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The Chartist movement was the first mass movement driven by the working classes. It grew following the failure of the Reform Act to extend the vote beyond those owning property. In a People's Charter was drawn up for the London Working Men's Association (LWMA) by William Lovett and Francis.

Play media Dramatisation of the trial of the Chartists at Shire Hall, Monmouth , including background information Several outbreaks of violence ensued, leading to arrests and trials. One of the leaders of the movement, John Frost , on trial for treason, claimed in his defence that he had toured his territory of industrial Wales urging people not to break the law, although he was himself guilty of using language that some might interpret as a call to arms. Dr William Price of Llantrisant â€”more of a maverick than a mainstream Chartistâ€”described Frost as putting "a sword in my hand and a rope around my neck". By early autumn men were being drilled and armed in south Wales, and also in the West Riding. Secret cells were set up, covert meetings were held in the Chartist Caves at Llangynidr and weapons were manufactured as the Chartists armed themselves. Behind closed doors and in pub back rooms, plans were drawn up for a mass protest. It seems that Frost and other local leaders were expecting to seize the town and trigger a national uprising. The result of the Newport Rising was a disaster for Chartism. The hotel was occupied by armed soldiers. A brief, violent, and bloody battle ensued. Shots were fired by both sides, although most contemporaries agree that the soldiers holding the building had vastly superior firepower. The Chartists were forced to retreat in disarray: Despite this significant setback the movement remained remarkably buoyant, and remained so until late Samuel Holberry led an abortive rising in Sheffield on 12 January; and on 26 January Robert Peddie attempted similar action in Bradford. Frost and two other Newport leaders, Jones and Williams, were transported. Holberry and Peddie received long prison sentences with hard labour; Holberry died in prison and became a Chartist martyr. The Northern Star commented on the rejection: Three and half millions have quietly, orderly, soberly, peaceably but firmly asked of their rulers to do justice; and their rulers have turned a deaf ear to that protest. The same class is to be a slave class still. The mark and brand of inferiority is not to be removed. The assumption of inferiority is still to be maintained. The people are not to be free. Calls for the implementation of the Charter were soon included alongside demands for the restoration of wages to previous levels. Working people went on strike in 14 English and 8 Scottish counties, principally in the Midlands , Lancashire , Cheshire , Yorkshire, and the Strathclyde region of Scotland. How far these strikes were directly Chartist in inspiration "was then, as now, a subject of much controversy". At the time, these disputes were collectively known as the Plug Plot as, in many cases, protesters removed the plugs from steam boilers powering industry to prevent their use. Amongst historians writing in the 20th century, the term General Strike was increasingly used. Unrest began in the Potteries of Staffordshire in early August, spreading north to Cheshire and Lancashire where at Manchester a meeting of the Chartist national executive endorsed the strikes on the 16th. The strikes had begun spreading in Scotland and West Yorkshire from the 13th. There were outbreaks of serious violence, including property destruction and the ambushing of police convoys, in the Potteries and the West Riding. Though the government deployed soldiers to suppress violence, it was the practical problems in sustaining an indefinite stoppage that ultimately defeated the strikers. The drift back to work began on 19 August. Only Lancashire and Cheshire were still strike-bound by September, the Manchester powerloom weavers being the last to return to work on 26 September. During the late summer of hundreds were incarcerated â€” in the Potteries alone men and women went to prison. A smaller number, but still amounting to many dozens â€” such as William Ellis, who was convicted on perjured evidence â€” were transported. Cooper alone of the national Chartist leadership was convicted at a different trial , having spoken at strike meetings in the Potteries. He was to write a long poem in prison called "The Purgatory of Suicides. Between and , five estates were purchased, subdivided, and built on, and then settled by lucky shareholders, who were chosen by lot. Cottages built by the Chartist Land Company are still standing and inhabited today in Oxfordshire , Worcestershire , Gloucestershire [20] and on the outskirts of London. Rosedene , a Chartist cottage in Dodford, Worcestershire , is owned and maintained by the National Trust , and is open to visitors by

appointment. Feargus became the only Chartist to be elected an MP; it was a remarkable victory for the movement. More commonly, Chartist candidates participated in the open meetings, called hustings, that were the first stage of an election. They frequently won the show of hands at the hustings, but then withdrew from the poll to expose the deeply undemocratic nature of the electoral system. This is what Harney did in a widely reported challenge against Lord Palmerston in Tiverton, Devon, in 1842. The last Chartist challenge at a parliamentary poll took place at Ripon in 1849. On 10 April 1848, a new Chartist Convention organised a mass meeting on Kennington Common, which would form a procession to present a third petition to Parliament. The military had threatened to intervene if working people made any attempt to cross the Thames, and the petition was delivered to Parliament by a small group of Chartist leaders. The Chartists declared that their petition was signed by 6 million people, but House of Commons clerks announced that it was a lesser figure of 1. In truth, the clerks could not have done their work in the time allocated to them; but their figure was widely reported, along with some of the pseudonyms appended to the petition such as "Punch" and "Sibthorp" an ultra-Tory MP, and the credibility of Chartism was undermined. Cuffay was to be transported, dying in Australia. This was a common theme in histories of the movement until the 1970s. The final National Convention—attended by only a handful—was held in 1864. Throughout the 1840s, there remained pockets of strong support for the Chartist cause in places such as the Black Country. Furthermore, there was no possibility of divorcing it from political science. William Hill, a Swedenborgian minister, wrote in the Northern Star: A man may be devout as a Christian More than 20 Chartist Churches existed in Scotland by 1848. Stephens, who was highly influential in the movement. Political preachers thus came into prominence. In 1848, a previously unknown and uncatalogued smaller pamphlet of 16 hymns was discovered in Todmorden Library in the North of England. Heavily influenced by dissenting Christians, the hymns are about social justice, "striking down evil doers", and blessing Chartist enterprises, rather than the conventional themes of crucifixion, heaven, and family. Some of the hymns protested against the exploitation of child labour and slavery. Another of the hymns proclaimed: Two of the hymns celebrate the martyrs of the movement. The Chartists were especially critical of the Church of England for unequal distribution of the state funds it received resulting in some bishops and higher dignitaries having grossly larger incomes than other clergy. This state of affairs led some Chartists to question the very idea of a state-sponsored church, leading them to call for an absolute separation of church and state. Often, they would forewarn the preacher and demand that he preach from texts they believed supported their cause, such as 2 Thessalonians 3: It was not until that urban working men were admitted to the franchise under the Reform Act 1832, and not until that full manhood suffrage was achieved. Participation in the Chartist Movement filled some working men with self-confidence: Many former Chartists went on to become journalists, poets, ministers, and councillors. However, the reformers of Manchester were themselves factionalised. By the late 1840s, the celebrated John Bright was agitating in the country for franchise reform. However, working class radicals had not gone away. The Reform League campaigned for manhood suffrage in the 1860s, and included former Chartists amongst its ranks. Chartism has also been regarded by historians as a forerunner to the UK Labour Party. Some leaders had been transported to Australia, where they spread their beliefs. In 1854, Chartist demands were put forward by the miners at the Eureka Stockade on the gold fields at Ballarat, Victoria, Australia. Within two years of the military suppression of the Eureka revolt, the first elections of the Victorian parliament were held, with near-universal male suffrage and by secret ballot.

