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Slave Cocoa and Red Rubber: E. D. Morel and the Problem of Ethical Consumption

JONATHAN E. ROBINS

Morgan State University

On Easter Sunday in 2001, a sensational story caught the attention of international media. Authorities in West Africa were hunting for the MV *Etireno*, alleged to be a "slave ship" carrying child workers to cocoa farms in the region.[1] While the *Etireno* turned out to be laden with migrants of all ages, there was plenty of prior evidence of coerced labor on cocoa farms, and the link between slavery and the Easter chocolate binge made for irresistible headlines in following weeks. "Chocolate slavery leaves rancid taste," cried one paper, while another promised to detail the "Cocoa industry's bitter secret."[2]

"Fair trade" and anti-slavery organizations responded by endorsing "free labor" cocoa products, and activists called for boycotts of "slave chocolate." Politicians scolded industry heads, West African governments promised reform, and little was accomplished.[3] Historians might feel a touch of *déjà-vu* in all this. The story of "tainted" chocolate enjoyed by children in the West at the expense of African labor had played out a century before in the Portuguese colony of São Tomé and Príncipe, and at least one writer connected the contemporary controversy to the case of Portuguese "slave cocoa," employing history as a morality play.[4] On the surface, there are useful parallels between the two cases: each

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[1] For a synopsis of the case, see Olenka Frenkiel, "Children of the Etireno," *Guardian* (Manchester), 4 Oct. 2001, http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2001/oct/04/features11.g22 (accessed 10 Apr. 2012).

[2] *Pioneer Press* (St. Paul, Minn.), 27 June 2001: A10; *Star-Telegram* (Forth Worth, Tex.), 11 Oct. 2001: n.p.

[3] Annual reports 2007–2009, "Oversight of Public and Private Initiatives to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the Cocoa Sector in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana," Payson Center, Tulane University, http://www.childlabor-payson.org (accessed 10 April 2012).

[4] Angela V. John, "A New Slavery?" *History Today* 52, 6 (June 2002): 34–35.

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featured malfeasance by capitalist firms operating in a global marketplace, and each posed serious ethical problems to consumers of cocoa.

This article uses the "slave cocoa" case to explore consumer-centered activism in the past, and it challenges the idea that consumers were, by virtue of their place on the terminal end of the commodity chain, best suited to effect change. I argue that alternative understandings of consumption were used to identify other sites of action in global networks of agriculture, manufacturing, distribution, and consumption. I follow the career of E. D. Morel, a British journalist and humanitarian activist who was intimately involved with the cocoa scandal as well as the contemporaneous "red rubber" affair in the Congo Free State.[5] Despite working in the midst of a blossoming consumer age, one that saw the proliferation of consumer groups and the politicization of consumption, Morel explicitly rejected consumerism as a basis for organization. His skeptical view of consumer agency led him to identify other, more influential agents for reform.

CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMERISM

Over the last two decades, historians have examined consumption and consumers as serious subjects in their own right. Consumption has been described as a kind of social and political space in modern societies, an area of activity from which individuals can negotiate and contest their relationships with capital, labor, and the state. Writing about the British experience, historian Matthew Hilton called consumerism "a mobilising force at the heart of twentieth-century social and political history."[6] The birth of a "consumer society" has been pushed steadily backward, past what Gary Cross called the "all-consuming" twentieth century[7] into the nineteenth and even eighteenth centuries. Scholars have found vibrant political agents in consumers of sugar,[8] bread,[9] clothing,[10] and even municipal water.[11]

[5] There is currently no good modern biography of Morel. For an early hagiographic take, see F. Seymour Cocks, *E. D. Morel: The Man and His Work* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1920). For a more balanced study limited to his humanitarian activism and political career, see Catherine Ann Cline, *E. D. Morel, 1873–1924: The Strategies of Protest* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1980). See also Robert Wuliger, "The Idea of Economic Imperialism with Special Reference to the Life and Work of E. D. Morel" (PhD diss., University of London, 1953).

[6] Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.

[7] Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[8] Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713–1833* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[9] Frank Trentmann, "Before Fair Trade: Empire, Free Trade and the Moral Economies of Food in the Modern World," in Alexander Nützenadel and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Food and Globalization: Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 253–76.

[10] Katherine K. Sklar, "The Consumers' White Label Campaign of the National Consumers' League, 1898–1918," in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt, eds., *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 17–35.

[11] Frank Trentmann and Vanessa Taylor, "From Users to Consumers: Water Politics in Nineteenth-Century London," in Frank Trentmann, ed., *The Making of the*

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Part of this new research into consumption emphasizes ethical consumption, the use of purchasing power to accomplish a social objective. The practice of ethical consumption experienced a renaissance in the 1980s, a revival visibly marked by the proliferation of Max Havelaar, Fairtrade, Equal Exchange, and other certifications on store merchandise. Scholars have since traced the roots of this behavior, showing how consumption was used as a tool for social change in campaigns ranging from the battle against "slave sugar" to boycotts of sweatshop garments.[12] From this perspective, consumption is an individual or collective decision that can achieve goals beyond the satisfaction of personal needs and desires. The implication is that ethically guided consumption is a morally superior choice to "normal" consumption.

The second and more recent direction in the scholarship sees consumption through the lens of consumerism. "Consumerism" often carries a negative connotation, indicative of a society where consumption has replaced production as "the principal propelling and operating force of society."[13] Scholars have recast the term, arguing that a consumer-centered politics "captures the desire for self-empowerment" that can be achieved through consumption.[14] Surveying the new literature, Alan Aldridge concludes that consumption is, from the "consumerist" perspective, fundamentally "about the empowerment of consumers as citizens."[15]

Both the "new consumerism" and the ethical consumption approaches represent limited understandings of consumption. Both reduce local, national, and global processes to a simple producer-consumer dichotomy. Primary producers are, at best, victims to be saved through ethical consumption; end-consumers appear as the only individuals with agency. Intermediary producers and consumers fade into the background, usually identified as villainous corporations guilty of exploiting workers, or hawking inferior products to consumers.

This narrow view was not always the rule in English-language understandings of "consumption." "Consume" and its derivative words had negative connotations in English before the eighteenth century, meaning the destruction

Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 53–79.

