CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT DURING THE REVOLUTION

I

The seventeen-seventies were a period of relative prosperity for the manufacture of Elbeuf between the crises of the seventeen-sixties and the end of the old regime. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find production statistics for this period, but complaints about the economic situation during the Revolution usually made a point of referring to it as a golden age of prosperity. Even so, all was not without shadows.

An investigation made under the auspices of the Archbishop of Rouen in 1774 found that as many as one-half to two-thirds of the inhabitants of certain parishes had no other resources than their day-to-day wages. This meant that in periods of economic difficulty they had immediately to fall back on charity. And because charitable institutions were practically non-existent outside the cities, the result was beggary and brigandage. The problem was so serious that in 1780 the Académie de la Conception of Rouen sponsored an essay contest on how to wipe out beggary in the Province. The winning essayist, Demandolx, lieutenant-général of the sénéchaussée of Marseille, suggested several procedures. It would be necessary to stop the influx of "gens oisifs, vagabonds et pervers" that resulted from the easy access to Normandy from the sea. Industry of all sorts would have to be encouraged and charitable aid provided in time of need. He called for the establishment of workhouses in the hospitals for children and the aged, who would, in so far as possible, contribute to their support by working, and for the creation of public works projects
to employ able-bodied beggars. A social insurance plan to which the workers would contribute during prosperous periods was to finance the scheme.¹

Elbeuf possessed none of these means of dealing with economic difficulty. And it suffered from this lack, particularly in 1779, when trade was "sans activité," and in 1785, when the municipal officers spoke of "l’anéantissement total de la manufacture." The latter year marked the beginning of the pre-Revolutionary crisis and was scourged by the double pestilence of an extremely cold winter and high grain prices that caused the greatest damage to "la plupart d’ouvriers chargés d’enfants et qui n’ont d’autre ressource que le travail de leurs bras." Had it not been for the generosity of certain wealthy inhabitants, the greatest part of them would have died of starvation.²

This sort of charity, at best a stop-gap measure, filled the need even in so difficult a year as 1785. Soon, however, the crisis was to grow so great that nothing but government intervention could deal with it. Realizing this, the Elbeuvians in 1789 followed Demandolx’s suggestions and asked for the creation of a workshop-hospital in the city. The plan was to employ children between the ages of five and fourteen, as well as elderly people, in the production of cloth lists. In return, they would receive food, shelter, and a small salary equivalent to one-third that of a regularly employed worker. The plan, no doubt valid so far as it went, failed to deal with the essential problem of securing employment for the mass of the labor force. It met with no success. Necker referred the petition to the Commission Intermédiaire of the Provincial Assembly, which rejected it for lack of funds. Elbeuf was to get its hospital only much later in the Revolution.³

The existence of a crisis is one thing, its explanation is another. Contemporaries and historians have been arguing about its causes ever since its outbreak, and the argument still goes on. The Anglophobia of the Normans made them quick to blame the English Commercial Treaty of 1786 for all their troubles. The Chamber

² Arch. Dép., C 202; C 193.
³ Arch. Nat., H 1420; St. Denis, Histoire, VI, 175–83.
of Commerce of Rouen argued that the English would shortly inundate the French market and would be successful in capturing it, because they could, for a variety of reasons, sell their goods more cheaply than the French. They had excellent raw materials including coal and wool in England and could obtain additional wool from Spain and cotton from the colonies at cheap rates. The French, on the other hand, had none of these advantages, importing almost all of their wool from Spain and their coal from England. The English also reduced their costs through the use of machinery, while the accumulation of capital in the hands of manufacturers and a benevolent government fiscal policy enabled them to avoid economic crises or to pass through them with a minimum of damage, all things which the French could not do. Even Du Pont de Nemours, a partisan of the treaty, had to admit that in Normandy “depuis le traité, la concurrence anglaise est certainement très fâcheuse,” although he attributed the fact to the non-enforcement of the treaty which, he said, would have adequately protected French industry if properly applied.

The extremely harsh judgment directed against the treaty by its Norman contemporaries was taken up in the early part of this century by Charles Schmidt who, basing his work on the reports of the Inspectors of Manufactures, believed that the treaty was one of the major factors in turning the industrial bourgeoisie against the old regime.

Certainly, there is good reason to believe that the Eden Treaty aggravated the pre-Revolutionary economic situation, without establishing a cause and effect relationship between the two. First of all, we know that the crisis had already begun in 1785, a year before the treaty was signed and two years before its effect could be felt. Moreover, the Chamber of Commerce itself seemed in 1788 to fear, in so far as Elbeuf was concerned, the future more than the present. It wrote:


5 Du Pont de Nemours, Lettre à la Chambre de Commerce de Normandie: Sur le Mémoire qu'Elle a Publié Relativement au Traité de Commerce avec l'Angleterre (Rouen, 1788), pp. 11, 48.

Elbeuf fabrique annuellement 18 mille pièces de draps et étoffes de laine. Les fabriques de cette ville offrent, du premier aspect, un état de prospérité qui séduit; mais elles n'ont pas la ressource de trouver, comme les fabriques anglaises du même genre, d'excellentes laines nationales, à bon compte, & propres à leur fabrication. Nous estimons que, dans les draps ordinaires de cinq quarts de large, & du prix de 15 à 16 livres l'aune, les fabriques d'Elbeuf ne pourront soutenir la concurrence des draps de Leeds, appelés draps de Bristol, qui, dans la même laize, ne coûtent pas 11 livres tournois l'aune. Les fabricants d'Elbeuf ont plus de confiance dans leurs draperies fines; mais pour peu qu'ils négligent les moyens d'en modérer le prix, celles des anglais qui en approchent déjà beaucoup par la qualité, les supplanteront dans les marchés de l'Europe, et même en France.7

In short, although there was reason for apprehension, Elbeuf industry had thus far been able to remain in competition with the English.

What, then, did cause the crisis?

It seems to be splitting hairs to at once deny the causal effect of the treaty as such and to attribute the depression to the backwardness of French industry, wool production, and commercial or fiscal policy, as do Gaillardon and Cahen.8 It is obvious that none of these factors would have come into play had it not been for competition. If it was indeed the state of affairs here described that provided for a potential crisis, then the English treaty, by providing the context in which the potential could become actual, must be blamed for the crisis. But we reject this thesis, if only for lack of coincidence in the dates, and so must look elsewhere.

Elsewhere in this case means to the Labrousse thesis, which makes of the depression of 1785–89 basically an agricultural phenomenon. One begins with an excessively bad harvest, the result of which is high grain prices. All but the wealthiest cultivators not only do not profit from rising prices but suffer therefrom because they are grain consumers. There is, thus, a general decline in rural purchasing power, first, because the rise in prices does not compensate for the fall in volume and, second, because the peasant is obliged to spend a greater share of whatever income he has

7 Observations de la Chambre de Commerce, pp. 41–42.
on food. This movement is accentuated by farm unemployment due also to smaller harvests. Because the majority of the population is rural, a general decline in the demand for industrial goods sets in. Urban centers are doubly affected by the drop in rural demand and by the impact of high grain prices on the expenditures of the city poor. The struggle between urban and rural poor for employment in industry may permit the manufacturers to cut their expenses by reducing wages, but whatever they may save in this way not only aggravates the situation of the populace but is ineffective as a measure against the crisis. Sooner or later, they must reduce production as markets close and industrial prices fall. They thus cut their losses, but the resulting unemployment only intensifies the overall difficulties. A remedy is found only when a good harvest restores the incomes of the majority of the population.9

As Labrousse himself admits, this schema must be subtly applied in order to explain validly the economic variations of different industries and regions. It is in this regard that Landes' criticism of the theory must be considered.10 He offers two basic criticisms. The first, that the proposition according to which farm income and farm prices are, for the majority of cultivators, inversely proportional, is not absolutely proved, is well taken. However, in the case of Elbeuf this does not invalidate Labrousse's thesis, for we have abundant evidence to prove that the peasant population of the Elbeuf hinterland were, by and large, marginal producers of grains and other foodstuffs, always dependent on the industry for an income which enabled them to eke out a meager living. They would thus be the first to be affected in the way Labrousse suggests by a crop failure, even if we adopt Landes' formulation of a middle range of cultivators who did not necessarily suffer. We can thus affirm that it was, in fact, the agricultural crisis that was responsible for the poverty of the Elbeuf countryside and for that of the urban workers, to the extent that the latter's misery was also due to high grain prices.

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There is a second term to the proposition: that the woolen industry was directly affected by the agricultural crisis, that the fall of rural purchasing power caused a crisis of relative industrial over-production. Landes is right in saying that this hypothesis depends on the assumption of large rural cloth consumption before the depression, which he does not believe existed. Danière, on the contrary, believes that the countryside did constitute an important textile market. We are not in a position to settle the argument.

One observation is, however, necessary. We know for a fact that the industry in Elbeuf did decline at this time and thereby re-enforced the poverty of those who depended on it for a living. But its original decline may not have been entirely caused by the agricultural crisis, although it no doubt had a role therein. In other words, the mediate causes of the twin phenomena of the general crisis may have been different, and the first might theoretically have occurred without the second. For this to be true, it would have to be shown that the second, the industrial crisis, was caused by something else, the most notable possibility being a decline of foreign markets. It does appear that Elbeuf exports declined at this time. The German states had placed duties on French cloth, and orders from Spain were on the downgrade. It is here that English competition no doubt made itself felt, more so than in France itself. After all, there had always been considerable imports of contraband English cloth before the treaty, and there is no reason to believe that the quantity increased significantly just because the procedure was now legal. It was just that it was now more obvious and provided an excellent scapegoat. In the foreign markets, on the other hand, the English did enjoy considerable advantages due to their technical improvements and lower manufacturing costs. Du Pont de Nemours believed, moreover, that Elbeuf manufacturers had, instead of trying to meet their competition, fallen into the trap of their own cupidity when they raised their prices some 20 to 25 per cent in a period of a few years. For him, this price rise was "le fruit de l'esprit de monopole, & des facilités que lui donnent les règlements & les privilèges for Bread in Late 18th Century France," *Journal of Economic History*, XVIII (1958), 317–31.

We have seen that this spirit did exist and may well have had the effect Du Pont attributed to it.

Although complaints over the state of the woolen industry start as early as 1785, it is in 1788 that they become almost daily. In 1787, Goy, then Inspector of Manufactures of the Generality of Rouen, wrote that the industry had remained stable until that time, 5,255 bales of wool having been used in 1786 to manufacture 18,301 pieces of cloth work 9,621,396 livres. It was only recently that the sales of solid color cloth, the immense majority of the cloth produced in Elbeuf, had begun to fall off. Several manufacturers had begun to make striped woolens on which the profit was large, but they were few in number, and Goy predicted that their career would be short-lived. In any case, the signal of alarm had been sounded.

The investigation ordered by the Provincial Assembly of Rouen in the spring of 1788 uncovered the great extent of the crisis. The municipalities or syndics were asked to fill in a table showing the number of poor, the ill, the old, and the unemployed. They were also required to indicate charitable aid available in their communes. Can their figures be trusted? There was an evident interest in swelling the ranks of the needy and in minimizing available charitable assistance, in order to obtain government aid. On the other hand, there may have been a tendency to lessen estimates of the needy and of money needed to support them for fear of being forced to pay a poor rate. Thus, while the exactness of the figures cannot be guaranteed, there is reason to believe that conflicting pressures may have neutralized one another so that the figures that have come down to us represent at least reasonable orders of magnitude.

The communes surrounding Elbeuf, in all of which numerous workers were employed in spinning wool for the manufacture, were in a bad way. The municipal officers of Orival wrote:

Il serait trop long de donner la liste de ceux qui manquent de travail dans ce moment. On prie seulement de se souvenir que six cents personnes

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14 *Arch. Dép. de l’Eure*, C 43 (October 10, 1788).
au moins sont occupées dans les fabriques d’Elbeuf et de Rouen et comme ces fabriques souffrent beaucoup, grand nombre d’ouvriers sont dans ce moment sans ouvrage et ceux qui sont occupés gagnent fort peu par la modicité des salaires. On compte 600 personnes parce-que les femmes et filles sont occupées pour la filature.

At Oissel, 200 persons who normally worked for the factories of Rouen, Elbeuf, and Darnetal were un- or underemployed. At Petit Couronne, there were numerous women and girls who spun for Elbeuf and Darnetal "dont beaucoup manquent d’ouvrages par la diminution des fabriques et d’autres gagnent fort peu."

