

From the time that King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta, Democracy has substantially grown in England. There were many different events which led to this growth that lasted all the way to the time of the Hanover Kings. Although the transformation into a Democratic England was shaky much of the time, it did eventually take effect.

The first English king who inspired the growth of Democracy in England was a man named Alfred the Great. During the time of Alfred's reign, he brought about many changes for the better in all aspects of life. His first major accomplishment was his defeating of the Danes. The Danes had been taking over all of England, until Alfred paid them to sign a treaty. After Alfred strengthened the English forces, he commenced to fight the Danes, and he eventually moved them back to a very small portion of England. After he gained the people's respect by doing so, he began his reforms.

Alfred first collected all of the written laws of England, and made a law code so that the people would not be unjustly punished. He became very involved with his people by journeying across England to make sure the courts were not unjustly arresting English citizens. Alfred also insisted that the culture of England, be revived, for it had suffered for the past few centuries. This, and all of his other reforms were successful.

For the next two centuries, England's rule was constantly changing hands, which made it hard for Democracy to come about. The first ruler who started Democratic reform after Alfred was William I. His conquests in England also greatly affected the lives of the people for the better. William the Conqueror, as he was often called, began his conquest by winning the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Since England had been primarily Anglo-Saxon for a long period of time, the integration of Normans into England was tough. After a short period of time, it proved to significantly alter the government of England. William, however, made this governmental transition very easy for the people in England. By setting the stones for a very strong centralized government, William I improved the English government greatly. He also set the foundation for the parliamentary system, by instating his King's Council. This group of officers would assist William in his decisions, because William believed that a government could not be successfully ruled by only one person.

After the transition period between Anglo-Saxon and Norman ways of life ended, William I's Salisbury Oath also modified the system of government in England. During medieval times, vassals had to first pledge their allegiance to the lord from whom they received their fiefs. William reformed the feudal system by stating in the Salisbury Oath that all vassals owed primary allegiance to him. The feudal system had long been a very complex system, in which betrayals would take place very often. By William's making everyone's primary allegiance to him, he centralized the government, as well as the feudal system. This proved to unite the people throughout England.

All of this laid down the foundation for the signing of the Magna Carta by King John in the year 1215. After King John and Henry III's rule ended, Edward I took over the reigns of England. His Model Parliament became the most important step in England's push towards Democracy. This very basic Parliament was the first formal government in England where people other than the king could make choices. Edward realized that by calling meetings of his Parliament, he could raise tax money, as well as keep the people content. During Edward's rule, the Parliament eventually split into two houses, which is very similar to the way it is run today.

After close to 200 years went by with very little being accomplished, Charles I took over the helm of England. Charles I happened to be one of the poorer rulers of England during the time of Democratic growth. He called Parliament only a few times and very sparsely in between, and he only called it when he needed money. By the third time he called Parliament in three years, the people finally figured out a way to demand more from this lackluster king. Charles was again desperate for money, and the Parliament was furious with him. When Charles asked for more money, the Parliament refused. They stated that unless he signed a document which was called The Petition of Right, granting the Parliament more power, they would not grant him money.

The Petition of Right had four basic things included in it which were demanded of the king. The first was that no one was to be imprisoned without a just cause. Second was that martial law could not be declared during times of peace. Forced loans were forbidden, which meant that Charles could no longer force money or tax raises out of the Parliament. Lastly, billeting of soldiers in their homes was forbidden without consent. Charles obviously was so interested in receiving money, that he didn't think twice about signing this Petition. His fights with Parliament

lasted for another decade, until Charles I finally dismissed them in 1629. Charles I was eventually tried for treason, and was executed in 1649.

For the next decade, England was in constant turmoil. The English Civil War took place, and instability plagued England. By the time Charles II was crowned king in 1660, England was in dire need of help. Since Charles II knew very little about English politics, and had no desire to have to deal with it, he appointed his authority on the matter to Edward Hyde. Hyde eventually passed many of the laws which had been drawn up by the Long Parliament, which included the important Due Process of Law. This also proved to be a huge step in the Democracy of England. The Due Process of Law stated that the king no longer had the right to imprison someone without a trial. More importantly, it stated that the Parliament meet at least once every three years. This may seem like very little, but considering England's Parliament had been abolished and reinstated so many times, it was the most it had been in centuries.

Due to Hyde's many reforms in the English Parliament, England entered a time of prosperity. During this time, which was later named The Glorious Revolution, William and Mary took over the throne, and set the stage for the signing of the first English Bill of Rights. This new set of liberties made the people in England very happy, and included many important things. Among them were the fact that Parliament must now meet at least once a year, freedom of election and debate within Parliament was received, trial by jury was now a law, and the king no longer had the right to have an army during times of peace. There were also a few other rights included in this Bill, all of which lessened the power of the king, and strengthened the power of Parliament.

Many other events helped pave the way for the Democracy which is in England today. As you can see, this was a long and lengthy process, which took over 500 years to fully accomplish. During the 1600's, Parliament was very shaky and over a decade went by on several occasions between meetings. By the time the 18<sup>th</sup> century rolled around, however, Parliament was to stay an important part of the English government. Due to all of these important acts, the Queen of England holds a throne more due to tradition, than one of containing power in the government.