The Nobility of Toulouse in the Eighteenth Century
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CHAPTER III


I

The transition from a self-sufficient to a market economy in grain was a slow one. Even under the new pressure of population, the local community only begrudgingly and gradually released its grain surpluses to the growing urban market. The small peasant proprietor in particular was unwilling to risk the slim surplus of one year against the chance of a bad harvest the next. But as the price for wheat and maize rose sharply, despite violent seasonal fluctuations, the large landholders who could more safely muster a surplus beyond their household consumption, found it increasingly profitable to transport their wheat to market. These were the owners of the overloaded wagons harnessed to three enormous work-horses, laden with 18 to 20 setiers (48 to 53 bushels) of wheat that rumbled to Porte Saint Sulpice at Toulouse or to any of the local markets—Villefranche, Basiège, Verfeil, Montastruc—in growing numbers as the century drew to a close.

Increased marketing of grain went hand in hand with improved communication, and it is not surprising that the province of Languedoc underwent an accelerated building of roads and canals in the last half of the century. This construction was championed by the entire complex of local assemblies—provincial, diocesan, and communal—whose members planned and financed new and better routes. The province of Languedoc was justifiably proud of what Arthur Young termed its "magnificent bridges," "superb causeways," and "remarkable routes." To be sure, the secondary roads fell somewhat below the high standard set by the post-roads built and maintained by the Provincial Estates. Nevertheless, even on the local level, considerable progress had been made.
In the first fifty years of the eighteenth century, the diocese of Toulouse had spent 1200 livres annually for road repair. In 1765 it was spending 40,000 livres, in 1782, 127,000, and in 1786, 198,000 livres annually for road development. Diocesan indebtedness for roads alone rose to 1,885,000 livres by 1787. At the meeting of the diocesan assembly in 1770 it was decided to have four roads continually under construction, and from 1771 to 1790 ten new routes were projected, and work begun. By the end of the century, the diocese was laced with a network of paved roads, 24 feet wide and bordered by neat rows of elm trees. In addition to the excellent royal route from Montauban to Montpellier which traversed the diocese, two paved roads radiated south from Toulouse along the Garonne and Ariège Rivers toward Luchon and Tarascon-sur-Ariège; two others led northeast to Albi and east to Castres in the Cévennes; and still another reached westward toward Auch in Gascony. All of these routes were built between 1750 and the Revolution and all, with the exception of the royal route, were financed by the diocese on the initiative of the diocesan assembly.

Far from neglecting internal improvements, the diocesan assembly had pushed its program so far that the tax-burdened communities protested. The service charges alone on the diocesan debt for public works reached almost 100,000 livres by 1787, a burden of over 20 livres per inhabitant. In February of 1788 the communities of the diocese in an extra-legal assembly, led by the Third Estate, demanded a halt to what they called, "a tendency to achieve the total ruin of the diocese by loans and expenditures arising from expenses regarding the roads, and the habit of turning these funds from their true destination . . ." In 1789, the cahier of St. Jory protested

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1 In Languedoc as a whole, 9,789,000 livres were borrowed for roads alone in the last 35 years of the Ancien Regime. Two-thirds of this sum was spent after 1781, evidence of the accelerated building program.
3 A. D. C-970, "Deliberation à prendre avant l'Assemblée de l'Assiette par toutes les communautés du Diocèse de Toulouse pour concourir efficacement à arrêter le cours des emprunts et des autres abus qui sont à la veille d'opérer sa ruine totale." February, 1788.
that the new roads served only the local landlord and were "useless to the mass of the inhabitants." 4

No doubt the larger proprietors were the chief beneficiaries of the road building program. But despite the protests of the communities in 1788, there was no reduction of the diocesan budget for public works. In the same year, the diocesan assembly voted additional loans of 124,000 livres for work on seven separate roads. 5 Although the assembly avowed that the Third Estate was fully represented in its councils, the diocesan body was in fact dominated by the First and Second Estates. Officially, the assembly was composed of a vicar-general, a royal commissioner, three barons of the diocese (de Créte, Saint Felix, and Lanta), and 24 deputies of the 12 chief towns of the diocese. The deputies were in fact the mayors and consuls of the towns chosen by and even represented by the chief landlord in each community. The names of the deputies leave no doubt that the gentlemen controlled a majority of the assembly and of the chairmanships of all the principal commissions. 6 There seems no question that the local nobility was in an excellent position to combine a civic interest in public improvements with a natural desire to transport its grain to market.

The new routes permitted regular postal and commercial communication between Toulouse and the principal localities within a radius of 60 to 90 miles from the city and thus helped rationalize the Toulousan grain market. Whereas before 1750 only a few merchants controlled the movement of grain to the city, this new network of paved roads permitted a greater number of grain sellers to compete in the wholesale market. It tended to replace the small grain brokers (the blatiers) and their limited mule-back supplies with large wagonloads of grain from the Lauragais and even from outside the diocese. 7 Whether more regular communication acted as a brake on increasing bread prices or simply reduced the number of intermediaries and increased the margin of profit for the grain producer is difficult to ascertain. The continued rise in bread prices through-

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5 A. D. C-970, "Procès verbaux de l'Assiette du Diocèse, 1788."
6 A. D. C-962, 968-970, "Procès verbaux de l'Assiette du Diocèse, 1766, 1787, 1788." These reports of proceedings include a list of the members.
7 Coppolani, op. cit., p. 77.
out this period, however, and the sums received by local land­
lords for their harvests would suggest the second alternative.8

