

*Extract from the debates at the
General Council of the Army, Putney.*

29 October 1647

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(The paper called the *Agreement* read. Afterwards the first article read by itself: 'That the people of England being at this day very unequally distributed by counties, cities and boroughs for the election of their deputies in parliament, ought to be more indifferently proportioned according to the number of inhabitants ...')

Commissary-General Henry Ireton: The exception that lies in it is this. It is said they ('the people of England etc.') are to be distributed according to the number of the inhabitants. This does make me think that the meaning is that every man that is an inhabitant is to be equally considered, and to have an equal voice in the election of the representers — those persons that are for the General Representative. And if that be the meaning then I have something to say against it. But if it be only that those people that by the civil constitution of this kingdom, which is original and fundamental, and beyond which I am sure no memory of record does go ...

Commissary Nicholas Cowling (interrupting): Not before the Conquest.

Ireton: But before the Conquest it was so. If it be intended that those that by that constitution that was before the Conquest that has been beyond memory, such persons that have been before by that constitution the electors should be still the electors, I have no more to say against it...

Ireton then asked whether those men whose hands are to *the Agreement*, or those that brought it, 'do know so much of the matter as to know whether they mean that all that had a former right of election are to be electors, or that those that had *no right before* are to come in?'

Cowling: In the time before the Conquest. Since the Conquest the greatest part of the kingdom was in vassalage.

Maximilian Petty: We judge that all inhabitants that have not lost their birthright should have an equal voice in elections.

Colonel Thomas Rainborough: I desired that those that had engaged in it might be included. For really I think that the poorest he that is in England has a life to live as the greatest he; and therefore truly, sir, I think it's clear that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government; and I do think that the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to that government that he has not had a voice to put himself under. And I am confident that when I have heard the reasons against it, something will

be said to answer those reasons — insomuch that I should doubt whether he was an Englishman or no that should doubt of these things.

Ireton: That's the meaning of this 'according to the number of the inhabitants'? Give me leave to tell you that if you make this the rule, I think you must fly for refuge to an absolute natural right and you must deny all civil right; and I am sure it will come to that in the consequence. This, I perceive, is pressed as that which is so essential and due: the right of the people of this kingdom, and as they *are* the people of this kingdom, distinct and divided from other people; and that we must for this right lay aside all other considerations; this is so just, this is so due, this is so right to them. And that those that they do thus choose must have such a power of binding all, and loosing all, according to those limitations. This is pressed as so due and so just as it is argued that it is an engagement paramount to all others, and you must for it lay aside all others. If you have engaged any otherwise you must break it. We must so look upon these as thus held out to us; so it was held out by the gentleman that brought it yesterday.

For my part, I think it is no right at all. I think that no person has a right to an interest or share in the disposing or determining of the affairs of the kingdom, and in choosing those that shall determine what laws we shall be ruled by here — no person has a right to this that has not a permanent fixed interest in this kingdom; and *those* persons together are properly the represented of this kingdom and consequently are also to make up the representers of this kingdom, who, taken together, do comprehend whatsoever is of real or permanent interest in the kingdom. And I am sure otherwise I cannot tell what any man can say why a foreigner coming in amongst us — or as many as will coming in amongst us, or by force or otherwise settling themselves here, or at least by our permission having a being here — why they should not as well lay claim to it as any other. We talk of 'birthright'. Truly by birthright there is *thus* much claim. Men may justly have by birthright (by their very being born in England) that we should not seclude them out of England, that we should not refuse to give them air and place and ground and the freedom of the highways and other things to live amongst us — not to any man that is born here, though by his birth there come nothing at all that is part of the permanent interest of this kingdom to him. *That* I think is due to a man by birth. But that by a man's being born here he shall have a share in that power that shall dispose of the lands here, and of all things here, I do not think it a sufficient ground.

I am sure, if we look upon that which is the utmost within *any* man's view of what was originally the constitution of this kingdom, upon that which is most radical and fundamental, and which if you take away there is no man has any land, any goods, or any civil interest, that is this: that those that choose the representers for the making of laws by which this state and kingdom are to be governed are the persons who, taken together, *do* comprehend the local interest of this kingdom, that is the persons in whom all land lies and those in corporations in whom all trading lies. This is the most fundamental constitution of this kingdom and that which if you do not allow, you allow none at all. This constitution has limited and determined it that only those shall have voices in elections. It is true — as was said by a gentleman near me — the meanest man in England ought to have a voice in the election of the government he lives under. But *only* if he

has some local interest. I say this: that those that have the meanest local interest — that man that has but forty shillings a year — he has as great voice in the election of a knight for the shire as he that has ten thousand a year or more, if he had never so much; and therefore there is that regard had to it. But this local interest, still the constitution of this government has had an eye to. And what other government has not an eye to this? It does not relate to the interest of the kingdom if it do not lay the foundation of the power that's given to the representers in those who have a permanent and a local interest in the kingdom, and who taken all together do comprehend the whole interest of the kingdom. There is all the reason and justice that can be in this. If I will come to live in a kingdom being a foreigner to it, or live in a kingdom having no permanent interest in it, and if I will desire as a stranger or claim as one freeborn here, the air, the free passage of highways, the protection of laws, and all such things — if I will either desire them or claim them, then I (if I have no permanent interest in that kingdom) must submit to those laws and those rules which they shall choose, who, taken together, do comprehend the whole interest of the kingdom. And if we shall go to take away this we shall plainly go to take away all property and interest that any man has, either in land by inheritance or in estate by possession, or anything else — I say, if you take away this fundamental part of the civil constitution.

Rainborough: Truly sir, I am of the same opinion I was, and am resolved to keep it till I know reason why I should not. I confess my memory is bad, and therefore I am fain to make use of my pen. I remember that — in a former speech which this gentleman brought before this meeting — he was saying that in some cases he should not value whether there were a king or no king, whether lords or no lords, whether a property or no property. For my part I differ in that. I do very much care whether there be a king or no king, lords or no lords, property or no property; and I think, if we do not all take care, we shall all have none of these very shortly.

But as to this present business. I do hear nothing at all that can convince me why any man that is born in England ought not to have his voice in election of burgesses. It is said that if a man have not a 'permanent interest' he can have no claim; and that we must be no freer than the laws will let us be; and that there is no law in any chronicle will let us be freer than that we now enjoy. Something was said to this yesterday. I do think that the main cause why Almighty God gave men reason, it was that they should make use of that reason, and that they should improve it for that end and purpose that God gave it them. And truly, I think that half a loaf is better than none if a man be an-hungry. This gift of reason without other property may seem a small thing, yet I think there is nothing that God has given a man that anyone else can take from him. And therefore I say that either it must be the Law of God or the law of man that must prohibit the meanest man in the kingdom to have this benefit as well as the greatest. I do not find anything in the Law of God that a lord shall choose twenty burgesses, and a gentleman but two, or a poor man shall choose none. I find no such thing in the law of nature, nor in the law of nations. But I do find that all Englishmen must be subject to English laws; and I do verily believe that there is no man but will say that the foundation of all law lies in the people; and if it lie in the people, I am to seek for this exemption.

