

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE AND WARTIME DISSENT, 1916-1918

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE AS THE "HAMMER" OF DISSENT:  
THE WAR PREMIERSHIP, 1916-1918

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation will focus upon Lloyd George's relationship to wartime dissent. This is an important area of study not yet coherently, systematically, and thoroughly treated. This neglect is indeed evident in the transformation of the 'pro-Boer' Radical at the turn of the century into "the man who won the war" in 1918. There have been numerous studies on Lloyd George and the Labour Movement, Lloyd George and the Generals, and Lloyd George as social reformer, just to name a few. But, as yet, there has not been any scholarly examination of Lloyd George and wartime dissent, topics which encompass his views on such issues as censorship, propaganda, the containment of peace-by-negotiation organizations, specifically, the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF), and the Independent Labour Party (ILP), and the imprisonment of conscientious objectors.

Two wars were fought by Lloyd George from 1916 to 1918: the first was the arduous military effort on behalf of the "knock-out blow" for total victory, while the second was the domestic campaign to maintain public support for the war. By focusing upon the "domestic war", the Lloyd George Government employed a sophisticated array of tools to buy loyalty and crush dissent: first, by constructing a propaganda machine which pledged the creation of a new post-war Britain in order to justify the hardships at home, the British Government capitalized upon the depth of patriotism throughout the working classes, and, second, by applying

the weapons of censorship and persecution, for instance, the trial and imprisonment of E.D. Morel, the secretary of the UDC, the Lloyd George Coalition punished the leading dissenter and demonstrated their willingness to subvert individual rights and liberties. Moreover, the campaign against dissent was aided when key German actions, for example, the decision by the German High Command to adopt a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917, undermined the claims of the dissenters that German peace moves were sincere and that Germany was often willing to negotiate in good faith. In addition, the British Government exploited internal divisions within wartime dissent over the issues of civil liberties and industrial action which prevented the formation of a potentially powerful alliance between peace advocates, civil libertarians, and industrial militants which could pose as a legitimate political alternative to the constitutional government. This ambitious domestic campaign contributed to Lloyd George's reputation as "the man who won the war" and to the rout of dissent in the election of 1918.

This examination of Lloyd George's proscription of wartime dissent has also highlighted the intellectual narrowness and deep internal divisions within the peace movement, the nature of German war aims chronicled by Fritz Fischer, the German historian, who traced the aggressive continuities in Germany's expansive foreign and military policy, and the paradox of Lloyd George's political ascendancy in 1918 and his vilification by the British Left as an enemy of the working classes. The failure of the peace-by-negotiation movement and the success of the

"knock-out blow" policy was therefore facilitated by Lloyd George's readiness to devote his tireless energy and demagogic oratory to mobilize the nation's resources - human, material, and psychological - to the defence of the nation.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ASE: Amalgamated Society of Engineers  
BSP: British Socialist Party  
BWL: British Workers' League  
CID: Committee of Imperial Defence  
CWC: Clyde Workers' Committee  
DORA: Defence of the Realm Act  
FOR: Fellowship of Reconciliation  
FSC: Friends' Service Committee  
HL: Herald League  
ILP: Independent Labour Party  
IWW: International Workers of the World  
JAC: Joint Advisory Council  
MSA: Military Service Act  
NAC: National Administrative Council  
NCCL: National Council for Civil Liberties  
NCF: No-Conscription Fellowship  
NWAC: National War Aims Committee  
PNC: Peace Negotiations Committee  
SLP: Socialist Labour Party  
TUC: Trades Union Congress  
UDC: Union of Democratic Control  
WSPU: Women's Social and Political Union



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## Chapter I: The Janus Face of David Lloyd George, 1899-1914

"Will anyone write The Real Lloyd George?", Frances Stevenson, his political secretary and mistress, asked herself, in her diary on 9 February, 1917. Lloyd George, along with James Ramsay MacDonald and Winston Churchill, must be considered as one of the most controversial British politicians of this century. As Michael Fry has asserted, Lloyd George was "subject to both passionate and even scurrilous attack, and romantic adulation. He could attract and repel in dangerous proportions." There have been numerous studies on Lloyd George and the Boer War, Lloyd George and social reform, Lloyd George and the Labour Movement, and Lloyd George as "the man who won the war", to name a few.<sup>1</sup> Although a number of these have made passing reference to Lloyd George's assault on wartime dissent, defined by such anti-war groups as the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) and the Independent Labour Party (ILP) who campaigned for a "peace-by-negotiation", there has been no scholarly examination of why Lloyd George viewed this coalition as one of his most formidable enemies in his struggle to maintain popular support behind the war effort.

This dissertation will examine the methods by which Lloyd George sought to contain, divide, and then crush his opponents. By espousing the "knock-out blow" policy, advocating the extension of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) to restrict individual liberties and collective rights, utilizing the weapons of patriotism and propaganda, and developing close ties to the "hard men" of the Unionist party, Lloyd George's pursuit of victory dealt his reputation as a pre-war hero of Radical dissent irreparable damage. Despite his tireless contribution in the mobilization

of Britain's entire resources to the defeat of Germany, Lloyd George's willingness to disregard traditional Liberal principles and exploit divisions within the anti-war movement earned him the reputation as the "hammer" of dissent and he became the implacable foe of the British Left.