The Garonne River was one of the principal arteries of river transport in the Midi, handling much more traffic in the eighteenth than in the nineteenth century. Navigation by river boat began some 30 miles south of Toulouse at Cazères. Each year, about 1,600 four-man boats plied their way from this landing to the provincial capital, laden with wool from Spain, wood, stone, and plaster from the Pyrenees, and grain and fruit from the local countryside. North of Toulouse, navigation was seriously hindered by more than 90 water mills before reaching Bordeaux and at least 18 dangerous shoals between the capital and the mouth of the river Tarn, a distance of some 60 miles. Ordinarily it took six to eight days to go from Toulouse to Bordeaux by river boat, pulled by 12 to 15 men. Freight costs and tolls totalled 600 livres for every 30,000 livres of merchandise. The principal items of this trade were cereals, wine, wood, coal, indigo, coffee, sugar, brandy, salted fish, and tobacco. In the late century, an estimated 1800 small boats annually negotiated the tortuous course of the Garonne north of Toulouse.9

More efficient water transport was via the Canal du Midi, pride of the Province. In 1787 Arthur Young called this waterway linking Toulouse with the Mediterranean "the most beauti­ful thing he had seen in France." The canal was designed and built by Pierre-Paul Riquet in the third quarter of the seven­teenth century and was held as a seigniory by his noble de­scendants until the Revolution.10 The Canal du Midi was supplemented and improved by a new junction with Narbonne, sponsored by the Marquis de Crillon in 1776, and by the Canal de Brienne built at Toulouse to circumvent the Moulin du

10 The 28 canal shares were held by the Riquet family until the death of Alexandre Riquet de Bonrepos in 1791. At the time of their division among Riquet de Bonrepos's three daughters, these shares yielded an annual dividend of 448,346 livres, making the Riquet family, without question, the richest noble family in the Midi. Archives Municipales, Toulouse, Serie G²-42, "Cambon-Riquet." These are the "Forced Loans" levied by the Convention and provide an income statement by all "citizens" of Toulouse in 1793.
Château which blocked the Garonne. In 1786, the King, the city of Carcassonne, and the Riquet family subscribed 115,000 livres to rectify the entire canal course.\textsuperscript{11} Merchandise was transported by horse-drawn barge from Toulouse to Agde or Sète on the Mediterranean, a distance of about 150 miles in 7 days and at the modest cost of 2 livres per quintal (110.25 lbs.) in 1750. The barges were 60 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 6 feet deep and could carry 880 to 2000 quintaux (110.25 tons) of freight, or twenty times the capacity of the average Garonne River boat. In 1780 there were 170 of these canal craft transporting fish, tobacco, coffee, and sugar from Bordeaux and the West Indies and, above all, grain from the region of Toulouse to Bas-Languedoc and overseas. Significantly, two-thirds of the canal revenues came from the grain trade. Moreover, the return trip brought only 40\% of the volume exported southeastward and included no grain—evidence that Toulouse was a center of cereal export. The categories of goods imported indicate the scope of trade made possible by the canal. They included woolens and cottons from Bas-Languedoc, olive oil and wood from Provence, wines from Spain, oranges from Italy, and spices and drugs from the Levant and the Barbary Coast. Canal commerce was evaluated at 652,796 livres, average for the decade 1750-1758, and at 975,282 livres, average for the decade 1780-1788, an increase of 50\% in 30 years.\textsuperscript{12}

If an improved road system made Toulouse and the local market towns more accessible to the grain producers of the Lauragais, the perfection of the river and canal system opened the possibility of profitable marketing outside of Haut-Languedoc and even outside of the province. Between 1745 and 1768, the value of the grain trade outside of Languedoc rose from six to sixteen million livres.\textsuperscript{13} It was not coincidental that this opportunity for an expanded market was joined by a new economic philosophy.

Association of the physiocratic movement with such vague

\textsuperscript{11} Dutil, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 700.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. p. 700 ff. It will be recalled, however, that grain prices rose 60\% in the same period, so that this increase in the valuation of canal commerce may represent little if any increase in trade volume.
\textsuperscript{13} Viala, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 36-37.
terms as the Enlightenment, has sometimes disguised the fact that Physiocracy was the large proprietor’s economic philosophy *par excellence*. The Physiocratic School preached not only that land was the unique source of all wealth, but also that free trade in grain was the best way of increasing farm production under the stimulus of the *bon prix*. And the *bon prix*, in a period of accelerated population increase and of imperfect competition between provincial producers in the interior of France was almost always a high price. Hence, the Toulousan nobility was assisted in its search for a good market by the rapid increase in the local population, by improved communication, and by a new doctrine that proclaimed free grain export outside of the province and even outside of the kingdom.\(^{14}\)

The Toulousan nobles had many vantage points from which to affirm their sincere adherence to new ideas. The Estates of Languedoc, the Parlement of Toulouse, the diocesan assemblies, the Chamber of Commerce at Toulouse lost no occasion to issue declarations on the "universal benefits of free trade." In 1761 the Estates assembled at Montpellier proclaimed that "the most assured means to animate agriculture is the free exportation of grain, not only from one province to another but also overseas." \(^{15}\) Not satisfied with the liberal export provisions of the Edict of July, 1764, the Estates proposed automatic renewal of free trade if the price of grain fell below 12 livres, 10 sous per quintal.\(^{16}\)

The years after 1760 brought successes to this campaign. Thanks to physiocratic-minded controller-generals such as Bertin and Turgot, the Monarchy legislated long periods of free trade in grain. From 1763 to 1770, 1774 to 1777, and from 1787 to 1788, national policy favored the *bon prix* and the grain

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\(^{14}\) To be sure, physiocratic ideas with regard to the land tax, the so-called *subvention territoriale*, were received less enthusiastically by the local nobility. Nevertheless, the nobility of Languedoc risked much less than their confrères in the North. The *taille* was *réelle* in Languedoc, and the tax rolls leave no doubt that the Toulousan gentlemen paid property taxes, in some cases as much as one-fourth of their gross landed income. Those who had "noble land," however, were exempt from the *taille*, though not from the 20th tax (the *vingtième*) on landed income. Cf. Chapter I *supra*.