Similarly, more than 200 men, women, and children of Grand Couronne worked in the woolen industry, the men at carding, the others at spinning. Of them it was said: "de jour en jour le prix de leurs travaux diminue; et . . . pour comble de misère, ils sont menacés d’être absolument et incessament privé de tout travail. . . ." 15 For the city of Elbeuf the municipal officers estimated in April, 1788, that there were 500 unemployed, but because of the "languishing state of the manufacture," there would be 2,000 within three months.16 There was some reluctance on the part of the central administration to believe these pessimistic forecasts, and on October 31, 1788, the Minister of the Interior wrote to Maussion, the Intendant of Rouen, asking him to check on the situation, as he had been informed that shipments of cloth from Elbeuf to Paris were currently larger than ever before.17

Such a challenge to the honesty of the city’s administrators could not go unanswered. Three times in the month of November the municipal officers or the mayor individually wrote to defend themselves. The figures cited in the letters do not always coincide with one another, but they are all in the same range. In the average year of the last ten, the city used 5,100 bales of wool to manufacture 13,000 pieces of cloth. To manufacture one bale of wool a year’s work by a man, woman, and child was necessary, which meant that 15,300 people were normally employed in a radius of three leagues around the city. But in the year running from October 1, 1787, to September 30, 1788, only 3,683 bales

17 Arch. Nat., F 1366.
were used and consequently only 11,049 persons had been employed, or 4,251 fewer than usual. Among other reasons cited for this state of affairs was that in the previous few months Elbeuf manufacturers had lost 300,000 livres in bankruptcies suffered by their clients, a fact which naturally discouraged them from wanting to keep their businesses operating at a normal rate.\textsuperscript{18}

The description of the municipality was seconded by the Inspectors of Manufactures who found 1,500 workers in Elbeuf unemployed. Goy thought the fault lay in a lack of orders and the bankruptcies, while the itinerant Inspectors could do no better than to state "de science certaine que la stagnation des fabriques d'Elbeuf . . . provient de la concurrence Anglaise."\textsuperscript{19}

Measures proposed to deal with the crisis or, more correctly, to provide for starving humanity were diverse. The municipality could not resist the opportunity to ask for a year's suspension of taxes including the \emph{tarif}, which constituted a surcharge of 18 livres a year on the food of the average worker. Together with Goy and Blin, the \emph{bailli}, the municipal officers wanted an \emph{atelier de charité} to employ workers to build a road from Elbeuf to Pont-de-l'Arche. The itinerant Inspectors thought it more advisable simply to give a bounty of two sols per pound of wool put out to spin by the manufacturers, but the latter preferred the more direct method of a public works project. To support this suggestion, they wrote:

Les apparences sont fausses, les travaux manquent absolument aujourd'hui; et l'on peut assurer qu'au moment présent au lieu du tiers des ouvriers sans travail, il y en a plus de moitié qui, quand même le commerce sortirait de son état léthargique tout à l'heure, ne pourrait avoir un travail réglé que dans 2 à 3 mois, par la raison qu'il faut 3 à 4 mois pour la fabrication d'un drap, que la première opération est la filature et qu'aucun fabricant n'ose s'en trop charger vu les circonstances.

Moreover, if help were not forthcoming, the worst was to be feared: "Un esprit de révolte & de séditation produit par le défaut de travail et par la cherté des vivres s'est déjà manifesté dans notre enceinte et il aurait pu avoir les conséquences les plus funestes si la prudence du magistrat chargé de la police de la ville n'y eût apporté obstacle."\textsuperscript{20}

In the face of the overwhelming evidence Necker was finally constrained to grant 6,000 livres to the city for use in road work. The funds were sufficient to employ 150 workers for a period of

\textsuperscript{18} Arch. Mun., BB\textsuperscript{a}. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{19} Arch. Nat., F\textsuperscript{12} 678. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{20} Arch. Mun., BB\textsuperscript{a}. 
somewhat more than six weeks, after which new aid was solicited and granted in the sum of 4,000 livres on May 28, 1789. A third grant of 4,000 livres was made in April, 1790. The total was so small that it could not do more than alleviate the misery of a very small section of the population. This was the more true as the winter of 1788–89 was one of the worst in Normandy since the legendary one of 1709. The thermometer had reached a low of 

\[ -17.4^\circ \text{ centigrade}, \]

enabling the *Journal de Rouen* to write that "L'histoire ne fournit pas d'exemple d'un hiver aussi long, aussi rigoureux & aussi constant que celui qu'on éprouve en cette année . . . ce degré de froid est le plus considérable qu'on ait éprouvé en Normandie." Still, Elbeuf was fortunate to have even this aid, the government having shown itself close with its money in refusing other requests from less important towns such as Touville-la-Rivière in the Elbeuf hinterland.

It is not surprising to find continuing concern over the (unimproved) state of the industry in 1790. New factors were soon to aggravate the crisis. The manufacturers greeted the new threats to prosperity with a call for government aid, saying that despite the continuing crisis, they had not sought to shelter their capital, but instead had given work to as many people as possible "afin d'alimenter les habitants pauvres de leur ville et de vivifier à l'entour une infinité de campagnes que nourissent les travaux de cette fabrique." Their success had been indifferent, although money had been available to pay the workers. What would they do if the supply of coin dried up? As Harris points out, the need to pay a premium in order to obtain coin to meet a wage bill would be a particular burden to manufacturers, unless they could compensate by increasing the price of their goods. Faced with a declining demand, it is hardly likely that the manufacturers would have this recourse open to them. The result would be to force a slowing down of production, as manufacturers strove to protect their investments. Because of money hoarding and exportation of capital that resulted from unsettled political and economic conditions, the 60,000 livres in small coin needed by the

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21 Arch. Mun., BB; Délib., Vol. I (March and April, 1790); see also Arch. Dép. de l'Eure, C 41 (April 3 and June 5, 1789).
22 *Journal de Rouen* (January 7, 1789), p. 6; (January 14, 1789), p. 17.
23 Arch. Dép. de l'Eure, C 41 (July 3, 1788).
manufacturers to pay their workers each week was no longer available by the middle of 1790. In July, 1790, the manufacturers and municipal officers asked the National Assembly to consider the problem. Shortly after this, the municipality, remembering Law's failure, found that the proposed issue of legal tender paper money (_assignats monnaie_) would be "infiniment dangereuse à l'état et leur subdivision encore plus funeste aux manufactures et aux campagnes puisqu'ils seraient donnés en paiement à des ouvriers qui ne pourraient les échanger sans un grand sacrifice contre les denrées de première nécessité qui doublaient infailliblement de prix." On the other hand, they had no such objection to _assignats domaniaux_ "qui ne seraient négociables que de gré à gré et qui seuls seraient admis dans l'achat des biens nationaux. Ce serait un moyen sûr d'accélérer la vente et de faire repaître le numéraire." Despite these protests, the assignat, still backed by the national lands, became legal tender in September, 1790. Still, it is hard to see how these assignats could have threatened the stability of prices, as they were issued in large denominations and therefore did not fall into the hands of the majority of the population. Not until May, 1791, were 100 million livres of 5-livre assignats issued, to which were added 300 million livres of 50, 25, 15, and 10 sous notes in the following December.

Because the early assignats did not fill their need, the manufacturers resorted to another expedient, the _billets de confiance_. Backed theoretically by the property of the manufacturers, but in reality only by their good name, they were granted a large measure of support by successive governments, which saw in them a means of providing a much needed means of exchange. They were eventually reimbursed with 5 livre assignats but some continued in circulation until early in 1793.

The first association to issue _billets de confiance_ was created by a few manufacturers on June 4, 1791. By July the _procureur_ of the commune was saying that the _billets_ were the "cause de la fermentation non seulement parmi les citoyens livrés aux travaux de la fabrique mais encore dans toutes les autres classes des habi-

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26 It does not appear that payment in truck was common in Elbeuf. At least, we have not met with a single instance of it during our period.
27 _Arch. Nat._, D'1 51; _Arch. Mun._, Délib., Vol. I (September 13, 1790).
28 Harris, _Assignats_, p. 26.
29 _Ibid._, p. 25.
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As a result of this complaint, the caisse de confiance was reorganized on September 6, this time with all the manufacturers participating. The preamble of the association stated that its founders "las de lutter contre les difficultés qui accompagnent la disette du numéraire qui est l'aliment, et la vie de leurs ateliers, et le premier moyen de toute entreprise, se sont enfin réunis en association légalement approuvée pour concerter entre'eux les moyens de rémédier aux maux dont ils sont menacés." They therefore resolved to issue paper up to a limit of 600,000 livres and declared themselves mutually responsible for it. In reality, 525,187 livres were put into circulation. Originally, the association was supposed to last only until July 31, 1792, but circumstances forced its continuation until at least January 31, 1793, when an inspection revealed 325,235 livres and 15 sols in bills still outstanding. They were shortly to be replaced by assignats. In the final analysis the operation was successful, for it permitted the manufacturers to continue in business when the lack of ready cash might have hindered them.

The woolen industry was in distress during most of the Revolution and Empire, and the wails of self-pity are often heard. So much so, indeed, that one comes to be extremely critical in the face of them. The greatest attention must be paid to the nuances of the situation, as well as to its causes.

It would appear that 1791 constitutes a breathing space between the grave crisis of 1785–89 and the depression of 1792—year VIII. In that year, the departmental administrators were able to write: "Nos fabriques ont éprouvé, cette année, la plus grande activité, et la consommation a été considérable." They thought that the most notable cause of this upward movement was inflation. The English manufacturers, they said, had withdrawn from the French market because of the difficulty of transferring French money without a high percentage of loss, thus leaving the way open for native products. (The theory presupposes a growth of the internal market due to the effects of better harvests in

80 Arch. Mun., Délib. (July 14, 1791); Arch. Dép., L 2495.
1790 and 1791.) There is yet another reason for the prosperity of 1791. Depreciation of foreign exchange, the result of the lack of confidence of foreigners in the Revolution and of the export of capital, proceeded more rapidly than depreciation of currency on the domestic market. Exports were thus stimulated, since Elbeuf woolens were now cheaper in terms of foreign money. On the other hand, this depreciation brought about an increase in the price of Spanish wool (from 6 livres, 2 sols to 8 livres, 5 sols the pound), a change which in turn forced cloth prices up and reduced the consumption thereof within France.

But it was the wars, civil as well as foreign, that ruined the industry of Elbeuf. It was inevitable that a city such as Elbeuf should suffer particularly, because of the trade it carried on with Spain, Italy, and the South of France. First, there was the British blockade, second, anti-republican agitation at home. The needs of national defense called for tight control of foreign trade. During the early part of 1793, this took the form of an absolute prohibition of exports, a resurgence of mercantilism. Then, from October, 1793, to Germinal II, trade picked up but under the close control of the Commission des Subsistances. From Floréal to the beginning of the year III, private individuals were again encouraged to participate in foreign trade with neutral nations, but this authorization was made less attractive by the requirement that merchants turn in foreign exchange received through these transactions for assignats, that is, that they accept a 50 per cent loss on their trade. They were also required to sell any imports at prices set by the maximum. It is only after Thermidor that foreign trade once again becomes a private matter.