To his contemporaries, the marvel of Lloyd George's pre-war career lay in his ability to portray himself as a Welsh nationalist, a 'pro-Boer' Radical, and the architect of the British welfare state. By virtue of his opposition to the South African War, his legislative accomplishments at the Exchequer, and his peace offensive during the winter of 1913-14, it is not surprising that his support for the British declaration of war on 4 August 1914 effectively ended Lloyd George's vocation as a domestic reformer. He was thereafter projected "into the role of frockcoated warrior with which he is most readily identified." When he refused to resign from the Cabinet to lead a peace party in opposition to the war, did Lloyd George betray his earlier reformist and dissenting reputation as the champion of the working classes? By turning his attention from the task of social amelioration, to which all his energies had been harnessed for eight years, and applying his vigour to the militarization of civilian life, Lloyd George became vilified as a ruthless dictator by the members of his traditional constituency, the ranks of organized labour, Nonconformity, and advocates of social change.<sup>2</sup>

A.J.P. Taylor's definition of dissent in modern British foreign policy is the clearest description of those organizations which criticized the pre-war Liberal government's foreign policy, opposed Britain's entry into the war, and attempted to counteract official efforts to secure military victory.

Wartime dissent covered a broad spectrum of liberals, socialists, Christians, and pacifists who belonged to a variety of organizations which co-operated in a loose association known as the peace-by-negotiation coalition. Their efforts to articulate an alternative foreign policy which supported non intervention and advocated a democratic and non-vindictive peace was perhaps incoherently stated at times, but was indicative of a dissenting mentality which accepted the sincerity of German peace overtures and believed that peace was not only attainable, but also in the practical and vital interest of Britain. By alleging that Allied war aims were annexationist and were needlessly prolonging the conflict, wartime dissent exploited growing war weariness, domestic hardship, and the erosion of individual liberties in their campaign to enlist the support of the working classes to force the Government to seek a negotiated peace.<sup>3</sup>

Lloyd George's insight and perseverance propelled him to the premiership. Yet, while he was praised by some as the leader of Radical opinion and as the father of unemployment and health insurance, he was scorned by others as the untrustworthy "goat-footed bard", and later depicted by J.M. Keynes, the renowned economist, as "rooted in nothing."<sup>4</sup> By refusing, however, to operate within the bounds of a single political framework, Lloyd George sought out new challenges, and experimented and mastered a familiarity with domestic and foreign issues. Whether as an imperialist with a difference throughout the Boer War, or as the public patriot during the Agadir crisis, or even as the above-party statesman during the coalition negotiations of 1910, Lloyd George fused an effective synthesis of progressive social reform and a sincere interest in

national and imperial security.

As the champion of the "New Liberalism", Lloyd George's pre-war career, nevertheless, revealed a sense of irony and ambiguity inherent in the man who in 1909 drafted the most partisan budget ever seen, proposing the use of graduated income taxation to implement social policy, and, within the following year, privately supported an ambitious scheme for a coalition Government, repudiating the basic tenets of Liberalism. This chapter explores this mystery surrounding Lloyd George's dual image, his remarkable political success, and endeavours to comprehend how the leading 'pro-Boer' Radical became transformed into the dictatorial war lord and was despised as the "hammer" of dissent.

#### The 'Pro-Boer' Radical?

In denouncing the South African War and the spasm of intolerant patriotism that accompanied it, Lloyd George opened himself to the charge of insufficient loyalty, not only from the Unionist ranks but from Liberal Imperialists within his own party. His 'pro-Boer' campaign has been portrayed as an act of supreme folly, or idiot courage, or both; he appeared to be irresponsible, and disreputable. Why, then, did Lloyd George react so vehemently, committing himself to total opposition to the war? Basically, he believed that this particular war was not in the national self-interest and represented an unjustifiable and aggressive example of Unionist foreign policy gone awry. Despite this impression of Lloyd George as a peace crusader, he was not a pacifist who believed that all war was immoral. He was an enthusiastic supporter of British maritime supremacy and of a "Commonwealth of free nations" on which the Empire was based. He had

opposed the Boer War "not because he had any *a priori* objection to war in any circumstances, but because he regarded that particular war as unnecessary and damaging - not least to the true interests of the British Empire." <sup>5</sup> For him, the conflict could not claim the elevated position of a just war, nor had it any relevance to Britain's strategic interest.

