

‘THERE’S DEATH IN THE POT!’*
THE BRITISH FREE PRODUCE MOVEMENT
AND THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE
NORTH-EAST OF ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

Ethical consumerism was one of the strategies used during the protracted struggle against slavery and was especially popular with Friends. From simple abstention from slave-grown produce to the promotion of alternative goods, it provided a means to bridge the distance between the consumer and the enslaved. This paper surveys the background to the mid-nineteenth-century British Free Produce Movement and explores the problems and opposition its supporters encountered. The reasons for the inability of the movement to develop mass appeal even amongst abolitionists, or for it to have any noticeable impact on the outcome of anti-slavery campaigning, are examined, as is its role in revitalising abolitionism at a time when interest had diminished. Particular emphasis is placed on ethical consumerism in the north-east anti-slavery movement, including the coordination of the Free Produce Movement from about 1846 to 1854, by Newcastle Quakers Henry and Anna Richardson.

KEYWORDS

abolition; free produce; Newcastle upon Tyne; abstention; free trade; sugar

INTRODUCTION

The waves of anti-slavery activism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be described collectively as the first mass pressure group campaign, deploying a range of tactics which are still familiar today. Josiah Wedgwood’s iconic ‘Am I Not A Man and A Brother?’ medallion and the engraving of the *Brooke* slave ship, for example, supplied slogans and logos which helped to foster anti-slavery sentiment. Ethical consumerism, another tactic with modern associations, was also utilised, to establish a direct connection between consumers and the context in which goods were produced, thus identifying them as moral agents, individually

responsible for the persistence of slavery. Beginning with the sugar boycott of the 1790s and developing into a sustained attempt to promote a 'free produce' alternative to goods produced through slave labour, ethical consumerism periodically re-emerged as a campaigning device until the American Declaration of Emancipation in 1864. Throughout the period, the Religious Society of Friends was closely identified with this tactic, as exemplified in the title of Ruth Ketring Nuernberger's book, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*.¹

However, despite the many and widespread attempts to encourage and sustain ethical consumerism in the battle against slavery, most historians agree that it had little impact in the drive towards abolition. For this reason, there have been few thorough explorations of the tactic. Nuernberger's book, for example, was published over sixty years ago, yet remains the only serious study of the American Free Produce Movement, with just a single chapter dedicated to the movement on the other side of the Atlantic. It is over thirty years since C. Duncan Rice and Louis Billington wrote about British abolitionism and ethical consumerism, the former with a specific focus on the Free Produce Movement.² Although a number of studies have been made of the 1790s sugar boycott, the Free Produce Movement has been comparatively neglected.³ Whilst Lawrence B. Glickman and E.C. Wilkinson have published articles about the movement in America, there has not been a new work on its counterpart in this country despite the outpouring of academic research into virtually all aspects of the anti-slavery movement during the bicentenary of the abolition of British involvement in the slave trade in 2007.⁴

This article attempts to redress the balance by furnishing an overview of the phases of ethical consumerism in Britain throughout the period, with an emphasis on the role of Quakers in the Free Produce Movement between about 1846 and 1854. Because this tactic was not always pursued through a co-ordinated national campaign, but often by individuals or short-lived local groups, the evidence can be frustratingly thin and patchy. Although the article highlights activities in the north-east of England, these have been supplemented and enlarged by evidence drawn from a wider area, in order to present a meaningful framework for the debates surrounding the device. The importance of close transatlantic networks to the Free Produce Movement is illustrated, fatefully linking its viability to schisms within American abolitionism. Disagreements between those who urged trade sanctions against slave-grown goods and the many Friends who supported free trade, especially in the 1840s, are also explored. Finally, some conclusions are offered about the effectiveness of ethical consumerism in the struggle to emancipate the enslaved.

FROM BOYCOTT TO FREE PRODUCE: THE EARLY PHASES OF ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

Abstention from slave-produced goods was first practised in the second half of the eighteenth century by individuals, mostly Quakers, on both sides of the Atlantic. John Woolman, for example, argued that the consumption of such goods was as morally bad as slaveholding itself, since it not only gave economic succour to the

institution, but supplied its very motive, expressed in the slogan, 'the receiver is as bad as the thief!'⁵ This analysis continued to permeate the ideology of ethical consumerism. In 1814, the question posed by Elias Hicks: 'By what class of the people is the slavery of the Africans and their descendants supported and encouraged?' prompted the reply, 'Principally by the purchasers and consumers of the produce of the slaves' labour'. 'If we purchase the commodity, we participate in the crime', he continued. 'The slave dealer, the slave holder, and the slave driver are virtually the agents of the consumer, and may be considered as employed and hired by him, to procure the commodity'.⁶ The motto of *The Non-Slaveholder*, launched on 4 January 1846 to publicise the Free Produce Movement—'Whoso gives the motive, makes his brother's sin his own'—was an analysis which placed consumers at the heart of the ethical debate, bringing home to them their personal involvement in slavery.⁷

In 1791, the Baptist William Fox published his pamphlet 'On the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum' in which he argued that if one family using five pounds of sugar per week abstained for twenty-one months, the enslavement and murder of one negro would be prevented.⁸ Such calculations forged an intimate connection between the actions of the consumer and the fate of the enslaved. Anti-slavery literature also sought to arouse disgust through images of cannibalism and pollution, as shown in an anonymous poem, published in 1788: 'Are drops of blood the horrible manure that fills with luscious juice the teeming cane?'⁹ The bodily fluids of the slaves became indistinguishable from the product, sugar, so the British tea-drinker was literally consuming their blood. Fox's pamphlet became hugely popular when the campaigners against British involvement in the slave trade urged abstention from slave-grown sugar in reaction to the failure to advance their cause in Parliament. Thomas Clarkson claimed that 300,000 gave up the use of West India sugar, making their 'sacrifice to virtue' at this time, including the astonished correspondent 'Humanus', writing to the *Newcastle Courant* in 1792:

Happening lately to be sometime from home, the females in my family had in my absence perused a pamphlet, entitled 'An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Utility of Refraining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum'. On my return, I was surprised to find that they had entirely left off the use of Sugar, and banished it from the tea table.¹⁰

This was the first evidence of anti-slavery activity in Newcastle by women, following the establishment of the men's abolition society there in 1791. East India sugar, promoted as a non-slave alternative, is known to have been available from a grocer's in Sunderland.¹¹

The abstention campaign enjoyed widespread publicity, becoming a fashionable statement of morality and a means to display one's virtuous credentials. The domestic nature of the protest has been acknowledged as crucial to the construction of a widespread culture of anti-slavery sentiment.¹² The Dublin Quaker, Mary Birkett, dedicated her 1792 *Poem on the African Slave Trade* to her own sex, imploring them to boycott slave-produced goods:

How little think the giddy and the gay
 While sipping o'er the sweets of charming tea,
 How oft with grief they pierce the manly breast,
 How oft their lux'ry robs the wretch of rest,
 And that to gain the plant we idly waste
 Th'extreme of human mis'ry they must taste!¹³

Sugar bowls labelled 'East India Sugar not made by Slaves'—and indeed entire tea-sets—were manufactured to purvey the anti-slavery message.¹⁴ Although the 1790s campaign was relatively short-lived, many people continued to abstain from sugar and other slave-grown products, especially Friends, who were 'accustomed to emphasising their distinctiveness by a self-denying lifestyle'.¹⁵ Quaker parents were warned to avoid the 'evil consequences...from the mistaken conduct of pampering the appetite, and indulging the pleasures of the palate in childhood', so it is little wonder that children were also expected to practice abstinence.¹⁶ Anna Lloyd of Birmingham, born in 1837, recalled how, at 'an early age we gave up the use of sugar in tea and coffee', while her grandmother, Rachel Lloyd, had such a 'fear of using slave grown cotton' that she had 'a great objection to any material which had an admixture of cotton, and confined [herself] to worsted and silk'.¹⁷ It was inevitable that Friends should be in the vanguard whenever the tactic re-emerged into the mainstream of the anti-slavery movement.

