Economic policies of the Privy Council 1620-1628

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Economic Policies of the Privy Council
1620-1628

By Jean A. Scott

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Dr. Hilling
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Chapter I

The Glass Monopoly

The first English patents of monopoly appeared in the decade from 1561 to 1570. The privileges granted under the patents were of three types, involving the exclusive rights either of supervision of an industry, of use of techniques or processes in production, or of trade in a product. Although intended primarily to stimulate invention and commerce, the monopolies were a potential source of power and wealth for monarch and courtier.

A series of patents for the manufacture of glass products appeared after 1567. Most of the early operations depended heavily upon the skill and technology of foreign workmen. The three most prominent families in the industry had continental connections: the Henpenys and Tynacks with Lorraine, and the Bungars with Normandy. Infringements upon the jurisdiction of the grants and the refusal of some of the foreigners, especially the Bungars, to cooperate with the patentees, reduced the effectiveness of the early patents.

In 1610 Sir William Slingsby, the queen's carver, received a patent for the manufacture of glass using coal instead of wood for fuel. In 1611 Sir Edward Zouch and three of his associates obtained a conflicting grant, and two years later, they demanded monopoly rights, claiming the monopoly was a necessity if the venture was to prosper. The Privy Council, fearing that a scarcity in the wood supply might develop, set aside other patents in 1614. Zouch and his partners gained a
monopoly of the manufacture of glass with coal in return for an annual rent payment to the Crown of £1,000. This sum provided a pension for Sir Jerome Boves, whose patent had been withdrawn.

Attempting to strengthen the position of their monopoly, Zouch and his partners admitted two courtiers, the Earl of Montgomery and Sir Robert Mansell, into partnership in 1615. The fears of the monopolists that glass made using wood as a fuel would compete with their product were relieved in May, 1615, when a proclamation, ostensibly to protect the forests, forbade the use of wood in the process. At the same time glass import was prohibited, giving the patentees a complete monopoly. By the end of 1618, Mansell had acquired sole interest in the glass patent.

The system of monopolies received occasional criticism in the Elizabethan House of Commons, and near the end of her reign, the Queen revoked several patents by proclamation. After his accession, James I suspended monopolies pending their examination by the Privy Council and appointed Commissioners for Suits to investigate monopolies. James' Parliament discussed monopolies in 1606 and 1610. In response to a petition of July 7, 1610, the king agreed to allow monopolies to be challenged in the common law courts. He also issued the Book of Bounty which declared monopolies to be against the law and the pleasure of the King, and stated that no more such grants would be made.

The Parliament of 1614 attacked the glass patent along with other monopolies, but its failure to grant supply to the King caused him to seek extra-Parliamentary sources of revenue. The issue of patents of monopoly appeared financially expedient to the Crown. Although the King's hopes
of increasing his income through grants of patents were disappointed, the issuing of the privileges continued.

Hansell's glass patent received considerable attention from the Privy Council and other government agencies in the period from 1620-1628. On January 19, 1620, a Privy Council committee composed of the Lord Steward, the Lord Chamberlain, and the Earl of Arundel approved the issue of a proclamation forbidding the import of glass "without prejudice to the patent." Since the monopoly grant had allowed the privilege of importation only to the patentee, this proclamation simply reinforced Hansell's position. Any significant benefit gained from this action lasted only a month, for on February 25, 1620, a proclamation confined the glass imported by Hansell to "rare and curious sorts."

In March, 1620, numerous glaziers complained to the King that Hansell's glass was "scarce, bad, and brittle," and that his best glass was not available to them. In an attempt to answer various accusations of the glaziers, Hansell wrote to the Privy Council in March, 1620, stating that he had worked to improve the quality of his product and that the rise in price was a result of the increased price of coals. Reports made by glaziers who tested Hansell's glass indicated that its quality was mediocre.

The Council performed the routine administrative tasks connected with the enforcement of the monopoly. On March 13, 1620, an order to the officers of the Port of London required them to seize all imported glass and give it to the patentee. This requirement upheld a provision in Hansell's patent which allowed him to confiscate imported glass.
In April, 1620, the Council again took action designed to protect the position of the monopolist. The Lord Steward, the Lord Chamberlain, and the Earl of Arundel requested the Lord Privy Seal to withhold the seal from a proposed patent for looking glass until the applicants, Sir Ralph and Dame Ann Singly, and Hansell, who opposed the new patent, could be heard by the Privy Council.