The Elbeuvians blamed governmental measures for their distress. That they should have taken the effect for the cause is not surprising in the light of their general attitude toward the Revolution. A readily available scapegoat is a tempting thing. Thus, when Elbeuvians were asked to file reports of income in 1793 at the time of the Forced Loan of Frimaire-Nivôse II, only four persons (two manufacturers, one tool grinder, and one wood mer-

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84 See, *Histoire Economique*, pp. 43–44.
86 *Arch. Mun.*, Series G.
chant) declared profits. All the rest claimed to have suffered losses, and they explained their plight by a common formula: "Bénéfices: nuls à cause du maximum." It is repeated almost as many times as there are persons on the list. But the declarants ignored the real problem: the revolt of Lyon. Because Lyon merchants acted as agents for Elbeuf's trade with southern Europe, the revolt was a hard blow to trade. Not only were markets closed but debt collection became impossible. The length of the revolt (July–October, 1793), and the subsequent process of re-establishment and repression explain the losses of the Elbeuf manufacturers. Indeed, the largest part of these losses was attributed by them to their clients at Lyon. Nonetheless, the manufacturers persisted for a long while in blaming the crisis on "les désastres qu'enfanta le règne de la terreur," as is shown by the comments of one of their number, Hayet, as late as 1822.87

This is not to say that the Elbeuvians were entirely wrong when they blamed things other than war for their distress. A lack of raw materials did re-enforce the effects of the war on the woolen industry. Something or other was always lacking. In May, 1793, it was combustible wood. In Ventôse year II, it was hemp used in the making of cards. A month earlier, the Société Populaire was drawing up petitions, looking hither and yon for oil and soap, the absence of which "peut préjudicier infiniment aux travaux de la fabrique." The problem was a continuing one. On 1 Germinal, the municipal officers estimated the needs of the manufacture as follows (in pounds):

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<td>Oils</td>
<td>260,000</td>
<td>Sulphur</td>
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<td>Soaps</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>Cochineal</td>
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<td>Potash</td>
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<td>Indigo</td>
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—and this for an eleven-month period. They had little success in obtaining what they asked for, at least in sufficient quantities. On 17 Vendémiaire III, the Société Populaire protested that 60 quintals of soap accorded to the city were so insufficient as to be derisory. Here again, the blame may be laid not on the reluctance of the government to comply with the petitioners' request (it had, on the contrary, every interest in so doing, given the fact that

87 Pierre Henry Hayet, "Notice Historique sur la Ville d'Elbeuf" (MS. in Bibliothèque de la Ville de Rouen, Ms. g. 1).
the Elbeuf manufacture was at this time almost exclusively employed in making uniform cloth for the army), but to the interruption of commerce by the war. It was, for instance, impossible for the soap manufacturers of Rouen to import animal fat from Russia and potash or pearl ash from America or the northern European countries. 

Among the other items in short supply in Elbeuf were candles, again because of the unavailability of animal fat that was their basic ingredient. The municipal officers attributed the shortage to the butchers, who, they said, sold fat outside the regular market in order to avoid the maximum. At various times during the year II, it was impossible to procure coal and pitch. In Ventôse, only 160 pounds of cotton were available for the stocking industry that used 6,000–7,000 pounds a year. Worst of all was the shortage of wool itself. Despite a considerable increase in the use of domestic wools in Elbeuf, the greatest part of its supply still came from Spain. In Thermidor II, 611,650 pounds of wool (38 per cent of the 1,600,000 used annually) were on hand. Moreover, only 138,450 pounds had been washed and were ready for use.

To the pressure on the manufacture caused by a dearth of raw materials was added the opposite but quite as annoying one of requisitions for the army. The levée en masse came to Elbeuf on 21 Ventôse II, with the requisition of 10,000 pieces of cloth. On 17 Germinal, the General Council of the commune urged the manufacturers "de ne s'occuper que des besoins de la République." A month later, fine cloth was added to the requisition, perhaps as one of the luxury goods with which to pay neutral traders for their grain imports.

Despite the variety of measures (right of pre-emption, prohibition of dying wool in any but the national colors) taken to ensure the delivery of woolen cloth, the government had trouble in getting the manufacturers to conform to its desires. Jobin, the representative of the Comité d'Approvisionnement in Elbeuf, often complained of the manufacturers' lack of patriotism, shown

88 Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. III (May 2, 1793); Arch. Dép., L 5618, 30 Pluviôse and 14 Ventôse II; L 5619, 26 Pluviôse and 1er Sans-culottide II; L 5620, 17 Vendémiaire III; L 2401; Arch. Nat., F12 1389–90.
89 Arch. Dép., L 5621, L 2401, L 2405; Arch. Mun., Délib., IV (7 Brumaire II).
90 Arch. Dép., L 2401.
41 Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. III (21 Ventôse and 17 Germinal II); Délib., Vol. IV (22 Prairial II); Lefebvre, Etudes, pp. 179, 182.
by their slowness in making deliveries and by their attempts to defraud the Republic by maintaining that their cloth was of a higher quality than it really was. The Committee wrote:

De quelle nation sont-ils donc ces égoïstes! Quelle est donc leur patrie? Ont-ils le malheur de n'être pas pères? Ne comptent-ils pas de fils parmi les zélés défenseurs de la République, qui combattent pour eux, et qui aient besoin de vêtements qui les garantissent de l'intemperie des saisons? Ah, puissent-ils périr s'ils ne se meuvent que par le plus sordide intérêt, s'ils ne connaissent d'autre bonheur que le leur propre et s'ils concentrent la patrie dans leurs familles, de tels êtres ne sont pas dignes des jouissances que promet notre glorieuse révolution, puisqu'ils n'ont pas rempli la tâche obligatoire des français qui l'aime et la soutiennent.

... Nous vous invitons [les citoyens de la Société Populaire], au nom de la patrie plaintive, de nous seconder de tous vos moyens dans nos pénibles travaux. Nous vous adjurons d'électriser les fabricants malévolés de votre commune, de les surveiller continuellement, de ne pas permettre... que les matières premières soient mal filées, mal fabriquées parce qu'elles se trouvent perdues; de ne pas permettre qu'il soit fait un usage criminel de la rame, par le moyen de laquelle les draps [sont] tout énervés et qui rend au soldat son habit inutile lorsqu'il a été mouillé, puisqu'il lui devient trop court et trop étroit.

Gardez-vous de souffrir que ces draps soient expédiés des fabriques sans avoir reçu les préparats dont ils sont susceptibles. Veillez aussi à ce que les ouvriers n'imposent pas de lois aux fabricants, instruisez-les, premiers de tous, que la fabrication des draps de luxe doit être remplacées exclusivement par celle des draps des troupes, et que ces draps doivent être corsés et de longue durée.

Ayez l'œil vivant sur toutes les manoeuvres de leur part dont l'objet serait d'obtenir une augmentation de salaire disproportionnée au cours ordinaire.

Faites entendre cet avertissement salutaire et terrible: La Loi révolutionnaire punit quiconque peut servir son pays et n'en fait rien.42

Even before the arrival of this letter, the Société Populaire had taken up the question and had ordered that the names of manufacturers of unsatisfactory cloth be posted in its meeting rooms, where they might be the object of a just scorn. One member took the occasion to attack the workers of the commune who, he said, preferred getting drunk to working. His remarks caused "quelques petits murmures dans la Tribune," but the Société "applauded his energy." 43

Six weeks later the Société was in a less co-operative mood. It

42 Arch. Dép., L 5621—5 Prairial II; see also Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. IV (28 Prairial II).
43 Arch. Dép., L 5618—1 Prairial II.
asked John why he wanted its members to redouble their efforts to supply the Republic with cloth. "Notre société n'est point particulièrement composée de chefs de manufactures. Ceux-là sont en plus petit nombre," it wrote. But this statement is untrue. We know that not only were many manufacturers members of the Société, but also that they enjoyed an influence in it even greater than their numbers would indicate. Undiscouraged by this lack of co-operation, the government continued to enforce its requisitions, although with more suppleness after Thermidor. So it was that permission was granted manufacturers to work on fine Spanish wool for their own purposes, if they had none suitable for the production of uniform cloth. The latter was still to have priority.

Why the reluctance of the manufacturers to co-operate? One might suppose that it was not entirely their fault, given the shortage of raw materials, were it not for the fact that a survey made in Vendémiaire III showed more than enough wool available to fill the orders placed by the government. It is perhaps true that shortages nevertheless did play a role. A more important reason was the manufacturers' wish to avoid the maximum.

In October, 1793, the District of Rouen, in accordance with the law of the maximum of September 29, set the following price schedule for Elbeuf cloth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of cloth</th>
<th>Price in 1790 (in livres &amp; sols)</th>
<th>Maximum price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine cloth:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First quality</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second quality</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third quality</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary cloth:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First quality</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29.6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second quality</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third quality</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor quality cloth</td>
<td>15–16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/8 Cloth (&quot;ci-devant royales&quot;)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth &quot;Façon de Louviers&quot;</td>
<td>15–16</td>
<td>20/21.6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44 Arch. Dép., L 5619—16 Floréal II; see also Chapter 5 below.
46 Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. IV (17 Vendémiaire III).
These prices, which conformed to the rise of one-third over prices of 1790 prescribed by the law, were for ordinary colors, adjustments being allowed for more expensive dyes such as blue and green. It will be noticed that no maximum was set on fine cloth of the sort made in Louviers. The manufacturers, despite their dislike of the maximum, continued to demand that fine cloth prices be set as well, for fear that if this were not done they would be unable to sell any at all.

To blame the maximum for the vicissitudes of economic life in Elbeuf is unwarranted by the facts. The fault lay with the war and consequent needs of national defense. This fact did not stop the manufacturers from having their own opinions on the matter.

According to the manufacturers, it cost 767 livres, 16 sols, 8 deniers to produce a piece of ordinary cloth of the fourth quality. It was made up of 32 aunes (ells) sold at 22 livres each, or a total of 704 livres. The manufacturers thus claimed a loss of 63 livres, 16 sols, 8 deniers per piece. The maximum would not have been effective had it not been for the requisitions. Without them, the manufacturers might have escaped the maximum altogether, through fraud, as did the other merchants.

The situation was, from the manufacturers' point of view, intolerable and could not continue. Attempts made throughout the year II to get the agents généraux de l'habillement to raise maximum prices were constantly interrupted by walk-outs and a general lack of intelligence between the negotiators. After Thermidor, the new regime was more understanding and permitted a price rise that put ordinary cloth at between 26 and 33 livres the aune according to quality in Frimaire III, when a new increase was refused.

The maximum was abolished in Ventôse III, but abolition did not automatically put an end to all of Elbeuf's problems. For a long while, the manufacturers had claimed for themselves the 5 per cent over and above maximum prices allowed wholesalers for transport costs and profit margin, and their claim had been

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47 *Arch. Dép.*, L 2401.
48 *Arch. Dép.*, L 5618—22 Germinal II.
honored. In Pluviôse III, however, the Comité d’Approvisionnement tried to recover this money on bills paid between Nivôse and Floréal II. The manufacturers refused to comply, and the commissioners decided to bring the case before the courts. At the same time, they refused to honor new bills carrying this 5 per cent surcharge. It took an order of the Committee of Public Safety on 7 Floréal III to put an end to the legal action against the manufacturers.\textsuperscript{51}

Despite the difficulties to which the industry was subject under the Revolutionary government and Thermidorean Reaction, there were no bankruptcies in Elbeuf from 1792 to the year V. This may well have been due, as Dardel suggests, to the overall economic paralysis of the period. That is, capital may have gone into hiding and production fallen off.\textsuperscript{52} However much of a burden government requisitions may have been, they apparently did not cause the losses the manufacturers’ complaints would indicate. It is even possible that the government provided a market to replace those that were lost through war and blockade. In the year VII, when they no longer enjoyed this resource and were on the point of ruin, the manufacturers asked for government orders “au nom de l’humanité et de la justice.”\textsuperscript{53}

The restoration of economic liberty under the Directory did not much help Elbeuf industry. The war and the blockade continued, although the end of the civil war and the partial reopening of the Mediterranean commerce may have caused some mild improvement.\textsuperscript{54} The only figures we have show that in the year III the Department of the Seine-Inferieure, which had produced 36,866 pieces of cloth annually before the war, now produced 24,550 or one-third less. There had been a replacement of 31,385 workers and 1,901 looms by 20,762 workers and 1,227 looms, figures which indicate a decline commensurate with that of the number of cloths manufactured.\textsuperscript{55} S. B. J. Noel, editor of the Journal de Rouen, noted that Elbeuf normally exported 4,000 pieces of cloth annually in peacetime, but then proceeded to sidestep the obvious conclu-
sions by attributing the decline of the industry, on the one hand, to the impossibility of obtaining Spanish wool and, on the other hand, to "l'inobservance des règlements, . . . l'introduction d'artisans étrangers à la fabrique, ou de simples ouvriers, qui, satisfaits de leur honnête médiocrité, s'estimaient heureux, avant cette époque, de consacrer leurs bras à la prosperité des manufactures, ont eux-mêmes élevé des ateliers, monté des métiers, etc." 56

The statistical investigation of the year VI showed a certain improvement in the economy of Elbeuf. Still, the industry was producing only 12,000–14,000 pieces of cloth totaling 400,000 aunes annually as compared with 18,000–20,000 pieces and 700,000 aunes before the Revolution. And in the year IX it employed only 5,000 persons, about one-third the pre-revolutionary number. 57 Everyone hoped that things would get back to normal once peace had been restored.

