

Royal Commission for Regulating Plantations; April 28, 1634

Charles, by the grace of God, of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc..

To the right reverend father in God, our right trusty and wellbeloved counselor, William, by the providence of God, Archbishop of Canterbury, primate and metropolitan of all England; to our right trusty and well-beloved counselor, Thomas, Lord Coventry, Lord Keeper of our great seal of England; to our right reverend father in God, our right trusty and well-beloved counselor, Richard, by the providence of God, Archbishop of York, primate and metropolitan of England; to our right trusty and well-beloved counselor, Richard, Earl of Portland and high treasurer of England; Henry, Earl of Manchester, keeper of our privy seal; Thomas, Earl of Arundell and Surrey, Earl Marshall of England; Edward, Earl of Dorset, chamberlain to our most dear consort, the Queen; and to our trusty and well-beloved counselor Francis Lord Cottington, Chamberlain and under treasurer of our Exchequer; Thomas Edmunds, Knight, treasurer of our household, John Cook, Knight, one of our principal secretaries of state; and Francis Windebank, another of our principal secretaries of state, greeting. Whereas diverse of the subjects of us and of our late dear father, King James, of famous memory, late, of England, King, by virtue of our royal authority, granted not only to enlarge the territories of our empire, but more especially to propagate the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, having, with their exceeding industry and charge, deduced great numbers of the people of England into several colonies in several places of the world, either altogether desert and unpeopled, or enjoyed by savage and barbarous nations, void of all manner of knowledge of Almighty God, we, being graciously pleased to provide for the ease and tranquility of the said subjects, and reposing assured confidence in your fidelity, wisdom, justice, and providence, do constitute you, our said Archbishop of Canterbury, etc., or any five or more of you, our counselors, and to you, or to any five or more of you, do commit and give power of protection and government, as well over the said English colonies already planted as over all such other colonies, which by any of our people of England, hereafter shall be deduced into any other like parts whatsoever, and power to make laws, ordinances, and constitutions, concerning either the state public of the said colonies, or utility of private persons and their lands, goods, debts, and succession within the precincts of the same, and for ordering and directing of them, in their demeanors towards foreign princes and their people, and likewise towards us and our subjects, as well within any foreign parts whatsoever beyond the seas as during their voyages, or upon the seas, to and from the same.

And for relief and support of the clergy, and the rule and cure of the souls of our people living in those parts, and for consigning of convenient maintenance to them by tiths, oblations, and other profits accruing, according to your good discretion, with the advice of two or three of our bishops, whom you shall think fit to call to your consultations, touching the distribution of such maintenance to the clergy, and all other matters ecclesiastical, and to inflict punishment on all

offenders or violaters of constitutions and ordinances, either by imprisonments or other restraints, or by loss of life or members, according as the quality of the offense shall require with power also, our royal assent being first had and obtained, to remove all governors and presidents of the said colonies, upon just cause appearing, from their several places, and to appoint others in their stead, and also to require and take account of them touching their office and government, and whom you shall find delinquents you shall punish, either by depriving them of their several places and provinces over which they are appointed, or by pecuniary mulcts and penalties, according to the qualities of the offenses; and power also to ordain temporal judges and civil magistrates to determine of civil causes, with such powers in such a form as to you or any five or more of you shall seem expedient; and also to ordain judges, magistrates, and officers for and concerning courts ecclesiastical, with such power and such a form as to you or any five or more of you, with the advice of the bishops suffragan to the Archbishop of Canterbury for the time being, shall be held meet; and power to constitute and ordain tribunals and courts of justice, both ecclesiastical and civil, with such power and in them form of judicature and manner of process and appeals from and to the said courts in all cases and matters, as well criminal as civil, both personal, real, and mixed, and touching the determination pertaining to any courts of justice, ecclesiastical and civil, to judge thereof and determine; provided nevertheless, the said laws, ordinances, and constitutions shall not be put in execution until our royal assent, expressed under our sign at least, be first thereto had and obtained, the which our royal assent so obtained, together with the said laws, ordinances, constitutions, being published and proclaimed in the provinces in which they are to be executed, the said laws, ordinances, and constitutions, from thenceforth, shall be in force in law; and we do hereby will and command all persons whom it shall concern inviolably to keep and observe the same. Notwithstanding, it may and shall be lawful for you, and every five and more of you, with our royal assent, the said laws, ordinances, and constitutions, though so published and proclaimed as aforesaid, to alter, revoke, and appeal, and other new laws, etc., in form aforesaid, from time to time, to make and publish as aforesaid, and to new and growing evils and perils to apply new remedies in such manner, and so often as to you shall appear to be necessary and expedient.

Know you also, that we do constitute you, the said Archbishop of Canterbury, etc., and every five or more of you, our committees, according to your good discretions, to hear and determine all complaints at the entrance and suit of the party grieved, whether it be against the whole colonies themselves or any governor or officer of the same, or whether complaint touching wrongs exhibited and depending, either between the whole bodies of the colonies or any private member thereof, and to summon the persons before you, and they or their procurators or agents being on both sides heard, finally to determine thereof, according to justice. Giving moreover, and granting to you and any five or more of you, that if it shall appear that any officer or governor of the said colonies shall injuriously intend and usurp upon the authority, power, and possessions of any other, or shall unjustly wrong one another, or shall not suppress all revels to us, or such as shall not obey our commands, that then it shall be lawful, upon advice with ourself

first had, for the causes aforesaid, or upon any other just reason, to remand and cause the offender to return into England, or into any other place, according as in your good discretions you shall think just and necessary.

And we do, furthermore, give to you, or any five or more of you, letters patents and other writings whatsoever, of us or of our royal predecessors granted, for or concerning the planting of any colonies in any countries, provinces, islands, or territories whatsoever, beyond the seas, and if, upon view thereof, the same shall appear to you, or any five or more of you, to have been surreptitiously and unduly obtained, or that any privileges or liberties therein granted- be hurtful to us, our crown, or prerogative royal, or to any foreign princes, to cause the same, according to the laws and customs of our realm of England, to be revoked and to do all other things which shall be necessary for the wholesome government and protection of the said colonies and our people therein abiding.

Wherefore, we command you that you diligently intend the premises at such times and places as yourselves for that purpose shall appoint, charging also and firmly commanding all presidents of provinces within the aforesaid colonies now planted or to be planted, and all and every the said colonies themselves, and all other persons whom it does concern, that they attend you in the premises, and be obedient to your commands touching the same so often as they shall be thereto commanded, at their peril. In witness whereof, we caused these our letters to be made patent. Witness ourself at Westminster, 28th day of April, in the tenth year of our reign.