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Ship-money collections in the city of London 1634-1640

Ramsey Douglas Ackerman

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SHIP-MONEY COLLECTIONS
IN THE CITY OF LONDON,
1634-1640

by

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B. A., Montana State University
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PREFACE

Some knowledge of the governmental organization of the City of London will provide assistance in following the story of ship-money collections in that city. The best modern brief account is in Kelvin C. Wren's "The Disputed Elections in London in 1641," from which the following quotation is taken:

Each of the City's twenty-six wards, all but six of which lay within the walls which enclosed less than one square mile, was administered by an alderman. Elected for life by the court of aldermen from three or four nominees chosen by the freemen assembled in wardmote, he served without pay and was subject to a fine of from four hundred to eight hundred pounds if he declined the honour. The twenty-six aldermen, of which ordinarily the oldest on point of service who had served as sheriff but had not 'passed the chair' was lord mayor, constituted the court of aldermen. The court appointed various officials, ordered payments from the City treasury or 'chamber', guided the lives and guarded the incomes of orphan wards of the City, and with the common council shared control over the livery companies of the City, of one of which every alderman was a member. The court of aldermen was more an executive than a legislative body, confining itself largely to implementing the broad lines of policy laid down by the court of common council. The latter included the lord mayor and aldermen in addition to some two hundred and twenty common councilmen, elected annually by the freemen of each ward from nominees usually selected in a parish or precinct meeting. Each ward was served in common council by one delegate for each of the ward's precincts. This lower house of the City's legislature appointed a number of officials, assessed taxes within the City, and enacted in general terms such laws as were necessary to the orderly government of the capital, apparently quite content, at
least until the civil war, to leave to the court of aldermen the burden of executing the laws.

During the civil war the common council insisted upon its right to govern the City free from veto by lord mayor or court of aldermen. A third court, the court of common hall, included the liverymen of all the companies of London. It met rarely, usually but twice a year, once to nominate two candidates for the mayoralty, the final choice resting with the court of aldermen; and again to elect the sheriffs and other officers. The court of common hall, numbering upwards of six thousand of the wealthiest citizens of London, also chose the four burgesses who represented the City in the house of commons. The machinery of government of the City remains to-day what it has been for many centuries, although the power it formerly enjoyed has been encroached upon by the London County Council and the national government. 1

A word regarding dates will not be amiss. Until 1752 England continued to use the Julian calendar, which in the seventeenth century was ten days behind the Gregorian. In addition the English began their new year on March 25 rather than January 1. In this thesis the old style dates have been used unless marked new style (n.s.), and to assist in keeping the time sequence clear, those dates which fall between January 1 and March 25 show the new style year in parenthesis after the old style, thus 1634(5).

Chapter I

THE FINANCIAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION
OF CHARLES I

Charles I fell heir to a constitutional and financial situation which was not of his own making. That robe the Tudors wore so well, the concept of King-in-Parliament, had begun to part at the seams in 1588, after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Tudor government had been built around successive emergencies: resurgence of the nobles, the fight against Rome, the threat of Spain. But after 1588 England was relatively secure, trade was prospering, and the Catholic threat had been abated. And so men's thoughts turned to the internal organization of England and reform.

On his way down from Scotland to take over the throne of Elizabeth, James I was handed a petition said to be signed by a thousand clergymen asking for reform of the English Church. James ended the long war with Spain and always prided himself upon keeping England at peace. Attempts by the House of Commons to limit the king's control over customs and to define the royal authority in its relations with parliament followed soon after.

James I was not the man to deal with the difficulties facing the Crown upon his ascension. Here
compromise was required, impatience characterized James. His theory of monarchy, the divine right of kings, was diametrically opposed to that held by the Commons. James was intelligent enough to see the implications of parliamentary supremacy. He knew that such a theory, if put into practice, would make a legal fiction of kingship as it was understood in those days. Though the issue was not joined during James’ reign and probably not understood in clear-cut terms, it was unmistakably there. The inability of king and parliament to agree upon the place of each in the scheme of government led to an ever-widening rift. Nor was the situation bettered by James’ reliance for advice upon court favorites. Buckingham, for instance, was a sharp thorn in James’ side, but James never realized it.

The last years of Elizabeth’s reign, particularly after the death of her lord treasurer, Burghley, were marked by a worsening of the Crown’s financial position. The maintenance of troops in the Netherlands and France and the costly Irish garrison were serious drains upon Elizabeth’s treasury. Burghley and his successor, Lord Buckhurst, were forced to levy new impositions upon the customs, to resume farming of certain customs duties, and to search out new projects which would produce revenue. In times of extreme financial emergencies
Elizabeth sold a quantity of Crown lands, as did James and Charles to a much greater extent, thus reducing Crown revenue. Also reducing the Crown's revenue was the rapidly depreciating value of money which continued through Charles' reign. When Elizabeth died, her debts were over £400,000.

Despite his having ended the long war with Spain and thus eliminating a heavy expense, James' profligacy added a considerable sum to his inherited debt. In 1608 the Crown debt stood close to £600,000 and by 1620 it had risen to well over £800,000. Then in 1624, in the face of very awkward financial difficulties, James embarked upon another war with Spain.

James died in 1625 and left his financial problems to Charles. Among these were commitments to further the war of £20,000 and £30,000 per month in Germany and Denmark respectively and debts of approximately £1,000,000. The war, also inherited, was estimated to cost £700,000, but the parliament summoned in 1625 saw fit to vote Charles only two subsidies, about £160,000.

2 Ibid., pp. 121, 184.
The second session of this parliament failed to provide additional funds, and Charles was forced to wage war without parliamentary grants. He succeeded for a time, but hard pressed by the tremendous costs, he ventured to call another parliament in 1628. This parliament purchased the Petition of Right for five subsidies which eventually yielded £275,000 to pay debts and expenditures of £1,300,000. The hopeless financial situation was probably the greatest factor in bringing hostilities with Spain to a halt. The parliament which met in the following year found itself in complete disagreement with the Crown, and Charles was forced to end the session in order to maintain the constitutional position of the Crown. Richard Weston, the lord treasurer at the time, was convinced that there was no need to put up with parliament since parliament refused to vote money for the expenses of government. Charles agreed.

By 1634 the king and his advisers were very much concerned about the position to which England had

4 Dietz, Public Finance, p. 248.
5 Ibid., pp. 253-57, 262n.
fallen in the eyes of the continental powers. She was faced with hostile tariffs, her ships were being seized and her seamen imprisoned, and she was in constant danger of being drawn again into the Thirty Years War still raging on the continent. The coastal waters were infested with pirates whom the present small navy could not control. Nor could it give satisfactory protection to fishermen against the inroads the Dutch were making into English fishing waters. Even historians who have little use for Charles' methods admit that a fleet was sorely needed to restore England's lost prestige and to

6 Zonca to the Doge, July 14, 1634 (n.s.), Calendar of State Papers, Venetian (abbreviated hereafter as Cal. S. F. Ven.), 1632-1636 (London: 1921), pp. 244-45; Correr to the Doge, Nov. 24, 1634 (n.s.), Ibid., p. 299.

7 Dietz, Public Finance, p. 266-67.

8 William Sanderson, History of the Life and Reign of King Charles (London: 1658), p. 197; Rushworth, II, p. 246; Lords of the council to the chamber of Exeter, May 21, 1633, Report on the Records of the City of Exeter, Historical Manuscripts Commission (abbreviated hereafter as H. M. C.), p. 89; Petition of the merchants of Exeter to the council, April, 1631, Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series (abbreviated hereafter as Cal. S. P. Dom.) 1631-1633 (London: 1862), p. 28; Memorandum by Sir Robert Heath, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, (1632?), Ibid., p. 489; Stephen Dowell, History of Taxes in England, I, p. 246. In Nov. 1629, the fleet consisted of 24,388 tons, 66 ships. Thirteen of these ships, 2,266 tons, were of no use at all, and many of the others were very small ships unsuited for long sea duty. Dietz, Public Finance, p. 267n.
protect her interests. So the device of ship-money was revived as the most likely means of providing the necessary navy.

When necessary to defend English coasts and border seas the Plantagenet kings had called upon the port towns to furnish ships manned, armed, and provisioned for war. But ship-money in the seventeenth century replaced the ships which had been called for in the fourteenth. Charles' writs were so drawn that each parish or hundred contributed its small share toward the town's or county's maintenance of a ship-of-war during the time each year that the fleet would be in service. Only London, whose wealth and size justified unique treatment, was allowed to provide ships instead of money. With the receipts from the rest of the kingdom Charles was able to renovate the Royal Navy, to retire vessels no longer serviceable, to repair others not wholly gone, and to build new modern men-of-war capable of contesting with the Dutch, French, and Spanish when the need arose. Indeed, Cromwell's later accomplishments at sea would have been impossible without the reconditioning and expansion of the Royal Navy made possible by Charles' collection of ship-money against which the English middle class complained so bitterly.

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Chapter II

BACKGROUND OF SHIP-MONEY

Attorney General William Noy has been given most of the credit for originating the 1634 project of furnishing a navy by means of ship-money. Clarendon says that Noy "with his own hand drew and prepared the writ for ship-money." Dietz agrees that ship-money was Noy's suggestion and adds that it was he who so devised the writs that money rather than ships would be provided.

The question of the king's legal right to use Noy's idea was given to Lord Thomas Coventry, Lord Keeper, and the Earl of Manchester, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, to consider. Their opinion being favorable, the suggestion to use ship-money was broached to the Privy Council in a statement read by Sir John Coke, one of the two Secretaries of State. The idea was well received and a committee was appointed to consult with

1 Clarendon, History, I, p. 104.

2 Dietz, Public Finance, p. 267. See also Rushworth, II, p. 247; Sanderson, History of Charles, p. 198; Dowell, Taxes, I, pp. 245-47; Gardiner, History, VII, p. 356 all of whom agree that ship-money was instigated by Noy.
Noy and to consider ways and means of making the levies. At the same time a search was made of the records to find precedents. Sir John Borough, keeper of the records in the Tower, found several examples from the Patent Rolls and Close Rolls of the reigns of Edward I, II, and III. For example, in the reign of Edward III:

The king having appointed Walter de Manny, his admiral of the North, to arrest all ships within his admiralty fit for passing the seas and to cause them to be doubly manned and furnished with arms, victuals, and other necessaries for the wars, and to be carried to Yarmouth and Crewell at a certain day. And understanding that many of the inhabitants of Lyme refused to contribute the furnishing and victualing of the said ships or the wages of the men that were to go in them, considering that all those of the said town who had no parts in those ships were bound to contribute towards the said charge, did by his commission assign William de Wynton and Thomas de Melchebourne to assess all such men of the said town, according to the proportion of their lands, tenements, goods, and chattels, to contribute to the expenses and wages of the men in the said ships and towards furnishing them with munitions as aforesaid; and having levied the money so assessed, to cause the same to be delivered to such as were to receive it. To which purpose the sheriff of Norfolk and the mayor and bailiffs of that town were commended to assist them. 4


4 12 Edward III, Rotulus Alemanni, (Oct.) 1634, State Papers, Domestic Series, Charles I (Public Record Office) (abbreviated hereafter as S. P. Dom. Charles I), CCLXXVI, No. 65. The spelling and punctuation have been modernized in material taken from manuscripts.
The medieval precedents seem to have been the only ones noted, despite there having been several recent instances which could have been cited. In Elizabethan times the port towns were called upon to help defend the country against the Spanish Armada, and again in 1626, during another war with Spain, the threat of invasion caused the king to call upon London for twenty ships. A further search of recent records would have revealed a most telling precedent, for a little over three years before the ship-money suggestion was made the south-coast towns themselves offered to defray the cost of ships to fight the channel pirates. It is probable that Noy as a member of the Privy Council knew of this request, particularly in view of the fact that the Council asked Exeter and other towns to have representatives at Whitehall on June 1, 1633, to discuss the matter. In presenting only medieval precedents Noy may have been concerned only to show the earliest examples and thus prove how ancient and unquestioned this royal prerogative was.


6 Petition of the merchants of Exeter to the council, April, 1631, Cal. S. P. Dom. 1631-33, p. 28.

7 Lords of the council to the chamber of Exeter, May, 21, 1633, Records of Exeter, H. M. C., p. 89.
Armed with precedents and with judicial assurance that the collection of ship-money would be legal, the business went forward quickly. Coke was ordered to prepare an estimate of the cost of the proposed fleet, and the committee considered several methods of making the assessments. A difference of opinion developed between Noy and the committee of the Privy Council over the inclusion of the maritime counties with the port towns. The committee felt they should be excluded, probably because the legal precedents applied only to the towns. Noy wanted the counties brought in to ease the charge on the towns. He eventually won his point although he did not live to see the writs executed.

The king and the council were now in agreement. If this "new-old way of dead Noy's" proved successful, the king was assured a navy to meet the threats against the kingdom.

A contemporary, sympathetic to Charles, con-


9 Coventry to the king, July 22, 1634, Ibid., p. 161.

demned ship-money as "a spring and magazine that should have no bottom, and for an everlasting supply of all occasions." But there is no indication that the king or any of his advisers intended ship-money for any other use than to rebuild a weakened navy. Indeed, every shilling collected and much more out of Charles' own purse went for naval expenditures.


Chapter III

LONDON AND THE 1634 LEVY

The ship-money writs, addressed to the port towns and maritime counties, were drawn and dated October 20, 1634. Two writs were sent to London. One writ was directed:

to the Bailiff of the City of Westminster; to the Mayor, Commonalty, and Citizens of the City of London, [as] Lords of the Manor and Borough of Southwark; to the Bailiff of the Liberty of St. Katherine near the Tower, London; to the Port-grave, Jurâtes, and Inhabitants of the Towns and Parishes of Gravesend and Milton and also to the honest men in the same City, Borough, Liberty, Towns, and Parishes, and members of the same; and in the Villages of Limehouse, Ratcliffe, Stepney, Whitechapel, Mile End, Stratford, Blackwall, Barking, Rederith, Deptford, Greenwich, Plumstead, Crith, Greenhithe, and Northfleet, and in all other Towns and Maritime Places between the aforesaid City of Westminster and the aforesaid Towns and Parishes of Gravesend and Milton and the members of the same (except the City of London, Liberties, and Suburbs thereof). 1

Westminster, Southwark, and the other towns and hamlets in the London area were ordered to prepare one five hundred-ton ship-of-war fully provisioned and equipped for

six months service and manned with two hundred men.

The second writ ordered the "Mayor, Commonalty, and Citizens of Our City of London, and the Sheriffs of the same City, and good Men in the said City, and in the Liberties, and Members of the same," to:

cause to be prepared and brought to the port of Portsmouth, before the first day of March now next ensuing, one ship of war of the burden of nine hundred tons, with three hundred and fifty men at the least, as well expert masters, as very able and skilful mariners; one other ship of war of the burden of eight hundred tons, with two hundred and sixty men at the least;...four other ships of war, every of them of the burden of five hundred tons, and every of them with two hundred men at the least;...and one other ship of war of the burden of three hundred tons, with a hundred and fifty men,... and also every of the said ships with ordnance, ...gun—powder, and spears and weapons, and other necessary arms sufficient for war, and with double tackling, and with victuals, until the said first of March, competent for so many men; and from that time, for twenty-six weeks, at your charge...Also we have assigned

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2 Ibid. By a series of charters granted in 1327, 1462, and 1550 London had been given jurisdiction over the Borough of Southwark. Although it was the expressed intention of the charter of 1550 that Southwark become a part of London, the Ward of Bridge Without (so named by the City on July 13, 1550) never achieved equality with the other wards of the City. From 1557 on the Court of Aldermen chose Southwark's alderman, which position gradually became an honorary one for the City's senior alderman. Southwark was never represented in the Court of Common Council. See W. de Gray Birch (ed.), Historical Charters and Constitutional Documents of the City of London (London: 1884), pp. 59-60, 80-82, 110-127; Reginald R. Sharpe, London and the Kingdom (London: 1894), I, pp. 308, 441-44; A. J. Loftie, London (London: 1887), pp. 112, 146-48.
you, the aforesaid mayor and aldermen of the city...within thirty days after the receipt of this writ, to assess all men in the said city, and in the liberties, and members of the same,...to contribute to the expenses, about the necessary provision of the premises...Also we have assigned you, the aforesaid mayor, and also the sheriffs of the city aforesaid, to levy the portions so as aforesaid assessed upon the aforesaid men...by distress and other due means; and to commit to prison all those, whom you shall find rebellious and contrary in the premises, there to remain until we shall give further order for their delivery. 3

4 while the writs were dated October 20, the City's records indicate that they were not received until November 6. On that day the Court of Aldermen called a meeting of the City's legal counsel for the following Wednesday, November 12, to consider the contents of the writs and to determine what procedures the City should follow. Mr. Mason, the City recorder, and Mr. Mosse, the comptroller of the Chamber of London, were ordered to


4 Although Rushworth shows the date of the writs to be October 20, the copy of the writ in the collection of State Papers, Domestic has October 6, 1634 on the last page of the manuscript. See photostatic copy, Appendix #1.

5 A covering letter dated October 31 sent with the writs is in Privy Council Register (microfilm of MSS. deposited in the Public Record Office) (abbreviated hereafter as P. C. R.), 2/44, pp. 199 ff.
attend the meeting of the lawyers. In the meantime the
town clerk was asked to translate the writs from Latin
into English and to make a number of copies. At the
same meeting of the Court of Aldermen, the City's solicitor, Mr. Marsh, was told to look for precedents "in the
Tower and elsewhere touching this business." The legal
staff was directed to "certify unto this Court how they
find the same and their opinions."

When the Court of Aldermen met a week later, the
report of the City's legal counsel was not complete. It
is not unlikely that the legal advisers needed more time
to gather data. The Court named the recorder, six alder-
men, a legal staff of five, and the comptroller of the
Chamber to a committee to meet at the Guildhall for
further study of the writs. The men were also to discover
what had been done by the City and by Southwark in similar
cases in the past and to "consider of the City's charter,
grants, and records how far they do exempt the City from
such charges." The committee was to hear Mr. Marsh's
report on precedents which had not been ready in time for
the November 12 meeting of the lawyers and, after con-
sidering all of the factors, was to render a report to the

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6 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Nov. 6, 1634,
Repertory of the Court of Aldermen (MSS, deposited in
the Record Office of the City of London) (hereafter cited
as Repertory), XLIX, fols. 5b-6.
Court of Aldermen.

On Monday, November 17, the Court of Aldermen called a meeting of the Court of Common Council for the following Wednesday to deliberate the two ship-money writs. At its meeting on November 19 the Common Council dealt only with the writ addressed to Southwark. After hearing the writ the Common Council chose a committee of two aldermen and four common councilmen to "treat and confer and conclude with the Bailiff of Westminster and others to whom the said writ is as aforesaid directed for and touching the premises" and asked the committee to report back "from time to time of their doings and opinions therein." In so dealing with the Southwark writ the Court of Common Council did not commit itself to comply with the king's demand. To "treat and confer and conclude" left the way open for London to oppose the writ in cooperation with Westminster and the other towns. On the other hand, if the writ could not successfully be opposed or if it was decided to accept the writ without question,

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7 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Nov. 13, 1634, Ibid., fol. 18.

8 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Nov. 17, 1634, Ibid., fol. 18b.

the City had provided the means whereby it could act with
the others named in the writ to supply the ship.

The writ covering the seven ships to be supplied
by the City was not considered by the Court of Common
Council until December 2, despite the fact that the writ
had ordered that all assessments be made within thirty
days after its receipt. The committee of lawyers earlier
appointed by the Court of Aldermen now reported to the
Court of Common Council, and the larger body decided to
petition the king against the levy.

Your petitioners do in all submissive humbleness
and with acknowledgement of your sacred Majesty's
many favors unto your said City inform your
Majesty that they conceive that by ancient privi-
leges, grants, and acts of Parliament (which
they are ready to humbly shew forth) they are
exempt and are to be freed from that charge.
And do most humbly pray, that your Majesty will
be graciously pleased that the petitioners with
your princely grace and favor may enjoy the
said privileges and exemptions and be freed
from providing of the said ships and provisions. 11

The City's petition to be excused from providing
the seven ships was ignored by the Crown, and on December
9 the king by letter ordered the Londoners to comply with

10 Minutes of the Court of Common Council, Dec. 2, 1634,
Ibid., fols. 19-19b; Rushworth, II, p. 265.

11 Minutes of the Court of Common Council, Dec. 2, 1634,
Journal, XXXVII, fol. 20; Rushworth, II, p. 266.
the terms of the writ. The City made no effort to press
its opposition. The search of the records must have
brought to light London's stubborn fight to avoid pro-
viding twenty ships for the navy back in 1626, a fight
which the citizens had lost. Now the Common Council,
many of whose members had sat in the same body in 1626,
must have decided that further opposition to the royal
writ was useless, and so it accepted it after only token
resistance.

Curiously enough, on the day before the king's
letter of December 9 was sent to the City, the Court of
Aldermen ordered:

that all and every the ward books of names of
all the inhabitants within the same shall to-
morrow morning be brought into this Court; and
that all the aldermen do then appear, that
some course may forthwith (be) taken for the
assessing all men in this City, and in the
liberties, and members of the same, towardâ
the necessary expenses about the provision of

12 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Dec. 10, 1634;
Repertory, XLIX, fol. 45-45b. Similar orders dated Dec.
9, 1634 sent to the sheriffs of all counties (including
that to London) are in the P. C. R. , 2/44, pp. 261-85.

13 See Wren, "London and the Twenty Ships, 1626-1627,"

14 See Melvin C. Wren, "The Disputed Elections in London
in 1641," English Historical Review, LXIV, No. 250 (Jan.
1949), pp. 48-52 for instances of years-long continuous
service by members of the Court of Common Council.
The ships and other necessaries commanded by his majesty's writ late in that behalf directed. 15

The action suggests that individual Londoners had had conversations with members of the privy council which left no room for further argument. If the surmise is correct

15 Order of the Court of Aldermen, Dec. 8, 1634, Repertory, XLIX, fol. 38.

16 Gardiner insists that the lord mayor himself and the City's lawyers were called before the privy council and there "reprimanded" and "intimidated" as a result of the City's petition. Gardiner, History of England, VII, p. 376. The Venetian ambassador sent the same information to his government. Correr to the Doge, Jan. 5, 1635 (n. s.), Cal. S. P. Ven. 1632-36, p. 314. However, Gardiner cites Strafford's Letters which do not give quite the same information:

In my last I advertised your Lordship, that the mayor of London received some reprimand for being so slow in giving answer to the writ sent into the city about the shipping-business; afterward the city council were called before the lords, and received some gentle check, or rather were admonished, to take heed how they advised the city in a case so clear for the king, wherein his majesty had first advised with his learned counsel, and with his council of state. It wrought this effect, that they all yielded, and instantly fell to seizing [i.e. assessing] in all the wards of London.

the Privy Councillors may have told the Londoners that the letter of December 9 was already on its way.

Two days later, on December 10, the Court of Aldermen received the king's letter ordering the execution of the writ. Without further question it was agreed to proceed to the assessments.

It is thought fit by this Court that every alderman shall forthwith call before him his deputy and common councilmen within his ward, or the greater number of them, and such other substantial men within the same as to him shall be thought fit; and inform himself by them, and all other the best means and ways he can, of the ability of all and every the men within his ward and the landholders in the same as aforesaid to contribute to the necessary provision of the premises; and duly consider what sum of money may with equality and indifference be imposed upon every of them, their estates and substances considered, for and towards the whole charge which is calculated to be thirty thousand pounds, at the least, and forthwith certify this Court of Aldermen in writing under their hands in a fair book the names and surnames of all such men and landholders within his ward, as also the sums of money thought fit by them assessed and laid upon them as aforesaid. 17

The lord mayor's precept to this effect and in substantially the same language was issued to each alderman,

17 Order of the Court of Aldermen, Dec. 10, 1634, Repertory, XLIX, fols. 45b-46. Although the City's estimate of the cost of furnishing the seven ships was £30,000, this was not in accord with the estimates made by the king's officials. Under date Dec. 9, the P. C. R., 2/44, p. 265, shows London assessed £35,118. This figure is confirmed by Notes by Edward Nicholas, Secretary to the Lords of the Admiralty, Mar. 1, 1634(5), S. P. Dom. Charles I, CLXXXIV, No. 1.
informing him of the share of the thirty thousand pounds
his ward was to provide.

To carry out the lord mayor's precept, the
alderman with his common councilmen and other "substantial"
citizens of the ward consulted the subsidy books in his ward
to determine each householder's worth and fix his assess­
ment. There was a subsidy book or ward book as it was
sometimes called in each precinct, and in it was listed
the names and property valuations, both real and personal,
of the members of the precinct. The subsidy was a direct
tax laid on the people of England and Wales, a population
of more than four million in 1600, worth approximately
£90,000 in Charles' time. The first ship-money levy on
London was equivalent to about 6 1/2 subsidies and later
levies about 2 1/3 subsidies. The ward books were re­
vised every two or three years because they were also
used as the basis of local taxes within the City. But
they were never completely accurate because of deaths and
removals.

18 Precept to the aldermen, no date, Journal, XXXVII,
fols. 18-18b. There does not seem to be a list of the
assessments by ward extant, but see Appendix #2 for an
example of how the assessments were made within the wards.

19 Gordon, Transactions, p. 150. The subsidy estimate
of £90,000 is a combined subsidy, a lay subsidy of £70,000
and a clerical subsidy of £20,000.
When the citizen knew his assessment, he would pay the money to the churchwarden or some other parish or precinct official. If he were dissatisfied with his assessment, he might appeal to his ward alderman for a review. If he refused to pay, he would suffer distraint, that is, the officials would seize property, usually goods of some kind, belonging to him of sufficient value to cover his assessment. The merchandise would be conveyed to a central location (in London usually the Guildhall) and sold at public auction. If any "overplus" were obtained at the sale, it would be returned to him. But if a delinquent refused to permit his goods to be distrained, he would be subject to commitment to prison. If any official were sued for illegal entry or illegal seizure by reason of his activities on the City's behalf, the City paid for the cost of his defense and liability, if any. The official so protected by the City was said to be "saved harmless."

On December 12, the Court of Aldermen ordered the recorder and two aldermen to inform the Privy Council of "the City's proceedings upon the writ for raising ships."

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20 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Dec. 12, 1634, Repertory, XLIX, fol. 46b.
On December 14, the recorder, acting as spokesman, gave the report which was "well received" by his majesty. The recorder was directed to make an appearance before the "Board" every Sunday afternoon until the city had completed its task. Five days later the Court of Aldermen appointed a committee of Aldermen Hammersley, Clitherow, Abbot, Garraway, Abdy, and Andrews to set forth the city ships, ordering it to:

"take upon them the whole care and charge in taking up (i.e. hiring) and furnishing, providing, arming, victualing, and setting forth of the said ships, their men and furniture in warlike manner,...to compound and agree with any person or persons to perform and supply the said service, so as it does not cost more than £30,000; and forthwith and from time to time to consult with Sir John Coke, one of his majesty's principal secretaries, and take his advice and directions concerning this service; and the committee from time to time to report to the Court." 22

On January 8, a committee was appointed to act as treasurer for the ship-money collections. The Court of Aldermen reserved control of expenditures, however, for they instructed

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22 Order of the Court of Aldermen, Dec. 19, 1634, Repertory, XLIX, fols. 51-51b.
the committee to issue the money only at their direction.

Two months after provision had been made for the assessment of ship-money, the City took firm steps to bring in the collections and to punish laggards. In mid-February the lord mayor directed the aldermen to have their collectors in the several wards turn over what money had been received to the committee acting as treasurer. If arrears were not paid immediately, the recalcitrants were to be warned to pay their assessments or expect the sheriffs to proceed against them without further notice. The aldermen were given five days to report what action they had taken. Less than a fortnight later the lord mayor issued another precept ordering those inhabitants who were in arrears to be brought before the ward aldermen. If payment was still refused or if those directed to appear did not do so, the alderman was to "charge some of the constables within your ward immediately to bring before me (the lord mayor) the bodies of all such persons...to the intent that they may be proceeded against and dealt

23 Order of the Court of Aldermen, Jan. 8, 1634(5), Ibid., fol. 52.

24 Precept to the aldermen, Feb. 15, 1634(5), Journal, XXXVII, fol. 43.
with according to his Majesty's pleasure."

While attending the king on Sunday, February 15, Aldermen Garraway and Abdy, two members of the City's committee for providing the ships, were informed that his Majesty had decided to furnish two of his own ships for the use of the admiral and vice-admiral of the ship-money fleet. The cost of providing these two ships was to be borne by London but was not an additional charge. The City was to furnish only five ships instead of seven and to pay the cost of the two Royal Navy vessels in cash.

The Court of Aldermen did not take issue with this development. It ordered the committee to proceed with the provisioning and furnishing of the five ships and directed, at this late date, that the committee and those deputized to act for it be "saved harmless." The Court of Aldermen

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26 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Feb. 17, 1634(5), Repertory, XLIX, fols. 97b-98. The two ships called for in the original writ that were now not to be supplied were the ones rated at 900 and 800 tons. See Notes by Nicholas, Mar. 1, 1634(5), S. P. Dom. Charles I, CCLXXXIV, No. 1. For a list and description of the five ships actually provided by the City see Report by the City of London to the lords of the admiralty, Feb. 1634(5), S. P. Dom. Charles I, CCLXXXIII, No. 117 and Report by the City of London, April 19, 1635, Ibid., CCLXXXVII, No. 9.

The decision of the king was formalized by the Privy Council. See Order of Council, Mar. 4, 1634(5), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1634-35, p. 559 which ordered the draft of a privy seal to lend London the Merhonour and the Swiftsure. Privy
ordered that £11,475 be paid to the Treasurer of the Navy, Sir William Russell, and several days later confirmed this action with a direct order to the committee acting as treasurer for the City to pay this sum upon the orders of the lord mayor and the sheriffs. The money was paid to Sir William Russell and noted in his account of March 8, 1634(5).

Seal, Mar. 24, 1634(5), P. C. R., 2/45, pp. 136-38 lists all the ships loaned by the king to the towns and ports including the Melchonour and Swiftsure to London.

The "saved harmless" provision was necessary to the speedy collection of the levy since collectors and constables would be reluctant to take forceful measures without it. For an account of the results obtained without such a provision in 1626-27, see aren, "London and the Twenty Ships," pp. 327-28.

27 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Feb. 17, and 26, 1634(5), Repertory, XLIX, fols. 97b-98, 106b-107.


Again the City's estimate did not agree with that of the council (see note #17, this chapter), this time as to the cost of the Melchonour and Swiftsure. The list of the king's ships with tonnages, number of men, and estimated costs, Feb. 1634(5), S. P. Dom. Charles I, CCLXXIII, No. 119 shows the cost of these two ships to be £114,430. In a certificate dated July 11, 1635 this item appears: "for so much unpaid of the demand of £114,430 by the estimate for the Honor and Swiftsure by the City of London detained under pretense of stores that may be saved at the ships' return from sea...£2,955-00-00. Certificate of surcharge of monies, July 11, 1635, S. P. Dom. Charles I, CCXCIII, No. 52.

It is possible that the Londoners were justified in making such a claim, for the issue was never pressed by the Crown. When London paid in the £11,475, the sheriffs asked for a warrant discharging them of that sum which the king granted. Minutes of the Privy Council, Mar. 6, 1634(5), P. C. R., 2/44, p. 460. This despite earlier demands for the whole sum of £114,430. See Minutes of the Privy Council, Jan. 21, 1634(5) and Jan. 25, 1634(5), P. C. R., 2/44, pp. 384, 385. The general tenor of Russell's later accounts
During the ensuing three months the records offer nothing but routine accounts of ship-money collections. On June 4, 1635, the lord mayor issued a precept to the aldermen asking each of them to render an account in writing of the status of collections in his ward. They were to report "what they have collected and paid, and what rests uncollected, and by whom unpaid, and the particular causes and reasons thereof." When these reports were in and correlated, the city found itself £4,000 short of its goal. The reasons advanced for the shortage were that some men were assessed who were not liable and some men were assessed who could not pay. The lord mayor charged the aldermen with the task of reviewing their assessments to determine if there were any inhabitants who had not been assessed and if there were any who had been under-assessed. And the aldermen were to consider "what sum of money may with equality and indifference be imposed upon every such person, their es-

of ship-money collections indicate that the Londoners' explanation had come to be accepted. See Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635, p. 496; Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635-36, pp. 7, 386. Sir William was eventually discharged of the amount assessed on London towards which the city had paid in cash £111,475, the balance of £23,643 being represented by the supplying of the five ships. Cal. S. P. Dom. 1636-37, p. 277.

29 Precept to the aldermen, June 4, 1635, Journal, XXXVII, fol. 79.
states and substances considered, whereby the remainder 30
of £4,000 may be raised."

There is no record of how successful these attempts to collect delinquent accounts were, but on November 24, 1635, the City still owed £1,380 to the masters of four of the ships for "harbor wages and otherwise." The Court of Aldermen ordered the City chamberlain to advance £900 to the ship-money fund so that the masters could be paid, the Chamber to be repaid with interest out of "the collection of monies in that behalf," i.e., from arrearages yet uncollected when they came in.

A positive attempt to collect the "monies" in arrears was made by the use of the distreining power. During May 1636, the Court ordered "that all such plate and goods as are seized upon for non-payment of money towards that service and are now in the hands of the last

30 Precept to the aldermen, July 23, 1635, Journal, XXXVII, fol. 92b.

31 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Nov. 24, 1635, Repertory, L, fol. 30b. Alderman John Highlord was entrusted with the task of paying the ships' masters. Shortly thereafter he was appointed treasurer of the ship-money fund for London. Order of the Court of Aldermen, Jan. 9, 1635(6), Ibid., fol. 66b. See also City Account Books (MS, deposited in the Record Office of the City of London), Series I, v. II, fols. 31b, 51b which reveal that the Chamber borrowed the £900 for six months at 7 per cent interest so that the money might be advanced to Highlord.
lord mayor and sheriffs or any others shall be forthwith brought into the Chamber of London by inventory and sold if the owners thereof will not redeem the same." Not all of the distrained goods were sold immediately, however, for in June 1637, the Court ordered that the "distresses taken in the time of the mayoralty of Sir Robert Parkhurst" (1634-1635) be sold and that "the overplus (if any be) be repaid to the owners thereof."

Thus it was that London met the demands of the 1634 writ. It would seem that the king had been satisfied with the City's performance, for there is no indication in the records of any serious complaints being made by the Crown. Even the fact that London did not have the ships ready by the March 1 deadline made no difference to the king, for some of his own ships had asked for and been granted an extension to the end of April.

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32 Order of the Court of Aldermen, May 19, 1635, Repertory, L, fols. 219b-220. Included in this same entry is an order to Highlord to repay to the Chamber the unpaid balance (approx. £700) of the loan of Nov. 24, 1635. See City Account Books, 1:11, fol. 34b which shows that Highlord repaid the sum of £916-00-04.

33 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, June 8, 1637, Repertory, LI, fol. 209.

34 Officers of the navy to the lords of the admiralty, Feb. 25, 1634(5), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1634-35, p. 523. See also Lords of the admiralty to the officers of the navy, Mar. 10, 1634(5), Ibid., p. 572 wherein Apr. 24, 1635 was set as the rendezvous date, and Lords of the admiralty to the lord mayor of London, Apr. 22, 1635, Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635, p. 39 which ordered London's ships to Tilbury hope, the rendezvous.
Unfortunately, the records of the committee that acted as treasurer for the ship-money fund are not extant so it cannot be said with certainty how much of the £30,000 assessed by the City was never paid. However, the sheriffs of London advised Nicholas on November 15, 1655, that £1,200 remained unpaid on the first writ. Since the £30,000 figure had been an estimate to begin with and since unsold distrained goods would, when sold, reduce the shortage even more, this was not a serious discrepancy. The tone of the minutes of the Court of Aldermen for November 24, 1635, wherein the £1,380 due for harbor wages was ordered paid, implies that this charge was perhaps the last outstanding. Of the £1,380 needed in the ship-money fund, only £900 had had to be borrowed so that if the £1,200 shortage had been collected the City would have had an overage of £300. Since some portion of the £900 borrowed from the Chamber was made up by the sale of distrained goods, the City's first estimate of £30,000 was remarkably accurate. The City's outlay was much closer to the £30,000 the City had estimated the service to cost than to the £35,118 the king's council

35 Notes by Nicholas, Feb. 21, 1635(6), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635-36, p. 246.
36 See chapter III, p. 27 above.
had estimated. Whether this was the result of chicanery or efficiency cannot be proved although the charge was later made that the 1635 ships were not fully manned and provisioned.
Chapter IV

THE WRITS FROM 1635 TO 1639

In each of the succeeding five years, the king issued a call for ship-money which included a demand upon London. Never again was the London assessment as heavy as that of 1634, for beginning in 1635 the writs were sent to the inland counties as well as to the port towns and maritime counties. Thus the cost of furnishing a navy was spread over a greater population. Although Charles increased the total levy that England and Wales had to pay (with the exception of 1638 when the total demanded fell below that of 1634), the most that London was assessed

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1 Notes of Sec. Windebank, Apr. 6, 1635, Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635, p. 12 state that the "maritime counties" are to be brought into the contribution next year, but this is obviously an error. The maritime counties contributed in 1634. The meaning of the notes is clear, namely, that the entire country was to be called upon rather than only the coastal regions. See also Lord Coventry's charge to the judges, June 17, 1635, Rushworth, II, pp. 297-98, and Laud to Wentworth, July 6, 1635, Strafford's Letters, p. 438, which states that the reason for the extension was that the charge would be too heavy for the maritime counties to bear alone. The official notice is in Letter of instructions from the lords of the Council to the sheriffs of the counties, Aug. 12, 1635, P. C. R., 2/45, pp. 71-75. For comments upon the effect of the decision, see Correr to the Doge, Nov. 2, 1635 (n.s.), Cal. S. P. Ven. 1632-36, p. 470.
during these five years was £16,000 in 1635. With the exception of the last year, 1639, London furnished ships rather than money, and with the same exception the City fulfilled its obligations.

Since the writs were very similar in content and the City's method of handling them remained unchanged, it would be repetitious to consider each writ separately. The writs from 1635 to 1639 prove interesting only where they deviate from the normal routine.

The 1635 writ, dated August 4, called upon London to have at Portsmouth by next March 1 two ships, each weighing 800 tons, and each manned by 320 men. A letter of instructions similar to that sent in 1634 accompanied the writ. It stated that two such ships would cost, according to his Majesty's calculations, £16,000 and directed the officials of London to assess that sum impartially and fairly. The Court of Aldermen acknowledged the receipt of the letter and the writ, but made no effort

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2 Gordon, Transactions, pp. 143, 155, 159 which has the assessments and the amounts uncollected tabulated by town and county for all the writs.

3 List of ship-money assessments, Aug. 4, 1635, P. C. R., 2/45, p. 78; Order of the Court of Aldermen, Jan. 12, 1635(6), Repertory, L, fol. 75.

to delay or evade the consequences of the writ as they had done in 1634. Committees were later appointed to carry out the terms of the writ, and Alderman Highlord was entrusted with the task of treasurer.

The Privy Council, however, was dissatisfied with the performance of the lord mayor and sheriffs of London and made several attempts to force those officers to speed up both assessments and collections in the City. On the other hand, the London officials were evidently content with the way the collections were coming in. It was not until June, 1636, nine weeks after the ships were to report at the rendezvous, that the lord mayor sent out a precept to the aldermen in an attempt to bring collections up to date. In the meantime Highlord had idle

5 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Aug. 18, 1635, Repertory, XLIX, fol. 289.

6 Orders of the Court of Aldermen, Nov. 12, 1635, Jan. 9, 1635(6), Jan. 12, 1635(6), Repertory, L, fols. 8, 66b, 75-75b. See also chapter III, p. 27 above.


8 Precept to the aldermen, June 16, 1636, Journal, XXXVII, fol. 208.
funds in the ship-money account. Upon his motion the Court of Aldermen directed that £1,000 be placed in the City Chamber from the ship-money fund. Several weeks later the Court ordered Highlord to lend £1,000 of ship-money funds to the East India Company at 6 per cent interest and a month later repeated the order for an additional £1,000. No maturity date was set for either of these loans. It is significant that by the time these loans were made, the ships required by the writ had been furnished to the navy.

Two explanations can be offered to account for the excess of money on hand in 1636; each is, however, insufficient in itself. The first is simply that the treasurer of the ship-money fund was not required to pay the bills incurred by the business immediately. Such a procedure would be following the precedent set in the previous year and was to be followed again in

9 Order of the Court of Aldermen, Apr. 26, 1636, Repertory, L, fol. 193.

10 Orders of the Court of Aldermen, May 19, June 30, 1636, Repertory, L, fol. 220b, 263.

11 See chapter III, p. 27 above.
the succeeding years.

The second explanation for the surplus on hand is revealed by the dispute which arose between the Londoners and the lords of the admiralty regarding the fitness and sufficiency of the ships proposed by the City. On February 7 the City reported that they would offer the Jonas, of 1,000 tons, and the Great Neptune, of 620 tons, their combined crews to number 640 men. This was in accordance with the terms of the king's writ. Actually, however, the City was not meeting the requirements of the 1635 writ, for a survey conducted by the officers of the navy disclosed that the Jonas was overrated 112 tons, the Neptune overrated 86 tons, and the combined crews overrated 210 men. The dispute was seemingly settled when London agreed to furnish a

12 Order of the Court of Aldermen, Oct. 11, 22, 1638, Oct. 17, Nov. 23, 1639, Repertory, LII, fols. 276, 282; LIII, fol. 317b; LIV, fol. 24b, all of which concern the advance of money in later years from the Chamber to the ship-money fund to meet bills which were maturing faster than collections were being brought in. These shortages in the ship-money fund reveal that the committee for setting forth the ships did not do business on a cash basis. The order of Oct. 17, 1639, for instance, speaks of £1,800 being "near due unto the owners of the ships." These loans to Treasurer Highlord are confirmed by the City's accounts for 1639 and 1640. See City Account Books, Series 1, III, fols. 50, 91b, 143b, 180.


14 Officers of the navy to the lords of the admiralty, Feb. 18, 1635(6), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635-36, p. 238.
third ship of 250 tons, the True Love.

The incident has capricious overtones, for the navy's report came hard on the heels of glowing compliments paid by the king to London for their performance in 1634 and their expected performance in 1635. The minutes of the Privy Council for the day preceding the report of the officers of the navy reads:

Whereas his Majesty and this Board have been informed that the committees and sheriffs of London did last year set forth and furnish their ships for defense of the kingdom more sufficiently and with better provisions and equipage and much cheaper than any of his Majesty's ships were provided, and that the like would be done this year through the skill and good husbandry of the present sheriffs and committees [i.e. committeemen] appointed to take care of that business. Forasmuch as it importeth his Majesty in point of honour and profit to have the services of his navy and ships to be ordered and managed with the most advantage for service and with the least charge and expense, it was this day ordered, his Majesty sitting in Council, that next Wednesday come sevemnight the former and present sheriffs and committeemen of London are to appear before the Privy Council and are required to come prepared as well with the particulars in what manner they did the last year furnish the five ships set forth by the said City, and likewise how they intend to furnish the two ships they are to set forth this year. And the said officers of the navy (who are also to attend) are likewise required to set down in writing the particulars wherewith two of his Majesty's

15 Notes by Nicholas, Feb. 21, 1635(6), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635-36, p. 246; Memorandum of William Burgis, Mar. 16, 1635(6), Ibid., p. 300.
ships of equal burden, rank, and number of men were furnished in all points, that a parallel being made of the provisions and charge of the one and the other, and consideration being had of the course and proceedings as well of the said officers of the navy as of the said sheriffs and committees, such use may be made thereof as may tend most to the honour, profit, and advantage of his Majesty's service. 16

What happened later regarding this does not appear in the register, but it is quite likely that in view of the navy's report the scheduled meeting was cancelled.

But the London committee for furnishing the ships did not give up easily. On April 25, fifteen days after the ships were to have been ready, Sir Henry Palmer, comptroller of the navy, made another survey for the lords of the admiralty and found the City's ships still short men and equipment. A few weeks later the officers of the navy made a report detailing the shortages of the City ships. They found shortages of equipment valued at £838. In addition the ships lacked 142 men of the figure required which would amount to a saving in sea wages of £838.


17 Sir Henry Palmer to the lords of the admiralty, Apr. 25, 1636, S. P. Dom. Charles I, CCCXIX, No. 44. Sir Henry found the Neptune in very poor condition, the True Love and the Jonas well-fitted, but all short of men and the Jonas lacking the necessary beer. These discrepancies appeared despite an extension of time from Mar. 1 to Apr. 10 granted to the City. See Notes by Nicholas, Feb. 21, 1635(6), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635-36, p. 246.
Ll.680, a total saving of L2,518. It is doubtful that the Londoners were ever made to pay this discrepancy.

Discrepancies between what was called for by the writs and what was furnished by the City were not peculiar to the second writ. Sir Henry Palmer and Surveyor Kenrick Edisbury petitioned the king to grant them Ll,374-18-01, the saving in sea wages accruing to those merchants who rented private ships to the king for the navy in 1637. This sum arose because such ships, including the ships furnished by the City of London, were manned by an insufficient number of men. Nicholas includes in his notes a brief regarding a complaint that the City's ships were insufficiently supplied with men although it is not clear whether he is referring to the 1636 or 1637 ships. Again, in 1636, the Privy Council

18 Officers of the navy to the lords of the admiralty, May 11, 1636, Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635-38, p. 422.

19 Petition of William Cooke to the king, Feb. 24, 1636(7), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1636-37, p. 460. Cooke, a captain in the king's navy, asked the king for permission to collect the money saved by the citizens of London on the ships furnished by virtue of the 1635 writ. The king granted the petition and gave Cooke power to "compound with the delinquents," but his success or failure is not recorded.

20 Petition of the comptroller and the surveyor of the navy to the lords of the admiralty, Nov. 23, 1637, Cal. S. P. Dom. 1637, p. 559.

21 Notes by Nicholas, Jan. 5, 1637(8), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1637-38, p. 142.
was not satisfied that the ships offered by the City fulfilled the terms of the writ which called for two ships of 700 tons each, manned with 280 men per vessel, to be at Portsmouth on the following March 1. At a meeting of the Council, the City's committeemen agreed to add a "pinnace or some other ship" to those already decided upon. In the following year London was forced to make a substitution for the Matthew, one of the ships she originally planned to use, for the officers of the navy declared the Matthew to be completely unfit for naval service.

On the other hand, the king did not hesitate to save money for himself where he could. Upon the suggestion of Sir William Russell, the Lewis, a ship already taken up by the navy, was assigned to London, "for I find there may another ship be had of 300 tons in place of her [the Lewis], and will be about 50 men less charge

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23 Minutes of the Privy Council, Mar. 5, 1636(7), P. C. R., 2/47, p. 224. The City offered three smaller ships in place of the two of 700 tons each asked for by the writ. The king agreed, but an investigation revealed a discrepancy, thus a fourth ship was added.

24 Officers of the navy to the lords of the admiralty, Mar. 2, 1637(8), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1637-38, p. 291.
both for victuals and wages, whereby will be saved to 25
his Majesty for eight months £800."

The London ships seemed to have been satisfactory in 1637. The writ called for two ships of 700 tons each, 26 estimated to cost £14,000. The City provided the ships, but collections were so very poor, the Chamber had to advance a total of £5,979 to the ship-money fund to pay the 27 ship owners.

In 1638 the king's writ called upon London to supply one ship of 500 tons with 200 men to cost £5,000. Upon receipt of the writ, the lord mayor issued the usual precept to the aldermen ordering them to make the assessments on the wards. Returns must have been highly unsatisfactory, for on January 29, 1638(9), the Court of

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25 Ibid. This quotation is from a postscript by Sir William Russell to the letter of the officers of the navy. Orders were issued in accordance with this suggestion. See Lords of the admiralty to the officers of the navy, and the same to the committees of London, Mar. 9, 1637(8), Ibid., p. 300.

26 Order of the Court of Aldermen, Nov. 16, 1537, Repertory, LII, fol. 16b.

27 Orders of the Court of Aldermen, Oct. 11, 22, 1638, Nov. 28, 1639, Repertory, LII, fols. 276, 282; LIV, fol. 24b.


29 Precept to the aldermen, Nov. 26, 1638, Journal, XXXVIII, fol. 174b.
Aldermen appointed a committee to attend the Earl of Northumberland, Lord High Admiral of His Majesty's fleet, and explain to him why the City found it impossible to furnish a ship for the current year's fleet. No reasons are given in the City's records, but it is apparent from later developments that failure of receipts was the primary reason. In any event their mission was a failure. On March 19 the Court of Aldermen thought it fit that the twelve great livery companies of London lend the City £1,000 which was required by the owners of the ship before they would release it to the City. The lord mayor issued a precept to the twelve companies requesting the loan. According to a news letter of the times, the twelve companies refused to lend the money for the ship to the City, and the lord mayor was forced to borrow the £1,000 from them on his own credit.

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30 Order of the Court of Aldermen, Jan. 29, 1638(9), Repertory, LIII, fol. 81.

31 Minutes of the Court of Aldermen, Mar. 19, 1638(9), Repertory, LIII, fol. 142b.

32 Precept to Mr. and Wardens of companies (no date, but probably Mar. 22 or 23, 1638(9)), Journal, XXXVIII, fol. 224b. The suggested division of the loan was as follows: mercers, grocers, drapers, fishmongers, goldsmiths, merchantailors, and haberdashers to lend £100 each; skinners, salters, ironmongers, vintners, and clothworkers to lend £60 each.

33 Rossingham to Conway, April 16, 1639, Cal. S. P. Dom. 1639, p. 51.
It is impossible to judge with any degree of certainty the success of the London officials in their attempts to collect the assessments on the writs of 1635, 1636, 1637, and 1638. The ship-money accounts were not kept in the City's regular account books, and neither the minutes of the Court of Aldermen nor the Court of Common Council disclose the amounts of the shortages. That there were shortages is obvious from the City account books where the loans to the ship-money fund were carried forward from year to year. As late as the fiscal year 1647-1648, the accounts show £7,611-12-02 as being due from the ship-money fund. This figure is very inconclusive insofar as any one year is concerned, particularly 1638 where even the initial payment of £1,000 to rent a ship had to be borrowed outside the Chamber.

During these four years, the City did furnish the ships called for, and in this sense the king's demands were met. But in another sense, he may not have received all he wanted. London was the focal point of interest in the England of the seventeenth century, and poor collections there for any reason whatsoever would

34 City Account Books, Series 1, VI, fol. 198.
be bound to have a like effect throughout the country. This would explain the king's anxiety to keep collections up to date in London and the numerous times City officials were called before the Privy Council to report their accomplishments despite the fact that the ships were supplied.

In 1639 London decided to pay money rather than to furnish ships as she had done in the past. This decision was probably caused by the difficulties the lord mayor experienced in setting out the one ship required by the previous year's writ. This year his Majesty's writ called for two ships, and in the face of a growing opposition to imposts of all kinds, the officials undoubtedly desired to simplify their work. By paying

35 This view is expressed by the Venetian ambassador in Correr to the Doge, Jan. 5, 1635 (n.s.), Cal. S. P. Ven. 1632-36, p. 314. See also the Council's remarks in the same vein. Order in Council, Nov. 24, 1639, Cal. S. P. Dom. 1639-40, p. 119.


38 Precept to the aldermen, Jan. 3, 1639(40), Journal, XXXIX, fol. 24.
money the City would eliminate the committee work involved in setting out the ships and avoid the time-consuming arguments they had had in the past with the lords of the admiralty and the officers of the navy. But the step was to no avail, for this year, the last in which the writs were issued, the ship-money collections were a complete failure. Of a total of £14,000 demanded of the City, only £810-02-00 was ever paid to the treasurer of the navy. The same state of affairs, in varying proportions, was true for the rest of England.

It would seem that when the people learned that Charles was calling a parliament, they waited. Charles, himself, acted in the same fashion. Rossingham wrote from London in April, "...his Majesty has not called upon the sheriffs many a day for an account of that business (i.e. ship-money), and there is not yet £200 levied." After the "short parliament" was dissolved with none of the grievances having been settled the people simply would not pay their assessments.

39 Gordon, Transactions, p. 159.

Chapter V

THE GROWTH OF OPPOSITION

It is apparent, of course, that some opposition to ship-money existed from the very beginning. Official London attempted to evade the consequences of the first writ by its petition to be relieved of the charge. Early in 1635 the recorder, sheriffs, and some aldermen of London reported to the Privy Council that some noblemen living in London had given "dilatory answers to those that come to demand the sums assessed" and "before any payment made have in contempt absented themselves and shut up the doors of their houses on purpose that no distress should be taken." A very similar report was made by the recorder in the following year. Sometime in 1635 Nicholas made certain suggestions on how to deal with the "impediments" to the collection of ship-money. Some of these "impediments" were: (1) the refusal of officers subordinate to the sheriffs to execute the warrants, (2) "disorderly and unequal" assessments, (3) the assessment of more money than called for by the writs, (4) collectors

1 Minutes of the Privy Council, Feb. 8, 1634(5), P. C. R., 2/44, pp. 385-86.

2 Minutes of the Privy Council, Feb. 21, 1635(6), P. C. R., 2/45, p. 472; Order in Council, Feb. 21, 1635(6), Remembrancia, VII, No. 170 (Index, pp. 467-68).

3 An instance of this is in Report to the council, Dec. (1635) from Charles I, CCLXXVIII, No. 100.
refusing to release the money they had on hand, and (5) collectors keeping for "other public uses" the overplus levied.

In response to these reports the Council directed the officials to call the recalcitrants before the lord mayor, to distrain their goods, or to arrest them if necessary. In the later years, however, the tenor of the Council's directives changed, and they came more and more to hold the higher officials themselves responsible for the arrears and other shortcomings. On December 30, 1638, for instance, the Council wrote to the lord mayor of London, "the greatest part of the ship-money...assessed...last year, 1637, is yet in arrear and unlevied, which we cannot but impute to the neglect and remissness of you the late lord mayor and sheriffs of the said City."

A part of the difficulties experienced in obtaining payment of the assessments could be attributed to factors other than a desire to resist a tax considered to be either burdensome or illegal. The plague contributed

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to delinquencies in some years, for the people and officials fled from the crowded city to escape the disease thus slowing down collections or making them impossible.

Some delays were occasioned by petitions for relief when the assessed person felt that he was being overcharged. Such a case was that of the Lady Elizabeth Camden, a widow. She was assessed £60 in 1639, but she petitioned for relief claiming that "no resident in the City, nor hardly three aldermen there, are charged as much as she." That her statement was not an exaggeration appears from the fact that in 1637, a year when the London assessment was the same as 1639, the lord mayor and Aldermen Andrew, and Smith were assessed £10 each and Aldermen Cremer and Gerrard £8 each.

Complaints were not confined to individuals, however. The parish of St. Olaves in Southwark petitioned the Privy Council that they were charged more than the other parishes in the borough. And the precinct of

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6 Lord Treasurer Juxon and Lord Cottington to Sir William Russell, Oct. 15, 1636, Cal. S. P. Dom. 1636-37, p. 163. "By reason of the present visitation in London...the ship-money is not so speedily paid as was expected."


8 Note of ship-money paid in 1637, (1637?), Cal. S. P. Dom. 1637-38, p. 87.

Blackfriars and the parish of Christchurch in the ward of Farringdon Within complained to the Court of Aldermen that they were much overrated in proportion to other precincts and parishes in the ward. In both cases the official body appealed to ordered an investigation so that impartiality might be achieved.

Such a course fitted perfectly the attitude maintained by the king and his advisers throughout the six years ship-money was assessed. Miss Gordon, whose article treats of ship-money in regard to all of England, states, "It is impossible to look through the Council Register for the years 1634 to 1640 without being struck by the very great amount of care taken by the council in adjusting the ship-money assessments."

While the Privy Council made every effort to keep the assessments impartial, they also were adamant in their insistence that the levies be paid. Many former Londoners neglected to pay the assessments that had been placed on them while still residents of the City, feeling, no doubt, that having moved from the City, they might


never be called upon to meet their responsibilities. The Privy Council, however, took steps to correct their misconception, insisting that such persons be brought before them rather than before the lord mayor or the local officials. If the recalcitrant had died, the officials were to levy upon the executors of the estate, and bring the executors before the Council if they refused payment.

The Privy Council's firm intention that payment must not be avoided or delayed was clearly expressed in the letter of instructions sent with the 1636 writs.

The Council wrote:

if you find or understand of any persons that are refractory or that unnecessarily delay the payment of what shall be assessed upon them for the said service (whereof you must frequently and often call for an account from the constables, officers, and others intrusted under you), you are presently without any delay, partiality, or respect of persons to proceed roundly with them (of what quality or condition soever they are) according to his Majesty's writ, and not to defer meddling with them to the last or until others have paid, as was done by some sheriffs of counties the last year, and those that were refractory gained time above those that were well affected to the said service. 13

12 Warrants directed to His Majesty's messengers, July 28, 1635, P. C. R., 2/45, p. 56; April 30, 1636, Remembrancia, VII, No. 179 (Index, p. 468); Nov. 3, 1637, P. C. R., 2/48, p. 345; Nov. 17, 1637, Remembrancia, VIII, No. 201 (Index, p. 470).

13 Minute of letter sent with the writs to the sheriffs, Oct. 9, 1636, P. C. R., 2/46, p. 389.
Officials, as well as ordinary citizens, were made aware of the Council's determination that ship-money must be paid. Late in 1636 the Council ordered "that all lords lieutenants, deputy lieutenants, or justices of the peace who either refused or forebore payment...shall be discharged out of their said offices."

To the inherent power of the Crown, Charles added the aid of legal opinion to make a success of ship-money collections. Shortly after the issue of the second writ of ship-money a degree of opposition developed. It was not serious but sufficient to make itself felt. Because of it, Charles requested John Finch, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, to ask the opinion of the king's judges on the legality of the writs. A majority of the judges declared, "where the good and safety of the kingdom in general is concerned, and the whole kingdom in danger -- of which his Majesty is the only judge -- there the charge of the defense ought to be borne by all the kingdom in general."


15 Gardiner, History of England, VIII, p. 94. The first bitter reaction against the 1635 writs, its disappearance, and its replacement by compliance (to the disgust of those who had hoped to force a convocation of parliament through the resentment against the levy), can be traced in Jorer to the Doge, Nov. 2, Dec. 14, 28, 1635, Feb. 15, 1636 (n. s.), Cal. S. P. Ven. 1635-38, pp. 470, 489, 495, 515.
Despite this opinion, in June 1636, Richard Chambers, a London merchant, sought to test the legality of the ship-money assessment laid upon him. He refused to pay the £10 levied upon him and was put in prison. He sought to bring suit for trespass and false imprisonment against the lord mayor, but Justice Robert Berkeley, then sitting, refused to permit the legality of ship-money to be argued. Berkeley insisted that "there was a rule of law and a rule of government, and that many things which might not be done by the rule of law, might be done by the rule of government." Chambers was again committed to prison, but upon payment of his assessment, he was released.

The 1636 writs caused a considerable amount of controversy, and Charles again asked the judges for an opinion. The judges declared that not only was ship-money a legal imposition, but that the king was the sole judge of how the perils facing the country were to be avoided.

The decision of the judges had the desired effect.


Collections were made rapidly and efficiently. But despite the aura of legality and the successful results of the 1636 collections, the favorable atmosphere did not extend into the following year. In 1639 the Privy Council ordered, "This day, upon consideration had at the Board of the great arrears of ship-money within the City of London due by virtue of the writ issued in 1637, as likewise by the backwardness of the levies this present year" the names of all those owing over 20 shillings are to be reported to the Privy Council.

In November, 1639, Middlesex, Westminster, the Tower Liberty, and the Minories reported that "many distresses (are) now taken and cannot be sold" and "more distresses this last year taken than any preceding." And to add to the difficulties in London, the lord mayor and the sheriffs in 1640 attempted to shift the responsibility for the collection of ship-money to each other.

The ship-money situation began to deteriorate.

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19 Order in Council, Apr. 10, 1639, P. C. R., 2/50, p. 256.

20 Account of ship-money payable in 1638, Nov. 24, 1639, Cal. S. P. Dom. 1639-40, p. 120.

rapidly early in 1640. The "short parliament" called to provide Charles with an army with which to fight the rebellion in Scotland, gave to ship-money a prominence which had the effect of stiffening resistance to payment of the levies. Charles offered to forego ship-money if parliament would provide some other means of supporting a navy, but parliament preferred to function on a grievances-first, supplies-later basis despite the emergency with which the government found itself faced. The public fulminations against ship-money among other things by the Commons added to Charles' difficulties in collecting it, for those who preferred not to pay his taxes, and they were numberless, knew that there were powerful men who preferred not to pay theirs for one reason or another. 22

In May the Privy Council "taking into consideration the great and supine negligence of the high sheriffs" ordered the attorney-general to examine the sheriffs and proceed against them in the Star Chamber for their "contempt and neglect." 23 Acting on the Council's orders, the


attorney-general examined the sheriffs and asked them to subscribe their confessions, but they all refused. Almost two months elapsed before any further action was taken against the London officials. In July the lord mayor and the sheriffs were called before the Privy Council to explain their dereliction of duty. When no satisfactory answers were forthcoming, the attorney-general was ordered "to prefer an information in the Star Chamber" against them. And if sufficient cause were found to prosecute any alderman, the attorney-general was to prefer a like action against him. When the attorney-general preferred charges, the lord mayor and the sheriffs demurred to the Star Chamber bill, but they were overruled. Rossingham states that "a new process is going out against them...but that process lies yet unsealed, suspended for a time." The records do not reveal any subsequent action on the part of the attorney-general.

In the meantime resistance to ship-money was having an ever-widening effect. In June, 1640, Secretary


Windebank wrote to Lord Conway:

the refractoriness of many of the western and southern counties, and more particularly of the City of London, both in ship-money and coat and conduct-money, will in probability give encouragement to the rebels of Scotland to visit their companions in iniquity here, and in their passage to touch at Newcastle. 27

And shortly thereafter Rossingham wrote:

he [the king] would waive that way [coining brass money] of supplying himself if the City would lend him £200,000 on interest and good security, and would also remit the ship-money for this year in the City; but the citizens pretend to great poverty, so the brass money is likely to go on. 28

Blocked at every turn, the king, in a last desperate attempt to obtain money, issued a proclamation for the "levying and payment of the ship-money in arrears." He spoke again of the imminent dangers facing England, the perils appearing on every side in these warlike times. He re-emphasized his duty to defend the kingdom, guard the seas, and secure the safe conduct of shipping. But he found that his commands were not being obeyed, that the ships for which he had asked were not being furnished, that the money called for in the writs was not forthcoming. Therefore he had to censure most of his sheriffs and other

28 Rossingham to Conway, July 21, 1640, Ibid., p. 496.
officials for their great neglect, and now he expected a prompt and faithful performance of the tasks he had set. Not only were the arrears of the present year to be levied and collected but also those of former years. He gave the sheriffs a deadline of the following October 1 and told them he would give no further respite nor brook further delays upon "pain of high contempt against his majesty."

But it was to no avail. The lord mayor and the aldermen had attempted to make collections and distress goods themselves but quite unsuccessfully. Rossingham wrote:

the lord mayor with both the sheriffs and a constable, and the city officers, go from house to house to call for ship-money, but not above one man paid it; wherefore the lord mayor willed the sheriffs to take distresses upon the refusers, but they refused, desiring him to do the office himself, it not being required by the writ. A linen-draper refused to pay, so my lord mayor seized a piece of linen cloth, which the linen-draper desired to measure, saying it would cost his lordship so much an ell, in all $1. And if his lordship would take it, both the sheriffs refusing to meddle with it, he told him he would enter it to his account in his book, and would expect payment, taking witness of the delivery of it. 30

29 Proclamation for the levying and payment of the ship-money in arrears, Aug. 20, 1640, Journal, XXXIX, fol. 119.

As the Audit Office Declared Accounts have shown, the amount London paid on the last writ was negligible. The experience of Mr. Hampden before the royal judges taught the people the folly of legal protests, and so political resistance was substituted for them.

On September 22, 1640, a petition was presented to Charles at York signed by ten thousand London citizens. They recited eight major grievances among which were the levying of ship-money and the imprisonment of citizens for the non-payment of ship-money, and concluded by beseeching the king to call a parliament. That the non-payment of ship-money in the City of London was not based on financial reasons is proved by the weekly contribution of £10,000 the City made to parliament during the ensuing civil war.

31 See chapter IV, p. 44 above.


I. Manuscripts

With the exception of the Privy Council Register, the following manuscripts were transcribed by M. C. Wren and made available to me for this study:

A. City of London manuscripts, deposited in the Record Office of the City of London:

2. Repertories of the Court of Aldermen, vols. 49-54.

B. Manuscripts in the Public Record Office, London:


II. Published Sources

The starred titles are in the possession of M. C. Wren, whose library was at my disposal.

*Birch, W. de Gray (editor), The Historical Charters and the Constitutional Documents of the City of London, London, 1884.


Great Britain, Stationary Office, Historical Manuscripts Commission:


Rushworth, John, Historical Collections of Private Passages of State, 7 vols., London, 1721.

Sanderson, William, A Compleat History of the Life and Reign of King Charles, from his cradle to his grave, London, 1658.


III. Secondary Works


"The assessment of £30,000 for the setting out of seven ships, whereof the ward of Walbrook is taxed to £328 and the precinct of St. Mary Bothaw is taxed to £76-08-06, which is levied upon the inhabitants as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Steele</td>
<td>£1-06-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Chamley</td>
<td>2-06-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Hilton</td>
<td>2-06-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fra. Croft</td>
<td>1-06-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Hudson</td>
<td>2-13-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy Busher</td>
<td>5-06-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Mayo</td>
<td>2-00-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Lage</td>
<td>0-07-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Barrett</td>
<td>2-00-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Totly</td>
<td>0-13-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich. Goer</td>
<td>0-13-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Blaxton</td>
<td>1-15-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stock</td>
<td>0-03-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wm. Chamberlin</td>
<td>0-13-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Marshal</td>
<td>0-06-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Lathy</td>
<td>0-03-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robt. Hudson</td>
<td>15-00-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Man</td>
<td>6-13-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Cleave</td>
<td>6-13-04, but paid £10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edw. Gittins</td>
<td>2-13-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fra. Heath</td>
<td>2-00-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Maye</td>
<td>2-00-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Wood</td>
<td>2-00-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tho. Mayhew</td>
<td>2-00-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Terre</td>
<td>13-06-08, but paid £20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Livingston, minister, not rated."