[12] See Tim Lang and Yiannis Gabriel, "A Brief History of Consumer Activism," in Rob Harrison, Terry Newholm, and Deirdre Shaw, eds., *The Ethical Consumer* (London and New York: Sage Publications, 2005), 39–54. Lang and Gabriel's Anglo-centric account identifies four "waves" of consumer activism, beginning with the nineteenth-century British co-operative movement. In their narrative, this movement was supplanted by a turn-of-the-century "value-for-money consumer" movement. After a hiatus, consumerism returned in the late twentieth century with "Naderism," followed by globalization and the emergence of today's "alternative consumers." For an American-centered perspective with a different periodization, which takes consumer activism back to the American Revolution, see Lawrence Glickman, *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[13] Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 28.

[14] Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 4, 2.

[15] Alan Aldridge, *Consumption* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 6.

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or using up of things. Authors sometimes specified "the last consumer" when using the word in its modern sense, as the end-user of a product.[16] The early political economists defined consumption as the antithesis of production, and as a result they had little to say about consumption as an economic or social process. Everyone knew how to consume; creating wealth was the hard part. Adam Smith turned this thinking on its head, famously declaring that consumption was "the sole end and purpose of all production," but most writers continued to see producers rather than consumers as the key actors in society.[17]

Frank Trentmann has shown that a "more wide-ranging use of the consumer as a category of social order emerged only slowly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries."[18] According to Trentmann, Jean-Baptiste Say "was one of the few political economists to accord consumption a special section," recognizing "the 'reproductive consumption' of goods in factories."[19] The concept of "reproductive" consumption refined economic analysis, showing how intermediary agents exercised consumer and producer relationships with individuals at both ends of a commodity chain.[20] Say's understanding of consumption reflected a simple definition of "consume" as the using up of anything: thus a textile factory was a consumer of fiber, coal, and labor, in addition to being a producer of cloth.

The understanding of industries as consumers fell out of favor in the 1920s. Radical economist J. A. Hobson, who took a keen interest in the economic and moral relationships between producers and consumers, thought Say's terminology was useless. He argued, "the use of the term 'consumption' to describe the wear and tear of plant and the utilisation of raw materials and semi-manufactured goods in productive processes helped to confuse the

[16] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "consumer." The *Early English Books Online* database contains only one reference to the "last consumer" before 1700 (a 1692 pamphlet by John Locke). A search of digitized texts in the Google Books database reveals more than a dozen different uses of this expression in books published between 1700 and 1820.

[17] Adam Smith, *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 5th ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1904), IV.8.49; Frank Trentmann, "The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer: Meanings, Identities and Political Synapses," in John Brewer and Frank Trentmann, eds., *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 21–28.

[18] Trentmann, "Modern Genealogy of the Consumer," 26.

[19] Ibid., 27. The idea did not originate with Say: according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s entry "consumer," Locke used the word in 1692 to identify an intermediate user of commodities: "Money may be considered as in the hands of the Consumer, under which Name I here reckon the Merchant who buys the Commodity, when made, to export."

[20] J. B. Say, *Treatise on Political Economy*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1855), I.X–XI; III.III. As Say's American translator noted, the purpose of identifying "reproductive consumption" as a distinct economic process was understanding "the exact nature of capital," which Say believed could be used up productively and unproductively (A.10). See also discussions of "consumption" in Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 79; Alan Warde, "Consumption," in Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, eds., *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 57–59.

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terminology of economic theory.… There is nothing in common in the process of converting cotton yarn into cotton sheeting and the process of wearing out cotton-clothing yet the term 'consumption' is applied indifferently to both."[21] Hobson's complaint has merit, and it is not the goal of this article to restore older understandings of "consumption" in contemporary discourse. Rather, the purpose is to stress the importance of a broader examination of the commodity chain in discussions of consumption and the agency of consumers. As John Brewer and Trentmann observe, "Consumer goods and services are not the product of immaculate conception. Thinking about the connections between different sites of consumption and between production and consumption requires attention to physical, material places as well as to virtual ones."[22]

It was with such a broad view of consumption that British journalist E. D. Morel approached the problems posed by the "slave cocoa" and "red rubber" scandals. Morel viewed industries as a kind of consumer, one with a privileged position along the commodity chain. Trentmann notes that during the very period when "the consumer" became "an altogether more active, ubiquitous character" in the public sphere in Britain, British manufacturers took pains to demonstrate "how industries were consumers too."[23] Like end-users, industrial consumers were sensitive to rising prices, quality problems, and ethical issues. Morel and his contemporaries agreed that end-consumers fulfilled "the last economic function in a community," as future Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald put it, but they emphasized a network of production and consumption rather than its terminal point.[24]

Morel's emphasis on the industrial consumer as an agent for ethical change struck at what Hilton calls the "central dilemma" of consumerism: the fact that "the consumer can always be everybody and yet nobody and consumption can always be everything and yet nothing."[25] Industrial consumers, unlike end consumers, are a narrowly defined group, and they have privileged relationships with suppliers and customers. One consumer making an ethical purchasing choice has little impact on society, but a single firm or an entire industry can have much more effect.

MOREL AND "RED RUBBER"

Morel's most famous campaign was directed against the Congo Free State. On the pretense of suppressing slavery and protecting free trade along the Congo River, the Great Powers recognized King Leopold's claim over a vast swath of territory in central Africa. Leopold's concessionary companies proceeded to

[21] John A. Hobson, *Wealth and Life: A Study in Values* (London: Macmillan, 1929), 303.
[22] John Brewer and Frank Trentmann, "Introduction: Space, Time and Value in Consuming Cultures," in Brewer and Trentmann, eds., *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 1–17, here 3.
[23] Trentmann, "Modern Genealogy of the Consumer," 37, 39.
[24] J. Ramsey MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire* (London: George Allen, 1907), 85.
[25] Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 12.

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extract rubber, ivory, and other commodities from the inhabitants of the Congo Basin with ruthless methods, until international pressure compelled the Belgian government to seize and reform the king's private domain.[26]

Missionaries and humanitarian organizations had been protesting abuses in Congo practically since the establishment of the Free State, to little effect. Morel stumbled on the case in his work as a shipping clerk, connecting suspicious trade figures with increasingly dire reports from missionaries and travelers working in the Free State. With leading politicians and humanitarians, Morel launched the Congo Reform Association (CRA) in 1904 to end what he called the "Leopoldian system."