Chapter 2 : BBC - History - British History in depth: The Chartist Movement -

Chartism was a working-class movement for political reform in Britain that existed from 1838 to 1848. It took its name from the People's Charter of 1839 and was a national protest movement, with particular strongholds of support in Northern England, the East Midlands, the Staffordshire Potteries, the Black Country, and the South Wales Valleys.

The Dignity Of Chartismhttps: This is an extremely valuable volume for socialists and historians, and it is useful at several different levels. Firstly the book offers a master class in historical research and presentation. Secondly, she brought to light the role of over-looked but important participants in the Chartist movement, with great sympathy and understanding, especially the role of women chartists. And lastly Thompson rightly holds the different schools of thought about Chartism to account. Chartism, class and language When working-class people enter the stage of history, their part is unrehearsed. They do not emerge with fully formed theories of the world, and a clear perception of what history demands of them. Their ideas, their language and the political demands that they make show the scars and deformities with which the years of oppression have burdened them. Their desire to make change happen is what makes them dangerous to the ruling class. Thus the Chartists were considered by governments between and as a revolutionary threat. It was a threat that needed to be met with soldiers and an expanded police force, as thousands of workers went on strike, rallied, demonstrated and rioted in support of extending the vote to working-class households, so that the horrors of poverty pay and child labour in mine and mill might be remedied. For example the Chartists campaigned to extend the right to vote to all workers, rather than trying to take over the economy and state. This gives the Chartists their dignity; a truthful and sympathetic analysis, based on an understanding of their struggle. Interpreting Chartism The first six essays in the book deal with the problems of interpreting Chartism. Thompson concerns herself with historians who argue that Chartism should be seen as part of a movement for reform that was often led by middle-class reformers, and even some reformers from the landed class. They argue that the demands of the Charter were not the sole property of Chartists. Wealthy reformers like Henry Hunt and Richard Cobden were recognised by many Chartist as people with whom they could work. Similarly the Anti-Corn Law League, which opposed tariffs on imported grain, and was led by an industrial bourgeoisie against the interests of the landed gentry, was seen as an ally of Chartism as it could bring cheap bread and alleviate suffering. Much is made by these historians of there being no Chartist revolutionary theory – no Chartist Marx, Lenin or Trotsky. Often Chartist tracts, and reports of Chartist meetings from police spies, reveal the use of language more charged with Christian morality than socialism. Historical interpretation of this sort is all too common today. It contains a narrow and prescriptive approach that lazily transports the mind-set of the modern historian with all their own prejudices back in time. Rather than reveal the history that the Chartists made, these historians criticise them in terms of their own modern-day values. They cite the language of Chartists abstractly, disconnecting it from the struggle they were fighting. Thompson offers the young historian a master class in how we should carry out research. Elliott was known as the Corn Law Rhymer and he wrote mainly about the plight of the poor. When wilt thou save the people? Oh, God of mercy! Not kings and lords, but nations! Not thrones and crowns, but men! Flowers of thy heart, oh, God, are they! Let them not pass, like weeds, away! Their heritage a sunless day! That he sees the agent of change as God and not the working class? Thompson took a different view. The whole point of understanding a moment in history is to set it in context. What came before it, and what came afterwards is the essential question to ask. The demands he makes of God are democratic. This is clearly a poem for the working class, and against the ruling class. Dorothy Thompson did much more than criticize others though. Her research, driven as it was by compassion for her subject and the desire to present the study of the Chartists in their own words and feelings, adds much to our understanding. Part of this work was to uncover those courageous unsung heroes that get overlooked by mainstream historians, but whose dedication carried the movement along. The study of Chartist women is of particular significance. Indeed many feminist historians have overlooked the important role that women played. One important motivation for Chartism was to rescue the family from the predations of wage slavery. Child and female labour in the mines and mills left many

