

A Putney Light Shines

By Maria Oshodi

directed by Tom Marshall
assisted by Tamara Hinchco
designed by Caroline Jones/Michael Bull
lighting by Miguel Ribeiro
producer: Sue Rolfe

Cast in order of appearance

Verger	Michael Bull
John Lilburne	Michael David
Soldier 1	James Rigby
Soldier 2	Robert Emms
Soldier 3	Stewart Marquis
John Wildman	Tim Stark
Edward Sexby	Oliver Campbell-Smith
Lord of Misrule	Peter Sproule
Chicken	Tony Rohr
Lieutenant-General Oliver Cromwell	Tom Marshall
Commissary-General Henry Ireton	Nick Tennant
Colonel Thomas Rainborough	Michael Lovatt
Mr Everard	Chris Tranchell
Lieutenant-Colonel William Goffe	Clive Merrison
Mr Petty	Michael David

Performance of this script is allowed provided credit is given as follows:

A Putney Light Shines, by Maria Oshodi, Extant, First performed at St Mary's Church, Putney 27-29 October, 2007

Scene 1.

(John Lilburne in tower, appears high up centre, lit by a spot.)

John Lilburne:

Oh Englishmen! Where are your freedoms? And what has become of your liberties and privileges that you have been fighting for all this time?

(Military drum roll - Below a light comes up on several soldiers entering)

Soldier 1: (holding a crown) I fought for parliament to curb the King

Soldier 2: (holding a bible) I fought for God to cleanse the land

Soldier 3: (Holding a sword) I fought for the people, to be free

John Lilburne: (writes furiously.)

You have expended your bloods and estates – and are tied in bondage faster than before. Look about you brothers, while there be still time, and give not occasion to your children yet unborn to curse you for making them slaves.

(Drum roll and white collared figure weaves between soldiers)

Soldier 1: We won Cromwell's war, only for him to protect his own and deal with the King (Cromwell takes the crown)

Soldier 2: We won God's war, only to be ruled by a treacherous parliament (Cromwell takes the bible.)

Soldier 3: We won the people's war, only to find there is no revolution (Cromwell takes the sword)

(Lights up again on tower)

John Lilburne: Here from my most illegal captivity in the Tower of London since July 1647, I, John Lilburne of the Levellers, who neither loves baseness nor fears greatness, cannot rest.

(He springs up with pamphlet in hand, reaching to two figures)

Now friends, I entreat you soldier Sexby, Lawyer Wildman, take these pamphlets and have them be speedily printed at the secret locations and distributed from the City's Whalebone Tavern and then onto the private soldiery who congregate at our other taverns in Southwark, Wapping and Shoreditch. They must know that Parliament do intend to reject the petition of the Army and will swiftly disband the regiments.

(He hands the Pamphlet to John Wildman, far stage right, who adds it to a pile.)

Wildman:

There is no visible authority in England but the power and force of the sword.

(A tavern scene with the revelling soldiers to whom Wildman hands the pamphlets.)

Wildman:

Look men, what happened when Cromwell's General Ireton presented his half-baked paper 'Head of the Proposals' to the King for the Settlement of the kingdom after all these bloody wars

Sexby: The King liked them not, and still gives his yay or nay in spite of our imprisonment of him down in Hampton.

(Soldiers jeer in agreement saying things like "Where he still be served in state" "and on bended knee" and "Should have left him to the Scots")

Wildman: Meanwhile the love and affection of the people to the Army, which was your greatest strength is decayed, cooled and near lost.

Soldier 1: 'Twas from us that Cromwell did form his New Model Army. 'Twas the roundheads that brought the King to his knees at Naseby, and be us that gave 7 years of our lives to bring it about, yet this Army now be slighted, it being the means, under God, used to save this kingdom from ruin and destruction.

Sexby: Instead the ruin befalls us, with our arrears of payments owed for months and months, refused by the Commons, whom we have defended with our blood!

Soldier 2: And some of our deeds done in that defence, we now fear imprisonments for

Soldier 3: Fear more I impressments now for Ireland under new commanders that I trust not...

Wildman: And to top it, they give Harassment to you for causes of religion, claiming only one man can know God's will.

(Soldiers jeer)

Wildman:

(Handing out more pamphlets.)

Feed then on the words of the Levellers John Lilburne. He doth explain how the oppressions of the Commonwealth have been brought upon all by the King and Lords.... Best we were rid of them...

(Soldiers murmur agreement)

Sexby: (standing up among the soldiers, gets up on a table/chair and waving a document)

We be hungry for these arguments and can better draft our own papers, than those drafted by Generals, like the Head of the Proposals, that serve only Generals. Before Cromwell might agree to parliament's desire to disband us, tis well he has agreed first to hear the voice of representation by ordinary soldiers such as I. Never before

hath something be permitted like this, that we can take these papers drawn up by 16 of our regiments, 'The Case of the Army truly Stated' and 'The Agreement of the People' and thrash out their legitimacy direct with those who can establish them. Will you aid us with your skilled lawyers tongue, though you be not a day over 4 and 20 John Wildman? (Cheer from other soldiers)

Wildman: Aye Sexby, let us go Straightway to where the General Council of army officers collect at the church in Putney
(Loud military drum roll off stage to which all their attention is turned – They then leave. Lights to black.)

Scene 2.

(The military drumming turns more to a jauntier pageant beat outside, joined by some merry piping. The doors of the church open and sounds of general revelry enter with The Lord of Misrule dressed absurdly and followed by a giant chicken. Closing the Dorr on the festivities outside, they both come down the aisle addressing the audience)

Lord of Misrule: Ah good people of Putney, what is it that I'm hearing? Some form of debate is to take place here? Are the services not worthy enough for you? An end to this solemnity commandeth the Lord of Misrule, The Grand captain of mischief. Architect of all festivities and frolics from Allhallows Eve until Candlemas. Like some others, vanquished by the Puritans, but not gone away! Oh no, no, Things never disappear completely have you noticed? After the storm there are always Bits and pieces that do remain to be picked up, to be re-set, put together this way or that...