Morel saw in the Free State a doctrine of colonial rule that merged coercive state power with commercial exploitation. According to Leopold, all land in Congo and the resources it contained were state property. Inhabitants were forced to collect rubber, and those who failed to meet quotas were often brutally punished with mutilation, rape, or murder. Morel was appalled by these atrocities, but he concluded that they were a necessary outcome of Leopold's original sin: "the reduction of millions of men to a condition of absolute slavery, by a system of legalised robbery enforced by violence."[27]

The CRA dramatically publicized the abuses, using technologies like the lantern lecture to reach audiences around the world. Speakers at these multimedia presentations bombarded viewers with images of amputated limbs and corpses, appealing to audiences through "the lantern slide image of atrocity."[28] Literary figures like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Mark Twain contributed scathing attacks on King Leopold, and politicians hurled torrents of abuse at Leopold and the Congo Free State.

Given the rich context of consumer activism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is puzzling that the CRA did not use a consumer boycott as an economic weapon. A single commodity, rubber, connected individuals around the world to the plight of Leopold's victims, and one refrain (attributed to inhabitants of the Upper Congo) appeared over and over in publications: "Rubber is Death."[29] Morel invoked the idea of a "tainted"

[26] The most accessible account is Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1999). Morel's own account can be found in his *Red Rubber* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1906). His unfinished history of the Congo campaign was edited and published with supplementary chapters by William Roger Louis and Jean Stengers as *History of the Congo Reform Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). See also Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa, 1895–1914* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 239–90.

[27] Morel, *History of the Congo Reform Movement*, 58.

[28] Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884–1926* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 67.

[29] Morel, *Red Rubber*, 174. For an example of popular literature incorporating the "rubber is death" message, see Herbert Strang, *Samba: A Story of the Rubber Slaves of the Congo* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1906), 341.

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commodity in the title of his book-length assault on the Free State, *Red Rubber*, but he never appealed to readers as users of rubber. He did not call for a boycott of Congo rubber or firms associated with it, nor did he even contact major industrial consumers of rubber about their connections to Congo.[30] Instead he focused on what he thought was the weakest link in the chain of rubber production and Leopold's rule in the Congo: the illegality under international law of Leopold's economic policies.

According to Morel, Leopold had effected "a complete revolution of accepted economics" by abolishing free trade, which was for Morel the primary "material factor governing the relationship of peoples."[31] That the inhabitants of the Congo were being tortured, mutilated, and killed was a secondary effect of their loss of economic rights. Morel argued that even "an overwhelming case made out as to the atrocities even on a scale of unparalleled magnitude" would be "met by promises and protestations of reform: by the punishment of a few scapegoats; by the promulgation of new laws breathing the quintessence of philanthropy." He was convinced that "The appeal must be to the mind as well as the heart."[32]

This approach came to typify Morel's thinking on social and political issues. He did not seek systematic explanations for colonialism, capitalism, or anything else. Rather, he displayed "a wholehearted intellectual commitment to a particular analysis of the roots of the abuses" he campaigned against.[33] Having identified Leopold and his economic policies as the central cause of the Congo's suffering, Morel passionately believed nothing less than "a sweeping removal of the cause of the evil by cauterising the evil at its roots" would suffice to end the humanitarian disaster.[34]

The problem was that King Leopold was not about to hand his private domain over to the Belgian state or anyone else. Finding someone who could compel Leopold to give up control proved more difficult than Morel imagined. Public opinion, it seemed, was irrelevant to Leopold, and Morel showed a real skepticism toward the political clout of the masses. At the height of the campaign, Morel lamented, "The rubber slave-trade flourishes, unchecked, unimpaired, unaltered by all the talk and ink-spilling of the last four years."

[30] Morel's correspondence is held at the London School of Economics archive (hereafter "Morel Papers"). I could find no record of contact with rubber firms or related industries. Morel briefly discussed the idea of a rubber boycott with several correspondents, but he did not display any enthusiasm for the idea (Meyer to Morel, 10 Feb. 1909, F8/108/22; Strachey to Morel, 13 May 1903, F8/135/18, Morel Papers; I am indebted to Dean Pavlakis for these references). Morel did suggest that rubber-laden freighters be barred from British territorial waters, but this was as far as proposed economic sanctions went (*Red Rubber*, 183).

[31] Morel, *History of the Congo Reform Movement*, 64.

[32] Ibid., 58.

[33] Cline, *Morel*, 10.

[34] Morel, *Red Rubber*, 179.

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He feared that public criticism even "stimulated" abuses in the Congo, since the regime felt "a sense of precariousness in the future."[35]

The successful conclusion of the Congo campaign did nothing to change Morel's view of mass political mobilization. In his unfinished memoir of the CRA, Morel complained that it took six years of public outrage before "the Congo Free State ceased to pollute the map of Africa." "Six years during which the language of indignant and even violent denunciation indulged in by statesmen of the first rank and by eminent divines served, as it often (unjustly perhaps) seemed to us, only to satirise the inaction of the former and to demonstrate the powerlessness of religion as a lever to move mankind. Six years of talk, while Leopoldianism swept like a pestilence through the Equatorial Forest."[36]

THE "SLAVE COCOA" SCANDAL

Shortly after the creation of the CRA, another humanitarian crisis in western Africa came to Morel's attention, this time concerning allegations of slavery and deadly working conditions on the cocoa-producing islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. Portuguese planters had replaced chattel slavery on the islands with contract labor in the late nineteenth century, but the terms of the contracts were harsh. Plantation owners regularly filled out re-enlistment paperwork without the consent of workers, and a fund for repatriating workers at the end of their service turned out to be an administrative fiction. According to official records, not a single worker returned from the islands to Angola, the main source of workers, before 1908.[37]

William A. Cadbury, buying manager for the giant Cadbury Brothers cocoa company, first heard rumors about "slave cocoa" during a 1901 visit to Trinidad. A traveler there pressed William over his firm's purchases from São Tomé, saying that William "was buying S. Thome cocoa and thus indirectly supporting a labour system that was virtually slavery."[38] This was a serious ethical problem for the Cadbury firm. The Cadbury family were devout Quakers, and the firm's brand image connected a reputation for religious philanthropy with the idea that cocoa was a healthy, nutritious food.

[35] Ibid., 180.

[36] Morel, *History of the Congo Reform Movement*, 136.

[37] James Duffy, *A Question of Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 210. For a detailed analysis of the contract labor system, see William Gervase Clarence-Smith, "The Hidden Costs of Labour on the Cocoa Plantations of Sao Tome and Principe, 1875–1914," *Portuguese Studies* 6 (1990): 152–72; and William Gervase Clarence-Smith, "Cocoa Plantations and Coerced Labor in the Gulf of Guinea, 1870–1914," in Martin Klein, ed., *Breaking the Chains: Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 150–70.