\(^{15}\) A. D. C-2404. "Procès verbaux de la séance des Etats de Languedoc," October-December, 1761.

producer. Even the Intendant, the Vicomte Saint Priest, had a penchant toward free trade. He wrote in 1758:

I believe that the interior trade must be kept completely free, and that one must simply demand declarations for certificates of release from those merchants who export their grain to Roussillon, Rouergue, and Dauphiné.

In addition to the relaxation of export controls, the abolition of local river and market tolls facilitated the marketing operations of the grain producer. Even before Physiocracy was current ideological coin, the opportunity to float merchandise on the Canal du Midi free of all local tolls had diverted a large portion of the grain trade from the seigniorial toll collectors. Local rulings of the Parlement had suppressed these tolls one by one throughout the eighteenth century. The national legislation of Turgot in 1774, freeing the grain trade of all internal customs, merely legalized the atrophy of such tolls in the Toulouse area. The Councilor d’Assézat, seigneur of Venergue, reflected the position of many of the local seigneurs in a letter to the Royal Government in 1750:

I feel the full value of the courtesy with which you honor me by kindly notifying me of the significance of the Arrêt du Conseil bearing on the suppression of certain toll rights on the Ariège River which neither I nor my father, nor my ancestors for more than a hundred years have ever enjoyed. Thus, it is nothing more than the suppression of a chimera which had no sort of reality nor existence whatever . . .

There were, however, a number of negligent proprietors who clung to their market tolls into the late eighteenth century. These became the object of more systematic suppression after

17 Viala, op. cit., pp. 15-23. The Edict of July, 1764 provided for unconditional free trade in grain within the kingdom and free trade overseas until the price of wheat reached 12 livres, 10 sous per quintal. The edict was renewed in 1776, although Turgot permitted free interior trade in 1774. After 1777 Necker instituted a pragmatic control policy based on the estimates of the annual harvest. This policy was formed largely as a reflex to increasing numbers of seasonal crisis and was continued, except for a brief interval in 1787-88, until 1789.

18 A. D. C-116, Intendant to the Subdelegate of Toulouse, December 17, 1758. It is true that the Intendant became less dogmatic after the disastrous crop years of 1771, 1777, and 1781.

1750. Among the more stubborn seigniorial toll collectors were the local communities who depended heavily on such revenues. The community of Villefranche-Lauragais, whose revenues from market tolls were 900 livres in 1775, fought a prolonged but losing battle against the Treasury Court (Cour des Aides) despite a claim based on letters-patent of Francis I. The market towns of Verfeil and Basièges lost their toll privileges of 1 sol per setier of wheat in the same year. At Montrastruc, the Comte de Clarac collected "rights of measure" as late as 1786, aided by his rights of High Justice and the loyal services of the town's archpriest. But, after numerous law cases, appeals, and reversals of judgment, the count finally lost his toll rights. In 1777 there were only five communities that still levied market tolls in the diocese, and by the end of the Ancien Regime only the river tolls at Blagnac, Clermont, Lacroix-Falgarde, and Portet on the Garonne and Ariège Rivers were still collected by the local seigneurs. The abolition of the market tolls on grain undoubtedly stimulated an increase in market fairs, the number of which rose from 120 in 1720 to 180 in 1789.

How was the grain actually gathered from the estates in the Lauragais and sold? French agricultural marketing has won a reputation for its army of intermediaries. The grain trade during the Ancien Regime was no exception. Every summer and fall, the countryside about Toulouse swarmed with the famous grain brokers (blatiers), who purchased from the proprietors on the spot in small quantities, often setier by setier. The broker sold in turn to the less numerous commission-

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20 The abolition of communal market tolls served the local landlord in a double sense. It lowered his marketing costs and at the same time lessened the independent influence of the village consuls by weakening community finances.
21 A. D. C-117, "Concernant les droits sur les grains perçus dans les halles et marché par les seigneurs," 1775-1777.
22 Ibid., "Suspension des droits d'étaillage de mesurage que le comte de Clarac perçevait sur les grains vendus à Montastruc"; "Arrêt du Conseil, 1773, exécuté février, 1786."
23 Fortanier, op. cit., pp. 384-385; Théron de Montaugé, L'agriculture et les classes rurales dans le pays toulousain depuis le milieu du 18ème siècle (Paris, 1869), p. 56. Between 1740 and 1750 the seigniorial tolls were definitively abolished at Auriac, Basièges, Gardouch, Montégut, Montgeard, Venergue, Caselles, Esquelles, Foutens, and Beauville.
24 Montaugé, op. cit., pp. 55-56.
merchants, the commission-merchants to the merchants and exporters, and these finally to the millers and bakers. The noble proprietors preferred hard money and it was the commission-agent who generally supplied the broker with credit. This was the traditional system of marketing. 25

Was the noble proprietor, then, relegated to a passive role in the grain trade? If the broker system was well-geared to amass the grain surpluses of the small independent proprietor, it was unsuited for the average Toulousan gentilhomme-campagnard of 1750 who had about 250 setiers of negotiable wheat to market each year. It was to the latter's advantage to avoid the broker, sell directly to the commission-merchant at the town market, in bulk, and at the seasonal price high.

