Chartism After 1848: The Working Class And The Politics Of Radical Education

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Chartism was the first truly national mass workers’ movement in history. The three Chartist petitions that advocated suffrage reform attracted millions of signatures and, set against the backdrop of a revolutionary Europe in 1848, the movement became a staple of working-class life in the mid-19th century. Writing for History Extra, Professor Malcolm Chase considers the rise and fall of the mass movement that features prominently in TV drama Victoria. In the drama Victoria, currently airing in the UK on Sunday nights, the year is 1848 and Chartism, the working-class movement for political reform, is on the rise. Here, Professor Malcolm Chase explores the movement... Working people had proclaimed themselves as Chartists at crowded meetings throughout March 1848. The authorities had viewed this campaign with great concern, and some of the propertied classes had come to believe that the Chartists intended revolution, even though the Movement's leaders always emphasized their commitment to peaceful protest. The draconian New Poor Law of 1834 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 origins of Chartism were complex.