[38] So states the official Cadbury Brothers account in, "Labour in Portuguese West Africa: Summary of Steps Taken by Cadbury Brothers, Ltd.," 120, Cadbury Papers, University of Birmingham Special Collections (hereafter "Cadbury Papers").

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Cadbury Brothers paid a "living wage" to workers in its model factory town, Bournville, and the firm stated that it was "in the habit of making enquiry as to the labour conditions in the mines from which we bought our coal." In 1906 the Cadbury board formally approved an "ethical purchasing policy" to weed out exploitative suppliers, requiring that all "contracts for machinery and sundries … state that the contract must be carried out by labour paid at proper trade rates."[39] Consumers seemed to agree, as Cadbury Brothers claimed in advertisements, that its cocoa was "Absolutely pure, therefore best."[40]

The juxtaposition of Cadbury Brothers with slavery in Africa captivated contemporaries, and the case continues to interest writers, especially in light of recent "slave cocoa" allegations in West Africa.[41] William Cadbury wrote, "It would have been ridiculous if we had attempted to ignore the conditions under which cocoa was produced," but the firm moved very slowly on the case.[42] Convinced that the cocoa firms could "bear better than anyone else on the question," William tried to organize an industry-wide campaign to pressure Portugal to reform labor standards or to boycott the islands in early 1903.[43] He was only able to convince British firms (also run by Quakers) and Stollwerck Brothers of Germany to cooperate. The firms could not simply switch suppliers, however, since new plantations growing comparable grades of cocoa would have taken about six years to produce commercial crops.[44] Instead they agreed to fund an investigation of labor conditions on São Tomé, with the aim of convincing planters and the Portuguese government to reform labor policies.[45]

[39] Ibid. See also C. Dellheim, "The Creation of a Company Culture: Cadburys, 1861–1931," *American Historical Review* 92, 1 (1987): 43–44; Lowell J. Satre, *Chocolate on Trial: Slavery, Politics, and the Ethics of Business* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 14–15.

[40] Dellheim, "Creation of a Company Culture," 17.

[41] The most comprehensive treatment remains Duffy, *A Question of Slavery*, a book that emphasizes high imperialist politics between Great Britain and Portugal. See also Glyn Stone, "The Foreign Office and Forced Labour in Portuguese West Africa, 1894–1914," in Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon, eds., *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807–1975* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 165–95. A recent account of Cadbury Brothers' involvement can be found in Satre, *Chocolate on Trial*; and Grant, *Civilised Savagery*. For a popular account of the story, see Deborah Cadbury, *Chocolate Wars: The 150-Year Rivalry between the World's Greatest Chocolate Makers* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010). Finally, William Cadbury's own version of the story was published as: William A. Cadbury, *Labour in Portuguese West Africa*, 2d ed. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969 [1910]).

[42] "Labour in Portuguese West Africa: Summary of Steps taken by Cadbury Brothers, Ltd.," 120, Cadbury Papers.

[43] W. A. Cadbury to Fry & Sons, 31 Mar. 1903, 180/953, Cadbury Papers.

[44] William Cadbury estimated São Tomé production at 24,000 tons, out of a world supply of about 147,000 tons. Cadbury Brothers alone bought one-third of the Portuguese crop. See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 175–76; Cadbury, *Labour in Portuguese West Africa*, 31.

[45] "Labour in Portuguese West Africa," 120, Cadbury Papers.

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Their report was preempted by British journalist and political campaigner Henry Nevinson.[46] He toured Portuguese West Africa and in 1905–1906 produced a series of articles and a book that sensationally linked wholesome cocoa to brutal slavery.[47] As a contemporary reviewer put it, Nevinson confronted "ordinary consumers" with the fact that "one-fifth of all the cocoa and chocolate we take is now produced for us by a form of black labour which is truly slavery." Nevinson found it ironic that "philanthropic manufacturers with the most scrupulous care for the welfare of their employees" would buy raw materials "grown under the most infamous and revolting conditions of murderous slavery."[48]

Political opponents of the Liberal-leaning Cadbury family used the cocoa issue as a weapon, criticizing those "Quaker houses who largely advertize their preparations of cocoa but singularly enough never mention that the main ingredient is obtained by slave labour."[49] Cadbury Brothers eventually issued its own report on labor conditions and switched from São Tomé cocoa to new supplies from Britain's Gold Coast colony, but the firm had to fight an ugly libel case over the controversy.[50]

THE INDUSTRIAL CONSUMER AS AN ETHICAL AGENT

William Cadbury began corresponding with Morel in late 1903, having taken an interest in Morel's reporting on the Congo Free State. William gave generously to the CRA when it formed in 1904, and he even began paying Morel a stipend in 1905 to support the journalist's humanitarian work.[51] The chocolate manufacturer asked that Morel keep this "a private understanding," alluding to the need to settle the problem in São Tomé before publically joining the fight against the Congo Free State.[52] Morel gratefully took the money, and he began to take a keen interest in São Tomé and Portuguese West Africa alongside his Congo crusade.[53]

[46] For a recent biography of Nevinson, see Angela V. John, *War, Journalism and the Shaping of the Twentieth Century: The Life and Times of Henry W. Nevinson* (London: I. B.Tauris, 2006). Nevinson reported on conflicts around the world in the early twentieth century, and was active in campaigns for women's suffrage and other political causes in Britain.

[47] Henry W. Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1906).

[48] "Slave Blood Mixed with Our Cocoa," *Review of Reviews*, Sept. 1907: 266.

[49] Quoted in Satre, *Chocolate on Trial*, 54.

[50] Satre's *Chocolate on Trial* gives a full account of the trial. The jury ruled in favor of Cadbury Brothers, but awarded damages of one farthing. The *Times* announced that it was "a victory which may seem to [Cadbury] a little too much like a defeat" (7 Dec. 1909: 4).

[51] Cadbury to Morel, 5 July 1905, F8/11/31, Morel Papers; William Roger Louis, "Morel and the Congo Reform Association 1904–1913," in William Roger Louis and Jean Stengers, eds., *History of the Congo Reform Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 171–220, here 172.

[52] Cadbury to Morel, 5 July 1905, F8/11/31, Morel Papers.

