

We may dream of the time when the *machine à gouverner* may come to supply—whether for good or evil—the present obvious inadequacy of the brain when the latter is concerned with the customary machinery of politics.

- Dominique Dubarle's *Le Monde* review of Norbert Wiener's *Cybernetics* (December 28th, 1948).

Black Knight's Pawn: Sir, your Plot's discovered.

Black Knight Gondomar: Which of the twenty thousand and nine hundred / fourscore and five? Canst tell?

Pawn: Bless us! so many? / How do poor countrymen have but one plot / To keep a cow on, yet in law for that? / You cannot know 'em all sure by their names, sir.

Gondomar: Yes, were their number trebled. Thou hast seen / A Globe stands on the table in my closet?

Pawn: A thing, sir, full of countries and hard words? [...]

Gondomar: Just such a thing, if e'er my skull be opened, / Will my brains look like.

- Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624).

### **The Impeachment of Lionel Cranfield:**

#### **Computation, Capitalism and Empire in Early Stuart England**

Over the course of the 17th-century, arithmetic established itself as a key component of political-economic discourse in England and its empire.<sup>1</sup> That same century saw the establishment of some other things in England as well. The end of the century gets much of the credit: Newton's astronomy, the Glorious Revolution in government and the Financial Revolution in economics—these moments were heralds of a new episteme, an opening to Enlightenment in science, government and commerce bought at a dear price from decades of conflict.<sup>2</sup> The incredible simultaneity of these moments raises a key historical puzzle: how are these three things (science, government and capitalism) related, at least in the early modern British context? One might think that the answer to this question is contained within the “logics” of these systems, and thus ought to be answered theoretically. I find thinking that way difficult. Instead, I think of this as a question that must be answered historically. It is a genealogical question.

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<sup>1</sup> Will Deringer has argued that “In the English-speaking world, the notion that numerical calculation was deserving of special esteem as a way of thinking and knowing, particularly in political contexts, first began to take hold in Britain around the turn of the eighteenth century. Prior to that point, numerical thinking had held a rather marginal place in political affairs.” If arithmetic won its special esteem by the beginning of the 18th-century, its fight from the margins must have been waged during the 17th. See William Deringer, *Calculated Values: Finance, Politics and the Quantitative Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018). I owe a great debt to Deringer for helping me pry open this question.

<sup>2</sup> I think Kant's specific formulation of that notorious word is rather poetically accurate in this context. The end of the 17th-century saw England “exit from [its] self-incurred tutelage.” Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (1784).

Because the relationship between these things was forged historically, it is reasonable to suspect that their interconnections were under-construction well before their moments of revealing. In that spirit, framing an answer to this riddle requires one to cast a long glance over the 17th-century to find important points of contact. One historiographically important point of contact between these three structures is a figure named William Petty—the man who coined the phrase “political arithmetic” and famously received the attention of Karl Marx.<sup>3</sup> The remarkable thing about Petty’s story is the seemingly clear relationship between his continental education, his interest in Baconian natural philosophy and his eventual application of numbers to questions of political economy. In other words, it was Petty’s background in “science” that enabled him to see the manifold uses for arithmetic in the realm of policy. The consequences for the historical relationship between these things, then, is clear: quantitative political economy is *scientific* political economy. The rest, as they say, is history.

The objective of this paper is to highlight a different, earlier figure in an effort to de-center the outsized role played by Petty in the historiography of 17th-century political economy, and thus to problematize the idea that it was primarily something-like-science that brought numbers into politics. I argue that the story of Lionel Cranfield, the Jacobean merchant turned Lord Treasurer, is evidence that government and commerce had been intertwined via the thread of calculation long before the work of Petty, while the experimental program of Francis Bacon still retained a serious distance to rigorous computation. It is possible that logarithmic tables did come to a few areas of accounting from astronomy around this time, and they would not have been friendly to the roman numeral techniques that dominated most 16th-century English estate books. But many merchants of Cranfield’s generation had already largely transitioned to arabic numerals by the end of the 1610s, well before most of them would have heard of the word “logarithm,” and in any case it is more likely that the merchants first encountered the

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<sup>3</sup> Marx called Petty “the founder of political economy.” See Karl Marx (trans. Emile Burns), *Theories of Surplus Value, Part I* [1861] (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), 1. Cited in Ted McCormick, *William Petty and the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). I take up McCormick’s excellent reading of Petty in the third section of this paper.

word from the sailors rather than from the scholars.<sup>4</sup> In short, I suspect that the commercial drive to compute and calculate has origins that lie beyond the emergence of 17th-century science. As a result, I am suspicious of any claim that “scientific economics” can be simply equated to “quantitative economics.” Something else is at work mediating between those two phrases, and I don’t think it is the natural tendency of market forces towards equilibrium.

The outsized role played in this paper by government—court and parliamentary politics, to be specific—came as something of a surprise to me. I approached this project eager to find intersections between quantification, political economy and state formation, but I had some naive impression that this story, particularly at this early date, might have been too arcane for the halls of Westminster or the Painted Chamber. It is true that much of this work went on “under-the-hood” as laboriously compiled tables of data that gathered some dust in the office of the Exchequer between Privy Council meetings. To my surprise, however, it became clear that expert interpretations of these tables *did* have a fundamental impact in shaping politics at the highest level, with the highest stakes. This paper is an account of one of those episodes: the 1624 impeachment of Lionel Cranfield, the Lord Treasurer.

There is essentially one conventional account of Cranfield’s impeachment, although it has been told in a few different ways. The Cranfield biographers, R. H. Tawney and Menna Prestwich chief among them, share the story with parliamentary historians as diverse in outlook as S. R. Gardiner and Conrad Russell. They all agree that Cranfield’s resistance to war with Spain (the marquee political issue of 1624) was an aggravating factor in his impeachment, as it was a source of serious antagonism between Cranfield and a number of prominent figures, including both Prince Charles and the Duke of Buckingham. They also all share a sense that it was *only* an aggravating factor, one amongst many. In the end, it was the personal politics of court intrigue that got Cranfield impeached, although whose personal politics were

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<sup>4</sup> The first English translation of Napier and Briggs’ text on logarithms was dedicated to the East India Company, whose “employment of so many Mariners in so many goodly and costly ships, in long and dangerous voyages, for whose use (though many other wayes profitable) this little booke is chiefly behooouefull.” See Edward Wright, *A Description of the Admirable Table of Logarithmes* (1616).

most closely involved varies depending on the account.<sup>5</sup> Further, given that war with Spain was only one factor among many (including, for example, an episode in which Cranfield scolded the Prince as a teen, or his cold-hosting of Buckingham's mother at his estate, or more seriously a wide variety of patronage frustrations combined with Cranfield's efforts to displace Buckingham with the his brother-in-law as the King's favorite), these scholars have not focused much effort in figuring out *why* Cranfield was so strongly opposed to war. Nonetheless, there is something of a provisional consensus that Cranfield's resistance to war was driven largely by his sensitivity to royal debt, a typical enough perspective for any Lord Treasurer. The promise of a Spanish dowry slipping through his fingers (perhaps the only financial instrument capable of reversing the fortunes of the crown in a single stroke) only added insult to injury. Cranfield, so the story goes, resisted war for the same reasons all treasurers did: it was expensive, and the King was broke. Case closed.

This paper takes a different approach. I argue that Cranfield's political maneuvering during the opening weeks of the 1624 parliament, motivated by his resistance to war with Spain, was the overwhelming cause of his impeachment, not just one issue amongst many. Further, I suggest that Cranfield was worried about much more than crown debt—for Cranfield the merchant, being sensitive to debt did not mean avoiding it, it meant being comfortable living in it. Instead, the reason Cranfield was willing to gamble his entire career in order to resist war with Spain was because such a war would have been fatal to his political-economic program, a global system built on detailed accounting, monitored by exhaustive computation and anchored in a pro-Spanish geopolitical alignment. For now, you must take

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<sup>5</sup> Most of the scholarship suggests that the Prince and Buckingham played roles in bringing Cranfield down. Gardiner, whose version of the story is something like an urtext, insists that both of these men ultimately pined for Cranfield's fall. The odd duckling, when it comes to identifying who was most responsible for Cranfield's impeachment, is Conrad Russell. Russell argues that the Prince played essentially no role in bringing Cranfield down, and that Cranfield's impeachment was thus not linked to his opposition to war. Instead, "Everything about the prosecution of Cranfield confirms the comment of the younger Dudley Carleton, that it all smelled of private grudges between Buckingham and him ... If Buckingham was largely responsible for the breach with Spain, he was solely responsible for the fall of Cranfield." I think I understand why Russell made this error: he missed Cranfield's March 11th speech, and talks about that March 11th moment as if it were only Weston who caused the problem. This small oversight might have cascading and dramatic implications for Russell's account of those 1620s parliaments, particularly because his account of March 11th also emphasizes it as a significant turning point, centered on the role of parliament in mediating the relationship between the Prince and the King. This footnote will make more sense if you come back to it after reading the rest of the paper. See Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621-1629* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 201.

my word that Cranfield was a careful counter, as this paper does not deal in great detail with Cranfield's methods.<sup>6</sup> Instead, it offers an account of the moment when Cranfield's innovative approach to political economy was felled by a fatal conflict in parliament. The fact that Cranfield was impeached may not be the most important thing about him, but understanding why he was impeached embeds his importance in its proper context: the relationship between high politics, commerce and state formation in early Stuart England.

Why was James I's Lord Treasurer impeached? I suggest the best way to tackle this is as a doubled question: why was Cranfield **impeached** (why was impeachment the tool used to take him down), and why was **Cranfield** impeached (what did he do wrong)? The first two sections of this paper tackle those two sides of this guiding question. The third section returns to some of the historiographical points made at the outset of this introduction before offering a brief description of Cranfield's imperial political-economic system. Finally, I conclude with a suggestion for how to bring Cranfield's methods back to the center of the story, with a specific focus on the administration of customs taxation.

### **Section 1: The Institutionalization of Impeachment**

First, I want to answer why Cranfield was **impeached**. Why was impeachment the tool used to take him down? When inquiring about legal proceedings, the knee-jerk reaction is to examine the charges: what has this person been accused of? Once that has been clarified, the next question that comes is typically: are they guilty? Both Prestwich and Tawney spent significant effort building answers to these questions

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<sup>6</sup> If you aren't inclined to take my word for it, there are two places that offer workable snapshots of Cranfield's efforts. For his early governmental work, in which he produced the first manuscript evidence of the phrase "balance of trade" in English, see Astrid Friis, *Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade: The Commercial Policy of England in Its Main Aspects, 1603-1625* (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1927), 206-213. For his post-1618 audit spree, see P. R. Seddon, "Household reforms in the Reign of King James," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 53, no. 127 (1980): 44-55. See also W. H. Price, "The Origin of the Phrase 'Balance of Trade,'" *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1905). If you are able, go check out Lansdowne MSS 152, fols 180-182, "Sir Lionel Cranfield his balance of Trade 21 May 1615."

regarding Cranfield's case, although even those answers remain incomplete.<sup>7</sup> The following section argues that determining **why** Cranfield was impeached has almost nothing to do with the specifics of his charge or the question of his guilt, which instead get at *how* Cranfield was impeached. To understand why, one must contextualize the re-invention of impeachment as a parliamentary tool in the 1620s. The mutation of Cranfield's charge between when it was first sent to him and when his trial began two weeks later won't answer our question, but it is a fine place to start an inquiry.

