

Why was there
repression by lord
liverpool's
government 1815-
1820 essay sample



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During this period of time, there are four types of people involved, the middling class perhaps wanting reform, the working class leaders wanting the vote, the working class (the mass) just wanted food and jobs and then there were the real revolutionaries (a real minority). Lord Liverpool's government believed that the revolutionaries were a majority.

First to answer this question we need to understand what repression means. Repression is the act to suppress a thought, feeling or desire in someone so that it becomes unconscious.

There were many forms of repression taken by Lord Liverpool's government between 1815-1820. They were: the abolition of income tax for the rich, the corn laws, suspension of habeas corpus, six acts, use of agents provocateurs and the seditious act.

Income tax was introduced as a wartime emergency measure in 1798, with the understanding that it would stop after the war. William Pitt introduced it. This was the tax the rich paid, the poor believed that they were being taxed for the benefit of the rich.

The Corn Laws came into existence in 1815. They stated that: the import of grain prohibited until the price of home grown wheat reached 80 shillings a quarter, colonial wheat was to be allowed in when the price reached 67 shillings, corn dealers were permitted to warehouse supplies at the ports for release when the price was right. The government introduced these laws as they feared cheaper foreign corn would be sold more than home grown, this would leave the farmers and landowners out of pocket. During the war farmers had enjoyed high prices and prosperity, landowners increased rent

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and loans had been contracted at high wartime interest rates. The laws acted as a protection against the bankruptcy of the landowners.

The suspension of habeas corpus for six months meant that a person could now be arrested without being formally charged with an offence. This meant that the government could arrest anyone they thought would start trouble. The Seditious Meeting Act meant that gatherings of more than 50 were prohibited.

The six acts were: restrictions on public meetings called to draft petitions, magistrates empowered to confiscate seditious literature, magistrates empowered to confiscate arms, increased stamp tax on newspapers and pamphlets, increased powers for the prosecution in treason cases, and training for private armies prohibited. The use of 'agents provocateurs' meant that any revolutionary groups could be infiltrated and suppressed. They also deliberately caused trouble so that troublemakers could be exposed.

Due to the repression made by Lord Liverpool's government the public's reaction was not surprising. There were violent protests in London due to the Corn Law, as the poor's staple diet was being raised in price. Other protests include Peterloo - led by Henry 'Orator' Hunt. It was a mass meeting to demand reform. The government were afraid, even though it was a peaceful demonstration, they sent in the cavalry. Opponents called it Peterloo as a mocking comparison to Waterloo. The six acts were put into effect after this demonstration.

The Blanketeers were unemployed workers. They had planned to march from Manchester to London with a petition to Prince Regent asking him to consider their grievances. Troops were used against them and only one made it to London.

The Spencean Radicals or philanthropists believed that all taxes except those of the income tax for the rich should be abolished and the land nationalised to make things fairer. They were followers of Thomas Spence. A meeting between them in London's Spa Fields got out of hand and led to riots and looting.

The Cato Street conspirators devised a plan to assassinate all the members of Lord Liverpool's government as they had caused all this repression and unfair acts. They were found out due to 'agents provocateurs' infiltrating them and exposing them. They were all executed.

All this repression made by Lord Liverpool's government was all due to them believing that Britain was on the verge of a revolution. The French Revolution began in 1789, by aristocrats who wanted a constitutional monarchy.

However in 1793/94 the Jacobins, political extremists started a reign of Terror. Lord Liverpool's government took it as a warning of what might happen if things changed in Britain.

Was Britain on the verge of a revolution? No, although people did see dangers of a revolution the vast majority of the public simply wanted food and jobs, they did not care for politics and the right to vote.