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**REFORM PETITIONS.**

*HC Deb 18 April 1831 vol 3 cc1494-509* [1494](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "column_1494" \o "Col. 1494 — HC Deb 18 April 1831 vol 3 c1494)

*Mr. John Smith*

rose to present a Petition, which he considered to be one of the highest importance at the present moment. It was a petition signed by 9,690 persons —Merchants, Bankers, and Traders of the City of London; and he believed there were not twenty names appended to the petition, which did not come under one of these three denominations. This petition was agreed to at one of the most numerous and respectable meetings ever convened in the City of London; and those who attended it might be said to have been unanimous, for only two persons opposed the Resolutions, and only one held up his hand against them, for the other finding the meeting to be decidedly against him, quitted the room. He might say, therefore, with great truth that the petition expressed the sentiments of the great body of the merchants of the metropolis. It had been said, in the course of their discussions, that the Reform measure had a tendency to produce revolution. He hoped the House would allow him to remind them that those who [1495](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "column_1495" \o "Col. 1495 — HC Deb 18 April 1831 vol 3 c1495) signed the petition were men engaged in peaceable pursuits, who must be the first victims of revolution, and they, one and all, agreed with him that the [Reform Bill](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/bills/reform-bill) which his Majesty's Ministers had introduced would, instead of producing revolution, be a means of protecting their property, and securing to them the fruits of their industry. They prayed, therefore, that it might pass into a law.

*Mr. Alderman Wood*

supported the prayer of the petition, and bore testimony to the respectability of the meeting at which it was agreed to be presented to that House. He had never seen a more numerous and respectable meeting.

[§](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions#S3V0003P0_18310418_HOC_10) Petition to be printed.

[§](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "S3V0003P0_18310418_HOC_11" \o "Link to this speech by Mr Thomas Hodges) [*Mr. Hodges*](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/mr-thomas-hodges)

presented similar Petitions from Hythe and Whitstable.

*Mr. Philip Howard*

took that opportunity of expressing to the House, that the assurance given by the noble Lord, the Paymaster of the Forces, that the rights of those claiming their freedom by birth or by servitude, should be duly considered, had given great satisfaction to the electors of Carlisle, and the freemen in towns generally. It was on no light grounds that our forefathers held out the elective franchise as the reward of those who, by seven years of patient industry, had given to the State a pledge of their fitness steadily to exercise the duties of a freeman. By preserving the rights of apprenticeship, by making industry, in a limited sense, as well as property, the basis of Representation, all the advantages arising from a mixed Representation, from that "Concordia discors" in the elective body, on which the right hon. Baronet, the member for Tamworth, on a former night enlarged, will be retained; without making that further admission, so repugnant to the spirit of the Constitution, to the privileges and standing Resolutions of the House, that nomination is a necessary part of the system. It should be his business to support the noble Lord and the Administration in their efforts to remedy imperfect, and to do away with that "ideal" Representation, which had been so long the bane of this country.

[§](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "S3V0003P0_18310418_HOC_13" \o "Link to this speech by Mr Thomas Hodges) [*Mr. Hodges*](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/mr-thomas-hodges)

presented a similar Petition from the Clergy, Gentry, and Freeholders of the county of Sussex.

[§](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "S3V0003P0_18310418_HOC_14" \o "Link to this speech by Mr Henry Winchester) [*Mr. Alderman Winchester*](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/mr-henry-winchester)

.—As one of the freeholders of the county of Sussex, from whom the petition just now presented by the hon. member for the county of Kent [1496](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "column_1496" \o "Col. 1496 — HC Deb 18 April 1831 vol 3 c1496) purports to be, I am desirous of ascertaining to what parts of the noble Paymaster's Bill for the Reform in Parliament its prayer particularly alludes; for, if I understood the noble Lord rightly the other night, he declared his readiness to abandon a great part of the principle of the Bill now before the House [No, no!]. Some honourable Members say No, no; but I beg to state, that such is the fact, and am not alone in that impression, both as regards the opinion in this House and out of doors. I shall now express my dissent from the prayer of the petition, for as it mentions freeholders generally, it might not, otherwise, be understood that I was not at all concerned in forwarding, or in promoting the petition.

[§](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "S3V0003P0_18310418_HOC_15" \o "Link to this speech by Mr Herbert Curteis) [*Mr. Curteis*](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/mr-herbert-curteis-1)

said, that the petition was agreed to at a large meeting of the county. The freeholders of Sussex were most decidedly in favour of the measure his Majesty's Ministers had brought forward. He also approved of the Reform measure, and hoped that Ministers would stand firmly by the Bill, and dissolve Parliament immediately if they could not carry it. He did not mean to say, that the meeting was attended by all the freeholders of the county of Sussex, for, from the size of the county, it was difficult to procure a meeting of that description. This fact, however, he thought, afforded an additional argument for the Reform which the Government contemplated, and he again implored them to persevere.

*Mr. Shelley*

was bound to say, that the meeting of the county of Sussex, at which the petition was agreed to, were nearly unanimous with respect to the [Reform Bill](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/bills/reform-bill); but he must take leave to say, that the meeting could not be very well said to express the opinions of the freeholders, for he did not think there were forty freeholders present. He mentioned this, without wishing to found any argument on it, but merely as a fact worthy of notice. With respect to the Bill itself, he would merely say, that he still continued to think it would be productive of the most disastrous consequences; and he repeated his opinion, that the freeholders of the county of Sussex were not favourable to it. A person at the meeting, in reply to some comments of his on the Ministerial Budget of Blunders, had used a couplet in their defence, which he was then happy to repeat for their benefit to the House— If to their share some fiscal errors fall, Look at their Bill, and you'll forget them all.

[1497](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "column_1497" \o "Col. 1497 — HC Deb 18 April 1831 vol 3 c1497)

[§](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "S3V0003P0_18310418_HOC_17" \o "Link to this speech by Lord John Lennox) [*Lord George Lennox*](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/lord-john-lennox)

was confident that the great majority of the people of Sussex were favourable to Reform; and as an instance of the unanimity of the opinions of the freeholders on the subject, he had seen upwards of 400 assembled in the room where the meeting was held.

[§](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions" \l "S3V0003P0_18310418_HOC_18" \o "Link to this speech by Hon. Charles Pelham) [*Mr. Cressett Pelham*](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/hon-charles-pelham)

also denied, that the freeholders of that county were unanimous in their approbation of the Reform measure. He was now a freeholder of that county; but if the Bill passed, he should become a dependant on the vile menials of the Government.

[§](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1831/apr/18/reform-petitions#S3V0003P0_18310418_HOC_19) Petition to be printed.