Peace, peace, but there was no peace. On 29 Ventôse VIII, the departmental administrators wrote that "depuis que l'Europe en armes voit balancer les destinées de toutes les puissances, l'industrie si florissante est frappée d'une inéritie funeste que la paix seule peut changer en activité." Already in Vendémiaire, Delaistre, the last commissioner of the Directory attached to the departmental administration, had written: "le commerce anéanti, les manufactures abandonnées, les fabriques interrompues, le numéraire disparu de la circulation, les ouvriers nombreux sans ouvrage et sans pain, annoncent un hiver infiniment difficile à passer." Later in the same year the Conseil Général of the Department corroborated this view by stating that: "L'agriculture est languissante, l'industrie est nulle, les manufactures sont sans produit, le commerce sans activité." It attributed this state of affairs to "une diminution très sensible de consommation dans l'intérieur, . . . le défaut de circulation des matières premières, . . . celui de l'exportation des objets fabriqués, . . . la cherté des divers combustibles, . . . l'insuffisance des loix relatives aux vols secrets et aux banqueroutes frauduleuses." 58

56 S. B. J. Noel, Second Essai sur le Département de la Seine-Inférieure (Rouen, 1795–year III), pp. 189–90. On the question of new manufacturers, see below, Section III.
57 Arch. Dép., Series M—Statistiques, Enquête de l’an VI, and Enquête de l’an IX.
58 Compte Rendu de l’Administration Centrale du Département de la Seine-Inférieure depuis le ler Brumaire an IV jusqu'à l'Organisation du Nouveau Système Administratif, Établi par la Loi du 28 Pluviôse an VIII (Rouen, year VIII), p. 252;
The year IX saw no improvement. During Frimaire, Beugnot called for the establishment of a series of *ateliers de charité* within the woolen industry and proposed Elbeuf as the best city in which to give his plan a try. He wrote: "La mendicité qui y est effrayante céderait aux premiers secours parce que le pauvre qui n’a pu quitter le travail, mais que le travail a quitté, n’en a pas perdu l’habitude et ne demande qu’à le reprendre." The departmental administrators remained pessimistic at the end of the year and complained particularly about the lack of coal and wool and the fraudulent imports of English products.\(^5\)

The peace that followed on the Treaty of Amiens allowed the manufacture to move forward on the road to prosperity. But it took some time before the full effects of the new political developments could be felt. We find the Prefect asking once again for government aid, this time in the form of orders for cloth. The request was refused in turn by the Ministers of the Interior, Navy, and War, who said that the prices of Elbeuf woolens were too high, and, moreover, the city had other markets open to it. In general, production was up, and, if industry was relatively slow in getting started again, Beugnot thought this should be attributed only "à l’attente incertaine de la paix ou de la guerre, et à l’espèce d’inquiétude qu’on éprouve même dans les premiers mois de paix, sur l’influence d’un si grand changement et sur les relations."\(^6\)

The optimism was well founded. "La paix a ravivé nos fabriques," wrote the departmental administrators. If manufacturers did not find the state of the industry entirely satisfactory, they nevertheless stated that they were currently using 6,000 bales of wool a year, half French and half Spanish, to make 18,000 pieces of cloth, 8,000 Spanish and 10,000 French, that sold for a total of 13,750,000 francs and gave them a profit of 1,666,000 francs.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) Arch. Nat., F\(^{1\text{e}}\) 256—Mémoire joint à l’état statistique du mois de Brumaire, an IX (signed by Beugnot). Another copy may be found in 40 AP 3; F\(^{1\text{e}}\) Seine-Inférieure I—Mémoire du Conseil-Général, Session de l’an IX.

\(^7\) Arch. Nat., F\(^{1\text{e}}\) Seine-Inférieure I—Conseil Général, Session de l’an X; Arch. Dép., Series M; Exposé Sommaire de son Administration Présenté par le Préfet du Département de la Seine-Inférieure au Conseil-Général à l’ouverture de la Session de l’an X (Rouen, year X), p. 16.
When Napoleon visited the city in Brumaire, he was pleased with what he saw, and the city in turn thanked him for bringing the peace that allowed it to flourish. Beugnot went along on this trip and reported the industry to be in "le meilleur état," its

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Bankruptcies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1786</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1787</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1792–year IV</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year V</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year VI</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year VII</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year VIII</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year IX</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year X</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year XI</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year XII</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year XIII</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year XIV</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808–10</td>
<td>No information available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The records are incomplete for 1812.

The prosperity having increased by one-third since 1788—a fact which made for complete political loyalty on the part of the population, even of the rich who had been suspected of aristocratic leanings during the Revolution. 

This prosperity, somewhat less than general if we are to believe the bankruptcy statistics, nonetheless marked a new departure in

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See Table 3–1. There were eighty-one bankruptcies in Elbeuf from 1786 to 1813, not including the years 1808–10, for which no information is available.

Although it is certain that crisis in the economy is generally reflected in the
Elbeuf. If in the year XIII the manufacture was far from being as prosperous as it would have been in peacetime, it was at least not inactive—far from it. There appears to have been little unemployment. Unfortunately, the situation was to deteriorate as the maritime war continued. In 1806 the departmental administrators affirmed that all branches of commerce and industry were suffering and were obliged to dismiss their workers.

As though the war were not enough to burden the industry,

...
other problems arose at the same time. Money went into hiding during the year XIV to such an extent that in Brumaire there was not enough available to meet the payroll. This fact, added to unemployment and reduced salaries, excited the workers and caused the mayor of Elbeuf to fear the worst, if a remedy were not found. He asked that a credit be accorded by the Bank of France to meet this need. In addition, Spain raised its tariff on woolen cloth by 5 francs, 15 centimes per meter. The Chambre Consultative de Commerce of Elbeuf wrote: "Si le surcroît d’impôts persiste, il faudra considérer comme nulle la consommation de ces draps en Espagne... ce qui achevera de faire au commerce, déjà très affaibli, un tort réel, lors surtout que le débouché de ces marchandises en Espagne est regardé comme d’un intérêt majeur." 65

The short respite that followed on the conclusion of the peace was obviously over. The question is: Did the continental system restore war-threatened prosperity? We can give no answer to that question, for statistics are either completely lacking (for the most part) or contradictory. So it is that in 1807 the Prefect wrote that only 5,000 to 6,000 persons were employed in the industry, but a survey of the same year showed 18,380 workers producing goods to a value of 12,000,000 francs, indicating a fairly healthy economy. Under the circumstances all we can do is to fall back on Sée’s affirmation that the continental system favored the prosperity of the woolen industry until 1810.66

The situation becomes clearer starting in 1810. The crisis that started then was tied to two phenomena: poor grain harvest and the vicissitudes of war. The troubles in Spain were surely no stranger to a lack of raw materials that made itself felt in Elbeuf, but the more general cause was the ever-changing situation of commerce, following on political events, that brought with it first a great expansion of speculation and later a forced and ruinous contraction. As the President of the Rouen Tribunal of Commerce wrote in 1811:

Cet état funeste [de commerce] a pour cause principale la continuelle mobilité des lois qui le régissent aujourd’hui, cette alternative de prohibitions et de permissions qui s’entredétruisent, ce changement journalier dans

65 St. Denis, Histoire, pp. 157–58, 164.
According to St. Denis, the crisis of 1810 caused a loss of 25 per cent of the capital of the textile industry. This cannot either be confirmed or denied but the great rise in the number of bankruptcies in 1811 would seem to point to the truth of the statement.67

The manufacturers were pessimistic about their future, which they felt would be compromised by the lack of ready cash and of a firm public credit. At the beginning of 1811, they expressed themselves through the medium of the Chambre Consultative de Commerce:

On ne vit jamais l'argent plus rare, plus difficile à se procurer. Toute négociation devient presque impossible, et les paiements ne se font qu'avec une peine extrême. La méfiance générale, qui fait réserver les capitaux, fermer toutes les bourses, menace nos manufactures d'une stagnation effrayante et, déjà, les marchandises s'y accumulent. Les faillites se multiplient et deviennent plus ruineuses que jamais. C'est certainement de la disette d'espèces que provient la cause immédiate de cet état désastreux.

In 1812 the situation was complicated by a disastrous rise in grain prices that cut deeply into the internal market.68

The contraction of the market did not immediately affect the production of woolen cloth. Statistics for the period 1810–16 show that production decreased from a norm of 18,000 pieces in 1810 to 15,500 in 1811, the figures for the first half of the year being particularly low. In 1812 and 1813 production was satisfactory (17,900 and 19,400 pieces, respectively), but in the first half of 1814 the manufacture fell into utter ruin, producing only 2,800 pieces. The cause is not hard to determine. A departmental administrator wrote with complete justice that “pendant le trimestre de janvier, [l' industrie] est rapidement tombée dans une nullité absolue. On ne peut s'en étonner, puisqu'il n'y avait plus partout que trouble et incertitude.” Only with the coming of the first Restoration did the situation improve well enough even to resist the disturbance of the hundred days, 23,000 and 25,300 pieces of cloth being produced in 1815 and 1816 respectively.69

In general, then, this crisis was one of relative overproduction

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67 Arch. Nat., F12 871a; St. Denis, Histoire, VIII, 251.
68 Arch. Nat., F12 871a; St. Denis, Histoire, VIII, 240–43.
and, as such, a crisis of the new type. Although agricultural difficulties played a role, we are no longer in the presence of an economic downturn due to high grain prices aggravated by a cut in industrial production as markets close. Capital is not withdrawn in an effort to cut losses, at least not in the first phase.

### Table 3-2

**Number of Workers in Elbeuf Textile Industry, 1810-16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Workers in machine spinning</th>
<th>Workers in hand spinning</th>
<th>Number of weavers</th>
<th>Other workers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>12,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810'</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>5,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>5,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811'</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>5,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,600-2,000</td>
<td>1,300-1,400</td>
<td>2,200-2,500</td>
<td>6,100-6,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812'</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>1,550</td>
<td>2,750</td>
<td>7,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812''</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>9,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>9,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813''</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>9,050</td>
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<td>2,050</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>9,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814'</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814''</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>1,950</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>9,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>?</td>
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*Source: Arch. Dép., Series M—Etat de situation des fabriques et manufactures de draps, drawn up by Pierre Henry Hayet, mayor.*

Instead, production continues while sales drop, leading to overproduction. Of course, old habits still persist and consequently may come to the surface in the face of some event particularly frightening in its economic consequences, as witness the first quarter of 1814. But if it would be silly to apply schema valid
for the crises of 1846-47, 1873, or even 1929 to the years 1810-14, it is nonetheless necessary to mark the birth of a new trend.

Yet another measure of the prosperity of the manufacture is the number of workers employed. The figures coincide with what we already know of the economic situation. So it was that in 1810 their number was already down from a pre-Revolutionary high of 16,000-18,000 to 12,250 in the first half of the year and 11,275 in the second. The real recession came in 1811 when the corresponding figures are 5,700 and 6,100. Low at the beginning of 1812, an increase in employment manifested itself in the second half of the year and went as high as 9,650. The first quarter of 1814, the high point of the crisis, brought the number down to 1,500, after which there was a slow recovery to 4,500 and 9,050 in the succeeding quarters. In 1815 the number was 8,350 and in 1816, 9,300. Lest it be thought that the last figure does not indicate as high a level of prosperity as in 1810, it should be added that the explanation lies in the change of the organization of the industry. Between 1810 and 1816 the number of workers spinning wool on machines increased about five times, while those spinning by hand decreased by eleven-twelfths. The number of spinning machines had grown from 200 in 1810 to 900 in 1816, and there were 900 weaving looms as opposed to 600 in 1810. Power required to use these machines was furnished by horses, which had doubled in quantity from 120 to 250. The greatly increased productivity of a worker running a machine as opposed to a hand worker explains the reduction in the total labor force.70

II

Troubles in the industry were usually accompanied, when not caused, by high grain prices, the result of shortages. The question of the grain supply was critical for Elbeuf for two reasons: first, because it had a large industrial population to feed, and second, because it was a grain distribution center for a large part of the Department of the Seine-Inferieure, including even the southern suburbs of Rouen. The largest part of the Canton of Elbeuf was a forest amounting to 1,486 acres, while there was only 168 acres of arable, 72 acres of garden (*masure*), and 40 acres of pasture

70 *Arch. Dép.*, Series M: see Table 3–2.
land, according to an estimate of the cantonal administrators made in 1798. In Messidor II, a similar investigation ordered by the Representative of the People Siblot reported 47.3 acres of wheat, 15.1 acres of mixed rye and wheat (*mèteil*), 11.5 of rye, and 9.4 of barley under cultivation in the commune, not enough to feed the city much less supply the market for outsiders.

