*The Case of the Army Truly Stated*

15 October 1647

*The case of the Armie truly stated,: together with the mischiefes and dangers that are imminent, and some sutable remedies, humbly proposed by the agents of five regiments of horse, to their respective regiments, and the whole Army. As it was presented by Mr.* ***Edmond Bear****, and Mr.* ***William Russell****, October 15. 1647. unto his Excellency,* ***Sir Thomas Fairfax****.*

Whereas the grievances, dissatisfactions and desires of the Army, both as Commoners and soldiers, hath been many months since represented to the Parliament, and the Army hath waited with much patience to see their common grievances redressed and the rights and freedoms of the nation cleared and secured; yet upon a most serious and conscientious view of our Narratives, Representations, Engagement, Declarations, Remonstrances, and comparing with those the present state of the Army and kingdom, and the present manner of actings of many at the Headquarters, we not only apprehend nothing to have been done effectually, either for the Army or the poor oppressed people of the nation, but we also conceive that there is little probability of any good without some more speedy and vigorous actings.

In respect of the Army, there hath been hitherto no public vindication thereof about their first Petition, answerable to the ignominy of declaring them enemies to the state and disturbers of the peace; no public clearing nor repairing of the credit of the officers, sent for about that petition as delinquents; no provision for apprentices, widows, orphans, or maimed soldiers, answerable to our reasonable addresses propounded in their behalf; no such indemnity as provideth security for the quiet, ease or safety of the soldiers disbanded or to be disbanded; no security for our arrears, or provision for present pay to enable the Army to subsist without burdening the distressed country.

And in respect to the rights and freedoms of ourselves and the people, that we declared we would insist upon, we conceive there is no kind or degree of satisfaction given. There is no determinate period of time set when the Parliament shall certainly end. The House is in no measure purged, either from persons unduly elected or from delinquents that appeared to be such at the Army’s last insisting upon their rights, or since; the honour of the Parliamentary authority not cleared and vindicated from the most horrid injustice of that declaration against the Army for petitioning, nor of suppressing and burning petitions, abusing and imprisoning petitioners. But those strange precedents remain upon record to the infamy of Parliamentary authority and the danger of our own and the people’s freedoms. The people are not righted nor satisfied in point of accounts, for the vast sums of money disbursed by them. None of the public burdens or oppressions by arbitrary committees, injustice in the law, tithes, monopolies and restraint of free trade, burdensome oaths, inequality of assessments, excise (and otherwise), are removed or lightened. The rights of the people in their Parliaments, concerning the nature and extent of that power, are not cleared and declared. So that we apprehend our own and the people’s case, little (if in any measure) better since the Army last hazarded themselves for their own and the people’s rights and freedoms.

Nay, to the grief of our hearts we must declare that we conceive the people and the Army’s case much impaired since the first rendezvous at Newmarket when that *Solemn Engagement*[[1]](#footnote-2)was entered into. In the Engagement, . . . the Army promised, every member thereof, each to other and to the Parliament and kingdom, that they would neither disband nor divide, nor suffer themselves to be disbanded or divided, until satisfaction should be given to the Army in relation to their grievances and desires, and security that neither the Army nor the free-born people of England should remain subject to such injuries, oppression and abuse, as the corrupt party in the Parliament then had attempted against them.

Secondly, the train of artillery is now to be disbanded before satisfaction or security is given to the whole Army in relation to themselves or other the free-born people, either in respect to their grievances or desires. And when the strength or sinews of the Army be broken, what effectual good can be secured for themselves or the people in case of opposition?

Thirdly, the Army is divided into quarters so far distant that one part is in no capability to give timely assistance to another if any design should be to disband any part by violence suddenly. . . . And as we conceive this dividing of the Army before satisfaction or security (as aforesaid) to be contrary to the Army’s intention in their engagement at the said rendezvous, so we conceive it hath from that time given all the advantage to the enemies to band and design against the Army, whereby not only pay hath been kept from the soldiers, and security for arrears prevented, but the kingdom was endangered to have been embroiled in blood, and the settlement of the peace and freedom of the nation hath been thus long delayed.