And truly I have thought something else: in what a miserable distressed condition would many a man that has fought for the parliament in this quarrel be! I will be bound to say that many a man whose zeal and affection to God and this kingdom has carried him forth in this cause, has so spent his estate that, in the way the state and the Army are going, he shall not hold up his head, if, when his estate is lost and not worth forty shillings a year, a man shall not have any 'interest'. And there are many other ways by which the estates men have — if that be the rule which God in his providence does use — do fall to decay. A man, when he has an estate, has an interest in making laws; but when he has none, he has no power in it; so that a man cannot lose that which he has for the maintenance of his family but he must also lose that which God and nature has given him! And therefore I do think, and am still of the same opinion, that every man born in England cannot, ought not, neither by the Law of God nor the law of nature, to be exempted from the choice of those who are to make laws for him to live under — and for him, for aught I know, to lose his life under. And therefore I think there can be no great stick in this.

Truly I think that there is not this day reigning in England a greater fruit or effect of tyranny than this very thing would produce. Truly I know nothing free but only the knight of the shire; nor do I know anything in a parliamentary way that is clear from the height and fullness of tyranny, but only that. As for this of corporations which you also mentioned, it is as contrary to freedom as may be. For, sir, what is it? The king he grants a patent under the Broad Seal of England to such a corporation to send burgesses. He grants to such a city to send burgesses. When a poor base corporation from the king's grant shall send two burgesses; when five hundred men of estate shall not send one; when those that are to make their laws are called by the king, or cannot act but by such a call: truly I think that the people of England have little freedom.

Ireton: I think there was nothing that I said to give you occasion to think that I did contend for this: that such a corporation as that should have the electing of a man to the parliament. I think I agreed to this matter, that all should be equally distributed. But the question is whether it should be distributed to *all persons*, or whether the *same persons* that are the electors now should be the electors still, and it be equally distributed amongst *them*. I do not see anybody else that makes this objection; and if nobody else be sensible of it I shall soon have done. Only I shall a little crave your leave to represent the consequences of it, and clear myself from one thing that was misrepresented by the gentleman that sat next me. I think if the gentleman remember himself, he cannot but remember that what I said was to this effect: that if I saw the hand of God leading so far as to destroy king, and destroy lords, and destroy property, and leave no such thing at all amongst us, I should acquiesce in it; and so I did not care if no king, no lords, or no property should be, in comparison of the tender care that I have of the honour of God and of the people of God, whose good name is so much concerned in this army. This I did deliver *so* and not absolutely.

All the main thing that I speak for is because I would have an eye to property. I hope we do not come to contend for victory; but let every man consider with himself that he do not go that way to take away all property. For here is the case of the most fundamental part of the constitution of the kingdom, which if you take away, you take away all by that. Here men of this and this

quality are determined to be the electors of men to the parliament, and they are all those who have any permanent interest in the kingdom, and who, taken together, do comprehend the whole permanent, local interest of the kingdom.

I mean by 'permanent' and 'local', that it is not able to be removed anywhere else, as for instance he that has a freehold and that freehold cannot be removed out of the kingdom; and also there's a freeman of a corporation, — a place which has the privilege of a market and trading — which if you should allow to all places equally, I do not see how you could preserve any peace in the kingdom: and that is the reason why in the constitution we have but some few market towns. Now those people that have freeholds and those that are the freemen of corporations, were looked upon by the former constitution to comprehend the permanent interest of the kingdom. For firstly, he that has his livelihood by his trade and by his freedom of trading in such a corporation — which he cannot exercise in another — he is tied to that place, for his livelihood depends upon it. And secondly, that man has an interest — has a *permanent* interest there, upon which he may live, and live a freeman without dependence. These things the constitution of this kingdom has looked at.

Now I wish we may all consider of what right you will challenge that all the people should have right to elections. Is it by the right of nature? If you will hold forth that as your ground, then I think you must deny all property too, and this is my reason. For thus: by that same right of nature (whatever it be) that you pretend, by which you can say that one man has an equal right with another to the choosing of him that shall govern him — by the same right of nature he has the same equal right in any goods he sees: meat, drink, clothes, to take and use them for his sustenance. He has a freedom to the land, to take the ground, to exercise it, till it; he has the same freedom to anything that anyone does account himself to have any propriety in. Why now I say then, if you, against the most fundamental part of the civil constitution (which I have now declared), will plead the law of nature that a man should (paramount to this, and contrary to this) have a power of choosing those men that shall determine what shall be law in this state, though he himself have no permanent interest in the state but whatever interest he hath he may carry about with him — if this be allowed (because by the right of nature we are free; we are equal; one man must have as much voice as another), then show me what step or difference there is why I may not by the same right take your property, though not of necessity to sustain nature. It is for my better being, and the better settlement of the kingdom? Possibly not for it, neither. Possibly I may not have so real a regard to the peace of the kingdom as that man who hath a permanent interest in it. He that is here today and gone tomorrow, I do not see that he hath such a permanent interest. Since you cannot plead to it by anything but the law of nature, or for anything but for the end of better being, and since that better being is not certain, and what is more, destructive to another: upon these grounds, if you do, paramount to all constitutions, hold up this law of nature, I would fain have any man show me their bounds, where you will end, and why you should not take away all property.

Rainborough: I shall now be a little more free and open with you than I was before. I wish we were all true-hearted, and that we did all carry ourselves with integrity. If I did mistrust you I

would not use such asseveration. I think it does go on mistrust, and things are thought too readily matters of reflection that were never intended. For my part, as I think, *you* forgot something that was in *my* speech; and you do not only yourselves believe that we are inclining to anarchy, but you would make all men believe that. And, sir, to say because a man pleads that every man has a voice by right of nature, that therefore it destroys by the same argument all property, this is to forget the Law of God. That there's a property, the Law of God says it — else why has God made that law 'Thou shalt not steal'?