husbands out of work or seeking casual employment. Thompson stresses that the drive to save their children, and escape the slum houses they inhabited, drove women to become Chartists, and to fight for the Charter. Life was short and the conditions were brutal. The huge demonstrations Chartists mustered would have been impossible without the active participation of women. And women were certainly not passive onlookers. When soldiers marched against Chartists in the Calder Valley, women were seen carrying aprons full of rocks to hurl at them. Women mocked the soldiers, picketed shops and inns that served them, and above all endured the same privations that men did in the fight for the Charter. It belittles female Chartists to write them off as mere supporters. As Thompson put it: Halifax One of the greatest delights to be found in the book is the previously unpublished essay about Chartism in Halifax. Halifax as a Chartist Centre, and was written in partnership with her husband Edward Thompson. The essay takes up some fifty pages and is a comprehensive account of Chartism from the s with its Luddite roots through to its links with the national reform movement in the s. It is history from below. The reader gets to know Chartist Halifax in all its glory. The extremely detailed research that was the hallmark of both Thompsons brings the reader face to face with the Chartist fight. We get to know the contending parties, with the powerful Akroyd cloth manufacturers at one time living in their mansion behind defensive barricades, and the inspired leaders of the Chartists, like the weaver Ben Rushton. It is a rip-roaring account of Chartism. The graphic descriptions of the abject poverty that this hub of northern manufacturing produced is essential reading to anyone who wants to understand the way that inhumanity is a precondition of free-market capitalism. An important point that comes out of this essay is the way Chartism acted as a uniting force. The introduction of powerlooms into the Calder Valley had very divisive results. It pitched hand-loom weaving against the new technology. The experience of handloom weavers, wool combers and other traditional cloth manufacturers was one of extreme precariousness. Women and children were favoured over men with the result that wages could be ground down to their lowest level. Chartism united the working class around a common set of demands: The struggle went through a series of stages, with appeals for reform being ignored by the manufacturers despite considerable pressure from some respected middle-class reformers, who catalogued the disastrous state of health and housing for factory hands. This led to the growth of militancy and saw strikes and riots, the deployment of soldiers, and armed conflict. The essay is studded with gems from the archives. The following description is from a contemporary report of a Bradford contingent of Chartists coming to the aid of their Halifax brethren: The essay should be seen as a model about how to research and present history. Fascinating for the reader, but true to the Chartists themselves. Her criticism of Marxism was aimed at her former comrades in the Communist Party, and in that sense is a criticism that many Marxists outside the CP would agree with. Here we need to rescue Marxism from the mechanical formulations of some Communist Party historians. At the same time we must acknowledge that some Communists also produced outstanding works; Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawm are but two of them. The final essays in the book criticize what we might call mechanical Marxism. Thompson left the Communist Party. This leaves us to talk about the ideas rather than the historians with whom she disagreed. To younger readers this part of the book might seem obscure, but it is an important historiographical debate. Teleology is defined as explaining something by what it becomes, or what its function is, for example we might explain an acorn by its function of becoming an oak tree. Communist historians that had been schooled under Stalin turned Marxism into a deterministic teleology. The function of the working class was to deliver Communism. The working class and its leaders were then judged on how far they approximated to this function. This was the teleology that Thompson opposed; sterile and deterministic formulations, devoid of compassion, and in the end, completely unhistorical. The explanation of why it failed is all too obvious. British capitalism was expanding domestically and abroad, had a powerful and growing state, an increasingly wealthy and compliant middle class, and the system could afford political reform without risking revolution. By the end of the century a substantial amount of the six points of the Charter had been met: It is important to point out that these results were largely achieved by the impact of Chartism on British politics. Thus a grand theoretical explanation emerged in the s, of the working class having its historic function hijacked by the capitalist class. By increasing the wages of skilled workers, the capitalists created a reactionary elite within the working class, who bought into the ruling ideas, and prevented revolutionary

struggle. However, as Thompson shows, there is no evidence of the capitalists willingly creating an elite. This ran contrary to all capitalist dogma concerning the function of the free market. The simple lesson should be: These criticisms are made reluctantly in the light of such a brilliant work, but it has to be said there is something not entirely satisfactory about it. However, a convincing historical explanation needs to be more than a view from below. History is a dynamic process powered by the struggle between two classes within an economic and political system.

Chapter 3 : Remembering the Chartists

The Chartist Movement, was a nationwide campaign () that fought for the rights of the working man in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

The electoral system in the early nineteenth century was radically different from the parliamentary democracy we have today. The system was not representative of the population in terms of wealth or region, and elections were open to corruption. Before 1832, just ten per cent of British adult males were eligible to vote – and this portion of the population was the richest. There were many efforts to reform this outdated system by people who used methods such as corresponding societies, pamphlets and mass meetings to spread their messages. The most notorious of the mass meetings occurred at St. Peter's Field in 1819. Eleven people were killed and wounded when a group of soldiers on horseback charged on the crowd. Reform of the electoral system finally arrived with the Reform Act of 1832, which increased the proportion of eligible voters in England and Wales to 18 per cent of the adult-male population and 12 per cent in Scotland. Although the working classes had high hopes for the Reform Act, they eventually felt betrayed as despite the new legislation, the poor ultimately remained voiceless in the way their country was run. In the years following the Reform Act, the Chartists would begin to plan their campaign to try to effect real electoral change in Britain. What were the aims of the Chartists? Support for the Charter spread rapidly and its advocates became known as the Chartists. Who took part in the Chartist campaign? Chartism was a mass movement that attracted a following of millions. Hundreds of thousands of people were sometimes reported to have attended their meetings and their three petitions amassed millions of signatures, although some were proved to be fake. Women may not have spoken publicly like the male Chartist orators, but many did attend meetings and mass demonstrations, and formed Female Charter Associations. Others actively challenged the Chartists to campaign for female suffrage. How did the Chartists run their campaign? The Chartist movement was not a completely unified organisation and its leadership was often fragmented. All members were decided on the end purpose of Chartism, but there were radical differences in opinion over the means to achieve it. The more radical Chartists took part in riots in Newcastle, Birmingham and elsewhere round the country, at which leading members of the movement were arrested. The most infamous episode in the history of Chartism was the disastrous Newport Rising, which took place on 4th November 1839. A group of Chartists stormed a hotel and 22 of the protestors were killed by waiting troops. For a while the energy went out of the movement, though the National Charter Association was established in 1838 to co-ordinate its work across the country. The last big protest was at Kennington Common in April 1848, which was followed by a procession to Westminster to present another petition. The Chartist leaders claimed this petition had over 5 million signatures, but many were proved to be fake. There was a massive police and military presence, but the meeting was peaceful, with a crowd estimated by some at 60,000. The petition was defeated heavily. How successful were they? Although the Chartists gathered enormous support in the form of signatures for their petitions, their demands were rejected by Parliament every time they were presented. In the Third Reform Act of 1871, the qualification of the Act was extended to the countryside so that almost two thirds of men had the vote.

Chapter 4 : Kennington Chartist Project – Celebrating Kennington Park’s place in the history of protest

The Petition. In the years 1839, 1842, and 1848, the Chartist Movement urged Parliament to adopt three great petitions. Of these, the best known is the final petition, with six million.

