

upon this, he remarked that "from election to election, the poor men run up scores at the shops, and are trusted by the shopkeepers, *expressly upon the credit of the proceeds of the ensuing election.*" Not all troubled to plead their poverty or to make excuses: some said frankly, "the *member* took care to get *well paid*, and they had a right to do the same if they could." Some even told Cobbett that by soliciting their votes he was endeavouring to "take the bread out of poor people's mouths," while the supporters of Bradshaw took for their motto, "Bread and Cheese, and *no empty Cupboard!*" It is not surprising that after Cobbett returned from Honiton he preached the purity of elections and the reform of the House of Commons.¹

William Cobbett to John Wright

BOTLEY, July 7, 1806.

As to Mr. Robson's re-election, I verily believe he would carry it for Westminster; and I would go up, and aid him with all my might, if he would stand upon my principle. He would surely carry it. Let me know *when* the dissolution is to take place. Give me, in your next letter, the very *best intelligence you can get* upon the subject, for I must begin, without loss of time, to address the electors all over the kingdom. Between you and I, my opinion is, that *I* should not come forward *now*, unless some body of electors were to *call* me forward. Most men like me have been ruined in reputation by their *haste* to get forward. If the great objects which I have at heart could be accomplished without my being in Parliament, I should greatly prefer it. I should first attend to my own family; I am perfectly sincere in all my public professions. But I will flinch from nothing

¹ *Political Register*, June 1806.