

By Herman Freudenberger

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS
TULANE UNIVERSITY

Fashion, Sumptuary Laws, and Business

« A remarkable instance of the interaction of business, society, and government unfolds in this study of the origins and effects of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century restrictions on luxury.

During the 150 years from 1650 to 1800 many European governments tried to regulate in some way the dress of their people. England was a conspicuous exception in that it had had no formal clothing ordinances on the law books since 1604.¹ Even there, however, the dead were forced to follow a fashion: they had to go to their graves in woolen shrouds made in England.

Such interference in the private lives of the people was nothing new. Sumptuary legislation and clothing ordinances had been fairly common since the Middle Ages. Condemned by the Church as the vice of avarice, sumptuousness in dress was also considered a social evil if indulged in by the wrong people. Thus, in 1327, under Edward III of England, a law was enacted to control "the outrageous and excessive apparel of divers people against their estate and degree."² In the sixteenth century, the moralistic and social motivations for such laws were intensified through the Reformation and as the result of the increasing mobility of the European people. Money, the great equalizer, came into the hands of more people and they frequently used it to give outward expression to their social ambitions. The power of money unquestionably posed a threat to the established privilege, whether rural and landed or urban and corporate. The exclusive use of fine cloth and other luxuries was one way in which traditional elites wanted to retain a visible position of eminence.

Sumptuary laws had still other justifications. Fear of the foreign — for fashion in many places came from abroad — and fear of change itself contributed to the enactment of sumptuary legislation.³ Even

¹ Wilfrid Hooper, "The Tudor Sumptuary Laws," *English Historical Review*, vol. XXX (July, 1915), pp. 448-49.

² Frances E. Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore, 1926), pp. 46-47.

³ John M. Vincent, *Costume and Conduct in the Laws of Basel, Bern, and Zurich, 1370-1800* (Baltimore, 1935), p. 42.

reasons of population can be given, as in the case of Lucca, where the tradition of expensive dowries threatened to reduce the city's population; fathers became hard pressed to outfit their daughters so as to make them eligible for a good match. The municipality therefore ordered a limitation on the number of expensive dresses per individual; but in practice the ordinance was unenforceable.⁴ Moral and social considerations were still involved in the clothing ordinances of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But the problems of business and economic life as a whole had now become more pressing. This was the era when the means of achieving economic development were being hotly debated. Moreover, it was the period during which fashion in dress began to assume increasing importance.

I

What is fashion? It is "a lady . . . of the strangest unconstant Constitution . . . who changes in the twinkle of an eye," so an eighteenth-century gentleman wrote disapprovingly. Introduced to society by her elder brother Taste, she had become the object of the adoration of the crowd.⁵ A desire for "tasteful" uniqueness may be the origin of a fashion; but its eventual result is emulation of the many. The fashion leader striving for uniqueness, as well as the imitator, attempting through dress to associate vicariously with the persons of prestige, will have to be willing to pay higher prices than normally. Fashion, thus, is unquestionably a luxury and since the seventeenth century has displayed itself chiefly in female attire. As a luxury it may have made part of the major contribution to modern capitalism that Werner Sombart maintained. The production of luxuries, he asserted, in many important cases made the employment of capitalistic organizational techniques necessary and may have been a stimulus toward their development.⁶ It also symbolizes Thorstein Veblen's conspicuous consumption, a disease of urbanized society. Fashions, in Veblen's terms, hardly made a beneficial contribution to the lives of the people. It wasted substance that might have been better employed.

Whether a positive or negative influence on the welfare of people, fashion represents outward proof of the affluence of society. This was also true in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when fashions as well as affluence were less widespread than today. As

⁴ I am indebted to Dr. Florence Edler de Roover for this information.

⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. VIII (April, 1738), p. 191.

