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This paper was posted up in Nottingham on Saturday Morning

May 9th 1812

Welcome Ned Ludd, your case is good,

Make Perceval your aim;

For by this Bill, 'tis understood

Its death to break a Frame—

With dexterous skill, the Hosier's kill

For they are quite as bad;

And die you must, by the late Bill-

Go on my bonny lad!—

You might as well be hung for death

As breaking a machine—

So now my Lad, your sword unsheath

And make it sharp and keen—

We are ready now your cause to join

Whenever you may call;

So make foul blood, run clear & fine

Of Tyrants great and small!—

with Mr Thomas

PS.- Deface this who dare

(Illegible) Courts

They shall have Tyrants fare

SWood Street

For Ned is every where

And can see and hear

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M34 ❖ 29 May 1812: Letter from "N. Ludd" mailed to Henry Wood, Leicester

The most famous incidents of machine breaking in Leicestershire took place at Loughborough in 1816, but as early as 1812 Leicestershire Luddism produced some letters that are not only interesting for the Luddite culture that they depict but also for how they were handled by the recipients. One such letter, received through the mail by Henry Wood of Leicester on 1 June 1812, appears on a reward poster printed in Leicester, 3 June 1812. Like many of the threatening letters

from Nottinghamshire, the letter to Wood employs a juridical discourse much as was found in magistrate's warrants. Unlike other threats, this letter purports merely to inform Wood of an irrevocable death sentence and does not offer a chance for him to reform. Perhaps the letter's most interesting feature is the new calendar suggested in the date, "29 May year two" (1812, the second year of the Luddite risings, which possibly imitates the French Revolutionary calendar).

The reward poster was sent to the Home Office. It was also forwarded to the Home Office by Gratian Hart of Leicester, in his 4 June 1812 letter, as a "specimen" of threat passed about in Leicestershire.

H. O. 42/124. The entire reward poster is reproduced in facsimile on page 134.<sup>73</sup>

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M35 ❖ Late Spring or Summer 1812: Song titled "Hunting a Loaf," Derbyshire

In his *History of the Machine-Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufacturers*, William Felkin speculates that the primary causes of Luddism were hunger and misery. He remarks that the winter of 1811–12 heard an incessant cry: "Give us work at any price—half a loaf is better than no bread."<sup>74</sup> Correspondents from all parts of the Luddite regions writing regularly to the Home Office report a doubling or even a tripling in the prices of oatmeal and potatoes (Fletcher letter, 6 May 1812, H. O. 40/1, and Maitland letter of the same date, H. O. 42/123).

"Hunting a Loaf," a Derbyshire ballad from the late spring or summer of 1812, explicitly links Luddism to the economic distress felt by Britons in general, rather than primarily to the clash between labor traditions and new technology. The song is also much more politically charged than most of the Midlands documents that were written before late spring of 1812 (and the assassination of Prime Minister Perceval on 11 May 1812 by John Bellingham, the "Liverpool man" of the song), placing blame for the distress squarely on the government. Even more remarkable for a document originating in the Midlands are the indications within the song of a self-conscious political discourse, one that is not only aware of boundaries of acceptable speech but also deliberate in its attempts to direct that speech along the paths of an audience's sympathies. The writer distinguishes between "sedition" and complaint, appealing more to the image of the (less objectionable) bread riot than to the more narrow (and perhaps less pathetic) notion of defending "the trade." Even the stylistic devices cater to audience expecta-

## Four Hundred Guineas Reward.

Mr. WOOD received the following Letter on Monday evening, the 1st of June, by the Post.

“ HENRY WOOD,

IT having been represented to me that you are one of those damned miscreants who delight in distressing and bringing to poverty those poor unhappy and much injured men called Stocking makers; now be it known unto you that I have this day issued orders for your being shot through the body with a Leden Ball on or before the 20th Day of June, therefore it will be adviseable of you to settle your worldly affairs and make the best use of your spare time, as nothing can or shall save you from the Death you so Justly deserve.

I am

a friend to the Poore

N. LUDD.

Ludd Office 29 May year Two”

*The following note was sent on a printed Card to the Warehouse of Ann Wood, & Sons, on Tuesday morning, the 2nd. instant.*

“ Leicester, June 1, 1812.

The Gentlemen Hosiers are requested to take notice that the Framework-knitters' bill will be read by the Attorney, Mr. Toplis, in the Exchange, at 3 o'clock in the Afternoon of Wednesday the 3rd. of June Inst. when its parts will be minutely examined, and the Hosiers will have a fair opportunity of approving or objecting to it.