Even though Lloyd George and his fellow 'pro-Boers' campaigned against the war, they did not desire a Boer victory. The war became not so much wrong as unnecessary: all its essential aims could be achieved by negotiation. In Lloyd George's scenario, for instance, the "Commonwealth of free nations" would consolidate itself as a secure political unit, promote free trade, and not impose intolerable burdens on any member. This concept of Empire enabled Lloyd George to declare: "I am also an imperialist. I believe in Empire; its enemies are my enemies." <sup>6</sup>

Throughout the conflict one must not exaggerate the degree of cool calculation in Lloyd George's attempt to reconcile three primary objectives: first, to oppose the war on moral and partisan grounds; second, to secure a Gladstonian peace settlement, which would promote both self-government and preserve British supremacy, and; third, to avoid widening the split of the Liberal Party and thus jeopardize their next electoral campaign and his political future. Lloyd George was convinced that the war in South Africa had been deliberately provoked by the Unionist government, particularly Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, and Lord Milner, the Governor of the Cape Colony and British High Commissioner. In his only speech during the emergency session of the House of Commons on 27 October 1899, Lloyd George asserted that the British government, intent on subjugating

the Boers and concealing that hidden agenda, had declared war on a bogus franchise issue. Speaking in a by-election campaign a month later, he remarked that the nation was now fighting "a little country, the total of whose population was less than Carmarthenshire - the British Empire against Carmarthenshire!"<sup>7</sup> In short, Lloyd George condemned the outbreak of the war as the work of a discredited government that represented everything he detested in political life: official corruption, dishonesty, and a tenderness for vested interests.

By concentrating his attack upon the Colonial Office and the policies of Chamberlain, a man once admired by Lloyd George as "unquestionably the future leader of the people", he criticized the rationale of the war. His reputation as a leading spokesman for dissent was heightened by his fiery speeches which attacked the costs of the war and the excessive profits of Birmingham armaments manufacturers. For example, at an unruly meeting in Bangor, in his own constituency, in April 1900, Lloyd George first charged that Chamberlain, his fallen idol, "prefers the patriotism which... ensures a dividend from the Small Arms Factory in which his relatives are interested." He also linked the war with domestic problems and the absence of social reform, blasting the Unionists for exploiting the war as a cover for their lack of a constructive domestic social policy. At Carmarthen in November 1899 he declared that "there was not a Lyddite shell which burst upon the South African hills that did not carry away an Old Age Pension."<sup>8</sup> Hence, Lloyd George's opposition to the war was based upon a two-part strategy: first, by presenting the conflict in moral terms, he depicted the Unionists as sinful and unrighteous, and; second, by criticizing the

government's folly in starting the war, he condemned their actions as a dangerous threat to the national interest.

Moreover, Lloyd George repeatedly called for an honourable Gladstonian peace which would fuse British supremacy with freedom and justice for South Africa. Such a position underlined the ambiguity in Lloyd George's reputation as a 'pro-Boer' Radical, and also illustrated how his set of beliefs on imperial and national security shaped his subsequent actions in regards to Britain's entry into the First World War. His policy of "Home Rule All Round" rested on the assumption that British supremacy in South Africa would be restored and would not jeopardize her imperial security. Thus, his peace settlement promoted responsible self-government and a degree of local autonomy so long as British interests were not jeopardized.<sup>9</sup>

Unless Lloyd George could court the support of the moderate Liberal leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and his followers, he might succeed merely in isolating, and, ultimately, destroying himself politically. Despite his closer contacts with Labour politicians and his affiliation with the Stop-the-War Committee and the League of Liberals Against Aggression and Militarism, Lloyd George was determined to prevent the development of a permanent split within Liberal ranks. In his stormy address to the Birmingham Liberal Association on 18 December 1901, for example, Lloyd George supported Lord Rosebery's speech at Chesterfield which had called for informal peace talks and had condemned Milner's conduct, but had failed to criticize the course of the war. Ignoring warnings from Birmingham police officials to stay away from the bastion of Joseph Chamberlain and Liberal Unionism, Lloyd George encountered a frenzied



mob both inside and outside the Town Hall. When the audience stormed the stage Lloyd George was unable to complete his speech and had to flee the Hall disguised in a police uniform. In addition to showing considerable courage, Lloyd George also won the admiration and praise from fellow Radicals for the strength of his conviction. In the words of Bentley Gilbert, "the attention he won from the misbehaviour of the Birmingham mob did him far more good than any speech he might have made." For his part, Lloyd George had gradually become accepted as a leading member of the Radical wing of the Liberal Party whose consistent stand on such a controversial issue, though bitterly contested, was certainly in no sense parochial.<sup>10</sup>

On balance, the Boer War advanced Lloyd George's career, not only because it opened up new opportunities for a politician of courage, skill, and ambition, but because he had evolved into a national political figure identified with dissent. There were proposals, for example, an open letter from Keir Hardie to the Labour Leader, the weekly of the socialist ILP, in February 1903 that he leave the Liberal Party and assume the leadership of a new Radical-Labour alliance. As the single most important event in Lloyd George's early career and certainly the most controversial, the Boer War had identified him with the leading tenets of dissent, for instance, the policies of arms limitation, arbitration and conciliation, as well as concert diplomacy.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, a closer analysis of Lloyd George's attitudes throughout the South African War reveals the development of a synthesis of his views on Radicalism and patriotic imperialism. His famous stand against the war

has been misinterpreted by those who describe him as a pacifist and an anti-Imperialist. According to Grigg, Lloyd George should be described as "an Imperialist himself, but with a difference." Interestingly enough, on 5 June 1902 he voted with the majority of the House in an expression of gratitude to the Army for its victory, "a not unrevealing commentary on his reactions to the Boer War." By risking his political future in the 'pro-Boer' campaign, Lloyd George soon became fully aware of the necessity to develop a familiarity with foreign and defence questions. To do so, he "became more concerned with the world as it was and rather less with what it might become, although he was never devoid of either reforming zeal or prescience." This particular attempt at a synthesis in the Boer War meant that "both the compulsion to challenge and the will to conciliate became integral parts of his political style."<sup>12</sup> In this way, the South African War served as an important episode in Lloyd George's rise as the champion of Edwardian dissent on the one hand and as the consummate political realist, eschewing his ideological origins, on the other hand.

