

From A Representation of the Army (14th June)[a](#)



That we may no longer be the dissatisfaction of our friends, the subject of our enemies' malice (to work jealousies and misrepresentations upon), and the suspicion, if not astonishment, of many in the kingdom, in our late or present transactions . . . , we shall in all faithfulness . . . declare unto you those things which have of late protracted and hindered our disbanding, the present grievances which possess our Army and are yet unremedied, with our desires as to the complete settlement of the liberties and peace of the kingdom. Which is that blessing of God than which, of all worldly things, nothing is more dear unto us or more precious in our thoughts, we having hitherto thought all our present enjoyments (whether of life, or livelihood, or nearest relations) a price but sufficient to the purchase of so rich a blessing, that we and all the free-born people of this nation may sit down in quiet under our vines, and under the glorious administration of justice and righteousness, and in full possession of those fundamental rights and liberties without which we can have little hopes, as to human considerations, to enjoy either any comfort of life or so much as life itself, but at the pleasures of some men ruling merely according to will and power.[2](#) * * *

Nor will it now, we hope, seem strange or unseasonable to rational and honest men, . . . if . . . we shall, before disbanding, proceed in our own and the kingdom's behalf to propound and plead for some provision for our and the kingdom's satisfaction and future security. . . . Especially considering that we were not a mere mercenary army, hired to serve any arbitrary power of a state, but called forth and conjured by the several declarations of Parliament to the defence of our own and the people's just rights and liberties. And so we took up arms in judgment and conscience to those ends, and have so continued them, and are resolved according to your[1](#) first just desires in your declarations, and such principles as we have received from your frequent informations, and our own common sense, concerning these our fundamental rights and liberties, to assert and vindicate the just power and rights of this kingdom in Parliament for those common ends premised, against all arbitrary power, violence and oppression, and all particular parties and interests whatsoever; the said declarations still directing us to the equitable sense of all laws and constitutions, as dispensing with the very letter of the same and being supreme to it when the safety and preservation of all is concerned, and assuring us that all authority is fundamentally seated in the office, and but ministerially in the persons. Neither do or will these our proceedings, as we are fully and in conscience persuaded, amount to anything unwarrantable before God and men; being thus far much short of the common proceedings in other nations, to things of an higher nature than we have yet appeared to. And we cannot but be sensible of the great complaints that have been

made to us generally in the kingdom from the people where we march, of arbitrariness and injustice to their great and insupportable oppressions.

And truly such kingdoms as have, according both to the law of nature and nations, appeared to the vindications and defences of their just rights and liberties, have proceeded much higher; as our brethren of Scotland, who in the first beginning of these late differences associated in covenant from the very same principles and grounds, having no visible form either of Parliament or King to countenance them—and as they were therein justified and protected by their own and this kingdom also, so we justly shall expect to be. (We need not mention the States of the Netherlands, the Portugals, and others, all proceeding upon the same principles of right and freedom.) And accordingly the Parliament hath declared it no resistance of magistracy to side with the just principles of law, nature, and nations, being that law upon which we have assisted you, and that the soldiery may lawfully hold the hands of that general who will turn his cannon against his army on purpose to destroy them, the seamen the hands of that pilot who wilfully runs the ship upon the rock (as our brethren of Scotland argued). And such were the proceedings of our ancestors of famous memory, to the purchasing of such rights and liberties as they have enjoyed through the price of their blood, and [such rights and liberties as] we, both by that and the later blood of our dear friends and fellow soldiers, with the hazard of our own, do now lay claim unto.

Nor is that supreme end, the glory of God, wanting in these cases to set a price upon all such proceedings of righteousness and justice; it being one witness of God in the world, to carry on a testimony against the injustice and unrighteousness of men, and against the miscarriages of government[s] when corrupted or declining from their primitive and original glory.

These things we mention but to compare proceedings, and to show that we are so much the more justifiable and warranted in what we do, by how much we come short of that height and measure of proceedings which the people in free kingdoms and nations have formerly practised.

Now, having thus far cleared our way in this business, we shall proceed to propound such things as we do humbly desire for the settling and securing of our own and the kingdom's right, freedom, peace, and safety, as followeth:

I. That the Houses may be speedily purged of such members as for their delinquency, or for corruption, or abuse to the state, or undue election, ought not to sit there. . . .