The papers of individual families indicate that this type of marketing was preferred among the Toulousan nobility. In 1751 the Marquis de Bertier sold 100 setiers of wheat in bulk at the seasonal high of 16 livres per setier—an excellent price for that year. 26 The Comte de Villèle sold between 600 and 900 setiers per year from his estate at Mourvilles, always at the seasonal high. 27 The Marquis de Fourquevaux's day to day accounts for four farms indicate small sales of maize and vegetables but practically no sales of wheat, suggesting that the money crop was sold on a separate account, probably en bloc. The small quantities registered were sold at the market at Montgiscard. 28 The Marquis de Gardouch always required a certificate of sale “at the market” and “especially for grains” from his steward. 29 Add to these individual examples the fact that almost all the sharecropping contracts specifically provided for cartage of farm produce to the market, and it appears conclusive that the noble proprietor after 1750 did not sell in small quantities to brokers but in large quantities at the local market. 30

The storage facilities of the larger proprietors gave them

25 Viala, op. cit., p. 39 f. This is the system described by A. P. Usher, History of the Grain Trade in France, 1400-1710 (Cambridge, 1933). Usher's work terminates in 1710, however.
26 A. D., 6 J, A-35.
27 Villèle Papers. Thanks to M. Fourcassié, Villèle's biographer, I was able to look at the comte's rough accounts, 1808-1813. (uncatalogued).
28 A. D. E-641.
29 Gardouch, 1009.
30 A. D. E-647; Archives Notariales, Registers 18083-18117.
the added advantage of awaiting the highest price of the season, or even of several seasons. In 1759 the provincial government ordered an inventory of all the grain warehouses in the diocese of Toulouse in an effort to check "individuals who are not customarily in this commerce and who are suspected of having stocked grain to obtain illicit profits." The subsequent inquest revealed 7,100 setiers of grain in the hands of bourgeois exporters, 8,550 setiers in the hands of Toulousan merchants, only 2,200 setiers in the hands of the grain brokers, 8,000 setiers "in the hands of diverse individuals coming from their harvests," and 20,000 setiers in the countryside about the city, also "in the hands of diverse individuals." In short, in January, 1759, five months after the harvest, 62% of the stored grain was in the hands of local proprietors, the bulk of whom were noblemen. In January, 1789, a similar inquiry revealed that 12,000 setiers of grain, one-fourth of the total stored in the city of Toulouse at that moment, was owned by M. Bermont du Loris de Dumay, a nobleman. How many of the other individuals listed on the inventory were agents of local gentlemen, is impossible to ascertain.

Many noble proprietors, not content with speculating in their own grain, speculated with grain of others as well. In the crisis year of 1781, when grain prices at Toulouse rose from 10 livres to 15 livres, 10 sous in one month, the Subdelegate of Toulouse received an anonymous letter which he dispatched to the Intendant. One passage read:

The major part of the grain stock is now [July] in the hands of the wholesale merchants, the speculators, the rich landed proprietors, and the well-to-do who have placed their money in grain at a time when it was cheap in order to market it (s’en défaire) at a favorable moment such as now.

The same letter warned that the small cultivator, unable to amass a surplus, would be forced to begin buying seed in October and November, possibly at 20 livres per setier.

Some of the Capitouls, nobility of very recent origin to be
sure, were actively engaged in grain speculation. In the same crisis year, Noble Fager and Noble Salruquet sent their agents to Lavaur and Albi where no one knew of the price increase at Toulouse, purchased four to 5,000 setiers of wheat at 11 livres, 5 sous and resold it at Toulouse at 15 livres per setier.\(^{35}\) A letter of the Subdelegate later in the same year confirmed the unique position of the larger proprietor of grain land. He observed that only the large holders could risk suspension of sale of grains reserved from previous harvests. The mediocre holders needed this grain for their immediate needs, such as household consumption, seed, and taxes.\(^{36}\) In brief, the noble proprietor of the Lauragais was in an excellent position to make what is commonly known as a "très bonne affaire."

Whatever be the twentieth century opinion of such speculation, the provincial administration of the eighteenth century exhibited a sympathetic mind. In 1758 the Intendant stated that he did not view badly the establishment of warehouses for grain, provided they were known to the government, because they provided "a prompt and sure resource when the markets were insufficiently provisioned."\(^{37}\) At the height of the seasonal crisis of 1781, the Subdelegate Ginesty elaborated the classic defense of the speculator. He maintained that the speculator provided a ready supply at the critical moment of shortage; he must always "eventually sell"; buying cheap and selling dear was no crime; strong government action would not only "excite the avidity of the landholder," but also alarm the consumer and raise prices still further.\(^{38}\) In government circles at least the function of the speculator appeared necessary and even desirable.

Thus, by improved means of land and water communication and by a new doctrine of "free trade" in grain, the landlords of the Lauragais expanded their market, reduced middleman costs, and perfected the technique of timely sales of large quantities of stored grain.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
\(^{36}\) Ibid. Subdelegate to Intendant, September 5, 1781.
\(^{37}\) A. D. C-116, Intendant to Subdelegate, December 3, 1758.
\(^{38}\) A. D. C-118, Subdelegate to Intendant, September 5, 1781. No doubt in a period when distribution was most imperfect and the supply only vaguely known, rumor and panic played an exaggerated and independent role in price variation.
II

The diocesan and provincial administration also fostered agrarian individualism with regard to communal rights. In Languedoc, there were two traditional communal rights of pasturage: (1) the right of use by all members of the community of the common meadow, and (2) the right to pasture livestock in the fallow field, wasteland, wood, and meadow of individual proprietors, the so-called vacant pasture.\(^3^9\)

In the diocese of Toulouse, only 1% of the land was held by the communities in 1750, and most of this was leased at money rents to individuals. The largest town common in the diocese was at Basiège and covered only 39 arpents (55.6 acres). The common at Toulouse, serving thousands of inhabitants, was only 21 arpents (29.4 acres). Many communities such as Auzielle, Quint, and Montariol had less than one acre of common. In some cases, the common existed only in theory, since the local seigneurs had converted the common pasturage into farms for wheat raising. Such usurpations by the seigneurs had taken place at Seyre, Gragnague, and Gargas near the end of the century.\(^4^0\) In short, the amount of common meadow in the diocese was negligible.