#### Lloyd George as the Pragmatic Radical

As the President of the Board of Trade and later as the Chancellor of the Exchequer in two successive Liberal Governments Lloyd George successfully fused his concern for the welfare of the working classes and his public reputation as the leading dissenter. He championed economy and reductions in naval and military expenditure to emerge as the leading Radical spokesman of the Liberal Party with a likely opportunity to become Prime Minister. He also devoted himself to the task of proving that he could administer a great department of State, and that in doing so he was not an

ideologue but a resourceful pragmatist. At the Board of Trade, for instance, tariff reformers in the Unionist party observed for the first time in November 1906 what they called "the struggle for mastery between the two Lloyd George's." The Liberal Minister confided something he was to avow publicly and often in subsequent years; namely, that he was not given to dogmatism, even with respect to the sacred Liberal principle of Free Trade. During the same month Lloyd George informed shipowners: "Personally I do not believe in introducing party politics into business... My predecessors have kept party politics out of the administration of trade and business of the nation. That is the only way to succeed." While such language was designed to win the allegiance of tariff reform-minded businessmen, it also demonstrated the possible advantages of a national above-party image while in office.<sup>13</sup>

It was good political sense not to squander good will from any quarter. "Once having reached national prominence", R.J. Scally observed, Lloyd George "lavished his considerable charm rather indiscriminately, bewitching friends and enemies alike." Indeed, certain contemporaries understood in part the process through which Lloyd George seemed to be passing. Among them was J.L. Garvin, the influential editor of The Observer. He told Lord Northcliffe, the newspaper proprietor, in November 1907, "Were we not right about Lloyd George. The man is maturing very rapidly. Having tasted the pleasures of a solid and statesmanlike success, tinsel triumphs will henceforth be less attractive to him. He will follow this up, bid high and go far." As a prominent Liberal Cabinet Minister Lloyd George therefore stirred the imaginations of those in Unionist circles as a

national political figure whose legislative dynamism demonstrated his "continuing independence while achieving a *modus vivendi* with convention and the consensus."<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, his term at the Board of Trade marked his first extended contact with the practical world of business, of confident entrepreneurs and competent managers, much the same men whom Lloyd George looked to when forming his own government a decade later. Out of the public eye, in its conference room, reforms were instituted at the Board of Trade without excessive fuss and debate and, perhaps more important, without the tension brought about by conflicting social styles and accents. As Chancellor of the Exchequer he later recalled:

"After years of strife, politically, I found myself at peace with all my neighbours. I met men of all political parties and of no political parties... and it was quite a delightful experience to be able for two or three years, to work in a department where there was really no political feeling, no political bias, and no political prejudice..."

Lloyd George thus came very near to making the best of both political worlds. His administrative competence in office, particularly with respect to his ambitious bill for health insurance, enhanced his position as a leading spokesman for the "New Liberalism", while industrialists appreciated his growing reputation as a "practical man of business."<sup>15</sup>

#### The Quest for National Efficiency

In the aftermath of the election of January 1910 which gave no party a majority of seats, Lloyd George set forth his controversial "Criccieth" Memorandum of 17 August 1910. It was an unprecedented scheme for a national coalition government led by a meritorious elite which could

transcend an ineffective party system and rescue Britain from imminent decline and ruin. The rise of Germany and America demanded a bold response undertaken by a single party with a truly national vision. In keeping with the non-political stance of the memorandum Lloyd George devoted himself largely to solving domestic issues, specifically, housing, health insurance, public welfare, and economic growth. While Fry has argued that the "proposed remedies were those of the 'New Liberalism'", Lloyd George, in the words of Scally, had

"already wrung an extraordinary degree of acquiescence to what was, in effect, a repudiation of the bulk of the Liberal party platform of previous years, since by far the greater part of the plan was an open concession to the Opposition, especially to the Tariff Reformers."<sup>16</sup>

Doubtless, his sudden advocacy of some form of national service and of expanded army and naval budgets came as a surprise to those who read the document. Yet, from the start of his tenure in office, Lloyd George had consistently championed direct interference by the State in the organization of civilian life, ignoring or even openly flouting what was left of traditional Liberal principles. As Sidney Buxton, the Liberal M.P., remarked in April 1907: "none of us know what Lloyd George is up to." His previous efforts to maximize national efficiency and improve social conditions prefigured his political philosophy as Prime Minister during the First World War. To a large extent, therefore, the "Criccieth" Memorandum tended to refurbish Lloyd George's image as an undoctrinaire statesman whose genuine concern for the health and safety of the British nation had won him respect within Opposition circles.<sup>17</sup>

