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The Leveller influence in the new model army from 1647 to 1649

G. Elaine Johnson

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THE LEVELLER INFLUENCE IN THE NEW MODEL ARMY

FROM 1647 TO 1649

G. Elaine Johnson
Senior Thesis
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PREFACE

Although the scope of this paper, from February of 1647 to January of 1649, would seem rather limited, the actual impact of Leveller principles and methods was felt during this short span of time. After the final Agreement of the People in early 1649, the movement seemed to center around personal attacks, reiteration of previous ideas, and defensive measures. The establishment of the Commonwealth, under the thumb of Oliver Cromwell, left behind all the Leveller plans of government, which had been discussed and approved by the Agitators and the Army Council.

Other aspects of the Leveller movement, such as their concept of religious toleration, could have received greater attention, but it was not felt necessary to the sense of the paper. Likewise, the political situation and intrigues of the period could have been covered in a more thorough manner, but only the events pertinent to the Army-Leveller relationship were explained in detail.
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Personifying the ideals of the Levellers, John Lilburne probably dominated the comment and activity of the party over the extent of his actual importance.¹ By combining the emotional state of a religious zealot with the philosopher's appeal to reason, Lilburne always attracted attention. For with a maniac's disregard for his personal welfare, Lilburne fought for liberty and justice and became the fiery heart of the movement. While this popular idol did become a threat to the Presbyterian Parliament and to Oliver Cromwell, nevertheless, his reported defiance of all authority, his egotism, and his vindictiveness caused a just historian of the Levellers to state that Lilburne "sacrificed public causes to personal resentment."² United with Lilburne in this fight were a group of well-educated men of middle or merchant class origins. Uncolorful and retiring, William Walwyn, often abused for his lack of religious convictions, was accused of everything from blasphemy to murder.³ These two men along with Wildman, the spokesman for the party at the Army Council debates, Overton, a signer and promoter of various petitions and pamphlets, Sexby, Rainsborough, and a few other supporters from the Army and London comprised the Leveller leadership.

Too idealistic and progressive to be practical, the Levellers

could demonstrate the source of their principles and demands to be from legal theories and from the growing tradition of "religious populism." Religious separation and dissent meant individuality rode rampant, as men found that the right to seek truth in the scripture led to the privilege of questioning authority and to a new respect for the rights of men. Out of Independency came these important intellectual principles: first, the priesthood and equality of believers and second, the liberty of free inquiry. Utilizing the experience of the Protestant dissent, the Levellers had the skills, channels of communication, and organization to change ideas into action.

With the Bible in one hand and Coke's Institutes in the other, Lilburne equated legal theories with the religious concepts of separatism. Yet while his ideals were concerned with the preservation of the common, fundamental law, many Levellers wished to discount precedence and to move in turn to a political philosophy of reason and natural rights. Therefore, this step in theory led the Levellers beyond the redress of grievances, even beyond the return to Anglo-Saxon laws before the hated Norman Conquest, to the claim for the sovereignty of the people and "the pursuit of rights because they ought to exist." 

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2 Ibid., p. 268.
5 Ibid., p. 75.
sequently, if any institution or ruling body was not completely representative, it forfeited its sovereignty, and the people had no compulsion to obey. Raising a contest over representation and franchise, the Levellers pleaded for those natural rights in opposition to the rights of property, upheld by law and the army leaders.

Finding themselves leaders of an opposition group, the political malcontents worked to win support for their system and party, which soon acquired a popular appellation. Usually used derogatorily, the term Leveller, which at first was denied by the group, was applied by writers with various interpretations. In July 1647, Cromwell was forced to move against the Presbyterian Party, and the King had refused the Army Proposals.

At this time [there was] a new faction grown up in the army . . . called Levellers; who spoke indolently and confidently against the King and Parliament and the great officers of the army, . . . and declared that all degree of men should be levelled, and an equality should be established, both in title and estate throughout the kingdom.9

Though the party was prominent in the Army before the Putney debates at the end of October, it was there that the term Leveller was given to a follower of Lilburne and did finally win acceptance by the party.10 In a confusion of names, for there were "other sorts of men, going then


under the name of Levellers,¹¹ the actual party could be distinguished from other republicans or religious reformers, by its image as a certain group of radicals gathered around Lilburne.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROTEST AGAINST PARLIAMENT

Political philosophies and political reformers are rarely created in a political vacuum; the proper solution of happenings and personalities, accompanied by a catalyst of one disturbing event is usually necessary to transform a group of radicals into a formidable party. Therefore, we see that not until the actions of Parliament against the Army had brought on the necessity of petitions, did the Leveller party take form and blend its program with that of the army agitation. For with the defeat of Charles I, the soldiers of the New Model Army had expected Parliament to settle the nation without the abuses and oppressions of tyranny. Harboring no thoughts of disloyalty, the soldiers would have followed the dictates of their officers in quiet obedience but for the cool disregard of Parliament for the welfare and payment of its Army. Direct interference in politics was forced upon the Army by the Presbyterian Party, who felt themselves losing ground under threats of Independence and Royalism. With the country in great debt, with an old tradition of civil law, and with the danger of a well-disciplined military force of Independents, Parliament quickly planned to disband the Army. On February 18, 1647, the plan to reduce the infantry was introduced in the House; a plan whereby the cavalry would be left dependent on a weak, undisciplined group of trained-bands or civilian soldiers. Since the defense of Ireland now fell on Parliament, many of the soldiers
were to be impressed or enlisted for service. Of the 7,000 horse soldiers, 400 were to be dismissed, and 14,000 foot soldiers were to be sent to garrisons. A serious mistake was to deprive any member of Parliament his commission in the Army. To further divide the troops, the Houses discussed sending 8,000 of the infantry, 3,000 of the horse, and 1,200 dragoons to Ireland. While the plan for disbandment was insult enough to the victorious Army, the attempts to oust Fairfax and the attack on Cromwell in March left the Army with a homogeneity of resentment.

In spite of dissatisfaction among the rank and file over disbanding, strong encouragement from their officers, particularly Cromwell, would probably have brought the loyal well-disciplined soldiers to obey the dictates of Parliament and the wishes of the nation. Expressing this confidence, Cromwell stated, "I know the army will disband and lay down their arms at your door, whenever you will command them." However as further encroachment on their rights, the soldiers were offered only a promise of payment of their arrears for a short time, with the rest in debentures. With the assessments not strictly collected and the accounts

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15 Gardiner, History, III, 222.
ill-kept and seldom paid, the possibilities of collecting the arrears of 18 weeks for the foot and 43 for the horse and dragoons were slim. As a result of Parliament's failure to pay the soldiers and officers, the Army spoke out in the tradition of Englishmen through a petition to Commons. With due respect, the mild, unpolitical list of economic demands was presented through their general—Fairfax. The Humble Petition of the Officers and Soldiers, on March 21, 1647, requested redress of these grievances: an act of indemnity, their arrears, no impressment to foreign lands, pensions for widows and orphans, and money to meet expenses. Much to the despair of the soldiers, the officers refused to hear their complaints and supported the act of disbandment. "And lest mere suspicion of their compliance with the Army... should be turned to their prejudices, they were willing... to suppress the soldiers first most innocent and modest petition."