It contained six demands: Chartism was the first movement both working class in character and national in scope that grew out of the protest against the injustices of the new industrial and political order in Britain. While composed of working people, Chartism was also mobilized around populism as well as clan identity. The movement was born amid the economic depression of 1838, when high unemployment and the effects of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 were felt in all parts of Britain. A Chartist convention met in London in February to prepare a petition to present to Parliament. In May the convention moved to Birmingham, where riots led to the arrest of its moderate leaders Lovett and John Collins. The rump of the convention returned to London and presented its petition in July. Parliament rejected it summarily. Its principal leaders were banished to Australia, and nearly every other Chartist leader was arrested and sentenced to a short prison term. The Chartists then started to emphasize efficient organization and moderate tactics. Three years later a second national petition was presented containing more than three million signatures, but again Parliament refused to consider it. The movement lost some of its mass support later in the 1840s as the economy revived. Also, the movement to repeal the Corn Laws divided radical energies, and several discouraged Chartist leaders turned to other projects. The last great burst of Chartism occurred in 1848. Another convention was summoned, and another petition was prepared. Again Parliament did nothing. Thereafter, Chartism lingered another decade in the provinces, but its appeal as a national mass movement was ended. With the onset of the relative prosperity of mid-Victorian Britain, popular militancy lost its edge. Many Chartist leaders, however, schooled in the ideological debates of the 1840s, continued to serve popular causes, and the Chartist spirit outlasted the organization. Five of the six points—all except the annual Parliaments—have since been secured. Learn More in these related Britannica articles:

The high water mark of Chartism was the Great Chartist Meeting in 1848. In the long run, all of the Chartists demands were met except for annual elections, so the Chartists were visionaries in a way.

The charter was a public petition aimed at redressing omissions from the electoral Reform Act of 1832. It quickly became a rallying point for working class agitators for social reform, who saw in it a cure-all for all sorts of social ills. In demanding so much the supporters of the charter probably ensured its downfall, for the number of demands probably diluted support for any single demand. Institution of a secret ballot General elections be held annually Members of Parliament not be required to own property MPs be paid a salary Electoral districts of equal size Universal male suffrage The National Convention The first gathering of Chartist delegates gathered in London on February 4, 1848. Although 53 delegates came to London, they were aware of laws forbidding gatherings of more than 50 men, and so took care that no more than that number were present at any one time. In other words, in common with many social movements, they could figure out what they were against, but had a harder time figuring out what to do about it. The Convention did adopt the motto "peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must", which may have frightened those more moderate middle-class members who might have been persuaded to support their cause. Agitation continued throughout the spring of 1848, and government troops were used to ensure order in some areas of the country, notably the north. Outcome Proponents of the charter gathered over 1 million signatures. They presented the charter and the signatures to Parliament when it gathered in July, 1848. Though supported by future Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, the charter was rejected by the House of Commons by a vote of 471 to 41. In the wake of this defeat in the Commons, the National Convention lost its importance and finally dissolved itself in September. With the national leadership of the Movement no longer effective, local reformers took charge. The government had many leaders of the movement arrested or detained. There were outbreaks of violence in several regions, notably at Newport, where 24 protestors were killed. The suppression of the Chartists drew further attention to their cause, but the movement in general failed to cross class lines and gain the necessary support among members of the ruling aristocracy and landed gentry. The Chartists attempted to submit their petition to Parliament twice more, in 1849, when they claimed to have gathered over 3 million signatures of support, and for a final time in 1850. After this final failure the movement died out. Why did Chartism seem a threat to authority? The aims of the Chartists may seem mild and eminently sensible to modern readers. But to the government of Victorian England they represented a potential for upheaval and overthrow of social institutions and entrenched authority. The violent turmoil of the French Revolution was still fresh in the minds of many in positions of authority. Why did Chartism fail? Chartism failed for a number of reasons; most obviously, it failed to gather support in Parliament - not surprising when you consider the threat it posed to the self-interest of those in power. Equally important, it failed to gather support from the middle-classes. The demands of Chartism were too radical for many of the middle-classes, who were comfortable enough with the status quo. The repeal of the Corn Laws helped improve the economic climate of Britain, and there was less interest in radical reform. As well, the mid-19th century spawned a variety of social-reform groups with special aims, and the Chartist movement lost many of its members to these other groups. Why was it a success? Although the Chartist Movement failed to directly achieve its aims, a good case can be made that the movement itself was not a failure at all, but a powerful force that resulted in an increased awareness of social issues and created a framework for future working-class organisations. Many of the demands of the Chartists were eventually answered in the electoral reform bills of 1867 and 1872. It also seems likely that the agitation for reform that the Chartist Movement helped bring to the forefront of British society was responsible for the repeal of the Corn Laws and other social reforms.

A second petition with 3 million signatures was rejected in ; the rejection of the third petition in brought an end to the movement. More important than the movement itself was the unrest it symbolized.