II. That those persons who have, in the late unjust and high proceedings against the Army, appeared to have the will, the confidence, credit, and power to abuse the Parliament and the Army, and endanger the kingdom in carrying on such things against us while an army, may be some way speedily disabled from doing the like or worse to us, when disbanded and dispersed, and in the condition of private men, or to other the free-born people of England in the same condition with us. * * *

But because neither the granting of this alone would be sufficient to secure our own and the kingdom's rights, liberties, and safety, either for the present age or posterity, nor would the proposal of this, singly, be free from the scandal and appearance of faction, or [of] design only to suppress one party under the notion of unjust or oppressive, that we may advance another, which may be imagined more our own: we therefore declare that indeed we cannot but wish that such men, and such only, might be preferred to the great power and trust of the

commonwealth, as are approved at least for moral righteousness, and of such we cannot but in our wishes prefer those that appear acted thereunto by a principle of conscience and religion in them; and accordingly we do and ever shall bless God for those many worthies who, through his providence, have been chosen into this Parliament; and to such men's endeavours, under God, we cannot but attribute that vindication in part of the people's rights and liberties, and those beginnings of a just reformation, which the proceedings of the beginnings of this Parliament appeared to have driven at and tended to, though of late obstructed, or rather diverted to other ends and interests, by the prevailing of other persons of other principles and conditions.

But we are so far from designing or complying to have any absolute arbitrary power fixed or settled for continuance in any persons whatsoever as that, if we might be sure to obtain it, we cannot wish to have it so in the persons of any who[m] we might best confide in, or who should appear most of our own opinions or principles, or whom we might have most personal assurance of, or interest in; but we do and shall much rather wish that the authority of this kingdom in the Parliaments rightly constituted, free, equally and successively chosen, according to its original intention, may ever stand and have its course. And therefore we shall apply our desires chiefly to such things as (by having parliaments settled in such a right constitution) may give more hopes of justice and righteousness to flow down equally to all in that its ancient channel, without any overture tending either to overthrow that foundation either of order or government in this kingdom, or to engross that power, for perpetuity, into the hands of any particular person or party whatsoever. * * *

We . . . humbly conceive that (of two inconveniences the less being to be chosen) the main thing to be intended . . . (and beyond which human providence cannot reach as to any assurance of positive good) seems to be this, *viz.*: To provide that however unjust or corrupt persons of Parliament, in present or future, may prove, or whatever it be they may do to particular parties, or to the whole in particular things, during their respective terms or periods; yet they shall not have the temptation or advantage of an unlimited power fixed in them during their own pleasure, whereby to perpetuate injustice and oppression upon any, without end or remedy, or to advance and uphold any one particular party, faction, or interest whatsoever, to the oppression or prejudice of the community and the enslaving of the kingdom unto all posterity; but that the people may have an equal hope or possibility, if they have [made] an ill choice at one time, to mend it in another, and [the members] themselves may be in a capacity to taste of subjection as well as rule, and may be so inclined to consider of other men's cases as what may come to be their own. This we speak of in relation to the House of Commons, as being entrusted on the people's behalf for their interest in that great and supreme power of the commonwealth (*viz.*, the legislative power, with the power of final judgments), which, being in its own nature so arbitrary, and in a manner unlimited unless in point of time, is most unfit and dangerous, as to the people's interest, to be fixed in the persons of the same men^a during life or their own pleasure. Neither by the original constitution of this state was it, or ought it to continue so. Nor doth it, wherever it is and continues so, render that state any better than a mere tyranny, or the people subjected to it any better than vassals. But in all states where there is any face of common freedom, and particularly in this state of England (as is most evident both by many positive laws and ancient constant custom), the people have a right to new and successive elections unto that great and supreme trust, at certain periods of time; which is so essential and fundamental to their freedom as it cannot or ought not to be denied them^a or withheld from them, and^b without which the House of Commons is of very little concernment to the interest of the Commons of England. Yet in this we would not be misunderstood to blame those worthies of

both Houses, whose zeal to vindicate the liberties of this nation did procure that act for [the] continuance of [this] Parliament, whereby it was secured from being dissolved at the King's pleasure, as former Parliaments have been, and reduced to such a certainty as might enable them the better to assist and vindicate the liberties of this nation (immediately before so highly invaded, and then also so much endangered). * * *

And therefore upon all the grounds premised we further humbly desire as followeth:

III. That some determinate period of time may be set for the continuance of this and future Parliaments, beyond which none shall continue, and upon which new writs may of course issue out, and new elections successively take place, according to the intent of the Bill for Triennial Parliaments. * * *

IV. That secure provision may be made for the continuance of future Parliaments, so as they may not be adjournable or dissolvable at the King's pleasure, or any other ways than by their own consent during their respective periods; but [at] those periods each Parliament to determine of course, as before. This we desire may be now provided for, if it may be, so as to put it out of all dispute for [the] future, though we think of right it ought not to have been otherwise before.

