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"From Great Reform to Great Betrayal: Politics, Resistance, and the Making of the English Working Class"

In this paper I argue that English workers came to think of themselves as a class with shared interests opposed to both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie after the New Poor Law was passed in 1834. The passage of the New Poor Law constituted a complete revision of the existing poor-relief system, forcing those who wanted to collect relief to submit to the harsh conditions of the workhouse. Workers felt as a result of this law that they had been betrayed by their employers, given that they had helped the middle class become enfranchised only two years prior. The formation of class consciousness, therefore, was the product of an extraordinary political event as well as shared material experiences. This argument is made against those scholars who would reject the idea that class was a relevant feature of popular politics in the early 19th century, as well as those who would suggest that the struggle over material conditions alone produces class consciousness.

Sources Include:

*Political Register* (London), January 1830- August 1834.
*Northern Star* (Leeds), January 1838- November 1838.