The Parliament of 1621, which convened for its first session on January 30, 1621 and its second on November 14, launched an attack on monopolies, including the glass monopoly, and on December 19, 1621, the Commons requested a royal official, the Treasurer, to "influence the King to suspend the patent for glass." Hansell's patent continued to be a source of controversy outside Parliament in 1621. The Glaziers' Company of London informed the Privy Council that Hansell's glass was "cheap, of good quality, and plentiful." They considered their condition to be better under Hansell's patent than it had been before, when Isaac Dungar bought all the glass and sold it at unnecessarily high prices. On April 15, the same company requested the Duke of Lenox and the other glass commissioners to work toward the defeat of the bill in Parliament which proposed to cancel Hansell's patent. They felt that Hansell's loss of the monopoly would result in the "tyranny" of Dungar.

Opponents of the monopoly were also vocal in 1621. Sir John Murrall and other glass makers petitioned the Privy Council for a license to manufacture glass, offering to pay the King £1,000 per year for the privilege. Sir Isaac Dungar pointed out that two Parliaments had declared Hansell's patent a monopoly, and he requested that it be
called in. Bungar wanted the Privy Council to open the manufacture of glass to all Englishmen, and he expressed a willingness to pay the King £500 per year and to sell glass for 2 shillings less than Mansell's price.26

In response to the attacks on Mansell's patent, the Privy Council initiated a policy of delay. On June 18, 1621, the Council decided that the patent would be maintained until Mansell returned to England.27 The patentee, who held the position of Vice Admiral of England,28 was abroad in the King's service. At the same time, the King's intention to pay Mansell £2,800 yearly to compensate for the patentee's losses resulting from the King's legalization of glass importation from Scotland was announced. On July 10, the Privy Council proved its determination to uphold Mansell's patent. The Council ordered eight men who had refused to pay the rent due Mansell for glassworks he had farmed to them while his patent was being discussed by the Commons to pay the rent or appear before the Council. The Board emphasized its decision that the patent would stand until Mansell returned, and continued to support it by summoning several men charged with making glass in violation of the patent to appear and answer the charges.29

On February 5, 1623, the Council concurred in a report presented by a committee of some of its members suggesting that Mansell's patent not be renewed. The King was to be urged to issue a new patent to Mansell "for the sole making of glass with sea coals without reserving any rent to himself," and allowing for import of glass with a duty to be split between Mansell and the King.30 The patent was granted on these terms and renewed from time to time. On July 11, 1623, Mansell
secured a writ of assistance from the privy Council commanding those
who were violating the new patent on the grounds that they had agree­
ments with Mansell under the old grant to cease their operations
until they secured a new license from the patentee. Sheriffs, mayors,
bailiffs, justices of the peace, and other officials were ordered to
send violators of this writ to the Council. Warrants similar in content
to this writ were issued on August 5, 1624.32

Parliament received a petition from Bungar and others criticizing
Mansell's patent. They contended that the patent was responsible for
an increase in glass prices, was harmful to the poor glass maker, and
that his process was not original with Mansell.33 Mansell defended
his position in the Parliament of 1624, asking the Parliament to ratify
the new patent he had received upon the recommendation of the Council.
He claimed that he hired 4,000 people, saved wood, employed shipping,
and made better and cheaper glass than that which had been made before
he received his patent. The independent glass makers contended that
they were not destroying the kingdom's supply of wood since their
manufacture used only light branches and that Mansell's prices were high
and his shipping of little consequence.34 The Statute of Monopolies,
which was passed by the Parliament of 1624, declared monopolies and
patents granted to individuals null, and opened monopolies to test by
the common law courts.35 Mansell's glass patent of May 22, 1623 was
specifically excepted from the provisions of this statute, probably
because supporters of the patent might have been able to defeat the
bill if the glass monopoly had been cancelled by it.36

The Statute of 1624 had allowed for test of Mansell's patent by
the common law courts.37 On June 19, 1626, the Attorney General
reported to the Privy Council that a case between Hansell and Isaac Bungar, who was making glass in violation of the provisions of Hansell's patent, would be settled by "due course of law." The Council was asked to determine whether or not Bungar could continue to manufacture glass while the case was in the courts. The Council ruled that Bungar could not continue until the court had made a decision, and specified that this ruling applied to others who might challenge the patent. On December 6, 1626, the Privy Council changed its position on this point, saying that the patent was beneficial to the country and that to challenge it in the courts was to violate the prerogative of the King. Therefore, the Council ordered Bungar to drop his proceedings against the monopoly, and threatened to punish anyone who bothered the King with complaints against this patent again. Ten days later, the Council directed in an open warrant that anyone not licensed by Hansell cease operations in the glass industry and that violators of the patent be sent to the Privy Council.