When the army officers refused the leadership of their men, direct action became necessary. In a meeting with the Commissions of Parliament at Saffron Walden, March 21, the officers' request for volunteers for Ireland was met by a rebuttal of demands. A reply was necessary on four issues: arrears, payment, service, and command in Ireland.

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16 Tanner, Constitutional Conflicts, p. 141.
17 Gardiner, History, III, 225.
19 Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 435.
Following this meeting, Lilburne attacked Cromwell for his betrayal to the Army and his stand for obedience to Parliament. "I am informed . . . that you and your agents . . . will not suffer them to petition till they have laid down their arms whenever they shall command them. . . . Accursed be the day that ever the House of Commons bribed you with a vote of 2,500 £ to betray and destroy us." 20 While a formal protest was still in the making and the Leveller party unsupported, the irrepressible Lilburne expressed his feeling against the mighty Cromwell.

Having made no effort to meet the demands of the Army, Parliament gave up its one chance for disbandment or alliance with that powerful group. To create a single grievance, behind which all dissenting parties could unite, was assuredly a suicidal course of action. To carry this course further on the road to destruction, the Commons passed an extreme resolution, introduced on March 30 by the hated Denzil Holles, that "All those who shall continue in their distempered condition . . . shall be proceeded against as enemies of the State." 21 Cromwell was not only deprived of his commission by an earlier declaration, but was now threatened with imprisonment. 22 There was no longer a choice; Cromwell had to accept the leadership of the Army and fight for their demands. By alienating not only the soldiers, but also the leading parliamentary


21Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 437.

22Ibid.
allies from the Army, the Commons sealed its fate. For men accused of
sedition or treason now took thought to an organized resistance and
entrance into the political arena.

In this same month of March, which saw an open breach between Parlia-
ment and the Army, the radical group of Levellers also presented a peti-
tion to Parliament. Very different in content and tone, the Large Peti-
tion of the Levellers was attacked and burned by the common hangman.
Such action was in direct violation to the right of petition, but the
list of grievances which the party presented did amount to a political
manifesto or statement of constitutional reform. Unimproved by the war
for justice, certain oppressions still disturbed the nation's defenders
of liberty. Among the issues were illegal monopolies, religious con-
formity, tithes, imprisonment without due process, the negative voices
of the King and Lords, forced oaths and self-witness, complicated and
foreign law procedure, and imprisonment for debt. More under the
influence of Lilburne than other Levellers, the plea concentrated on the
legality and precedence of rights. Most importantly, it was the initial
declaration of party doctrines. With no drastic change proposed in the
structure or sovereignty of government, the petition was only a small
measure of later declarations and pleas, which were founded on the philo-
sophical concept of natural rights.

Lilburne's early influence also extended into the rank and file

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of the soldiers, whose discontent with the Commons was uniting them in a strong determination not to yield. Relating the greedy desires of the "Godly party" or Presbyterians, the anonymous pamphlet A New-Found Stratagem, from the radicals in the Army, was inspired by Lilburne. By April, army manifestoes were filled with ideas of the extremists, and the Army was said to be "one Lilburne throughout." From writing to demonstration, the orderly petition and rumbling pamphlet led to a show of unity. When the Commissioners visited on Saffron Walden on April 15 to appease the soldiers and to recruit volunteers to Ireland, they were met by a mighty cry, "All! All! Fairfax and Cromwell and we all go!" Worried about the exclusion of those officers from command, the soldiers were willing to follow them into service. On this same day, April 15, the first mention was made of representation from the troops in the form of two Agitators from each regiment. Feeling that the Council of War, composed of officers, was slack in presenting the views of the Army, they wanted to present them directly. Any such concept of organization with secret agents and codes and representation of the common soldiers surely came from an infiltration of Leveller ideas.

25Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 3.
26Gardiner, History, III, 234.
27Ibid., p. 237.
CHAPTER III

THE INFLUENCE OF THE LEVELLERS IN THE ORGANIZATION
AND ACTIVITY OF THE AGITATORS

Perhaps more than any other action of the Levellers, the method, organization, and doctrines of agitation which the soldiers utilized was the greatest debt owed by the Army to that secular, democratic party. While furthering the cause of the soldiers, the Levellers improved their own status of recognition, which enabled them to become a formidable threat in later months. Though many historians characteristically disagree on the total impact and long-range influence of the Levellers, most do agree on this one point. The party inserted some of its principles and techniques into the Army through the Agitators and the Army Council. "Inevitably, the Levellers took an important part, though one that cannot be precisely described, in supporting, even in helping to direct, the campaign of resistance which began forthwith." With this dangerous new element, a group committed to satisfaction of demands and the Leveller ideas of equality and justice, present in the Army, concessions were too late. Even a resolution passed by the Commons on April 27 to pay six weeks' arrears to disbanded men who didn't go to Ireland was taken lightly.

29 Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 9.
30 Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 439.
After the decision to organize was made, small gifts from Parliament couldn’t stop the movement. In a letter to the generals on April 28, 1647, the agents or Agitators, elected from eight regiments of horse, discussed the choosing of and meeting with two representatives from every regiment in the Army. By refusing to respond, the Grandees demonstrated that they themselves had no idea of organizing the rank and file for resistance. Cromwell, Ireton, and Fairfax had certainly not given up hopes of a vindication from Parliament or even of the restoration of a slightly limited monarchy. On April 30, the officers sent a letter to Commons requesting that their reputations be cleared. With indignation and yet with a growing fear of overthrow, the members offered promises of arrears, debentures, and indemnities. In reply, the generals instructed their officers to take notice of the news from the Commons on the payment of arrears and indemnities and to make a report "concerning the present temper and disposition of the regiment." Nevertheless, with the month of May came both the reluctant recognition of the Agitators by the officers and the election of representatives from the infantry as well as the horse. In contrast to the hopes of the officers, the Agitators were steadily growing in strength.

With such progress being made, fears that the Levellers would push the Army into more serious discontent and uprising caused the

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31 Letter from Cromwell, Ireton, and Skippon to Colonels or chief officers of the respective regiments, May 3, 1647, quoted in Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 144.

32 Gardiner, History, III, 244-49.
Grandees to make a surface alliance with the Agitators.\(^\text{33}\) Due to this uneasiness, 223 commissioned officers published the Declaration of the Army on May 15,\(^\text{34}\) in an attempt to discourage soldiers from entering the political arena on the advice of the radicals. Reaching to the heart of their uniform dissatisfaction with Parliament, the officers complained of arrest without the consent of Fairfax, suggested definite amounts of arrears to be paid, asked permission to publish vindication, and confirmed the right of troops to petition their officers.\(^\text{35}\) Impressed by their demands, Cromwell defended the Declaration to Parliament on May 21. With some intent on compromise, Parliament passed an ordinance on May 28, 1647, stating that army accounts were "to be audited and cast up during their services in the said Army: . . . and to give out Debenters accordingly unto the said Officers and Souldiers."\(^\text{36}\) Yet two problems remained: first, the Army could not be convinced to disband short of redress of all grievances, and second, the accounts and assessments were never properly handled and completed.