By order of the Committee

Of the House of Commons,

T. ALLSOP. Sec.”

A copy of the above has been sent to the Secretary of State, and also to every Member of Parliament, and a Reward of

## TWO HUNDRED GUINEAS

is hereby offered to be paid by Ann Wood & Sons, to any individual who will give such evidence as shall be the means of convicting the person or persons guilty of sending the above threatening Letter. And if two or more persons were concerned in writing and sending the said letter, and one of them will impeach his accomplice or accomplices, or give such secret information as shall lead ultimately to a conviction, he or they shall receive the like reward, and exertions shall be made to procure the pardon of the person or persons so impeaching.

The MAYOR and MAGISTRATES, having been informed of this threatening Letter, hereby offer a Reward of TWO HUNDRED GUINEAS to be paid by them, over and above the sum promised by the House of Ann Wood and Sons.

LEICESTER: JUNE; 3, 1812.

*Browne, Printer, Market-place.*

Reward poster containing 29 May 1812 letter from “N. Ludd” mailed to Henry Wood, Leicester, H. O. 42/124

tions. The image of the “big loaf” for a shilling was familiar and commonly used by the disaffected and by reformers as an amalgam of the desire for prosperity and for a political reform that would alleviate economic distresses.<sup>75</sup> The highly wrought internal rhyme forces a pause and thereby segments each line into more manageable, oralized lengths—a technique typical not only of popular songs and hymns but also of some of the schoolbooks of the time.

A printed sheet illustrated with a woodcut in the Broadsheet Collection, Derby Local Studies Library, box 15. It has been reprinted with its tune and a great many emendations in Roy Palmer, *A Touch on the Times* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Education, 1974), 289–90.<sup>76</sup>

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HUNTING A  
LOAF.

GOOD people I pray give ear unto what I say,  
And pray do not call it sedition,  
For these great men of late they have crack'd my pate,  
I'm wounded in a woeful condition.<sup>77</sup>

Fal lal de ral, &c.

For Derby it's true, and Nottingham too,  
Poor men to the jail they've been taking,  
They say that Ned Ludd as I understood,  
A thousand wide frames has been breaking.

Fal lal, &c.

Now is it not bad there's no work to be had,<sup>78</sup>  
The poor to be starv'd in their station;  
And if they do steal they're strait sent to the jail,  
And they're hang'd by the laws of the nation.

Fal lal, &c.

Since this time last year I've been very queer,  
And I've had a sad national cross;  
I've been up and down, from town unto town,  
With a shilling to buy a big loaf.

Fal lal, &c.

The first that I met was Sir Francis Burdett,

He told me he'd been in the Tower;<sup>79</sup>  
 I told him my mind a big loaf was to find,  
 He said you must ask them in power.

Fal lal, &c.

Then I thought it was time to speak to the prime  
 Master Perceval would take my part,  
 But a Liverpool man soon ended the plan,  
 With a pistol he shot through his heart.

Fal lal, &c.

Then I thought he'd a chance on a rope for to dance,  
 Some people would think very pretty;  
 But he lost all his fun thro' the country he'd run,  
 And he found it in fair London city.

Fal lal, &c.

Now ending my journey I'll sit down with my friends,  
 And I'll drink a good health to the poor;  
 With a glass of good ale I have told you my tale,  
 And I'll look for a big loaf no more.

Fal lal, &c.

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M36 ❖ 4 June 1812: Letter from "L.." at Nottingham to the prince regent at Carlton House

H. O. 42/124 contains many letters, written during the spring and summer of 1812, that threaten public officials. Several of them are addressed to the prince regent from various parts of the country. Most of the letters express grievances, but even the authors of those letters seem to be aware that their pleas will have little effect on the regent. (The prince regent did have some well-wishers, although much apparent well-wishing to public officials was ironic; see, for example, the July 1812 letter from Daypool (Y17) among the Yorkshire documents.) Almost all of the letters indicate popular disapproval of the regent's style of living, and many of those have religious moral and rhetorical underpinnings: one message consisted of nothing more than a stamp of George III with the biblical passage on the destruction of Sodom and the letters "a" and "n" written large in the margins.

