

Social criticism – jonathan swift "a modest proposal" essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



Social Criticism – Jonathan Swift “ A Modest Proposal” Essay Sample

Jonathan Swift in “ A Modest Proposal” discusses his annoyance with the ineffectiveness of Ireland’s politicians and the dirtiness that many of the Irish people were forced to live in. Some of the major political issues that Swift felt contributed to the poor living conditions of the Irish people were high levels of poverty, too many children, and poor trade opportunities. A review of our society quickly reveals that these same political issues are still major concerns for citizens today. The U. S. poverty levels continue to rise; people are still using abortion as a means of birth control; and there has been a great improvement in trade relationships in many countries, thereby making child labor against the law.

Swift paints a clear picture of how poor the Irish people were in Ireland. He stated, “ The roads are crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants” (Swift). Poverty is lacking the essential items such as food, water, clothing, and shelter needed for proper living. The Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. The official poverty rate for the US in 2010 was 46. 2 million people.

This is the fourth consecutive annual increase in the number of people in poverty (Bureau). Much like the people of Ireland in 1729, poverty stills

seems to be a political and social issue for our society. Swift was annoyed that politicians were not working towards solutions. In our society, politicians are trying to find solutions to the poverty problems. President Obama's administration is addressing poverty through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which includes acts to fight hunger, job training funds for workforce development programs, and tax breaks for families through Make Work Pay and Child Tax Credit programs (House). While these acts are nice on paper, the people who really need the help are not receiving these services. My family volunteers during the winter months with a project called Warm Loafs. We distribute blankets, socks, gloves, and food to homeless people and families in various areas of our city. We cannot solve the poverty problem for everyone, but this is our way of trying to help some of those in need.

Swift stated " those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas! too frequent among us, sacrificing the poor innocent babes to avoid the expense than the shame" (Swift). In the US, nearly half of the pregnancies among American women are unintended, and about four in 10 of these pregnancies are terminated by abortion. Twenty-two of all pregnancies (excluding miscarriages) end in abortion; each year two percent of women aged 15-44 have an abortion, and half have had at least one previous abortion. At least half of American women will experience an unintended pregnancy by the age of 45, and at the current rate, one in 10 women will have an abortion by age 20, one in four by the age 30 and three in 10 by the age 45 (Institute). Women all over the world

have used abortion for years to absolve themselves of babies they were unprepared to care for, did not want, were not ready to be mothers of, or for other reasons such as a rape. Abortion has been used as means of birth control for years; people just did not call it that, and it has not changed.

Swift felt that a conceivable solution to the trade problem was to make the children a commodity. He felt that for the unfortunate people making their children worthwhile commodity (goods) that this would help them be able to pay off their debts to their property owners. What he was actually suggesting was selling children into servitude. I am sure this was purely satirical; however, when people are faced with not having the money to meet the basic needs, they will do different things, and sending children to work is not an uncommon practice. Child labor became a vast problem by the mid 1800's mainly because children worked cheaper than adults. Children would work long hours, anywhere from 12 to 18 hours per day, six days a week and earn only a dollar for their labor. Many of these children started working by the time they were 7 years old.

It was not until 1924 when the US Congress proposed a constitutional amendment prohibiting child labor, but the states did not ratify it. In 1938, Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, which fixed the minimum work ages of 16 during school hours, 14 for certain jobs after school, and 18 for dangerous work. Today all of the states and the US government have laws regulating child labor (Scholastic). These laws are designed to protect children from being abused in the workforce. The political issues that Swift addressed in “ A Modest Proposal”, in 1729 were high levels of poverty, too

many children, and poor trade. Now more than 283 years later, we are still faced with similar issues. The US has a poverty rate of more than 46. 2 million people and is steadily rising each year. Abortion is still being used as a method of birth control where four in 10 of pregnancies are terminated by abortion each year. The only thing, which has changed in the last 283 years is that child labor is against the law in the US; other countries still have major problems with this and are working hard to implement regulations to control child labor.

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