The idea for such a bill emerged from discussions between a small group of radical members of Parliament MPs and leaders of earlier reform movements in London. Most of the latter had been members of the National Union of the Working Classes NUWC , which had agitated for the Reform Bill in the years and had taken part in the struggle to secure an unstamped press, partly successful when the stamp duty on newspapers was reduced to one penny in This campaign, with its combination of externally organized pressure coupled with parliamentary lobbying and support from inside the House of Commons provided the first model for what was to become Chartism. In June a committee of six MPs and six working men, including Lovett, issued the Six Points, which became talismanic for the future movement: The intention was thus not only to demand the central plank of manhood suffrage but also all those other measures necessary to make that a reality. The draft bill itself was a lengthy and sophisticated document, going well beyond the Six Points, and it was to evolve over time to include important constitutional changes such as repeal of the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland In practice, the Act confused the system rather than simplifying it, especially with its complicated system for voter registration, and having removed the sanctity of age from the nature of the voting qualification it almost invited further amendment. The idea was not unreasonable but it was perhaps wishful thinking to believe that the Charter would be carried, given the radical transformation to the representative system that it entailed. Parallel with these developments, a similar movement appeared in Birmingham, where the local MP, Thomas Attwood , was disillusioned with the Reform Act. He had been a leader from to of the Birmingham Political Union BPU , which had done a great deal to organize public opinion in favor of reform. Lecturers were simultaneously sent out to rouse public opinion in the country. A third source of Chartism was dissatisfaction with the social and economic conditions created by rapid industrialization and urbanization, especially in centers of textile manufacture in the Midlands, north of England, and western Scotland. Reformers believed, unlike modern historians, that the Reform Act had been a victory for the middle classes, whose possession of property had enabled them to elect a House of Commons to carry legislation specifically in their narrow class interests. Such "class legislation" included measures against trade unions, a reluctance to restrict working hours in factories, and, above all, the Poor Law Amendment Act of , which removed the traditional parochial support for the poor and threatened them with either starvation or the workhouse. The attempt to introduce this system from , just as a major depression hit industrial Britain, produced widespread disturbances that fed into popular support for a thorough reform of the House of Commons. This strategy was based on the successful Irish campaign of the s that had by mass mobilization and threats of revolution secured a major constitutional change in with the Catholic Emancipation Act. On the first occasion there was a genuine mass movement as all sections of Chartism united at large public meetings where the Charter was proclaimed and delegates to the Convention elected by show of hands. The violent language used by some of the speakers at these meetings led to swift action by the local forces of law and order. Actual violence broke out sporadically, most notably in the mid-Wales textile district in April Troops were sent to control the Midlands and north of England. The situation was increasingly tense as 1,, signatures were collected on the Petition and Convention delegates assembled in London to oversee the presentation of the Petition to Parliament. Strong language used in the debates about what to do if the Petition were rejected led to all but one of the BPU delegates resigning. Events were delayed by the collapse of the Whig government and the so-called Bedchamber Crisis, and the Convention moved to Birmingham. Here riots led to troops and the London police being called in, and William Lovett was arrested for his part in protesting against the violent conduct of the police. When the government crisis was over, the depleted Convention returned to London, the Petition was presented on 14 June, but in the ensuing debate was rejected by votes to The problem was what to do next. The idea of a general strike failed in the midst of unemployment and trade-union skepticism. The strategy of mass action had made the word Chartism synonymous with violence,

an image reinforced as some disillusioned delegates returned to their local areas to whip up further support. Frustration led to further violence, notably in the valleys of south Wales, where several thousand armed men marched on Newport on 4 November. There followed a lull in Chartist activity, but the movement was sustained, largely by the Northern Star and new local leaders who emerged to form in July the National Charter Association NCA. In April, William Lovett set up the National Association to promote political education, but it made little headway. Birmingham reformers, led by the Quaker philanthropist Joseph Sturge, formed the Complete Suffrage Union to unite middle- and working-class reformers in January, but its petition was rejected in April by votes to 1,000 to 100. The NCA in effect became Chartism. It arranged for a new Convention, which met in London in April and a new Petition, which was presented with 300,000 signatures on 2 May and rejected by votes to 1,000 to 100. The mass strategy had again failed, despite better organization and the increased number of signatures which, if genuine, represented a majority of the adult working people of Britain. The movement never really caught on in Ireland and certainly far outnumbered the official electorate of around one million in 1840. A summer of strikes and violence then spread throughout the industrial districts of the north of England, often led by local Chartists, although the motivation of the strikers was mainly economic. This marked the end of Chartism as a mass movement in many parts of the country. As economic conditions improved for the first time since late 1830s, and as it became apparent that, far from Chartism being the key to unlock the door to social reform for the working classes, instead the way was open to piecemeal reform without the Charter: The Land Plan was an enormous success in maintaining Chartism and carrying it to parts of the country scarcely touched before, although it had little to do with the Charter and produced further divisions among the leadership. This was followed by renewed industrial depression and then outbreaks of revolution in Europe. Serious rioting in Britain, notably in London in March 1841, were followed by a mass meeting on Kennington Common in south London on 10 April, prior to a march on Parliament with the Petition, containing an alleged 500,000 signatures. When the giant Petition reached the House of Commons it was ridiculed, the number of signatures being reduced to "merely" 100,000, still twice the electorate and it was rejected. Parliament was more concerned about the security situation in Ireland, which seemed to be following the Continental path to revolution. The Convention broke up in disagreement over what to do next. Some delegates reconvened in a provocatively named National Assembly; others went back to their local communities to hold mass meetings amid increasing threats of violence. The government struck hard throughout the summer, and mass arrests once more deprived Chartism of its effective leadership. This was the end of Chartism. The leaders emerged from jail into a world that was unwilling to rally to the old cause. The only chance for his alternative approach was if the government were genuinely cowed by the threat of numbers. It was not and had the means at its command to suppress what it could not dissuade. The strategy of so-called physical force was a gamble that failed and in failing it destroyed the alternative strategies. Despite the NCA he was never able to turn mass mobilization from an agitation into an effective organization. Chartism was thus dependent on external factors, such as the state of the economy, and when that improved, and when piecemeal reforms began to be granted, it had no way of sustaining mass support in the face of repeated failure. Yet the paradox is that Chartism was not a failure. It achieved none of its objectives and may have set some back by its identification of reform with violence, yet among its followers it created a popular political culture that over the next generation was to feed into the lowest levels of local government as democracy was extended—beginning with school boards after 1845. What was of long term significance was not the mass movement of the three peak years of petitioning, but the formation of local associations and "localities" of the NCA, where Chartist men and women lived out their democratic aspirations in the formation of what has been called a "Chartist culture. None of the religious organizations endorsed Chartism, and the Chartists themselves came from many religious backgrounds—and none—but the traditions of the nonconformist chapel ran deep in many of the working-class communities where Chartism was strong. These traditions—of lay leadership, social meetings for mutual improvement, sermons that became lectures and Bible study that became reading, the Northern Star—helped Chartism become the means by which politics were embedded in community life. Chartism has been claimed by many subsequent movements but it is hard to accept that specific later ideologies have an exclusive right to a Chartist pedigree. Chartism was a