The necessity of compromise and redress of grievances was grudgingly but finally admitted by Cromwell and Ireton. Therefore they were

\(^{33}\)Hill, Puritanism and Revolution, p. 175.

\(^{34}\)May 15, 1647, is the date given by Abbott, but May 16, 1647, is quoted by Gardiner. On the basis of preference to primary source and due to the specific mention of a meeting at Saffron Walden on May 15, I have used this as the date of the document.

\(^{35}\)Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 444-45.

anxious to maintain discipline and to prevent any possibility of extremism or anarchy. Careful guidance and dominance over the Agitators was better assured by bringing them into a carefully chosen Council of the Army, consisting of all the general officers, two commissioned officers and two enlisted men or Agitators from each regiment.\textsuperscript{37} By combining the Council of War and the group of Leveller-inspired Agents, the officers could out-number the radical reformers. In actuality, the greatest influence of the Agitators existed outside the Council, where the spokesmen for the soldiers could utilize the press and an organized procedure of petitioning in the manner of the Levellers. While the officers concentrated on quieting the economic and immediate demands of the Army, the Agitators involved themselves in politics to seek justice in the settlement of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{38} In a circular to the soldiers on May 19, the Agitators stressed unity by saying, "If you do but stand . . . nor do anything without the consent of the whole army, you will do good to yourselves, your officers, and the whole kingdom."\textsuperscript{39}

Outside of this infiltration into the Army, the Levellers' procedure of protest, from the Large Petition in March to the organized protest in the Army in May, consisted of two more petitions to the Commons. By recognizing the Commons as "the supreme authority,"\textsuperscript{40} the

\textsuperscript{37}C. H. Firth, Cromwell's Army (London, 1902), p. 353.
\textsuperscript{38}Woodhouse, ed. Puritanism and Liberty, (\textit{\textsuperscript{22}}).
\textsuperscript{39}Gardiner, History, III, 25\textsuperscript{4}.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 255.
March petition had stepped too far in the direction of a radical manifesto, such as those typical of the autumns of 1647 and 1648. Since it appeared as an encroachment on the privilege of the influential classes, and since the petition's demands had a chance of military support, the Commons was particularly anxious to be rid of the Army and to suppress the petition. Two disciples of Lilburne were immediately imprisoned, an action which brought forth a second petition the next day—March 20. As a culmination to the March petition, the Levellers sent a third plea on May 20 to the Commons to demand the liberation of the imprisoned supporters. The order to burn this petition was the signal for the complete absorption of the Leveller program into the Army protest. From May to the end of the Army Council debates at Putney early in November, Leveller ideas could be found almost solely in the pronouncements from the Army. Communication transpired from the Levellers to the Agitators, and then to the people. Only when the leaders of the party found the army officers untrustworthy and in opposition to some of the Leveller doctrines did they publish outside the name of the Army.

\[1\] Ibid., pp. 255-58.

\[2\] Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 1.
CHAPTER IV

THE ARMY ENGAGEMENTS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE
SETTLEMENT OF THE KINGDOM

Despite the petitions, the explosive temper of the Army, and the
election of Agitators, Parliament, fearing an Army plot against the
King, determined to proceed with disbandment beginning June 1, 1647. In
order to prevent a united effort of disobedience, separate rendezvous
were assigned for the final muster to disband or to send troops to Ire­
land. Yet resistance did occur, and Ireton properly expressed a dread
of the consequences. As he had dreaded, a strong defiance was pro­
posed in the form of a general rendezvous at Newmarket. Commissioners
from Parliament were recalled, and the two forces were in open conflict.
In spite of all evidence of the break, Ireton believed the Army to be
still loyal if only the Houses would reform. Indicating that neither he
nor Cromwell had led this movement, he wrote to the latter, "I assure
you that passionate and violent counsel which is given thus to provoke
the army will in time be apprehended to be destructive, or my observa­
tion fails me."

Yet reform and satisfaction from the Commons was not in the realm
of possibility, for there was a formula of Leveller machinery plus the
spirit of resistance, pouring from the one source of domestic military

\[lv^3\] Gardiner, History, III, 261.

\[lv^4\] Ibid.
might, which was the magic solution needed to weaken the Houses beyond repair. Indicating their secondary position, Parliament voted to hold the most violent Leveller petition, that of June 2, for consideration in committee. Cooperation of the party with the Agitators was hereby revealed in the demands of the petition, which called for the redress of grievances in the Army. The vote on June 3 to consider the payment of full arrears and to strike off the resolution calling the soldiers enemies of the state was another show of weakness. Such reform would have at least hampered the efforts of the Levellers in the Army. In desperation the Presbyterians invited the Scots to invade England against the New Model.\(^{45}\) If the rendezvous at Newmarket was the Army's sign of revolt, Parliament's invitation placed the soldiers as enemies of the kingdom.

In the position of a political force, the Army had to quickly draw up a declaration of its intentions. Thrown into a mass gathering of distempered soldiers, the Army Council, especially the Agitators, had to work to achieve unity and order. By placing all future decisions of disbandment or any actions to be taken in the hands of the Council, the troops felt they had a slight voice in their future. If the Army Council did nothing else, it at least preserved discipline and pacified the soldiers in times of crisis. A shaky but acceptable agreement was reached at Newmarket on June 5, when the Solemn Engagement was signed. It was decided to allow the Council to decide when the condition of full

redress was met and it was safe to disband. Until that time, all regiments were to remain disobedient to the legislative orders. With the signing of this statement, the change in the Army revealed that the soldiers had been led from petitioning as humble subjects into the machinery and tone of a revolutionary party. In the opinion of the rank and file, they were not "a mere mercenary Army, hired to serve any Arbitrary power of a State; but called ... to the defense of our owne and the peoples just rights, and liberties." Though the practical aspects of the Engagement came from Cromwell, and though the Army Council was dominated by the officers, the nature of such a document was the evidence of Leveller influence on the Agitators. An even stronger indication of the radical infiltration was the following of party lines on the state of nature. By defying the demands of the people, Parliament had relinquished its sovereignty and had placed each man left to his own authority. Mutual agreement and unity in the Army now had become necessary for reason and safety. The Grandees were anxious to be lawful and traditional in their task of settling the kingdom; the Levelers were determined to give all men a voice in their welfare and in governing the country.

\[\text{16}^{\text{Woodhouse, ed., Puritanism and Liberty, [23]-[24].}}\]

\[\text{17}^{\text{Henry Ireton, "A Declaration, or Representation," Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 55.}}\]

\[\text{18}^{\text{Gardiner, History, III, 280.}}\]

\[\text{19}^{\text{Pease, Leveller Movement, p. 185.}}\]

\[\text{50}^{\text{Ibid., p. 179.}}\]
In a more definite statement of democratic ideals and fundamental rights, the Army laid out its program for securing the kingdom. *A Declaration, or Representation*, printed June 14, 1647, was composed by Ireton, but expressed the opinions of the more radical rank and file.

