

ROBERT OWEN

REPORT TO THE COUNTY OF LANARK

A NEW VIEW OF SOCIETY

Robert Owen, the New Lanark mill-owner and social philosopher, was one of the first to stress the influence of environment upon character. His rationalistic belief in human perfectibility, and his unbounded faith in education to bring about a new moral order without class conflict led the Fabians to revere him as the father of English socialism. But his influence, V.A.C. Gatrell argues, was even wider: for although 'Owenism' as a cooperative movement soon dated, his belief in a harmonious organic community in contrast to unrestrained capitalism also inspired a Tory tradition. Owen's ideas and practice have entered our cultural bloodstream through many different channels.

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