I am a poor man, therefore I must be *oppressed*? If I have no interest in the kingdom, I must suffer by all their laws — be they right or wrong? Nay thus: a gentleman lives in a country and has three or four lordships — as some men have (God knows how they got them) — and when a parliament is called he must be a parliament-man. And it may be he sees some poor men — they live near this man. He can crush them; I have known an invasion to make sure he has turned the poor men out of doors; and I would fain know whether the potency of rich men do not this, and so keep them under the greatest tyranny that was ever thought of in the world. And therefore I think that to that it is fully answered: God has set down that thing as to propriety with this law of his: 'Thou shalt not steal.' For my part I am against any such thought; and, as for yourselves, I wish you would not make the world believe that we are for anarchy.

Lieutenant-General Oliver Cromwell: I know nothing but this, that they that are the most yielding have the greatest wisdom; but really, sir, this is not right as it should be. No man says that you have a mind to anarchy, but that the *consequence* of this rule tends to anarchy, must *end* in anarchy. For where is there any bound or limit set if you take away this limit: that men that have no interest but the interest of breathing shall have no voice in elections? Therefore I am confident on't, we should not be so hot one with another.

Rainborough: I know that some particular men we debate with believe we are for anarchy.

Ireton: I profess I must clear myself as to that point. I would not desire — I cannot allow myself — to lay the least scandal upon anybody. And truly, for that gentleman that did take so much offence, I do not know why he should take it so. We speak to the paper and to the matter of the paper — not to persons. And I hope that no man is so much engaged to the matter of the paper — I hope that our persons and our hearts and judgements are not so pinned to papers but that we are ready to hear what good or ill consequence will flow from it.

I have, with as much plainness and clearness of reason as I could, showed you how I did conceive the doing of this that the paper advocates: takes away that which is the most original, the most fundamental civil constitution of this kingdom, and which is, above all, that constitution by which I have any property. If you will take away that, and set up as a thing paramount whatever a man may claim by the law of nature — though it be not a thing of necessity to him for the sustenance of nature — if you do make this your rule, I desire clearly to understand where then remains property.

Now then — I would misrepresent nothing — the answer which had anything of matter in it (the great and main answer upon which that which hath been said against this objection rests) seemed to be that it will not make a breach of property, for this reason: that there is a Law, 'Thou shalt not steal.' But the same law says, 'Honour thy father and thy mother', and that law does likewise hold out that it does extend to all that (in that place where we are in) are our governors: so that by that there is a forbidding of breaking a civil law when we may live quietly under it — and that by a divine law.

Again it is said — indeed was said before — that there is no law, no divine law, that tells us that such a corporation must have the election of burgesses, such a shire of knights, or the like.

Divine law extends not to particular things. And so, on the other side, if a man were to demonstrate his right to property by divine law, it would be very remote. Our right to property descends from other things, as well as our right of sending burgesses. That divine law does not determine particulars but generals in relation to man and man and to property and all things else; and we should be as far to seek if we should go to prove a property in a thing by divine law as to prove that I have an interest in choosing burgesses of the parliament by divine law. And truly, under favour, I refer it to all whether there be anything of solution to that objection that I made, if it be understood. I submit it to any man's judgement.

Rainborough: To the thing itself — property in the franchise. I would fain know how it comes to be the property of some men and not of others. As for estates and those kind of things — and other things that belong to men — it will be granted that they are property. But I deny that *that* is a property — to a lord, to a gentleman, to any man more than another in the kingdom of England. *If* it be a property, it is a property by a law; neither do I think that there is very little property in this thing by the law of the land, because I think that the law of the land in that thing is the most tyrannical law under heaven. And I would fain know what we have fought for — for a law which denies the people the franchise? And *this* is the old law of England, and that which enslaves the people of England: that they should be bound by laws in which they have no voice at all!

With respect to the divine law which says 'Honour thy father and thy mother', the great dispute is who is a right father and a right mother? I am bound to know *who* is my father and mother; and — I take it in the same sense you do — I would have a distinction, a character, whereby God commands me to honour them. And for my part I look upon the people of England so, that wherein they have not voices in the choosing of their governors — their civil fathers and mothers — they are not bound to that commandment.

Petty: I desire to add one word concerning the word 'property'. It is for *something* that anarchy is so much talked of. For my own part I cannot believe in the least that it can be clearly derived from that paper. 'Tis true that somewhat may be derived in the paper against the king — the power of the king — and somewhat against the power of the Lords. And the truth is, when I shall see God going about to throw down king and Lords and property, then I shall be contented.

But I hope that they may live to see the power of the king and the Lords thrown down that yet may live to see property preserved. And for this of changing the Representative of the nation, of changing those that choose the Representative — making of them more full, taking more into the number than formerly — I had verily thought we had all agreed in it that more should have chosen, that all had desired a more equal representation than we now have. For now those only choose who have forty shillings freehold. A man may have a lease for one hundred pounds a year, a man may have a lease for three lives, but he has no voice. But as for this argument that it destroys all right to property that every Englishman that is an inhabitant of England should choose and have a voice in the representatives, I suppose it is, on the contrary, the only means to preserve all property. For I judge every man is naturally free; and I judge the reason why men chose representatives when they were in so great numbers that every man could not give his voice directly was that they who were chosen might preserve property for all; and therefore men agreed to come into some form of government that they might preserve property. And I would fain know, if we were to begin a government, whether you would say: 'You have not forty shillings a year, therefore you shall not have a voice.' Whereas *before* there was a government, every man *had* such a voice, and afterwards — and for this very cause — they did choose representatives and put themselves into forms of government that they may preserve property; and therefore it is not to destroy it, to give every man a voice.

Ireton: I think we shall not be so apt to come to a right understanding in this business, if one man, and another man, and another man do speak their several thoughts and conceptions to the same purpose, as if we do consider where the *objection* lies, and what the answer is which is made to it; and therefore I desire we may do so.