Ironically, the violence and class bitterness of Lloyd George's platform

oratory throughout the budget crisis of 1909 threatened to paralyze the machinery of government, delayed important social reforms, and weakened the nation at a critical time of international tension. What made the famous Limehouse speech, delivered on 30 July 1909, unique in British political life was "the clear intent of the speaker, a cabinet minister, to prejudice the middle and lower classes against the traditional ruling elite, the landed and moneyed aristocracy." Determined to goad the peers into rejecting the Finance Bill, Lloyd George warned that "no country, however rich, can permanently afford to have quartered upon its revenue a class which declines to do the duty which it was called upon to perform since the beginning." Editorial writers at The Observer, for example, condemned the Chancellor's "Radical Plunderbund", while in the adjoining letters irate peers suggested half-seriously that the "Welsh footpad" be "gagged", sent to the Tower of London, or flung to a pack of foxhounds. No sooner had he helped whip up partisan feeling to a fever pitch, than the Chancellor was seeking a way out of the political impasse. As Scally explains:

"Lloyd George's political face, with the menacing grimace of his earlier radicalism conspicuously lifted did not emerge fully at this early date; but as his embattled budget finally approached enactment, the Limehouse firebrand began discreetly to disclose a new demeanor, as unfamiliar to his friends as to his enemies."

The year 1910, therefore, represented one in which Lloyd George had consciously sought to make great decisions and formulate policy on a grand scale, foreshadowing his term as a wartime Coalition Prime Minister. By this time, he was clearly no longer content to remain in the guise of "radical agitator" but was determined to play the more influential role as a "manipulator of power."<sup>18</sup>

### The Agadir Crisis and the Mansion House Speech: A Radical's Response?

The arrival of the German gunboat Panther at Agadir on 1 July 1911 symbolized that the Pax Britannica might be nearing its end and dramatized the possible virtues of a national government to meet the crisis. Lloyd George's dramatic Mansion House speech of 21 July 1911 represented his debut in the field of diplomacy and it still remains a subject of dispute. At the Mansion House, Lloyd George warned that the nation would not shrink from the challenge of war. He also stressed that Britain would not be treated "as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations... peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure." The meaning of the speech could not be misinterpreted. The Labour Leader, for instance, reacted with astonishment:

"Weighed down with official responsibility... Lloyd George must have forgotten the dark days of the South African War, when these very phrases ["prestige" and "national honour"] were made to do duty in covering the evil and sinister designs of mine-exploiters in the Transvaal."

"It was a public threat to Germany", Bertrand Russell, the famous logician and peace activist, later commented bitterly, "a clear intimation that we were prepared to go to war in defence of our interests in the Moroccan question." 19

The exact motive for Lloyd George's response during the Agadir crisis is obscure and has remained a source of historical controversy. Some have alleged that he underwent a dramatic political conversion in July 1911. Those who had mistakenly supposed Lloyd George to be a pacifist and anti-Imperialist from his opposition to the Boer War were astonished that this apparent Germanophile, acting from dubious motives and

seduced by officialdom, had become the darling of the Foreign Office. Others have asserted that his statement on Agadir was intended not for a German audience but rather designed to impress the French or Europeans in general, or even to help to settle a railway strike at home. However, none of these hypotheses accurately documented Lloyd George's appreciation of national and imperial security. Both Asquith and Grey welcomed a speech delivered by Lloyd George that was devoted to nationalist themes while reiterating the government's pledges for peace and prosperity. In addition, Lloyd George did not want the Unionists to have the opportunity of accusing the government of irresponsible weakness. Simply put, the government must be "a credible as well as a pacific administration" in order to maintain public respectability.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the Moroccan crisis had promoted cooperation between Lloyd George and Grey. It also highlighted the Chancellor's deep-rooted consciousness as an architect of national and imperial security at a moment of national crisis. Throughout the tense months after the Mansion House speech, when Anglo-German relations became noticeably abrasive, Lloyd George often defended Grey as frank and moderate. In turn, Grey strongly advocated the passage of the National Insurance Bill and formed an alliance with Lloyd George from the summer of 1911 until the spring of 1912. Arthur Murray, a Liberal M.P., wrote in his diary that Lloyd George confided to him that "If Grey goes, we would go together. I would go and certainly Winston ought to go. I should certainly go if the attempt to hound Grey were successful." In addition, during an important debate on strategy by the select meeting of the CID (Committee of Imperial Defence) on 23



August 1911, Lloyd George offered no words of alarm, criticism, or restraint in protest against the decision that in the event of a Franco-German conflict, Britain would dispatch six infantry divisions and one cavalry division to the continent. Later that month he expressed his concern lest Britain's own preparations against invasion should be inadequate and one point he emphasized succinctly: "people think that because I was a pro-Boer I am anti-war in general; and that I should faint at the mention of a cannon. I am not against war a bit."<sup>21</sup> In view of his private concern for Britain's preparedness for war and his support for Grey throughout the Agadir crisis, Lloyd George demonstrated a sharp awareness of national and imperial issues.

#### The Chancellor's 'Peace Offensive'

In an atmosphere of detente, despite the failure of the Haldane Mission to Germany in February 1912 and the two successive Balkan Wars of 1912-13, Lloyd George actively pursued the Radicals' dream of international accord and goodwill at a time when he desperately needed their enthusiastic support for the implementation of his Land Campaign. Throughout the winter of 1913-14, therefore, one finds Lloyd George at his most "dove-like" in terms of economy for the naval estimates for 1914, and in the forefront of a peace campaign, as demonstrated by his famous interview in the Daily Chronicle, published on New Years' Day, 1914.