This meant that Elbeuf was dependent for its supplies of grain on the neighboring parishes of the Department of the Eure, wherein lay the rich grain lands of the *Vexin Normand* and the *Lieuvin*. Grain was shipped in from as far away as Pont-Audemer and Bernay until 1793, and in the year IV we find that no fewer than twenty-six communes of the Eure were habitual suppliers of Elbeuf.\(^1\) This was certainly one of the reasons for which Elbeuf had solicited its transfer from the Seine-Inférieure to the Eure in 1789. In that year the municipality asked the National Assembly:

> que vous ne ternissiez pas notre lustre, que vous ne ruiniez pas notre commerce et nos propriétés, que vous n’enleviez pas à ces paroisses leurs correspondances avec une ville qui répand dans leurs communes l’abondance, fait fleurir l’industrie, alimente une partie des habitants en même temps qu’elle est le dépôt de leurs productions dont elle procure la consommation et le débit et devient pour chaque cultivateur une ressource avantageuse qui encourage son zèle et le dédommage de ses sueurs. . . .

The truth was that the cultivators were also a resource for Elbeuf. Elbeuvians were not unconscious of the fact that the transfer of grain between departments would be no easy matter, even though their right to free circulation of grain was theoretically guaranteed, as had been proved by the recent famine.

The rampant parochialism of the French countryside, aided by fears of a repetition of the celebrated *pacte de famine*, would continue to act as a brake on the grain trade for a long time to come. The division of France into smaller administrative areas than had been customary under the old regime would, it was feared, re-enforce this localism—hence the Elbeuvians’ petition

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to the National Assembly. They got no satisfaction, although the Assembly did allow them to present the matter to the departmental administrators. In the end, nothing at all came of the request.  

Elbeuf was thus particularly open to the calamities occasioned by a lack of grain. The disturbances of 1788–89 were only the beginning of a movement that was to exercise its pressure on the city during a good part of the Revolution and Empire. All the measures taken by the government, none of them strikingly original, were unsuccessful in coping with the crisis.

In September, 1788, Necker suspended the export of grain and, in November, revived the old regulations that ordered grain to be sold only in markets and required that the inhabitants of the market towns be supplied before the merchants and bakers. In April, 1789, local judicial officers were authorized to force cultivators to bring grain to market and to inspect grain supplies within their jurisdictions. Still grain did not reappear in sufficient quantities, and the people began to be exasperated. During the grande peur of the summer of 1789, armed bands roamed the countryside setting grain prices and attacking convoys going from La Havre or Rouen to Paris. Coincident with the fall of the Bastille, Rouen was the scene of a veritable revolt on the part of the city poor who also attacked and destroyed cotton spinning machines whenever they could lay their hands on them. In September the Commission Intermédiaire of the Provincial Assembly, while protesting against the presence of commissioners of the Paris Commune in the Province and proposing to fix grain prices, spoke of the need to "faire cesser une anarchie funeste et d’établir un régime qui puisse nous garantir des effets de la cupidité et de la licence." In October it had given up all hope of restoring order, because "l’anarchie, soutenue par la force active des milices bourgeoises dans les villes et les paysans armés dans les campagnes ne nous laisse même pas l’espoir de faire écouter nos représentations. . . . Toutes les têtes fermentent: le désordre est dans toutes les villes


et la famine nous menace. Notre récolte généralement mauvaise ne nous laisse pas l’espoir de nous alimenter pendant la totalité de l’hiver."

Whatever may have been the reluctance of other bourgeois militias to protect the free flow of grain, Elbeuf’s Volunteer Patriots were open to no criticism on this point. On July 27 a detachment of eleven of them went out to the neighboring village of Poses on the road to Louviers where an angry crowd was, with the complicity of the soldiers assigned to guard it, holding up the dispatch of a boatload of grain for Paris. They succeeded in mastering the tumult and sending the ship on its way. This adventure did not sit well with the municipality of Louviers, which arrested a certain Guilbert, one of the Elbeuvian guards, for having participated in the operations. The municipal officers of Louviers later claimed that they had done so only to protect him from an angry mob that had wanted to lynch him. A detachment of the Elbeuf guard together with members of their Rouen counterpart and some dragoons of the Penthèvre regiment went to Louviers to release Guilbert. They met with resistance from the Louviers militia, a resistance that was supported by what appears to have been a majority of the population, a large part of which had participated in the pillage at Poses. A massacre was avoided only by a last minute compromise that allowed the Elbeuvians and their allies to honorably withdraw to the faubourgs to await a delegation of municipal officers who would discuss with them ways and means of setting Guilbert free without running the risk of a lynching. The conference was held, but without result. Guilbert was not released until August 4 and only then as a result of pressing demands made by the Rouen municipality. The affair did, however, give Elbeuf the occasion to write to the Paris Commune about its exploits and to receive praise for the city’s “firm and wise” conduct.

Precious little good these exploits did. Only a few days later the municipality wrote that strong precautions would be necessary to prevent interference with Paris-bound grain convoys. Rumors


75 Arch. Nat., Dextra 37; Intrépidité de Onze Volontaires Patriotes de la Ville d’Elbeuf Qui... Ont Attaqué Quatre Mille Furieux Qui Pillaient un Bateau de Bled Destiné pour l’Approvisionnement de la Capitale (n. p., 1789).
of revolt were everywhere, the people calling for wheat and de­
claring that they would not be satisfied with barley as a substitute.
On September 9 " un nombre très considérable de personnes " had demonstrated their discontent in front of the city hall, and the municipal officers were obliged in the days that followed to " invite " cultivators to bring as much grain to market as possible and to order the closing of the market to bakers during the first two hours of each market day. In October they wrote of the famine that had been raging for six months and said that only a miracle had preserved the city itself from the disorders of the countryside. They were unable to cope with the situation because the baili refused to aid them in enforcing market regulations. The city had undertaken to procure flour and to sell it to bakers, but the bakers were unsatisfied and claimed that the flour assigned them was both bad and high priced. They refused to bake. The city ordered them to provide bread, and they appealed the order to the baili, who ruled in their favor, thus quashing all municipal efforts in this field. At this time only 120 sacks of grain were being brought to the Elbeuf market weekly, instead of 1,400–1,500 as in the previous year. The municipality turned to the government for direct aid in the form of grain allocations and was refused. On November 27 Necker wrote that it was very likely that the municipality itself was responsible for the desertion of the market " en voulant y faire venir par la force les laboureurs et décimateurs de votre canton." He invited the administrators to obey the decree of the National Assembly guaranteeing free trade in grain and at the same time expressed the opinion that persuasion rather than constraint was the proper course of action to adopt. Specifi­cally, why not establish a bounty of 20 sols per quintal on all grain brought to market?

The first action taken by the municipality when it assumed police powers in 1790 was to set the price of pain bourgeois at 2 sols, 9 pence the pound and that of white bread at 3 sols, 3 pence, an increase of 3 pence over the prices of 1789. It also ordered the bakers to " garnir leurs boutiques [de pain], de le vendre au jour et de se conformer aux règlements de la police." Several times during the year it ordered bakers, millers, and grain mer­chants to desist from buying at the market until the citizens had

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76 Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. I (August 7, September 10 and 12, 1789).
77 Arch. Mun., BB; Délib., Vol. I (November 27, 1789).
made their purchases, setting the hours when the former might be served.\textsuperscript{78} As this sort of action indicates, the problem here and throughout 1790 and 1791 was less one of high prices than of short supply, although prices did shoot suddenly upward beginning in July, 1791—for two reasons, according to the Pro-cureur of the Commune. The first was that the circulation of paper money was finally making itself felt, and the second, "l'affluence des boulangers de Rouen et autres qui se meunissent pour le temps de la moisson où les halles sont désertes." The result in both cases—high prices and/or short supply—was the same: the menu peuple could not procure enough grain to meet their needs. Inevitably when this happened they rioted, and it was several times necessary to call out the National Guard to restore calm. On one occasion a riot assumed much greater proportions. In February, 1791, two persons held in jail in Elbeuf and accused of having participated in a bread riot of the previous October were to be transported by boat to Rouen. Just as the boat was about to weigh anchor, a crowd ran wild and attacked the soldiers guarding the prisoners. The soldiers opened fire and killed two of the attackers while wounding several more. Two soldiers were gravely wounded. On the following day a detachment of national guards and regular cavalry were sent from Rouen to keep the peace. Five arrests were made.\textsuperscript{79}

From July, 1791, prices started on a slow upward climb. Cultivators were reluctant to bring their grains to market for fear of being forced to sell at low prices. On March 7 there were riots and forced sales at the neighboring market of Neufbourg in the Eure. On the request of the Elbeuf municipality, the Directory of the Department of the Seine-Inférieure ordered a group of 400 national guardsmen and troops of the line to go to Elbeuf to protect the market scheduled for the following Saturday. But before they started out reports were received from the Department of the Eure stating that the attacking bands had been broken up. The order was therefore countermanded. Still, just to be sure, fifty cavalymen were dispatched to the city, but no disturbance occurred.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{78}Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. I (April 9 and 24, August 24, and September 24, 1790).
\textsuperscript{79}Arch. Mun., F\textsuperscript{4}, Délib., Vol. I (September 2, 1790); Arch. Nat., Dx\textsuperscript{3689} 37.
\textsuperscript{80}Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. II (March 7, 1792); Arch. Nat., F\textsuperscript{7} 3689\textsuperscript{1}.
It was in the summer and autumn of 1792 that, despite a brief reprieve following the harvest in September and October, the shortage of grain began to assume the proportions of a famine. Prices ceased their slow upward climb to shoot sky-high, reaching 15 livres the quintal in July and August, 14, in December and in January, 1793. In order to meet the crisis, the municipality sent commissioners and national guardsmen into neighboring grain growing regions to persuade cultivators to furnish the market, at the same time taking measures to fix the price of bread and to forbid bakers to make white bread. To farmers who complained that they did not have enough manpower to thresh grain help was offered. This policy encountered three sorts of resistance: first, from the farmers themselves, who simply refused to conform to the requisitions addressed to them; second, from wage-earners of the city, who found the procedures employed too slow and inefficacious and favored more direct action. In November they went so far as to invade the city hall to demand that the municipality sound the alarm and call a general mobilization. The third source of opposition was the District of Louviers and others of the Department of the Eure who fought toe-to-toe with Elbeuf against the latter’s requisitions of grain grown in the areas of jurisdiction. In the first case the city was more or less powerless. All it could do was to insist as persuasively as possible, but without marked success. Vis-à-vis the protesting wage earners, more effective action could be taken. There was the prohibition of unauthorized assemblies and the punishment of those who showed a propensity for rioting. Such conduct, said the municipality, could only worsen the situation, and those who indulged in it were “mauvais citoyens et ennemis de toute ordre et de tout bien.” Finally, the city appealed to the Ministry of the Interior against Louviers’ pretentions. At the end of 1792, Roland ruled in Elbeuf’s favor, authorizing it to continue its requisitions and to send out the National Guard to do threshing “chez les recal­citrants.” To justify his decision he wrote: “Le marché d’Elbeuf est un de ceux qui contribuent le plus à la subsistance des habitants de Rouen. Comment cette ville s’approvisionnera-t-elle si, par des mesures dictées par l’intérêt particulier d’un département voisin, on réduit au nécessaire absolu les habitants des lieux où se tiennent les marchés?”

\[81\] Arch. Mun., Délib. (August 30, September 22, October 4, 9, 11, 16, and 20,
During all this time little help was forthcoming either from the departmental administration or the national government, although Elbeuf was continuously appealing for aid. When the Elbeuvians asked for grain, they were offered money or given vague promises that they would have a part in the next shipment, a shipment that was eagerly awaited but rarely arrived. Occasionally a small quantity sent by the government did arrive, but it was hardly sufficient to meet the need. Suggestions were more common than grain, like the one made by the District of Rouen in November urging the city to borrow money in order to be able to import grain from abroad. The municipality replied that this was not necessary, for there was grain available, and it was just a question of making it come out of hiding.\(^{82}\)

How to get the grain out of the granaries and onto the market? The Elbeuvians had some very concrete ideas on the matter and expressed them in a petition to the Minister of the Interior in October, 1792. Blaming a vicious avarice for the shortage of grain, they asked that cultivators be obliged to bring their grain to the market nearest their domicile every market day or pay a 500 livre fine for non-compliance. If they refused to thresh or bring grain to market, the municipalities should undertake the execution of these operations. In order to avoid disturbances in the markets, each parish attached to a market should furnish a detachment of five men to guard it. Price fixing was also envisaged at 8 livres the quintal (24 livres the sack) in a good year and 10 livres (30 livres the sack) in a bad one, the corresponding prices of bread to be 2 sols and 2 sols 6 pence the pound. In order to more adequately control grain supplies, each cultivator would be forced to declare the amount of his harvest to the municipality and would thereafter have to provide receipts of delivery of the grain to market. A 500 livre fine would be imposed, together with corporal punishment, should he sell his grain elsewhere. If the farmer refused to bring a part of his grain to market, he would be fined 50 livres only. Finally, the petitioners asked that "défenses soient... faites aux laboureurs de faire battre leurs grains et d’en faire des lits avec leurs pailles sans les vanner pour les garder plus longtemps, qu’au contraire il soit ordonné au laboureur..."