To that which this gentleman spoke last. The main thing that he seemed to answer was this: that he would make it appear that the going about to establish this government — or such a government — is not a destruction of property, nor does not tend to the destruction of property, because the people's falling into a government is for the *preservation* of property. What weight there is in it lies in this: since there is a falling into a government, and government is to preserve property, therefore this cannot be against property. But my objection does not lie in that — the making of the representation more equal — but in the introducing of men into an equality of interest in this government who have no property in this kingdom, or who have no local permanent interest in it. For if I had said that I would not wish at all that we should have any enlargement of the bounds of those that are to be the electors, then you might have excepted against it. But what I said was that I would not go to enlarge it *beyond all bounds*, so that upon the same ground you may admit of so many men from foreign states as would outvote you. The objection lies *still* in this. I do not mean that I would have it restrained to that proportion that now obtains, but to restrain it still to men who have a local, a permanent interest in the kingdom, who have such an interest that they may live upon it as freemen, and who have such an interest as is fixed upon a place, and is not the same everywhere equally. If a man be an inhabitant upon a rack rent for a year, for two years, or twenty years, you cannot think that man has any fixed or permanent interest. That man, if he pay the rent that his land is worth, and has no advantage but what he has by his land, is as good a man — may have as much interest — in another kingdom

as here. I do not speak of not enlarging this representation at all, but of keeping this to the most fundamental constitution in this kingdom, that is, that no person that has not a local and permanent interest in the kingdom should have an equal dependence in election with those that have. But if you go beyond this law — if you admit any man that has a breath and being — I did show you how this will destroy property. It may come to destroy property thus. You may have such men chosen, or at least the major part of them, as have no local and permanent interest. Why may not those men vote against all property? Again you may admit strangers by this rule (if you admit them once to inhabit), and those that have interest in the land may be voted out of their land. It may destroy property that way. But here is the rule that you go by. You infer this to be the right of the people, of every inhabitant, because man has such a right in nature, though it be not of necessity for the preserving of his being; and therefore you are to overthrow the most fundamental constitution for this. By the same rule, show me why you will not by the same right of nature make use of anything that any man has, though it be not for the necessary sustenance of men? Show me what you will stop at, wherein you will fence any man in a property by this rule.

Rainborough: I desire to know how this comes to be a property in some men and not in others.

Colonel Nathaniel Rich: I confess there is weight in that objection that the Commissary-General last insisted upon; for you have five to one in this kingdom that have no permanent interest. Some men have ten, some twenty servants — some more, some less. If the master and servant shall be equal electors, then clearly those that have no interest in the kingdom will make it their interest to choose those that have no interest. It may happen that the majority may, by law — not in a confusion — destroy property; there may be a law enacted that there shall be an equality of goods and estate. I think that either of the extremes may be urged to inconveniency: that is, that men that have no interest as to estate should have no interest as to election and that they should have an *equal* interest. But there may be a more equitable division and distribution than that he that has nothing should have an equal voice; and certainly there may be some other way thought of that there may be a representative of the poor as well as the rich, and not to exclude all. I remember there were many workings and revolutions, as we have heard, in the Roman Senate; and there was never a confusion that did appear — and that indeed *was* come to — till the state came to know this kind of distribution of election. That is how the people's voices were bought and sold, and that by the poor; and thence it came that he that was the richest man, and a man of some considerable power among the soldiers, and one they resolved on, made himself a perpetual dictator. And if we strain too far to avoid monarchy in kings let us take heed that we do not call for emperors to deliver us from more than one tyrant.

Rainborough: I should not have spoken again. I think it is a fine gilded pill. But there is much danger and it may seem to some that there is some kind of remedy possible. I think that we are better as we are if it can be really proved that the poor shall choose many and still the people be in the same case, be over-voted still. But of this, and much else, I am unsatisfied; and therefore truly, sir, I should desire to go close to the business; and the first thing that I am unsatisfied in is how it comes about that there is such a propriety in some freeborn Englishmen, and not in others.

Cowling demanded whether the younger son have not as much right to the inheritance as the eldest.

Ireton: Will you decide it by the light of nature?

Cowling: Why election was given only to those with freeholds of forty shillings a year (which was then worth more than forty pounds a year now), the reason was that the commons of England were overpowered by the lords who had abundance of vassals; but that still they might make their laws good against encroaching prerogatives by this means, therefore they did exclude all slaves. Now the case is not so. All slaves have bought their freedoms, and they are more free than in the commonwealth are more beneficial. Yet there are men of substance in the country with no voice in elections. There is a tanner in Staines worth three thousand pounds, and another in Reading worth three horseskins. The second has a voice; the first, none.

Ireton: In the beginning of your speech you seem to acknowledge that by law, by civil constitution, the propriety of having voices in election was fixed in certain persons. So then your exception of your argument does not prove that by civil constitution they have *no* such propriety, but your argument does acknowledge that by civil constitution they *have* such propriety. You argue against this law only that this law is not good.

John Wildman: Unless I be very much mistaken, we are very much deviated from the first question. Instead of following the first proposition to inquire what is just, I conceive we look to prophecies, and look to what may be the event, and judge of the justness of a thing by the consequence. I desire we may recall ourselves to the question whether it be right or no. I conceive all that has been said against it will be reduced to this question of consequences. And to another reason: that it is against a fundamental law that every person choosing ought to have a permanent interest, because it is not fit that those should choose parliaments that have no lands to be disposed of by parliament.

Ireton: If you will take it by the way, it is not fit that the representees should choose as the representers — the persons who shall make the law in the kingdom — those who have not a permanent fixed interest in the kingdom. The reason is the same in the two cases.

Wildman: Sir, I do so take it; and I conceive that that is brought in for the same reason: that foreigners might otherwise not only come to have a voice in our elections as well as the native inhabitants, but to be elected.

Ireton: That is upon supposition that these foreigners should be all inhabitants.

Wildman: I shall begin with the last first. The case is different with the native inhabitant and the foreigner. If a foreigner shall be admitted to be an inhabitant in the nation (so he will submit to that form of government as the natives do) he has the same right as the natives but in this particular. *Our* case is to be considered thus: that we have been under slavery; that's

acknowledged by all; our very laws were made by our conquerors. And whereas it's spoken much of chronicles, I conceive there is no credit to be given to any of them: and the reason is because those that were our lords and made us their vassals would suffer nothing else to be chronicled.

We are now engaged for our freedom. That's the end of parliaments: not to constitute what is already established but to act according to the just rules of government. Every person in England has as clear a right to elect his representative as the greatest person in England. I conceive that's the undeniable maxim of government: that all government is in the free consent of the people. If so, then upon that account there is no person that is under a just government — or has justly his own — unless he by his own free consent be put under that government. This he cannot be unless he be consenting to it; and therefore, according to this maxim, there is never a person in England but ought to have a voice in elections. If such as that gentleman says be true, there are no laws that in this strictness and rigour of justice any man is bound to that are not made by those whom he does consent to. And therefore I should humbly move that if the question be stated in a way which would soonest bring things to an issue, it might rather be thus: whether any person can justly be bound by law, who does not give his consent that such persons shall make laws for him?