The whole intent of the Engagement, and the equitable sense of it, hath been perverted openly by affirming, and by sinister means making seeming determinations in the Council, that the Army was not to insist upon, or demand any security for, any of their own or other the free-born people’s freedoms or rights, though they might propound anything to the Parliament’s consideration. And according to that high breach of their engagement their actions have been regulated, and nothing that was declared formerly to be insisted upon hath been resolvedly adhered to, or claimed as the Army’s or the people’s due. And we conceive it hath been by this means that the soldier hath had no pay constantly provided, nor any security for arrears given them, and that hitherto they could not obtain so much as to be paid up equally with those that did desert the Army.

Fourthly, in the prosecution of this breach there hath been many discouragements of the Agitators of the regiments in consulting about the most effectual means for procuring the speedy redress of the people’s grievances, and clearing and securing the native rights of the Army and all others the free Commons.

It hath been instilled into them that they ought not to intermeddle with those matters, thereby to induce them to betray the trust the regiments reposed in them. And for that purpose the endeavours of some hath been to persuade the soldier that their Agitators have meddled with more than concerned them. In the Declaration of June 14, . . . it was declared that the Army would adhere to their desires of full and equal satisfaction to the whole soldiery of the kingdom (in arrears, indemnity, and all other things mentioned in the papers that contained the grievances, dissatisfactions and desires), who did then, or should afterward, concur with this Army in these desires….

Sixthly, in the same declaration . . . it is declared that the Army took up arms in judgment and conscience for the people’s just rights and liberties, and not as mercenary soldiers, hired to serve an arbitrary power of the state, and that in the same manner it continued in arms at that time. And . . . it was declared that they proceeded upon the principles of right and freedom, and upon the law of nature and nations. But the strength of the endeavours of many hath been and are now spent to persuade the soldiers and Agitators that they stand as soldiers only to serve the state, and may not as free Commons claim their right and freedom as due to them, as those ends for which they have hazarded their lives, and that the ground of their refusing to disband was only the want of arrears and indemnity.

Eighthly, in the Declaration of June 14 . . . (as in all other remonstrances and declarations) it was desired that the rights and liberties of the people might be secured before the King’s business should be considered. But now the grievances of the people are propounded to be considered after the restoring him to the regal power, and that in such a way according to the *Proposals,viz.,* with a negative voice, that the people that have purchased by blood what was their right, of which the King endeavoured to deprive them, should yet solely depend on his will for their relief in their grievances and oppressions; and in like manner the security for the Army’s arrears is proposed to be considered after the business of the King be determined, so that there is a total declension since the method formerly desired in the settling the peace of the nation….

Tenthly, when imminent ruin to the whole nation was apprehended by means of the multitudes of corrupted members of Parliament, diverting and obstructing all good proceedings, then the purging of the House in part, from one kind of delinquents, was again insisted upon, and a solemn protestation was passed in the Remonstrance from Kingston . . . that the Army would not permit those to sit in the House, that usurped the name and power of Parliamentary authority when the Parliament was by violence suspended, and endeavoured to raise a war to destroy the Parliament and Army, but that they would take some effectual course to restrain them from sitting there, that the people might be concluded only by those members that are free from such apparent treacherous breaches of their trust.

But hitherto this engagement for purging the House from those delinquents, whose interest engages them to be designing mischief against the people and Army, is declined and broken, to the black reproach and foulest infamy of the Army; and now these strong cords are cut in sunder and so forgotten that there are no visible endeavours or intentions to preserve the honour of the Army in its faithfulness to its engagement and protestation.

Thus all promises of the Army to the people that petitioned his Excellency and the Army to stand for the national interest, freedoms, and rights, are hitherto wholly declined, and the law of nature and nations now refused by many to be the rule by which their proceedings should be regulated. They now strip themselves of the interest of Englishmen, which was so ill resented when it was attempted by the malice of the enemies. And thus the people’s expectations that were much greatened, and their hopes of relief in their miseries and oppressions, which were so much heightened, are like to be frustrate, and while you look for peace and freedom the flood-gates of slavery, oppression and misery are opened upon the nation. . . .

1. “At the Newmarket rendezvous (4-5 June 1647), *The Solemn Engagement of the Army* was adopted. This manifesto proposed the establishment of the Council of the Army, to be composed of senior officers along with two commissioned officers and two private soldiers chosen by each regiment; furthermore the Army resolved not to divide or disband until its grievances had been settled. By this time, military Agitators were co-operating with civilian Levellers to further their political ends. The Representation of the Army, issued on 14 June, called for a new Parliament to be elected on a wider franchise and stated the Army's right to be involved in the settlement of the nation.” (BCW Project) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)