working-class movement in the sense that it appealed largely to working people. This is unsurprising given that over four-fifths of the population were wage earners and Chartism had widespread appeal, mainly to those below the top fifth. But Chartism was not the forerunner of the working-class movement later embodied in the twentieth-century Labor movement. The language of class was used, but as much by opponents who wished to belittle the Chartists as by the Chartists themselves. The latter more usually used the language of the people, by which they meant both the majority who lacked the vote and those in the voting classes who sympathized with them. Its strategy was to adopt a language that deliberately avoided class. Equally, Chartism was not a socialist movement. Chartists were opposed to the exploitative capitalism of factory masters but they were not anticapitalist as such. The great majority of the factory "proletariat" at this time were women and children; many workingmen Chartists were small producers still owning some of their own means of production or aspiring to do so. Chartism was also not the forerunner of anything resembling modern feminism. Although some of its leaders— including William Lovett— favored universal suffrage, the program of the Chartists was only for manhood suffrage, by which was meant the people as represented through adult males. The language of domesticity and separate spheres was dominant, as women sought through their families those social and economic benefits which it was believed would be brought by the suffrage. Women were part of the early mass movement and local Chartist activities, but they had little place in its formal structures. So long as men and women were equally deprived, the separate issue of individual female enfranchisement was rarely advanced within Chartism. So Chartism was many of the things that a later century was to find important. It was an agitation that achieved remarkable maturity in its response to the Reform Act of 1832 through a campaign to secure for the ordinary working people of Britain the advantages of democracy against the perceived political influence of the emerging new urban elites of industrialists, merchants, and larger shopkeepers. Despite its failure, Chartism created a political culture that was to shape the semidemocratic dawn in Britain as the franchise was extended at local and then national levels between 1832 and 1868. Though former Chartists were to place themselves in both Liberal and Tory parties—and some were to live long enough to join various socialist or Labor parties—the democratic ethos of Chartism largely contributed to Liberal Britain. But the vitality of Chartist political culture was such that popular politics were never completely subsumed within "popular Liberalism."

Chapter 7 : Chartism or The Chartist Movement

THE CHARTIST MOVEMENT. BY THE LATE MARK HOVELL, M.A. 2nd Lieutenant, The Sherwood Foresters, and Lecturer in Military History in the University. edited and completed, with a memoir, by.

He was baptised 13 February He began speaking at public meetings and as a result lost his job. He began travelling simply to find work, but became increasingly active as a Chartist lecturer. Before the meeting was held, Gammage and two companions attended a service in the parish church where the clergyman Charles Frederic Watkins , who was vicar of Brixworth from to rebuked them and threatened the three with arrest if the meeting proceeded. He then travelled through Bedford , Ampthill , Huntingdon and Cambridge to Hertford , where he stayed with friends, and made a visit to a cousin in Hatfield he had not seen since childhood. In London he stayed for six weeks with an uncle and aunt. In Southampton he heard about work in Portsmouth , so travelled back but was rejected because he lacked experience. He travelled on via Salisbury and Devizes to Bath , and finally to Sherbourne , where he found work. Many of my friends were eager to get a look at [it], and I gratified them as best I could. Those that read it did not think that Chartism was so bad as it had often been presented. I became involved in a long and arduous search for work, and during that time felt the full force of my remark to Mr. Hill [his employer in Sherborne] on the value of a trade society to support men when seeking employment. I travelled no less than 1, miles in different parts of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland before I again obtained work. He then went by boat to Ireland, visiting Belfast and Dublin. Returning to London, he finally found work in Chelmsford. He was dismissed in late for political activities, and returned to Northampton , via Ipswich and Cambridge. The job in Northampton lasted only three months. Travelling again, he passed through Leicester , which he describes as "in a constant ferment", due to "intense distress". He stopped briefly in Harrogate , where he had an introduction from his employer in Sherborne to a coach trimmer who had moved there from Dorset, and he finally arrived in Newcastle in September It is clear that on his travels since Chelmsford , he had become increasingly active as a speaker, and in Newcastle he was advised to take up lecturing as a Chartist orator regularly. Chartist politics[edit] Gammage travelled very extensively in the autumn of and in , passing through the north west, the midlands, and the south to arrive in London by Christmas. He visited the south west and south in the early spring of , the east midlands, Yorkshire, and Lancashire in the early summer, Scotland in the autumn, finally returning to Newcastle in November He remained in the north east for several months in early , having developed links with radicals there, but returned to Northampton by the end of the year. He moved to Stony Stratford in , following an argument with the Northampton Chartists, working first as a hawker and then as a shoemaker. In , he became involved in the upsurge in popular agitation, lost his job, and moved again to Buckingham. In this period he lectured in many towns in the area. A further period of inactivity ended in , when he was elected onto the executive of the National Chartist Association. Following this, he again travelled extensively as a speaker and his reminiscences include detailed descriptions of some of these journeys. He was a candidate at Cheltenham in the General Election of In , he fell out with Ernest Jones and was not re-elected onto the Chartist executive. He then moved to Newcastle and Sunderland , where he spent the years 1877, qualifying as a doctor and working mainly for friendly societies. In , he was one of the founders of the Manhood Suffrage League. In , he was forced to retire because of ill health, and returned to Northampton. He died there on 7 January after a fall that occurred while walking to get out of the way of a tram.

Chapter 8 : Robert George Gammage - Wikipedia

As the New Chartist Movement takes off - and more and more people understand the blatant treason, lies, fraud and deception that's going on in Parliament and the City of London - the truth will break through and all this madness, poverty, stress and misery that's affecting our country today will simply cease to exist.