Chicken: As someone said recently "The Kaleidoscope has been shaken. The pieces are in flux. Soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us re-order this world around us."

Lord: Who said that? (Looks behind at chicken)

Chicken: Someone who is gone, but only to be re-ordered somewhere else.

Lord: Yes, Re-order, re-order, That's what I like, what I do, and what better thing to do than to beat the ban, come out of hiding and return to the church to disrupt proceedings

Chicken: Just like the good old days

Lord: who are you?

Chicken: I'm from the feast day carnival, remember? Sometimes back in the day, I'd be a pig, or a horse, or a cow and together with the madcap lusty gut youth of town we'd all carouse around and disrupt the service...

Lord: Ah yes, yes, but now the world is all turned upside down since the late war, and I say where is the place for mis behaviour, when everyone is misbehaving now? Ah, pieces, broken pieces! (Which way will they be put together? Begins to leave) And how to disrupt the already disrupted...

Chicken: (Following) I'm sure we'll find a way.

Lord: When I need your help, I'll ask for it!

Scene 3.

(The Church of St Mary's.

Cromwell (coughs repeatedly, which he does throughout the play. He rubs his eyes, sitting alone in an attitude of heavy despondency)

Ireton: (Entering to join him.)

Papers, papers, what with more papers?! Is it not enough that I drew up The Representation of the Army not less than 4 months ago, and The ink to set down my paper, the Heads of the Proposals in august is barely yet dry? Then ten days ago we have these agitators delivering the case of the Army truly stated, followed now by these new demands about to come. They are no doubt influenced by Lilburne's scribblings already being quoted as statute laws, in spite that the man spends more time in the Tower than out.

(Pause while Cromwell stares pensively ahead of him,)

Ireton: (Moving closer towards him)

Truly, General Cromwell, I think we should greatly fear the mood of the army. Some of the soldiers call the Parliament men tyrants

Cromwell: Stirring himself at last and sighing heavily.

Aye, hence the necessity for this public council, lest anarchy finally be the only thing to reign.

Ireton: The paper of the Agitators we are called to consider may in itself hold enough destabilising demands to make Our endeavours these 7 years come to that end

Cromwell: And pray, what end are we at now Ireton? God hath given us the answer of victory over the King, and it be clear he doth not want the King restored, but with all the King's constant duplicity upon us, so much else unanswered is raised. Are we called upon to be the instruments of his final destruction now...?

Ireton: General, sir!

Cromwell: ...and would his destruction mean the finish of the God given authority...?

Ireton: These be unthinkable thoughts that do populate your mind

Cromwell: That may be so, but they do be the issue of the fullest consequence of the actions of this war, and therefore must be thought of.

Ireton: Then if so, take heed, this neither be the best place nor best time to do it.

Cromwell: (After a pause.)

Aye Indeed, one step before another... (Pause.) Now, this fellow Wildman... the one they call the soldiers voice...they say he is in some sort -A lawyer?

Ireton: 'John Lawmind' some call him – he holds with the Levellers that all government from high to low, be in the free consent of the people.

Cromwell: A republican then?

Ireton: His hand is plain, I think, in drafting that last paper 'The Case of the Army Truly Stated.'

Cromwell: (shaking his head)

Nay, I think not. That paper was written by a soldier, one like Sexby rather ...

Ireton: Sexby? Yes, maybe, but further I detect the Leveller's hand of Lilburne in it someways, aided by this lawyer Wildman... Now here they are come...

Cromwell (Rising)

Aye, Let us prepare ourselves...

(They take new positions, while Wildman and Rainborough enter some way off, followed by others.)

Rainborough: You know that Cromwell would civil talk with the King again?

Wildman: No, but truly I did fear it with his speeches of late given in parliament favouring the monarchy

Rainborough: High language passed between us on the matter

Wildman: High language, I congratulate that Colonel Rainborough,

Rainborough: So high that I told him one of us must not live

Wildman: (loud whisper)

If it was to be the honest man to survive, then it would not be he... (Indicates Cromwell.)

(CROMWELL CALLS THE MEETING TO ORDER WITH HIS GAVEL)

Cromwell:

I General Lieutenant Cromwell, on the 28th day of October 1647, declare this meeting is for public business. Those that have anything to say concerning the public business have liberty to speak.

EVERYONE TAKES THEIR PLACES

Cromwell: Mr Sexby, who be in your representation?

Sexby: Three soldiers from your own regiment sir and Colonel Whalley's. I Edward Sexby, Mr Everard, and Mr Lockyer, with two other gentlemen, Mr Wildman and Mr Petty.

Cromwell:

And so, what would you have us examine here today?

Sexby: Well sir, I will come straight to it. The cause of our misery is upon two things. We sought to satisfy all men, but in going about to do it we have dissatisfied all men. We have laboured to please a King, and I think, unless we go about to cut all our throats, we shall not please Him. We have gone to support Parliament full of rotten members ...and the reputation among us of you sir, the Lieutenant General and Commissary General has been much blasted by these considerations.

CROMWELL AND IRETON ARE STARTLED AND ANNOYED AT THIS
FRONTAL ATTACK

Cromwell:

Mr. Sexby, I know not why you spoke thus, except you think that we have acted somewhat different from the sense and resolution of the General Council, but I have had my warrant for how I have acted in Parliament in the name of the Council and Army, from them.

Sexby: Desiring your pardon, I urge you hear these things Sir, so our fellow soldiers may be quietened in spirit.

(Soldier 1 and 2 by the door throw up sounds of agreement.)

Ireton: I do defy and detest the thought of any great slander cast upon the Lieutenant General and myself here regarding our making covert agreements with King or Parliament, yet I would not join with them that do seek, the destruction of either.

Everard: (Meekly)

May it please your honour ... that we may come directly upon our matter?

Cromwell: Let this paper called 'The Agreement of the People' be read.