[53] William Cadbury's subsidies to Morel have been controversial. According to Kevin Grant, William Cadbury "appears" to have "deftly exploited" Morel, whom Cadbury recognized as "a brilliant propagandist" and "a potential political leader," to "distract attention from his company's own slavery scandal" (*Civilised Savagery*, 111). But as Cline observes, Morel was "a true believer in his

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As Morel and William corresponded about both ongoing crises, Morel worked out a pragmatic view of ethical consumption, one that privileged the industrial consumer as an agent for change. From Morel's perspective, steeped in the classical economic faith of his merchant friends in Liverpool, the merchant or manufacturer's job was to practice capitalism, which by definition required free trade, free labor, and private property. Capitalists who defended these tenets in the name of commerce were, by default, also carrying out an ethical mission against slavery and oppression. Unfortunately, no such capitalist stepped forward to lead the campaign against Congo rubber. Morel desperately hoped that Sir Alfred Jones, his patron and former employer at the Elder Dempster shipping firm, would take a stand against Leopold's policies in the Congo, but Jones flatly rejected his appeals.[54]

Next in line was John Holt, a Liverpool merchant with a trading empire the stretched across western Africa. He was a fervent Christian and a passionate believer in the doctrines of free trade and property, and his two faiths often intermingled in his correspondence with Morel. Holt was a bitter commercial rival of Jones, but when Morel tried to enlist Holt's leadership, the businessman replied: "So far as I am able to discern, my destiny arranged by Providence is to be a distributor of merchandise. Have I the capacity or mental qualification for any other role? How can I voice the wrongs of these helpless millions, and by what means can I bring about their redemption?"[55] Holt did serve on the CRA executive committee, but Morel struggled to enlist other important merchants in his campaign.[56] The rubber firms stayed as far as possible from the public eye, "although the whole world rang with the iniquity of the methods by which that rubber was put on the market."[57]

After these disappointments, William Cadbury's interest in investigating Portuguese labor abuses was a refreshing sign that capitalists could make a

own propaganda" (*Morel*, 15, 50). He had no qualms about accepting patronage for causes he believed in, and there is every indication in the Cadbury-Morel correspondence that Morel found William Cadbury's policies both ethical and efficacious. For more on Morel's personal finances, see William Roger Louis and Jean Stenger's "Critical Note D" in *History of the Congo Reform Movement*, 258–60. This was not the only instance in which Morel's need for patronage appeared to compromise his morals. Soap magnate William Lever gave Morel money in the hopes that he would back Lever's bid for palm oil concessions in Nigeria. Morel initially supported Lever but turned against the businessman when his racist ideas and monopolist plans became clear. Morel did not return the money. See K. Dike Nworah, "The Politics of Lever's West African Concessions, 1907–1913," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5, 2 (1972): 248–63, here 258. For Grant's take on the Lever affair, see *Civilised Savagery*, 82–87.

[54] Morel's final break with Jones came in May 1903, when Morel told him it was impossible to believe "that you alone are ignorant of all these horrors or of the system under which they are endemic and inevitable" (Morel to Jones, 3 May 1903, F8/94/8, Morel Papers).

[55] Holt to Morel, 31 Dec. 1901, F8/83, Morel Papers.

[56] Dean Pavlakis, "The Congo Reform Movement in Britain, 1896–1913" (PhD diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2011).

[57] E. D Morel, *The Black Man's Burden* (Manchester: National Labour Press, 1920), 151.

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positive difference in the world. Ten years after the end of Cadbury Brothers' involvement with São Tomé, Morel wrote: "The chocolate manufacturers of the world bought the raw material on the open market. They had no more to do with the methods of its production than the manufacturers of rubber tyres or toys, who bought Congo rubber on the market had to do with the systems under which rubber was produced in the Congo." The difference was that the cocoa makers were capitalists with consciences, and Morel thought their attitude "typifies what ought to be the attitude of public opinion generally on these questions."[58] George Cadbury, William's uncle and head of the firm, shared this view, writing that he "longed that some great india-rubber manufacturer would take the same course" that William adopted. He thought "it might have had years ago some influence in bringing public opinion in Belgium to bear on the awful conditions existing in the Congo."[59]

In hindsight, Morel concluded that Cadbury Brothers and its allies were the exception rather than the rule in modern business. He asserted, "This is the only case I have ever heard of in which manufacturers in Europe have recognised that it would be wrong of them not to investigate reports as to the ill-treatment of the distant coloured peoples producing the raw material … and not only to spend considerable sums in investigation, but to take action and refuse to buy the raw material so long as the conditions under which it was produced remained substantially unaltered."[60]

Morel also believed that the actions of the cocoa firms could actually make a difference where humanitarian groups and governments had failed. The Portuguese government had in fact issued a number of decrees ending the façade of involuntary "recruitment," but reforms were "cheerfully ignored in Africa."[61] The cocoa companies, on the other hand, had real power to change the labor system, because they were the only customers of the plantations. They could punish or reward planters through the marketplace.

William Cadbury was less enthusiastic than Morel about his own power as a market agent. "Sole hope was with planters," William insisted, "and the only weapon the simple statement that unless circumstances were completely changed we should be compelled to stop our purchases."[62] Believing that the boycott stick would be ineffective without universal participation, he preferred to dangle a carrot of closer business relationships and larger purchases in front of the Portuguese in exchange for labor reforms.[63] When colleagues in other cocoa firms urged William to declare a unilateral boycott of São Tomé

[58] Ibid.
[59] Quoted in Pavlakis, "Reforming Red Rubber."
[60] Morel, *The Black Man's Burden*, 151.
[61] The wording is Catherine Ann Cline's. "Review, James Duffy's A Question of Slavery," *Catholic Historical Review* 56, 4 (Jan. 1971): 691.
[62] "Labour in Portuguese West Africa," 120, Cadbury Papers.
[63] Cadbury, *Labour in Portuguese West Africa*.

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cocoa, he argued that if the firms stopped buying, "we as *manufacturers* would have no longer any right to complain of conditions of labour in Portuguese territories."[64]

Consumption created an economic as well as a moral connection to São Tomé, one that transcended political boundaries. Only the Cadbury firm's status as a participant in a market relationship gave them the right to speak to Portuguese plantation owners about their labor practices. In effect, William wanted to exercise what economist Albert Hirschman called the "voice" option.[65] Hirschman argued that critics implicitly recognize the legitimacy of an institution when they speak from within it, encouraging opponents to see criticism in a constructive light. According to Hirschman, "exiting" the relationship by leaving a firm or ending a purchasing agreement would mean a loss for both parties.