The background for this interview was as follows: on 5 December 1913 Churchill presented formidable estimates to the Cabinet for more than £50 million, an increase of approximately £3 million over the combined 1913 and supplementary naval estimate figures. While Lloyd George was

determined to preserve Britain's naval supremacy, as a Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, he was equally bound to advocate retrenchment by keeping Service expenditure under control. At the same time, Lloyd George was personally less hostile toward Churchill's policy aspirations than other Radicals in the Cabinet such as Herbert Samuel and John Burns. When Churchill later proposed estimates of just under £50 million, the Radicals, however, were still upset and the Cabinet dispersed prior to Christmas without solving this dilemma. The tactical question confronting Lloyd George was thus how far he should lend his influential support to this group of dissenting Ministers.

Lloyd George gave the interview published in the Daily Chronicle on New Years' Day, 1914, and then departed for North Africa. He offered three reasons why the time was now favourable to reduce military expenditure and launched what was, in effect, a peace offensive. First of all, the strain and tension in Anglo-German relations was, "owing largely to the wise and patient diplomacy of Sir Edward Grey, completely relaxed." Second, Lloyd George deprecated the "feverish efforts" to increase her naval superiority and cautioned that "if we went on spending and swelling [the Navy's] strength we should wantonly provoke other nations." Finally, in response to a public revolt against militarism throughout Europe, Britain must take a "bold and independent step" to restrict expenditure on armaments and also remain faithful to the traditions of Liberalism.<sup>22</sup>

This controversial step was an expression of Lloyd George's convictions as well as a tactical move. Unlike his statement on Agadir, it was his personal opinion without any prior consultation with either Asquith or

Grey. At home, the left-wing press viewed Lloyd George's overtures for not only a reduction in armaments but also the advocacy of independent action on behalf of Britain to end the "organised insanity" with downright suspicion. On 8 January 1914 the Labour Leader asked Lloyd George "how he can remain a member of the Government if his protest is sincere." The paper also reminded its readers that it was the same Lloyd George who "delivered the provocative speech at the Mansion House at the time of the Agadir crisis which nearly plunged Germany and Great Britain into the horrors of war." In short, the interview was *maladroit*, since it weakened his stature among those on the domestic Left and his position in Cabinet vis-à-vis Churchill.<sup>23</sup>

A confrontation with Churchill was virtually unavoidable once the Cabinet reassembled in mid-January 1914 to decide upon the exact figure for the 1914 naval estimates. Asquith, expressing complete confidence in Churchill's integrity on this issue, threatened an immediate dissolution in order to force Lloyd George's hand. When the Cabinet met on 28 January Churchill prepared a review of the naval figures and on 6 February he proposed estimates of just under £52 million that the Cabinet readily accepted. Clearly, Churchill had won a substantial victory.

Throughout the naval debate of 1913-14 Lloyd George's dual posture reduced his credibility and even his effectiveness politically. On the one hand, there was in him a certain residue of the old-fashioned Gladstonian Liberalism of fiscal retrenchment, despite his eagerness to employ the Budget for costly social projects of which no true Gladstonian could approve. He was also fully aware of his reputation as the leading Radical in

Cabinet and he recognized the political advantages of a peace offensive to enlist left-leaning Liberal supporters for his ambitious Land Campaign. On the other hand, the naval dispute was much more tactical than ideological: both Lloyd George and Churchill believed in a strong Navy and were by their own temperament patriotic radicals who acted with an empiricism which was easily mistaken for political opportunism. Despite this setback to Lloyd George's reputation, public attention was soon diverted to the growing crisis in Ireland, which incidentally brought him and Churchill into close cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

Following the naval controversy, Lloyd George's interest in foreign affairs was limited to his budget speech of 1914 and a Mansion House address during the July crisis. In Parliament he claimed to have strengthened the nation's defences as a result of naval and army increases in their respective estimates. Britain's relations with a neighbour of ours had improved significantly and, although Lloyd George never actually referred to Germany, no one could mistake the reference. At the Mansion House on 17 July 1914 Lloyd George reiterated his commitment to economy in military estimates. Contemporary and later observers, noting that Austria presented her ultimatum to Serbia less than a week later, have unfairly emphasized Lloyd George's lack of prescience. The historical significance of the speech on the eve of war does not lie, however, in its "faulty prognostications." In the words of Fry,

"It both reflected Lloyd George's political predicament and expressed in a premeditated way the state of his thoughts on the international situation as they had evolved since 1906; the results of the education which came from holding office and attempting to construct an unconventional policy synthesis. Significantly, it praised Grey without reservation."<sup>25</sup>

### Conclusion

Lloyd George's unique political synthesis meant that he had evolved into a champion of the "New Liberalism" as well as an advocate of traditional Radical causes. In addition, he had become a shrewd political pragmatist whose essential changelessness of personality enabled him to offer a solution to a problem or to propose a grand outline of a program. How rapidly and fully did the fusion of views take place, and how often did he regress in a fit of sentimental nostalgia? "Part of the problem", Fry observes, "lies in the intellectual constructs of observers who see unyielding dichotomous relationships between, for instance, radicalism and imperialism, and idealist and realist assumptions about foreign policy." Perhaps H.W. Massingham, the noted editor of the Nation, the leading paper of the "New Liberalism", came closest to capturing the essence of Lloyd George in an article dated 6 January 1912:

"He takes freely from many sources of political inspiration - Liberalism, Socialism, even Imperialism, and gives back his adaptive and energetic spirit and his unequalled capacity for action. No career in English politics has marched so fast since the days of Pitt; and none has seemed so lightly planted in the soil from which it has made such astonishing growth."