⁶ Werner Sombart, *Luxus und Kapitalismus* (München & Leipzig, 1922), pp. 203-205.

far as business was concerned, the frequent obsolescence of fashionable wearing apparel provided it with new opportunities and new risks. The short and unpredictable dominance of one type of dress, fashion properly speaking, introduced a great uncertainty in the market. This allowed the businessman who guessed right windfall profits and could entail great loss for the one who made the wrong decision.

Even before the seventeenth century there had been changes in the style of dress. They had, however, been relatively slow and a particular type of attire lasted for decades and, at times, for centuries. These long cycles might be called *Tracht* or costume cycles, for lack of a better term, to differentiate them from the short periods of fashion, which operated within the longer cycles.

During the Middle Ages there were few changes in dress and consequently the *Tracht* cycles are the only ones to be considered. Furthermore, these changes were mainly in male attire and were, as one might expect, determined by military considerations. In the fourteenth century, for example, the introduction of plate armor instead of chain-mail necessitated a change in clothing.⁷ More than a century later, a new cycle of male dress was inaugurated by the clothing worn by victorious Swiss mercenaries. This was followed in the sixteenth century by the emulation of the dress of another victorious soldiery, the Spanish. Fame in war brought imitation in peace. These long cycles, it may be noted, involved only minimally the dress of women, who had not yet become very "clothes conscious."⁸ About 1630 this situation changed; fashion in the apparel of women became an important factor in European society.⁹

II

What accounts for this phenomenon? Urbanization and the attendant rise of the bourgeoisie seem to have been major causes. The medieval castle gave little opportunity for individual display; its society was too isolated and its life too primitive. Moreover, town life was more gregarious and more socially mobile. A person's pedigree was not as important as before and his position at a given time carried greater weight. Outward display was therefore a method by which he could give overt expression of his wealth. He used the same method, too, in social competition with the nobleman,

⁷ Max von Boehn, *Die Mode: Menschen und Moden im Mittelalter* (München, 1925), pp. 203-204.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁹ Max von Boehn, *Die Mode: Menschen und Moden im siebzehnten Jahrhundert* (München, 1913), p. 139.

whose social standing in the medieval context was still superior to that of a merchant or other commoner.¹⁰ As his desire for outward show of wealth increased, the wealthy burgher may have wanted, in Veblen's terms, to show his position by having his wife wear clothes that emphasized the leisure to which her husband's wealth had assigned her.¹¹ Fashion and luxury may, on the other hand, have gotten their main impetus from the competition between the mistress or prostitute and the wife for the affection of the man, using, among other things, the method of fashionable dress to provide the stronger attraction. This at least, is Sombart's thesis.¹² In either case, it was the city that was the scene of fashion. This said, it must also be noted that the royal courts were the places of the greatest ostentation and that the courtiers vied with each other in display. The desire for distinctiveness was here the more important consideration. Queen Elizabeth I of England forbade emulation of her style of dress and at her death left 6,000 fine garments behind.¹³ Uniqueness but also variety were satisfied by such large accumulations of wearing apparel. Apparently, a certain amount of boredom at court was relieved by frequent changes in dress. Thus, the Russian Czarina Anna, living in the first half of the eighteenth century, required that her courtiers appear in a different suit each time they were in her presence.¹⁴

On the other hand, at some eighteenth-century courts instead of uniqueness it was homogeneity in dress that was sought. Court uniforms were prescribed in the Russia of Catherine the Great, in Bavaria, in Sweden, and in the Habsburg monarchy under Maria Theresa. In most cases regardless of the prevailing trend, their purpose was to distinguish the courtiers and other aristocrats from the ambitious bourgeoisie. For, despite the many complaints of eighteenth-century writers that the lowest classes aped their betters in matters of dress, the competition was essentially between the nobles, on the one hand, and the merchants, financiers, and other middle-class persons on the other hand. The newly wealthy and socially ambitious were especially anxious to look like aristocrats, a process that the impoverishing aristocrats wanted to prevent through sumptuary legislation.¹⁵ The staid burghers of Swiss and German

¹⁰ Boehn, *Mittelalter*, p. 201.