CONSUMERS AND CAPITALISTS

After Nevinson's findings were published, British and American newspapers began to report on cocoa. Conditions seemed ripe for a popular boycott of Portuguese cocoa. Writers vividly recalled abolitionist tropes of "slave-tainted" sugar by reminding readers that "one-fifth of every cup of cocoa that we drink is mixed with the blood of slaves."[66] One journalist used the metaphor of a commodity chain quite literally, writing that "the innocent demand for cocoa to drink or chocolate to eat by men, women and children in America is only one end of a chain which, at the other end, is shackled to a slave."[67] Even William Cadbury thought that "the consumer in Europe will always be more fastidious about an article of food than with other articles of commerce," suggesting that such an intimate, romanticized commodity like chocolate could easily inspire action.[68]

Yet William Cadbury, like Morel, did not see the consuming public as an ally in this fight. It was not for want of familiarity with consumer boycotts on William's part: in his 1910 book on São Tomé, William directly invoked the Quaker abolitionist legacy, urging Britons to recall the great anti-slavery campaigns of past centuries. "We have been the greatest slave owning nation," he observed, "but Englishmen … fought and won the great battle for human liberty, and the world cannot go back on that victory."[69] Instead of borrowing the methods of the abolitionists, William insisted that "the miseries of the

[64] Quoted in Satre, *Chocolate on Trial*, 140.
[65] Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).
[66] "Slave Blood Mixed with Our Cocoa," 266.
[67] *The Spectator*, quoted in "The African Cocoa Slave," *Current Literature*, Nov. 1909, 497–98, quote 498.
[68] Cadbury, *Labour in Portuguese West Africa*, 187.
[69] Ibid., 98.

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oppressed" obligated the business community—not the consuming public—to "make its voice heard in questions affecting human rights and freedom."[70]

It is clear that a public boycott of São Tomé cocoa would have been financially damaging to Cadbury Brothers, giving the firm an incentive to delay action and promote the idea of industry-wide reform.[71] Morel might have launched a parallel campaign to the CRA aimed at ending slavery in Portuguese West Africa, but he held back, even arguing against anti-Portuguese agitation. Morel's relationship as friend and client of William Cadbury might seem sufficient to explain the journalist's public stance on the cocoa issue, but Morel genuinely believed that the public could not change conditions in the Portuguese colonies. He dismissed the idea of a consumer boycott of cocoa by saying it would "be chiefly of a sentimental character."[72] Most importantly, Morel and Cadbury were concerned that São Tomé would distract attention from Congo, which both considered the greater evil.[73]

British firms finally boycotted Portuguese cocoa in 1909, convinced that further action from the Portuguese government or the planters was unlikely. The decision was undoubtedly influenced by the emergence of Britain's Gold Coast colony as a new supplier of high-quality cocoa. British consumers were not asked to make sacrifices to save São Tomé's workers; rather they were encouraged to continue buying Cadbury's cocoa to affirm their morality as consumers. Joseph Burtt, the cocoa firm's investigative agent, proudly told the British public: "Thanks to the refusal of large firms in England and elsewhere to buy slave-grown produce, we can now drink clean cocoa."[74]

Across the Atlantic, humanitarians tried to mobilize American consumers behind the boycott, targeting American firms that had refused to join Cadbury's investigation and boycott. Charitably stating that the "slave-grown product that the British refuse to buy is being dumped upon the United States," activists warned, "Portuguese cocoa comes to us steeped in all the infamies of the slave trade."[75] A letter to the *New York Times* in August 1909 urged the publication of a "white list of firms that have tabooed" the tainted cocoa.[76] Britain's Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society dispatched Burtt on an

[70] Ibid., 132–33.
[71] On this point Satre (*Chocolate on Trial*) and Grant (*Civilised Savagery*) agree.
[72] Morel to Cadbury, 4 May 1908, Cadbury Papers 180/782.
[73] This fact is crucial in understanding Morel's troubled relationship with Nevinson and other leaders of humanitarian and reformist movements. Looking over Britain's own imperial record, this latter group was perfectly willing to point out British evils, decrying "Chinese slavery" on the Rand and atrocities in India. Morel feared that this only gave ammunition to apologists for coercion elsewhere in Africa. One Portuguese pamphlet used quotes from Nevinson's *Modern Slavery* to show how the British endorsed "anarchy," connecting anti-slavery campaigning to revolutionary anti-colonialism: see "Pseudo-Philanthropy in Theory and Practice," in Donald F. Joyce, ed., *Slavery in Portuguese Africa: Opposing Views* (Northbrook, Ill: Metro Books, 1972), 62–63.
[74] Quoted in the *Republican* (Springfield, Mass.), 26 July 1909: 6.
[75] Ibid.
[76] *New York Times*, 4 Aug. 1909, 6.

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American tour, hoping for a repeat of the CRA's success in shocking the American public into action.[77] Quaker publications called for a boycott of American cocoa firms using "slave cocoa."[78] One newspaper's illustrated feature asked, "Would you boycott your cup of chocolate if you knew you'd free a child slave?" No boycott movement appeared, so we may conclude that for most American cocoa consumers, the answer was "no."

MOREL AND MORALITY IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

Morel's campaign against "red rubber" ended in victory: the Congo Free State ceased to exist when Belgium took over and reformed the administration of the troubled territory. The cocoa affair came to a less satisfactory end, however, and it left Morel disenchanted with the power of the market to enact social change. He declared in a speech: "The fact remains that the boycott has not released a single Angolan native. Unofficial England has done what it could." All that remained was state power, and he asked what "official England" could do to remedy the problem.[79]

Morel's thinking on power and consumption evolved over the next decade. Horrified by the First World War, Morel joined pacifist activists in demanding peace and an end to "secret diplomacy." His anti-war campaign with the Union for Democratic Control (UDC) was unpopular and earned him a stint in Pentonville prison, but working-class support for the anti-war campaign lured Morel away from Liberal politics to the Independent Labour Party.[80] In the proletariat he found a new agent for ethical change. Morel always emphasized the necessity of organization in achieving reform, and he came to view the socialist wing of the labor movement "as the only *organized* force making for international righteousness and peace."[81] He was not the only Liberal-turned-Labourite to see the worker as the prime agent of twentieth-century politics. Many of his contemporaries believed that the First World War demonstrated the worker's "power and his importance," and made the worker "conscious, as never before, of the necessity of using his power."[82]

From Morel's point of view, the political ascendency of organized labor in post-war Britain promised a new era in relations between industrialized societies and primary commodity-producing countries. "Had I known then what I know now, I should not have limited myself during the decade of the Congo agitation to approaching the statesman, the administrator, the heads of

[77] Satre, *Chocolate on Trial*, 134.
[78] Glickman, *Buying Power*, 158.
[79] Speech, F2/2/7 A87, Morel Papers. The date given on the typescript is July 1908, but should read 1909; there was no British boycott before 1909.
[80] Cline, *Morel*, 109–15.
[81] Ibid., 109.
[82] *Nation*, 30 June 1917, quoted in Michael Freeden, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought, 1914–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 51.

