

A DAY LIKE TODAY, JUNE 15TH 1215, KING JOHN "LACKLAND" GAVE MAGNA CARTA TO ENGLISH BARONS



Happy birthday Magna Carta. It turns 804 years. King John puts his seal (not signed) to Magna Carta Charter in order to make peace with his rebel barons. This great document established some core principles of English law, including Habeas Corpus, the right to a fair trial before conviction and the place of the monarch within, rather than above, the law.

Magna Carta starts with this quote: "FIRST, THAT WE HAVE GRANTED TO GOD, and by this present charter have confirmed for us and our heirs in perpetuity, that the English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired." And continues with: "to no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice".

On June 15th, 1215, a little more than eight hundred years ago to the day, King John, Monarch of England, met his nobles on a soggy meadow near Runnymede Green and set his seal to the Magna Carta. This moment was more tortured than auspicious, like we never had considered. Nobody on the meadows of Runnymede field could have foreseen that eight hundred years hence, their dubious and forced act of agreement – the King was acting under great duress and in the face of rebellion – would be celebrated as the moment when liberty, the rule of law, and bases of the current democracy were born.

Magna Carta not only was an event without precedents in Common Law or the national legal systems of British Commonwealth countries. Its influence forged the conviction that any serious state power must be exercised lawfully, within the framework of the law. That is to say, law had primacy over the executive power of the King and his administrators and the prior consent of the legislators also.

As you know King John was forced by rebel barons to sign the Magna Carta 804 years ago at Runnymede. The Magna Carta became the bedrock of British and American legal rights, including trial by jury, habeas corpus and due process of law. English people, Canadians and U.S. citizens celebrate this important day with several tributes.

Some authorities in Kansas Supreme Court in the U.S.A. said: “While the Magna Carta began as a series of grievances from barons in medieval England, the fundamental rights that were laid out in that document were later echoed in our own Declaration of Independence, and have been symbolic of liberty and democracy (...) the collective genius of our nation’s founding fathers is memorialized in both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.”

The District Judge of Kansas said too: “The Magna Carta is a portion of the deep historical roots that provided their inspiration that still manifests the liberty and justice enjoyed by Americans today.”

Francis Figueroa Lozano

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