

(Transcribed by Peter Castree)

Reformists Meeting

Manchester 16th August 1819

Meeting appointed to be at 12 o'clock. Several speakers were there at this time and only one spoke to the Crowd until Hunt Johnson & others arrived in an open Coach. It was to this effect (turning himself to the Crowd) [and?] immediately to the constables (who were very numerous). That tho' he knew there were a number of their enemies about them he hoped they would be peaceable, as peace was all they wanted yet he desired them **to [be] firm** and keep their places - at this time only one Banner and Cap of Liberty "alias Anarchy" was visible with a Band of Musick which immediately after he had spoken played The Dead March. Nothing but confusion around the "platform" with the exception of reiterated and deafening huzzas to those near the platform (not hustings) occurred, in consequence of the different Banners and Caps of Anarchy arriving upon the Ground in irregular Military order great numbers of whom carried their Sticks in the manner Soldiers carry their Flintlocks when ordered to Shoulder Arms. This was done through the principal Streets with a number of Females marching immediately before and after a Man who carried it. During the interval from 12 o'clock to the time of Hunt & Coleagues coming being about ½ past one or two o'clock the Reformers in different Bands came with their Caps of Anarchy & Banners bearing different devices in regular order from the different Townships of Ashton, Royton, Middleton, Saddleworth, Oldham, Bolton, Failsworth, Bury and the adjoining neighbourhoods. On one Banner that of Saddleworth were the inscriptions "Taxation and no representation is tyrannical and unjust", and on the reverse "Equal representation or Death" this [illeg.] in a black Cloth with white borders and black hanging Tassels. On another "Die like men and not be sold like slaves". On another Major Cartwright's Bill and no Corn Laws. On another "Unity and Fraternity" reverse "Strength and Liberty". Another with No Corn Laws and a Bloody Dagger at the Top &c &c. There were in the whole 18 Banners and Caps of Anarchy and three Bands of Music. About 2 o'clock Hunt, Johnston & Cy. arrived in an open Coach with a Female riding with the Driver carryg. a White Banner with the Inscriptn. "Manchester Female Union". A number of the Men had in their Hats Slips of White Cloth fastened in their Hatbands. They called to each other "Lads take care of your white Rags". When Hunt and the party had been cheered by 9 times 3 Johnston immediately appointed Mr Hunt in the Chair carried by loud cheering. Hunt immediately aftds. desired they would be peaceable a great deal depended upon that as they were surrounded by their enemies, that in consequence of the Magistrates having acted in the degrading manner they had by taking the advantage of a few words not quite conformable to the established Law they (the Reformists) had deferred their meeting to this day, by which (in consequence of the Reformists being determined to act legally) they thought they had triumphed, but they had found the difference for in consequence of the delay they Reformists had doubled their numbers and now they had Triumphed. Immediately afterwards the Manchester Yeomanry Cavalry arrived and stationed themselves near the Constables. So soon as they were observed by the persons upon the Scaffold they and the immense multitude huzzaed vehemently which was answered by the Yeomanry and the Constables, immediately after which they Charged and surrounded the Scaffold and took down Johnson & Hunt [?] grand opposition took place during which our Cavalry (from the Barracks) assisted by the Cheshire Yeomanry completely discomfited them. Scores of Hats & Shoes were left upon the Ground. A many both Women & Men severely wounded. A Constable killed. One of the Manchester Yeomanry severely wounded by Brick bats which were thrown in abundance in one part of the Ground. All the Flags, Caps &c were taken.