In , the common people of the United Kingdom, fed up with oppression and poverty, took to the streets by the tens of thousands and united under the banner of a new social movement: Their goal was rather simple. They wanted the right to vote. Seven years earlier, a coalition of middle- and working-class radicals had forced the Reform Act through parliament, extending suffrage from the landed aristocracy to middle-class property owners but excluding the vast majority of Britons, who were property-less workers. At first, many working-class radicals thought their newly empowered middle-class allies “organized in the Whig Party” would pursue a radical democratic reform agenda. They hoped their common enemy “the conservative, landed aristocracy” would be enough to unite them behind a program of expanding suffrage to the property-less and serving the interests of the bourgeois and proletarians. But these hopes were soon dashed. When the new Reformed Parliament opened, a wave of civil disobedience and popular resistance against mandatory church tithes swept across Ireland, terrifying property owners who feared another republican revolt. Working-class radicals across Great Britain felt betrayed. British workers vigorously opposed tyranny in Ireland, not only because of the injustice and suffering it imposed on the Irish, but also because it strengthened their mutual oppressors “the property owners and the British state. They presciently argued that the techniques of military occupation the authorities developed on the Emerald Isle could easily be imported back and deployed against popular agitation in the industrial districts of England, Scotland, and Wales. It did little more than ban child labor below the ripe old age of nine and even then, only in certain industries , while limiting the working day for nine- to twelve-year-olds to eight hours and thirteen to seventeen-year-olds to twelve. It established no cap on work hours for adults. The Factory Act was coupled with a vigorous assault on labor unions across the country, for which Tories and Whigs more often than not joined forces. To make matters worse, in the parliament passed the New Poor Law , which reduced alms to the destitute, introduced dehumanizing work requirements, and established intrusive oversight measures for the poor. For working-class radicals, these developments signaled that their political alliance with the middle-class Whigs had come to an end. The British working class had learned what many others across the world have come to learn since: It was one of the first calls for a general strike in modern history. As expected, parliament overwhelmingly rejected the petition. Though largely symbolic when carried out, the action still resulted in the arresting and jailing of the strike leaders. Small armed uprisings, organized in secret, erupted in the industrial districts that winter. The most significant of these occurred in November in Newport South Wales, where thousands of armed Welsh workingmen, organized by Chartist leaders John Frost , Zephaniah Williams , and William Jones, descended on a military post in the center of town. Twenty-two Chartists were shot dead before the crowd dispersed, and the three organizers tried for high treason were booted out of the country. The Workers Regroup Undeterred, the Chartist movement continued to organize and expand their activity. In the early s, the middle classes focused on fighting to repeal the Corn Law, a protectionist measure that taxed imported grains. While landlords benefitted greatly from the tariffs, manufacturers opposed it because it raised the cost of bread and, by extension, the wages they had to pay workers. Anti“Corn Law activists expected the easy support of the working masses and made public appeals to galvanize their cause. But workers were uninterested in an alliance. As one writer recalled at the time: It was a battle of the employer and the employed. Masters were astonished at what they deemed the audacity of their workmen, who made no scruple standing beside them on the platform, and contesting with them face to face their most cherished doctrines. Terrible was the persecution they suffered for taking this liberty. Loss of employment usually followed, but it was in vain that their employers endeavored to starve them into submission. But its reception was no warmer. I believe that Universal Suffrage would be fatal to all purposes for which government exists, and for which aristocracies and all other things exist, and that it is utterly incompatible with the very existence of

civilization. I conceive that civilization rests on the security of property. I will assert, that while property is insecure, it is not in the power of the finest soil, or of the moral or intellectual constitution of any country, to prevent the country sinking into barbarism. Macaulay had every right to be concerned. This time around, the charter was being taken up by an increasingly militant trade union movement. Defeat after defeat had taught the unionists that power in the workplace could not be conquered until power over the state had been removed from the hands of their employers. As one group of London journeymen shoemakers put it: The workers chose their tactic carefully. They understood how their labor was used to maintain bourgeois rule, and consequently, the collective power they held in the strike. This placard was posted in several coal-mining districts: To the Colliers of England and Wales. Strike for the Charter! In your hands is reposed such a power as the tyrant few, who oppress and grind the faces of the poor, cannot withstand. Without coal the lordly aristocrat cannot cook his luxurious meal. Without coal the Steam Engine whose iron arm has beggared so many of your poor fellow-countrymen, willing to work "murdered thousands of innocent children in our Cotton Mills yearly" reduced thousands of tender mothers to a worse state than brute beasts, and hung their pale limbs with filthy rags"without coal this giant monster, the Steam Engine, cannot work. Your labour, my honest friends, supplies it with strength, for without Coal it is powerless. Stop getting Coal, for Coal supports the money-mongering Capitalists. Riots subsequently erupted in several cities, and workers brought entire industries to a standstill in one of the first general strikes in history. Authorities responded by arresting and sentencing "dozens of Chartist leaders were tried in London, and over a thousand strikers in the industrial districts. But what ultimately defeated the strike was hunger. Socialism and the End of Chartism In the wake of , the movement began showing signs of fraying. Workers increasingly turned toward localized efforts to advance their interests "schools, temperance leagues, unions, socialist cooperatives, and the like. Workers would buy into the scheme; the funds raised would be used to obtain large estates, which would be subdivided; and then participants would be chosen by lottery for settlement. Not only did lifelong industrial workers make poor small farmers, but legal issues beset the project and eventually did it in. In these years, Chartism also became inflected with internationalist and communist elements. Prominent leaders like George Julian Harney and Ernest Jones became close collaborators with Marx and Engels and participated in groups of continental revolutionaries exiled in London, such as the Fraternal Democrats and the Communist League. Harney took over as editor of the Northern Star in , and began placing a greater emphasis on radical activity in other countries. The newfound orientation toward Europe would prove to be a source of renewed strength on the home front. The intervening years had shifted a number of factors in their favor. On top of this fledgling alliance, news of the February French Revolution against the Orleans Monarchy and the subsequent wave of European revolutions electrified the Chartists. With a third petition for the charter being prepared for the tenth of April, it seemed the transnational revolt against monarchy might sweep the British Isles as well. The shift toward self-help organizations had taken its toll as well. The revolutionary agitation that did occur paled in comparison to or The armed revolt in Ireland that summer "occurring among a population enfeebled and driven into despair by years of "amounted to little more than a skirmish. Over the course of , the leaders organizing in the provinces were arrested, the Land Company effectively collapsed, and the Chartist movement came to an end as a mass force in British politics. They had failed in their quest to extend the franchise. The Dignity of Chartism What should we make of this momentous but unsuccessful movement? Was it the last gasp of the failed eighteenth-century political revolution in Great Britain? Was it nothing more than the political expression of a class of people on the verge of starvation? Thompson "offers the richest history of the movement. Her new collection of essays "The Dignity of Chartism , edited by Stephen Roberts "is devoted to sifting through the historical analyses of the movement, good and bad. He knew that the working men were pressed down by the capitalists. The whole question resolved itself into the battle between labour and capital. The modern form of class conflict was the driving force behind Chartism, both on the pages of the journals and on the barricades in the streets. This gave the universal suffrage demand a distinctly working-class content. Battling brutal conditions and never-ending shifts in the factories, the humiliations of the New Poor Law, and the constant threat of starvation, they largely viewed their oppression in class terms and embraced universal manhood suffrage and the additional goals of the male Chartists as their

