

sand, if they had the power; but I cannot see how the thousand could expect any lasting gain from a robbery of the ten—(cheers). The few may have an interest in robbing the many, but the many can have little interest in robbing the few—(cheers). The millions might calculate on some tenpenny-halfpenny gain from seizing on the jewels of the Queen and the Duchess of Sutherland, so ostentatiously talked of amidst general national distress; but the advantage would be temporary, and counterbalanced in the mind of nine-tenths of the working population by the shock that would be given to the security of property. I do not believe, from all that I have seen of the working classes, that they have the slightest intention to interfere with the sacred right of property. What is their wish? Do they not hope each to gain something, and does not each desire earnestly that the fruits of his industry should be preserved to him?—(cheers.) Their complaint is that property is not respected at present—(cheers). By unjust laws, their little earnings are frittered away to support a bad system of policy, which does not enrich even the few to the extent that it impoverishes the many—(cheers). Talk of security to property! Where is it? I was in my native town of Paisley the other day, and I saw men who, a few years ago, were worth thousands, reduced to beggary—I saw men who had talents, industry, and perseverance, equal to what is possessed by any one here, who could hardly provide wherewithal to keep their families from starving—(hear, hear). The distress of that town has not been exaggerated; and it is a fact that those on the relief list are not the worst off. The men who have been accustomed to go with good coats on their backs—the foremen, the clerks and petty managers who have been thrown out of employment, who have sold or pawned every article of furniture or clothing that could be spared, till they are obliged to appear in a dress that would disgrace a broken-down sheriff-officer, and who are now on the brink of starvation, and yet ashamed to go to a meal-store or a soup-kitchen—are more to be pitied than some of the parties who have all along been counted among the destitute—(hear, hear). Where is these men's property? Some of them were rich—all of them were comfortable—a few years ago; and what are they now? And yet we have not had universal suffrage. No; nor one of the points of the Charter—(cheers). Protection to property, forsooth! Need we wonder that these Paisley men—and there will soon be others in similar circumstances—should have little fear of the effect of universal suffrage? Then how are the working-classes to set about robbing the wealthy? If they are to do it by illegal means, are they not as well able to do it now as they will be after their enfranchisement?—and are they not more likely to have the necessary provocation?—(cheers.) If they are to do it legally, it must be by a slow and considerate process—one that will expose

their designs to the public, cause them to be canvassed in all their bearings, and rouse a feeling of indignation against them. As I have said, I do not believe that the working-classes have any such object in view. I do not believe that they will seek to retaliate for the injuries they have suffered from the corn-laws and other monopolies—(cheers); but, if they were to do so, I can easily imagine them pointing for precedent, not to the proceedings of any revolutionary body, but to the deliberate acts of a Conservative Premier and a Conservative Parliament. When they want to confiscate the property of the rich—to seize money wherever it can be got, without regard to justice—they have only to point to the income tax—(cheers). When they want to sponge the debt, they have only to say, Sir Robert Peel compounded for 19s. 5d. in the pound—we choose to compound for the 7d.—(cheers). But to support the allegation that the working-classes would spoil and rob if they were invested with the franchise, reference has been made to the National Petition—presented, the other day, in the House of Commons—which, it is said, contains exceedingly dangerous doctrines. Now, I do not think, Mr. Chairman, that the National Petition has either been generously treated by its opponents, or fairly defended by its friends. I am not prepared to say that its composition is excellent; in many points, it is clumsily and stupidly enough worded. But we all know the difficulty of drawing up formal documents; and, if William Cobbett was able to find so many flaws in kings' speeches, and the standard writings of celebrated authors, we need not wonder that regular critics of the *Edinburgh* or *Westminster Review* should see blunders in a declaration by the unenfranchised. Neither am I going to stand up for all the doctrines that may be current among the authors and subscribers of the National Petition. There is, I doubt not, as bad political economy among the working classes as there is among the upper and middle classes of society—the difference being that the former have not yet had an opportunity of trying their hand at practical blundering, and that the latter have blundered too long—(cheers). But, in reference to this petition, the substance of it, or rather of the clause that has given rise to so much clamour, I do not find that it contains anything to excite alarm. Why, let us see. It talks of a monopoly of the suffrage. We are met to denounce that; and yet we are not spoliators. “The monopoly of paper-money.” Thousands of good men and eminent political economists have declaimed against the monopoly enjoyed by the Bank of England, and even against the banking system generally, and yet they were not called spoliators—(cheers). “The monopoly of machinery.” I confess I cannot understand what this means, but probably—and we are bound to give a liberal interpretation—it has some bearing on the scope and extent of the Factory Acts—(cheers). “The monopoly of land.” Have