Hence, it was primarily toward the right of vacant pasture on private properties that the local governing bodies of Toulouse turned their attention. The offensive against this right in Languedoc had been initiated early in the eighteenth century by the local communities themselves, represented by their town councils. This anomaly is explained by the fact that almost without exception, the town councils were composed of the most important landholders of each community.\(^4^1\) These indi-

\(^3^9\) The problem of the *vaine pâture* or *compascuité* is treated for the entire kingdom by Marc Bloch, "La lutte pour l’individualisme agraire dans la France du XVIII\(^{e}\) siècle," *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale*, 1930, pp. 329-381, 511-556.

\(^4^0\) A. D. C-1516-1517; G. Richert, "Biens communaux et droits d’usage en Haute-Garonne pendant la Réaction Thermidorienne et sous le Directoire," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 1951, pp. 274-280. Great regional variation is indicated by the fact that in the region of Saint-Gaudens in the Pyrenees about 14% of the land was in common.

\(^4^1\) E. Appolis, "La question de la vaine pature en Languedoc au XVIII\(^{e}\) siècle," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 1938, p. 99, "... les conseils politiques sont formés presque partout de cultivateurs aisés..."
viduals were naturally the strongest proponents of the "natural liberty of the proprietor," to use the physiocratic vocabulary, and of the elimination of communal rights on their land in particular. The town councils found a ready sounding board for their appeal in the Estates of the Province, the Parlement of Toulouse, and the Intendant of Languedoc. The Vicomte Saint Priest set the tone of his policy toward the right of vacant pasture when he said:

It is the essence of the administration of this province not to touch, as far as possible, the natural liberty which the proprietors must have to dispose of their possessions as they see fit and that is, above all, because the taille, being réele [on land], the individual is interested in giving them the full value to which they are susceptible.42

As early as 1634, the Parlement of Toulouse had issued a ruling limiting the right of vacant pasture, but it was only after the ruling of March 27, 1725, that the Parlement began to hand down numerous judicial rulings in response to a growing number of individual and community petitions. Under the pretext of maintaining equality for all members of a community, the court in fact defended proprietors who had successfully prevented communal livestock from foraging on their lands. The ruling of 1725 established a general principle: "The Court has made and does make the strongest prohibitions and interdictions to enter or pasture any kind of animal during the entire year in the olive groves, vineyards, newly planted or cut woods, fruit orchards, and other lands bounded by an enclosure." 43

Among the numerous rulings that followed, four can be cited favoring noble proprietors in the diocese of Toulouse. They were in favor of Charles de Rochefoucard, Comte de Clermont (September 6, 1735), M. de Vignes, councilor at the Parlement (June 26, 1738), M. de Buisson, Marquis d'Aussonne (April 26, 1742), and M. de Célès, councilor at the Parlement (July 23, 1746). All of these gentilshommes were engaged in legal disputes with their respective communities over the right of vacant pasture. The substance of these four judgments may be summarized as follows: (1) pasturage was prohibited by any

members of the community on the seigneur's land and fines for violations fixed at 50 to 100 livres; (2) a survey was projected to estimate the maximum number of livestock each inhabitant could own, outlawing in any case pasturage on lands other than those belonging to each inhabitant; (3) it was prohibited to cut any wood, gather any grapes, or glean before the sheaves had been collected on the seigneur's land; (4) trespassing on the seigneur's land without permission was strictly prohibited; and (5) the pasturage of sheep, goats, pigs, geese, or ducks on the common meadow was prohibited at any time, and the pasturage of oxen, cows, horses, and mules was prohibited before the straw had been collected. More than ending the vacant pasture, these rulings attacked the livestock holder who had little property and even restricted the use of the common meadow.  

By 1765, the appeals against the right of vacant pasture had become so profuse that the Agricultural Committee of the Provincial Estates made an inquiry among all the dioceses of Languedoc about this problem. The replies to this inquest, presented before the next session of the Estates by the Archbishop of Toulouse, were almost unanimously opposed to the right of vacant pasture. Subsequently, the Estates voted a general abolition of this right in Languedoc with the proviso that individual communities could vote its retention if they so desired. The Parlement of Toulouse, revealing its fundamental affinity of interest with the Estates, handed down the ruling of June 21, 1766 making vacant pasture illegal "except in those communities which by unanimous vote will judge à propos to retain it. . . ." 