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\(^{82}\) Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. II (October 28, November 10, 13, and 14, 1792).
de ne battre qu'à fur et mesure de ce qu'il lui faudra pour garnir la halle... This was the only way to "arrêter ce désespoir [du pauvre] qui n'est occasionné que des spéculateurs qui s'efforcent de le priver de sa nourriture," and thus avoid possible revolts. Although no immediate satisfaction was granted the petitioners, the municipality enforced many of these provisions before it had legal authority to do so.

It would seem that nothing that was done in the realm of grain supply was destined to succeed. While prices continued to climb, quantities continued to diminish in 1793 and until the end of the year IV. Statistics of grain available are complete for only a few of these months in 1793 and the year II. The Elbeuf market had to be supplied with a minimum of 150 sacks of 6 bushels each of wheat (450 quintals) per week or 2,000 quintals a month in order to feed the city population. An idea of the extent of the deficiency is gained when it is seen that in January, 1793, only 753 quintals were brought to market. In April the figure is only 255, although, admittedly, the figures for two market days are missing. It is unlikely that the additional amount made any significant difference, for only 50 quintals were available at an average market. In October, immediately following the harvest, it is true that the 2,620 quintals of wheat for sale were more than enough for the city of Elbeuf alone. It is another story when it is noted that no fewer than 24,000 people from the surrounding area were attempting to buy grain at the market. In November the quantity available suddenly fell to 1,624 quintals and in December, with the harvest exhausted, to 156 quintals supplemented by 109 quintals of flour.

The arsenal of weapons at the municipality's disposal was, as we have seen, small. Moreover, it was often forced to compromise in order to obtain any results at all. Thus it fixed bread prices in accordance with the maximum at 2 sols, 6 pence the pound of pain bis, but the bakers simply refused to bake until they were accorded a subsidy. Farmers, upheld by the village municipalities, refused to obey regulations, and when, rarely, they did obey, they ran the risk of their shipments being pillaged en route. For the Elbeuvians the explanation was simple: it was all a gigantic conspiracy directed against them,
un concert fomenté par la malveillance entre les laboureurs soutenus des manouvriers qu’ils excitent à les empêcher de porter à la halle, au point qu’il n’est que trop à craindre que les habitants des campagnes ne prennent les armes comme ils en menacent tous les jours pour repousser la force armée que pourraient requérir [les commissaires aux grains des représentants du peuple], ce qui est malheureusement arrivé au Bourgtherould, et avec impunité au point que ce peu de laboureurs qui déferent à ces réquisitions sont arrêtés sur les routes, au point enfin que les autorités constituées des campagnes, loins de punir ces excès y applaudissent et les encouragent.85

No possible means were neglected in an effort to solve the problem thus presented. A loan of 30,000 livres was contracted by the municipality to be used in purchasing grain, and a petition for aid was sent to the Convention on the occasion of the publication of the Constitution of 1793. The commissioners sent to Paris by the municipality stressed especially the usefulness of the cloth industry to the Republic and the danger that valuable production would be lost in the time spent by workers in running about the countryside looking for grain. They asked also that Elbeuvians be permitted to buy directly from the cultivators without going through the markets. This last demand was motivated by the fact that, because Elbeuf’s suppliers were not located in its arrondissement, it was impossible to compel them to supply the city’s market under the terms of the maximum of May 4, 1793.86 And the famine continued, increasing in virulence every day. The “fraternal invitations” issued by the Société Populaire to the neighboring communes to bring grain to market and not to interfere with the free circulation of foodstuffs were of no avail.87

From time to time, small supplies of grain were granted to Elbeuf by the Department. They were always insufficient. The city tried to stretch whatever supplies it did have by refusing the bakers the right to bake anything but bread, to the exclusion of cakes or pasta. The planting of potatoes was also encouraged.88 But you can only stretch a given quantity of grain so far—and that was not far enough. At the end of its rope, the municipality sent commissioners to Paris to ask that the law of 18 Brumaire

85 Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. III (May 18 and 20, July 9, 17 and 25, September 5 and October 24, 1793).
86 Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. III (June, 1793), passim.
87 Arch. Dép., L 5619–28 Frimaire II.
forcing farmers to ship grain to their usual markets be enforced. The commissioners received a somewhat niggardly encouragement, being told to enforce the law themselves. Accordingly, they sent out requisitions to the Districts of Louviers, Pontaudemer, and Bernay. The first never even bothered to reply, the last two answered that they had transmitted the order to the communes under their jurisdiction but they were afraid nothing would come of it. They were right. In the ten-day period from 13 to 22 Ventôse II, only 309 quintals of wheat reached the market where 650 constituted a minimum requirement. The workers who went into the countryside to buy bread, and thus lost precious time and money, were forced to pay up to 10 sols per pound, instead of 3 sols 6 pence they would have paid on the market had any been available. Even then the bread thus obtained was not enough to meet the demand. During the month of Prairial the Société Populaire twice petitioned higher authority for a supplementary ration for the workers of the woolen industry. It appears that they had only 13 ounces of bread daily, whereas the workers of Rouen under similar requisition to work for the government were guaranteed a pound and a half a day. Children under the age of six and old people over the age of sixty were given a half ration, presumably because they were considered to be unproductive members of society. The workers were half-starved, said the Société Populaire, and they would not go on working unless something were done to remedy the situation.89

What was done about this request is not known. But it was symptomatic of a long rivalry between Rouen and Elbeuf in the matter of grain supply. Elbeuf, in direct competition for grain with the Army of the Côtes de Cherbourg, was in a bad enough position already without having to supply Rouen. At the same time, supplying of Rouen was one of the market's traditional functions. That a conflict should develop was natural. Rouen requisitioned grain, Elbeuf refused to obey, Rouen accused Elbeuf of hoarding—and so it went. The situation was the worse because Rouen chose to call for grain at times when shortages were at their high point, as in Fructidor II, when the price in assignats at Elbeuf had reached 42 livres the quintal. Even allowing for the depreciation of the assignat, which then stood at about 40

89 Arch. Dép., L 5619—1 and 8 Prairial II; Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. III (3, 9, and 23 Nivôse II).
per cent of its face value, the price had gone up tremendously. The maximum obviously could not be enforced.90

We know further that famine continued to rage in Elbeuf through the years III and IV. The repeal of the maximum of 4 Nivôse III and the general relaxation of government authority under the Thermidorean Reaction helped matters not at all. By the end of the year III, the price for a quintal of wheat had reached 617 livres, 17 sols, while the assignat had fallen to 7.5 per cent of its face value. In Ventôse IV, the assignat of 100 livres was worth 1 livre, 5 sols, 6 pence. For a good part of the year IV the market reports of Elbeuf carry no mention of prices at all, stating only that of wheat "il n'en est point venu." It was only in Fructidor IV, when 2,007 quintals were delivered to the market, that the situation began to get back to normal.91

During this period all the old measures for ensuring the grain supply were renewed many times.92 Any detail added here would be only to repeat what already has been said. One new method was, however, employed. On 21 Nivôse III, the District of Rouen announced that the Convention had ordered an end to the requisitioning of grain, the order to take effect in a month's time. Upon hearing the news, the Elbeuf municipality decided to open a subscription to raise money with which to buy grain to distribute to the citizens. At the beginning, 8 pounds of wheat per period of ten days was the ration accorded. This was quickly reduced, in Ventôse, to 7 pounds. In order to make supplies go further, the "gens aisés" were no longer to be given their rations, starting at the end of Ventôse. But that helped not at all. In Germinal rations were again reduced, first to 5 pounds and then to 1 pound of wheat and 1 pound of rice. In Floréal the grain supply was so short that another reduction, to as little as half a pound, was introduced—and this while the price was going up from 6 sols

to 80 sols and finally to 100 sols the pound, after the demoneti-
zation of the 5-livre royal assignat on 27 Floréal III.\footnote{Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. IV (23–30 Nivôse, 8 Pluviôse, 9, 24 and 28 Ventôse, 7, 14, 21 and 28 Germinal, 8, 12 and 29 Floréal, 19 Prairial, 9, 26 and 28 Messidor, 6, 10, 17 and 30 Thermidor, and 5e jour complémentaire III).}

The same policy was continued in the year IV for lack of any other possibility. The price charged by the city to the indigents it supplied with grain fell to 30 sols the pound in Brumaire, the rest of the cost being absorbed by the city through the use of money earned from the sale of surplus soap. Difficulties in procuring grain were so great, however, that the departmental Commissaire du Directoire, F. N. Augustin, wrote on 16 Pluviôse that unless something were done, "ce département sera dans une famine complète." Indeed, there were only 1,220 pounds (12 quintals) of wheat and 500 pounds of rice on hand on 18 Messidor. In Thermidor it was noted that beggary was tolerated because no public assistance was available.\footnote{Arch. Nat., F\textsuperscript{\textdegree} III Seine-Inferieure 7; Arch. Dép., L 231; Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. V (10, 15 and 17 Brumaire, 18 Messidor IV).}

The year V saw the end of the years of misery and famine in Elbeuf. By Frimaire prices had become fairly well stabilized in the 10–11 livres per quintal range out of which they did not move, except for seasonal fluctuations, for several months. In the year VI, prices fell still further to between 8 and 10 livres and remained stable through the years VII and VIII. Shooting upward in the year IX, a year of extreme difficulty for the manufacture, grain doubled in price by Floréal X, before starting on a downward slide that brought prices back to normal a year later. The year XII saw abundant supplies and normal prices as well. When the intensity of the war increased in the year XIII, prices began to fluctuate between 12 and 15 livres the quintal, staying in that range until the beginning of 1806. From then until May, 1810, prices varied between 9 and 13 livres, the last figure being high but not excessive. June, 1810, was the beginning of a new cycle of high prices that, after a brief respite in the first months of 1811, brought prices up to over 20 livres at the end of 1811. The real year of crisis was 1812, the lowest price never falling below 20 livres and going as high as 32 livres, 13 sols, 4 pence in April. In 1813 prices slowly declined, but it was not until the end of the year that they returned to normal (9–13 livres). The year
1814 presented no grain supply problems, despite political and industrial disturbances; neither did 1815, although prices did increase somewhat toward its close.\textsuperscript{95}

Although high prices in this period sometimes caused concern on the part of the administration, it was only once judged necessary to enact regulatory measures, the fixing of bread prices in Messidor X. For the rest, no real fears about the possible consequences of high prices were expressed before the crisis of 1811–12. On November 18, 1811, the sub-prefect of the arrondissement of Rouen wrote that the mayors of the region blamed high grain prices not only on the bad harvest but also on "la cupidité des riches cultivateurs et [des] blatiers et marchands de farine," who indulged in speculation. When grain came to market, it was grabbed up by the merchants who also bought directly from the farmers in the countryside. In order to end speculation, the sub-prefect recommended the application of the law of 7 Vendémiaire IV, which forbade grain sales outside of the markets, and that no merchants should be admitted to the markets until local consumers' needs has been satisfied. On second thought, he said, it might be dangerous to enforce this sort of measure, for it would alarm the people. Why not just arrest some speculators and let the government enter the grain business as a market supplier. This last should be, according to the sub-prefect, "la mesure la plus efficace," given the fact that "la classe ouvrière et nombreuse dans l'arrondissement est peu occupée, et que la modicité des salaires qu'on lui accorde ne suffira pas à ses besoins. Il est donc naturel de redouter les excès auxquels elle se livrerait infailliblement si le prix du pain continuait a s'élèver..." \textsuperscript{96}

The sub-prefect was right to express these fears, for they had a real basis, although it took several months for them to be realized. Normal supply of grain to the Elbeuf market was 1,500 to 4,000 hectoliters every two weeks. In early March, 1812, only 900 arrived. The response of the crowd was immediate. On March 7 a group of women in the market harassed one seller to such an extent that he consented to sell them a sack of grain well below the going price. This was the signal for a general uproar. The same demand was made of other cultivators, and their refusal touched off a riot that neither the National Guard nor the Gen-

\textsuperscript{95} Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. V (12 Thermidor V); Arch. Mun., F4.
\textsuperscript{96} Arch. Nat., F7 3639; Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. A, (23 Messidor X).
darmerie was able to control. In short, what happened was the forced sale of grain at prices fixed by the buyers, by this time an old tradition in the Norman countryside. To re-enforce their position, the attackers started a rumor that the mayor had fixed prices at the level they wished, an allegation the former stoutly denied. The commotion eventually went so far that some grain was taken and never paid for. Fifteen arrests were made. The popular nature of the riot is proved by the social standing of those arrested. Nine of them can be identified, including one cloth merchant (not a manufacturer), a butcher, a tanner, a gardener, a woodcutter, and four workers in the textile industry: two shearers, a carder, and a weaver. Everyone escaped without punishment, because the families saw to it that the cultivators were paid for the grain taken on condition that they would not testify against the accused. This ruse excited the anger of the commander of the Gendarmerie who feared a new outbreak of rioting once the ringleaders had been let go.