And 1 because the present distribution of elections for Parliament-members is so very unequal, and the multitude of burgesses for decayed or inconsiderable towns (whose interest in the kingdom would in many not exceed, or in others not equal, ordinary villages) doth give too much and too evident opportunity for men of power to frame parties in Parliament to serve particular interest[s], and thereby the common interest of the whole is not so minded, or not so equally provided for, we therefore further desire:

V. That some provision may be now made for such distribution of elections for future Parliaments as may stand with some rule of equality or proportion as near as may be, to render the Parliament a more equal representative of the whole, as, for instance, that all counties or divisions and parts of the kingdom (involving inconsiderable towns) may have a number of Parliament-men allowed to their choice proportionable to the respective rates they bear in the common charges and burdens of the kingdom, and not to have more, or some other such-like rule.

And thus a firm foundation being laid in the authority and constitution of Parliament for the hopes, at least, of common and equal right and freedom to ourselves and all the free-born people of this land, we shall, for our parts, freely and cheerfully commit our stock or share of interest in this kingdom into this common bottom of Parliament[s]; and though it may, for our particulars, go ill with us in one voyage, yet we shall thus hope, if right be with us, to fare better in another.

These things we desire may be provided for by bill or ordinance of Parliament, to which the Royal Assent may be desired. And when His Majesty (in these things, and what else shall be proposed by the Parliament, necessary for securing the rights and liberties of the people, and for settling the militia and peace of the kingdom) shall have given his concurrence to put them past dispute, we shall then desire that the rights of His Majesty and his posterity may be considered of and settled in all things, so far as may consist with the right and freedom of the subject and with the security of the same for [the] future.

VI. We desire that the right and freedom of the people to represent to the Parliament, by way of humble petition, their grievances in such things as cannot otherwise be remedied than by Parliament, may be cleared and vindicated; that all such grievances of the people may be freely received and admitted into consideration, and put into an equitable and speedy way to be heard, examined, and redressed, if they appear real; and that in such things for which men have remedy by law they may be freely left to the benefit of [the] law, and the regulated course of justice, without interruption or check from the Parliament, except in case of things done upon the exigency of war, or for the service and benefit of the Parliament and kingdom in relation to the war, or otherwise in due pursuance and execution of ordinances or orders of Parliament.

More particularly, under this head we cannot but desire that all such as are imprisoned for any pretended misdemeanour may be put into a speedy way for a just hearing and trial; and such as shall appear to have been unjustly and unduly imprisoned, may, with their liberty, have some reasonable reparation according to their sufferings and the demerit of their oppressors.¹ * * *

IX. That public justice being first satisfied by some few examples to posterity out of the worst of excepted persons, and other delinquents having passed their compositions, some course may be taken by a general act of oblivion, or otherwise, whereby the seeds of future war or feuds, either to the present age or posterity, may the better be taken away, by easing that sense of present, and satisfying those fears of future, ruin or undoing to persons or families, which may drive men into any desperate ways for self-preservation and remedy, and by taking away the private remembrances and distinctions of parties, as far as may stand with safety to the rights and liberties we have hitherto fought for.

There are, besides these, many particular things which we could wish to be done, and some to be undone, all in order still to the same end of common right, freedom, peace, and safety; but these proposals aforegoing being the principal things we bottom and insist upon, we shall, as we have said before, for our parts acquiesce for other particulars in the wisdom and justice of Parliament. And whereas it hath been suggested, or suspected, that in our late or present proceedings our design is to overthrow Presbytery, or hinder the settlement thereof, and to have the Independent government set up, we do clearly disclaim and disavow any such design. We only desire that, according to the declarations promising a privilege for tender consciences, there may be some effectual course taken, according to the intent thereof, and that such who upon conscientious grounds may differ from the established forms, may not for that be debarred from the common rights, liberties, or benefits belonging equally to all as men and members of the commonwealth, while they live soberly, honestly, inoffensively towards others, and peacefully and faithfully towards the state. * * *

C.

THE READING DEBATES

[2] Omitted passage contains a brief and forceful statement of the particular grievances and demands of the Army.

[1] The *Representation* is addressed to the Parliament.

[1] This and the following paragraph occur only in the Cambridge edition.

[1] VII deals with the limiting of the regional powers given during the war to committees and deputy lieutenants; VIII, with the auditing of Parliament's accounts.

[403. (a)] A Representation from his Excellencie Sr. Thomas Fairfax, And the Army under his command, Humbly tendered to the Parliament: Concerning the just and fundamentall rights and liberties of themselves and the kingdome, with some humble proposals and desires in order thereunto, and for settling the peace of the kingdome. St. Albans, June 14. 1647. * * * Cambridge: Printed by Roger Daniel, Printer to the Universitie. Compared with the London edition, printed for George Whittington, 1647, which lacks two paragraphs present in the Cambridge edition.

[406. (a)] London text; Cambridge text + *now*.

[407. (a-b)] London text.