The position of the Council with respect to Hansell's patent was consistent throughout the period. Despite serious attacks in Council and Parliament, the body firmly upheld the monopoly. The reason for this policy is not entirely clear. Financial expediency does not seem to be an adequate explanation, since offers of payments to the Crown equal to Hansell's were made in return for the grant of freedom from Hansell's control, and the patent of 1623 provided that no rent be paid to the King. It is more likely that Hansell's position as Vice Admiral of England inclined the Council in his favor. The Council did recommend
the recall of the patent in 1623, and the issue of another one which exempted control of imports from Hansell's jurisdiction, thus weakening his position somewhat. The board then refused to allow the grant to stand trial by the common law, maintaining that the royal prerogative would be violated by such a procedure. Thus, by 1626, the Council was using the monopoly in a strictly illegal way to assert the power of the king over the common law courts. The grant remained in force until it was cancelled by the Long Parliament in 1642.
Chapter II
The Grain Shortage

Regulation of the price and availability of grain was a matter of considerable importance to the Privy Council in the years 1620-1623. In times of plenty, the board attempted to control prices and to provide for less prosperous years. On January 24, 1620, the Council wrote letters to the Justices of the Peace of Middlesex County, the Dean and Justices of Westminster, and the Lord Mayor of London in response to a complaint by the farmers that the grain prices in and around London were too low. The farmer received 4 shillings a bushel for his wheat, but bread brought 8 shillings a bushel on the market. The local officials were charged by the Council with neglect and ordered to see that bread prices were brought into line with grain prices.

Two days later the Council ordered the Sheriffs and J.P.'s of the various counties to find a place in each county for a storehouse for corn, in order that existent surpluses might be stored, prices stabilized, and corn made available for purchase in times of scarcity. A directive to the J.P.'s of Kent on January 28 gave permission for surplus Kentish corn to be shipped to other parts of England where grain was scarce. The Council informed the Mayor and Aldermen of London on February 29 that the Companies of London were to maintain a quantity of wheat in storage as had been their custom. These acts of the Council in 1620 were of a routine nature, indicating no acute problem in the supply of food products. References to scarcity in some areas and surpluses in others, however, show that even in 1620, there
was some problem of uneven distribution of the food supply.

A letter from the J.P.'s of Warwickshire to the Justices of the Assize revealed that the orders of the Council for the building of storehouses were not universally practical. The J.P.'s pointed out that the erection of such granaries would be an unnecessary burden since the poor were "scarcely able to maintain themselves" under the existing conditions of price and grain supply.3

Bad harvests in 1621 increased the urgency of Council action on food problems. The scarcity of corn inevitably forced its price up, and thus compounded the difficulties of the situation. The Council reminded the Mayor of London on November 16, 1621 of his responsibility to supply the needs of the city by keeping corn prices as low as possible and importing grain.6

The Council wrote to the J.P.'s of the southeast coast counties, Essex, Sussex, Kent, Cambridge, Norfolk, and Suffolk on March 4, 1622 asking them to survey the amount of corn stored in these counties and to ascertain how much was available to be sent to other parts of England to alleviate the scarcity.7 The situation worsened, however, and corn riots broke out in Somersetshire. On May 20, 1622, the sheriff of that county was able to report to the Council that the riots had been put down. The Justices of Northumberland reported starvation because of the bad harvest coupled with problems in cattle raising and the "prohibition of export of their coarse wool.8

In a letter to the J.P.'s of England and Wales in October, 1622, the Council directed that barley be used for food in the absence of corn and that the amount of barley used in alehouses be limited.9 In
In a reinforcement of its orders of November, 1621 that the Lord Mayor of London import grain to relieve the city, the Council ordered that official to be sure the grain was brought in from abroad. The practice of the lowering of the price of bread, which seemed to help the poor, only resulted in further depletion of the grain supply rather than a solution for the problems of scarcity and high prices.