¹¹ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York, 1912), p. 126.

¹² Sombart, *Luxus*, pp. 68-69.

¹³ Max von Boehn, *Die Mode: Menschen und Moden im sechzehnten Jahrhundert* (München, 1923), p. 149.

¹⁴ Max von Boehn, *Die Mode: Menschen und Moden im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (München, 1923), p. 208.

¹⁵ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York, 1954), p. 324 n. This appears to have been the purpose of a French ordinance of 1633 which attempted to

city-states, like those of Rembrandt's Holland, retained the conservative black costume of Spain. Similarly, during our period the clergy kept to simple dress for every-day purposes. Before the Reformation, however, they had been as clothes conscious as any dandy at court.¹⁶

Although the upper classes wanted to parade their distinctiveness through fashionable dress, their fashion many times was deliberately patterned on that of their supposed inferiors. For example, during the seventeenth century the loose fitting jacket of the peasant became popular. Or, to give another example, in eighteenth-century England men considered it fashionable to "look like Stage-Coachmen, Jockeys, and Pick-Pockets," as *Gentleman's Magazine* scornfully reported in 1739.¹⁷ And, who were the most successful in setting the fashion? The people of the theater, certainly not a group in the highest repute.¹⁸ Moreover, prostitutes and mistresses were commonly among the most fashionable and were even the initiators of fashion.¹⁹ Under such conditions it is evident that excess in clothing could hardly be curbed by deliberately allowing only prostitutes and rascals to wear certain styles of clothes.²⁰ Even so, the French King Henry III tried this psychological maneuver in the late sixteenth century as did the Duc de Sully, the great minister of his successor Henry IV.²¹

III

Sully's clothing ordinances as well as his actions in general were intended to strengthen France. He saw an outflow of money, principally to Italy for silks and for gold and silver thread used to embroider clothing. To eliminate this outflow he resorted to sumptuary legislation. There were many precedents for this in France, but Sully's Calvinist background may have influenced his preference for these measures. He prided himself on wearing only the simplest of clothes. The Calvinist background of his king, Henry IV, did not prevent the latter, however, from preferring a solution to the problems suggested by Barthélemy de Laffemas, his advisor in economic affairs. Rather than forbid the wearing of silks and thereby prevent

control dress to prevent the ruination of the courtiers. Michèle Beaulieu, *Contribution à l'Étude de la Mode à Paris: Les Transformations du Costume Éléphant sous le Règne de Louis XIII (1610-1643)* (Paris, 1936), p. 81.

¹⁶ Boehn, *Mittelalter*, pp. 241-42.

¹⁷ *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. IX (January, 1739), p. 28.

¹⁸ Caroline A. Foley, "Fashion," *Economic Journal*, vol. III (Sept., 1893), p. 465.

¹⁹ Sombart, *Luxus*, pp. 68-69; Vincent, *Costume*, p. 49.

²⁰ Boehn, *Sechszehntes Jahrhundert*, p. 174.

²¹ Henri J. L. Baudrillard, *Histoire du Luxe Privé et Public* (Paris, 1880-1881), vol. IV, pp. 11-23.

the outflow of money to Italy, as Sully wished, the King favored allowing silks to be worn but, above all, those manufactured in France. This policy gave a strong stimulus to the development of the French silk industry and, for that matter, to other luxury industries as well. For this reason the policy was carried forward most successfully by Jean Baptiste Colbert in the second half of the seventeenth century. Thus, instead of outlawing luxuries, France to her great profit became Europe's foremost producer of luxuries and also became the subject of envy and hatred of other European countries.

