

# REMONSTRANCE

## House of Commons

25 June 1628

Most Gracious Sovereign, Your Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the Commons in this present Parliament assembled, being in nothing more careful than of the honour and prosperity of Your Majesty and the Kingdom, which they know do much depend upon that happy union and relation betwixt Your Majesty and your people, do with much sorrow apprehend that by reason of the uncertainty of their continuance together, the unexpected interruptions which have been cast upon them, and the shortness of time in which Your Majesty has determined to end this Session, they cannot bring to maturity and perfection diverse businesses of weight, which they have taken into their consideration and resolution as most important for the common good.

Amongst other things they have taken into especial care the preparing of a bill for the granting of Your Majesty such a subsidy of tonnage and poundage as might uphold your profit and revenue in as ample a manner as their just care and respect of trade (wherein not only the prosperity, but even the life of the Kingdom does consist) would permit. But being a work which will require much time, and preparation by conference with Your Majesty's officers and with the merchants, not only of London, but of other remote parts, they find it not possible to be accomplished at this time.

Wherefore considering it will be much more prejudicial to the right of the subject if Your Majesty should continue to receive the same without authority of law after the determination of a Session than if there had been a recess by adjournment only, in which case that intended grant would have related to the first day of the Parliament, and assuring themselves that Your Majesty is resolved to observe that your royal answer, which you have lately made to the Petition of Right of both Houses of Parliament, yet doubting lest Your Majesty may be mis-informed concerning this particular case, as if you might continue to take those subsidies of tonnage and poundage and other impositions upon merchants without breaking that answer, they are forced by that duty which they owe to Your Majesty, and to those whom they represent, to declare that there ought not any imposition to be laid upon the goods of merchants, exported or imported, without common consent by Act of Parliament, which is the right and inheritance of your subjects, founded not only upon the most ancient and original constitution of this Kingdom, but often confirmed and declared in diverse statute laws.

And for the better manifestation thereof, may it please Your Majesty to understand that although your royal predecessors, the Kings of this Realm, have often had such subsidies and impositions granted unto them upon diverse occasions, especially for the guarding of the seas and safeguard of merchants, yet the subjects have been ever careful to use such cautions and limitations in those grants as might prevent any claim to be made that such subsidies do proceed from duty and not from the free gift of the subjects.

And that they have heretofore used to limit a time in such grants, and for the most part but short, as for a year or two, and if it were continued longer, they have sometimes directed a certain space of cessation or intermission that so the right of the subject might be more evident. At other times it has been granted upon occasion of war for a certain number of years, with proviso that if the war were ended in the meantime, then the grant should cease. And of course it has been sequestered into the hands of some subjects to be employed for the guarding of the seas. And it is acknowledged by the ordinary answers of Your Majesty's predecessors in their assent to the bills of subsidies of tonnage and poundage that it is of the nature of other subsidies, proceeding from the good will of the subject.

Very few of your predecessors had it for life, until the reign of Henry VII, who was so far from conceiving he had any right thereunto that although he granted commissions for collecting certain duties and customs due by law, yet he made no commissions for receiving the subsidy of tonnage and poundage until the same was granted

unto him in Parliament. Since his time all the Kings and Queens of this Realm have had the like grants for life by the free love and good will of the subjects.

And whensoever the people have been grieved by laying any impositions or other charges upon their goods and merchandises without authority of law (which has been very seldom), yet upon complaint in Parliament they have been forthwith relieved, saving in the time of your royal father, who having through ill counsel raised the rates and charges upon merchandises to that height at which they now are, yet he was pleased so far forth to yield to the complaint of his people as to offer that if the value of those impositions which he had set might be made good unto him, he would bind himself and his heirs by act of Parliament never to lay any other; which offer the Commons at that time, in regard of the great burden, did not think fit to yield unto.

Nevertheless, your loyal Commons in this Parliament, out of their especial zeal to your service and especial regard of your pressing occasions, have taken into their consideration so to frame a grant of subsidy of tonnage or poundage to Your Majesty that both you might have been the better enabled for the defence of your realm, and your subjects, by being secure from all undue charges, be the more encouraged cheerfully to proceed in their course of trade; by the increase whereof Your Majesty's profit, and likewise the strength of the Kingdom, would be very much augmented.

But not now being able to accomplish this, their desire, there is no course left unto them without manifest breach of their duty, both to Your Majesty and their country, save only to make this humble declaration,

That the receiving of tonnage and poundage, and other impositions not granted by Parliament, is a breach of the fundamental liberties of this Kingdom, and contrary to Your Majesty's royal answer to the said Petition of Right.

And therefore they do most humbly beseech Your Majesty to forbear any further receiving of the same, and not to take it in ill part from those of Your Majesty's loving subjects who shall refuse to make payment of any such charges without warrant of law demanded.

And as by this forbearance, Your Most Excellent Majesty shall manifest unto the world your royal justice in the observation of your laws. So they doubt not but hereafter, at the time appointed for their coming again, they shall have occasion to express their great desire to advance Your Majesty's honour and profit.

G.B. Adams and H.M. Stephens, eds., *Select Documents of English Constitutional History* (London: MacMillan, 1914):343–345.  
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