(Sexby unfolds the paper and reads)

Sexby:

1. that the people of England being at this day very unequally distributed for the election of their deputies in Parliament, ought to be better represented according to the number of inhabitants in their boroughs.
2. That elections should be held every two years
3. That matters of religion and worship should be for a man's conscience to decide.
4. That conscription to wars is against our freedoms
5. That amnesty must be granted for deeds relating to the recent wars

6. That all men whatever their degree should be equal under the law

These things we declare to be our native rights, which we have dearly earned. Yet we are dependent for settlement of our peace and freedom upon those who intended our bondage and brought a cruel war upon us.

Everard: (supportive but with a small voice)

Think you not it be strange that we soldiers cannot have these things? We beseech you consider of it.

Cromwell: (After a moments consideration)

Truly, these things that you have now offered, they are new to us. This Agreement of the People contains great alterations to the very government of the Kingdom. And although the expressions in it are very plausible, how do we not know, that whilst we are considering this, another company of men shall not gather in some tavern And put out a paper as plausible as this? And not only another, but many of this kind? And, what do you think the consequence of this would be? Would it not be confusion? Would it not be utter confusion? Would it not make England like the Switzerland country, one region of the Switz against another and one county against another? Having received your paper, we shall consider amongst Ourselves what to do. But first, how far we are obliged and how far we are free by our commitments to do so.

Wildman: Sir

Cromwell: Mr Wildman I believe?

Wildman: Indeed I am Sir, and the soldiers and agents of the five regiments have desired me that I would be their mouth.

Cromwell: So I have heard.

Wildman: It is judged by the soldiers that if a commitment be not just, then it is an act of honesty not to be obligated by it.

Ireton: But truly, we do have commitments. We are under engagements with certain parties. And even if we are convinced that they are unjust, truly I cannot fully concur with this gentleman that we are, fully absolved from them.

Rainborough: (to Ireton)

So if a man be engaged, he must perform his engagements? I am wholly confident that every honest man is bound in duty to god and his conscience, let him be engaged in what he will, to decline something when he sees it to be evil .

Cromwell: Colonel Rainborough!

Rainborough: (impenitent)

Truly I think that in the face of difficulties, in the face of death, if you are convinced that the thing is just, you are bound in conscience to carry it out. I hear you say 'this paper is a huge alteration— it's a bringing of new laws.' But If the people find the laws not suitable to freemen as they are, I know no reason should deter me from trying by all

means to change the government under which they presently live. there have been thus far many scufflings between the honest men of England and those that tyrannised over them have there not?

Cromwell: Truly I am very glad that this gentleman that spoke last is here. We shall enjoy his company longer than I thought we should have done.

Rainborough: If I should not be kicked out, sir.

Cromwell: (more conciliatory)

Truly I do not know what the meaning of that expression is – nor the meaning of any hateful word here ... we are almost all soldiers – all words of courage animate us to carry on our business ... (rising) and yet, rather than this kingdom should break in pieces before we are united to a settlement, I will withdraw myself from the Army and lay down my commission – I will perish before I hinder it.

PROTESTS FROM THE COMPANY WHO ARE TOUCHED BY THIS TYPICALLY CROMWELLIAN PLEA FOR UNITY

Cromwell: (Sits again)

As to engagements and the breaking of them, certainly it is an act of duty to break an unrighteous engagement. But there may be just promises upon us as such as perhaps it will be our duty to keep – and all I said was that we should consider them – and therefore what need anybody be angry or offended by this?

Everard: May it please your honour – I confess my ignorance in these engagements, but I hope they have given nothing away from the people that is their right. As for the change of government which is so dangerous, I apprehend there may be many dangers in it – but also that there may be more dangers without it! For I conceive if you keep the government as it is, and bring in the King, there may be more dangers than in changing the government.

MURMERS OF AGREEMENT

Goffe: Sir –

Cromwell: (Sighs with relief as knows what Goffe's theme will be) Ah – Lieutenant Goffe

Goffe: I shall but humbly take the boldness to put you in mind of one other thing. I consider there is much ground to conceive that there has been a withdrawing of the presence of god from us that have met in this place. It has been our trouble night and day that God has not been with us. And if God has departed from us He is somewhere else. The greatest powers in the kingdom have been shaken. God hath thrown down the glory of the King and his army. He hath thrown down an uprising in the City. I do not say that God will throw us down, but He will have the glory. I desire that we do recover humiliation in that we seek the Lord.

Cromwell: Yes – I think God would have us spend tomorrow morning in prayer and the afternoon be the time of our business. I do not know if the others gathered here do assent to it?

WILDMAN AND OTHER ADJUTATORS CONSULT. THEY CLEARLY FEAR
A DIVERSIONARY TACTIC

Ireton: That which Colonel Goffe offered hath made a very great impression upon me, therefore I wish his motion may be pursued.

(Sexby, Wildman and others still talk agitatedly...)

Cromwell: I hope you know us better than to make appearance of religious meetings as covers for other designs. Through me I pray God may unite us and carry us both one way that we may not both be destroyed. And therefore I do desire you that you will come to us tomorrow.

Wildman: God has now opened our eyes and discovered unto us our Christian liberty, so the present need of the kingdom is for action. (Audible agreement from soldiers.) The loss of two or three mornings may loose us that Kingdom, so this morning we desire to return somewhat to the business in hand.

CRIES OF AYE TRULY

Wildman: In the sight of God, I desire to speak plainly. There may be an agreement between the King and the Parliament, that hath the power to hinder the making of any laws that are good ... and though it is desired that your previous commitments may be considered, I desire that only the justice of the paper that is proposed may be considered. The chief intent of 'the Agreement of the People' is to secure the rights of the people in Parliament. This was declared by this Army in the declaration of the 14th June to be absolutely insisted on.