The 1820s saw a resurgence of anti-slavery activity, including the promotion of ethical consumerism.¹⁸ A new abolition society was formed in Newcastle upon Tyne; its first report commented on the need to revive abolitionism, as 'the country at large seemed to settle into a state of indifference on the subject of negro slavery'.¹⁹ After the ending of British involvement in the slave trade in 1807, it had been assumed that planters would behave more humanely, leading to an amelioration of conditions and even, some fervently hoped, emancipation itself. Moreover, most abolitionists were from the urban middle-classes, and their evangelical drive towards a true moral order intermingled with an equally strong commitment to free trade. 'The arguments against the use of sugar address themselves equally to our interests and our feelings', reported the *Newcastle Chronicle* in 1791.²⁰ As Adam Smith had argued:

a person who can acquire no property can have no other interest but to eat as much, and to labour as little as possible. Whatever work he does beyond that which is sufficient to purchase his own maintenance can be squeezed out of him by violence only, and not by any interest of his own.²¹

Slave labour was therefore not only wicked but also economically inefficient and wasteful, and its opponents used the ideas of political economy as well as humanitarian appeals to gain support. The removal of the high tariffs on foreign, that is, non-West Indian sugar, which protected the planters from competition would, they argued, ultimately prove the superiority of free labour, by making its produce cheaper. 'If it were not for the duties laid upon other sugar to *protect that grown by slave holders*, you would buy *all* sugars at least, one penny per pound *cheaper* than you now do', asserted one pamphlet in 1825.²² Alternatives to slave-grown sugar

included that produced in East India or the experimental colony for freed slaves in Sierra Leone, as well as the development of maple, beet and even birch substitutes for cane sugar. The focus of this phase of ethical consumerism, which occurred on both sides of the Atlantic, was not just the boycott of slavery's commodities, but also the active promotion of these 'free labour' alternatives. In the United States this led to the development of the Free Produce Movement, with its own stores, newspapers and network of local societies; in Britain to the campaign to equalise sugar duties, to deprive West Indian planters of their unfair market advantage.

Abstinence from slave-grown produce and the commitment to finding free labour alternatives continued throughout the 1830s, although with a lower profile in the anti-slavery movement as a whole, as emancipation and the apprenticeship system preoccupied activists and called for different tactics. By the end of the 1830s, following the emancipation of West Indian slaves, the issue of protecting Caribbean sugar came to the fore once again. This time many abolitionists had apparently switched sides. In the 1820s it was possible to combine free-trade inclinations with humanitarian impulses, during the (unsuccessful) campaign to equalise East and West Indian sugar duties. But after emancipation, West Indian sugar was technically grown by free labour, whose greater efficiencies should, according to this reasoning, have resulted in much higher productivity. In reality, productivity declined after emancipation, with Jamaican sugar exports, for example, down by almost half.²³ The principles of economic liberalism demanded the removal of all protective tariffs, but West Indian planters continued to enjoy mercantile manipulation of sugar prices. At the beginning of the 1840s, for example, the duty on West Indian sugar was only 24 shillings per hundredweight, while the rate for Latin American sugar was 63 shillings.²⁴ The Parliamentary battle to abolish sugar tariffs altogether in the mid-1840s, however, led the Quaker abolitionist and political radical Joseph Sturge of Birmingham to argue in opposition that it was too soon to move to unfettered economic liberalism. A system which privileged all free-labour sugar, whether colonial or foreign, over that grown by slaves was called for, giving an economic motive for emancipation and creating the conditions for universally free markets.²⁵ For this reason, many abolitionists reluctantly supported their erstwhile enemies, the West Indian planters, who now 'held the humanitarian torch' in their efforts to maintain protectionism.²⁶ Others deplored this unholy alliance, especially committed free-traders, who argued that the 'distinction between free-grown and slave-grown products was a principle for individual agency, not a rule which could direct international commerce'.²⁷

The anti-slavery movement was also under attack in the press for seemingly privileging well-fed freedmen in the Caribbean over half-starved workers at home. *The Times*, in 1838, had wondered at the concern for slaves of Joseph Pease, the Darlington Quaker abolitionist, over the fate of 'the wretched little beings who are toiling from morning to night among the wheels of his own machinery'.²⁸ Drescher states that, '[t]he 1840s was the first decade in half a century in which a united anti-slavery front could no longer produce mass mobilization to influence public policy'.²⁹

'THE ABSENCE OF A DEFINITE OBJECT':³⁰ DEVELOPMENT OF THE
BRITISH FREE PRODUCE MOVEMENT, 1845 TO 1854

As well as disagreements about protection for free-labour sugar, the intention to abolish universal slavery widened the geographical scope of the movement, diminishing its ability to realise its goals. As a consequence, active support for anti-slavery organisations fell away in the 1840s.³¹ This was the context in which ethical consumerism came to the fore once again.

In February 1850, the Ladies' Negro Friends and Emancipation Society for Newcastle upon Tyne resolved that, as the Society had not met for three years, members should henceforth focus their energies on the encouragement of the Free Produce Movement.³² In fact, the Newcastle Free Produce Association had been established a few years earlier by Friends Anna and Henry Richardson, who became interested in the issue through their association with the Peace Movement and the American peace campaigner Elihu Burritt.³³ Burritt, of Connecticut (1810–1879) was known as the 'Learned Blacksmith' and claimed to speak forty languages. He arrived in England in 1846 to promote his League of Universal Brotherhood, a peace organisation, and saw the Free Produce Movement as part of the campaign for worldwide peace. Henry and Anna Richardson were enthusiastic supporters of the Peace Movement, attending the Paris Peace Convention in 1849. Anna edited a peace annual for children, *The Olive Leaf*, and was also Secretary of Newcastle Olive Leaf Circle, a female branch of Burritt's organisation.³⁴ By 1850 there were about 150 of these circles, mostly made up of young Quaker women and forming a ready-made network of consumers for free labour goods.³⁵ Realising that the Free Produce Movement could help to reinvigorate anti-slavery activities at a time when interest in the issue was flagging, a flurry of free-labour publications was issued from the printing presses of Newcastle between the late 1840s and early 1850s. Anna reported in April 1848 that 'four anti-slavery tracts and several papers have already been published in Newcastle', as well as a 'sheet of *Monthly Illustrations of American Slavery*...issued since the beginning of 1847, for the special use of newspaper editors, to nearly one hundred of whom it is forwarded monthly by permission'.³⁶

Henry Richardson was a member of the well-known Quaker tanning family which dominated Newcastle Monthly Meeting in the nineteenth century, with branches in North Shields and Sunderland, as well as Newcastle.³⁷ His father, George, was a grocer in Newcastle's Flesh Market and a noted Quaker minister and philanthropist. Anna, Henry's wife, had been brought up by her widowed mother in Oxfordshire, and she remembered her mother refusing to use slave-grown sugar and insisting that black beggars must never be turned away because they might be runaway slaves.³⁸ The couple met at the Friends' school at Ackworth and married in the year of the Emancipation Act, 1833. Henry worked in his father's grocery business but the couple chiefly devoted themselves to good causes, including the Bible Society, Temperance, prison visiting, as well as anti-slavery and peace campaigning. Their home in the Summerhill 'Quaker enclave'

in the west end of the city hosted visits from leading abolitionists, including, most notably, Frederick Douglass, whose freedom they purchased in 1846.³⁹ Because Henry's health was frequently poor, Anna often took the lead in their activities.

