The **Irish Poor Laws** were a series of Acts of Parliament intended to address social instability due to widespread and persistent poverty in Ireland. While some legislation had been introduced by the pre-Union [Parliament of Ireland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_Ireland) prior to the[Act of Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Act_of_Union_1800), the most radical and comprehensive attempt was the Irish act of 1838, closely modelled on the [English Poor Law of 1834](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor_Law#The_1834_Poor_Law_Amendment_Act). In England, this replaced Elizabethan era legislation which had no equivalent in Ireland.