own. Contrary to those who see Chartism as little more than a popular outburst against the poverty of the early Industrial Revolution, Thompson argues the movement was political to its core. For British working people, the political arena had not lost the enchantment or promise it seemed to hold in the days of the French Revolution. They had faith that popular sovereignty “ and the sorts of emancipatory policies they could enact upon attaining it “ was the solution to their degradation and poverty. An Unfinished Revolution To examine the Chartists is to remember the enormous strife and sacrifice it took to win even the rudiments of political democracy. The enfranchisement of working people was not, as is sometimes imagined, a ruling-class ruse to co-opt and deceive the masses. Today, universal suffrage remains elusive even in many self-proclaimed democratic countries. The United States is a particularly glaring example: A renewed Chartist movement would, for starters, demand the extension of the franchise to all those who lack it. In the s, after a decade of ramped-up repression, many of the Chartists retreated from the realm of politics and turned toward apolitical self-help organizations. The past few decades have been marred by similar depoliticization. Socialist parties and labor movements have been in retreat, and lifestyle politics on the ascent. Socialists should be wading waist deep into these movements, agitating, educating, and organizing. We should take up the fight to defeat elite-driven policies and assert popular sovereignty on the basis of truly universal suffrage.

Chartism was the first movement both working class in character and national in scope that grew out of the protest against the injustices of the new industrial and political order in Britain. While composed of working people, Chartism was also mobilized around populism as well as clan identity.

Print this page The Petition In the years , and , the Chartist Movement urged Parliament to adopt three great petitions. Of these, the best known is the final petition, with six million signatures although a number of these were later found to be fake , presented to Parliament on 10th April after a huge meeting on Kennington Common. This event achieved great prominence in the story of Chartism, due largely to the reaction of the authorities as they faced the challenges of that turbulent year. The presentation of the petition came at a time of much violent change in Europe; Louis Philippe had been removed from the French throne in February , and revolutions were soon to convulse other European capitals. Working people had proclaimed themselves as Chartists at crowded meetings throughout March This was not - as his many enemies were keen to observe after the event - because he was a frightened blusterer, but because he knew that in any confrontation with soldiers it would be the demonstrators who would be killed or wounded. In 17 hours, 13 clerks had apparently counted 1. Despite this, Chartists such as Thomas Clark, who had walked alongside the cabs carrying the petition, looked back on the events of with great pride. Their intentions had been peaceful; the aggressive militarisation of the capital had been unnecessary. It contained six points: Thousands of working people had rallied together on the basis of this charter, and hundreds of them had gone to prison for their beliefs. William Lovett was instrumental in drawing up this new document of long-established radical demands. He had been an active metropolitan radical at the time of the Reform Bill crisis of , when the middle class but not the working class had been admitted into the parliamentary system. This was seen as a betrayal of a large section of society, and created some of the resentment that led to Chartism. The draconian New Poor Law of amounted to an attack on the working class, and helped this new movement of protest to gain massive support in the north of England. There were other injustices, including the treatment of trade unionists, to fuel the fires that turned people into Chartists. The draconian New Poor Law of amounted to an attack on the working class The origins of Chartism were complex. John Frost was transported after leading a rising in Newport, in November , in which 22 Chartists were shot dead by soldiers; Robert Peddie was sentenced to three years with hard labour after his involvement in an attempted Chartist rising in Bradford in January Though it was particularly strong in the textile towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire, as well as in the east midlands, the Potteries and the Black Country, Chartist lecturers such as Dean Taylor and E. Mead travelled throughout the country. These local leaders were not failures or dropouts. George Binns, of Sunderland, sacrificed involvement in a family business to be part of the movement. Peter McDouall, active in Bury, was a surgeon. Thomas Cooper was a journalist in Leicester, who encouraged poetry writing, gave lectures and opened an adult school. Weavers, shoemakers, tailors, carpenters - all became Chartists. Women were drawn into active support for Chartism. In Preston, in the face of Chartist crowds, soldiers opened fire In more force was thrown against the authorities than in any other year in the 19th century. In Preston, in the face of Chartist crowds, soldiers opened fire; in Halifax there was an attack by Chartists on soldiers escorting prisoners. The authorities struck back harshly; 56 Chartists from the Potteries were transported. This defeat did not, however, spell the end of Chartism. The idea was that people might be helped to leave their factory towns, to live independently in a cottage with an allotment. This had huge appeal, and in about branches of the Land Company were formed. Members of the company paid a small weekly subscription and drew lots for the cottages. The scheme touched deep feelings of attachment to the land, and greatly bolstered Chartism, although only working people were eventually settled on the estates. The project soon ran into legal difficulties: One of the Chartist cottages, restored to its original appearance, can still be seen, in Dodford, Worcestershire. His madness in his last years led him to exhibit some excruciating behaviour in the House of Commons, including an assault on a fellow MP, but he was of sound mind up to He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery in London, where 40, people attended his funeral. William Lovett died in , having spent his life since the years of the Chartist Movement

promoting working-class education. Thomas Clark lived only two years longer than Feargus, the man he had so admired. Thomas Cooper spent the second part of his long life as a Christian preacher. He died in , the same year as Samuel Kydd, another well-known figure in the movement. In the short term Chartism failed, but it was a movement founded on an optimism that was eventually justified. It was a powerful assertion of the rights of working people, creating in them a long-term self-confidence and self-reliance. During the century after the end of the movement, most of the Chartist demands were passed into law, and undoubtedly the Chartist issues of democratic inclusion and the rights of citizenship remain highly relevant today.