Their pamphlets emphasised humanitarian rather than economic arguments in favour of free labour and sought to make the link between producer and consumer a tangible one, however geographically remote from each other: 'Were the misery we thus occasion only brought to our doors, we should start from it aghast, horrified and self-condemned!'⁴⁰ There had been no point abolishing slavery in the West Indies, they argued, if people simply transferred their custom to Cuba or Brazil, encouraging the continuation of the traffic in human beings and abandoning the enslaved to the 'tender mercies of Spanish slave-drivers'.⁴¹ Abstention from slave labour produce was urged as a 'self-cleansing measure from voluntary participation in the crime of slavery'.⁴² Cotton rather than sugar production was now at the forefront of the campaign; by 1850, cotton imports were even more vital to the British economy than revenue from the sugar colonies had been in the late eighteenth century.⁴³

A pamphlet by H. Richardson entitled *A Revolution of Spindles for the Overthrow of American Slavery* was published, and George Richardson spoke on behalf of his son and daughter-in-law at London Yearly Meeting in May 1849, asking Friends to support the British Free Produce Movement.⁴⁴ Articles and letters were published in the British Quaker press, and free labour goods advertised.⁴⁵ By now the coordination of the movement had shifted from London, where it had been within the remit of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS) secretary, to Newcastle.⁴⁶

The Newcastle Ladies Committee was visited on 16 April 1850 by the black abolitionist James W.C. Pennington, for whom a tea party was held the following week. Born Jim Pembroke, a slave, in Maryland c. 1807, Pennington escaped aged about 20 and went on to become a minister of the Congregational Church. He met leading American abolitionists, including William Lloyd Garrison, in the 1830s and soon became a prominent figure in the abolitionist movement. In 1843 he represented Connecticut at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London and also attended the 1849 Paris Peace Convention.⁴⁷ At the Newcastle tea party, Pennington made 'a truly impressive and convincing address clearly showing the dependency of the system of American slavery on the support of the British consumers of cotton', and was asked to hold a public meeting in Brunswick Place Chapel after his forthcoming visit to Scotland. In August, Henry Highland Garnet, also a black abolitionist and former slave, was designated the Travelling Agent of Newcastle Ladies' Emancipation Society. Garnet, born in 1815, had escaped with ten other family members in 1824. In 1843 he became a Presbyterian minister, by which time he was already speaking for the anti-slavery movement.⁴⁸ The Richardsons clearly understood how important the involvement of these former slaves would be to the success of their enterprise, providing 'colourful and out of the ordinary experiences that would attract audiences to their meetings and provoke reports in the press'.⁴⁹

In May 1851, it was resolved 'to make a subscription to defray the expenses of H. Garnet's family being brought to this country'.⁵⁰ On their arrival, a soiree was held to welcome them to the north-east, with four hundred tickets issued at sixpence each.⁵¹ Garnet's brief was to raise the profile of free produce, and by September 1850 he was holding meetings all over the region, urging audiences to abstain from slave-grown products, and reminding them of earlier consumer boycotts:

A former generation gave up, for the sake of the negro, the use of slave-grown sugar; and this was done when free labour sugar was not to be had. A less sacrifice was now demanded... It was simply asked of them to prefer free-labour to slave-labour sugar, coffee, cotton, rice etc.⁵²

Britain was the 'main prop and stay of slavery... [which] could best be struck down by the withdrawal of British custom'. '[I]f slaves sold well in America', he argued, 'you might be sure that cotton was high in Liverpool, and vice versa'.⁵³ He besought women 'to take it into their hands', to create the demand for free produce: 'Let there be a demand for free-labour produce, and the cause would cease; let the public move first, and all the great firms who supplied the country must follow as a matter of course'.⁵⁴

This message was reinforced by a display of free-labour cottons and cotton prints, and information as to where they might be bought in Newcastle and Gateshead.⁵⁵ In the pamphlet *Conscience versus Cotton*, the Richardsons made practical suggestions to improve the marketing of free-labour goods, including setting up a network of commercial travellers, offering merchants the opportunity to become agents for free produce and ensuring goods were displayed attractively: 'leave handsome labels, to be placed conspicuously in shops, in order to excite attention...'⁵⁶ Elsewhere, they both anticipated and reiterated Garnet's appeal to women:

A path for showing mercy is open to us, if we will but walk in it; a path peculiarly appropriate to us, the Women of Great Britain, who have the furnishing of the wardrobes and the tables of our households.⁵⁷

Women, one and all, in tears must acknowledge that if ever any social reform demanded **their** attention, **their** exertions, **their** prayers, it is the utter overthrow of slavery.⁵⁸

A list of commodities was published, entitled 'The Free Man or the Slave, Which Shall Supply Your Table?' underlining their assertion that, 'it may be you do not know that it is *slave-grown*, but this is no excuse; you *ought* to know'.⁵⁹

Yet another former slave, William Wells Brown, was touring the north of England at this time, and the local press, reporting on his appearance at Blaydon's Wesleyan chapel, were in 'no doubt that his lecture will have given a powerful impetus to the free-labour movement in Blaydon'.⁶⁰ The high profile of the Free Produce Movement was such that a small handful of Free Labour Associations quickly grew to twenty-six, thirteen of which were in the north-east of England, each probably started up on the tide of enthusiasm following Garnet's meetings.⁶¹

To spread the message far and wide, the Richardsons produced a penny sheet entitled *The Slave: His Wrongs and Their Remedy*, with a circulation of 2500 to 3000 per month. A successful Free Produce Movement appeared to be taking shape, with various depots opening to distribute free-labour goods, and great efforts made to secure adequate supplies of free-labour cotton and to persuade manufacturers to use it for their cloth. There was even a cooperative of up to 200 handloom weavers in Carlisle who produced gingham from free-labour yarn, although poor demand meant that the Cumberland Free Labour Gingham Company was short-lived.⁶²

‘EXPOSING OUR OWN INCONSISTENCY’:⁶³ OBJECTIONS TO THE FREE
PRODUCE MOVEMENT FROM BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE
THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

From the outset, ethical consumerism as a means to abolish slavery and the slave trade attracted criticism. The most vociferous attacks came from those whose financial interests were threatened, but even amongst those who supported abolition, doubts were voiced as to the effectiveness of the tactic. Concerns were also expressed about its compatibility with another great crusade of the second quarter of the nineteenth century: the free trade movement. Quakerism, being closely identified with both free trade and abolitionism, faced a moral dilemma when it came to the question as to whether slave-grown produce should be deliberately excluded from Britain. Moreover, since it seemed almost impossible to avoid the produce of slavery completely, their ‘hands could not be said to be clean’, so to campaign against the importation of slave produce would be ‘exposing [their] own inconsistency’.⁶⁴ The close association of the British anti-slavery movement and the Religious Society of Friends on both sides of the Atlantic also had an impact on support for the free produce association.

