

Why did people want the king back in 1646?

Case study 2: Viewpoints, 1645-46 - Source 4

Extract from a political pamphlet against the king, June 1646

(Catalogue ref: SP 16/514/33)

What is this source?

This pamphlet argued against giving Charles control of the militia who had fought on the side of Parliament.

During the reign of Charles I there was strict censorship or banning of written material containing ideas considered harmful for political or other reasons. Anyone producing a pamphlet like this would have been punished severely. During the Civil War censorship broke down. New ideas emerged and were published in pamphlets like this.

What's the background to this source?

This source was published as Charles surrendered in the war. The next big issue was to work out peace terms.

Most MPs and ordinary people were so sick of war that they just wanted to restore Charles as king and stop paying taxes to support the army. However, there were some MPs and many army commanders who wanted to force Charles to accept some restrictions on his power. They wanted him to agree to listen to Parliament more and to stop raising taxes. They also wanted him to obey the law and not simply put his opponents in jail. Many Puritan MPs and soldiers also wanted to undo all the changes Charles and Archbishop Laud had brought into the church.

It's worth knowing that ...

England did not have a regular army in the 1600s. It relied on local forces called militia. Every county had a militia. This was the basis for an army when the country went to war or had to face a rebellion or similar threat. In the past, the king had always been in charge of the militia. However, by 1646 there were plenty of new ideas around.

This pamphlet is probably from a radical (extreme) new thinker. Most of the radicals agreed that giving Charles command of the militia again



would put people like them, with their new ideas, in danger. On the other hand, pamphlets like this alarmed moderate (middle-of-the-road) MPs. If people were prepared to question the authority of the king, then their own authority might also be questioned. As ideas like this spread, moderate MPs began to think Charles would clamp down on these dangerous ideas and so his support grew.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What did the writer say would happen if the king had control of the militia?
2. Look at the first sentence of point 1 in the source. How does it describe the king?
3. How would you describe the attitude of the writer towards the king?
4. Do you think ideas like this were published widely before the Civil War?
5. What sort of people would have agreed with the ideas of the writer?
6. What sort of people would have disagreed with the ideas of the writer?
7. How does this source help to explain why Charles gained support in 1646?



Source 4