The charge that Cranfield was sent by Parliament on April 24th, 1624, was comprised of six sections. The first three dealt with accusations of bribery-by-customs-farmers. The fourth concerned Cranfield's profits from his patent on sugar, the fifth dealt with compositions on outports and the sixth was a combination of charges stemming from (6a) Cranfield's tenure as Master of the Court of Wards and (6b) his official dealings with the Ordnance and some of its officers. This charge-list was composed by the Lords, and had already eliminated a few of the accusations sent up from the Commons (one regarding the imposition on wines, another on hops).<sup>8</sup> The charge was altered once on April 29th, when the Attorney General struck one of the three customs-farming bribery accusations and added on a seventh section concerning Cranfield's tenure as Master of the Wardrobe, and it was altered again on the first day of Cranfield's trial, May 7th, when the King summoned the Lords to him and indicated that the issues regarding the sugar patent and some of the matters involving the Court of Wards were unfounded, as the King was aware of these dealings and Cranfield was thus operating under his authority.<sup>9</sup> Each of these

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<sup>7</sup> For a critique of Prestwich's account of the section Cranfield's charge concerning the Ordnance (which is celebrated as by far the most complete), see Michael B. Young, "Illusions of Grandeur and Reform at the Jacobean Court: Cranfield and the Ordnance," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1979), 53-73. Young's account is even more preoccupied with the specifics of the charge than Tawney and Prestwich. See also R. H. Tawney, *Business and Politics under James I: Lionel Cranfield as Merchant and Minister* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958) and Menna Prestwich, *Politics and Profits under the Early Stuarts: The Career of Lionel Cranfield Earl of Middlesex* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966).

<sup>8</sup> Some in the Commons, like Richard Phelips, were unhappy with how this progressed, and naturally claimed it went against precedent—the job of the Lords was to try all the charges sent to them from the Commons. "24th April 1624," in *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*, ed. Philip Baker (British History Online, 2015-18), *British History Online*, accessed March 17, 2022, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/apr-24>.

<sup>9</sup> "House of Lords Journal Volume 3: 7 May 1624," in *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 3, 1620-1628*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830), 342-361. *British History Online*, accessed March 17, 2022, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol3/pp342-361>.

accusations—in their their additions, subtractions and revisions—contains a maze of witnesses and interests, and they hardly represent a unified vision for prosecution. The two managers of the case against Cranfield, Randolph Crew and Thomas Coventry, were inheriting a “throw everything at the wall and see what sticks” approach from the smattering of committees in the Commons and Lords that had prepared this legal smorgasbord over the previous few weeks.<sup>10</sup> Despite the sweeping range of Cranfield’s charge, a contemporary probably expressed a common sentiment when he noted in early April that “[the] matters brought against him hitherto (in my conceit) are neither so heavy nor so heinous but with a favorable construction they might pass uncensured, and I think for our time few of his predecessors in that place if they were as narrowly searched into but they would be found as faulty.”<sup>11</sup> Despite what Cranfield’s enemies had dug up and put on display, there was no obvious silver bullet. The charge was simply a means to an end, Cranfield had to be investigated for *something*.

If the above account of Cranfield’s charge leaves an impression of the process of impeachment as something rather under-construction, that’s because—in 1624, at least—it was. Impeachment (or parliamentary judicature, as it was referred to technically) had reappeared in 1621 for the first time in well over a century with the two high profile cases of Giles Mompesson and Francis Bacon, as well as a couple of more exotic cases like the one involving the Catholic barrister Edward Floyd. Between this “revival” in 1621 and Buckingham’s impeachment in 1626, and extending through the retrospective treatises of John Selden and Henry Elsynge written later in the decade, MPs, lawyers and their antiquary allies molded parliamentary judicature into something institutionally recognizable as impeachment through a half-dozen years of practice and the creative deployment of regularly contested precedent.<sup>12</sup> That it was contested is not to say that the medieval precedent didn’t matter, or was merely cynically deployed to achieve the narrow interest of a faction: part of the reason the revival worked is exactly because the precedents were compelling to many.

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<sup>10</sup> In the Commons: Coke’s Committee on Grievances and Sandys’ Committee on Trade; in the Lords: Buckingham’s Committee on Munitions.

<sup>11</sup> Chamberlain (10th April 1624), cited in Prestwich, *Cranfield*, 442.

<sup>12</sup> Colin G. Tite, *Impeachment and Parliamentary Judicature in Early Stuart England* (London: The Athlone Press, 1974). See also John Selden, *Of the Judicature in Parliaments* (London, n.d.) and Henry Elsynge, “The moderne frame of the Parliaments of England,” ed. C. S. Sims, *American Historical Review*, liii (1948), 288-305.

In the following paragraphs, I argue that impeachment was characterized by three broad themes, and that it was in negotiating the boundaries and interplay of these themes that the 17th-century process of impeachment was wrought out from the medieval precedents of parliamentary judicature. Further, I claim that contextualizing these three themes gives the best lead to answering this section's guiding question: why was Cranfield **impeached**? Understanding the atmosphere surrounding parliamentary judicature in the early 1620s is the key to answering why it was used in Cranfield's case.

The first theme that linked the 14th-century precedents to their 17th-century descendants was the importance of "clamor" to the ignition of proceedings. The case for impeachment-by-clamor has been made most forcefully by T. F. T. Plucknett. His argument is that the bedrock precedent of 14th-century impeachment was developed over the course of that century through the gradual usurpation by parliament of two older common law procedures that had traditionally been associated with royal prerogative: conviction by record and conviction by notoriety.<sup>13</sup> Both of these, record and notoriety, differ from the more familiar process of indictment in that the preparation of a specific charge is not central to their operation.<sup>14</sup> Conviction by record was the original and more "absolute" mode, in which conviction could be secured by the king's word alone—a power typically extended to the royal coroner as well.

Over the first half of the 14th-century, however, the English crown failed to sustain a few convictions by record, which prompted something of a crisis in the technique. One key moment was the second trial of Roger Mortimer in 1330 by Edward III. Mortimer's conviction by record had been reversed three years earlier, and so the young king invited the peers in parliament to confirm his judgement that "the said things [Mortimer's charge] are notorious and known to be true to you and all the people of the realm." The peers, after some discussion, agreed that the charges were indeed notorious, and they as judges sentenced Mortimer to death. Plucknett suggested that this move signaled the emergence of "condemnation on the strength of notoriety, even without the intervention of the king's record."<sup>15</sup> The Commons was folded into this new parliamentary role in adjudicating notoriety in the famous case of

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<sup>13</sup> T. F. T. Plucknett, "The Origins of Impeachment," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser. xxiv (1942), 47-71.

<sup>14</sup> Here, Plucknett argues against Maude Clarke's interpretation of impeachment as developing out of indictment. See Maude Clarke (ed), *Fourteenth Century Studies* (1937).

<sup>15</sup> Plucknett, "The Origins of Impeachment," 61.



William Latimer in 1376, and the handful of other “impeachments” (the first time the word was used in that context) managed by the Good Parliament in that year.<sup>16</sup> Colin Tite emphasized that the Commons had occasionally been able to wedge their way into judicature during the long reign of Edward III by sending deputations to the Lords, but that their role was not secure until this 1376 moment. He suggested that it was the weakness of the court during that parliament that allowed the Commons to assert their initiative in Latimer’s case.<sup>17</sup>

The Latimer case was something like the precedential north star for the 17th-century antiquarians, such as Coke and Selden, who were working to “revive” the process of impeachment.<sup>18</sup> This was the first case whose heading included the specific verbiage “impeached and accused,” the phrase that is the most concrete link amongst the early wave of impeachments in the 14th and 15th century.<sup>19</sup> The full sentence from this heading, however, places this word **clamor** front and center: “William, lord Latimer was impeached and accused by the clamour of the commons.” This language of clamor carried through to the associated impeachment of Adam Bury by parliament in that same year, as well as the contemporaneous

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<sup>16</sup> There were a number of intermediary steps between Mortimer’s conviction in 1330 and Latimer’s impeachment in 1376. The “parliamentary crisis” of 1341 has also been pointed to as playing a role in the establishment of “clamor” as a motor of judicature, for example. See Gaillard Lapsley, “Archbishop Stratford and The Parliamentary Crisis of 1341 (Continued),” *The English Historical Review*, vol. 30, no. 118 (1915), 193-215. For more on Latimer, see B. Wilkinson, “Latimer’s Impeachment and Parliament in the Fourteenth Century” in *Studies in the Constitutional History of the Thirteenth & Fourteenth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1937), 82-107.

<sup>17</sup> Colin G. Tite, *Impeachment and Parliamentary Judicature in Early Stuart England* (London: The Athlone Press, 1974), 14-17. A failed foreign policy connected to English possessions on the Continent, encapsulated in the 1375 treaty of Bruges, was compounded by the illness of the prince and the old age of the king to have opened room for the Commons to “seize the initiative,” in a sense. Cranfield’s case shares some of these elements.

<sup>18</sup> Latimer’s case, though significant, was also part of a larger constellation of precedent. The 1386 impeachment of Michael de la Pole, for example, was recognized as specifically important for Bacon’s impeachment as de la Pole had been Lord Chancellor. Tite suggests that Selden, working as an advisor to the Lords on impeachment precedent during the 1621 session, deliberately botched his transcription of the de la Pole proceedings to tilt the scales in favor of Bacon’s conviction. Selden, in a letter to Bacon sent the year after his fall, argues that he was trying to help him by obfuscating de la Pole’s legal strategy. I am inclined to agree with Tite’s interpretation: much of the archival work done by Selden during these months took place at Robert Cotton’s library, to which Selden had a personal key. Bacon, meanwhile, was barred by parliament from setting foot on the premises. This seems to make it clear whose side he was on. See Tite, 30-35.

<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that this specific phrasing only reappeared in the proceedings against the Duke of Buckingham in 1626, which emphasizes that impeachment was still well under-construction in 1624.

extra-parliamentary proceedings against William of Wykeham, who “by the clamour of the common people” was “impeached before a great council.” Plucknett argued that it was “The deeds of the Good Parliament [1376] wherein the first steps were taken”, and that the “general principle of impeachment” remained ingrained in the precedent of parliament for good following that parliament’s actions, cementing clamor as a key ingredient of impeachments going forward. He cautioned, however, that this 14th-century story “is concerned less with the forging of the weapon, than with the raw material out of which it was to be fashioned.”<sup>20</sup> If the medieval legacy of impeachment is an account of the raw material, the story of its forging into a weapon of modern politics began in 1621.

While it was only in 1626 that the phrase “impeached and accused” made a complete reappearance, references to clamor came early in 1621 and continued throughout the decade, including in Cranfield’s case in 1624.<sup>21</sup> On the 5th of April, at the outset of Cranfield’s ordeal, the Commons heard a report from Miles Fleetwood, one of Cranfield’s subordinates during his tenure as Master of the Court of Wards and a client of Buckingham’s.<sup>22</sup> The accusations enflamed tempers, although not all were convinced, and there was debate about how the Commons should proceed. Edward Coke, head of the committee on grievances, referred to Fleetwood’s claims as “a Grievance of Grievances,” clearly angling for the house to nominate his aptly named committee to investigate them. Sandys, whose own committee on trade had already discussed much subtler accusations against Cranfield three days earlier, on April 2nd, spoke more cautiously about Fleetwood’s charges, perhaps intending to preserve his own committee’s role in managing the Commons’ attack on the Lord Treasurer. Ultimately, after the urging of Poole that “to examine the greatest offenders was [the Commons] ancient right,” Coke got his wish and his committee was put in charge of investigating Fleetwood’s claims.<sup>23</sup>

Over the next three days, Coke’s committee heard evidence regarding two bribes from customs farmers that Cranfield allegedly accepted, although the testimony seemed unreliable. As Colin Tite put it,

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<sup>20</sup> Plucknett, “The Origins of Impeachment,” 70.

<sup>21</sup> Tite, *Impeachment and Parliamentary Judicature in Early Stuart England*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Russell, *Parliament and English Politics*, 168, 173-74. Fleetwood had been an early force for organizing support for war in the Commons, giving a speech with references to both 1588 and the Gunpowder Plot.

