

the best of my ability, to explain to you the reasons by which I think they can, one and all, be supported. Their importance, however, I would beg to say, is not uniform. The grand principle is the equal right of every member of society to a voice in the management of the affairs of society; and the most eligible practical application of this principle is male adult suffrage. To carry it out, equal electoral districts, no property qualification for members, and a short duration of parliament, are considered essential; and less essential, but still expedient, the ballot, and payment of members of parliament—(cheers). Let me now, for a few minutes, direct your attention to some objections that are made to the proceedings of the Birmingham Conference. The first is a very trifling one, and it is urged with equal lack of reason by two parties. Our timid middle-class friends complain that we have adopted all the points of the Charter, and our extreme Chartist friends grumble because we will not call ourselves Chartists—(laughter). Now, to the first I would say, if the points be good and true, as I have tried to show them to be, why should you care where they come from; and to the second, if we have agreed to the things that you think right, why should you be so silly as cavil because, for some reason, good or bad, we do not adopt a particular name. But, as prejudice will sometimes be obstinate, it may, perhaps, reconcile both parties a little to put them in mind of some facts, that, in their eagerness to avoid or impose a name, they seem altogether to have forgotten. Be it known, then, that the six points agreed to at Birmingham, were adopted by Reformers nearly 60 years before ever the Charter was heard of, and many years before nine-tenths of the Chartists were born. In 1776, Major Cartwright published a pamphlet, pointing out the necessity of Parliamentary Reform. In 1780, a great public meeting of the inhabitants of Westminster was held for the purpose of promoting Parliamentary reform. At this meeting, a committee was appointed, which agreed to a report, recommending

1. Annual Parliaments.
2. Universal Suffrage.
3. Voting by Ballot
4. Equal Polling Districts.
5. No Money Qualifications for Members.
6. Payment of Members.

This report was immediately adopted by the Society for Constitutional Information, at the head of which was

The Duke of Richmond, President.

(I wish his son were of the same way of thinking.)

The Earl of Derby.

The Earl of Selkirk.

The Earl of Effingham.

Viscount Mountmaurice.

The Earl of Surrey.

Lord Kinnaird.

Now, it may, perhaps, please some of our middle-class friends to know that the principles adopted at Birmingham

did not take their origin in the Charter (although, if they had, they would have had a most respectable parentage), but were ushered into the world under the auspices of dukes, earls, viscounts, and lords—(cheers). And when our Chartist friends reflect that these points were promulgated so long before the Charter was heard of, they may possibly come to the conclusion that they have no right to insist that everybody who adopts them shall call himself a Chartist—(cheers). This information, relative to former movements in behalf of reform, I give you as it is detailed in an excellent tract published by the Metropolitan and Parliamentary Reform Association, but the facts can be attested by many old Reformers still alive, some of whom I have the honour of calling my friends—(cheers). The Metropolitan Association have resumed all these six points, with a little alteration on the annual parliaments one, and yet they do not call themselves Chartists. Are they the worse Reformers for that, or is there a reasonable Chartist that would object to them or obstruct them on that account? Another objection to the principles of the Birmingham Conference, but which is urged only by one class, is, that an extension of the franchise would only extend the field of bribery. My answer to this is, that the first effect of the extension of the franchise to every adult male, would be to put an end to the abuses that form the chief temptation to bribe. Do you believe that, if the corn-laws and other monopolies had been repealed before last election, the Carlton Club, or, in other words, the Tory aristocracy, would have thought it worth their while to expend nearly a million of money in securing a majority in the House of Commons? Depend upon it they would not. But it is said, "Oh, there will always be bribery, even if you render it more expensive, by increasing the number of voters; and, less profitable, by decreasing the chance of a return for the money." I do not believe it—I do not think that there will be bribing without a motive; but, if I am mistaken, if there must be bribery, why, in the name of fair play, I say let all get a share of it—give it to the poor who need money, as well as to the ten-pounders who are not in want—(cheers and laughter). There is another objection, however, which, although not better grounded than either of the preceding, is of a more serious character, and merits a graver answer. It has been said that, if you give the working classes political power, they will use it for purposes of spoliation and robbery. Mr. Macaulay in the House of Commons, and many timid Tories and Whigs out of it, have drawn horrible pictures of the state of anarchy and confusion that would flow from universal suffrage. But I feel persuaded that, if they really believe what they say, they are utterly mistaken. What motive have the working classes to rob those above them; and how are they to do it if they are so disposed? I can easily see how ten people could hope for permanent benefit from robbing a thou-