To clarify their position on disbandment, to state their grievances, and to soothe the suspicions of the nation was the expressed purpose of the Declaration. Since Parliament had obviously intended to break or divide the Army, and since no reasonable answer was given to its requests, the Army felt justified in its disobedience and desires for the future security of the people. Those things necessary "to the same ends, of common right, freedom, peace and safety" distinguished this document from earlier petitions of the Army. Dealing with Parliament, the Declaration urged the purging of unjust members, set a date for dismissal, and ordered new elections on a more representative distribution of seats. Along with the usual demand for payment and the confirmation of the right of petition, this publication showed its colors as a political manifesto by claiming the right of religious differences within the establishment. Military grievances were put in the background in preference to constitutional principles. Convinced that they were expressing the desires of the people, the Army's spokesman included the statement of assurance, "as we have already found the concurrent sense of the people in divers counties by their Petitions to the Generall." As

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51 Henry Ireton, "A Declaration, or Representation," Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 62.

52 Ibid., p. 63.
one in a series with the Houses, begun March, 1647, and continued through the summer and fall, the Army Declaration was an important milestone on the way to Army dominance.53

Not satisfied with the document alone, the radicals also pushed for a march against London. Army leaders, however, were very conscious of the people's fear of military dictatorship and were extremely hesitant. Despite the officers' claims for peace, their letter of warning to city authorities presented the first real threat of force.54 The impatience of the soldiers, in contrast to the cautious legality of the officers, was doubtless due to radical insistence of the Leveller influence. Convinced of his mission to lead the Army, Lilburne declared himself to Cromwell on July 1, 1647. Seeing that the Commons "would not heare, regard, or receive, but burnt, or sleighted all those just Petitions; . . . I applyed my selfe vigorously unto the honest blades, the private Souldiers, I meane, of the Army."55

To hold back the energetic Lilburne and to pacify the restless soldiers led by the Agitators, the officers called a Council of War at Reading to consider the march. Immediately the Agitators demanded a place in the debates, and the Council of War, composed only of officers, became the Army Council on July 16, 1647.56 Army secretary John Rushworth

53Ibid., pp. 51-63.
54Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 459-460.
55Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 9.
56Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 473-475.
wrote in a newsletter, "It is not more than necessary they should be considering the influence they have upon the soul¬diers." A significant turning point and a concession to the dis¬sident party in the Army, the inclusion of the Agitators in the Reading debates proved that the Leveller-minded group had become essential in the actions of the New Model. Among the five points insisted upon by the Agitators were: first, the exclusion and impeachment of eleven delinquent members, second, the return of the London militia into loyal hands, and third, the release of certain prisoners, particularly John Lilburne. With the adverse party in command in London, a march was necessary to enforce their points and to show the effectiveness of the Army. Though the Agitators "prest with reason and earnestness," the officers didn't feel that the situation was serious enough to warrant a show of force. Exclusive power in the militia could have been dangerous. In the conclusion of the debate over a march, the Agitators and the officers were able to reach a basic agreement on all the propos¬als, but Cromwell felt that the means they advocated was improper. Only when the good of the nation could be served in no other way was the use of military might wise. Therefore, it was desirable to consider first "what it is that we intend to do with that power when we have it." To

57 Ibid., p. 475.


59 Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 475.

follow up the challenge of power, the Council began to debate on the then uncompleted Heads of Proposal.

Fairly well satisfied with the debate and in deference to their officers, the Agitators gave in on the question of a march and began to debate on July 17 the proposed Heads. As an Agent, Allen expressed the feeling of inadequacy of the common soldier as a politician, for he saw that "we are most of us but young statesmen."61 From this simple admission, Allen gave a clue into one of the underlying reasons for the strong Leveller influence in the Army and particularly among the rank and file. The common soldier, who had no rights of franchise and minimum experience in government, was easily attracted to the party that would identify itself with the lowly men of the kingdom and would fight for their economic welfare. Knowing their inexperience, Lilburne was dedicated to the cause of arousing people to their lost liberties. On the other hand, neither the political opportunist Cromwell, nor the cold man of reason Ireton, nor the "old, beaten, subtle foxes of Westminster"62 could be unreservedly swayed by the appeal of the Levellers. Realizing this fact, their leader continually warned the Agitators to be steadfast, to be watchful for deceptions by the Grandees, and not to be fooled by the apparent willingness of the officers to work with them.63

61 Ibid., p. 421.
63 Pease, The Leveller Movement, p. 126.
As a follow-up to previous declarations and as an assurance to the nation, the Heads of Proposals, completed August 1, 1647, was a sensible summary of the proposed settlement of the kingdom. Handled completely by the Grandees, the fifteen Heads and five supplementary articles took no thought for the fundamental rights of the people, but intended an agreement with Parliament and the King. Though it did provide for the King's privileges and responsibilities, including the right to call or dissolve a Parliament, it also included a few provisions for legal rights, soldiers' grievances, and the right to petition. The fact that such things were included indicates that Ireton found it necessary to heed the Levellers on certain issues. Ireton's sincerity in the debates revealed that he was not just an opportunist like Cromwell, but was slightly sympathetic to the notion of reform. While the radicals were thoroughly democratic and individualistic in principle, the moderate officer was dependent on legality and the authority of the state. Feeling that the officers had made too many concessions, particularly in granting the negative voice to the King and Lords, the Levellers showed their dissatisfaction. "I know no other use of these Proposals than to support the tottering reputation of the grand officers in the minds of such as shall not discern their vanity." By all evidence then and in the chain of events still to follow, the author of the statement in Putney Projects has some justification for his condemnation.

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65 Woodhouse, ed., Puritanism and Liberty, p. 98.