Another bad harvest in 1622 added to the already existent distress, but by spring, 1623, conditions were improving in some places. In the period from February 12 to May 8, 1623, reports from Hampshire, Devon and Wiltshire, Winchester, Aylesbury Hundred in Buckinghamshire Devonshire, and Somersetshire indicated that the supply of grain in those places was adequate for local needs. These cities and counties form an almost continuous belt in south-central England, suggesting that this area, which had suffered acutely earlier as evidenced by the Somerset riots of 1622, was beginning to recover. Lack of records from many parts of England limit the accuracy with which such analyses may be made, however.

The relief felt by some areas in 1623 was not universal. Officiala from Anglesey, Carnarvonshire, Suffolk, and Cornwall complained of scarcity between February 26 and May 3. These areas are scattered along the coast of England and are widely separated, indicating that dearth extended over a large area and was not localized.

In a letter of February 26, 1623, the Privy Council approved the action of the J.P.'s of Norfolk who had seized corn which certain people were attempting to export. The Council commended this seizure...
on the grounds that export of grain violated a royal proclamation
and that there should be no export when there was a scarcity of corn
in the country.\(^{15}\)

After the spring of 1623, the Privy Council did not give any
significant attention to the food problem, indicating that the situation
had improved. On June 23, 1625, a letter to the Lord High Treasurer
directed him to order a halt in the export of grain because the crop
was threatened by too much rain.\(^{16}\) No further measures were taken
at that time.

The measures taken by the Privy Council in a time of food shortage
show a definite desire to alleviate the suffering of the people. Much
attention was given to the transfer of grain products from areas of
abundance to areas of scarcity, to the increase of the supply of food
available through import and storage measures, and to the keeping of
the prices of food within the reach of the poor. These constructive
policies of the Council indicate a regard for the welfare of the
people and a lack of sympathy with schemes whereby a few might profit
financially by charging high prices for the scarce necessities of life.
Chapter III
Currency Problems

Although there were no important changes in the value of English currency between 1621 and 1628, the decade of the 1620's was a time of monetary difficulties. Silver was a more important currency metal than gold in this period, but an "overvaluation of gold in relation to silver" by the English mint in 1611 naturally caused gold to flow into the mint instead of silver. An opposite in the gold/silver ratio in the United Provinces in 1615 resulted in the shipping of silver abroad. Debasements of currency took place inolland beginning in 1616 and 1617 and in Germany in 1618. These manipulations, which increased the amount of money in circulation, enabled foreign merchants to sell their goods at a lower price than the English merchants could afford to accept. This caused England's balance of trade to shift, since the inability of merchants to compete with the prices of their continental counterparts resulted in a decline in English exports. The basic reason for the difficulty was that the money the English received abroad in return for their goods was worth less than the same amount would have been before the manipulations since the coins contained less silver than before.

Faced with this situation, the Privy Council approved a debasement of silver currency on January 12, 1620. The Council accepted a proposal that a pound of silver be cut into sixty-six shillings instead of the old standard 62. At the same time, Council prohibited the East India Company and the Company of Goldsmiths from offering a higher price for
bullion or foreign coin than the mint price, thus eliminating any advantage that might have been gained from selling the metals to private companies rather than to the mint.

On February 25 some members of the Council, fearing that the measures taken would not bring enough silver into the mint, appointed a committee of councillors to confer with the East India Company, the Company of Goldsmiths, customs farmers and mint officials to find a way to attract silver. On April 25, the Council heard a report from the merchants advising a one year delay in the change of the price of silver. The reason given for this recommendation was that a debasement could enrich Spain since England would have to pay her a higher price for silver. The Council granted this one year delay on May 10, and although the body specified that the measure was to be reconsidered the following year, the project was not brought up in 1621, and the debasement plan was thus killed.

Attempts to settle the problem of loss of currency continued in 1621. The Parliament which convened in January forbade export of gold and silver by the East India Company. On June 14, the Council established a committee of representatives to be appointed by the East India Company, the French Company, the Merchant Adventurers, the Turkey Company, the Eastland Merchants, and the Spanish Merchants to discuss the problem of loss of silver. Four days later, the six companies recommended that the King reach an agreement with foreign rulers on the value of coins. It was hoped that such an understanding would eliminate the disadvantages to England caused by the uncertain exchange rates.
In the fall of 1621 and the spring of 1622, more committees were appointed by the Council to study the problem of the decay in trade and the scarcity of coin in the kingdom. A committee appointed by the King in 1622 reported that the undervaluation of silver was the cause of its loss, and recommended that exchange for silver currency should be made according to the intrinsic value of the coins. The feeling of the committee was that the devaluation of their currencies by the foreign powers had created a situation in which an unrealistic rate of exchange caused England to lose currency.