Before slavery was abolished in the West Indies, plantation owners and their supporters in Britain claimed that the campaign to abstain from slave-grown sugar would ruin the entire British economy. Abstainers were attacked in Parliament, the press and through political cartoons, as their motives, priorities and the extent of their support were questioned and ridiculed. An 1825 pamphlet belonging to Sunderland Quakers highlighted the objections made by West Indian planters to the proposal to remove duties on sugar originating in East India: ‘The loss of wealth, commerce, manufactures, and naval strength...are set out in battle array before the consumer of East India sugar, as the necessary consequence of his decreasing its growth in the West’.⁶⁵ In 1826 the political cartoonist Robert Cruikshank offered a detailed satirical comment on the campaign, incorporating a number of the principal objections to abstentionism. The cartoon implied, for example, that the organiser of a petition against tariffs was in the pay of the East India Company, while those queuing up to sign it were mere children. An advertisement for a play to promote the cause was by a ‘Signor Bamboozle’ and identified as a ‘Farce’, and the presence of a white beggar suggested that the abolitionists were ignoring suffering closer to home. In comparison, on a nearby

island, the slaves could be seen living an idyllic life.⁶⁶ But at least in this period the abolitionists themselves could present a united front about the removal of the tariffs, since free trade and abolitionism did not appear to be at odds with each other. This unity would be under increasing attack in the years ahead.

Turley notes the 'myth' of cohesion amongst abolitionists in Britain, especially after the emancipation of West Indian slaves in the late 1830s, when tensions between provincial groups and the central body (by then the BFASS, established in 1839) became stronger. By the 1840s, the pressure to remove discriminatory tariffs from West Indian sugar produced further strains within the antislavery movement. This campaign, writes Isichei, 'divided the Anti-Slavery Society to the point of schism'.⁶⁷ Dedicated free traders argued that the well-being of West Indian freedmen must be balanced against the suffering of the labouring population at home. Removal of sugar tariffs would result in lower prices and an increased standard of living for all; their continuance would 'deprive the greater part of Her Majesty's subjects in the United Kingdom using enough of sugar: the poorer class from not using it at all'.⁶⁸ The 'zeal for Free Trade' of Quaker M.P. John Bright 'turned him into something very like an apologist for slavery'.⁶⁹ In 1877, he looked back at the benefits which the abolition of all sugar duties in 1846 had brought:

The quantity imported has been enormously increased and the price has been to an extraordinary degree diminished... [I]t has been so cheap that it must have added greatly to the comfort of families and to the ease with which many other things, fruit and so on, are made palatable, especially to children in families.⁷⁰

Lower prices were not the only consequences; free trade in sugar had led to an increase in exports, which in turn produced greater opportunities for employment and higher wages. Brazil constituted a 'vast potential market' for British cotton goods if Brazilian sugar could be freely imported.⁷¹ Nor were the anticipated benefits of free trade confined purely to the financial; Samuel Neave, of Gosport, wrote in *The British Friend* in 1845 of the 'tendency of commercial freedom to the preservation of the peace of the world', attacking the 'impolicy and wickedness of our restrictive laws'.⁷² For many Friends, free trade was no less a moral crusade than anti-slavery, as a means to 'usher in the millennial age of peace, prosperity and good government'.⁷³

To give special protection to 'free labour' sugar, as proposed by abolitionists like Joseph Sturge, would, opponents argued, have a deleterious impact on the whole economy, as slave societies imposed their own retaliatory tariffs on British manufactured goods: 'we injure our shipping interests in the carrying trade, we injure our manufacturing interests by limiting the demand in foreign markets and we impose a heavy additional tax by increased prices on the whole population'. If slave-produced sugar were to be prohibited, then for consistency's sake so should 'the importation of Cotton Wool, Tobacco, Coffee, Rice, Hides, tallow, Copper Ore, Dyewoods, from the United States of America and from Cuba, Porto Rico and Brazil'.⁷⁴ Moreover, there was, as reported in the *Newcastle Guardian* in May 1846, a 'Scarcity of Sugar!'⁷⁵ With supplies falling far short of demand, prices had

greatly increased. Special protection for 'free-labour' sugar could only make the situation worse, as supplies, at approximately 8000 tons in 1845 out of a total consumption of 240,000 tons, were clearly insufficient. In any case, it was claimed, East India sugar, the type promoted most vigorously by the Free Produce Movement, 'enjoys no favour with consumers'.⁷⁶

These arguments were strongly attacked by those who viewed slave produce as 'stolen goods', and therefore wanted to continue imposing high tariffs on slave-grown sugar. Rice argues that the willingness of some anti-slavery activists to put aside their free trade principles and align themselves with the planters is clear evidence that abolitionism was not primarily driven by economic self-interest.⁷⁷ Ultimately, the free traders won the day with the 1846 Sugar Act, and voluntary abstention remained the only way to avoid giving economic succour to slave societies. However, at Yearly Meeting in 1847, discussions continued, as speakers deplored the 'lamentable fact that the opening of the British ports to the slave sugars of Brazil and Cuba had largely increased the price of slaves, the price of lands, and the African slave trade'.⁷⁸ A 'spirit of bitterness' developed between the Anti-Corn Law League and parts of the anti-slavery movement as a result of this disagreement, despite a close corollary between the personnel of the Anti-Corn Law League and Anti-Slavery Societies, many of whom were Quakers.⁷⁹

Burritt was aware of how divisive this issue was, and attempted to diffuse tensions, asserting that abstinence from slave-labour produce would 'not trench upon any principle of free trade', since it 'involves nothing but the free, voluntary legislation of the individual conscience upon articles of household or personal consumption'. Abstention, he continued, 'is no more opposed to the fullest development of free trade than is the exercise of individual taste or fancy in supplying the table or wardrobe'.⁸⁰ A letter to *The British Friend* in 1850 argued that it was not inconsistent for free-traders to impose 'some kind of discriminating duties on slave production' because it would be 'but a small recompense to this generation of negroes', referring to the former West Indian slaves who had received no compensation upon emancipation and who were still being unjustly treated by their erstwhile masters.⁸¹ But despite such arguments, these disputes contributed to the fragmentation of abolitionism in the 1840s, seriously threatening the future of the movement, and reducing the ability of the Free Produce Movement to attract more than minority support.

Intense links with American reformers exacerbated tensions within British anti-slavery still further, when the abolitionist movement in the United States suffered an acrimonious split in the 1840s.⁸² The free produce campaign fell victim to this division, as abolitionists took up policy positions according to whether they defined themselves as for or against the controversial American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison was committed to 'moral suasion' or non-resistance as a means to end slavery, rejecting political action and attacking the American Constitution as 'pro-slavery'. Some viewed his followers as dangerous extremists because of their alignment with various radical causes, including women's rights, and their association with unconventional religious views.⁸³

In his anti-slavery paper *The Liberator* in 1831, Garrison had written a hearty endorsement of the principle of free labour: 'Once bring free into competition with slave labor and the present system will be speedily overthrown'.⁸⁴ The tactic of ethical consumerism was firmly in the mainstream of abolitionism in America until about 1847, when Garrison launched an attack against the Free Produce Movement as being a distraction from more effective measures to combat slavery. Those who abstained from slave-grown produce, he argued, exhausted themselves trying to secure supplies of free-labour goods. They adopted an offensively self-righteous tone in their publications, and were concerned only with outward style—being fashionably anti-fashion and ostentatiously self-denying. Moreover, they denounced slave produce but accepted goods made by the oppressed industrial working classes.⁸⁵ His son Wendell P. Garrison, writing in 1868, ridiculed the enthusiasts of ethical consumerism, mocking John Woolman's 'Quaker slyness' and 'morbidly sensitive conscience'.⁸⁶ 'The free-produce doctrines were never adopted by the Abolitionists as a body', he asserted, calling the champions of the movement 'sentimentalists' who 'flattered themselves that they could escape using the technical fruits of slave labour, [but] they never could escape dependence on oppression in some form or another'.⁸⁷ As his father had done in the 1840s, he controversially claimed for abolitionists the 'right above all others to wear the product of [slaves'] blood and travail'.⁸⁸