Ireton: Let the question be so, whether a man can be bound to any law that he does not consent to, and I shall tell you that he may and ought to be bound to a law that he does not give a consent to, nor does not choose any to consent to; and I will make it clear. If a foreigner come within this kingdom, if that stranger will have liberty to dwell here who has no local interest here, he, as a man, it's true, has air, the passage of highways, the protection of laws, and all that by nature. We must not expel him our coasts, give him no being amongst us, nor kill him because he comes upon our land, comes up our stream, arrives at our shore. It is a piece of hospitality, of humanity, to receive that man amongst us. But if that man be received to a being amongst us, I think that man may very well be content to submit himself to the law of the land — that is, the law that is made by those people that have a property, a fixed property, in the land. I think, if any man will receive protection from this people — though neither he nor his ancestors, not any betwixt him and Adam, did ever give concurrence to this constitution — I think this man ought to be subject to those laws, and to be bound by those laws, so long as he continues amongst them. That is my opinion. A man ought to be subject to a law that did not give his consent. But with this reservation: that if this man do think himself unsatisfied to be subject to this law he may go into another kingdom. And so the same reason does extend, in my understanding, to that man that has no permanent interest in the kingdom. If he has money, his money is as good in another place as here; he has nothing that does locally fix him to this kingdom. If that man will live in this kingdom, or trade amongst us, that man ought to subject himself to the law made by the people who have the interest of this kingdom in them. And yet I do acknowledge that which you take to be so general a maxim, that in every kingdom, within every land, the original of power of making laws, of determining what shall be law in the land, *does* lie in the people — but by 'the people' is meant those that are possessed of the permanent interest in the land. But whoever is extraneous to this, that is, as good a man in another land, that man ought to give such a respect

to the property of men that live in the land. *They* do not determine that I shall live in this land. Why should I have any interest in determining what shall be the law of this land?

Major William Rainborough: I think if it can be made to appear that it is a just and reasonable thing, and that it is for the preservation of all the native freeborn men that they should have an equal voice in election — I think it ought to be made good unto them. And the reason is that the chief end of this government is to preserve *persons* as well as estates, and if any law shall take hold of my person it is more dear than my estate.

Colonel Thomas Rainborough: I do very well remember that the gentleman in the window — Colonel Rich — said that if it were so, there were no propriety to be had, because five parts of the nation — the poor people — are now excluded and would then come in. So one on the other side said that if it were otherwise, then rich men only shall be chosen. *Then*, I say, the one part shall make hewers of wood and drawers of water of the other five, and so the greatest part of the nation be enslaved. Truly I think we are still where we were; and I do not hear any argument given but only that it is the present law of the kingdom. I say still: what shall become of those many men that have laid out themselves for the parliament of England in this present war, that have ruined themselves by fighting, by hazarding all they had? They are Englishmen. They have now nothing to say for themselves.

Rich: I should be very sorry to speak anything here that should give offence — or that may occasion personal reflections that we spoke against just now. I did not urge anything so *far* as was represented; and I did not *at all* urge that there should be a consideration had of rich men only, and that a man that is poor shall be without consideration, or that he deserves to be made poorer and not to live in independence at all. All that I urged was this: that I think it worthy consideration, whether they should have an *equality* in their interest. However, I think we have been a great while upon this point; and if we be as long upon all the rest it were well if there were no greater difference than this.

Mr Hugh Peter: I think that this matter of the franchise may be easily agreed on — that is, there may be a way thought of. I think you would do well to sit up all night if thereby you could effect it, but I think that three or four might be thought of in this company to form a committee. You will be forced only to put characters upon electors or elected; therefore I do suppose that if there be any here that can make up a Representative to your mind, the thing is gained. But I would fain know whether that will answer the work of your meeting. The question is whether you can state any *one* question for removing the present danger of the kingdom — whether any one question or no will dispatch the work.

Sir, I desire, if it be possible, that some question may be stated to finish the present work, to cement us in the points wherein lies the distance; and if the thoughts be of the commonwealth and the people's freedom, I think that's soon cured. I desire that all manner of plainness may be used, that we may not go on with the lapwing and carry one another off the nest. There is something else that must cement us where the awkwardness of our spirits lies.

Col. Rainborough: For my part, I think we cannot engage one way or other in the Army if we do not think of the people's liberties. If we can agree where the liberty and freedom of the people lies, that will do all.

Ireton: I cannot consent so far. As I said before: when I see the hand of God destroying king, and Lords — and Commons too, or any foundation of human constitution — when I see God has done it, I shall, I hope, comfortably acquiesce in it. But first, I cannot give my consent to it, because it is not good. And secondly, as I desire that this army should have regard to engagements wherever they are lawful, so I would have them have regard to this as well: that they should not bring that scandal upon the name of God and the saints, that those that call themselves by that name — those whom God has owned and appeared with — that we should represent ourselves to the world as men so far from being of that peaceable spirit which is suitable to the gospel, as we should have bought peace of the world upon such terms as we would not have peace in the world but upon such terms as should destroy all property. If the principle upon which you move this alteration, or the ground upon which you press that we should make this alteration, do destroy all kind of property or whatsoever a man has by human constitution, I cannot consent to it. The Law of God does not give me property, nor the law of nature, but property is of human constitution. I have a property and this I shall enjoy. Constitution founds property. If either the thing itself that you press or the consequence of that you press do destroy property, though I shall acquiesce in having no property, yet I cannot give my heart or hand to it because it is a thing evil in itself and scandalous to the world, and I desire this army may be free from both.

Captain Edward Sexby: I see that though liberty were our end, there is a degeneration from it. We have engaged in this kingdom and ventured our lives, and it was all for this: to recover our birthrights and privileges as Englishmen; and by the arguments urged there *are* none. There are many thousands of us soldiers that have ventured our lives. We have had little propriety in the kingdom as to our estates, yet we have had a birthright. But it seems now, except a man has a fixed estate in this kingdom, he has no right in this kingdom. I wonder we were so much deceived. If we had not a right to the kingdom we were mere mercenary soldiers. There are many in my condition that have as good a condition as I have. It may be little estate they have at present, and yet they have as much a birthright as those, too, who are their lawgivers — as any in this place. I shall tell you in a word my resolution. I am resolved to give my birthright to none. Whatsoever may come in the way, and whatsoever may be thought, I will give it to none. If this thing be denied the poor that with so much pressing after they have sought, it will be the greatest scandal.

There was one thing spoken to this effect: that if the poor and those in low condition were given their birthright it would be the destruction of this kingdom. I think this was but a distrust of providence. I do think the poor and meaner of this kingdom — I speak as in relation to the condition of soldiers, in which we are — have been the means of the *preservation* of this kingdom. I say, in their stations, and really I think to their utmost possibility; and their lives have not been held dear for purchasing the good of the kingdom. And now they demand the birthright

for which they fought. Those that act to this end are as free from anarchy or confusion as those that oppose it, and they have the Law of God and the law of their conscience with them. But truly I shall only sum up in this. I desire that we may not spend so much time upon these things. We must be plain. When men come to understand these things, they will not lose that which they have contended for. That which I shall beseech you is to come to a determination of this question.