Compared to this strong prohibition, the project for a Royal Declaration on the right of vacant pasture sponsored by Bertin, the Controller-General, seemed timid indeed. Bertin's project provided that a maximum of one-fifth of a property be exempted from the vacant pasture and then on condition that this portion be put into artificial meadow and bounded by hedges or ditches. The reaction of Riquet de Bonrepos, Attorney-General of the

\[\text{44 A. D., B-1518, f}^{\circ} 652; \text{B-1686, f}^{\circ} 494, f^{\circ} 543. \text{Series B is the "Archives du Parlement." These are the registers of the arrêts followed by the folio number.}
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\[\text{45 Appolis, "La question de la vaine pâturé," loc. cit., pp. 111-118.} \]
Parlement of Toulouse, to Bertin’s proposal, revealed not only how far Languedoc was ahead of the rest of the Kingdom in the campaign against communal rights, but also the unwillingness of the proprietor beneficiary to accept conditions in exchange for abolition. Riquet, whose extensive landholdings in the Lauragais made him representative of the landed nobility of Toulouse, was quick to point out that Bertin’s declaration would still be prejudicial to the “natural right of each proprietor,” since it abolished vacant pasture on only one-fifth of a property, while in Languedoc each proprietor had the freedom to prohibit communal pasturage on all of his land if he saw fit. Furthermore, Riquet objected to putting the proprietor to the extra expense of digging ditches and growing hedges when, on the contrary, he should have “the right” to compensation for damages caused by communal flocks and livestock on his land. Finally, Riquet concluded, “it was hardly possible to make general laws for the whole Kingdom on such a matter,” and it would be much better that each locality be guided by its own usages as interpreted by the Parlement of its resort. The Intendant Saint Priest, avoiding any conflict with Bertin, simply stated that the new project would encounter no inconvenience in Languedoc “because it conforms to what is already observed here.”

Between 1766 and the Revolution, the penalties prescribed by the Parlement for violations of the ruling of 1766 became more severe, especially in rich grain areas such as the Lauragais. Fines varied from 50 to 500 livres for pasturage on another’s property, or for exceeding one’s quota on the common meadow. The members of Parlement who usually possessed seigniorial rights of justice in rural areas themselves were inclined to delegate the enforcement of the law against vacant pasturage to the seigneurs. The results of this delegation of enforcement powers were manifest in the numerous re-statements of seigniorial rights over the communities. Between 1773 and 1789, numerous are the cases before the Seneschal Court for the diocese of Toulouse in which the local seigneur asserted his

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46 Ibid., 119-120. These two letters are found in the Archives Nationales, H-1486, n. 273; H-1486, no. 19; dated August 10, 1766 and July 20, 1766, respectively.  
47 Ibid., 124.
judicial prerogatives, especially with regard to the punishment of communal pasturage on his property. Private contracts also reveal the enforcement of the 1766 ruling. Sharecroppers and tenant-farmers had to pay for whatever wood and straw they were allotted from the seigneur’s domain and communal pasturage was strictly forbidden. In short, whether enforced by royal official, Parlementary ruling, or local seigneur, the communal right of vacant pasture had practically ended in the diocese of Toulouse by the end of the Ancien Regime.

From the point of view of increasing agricultural productivity, the abolition of common rights of pasturage on the fallow field was an indispensable step toward the planting of artificial meadows. Artificial meadows demanded enclosure and the right of vacant pasture prevented enclosure. But whether abolition necessarily led to this result is another question. In the diocese of Toulouse, the abolition of 1766 did not lead to profuse planting of artificial grasses before 1786, and probably not before 1800. It seems clear, therefore, that the campaign of the more prosperous landholders against the right of vacant pasture, though an indispensable preliminary to artificial meadows, was not waged with this in mind, and cannot be considered as a technique to increase agricultural productivity. It did, however, indirectly influence the larger proprietor’s income by aiding him to gain a firmer hold on the available livestock—the principal farm capital.

The rising demand for cereals encouraged all proprietors, large and small, to plant every available arpent in grain. It was this desire that gave the great impetus to the extensive clearings between 1770 and the Revolution. But clearings were made on meadow and woodland as well as on wastelands, reducing the supply of forage to a minimum. Of 328,435 arpents of land in the diocese, only about 27,000 arpents or 8% were still in natural meadow by 1789. Moreover, the soil of the Lauragais, so favorable for wheat and maize, was too humid in winter, and too dry in summer, to produce high yields of natural grasses. The Subdelegate estimated a yield of 30 quintaux (two small cart-loads) of hay per arpent in a common year and 15 or less

50 Dutil, op. cit., p. 122.
in a dry year.\footnote{A. D., C-109. Subdelegate to Intendant, January 11, 1786.} Along the streams, such as the Hers and the Girou, or near the banks of the Garonne or Ariège Rivers, good meadow could still be found, but in the diocese as a whole, cattle forage became increasingly rare.

It was against a background of forage scarcity that the communal right of vacant pasture was progressively suppressed. In a diocese where only 1\% of the land was in common, the plight of the propertyless day laborer who owned a few sheep and goats was obvious. But even the mass of the peasantry whose average landholdings in the diocese were 5.8 acres found the problem of pasturage increasingly acute. Clearings had deprived these small proprietors of the wastelands they had used for pasturage; the abolition of the right of vacant pasture barred them from the fallow field, wood, and meadow of the larger proprietors.\footnote{H. Martin, Documents relatifs à la vente des biens nationaux, District de Toulouse (Toulouse, 1916-1924), pp. 516-517; Richert, "Biens communaux en Haute-Garonne," loc. cit., pp. 280-281.}

The forage reports from the communities during the drought of 1785 emphasized the critical position of the marginal livestock owner. The village of Pujoler reported that it possessed only one meadow on the Girou producing only one-quarter of its usual yield of hay and, as a consequence, the poor were beginning to sell their livestock at a very low price. At Saint-Jory the consuls stated that pasturage was extremely rare and that the meadows near the Garonne belonging to the seigneur were guarded to prevent entrance of community livestock. The consuls of Villandrie reported that only the larger landowners were in a position to buy straw and maize in the neighboring villages and that the other proprietors were forced to use dried oak and poplar leaves wetted with wine as winter forage. The Subdelegate observed that many of the peasant farmers had abandoned their fields entirely because of lack of work-oxen.\footnote{A. D., C-109. Many communities reported that they had no natural pasturage whatsoever.}

To be sure, 1785 was a bad year for all proprietors, large and small, but it was the small peasant holder who necessarily suffered most from lack of forage.

