



**T**he Poor Man's Guardian was established by Henry Hetherington in 1830. It was a time when radical sentiment in England had been re-awakened by the July revolution in France.

There were many hundreds of radical pamphlets and newspapers published at this time, often with provocative anti-Establishment titles; all of them were bound by law to pay the newspaper stamp tax, but none of them did, so they were known collectively as the Unstamped, and their campaign to remove the Stamp Tax was labelled the War of the Unstamped. They all difficulties in distribution, since booksellers were not interested in handling products with such low margins, especially if the met with the disapproval of magistrates and clergymen. All of these papers operated under the harsh provisions of the Six Acts,

The Poor Man's Guardian was the most successful of these publications. Hetherington was also pursuing an energetic programme of public lectures to working class and radical groups, lecturing them on the right to vote, and the wrong done to them by excessive taxation, and the pensioners, priests and warmongers these taxes went to support.

The paper was printed in two columns on paper approx.

The first page normally had a long leading article. The rest of the paper carried reports of court cases, particularly under the Six Acts, Lists of

Victims of the Odious Six Acts, and reports or notices of such organisations as the National Union of the Working Class, the Fund in Aid of the Wives and Children of the Men in Lancaster castle, the Meeting of the Co-operative Congress.

The Poor Man's Guardian set out to beat the Law and to make money and was broadly successful in both objectives. Its vendors flooded the Houses of Correction, its circulation was higher than nearly all the stamped

newspapers, and in 1836 the Chancellor of the Exchequer was reluctantly compelled to reduce the Stamp Tax from four pence to just one penny. This must be accounted the most successful pressure group campaign of the decade; there were of course many other pressure groups, but they took much longer to achieve their objectives. It also turned out to be the training ground for most of the activists and journalists who later served in the Chartist movement.

The Unstamped made money. The money that came to the Victim Fund and later to the proprietors was used to support other working class causes, such as the relief of unionists on strike, the fathers and families of Tolpuddle, and help to

Lovett when his property was seized because he would not join the militia. The Unstamped itself was a political movement, a crusade for the vote and the cheap dissemination of knowledge.

Although the Poor Man's Guardian only lasted for four years until 1835, it had a powerful influence on radical journalism at a critical period, and thus had an influence much greater than its short life would suggest.