MURMERS OF ASSENT

Ireton: (angrily)

Sir, truly I was so taken by what Lieutenant Goffe uttered I confess all Other thoughts in this business were taken from me so that I did not think of speaking anything more. But now I must say, I am far from holding that if a man hath committed himself to a thing that is not just, that is evil, that the man be bound to perform what he has promised. But when we talk of just, it is not so much of what is sinful before God, but of what is just between man and man. Agreements freely made, freely entered into, must be kept. What right hath any man to anything if you do not uphold that principle? If you will resort only to the law of nature, by the law of nature you have no more right to this land or anything else than I have. And therefore when I hear men speak of laying aside all commitments to consider only that wild or vast notion of what in every man's conception is just or unjust – I am afraid and do tremble at the boundless and endless consequences of it.

Wildman: You take away the substance of the question and do not repeat the principle right. Our meaning was that an unjust Agreement is rather to be broken than kept. And what is more if we linger long like three days before you satisfy yourselves over this, the King will just come and merely say who among us will be hanged first.

(Loud drum roll off stage – Everyone turns quickly in the direction of the sound. It stops and they continue.)

Rainborough: Sir, I do not share the apprehensions that two or three days will undo us, rather any delay in arriving at a decision will undo us

Cromwell: (Asserting himself.)

I am of the previous opinion it best we defer the debate until the morrow. (HAMMERS ON TABLE WITH GAVEL) Record the names of the committee present here and the name of the paper to be considered, 'The agreement of the people'.

(– Lights to black)

Scene 4.

(Chicken enters puffing)

Lord: Cook been trying to spit you on the roast again?

Chicken: Nay, the hog is still spluttering away out there. I've flown in from the Heath, or where the Heath should be.

Lord: Has it moved?

Chicken: Buried under concrete, shortly to become terminal 5.

Lord: Our Heath? Developed into Heathrow! We must protest! (To audience) I give you free leave that we break up all locks, bolts, bars, doors and latches, and to fling up all doors out of hinges for us to all go protest!

Chicken: Not this many... (ushering the Lord off) We'd end up in the courtroom for mass disobedience. You might get away with doing it on your own. Keep it up for around 6 years, and you may become a Tate installation.

(They exit)

Scene 5.

(Lights rise on the rowdy tavern – Several soldiers are drinking with Wildman standing a side watching the scene.)

Soldier 1: Engagements! It is a great wonder that some should have principles to break engagements, yet other Gentlemen do so much insist upon them!

Soldier 2: But never were engagements broken more than by those up at the Church now. Did they not at first engage Parliament for the liberties of the people against the King's army? And though we got the better of that army in the field, what now with that engagement? They are still to be our masters.

Soldier 1: Well If a pilot run his ship upon a rock, or if a General mount his cannon against his army, may he not be resisted?

Wildman: (Now entering to hand out more pamphlets.)

Faithful friends! One of the surest marks of deceivers is to make fair, long and eloquent speeches. Take heed of crafty politicians and be sure to trust no man's painted words ... in the House of Commons both Ireton and Cromwell do earnestly carry on the King's design, so your best friends are amazed thereat. And they do this in the name of the whole Army, assuring the House that if they do not make further address to the King they cannot promise the Army will stand by them. Ask yourselves why are they so familiar with the King's chief agents and clergy?

CRIES OF AYE, SHAME ETC

Soldier 1: (Shouting above the noise)

This is as clear as anything in the world! I be against the King; him or any power that would destroy God's people! Pity the long speeches are not made to satisfy our needs!

Soldier 2: Well you can be for the Devil an you will, but I be still for the King, knowing him to be appointed direct from God.

Soldier 3: Aye, many of us still be for the King

Soldier 1: HOLD THY PEACE, THE KING IS A MAN OF BLOOD!

Wildman: Friends, it is not between ourselves that we must fight, but with those at the Church, who tomorrow will continue to debate our paper which enshrines our liberty.

Soldier 2: I am but a poor man, and unacquainted with the affairs of the kingdom, yet I am acquainted that there be a great expectation that those who fought for the King might bring sudden destruction that calls for the time not to be filled up with words.

(Drum roll in the distance, makes everyone pause for a moment.)

Wildman: I know that danger is imagined at hand – and indeed I think it is – but be the danger what it will, our business with the agreement is much more pressing.

Soldier 1: While they debate, we do nothing! Let us hope they will all agree together come the time of action, for it is idleness that has brought This rust, this gangrene among us.

Wildman: Will you return there tomorrow for us to go about the work then?

(General sounds of ambivalence.)

Wildman: Well I shall be back at the church after noon tomorrow, satisfied that there lie no engagements or none but such as it is duty to break, and this will hasten the action of delivering the kingdom from the burden that lies upon us.

(He exits while soldiers murmur among themselves. – Lights to black.)

Scene 6.

(Lord of misrule runs through quickly followed by chicken)

Lord : What motto? Whose motto?

Chicken: The motto of the day!

Lord: Oh er, what about, Here is the fruit of our victory.

Chicken: No! Try again...

Lord: Oh I be only here for the merry path of dalliance and delight, I don't know!,

Chicken: Yes you do... Here's a clue... "I just want you to know that, when we talk about war, we're really talking about peace."

Lord: 'Ah yes, it's old Cromwell's ...Let peace be sought through war'

Chicken: (Chasing the Lord off) That's right! I owe you one pewter mug of porter, so why keep running?

Lord: (Exiting) Because you keep chasing....

(They exit)

Scene 7.

Lights come up on the church)

(People milling about.)

Goffe: (To Ireton and Cromwell, but loud enough to be over heard)
I do inquire whether the actions that some of us have done of late do not cross the word of God?

Rainborough: (Knowing this comment is for his benefit.)
Sir, I am sorry that the ill disposition of my body caused me to go to London last night and hindered me from coming so soon to worship this morning.

CROMWELL: (Disbelieving) Indeed sir, we did think the Navy had at last come to re-enlist you. (Turning) Mr Everard, is this all we are to have present today?

Everard: Sir, when I went to fetch the men hither for debating further, many of them I found dispersed.

Cromwell: Maybe they also share in the ague that unfortunately struck Colonel Rainborough this morning? (Sighing and moving to take his place.) Will those gentlemen that are come, draw nigh then for this second debating day of 29 October.