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WOULD YOU BOYCOTT YOUR CUP OF CHOCOLATE IF YOU KNEW YOU'D FREE A CHILD SLAVE?

By Dorothy Dale.

It gives you a shock, doesn't it, to learn that the cup of hot chocolate before you was partly prepared by the hands of a slave? It was, though very likely. Much of the cocoa used in this country comes from Portuguese growers, whose plantations are worked by slaves, bought outright in Africa. The matter is a serious one, so serious, indeed, that officials of the Portuguese government are aroused to the neces-



THE CHOCOLATE GIRL AND A GROUPE OF CHOCOLATE SLAVES IN PORTUGUESE WEST AFRICA. THEY ARE CARRYING THE POLES ON THE TOP OF WHICH THEY CURE THE PODS.

sity of reform, and are said to be about to call upon the United States, as the country using most of the cocoa produced in the slave-worked districts, to boycott the product.

Such a boycott would probably affect the price of cocoa and all chocolate products. It might even raise the price of chocolate soda and fudge, and thus impress the strange fact upon the mind of the girl consumer that she is helping to free a slave.

It is not always an adult slave, either. In a letter recently published by the London Spectator, England's most conservative journal, a friend of the editor writes under the date of July 5 of having himself seen a cargo of boys and girls sold at a station in Angola, Portuguese West Africa, and shipped to the coast for the cocoa

IMAGE 1 *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader*, 3 August 1909, p. 7. Image courtesy of NewsBank Inc.

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the churches, and the man in the street," Morel wrote in 1920. "I should have gone direct to the leaders of the Labour movement."[83]

Without absolving capitalist firms of moral responsibility, Morel argued that the burden to police the global marketplace was "shared by Trade Unions, by Industrial Councils."[84] In this new vision of ethical consumption, agency shifted from capitalists to workers, but the site of action remained fixed at the factory, understood as the first consumer of commodities. Morel continued to discount the agency of end-users, arguing that responsibility was shared "to a lesser degree, but distinctly, by the consumer." The consuming public might eat and use the fruits of slavery or mass murder in everyday life, but only the worker, Morel argued, could bring the entire commodity chain grinding to a halt. Unlike the individual consumer, the worker was "a unit in an organisation which can make itself politically felt."[85]

Morel argued that knowledge was the key to activating the ethical agency of workers. "A much-needed missionary work is that of interesting the labouring classes of Europe in the human associations connected with the raw material they handle," he wrote. Through the labor movement, Morel hoped to de-commodify commodities, attaching a human story to the cocoa, cotton, or rubber that might arrive from the tropics at British factories. "Those who might be disposed to deride the idea do not, in my humble opinion, know the working man—the British working man at any rate. The fact that the conditions he suffers from himself are often atrocious, would not deter him from becoming politically conscious, or politically active in the defence of the defenceless. I believe it is perfectly possible to arouse the interest and the sympathy of the British working man in the producers of the material he turns into candles, soap, rubber tyres, furniture, or clothing."[86]

This relationship between primary producer and industrial worker was possible because the labor process brought the worker into a physical relationship with commodities in a way that mere consumption did not: "As a fashioner of the raw material into the finished article, his professional intelligence should be easy to awaken, his sympathy would be certain to follow and, with its dawning, would come a great democratic drive for the honest, just, and humane treatment of the coloured races."[87]

The object of ethical consumption, Lawrence Glickman argues, is making "the near distant and the distant near," creating "long-distance solidarity" between producers and consumers at disparate ends of a commodity

[83] Morel, *The Black Man's Burden*, 153.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid. Hobson similarly argued that "man, as worker, is closely associated with his fellow man, as consumer is a detached unit." J. A. Hobson, "The New Industrial Revolution," 638, quoted in Freeden, *Liberalism Divided*, 71.
[86] Morel, *The Black Man's Burden*, 153.
[87] Ibid.

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chain.[88] In Morel's vision, workers were better positioned than consumers to accomplish this feat of the moral imagination.

Morel had little time to put any of these ideas into action. Much of his attention after 1919 was consumed by the editorship of the UDC publication *Foreign Affairs*, which aimed to overturn the Versailles treaty.[89] Morel did successfully enter Parliament in 1922, defeating Winston Churchill in Dundee. Constituent issues and foreign politics took most of Morel's time, but he kept an eye on labor conditions in Africa. In 1923, for instance, he inquired in Parliament about commodity exports and labor conditions in British Africa, perhaps assembling evidence to demonstrate the economic and moral superiority of peasant proprietorship over capitalist plantation agriculture.[90] Up to his death in 1924, Morel argued that free working conditions and fair prices were the best way to obtain necessary commodities from colonized peoples. Speaking on the need to reverse seizures of native land in Kenya, Morel warned, "You will not get your supplies unless you have a happy contented native population of landowners producing in their own right and for their own profit."[91] Morel died without an intellectual heir, and no one of his stature in Britain took up the torch for the rights of primary producers in distant lands. Morel's vision of a moral economy mediated by labor, government, and capital was one of many "paths not taken" in the interwar period.[92]

CONCLUSION

During the height of the recent "slave chocolate" agitation, activists and sympathetic journalists stressed the intimacy of individual consumers with commodities "tainted with slavery," piling guilt on chocolate lovers whose purchases "bring modern-day slavery into our homes."[93] One paper warned, "There is no way to know which chocolate products taste of slavery and

[88] Glickman, *Buying Power*, xi.

[89] Unfortunately for Morel's legacy, his last major campaign in *Foreign Affairs* condemned the stationing of African soldiers in occupied Germany. Morel delivered a series of uncharacteristically racist attacks on black soldiers as part of his wider opposition to the Allies' punitive post-war policy toward Germany. See Cline, *Morel*, 126–28; Henry Winkler, *Paths not Taken: British Labour and International Policy in the 1920s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 73; Robert C. Reinders, "Racialism on the Left: E. D. Morel and the 'Black Horror on the Rhine,'" *International Review of Social History* 13, 1 (1968): 1–28.

[90] House of Commons Debates (5th series), 30 July 1923, vol. 167, cc1006–7. See also 7 May 1923, vol. 163, cc1899–900 for an inquiry into coffee production; and 11 July 1923, vol. 166, cc1389–91 for a statement comparing peasant and plantation production in Kenya. Morel made similar inquiries to the end of his life in 1924 (House of Commons Debates, 26 Feb. 1924, vol. 170, c310).