Ireton: I am very sorry we are come to this point, that from reasoning one to another we should come to express our resolutions. I profess for my part, what I see is good for the kingdom and becoming a Christian to contend for, I hope through God I shall have strength and resolution to do my part towards it. And yet I will profess direct contrary in some kind to what that gentleman said. For my part, rather than I will make a disturbance to a good constitution of a kingdom wherein I may live in godliness and honesty and peace and quietness, I will part with a great deal of my birthright. I will part with my own property rather than I will be the man that shall make a disturbance in the kingdom for my property. And therefore if all the people in this kingdom, or the representatives of them all together, should meet and should give away my property, I would submit to it; I would give it away. But that gentleman — and I think every Christian — ought to bear that spirit, to carry that in him, that he will not make a public disturbance upon a private prejudice.

Now let us consider where our difference lies. We all agree that you should have a Representative to govern, and this Representative to be as equal as you can make it. But the question is, whether this distribution can be made to all persons equally, or whether equally amongst those that have the interest of England in them — that which I have declared is my opinion still. I think we ought to keep to that constitution which we have now, both because it is a civil constitution — it is the most fundamental constitution that we have — and because there is so much justice and reason and prudence in it as I dare confidently undertake to demonstrate that there are many more evils that will follow in case you do alter it than there can be in the standing of it.

But I say but this in the general: that I do wish that they that talk of birthrights — we *any* of us when we talk of birthrights — would consider what really our birthright is. If a man mean by birthright whatsoever he can challenge by the law of nature (supposing there were no constitution at all, supposing no civil law and no civil constitution) and that I am to contend for against constitution, then you leave no property, nor no foundation for any man to enjoy anything. But if you call that your birthright which is the most fundamental part of your constitution, then let him perish that goes about to hinder you or any man of the least part of your birthright or will desire to do it. But if you will lay aside the most fundamental constitution, which is as good for aught you can discern as anything you can propose — at least it is a constitution, and I will give you consequence for consequence of good upon that constitution as you can give upon your birthright without it. And if you, merely upon pretence of a birthright, of the right of nature — which is only true as for your being, and not for your better being — if you will upon that ground pretend that this constitution, the most fundamental constitution, the thing

that has reason and equity in it, shall not stand in your way, it is the same principle to me, say I, as if but for your better satisfaction you shall take hold of anything that another man calls his own.

Col. Rainborough: Sir, I see that it is impossible to have liberty but all property must be taken away. If it be laid down for a rule, and if you will say it, it must be so. But I would fain know what the soldier has fought for all this while? He has fought to *enslave* himself, to give power to men of riches, men of estates, to make him a perpetual slave? We do find in all presses that go forth none must be pressed that are freehold men. When these gentlemen fall out among themselves they shall press the poor scrubs to come and kill one another for them.

Ireton: I confess I see so much right in the business that I am not easily satisfied with flourishes. If you will not lay the stress of the business upon the consideration of reason, or right relating to anything of human constitution, or anything of that nature, but will put it upon consequences, I will show you greater ill consequences. I see enough to say that, to my apprehensions, I can show you greater ill consequences to follow upon that alteration which you would have, by extending voices to all that have a being in this kingdom, than any that can come by this present constitution — a great deal. That that you urge of the present constitution is a *particular* ill consequence. This that I object against your proposal is a *general* ill consequence, and this is as great as that or any ill consequence else whatsoever, though I think you will see that the validity of that argument must be that for one ill that lies upon that which now is, I can show you a thousand upon this that you propose.

Give me leave to say but this one word. I will tell you what the soldier of the kingdom has fought for. First, the danger that we stood in was that one man's will must be a law. The people of the kingdom must have this right at least, that they should not be concluded but by the representative of those that had the interest of the kingdom. Some men fought in this because they were immediately concerned and engaged in it. Other men who had no other interest in the kingdom but this, that they should have the benefit of those laws made by the representative, yet fought that they should have the benefit of this Representative. They thought it was better to be concluded by the common consent of those that were fixed men, and settled men that had the interest of this kingdom in them. 'And from that way', said they, 'I shall know a law and have a certainty.' Every man that was born in the country, that is a denizen in it, that has a freedom, he was capable of trading to get money, to get estates by; and therefore this man, I think, had a great deal of reason to build up such a foundation of interest to himself: that is, that the will of one man should not be a law, but that the law of this kingdom should be by a choice of persons to represent, and that choice to be made by the generality of the kingdom. *Here* was a right that induced men to fight; and those men that had this interest, though this be not the utmost interest that other men have, yet they had some interest. Now tell me why we should go to plead whatsoever we can challenge by the right of nature against whatsoever any man can challenge by constitution. I do not see where that man will stop, as to point of property, so that he shall not use against other property that right he has claimed by the law of nature against that constitution. I desire any man to show me where there is a difference.

I have been answered: 'now we see liberty cannot stand without destroying property'. Liberty *may* be had and property not be destroyed. First, the liberty of all those that have the permanent interest in the kingdom, that is provided for by the constitution. And secondly, by an appeal to the law of nature, liberty cannot be provided for in a general sense, if property be preserved. For if property be preserved by acknowledging a natural right in the possessor — so that I am not to meddle with such a man's estate, his meat, his drink, his apparel, or other goods — then the right of nature destroys liberty. By the right of nature I am to have sustenance rather than perish; yet property destroys it for a man to have this by the right of nature, even suppose there be *no* human constitution.

Peter: I do say still, under favour, there is a way to cure all this debate. I will mind you of one thing: that upon the will of one man abusing us, we reached agreement; and if the safety of the Army be in danger so we may again. I hope it is not denied by any man that any wise, discreet man that has preserved England is worthy of a voice in the government of it. So that I profess to you for my part I am clear the point of election should be amended in that sense. I think they will desire no more liberty. If there were time to dispute it, I think they would be satisfied, and all will be satisfied.