By April calm had been restored in Elbeuf, and there were no further incidents, despite the high prices that continued to prevail. Prices set by the Prefect in May were only a little lower than the free market prices that had provoked the rioting and too high for most consumers—40 francs the hectoliter of wheat (26.70 francs the quintal) and 55 to 65 centimes the kilo of bread, depending on its quality. Grain also remained scarce. In April 1,200 quintals were brought to market, in August, 613, the seasonal shortage of the harvest time re-enforcing the cyclical phenomenon. Immediately following the harvest, an adequate supply was available for a month beginning in the second half of September. But the time of plenty was short-lived, as the Prefect wrote in December that the supplies of the department would fall 577,089 hectoliters short of its yearly needs. The monthly figures for grain that reached Elbeuf from March to August, 1813, are: 1,000, 1,220, 1,800, 920, 1,120, and 680 hectoliters. Only in September, 1813, when 4,100 hectoliters were available for sale, did the situation improve definitively, to remain good for the next two years. All was calm until the end of our period.\(^7\)

\(^7\) Arch. Nat., F7 3639; Arch. Mun., F4.
Before the late eighteenth century, the only machinery used in the woolen industry were fulling mills, consisting of mallets moved by a water wheel.\textsuperscript{98} Even when, on the eve of the Revolution, machinery began to penetrate into Normandy, its spread was slow, despite the efforts made by the Provincial Assembly to propagate it. In Rouen, where cotton manufacturers wanted to use machines to help meet English competition, there were riots and machine breaking.\textsuperscript{99} That this did not occur in Elbeuf was due only to the relative unimportance of machinery there.

Why this slowness in adopting modern techniques? One reason was certainly the imperfection of available machinery. Cotton was less fragile than wool and therefore more easily adaptable to machines. Perhaps even more important was the essential conservatism of the Elbeuf manufacturers. They were immensely proud of the quality of their cloth and therefore reluctant to adopt any procedures that might harm it. This was a characteristic they and their successors were to exhibit throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, with the result that the industry of Elbeuf is now almost extinct.

Machines were used in certain minor processes of the woolen industry before the major ones. In 1787 Cherel was using them to card wool, a process which, according to the Inspector of Manufactures, produced a product of good quality. A machine to shear wool had been invented as early as 1778 by Everet and improved upon by Delarche in 1784. It too was run hydraulically.\textsuperscript{100}

The first major operation to which machinery was applied was that of spinning. There were ninety-six spinning jennies in Elbeuf in 1787. Opinion as to their usefulness was divided. Goy in 1787 wrote that they were "d'autant plus intéressantes qu'en procurant un fil égal et une économie dans le main d'oeuvre, on n'est point exposé à être volé par des fileurs étrangers, ce qui est arrivé trop souvent." But Brinon, another Inspector of Manufactures, thought they were "dans leur état actuel plus propres à donner de l'économie et de la célérité dans le travail qu'elles n'y donnent de perfection. Le filage qu'elles produisent est inégal." \textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{98} Ballot, \textit{Machinisme}, p. 162.
\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Arch. Nat.}, F\textsuperscript{12} 1365; Ballot, \textit{Machinisme}, pp. 180-81.
\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Arch. Nat.}, F\textsuperscript{12} 1365.
In the long run mechanical spinning became an economic necessity, especially under pressure of the crises of the Revolutionary period. The machines available at that time had forty to fifty spindles and each produced 8–9 pounds of thread measuring 3,000–4,000 aunes to the pound daily. Four spinning women were required to run the machines, and they earned three francs a day between them. By hand the work would have cost double the amount. These facts impressed manufacturers all over France sufficiently to make them realize that the introduction of machinery might be one way to circumvent the crisis of the year III, for it was a time when there was a shortage of manpower due to army recruiting and a loss of productivity because of time spent in procuring grain supplies. The statistical reports of the year VI showed that "dupuis 12 à 15 ans, on obtient une assez belle filature par le moyen de mécaniques à filer la laine. Ces mécaniques conduites par des femmes donnent une économie de gros qu'on évalue à peu près à moitié." The manufacturers regretted that they did not have enough money to accept the offer made by two English entrepreneurs to install a water frame "qui devait fournir toute la filature de nos manufactures." Such a machine had existed in Louviers since 1786 and in Lillebonne since 1793.

The next advance in spinning machinery was made with the introduction by Flavigny and Sons in the year XIII of a gamut of machines invented by Douglas. Hayet and Sons and Amable Delaunay also installed them in their factories. The installation cost 20,054 francs; they could process 50 to 60 kilos of wool daily, and included machines for sorting and separating raw wool, for carding, spinning, shearing, and teaseling cloth. The system had several disadvantages, however. First, the machines were run by manpower and required great care to keep thread from breaking. Second, they could spin reliably only the carded wool used in making coarse cloth. But carded wool was only used for a small part of Elbeuf’s production. More and more, the industry specialized in the manufacture of smooth-napped cloth (à poil ras),

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103 *Arch. Dép.*, Series M—Enquête Statistique de l’an VI.

104 Sion, *Paysans*, p. 298.
for which combed wool was needed. Moreover, while carded wool
could be spun immediately after carding, combed wool had first
to undergo several intermediate processes, for which machines
were not yet available. The machines invented by Cockerill and
sold in France beginning in 1812, although better than Douglas',
did not solve this problem. These difficulties, no doubt, go far
to explain the reluctance of many Elbeuf manufacturers to buy
Douglas' machines, even when the government offered to finance
their acquisition by granting long-term loans.

Despite the difficulties, these machines were ever increasingly
adopted in Elbeuf. In 1811, four hundred of them were already
in use, and the Chambre Consultative des Manufactures could
write: "Il est constant qu'à l'aide de ces machines, l'entre-
preneur aura le moyen d'augmenter de beaucoup les produits de
sa fabrication, mais il ne cherchera à fournir de cet avantage que
lorsque des temps plus heureux le lui permettront. Car à quoi
lui servirait cette surabondance," given the economic crisis of
the moment. With the coming of the peace and the re-establishment
of prosperity, the number of spinning machines reached eight hun-
dred in 1811 and nine hundred a year later.

Other operations were in the process of being mechanized at
the same time as spinning. Shearing machines made by Leblanc
of Reims were installed in Elbeuf between 1803 and 1806 and
were improved upon by two Elbeuvians, Fouard and Gancel, in
1808. Their machine did the work in three-fifths of the time
required by hand and produced better quality goods. But the
combing problem remained unsolved. A primitive combing ma-
chine had been invented by Cartwright in England in the seventeen-
eighties, but it was not used in Elbeuf before 1825. It was not
until 1845 that Heilman constructed a really efficient machine of
this sort.

Weaving was mechanically backward. The flying shuttle in-
vented in 1733 and known in France since 1747 did not come into
general use until the Empire. In 1810 an improved version in-

105 Sion, Paysans, pp. 298–99; Ballot, Machinisme, pp. 183–93, 203.
106 Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. B (September 28, 1808); St. Denis, Histoire,
VIII, 205.
108 St. Denis, Histoire, VIII, 195–96; Ballot, Machinisme, pp. 211–12.
109 Ballot, Machinisme, p. 205.
vented by Jean Despraux de Condom was brought by the Elbeuf manufacturers. But mechanization was extremely slow, and it did not become general until after the Franco-Prussian War. By that time the manufacture of Elbeuf was dominated by immigrants from Alsace, while most of the manufacturers of this period had left the industry. Domestic hand-loom weaving even increased during the Revolutionary era.\footnote{110}{Ballot, \textit{Machinisme}, pp. 249–51; Sion, \textit{Paysans}, 301 ff., 317; G. Olphe-Galliard, \textit{Les Industries Rurales à Domicile dans la Normandie Orientale} (Paris, 1913), p. 8.}

The introduction of machinery had the greatest of consequences for the organization of the industry. The changes may be summed up under three headings: integration, urbanization, and proletarianization.

Integration itself implies two separate but related phenomena: the grouping of the various processes of wool manufacture under the control of one man and the establishment of factories. Both were favored by mechanization and the consequent need for large amounts of capital. It is in spinning that we have the first examples. Although the introduction of a low-cost jenny enabled some domestic spinners to survive for a relatively long period of time, the greater efficiency and lower cost of Arkwright’s water-frame and Crompton’s mule doomed them to extinction. They were replaced by machines in factories, the latter numbering thirty in 1811 and fifty-five in 1815. Although output did not rise very greatly between the beginning of the Revolution and 1811, capital investment went up from 10 million to 15 million francs, which indicates the cost of machinery as well as the increased number of manufacturers in Elbeuf. In 1806 the Prefect of the Seine-Inférieure wrote that “en général, l’homme industrieux ne borne ses spéculations à un genre de travail qui lorsqu’il n’a ni assez de capitaux ni assez de crédit pour réunir sous sa main les diverses parties de son genre de fabrication.”\footnote{111}{Sion, \textit{Paysans}, p. 298; St. Denis, \textit{Histoire}, VIII, 243; \textit{Arch. Nat.}, F1568.}

Integration meant urbanization, at least in the case of Elbeuf. It would theoretically have been possible to create factories in the fields, as sometimes happened in England, but the prior existence of workshops for preparing and finishing the wool in the cities did not favor them. Rather, the old workshops formed the nuclei into which the newly mechanized processes were fitted. Except for
weavers, the workers now came daily into the city from outlying communes to work. If in the year XI the majority of workers of St. Aubin and Orival employed by Elbeuf manufacturers still worked either in their homes or at factories established in their communes, those of Grand Couronne went to "travailler à la ville à la journée." Moreover, we know that in 1807 a sufficient number of workers from St. Aubin, Cléon, and Freneuse commuted to the city to justify the establishment of a ferry on the Seine for their use. It was specifically stated that the boat was to be used to "ramener les ouvriers travaillant à la fabrique d'Elbeuf." From November 1 until the end of February, the boat left the left bank of the Seine between 7 A. M. and 8 A. M., in March, April, and September at 6 A. M., and from May through August at 5 A. M. It returned from Elbeuf at 8:15 P. M. from March 1 to September 15, and at 9:15 P. M. from then until the end of February. This meant a twelve to fourteen hour working day depending on the season, the latter figure applying from May until October.112

The movement toward the city appeared irreversible. Of 5,700 workers employed in Elbeuf in the crisis year of 1811, 3,130, or slightly less than 55 per cent, were domiciled in the city. Others came daily to work in Elbeuf, but no precise figure is cited for them. It was stated that some worker dyers "demeurent dans les communes environnantes; mais ils se rendent chaque jour dans leurs ateliers, où ils sont employés pendant l'année entière." Again for spinners, "un très grand nombre se rend chaque jour dans les ateliers établis en ville," although they lived outside it. In 1815 one-half of the spinners employed in the industry came to work from the "suburbs." For the moment, the phenomenon of urbanization was evident only in the woolen industry. Tanners and saddle makers worked in workshops in the surrounding villages, while locksmiths and hosiers worked independently on a domestic basis.113

In 1788, Messance had written:

Quand un habitant des villes est obligé d'aller végéter à la campagne, il faut au moins deux générations pour que ses descendants soient capables des travaux de l'agriculture.

