



In this illustration, from *Froissart's Chronicle*, we see the end of the Peasants' Rebellion unfold.

As Wat Tyler meets his fate, at the hands of King Richard II's swordsman, the young monarch addresses the rest of the rebels. They were fed-up with increasingly heavy tax burdens and had mounted a rebellion against the King and his tax-levying representatives. The King promised reforms (which never materialized).

The Peasants' Rebellion failed to achieve its hoped-for objectives, but it marked a turning point in history.

The British Library, which maintains this illustration from *Froissart's Chronicle*, [tells us more](#) about the event and its meaning:

Froissart described the Peasants' Revolt in detail. Here he explains the roots of the rebels' resentment: "Never was any land or realm in such great danger as England at that time. It was because of the abundance and prosperity in which the common people then lived that this rebellion broke out... The evil-disposed in these districts began to rise, saying, they were too severely oppressed;... [that their lords] treated them as beasts. This they would not longer bear, but had determined to be free, and if they laboured or did any other works for their lords, they would be paid for it."

In other words ... peasants were no longer interested in unfair labor practices which forced them to work endless hours for little pay.

Reading this quoted passage, we can ask ourselves this question: If Froissart never intended to present a copy of his chronicle to the King, would he have used such words to describe the peasants' demands?

Credits:

Image online, courtesy British Library.

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Richard II and the Peasant Revolt of 1381

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