Cromwell: I confess I was most dissatisfied with that I heard Mr Sexby speak, of any man here, because it did savour so much of *will*. But I desire that all of us may decline that; and if we meet here really to agree to that which is for the safety of the kingdom, let us not spend so much time in such debates as these are, but let us apply ourselves to such things as are conclusive: and that shall be this. Everybody here would be willing that the representative might be mended, that is, that it might be made better than it is. Perhaps it may be offered in that other paper too lamely. If the thing there insisted upon be too limited, why perhaps there are a very considerable part of copyholders by inheritance that ought to have a voice; and there may be somewhat in that paper too that reflects upon the generality of the people in denying them a voice. I know our debates are endless if we think to bring it to an issue this way. If we may but resolve upon a committee, things may be done. If I cannot be satisfied to go so far as these gentlemen that bring this paper, I say it again and I profess it, I shall freely and willingly withdraw myself; and I hope to do it in such a manner that the Army shall see that I shall, by my withdrawing, satisfy the interest of the Army, the public interest of the kingdom, and those ends these men aim at. And I think if you do bring this to a result it were well.

Col Rainborough: If these men must be advanced, and other men set under foot, I am not satisfied. *If their* rules must be observed, and other men that are not in authority be silenced, I do not know how this can stand together with the idea of a free debate. I wonder how that should be thought wilfulness in one man that is reason in another; for I confess I have not heard anything that does satisfy me; and though I have not so much wisdom, or so many notions in my head, I have so many apprehensions that I could tell an hundred such of the ruin of the people. I am not at all against a committee's meeting; and as you say — and I think every Christian ought to do the same — for my part I shall be ready, if I see the way that I am going, and the thing that I would insist on will destroy the kingdom, I shall withdraw from it as soon as any. And therefore,

till I see that, I shall use all the means I can, and I think it is no fault in any man to refuse to sell that which is his birthright.

Sexby. I desire to speak a few words. I am sorry that my zeal to what I apprehend is good should be so ill-resented. I am not sorry to see that which I apprehend is truth disputed; but I am sorry the Lord has darkened some so much as not to see it, and that is in short this. Do you not think it were a sad and miserable condition, that we have fought all this time for nothing? All here — both great and small — do think that we fought for something. I confess, many of us fought for those ends which, we since saw, were not those which caused us to go through difficulties and straits and to venture all in the ship with you. It had been good in you to have advertised us of it, and I believe you would have had fewer under your command to have commanded. But if this be the business, that an estate does make men capable — it is no matter which way they get it, they are capable — to choose those that shall represent them, I think there are many that have not estates that in honesty have as much right in the freedom of their choice as any that have great estates. Truly, sir, as for your putting off this question and coming to some other, I dare say, and I dare appeal to all of them, that they cannot settle upon any other until this be done. It was the ground that we took up arms on, and it is the ground which we shall maintain.

Concerning my making rents and divisions in this way. As a particular, if I were but so, I could lie down and be trodden there; but truly I am sent by a regiment, and if I should not speak, guilt shall lie upon me, and I should think I were a covenant-breaker. I do not know how we have been answered in our arguments; and as for our engagements, I conceive we shall not accomplish them to the kingdom when we deny them to ourselves. I shall be loath to make a rent and division, but for my own part, unless I see this put to a question, I despair of an issue.

Captain John Clarke: The first thing that I shall desire was, and is, this: that there might be temperance and moderation of spirit within us; that we should speak with moderation, not with such reflection as was boulded one from another, but so speak and so hear as that which may be the droppings of love from one another to another's hears.

Another word I have to say is: the grand question of all is, whether or no it be the property of every individual person in the kingdom to have a vote in election? And the ground in the law of nature, which, for my part, I think to be that law which is the ground of all constitutions. Yet really properties are the foundations of constitutions; for if so be there were no property, that the law of nature does give a principle to have a property of what he has, or may have, which is not another man's: this property is the ground of *meum* and *tuum*. Now there may be inconveniences on both hands, but not so great freedom. The greater freedom, as I conceive, that all may have whatsoever. And if it come to pass that there be a difference, and that the one does oppose the other, then nothing can decide it but the sword, which is the wrath of God.

[text omitted]

Ireton: I should not speak again, but reflections do necessitate it, do call upon us to vindicate ourselves. As if we, who have led men into engagements and services, had divided from them because we did not concur with them! I will ask that gentleman that spoke (whom I love in my heart): whether when they drew out to serve the parliament in the beginning, whether when they engaged with the Army at Newmarket, whether then they thought of any more interest or right in the kingdom than this; whether they did think that they should have as great interest in parliament-men as freeholders had, or whether from the beginning we did not engage for the liberty of parliaments, and that we should be concluded by the laws that such did make. Unless somebody did make you believe before now that you should have an equal interest in the kingdom — unless somebody did make that to be believed — there is no reason to blame men for leading you so far as they have done; and if any man was far enough from such an apprehension, that man has not been deceived.

And truly, I shall say but this word more for *myself* in this business — because the whole objection seems to be pressed to me, and maintained against me. I will not arrogate that I was the first man that put the Army upon the thought either of successive parliaments or more equal parliaments; yet there are some here that know who they were that put us upon that foundation of liberty of putting a period to this parliament, in order that we might have successive parliaments, and that there might be a more equal distribution of elections. There are many here that know who were the first movers of that business in the Army. I shall not arrogate that to myself; but I can argue this with a clear conscience: that no man has prosecuted that with more earnestness, and will stand to that interest more than I do, of having parliaments successive and not perpetual, and the distribution of elections more equal.

But notwithstanding, my opinion stands good that it ought to be a distribution amongst the fixed and settled people of this nation. It's more prudent and safe, and more upon this ground of right for it to be so. Now it is the fundamental constitution of this kingdom; and that which if you take away, you take away for matter of wilfulness.

Notwithstanding, as for this universal conclusion that all inhabitants shall have voices as it stands in the Agreement, I must declare that though I cannot yet be satisfied, yet for my part I shall acquiesce. I will not make a distraction in this army. Though I have a property in being one of those that should be an elector, though I have an interest in the birthright, yet I will rather lose that birthright and that interest than I will make it my business to oppose them, if I see but the generality of those whom I have reason to think honest men and conscientious men and godly men to carry themselves another way. I will not oppose, though I be not satisfied to join with them. And I desire to say this. I am agreed with you if you insist upon a more equal distribution of elections; I will agree with you, not only to dispute for it, but to fight for it and contend for it. Thus far I shall agree with you. On the other hand, to those who differ in their terms and say 'I will not agree with you except you go farther', I make answer, 'thus far I can go with you; I will go with you as far as I can'. If you will appoint a committee of some few to consider of that — so as you preserve the equitable part of that constitution that now is, securing a voice to those who are like to be free men, men not given up to the wills of others, and thereby

keeping to the latitude which is the equity of constitutions — I will go with you as far as I can. And where I cannot I will sit down. I will not make any disturbance among you.