Support for the British Free Produce Movement was seriously undermined by the rifts within the United States abolitionist movement. After Anna Richardson assumed its leadership in the late 1840s, she was strongly criticised by British Garrisonians. The Bristol Unitarian John Bishop Estlin of Bristol, for example, wrote in 1852 of his 'duty to oppose' what he called 'Mrs Richardson's slave trade'. 'The Quakers were never more bitter against WLG than they are now', he continued. 'Mrs R as far as we have the means of judging, always fanning the flame of opposition to him (Spite?)'.⁸⁹ He mocked the 'nonsense about freeing the slaves by the quaker ladies giving up the use of dresses made with American cotton'.⁹⁰ Like Garrison, he regarded the Free Produce Movement as an impractical distraction from more important issues; however, the strength of the attacks on Anna Richardson may have had more to do with her allegiance to the anti-Garrisonian BFASS and a fear that her success in building up the Free Produce Movement in the early 1850s was diverting funds from Garrison's campaign. Andrew Paton, writing to Garrison in 1851, reported that the Edinburgh Ladies' Antislavery Society was withholding contributions for the pro-Garrison Boston Anti-Slavery Bazaar, and recommending support for the free labour movement, 'at the instigation of Anna H. Richardson of Newcastle who is related to the Wighams'.⁹¹

Not only were their funds in jeopardy, but there was a real danger that 'star' black abolitionists were being lured away by the opposition. While Henry Highland Garnet and J.C. Pennington were regarded as hostile to Garrison, William Wells Brown was undoubtedly the leading Garrisonian African American abolitionist, so the suggestion that he had shared a platform with Garnet and

Pennington during their tour to promote the Free Produce Movement provoked deep alarm.⁹² Blackett argues that black abolitionists, whose support was sought by all factions, were generally willing to cooperate with anyone who promoted the anti-slavery cause, whatever their own personal allegiance. This explains the shared platform of Pennington and Garnet, who stood on opposite sides in the colonisation debate.⁹³ Harriet Beecher Stowe's advocacy for free produce during her tour of Britain in 1853 was another blow to those who opposed the tactic.⁹⁴ She had stayed at Joseph Sturge's Birmingham home in April that year, where she met Elihu Burritt, who was anxious to harness the anti-slavery feelings aroused by the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the service of the Free Produce Movement. Stowe found Sturge to be 'very confident' about the prospects of bringing about the end of slavery through 'combinations for the encouragement for free in the place of slave grown produce'. She was particularly impressed that although Sturge undoubtedly practiced what he preached, his household nevertheless enjoyed 'abundance and variety of all that is comfortable and desirable'. During the same visit to Britain, Harriet and her husband stayed with members of the Richardson family in Newcastle, and another tract was published in Newcastle to capitalise further on the popularity of Stowe's book: *Who Are the Slaveholders? A Moral Drawn from 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'*.⁹⁵

'ONE OF A THOUSAND CORDS':⁹⁶ AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION
OF ETHICAL CONSUMERISM TO THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

The direct role of ethical consumerism in the fight against slavery was, it is generally agreed, marginal. Its supporters were neither able to 'prove' the economic superiority of free labour, nor did they drive any slave-holders to financial ruin. Although the initial 1790s sugar boycott attracted wide support, long-term voluntary self-denial was unlikely to appeal to the masses, and could only realistically be expected from the conscientious few. An acknowledgement of the difficulty in maintaining interest in abstention, the Free Produce Movement was developed to provide consumers with an ethical alternative to slave-grown produce. However, the movement never enjoyed widespread support, even amongst abolitionists, and there is 'little evidence that slaveholders or their political representatives paid much attention to the movement, or that it had much economic impact on them'.⁹⁷

Throughout its existence, the movement suffered from practical difficulties. There were massive problems sourcing free-labour goods, especially cotton, and even at the height of the Free Produce Movement, in the early 1850s, only a few hundred bales of free-labour cotton were imported into Britain—at a time when imports of raw cotton from the American slave states numbered between 1 and 2 million bales a year.⁹⁸ The movement also proved unable to produce goods whose quality matched slave-made commercial alternatives. East India rice sold by a Manchester merchant was described in 1852 as 'very poor, dark and dirty', and there were problems with contamination of free-labour sugar from poor packing or defective processing.⁹⁹ Not only was there a lack of variety in cloth manufactured with free-labour cotton, but it was more expensive and of a decidedly

inferior quality: 'Free labour calicoes [are] coarser, less durable and more faily than other prints', observed one retailer in America, while the prominent American abolitionist Lucretia Mott wrote:

Unfortunately, free sugar was not always as free from other taints as from that of slavery; and free calicos could seldom be called handsome, even by the most enthusiastic; free umbrellas were hideous to look upon, and free candies, an abomination.¹⁰⁰

The movement also suffered from unscrupulous traders trying to sell goods advertised as free labour under false pretences, making consumers unwilling to trust the labelling.¹⁰¹

There were few financial resources to develop and market free-labour goods, and even Quaker manufacturers were unwilling to risk tying up their capital in products they may not be able to sell, despite efforts to secure firm commitments to buy from their customers.¹⁰² The movement also lacked high-profile leadership. Elihu Burritt and Joseph Sturge lent their energies to the Free Produce Movement at different times, but both were involved in so many other reform activities they were unable to provide consistent support.¹⁰³ The illness of Henry Richardson in 1854, forcing Anna to withdraw from her role as coordinator of the movement, meant the loss of its 'prime propagandists', and although Burritt took over the editorship of *The Slave*, his other interests prevented him from giving it his full attention.¹⁰⁴ Tensions within the anti-slavery movement on either side of the Atlantic also had a negative impact on the movement's chances of success.

However, the tactic of ethical consumerism need not be regarded as an utter failure. Sussman claims that the antislavery abstention movements were 'more culturally important than their immediate political effects' might suggest, citing the way in which the rhetoric employed, conjuring images of bodily fluids and pollution, created a direct relationship between the producer and the consumer and showed how a commodity (sugar) physically connected them.¹⁰⁵ Turley sees the tactic as allowing a link between private motives and public consequences to be asserted in a period when there was anxiety about the perceived dislocation between morality and economic development.¹⁰⁶ It also gave a voice to those excluded from the formal political process, especially women, allowing them a new and crucial place in the political arena.¹⁰⁷ Midgley argues that the 1790s sugar boycott was a vital element in creating an anti-slavery culture with strong female support and deep domestic roots.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, she links the campaign to the development of immediatism, a more radical anti-slavery position than male-dominated tactics which centred on Parliamentary lobbying and petitions, and advocated gradual progress towards emancipation so as not to alienate support. The female stress on private morality, she argues, was aimed at destroying the slave system altogether and rejected the reliance on governmental action of their male counterparts.¹⁰⁹

The tactic also played a vital role in sustaining interest in the anti-slavery movement in Britain, especially after the emancipation of West Indian slaves, when it was part of a national push to gain wider support for American abolitionists.¹¹⁰