<sup>23</sup> Tite, *Impeachment and Parliamentary Judicature in Early Stuart England*, 150-151

“the witnesses presented [to the committee] were not uniformly satisfactory, as their evidence was inclined to improve on reflection and after contact with other witnesses.” While the exact nature of what Cranfield had done wrong remained somewhat murky, on April 9th the Commons began to deliberate what it should do next. Richard Weston, Chancellor of the Exchequer and a key Cranfield ally, suggested that because the house had heard the accusers, they should also hear Cranfield make his defense. Some in the house were immediately cautious, because it was thought to be the Lords’ responsibility to bring judgement on any potential case, and inviting Middlesex to address the Commons came close to looking like a trial. Weighing in on this debate, Humphrey May joined in on the other side, and specifically highlighted the complicated status of clamor in the re-invention of impeachment: “Ye antient style of ye complaints of this hows [house], was called ye clamor of ye Commons (yt word then beeing taken in better sence then now) but now it would justly be called a clamor, if we should only hear his accusation, & not his defense.” The Commons ultimately agreed to hear Cranfield’s response the next day. By this point, however, the Lords had caught on that something important in terms of precedent was unfolding. They realized that Cranfield, as a peer, needed permission from the Lords to answer to the Commons, which Cranfield had not been granted. It was the Duke of Buckingham himself who jumped in to quickly resolve this procedural error, claiming that “no one should be blamed for the failure to seek the peers approval” in this instance, but the upper House ultimately concluded that none of their members should “answer complaints in the Commons without license” in the future. This disorganization was emblematic of the mood of the moment: shoot-first, seek precedence later.<sup>24</sup>

The written response Cranfield gave to the Commons confined itself to answering the bribery-by-customs-farmers allegations, and these answers were apparently persuasive enough to sow doubt. In light of this weakness—as the lower house considered how it would prepare its formal charge—many of the other issues surrounding Cranfield that had been percolating in the committees on trade and grievances were brought up. Ultimately, a whole host of them were sent to the Lords, who pruned a few and tacked

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<sup>24</sup> Tite, *Impeachment and Parliamentary Judicature in Early Stuart England*, 154. It is worth noting that the Lords, at the conclusion of Cranfield’s trial, immediately moved to institutionalize further protection for peers under impeachment: both the right to (at least informal) counsel and the right to receive transcripts of depositions with enough time to prepare a defense were affirmed by the Lords as rights belonging to the impeached. These were two things that Cranfield had demanded during his ordeal, and which were only granted to him after negotiations, and only within certain limits.

on a couple of their own. The scattered and disjointed way in which specifics were brought in as crucial issues in the process of Cranfield's impeachment suggests that the decision to impeach him was made before any concrete investigation into his supposed crimes had concluded (or perhaps before said investigations had even begun). This is the key link between Cranfield's case and the notion of initiating procedure by clamor: he became a target for impeachment for reasons entirely separate from and even beyond the charge he wound up facing. The outburst made in the midst of the debate by John Eliot, a client of Buckingham, spoke to the heart of the issue, comparing Cranfield's activities to a "strange and prodigious comet which so fatally hangs over us, etc. Such comets, whose original is uncertain, whose motions are unknown, whose substance is corruption ... he censures [Cranfield] to be unworthy his place and the King's favour, and hopes the Lords will see judgement rightly done."<sup>25</sup> To answer why **Cranfield** was impeached, then, one has to discover how Cranfield caused a clamor. This is the subject of the second part of this paper.

I claimed at the outset of this section that there were three themes that linked the 14th- and 17th-century impeachments to each other. The first, clamor, is the most important to my argument in this paper. The above section has argued that Cranfield did not seem to have been guilty of anything beyond that which "with a favorable construction ... might pass uncensured." Because of this, Cranfield was taken down through the tool of impeachment, a flexible procedure whose ongoing institutionalization during the early 1620s made it an appealing way to deal with the cantankerous Lord Treasurer. Everyone seemed to recognize that Cranfield was causing problems too large to ignore, but there was no straightforward crime that seemed to be capable of hanging a case on. Before moving on to discuss how Cranfield caused a clamor, I want to briefly mention the two other themes, as both played subtle roles in determining why impeachment was the tool used to take Cranfield down.

The second theme is what I call the bicameral consensus of impeachment, embodied by the involvement of both the Lords and the Commons in the procedure of parliamentary judicature, although in theoretically separate capacities. The peers, naturally, served as the judges of any impeachment case,

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<sup>25</sup> Commons Diary of William Spring. "12th April 1624." *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 6 March 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/apr-12>.

operating *ex parte regis*.<sup>26</sup> The Commons, on the other hand, served as the “general inquisitor of grievances,” who investigated problematic cases and managed their prosecution in front of the Lords. John Pym, who as early as 1621 had a more expansive view of the role to be played by the Commons in impeachment than many, argued that parliament was the “great eye of the Kingdom to find out offenses and punish them.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, one can think of the development of impeachment over the course of the 14th-century in the following way: first, the word of the King was enough to secure conviction by record. Second, during the reign of Edward III, the consensus of the peers became necessary to secure conviction by notoriety. Finally, during the Good Parliament at the end of Edward’s reign, the clamor of the commons became a viable sign of notoriety, enough to prompt a trial and judgement by the peers, without the word of the king being involved. The theoretically separate roles for the Commons and Lords were often mixed in practice (as evidenced by the role played by Buckingham’s committee on munitions in initiating clamor for Cranfield’s impeachment in the Lords before Sandys or Coke did it in the Commons), but the 17th-century antiquarians seemed to agree that this theoretical separation was the technically correct configuration.<sup>28</sup> When viewed in the long duration perspective, impeachment looks like a gradual usurpation of judicature-operating-under-royal-prerogative by parliament, and by the Commons in particular. It is tempting to think of the failed 1641 impeachment (and resulting parliamentary attainder

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<sup>26</sup> Tite, *Impeachment and Parliamentary Judicature in Early Stuart England*, 30-32.

<sup>27</sup> See Tite, *Impeachment and Parliamentary Judicature in Early Stuart England*, 51. The debate over the right of the Commons to both impeach and prosecute the barrister Edward Floyd in only their own house, without involving the Lords, was a more radical position that split the Lower House at the end of the 1621 session, demonstrating that the exact boundaries of the “bicameral consensus” were very much up for negotiation. Those that had advocated for this position, including Coke himself, were briefly imprisoned in the Tower and had their documents searched by royal authorities. A subset of these boundaries, tested by both the Floyd impeachment in 1621 and Cranfield’s impeachment in 1624, was the right of the Commons to debate foreign policy. This is an issue for a different paper, however.

<sup>28</sup> Clarke, Plucknett, Wilkinson and Tite all point to this broad consensus on the separate roles of the two houses by contemporaries, while also all cautioning that the separation was harder to ensure in action. This view is also broadly the one cataloged by Erskine May in *Parliamentary Practice* (1844), although no one has been impeached by a British parliament since 1806. It also bears similarity to the US procedure.

and ultimate execution) of Sir Thomas Wentworth, First Earl Strafford, as a part of this longer story.<sup>29</sup> Figures such as Coke and Selden, inspired by their antiquarian research, viewed each passing impeachment as one more successful operation in the (re)institutionalization of parliamentary judicature. As Pym rejoiced at the conclusion of the 1621 session, “We have Donne great works . . . Judgement, the which hath slept theis 300 yeears and is the greatest benefit that may be, is now revived.”<sup>30</sup>

The third theme that characterized impeachment is what I call emergency politics. Impeachments tended to happen in moments of crisis. This was the case 1330, 1341, 1376 and 1386 as much as it was 1621, 1624, 1626, 1629 and 1641. The following section of this paper demonstrates in detail how the particular emergency situation of the parliament of 1624 motivated two creatures of royal power—the Duke of Buckingham and Prince Charles—to risk sharpening parliament’s sword of impeachment to pursue their immediate political objectives. Cranfield, I argue, was impeached because his opposition to war with Spain played a very specific role in creating a parliamentary emergency that threatened to derail Charles and Buckingham’s plans. The danger of taking this expedient route to destroy Cranfield was not lost on King James, who pointedly told Buckingham “you are a fool . . . you are making a rod which you will be scourged yourself” and warned his son that he “would soon have his bellyful of parliaments.”<sup>31</sup>

## Section 2: Emergency Politics and the Spanish Match, 1623-1624

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<sup>29</sup> Conrad Russell actually begins his account of the 1624 parliament from Strafford’s perspective. Russell mentions that Wentworth, informed of Cranfield’s position as it was developing by Arthur Ingram (a mutual friend, perhaps Cranfield’s closest business associate), decided that his arrival to Westminster, already delayed by illness, might be pushed back even further by prudence. See Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 145. Wentworth, when he did make it to Parliament, spoke in Cranfield’s defense on the day Fleetwood first raised his charge of bribery, “an act of integrity which perhaps did more to lose him Buckingham’s favor than any supposed misdemeanors in the next Parliament.” Ibid, 200.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Tite, *Impeachment and Parliamentary Judicature in Early Stuart England*, 51. Bacon had a different view: “Judges ought to remember, that their Office is *Jus dicere*, and not *Jus dare*: To Interpret Law, and not to Make Law, or Give Law. Else will it be like the Authority claimed by the Church of Rome, which under pretext of Exposition of Scripture, doth not stick to Add and Alter, and to pronounce that which they do not find; and by *Shew of Antiquity* to introduce *Novelty*.” See Bacon “On Judicature,” *Bacon’s Essays*, ed. Sydney Humphries (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912), 299.

<sup>31</sup> S. R. Gardiner, *History of England, 1603-1642*, vol. 5, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883), 231.

This section seeks to answer the question: why was **Cranfield** impeached? What did he do wrong? If my argument thus far is persuasive, the best way of answering this question is to figure out how Cranfield caused a clamor, rather than investigating the specifics of the charge he was confronted with.

For starters, it is important to separate baseline annoyance from outright clamor, as Cranfield was never universally beloved. King James, when he finally decided to give a milquetoast public defense of Cranfield on the morning of the first day of his trial, emphasized that this unpopularity was a hazard of his position: “I must therefore put you here in Mind of One Thing; and Justice forceth me so to do. He cannot but have many enemies; all Treasurers, if they do good Service to their Master, must be generally hated...”.<sup>32</sup> Simmering resentments aimed at a tight-fisted treasurer, in other words, were not yet clamor. Cranfield had lived amongst these for years by 1624. While it is likely that this background of general antagonism made impeachment run more smoothly against Cranfield than it might have against a more popular figure, it cannot have been the decisive factor.

Fortunately, there is significant consensus on what the main-stage political issue was from the winter of 1623 through the summer of 1624: the failure of the Spanish Match, and the ensuing saber rattling for war with Spain. Most accounts of Cranfield’s impeachment are quick to suggest that the Lord Treasurer’s resistance to that war was a key ingredient of his downfall, although these same accounts then tend to get lost in the details of the charge he wound up facing.<sup>33</sup> As such, the specifics of how Cranfield’s resistance to war caused sufficient clamor to lead to impeachment and, further, why Cranfield was willing to risk his career on this pro-Spanish position, remain elusive. Discovering how Cranfield caused a clamor is the first step in solving this mystery, and that requires an investigation into the arguments and political maneuvering he conducted in defense of his foreign policy agenda. Thus, we are left with two two further queries. First, when did Cranfield cross the rubicon? What moment represented the point-of-

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<sup>32</sup> "House of Lords Journal Volume 3: 7 May 1624." *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 3, 1620-1628*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830. 342-361. *British History Online*. Web. 12 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol3/pp342-361>.

<sup>33</sup> Menna Prestwich, *Politics and Profits under the Early Stuarts: The Career of Lionel Cranfield Earl of Middlesex* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966), 440; R. H. Tawney, *Business and Politics under James I: Lionel Cranfield as Merchant and Minister* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

no-return, when the mood shifted from frustrated disagreement to outraged impeachment? Second, whose outrage in particular weighed heavy enough to tilt the scales? Who was Clamor-Patient-Zero?