This complex flow of ideas, the result of a unique synthesis of domestic and foreign policy full of assumptions and patterns of thought determined that Lloyd George would, during the 1914 crisis, seemed first to divide and then help unite the Cabinet, the Liberal party, and the nation.<sup>26</sup>

## NOTES

1. A.J.P. Taylor, ed., Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson (1971), diary entry of 9 February 1917, 143; Michael G. Fry, Lloyd George and Foreign Policy. Volume One: The Education of a Statesman, 1890-1916. (1977), ix-x. Other works include John Grigg, The Young Lloyd George. (1973) and Lloyd George: The People's Champion 1902-1911. (1978), Chris Wrigley, David Lloyd George and the British Labour Movement (1976), and Cameron Hazlehurst, Politicians at War. July 1914 to May 1915. A Prologue to the Triumph of Lloyd George. (1971).

2. Don M. Creiger, Bounder from Wales. Lloyd George's Career Before the First World War. (1976), v. See also Trevor Wilson, The Myriad Faces of War. Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918. (1986), 668-669 and Hazlehurst, 15.

3. A.J.P. Taylor, The Trouble-Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792-1939. (1957), 19; H. Weinroth, "Peace By Negotiation and the British Anti-War Movement, 1914-1918", in the Canadian Journal of History, Vol. X, Issue 3, December 1975, 369n, 376; The terms peace dissenters, the peace-by-negotiation advocates, and the anti-war movement are employed interchangeably in the dissertation and refer to those individuals and groups who, despite their diverse aims and aspirations, collaborated for an early end to the European conflict.

4. A. M. Gollin, Proconsul in Politics. A Study of Lord Milner in Opposition and in Power. (1964), 293; J.M. Keynes, Essays in Biography. (1963), 36.

5. John Grigg, Lloyd George: Peace to War 1912-1916. (1985), 128-129. See also Bentley B. Gilbert, David Lloyd George: A Political Life. The Architect of Change, 1863-1912. (1987) and Grigg, The Young Lloyd George, 295.

6. Fry, 58. See also A.J.P. Taylor, 109.

7. Speech at Carmarthen, 27 November 1899, quoted in Grigg, The Young Lloyd George, 262. See also Fry, 40-41, 44.

8. North Wales Observer and Express, 17 October 1884, quoted in Creiger, 21. See also Grigg, The Young Lloyd George, 259-263.

9. Grigg, The Young Lloyd George, 260-261; Fry, 50.

10. Gilbert, 214. See also Grigg, Lloyd George: The People's Champion 1902-1911, 21.

11. Gilbert, 214; Fry, 67.

12. Grigg, The Young Lloyd George, 260; Fry, 17, 14. See also Fry, 36-37.

13. "Monthly Notes" in the Tariff Reform League pamphlet, Volume V, Number 5, November 1906, quoted in R.J. Scally, The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition. The Politics of Social Imperialism, 1900-1918. (1975), 139; At the Trocadero, 20 November, 1906 in the Shipping Gazette and Lloyd's List, 21 November, 1906, quoted in Wrigley, 48. See also Grigg, The People's Champion 1902-1911, 98 and Hazlehurst, 61.
14. Scally, 141; J.L. Garvin Papers: Box 59, J.L. Garvin to Lord Northcliffe, 7 November 1907, quoted in Fry, 68; Fry, 14.
15. Speech at the Law Society Hall, 29 January 1909, quoted in Scally, 144. See also G.R. Searle, The Quest for National Efficiency. A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914. (1971), 174; Grigg, The People's Champion, 98.
16. Fry, 120; Scally, 189, 200.
17. A. Chamberlain, Politics from Within. (1936), 65-66, quoted in Fry, 16. See also Scally, 192.
18. Creiger, 127-129; Peter Rowland, Lloyd George. (1975), 221; Scally, 170-171. See also Searle, 176.
19. Zara S. Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War. (1977), 73; "Mr. Lloyd George and Germany", Labour Leader, 28 July 1911, 30, 8, 472; Bertrand Russell, The Policy of the Entente, 1904-1914: A Reply to Professor Gilbert Murray. December 1915, excerpt in Richard A. Rempel, ed. The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Prophecy and Dissent, 1914-1916 . Volume 13. (1988), 241.
20. Fry, 132, 138-140.
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22. Grigg, Lloyd George: From Peace to War, 132-135; Fry, 170-174.
23. Labour Leader, 8 January 1914, 2, 11, 1. See also Grigg, Lloyd George: From Peace to War, 135.
24. Grigg, Lloyd George: From Peace to War, 132-136.
25. Speeches, 20 June 1914 and 17 July 1914, quoted in Fry, 180-181. See also Grigg, Lloyd George: From Peace to War, 137-138.
26. Gilbert, 466. See also Fry, 17-18.