(SEXBY ETC ALL TAKE THEIR PLACES)

Rainborough: Sir.

Cromwell: Colonel Rainborough.

Rainborough: I am of the opinion that if we should spend ten days going over our previous commitments, we still would not come to the real business, so may we go the quickest way to work – and since there is this ‘Agreement’ to which the people have subscribed, I desire that you would read it in more detail and debate.

Cromwell: Aye then, Let the articles of the paper called the Agreement, be again read.

Sexby: (stands and reads from document.)

We declare

1. that the people of England being very unequally distributed by Counties, cities and Boroughs for the election of their deputies in Parliament, ought to be more fairly proportioned according to the number of the inhabitants. 2.

Ireton: Er, you say that the people of England are to be redistributed for the purpose of electing their deputies in Parliament according to the number of the inhabitants?

Sexby: Aye sir.

Ireton: But this does make me think the meaning is that every man that is an inhabitant is to be equally considered, and to have an equal voice in the election of his representatives?

Sexby: Aye sir.

Ireton: Well if that be the meaning, then I have something to say against it. But if the meaning be, the electors before who were the electors since the Norman conquest should still be the electors now, I have no more to say against it.

1st Soldier: Before and since the conquest, , the greater people of this Kingdom be without a vote, and now we judge that all inhabitants that have not lost their birthright should have an equal voice in elections.

MURMURS OF ASSENT

Rainborough: (very emphatically)

I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he, and therefore truly sir, I think it clear that every man that is to live under a government ought first, , to put himself under that government by his own consent.

(Pause)

Ireton: So, according to the number of the inhabitants, means this?

Rainborough: Aye, truly.

(Pause)

Ireton: (Rousing...) Then I think you must fly for refuge to all having an absolute natural right! Is it not already that a man that is worth, what, 40 shillings a year has as greater voice in the election of a member, as he that has 10,000 a year or more?

Rainborough: Truly sir, I am of the same opinion I held before, and am resolved to keep it till I know of some reason why I should not.

Ireton: Let me put it plain then. Those that choose the representatives for the making of laws by which this state and kingdom are to be governed are those persons, who have a local interest in this Kingdom, that is by whom owns the land, and by whom trade in corporations. If we shall take away this fundamental part of the present civil constitution, we shall plainly go to take away all property and interest that any man hath, either in land, inheritance, or in his own possessed estate.

Rainborough: I do not find anything in the law of god that a lord shall choose twenty representatives, a gentleman but two, and a poor man choose none, for he hath not 40 shillings. And, I have thought of something else. I would be bound to say that what a miserable distressed condition are many a man that hath fought for the Parliament in this quarrel - whose zeal and affection to God and this kingdom hath carried him forth in this cause, now hath so spent from his estate that it is not even worth forty shillings a year!

Ireton: By what right do you claim that all the people should have right to elections. Is it by the right of nature – The equality of all men in the sight of God?(Half laughs) If so, I think you must then deny all property, because, if one man hath an equal right with another to the choosing of him that shall govern him, then by the same right of nature, he hath the same equal right in any goods he sees, meat, drink, clothes, to take and use them for his sustenance. He hath a freedom to the land, to take the ground, to till and exercise it. Why now I say then, if you, against the most fundamental part of the civil constitution, will plead the Law of nature, that one man must have as much voice as another, then show me what step or difference there is, why I may not by the same right take your property saying It is for my better being, and the better settlement of the kingdom? Or, possibly not for possibly I may not have so real a regard to the peace of the kingdom as that man who hath a permanent interest in it. He that is here to-day, and gone on the morrow, I do not see that he hath such a permanent interest. Since you cannot plead to it by anything but the Law of Nature, I would fain have any man show me their bounds, where you will end, and why you should not take away all property.

Rainborough: So if I am a poor man I must be oppressed? if I have no vested interest in the kingdom – must I therefore suffer by all the laws be they right or wrong? Nay thus: a gentleman lives in a country and hath three or four lordships, as some men have (God knows how they got them); and yet when a Parliament is called he can be a Parliament-man, I have known such a man who hath turned out of doors poor men living near him. This be the potency of rich men, to so keep poor men under the greatest tyranny that was ever thought of in the world, and I would fain know what we have fought for. Is it the old law of England which enslaves the people so that they are bound by the laws in which they have no choice at all?

EXCLAMATIONS - AYE TRULY

Soldier 1: (standing by the door) I'll go gather our friends that are not here. I've not heard the cannon fire so hotly since the Naseby field

Rainborough:

And further, to say because a man pleads that every man hath a voice by right of nature, and from this argument that it destroys all property Sir, I wish you would not make from this the world to believe that we are for anarchy.

Cromwell: (reprovingly) No one says that you have a mind to anarchy – We should not be so hot with one another.

Rainborough (not really mollified) I know some particular men we debate with believe we are for anarchy.

Ireton (haughtily): I profess I must clear myself of that point. I would not desire to lay the least scandal upon anybody – and truly do not know why this gentleman should take so much offence. We speak to the paper not to the persons.

Petty: Sir, I desire to add one word to this, since anarchy is so much talked of. For my own part, I cannot believe in the least it can be clearly derived from that paper.

Cromwell: But the consequence of this rule is that it tends to anarchy, aye must end in anarchy, for where is there any bound or limit set if you take away this limit, that men that have no interest but the interest of breathing shall have their voices in elections.

Petty: I had thought that we all agreed that more should choose our representatives and that all had desired a more equal representation than we now have. For now those only choose who have at least forty shillings freehold.

Ireton: But what we argue here is that we would not go to enlarge it beyond all bounds, upon the same ground you may admit so many men from foreign state as would outvote you. I do not mean that I would have it restrained to that proportion it is now, but if you admit any man that hath a breath and being you will destroy property – you may have such men chosen as have no local and permanent interest, so why not may those men vote against all property, or I am sure I know not why a foreigner coming in amongst us should not as well lay claim to it as any other.

Rainborough: Ridiculous Sir!

(Murmur travels around the room.)

