

# Oppositions to Liberalism

SS 30-1

Protests against the effects of classical liberalism and capitalism were many and varied. Not all of these developed into complete ideologies, but they reflected the general discontent of the times among various groups of people.

# Luddites

By the early 19th century, skilled textile artisans were being replaced by machines operated by cheap, relatively unskilled labourers. The replaced workers formed a protest movement. Claiming to be led by Ned Ludd, who was thought to have been the first person to have destroyed industrial machinery in 1779, disgruntled textile workers formed the Army of Redressers in 1811.



*Why do you think the Luddites chose to attack the machines being invented during this time?  
What did the machines represent?*

# Ned Ludd

They called themselves “Luddites” after **Ned Ludd**, a young apprentice who was rumored to have wrecked a textile apparatus in 1779. There's no evidence **Ludd** actually existed—like Robin Hood, he was said to reside in Sherwood Forest—but he eventually became the mythical leader of the movement



# Army of Redressers

- Armies of Redressers broke into factories and destroyed over 200 of the machines that would make their labour redundant and threaten their employment. The first attacks occurred in Nottingham. The idea quickly caught on, and the movement known as **Luddism** spread across the textile industry.
- In 1817 British government suppresses the movement using force and the law. The government responded by declaring machine-breaking a capital offence—**punishable by death**—and ordered 12 000 troops into the areas where Luddites were active. Many more Luddites were killed or captured. Those captured were either executed or transported to penal colonies.
- *In its actions against the Luddites, what main principle of classical liberalism was the British government protecting through the use of force and the law?*

# Chartists

Chartism was a working-class movement in Britain that focused on political and social reform. Flourishing from 1838 to 1848, Chartism got its name from the **People's Charter of 1838**, which outlined the six essential goals of the movement:

- Universal suffrage for all men over 21
- Equal-sized electoral districts
- Voting by secret ballot
- An end to the need for property qualifications for parliament
- Pay for Members of Parliament
- Annual elections



# The Six Points OF THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER.

1. A VOTE for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.
2. THE BALLOT.—To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.
3. NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION for Members of Parliament—thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.
4. PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when taken from his business to attend to the interests of the country.
5. EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of large ones.
6. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelvemonth; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituents as now.

# 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.*

Every Mite for the Cause, 1, Edward Street, Hoxton Road.



*For what main principle of liberalism were the Chartists fighting to have recognized?*



# Chartism

- The major initiative of the Chartists was presenting the Charter to Parliament in 1839, with 1.25 million signatures. The House of Commons rejected the Charter by a vote of 235 to 46. When some of the Chartist leaders threatened to call a general strike, they were arrested and imprisoned in Newport, Wales.
- Their supporters marched on the prison demanding the release of their leaders, at which point troops opened fire on them, killing 24 people and wounding 40. A second petition with 3 million signatures was rejected in 1842. The rejection of a third petition in 1848 ended the movement, and many of the Chartists then channelled their efforts into socialist movements.
- **The significance of the Chartists lies in their demonstration of the discontent that gripped Britain at the time. The government saw them as an unruly mob reminiscent of the French Revolution, but most of their demands were eventually implemented in the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884.**