

Petition of Joseph Coates, of Royton

House of Commons, Votes and Proceedings, 29 November 1819

Transcribed by Lauren Jaye Gradwell

(No. 38)

A Petition of *Joseph Coates, of Royton*, in the County Palatine of *Lancaster*, was presented, and read; setting forth, That in thus claiming the attention of the House, through the medium of the Petition, the Petitioner is less actuated by a recollection of the personal injuries which he has sustained, and of the cruel sufferings which he for a considerable time endured, than by a strong and just sense of outrage which in his person has been made upon the liberties of *England*, and upon that feeling of security and of protection which the Law was wont to afford; that on Monday the 16th day of August last, the Petitioner went to a public meeting at *Manchester*, in the County aforesaid, which meeting was called for the discussion of certain grievances, and for the adoption of such resolutions as by the persons assembled might be deemed most proper; that the meeting had scarcely commenced, by the appointment of a chairman, and other necessary and usual regulations, when it was attacked by the *Manchester* Yeomanry Cavalry, who charged sword in hand upon the defenceless multitude, cruelly bruising and mutilating such as could not escape, and several the inhumanly put to death; that to secure himself from the brutal violence of these armed desperadoes, the Petitioner sought refuge under the boards of the hustings, where he remained until forced away by the special Constables, who were in attendance at that time, and who, with oaths and imprecations, and with violent thrusts from certain staves which they held in their hands, forced him from that place; that the Petitioner, when quitting his situation under the platform or hustings, was brutally assailed by numbers of the afore-mentioned Constables, one of whom struck him on the head with a staff or bludgeon, and felled him to the ground, and upon his rising up, he was again surrounded and attacked by numbers of the said Constables, who prevented him from going away and continued without mercy to wound and bruise him, with heavy blows from their truncheons or staves; that the Petitioner seeing no mercy was to be had from these men, and being strong and athletic, broke through them by force, and endeavoured to escape, but his progress was stopped by a party of Cavalry, one of whom struck at the Petitioner with his sword, whereupon the Petitioner stepped backwards and thereby avoided the blows which appeared to be aimed at the head of the Petitioner; who now driven back to his former position near the hustings, was again assailed with unmanly and cowardly violence by the persons before-mentioned, as special Constables, and who, in the humble judgment of the Petitioner, ought to have defended from outrage like this, a defenceless and unarmed individual, who had intended violence to no one, and who consequently was not prepared to expect it, especially from the guardians of the Peace and of the Laws; that in this pitiable situation, assailed on all sides, and defenceless, the Petitioner remained, as near as he can judge, for the space of ten minutes, and at length with great difficulty escaped therefrom, through an opening in the line of Cavalry afore-mentioned, but in going down a street called *Windmill Street*, which is contiguous to the place of meeting, the Petitioner was again stopped by a body of special Constables, some of whom struck him with their staves, and drove him back; and in another street, he received a violent blow from the bludgeon of a Constable, upon the left side of his neck, immediately under his ear; that in this manner was the Petitioner treated, in one of the largest towns in *England*, in the open noon day, and under the very eye, and by the authority of several of

His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, until his wounds and bruises had well nigh deprived him of recollection, and went near afterwards to deprive him of life; for being upon his return home attacked by an inflammation of the brain, he was brought very near to the grave thereby, and lay in a state of sickness many weeks; that for these aggravated outrages, the Petitioner humbly prays, That the House would institute such measures as should bring the authors and executors thereof to justice, by punishing them in a manner commensurate with their atrocities.