Col. Rainborough: If I do speak my soul and conscience I do think that there is not an objection made but that it has been answered; but the speeches are so long. I am sorry for some passion and some reflections, and I could wish where it is most taken amiss that cause had not been given. It is a fundamental of the constitution of the kingdom that there be parliamentary boroughs; I would fain know whether the choice of burgesses in corporations should not be altered. But the end wherefore I speak is only this. You think we shall be worse than we are if we come to a conclusion by a sudden vote. If it be put to the question we shall at least all know one another's mind. If it be determined, and the common resolutions known, we shall take such a course as to put it in execution. This gentleman says, if he cannot go he will sit still. He thinks he has a full liberty to do so; we think we have not. There is a great deal of difference between us two. If a man has all he does desire, he may *wish* to sit still; but if I think I have nothing at all of what I fought for, I do not think the argument holds that I must desist as well as he.

Petty: The rich would very unwillingly be concluded by the poor. And there is as much reason that the rich should conclude the poor as the poor the rich — and indeed that is no reason at all. There should be an equal share in both. I understood your engagement was that you would use all your endeavours for the liberties of the people, that they should be secured. If there is such a constitution that the people are not free, that constitution should be annulled. That constitution which is now set up is a constitution of forty shillings a year; but this constitution does not make the people free.

Cromwell: Here's the mistake: you make the whole question to be whether that's the better constitution in that paper, or that which now is. But if you will go upon such a ground as that, although a better constitution was *really* offered for the removing of the worse, yet some gentlemen are resolved to stick to the worse and there might be a great deal of prejudice upon such an apprehension. I think you are by this time satisfied that it is a clear mistake; for it is a *dispute* whether or no this proposed constitution be better — nay, whether it be not destructive to the kingdom.

Petty: I desire to speak one word to this business, because I do not know whether my occasions will suffer me to attend it any longer. The great reason that I have heard is the constitution of the kingdom, the utmost constitution of it; and if we destroy this constitution, there is no property. I suppose that if constitutions should tie up all men in this nature, it were very dangerous.

Ireton: First, the thing itself were dangerous, if it were settled to destroy property. But I say the principle that leads to this is destructive to property; for by the same reason that you will alter this constitution, merely that there's a greater constitution by nature, by the same reason, by the law of nature, there is a greater liberty to the use of other men's goods, which that property bars you of. And I would fain have any man show me why I should destroy that liberty which the freeholders and burghers in corporations have in choosing burgesses, that which if you take

away, you leave no constitution; and this because there is a greater freedom due to me from some men by the law of nature. More than that, I should take another man's goods because the law of nature does allow me.

Col. Rainborough: I would grant something that the Commissary-General says. But whether this be a just property, the property says that forty shillings a year enables a man to elect; if it were stated to that, nothing would conduce so much whether some men do agree or no.

[Text omitted]

Lieutenant Edmund Chillenden: In the beginning of this discourse there were overtures made of imminent danger. This way we have taken this afternoon is not the way to prevent it. I would humbly move that we should put a speedy end to this business, and that not only to this main question of the paper, but also according to the Lieutenant-General's motion that a committee may be chosen seriously to consider the things in that paper and compare them with divers things in our declarations and engagements, that so we may show ourselves ready, as we have all professed, to lay down ourselves before God. If we take this course of debating upon one question a whole afternoon, and if the danger be so near as it is supposed, it were the ready way to bring us into it. I desire that things may be put into a speedy dispatch.

Clarke: I presume that the great stick here is this: that if everyone shall have his natural propriety of election it does bereave the kingdom of its principal fundamental constitution that it now has. I presume that all people and all nations whatsoever have a liberty and power to alter and change their constitutions if they find them to be weak and infirm. Now if the people of England shall find this weakness in their constitution, they may change it if they please. Another thing is this: it is feared that if the light of nature be only followed in this, it may destroy the propriety which every man can call his own. But it will not. And the reason is this: because this principle and light of nature does give all men their own — as, for example, the clothes upon my back because they are not another man's. Finally, if every man has this propriety of election to choose those who shall make the laws, you fear it may beget inconveniences. I do not conceive that anything may be so nicely and precisely done but that it may admit of inconveniency. If it be that there is inconveniency in that form of the constitution wherein it is now, there may some of those inconveniences rise from the changes that are apprehended from them. For my part I know nothing of fatal consequence in the relation of men but the want of love in it; and then, if difference arises, the sword must decide it. I too shall desire that before the question be stated it may be moderated as for foreigners.

[Text omitted]

Ireton: I have declared that you will alter that constitution from a better to a worse, from a just to a thing that is less just, in my apprehension; and I will not repeat the reasons of that, but refer to what I have declared before. To me, if there were nothing but this, that there is a constitution, and that constitution which is the very last constitution, which if you take away you leave

nothing of constitution, and consequently nothing of right or property, it would be enough. I would not go to alter this, though a man could propound that which in some respects might be better, unless it could be demonstrated to me that this were unlawful or that this were destructive. Truly, therefore, I say for my part, to go on a sudden to make such a limitation as that to inhabitants in general is to make no limitation at all. If you do extend the latitude of the constitution so far that any man shall have a voice in election who has not that interest in this kingdom that is permanent and fixed, who has not that interest upon which he may have his freedom in this kingdom without dependence, you will put it into the hands of men to choose, not of men desirous to preserve their liberty, but of men who will give it away.

I am confident, our discontent and dissatisfaction if ever they do well, they do in this. If there be anything at all that is a foundation of liberty it is this, that those who shall choose the law-makers shall be men freed from dependence upon others. I have a thing put into my heart which I cannot but speak. I profess I am afraid that if we — from such apprehensions as these are of an imaginable right of nature opposite to constitution — if we will contend and hazard the breaking of peace upon this business of that enlargement, I think if we, from imaginations and conceits, will go about to hazard the peace of the kingdom to alter the constitution in such a point, I am afraid we shall find the hand of God will follow it and we shall see that that liberty which we so much talk of and have so much contended for, shall be nothing at all by this our contending for it, by our putting it into the hands of those men that will give it away when they have it.

Cromwell: If we should go about to alter these things, I do not think that we are bound to fight for every particular proposition. Servants, while servants, are not included. Then you agree that he that receives alms is to be excluded?

Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Reade: I suppose it's concluded by all that the choosing of representatives is a privilege. Now I see no reason why any man that is a native ought to be excluded that privilege, unless from voluntary servitude.

Petty: I conceive the reason why we would exclude apprentices, or servants, or those that take alms, is because they depend upon the will of other men and should be afraid to displease them. For servants and apprentices, they are included in their masters, and so for those that receive alms from door to door; but if there be any general way taken for those that are not so bound to the will of other men, it would be well.

[text omitted]
