

## **Unity - Belfast, Northern Ireland**

22<sup>nd</sup> September 1984

**Denis Smyth** reviews - *A Radical Reader: The struggle for change in England 1381-1914*

Edited by Christopher Hampton

The book has just over 600 pages and is full of rich and memorable quotations and readings, stretching from the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 through the revolt in Norfolk in 1549, the Levellers, the Diggers and the agitators of the English Civil War to the Luddites, the Tolpuddle Martyrs and the Chartists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, right up to the Great Dock Strikes of London and Liverpool and ending with the anti-war upsurges of 1914.

It is a great anthology covering 500 years of radical protest, giving a first class alternative of people's history.

This is a wonderful book depicting over 500 years of struggle in England from 1381-1914. These pages contain the many varied episodes of protest, rebellion and uprising throughout the 500 odd years the book covers.

Edited by Christopher Hampton, the book contains a variety of forceful action and the best of England's protestors and advocates for social change, including Hobbes, Tom Paine, Tom Mann, Robert Tressell, Dickens, Blake, Shelley – with each section linked with commentary and bibliography – Christopher Hampton lets them act as spokespersons for the down-trodden and disposed.

The pages are alive with such vibrant and passionate fervour, each line crying out for social justice, liberty and freedom that this book deserves a pride of place in any socialist library.

The author has produced a wonderful tome of radical reading which, even by dipping into at random, the reader will be provided with inspiration and a great

sense of belonging and loyalty to the greatest cause in the world, the emancipation of the working classes.

The book also provides a marvellous lesson of the continuous war of attrition carried out against the labouring classes by the ruling order and their minions, which is still relevant to the present day. It gives credence to the important lessons of the past, so that we can learn in the present, to provide a better future for all our people – so we can reach to the ultimate prize.