Paris became the center of fashion during the seventeenth century. This was true to some extent even while Spanish and Dutch styles were still the vogue during the earlier part of the century. Beginning with the second half of the century, however, Paris' domination became increasingly obvious and self-conscious. Regularly every month Parisian mannequins called Pandoras (*bambola* in Italian and "fashion babies" in English), were completely dressed in the latest fashion, and toured European capitals, not even impeded by war.²² Who dictated the style at this time is not clear. Louis XIV consciously tried to influence it, but he was certainly not anywhere near as successful as were Madame de Pompadour in the eighteenth century and, from the 1770's to the French Revolution, Queen Marie Antoinette. The latter, in combination with her principal clothes supplier, Marie-Jeanne (better known under her assumed name Rose) Bertin, who was often called the unofficial minister of fashion, were the unquestioned fashion leaders of their time.²³ Under their aegis, there was a regular frenzy for variety and originality in style, resulting in great exaggerations in dress.²⁴ Such exaggerations often have resulted in major changes in style.²⁵ A new costume cycle did begin in the 1790's for which the French Revolution was largely responsible.

Paris was the intellectual leader of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. How did she become the leader in fashion as well? It was not only because of the Pandoras or even the court life in Versailles, emulated as it was all over the continent, that France influenced, to the point of controlling, the fashion in dress. Equally

²² Boehn, *Achtzehntes Jahrhundert*, p. 128. The practice of having two such puppets began in the first half of the century — one large and one small. Beaulieu, *Contribution*, p. 11.

²³ Emile Langlade, *La Marchande de Modes de Marie Antoinette: Rose Bertin* (Paris, n.d.), pp. 56-57. There is an English edition of this book, *Rose Bertin: The Creator of Fashion at the Court of Marie Antoinette*, adapted from the French by Angelo S. Rappoport (London, 1913).

²⁴ Roland de la Platière, *Encyclopédie Methodique, Manufactures, Arts, et Métiers* (Paris, 1785), p. 133.

²⁵ Dwight E. Robinson, "Fashion Theory and Product Design," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. XXXVI (Nov.-Dec., 1958), p. 128.

influential were the French journals. The *Mercure Gallant*, founded in 1672, may have been the first fashion magazine; it included illustrations and information on fashion. Late in the eighteenth century, other journals appeared both in France and abroad: *Galerie des Modes* and *Courier des Modes* began publication in France in the 1770's and *Cabinet des Modes* and *Magasin de Modes* in the mid-1780's; *Galery of Fashion* in the 1790's in England; and, in the same decade, *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* and *Journal für Fabriken, Manufakturen, Handlung, Kunst, und Mode* in Germany.²⁶ Fashion had gained a strong hold over people.

Although fashions might depend to some extent on overt leadership, their acceptance has been difficult to impede or control by legislation. Yet, this was attempted repeatedly, as has been suggested, and above all in late seventeenth-century France. The government of Louis XIV tried to aid French industry and prevent the outflow of bullion through clothing ordinances. Its most conspicuous attempt in this direction, and at the same time its greatest failure, was in trying to prevent the use of printed cottons in order to preserve the French silk industry. Thousands died or were sent to the galleys for infractions of these rules.²⁷ It is somewhat ironic that all this was done to aid the manufacture of silk, which a century before had been in a position analogous to that of cotton in the eighteenth century. Similar attempts were made elsewhere, especially in England, where they were even less successful than in France. England's Calico Act of 1720 may not have been called a sumptuary law, but its purpose was little different from many such laws enacted elsewhere in eighteenth-century Europe. Even in England, however, there were some demands for outright sumptuary laws to prevent the outflow of money for "luxuries."

IV

Sumptuary laws did exist in a number of European countries until well into the eighteenth century. In general, however, it can be said that their doom was sealed during this century possibly, as John Martin Vincent suggests, by the increasing individualism and economic freedom of the time.²⁸ Moreover, the Mercantilist spirit was also a strong contributor. Its biggest contribution in this direc-

²⁶ Boehn, *Achtzehntes Jahrhundert*, p. 238. See also André Blum, *Histoire du Costume: Les Modes au XVII^e et au XVIII^e Siècles* (Paris, 1928), pp. 74-75.

²⁷ Eli F. Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, trans. by Mendel Shapiro (2 vols., London, 1935), vol. I, pp. 172-73.