Answering this latter question—whose outrage tilted the scales—will help guide us to an answer to the former question regarding the timeline. Assuming that it was never James’s intention to dismiss Cranfield himself (which he could have done without issue at any time if he so chose), the field of candidates both powerful enough to be the decisive vote and invested enough to be willing to oversee impeachment efforts is not outrageously large. The headmen of the Commons, Edward Coke in particular, might have been able to play such a role, but it is unlikely that his personal animosity towards Cranfield ran as deep as his actions as head of the committee on grievances might suggest.<sup>34</sup> Edwin Sandys, whose committee on trade was the first in the Commons to begin the investigation, had more recent gripes with Cranfield over the latter’s handling of how tobacco was being processed through the customs. Spanish encroachments on the tobacco trade had been a topic of debate throughout 1622, which gave Sandys a potential interest in conflict with Spain, and he did go on to be a vocal supporter of the war party over the course of the parliament.<sup>35</sup> Cranfield had also played a decisive role in terminating the Virginia lotteries in an effort to squeeze extra revenue from the company while he sat as an MP during the 1621 session.<sup>36</sup> However, as Lord Treasurer he had at least been willing to negotiate new terms for granting the Virginia

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<sup>34</sup> Cranfield, of course, had been a contributor to Coke’s prosecutions of Mompesson and Bacon, and Arthur Ingram wrote Cranfield earlier in the 20s asking him to use his favor with Coke to advance one of Ingram’s business schemes. See Arthur Ingram to Cranfield, U269/1/CB115. Coke had actually attempted to move the Cranfield impeachment down the docket in favor of more general legislation against monopolies, but relished the chance to go after the Lord Treasurer as a consolation when his priorities were disregarded. As Russell mentioned, “Secretary Conway’s son commented that Coke would die if he could not help to ruin a great man once every seven years.” Regarding war with Spain, Coke was eager, noting that the thought of it “made him feel seven years younger.” See Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 169, 201. As leases were typically negotiated in chunks of seven years means that both the impeachment of Cranfield and war with Spain offered Coke a new lease on life, apparently.

<sup>35</sup> See U269/1/OV17, “Spanish merchants: offer for tobacco farm and request that patent to garble tobacco be transferred to them” (n.d.) ; U269/1/OV47, “Summary account of tobacco imported 1614-1621, Spanish, Virginia and Bermuda’s” (1622). Russell has argued that Sandys was, among the headmen in the Commons, perhaps the most aware of the practical economic difficulties of war with Spain, but that he allowed his alliance with the Duke to drag him into support against his better judgement. See Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 170. Later in the parliament, in response to some of Cranfield’s claims, Sandys would let his optimism win out, and proclaimed boldly that English trade had typically “flourished” in times of conflict with Spain.

<sup>36</sup> Emily Rose, “The End of the Gamble: The Termination of the Virginia Lotteries in March 1621,” *Parliamentary History*, vol. 27, pt. 2 (2008): 175-197.



and Somers Island companies a monopoly by early 1623, and was himself an owner of Virginia Company stock.<sup>37</sup> Sandys had even personally thanked Cranfield for his help on Virginia matters in 1619, demonstrating that Cranfield's relationship to the company was not exclusively antagonistic.<sup>38</sup>

There was some anxiety in the court over Coke and Sandys, as King James had unsuccessfully attempted to prevent both from taking their seats in the first place by sending them on a commission to Ireland, given their actions during the previous session. Indeed, Coke and Sandys were the only two "parliament names" on the list of possible appointees to that hypothetical station.<sup>39</sup> However, this was probably a more general insurance policy rather than any kind of forward defense intended explicitly to shield Cranfield. Because of their support for war it might have been unsurprising that these two wound up playing lead roles in the Lord Treasurer's impeachment, but is unlikely that either Coke or Sandys came to the opening meeting of the 1624 Parliament bent on Cranfield's destruction, given that neither of their formal investigations began until early April.

A change of perspective from the Commons to the Lords brings us closer to the agent of clamor. A few hours before Sandys' committee on trade had begun its investigations into Cranfield, the Lords' committee of munitions had already fired the first shots. The de facto leader of the Upper house for the 1624 session—the Duke of Buckingham—played a decisive role in steering the efforts of that committee as he aimed to prepare England for war. Cranfield and Buckingham had a long and primarily amicable history, and the former owed much of his stature at court to the Duke's patronage. Indeed, Cranfield's 1621 acquisition of the Lord Treasurer's Staff coincided with his marriage to Buckingham's cousin, Anne Brett. However, their relationship began to dissolve during the Duke's adventure with the Prince to Spain,

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<sup>37</sup> U269/1/OV49, "Terms of contract between the Lord Treasurer and the Virginia and Somers Islands Companies for sole import of tobacco" (1622,1623) ; U269/1/OV45, "Reasons against contract and joint stock for Virginia and Somers Islands tobacco" (1622) ; U269/1/OV39, "Certificate of Cranfield's shares in Virginia Company, two on printed forms" (1611-1618).

<sup>38</sup> U269/1/OV6, "Sir Edwin Sandys: thanks for service, has sent 100 men to Virginia" (1619).

<sup>39</sup> S. R. Gardiner, *History of England*, vol. 5, 182. Conrad Russell notes that Sandys was a particular target of the King's ire, notably for his election campaign rhetoric. Sandys won his seat "by crying down his two opponents, one as a papist, and the other, sir Dudley Digges, as a 'royalist.' This, Chamberlain drily remarked, 'will incense the King more towards him, which he needs not.'" Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 152. The King, Russell noted, refused to let "bygones be bygones" regarding the actions of both Sandys and Coke, although he was ultimately outmaneuvered by the Duke and the Prince and the attempt to send the two men to Ireland failed.

and Cranfield's resistance to Buckingham's calls for war upon his return put the two on a collision course that came to a head in the first two weeks of 1624.<sup>40</sup> Rumors also swirled around Arthur Brett, Buckingham's cousin and Cranfield's brother-in-law, which some viewed as a serious threat to Buckingham's position at court.<sup>41</sup> Buckingham, as someone potentially in possession of both the motivation to attack Cranfield and the means to ensure his destruction, is thus suspect number one.<sup>42</sup> But did Buckingham ever cause a clamor?

Buckingham's moment came before Parliament opened, in January, 1624. After having convinced James to recall John Digby, Earl of Bristol, from his position as ambassador to Spain in late December, Buckingham was preparing the court for war—preparations which included an invitation to the Dutch States-General to send a commission to negotiate a close alliance.<sup>43</sup> However, on January 13th, the Spanish ambassadors in London made one last grandiose proposal to the king in an effort to keep negotiations going through the summer of that year. They promised James that “before the end of August ... all that part of the Palatinate that was occupied by Spanish troops should be placed in his hands,” and that Philip would do everything in his power short of declaring war on the Emperor to bring the match to an agreement. The King—stuck between his favorite's insistence that the Spanish were only seeking to delay England's action and the Spanish proposals that promised him the moon in the very twilight of his reign—convened his commissioners for Spanish affairs (composed of 12 Privy Council members) to

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<sup>40</sup> Buckingham was at first eager to write Cranfield regarding the King of Spain's letter about “restoring the Palatinate” but his news became less frequent as negotiations went south until he sent Cranfield a flurry of letters demanding preparations for the journey home. See U269/1/OE108. Sir George Calvert wrote Cranfield inquiring about the rumored “coolness” developing between him and the Duke, and he wasn't the only one. See U269/1/OE121.

<sup>41</sup> As Conrad Russell put it rather crudely, “Cranfield had prepared a rival homosexual favorite [Arthur Brett], who had secured James's attention, and the great men of the court, like the Earl of Pembroke, were in two minds whether to throw in their lot with this apparent new favorite.” Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 147. I have found only traces of evidence in the Cranfield papers that speak to this intrigue. See U269/1/CP16/1, letters from Arthur Brett “Plans for retirement to Paris, Prince of Wales there on way to Spain, seeks permission to return home from Paris” (1623). The State Papers Domestic include ample discussion of Buckingham's treatment of Brett after Cranfield's fall, where the young suitor was interrogated and then sent to the navy under Buckingham's (as Lord Admiral) watch.

<sup>42</sup> Russell has argued that Buckingham was indeed Clamor-Patient-Zero. See footnote 4, above.

<sup>43</sup> For a description of the early plans of this faction for war, see Thomas Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621-1624* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 69-76.

advise him on his final decision. When the question was put to the commission about whether Spain's actions merited a declaration of war, only 3 of the 12 voted yes (Buckingham, Carlisle and Conway). The rest of the commission pleaded that they needed more information to make their decision, and asked James for permission to examine all the correspondence relevant to the matter before giving their judgement, a request the King denied.<sup>44</sup> S. R. Gardiner gave an evocative description of Buckingham's response to the vote against War: "He sprang from his seat, pouring out on the nine Commissioners the most unmeasured abuse as he strode out of the room, 'as a hen that hath lost her brood, and clucks up and down when she hath none to follow her.' Taking the Prince with him, he hurried down to Newmarket, to complain to the King."<sup>45</sup> Outrageous, certainly, but was Buckingham's behavior that day in Whitehall enough to constitute clamor?

Cranfield was a vocal anti-war member of the Commission for Spanish affairs, and it was perhaps he himself who made the decisive comment that sent Buckingham into that rage.<sup>46</sup> The Lord Treasurer had been among the minority on the Commission that had voted against summoning a parliament earlier that January. Cranfield had been opposed to calling parliament to discuss the possibility of war since at least 1622, when "opposition to a new session crystalized around Cranfield, who, as Giles Mompesson reported, 'hath proposed som other means for monye.'"<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Cranfield had recently taken to reading Francis Bacon's *History of the Reign of Henry VII* (1622) for inspiration on how he might raise these

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<sup>44</sup> That much of this correspondence was authored by Digby likely made this proposition distinctly unappealing to Buckingham.

<sup>45</sup> S. R. Gardiner, *History of England*, vol. 5, 174-177.

<sup>46</sup> Gardiner claims that Buckingham stormed out after "One of [the commissioners] turned to the Prince, who was present amongst them, and pointedly asked him whether, when he swore to the marriage treaty in Spain, it had been agreed upon that the restitution of the Palatinate was to precede the marriage. Charles kept silence for a while, and then replied that in such matters he had no will but his fathers." Buckingham then engaged in his furor, and stormed from the room with the Prince in tow.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution*, 59. Given the role played by Cranfield's underling Richard Weston in financing Charles's personal rule, this moment is suggestive. That Weston only narrowly escaped his own impeachment in 1629 serves as another link to Cranfield's experience in 1624.

funds.<sup>48</sup> Further, at a meeting in late Fall of 1623, he had stood out amongst the dozen commissioners as being the only councilor who demanded that the Prince marry the Infanta without any concern for his personal taste: it was the Prince's obligation to enter the marriage, as Williams recounted a decade later, "for reason of state and the good that would thence redound to all of Christendom."<sup>49</sup> Charles, for his part, seems to have taken Cranfield's provocations during these meetings in stride, even though Buckingham was quick to take offense on his behalf.

The Buckingham as Clamor-Patient-Zero theory, however, ultimately fails. The reason is the timing. Though the two had fought skirmishes throughout late 1623 and early 1624, the Duke had not yet made any open-and-decisive moves against Cranfield, and the Lord Treasurer continued to exert influence at court and in Parliament through mid-March. Perhaps there was still hope that Cranfield could be brought around, as other anti-war councilors such as Pembroke had been. Indeed, despite his preference for peace and continued collaboration with Spain, Cranfield was willing to at least consider preparations for war, and had set to numbering trees in the event that a fleet might need to be raised in haste.<sup>50</sup> When parliament finally opened after a week of delays on February 19th, Cranfield took his seat amongst the peers for the first time as Earl Middlesex, and he was quick to involve himself in proceedings.<sup>51</sup> If Buckingham had been working on a plan to impeach Cranfield since mid-January, there were seemingly no signs of it yet. Thus, it is unlikely that Cranfield's behavior in those privy council meetings had caused sufficient clamor to have set his impeachment in motion. Further, it seems that Buckingham did not have

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<sup>48</sup> U269/1/OE1482, "Summary, apparently from Bacon's 'History' of means used by Henry VII to increase revenue," (1622). As a previous Master of the Court of Wards, Cranfield was no stranger to medieval creativity when it came to revenue. It is worth highlighting that it was Bacon's history, not his philosophy, that struck Cranfield as most useful for his political economy. It is worth mentioning here that the antiquarian Robert Cotton was also a political economist.

