

## *Why did Britain become a republic?*

### Case study 1: Death of Charles I - Source 1

A request from army leaders at Putney to Parliament, October 1647  
(Catalogue ref: SP 9/245 f5)

#### What is this source?

This comes from a news sheet published regularly during the 1640s. News sheets were similar to modern newspapers.

This particular news sheet supported Parliament and the army during the Civil War.

#### What's the background to this source?

At the time of this source the army had effectively moved in on London and taken over the city. After the war many MPs became concerned about the cost of the army and the increasing power of its leaders.

- In July 1647 the army set out its proposals for a peace settlement with Charles I. They planned to bring back Charles as king, but with a series of restrictions on his powers (e.g. he would have to call regular Parliaments). The army also recognised that some of the main complaints of the Levellers should be tackled.
- Many MPs were alarmed by the army's views. In July some MPs tried to bring back Charles as king without consulting the army leaders.
- The army leaders responded by marching on London in August.
- Throughout the summer and autumn of 1647 relations between the majority of MPs and army leaders got worse.
- In October 1647 the army leaders and some radical political leaders (the Levellers) began a series of debates at Putney about what Britain should be like in the future. This document emerged from the debates.
- Many soldiers (some of them senior officers) were influenced by the ideas of the Levellers. You can find out more about the Levellers from the [key people, & events](#) section.



## It's worth knowing that ...

The source gives a clear sense of the growing power of the army in the later 1640s. Although the tone of the document was polite, requesting that Parliament deal with key issues, in reality the army was putting great pressure on the MPs. The biggest problem was pay, but there were other problems too.

Cromwell and other army leaders wanted more religious freedom. MPs were afraid of new and different political and religious groups and tried to crush them. Cromwell wanted a more tolerant approach to these groups, as long as they did not cause trouble.

## Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What was the main complaint of the army in this source?
2. What did they want done?
3. How would you describe the tone of this source – angry, respectful or careful? Try and think of some other words to define it.
4. Read the supporting notes. How would you outline relations between most MPs and the army by late 1647?

## Source 1

VV Hereas by a paper delivered to the Commissioners of Parliament, residing with the Army, from and in the name of this council (Bearing date the twenty-third day of September) wee did upon the grounds, and for the reason therein expressed, desire, That if the Armes as due from the City to this Army should not by the time then limited be paid in the Parliament would thinke of some course by way of penalty to increase the sum and give power to the General, [with directions from the Committee of the Army] to levy upon the residents, both the summe formerly due & also the additionall penalties. Now for as much as the said Armes are not yet paid in nor levied, wee hereby renew our humble desires to the Parliament, *to be paid, but reserved, either for the Church, or for the Army, or for the City, or for the Commonwealth.*