Throughout 1622 the government enacted measures designed to conserve the silver supply for coinage. A royal proclamation issued on June 11 forbade unlicensed exportation of gold and silver "coine, plate, vessels, jewels, goldsmithes' workes, bullion" or masses of the precious metals and the sale of fine gold or silver to anyone other than mint officials. The manufacture and sale of gold and silver thread was also prohibited in the kingdom. These orders were disobeyed, and the Council demanded that offenders be brought to its sessions.

In 1623 and 1624 attempts were made to regulate the manufacture of gold and silver threads. On May 7, 1623, the Council noted that the making of these luxury items was resulting in a loss of bullion, the production of counterfeit silver, and the illegal use of refined silver. A corporation with sole right to make the threads was established and required to take to the mint an amount of bullion equal to that used in the manufacturing process. This bullion was to be acquired by the importation of foreign metals. Some difficulties were encountered,
however, as indicated by a complaint that much bullion was consumed by the corporation. On July 10, 1621, the manufacture of gold and silver thread was again forbidden in order to cut down the use of bullion.¹⁶

In the years 1618-1622, England experienced the most severe monetary difficulties she had known. Despite great concern, currency manipulation was avoided. Again in 1626 debasement was considered, and the proposal was narrowly defeated in the Privy Council.¹⁷ Such discussion and study of currency problems occurred during the 1620's, but little action was taken. The Council tried through consultation with merchants and mint officials and regulation of private consumption of precious metals to find a solution to the problem and make more precious metal available for coinage. The problem of silver shortage was somewhat alleviated after 1623 when the foreign currencies were stabilized,¹⁸ but it was remedied only in 1630, when a treaty with Spain provided for the import and coinage of Spanish bullion, which was to be paid for by bills of exchange.¹⁹
Chapter IV
Depression in the Cloth Industry

The cloth industry formed the basis of English commercial activity in the early seventeenth century, with wool products alone accounting for between 75 and 90% of all the nation's exports. The "putting out" system, whereby a clothier distributed materials to the spinners and weavers, who owned their wheels and looms and worked for a commission, was used in the making of textiles. The extent of the industry is illustrated by the case of a Wiltshire clothier who, during the reign of Charles I, employed 1,000 spinners and weavers. The average number of such workers in the service of one capitalist in southwest England was about 500. In Yorkshire, which was a center of the industry, the work was done on a much smaller scale. The presence of middlemen in the domestic cloth industry increased its national scope, as staplers bought wool anywhere in England and sold it in one of the twenty-three places in the country designated for the purpose and factors distributed the products of the manufacturers to the drapers, or wholesale dealers.

The extensiveness of the textile business and the number of people involved in it made severe distress inevitable in case of a decline in the industry. Such a slump occurred between 1618 and 1622, when the number of shortcloths sent overseas from London by Englishmen dropped from 102,332 to 76,624, or about 25%. The immediate reason for this reduction in exports was the manipulation of foreign currencies which...
forced English merchants to raise their prices, placing their goods in a poor competitive position abroad. The burden of the decay in trade fell most heavily upon the provincial traders and clothiers who, unlike the London merchants, did not have enough capital to leave the textile industry for more profitable ventures, and the large and immobile class of laborers. 10

On May 12, 1620, a letter from the J.P.'s of Wiltes describing the plight of the local weavers and spinners reached the Privy Council. It was reported that clothiers were being forced out of business because of the poor trade conditions. In response to this complaint, Council appointed a committee to study the situation and report its findings to the entire body. Six days later, this committee was enlarged and made a standing body to deal with the problem throughout the country. This action was taken because many complaints from all parts of England of a decline in the cloth industry and attendant misery had been registered. 11

On May 29 the Privy Council sent a reply to the J.P.'s of Wiltes. The Council informed the local officials that it had arranged with merchants for the purchase of unsold cloth and that the board would try to encourage foreign trade. The J.P.'s were ordered to have the clothiers hire the unemployed spinners and weavers. If the clothiers lacked supplies or money to hire all the jobless laborers, the Council commanded implementation of the provisions of the Poor Relief Act of 1598, which required the acquisition of a stock of money and raw materials for use in employing the poor within the parishes. The Council further informed the J.P.'s that woolgrowers were being forbidden to keep their wool until it would bring better prices and to expect the
same payment for their crops which they received in good times. This restriction of the woolgrowers was justified as essential to the public welfare. Similar measures were recommended to the J.P.'s of Wilts, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Gloucester, Worcester, Oxford, Kent, Suffolk, and York on February 9, 1622. 12