<sup>49</sup> Dillon's Articles against Williams, 1634(?), S. P. Domestic, vol. 280, 77; cited in Gardiner, *History of England*, vol. 5, 229. Williams also ascribed the Prince a snappy retort: "the Prince bid him judge his merchandises, if he would, for he was no arbiter in points of honor."

<sup>50</sup> Prestwich, *Politics and Profits*, 427.

<sup>51</sup> For example, though Buckingham did not include Cranfield in the committee for munitions when he set it up on March 1st, Cranfield successfully petitioned to the Lords to add him to it first thing the next morning, and proceeded to get an exceptionally verbose letter from Digby about the Spanish situation read aloud to the full house by the Attorney General. "House of Lords Journal Volume 3: 2 March 1624." *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 3, 1620-1628*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830. 238-242. *British History Online*. Web. 14 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol3/pp238-242>.

enough sway on his own to take out the Lord Treasurer, a notable difference to his success in recalling Ambassador Digby from Spain and his subsequent management of Digby's banishment from James's court.<sup>52</sup>

If it wasn't James, Coke, Sandys or even Buckingham whose outrage was enough to cause Cranfield's impeachment, that leaves only one other real option: Prince Charles. Further, if I am right in thinking that the impeachment plans were not yet in motion by February 19th (and thus not determined by the Lord Treasurer's behavior in the privy council), then Cranfield's moment of clamor must have come in parliament.

The real point of no-return for Cranfield, I argue, came between March 11th and March 14th, at a key moment during the debate in parliament regarding subsidies to fund a war with Spain. On the morning of the 11th, Cranfield gave a speech to the Lords laying out the state of the King's finances. It was a follow up to a speech given on the 5th by James which promised parliament significant influence over the terms of the war, including oversight of any peace treaty, if they voted for subsidies, and as such the Lord Treasurer's speech had been much anticipated—Cranfield tried to delay it as long as he could, but in the end only won a single extra day.<sup>53</sup> Despite the hype, the published "transcript" of the Lords Journal for that day spares just one sentence regarding the speech: "The Lord Treasurer made Relation of those Things which concerned His Majesty's Estate, which he was commanded."<sup>54</sup> Fortunately, Cranfield's junior Richard Weston, Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave a twinned speech to the Commons at the same time, and the journals of those MPs had more ink to spare regarding its contents. Beyond a short preface, the vast majority of the MP journals (as well as the manuscript Lords Journal account of

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<sup>52</sup> Digby, although never dragged through Parliament like Cranfield was, remained a target of Buckingham's antagonisms throughout the rest of Spring and Summer 1624. See the *Calendar of the State Papers, Domestic Series of the Reign of James I, 1623-1625* (London: 1859) for summaries of a dozen or so exchanges between Buckingham and Digby negotiating the latter's "failures"—it is clear that Buckingham was personally managing his exile. Digby would get his revenge on Buckingham by testifying against him at the Duke's own impeachment two years later, in 1626.

<sup>53</sup> Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution*, 188-196. I discuss the reasons why Cranfield sought this delay below.

<sup>54</sup> "House of Lords Journal Volume 3: 11 March 1624." *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 3, 1620-1628*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830. 255-256. *British History Online*. Web. 13 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol3/pp255-256>.

Cranfield's speech) describe the bulk of the speech in exactly the same way: as a list of arabic numerals arranged in a kind of loose table.<sup>55</sup> A key moment in Cranfield's transgression, the heart of his impeachment, was a speech principally composed of numbers. While this may seem unremarkable, this was (as I have so far seen) the only speech made in the entire session that was recorded in this manner.

The seeds of clamor sprouted immediately after Cranfield's speech in the Lords, which the Prince apparently had been present for.<sup>56</sup> The entry following Cranfield's speech in the Lords' Journal is an account of an urgent message sent to the Commons: given the contents of what Cranfield had said, and knowing that the Commons had just heard a mirrored speech from Weston, the Prince himself requested their presence that afternoon at an emergency session in the Painted Chamber, to be attended by a committee appointed from both houses. The Prince felt the need to immediately respond to parliament—and the Commons in particular (“this being like to be the Foundation of those Endeavors which must first arise from you”)—in the face of Cranfield's accounting, “to clear such Doubts as have arisen amongst them [the Lords], and may, peradventure arise amongst you [the Commons].”<sup>57</sup> The committee from the Lords that attended the meeting included both Buckingham and Cranfield—the Lord Treasurer had been generously given a front row seat from which to watch the initiation of his demise. Pembroke, meanwhile, had requested leave to be absent earlier that morning, perhaps sensing a coming fight that he wished to play no role in.<sup>58</sup> For his part, as soon as this letter arrived to the Commons, Richard Weston sprang up

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<sup>55</sup> For the Commons accounts, see the Diary of John Hawarde (Wiltshire and Swinden Archives, 9/34/2) ; the Diary of John Lowther, Cumbria Archive Centre, Carlisle (DLONS/L/2/1) ; the Diary of Edward Nicholas, the National Archive (SP 14/166, available online in manuscript), the Diary of Sir William Spring, Houghton Library, Harvard University (MS Eng. 980) [etc ... Thomas Holland, John Pym, Walter Earle, Simonds D'Ewes]. For the Lords, see “House of Lords Manuscript Minute Books volumes 1-5,” (on microfilm).

<sup>56</sup> Gardiner remarks that the Prince was sitting amongst the Peers that day. See Gardiner, *History of England* vol. 5, 195.

<sup>57</sup> "House of Lords Journal Volume 3: 11 March 1624." *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 3, 1620-1628*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830. 255-256. *British History Online*. Web. 13 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol3/pp255-256>.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

and insisted “That no doubts here. Therefore, to clear that to the Lords before we admit a conference.”<sup>59</sup>

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was already running for cover.

One of the most complete accounts of what the Prince said that afternoon comes from the Commons diary of John Pym, who took meticulous notes during the report of the Prince’s speech that was delivered to the full house the next day, on March 12th.<sup>60</sup> The Prince’s speech made three principal arguments. First, he noted that the Lord Treasurer’s account of royal debts had ruffled feathers, “that a doubt being risen in the Lords' House what should be his Majesty's intention in appointing the Lord Treasurer to declare the necessity of his own estate.”<sup>61</sup> In response to these worries, the Prince offered his own interpretation of his father’s motives: “[the Prince] conceived the King did not intend by that declaration that we should take present consideration of the relief of his particular estate, but only to make it appear that he could not of himself upon his own estate maintain a war. And therefore, in the first place, we should provide for the defence and safety of the kingdom, and when we had resolved of this, his Majesty's estate might hereafter be settled in due time.” Second, the Prince insisted that the stakes of this business regarding war with Spain and the recovery of the Palatinate were high, and that “the King's honour and his own honour more particularly was engaged.” Third, and most tellingly, he reminded the peers and MPs of the reasons why it was not his father’s fault “if he were not in love with Parliaments” given their recent behavior. He insisted that, for now, time was of the essence, and they should concern themselves only with the question of subsidies to support war. If they accomplished this task at hand, he assured them they would be quickly reconvened for another session. Charles insisted that he had a much

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<sup>59</sup> "11th March 1624." *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 14 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-11>.

<sup>60</sup> "12th March 1624." *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 13 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-12>. Note that Gardiner was wrong to suggest that the Prince had given two speeches, one to the Lords on the 11th and another identical speech to the Commons on the 12th. See Gardiner, 196.

<sup>61</sup> Pym’s diary, *ibid*. Given the King’s unprecedented March 5th offer of concessions to parliament regarding influence over the terms of war and peace, that it was immediately followed by a speech about the crown’s significant debts apparently dampened what might have at first seemed like the King’s generosity. There is no indication in the transcript proceedings of who in the Lords first raised these doubts in response to Cranfield’s speech.

more optimistic view of the horizons of the relationship between crown and parliament than his father did, “add[ing] that himself, having occasion to send to his Majesty about other business, found him not only willing but that he thought it necessary to call us often together for making good laws and redressing such abuses as he knew he could not be informed of but in Parliament.”<sup>62</sup>

That the King’s speech to Parliament on March 5th had been originally scheduled for March 1st, only to be delayed due to reports of his “fierce rheum and cough” made this final point, concerning Charles’s relationship to parliament, particularly salient.<sup>63</sup> As the Prince emphasized, “This being the first action of his coming into the world, if we should herein fail him, it would not only dishonour but discourage him and bring shame upon ourselves. And concluded that by our readiness and alacrity in this great business, we should oblige him so to acknowledge our care that hereafter, when time shall serve, we should not think our labours ill-bestowed.”<sup>64</sup> The Prince projected a happy future for his relationship with Parliament, but that meant that they had to trust him in the meantime: he knew, he told them, that the King had not sent the Lord Treasurer to derail plans for war by broaching the topic of royal solvency, despite the “doubts” that had unfortunately arisen in response to that speech in the Lords. James had only wished them to be well-informed, so that their “advice” (in the form of subsidies for war, of course) might be based on clear understanding.

On the morning following the Prince’s address, the reaction in the Commons was clamor, but not of the angered sort. Humphrey May remarked that he “Never rejoiced so much in any Parliament” before moving for the formation of a committee to examine the Prince’s message. Robert Phelps mentioned that “The Prince’s respect to us in the last speech rare,” and moved that the Commons should expressly send him a message of thanks. Though May was cautious, as “it has not been the use of Parliament to send any compliment or thanks but to the king,” ultimately the importance of the Prince’s address made the break with precedent worth it, and in any event “[as] it is *quod* divinity, the father and son are one.” Coke, for his part, pointed to Plantagenet precedent for such action: “The Black Prince and Harry the 5th in their

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<sup>62</sup> Pym’s diary, *ibid*.

<sup>63</sup> Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution*, 183.

<sup>64</sup> Pym’s diary, “12th March 1624.” *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 13 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-12>.



fathers' times sat divers times in committees as Lords of Parliament, and had divers times thanks given them for their good offices between the king and people."<sup>65</sup> While May was thus wrong about the Prince's speech being literally unprecedented, he was correct in his general sentiment: something remarkable had occurred.

While the reception of the Prince's speech by the Commons seems to have been all smiles, the emotions that compelled the Prince to take to the Painted Chamber had been quite the opposite, and not only because Cranfield had front-loaded his account with tallies of the Prince's extravagant expenses in Spain, which he clocked at £84,592.<sup>66</sup> Cranfield, by raising the question of the King's debts, was kicking a parliamentary hornet nest, and the Prince knew it—that is why he wasted no time before intervening. Unfortunately, because the Prince's "most heroical" speech was delivered with such haste, he had not actually had the chance to meet with his father before boldly pronouncing his supposedly true intentions to the joint parliamentary committee that afternoon. The Prince's claims had originally placated the two houses, but on March 14th the other shoe dropped.

Between the 12th and 13th, the joint committee that had heard the Prince speak prepared a general offer of support for the King, promising him to discuss the particulars if he would officially break off the Spanish treaties. On the afternoon of the 14th, the committee was summoned to Whitehall, where they heard the King's response. It wasn't good. Archbishop Abbot, who as messenger between the crown and the committee had seen a preview of the positions of both sides, "immediately took to his bed." The King claimed to be pleased with parliament's offers of general support, but insisted to them that—as the crown had to deal with international allies, whose decisions were motivated by particulars rather than generalities—what he needed from them was an explicit and detailed offer. As their offer of generals did not yet reach this threshold, the King gave them a blueprint: he demanded five subsidies and ten fifteenths

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<sup>65</sup> "12th March 1624." *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 13 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-12>.

