Economics 303Y1: The Economic History of Modern Europe to 1914

Topic No. 9 [17]: ‘The Great Depression’, 1873 - 1896: Myth or Reality?

General Surveys: books, textbooks, and monographs


Journal Articles (many involving econometrics)


QUESTIONS:

1. Did the British economy experience a ‘depression’ or secular downswing or a series of recessions in the period 1873 - 1896? If so, were these unique to Great Britain, or international? What characterizes the major economic trends in this era? How did they differ from those for the following period, 1896 - 1914?

2. If the term ‘depression’ is inappropriate, why did many contemporaries believe that the economy was undergoing a depression?

3. What explains the downswing in prices (the deflation), profits, and interest rates from 1873 - 1896? Were other industrial economies experiencing depressions? How did the British economy fare as well as the French and/or German?

4. What British economic sectors fared the best, and which ones the worst during this period?

5. Do trends in employment and real wages justify in any way the use of the term ‘Great Depression’? What were the major economic factors influencing the course of real wages in this era?