

created within Parliament (Williams: 2010: 104), enhancing use of this repeal on the ban of parliamentary reporting; as a result providing accuracy and a widened sense of knowledge and parliamentary context for readers. These contributing factors implying that the press was already free before 1861 are solidified with the evidence that a decade earlier, in 1851, *The Times* was blamed for the downfall of the British government led under Lord Russell. During this period the press received a large amount of criticism, including from political essayist William Hazlitt who, in 1823, described *The Times* as “valiant, swaggering, insolent, with 100,000 readers at its heels” (Williams: 2010: 108). It could be interpreted that many in a position of power were afraid of the power and influence that the press as an institution had, and thus turned against it. Prime Minister Russell declared that the “degree of information possessed by *The Times* with regards to the most secret affairs of the State (was)...mortifying, humiliating and incomprehensible” (Williams: 2010: 109). Kevin Williams claims that it was in fact “the repeal of the ‘taxes on knowledge’ that enabled ‘the powers that be’ to seek revenge on their tormentor”, however as the above criticisms – and many more, as well as events such as the 1851 government collapse – were voiced *before* the repeal of the ‘taxes on knowledge’, it is justified to argue that as the press was already beyond ‘government censorship regarding ideology’, it was free before 1861.

Though the repeal of ‘taxes on knowledge’ may have only had a small part in press freedom, it did play a more significant role in press expansion. The main reason for this is because the repeal created heightened competition as more new publications launched; the number of newspapers per capita purchased over the age of 14 was 182 in 1920, compared with a mere six some seventy years earlier. The content of the publications themselves altered after the tax repeal - Ralph Negrine described “the commercialisation of the press...effect of advertising...trend to sensationalism...the reduction of political coverage” (Negrine: 1994: 39). This reference to advertising portrays the idea that after the repeal of taxes, publications became a lot more reliant on revenue from advertising – larger publications in particular. If the publication was of a good quality, advertisers sought to be featured as they knew they would be shown to a large proportion of upper-class readers. One such example of a national publication revelling in the importance of advertising was *The Times*, which is estimated to have “received twice as much revenue from advertisements as from sales” (Grant: 1871: 120), and in its 3rd July 1860 issue featured over 600 advertisements. The repeal on taxes also led to the price of publications decreasing, meaning more social classes gained access to newspapers. During the struggle for the tax repeal, Richard Cobden argued for this cause, saying “so long as the penny (tax) lasts there can be no daily press for the middle or working class” (Griffiths: 2002: 25). It was also suggested that the whole reason for the taxes in the first place was to “restrict circulation to the rich and more “reliable” of the public” (Brown: 1992: 25). After the final abolition of ‘taxes on knowledge’, the middle class were able to access the press, giving them a “positive social identity”, as well as enabling them to become the “economic and moral backbone of England” (Curran: 2002: 75). Literacy rates drastically improved – going from 69% of adults being able to write their name in 1850, to 97% in 1900 – and general literature reached “the nation through all its ranks” (Williams: 1970: 16). It could be argued that this was more to do with the availability of new technology at the time, such as rotary presses, linotype machines and the gas light - meaning more people could read in darkness. However, without the repeal of the ‘taxes on