Wildman: (to Ireton) Sir – I conceive that one of the fears is that foreigners might not only come to have a voice in our elections as well as the native inhabitants, but also come to be elected too?

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

Wildman: But if a foreigner should be admitted to be an inhabitant in the nation, he will admit to that form of government as the natives do, so he hath the same right as an inhabitant.

Ireton: It is true that he hath a right that we should not expel him from our coasts, not disallow him being amongst us, nor kill him because he comes on our land, comes up our stream, arrives at our shore. It is a piece of hospitality, of humanity to receive him amongst us – but I think if he will receive protection from this people, he ought to be subject to their laws so long as he continues amongst them, though neither he nor his ancestors betwixt him and Adam, did ever give concurrence to our constitution. That is my opinion. Therefore sir, in this case, a man may and ought to be bound by a law to which he doth not give a consent. And if he do think himself unsatisfied to be a subject to this law – he may go to another kingdom.

Wildman: Sirs, unless I be mistaken, we are very much deviated from the first question, that be that we have been under slavery. We are now engaged for our freedom, that be every person that is in England hath as clear a right to elect his representative, and this must be the undeniable maxim of government, that government is in the free consent of the people.

Ireton: Concede to this I cannot for the consequence of it will destroy property.

Rainborough: Sir – I begin to see that it is impossible to have liberty except all property must be taken away....

(The officers shift uneasily and look at each other in the light of this implication.)

Rainborough: (continues.) But still I would know what the soldier has fought for all this while. He has fought to enslave himself – to give power to men of riches, men of estates to make himself a perpetual slave.

Ireton: I will tell you what the soldier of the kingdom has fought for: The danger that we stood in was that one man's will would be law. The people of the kingdom have the right at least that they are governed now by representatives who are fixed men and settled men, that have the interest of this kingdom in them.

Sexby: (explodes with rage and hammers the table)

Sir! We have engaged in this kingdom and ventured our lives all to recover our birthrights and privileges as Englishmen. now by these arguments urged, about foreigners and the like, there are none! Many thousands of us soldiers ventured our lives and we have had little property in the kingdom making up our estates – yet we have had a birthright. But now it seems, unless a man hath a fixed estate in this kingdom, he hath no right in this kingdom. I wonder we were so much deceived! If we had not a right in the kingdom, we were mere mercenary soldiers. There are many in my condition, yet we have as much a birthright as to our lawgivers, and to those in this place. I do think that the poor and meaner of this kingdom have been the means of the preservation of this kingdom. Those that act to this end are as free from anarchy and confusion as those that oppose it, and they have the law of God and the law of their conscience with them!

STUNNED SILENCE

Cromwell: I confess I am most dissatisfied with what I heard Mr Sexby just speak, more than with any man here because it did savour so much of will. If we think to resolve an issue in this way, I know our debates will be endless. If you do desire to bring this to a result, it were well if we resort upon a committee.

Rainborough: I am not at all against a committee's meeting sir, but I just wonder how something should be thought wilfulness in one man that is taken to be reason in another?

Sexby: Sir, I am very sorry that my zeal to what I apprehend is good should be so ill resented, but Sir, I do desire to speak a few words more...

Cromwell: (After a pause)
Continue.

Sexby: Do you not think it were a sad and miserable condition that we have fought all this time for nothing?
All here, both great and small, think we fought for something. If not, it had been good in you to have advertised us of it, and I believe you would have had fewer under your command to have commanded

MURMURS OF AGREEMENT

Ireton: May I ask that gentleman that spoke whether when they drew out to serve the Parliament in the beginning, whether then they thought that they should have as great interest in Parliament as freeholders had, or, whether from the beginning you did not engage for the liberty of Parliaments, and that after we should be concluded by the laws that parliament did make?

Rainborough: Aye, like the one freehold gentlemen make that when they do fall out among themselves they are free from being pressed, but shall press the poor scrubs to come and kill one another for them.

Petty: (To Ireton) I understood the battle was so that you would use all your endeavours for securing the liberties of the people. If there is such a constitution that the people are not free, that constitution should be annulled, and the constitution now of having forty shillings a year, doth not make the people free.

Sexby: (to Cromwell)

... And truly, sir, as for your putting off this question, and coming to some other, we cannot settle upon any other till this be done. It was the ground that we took up arms, and it is the ground that we shall maintain. I shall be loath to make a rend and a division, but for my own part, unless I see this put to a vote, I despair of a result.

Cromwell: No, we will not

Rainborough: Sir, I am sorry for some reflection and some passion, and if there was any offence that was given. You think we shall be worse than we are if we come to a conclusion by a vote, but if the question be put then we shall all know one another's mind.

CRIES OF AYE AND A VOTE, A VOTE

Soldier 2: It is not easy for us to say when this dispute will have an end – but I think it easy to say when the kingdom will have an end. If it is to be decided by a vote and all parties are satisfied in that, I think the sooner you hasten to it the better.

Cromwell: I have not heard the Commissary General here answered, not in any part, to my knowledge, not of the detail objection he did raise. Not a tittle, and so if you would put this paper to the vote without any qualifications, I doubt whether it would pass so freely. If there be no equality in our minds, then I grieve for it. I think we have been a great while upon this point, and If we be as long upon all the rest, it were well if there were no greater difference than this. Therefore, when I see there is an extremity of difference between you, I move for a committee that it may be brought nearer to a general satisfaction (Hammers loudly on table) Gentlemen, we will return on the morrow with some resolution...(They begin to disperse murmuring with each other – Lights to black.)

Scene 7

Lights come up on Lord of Misrule and Chicken who have replaced the soldiers sitting in the tavern scene)

Lord: (waving a string of sausages)
A brewer may be bold as Hector
When he's had a drop of nectar

I baptise you in the name of (waves sausages again)

Chicken: Churchwarden William will have you for bringing them sausages into here

Lord: It's alright, This isn't a church, it's a play day, and where's that wench with her flagon?