²⁸ John M. Vincent, "Sumptuary Legislation," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, 1948), vol. XIV, p. 466.

tion might have been in that it divorced these laws from moral and social connotations and employed them solely for the furtherance of the national economies in question. Clothing ordinances became for the Mercantilists merely another weapon akin to their favorite one of prohibiting imports. In short, they were primarily concerned with the outflow of bullion. If a new fashion came into vogue, they preferred producing the necessary goods within the country to prohibiting their use altogether.

The eighteenth-century economic writers were, as has often been stated, production minded; less emphasis has been placed on their attitude toward consumption.²⁹ In one form this problem is another aspect of the question of production. The opinion became more common that people worked best when they could increase their level of consumption through higher wages. This was opposed to the position held by many that low wages, near the subsistence level, were the necessary whip for maximum output. High wages they agreed would allow workers to purchase what had been up to then luxury goods.³⁰ Not only would this raise the production of such goods, but it would also provide a broader market for them. This in turn would be an incentive for manufacturers to expand production. This seems to have happened in England, where it aided the Industrial Revolution significantly. England was a society with some degree of vertical social mobility in which the fashionable articles of the rich could eventually filter down to the lower classes. As an eighteenth-century English writer said, "a state . . . [in which] fashion . . . [has] uncontrolled sway" holds the promise of prosperity. The desire for luxuries may have been another important concomitant of the Industrial Revolution. It may have been a lure for some people to make them willing to submit to the discipline of factories, where the opportunities for higher wages existed.³¹

In general as the eighteenth century wore on, Mercantilists and other writers who concerned themselves with economic subjects began to approve the production and consumption of luxuries but took a strong stand against the importation of such goods. Along with David Hume they felt that excessive luxuries were an evil, but still preferable to none at all, so long as they were produced

²⁹ A. W. Coats, "Changing Attitudes to Labour in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Economic History Review*, Second Series, vol. XI (Aug., 1958), pp. 35-51.

³⁰ Joseph J. Spengler, "Mercantilist and Physiocratic Growth Theory," in Bert F. Hoselitz (ed.), *Theories of Economic Growth* (Glencoe, 1960), pp. 19-20. See also E. A. J. Johnson, "Unemployment and Consumption: The Mercantilist View," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. XLVI (Aug., 1932), pp. 698-719.

³¹ Elizabeth W. Gilboy, "Demand as a Factor in the Industrial Revolution," *Facts and Factors in Economic History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1932), pp. 628-29.

within the country.³² Neither they nor Hume were willing to go to the extreme of Bernard Mandeville who saw the dirty streets of London as necessary so that luxury could employ "a million of the poor and odious pride a million more."³³ This argument found strong opposition in the English economist Sir James Steuart and in Jean Jacques Rousseau, who saw the material needed for luxuries diverted from necessities and thus harmful rather than beneficial to the poor.³⁴

Some were not even much concerned that fashionable goods had to be bought abroad, although they did prefer the home product. If a luxury good had to be imported, however, it should at least come from a country that bought from one's own. In the case of Germany, this meant that imports from France should not be purchased but that imports from England and Holland were permissible.³⁵ Moreover, no exceptions were to be made for aristocrats and royalty who would, of course, consider the right of purchasing foreign cloth a part of their privileged position in society. Now in the eighteenth century they were to be required to set the good example that the rest of society was to emulate. The German princes, for example, wrote a contemporary German writer, should be the first to do without French fashion goods.³⁶ This was also the attitude of Habsburg officials in proposing sumptuary laws during the eighteenth century.³⁷

V

A tendency toward social equality can thus be observed, though it would be folly to assert that class distinctions had ceased or that the upper class was willingly giving up its prerogatives in dress. It merely means that the nobility was being required to contribute in this way to the common effort toward economic development. As the officials of the Habsburg commercial council (*Hofkommerzienrat*) pointed out in 1761, one could hardly expect the common people to wear domestically manufactured cloth if the court and the monarch did not.³⁸ That was also the reason why Duke Leopold of

³² David Hume, *Writings on Economics*, ed. by Eugene Rotwein (Madison, 1955), pp. 11, 28. Also, Johann Heinrich Ludwig Bergius (ed.), *Policey-und Cameral Magazin* (Frankfurt a/M, 1773), vol. VII, pp. 180-205.