CHAPTER V

THE PRESENTATION AND RESULTS OF THE CASE OF THE ARMY IN THE PUTNEY DEBATES

Political agitation by the Levellers, both inside and outside the Army in the autumn of 1647, was concerned with the growing distrust of the Grandees. Though great strides had been made in their influence, the party leaders were discontented with the results of the engagements and the declarations, the dominance of Cromwell and Ireton in the Army Council, and the misuse of the Agitators. During the summer of 1647 Lilburne began to be suspicious of the Independents. Even though Cromwell had acted on the previous proposal to purge the Parliament of eleven delinquent members, yet his frequent visits and negotiations with the King caused the Leveller to regard him as a hypocrite. 67 These two men, who fought for, with, and against each other at various times in their careers, met curiously on September 6 in the Tower where Lilburne was imprisoned. Cromwell, who came to him hoping that he could be won over to the side of the Independents, found instead that Lilburne regarded him as an enemy and could conceive of no political compromise. In return for his release, Lilburne promised to leave the country if justice and liberty were assured. Rightfully cautious, Cromwell feared that the radical would stir up trouble in the Army if allowed to go free. 68

67Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 496-497.
68Gardiner, History, III, 363.
Though only a small incident, this meeting exemplified the feeling which existed between the two leaders of opposing parties. The Lieutenant-General discerned the formidable threat levelled against his Army by Lilburne the fanatic, who regarded the personal ambition and machinations of Cromwell with contempt. After September 11, the wily Grandee supported a motion in the Commons to find precedence for the Lords to act against the prisoner, who then appealed to the soldiers to rise up against the "perfidious firebrand." All through the month of September, Cromwell and Ireton continued to work for a settlement with Charles, who could provide a status of legality for the Army and its leaders. As this possibility became more remote in October, the anti-monarchial feeling grew, and the soldiers felt dissatisfied to the point of further action.

Uncertainty in the political situation and a distempered feeling within the Army bred an even greater opportunity for the extremist. Since all powers, the King, Parliament, and the Army, had failed to bring peace, the Levellers wanted to do away with all existing forms of government and to build a new system on abstract principles. Regardless of attempts to pacify the soldiers, the Grandees were unable to stifle the forceful program of the movement. Finding a number of Agitators unfaithful and too passive in representing the soldiers, five regiments of horse elected "New Agents." More under the influence of Lilburne,

69Abbott, ed., Writings and Speeches, I, 505.

70Gardiner, History, III, 380.

71Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 357.
the new Agitators met to draw up a proposal for settlement on the principles of certain rights and liberties. Completed on October 9, 1647, The Case of the Armie, written by John Wildman, was presented to Fairfax on October 18. Heartily disapproving of the Heads of Proposals and afraid that the officers were betraying the Declaration of June 14, the rank and file wished to present a true statement of their ideas and demands. They felt that there had been "a total neglect of insisting positively upon the redress of those grievances or granting those desires of the Army as Soldiers."\(^\text{72}\) In addition to restating the same economic and political oppressions that had existed since the beginning of the Parliament versus Army struggle, the Case brought in more fundamental principles of government.

Not unwilling to consider the restoration of the King, they demanded beforehand the security of the people's rights. With this aim always in mind, they desired the immediate purging of Parliament, dissolution within a year, a biennial meeting and election, a new system of constituencies, and representatives chosen by manhood suffrage. Mainly interested that the Case should become supreme law, the Levellers and Agitators defined the abstractions on which their theories were based. Original power existed in the body of the people, therefore, the truly representative form of government was the only just one. "\(\sqrt{\text{For}}\) the equitie of popular safettie is the thing which justifieth all formes, or

\(^{72}\text{John Wildman, "The Case of the Army," Haller and Davies, ed., Leveller Tracts, p. 69.}\)
the change of formes for the accomplishment thereof; and no formes are lawfull longer then they preserve or accomplish the same."73 Government exists for the good and safety of the people.74 Yet two basic Leveller ideals which the Army leaders found difficult or impossible to accept were the equality in a voting system and the idea that the aim of government was the protection of the people's rights. That the two groups could never be reconciled on these issues, regardless of their political situation or interaction, was set in clear relief against the background of the Putney debates.

On October 28, 1647, the Army Council was gathered at Putney to discuss and to pass judgment on the Case, but before a solution was found to the proposals, a new document was presented by the Agitators. Holding to the concept that all authority of government originated from the people, the Levellers felt it was desirable to draw up a written constitution, which would be the supreme law after acceptance by the nation. The Agreement of the People of October 28 did not replace the Case, but it was formulated more as a definite statement of fundamental law, rather than as an explanation of Army action and grievances.75 All power, with the exception of certain rights specifically reserved for the kingdom's populace, was placed in a more representative, biennial Parliament. For the first time in Army declarations, there appeared a

73Ibid., p. 78.
74Ibid., pp. 64-87.
75Gardiner, History, III, 382-383.
list of the just rights the Levellers had been claiming for the people. Such basic things as freedom of conscience, equality under the law, and no impressment were revolutionary concepts to most of the nation.76

More than any other statement, the conclusion of the Agreement revealed the ideals and intentions of the Levellers and their allies, the Agitators, in the fall of 1647.

These things we declare to be our native rights, . . . and resolved to maintain them with our utmost possibilities against all opposition whatsoever; . . . having long expected and dearly earned the establishment of the certain rules of government, are yet made to defend for the settlement of our peace and freedom upon him that intended our bondage. . . .77

Accounts of the debates, which lasted from October 28 to November 8, were not complete in their coverage by the writers. Nevertheless they revealed the procedure of the Council of the Army, the beliefs of the spokesmen for each party, and the basic differences which existed between the Grandees and the Levellers. For the Agitators, the debates presented the true test of their strengths and abilities in putting across the real needs and ideas of the rank and file. Therefore, much thought was given to the presentation of the Agreement, and the debaters for the party stood firm in their arguments. Never was the ultimate control of Cromwell and Ireton seriously threatened, but the Agents and the Levellers persistently sought and gradually won acceptance for some of their principles. Even after the Putney debates were completed

77 Ibid., p. 394.
and the Agitators became a powerless group, the Grandees were left with a few democratic ideas imprinted on them. Weaknesses within the group of agitation were soon apparent in the form of inexperience in the task of political debate. With Sexby and Allen from the Agitators, and John Wildman, a civilian, speaking for the New Agents, the group was further strengthened by the radical spirit of Colonel Rainsborough and a few other inferior officers. Overton warned them of the dangerous designs and intended dominance of the higher officers. "... I only advise you to be cautious and wary, and keep up your betrussted power and authority, and let nothing be acted ... or concluded without your consent and privity." Always afraid of divisions in the Army, Cromwell reacted to the Agreement with uncertainty and suspicion. To the dissatisfaction of the Levellers, he found the constitution too impractical and lacking general, popular approval. Consequently, the complaints and concepts of the Agreement had to be carefully reviewed by the Army Council, and a decision on its approval was postponed until after debate.

In the opening debates, the two Grandees found themselves under great pressure to not just criticize and refuse, but to fight the Levelers with principles that could unify support on the side of Independency. Since their victory in the war had not yet brought justice or

78 Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 358.


80 Gardiner, History, III, 382-384.

81 Ibid., p. 386.
peace, the kingdom demanded a settlement. In this spirit the Agreement was drawn up and defended in the first speech of Sexby. "... The cause of our misery is upon two things. We sought to satisfy all men, and it was well; but in going about to do it we have dissatisfied all men." With particular disapproval of the negotiations with Charles and the compromises made to Parliament, the radicals were determined to settle the state with an original form of government. Before proceeding with a fundamental constitution, it was first necessary to be free of all previous engagements. As a result, the question of Army commitments became the first point of contention and verbal opposition. While Cromwell firmly believed that any past agreement was binding, the Agitators argued that it was not holding if now considered unreasonable or contrary to the good of the people. Using all manner of devices to cool down the fervor of the extremists at the debates, Independent leaders employed the contest over the engagement as a delaying technique to give them time to work out a more flexible, less democratic Agreement. After exhausting that question, both parties proceeded to rationalize their positions on the proposals.