'British abolitionists who felt powerless to assist the American anti-slavery movement', explains Billington, 'could demonstrate their continued opposition to slavery by buying free labour cotton goods'.¹¹¹ It is no coincidence that the Newcastle Ladies' Emancipation Society resolved that their 'efforts at the present moment be especially turned to encouraging the consumption of Free-Labour Produce', following a three-year lull in their activities.¹¹² The movement gave British abolitionists the means to express their continued opposition to slavery and was extolled by Burritt's as:

a mode of anti-slavery action in which every man, woman, and child may take a part every day, at every meal, in every article of dress they wear and enjoy... [T]his silent, daily testimony would tend to keep their anti-slavery sentiments active, outspoken, and ever working in their spheres of influence.¹¹³

Abstinence, 'far from being a substitute for any other anti-slavery efforts, would increase their number and variety, and give them all a point and power which they now lack'.¹¹⁴ Nor were the supporters of the campaign mere politically naive idealists. Although total rejection of slave produce may be impossible, ethical consumerism could still have an impact: 'We may not succeed in starving the monster to death, but we may reduce his strength, and render him less formidable'.¹¹⁵ As one amongst a range of tactics, it could only benefit the struggle against slavery:

The Free-Labour effort may be but one of the thousand cords that in the ordering of a superintending Providence, may have its commission to assist in pulling down the monster, Slaver; but that cord is a strong one, and if it could be twisted into ropes of seven-fold strength, and those ropes could be pulled by thousands or tens of thousands of energetic hands, who is to say that the hideous monster, which has stood unblushing for centuries, might not be dragged from his shameless position, and amid the execrations of the whole world, be consigned to speedy and entire destruction!¹¹⁶

The Richardsons also hoped that the revival of the tactic would help to foster unity in the abolitionist movement: 'The time has arrived, the hour is come, when past dissensions should be forgotten and forgiven...[to] merge all differences of opinion as to the merits of this abolitionist, or of that'.¹¹⁷ It should also be remembered that many Friends, especially older, more conservative members, were wary of overt political activity, even through the media of philanthropic organisations. In 1846, for example, Edward Pease of Darlington expressed concern about the 'various meetings now taking place for the advancement of Christian Brotherhood, total abstinence, peace meetings, anti-slavery meetings, Bible meetings'. '[A]ll of which may be said to have the semblance and surface of good in them, and some deeper than that', he continued:

yet my fear is that among my dear junior friends, and some older, there is more of a resting in doing good in this way than in taking up a daily cross to all that is of creaturely activity, in place of pious cooperation with divine grace.¹¹⁸

The emphasis on individual conscience of ethical consumerism could go some way to allay such anxieties and enabled supporters to oppose slavery actively without

becoming embroiled in direct political campaigning.¹¹⁹ Billington sees the Free Produce Movement as 'quietist' and 'part of non-militant abolitionism', and the pamphlets published by Henry and Anna Richardson were able to promote the tactic as 'entirely Christian in its character, thoroughly peaceful in its operation, and strictly just in its moral theory'.¹²⁰ The importance of individual agency in the campaign was powerfully expressed at a Free Labour meeting held in London in May 1857: 'a sweet and powerful incentive to engage in this department of Anti-Slavery action is derived from the Saviour's words: "She hath done what she could."' ¹²¹

CONCLUSION

The British Free Produce Movement, like its American counterpart, was unable to pose a serious challenge to the institution of slavery. Neither the foodstuffs nor the textiles it promoted proved sufficiently attractive to rival slave produce. Its failure can be attributed to a number of factors, including the many practical difficulties in securing adequate, good quality and reasonably priced supplies of free-labour-produced goods. The major obstacles to its developing a higher profile within general abolitionism, however, sprang from strategic, ideological and personal controversies. Anna Richardson's belief that, '[a]nother happy feature of this great movement, is its entire independence of the strife of party', was, unfortunately, unfounded; disagreements within abolitionism on both sides of the Atlantic impeded its viability.¹²² Undoubtedly, it could never be the only, or even the main, tactic in the struggle against slavery; its supporters, however, never claimed that it could. Instead, it was a tool which could be brought forth at strategic moments in the long history of anti-slavery campaigning, to re-energise and re-focus flagging support, so that, in the words of Samuel Rhoads, 'our sympathies would no longer run to waste, but would be perpetually exercised in a wholesome and practical direction'.¹²³ It also provided a means to personalise the connection between slaves in distant countries and the British consumer, making the plight of the former more vivid.

The Free Produce Movement foreshadowed the Fairtrade movement today; indeed, many of the nineteenth-century objections to the Free Produce Movement have been levelled against Fairtrade, including arguments favouring unfettered trade, as well as complaints about quality. Now, as then, members of the Religious Society of Friends are at the forefront of trying to establish fairness in global markets.¹²⁴ By a curious coincidence, the north-east of England has also been in the vanguard of this contemporary form of ethical consumerism, as it was in the mid-nineteenth century; Traidcraft, which has been working in the fair trade area since 1979, was established in, and is still run from, the region.¹²⁵ The question remains, 'Can consumer power change lives?'¹²⁶ Taking the example of coffee, five million people in Africa, Latin America and Asia benefit from the production of products for the Fairtrade market in general, but of the 70 million cups of coffee drunk in Britain daily, only 4.3 million are Fairtrade, a paltry 6% of the total. Despite this, it can be argued that Fairtrade has 'rattled' the 'Big Five'

coffee corporations (Nestle, Kraft, Proctor and Gamble, Sara Lee and Tchibo which together control at least 50% of the global market in coffee) to such an extent that even they are ‘trying to get in on the act [although] the quantities are fatuously small’. ‘[I]t is not the final answer’, acknowledges one supporter, unconsciously echoing earlier free-produce rhetoric, ‘but it is a beginning. It brings the words “fair” and “trade” into the minds of people who wouldn’t get involved in the issue’.¹²⁷

NOTES

* *There’s Death in the Pot!* Newcastle upon Tyne, n.d. Pamphlet supposed to have been written c. 1850 by Anna Henry Richardson of Newcastle upon Tyne. A version of this paper was delivered to the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle upon Tyne on 12 September 2007, as part of the Remembering Slavery 2007 programme in the north-east of England.

1. Nuernberger, R.K., *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest Against Slavery*, New York: AMS Press, 1942.

2. Rice, C.D., ‘Humanity Sold For Sugar! The British Abolitionist Response to Free Trade in Slave-Grown Sugar’, *The Historical Journal* 13.3 (1970), pp. 402–18; Billington, L., ‘British Humanitarians and American Cotton, 1840–1860’, *American Studies* 11.3 (1978), pp. 313–34.

3. See, for example, Sussman, C., *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713–1833*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000; Midgley, C., ‘Sugar Slave Boycotts, Female Activism and the Domestic Base of British Anti-Slavery Culture’, *Slavery and Abolition* 17.3 (1996), pp. 137–62.

4. Glickman, L.B., “‘Buy for the Sake of the Slave’”: Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism’, *American Quarterly* 56.4 (2004), pp. 889–912; Wilkinson, E.C., “‘Touch Not, Taste Not, Handle Not’”: The Abolitionist Debate over the Free Produce Movement’, *Columbia Historical Review* 2 (2002), pp. 2–14.

5. Nuernberger, *The Free Produce Movement*, p. 4.

6. Hicks, E., *Observations on the Slavery of the Africans and Their Descendants, and on the use of the Produce of their Labour. Recommended to the Serious Perusal, and Impartial Consideration of the Citizens of the United States of America, and Other Concerned*, New York (1814), pp. 15–16.