With the virtual end of vacant pasture, the larger proprietors
had exclusive use of their meadowlands which included the best pasturage in the diocese. M. Rolland de Saint-Rome, for example, had 80 arpents (112 acres) of well-watered pasture along the Hers between Saint-Rome and Villenouvelle. At Bonrepos on the Girou the Riquet family had 35 arpents (49 acres) in meadow, leased in 1750 but strictly reserved for the seigneur after 1756. The Marquis de Bertier kept half his domain at Montrabe in wood and pasture, probably for commercial use since the bulk of his work-oxen were at Pinsaguel, over 20 kilometers away on the other side of Toulouse. In the same community, the Baron de Montbrun had half his domain of 100 acres in meadow. To the northeast, M. Picot de Lapeyrouse had 90 arpents (126 acres) of natural meadow along the Girou on his estate near Montastruc.

Without doubt the average noble proprietor had less pasturage than these examples would suggest. Of 50 families taken from the tax rolls of 1750, the average seigneur had about 10% of his properties in natural meadow. As a rule, this meadowland was distributed equally among the domain farms, suggesting the minimum pasturage necessary to feed the work-oxen and other livestock on the adjoining lands under cultivation. Typical was the Marquis de Gavarret with his 40 arpents (56 acres) of meadowland distributed in 4 arpent blocks among 11 farms. Nevertheless, the noble proprietors were usually able to economize some hay for the market. The Baron de Lapeyrouse observed that the proprietors in the region of Montastruc used the hay of their meadows very sparingly and sold the greater part at Toulouse for a good price.

It would be too much to conclude that the eighteenth century witnessed the complete annihilation of the small livestock-owner in the diocese of Toulouse. The vitality of this class is revealed by the partial re-establishment of communal rights during and after the Revolution. On the other hand, there is little doubt that the bulk of the livestock was in the hands of the larger proprietors who owned most of the available meadowland on

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65 A. D., C.1331-1346.
67 Richert, *loc. cit.*, p. 284 and *passim.*
the eve of the Revolution. The relatively few registered leases of farm-oxen by independent livestock-owners in the late century suggest such a concentration. Moreover, not only do sharecropping contracts invariably include a lease of livestock, but also the progressive reduction of the sharecropper's portion of the harvest indicates an increasing dependence on the larger proprietor for farm-capital. The new clearings and, above all, the suppression of the right of vacant pasture were in large measure responsible for this dependence.

The livestock accounts of individual noble proprietors were carefully kept, particular attention being given to natural increases through breeding as well as inflation in cattle values. The accounts of the Marquis d'Escouloubre and Astre de Blagnac for 1750 indicate a concern for every ox, calf, colt, and sheep bought or sold on their farms and the exact division of profits and costs (to the sou) with the sharecroppers. After 1779, the Marquis de Fourquevaux paid more attention to the division of livestock profits with his sharecropper and after 1783 he kept the entire profit on the stock for himself. The Baron de Saint Elix possessed an exact inventory of all the farm animals from an ox to the smallest heifer on each of his six farms. He calculated an increase in capital value of the livestock of 1,163 livres between 1739 and 1763, an increase of 40%, largely from natural increases. This entire sum was made a charge on the leaseholders. In 1772 the baron demanded his sharecroppers to pay one-half of the capital value of all the livestock, a sum amounting to over 2,000 livres, or between 200 and 300 livres per sharecropper. No doubt the increase in the price of oxen, cows, and calves of about 30% between

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58 *Supra*, Chapter II on métayage contracts.

59 The process was accelerated by the severe cattle epidemics of 1775-1783. The epizootic disease of 1775 took 80,000 head of cattle between Bordeaux and Toulouse. Thousands more were slaughtered by the provincial administration in an effort to stem the epidemic by creating a *cordon sanitaire* about the uninfected area. In the plague of carbuncles (*mal noir*) between 1777 and 1783 the community of Labastide-Saint Sernin lost 29 oxen out of a total of 50 in 32 days. Montaugé, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-45; A. D., C-124.

60 A. D., E-1713 "Métaire d'Endonnat, 1751"; E-647 (de Blagnac).

61 A. D., E-641 "Livre de raison de Fourquevaux, 1753-1789."

62 A. D., E-1777 Saint Elix Papers.
1775 and 1789 furnished added encouragement to the proprietor to take careful inventory of his livestock.  

Sources confirm that the quality of the bovine livestock was distinctly mediocre. Picot de Lapeyrouse spoke for the diocese when he wrote as late as 1818 that nothing had been done towards the improvement of the cattle breeds and consequently they were stunted, lean and deformed. "In all of the canton of Montastruc," he writes, "there is not a single choice bull . . . a pitiful calf of one year leaps on the most beautiful cow . . . What sort of fruit can one expect?" Good oxen had to be bought outside of the diocese as far as Montauban or Gresoles in Gascony. Horses were not substituted despite the number of available Norman and Andalusian breeds in the Royal Studs of Epinet near Toulouse.

