

## CHAPTER XIII

### WORK OF THE PROTECTORATE COUNCILS

THE work of the privy council of the protectorate was large and varied. It was much like that of the councils of state and of the committee of both houses preceding; and it was even more like that of the privy council before the civil wars and the fall of the king. It can be studied partly in what the council accomplished in its various sessions, partly in what was done by numerous and active committees, to be considered later on. As in chapters preceding, it is probably a dull and laborious theme, to be constructed from a vast abundance of details that made the life and the work of the council. As before, a glimpse may be had by studying the council in some of its sessions; better understanding by grouping the activities in what seem to have been the main categories of work.

At a meeting in March 1654, at which eleven members of the council were present, "The Lord President reported that he hath p<sup>r</sup>esented unto his Highnes, the Lo. Protect<sup>r</sup> these Ordinances which his Highnes doth approue": an ordinance for reviving an act of parliament for impressing seamen; an ordinance imposing a tax of four pence a pint on Scots ale and beer in Edinburgh; an ordinance for the relief of persons who had acted in the service of parliament. Respecting forty orders during the month preceding: "His Highnes the Lord Protecto<sup>r</sup> was this day attended by the Lo: Presid<sup>t</sup> with the seuerall Ord<sup>r</sup>s following Which being read by M<sup>r</sup>: Jessop, His High<sup>nes</sup> did in his Lo<sup>pp</sup>s p<sup>r</sup>esence approve the same." <sup>1</sup> It should be noted that

<sup>1</sup> S. P. D., Interregnum, I 75, 23 March 1653-4.

whereas orders, proceedings, decisions and other things done in the council of the Stuart kings had been known as "causes" or "acts," in the protector's council the term "ordinance" was frequently used not merely with respect to proceedings essentially legislative—what had formerly been known as acts when passed by parliament, and ordinances when passed in the privy council—but also with respect to various proceedings, decisions, and orders. During this time, for example, the standing committees of the council seem to have been appointed by ordinances of the council, and not merely named as formerly it had been done.<sup>2</sup>

In August 1655, at a meeting of the lord protector and nine of the council, passes were granted to various persons to go beyond the seas, and numerous petitions referred for consideration. Ordered that two weeks pay, which was to be given out of the sum of £ 92,000 appropriated from money arising out of compositions, sequestrations, or sale of delinquents' estates, which was not available, however, because insufficient money had come in from these sources, should be made up to the extent of some £ 10,800 "out of any other monyes in their hands." And that "they doe reimburse the same out of the next monies that shalbe paid unto them out of the Excheq<sup>r</sup> upon the said Seale." Until further notice, Sir Thomas Vyner and Alderman Riccard not to pay from £ 85,000 deposited in their hands, any more of the £ 30,000 previously ordered to be paid to the East India Company. Consideration of certain navy business to be on the following morning. Provision of victuals to be made for 8,000 men for the fleet for six months for the winter guard. The admiralty commissioners to consider whether the navy victualling could be better managed by contract or by themselves.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xlii, 26, 31 December 1653.

Three of the council were appointed to consider the state of the treasuries, what allowance might be regularly supplied for the navy. The petition of certain inventors was referred to the lord mayor and the aldermen of London for their report.<sup>3</sup>

As the privy council had assisted the king in important government matters, so now the protector's council took part in management and affairs of state. In December 1653 was prepared in the council a proclamation for continuing commissions and courts of law:

That all persons who on the tenth day of this instant Decemb<sup>r</sup>; were duly and lawfully possessed of any place of Judicature or office of Authority, Jurisdiction or Governm<sup>t</sup> with in this Co<sup>m</sup>onwealth, shall be, and shall soe hold themselves continued in the said Offices and places respectively, as formerly they held & enjoyed the same, and not otherwise, untill his Highnesse pleasure be further knowne. And all Comissions, Patents and other Grants, which respect or relate unto the doeing and executing of publike Justice, and all proceedings of what nature soever, in Courts of Co<sup>m</sup>on Law or equity, or in the Court of Admiralty, or by Co<sup>m</sup>mission<sup>s</sup> of Sewers shall stand and be in the same and like force to all intents and purposes as the same were on the said tenth day of this instant Decemb<sup>r</sup>;, untill further Order given by his Highnesse therein.

The draft of this proclamation, presented to the protector with the advice of the council, was by his highness with consent of the council passed and ordered to be printed and published.<sup>4</sup> In April 1654, at a meeting of the lord protector and eight of the council, the ordinance for uniting Scotland in one commonwealth with England was

<sup>3</sup> S. P. D., Interregnum, I 76, 1 August 1655.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I 75, 21 December 1653.

read for the third time and the blanks filled up at the table; whereupon it was passed by his highness with consent of the council.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after: "The Lord President reports his Highnesse approbation of the Writt for election of Members to Parliament, which was now passed."<sup>6</sup>

During much of this time Cromwell and his privy council ruled England with as much authority and decision as Charles I and his privy councillors had in the era preceding. A fortnight after the protector had dismissed his first parliament elected under the Instrument of Government:

The Cōmittee of the Councell [to which the matter had been referred] report amendments to the Order & Declarac̄on of his Highnesse the Lord Protector with the advise of his Councell, for an Assessment of Three score thousand pounds by the moneth for six moneths for and towards the maintenance of the Armyes and Navyes of this Cōmonwealth, and the whole order w<sup>th</sup> the amendments was read by parts, and severall alterac̄ons and omissions being agreed, the whole soe amended was assented unto, and with this Title was passed and Ordered to be presented to his Highnesse as the advise of the Councell.

Next day it was approved by the protector and ordered to be printed and published.<sup>7</sup> In March the council settled the civil government of Scotland.<sup>8</sup> In the council were drawn up the instructions to the major generals for governing the districts of England.<sup>9</sup> In March 1658 it was ordered "That the Councell be Sumond prticularly to be present, precisely at Nine of the Clock to-morrow morning, upon important business by the Special Comaund of his Highness."<sup>10</sup> In the council officers and officials were

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 April 1654.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 May 1654.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 7 February 1654-5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 March 1655.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 22, 24 August 1655.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, I 78, 25 March 1658.

appointed. In council, in June 1655, the protector in person approved the appointment of Miles Corbett as chief baron of the court of exchequer in Ireland.<sup>11</sup>

The council was essentially an advisory and executive body, occupied with problems of administration, but circumstances of the time caused it to be much concerned with legislative work as well. It was asserted from the start that the lord protector and his council had power until the next meeting of parliament "to make Lawes & Ordinances for the peace and welfare of these Nations, where it shall bee necessary, which shall be binding and in force untill order shall be taken in Parlam<sup>t</sup> concerning the same."<sup>12</sup> The council at once proceeded to prepare a bill for renewing the former powers for probate of wills, and this bill was quickly passed.<sup>13</sup> At the same time order was given to bring in to the council "the draught of an Act for confirming of the Excise till further order."<sup>14</sup> For 1659 a remaining index book of the council record contains note of an "Act to be p<sup>r</sup>pared for Treason" and an "Act for such as have served p<sup>t</sup> of their tyme of Apprenticeship in the warres to be p<sup>r</sup>pred."<sup>15</sup> To Thurloe, secretary of the council, was entrusted the task of making ready for enrolling and publication "the Instrument entitled The Government of the Co<sup>m</sup>onwealth."<sup>16</sup>

The privy council of the protector had much to do with the procuring of revenue, appropriation of money, and management of taxation, and finance. In 1654 the council referred it to the committee for inspection of the treasuries to consider how £ 7,000 might be speedily provided for contingencies of the council.<sup>17</sup> A little later an ordinance presented by a committee of the council for bringing

<sup>11</sup> S. P. D., Interregnum, I 76, 13 June 1655.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, I 75, 21 December 1653.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, 21 December 1653.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, I 85, col. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, I 75, 20 December 1653.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 April 1654.

the public revenues of the commonwealth into one treasury was read, amended, and passed, by the protector with consent of the council.<sup>18</sup> In 1655 there was an order "That it be referred" to certain ones "to consider of and prepare something to be offered to the Counsell for the better Collecting the Customes and Excise in Scotland."<sup>19</sup> A little later it was ordered by the protector and his council that the committee for the army should issue warrants to the treasurers at war authorizing them to send, out of the moneys designed for the forces in Ireland, £40,000 by wagons to Chester, thence by ships, as the commissioners of the admiralty should direct, to be taken to Dublin for the forces in Ireland.<sup>20</sup> In September 1655: "Ordered That all such monyes as shalbe paid into the receipt of his Highnes Excheq<sup>r</sup> this weeke shalbe paid unto the Treasurer of the Nauy for the service of the Nauy and that the Com<sup>rs</sup> of the Treary doe take care the same be done".<sup>21</sup> In 1657 the council referred to a committee of eight members consideration of the whole question of public money, particularly payment of the protector's household, the council's contingencies, payment of the public officers, allotment of revenue to the army and the navy, and how £300,000 for the government's charges might best be obtained.<sup>22</sup> A little later the council referred it to the committee "for the affaires of money" to consider the state of the revenue payable into the receipt of his highness's exchequer, and the sum<sup>r</sup> charged on that receipt, and what would be fit to be offered upon this debate "for making the Charge thereon, proporconable to the Income."<sup>23</sup>

As was the case with councils preceding, the protector's council had much to do with management and direction of

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 June 1654

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 June 1655.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 13 June 1655.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 September 1655.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, I 78, 21 July 1657.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 September 1657.

the army and the navy—much more with the navy than the army, which was in this unusual time so largely of a law to itself—though a great part of army and of navy administration, as in previous times, was managed by subordinate or related “committees” or boards.

In January 1655 the treasurers at war attending the council, pursuant to an order of the day before, four members of the council were deputed to withdraw from the council chamber and speak with the treasurers about the business for which their presence was required.<sup>24</sup> Shortly after, the protector with the advice of his council referred it to the committee for the army to send into the several counties printed copies of an order for assessment of £ 60,000 a month for six months, for the maintenance of the army and the navy, and to see to the execution of the order.<sup>25</sup> In 1655 the lord protector and his council ordered the committee for the army forthwith to issue their warrant to the treasurer at war to pay to a certain one £ 400 for army expenses.<sup>26</sup>

The protector’s council was often occupied with matters that concerned administration of the navy. Immediately on beginning its work the council ordered “That the Com<sup>rs</sup> for Inspections [appointed by parliament to inspect the “treasuries”] be desired to prepare an Act for renewing the power of the Trear<sup>r</sup> of the Navy and to bring in the same to the Councell with the first opportunity.”<sup>27</sup> During the commonwealth period there had, for administration of naval matters, been instituted a board of commissioners for the admiralty, which now continued to function; and a parliamentary committee for the navy had recently done much work. In January 1654, the council authorized the admiralty commissioners, some of them

<sup>24</sup> S. P. D., Interregnum, I 75, 24 January 1654-5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 February 1654-5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 13 December 1655.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, I 75, 20 December 1653.

members of the council, to give warrants to the treasurer of the navy for the payment of all monies due for stores and ammunition, and to contract for ammunition and stores to supply the armies and the garrisons, the treasurer of the navy to pay such warrants as the commissioners from time to time issued for such purpose.<sup>28</sup> In June 1654 an ordinance of the council was passed continuing the commission for managing the affairs of the admiralty and the navy.<sup>29</sup> Somewhat later the council drew up instructions for the commissioners, and still later installed them at Derby House, where the parliamentary councils of pre-commonwealth times had so often assembled.<sup>30</sup>

In June 1655 the council ordered that debate about the fleet commanded by General Blake should be resumed first thing the next morning, and that the commissioners of the admiralty and the navy should attend the council.<sup>31</sup> A few days later "At the Councill at Whitehall" the protector and councillors referred it to the commissioners of the admiralty to provide with all speed thirteen weeks' victuals for 3,500 men who were to be continued with Blake.<sup>32</sup> Shortly after: "The Letter to Generall Blake from his Highness was read and agreed to be sent."<sup>33</sup> At a meeting of the council in July it was resolved that next morning there should be consideration of naval affairs.<sup>34</sup> In November 1655 a commission and lengthy instructions to the commissioners of the admiralty and the navy, having been referred to a committee of the privy council, and by the committee presented to the council,

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 January 1653-4.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 13 June 1654.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 September 1654, 25 January 1654-5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 5 June 1655.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, xcvi, 8 June 1655.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 13 June 1655.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 July 1655.



were amended, passed, ordered to be presented to the protector, and then by the protector approved.<sup>35</sup>

At a meeting in 1656 Lambert and Desborough were ordered to withdraw and confer with the commissioners of the admiralty about business then in debate before the council.<sup>36</sup> In 1657, the protector and eight being present, it was ordered "That the whole business of the Fleet be taken into Consideration, at the Counsell, to morrow morning."<sup>37</sup> At another meeting, of the lord protector and nine, was presented a letter from the commissioners of the admiralty and navy, with two letters enclosed—one from the commissioners of the navy, another from the victuallers of the navy—about the necessity of providing money for the navy. Ordered that the council meet again that afternoon to consider the matter.<sup>38</sup> In 1658 the council ordered the commissioners to send necessary provisions to the garrison at Yarmouth.<sup>39</sup>

Local affairs always claimed some of the attention of the council in England, though there was not now, apparently, the minute and constant supervision once given by the privy councils of James I and Charles I. In 1654 Cromwell's council ordered that a committee of the council be appointed for regulation of the justices of the peace throughout the nation.<sup>40</sup> In 1658 the council advised his highness that he would be pleased to issue a proclamation prohibiting all horse racing for the next eight months.<sup>41</sup>

In 1657, following a petition from Quakers, President Lawrence wrote to the justices of the peace: <sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> S. P. D., Interregnum, I 76, 8, 9 November 1655.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, I 77, 22 May 1656.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, I 78, 22 September 1657.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 December 1657.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, clxxx, 20 April 1658.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, I 75, 3 January 1653-4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, I 78, 8 April 1658.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, clvii. 88, undated, but apparently relating to 10 November 1657.

His Highness and the Councell haue received seu'all addresses on the behalfe of diurse prsons cōmonly called Quakers who are imprisoned in seuerall places some of them for not pulling off their hatts others for not finding sureties for the good behauior, or for their retorne to their owne houses and some of them haue layne long in prison and not likely to get out by conforming to what might be expected from them and becomes them to doe, His Highnes and the Councell though they are farre from giving any Countenance to the mistaken principles or practises of such men especially in their disturbance of godly Ministers or in any affronts put uppon Magestrates whose dignity ought to be maintained, yet finding that the same doth for the most part p'ceed rather from a spirit of error wch hath seduced them then from a malicious opposīon to authority in wch case they (especially such among them as are otherwise of sober Conversāon) are to be pittied and dealt w<sup>th</sup> as p'rons und<sup>r</sup> a strong delusion who chuse rather to suffer & p'ish then to doe any thing contrary to their strange ungrounded and Corrupt principles. therefore his Highnes and the Councell haue thought fitt to recomēd their Condīon unto yo<sup>r</sup> prudence to take such Course for the discharge of such of them as are in prisons within yo<sup>r</sup> County as (having put a discountenance on their miscarriages) their liues may be preserued, diurse of them hauing died in their imprisonments. And that out of a tendernes towards such poore deluded persons you would as much as in you lyes endeavo<sup>r</sup> to prevent this running into such Contempts for not giving that Civill report wch they owe to you as Magestrates when they are brought before you, by Causing their hatts to be pulled off before hand. or that for such contempts such punishment may be inflicted as may rather discounten̄nce their folly then

endang<sup>r</sup> their Liues. His Highnes & the Councell iudg-  
ing it safer in dealing w<sup>th</sup> persons whose miscarriages  
arise rather from defects in their understanding then  
from malice in their wills to exercise too much lenity  
then too much severity.

There was also not a little council business concerning  
Scotland, Ireland, and the plantations. In 1655 the pro-  
tector and the council drew up instructions for "his High-  
nes Councell in Scotland for the Government of that  
Nation."<sup>43</sup> A year later a letter from the council in  
Scotland to the privy council in England, concerning the  
fines in Scotland, along with papers sent also, was referred  
to the committee of the council for Scotland to consider  
and report.<sup>44</sup> On another occasion the privy council or-  
dered "That the Quorum of the Counsell in Scotland  
be reduced to the Number of three."<sup>45</sup> In 1658 an act of  
the common councii of Edinburgh—that all buyers or  
sellers of ale there should pay four pence Scots for every  
Scots pint, to discharge the corporation's debt of £ 54,761,  
being presented to the lord protector and his council, was  
approved, provided it were not contrary to law.<sup>46</sup> In the  
summer of 1655, at a council of the protector and nine,  
it was ordered that the lord deputy of Ireland should be  
asked to come to London as soon as he could, to confer  
about Irish affairs.<sup>47</sup> In 1656 a petition of the agents for  
Virginia and the other plantations on Chesapeake Bay  
was referred to a committee of the council.<sup>48</sup>

The council of the protectorate was much occupied with  
foreign affairs. As in the earlier period much that related  
to diplomacy and to negotiation and correspondence with  
foreign states was dealt with by the committee of the  
council for foreign affairs; but much of it also was handled

<sup>43</sup> S. P. D., Interregnum, I 76A, 30 March 1655.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, I 77, 16 May 1656.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 August 1656.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, I 78, 27 July 1658.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 26 July 1655.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, I 77, 15 July 1656.

by the council itself—more, perhaps, than in the earlier period, before 1640, when the foreign committee, under the king, was monopolizing more and more of the conduct of important foreign relations, and much more than after the restoration, when the privy council committee of foreign affairs engrossed important foreign business, then all other important business, and gradually as “the committee” or cabinet, superseded the privy council in effect.

The council, or more usually committees of the council, conferred with representatives of foreign powers. In 1654 the lord protector in council ordered that certain members of the council be commissioners to treat with the ambassador extraordinary from the French king, while others were to treat with the ambassador from Spain.<sup>49</sup> On another occasion the protector ordered three of the council to treat with the ambassador from Genoa.<sup>50</sup> In June 1655 the council arranged to meet again that afternoon to consider papers brought by the Spanish ambassador, Secretary Thurloe to have them ready.<sup>51</sup> A few days after, the council was to consider letters from France about distressed Protestants, who were subjects of the duke of Savoy.<sup>52</sup> In August at a council of nine, the protector present, a letter from Geneva to the secretary was read. “Ordered That a Letter be prepared by M<sup>r</sup> Sec<sup>ry</sup> according to the sence of the present Debate to be sent to M<sup>r</sup> Moreland.”<sup>53</sup> At a meeting in May 1656, the secretary presented some letters from his highness s agent in Portugal. They were considered, and ordered to be further debated next morning.<sup>54</sup> On another occasion the council referred it to the commissioners of the admiralty and the navy, to consider and offer their opinion, whether an English consul should be appointed at Tetuan on the Barbary

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, I 75, 4 April 1654.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 5 June 1655.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 August 1655.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 January 1654-5.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 June 1655.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, I 77, 5 May 1656.

Coast.<sup>56</sup> In 1657 the secretary presented a memorial from the duke of Courland to the protector; read, then referred to two of the council to consider fitting instructions to his highness's agent at Hamburg concerning the matter.<sup>56</sup>

Ambassadors from abroad were sometimes received with much entertainment and care. In August 1657 the council ordered Secretary Strickland to give directions about entertaining Don Francisco de Mello, ambassador from Portugal. He was to arrange for a house for the ambassador and a steward to serve him; two of the council to receive and conduct him to his lodgings; from the council's contingencies £300 to be paid for expense of the ambassador's diet; he to be allowed a diet of fifty dishes for the first and second course, and thirty of fruits and sweetmeats for each meal, with a convenient allowance for his attendants; seven meals at the state's charge to be given in the ambassador's entertainment; the plate required to be provided; twelve of the council's messengers to carry dishes and wait at the table.<sup>57</sup>

At a meeting of the council in 1657 the secretary was bidden to inform the Swedish resident and agent what he had just told the council concerning the English resident at Hamburg, communicating the sense of the council therein, and then report to the council.<sup>58</sup> A little later the council arranged an afternoon meeting to consider further a paper from the Portuguese ambassador.<sup>59</sup> In 1658 the secretary presented to the council letters from the English ambassador who had been sent to the king of France; and the letters were read.<sup>60</sup>

At a meeting in April 1658 the secretary reported various bills of exchange from public ministers abroad,

<sup>56</sup> S. P. D., Interregnum, cliii, 8 January 1656-7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, I 78, 14 July 1657.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 August 1657.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1<sup>o</sup> September 1657.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1<sup>o</sup> June 1658.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 October 1657.

charged on a certain Martin Noel, for sums due on account of their negotiations—the envoy to Sweden about £ 1000, the ambassador to France £ 1000, the envoy to Denmark about £ 500, the resident in Holland £ 200: order thereupon to the treasury commissioners to pay to the treasurer of the council's contingencies, he to pay the agent; a committee of council to consider how best these sums and others might be paid, and report to the council.<sup>61</sup>

In connection with its work the council issued numerous orders and warrants, considered many petitions, and like the councils preceding allowed passes for going abroad. On one day in August 1655 the lord protector approved eleven orders of the council.<sup>62</sup> A great number of warrants was issued for the payment of money, or for ordering that something be done.<sup>63</sup> In February 1655 a letter from the commissioners of the treasury was read in the council, that £ 100,000 was required for the pressing needs of the navy. So the council advised his highness to issue warrants under the great seal for the commissioners of the treasury to pay to the treasurer of the navy £ 100,000 to carry on the service of the navy and the land stores.<sup>64</sup> In 1658, shortly after the death of Oliver Cromwell, the lord president of the council was authorized to issue warrants.<sup>65</sup> The council also issued many warrants allowing passes for persons desiring to go abroad.<sup>66</sup>

The council of the protectorate gave out many proclamations and declarations.<sup>67</sup> In 1657, at a council of ten, to which also came the protector, a proclamation set apart a day for solemn fasting and prayer: <sup>68</sup>

His Highness the Lord Protector, and his privy Counsell taking notice of the hand of God, w<sup>ch</sup>, at this

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 April 1658.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 2 August 1655.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 February 1654-5.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, I 75, 16 March 1653-4, 30 March 1655.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76A.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, I 75.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, I 84, col. 43.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, I 78, 13 August 1657.

tyme, is gonne out ag<sup>t</sup> this Nacon, in the present Visitation by Sicknesse, that is much Spread on the Land, w<sup>ch</sup> calls upon the people of this Nacon to humble themselves in a Solemne manner before the Lord, and to seeke his face in reference thereunto.

The protector's privy council, like the other councils before it, gave orders to commit to prison. In 1656 the protector and seven councillors ordered that Colonel Matthew Allured be committed to the Isle of Man, and that Colonel Nathaniel Rich be kept prisoner at Windsor Castle.<sup>69</sup>

As always, there were many petitions to be dealt with. In 1654 "The humble petition of Mary Gernon the wife of Luke Gernon referred by his Highnesse to the Council was this day read."<sup>70</sup> Many petitions came to the protector, he referring them usually to the privy council, while many others were addressed to the council itself. Sometimes considered in council, more frequently they were referred to committees appointed temporarily to examine them.<sup>71</sup> In 1655 a petition beautifully written to the lord protector was by him referred to the council with recommendation that the petitioner be satisfied.<sup>72</sup> In 1658 the council ordered the petition of certain merchants of London referred to the commissioners of the admiralty and the navy, they to consider and report to the council on the next Thursday.<sup>73</sup>

Evidently business connected with petitions encroached on the time of the council. The committee appointed to consider petitions was enlarged in September 1655.<sup>74</sup> Shortly after a standing committee of all the members of the council, or any three of them, was appointed to

<sup>69</sup> S. P. D., Interregnum, I 77, 14 August 1656.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, I 75, 10 March 1653-4.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, xcvi, 25 May 1655.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, clxxiii, 19 October 1658.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 25 September 1655.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, I 121.

consider all petitions addressed to the council, by reference from the protector or otherwise, and deal with them in order, unless special direction of the council to the contrary was given. This committee was to have the room adjoining the council chamber. The council set aside every Thursday to receive the committee's report.<sup>75</sup> From time to time, however, particular petitions were otherwise dealt with. In 1656 the petition of certain merchants of Bristol was referred by the protector to the council, and by the council to a committee of four of the council's members.<sup>76</sup> At a meeting of the council about this time, "On the Question put whether the Counsell shall sitt to morrow for heareing of Reports on private petiçions It passed in the Negative."<sup>77</sup> On another occasion it was arranged that the reports prepared by the committee of the council for petitions should be considered on the following Tuesday.<sup>78</sup>

At a meeting of the protector and eleven of the council in August 1655, a certain one who had been summoned was questioned whether he had penned and dispersed a paper entitled "the humble peticon of the ffreeholders and other welaffected people of this Comonwealth etc." He admitted having written it, as a lawyer in behalf of clients for whom he was counsel about some of the particulars mentioned. When he had learned that the petition was disliked, however, he had stopped distribution of the printed copies. He was commanded to withdraw. "And being againe called in his Highness did sharpely reprove him for diverse passages in the Peticon being against the Governmt and Comaunded him to proceed noe further in this busines." He was ordered to call in all the papers put out, and deliver those which he had to the council.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 November 1655.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 January 1655-6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, I 78, 20 August 1657.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 January 1655-6.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, I 76, 14 August 1655.