7. Quoted in Wilkinson, “‘Touch Not, Taste Not, Handle Not’”, p. 6.

8. Fox, W., *An Address to the People of Great-Britain, on the propriety of Abstaining from West-India Sugar and Rum*, London, 1791, quoted in Nuernberger, *The Free Produce Movement*, p. 10.

9. Quoted in Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties*, p. 15.

10. Clarkson, T., *History of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, quoted in Garrison, W.P., ‘Free Produce Among the Quakers’, *Atlantic Monthly* 22.132 (1868), p. 487. ‘Humanus’ letter quoted in Midgley, C., ‘Women Anti-Slavery Campaigners, with Special Reference to the North East’, *North-East Labour History Bulletin* 29 (1995), pp. 20–21.

11. Sharp, G., ‘Report on the Parliamentary discussion of the abolition of the slave trade’, London (1795), Du 1/60/8 23: Durham County Records Office [DCRO].

12. Midgley, ‘Sugar Slave Boycotts’, p. 143.

13. Birkett, M., *A Poem on the African Slave Trade: Addressed to her own sex. Part 1* (1792), online: www.brychancarey.com/slavery/mbc1.htm. Mary Birkett (1774–1817) was the niece of George Harrison, one of the six Quakers who set up the first anti-slave trade committee in England in 1783. The publication of her poem probably coincided with the passage of the 1792 Abolition Bill through the Houses of Parliament, as Part II contains an address to the House of Lords.

14. Midgley, ‘Sugar Slave Boycotts’, p. 144.

15. Midgley, ‘Sugar Slave Boycotts’, p. 142.

16. Mott, J., *Observations on the Education of Children; and Hints to Young People, on the Duties of Civil Life*, York, 1819, p. 32.
17. Lloyd, A., *A Memoir. With Extracts from her Letters*, London: Cayme Press, 1928, pp. 25, 16.
18. Turley, D., *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery, 1780–1860*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 31.
19. *The First Report of the Committee of Newcastle upon Tyne Society for promoting the Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions* (Newcastle, 1825).
20. Cutting from *Newcastle Chronicle*, 31[?] December 1791, SANT/PR/05/08/368, Northumberland County Record Office.
21. Smith, A., *Wealth of Nations*, quoted in Drescher, S., *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 21. See Searle, G.R., *Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, pp. 48–67, for a fuller discussion of the connection between economic liberalism and the anti-slavery movement.
22. *To the Consumers of Sugar* (24 March 1825), anonymous pamphlet belonging to the Society of Friends, Sunderland (Durham University Library [DUL], Sunderland Friends 1255/10).
23. Searle, *Morality and the Market*, p. 57.
24. Rice, 'Humanity Sold for Sugar!', p. 407.
25. Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, p. 129. By 1846, the argument had been lost, with the Sugar Act removing all import duties of foreign-grown sugar, making the influx of slave-grown produce impossible to control by fiscal means. Thus, the 'only course of action left for Sturge and his supporters was personal abstention from slave-grown produce' (Isichei, E., *Victorian Quakers*, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 233).
26. Williams, E., *Capitalism and Slavery*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (1944), p. 175.
27. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, pp. 165–66.
28. Quoted in Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 231.
29. Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment*, pp. 162, 173.
30. From the report of a visit by Samuel Rhoads of Philadelphia to promote free produce, in which he acknowledged that the anti-slavery movement in Britain needed a new focus if it was to be reinvigorated for the attack on American slavery. *The British Friend*, 10th month, 1847, p. 273.
31. Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, pp. 57–59.
32. *Minute Book of the Ladies' Negro Friends and Emancipation Society for Newcastle upon Tyne*, 27th of 2nd month, 1850 (Tyne and Wear Archives Service, 3744/389).
33. Billington, 'British Humanitarians and American Cotton', pp. 320–21.
34. Pumphrey, T., and E.R. Pumphrey, *Henry and Anna Richardson: In Memoriam*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1892, p. 21.
35. Billington, 'British Humanitarians', p. 324.
36. *The British Friend*, 4th month, 1848, p. 105.
37. For a full account of the role of the Richardson family within Newcastle Monthly Meeting at this time, see O'Donnell, E.A., 'Woman's Rights and Woman's Duties: Quaker Women in the Nineteenth Century, with Specific Reference to Newcastle Monthly Meeting of Women Friends', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sunderland, 2000.
38. Pumphrey and Pumphrey, *Henry and Anna Richardson*, p. 11.
39. McFeely, W.S., *Frederick Douglass*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991, pp. 143–44. The Richardsons also purchased the freedom of William Wells Brown in 1854, allowing both Douglass and Brown to return to the United States without fear of re-enslavement.
40. *The Beloved Crime, or, The North and the South at Issue. A Friendly Address to the Americans. Also, Some Remarks on the Duty of Encouraging Free Labour Produce*, n.p.n.d., p. 34.

41. *There's Death in the Pot!*, p. 2.
42. *Conscience versus Cotton; or, the Preference of Free-Labour-Produced*. No. 3, Newcastle upon Tyne, n.d., c. 1851, p. 3.
43. Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment*, p. 199.
44. Richardson, H., *A Revolution of Spindles for the Overthrow of American Slavery*, n.p.n.d. This pamphlet is extensively quoted in *The Beloved Crime*, pp. 38-39. *The Friend*, 6th month, 1849, p. 117, gives an account of a Free Produce meeting at Gracechurch Street on 31 May, presided over by George Richardson, with Elihu Burritt present.
45. See, for example, *The Friend* 8 (April/June 1849), pp. 76, 117.
46. Midgley, 'Women Anti-Slavery Campaigners', pp. 321-22.
47. Biographical information about Pennington from the *Exploring Amistad* website, online: www.academic.sun.ac.za/.../history/msp/bio_penn.htm (accessed 12 October 2007).
48. Garnet's life story is told online: www.africawithin.com/bios/henry_garnet.htm (accessed 12 October 2007).
49. Pickering, P.A., and Tyrell, A., *The People's Bread: A History of the Anti-Corn Law League*, London: Leicester University Press, 2000, p. 200. Pickering and Tyrell illustrate how the Anti-Corn Law League had learnt this crucial lesson from the anti-slavery movement.
50. Ladies Minute Book, 15th of 5th month, 1851.
51. Ladies Minute Book, 8th month, 1851. Any profits were to be presented to Mrs Garnet.
52. *Gateshead Observer*, 2 September 1850.
53. *Gateshead Observer*, 28 September 1850. Pennington joined Garnet on the podium for this anti-slavery meeting in Newcastle, presumably after his visit to Scotland as arranged.
54. *Anti-Slave Reporter*, 1 January 1851.
55. *Gateshead Observer*, 2 September 1850.
56. *Conscience versus Cotton*, p. 9.
57. Richardson, Anna H., 'To the Friends of the Slave in Great Britain', in *The British Friend*, 4th month, 1848, p. 103.
58. *The Beloved Crime*, p. 9 (emphasis original).
59. *The Beloved Crime*, pp. 37, 35.
60. *Gateshead Observer*, 7 December 1850.
61. *Conscience versus Cotton*, pp. 5-6. The 13 north-east groups were: Alnwick, Blaydon, Berwick, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, North and South Shields, Sunderland, Stockton and Winlaton.
62. Billington, 'British Humanitarians', pp. 327-29.
63. *The British Friend*, 5th month, 1848, p. 135. From a report of Yearly Meeting in which the proposal to petition Parliament against the introduction of slave-grown sugar was discussed.
64. *The British Friend*, 5th month, 1848, p. 135.
65. *To the Consumers of Sugar*.
66. Cruikshank, R., *John Bull Taking a Clear View of the Negro Slavery Question!!* London: G. Humphrey, 1826, online: <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/campaignforabolition/sources/proslavery/johnbullcartoon/cartoonjbull.html> (accessed 12 October 2007) The alleged hypocrisy of those who promoted East India sugar as part of their anti-slavery activities and yet had a financial interest in its sales is highlighted in Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*. For example, Zachery Macaulay had shares in the East India Company and the prominent Quaker abolitionist James Cropper was the greatest importer of East India sugar into Liverpool. (Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 186).
67. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 232.
68. 'The Effect of Importing Free Labor Sugar the Produce of Foreign Countries and the Exclusion of Slave Labor, as bearing upon the discouragement of Slavery and upon British Trade to the Slave Producing Sugar Countries'. DUL, GRE/B149 (c. 1842).
69. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 231.