Chicken: Gone to help Warden William take down the crucifix's I dare say

Lord:
Get away ... sings
"Whatever the Popish hands have built
Our hammers shall undo
We'll break their pipes and burn their copes
And pull down churches too"

Chicken: It is their way of winning our hearts and minds.

Lord: By pulling down Christmas too? What harm did a pudding and a cracker ever do?

Chicken:
Don't start on your old hobbyhorse again. Haven't you noticed times are changed? If you want to practise your heathen devilry here you must sit the UK test.

Lord: If this country still don't have a constitution that's writ down then how can I be tested on it?

Chicken: Then you can be tested on our bill of rights

Lord: When we get it.

Chicken: So until then you'll remain without influence and totally unruly and God save your bacon!

Lord: Like them Levellers, I'll find God's salvation at the bottom of the bottle

Chicken: I'll join you down there, with all the other Bushes, Blair's, Browns and bastards

(They clink tankards)

Lord/Chicken: Your health, your liberty!

Scene 8.

(Lights come up on Church where everyone is already gathered – Cromwell calls their attention with a couple of strikes of the gavel.)

Cromwell:

On this 1st day of November 1647, it has been agreed by all the committee's appointed by this council that

1. The elections of members for the House of Commons shall be distributed to render the House, as near as maybe, representatives of the whole body of people that are to elect.
 2. The qualification of the people that shall have voices in the elections, and also of those that shall be capable of being elected, be determined so as to give as much enlargement to common freedom as may be – Where in we desire that all free born Englishmen, who have served the parliament in the late war for the liberties of the Kingdom, and were in service before the engagement at Naseby on the 14 day of June 1645 (aside) You will recall that after our victory there, some 7,000 of the Kings army crossed to our side) Those who were in the service before that date, or have voluntarily assisted the parliament in the said war with money or arms, be admitted to have voices in the elections for the respective counties or divisions where in they shall inhabit. And for that purpose, that no person what so ever, who has been in hostility against the parliament in the late war, shall have a voice or be elected until the second biennial parliament be passed.
 3. That no piers made since the 21st day of May 1642, or here after to be made shall be admitted or capable to sit or vote in parliament without the consent of both Houses.
- (Pause)

I declare that we all here be agreed to this and have signed to it thus.

(General murmurs of confirmation.)

Wildman: (Standing)

Sir, while it be well that some union hath been arrived at betwixt the Generals Council and the regiments Agitators, there be still some words left on behalf of the regiments agents for me to speak on.

Cromwell: Be it so Mr Wildman? Proceed then will you.

Wildman: The matter rests on the vast difference in Commissary General Ireton's Proposals and the one we have here today. In that one the armed force is riveted in slavery by it being instated in the King and Lords, and not in the Commons, and this is where there is the foundation of a future quarrel constantly laid. However, the main thing was that in your proposals the King was to have his veto, his negative voice, whereby the people and Army that have fought against him, would be at his mercy. With this negative voice, the Parliament are but as so many ciphers, so many round zeros, and with the vote or no, the godly people are turned over and trampled upon in most places of the kingdom.

Petty: Aye, truly I cannot but think that both the power of the King and Lords was ever a branch of tyranny, and if ever a people shall free themselves from tyranny,

certainly it is after seven years war and fighting for their liberty. If, as in your paper, the constitution of the kingdom shall be established as formerly, it might rivet tyranny into this kingdom more strongly than before.

(Pause)

Cromwell: (Considering hard, then) Continue, we would hear what you propose...

Wildman: Well, How will our new paper provide anything other? I shall say in that it doth lay down the foundations of freedom for all manner of people, beginning with the soldiery. Whereas we found a great uncertainty in your Proposals, which implied that they should go to the King for an Act of protection, and thus the King might command his judges to hang them up for what they did in the wars, because, the present constitution being left as it was, nothing is law but what the King signs, and no decree of Parliament is made without his consent.

Ireton: Sir! Your case doth so abuse the General and General Council of the Army, stating that such and such things have been done that made them do thus and thus, that I cannot leave it unanswered. There is not one thing in our Proposals, nor in what was declared, that doth give the King any negative voice. This is part of the scandal amongst others heard in this place. We do not give the King any negative voice; we do but take the King as a man with whom we have been at a difference, one with whom we propound terms of peace.

Cromwell: Indeed.

Ireton: You say that in our former papers we go to establish the King's rights before taking away the people's grievances. But in our general declarations, we first desired a purging of this Parliament, and a provision for the certainty of future Parliaments and if the King shall agree to these things, then we desire his rights may be considered, so far as may consist with the rights of the people.

Cromwell: And, for a great part they do consist.

Ireton: Further, it was said by you that our want was to put the soldiers out of the way. It is said that whereas before we were not a mercenary army – now we are! But to say that we should prefer the King's rights before a general good was as unworthy and as unchristian an injury as ever was done to us.

Wildman: But when you say the King shall be restored to his personal rights, you do say the legislative power to be partly in him still...and To give the King a legislative power is contrary to his own oath at this coronation. And as for the Lords, seeing the foundation of all justice is in the election of the people, it is unjust that they should have any power.

Ireton: There hath been such an agreement before when the people have fought for their liberty and did establish the King again.

Wildman: 'Twas their superstition back then, to have such an opinion of a great man.

Cromwell: Take heed Mr Wildman, that great man you speak so freely of, be the King.

Wildman: I think it will be very shameful in future chronicles, that after so much blood, there should be no greater issue for the commons than according to the letter of the law, if the King will, he may kill me by law, AYE TRULY ...!

Ireton: When the King stands thus bound with so many laws about him, he will not hazard himself to kill this, or that, or any other man.

Goffe: (Standing)

Sir, Truly I am very tender in this thing; if we shall wait for God, and if God shall speak to us and we not hearken, we shall bring much evil upon ourselves. it seems to me evident that there hath been a voice from Heaven to us that we have sinned against the Lord in tampering with his enemies and because of this I dare not open my mouth for the upholding of that kingly power neither can I run ahead of time, but urge that we wait upon God...