Advocates of the document first had to demonstrate their right to take and to hold the liberties which they desired. Dogmatic and slightly irrational, the Levellers insisted that their authority was derived from the natural rights of men. Any past law or agreement which was

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\(^{82}\) Woodhouse, ed., Puritanism and Liberty, p. 2.

\(^{83}\) Ibid., 209.
contrary to the people's will was unacceptable. In rebuttal, the officers asked for proof that natural rights had ever existed and if so, that they had taken the specific form outlined in the radicals' plan of government. As a veteran political thinker, Ireton was able to maneuver the questions to put the Agitators on the defensive and to move the debate around to the center of his political theories. Inevitably, the problem of suffrage was brought up in the discussion and thereby became the most heated point of contention. Again referring to natural rights, the Levellers demanded manhood suffrage, because they believed any man bound by the law must have a voice in its making. In contrast, Ireton contended that the control of the state was limited to those who had a stake in the nation or, in other words, who possessed property. He was also afraid that equal rights would lead to the concept of equal property. In spite of Ireton's argument, the soldiers' spokesmen continued to press the point by asking what liberties did belong to those who had risked their lives for the safety of the nation. Only the privilege of living free from tyranny was the reward of the common trooper with no property. 84 Continuing on the problem of suffrage, Rainsborough conceded that property could be estates "but I deny that [the franchise] is a property to a Lord, to a Gentleman, to any man more than another in the Kingdom of England." 85 As a concession to the request for the vote, Cromwell, who also wished to add provisions for the rule of the

84Pease, Leveller Movement, pp. 215-220.
85Ibid., p. 220.
King and a Council of State, proposed a franchise to be extended only to those common men who had served the Army. With such a firm conviction in the equality of men and the sovereignty of the people, it was impossible for the democrats to accept any compromise. As Sexby expressed it, the political motivation of the soldiers seemed to rest on the issue of suffrage.

"We have engaged ... and ventured our lives and it was all for this; to restore our birthrights and privileges as Englishmen, ... But it seems now except a man have a fixed estate in this kingdom he hath no right in this kingdom. I wonder we were so much deceived."

Enigmatically, the Putney debates portrayed the growing difference between Independency and the Left, but, at the same time, they revealed a certain uniformity of goals. When two parties of such bitter opposition were thrown together in a verbal contest over a way of life and a system of government, the atmosphere of tension made even minor arguments unlikely and brought out tactics of debate which further complicated the situation. While the Grandees were not too far from the ideals of the Levellers, they were violently opposed to their arguments. Both groups saw the necessity of unity, but their means of accomplishing it were different. Unity to the officers was obedience to their wishes on the settlement, but to the radical party, it was consent to government by the people. Both Ireton and Lilburne believed in the supremacy

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86 Gardiner, History, III, 390-391.
87 Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 359.
88 Woodhouse, ed., Puritanism and Liberty, 297.
of the law, but the Levellers used law to limit government and to protect the people's rights and liberties, while the Independents viewed law as a protector of property. 89

Besides the personalities, the issues, and the arguments which were unfolded at Putney, the significance of these debates lay in the open confrontation of the two parties. In pamphlets, letters, and petitions, only one side of the contest was seen at a time; the result was that each group presented their doctrines without direct challenge. Consequently, as the Agitators grew in prominence and influence over the Army, the superior officers were forced to include them in a discussion of any proposed settlement and theories to prove the irrationality and improbability of the Leveller plan. With superior tactics of debate, Cromwell and Ireton defeated the radicals in rationality by standing on the legality of compacts and property rights. Yet the emotional, sincere appeal and persistence of the Agitators remained undaunted, for they then decided to plead the case of the Agreement directly to the soldiers in a general rendezvous. 90 Insisting that the nation be ruled by an unalterable constitution and not by changeable laws, the Levellers urged the soldiers and the people to join in the Agreement to decide the extent of Parliament. 91 "And were but this agreement established,

89 Pease, Leveller Movement, p. 221.
90 Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 359.
doubtless all the grievances of the Army and people would be redressed immediately. . . ."92

Inevitably discipline and authority did prevail, and Cromwell enforced the strict rules of war and obedience, as necessary for survival. Trying to pull the Army out of politics, he maintained that the Houses should be left to decide "what is fit for the kingdom."93 The people should only be watchful to see that the Commons was properly representative. Impressed by the forces and influence of the Agitators and by the danger of the principle of manhood suffrage, Cromwell resolved to send the agents and officers back to their regiments to quiet the dissatisfaction among the rank and file and to await the rendezvous. On November 8, the indomitable Independent carried the vote at the final meeting, and the Army Council was dissolved.94 Discipline was restored at the cost of representation, and thereafter, the actions of the Army were decided by the General and the Council of War. Fairfax, who later claimed that the declarations and petitions from the Army had received his signature without his approval,95 had threatened to resign his command unless the agitation was ended. While the Army Council had been

93Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 360.
successful in calming the voices of discontent and in weathering the storm of disunity, begun in March of 1647, the body lasted only as long as the different voices and opinions did not become loud and persistent. Its partial success meant the death of the Council, for the persuasive declarations and defenses of the Agitators could not be tolerated. Despite later attempts at revival, the Council and Agitators were lost as organs of propaganda for the Leveller doctrines. 96

When the promised rendezvous did take place, the regiments found themselves divided in three locations, and therefore, they were unable to seriously challenge the imposed quiet and discipline. Despite the apparent defeat of the Levellers in the Army, on November 15 two regiments were incited to rebel and appeared with copies of the Agreement. Quickly and harshly, the disturbance was put down by Cromwell, who had the ringleader of the New Agents shot. After the incident, a general reconciliation of opposing parties was enacted, as the Independents formed a temporary and unsteady alliance with the Levellers. 97 Conciliatory action continued through November to January of 1648, during which time Leveller prisoners were released and some agreement was arranged with Parliament. On January 3, a vote in the Commons for no more addresses to the King was heartily approved by Cromwell, who had moved to the Left's position on the issue of restoration. Unity had been

96 Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 362.

obtained by the efforts of the Lieutenant-General according to his methods and not by the desired Agreement, but the Independents had to move even further left in the course of events through 1648. 98