[91] House of Commons Debates, 3 Mar. 1924, vol. 170, c1092.

[92] The phrase is Henry Winkler's (*Paths not Taken*). Winkler argues that the abandonment of radical ideas like Morel's was necessary, resulting in a Labour Party infused with "a strong element of realism" that better prepared it for the realpolitik of the 1930s (p. 192).

[93] Cheryl Stonehouse, "The Evil Slave Traders Who Deal in Misery so You Can Eat Chocolate," *The Express*, 27 Sept. 2000: n.p.

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which do not."[94] The producers of a television documentary about child labor on Ivoirian cocoa farms struck at the essential problem of consumer-driven reform when they rhetorically asked viewers, "did that unspeakably piercing moment [of seeing enslaved children] stop you reaching out, the next day, for your afternoon Twix or KitKat? Or did it just give you a twinge of guilt, quickly drowned out by desire?"[95]

There is little evidence that ethical consumption among end-users has improved the situation of child workers on West African cocoa farms.[96] But what else is left? Morel's two industrial agents, the philanthropic capitalist and the ethically conscious worker, are absent from contemporary debates about "ethical consumption." Philanthropic capitalists have disappeared from major cocoa firms,[97] and it is hard to imagine factory workers in Bournville or Hershey risking their own jobs for the sake of farmers in Ghana or Côte d'Ivoire.

The industrial consumer may yet have a future as an ethical agent, however. Cadbury has tried to (re-)associate its brand with humanitarian causes as part of its battle for market share in Britain. The company launched an ambitious social welfare program in Ghana to commemorate the centenary of Cadbury's purchasing relationships with cocoa growers in that country, and Cadbury's flagship product, Dairy Milk, now bears "Fairtrade" certification.[98] Cadbury returned to its traditional emphasis on ethical consumption to convince contemporary shoppers to favor its products.

After prodding by governments, major cocoa firms have funded initiatives in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to mitigate "the worst forms of child labor" in the

[94] Sudarsan Raghavan and Sumana Chatterjee, "How Your Chocolate may Be Tainted," *Knight Ridder Newspapers*, 24 June 2001: n.p.

[95] Natasha Walter, "Where Are the Ethical Consumers?" *Independent*, 16 Oct. 2000: 5.

[96] Sarah Grossman-Greene and Chris Bayer claim that media coverage of "chocolate slavery" in 2000–2001 caused a 2 percent drop in UK chocolate sales, the only fall in chocolate consumption recorded between 1996 and 2002: "A History of Child Labor, Child Rights, and the Harkin-Engel Protocol," 11, n. 39, Tulane University, Payson Center for International Development, Nov. 2009, http://www.childlabor-payson.org/A History of Child Rights, Child Labor, and the Harkin-Engel Protocol.pdf (accessed 10 Apr. 2012). A British retail trade magazine attributed the drop to increased spending on mobile phones and games, compounded by an unusually small number of new chocolate product launches. Sales of non-cocoa sweets also fell over the same period (*The Grocer*, 15 Dec. 2001, http://www.thegrocer.co.uk/topics/as-a-whole-the-total-confectionery-market-has-declined-this/73282.article (accessed 10 Apr. 2012).

[97] A possible exception in the cocoa industry is the charitable Hershey Trust, which continues to own a controlling stake in the Hershey firm. Cadbury Brothers absorbed fellow Quaker firm Fry & Sons, was in turn bought by multinational giant Schweppes, and was finally acquired in 2010 by the even bigger Kraft Foods. Quaker-owned Rowntree was reduced to a brand of the Nestlé foods empire. See Niels Fold, "Restructuring of the European Chocolate Industry and Its Impact on Cocoa Production in West Africa," *Journal of Economic Geography* 1, 4 (2001): 405–20.

[98] It remains to be seen what Cadbury will do if and when ethical consumption threatens profits. As a subsidiary of Kraft Foods, Cadbury is "judged by investors on its ability to increase profits margins—not the size of its heart" (Zoe Wood, "Socially Aware Chocoholics Rejoice as Cadbury's Dairy Milk Goes Fairtrade," *Guardian*, 22 July 2009: 25).

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industry.[99] The industry-funded International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) created programs to combat human trafficking and to increase access to education among working children. Using language reminiscent of E. D. Morel, the ICI states: "The cocoa industry including local buyers, transporters and processors, manufacturers of cocoa based products, with the related trade and retail sector, bear a key part of the shared responsibility for the future of the cocoa supply chain. The industry should support the evolution of an efficient, transparent and sustainable cocoa supply chain that significantly contributes to the needs for a decent living for farmers and their families and actively supports efforts towards the elimination of child and forced labour."[100] While it remains to be seen how these industry-led projects will transform the lives of primary producers, industrial efforts at reform should not be discounted as mere publicity stunts.

What contemporary scholars and activists should take from E. D. Morel's ideas on ethical consumption is not a blueprint for industrial-level reform in global commodity chains. Rather, it is the idea that consumption is the end of a long chain, with many sites of production and consumption separating the primary producer from the end user. Consumption may be the end of all production, but it is not the only site of action.

Abstract: Over the last two decades, consumption, consumerism, and the idea of consumer agency have attracted a great deal attention from scholars across a number of disciplines. Among historians, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been identified as a crucial period for consumption, one in which consumers emerged as an influential group of political, economic, and social agents. Historians of the English-speaking world have advanced bold claims about the prominence and impact of consumers during this period. Consumer movements were conspicuously absent in two major scandals of the early twentieth century, however. This article uses these commodity-centered cases—of rubber in the Congo Free State, and cocoa in the Portuguese colonies of São Tomé and Príncipe—to question the salience of "consumerism" in turn-of-the-century political thought. By tracing the career of British journalist and humanitarian activist E. D. Morel through the "red rubber" and "slave cocoa" scandals, the article demonstrates that consumers were only one of many influences along the commodity chain of production and consumption.

[99] See Grossman-Greene and Bayer, "History of Child Rights." Annual reports of the Payson Center's oversight project can be found at the project's website: http://www.childlabor-payson.org.

[100] International Cocoa Initiative, "Q&A," Apr. 2011, accessed 10 Apr. 2012, http://www.cocoainitiative.org/images/stories/pdf/Press_kit/Press_Kit_April_2011_Eng/ICI_QA_April_2011.pdf.

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