<sup>66</sup> "11th March 1624." *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 14 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-11>. The figure comes from adding three entries from the diary of William Spring, who seemed to have kept the most precise record. Other accounts rounded Cranfield's exact figures. The three entries were for the Prince's fleet (£22,426), the monies taken by him to Spain (£46,028) and the jewels he gave away while there (£16,138).

for war. This was high, but amidst the bellicose mood it was not unreasonable. The problem was what came next. In complete contradiction of the Prince's description of the King's motives that the committee had received only 72 hours before ("the King did not intend by that declaration that we should take present consideration of the relief of his particular estate"), the King also demanded a *recurring, annual* tax of one subsidy and two fifteenths that would go to paying off his own debts.<sup>67</sup> Upon hearing this, the Prince actually interrupted the King mid-speech to deny it (an utterance that the clerk did not know how to write into the Roll given its unprecedented nature), but the King insisted on his position.<sup>68</sup> James then provocatively noted that he had still not even made up his mind to break off the Spanish treaties in the first place!<sup>69</sup> This, now, caused a clamor, though a markedly sullen one. As historian Thomas Cogswell put it: "One account related how James's response 'much discomforted' Abbot and the joint committee; a second how it 'much disheartened' them; a third how it 'peeved' them; and a fourth how the committee was so surprised that they omitted the customary 'God Save the King.'"<sup>70</sup> According to the Venetian ambassador, Charles and Buckingham "turned pale" as they listened to the King's account, and the Prince "after his interruption, never spoke a word all day."<sup>71</sup>

Cranfield, whose March 11th speech had set the Prince in action, thus played a central role in a dramatic parliamentary fiasco: the King, in a moment of supreme seriousness in front of a joint committee of parliament, had just given the lie to the Prince himself.<sup>72</sup> It may not have been the "lie direct" (as John Holles put it the next day, "a report was spread that the King had disavowed the Prince's relation") but the implication of the King's pronouncement was lost on no one, and the Prince's inappropriate interjection

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<sup>67</sup> "14th March 1624." *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 14 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-14>. It was Buckingham that took to the Commons to relay the news, he did the best he could to cushion the blow but there was no hiding the damage.

<sup>68</sup> Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 185. The clerk wound up including the Prince's remarks as a weird side bracket on the right side of the Roll.

<sup>69</sup> Anonymous Diary, *ibid*.

<sup>70</sup> Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution*, 195.

<sup>71</sup> Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 186.

<sup>72</sup> On the importance of "giving the lie" in English aristocratic culture, see Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

must have highlighted it for those who were present.<sup>73</sup> This is what Cranfield did wrong, this was what he was impeached for. He had (not on his own, of course) set the Prince up to be called a liar by the King, and on a matter of great consequence, “the first action of his coming into the world” in which “his own honour more particularly was engaged.”<sup>74</sup> The Prince, needless to say, was inconsolable, and Cranfield became the target of his wrath. The Lord Treasurer, along with the Earl of Arundel, rushed to the Prince to try to cool tempers immediately after the King gave his proposal. No record of that meeting has yet surfaced, but the consequences were clear. According to Dudley Carelton’s son, “the Treasurer had been ill ever since.”<sup>75</sup> Archbishop Abbot, apparently, was not the only one forced into bed by the events of that Sunday afternoon, and Cranfield virtually vanishes from the record as a participant in parliamentary affairs until reappearing three weeks later, in the beginning of April, as a subject-under-investigation.<sup>76</sup> It was the anger of the Prince that tilted the scales from frustrated disagreement to clamorous outrage, and it was Cranfield’s speech from the 11th that had set this chain of events in motion. Why was **Cranfield** impeached? Because his March 11th speech resulted in the Prince being given the lie by the King. And, as Cogswell noted, this forced a shift in Charles and Buckingham’s strategy for managing parliament: “thanks to James’s demands, they could no longer avoid discussion of the potentially dangerous topic of the war itself.”<sup>77</sup> The only way to move forward, now, was to bring the heart of the foreign policy debate to the floor of the Commons.

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<sup>73</sup> "15th March 1624." *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 17 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-15>.

<sup>74</sup> "12th March 1624." *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 13 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-12>.

<sup>75</sup> Dudley Carelton, March 17th, *Calendar of the State Papers, Domestic Series of the Reign of James I, 1623-1625* (London: 1859), 191, cited in Prestwich, *Politics and Profits*, 439.

<sup>76</sup> That last mention of Cranfield came from his ally, Arthur Ingram, who briefly raised the Treasurers’ name on March 12th. Ingram suggested that Cranfield oversee an investigation into rumors of Catholic forces (Jesuits, Papists, Recusants depending on the Commons journal) mobilizing to shift gold out of the country. Edward Villiers immediately responded that such a responsibility should go to the Lord Admiral (Buckingham) instead. “12th March 1624.” *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 13 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-12>.

<sup>77</sup> Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution*, 196.

We now have an answer to both sides of the original question: Cranfield was **impeached** because he caused a clamor, and **Cranfield** was impeached because of his March 11th speech. Both of these were wrapped up in the foreign policy debate regarding the Spanish Match. One thing, however, remains unclear: why was Cranfield willing to go to such lengths to attempt to prevent England from going to war with Spain? What inspired his opposition? The tenor of Cranfield's motivations is revealed by a barely-remarked-on feature of his March 11th speech: its subject—the state of the King's debts—was not what Cranfield had originally intended to speak on. It was plan B. The speech that Cranfield had hoped to give, at least according to Weston's preface in the Commons, was something else entirely: a prediction concerning how war with Spain would affect England's balance of trade. The speech, which had already been delayed for a day, would have "been made sooner if computations could have been made what would be lost in the customs if a war, which the customers cannot as yet do, but shall at any time hereafter be ready. Will only open the debt of the King..."<sup>78</sup> Given that the session was stalled waiting for this speech, it was "Not the King's pleasure, nor for the times" to wait for Cranfield and his team of computers to prepare their balance of trade calculation.<sup>79</sup> If Cranfield had his way, however, the speech from the 11th would not have focused the spotlight on the royal debt, but rather would have aimed at providing a general prediction of the commercial effects of war with Spain on the broader English economy, using customs computations as a bellwether. That Cranfield was unable to give this version of the speech was not because of a myopic perspective of the national economy as only the King's estate, but was rather a consequence of the infeasibility of the computation. The compiling of data and its processing by arithmetic was just taking too long.<sup>80</sup> One has to wonder if Cranfield had been able to focus his speech on the balance of trade rather than the King's debts, if the resulting clamor-chain would have still occurred as

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<sup>78</sup> "11th March 1624." *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*. Ed. Philip Baker. British History Online, 2015-18. *British History Online*. Web. 14 February 2022. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-11>.

<sup>79</sup> Diary of John Lowther, *ibid*.

<sup>80</sup> Exactly when Cranfield acquired his team of computers is unclear to me, but he certainly had them by 1624. I have thus far found only one document survives amongst the Cranfield Papers relating to this question: a letter from a William James, identified as a "Wood Street Computer," who requested for his wife to serve as a bedeswomen at the funeral of Cranfield's first wife. See U269/1/CP64 (1617). Cranfield owned some property on Wood street where he served as a landlord, and it is thus tempting to think that he kept his computers close at hand.

it did. It is certainly likely that his continued insubordination would have forced the Prince and the Duke's hand at some point, but the specifics of the event might have resulted in a different kind of conflict, something other than an impeachment.

The heart of Cranfield's resistance to war was more than just a concern for the royal debt: it was instead part of his overall political-economic program for England. His first big foray into administration was in his capacity as the Surveyor General of the customs, after all, and it had centered on a sweeping balance of trade calculation. Cranfield's interest in customs administration had hardly waned during the intervening decade.<sup>81</sup> Thus, this investigation into why Cranfield was impeached reveals that a quantitatively sophisticated political-economy served as the foundation of his Privy Council and parliamentary maneuvers, and opens up a much wider series of questions. The final section of this paper turns here, and unpacks (in broad strokes) the contours of Cranfield's vision for English empire amongst the backdrop of renewed conflict between the Dutch and the Spanish that coincided with Cranfield's ascension to the position of Lord Treasurer in 1621.

### **Section 3: Lionel Cranfield's System and the Origins of an English Imperial Political Economy**

Before political economy had an intellectual history, it had a commercial one.<sup>82</sup> Lord Treasurer Cranfield did not attend either Oxford or Cambridge, nor did he ever visit a continental university.<sup>83</sup> He was not, as best as I can tell, particularly familiar with Aristotle. He was friends—for a short time—with the Merchant Adventurer and Lord Mayor of London Henry Billingsley, credited with the first translation of

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<sup>81</sup> As the massive amount of material relating to Cranfield's management of both the English and Irish customs during his tenure as Lord Treasurer demonstrates.

<sup>82</sup> Many would argue that the intellectual and the commercial share important connections, at least in the English case. See, for example, Joel Kaye, *Economy and Nature in the Fourteenth Century: Money, Market Exchange and the Emergence of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For an argument about the Dutch case, see Harold Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>83</sup> He was, however, educated at St Paul's school, London, so he was not unfamiliar with the basic shape of Elizabethan learning. Cranfield seemed to retain some polite interest in his alma mater for the duration of his life. See U269/1/Z6, "Latin and Greek Verse, Addressed to Cranfield by boys of St Paul's school, with modern translation by J. H. K. Thompson and letter to Professor Newton."

Euclid's *Elements* into English, though if Cranfield read Euclid he left no notes behind.<sup>84</sup> Cranfield's education came, instead, through his apprenticeship as a Merchant Adventurer dealing primarily in textile trading to Northern Europe, and his skills were sharpened during his years spent managing his own business. Both Tawney and Prestwich have done an excellent job covering this era of Cranfield's life, and both accounts are full of the young merchant's numerous and quite varied endeavors, from high-stakes "corner-the-market" trades in starch and dyewood to lower-risk administrative opportunities like tavern licensing and rent collecting, though a two-tiered textile trade to the Low Countries and the Baltic remained his bread-and-butter business throughout his career.

Even though he did not possess a university education, Cranfield's grasp of the importance of rigorous arithmetic to large-scale, enduring commercial enterprise set him in a class of his own as a mercantile expert during the final decade of James's reign and earned him a peerage that was never stripped, despite his fall. And even though he was seemingly not interested in the New Philosophy, he earned the intellectual respect of his contemporary Francis Bacon.<sup>85</sup> That the Earl of Middlesex's political economy was (by orders of magnitude) more numerically involved than Bacon's experimental philosophy, and that his expertise in arithmetic was honed from a life of commercial exchange rather than a life of astronomical observation or Jesuit instruction, raises important questions about the dominant account of the genealogy of 17th-century English political economy, often investigated under the more provincial heading of "political arithmetic."

To de-emphasize this phrase "political arithmetic," one must de-center the figure of William Petty. Ted McCormick has argued that:

"Petty wrote political arithmetic as a natural philosopher, and in particular as a self-conscious follower of Bacon ... Seen from this perspective, his political arithmetic carried the New Philosophy into government not so much by introducing an empirical or quantitative sensibility as by reorienting political practice from the pronouncement of

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<sup>84</sup> See Euclid, *Elements of Geometrie*, trans. Henry Billingsley (London: 1570). The extent to which Billingsley himself was responsible for the translation is an open question. Another Merchant Adventurer, John Dee, wrote a lengthy preface to the piece, and Billingsley's tutor from his time at Cambridge, the one-time Marian exile David Whitehead, likely played a large role as well. Billingsley was of an older generation, but Cranfield crossed his path in the final years of the Lord Mayor's life around the turn of the century.