112 Ballot, Machinisme, pp. 223–25; St. Denis, Notice Historique sur la Ville de St. Aubin-jouxté-Boulleng (Elbeuf, 1888), p. 365; Arch. Dép., Series M.
113 Arch. Dép., Series M—Statistiques Industrielles de la Ville d'Elbeuf, 1811 and 1815.
Un habitant des campagnes, dès qu’il entre dans une ville, réussit à ce qu’il entreprend.

D’où vient cette différence? Le campagnard est porté à la ville par un certain génie, et le citadin ne va à la campagne que parce qu’il y est forcé.\textsuperscript{114}

The third paragraph is an incorrect explanation of the first two. If peasants went to the city, it was because they had to earn a living—and this was the only way open to them.\textsuperscript{115}

We have seen that the agricultural difficulties to which peasants were subject in the course of the eighteenth century had made them turn more and more to industrial work on a domestic basis; no longer as a supplement to their income, but as its basis. In so far as they were dependent upon the sale of their labor power for their exclusive source of income, these peasants were playing the social role of proletarians—even while still on the land. No quantitative statement can be made as to how many peasants had been deprived of land and/or were entirely occupied in industrial pursuits before coming to the city. But if they needed to do some industrial work in order to survive, and industry was moving to the city, they would have to follow it. Little by little they would cease to have any agricultural occupation and become full-fledged proletarians.

This movement is quite independent of any wage differentials between town and country. Whether or not the peasant stood to increase his income by becoming an urbanite is irrelevant. He moved when two conditions were fulfilled: (1) when agriculture could no longer give him a living, and (2) when the industry upon which he depended became urbanized. We have seen the development of the second phenomenon. As concerns agriculture, the Revolution aggravated the situation of the poorer peasants, particularly by continuing the enclosure movement that had already made so much progress in Normandy. In an area most of whose acreage was in forest land, the prohibition against allowing animals to wander in the woods was a hard blow. A peasant’s income might be substantially reduced by such a prohibition, along with the suppression of \textit{vaine pâture}, the enclosure of common

\textsuperscript{114} Messance, \textit{Nouvelles Recherches sur la Population de la France} (Lyon, 1788), p. 29.

\textsuperscript{115} We have discussed this problem in Chapter 1 above, pages 20 ff.

The only workers in the labor force of Elbeuf who succeeded in slowing down their conversion to proletarians were the weavers, and that was because of a relative lack of technological advance in their branch of the industry. There was as yet no economic need to integrate weavers into the factory system. There was no negative sanction against the weavers, so that they were able, with the relatively high wages they received (as compared to spinners), to accumulate money with which to buy land and thus re-enforce their independence. In 1834 the Elbeuf Chamber of Commerce reported that one-half of them were land owners.\footnote{117 Sion, \textit{Paysans}, pp. 316, 406.}

Did proletarianization mean pauperization of the mass of the workers? This question cannot be answered in so far as it concerns the transition from agricultural to industrial worker, for there is no information on farm incomes, except for wages paid to agricultural day laborers. The latter seem to have earned about the same as a teasler at the beginning of the Revolution.

Information on wage levels is scanty, and the existence of both the maximum and the assignats makes it difficult to draw any conclusions therefrom. The maximum raised wages by one-half and prices by one-third over 1790, but this proves nothing, as prices in 1790 were already inflated. It is likely that the purchasing power of the wage earner did suffer in this period; and it is certain that it did so after the repeal of the maximum and the onset of uncontrollable inflation. For instance, a weaver's wage had, according to Caron's statistics, gone up slightly less than four times between 1790 and Germinal III. But grain prices went up nine to ten times during the same period, depending on the quality of the grain. The pound of beef went up from 8 sols, 3 deniers to 3 livres, 8 sols, 6 deniers, or eight times. Only cider, a favorite drink in Elbeuf, did not outrun the wage movement, its price rising only three and one-half times. In general, then, wages lagged behind prices from 1792 until the end of the year IV, even
during the maximum, when the government was more concerned with, and more successful in, holding the line on wages than on

### Table 3-3
**Wages in Elbeuf, 1790-Year III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1790</th>
<th>1791</th>
<th>Year II</th>
<th>Year III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teasler</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinner</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>5.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardener</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shearer</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiner</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locksmith</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled worker</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burler</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural worker</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female agricultural worker</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roofer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonecutter</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter (of cloth)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuller</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thresher</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female woolsorter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pounds of wool</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female warper</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who tied broken threads</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>3.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodcutter</td>
<td>28.10</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>6.16.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In the first three columns all figures are given in sols and pence, unless otherwise indicated. In the fourth column all figures are given in livres, sols, and pence and represent assignats. The third column contains the official figures, according to the maximum. All wages are for one day's work, unless otherwise indicated. The letter a indicates that this wage included payment for overtime. The letter b indicates a food ration was given each employee over and above the money wage.


prices. Later, between the years V and VIII, wages resisted a fall longer than did prices.\(^{118}\)

\(^{118}\) Pierre Caron, "Une Enquête sur les Prix après la Suppression du Maximum," Commission de Recherche et de Publication des Documents Relatifs à la Vie
In 1804 the mayor of Elbeuf declared that labor in the city was one-third dearer than in 1789. At the time he wrote, the quintal of first quality grain stood at 12 livres, approximately one-third more than at the end of 1790. This would indicate that wages and prices were advancing at about the same rate. Such a conclusion is, however, too hasty. For one thing, the price of grain was subject to excessive variation and cannot, therefore, be adopted as our sole measure of the price level. For a second, we do not have price indices on commodities normally consumed by wage earners in this period. Again, we know that the average textile worker earned 1.25 francs a day in 1811 and 2 francs a day in 1815, but the meaning of these figures is obscure. The question of pauperization must, for the moment, remain moot.

The perennial sickness and troubles of which the Elbeuf woolen industry was the victim during the Revolution should not be allowed to conceal the fact that this was also a period of foundation building and development. The introduction of machinery, the changes in the organization of the manufacture, the proliferation of entrepreneurs (their number increased from approximately 70 in 1782 to 130 in 1811 and 140 in 1815, while others had been in and out of the business in the interim) all testify to the importance of this period for the future of Elbeuf textiles.

Several things indicate the strength of the industry at this time. First of all, a new confidence in its ability to meet competition. If in the year IV the departmental administrators could write only that France was capable of producing cloths as fine as any available with only a little effort, by the year VI the manufacturers themselves were saying that their cloth was in fact superior to that of their English and German competitors. Not only was it beautiful, they said, but it had "la solidité et le moelleux qui ...
assurent la superiorité.”  122 These were new words in their mouths; previously it had been most common to complain of the disadvantages under which the industry was laboring, so as to be able to justify appeals for government aid.

The optimism seemed to be justified by the results of the industrial expositions of the years IX, X, and 1806. At the first of these, Elbeuvians were awarded one bronze medal and one honorable mention. At the second, they received two bronze and two silver medals, and in 1806 one silver medal and a general citation in which the judges stated: “indiquer des draps d’Elbeuf, c’est dire qu’ils sont soignés et d’une qualité suivie.” It should be noted that it was always the old, established manufacturers who earned these recompenses and almost never those whose names were unknown before the Revolution. 123

Another and much more important recognition was granted Elbeuf industry by the governments of the Revolution and Empire: it was asked to give its opinion on the negotiation of various commercial treatises under consideration in the year V, a request that was never made under the old regime, as we know from the history of the English treaty of 1786. Moreover, the idea of according industrialists at least an advisory role in the establishment of economic policy was institutionalized in the year IX with the creation of a Commission de Commerce and later of a Chambre Consultative de Commerce. 124 The members of these two bodies were all manufacturers, a fact that is indicative of their ever-increasing importance in the community. Once again, the names mentioned—Grandin, Flavigny, Godet, Hayet, Quesné, Sevaistre, Lefebvre, Louvet—correspond to families already well established before the Revolution.

The creation of these advisory bodies enabled the manufacturers of Elbeuf to express better their demands vis-à-vis the government.

122 Rapport des Travaux du Département de la Seine-Inférieure depuis le Mois de Novembre, 1792 jusqu’au Renouvellement au ler Brumaire, an IV (Rouen, year V), p. 62; Arch. Mun., Series M—Enquête Statistique de l’an VI.


124 Arch. Mun., Délib., Vol. V (12 Frimaire V); see also St. Denis, Histoire, VIII, 40–41.
They lost no time in so doing. First of all, they wanted greater control over their workers. This they sought to obtain by re-establishing the old regime system of *billets de congé*, that is, a written authorization to the worker to quit his job. Their request was granted first by local ordinance and, a year later, by government order. This order instituted the system of *livrets* or little booklets containing certificates of good conduct and discharge given by the employer to the worker upon termination of a work agreement. On 29 Brumaire XIII, women were made subject to the same system. They too had now to be in possession of these *livrets*, unless they wished to be considered beggars and treated accordingly.\(^{125}\)

Of course, there were other issues, on some of which the manufacturers did not get their own way. Such was the case of their proposal to appoint three of their number to assist the justice of the peace in settling all disputes having to do with the industry, including those that set worker against employer. They wished the judgment of this body to be final and without appeal, except in cases involving the possibility of corporal punishment (*peine afflictive*), which would be referred by them, after preliminary investigation, to the appropriate court. Seeing that they could not carry the day with this request, they modified their demands to ask that all disputes between masters and workers be judged by the justice of the peace of the place in which the manufacture was set up. The reason for their insistence on this point is simply that many of the workers in Elbeuf were domiciled in the Department of the Eure and thereby escaped the jurisdiction of the local justice of the peace, over whose selection the manufacturers had some measure of control. It was in this way that they hoped to discourage the thievery of raw materials that, they charged, was practiced on a large scale by the workers. So far as we know, neither of their requests was granted.\(^{126}\)

Aside from issues directly related to labor-management disputes, the manufacturers of Elbeuf regularly send recommendations to the government on all matter of things. The recommendations concerned government encouragement of wool production, of most-favored nation commercial treaties, of coal mining to provide


industrial fuels. Measures to be taken against bankrupts were asked so as to more effectively protect creditors. A well-justified outcry against the inadequacy of road communications with the markets continued. And there was a constant demand to put a stop to the illegal importation of English goods. In 1810 an imperial decree that ordered the destruction of all English merchandise found in France, Holland, and the Hansa towns was vigorously applauded by the Elbeuvians.\textsuperscript{127}

One demand that may, at first glance, appear curious was that which requested the re-establishment of government regulation of industry as it had existed under the old regime. But there was a good reason for this nostalgia. According to the petitioners, the abolition of regulation had wreaked havoc on production standards and had led to indiscriminate competition that would eventually destroy the woolen industry. All sorts of people, they said, were now entering the industry, although their only qualification for so doing was their money. They were said to be entirely lacking in technical knowledge and skill. What we have here is the reaction of long established manufacturers to the invasion of their prerogatives by certain new capitalist elements, and, as might be expected, it was not limited to Elbeuf alone. But it is in Elbeuf that we find the clearly formulated desire for a return to the guild system, that is, to the status of a \textit{manufacture royale}. Before the Revolution, the government had determined the kind of cloth that could be manufactured and had controlled the woolen trade. But despite interference by the government in various matters, as seen in Chapter 2, the manufacturers had enjoyed a good deal of autonomy. It had been possible for them to discourage competition, to protect their market against interlopers, as well as from any one of their number who attempted to profit at the expense of the community as a whole. Whatever abuses had existed might easily be corrected in the projected revival of the guild. The manufacturers were not yet so attached to the idea of laissez faire that they would reject the idea of a paternalistic government acting in their interest.\textsuperscript{128}


\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Arch. Nat.}, F\textsuperscript{12} 2412—Printed Brochure: Louis Jourdain, \textit{Mémoires sur les Manufactures des Draps suivi d'un Projet de Règlement Relatif à Celle de Darnetal} (Rouen, 1813); \textit{Arch. Mun.}, Series M—Report on the Manufacture by Grandin and Frontin.
On the basis of the above information, two conclusions can be drawn about the effects of the Revolution on Elbeuf. First, economically the city’s industry was, while troubled, going through an important phase of reorganization that was to have the most basic of results in the future. Second, a change can be noted in the value placed on the participation of industrialists in the life of the nation—a revaluation of the industrial bourgeoisie. We might then expect that these same bourgeois would take an ever-increasing part in the political life of their constituency. It is to that question that we must now address ourselves, so as to be able to draw a third conclusion, this time concerning politics, and thus to fix another signpost on the way to answering the more general question of changes in the social structure.