Sexby: (Standing with vigour.) Oh – the Lord hath put you into a state – or at least suffered you to run yourselves into such a one that you know not where you are. You are in a wilderness condition. We find in the word of God” I would heal Babylon, but she would not be healed.” I think we have gone about to heal Babylon when she would not. We are going about to set up that power of Kings which God will destroy, which will be but as a burdensome stone “that whosoever shall fall upon it, it will destroy him.” This is the reason of the straits that are in hand.

Cromwell: And truly again I think we should take heed what we speak in the name of the Lord ... But I shall speak a word to that which Lieutenant Colonel Goffe said, because it seems to come as a reproof to me – and I shall be willing to receive a reproof when it come in love. Our differences are not so much in the end as in the way. The end is to deliver this nation from oppression and slavery – to accomplish the word that God has carried us on in. We agree thus far. I think we may go farther – that we all apprehend danger from the person of the King and from the Lords. So that part of the difference that seems to be among us is whether they can be preserved with safety to the Kingdom. First of all, on the one part, we cannot with justice and righteousness at the present destroy all the interest they have in the public affairs of the Kingdom. On the other hand, those who differ from this say that there is not any safety or security to the liberty of the kingdom, and to the public interest, if you do retain them at all.

Wildman:

When you sir speak of the differences between us, I think there are so many as not easily to be reckoned up. How is it just or reasonable to punish those with death that according to the King’s command, make war, yet then to agree there is mercy for him who was the great contriver of war ‘n all!

Everard:

Indeed sir we are confident this may be our destruction if the King be preserved.

Cromwell:

Sirs! (Slams the gavel down) I did not speak of destroying the King!

EVERYONE LOOKS AT Cromwell

(Military drum roll outside - the loudest it has been... while soldier appears briefly in spot and brings axe down on the crown. The drum quietens to a low menacing rhythm that plays until the end. Light up on tavern.)

Soldier 1

Some do say t'was at Putney that the first utterances did occur that came to turn this Kingdom to a temporary republic.

(Lights up on Tower)

Mark this well, ye freeman of England – after these fair blossoms of hopeful liberty, breaks forth a bitter fruit.

Soldier 2:

Aye, a republic, but under a fist tight Cromwell who did squeeze dry them seeds we did begin to water at Putney.

Lilburne:

Before, we were ruled by Kings, Lords and Commons, and now, by a General, a court Martial and Commons, and we pray you, what is the difference?

(Back at the debates)

Ireton: (Attempting to diffuse the tension)

Sirs, I fear this business is grown much heightened, and yet I do not know, by all that hath been said, that the King or Lords are more fastened on us than before.

Everard:

Ah! we should learn from our ancestors that the sword is the only thing that has ever recovered our rights –they recovered their liberties from the Danes and the Normans by the sword, when they were under such a slavery that an Englishman was as hateful then as an Irishman is now!

Rainborough:

Sir, I move that the Army may be called to a general assembly of all the soldiers where by these vital Matters can be settled.

Cromwell (Bangs his hammer.)

The Army will conform to those things that are within their sphere. I think it is their proper place to conform to the Parliament that first gave them their being.

Soldier 1: And what other betrayals and corruptions did unfold after that debate...

Soldier 2: Like the King escaping from Hampton a few days later and fleeing to the Isle of White...

Soldier 1: and Cromwell's suppression of the mutiny to support our people's paper some weeks later at Corkbush

Soldier 2: and the arrest of Wildman, Lilburne still in the Tower and Rainborough murdered by Royalists in the North.

Lilburne:

Truly, did I not consider there is a just, righteous and powerful God in Heaven, I should even be overwhelmed with sorrow and grief. I had thought the happy time was come when I should have balm poured into my wounds, and that by my stripes England would be healed. Is this the Cromwell that supported me originally in my contest against the Lords?

Cromwell:

I perceive there are several disobligations to my orders in calling a general assembly. I conceive it is not in the power of any particular men, or any particular man in the Army to call a general assembly of a troop or regiment, or in the least disoblige the Army from the command of the General, which be destructive to every man in the Army.

Soldier 1: And what did It all do but to bring us back to a second war again

Soldier 2: one that did bring the King to trial and his head to the block.

Cromwell:

I have been informed by some of the King's party that if they give us enough rope, we will hang ourselves. We shall hang ourselves if we do not conform to the rules and discipline of war, therefore I move here that what we centre upon must be the rules of war and our authority from Parliament. We are like a drowning man, if it be but a hare swimming over the Thames, he will take hold of it rather than let it go!

Lilburne:

Is this that valiant, just and faithful Cromwell whose courage daunted the most daring champion of kingly, lordly interest? He has visibly shaken hands with those he accused and judged to be enemies to the peace and liberties of England. It is he, Cromwell, who is the General that hath now turned his cannon upon his own men

Soldier 1: Ah But for those 3 days in the midst of it all in Putney...

Soldier 2: the light did extend to shine on all of us

Soldier 1: and, if only for a short time, we did rightly step forward and lay down the principles of involvement for all in the foundational affairs of this country

(Slow light to fade on soldiers while the drum rises, then abruptly cuts out.)

Scene 9.

(Enter Lord of Misrule and Chicken.)

Lord:

"Ladies and gentlemen,
Our story is ended,
Our moneybox is recommended;
Five or six shillings will not do us harm,
Silver, or copper, or gold if you can."

Chicken:

Or we pray you some bread, some good ale, some new cheese, some old cheese, some custards, some cracknels, some cakes, some flauns, some tarts, some creams, some meat, some one thing and another to maintain these execrable pass times.

Lord:

Dig deep now while you join us in song...

(The organ strikes for the closing hymn – Audience stand to sing...)

Lord: (Passing around the collecting sack)

We thank you Ladies and Gentlemen, be generous with your hand!

END

September 2007.

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Possible end with: I Vow to thee my country

(Organ begins and audience stand to sing the Hymn
‘I vow to thee my country’)

“I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love.
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best.
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know.
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering.
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.

END

July 2007.