Concern about the failures in the cloth industry extended to Parliament in 1621, where clothiers from Kent, Worcestershire, Suffolk, Essex, Somerset, and Gloucestershire explained their plight to a committee of the House of Commons. Representatives of the main trading companies received a hearing in April. 13

On September 11, 1621, the Council wrote to the Mayors and Bailiffs of twenty port towns requesting them to send an experienced businessman to the Council before October 9 to help find a solution for the lack of money and the slump in the cloth industry. 14 The reports which came in from these cities told of "shrinking markets, unfavorable trading conditions, credit tightness, and widening poverty." 15 By February 25, 1622, conditions in some counties were so bad that cloth workers were rioting, sometimes in bands of 500 or 600. Faced with starvation, these jobless people stole livestock and grain and sometimes even broke into homes. Recognizing that these uprisings were not directed against the King and the government, the Council tried to help the unemployed by giving them three pence a day until they could find employment. 16

In April, 1622, the Privy Council appointed a commission headed by Sir John Suckling to confer with representatives of the Merchant Adventurers and the clothiers and to present to Council a proposed remedy for the decay in the cloth trade. The Merchant Adventurers...
and the J.P.'s and Sheriffs of twenty-four counties, ranging
geographically from Northumberland in the north to Cornwall in the
southwest and Kent in the southeast were required to appoint representa-
tives to work with Suckling's Commission. 17

In May, 1622, the Council reinforced its order of 1620 that the
poor be kept within their own parishes and employed according to law.
Because riots had been taking place, especially in the western counties
the appointment of a Provost Marshal to punish those who incited the
uprisings was commanded. A specific order to this affect was sent to
Wiltshire, and later in the month, the counties of Somerset, Kent,
Devon, Berks, Northampton, Gloucester, Oxon, Dorset, and Southampton
were included in the directions. 18 This and other lists of localities
to be helped indicate that the most severely affected area was southern
England.

The Cloth Commission headed by Suckling received the opinion of
the drapers of England in May, 1622. The drapers felt that the cloth
industry depression was caused by the employment of inexperienced
people in the manufacture of cloth. They requested that all who worked
in the industry "be restricted to their proper trades," and recommended
that cloth be inspected before it was sold. 19 On August 15, the
Council dealt with this last request by sending an open warrant to
local officials charging them to see that the privilege given to the
Duke of Lenox by letters patent to search, weigh, and seal wools be
respected. 20 In September the Commissioners drew up an abstract of
the causes of the decline in cloth sales. The reasons they listed were
the poor quality of the products, scarcity of buyers, high customs
duties, the difficulties abroad caused by the German war, foreign
Considerable controversy developed in Norfolk and Norwich concerning the prohibition placed on bringing combed wools into Norfolk from other counties. On October 13, 1622, the Company of Hosiers of Norwich, a city in Norfolk County, protested to the Council that this prohibition hurt their business and would lead to the unemployment of 6,000 workers. In May, 1623, the spinners and weavers of Norwich expressed the opposite viewpoint, contending that the wool yarn brought in from other counties was of a poor quality, and the mixture of this inferior product with the better Norwich yarns lowered the price of the good wool. The city of Norwich sent a certificate to the Council which supported the position of the spinners and weavers that the poor quality of the cloth brought in needed to be corrected but argued that the “import” of wool should not be cut off because the local supply would not suffice to keep the workers employed. After hearing these arguments, the Council ordered that wools brought into Norfolk and Norwich be sold only in a common hall and that inspectors approve the quality of the wools and woolen yarn before they were sold. This decision of the Council illustrates its willingness to hear all points of view on the problems that existed and its desire to reach a satisfactory solution.