³³ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices, Public Benefits* (Edinburgh, 1777), vol. I, pp. vii, 13.

³⁴ Carl Landauer, *Die Theorien der Merkantilisten und der Physiokraten über die oekonomische Bedeutung des Luxus* (München, 1915), pp. 50, 104-106.

³⁵ Johann Jacob Marperger, *Das Neu-eröffnete Manufakturwarenhauß* (Hamburg, 1704), pp. 13-15.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁷ Adolf Beer, "Zwei Handschreiben von Maria Theresia über den Luxus," *Zeitschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, vol. I (1893), pp. 341-48.

³⁸ Hofkammerarchiv (Vienna), Boehm. Commerz, fasc. 100, red no. 890, f. 28ff.

Tuscany (reigned 1765–1790), later Emperor Leopold II (reigned 1790–1792), felt it necessary to warn his nobility against excess in luxury.³⁹ Similarly, the ruling of the Swedish king, Gustav III (reigned 1771–1792), which ordered the wearing of a national costume made of Swedish cloth, had an egalitarian character although its specific purpose was to aid the woolen industry.⁴⁰ This was also true of the Polish sumptuary law of 1776, one of the last on record in Europe. It enjoined all, irrespective of rank, to wear Polish goods though the various classes were assigned different styles of apparel.⁴¹ A report on this law appeared in a German Physiocratic journal, which strongly inveighed against it. The writer felt that its prohibitive character eliminated foreign competition and was therefore harmful inasmuch as all competition was a necessary spur to high production.⁴² That this Physiocratic journal stood for economic freedom need not occasion surprise; but its friendly attitude toward industry as opposed to agriculture made it quite different from its French counterpart. The French Physiocrats opposed sumptuary laws, but they were displeased with luxury, except in the products of the soil. They felt that free competition rather than laws could check ostentatious living.⁴³ On this point the German Physiocratic journal also differed. It favored luxury as an incentive to work and, in one article, enunciated the principle that “ever-recurring extravagance is the fundamental principle of the welfare of society (*ein sich beständig erneuernder Aufwand . . . [ist] ein unumgängliches Bedingniss der gesellschaftlichen Glückseligkeit*).”⁴⁴

Whether of Physiocratic, Mercantilist, or other persuasion, economic writers by the end of the eighteenth century generally accepted the positive role of fashion and luxury in a country's development.

VI

The effect that the democratization of fashion and luxury had on business is hard to judge in precise terms. Yet there is abundant proof that fashionableness provided the incentive for many important industries. One need only point to the French silk industry centered in Lyons or the so-called French fine cloth industry at Sedan, Elboeuf, and Abbeville. In England the “New Draperies” intro-

³⁹ *Ephemeriden der Menschheit*, vol. XVIII (Sept., 1782), pp. 365–67.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. IV (Jan., 1778), pp. 87–90.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. III (Feb., 1777), pp. 158–75.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴³ *Ephemerides du Citoyens* (1767), part I, pp. 223ff.

