



Why did people go to war in 1642?

Case study 1: 1637-39 – Source 8

Report of a discussion between Charles I and Sir Thomas Wilford on the situation with Parliament, 28 May 1639

(Catalogue ref: SP 16/422/65)

What is this source?

This report in the State Papers must have been written by a person at Charles's court in Newcastle, probably a noble loyal to Charles.

The State Papers (now in The National Archives) contain many reports of discussions between the king and his subjects.

What's the background to this source?

In 1639 Charles I was in the north of England facing a major rebellion in Scotland. Wars were very expensive, so Charles was forced to call a Parliament in April 1640 to ask them for money.

British monarchs called Parliament into session. Parliament could agree to taxes to pay for wars. In return, Parliament usually demanded some say in how the war was fought and often brought up other issues as well. However, Charles hated working with Parliament. From 1629-40 he ruled without calling it once. This period was known as the Personal Rule.

It's worth knowing that ...

Although many MPs criticised Charles's policies in the 1630s, many other MPs remained loyal to him. Some stayed neutral if they could, taking neither side (we do not really know exact numbers on each side). Charles didn't like the criticism, so he ended the Parliament in 1640 after a few weeks.

Many MPs, though unhappy about Charles's policies, continued to support him. This was partly out of loyalty. It was partly because they disliked Charles's main critics, the Puritans. It was partly because they believed in Divine Right – that the king was appointed by God.



Learning Curve Civil War



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Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. Why do you think Sir Thomas Wilford brought men and horses to Charles I?
2. What was the attitude of Wilford towards Charles?
3. Was he afraid to criticise Charles?
4. What was his advice to Charles?
5. What was his attitude to the MPs who opposed Charles?
6. How useful is this source in telling us how much support Charles had?
7. Does this source give us any clues about why the kingdom went to war in 1642?

Source 8

During our stay at Newcastl^e there came to Court one of the same
 to the King w^{ch} professed to tell him (in the hearing of divers of his w^{ch} vants)
 & my wife among the rest that he had come out of Kent a long way at
 robbery, & w^{ch} told him how many men & horses he had brought him, and
 said I pray God we w^{ch} well to doe in his busyness, but said hereof
 like not the beginning, the King asked him why he had w^{ch} and because
 you go by wrong way to work, the King smiled & asked him w^{ch} was the right
 way, he answered If you think to make a warre, w^{ch} you w^{ch} see for
 you desire youe selfe by only way to your selfe is to go backe and call
 a Parliament & so should hee have no more enough, & do youe busyness handfastly.
 The King w^{ch} said by your words in the last Parliament all that was said of
 Thomas) but by your words to the King