

Why did people go to war in 1642?

Case study 2: 1640-42 - Source 3

A document setting out the wishes of Parliament, December 1640
(Catalogue ref: SP 16/474/8)

What is this source?

This source set out clearly what MPs thought the powers of Parliament should be.

For example, the first point in the document says that laws made by Parliament also apply to the courts of justice, including the Star Chamber. The Star Chamber was the meeting place in the Palace of Westminster of the King's councillors. There they could hold court cases separately from the common-law courts. Charles used this court as a means to get his own way in law, especially over church matters, until Parliament finally put a stop to it in 1641.

What's the background to this source?

Charles I managed to rule his kingdom without calling Parliament from 1629-40. During that time he introduced changes to the church. He also raised money through new taxes that were not approved by Parliament. However, by 1640 he needed more money to fight a war against the Scots. He was forced to call a Parliament.

In December 1640 most MPs were moderates (not very extreme in their ideas). However, there were some MPs who were bitter critics of Charles and his policies. They were probably the men behind this document. Above all, the aim of these proposals was to make sure that Charles would never again be able to rule as he had done in the period 1629-40.

It's worth knowing that ...

There were two Parliaments in 1640. The Short Parliament only lasted a few weeks in early 1640. Then Charles ended it. By November Charles was forced to call another Parliament, the Long Parliament. Both Parliaments had many complaints about different aspects of the king's Personal Rule.



The MPs were not completely united in their concerns. Some were concerned about religion. Others were concerned about taxes. Others were worried about Charles ignoring the law. MPs also disagreed about how far they could argue with the king. They were still loyal to Charles, even though they were unhappy about his actions.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What were the demands of the MPs?
2. Does this source suggest that relations between Charles and Parliament were good or bad?
3. Does this speech seem more or less respectful towards Charles than other sources in this case study?
4. Does this source give us any clues about why the kingdom went to war in 1642?



Source 3

1. whatsoever is declared by y^e 2 houses binds y^e Archbishops
y^e B^{is} of y^e Council and all other Courts of Justice.

2. y^e y^e King hath not power to lay any imposition upon forayne
(much lesse home-borne) commodities though wth consent
of y^e merchants without consent of Parliament.

3. y^e y^e clergy though by y^e Kings consent and wth his confirmation
can make no constitutions or canons to bind y^e clergy (much
lesse the laity) without consent of Parliament. ex Confreg²
y^e King alone can not doe it without such consent. See Br² 13th 11th
Commons Journall II pth 11

4. y^e of right we ought to have Parliament once or twice a
year.

5. y^e dissolving of Parle^{ts} suddaynly without redressing y^e
grievances Complaynd of is a great grievance.