

ACT ABOLISHING THE OFFICE OF KING

17 March 1648/1649

Whereas Charles Stuart, late King of England, Ireland, and the territories and dominions thereunto belonging, has by authority derived from Parliament been and is hereby declared to be justly condemned, adjudged to die, and put to death for many treasons, murders, and other heinous offences committed by him, by which judgment he stood, and is hereby declared to be, attainted of high treason, whereby his issue and posterity, and all others pretending title under him, are become incapable of the said Crown, or of being King or Queen of the said Kingdom or dominions, or either or any of them;

Be it therefore enacted and ordained, and it is enacted, ordained, and declared by this present Parliament and by authority thereof, that all the people of England and Ireland, and the dominions and territories thereunto belonging, of what degree or condition soever, are discharged of all fealty, homage, and allegiance which is or shall be pretended to be due unto any of the issue and posterity of the said late King, or any claiming under him. And that Charles Stuart, eldest son, and James, called Duke of York, second son, and all other the issue and posterity of him the said late King, and all and every person and persons pretending title from, by, or under him, are and be disabled to hold or enjoy the said Crown of England and Ireland, and other the dominions thereunto belonging, or any of them; or to have the name, title, style, or dignity of King or Queen of England and Ireland, Prince of Wales, or any of them; or to have and enjoy the power and dominion of the said Kingdom and dominions, or any of them, or the honours, manors, lands, tenements, possessions, and hereditaments belonging or appertaining to the said Crown of England and Ireland, and other the dominions aforesaid, or to any of them; or to the Principality of Wales, Duchy of Lancaster or Cornwall, or any or either of them, any law, statute, ordinance, usage, or custom to the contrary hereof in any wise notwithstanding.

And whereas it is and has been found by experience that the office of a king in this nation and Ireland, and to have the power thereof in any single person, is unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to the liberty, safety, and public interest of the people, and that for the most part, use has been made of the regal power and prerogative to oppress and impoverish and enslave the subject; and that usually and naturally any one person in such power makes it his interest to encroach upon the just freedom and liberty of the people, and to promote the setting up of their own will and power above the laws, that so they might enslave these kingdoms to their own lust;

Be it therefore enacted and ordained by this present Parliament, and by authority of the same, that the office of a king in this nation shall not henceforth reside in or be exercised by any one single person; and that no one person whatsoever shall or may have or hold the office, style, dignity, power, or authority of king of the said Kingdoms and dominions, or any of them, or of the Prince of Wales, any law, statute, usage, or custom to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding.

And it is hereby enacted that if any person or persons shall endeavour to attempt by force of arms or otherwise, or be aiding, assisting, comforting, or abetting unto any person or persons that shall by any ways or means whatsoever endeavour or attempt the reviving or setting up again of any pretended right of the said Charles, eldest son to the said late King, James called Duke of York, or of any other the issue and posterity of the said late King, or of any person or persons claiming under him or them, to the said regal office, style, dignity, or authority, or to be Prince of Wales; or the promoting of any one person whatsoever to the name, style, dignity, power, prerogative, or authority of King of England and Ireland, and dominions aforesaid, or any of them; that then every such offence shall be deemed and adjudged high treason, and the offenders therein, their counsellors, procurers, aiders, and abettors being convicted of the said offence, or any of them, shall be deemed and adjudged traitors against the Parliament and people of England, and shall suffer, lose, and forfeit, and have such like and the same pains, forfeitures, judgments, and execution as is used in case of high treason.

And whereas by the abolition of the kingly office provided for in this Act, a most happy way is made for this nation (if God see it good) to return to its just and ancient right of being governed by its own representatives or national meetings in council, from time to time chosen and entrusted for that purpose by the people, it is therefore resolved and declared by the Commons assembled in Parliament that they will put a period to the sitting of this present Parliament, and dissolve the same so soon as may possibly stand with the safety of the people that has betruſted them, and with what is abſolutely neceſſary for the preſerving and upholding the government now ſettled in the way of a commonwealth; and that they will carefully provide for the certain chooſing, meeting, and ſitting of the next and future representatives, with ſuch other circumſtances of freedom in choice and equality in diſtribution of members to be elected thereunto as ſhall moſt conduce to the laſting freedom and good of this Commonwealth.

And it is hereby further enacted and declared, notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, no perſon or perſons of what condition and quality ſoever within the Commonwealth of England and Ireland, Dominion of Wales, the iſlands of Guernſey and Jerſey, and town of Berwick-upon-Tweed ſhall be diſcharged from the obedience and ſubjection which he and they owe to the government of this nation as it is now declared, but all and every of them ſhall in all things render and perform the ſame as of right is due unto the ſupreme authority hereby declared to reſide in this and the ſucceſſive representatives of the people of this nation, and in them only.

G.B. Adams and H.M. Stephens, eds., *Select Documents of English Constitutional History* (London: MacMillan, 1901):397–399.
[modernized]