Chartism (1838-48)

Cause

Economic

- Unemployment and inflation
  - 1842 severe unemployment
  - Bad harvests 1837-38 → High food prices
- **Chartism's peaks and troughs very linked to periods of unemployment and inflation!**

Political

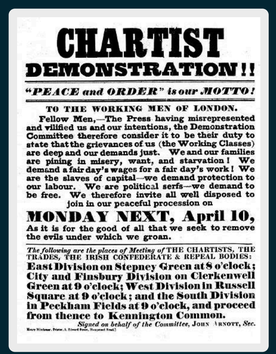
- Disappointment of working class
  - Reform Act 1832 — Failed to provide the vote for working class
  - New Poor Law 1834 — Despised workhouses
- Lack of useful reform for workers — Parliament had other concerns
  - For example, millions of pounds compensation given to slave owners after slave trade abolished in 1833 (finished paying back in 2015!)
  - But nothing for the poor and working class!
- Trade union failure

Social

- Growing **literacy** among working classes
- **Free press**
  - Radical newspapers — Encouraged action — Angry working class
  - Cheap
  - **Northern Star**
    - Strongly opposed to New Poor Law
    - Major Chartist newspaper — Sold more than any other provincial newspapers read by middle class
    - Founded by Feargus O'Connor
- Leadership
  - Educated and able men
  - William Lovett, Feargus O'Connor

Chartists

- Skilled working class men — Believed in democracy
- Birth - London 1838
  - Small group of skilled workers met up — Led by
    - Francis Place
    - William Lovett
  - Drew up the **People's Charter**
- Six points of the **People's Charter**
  - Universal manhood suffrage
  - No property qualifications for MPs
  - Payment for MPs
  - **So that working class could become MPs**
  - Equal representation — Equal sized districts (in number of voters)
  - Ballot/ voting in secret
  - Annual parliaments
  - **All except annual parliaments adopted in the long term! (and still are)**



CHARTIST DEMONSTRATION!!

"PEACE and ORDER" is our MOTTO!

TO THE WORKING MEN OF LONDON.

Fellow Men,—The Press having misrepresented and vilified us and our intentions, the Demonstration Committee therefore consider it to be their duty to state that the grievances of us (the Working Classes) are deep and our demands just. We and our families are pining in misery, want, and starvation! We demand a fair day's wages for a fair day's work! We are the slaves of capital—we demand protection to our labour. We are political serfs—we demand to be free. We therefore invite all well disposed to join in our peaceful procession on

MONDAY NEXT, April 10,

As it is for the good of all that we seek to remove the evils under which we groan.

The following are the places of Meeting of THE CHARTISTS, THE TRADES, THE IRISH CONFEDERATE & REPEAL BODIES:

East Division on Stepney Green at 8 o'clock; City and Finsbury Division on Clerkenwell Green at 9 o'clock; West Division in Russell Square at 9 o'clock; and the South Division in Peckham Fields at 9 o'clock, and proceed from thence to Kennington Common.

Signed on behalf of the Committee, JOHN ARNOTT, *Sec.*

Significance

- Short term failure
  - Many arrested and exiled
  - Did not achieve any change — Died out as hunger fell — Not worth the struggle anymore?
- Long term success
  - 5/6 points adopted
    - Democratic methods — Visionary, very rational demands!
    - Had ideology and substance
- Symbol
  - Free press - awareness — Emerging class consciousness
  - Involvement of working classes in politics

Reasons for failure

- **Prosperity in 1850s**
  - Rising employment
  - Rising real wages
  - Lower inflation
- **Internal divisions**
  - Moral Force (peace) vs Physical Force (violence)
  - Revolution vs moderation
  - Support for industrialisation or not (handloom weavers)
  - Collaboration with middle class or not
  - Religious or not
  - Self-improvement within working class or pressure on the government
  - Hate or support O'Connor
  - Socialists or not
- Firm government action

Activities

- Huge rallies
  - Often over 50,000 attending
  - Speeches
  - "Monster meetings"
- **Petitions** sent to parliament
  - Millions of signatures — **The People's Charter had 1.5 million signatures in 1839**
  - Pressure on government
- **Newport Rising 1839**
  - South Wales
  - Aims
    - Protest against the arrest of a prominent Chartist
    - Others wanted revolution
  - Some armed — Miners and iron workers marched
  - Gov reaction
    - Soldiers sent
    - **Shot 12 demonstrators**
    - Chartist organiser
      - Had tried to make the protest peaceful
      - Arrested and sent to Australia
    - Many imprisoned — **Over 500 arrested**
- 1842
  - North and Midlands
  - Workers demanding better wages and political concessions!
  - Merged with trade union protest
  - Coincided with **1842 general strike**
  - Damage to factory machinery
  - Period of rapid railway building — Died out when employment rose
- **1848**
  - Huge demonstration planned in London
    - Meeting banned by gov.
    - Fewer showed up than expected
  - Attendance estimates
    - 300,000 — Chartists
    - 15,000 — Government
    - 50,000 — Sunday Observer
  - press
  - intimidated
  - 10,000 specially recruited policemen — Government
  - Feargus O'Connor (Chartist leader)
    - **He ended up in a mental hospital after the failure of Chartism**
    - Presented the final petition to Parliament
    - End of Chartism — Failure

Presented with xmind