Much of the initial action related to the problem of textiles shifted away from the Council to a Commission appointed on October 21, 1622 to supervise all trade, especially that in textiles. Throughout the period of depression the government pursued a policy of enforcement of standards of textile quality, restriction of export
of raw materials, and limitation of the powers of the Merchant Adventurers and of their control over exports. By October, 1623, the worst part of the depression was over.23

In 1625 the appearance of plague in London threatened to disrupt the cloth industry again. Merchants were afraid to go to London to buy and sell textiles, and the Council, seeing the danger, made plans to move the staple from London to Reading, where the trade could proceed in safety. Later in the year, however, the clothiers of Wiltshire petitioned the Council for permission to sell their woolen cloth in London to prevent unemployment. The Council granted its consent on condition that the goods be sold to private merchants and not on the open market, where there might be danger that the plague would spread. On December 25, the plague had cleared up sufficiently for the Council to approve the lifting of a restriction barring Londoners from attending fairs throughout the realm. No crisis of the severity of that of 1620-1623 developed in the textile industry at this time.24

The Council worked during the depression of the early 1620's and the scare of 1625 to provide for the immediate needs of the people whose means of livelihood disappeared or were threatened. At the same time, the board sought solutions to the puzzle of the cause of the lag in employment—the decline of trade in textiles. Characterized by a desire to locate the source of trouble, the Privy Council appointed committees and called in merchants, clothiers, and other interested parties to confer with them. The remedies attempted by the group may not always have been wise. For example,
the practice of employing all the jobless in the textile industry by use of parish funds probably lowered the quality of the product.25 The bad effects of this practice may have been counterbalanced, however, by the increase in stability that came about as rioting was controlled. The problem remained to find an outlet for the cloth produced by the paupers, and the economic situation in the industry returned to normal only after the stabilization of foreign currencies in 1623 made English exports again competitive in the foreign market.26
Chapter V

Conclusion: The Nature and Policy of the Privy Council in the 1620's

During the period from 1485 to 1640, the Privy Council possessed considerable power in the English government. By the time of the accession of James I, however, the growing influence of Parliament and the common law courts challenged the position of the Council.

Although it was still a vital institution in the 1620's, the Council's importance began to be threatened as King and Parliament struggled against each other to gain ascendancy.¹

The size and composition of the Council varied somewhat during the 1620's, ranging from between twenty-eight and thirty-three in 1621² to 42 in 1630. In general, Charles I's Councils were slightly larger than his father's had been. The officials who served on the board by virtue of their offices in the reign of Charles I were the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chancellor or Lord Keeper, the Lord Treasurer, the Lord President of the Council, the Lord Privy Seal, the Lord Admiral, the Lord Steward, the Lord Chamberlain, the Lord Lieutenant or Lord Deputy of Ireland, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, two Secretaries of State, the Treasurer of the Household, and the Comptroller of the Household. Holders of some other positions were almost always found on the Council.³

Much of the work of the Council was conducted by committees, and almost never in the areas of the glass patent, the textile depression, and the coin shortage.¹² does the Privy Council register indicate that an individual Councillor played a dominant role in the shaping
of a policy. The names affixed to certain orders where only a few members' names appear, and the identities of the Councillors who served on various committees may give some insight into the interests of the individuals on the board.

In 1620 the three names associated with Sir Robert Hanceil's glass patent were those of the Duke of Lennox, Lord Steward; the Earl of Pembroke, who was Lord Chamberlain; and the Earl of Arundel. Strong supporters of the patent, these three councillors signed orders enforcing Hancell's privileges and condemning offenders against the monopoly and staying the application for a patent for looking glasses which Hancell wished to contest. The report in which the withdrawal of Hancell's patent and the issue of a different one to him was recommended in February, 1623, was presented by the Lord High Treasurer, the Earl of Middlesex; the Marquis of Hamilton; the Earl of Carlisle; Viscount Grandison; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Richard Weston in addition to the three who had signed the 1620 orders. This group of men was probably the most important in shaping the policy pertaining to the glass monopoly, and they, too, upheld the patent with some modifications.

In 1620 a committee was formed by Councillors who felt that the plans made to bring precious metal into the mint would not be sufficient. The body consisted of Lord Digbie, the Vice-Chamberlain; Robert Naunton; Sir Foulke Creville, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir Edward Coke, and the Master of the Ward, Middlesex. This group and was to meet with various merchants, mint and customs officials to find a way to bring silver into the kingdom and report to Council.
No remedy seems to have been devised by the group. A merchants' report two months later opposed the planned debasement of currency. Although there may not have been any direct connection between the committee and the merchants' report, the fact that the members of the Privy Council felt it necessary to review the situation with the merchants indicates the willingness and desire of the body to seek assistance from the professional class.