<sup>85</sup> See Friis, *Alderman Cockayne's Project*, 208-9.

laws to the manipulation of populations. This implies that the real political analogue of the Scientific Revolution was not an eighteenth-century revolution in statistical reasoning consolidated by a nineteenth-century ‘avalanche of numbers’, but rather a late seventeenth-century revolution in social engineering whose connection to numerical precision, as Petty’s own words and works attest, was often tenuous.”<sup>86</sup>

That the “second generation” political arithmeticians associated with the so-called Financial Revolution—Charles Davenant and Gregory King chief among them—were quite rigorous in their arithmetic has been suggested as an evolution away from Petty’s back-of-the-envelope methods, one conveniently timed with a calculative renaissance in English astronomy and a glorious revolution in English government.<sup>87</sup> Instead, I argue that Cranfield is evidence that a quantitatively sophisticated political economy pre-dated Petty’s political arithmetic, and establishes it as *contemporaneous to*, rather than inspired by, Bacon’s project. And while Cranfield was reading Bacon hot off the press in 1622, it was notably his historical work that the Lord Treasurer spent most of his efforts investigating.<sup>88</sup>

Although he never published a treatise of his own, Cranfield’s influence over the group that Carl Wennerlind has described as “England’s first school of political economy” is clear.<sup>89</sup> Edward Misselden

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<sup>86</sup> See Ted McCormick, *William Petty and the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 301-302. On government as the manipulation of populations, see Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). See also Steve Pincus, “From Holy Cause to Economic Interest: the Study of Population and the Invention of the State” in *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration*, eds. Houston and Pincus, 272-298.

<sup>87</sup> That Newton became Master of the Mint and Halley designed algorithms for pricing life annuities should come as no surprise. The long legacy of this “calculating eye” has been best described by William Ashworth. See William J. Ashworth, “The Calculating Eye: Baily, Herschel, Babbage and the Business of Astronomy,” *The British Journal for the History of Science*, vol. 24, no. 4 (1994), 409-441. In Cranfield’s time, Kepler was busy working on new methods in stereometry, inspired in no small part by a desire to achieve more accurate volumetric measurements of barrels. This family of techniques would power the calculations of hundreds of excisemen in Davenant’s time, apparently much to his consternation. See Miles Ogborn, “The Capacities of State: Charles Davenant and the Management of the Excise, 1683-1698,” *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1998), 289-312.

<sup>88</sup> Cranfield’s exacting calculations are not the subject of this essay, so you will have to take my word for it that his maths are significantly more involved than Petty’s were, and ring closer to Davenant and King, or at least Captain John Graunt. I’ll just mention something suggestive for now: Cranfield must of have been one of the earliest clients of the first serialized publications of London bills of mortality. See U269/1/Oo186, “London Mortality Bill, printed” (1605). That the “searchers” charged with determining cause of death for parish reports shared an occupational title with the “searchers” of the customs administration strikes me as something more than coincidence.

<sup>89</sup> Carl Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 21.

dedicated his *Circle of Commerce* (1623) to Cranfield, a work best-known for being the first place the phrase “balance of trade” appeared in print in English. Misselden even included a summary of Cranfield’s 1615 manuscript balance of trade calculation and printed it alongside what he took to be a 14th-century precedent from the reign of Edward III.<sup>90</sup> Gerard Malynes, who wrote Cranfield asking to dedicate his 1622 text on merchant law to the Lord Treasurer, likely had Cranfield in mind when he penned his response to Misselden’s text, despite the two’s disagreements.<sup>91</sup> Cranfield was Lord Treasurer, after all, and he had just installed his brother Randall Cranfield as Master of the Mint as well.<sup>92</sup> By the Fall of 1623, Cranfield must have been seen as the undisputed chief of England’s commercial and monetary policy, particularly given his attempts to stave off any calling of parliament through inventive revenue efforts and his clear influence over his immediate junior Richard Weston, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Yet by the Fall of 1624, Cranfield had been kicked from office and forced to the sidelines of English politics for decades to come. The previous sections of this paper aimed to detail the high-stakes of the political emergency that the Lord Treasurer found himself enmeshed in. But **a key question remains**: What motivated Cranfield to risk his hard-won and significant influence to prevent war with Spain? If Cranfield’s methods were cutting edge, what program for empire did they lead him to pursue?

The one sentence answer is that Cranfield’s vision was anti-Dutch. Any attempt to break off the Spanish Match and seek war with Spain was immediately linked to building closer ties with the Dutch, who by 1621 had significant experience fighting Spanish forces and were about to start fighting them again.<sup>93</sup> Cranfield was not anti-Dutch because of prejudice (or at least not only or primarily prejudice),

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<sup>90</sup> Edward Misselden, *The Circle of Commerce* (London: 1623), 119-129. Misselden also includes what must have been Cranfield’s first balance of trade calculation as Lord Treasurer, covering Christmas 1621 to Christmas 1622.

<sup>91</sup> U269/1/OE461, Malynes to Cranfield (1622). See Gerard Malynes, *The Center of the Circle of Commerce* (London: 1623).

<sup>92</sup> Cranfield had traded Buckingham’s brother, Edward Villiers, the patent on gold and silver thread (whose previous owner, Giles Mompesson, had been impeached in 1621) for Villiers’ office as Master of the Mint. Cranfield even secured the reversion of that office to Randall’s son, suggesting he had longer term plans for mint operations. Naturally, Randall lost his position in the wake of Cranfield’s fall in mid-Summer 1624.

<sup>93</sup> Rudyard’s speech that opened the Commons debate on war with Spain called for collaboration with the Dutch, a sentiment seconded later that afternoon by Christopher Brooke. See Russell, *Parliament and English Politics*, 176.



Cranfield was anti-Dutch because his political economic *system* was anti-Dutch, and that system was a rather thorny entanglement of world-spanning commerce and financial exchange. The following section offers a brief description of Cranfield's system in broad strokes. First, I deal with an interpretative issue and defend my use of this word "system" to describe Cranfield's project. Second, I draw some borders around Cranfield's system to demonstrate the imperial scope of his interests. Third and finally, I describe Cranfield's concern with coinage and monetary policy. Along the way, I offer some comments regarding the particular commercial advantages Cranfield saw in his anti-Dutch position, including an English-Iberian partnership in the Atlantic, along with English dominance in fishing, shipping and the East Indies trade.

Cranfield's "system" was simultaneously commercial and diplomatic. As John Shovlin has remarked about the 18th-century, "understood as a political-economic order ... capitalism was not separate from the interstate system but inextricably interwoven with it."<sup>94</sup> In other words, balancing trade was a key element of balancing power. Shovlin, in his account of John Law's Mississippi scheme, emphasized its relationship to Law's broader vision for European interstate and imperial politics: paper money and a reorganization of French debt was only a means to a greater end—a new European imperial order where France, freed from the illiquid debt of the *rentes* that had hamstrung its aggrandizement, might keep perpetual peace through its status as a commercial hegemon.<sup>95</sup> Cranfield's world was similarly interwoven, as was his "system" of political economy. In fact, Cranfield's broader economic vision can only be understood within the context of his foreign policy. Thus, Cranfield's political economy can be described as a system in the same way that Law's (or perhaps even the Napoleonic Wars' "Continental System") can be: a program concerned both with global commerce and interstate competition. This is my first argument about Cranfield's position, and explains why a shift in foreign policy (war with Spain)

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<sup>94</sup> John Shovlin, *Trading with the Enemy: Britain, France and the 18th-Century Quest for a Peaceful World Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 10.

<sup>95</sup> Shovlin, *Trading with the Enemy*, esp. chapter 3, "To Keep the European Peace: John Law's Financial Revolution and its Legacy." For an account of 1720 that decenters Law, but retains a focus on France's commercial "system," see Arnaud Orain, *La politique du merveilleux. Une autre histoire du Système de Law, 1695-1795* (Paris: Fayard, 2018).

represented such a fundamental threat to his plans for England's commercial expansion that he was willing to wager his career in a gamble to resist it.

My second point is that Cranfield's system had expansive—even imperial—boundaries. In the West, Cranfield's interests clearly extended across the Atlantic. As was briefly mentioned above, while serving as an MP in the 1621 parliament Cranfield had schemed to put pressure on the Virginia Company to enable the Crown to renegotiate the terms of its monopoly, and the competition between English and Spanish tobacco was a subject of inquiry during his time as Lord Treasurer. When he surrendered his position as Master of the Wardrobe to take up the Lord Treasurer's staff, Cranfield had angled for a new privilege to offset the revenue he would be losing in giving up his control of the Wardrobe. He set his sights on the patent for trading sugar, which Cranfield valued at £20,000 (the same allowance he had been given by the King to spend *per annum* on the Wardrobe).<sup>96</sup> He seemed remarkably uninterested in the Spanish American bullion trade, however, for reasons that I detail below regarding his position on coinage and monetary policy. Thus, while he was concerned with Virginia and the Caribbean, he himself never strongly advocated for English adventure to Peru.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, his interest in American militarization was overwhelmingly defensive, although he did advocate a “blue water,” Caribbean-focused strategy if war with Spain became inevitable.<sup>98</sup> English-Spanish cooperation in the Atlantic, Cranfield thought, would be the best way of keeping Dutch merchants out of American markets.

In Europe and the Mediterranean world, Cranfield remained primarily concerned with maritime matters. The Lord Treasurer had deep antagonism towards the Dutch from his experience in trading

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<sup>96</sup> See Prestwich, *Politics and Profits*, a transcription of Cranfield's accounting of his estate, Summer 1623, 595. Cranfield paid the King £2,000 a year for the lease.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Scott, one of the most vocal supporters for rekindling the English-Dutch alliance to pursue war with Spain, thought that for all of the Spanish holdings “in Europe, Asia or America, Peru is the prime and Souveraigne, being above any other in the World, most abounding in gold, silver, and pearle.” According to Scott, unlike other territories—where such things can only be “digged and fought for, in deepe and rocky mines”—these precious materials can simply be found laying around all over the place in Peru “neither in scruples, or little and small graines, but in lumpes, and solid masses, weighing two or three pound weight a peece.” See Thomas Scott, *The Second Part of Vox Populi, or Gondomar appearing in the likeness of a Matchiavell in a Spanish Parliament* (Goricom: 1624), 43.

<sup>98</sup> See U269/1/OR1, “Lord Carew From Cranfield, request to deliver some unserviceable munitions to Virginia Company” (1622). For a description of Cranfield's plans for war, see Prestwich, *Politics and Profits*, 427.

textiles in Northern Europe, and viewed defanging Dutch commercial power as a primary objective from the beginning of his service to crown.<sup>99</sup> Cranfield had read the works of John Keymer, who had been touting the economic benefits of the seacoal trade and North Sea fishing since the final years of Elizabeth's reign, and even set up a 1622 meeting between Keymer, Buckingham and the Prince "to hear the propositions of John Keymer, and consider whether they will tend to the good of the King and the Commonwealth, as is pretended."<sup>100</sup> Keymer's work lambasted the Dutch as the English's key competition in the North Sea, particularly over fishing rights, and Cranfield was optimistic that hostilities between Dutch and Spanish ships would leave the fisheries to the English. Further, Cranfield hoped that these hostilities would decisively displace the Hollanders and their allies from the carrying trade in the Western Mediterranean, opening opportunities to expand English commerce towards the Levant. It is unclear if Cranfield's vision went as far as the pipe dream of King James's peace policy, which concluded with united Christian conflict with the Ottoman Empire over control of the Mediterranean world, but it is not out of the realm of possibility. That the Portuguese had, a century earlier, considered conflict against the Mamluks in the Red Sea to simultaneously thwart their Venetian rivals (who sourced East Indian goods through Egypt) and secure their dominance over the East Indian spice trade demonstrates that the 17th-century struggle between the Christian and Ottoman worlds had extra-Mediterranean implications as well.<sup>101</sup>

The eastern boundaries of Cranfield's system could be found somewhere between Malacca and Manila, though Cranfield himself entertained a fascination with the Japanese.<sup>102</sup> It was here, in the East Indies, that the anti-Dutch flavor of Cranfield's system was perhaps most clearly on display. Cranfield had been vocally opposed to the treaty that was negotiated between the English and Dutch East India

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<sup>99</sup> See U269/1/B82/7, "Draft memorandum by Cranfield for James I: measures against Dutch to benefit English cloth trade" (1616).

<sup>100</sup> See U269/1/OE1515, "Treatise by John Keymer addressed to Queen Elizabeth: proposals for increasing revenue, particularly from coal and fish, with account of Low Countries" (1622). See also *Cal. State Papers*, Dom. 1619-22, p. 469.

<sup>101</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 54

<sup>102</sup> See U269/1/Oo181, "Sir Thomas Wilson from Richard Cook at Firmado and Nagasaki, Japan: description and anecdotes; curtailment of foreigners' privileges provoked by activity of Jesuits; requests assistance for his brother, Walter; unruly behaviour of Dutch; treatment of Christians" (1619-1620).

Companies in 1619, which had attempted to resolve their significant hostilities in a manner that both sides likely found untenable, but which Cranfield found particularly appalling.<sup>103</sup> Hostilities between the two merchant groupings did not stop with the 1619 negotiations, however, and Cranfield continued to receive complaints from both the English and Spanish sides regarding the behavior of the Dutch in the East Indies through 1624.<sup>104</sup> These disputes, which ranged widely and included shipping and insurance rates as well as accusations of violence and piracy, led Cranfield to view the Dutch East India merchants as quite possibly the most significant foreign threat to English commercial interests writ large. The Lord Treasurer likely thought that this friction could ultimately only be resolved through force, and over the course of 1623 demanded records of all sales of English ordnance to Dutch ships.<sup>105</sup> In a markedly different tone than his approach to defense in Virginia, where Cranfield had sent the “unserviceable munitions,” the Lord Treasurer used his influence to help the East India Company secure 200 barrels of fresh powder from England’s chief saltpeterist, John Evelyn, despite calls from some that the Ordnance’s own stores in the Tower were running dangerously low.<sup>106</sup>

Unfortunately for Cranfield, news of the 1623 events surrounding Amboyna—which became an anchor of public outrage against the Dutch a decade later and even served as justification for the First

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<sup>103</sup> See U269/1/OE1547, “East India Company, Dutch and English: notes on negotiations between them and on sums they owe each other” (1619). “Proposition made to sell the Adventurers and consequently the trade of the East Indies to the Hollanders. This damnable proposition approved.”

<sup>104</sup> See U269/1/OE1253, “From East India Company to Privy Council: restoration of their goods in Holland; refuting Dutch demands for higher freight and insurance charges; answer to question raised by Council about restoring trade, Commission procured by Spanish Ambassador” (1622-23), U269/1/OE1119, “From President and Council at Jacarta, East Indies to East India Merchants in London: certified extract from letter expressing hope that no merchant will initiate violent exploits of the Dutch” (1622). The Dutch continued to complain as well. See U269/1/OE1254, “From Dutch East India Company to Privy Council: English Company has no right to compensation in Europe for goods taken from them in East Indies” (1622).

<sup>105</sup> U269/1/OE1333, “From Cranfield to Trinity House: warrant to supply record of ordnance supplied to Dutch ships,” U269/1/OE128, Lord Carey to Cranfield regarding “lack of powder in Ordnance Office” (1623). Thomas Middleton even makes a joke about this in *A Game at Chess*, where the Spanish Ambassador finds that the White King’s Council Pawn (a figure based largely on Cranfield) had developed a “state policy / and an exceedingly safe one” to “sell away all the powder in the Kingdom / to prevent from blowing up.” See Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, Act II, Scene 1.

<sup>106</sup> See U269/1/OE238, “East India Company: formal petitions for permission to obtain 200 barrels of gunpowder from Mr Evelyn; dispute with Customs at Milford Haven with reply from Customs House, London” (1623).

Dutch War in 1652—came to London at the worst possible time: right after his trial had ended in June of 1624, when all the political capital of the Prince, Buckingham and many in parliament had been spent antagonizing the Spanish and courting the States General. Placing the immediate history of Amboyna within the context of Cranfield's impeachment and the mobilization of parliament and the court towards war with Spain explains why there was a decade long lag between the actual events of 1623 and the early 1630's pamphlet campaign that sought to use it to win support for an anti-Dutch position.<sup>107</sup> Thus, while Cranfield's imperial system stretched from the Americas to the Philippines, it is clear that the Lord Treasurer was significantly more concerned about competition with the Dutch for the East Indies trade than he was with usurping Spanish control over American bullion.

The East India trade, throughout the 17th Century, was disparaged by some commercial thinkers as injurious England's economy because it was powered by an *outflow* of silver from the Island. When forced to defend the East India Company's charter in front of the Commons on March 6th, Maurice Abbot, the Company's treasurer, rebutted the claims of his antagonists that it had ships loaded with bullion waiting to sail out of the Thames, and should therefore be stayed and searched. Abbott argued that the Company was a net positive for the English economy, which he estimated to result in a spectacular profit of £400,000 per annum, highlighting its trade in silks and calicoes in particular.<sup>108</sup> That Cranfield was so committed to this trade, then, is a clue to unlocking his position on coinage and monetary policy. A caricatured view of 17th-century political economy as simply "mercantilism" has lead many to emphasize

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<sup>107</sup> See Carleton to Carleton (June 26, 1624), *Cal. State Papers*, Dom. 1623-1625, 298. In this one letter, Carleton and his son discuss (1) the departure of the Dutch Ambassadors and the raising of money to send them soldiers (2) the size of the fine assigned to Cranfield as part of his impeachment sentencing and (3) that "The East India Company complain loudly of the cruelty of the Hollanders, in torture and execution of ten Englishmen, accused of conspiring with the Japanese to surprise the fort of Amboyna. The company say it was plotted in Amsterdam to ruin their trade, and that they must abandon it. This breeds much ill blood."

<sup>108</sup> Abbott offered only a token defense of the charge against the trade being a net loss in bullion, claiming that he personally had brought back to London a chest full of "£60 weight in gold." See "6th March 1624," in *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*, ed. Philip Baker (British History Online, 2015-18), *British History Online*, accessed March 16, 2022, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/mar-06>.

the role played by precious metals in the minds of Cranfield's contemporaries.<sup>109</sup> Certainly many of them were pre-occupied with gold and silver, but Cranfield had a significantly more complicated view. First, and most importantly, the Lord Treasurer did not seem to think that a perceived coinage shortage was any kind of existential threat to the English economy during the early 1620s. Of course Cranfield thought money was important, especially in times of war, as coinage was key to paying the wages of soldiers and thus preventing them from doing unsavory things. For example, Cranfield, assisted by his longterm business associate Philip Burlamachi, had gone to great lengths to get coinage payment to the force of English volunteers that had been led into the Palatinate during the Summer of 1620, but by 1623 had been cut-off and defeated. Dire news of the increasing violence and thievery committed by the besieged English troops in Frankenthal, the site of the English's last stand, encouraged Cranfield to use Burlamachi to pay the troops their arrears in Venetian currency as part of a package to convince them to return home before things got worse.<sup>110</sup>

Overall, however, Cranfield—as both a merchant and a minister—was significantly more preoccupied with merchandise and credit than with coins, echoing the sentiment of Abbot's parliamentary defense of the East Indies trade. Cranfield conducted his personal business through diverse means: bills of exchange, exchequer tallies, property, goods of all kinds, offices, privilege revenues, jewels and plate, to name some of the more common instruments. His actual dealings in “monies,” however, were few and far between. Thus, because Cranfield seemingly did not possess a more “philosophical” view of money as the *par-excellence* medium of exchange, he was willing to build his imperial economy not as a replication of Spanish success mining bullion in the Americas, but instead as a competition with the Dutch for a commercial empire built on shipping and trade. Cranfield did think that England's coinage policy was in

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<sup>109</sup> Steve Pincus has made an argument for reorienting a study of 17th-century political economy away from “mercantilism.” See Steve Pincus, “Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 1 (2012): 3-34.

<sup>110</sup> An interesting figure for future investigation, Burlamachi (described by Conrad Russell as the King's “biggest creditor”) apparently proposed a project to establish a national bank during the 1630s along lines remarkably similar to the Bank of England's founding at the end of the century. For Frankenthal, see U269/1/OE155, “Lord Chichester and Sir Horace Vere in Frankendale: discontent among three garrisons in King's pay; lapse in money supply could have grave consequences” (1622) and U269/1/OE1039, “From Burlamachi: accounts of disbursements on garrisons of Mannheim and Frankenthal in Palatinate” (1623).

trouble, but he followed Misselden and Mun in identifying pernicious foreign exchange as a key contributor to problematic outflows of English bullion—a Continental problem, rather than an East Indian one. The rather technical solution he proposed was a rebalancing of the silver-to-gold ratio of English coinage, which he argued would significantly mitigate the foreign exchange problem that had largely been caused by inflationary pressure in Germany due to the war.<sup>111</sup> While Cranfield may not have been in possession of a full-fledged “labor theory of value,” he was clearly committed to a political economy premised in competition for commerce rather than in conflict over territory. If a coinage crisis really was the core issue of English political economy during the first half of the 1620s, the Lord Treasurer and de facto Master of the Mint seemingly hadn’t gotten the memo, although a bill (which had languished on the vine in 1621) on reducing interest rates to boost the coinage supply and ultimately increase the value of land, was given serious consideration as he struggled against his impeachment. Arthur Ingram, undoubtedly reflecting what would have been Cranfield’s view, maintained an opposition to the bill. He noted that “in the course of trade three parts of four are by credit: if we make a law to diminish credit we shall diminish trade.”<sup>112</sup> Credit and trade, not coin and land, was the key to England’s economic future.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has offered a reinterpretation of the impeachment of Lionel Cranfield. It argued that the Lord Treasurer’s political economic system, particularly its foreign policy component, was the primary factor that motivated his powerful enemies to seek his destruction. The fact that Cranfield went to such great lengths to resist war with Spain reveals that his balance of trade calculations were only part of a larger project aimed at balancing power, and that the global imperial dimensions of this balancing act were at the front of Cranfield’s mind. Previous accounts, which claimed Cranfield’s resistance to war was based primarily in his wariness towards debt, obscured this more expansive view of his political economy. That

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<sup>111</sup> See U269/1/OE1512, “Observations on gold and silver coinage, with endorsed notes by Cranfield” (1621). Note that this manuscript, which summarizes the perception of a coinage problem and offers what Cranfield labeled his “solution” (the readjustment of the gold/silver ratios in the coinage) took up only two pages. Cranfield spilled more ink on starch than he did on the coinage “crisis.” It is worth noting that Cranfield used roman numerals while discussing bullion ratios, which sticks out amongst his typical preference for the arabic notation.

<sup>112</sup> Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics*, 193.

Cranfield hoped to focus his critical March 11th speech on the balance of trade (rather than the Crown's debts) reveals the deeper issues at stake in the decision to take Cranfield down, issues that range far beyond the mismatched charges that were the focus of his trial.

I want to end with a forward-looking suggestion: a new history of 17th-century English political economy should pay close attention to the administration of the customs. The role played by excise taxation in the emergence of the fiscal-military state has been noted, but the customs could use some fresh eyes. Cranfield, whose experience with the customs was the foundation of his ministerial work, is evidence that the customs apparatus was important to early Stuart commercial policy for both its revenue *and* its data. Further, the fact that the revenue of the "Great Farm" (by far the most lucrative of the customs privileges) was tied to gross traffic rather than profit margins on any particular suite of goods, and that it was leased to powerful merchants with diverse interests, made it an important site of large-scale merchant collaboration, although purchasing a share to get a seat at the table was a competitive process typically orchestrated by established syndicates. A study of the construction, interpretation and utilization of customs data—the embodied practices of the "searchers," the enumeration of trafficked goods in the port books, the processing and analysis of that port book data by teams of computers based in London and, ultimately, the shaping of imperial policy by someone like Cranfield—is a promising route to a practitioner history of the early decades of political economy which emphasizes the commercial expertise that inspired a quantitative approach to statecraft.