

The Northern Political Union

In April 1838, the Leeds Workingmen's Association was dissolved and in its place was created the Northern Political Union. This was reported in the 5 May 1838 edition of the Northern Star

In pursuance of a resolution passed on Wednesday 26 April 1838 at a general meeting of the Leeds Workingmen's Association, convened by advertisement Mr George White in the chair:-

The several persons appointed as a committee to draw up the objects and rules of a union to be called the Great Northern Union, met on Friday evening the 27th instant, at the Northern Star office, in pursuance of the order of the meeting, when Mr. George Robertson in the chair and Mr. Fergus O'Connor acted as secretary, at which meeting your committee resolved upon the several objectives to be contended for by the Union and the rules for its management, which your committee has now the honour to submit for your consideration

OBJECTS

FIRST - That inasmuch as the Reform Bill has failed to produce any practical benefit for the working classes, and, inasmuch as all unions of working men have hitherto been duped by the two political factions alternatively holding usurped power in the state, the time has now arrived when a great struggle should be made by the people to induce the government to concede those political privileges without which the working classes never can hope to secure to themselves protection for life and property, or a just remuneration for their industry.

Secondly - That as it is impossible to expect justice from a party in power and which power has arisen from and is perpetuated by force and plunder and is used exclusively for the benefit of the privileged order, we deem it indispensable that a principal object shall be boldly to insist upon the adoption and legal recognition of a new constitution based upon Magna Charta and the bill of rights and inasmuch as those for whose protection union is necessary, have been deprived of the right of nominating their own representatives and whereas the right of appeal which was through petition, has been virtually abrogated, one of the chief objects of the great Northern Union, will be to restore the right of Suffrage to every male adult not tainted with crime and of sound mind, and the right of petition to all.

A third object to which public attention should be directed is, that an extensive incorporation of the working classes, will afford to every man an opportunity of taking advantage of those means for urging popular demands, which union well advised never fails to effect.

Fourthly - A further object to which your committee feels confident the energies of the union will be directed, is the adoption of some sound and practical means

of opposing the strong arm of virtuous organisation to the unjust administration of bad laws, and that men will discover the absurdity of submitting to the mal-administration of things as they are, while they attach all importance to a complete change in the political system. Your committee therefore encourage themselves to believe that the union will meet oppression and strangle it whenever it presents itself. Another object of the union is, in order to create a good feeling among the several trades, mechanics and other working classes, there can be no separate interests in a community so politically and socially bound together as the working classes of this great Empire: and to inculcate a knowledge of the fact that when one of a community is oppressed the whole community is oppressed, through the suffering of one of its members.

Fifthly - Another object which should be kept prominently in view, is the absolute necessity of being prepared to meet any injurious results which may be entailed upon industrious classes, by a partial decision of a committee of capitalists now sitting upon the question of Trades Unions and that no time should be allowed to intervene between the subjugation of one Union and the perfect organisation of another, which should be ready to supply the place of that which avarice marked and oppression may overcome.

Sixthly - Tat the last, but the least object which your committee confidently anticipate the great Northern Union will constantly keep in view, is the uniting together upon the general principle of justice, all those who though loving people are resolved to risk their lives in the attainment of their rights. Your committee therefore deem it expedient, that before joining the Union any member should distinctly understand that in the event of Moral Force failing to procure these priveleges which the constitution guarantees, but which a party would abrogate and should the constitution be invaded, it is resolved that physical force should be resorted to if necessary, in order to secure the rquality of law and the blessings of those institutions which are the birth right of freemen. That as the object of yielding allegiances is to receive protection, the fact of withholding protection is a violation of the bond, which should bind subjects to a monarch; and therefore the union should recognise no authority save that which emanates from the legitimate source of all honour, namely from the people.