The causes for this neglect were many—overemphasis on cereal production, the neglect of cattle forage, the stubborn attachment of proprietor and sharecropper to traditional methods of agriculture, and the sharecropper's lack of interest in and even suspicion of ameliorations urged by the more progressive noble proprietors such as the Baron de Lapeyrouse. Théron de Montauge, writing in 1869, states that capital was turned away from agriculture and placed in colonial commerce and provincial rentes, although the distribution of noble investments in the Toulouse area would lead to the opposite conclusion. Farm capital, however, was placed in land or clearings rather than into livestock or tools. A letter of the Subdelegate to the Intendant in 1762 was enlightening in this regard. A passage read: "... the fear of a heavier tax often prevents the purchase of more livestock in order not to reveal prosperity." No doubt the poor knowledge of veterinary science

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63 Montaugé, op. cit., p. 45. Livestock prices in 1789 were as follows:
1 calf—25 to 30 livres
1 pair of cows—200 to 300 livres
1 pair of mules—250 livres
1 pair of work-oxen—400 to 550 livres


65 Picot, op. cit., p. 27. In his conclusion Picot writes: "It is to be noted that the agriculture of the canton of Montastruc is the same as that of a great number of neighboring cantons. Thus, in the practice of our canton, I have also given that of the canton of Verfeil, Lanta, the center of Toulouse, etc." Ibid., 85.

66 Montaugé, op. cit., p. 57. Cf. Chapter V infra, and, in fact, the whole weight of this study.

67 A. D., C-106. Subdelegate to Intendant, April 17, 1762.
and the series of cattle epidemics between 1775 and 1783 dis­
couraged many proprietors from investing one sou in farm
animals beyond the minimum requirements of plowing and
fertilizing. In any event, the profits that the noble proprietor
realized on his bovine livestock were due largely to scarcity and
concentration of available supply, rather than to an improve­
ment of cattle breeds.

Almost all the principal families of the diocese had flocks of
30 to 100 sheep. These flocks were not large enough to be
used for extensive sheepfolding since about 300 sheep were
required to fertilize 20 arpents (28 acres) of land. But they
had the advantage of being small enough to be well surveyed
and cared for. The Subdelegate reported that the flocks in the
Lauragais were "very well housed, their pens " well equipped,
clean, warm, and aired twice annually." He observed that it
was "especially in the Lauragais that the best shepherds were
found," a factor which, added to the favorable climate, "should
give as good a return as in England," provided the local variety
were bred with the heat-resisting Spanish Merinos. The larger
proprietors were in a position to experiment with new breeds
and raise larger than average flocks. The Comte de Villèle took
advantage of the experimental sheep farm at Rambouillet to
transport Spanish rams over 1000 kilometers (600 miles) to
Toulouse. On his estate at Mourvilles-Basses he increased his
flock to 300 by the end of the century, and was to double this
number in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. After
innumerable initial setbacks, the Baron de Lapeyrouse estab-

88 A. D., C-123. Intendant to Subdelegate, January 27, 1762. In an invitation
to the Subdelegate to find students for the new (and only) veterinary school in the Midi at Lyon, the Intendant wrote "the treatment of animal sickness has
been almost entirely neglected . . . the philosophers and most respectable doctors
having scorned occupying themselves with it." A. D., C-124. Note 61 above.
89 Neglect of farm livestock was not due to a lack of attention on the part of
the Estates of Languedoc. In the session of 1765-1767, for example, the
Estates reimbursed the Vicomte de Polignac for having brought 42 Swiss bulls
into the province. A. D., C-2409 "Seance de 1766-67."
90 Picot, op. cit., p. 29; A. D., C-1312-1330.
91 A. D., C-123 "Instruction sur le parage des bêtes à laine, 1785"; Sub­
delegate to Intendant, June 28, 1783, "Réponses sur les bêtes à laine"; Dutil
asserts that the Lauragais was not typical of Languedoc, however. Like Arthur
Young, he stresses the poor care of the sheep flocks in most of the diocese.
lished a healthy flock by breeding 100 ewes of the local variety with two Merino rams. To assure this flock of good care, he sent one of his sons to Rambouillet to procure a "skillful and docile shepherd." He then built a number of well-aired sheep pens close to his principal domain including barns for fodder and litter, brick mangers, stone troughs, and a separate pen for sick ewes. Between 1780 and 1815 the baron had increased his flock at Lapeyrouse from 370 to 657 sheep of which 162 were Merinos.  

An official inventory in 1782 indicates the importance of ovine relative to bovine livestock in the diocese. Given that the noble proprietors held almost half of the land in each community and that Parlementary rulings permitted only one or two sheep per habitant, it seems fair to assume that the bulk of the sheep in each community belonged to the seigneur. Thus, most of the 1,000 sheep at Saint-Léon belonged to the Marquis de Gavarret, most of the 810 at Pinsaguel and Portet to the Marquis de Bertier, most of the 1,075 at Venerygue-Vernet to the Councilor d'Assézat, most of the 950 at Pibrac to the Comte Dufaur, and most of the 1,100 at Caraman to the Comte Riquet, cousin of the Attorney-General. These figures indicate a substantial increase over the number of sheep declared by these gentlemen, on their tax rolls thirty-two years earlier.  

Although the noble landlord was more attentive to sheep-raising than to cattle breeding, in both instances he benefited from scarcity and concentration of supply. This was due to his firm hold on the available meadowland, a near-monopoly which had been made possible by the clearings and the abolition of the right of vacant pasture. The noble proprietor did not make appreciable profits from the sales of livestock or subsidiary products; the Lauragais was neither cattle nor sheep country. However, control of this important farm capital greatly strengthened the seigneur's bargaining position with his tenants and his peasant neighbors.

73 Picot, op. cit., pp. 32-36.
76 A. D., C-1312-1330.