70. Speech given in Rochdale, 2 January 1877. From: Bright, J., *Selected Speeches of the Rt. Hon. John Bright M.P. On Public Questions*, introduction by Joseph Sturge (London: J.M.Dent and Co., 1907), online: <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1658/50313> (accessed 14 September 2007).

71. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 231.

72. *The British Friend*, 1845, p. 108. The title of his letter was 'Free Trade the Cause of Peace'.

73. Pickering and Tyrell, *The People's Bread*, p. 22.

74. 'The Effect of Importing Free Labor Sugar'.

75. *Newcastle Guardian*, 9 May 1846, p. 3.

76. *Newcastle Guardian*, 9 May 1846, p. 3.

77. Rice, 'Humanity Sold for Sugar!', pp. 403-404.

78. *The British Friend*, 9th month, 1847, p. 235.

79. Pickering and Tyrell, *The People's Bread*, p. 110; Rice, 'Humanity Sold for Sugar!', pp. 406-407.

80. Burritt, E. *Twenty Reasons for Total Abstinence from Slave-Labour Produce*, London (n.d. but post-1852), p. 1.

81. *The British Friend*, 8th month, 1850, pp. 202-203.

82. Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, pp. 90, 100.

83. Midgley, 'Women Anti-Slavery Campaigners', p. 24.

84. Quoted in Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement*, p. 102.

85. Wilkinson, 'Touch Not, Taste Not, Handle Not', p. 9.

86. Garrison, 'Free Produce Among the Quakers', p. 490.

87. Garrison, 'Free Produce Among the Quakers', pp. 486, 493.

88. Garrison, 'Free Produce Among the Quakers', p. 490.

89. Letter from J.B. Estlin to Maria Weston Chapman, Bristol, December 1852, in Taylor, C. (ed.), *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974, p. 392.

90. Letter from Estlin to Weston, March 1851, in Blackett, R.J.M., *Building an Anti-Slavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983, p. 122.

91. Letter from Andrew Paton to William Lloyd Garrison, Glasgow, 7 February 1851, in Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists*, p. 362. The Edinburgh Wigham family was originally from Coanwood in Northumberland. Jane Wigham had married Edward Richardson, Henry's cousin, in 1830, and lived next door to Henry and Anna. In the late 1840s Jane had been authorised to receive, on behalf of the Edinburgh Ladies' Emancipation Society, contributions to a 'Box of Ladies' work' to be sent to the Anti-Slavery Bazaars in Boston, USA, online: <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/benjaminbeckwigham.html> (accessed 30 October 2007).

92. Blackett, *Building an Anti-Slavery Wall*, p. 127.

93. Blackett, *Building an Anti-Slavery Wall*, p. 43.

94. Stowe, C.E., *Life of Harriet Beech Stowe, Compiled From Her Letters and Journals*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889. Project Gutenberg Ebook #6702 (accessed 10 September 2007).

95. *Who Are the Slaveholders? A moral Drawn from 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', Respectfully Submitted to the Readers of the work*, Newcastle Anti-Slavery Series no. 1, n.d.

96. From an article written in Newcastle upon Tyne, entitled, 'Free-Labour Movement' in *The Friend*, 4th month, 1849, p. 75.

97. Glickman, 'Buy for the Sake of the Slave', pp. 902-903.

98. Billington, 'British Humanitarians', p. 315. He notes that US cotton exports to Britain trebled between 1840 and 1860, and that it was never less than 80% of Britain's raw cotton supply.

99. Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement*, pp. 93, 95.

100. Quoted in Nuernberger, *The Free Produce Movement*, pp. 71, 99.
101. Billington, 'British Humanitarians', p. 316.
102. Billington, 'British Humanitarians', pp. 318, 322.
103. Billington, 'British Humanitarians', p. 320.
104. Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, p. 79.
105. Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties*, pp. 2, 14, 17.
106. Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, p. 45.
107. Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties*, pp. 3, 127.
108. Midgley, 'Slave Sugar Boycotts', p. 147.
109. Midgley, 'Slave Sugar Boycotts', p. 153.
110. Midgley, 'Women Anti-slavery Campaigners', p. 30.
111. Billington, 'British Humanitarians', p. 318.
112. Ladies' Minute Book, 27th of 2nd month, 1850.
113. Burritt, *Twenty Reasons for Total Abstinence from Slave-Labour Produce*, p. 1.
114. Burritt, *Twenty Reasons for Total Abstinence from Slave-Labour Produce*, p. 1.
115. *The Beloved Crime*, p. 38.
116. *The British Friend*, 4th month, 1849, p. 75. Article written 3rd month, Newcastle upon Tyne.
117. *The Beloved Crime*, p. 23.
118. A.E. Pease (ed.), *The Diaries of Edward Pease*, London, 1907, p. 233.
119. Nuernberger argues that this unifying aspect of the Free Produce Movement was even more significant in the United States, where existing tensions within the Society of Friends had already resulted in divisions in the earlier nineteenth century (p. 4).
120. Billington, 'British Humanitarians', p. 334; *Conscience versus Cotton*, p. 3.
121. *The British Friend*, 7th month, 1857, p. 294.
122. *The British Friend*, 4th month, 1848, p. 103.
123. Anna H. Richardson, 'To the Friends of the Slave in Great Britain', *The British Friend*, 10th month, 1847, p. 273.
124. A questionnaire in May 2006 by the Quaker Fairtrade steering group found that 60% of meetings were committed to, or were willing to be committed to, Fairtrade church status. In addition, many members have been in the forefront of achieving Fairtrade status for their home town or city. *Better World Economics. Quaker Peace and Social Witness Economic Issues Programme*, (Autumn 2007), p. 3, online: http://www.quaker.org.uk/shared_asp_files/GFSR.asp?NodeID=127312 (accessed 3 February 2008).
125. Online: <http://www.traidcraft.co.uk> (accessed 3 February 2008).
126. Title of article in *Observer Food Magazine*, February 2007, p. 53.
127. *Observer Food Magazine*, February 2007, p. 51.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Elizabeth O'Donnell taught history in further and higher education in the north-east of England for over 25 years. She is now working for Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn, near Ashington, Northumberland, developing outreach projects and collecting oral histories. She received her PhD in 2000 from the Centre for Quaker Studies, University of Sunderland, and is a regular speaker to both academic and community audiences in the region. Her research interests include the development of 'first wave' feminism, the treatment of juvenile delinquency in the nineteenth century and the anti-slavery movement.

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