

## **Political Background**

During the reign of King James I (1603-25) William Fiennes, 8th Baron Saye and Sele and 1st Viscount, was a politically active peer, deeply involved in all the important opposition movements of the period.<sup>2</sup> James I, the great exponent of the Divine Right of Kings, was apt to prorogue Parliament for long periods when he wished to raise taxes and could not get his own way. Lord Saye was imprisoned in 1622 in the Fleet Prison for nearly eight months for opposing King James' Palatinate Benevolence;<sup>3</sup> just one of his many illegal money raising activities.

However, early on in King James's reign, relations between Richard Fiennes (7th Baron), William's father, and his king must have been good as James, with his Danish Queen, Anne, stayed at Broughton Castle in 1604. Despite William's strong opposition to the King's illegal tax raising James nevertheless thought sufficiently highly of him, with some prodding from the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Buckingham, to elevate him to viscount in 1624. James died in the following year and his son Charles ascended the throne. Like his father he was prone to dissolving Parliament if he could not get his own way.

## **Early Beginnings**

The years when William Fiennes was not at Westminster were not wasted. He devoted his considerable energies and wealth to financing schemes of colonisation of the New World. His motives, and those of his compatriots also involved in these colonial enterprises, were not only to make money but also to found colonies run on sound Puritan lines. This was a reflection of their strong disapproval of the way the King was conducting affairs of state and the way that the established Church was edging towards Catholicism. In fact Lord Saye was regarded in Westminster as probably the most intractable opponent of arbitrary government in church and state. Both the Earl of Clarendon and Anthony Wood, writing in the later seventeenth century, treated him as the acknowledged leader of the party that provoked the Civil War.

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<sup>2</sup> Schwarz, M.A. 'Lord Saye and Sele's Objections to the Palatinate Benevolence of 1622: Some New Evidence and its Significance' (a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Pacific Northwest Section of the Conference, Calgary, Alberta, March, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> See page 173.