⁴⁴ *Ephemeriden der Menschheit*, vol. IX (May, 1781), p. 528.

duced by Dutch and Flemish artisans satisfied a demand for lighter and more sumptuous goods. And the greatest success story of all has to be mentioned, the production of printed cotton fabrics in England. These fabrics all took the route from fashion for the few to consumption for the many and wider markets. To these examples may be added specific instances such as Verviers and Montjoie (both in modern Belgium) which became great centers for cloth production in the eighteenth century by watching the latest fashions. The Rococo style in men's clothing called for lighter, pastel colors and Verviers and Montjoie catered to that demand.⁴⁵

In the case of England and Belgium, it was businessmen who discovered the opportunities and exploited them. In France, however, it was the government which was prominently engaged in the creation of new business. Most of continental Europe followed the French rather than the English model. The reason may have been, as a high Habsburg official pointed out in the 1760's, that the spirit of enterprise was not as yet well developed.⁴⁶ It might be added that many continental national economies were backward compared to England and the Netherlands in terms of technological skills, business techniques, and capital. Prussia, Russia, and the Habsburg monarchy, among others, used the power of government to encourage, direct, and finance new enterprises so that fashion goods and luxuries need not be bought abroad. In using these methods, they copied France in order to oppose her. They hoped to have to purchase less from that fount of fashions. Unfortunately for them, they were often not successful; the new goods produced by less skilled hands could not compete with the French articles. Moreover, part of the intrinsic attraction of fashion goods was that they came from abroad, especially from France. It was only natural, therefore, that when Marie Antoinette came from Austria to meet her bridegroom, the Paris fashion house of Rose Bertin outfitted her.

The case of Rose Bertin deserves further comment. She was a retail merchant who sold ready-to-wear garments and hats. Her store exerted leadership in the field of fashion, and she exercised this leadership in consultation with Marie Antoinette.⁴⁷ Without

⁴⁵ Ernst Barkhausen, *Die Tuchindustrie in Montjoie, ihr Aufstieg und Niedergang* (Aachen, 1925), p. 34.

⁴⁶ Hofkammerarchiv (Vienna), Boehm. Commerz, fasc. 101/1, red no. 891, 14. April, 1761.

⁴⁷ Langlade, *Marchande*, pp. 56-57. Marie-Jeanne (Rose) Bertin was apprenticed to a *marchande de mode* in Abbeville named Barbier who wanted to set up business in Paris with Rose. When Barbier's husband refused to go along, Rose went by herself in 1770 and Barbier joined her later after the latter's husband died. Barbier married M. Tetard, *negotiant au drap et fournisseur de la Reine*, in Paris, and the Tetards gave Bertin credits

her connections, Rose Bertin could hardly have become the outstanding *marchande de modes* of the 1770's and 1780's. The risks were tremendous, but many girls, so Platière asserted, were drawn into the business.⁴⁸

Ready-to-wear clothing, today associated primarily with the mass market, may have been born in the demand for fashion goods, as Sombart asserted. On the other end of the scale, the used-clothing business undoubtedly also received a strong stimulus therefrom. It is the nature of fashionable goods to become quickly obsolete. Since, in many cases, they were still in good condition when discarded, they found their way to the used-clothing market. This type of business was also fostered by the military. Possibly even before discarded fashion goods came to the used-clothing market, used uniforms did.

The ramifications of fashion and luxury, as has been shown, were fairly widespread. During the century and a half prior to the French Revolution of 1789, both fashion and luxury increased in scope and in social penetration. They represented a significant determinant of the democratization of society. Furthermore, they laid a basis for the Industrial Revolution which for its mass production needed mass markets. At the same time they introduced an instability that became characteristic of many national economies.

To stem the tide of fashion and luxury with legislation proved to be a total failure even when the punishment for infraction was great. Generally during this period such sumptuary laws had as their purpose to aid the national economy, though many writers and government officials recognized that they were ineffectual. Nevertheless, they had changed their character significantly since the Middle Ages when morality and social distinction were their primary goals. Such legislation was considered an important aid to business by many in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when government participation in the economy and initiative in economic development were considered important. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the ideas of the French Physiocrats on the appropriate role of government were waning before the novel economic thought of Adam Smith. Sumptuary legislation disappeared apace.

and supported her financially in other ways. Pierre de Nouvion and Emile Liez, *Un Ministre des Modes sous Louis XVI: Mademoiselle Bertin* (Paris, 1911), pp. 22-28.

⁴⁸ Platière, *Encyclopédie*, p. 135.