In May, 1620, when the complaints about the decay in the cloth trade began to come to the Council from all parts of the country, the Chancellor; the Duke of Lennox; the Earl of Arundel; Lord Digby; the Treasurer of the Household, Sir Thomas Edmonds; the Comptroller of the Household; Secretary Haunton; Sir George Calvert; Greville; Coke; and the Master of the Wards were appointed to hear the requests of those troubled by the cloth industry slump. Some of the petitions were handled by this body alone without reference to the Privy Council, and others were referred to the entire body. The presence of some men, including the Earl of Arundel, Lord Digby, Lord Steward Lennox, Sir Edward Coke, and the Earl of Middlesex; in the capacity either of Master of the Wards or Lord Treasurer, on more than one committee of investigation in the different phases of economic activity indicates the respect with which the Council honored their judgments and their interest in economic policy.

The period of the 1620's was a difficult time in the economic life of England, and in the work of the Council. Loss of export trade and consequently, of silver, and simultaneous distress caused by bad harvests presented serious problems to the Privy Council.
The body attempted to meet these challenges through study and educated experimentation in economic endeavors as well as through the enforcement of traditional laws. Desire to improve the status of the poor was a real factor in the program of the Council. So also were a longing for stability and order in society and the maintenance of the authority of the King and Council. The Council's protection of the monopolist against those who wanted to test his patent and the assertion that to allow such a trial would be to violate the royal prerogative indicate that desire to keep its own position in the Stuart scheme of government was a major consideration of the Council.
Footnotes

Chapter I


5. Price, Patents, 14.

6. Ibid., 67-70.

7. Ibid., 71.


17. Price, Patents, 217.


19. Ibid., X, 134.
24. Price, Patents, 75.
30. Ibid., XXXVIII, 406-407.
34. Price, Patents, 76-77.
35. Carl Stephenson and Frederick George Hurst, eds. and trans., Sources of English Constitutional History (New York, 1937), 434.
36. Price, Patents, 76.
37. Ibid.
39. Price, Patents, 76.

Chapter II
2. Ibid., XXXVII, 112-114, 143.
3. Green, State Papers, Domestic, X, 140.

5. Green, State Papers, Domestic, X, 333.


7. Ibid., XXXVIII, 154.


9. Ibid., X, 455.

10. Leonard, Poor Relief, 185.


12. Leonard, Poor Relief, 185.


16. Ibid., XL (1934), 99-100.

Chapter III

1. B. E. Supple, Commercial Crisis and Change in England 1600-1642; A Study in the Instability of a Mercantile Economy (Cambridge, 1901), 107, 173.


3. Supple, Crisis and Change, 73, 75-76, 95.


7. Ibid., XXXVII, 114, 181, 187.

8. Supple, Crisis and Change, 185.


Chapter IV

2. Davies, Early Stuarts, 283.
4. Davies, Early Stuarts, 283.
6. Birnie, Economic History, 188.
7. Davies, Early Stuarts, 287.
10. Ibid., 11-12, 75, 80.
12. Ibid., XXXVII, 205-206; XXXVIII, 131-132; Stephenson and Kirman, Sources, 356.
15. Supple, Crisis and Change, 55.
17. Privy Council, Acts, XXXVIII, 190-191, 201, 203.
Chapter V

1. Albert Venn Dicey, The Privy Council (London, 1887), 80, 120-121, 123.


5. Ibid., XXV, 216; XXXVII, 141, 181, 357-358.

6. Ibid., XXV, 216; XXVII, 197-198, 357-358.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

   The Privy Council Register's record of the action taken by the Council was the basis of my research. It was a means of acquiring an understanding of the way in which the Council conducted business, although the lack of the actual debates of the group limits its effectiveness in this area.


   This work provided much material about the acts of government agencies other than the Privy Council, and was the major source of information concerning the conditions in England seen through the eyes of local officials and of their reactions to Privy Council measures. The Calendar does not always indicate what government body took the actions it lists, and its dating is occasionally inaccurate, but the work is generally reliable.


Secondary Sources


   The fourth volume of Gardiner's History contained valuable information on the early history of monopolies and the attacks on the patents during the early Stuart period.


   Price's book contained a chapter on the glass monopoly as well as an introduction to the subject of monopolies in general. The author depended upon Gardiner for some of his more general material, but the description of the glass monopoly was a helpful feature not to be found in Gardiner. Price showed the connection between the actions of the Privy Council and Parliament on the glass monopoly.

   Supple provided an invaluable explanation of the inter-relationships of the various economic problems of the period, his emphasis on these relationships and on the basic causes of the difficulties helped draw such seemingly disjointed material into a coherent whole.