_98Ibid., 231._
As the kingdom became again involved in civil strife by the escape of Charles to the Isle of Wight, the Leveller influence was curbed. With the exception of a few personal petitions, declarations, and defenses, the party of the Left was completely out of the political scene. Called to the bar and imprisoned in February for promoting a seditious pamphlet, Lilburne and Wildman demanded that the Commons either claim sole authority and redress grievances or else declare that it was unable to relieve the people. In a varied list of social, political, and economic grievances, it was obvious that the Levellers had withdrawn from the Army as their channel of protest. Though the party returned to the earlier methods of direct petition, its threat was sufficient enough that the document was burned and its authors were put in prison. Termed seditious and unjust, the petition was taken as an effort to make the people disloyal to Parliament. From A Declaration of Some Proceedings, recounting the trial of Lilburne in 1645, it was seen that the group around him had gone back to the meetings, organization, and manner of protest of the early days of 1647. Yet their comeback on the political stage did not really occur until the end of the war and with the publication of Walwyn's The Bloody Project, which

merely reaffirmed the old complaints against oppression.\textsuperscript{100}

Dated August 21, 1648, \textit{The Bloody Project} repeated the constitutional demands of the earlier petitions, but it also involved leaders of the Left in a strong attack on the Grandees. Feeling that all hope for redress and reconciliation with Parliament was shattered, the pamphlet saw previous abuses now replaced by new ones of equal suppression. The Army had forgotten its responsibility and promises to the kingdom and to the soldiers. "... All the quarrell we have at this day in the Kingdome, is no other than a quarrell of Interests, and Partyes, a pulling down of one Tyrant, to set up another, and instead of Liberty, heaping upon our selves a greater slavery than we fought against."\textsuperscript{101} Finally the printed attack demanded that Parliament do whatever was conducive to settling the kingdom and relieving the people.

Political agitation in the fall of 1648 was once again considered with mistrust of the Grandees and the establishment of a constitutional scheme, but the situation in England had changed from 1647. Now that Charles had been completely defeated and withdrawn from the issues of the kingdom, the question arose over the disposal of the person and the office.\textsuperscript{102} Since the last civil war could be blamed only on the King, the Levellers urged punishment for Charles and a constitution which

\textsuperscript{100}Haller and Davies, eds., \textit{Leveller Tracts}, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{101}William Walwyn, "The Bloody Project," Haller and Davies, eds., \textit{Leveller Tracts}, pp. 135-145.

would abolish the Lords and Monarchy. Due to the recent violence and hatred of the King, the petition of September 11, 1648, had more influence and support than any Leveller document of 1647. 103

Meeting at the Whalebone in London, Lilburne and other leaders drew up The Humble Petition and presented it to Parliament with the signatures of 40,000 people. The significance of the pamphlet lay in the fact that it represented the principal statement of Leveller ideals and it became the basis of the Agreement of the People, drawn up for Army debate in December of 1648. Outlined in three sections, The Humble Petition explained why the people had sided with Parliament against the King, told what apprehensions still remained in the kingdom, and enumerated what things the people still desired. Claiming the Commons as the highest authority in the land, the petitioners had expected that authority to defend them and to redress their grievances. The great fear in the radical group was the return of monarchy, which might again embroil the country in a conflict over supreme authority. By the recent rising against the people, it was obvious that the King was contemptuous of their safety and freedom. In a long list of constitutional provisions, the petition told what was needed for the welfare of the people and for the future protection of their rights. Included in the enumeration were legal and parliamentary demands such as: the supreme authority of the Commons, yearly elections, a set time of meeting and dissolution, religious freedom over civil authorities, equality under the law, trial by

103 Tanner, Constitutional Conflicts, p. 152.
jury and not by the Lords, simpler law proceedings, law written in En-
lish, and no self-incrimination. Economic demands included help for the
poor, the removal of the excise tax and the abolition of monopolies. A
variety of requests, from defining the position of the Lords to paying
the Army, completed the statement of the Levellers. After several
determining events had occurred through the autumn of 1648, the Army
leaders found it necessary to reach an agreement with the Left, who used
the petition of September 11 as the basic viewpoint of the party.

Necessity was usually the mother of Oliver Cromwell's political
inventions, for once again in 1648, the situation in the kingdom led him
to reverse his previous commitments. Always true to the authority of
Parliament, he was extremely hesitant about moving against the legal
establishment. Even though the Commons had defiantly ignored the com-
plaints of the Army and had continued with orders for disbandment, the
political commander had refused to move against London and the Legisla-
ture. In contrast, the Cromwell of 1648 was in no position to turn away
from the responsibility of settling the peace—a job which had to be
done without the restoration of Charles I. When Parliament resumed
negotiations with the King in October, the Army, which had just com-
pleted its second war against Charles, was thoroughly aroused. Such a
threat could not be overlooked and the Remonstrance of the Army was pre-
sented to the Council of Officers on November 10. It was immediately

104 John Lilburne, "The H.umble Petition," Haller and Davies, eds.,
Leveller Tracts, pp. 147-155.
approved and sent on to the Commons on the 18th of the month. 105 Besides demanding justice against those responsible for the war, the petition asked to make the sons of the present King incapable of ruling England. With no reply from Parliament, the Army acted illegally and radically by seizing the King at Newport and marching toward London to threaten the Commons. 106

With the Army and Parliament once again at odds, the Independents found it expedient to work temporarily with the Left. Ireton not only conferred with the Levellers, but also accepted the definite influence of Lilburne in the Remonstrance and the proposal for an Agreement. In return for the concessions made to the party, he accepted the idea to end Parliament and to rule by a committee until a new constitution and the new representatives could be approved. On November 30, the Council of Officers instructed the House to dissolve and followed up the demand by arriving in London on December 2, 1648. Still shying from the idea of a military coup, the Independents decided to purge rather than to dissolve that body. Pride's Purge was thereby enacted on the 6th of December. 107 Without any hint of their ambitions, the Army declaration for the march to London stated that they desired "a just and safe settlement of the kingdom upon such foundations as have been propounded by us and others for that purpose." 108 Yet power was handed over to the

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\begin{align*}
105 & \text{Woodhouse, ed., Puritanism and Liberty, p. 317.} \\
106 & \text{Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 363.} \\
107 & \text{Woodhouse, ed., Puritanism and Liberty, p. 327.} \\
108 & \text{Ibid., p. 466.}
\end{align*}
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Council of Officers, who held both the authority in the Army and the control over Parliament, where less than eighty members were left in the Independent Rump.\textsuperscript{109}

Foreseeing the overbalance of power, the Levellers had met at Nag's Head Tavern in November to discuss the desired settlement. In a statement of their intentions, they pressed for an agreement, before the King was executed and before Parliament was purged, in order to keep an equilibrium of tyranny. Wanting security before the Grandees were left in command, the Left requested a meeting of representatives from the Army and from every county. From past experience, especially at Putney, Lilburne was afraid of delay tactics, so consequently, he pressed for an Agreement immediately.\textsuperscript{110} In recognition, a committee of sixteen, composed of four representatives from the Army, Parliament, the Levellers, and the Independents, respectively, was appointed to discuss the proper and just settlement of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{111} Therefore, only a few days after the purge, the Levellers prematurely drew up an Agreement which forced the hand of the officers to debate the document. With the expressed purpose of offering the plan of government to the nation, Lilburne published his Agreement on December 15, 1648, to give men the opportunity to consider the equity thereof, and offer their reasons:

\textsuperscript{109}Tanner, \textit{Constitutional Conflicts}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{111}Woodhouse, ed., \textit{Puritanism and Liberty}, \textsuperscript{327}. 
against anything . . . before it be concluded." [112]

When it was concluded, the plan of the radicals brought on a fierce debate in the Council of Officers at Whitehall from December 16th to January 6, 1649. [113] Soon in the discussion, it became apparent that the plans for publication of the Agreement of the People had two different interpretations. To the Grandees, it was intended as a representation for the approval of Parliament, but the Levellers aimed to distribute the constitution for subscriptions from the Council of War, from the regiments, and from all the people. [114] Accounts of the several weeks' debate further showed that Ireton, the "eyes and ears" of the Independents, was not as close to democratic thought as was first supposed by his consent to an agreement. Despite all argument, he made changes in the original plan, refused to allow complete liberty of conscience, and gave Parliament the right to punish without due process of law. [115] In the Agreement presented to the Rump on January 20, 1649, not only was the right to worship denied to non-Christians, Papists, and Prelates, but also civil magistrates kept some of their former control over religious instructions and discipline. Detailed provisions were

[115] Ibid., p. 347.
[116] Ibid., p. 348.
made for the distribution of parliamentary seats, but the Leveller plan for manhood suffrage was sensibly restricted to require a man to be a housekeeper and a wage earner. Though supreme authority was given to representatives in civil affairs, the Agreement did reserve certain fundamental rights for the people and planned for the executive power in a Council of State.\textsuperscript{117}

Both the differences in handling the Agreement and the additions made by Ireton confirmed the judgment made by a Royalist in Mercurius Pragmaticus: "The grandees and the Levellers can as soon combine as fire and water; the one aim at a pure democracy, the others at an oligarchy."\textsuperscript{118} In contrast to the Grandee designs of rule by the minority, which would have to be upheld by the military, the plan of the Left would have had to be propagandized by local agents. If the people had been able to choose their own form of government, as the Levellers proposed, the decision probably would have been for the restoration of monarchy. Yet the organization and method of subscription could have won the populace to acceptance of a petition. Describing the system which would present the Agreement, a hostile writer claimed the Levellers "have Agents of their own in all Quarters of the Army, the Counties abroad, and the City of London, to draw in Persons to subscribe to the aforesaid damned particulars."\textsuperscript{119} Though the concept of govern-

\textsuperscript{117}Gardiner, ed., Constitutional Documents, pp. 360-370.

\textsuperscript{118}Gooch, English Democratic Ideas, p. 167.

\textsuperscript{119}Pease, Leveller Movement, p. 236.
ment by consent was reasonable and lawful, Cromwell could not allow any civil action to take precedence over military power. What he planned was rule with an iron hand; and the Agreement was discussed and drawn up only to pacify the Left until he could afford to suppress it and set up the Commonwealth. After the King was charged with betraying the fundamental laws and liberties on January 6, was tried, and at last was executed, the Grandees were free from two powers of opposition—Parliament and the King. With all military and civil power in the hands of the Lieutenant-General, the only possible source of trouble was the Leveller party, which was quickly and surely put down.

When the Grandees dropped the idea of an agreement, a petition was drawn up from the soldiers to protest an unrepresentative Council of Officers acting in the name of the Army. As the first in a series of attacks from February to fall, this protest was handled by Cromwell, who restricted petitions from being sent to the Commons, and said that any pleas would have to go through the military channel to the General. As the Leveller movement now consisted of an outside group of extremists, their influence in the Army in a positive, constructive sense had died with the Agreement of the People in January of 1649. Though the appeals to the army now managed to incite an occasional mutiny, their political contribution had come primarily through the Agitators and New Agents of the Army. When the voice and petitions of the soldiers to Parliament

120 Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 34.
121 Firth and Rait, eds., Acts and Ordinances, I, 253.
had been to his advantage, Cromwell had accepted their representatives in the debates and in an Army Council. Suspicious and deeply resentful, many soldiers planned to reappoint Agitators and revive the Army Council, but the petition was termed seditious and the authors were punished. 122

Now that the cry of the rank and file was levied against its superior officers, the Grandees called it mutiny. 123

Though the democrats had long pleaded for the abolition of the negative voice from the King or Lords, the acts passed by the Rump to abolish the kingship on March 17, 124 and to abolish the House of Lords on March 19, 125 were certainly no sign the Levellers had gotten part of their program passed. As Executive authority now passed to the Council of State, Set up in February of 1649, it was even more tyrannical in suppression of petitions, imprisonment of political opponents, and absolute control over the kingdom. Censorship and other restrictions on the rank and file caused Lilburne to say that by the nature of the Council of State, "our Liberties have bin more deeply wounded, than since the beginning of this Parliament; and that to the dislike of the Souldiery." 126

Violent in their condemnation of the present executive body, the Leveller

122 Firth, Cromwell's Army, p. 366.
123 Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 18.
125 Ibid., p. 24.
leaders blamed all the misery of the nation on the evil designs of Cromwell and Ireton, who had deceitfully tricked and lied their way to complete dominance. By any method of obtaining power—replacing officers, punishing political objectors, or allying with former enemies—the Grandees had slowly proceeded to power over the last months from the breach of promises made at Newmarket in June, 1647, to the overlooking of the Agreement in January of 1648. 127

In the questioning of Lilburne, Overton, Prince, and Walwyn before the Council of State in March of 1649, Cromwell expressively summarized the whole matter of influence and interaction between the Grandees and the Levellers. In stating the conflict he said, "You have no other way to deale with these men, but to break them... they will break you." 128 One or the other of the parties had to prevail, for their political theories were not compatible.

Gardiner, who was sympathetic to Lilburne and his group until he angrily attacked Cromwell, felt that the Leveller party lost all because they were uncompromising and persistent in every demand. 129 Too revolutionary for their day, the Levellers drew their political theory from political situations. Suffering from injustice, they constructed a theory to counteract the oppression. 130 Democratic in their organization

127 Ibid., p. 164.
128 Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 21.
129 Ibid., p. 34.
130 Pease, Leveller Movement, p. 238.
and their concept of government by consent, the party platform probably would have been harmful if completely carried out, for the common man of the day had no ideas or experience in political participation. 131 Though there were several drawbacks and disadvantages of the democratic group, the threat came with the mood and desires of the common soldiers, who together comprised a mighty force in the kingdom. From the mild petitions for arrears, to the organization and debates of the Agitators, to the negotiations within existing forms of government, and finally to the Agreement for a new basis of settlement, the Levellers had made their influence felt to this purpose, "for what is done to anyone, may be done to everyone: besides, being all members of one body, that is, of the English Commonwealth, one man should not suffer wrongfully, but all should be sensible, and endeavour his preservation." 132

131 Haller and Davies, eds., Leveller Tracts, p. 36.
132 Ibid., p. 33.
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