Among the threats is a Luddite letter from Nottingham addressed to "His Royal highness The Prince Regent Carlton House London/ Speed." Despite several grammatical problems, the skillful rhetorical balances in the letter—for example, between God's and Lud's "eres" and between "extravagance" and "love"—are remarkable for a Luddite document. The posited connection between divine and temporal justice typifies, in many ways, the later stages of frustrated Nottinghamshire Luddism; however, the insistence on personal justice (that is, against the regent's person) wrought by the "avenger of blood" demonstrates that the writer still envisions the possibility of action, even though that possibility is rendered in the third person, Lud. The vision certainly is not as bold or optimistic as earlier Luddite visions (such as we find in "General Ludd's Triumph") had been. Instead, the writer treats rebellious violence as a last resort of men "whoes lives are not worth keeping in this wretched period of your Reign." The repetition of "you" and "your" throughout imparts to the letter an accusing tone much more pronounced than in many other letters, drawing attention to the disparity between sovereignty ("your Reign") and failed governance caused by moral slackness ("your Country" juxtaposed against "your extravagance"). That disparity is further punctuated by the closing: "one who wishes well/To his Country," rather than to His Royal Highness.

H. O. 42/124. It is enclosed by a 4 June 1812 letter from Conant (by way of his colleague, Baker). Conant says that the suspected writer "was laid hold of, and it was discovered that he had loose in the breast of his Coat a sharp pointed knife fixed in a wooden handle apparently new, near a foot long" (H. O. 42/124). No more is said about the writer in series 42, except that Conant judged him to be mad and noted that he laid a book—perhaps a Bible—before the judge at his arraignment.

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George

The cry of your sins, is gone into the Eres of the Lord of hostes. and the day of repentance will shortly be gone by---

The cry of your hard and unmoveable heart to the sufferings of your Poor Starving Subjects is gone into the Eres of General Lud—

Four thousand of his bravest Men (whoes lives are not worth keeping in this wretched period of your Reign) have sworn to revenge the wrongs of their countrymen and their own, if you dont stand still, and think and act differantly to what you have done—Was it ever known to your Country, (since you have had the power of acting in its behalf) that you have dropt a sentance,

or done a single act which has worn the slightest appearance of Love to your Country—O Shame think of your extravagance. Think of your example—repent before the avenger of Blood put it out of your power—

Take the advice of one who wishes well

To his Country

L..

To The Prince Regiant

Nott<sup>m</sup> 4th June 1812

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M37 ❖ 7 June 1812: Letter from “Tho Jones” at Bristol to the prince regent at London

Although the following letter, dated 7 June 1812 from Bristol, does not originate in one of the Luddite regions, it adheres to the pattern of some of the ironic well-wisher letters from the Luddite regions to the regent and other authorities and makes specific reference to the disturbances at Nottingham.<sup>80</sup>

H. O. 42/124. It appears without an enclosing letter among a number of letters threatening the regent and cabinet ministers.

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To His Royle Highness prince Regent London

June 7 1812

You Royle Highness

I have taking Liberty of writing thies few lines To awear you what may happing to your Person and that in averry short time I am informed by sum of the Rioters in Nottingham that if you donot InDever To make peace with the Countrey and France or indever That Bread Shall Be Cheaper That thay will Blow your Braines out. and what I can learn that thay are In wait for you dayley

I remain your

Well whisher

Tho Jones Cabinet Maker

Bristol

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M38 ❖ 11 June 1812: Letter from “a poor woman” at “Lester” to James Stevenson at Leicester

Enclosed with a 16 June 1812 letter from General Dyott in Lichfield to General Maitland is a 15 June letter from the mayor of Leicester, James Stevenson, to Dyott, expressing the mayor’s concern about the spread of machine wrecking into his town. Stevenson’s letter contains a transcription of an anonymous letter that he had received, dated 11 June 1812. While the authorities believe the letter to be genuine in its declared intentions, it is possible that the letter follows the rhetorical “good cop” form directed to offending recipients by Luddite writers who attempt to convey a threat without appearing threatening, thereby avoiding the consequences specified in the Black Act; perhaps the best example is the April 1812 letter to Joseph Radcliffe from “Mr Love Good” in the Radcliffe Papers 126/28, transcribed below.

I include all of Stevenson’s letter to show the reaction of the authorities.

H. O. 40/1/4.

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Leicester, June 15th 1812

Sir,

I take the liberty of requesting that you will, if it be possible, increase the force of this Garrison. I understand there are only about 158 Soldiers in the place.

It is not possible, in the compass of letter, to explain to you all the reasons which induce me to apprehend for the safety of the Town. I will state a few, but beg you to give me credit for more. Letters threatening assassination have been sent here to several persons. It is pretty clear that these have been sent by the Committee of Frameworkknitters who have as complete an organization of the whole Body as you could have of a Regiment. The Leicester Chronicle has been for some time employed in familiarizing and justifying assassination. It has advertised a Subscription for Bellingham’s Widow. The system of terror is here almost as complete as at Nottingham; and do not forget that the Press is here more devoted to Revolutionists than in any other part of the Kingdom. I received by the Post lately the following letter: