

Human rights: magna carta assignment

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Traditionally, a good king was one that lead militaries well and have strategic planning skills. However, King John did not possess these qualities, which subsequently lead to the loss Of respect towards him from both nobles and peasants. Religion was an important part of day to day life in King John's era, to both peasants and nobles. The Roman Catholic church taught people that they would only get into Heaven if they deemed them good enough, those cast out would be sent to Hell. After the death of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1105, Hubert Walter, King John wanted to elect his own bishop.

However, Pope Innocent did not agree. He wanted his own man, Stephen Longboat to be the Archbishop. King John, infuriated with the pope's decision, refused to let Stephen into the country and seized the lands of Canterbury Cathedral and collected its income. John felt that he, as king, was allowed to do whatever he wishes and should be allowed to elect his own Archbishop. He refused to give in to the Pope, as it would make him look weak. This marked the beginning of a dispute that broke down the communities of England. In March 1208, Pope Innocent placed England under an interdict and later, excommunicated King John.

All church services were halted. Churches were closed down, marriages, burials and christenings could not take place. This caused great difficulties across the country. People had no guidance, and were constantly paranoid at the thought of going to Hell, as they did not attend church. The common folk were annoyed at both the King and the Pope. Eventually, Pope Innocent upgraded the excommunication so that the barons would no longer have to follow John's orders. In 1214, John faced another military loss. He then

returned to London and demanded more tax from the barons (who collected the taxes).

The barons refused his demands and began to rebel against his weakened power. They captured London, marching in as the 'Army of God'. By spring in 1215, both sides had agreed to discuss matters. At the town of Runnymede on the 15th of June 1215, the forces gathered and the Archbishop of Canterbury read aloud the document now known as 'The great charter- the Magna Carta. The document brought forth rules associated with equality, freedom and democracy. Even though John was aware that signing the document his power would be limited, he knew that it would ease the unrest in the country and between the Pope and himself.

The Magna Carta did not affect peasants as much as it did the nobles, but it was the start of human rights awareness. Previous to the Magna Carta, Monarchs virtually had unlimited power. The document was a start in the shift of power away from the rulers and towards the people. It also stated the right and freedom to appeal against unlawful imprisonment 'no free man can be imprisoned, outlawed or exiled except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land, and that justice could not be sold, delayed or ended'.