

Source 5

Handbill issued by the weavers and townspeople of Royton in May 1808, after Parliament rejected a bill to guarantee the weavers a minimum wage (Catalogue ref: HO 42/95 f.375)

As you study the source, ask yourself:

1. The Napoleonic War lasted from 1802-1812. Why do the weavers and the people of Royton believe that their hardships are caused by the war?
2. How do they feel that they have been portrayed?
3. What is the attitude of the weavers to the grievances of other workers?
4. Why do they hope to go forward in a "constitutional manner"?

Source 5

Royton.

At a Meeting of the Weavers and other Inhabitants of the Township of ROYTON, it was agreed to submit the following Statement of our Sufferings, and the Cause thereof, to our Fellow Countrymen :

AS we have been called upon to take part with you in your present proceedings, we the said Inhabitants feel it our indispensable duty to address you at this important crisis, upon the subject of our mutual distress; a subject that demands the most serious attention of every one of us, and upon which depends our happiness or misery. While we lament the general distress, we beg leave to suggest that it is our opinion your proceedings are not likely to obtain you relief; for that distress can only be removed, by removing the cause;—which cause we have no hesitation in pronouncing is the WAR:—to prove which we need only refer to our dependance upon Commerce, and how it is obstructed by the War;—and it is our humble opinion that it is impossible for either the Legislature or commercial characters to remedy the evil by any other means than that of the restoration of Peace.

Fellow Countrymen,—We have been misrepresented and treated as enemies to our King and Country; but we can safely say, that our only wish has invariably been, a termination of the contest in which we are unfortunately engaged; and are now convinced, that it is an object equally the wish of the major part of the Country; and which we believe has been withheld from us by those whose Counsels have too long prevailed in this Country. Yet notwithstanding, we are ready at all times to forward, in any constitutional manner, that which is likely to be productive of the good we all aim at. But will never lend our aid to any illegal measure; therefore, by your permission, we will advise you to desist from your present proceedings—return to your families and respective employments; as the neglect so to do, will, we fear, only tend to your misfortune and distress.

May 30th, 1808.

W. COWDROY, PRINTER, MANCHESTER.