## Chapter II:

### The Advent of War to the Premiership: 4 August 1914 - 7 December 1916

With the outbreak of war, Lloyd George, after much hesitation, decided to remain in the Cabinet and wage war. At fifty-one years of age Lloyd George was in his prime; a senior minister with an impressive record of reform, and especially beloved in Wales despite blemishes on his personal conduct, and popular in the country at large. He was indispensable to the Liberal party, and his resignation would have been pivotal, second in importance only to that of Asquith. Sheer political realism dictated that Lloyd George "should neither lead those most reluctant to risk war, nor to trail behind those who concluded that Britain must intervene in Europe." Convictions and perceptions about foreign policy reinforced this position. Lloyd George identified British security with the maintenance of the European balance of power, the preservation of France, and the prevention of German hegemony. He also understood that the violation of Belgian neutrality would provide public opinion with a casus belli which the nation would accept as a legitimate reason to enter the war.<sup>1</sup>

Once reconciled with the decision to intervene, Lloyd George expected the nation to follow his example in facing what he described as a justifiable and ultimately unavoidable war. The Liberal distinction between the German people and Prussian militarists was integral to his decision, reflecting a basic presupposition about the origins of war and a genuine belief about the purpose for which Britain was fighting. In this way, Lloyd George helped foster the notion that only complete victory would achieve the Government's objective. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, next as



Minister of Munitions, then as War Secretary, and ultimately as Prime Minister, he committed himself to every action essential to victory, no matter what Liberal principles had to be violated. Recruiting, the supply of munitions, industrial relations, and the disarming of wartime dissent all fell within the scope of his restless intervention in the higher direction of the war effort.<sup>2</sup> An analysis of his part in the negotiation of the Treasury Agreement, the passage of the Munitions of War Act, the ban of the socialist paper Forward, and the publication of his famous "knock-out blow" interview of 28 September 1916 will underline Lloyd George's adamant patriotism and will highlight his relentless persecution of domestic enemies, specifically, the peace-by-negotiation movement, civil libertarians, and industrial militants, all in the defence of national security.

#### Intervention or Neutrality?

Until 2 August 1914 Lloyd George was associated with those neutralists in the Cabinet such as Lord Morley and John Burns who believed that it would be folly for Britain to take sides in a Continental quarrel. After all, he was still widely regarded as a 'pro-Boer', a champion of social reform, economy in naval and military spending, and the creator of the Land Campaign. However, in view of his traditional concern for maritime security, Lloyd George supported the Cabinet's decisions that day to defend the French Channel coast and to respond if there were substantial violation of Belgian neutrality. On 3 August Lloyd George wrote to his wife:

"I am moving through a nightmare world these days. I have fought hard for peace & succeeded so far in keeping the Cabinet out of it but I am driven to the conclusion that if

the small nationality of Belgium is attacked by Germany all my traditions & even prejudices will be engaged on the side of war. I am filled with horror at the prospect."

He again stressed the Belgian issue to C.P. Scott, his close friend and editor of the Manchester Guardian, when they met briefly on the 4th. In his mind, the Liberal Government "could not have tolerated attacks on the French coast of the Channel;" had they done so, "public opinion would have swept them out of power in a week." The decision to intervene was, therefore, undertaken for strategic considerations, though the Belgian issue consolidated public support for the war. "For all of Lloyd George's eagerness to push ahead with social reform", Grigg points out, "he could not ignore a threat to the country and its power in the world, upon which all progress at home ultimately depended."<sup>3</sup> Lloyd George thus does not appear to be opportunistic: he had analyzed the issue frankly and his attitude had evolved from one of deep suspicion to one of resigned acceptance of war.

All the same, Lloyd George was the obvious candidate to precipitate defections from the Cabinet and to build the foundations of a potentially powerful peace movement against Britain's entry into war. His influence was symbolic: if he went, it would be awkward for many of those who remained; if he stayed, it would deprive those who left of much their moral force. If Lloyd George had declared himself at an early moment during the July crisis, "dissident elements in the cabinet, radical back-benchers, and neutralists throughout the country might have joined forces for a great crusade." Historians have long debated the likelihood of this scenario. According to Lord Beaverbrook, on the eve of war, "the pacifists were strong in numbers, but without a leader, they were helpless"; the question

was asked, "Would Mr. Lloyd George consent to fill the role of leader?"<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George's plans were linked with the Liberal government. Since his financial position was fundamentally insecure - depending not on patronage, family connection, or wealth, but on unique personal qualities - he could not afford to take the risk of resignation. The hazard was easy to predict: his political career might never recover from opposition to a short successful war; a long war would probably lead to a coalition in which the Chancellor was more likely to be included than a man who had declined to accept responsibility for intervention.<sup>5</sup>

In attributing responsibility for the outbreak of war to Germany, Lloyd George and the Liberal Cabinet stressed that such intervention was against the Prussian military caste, not against the German people. Lloyd George, for instance, supported "beat[ing] the German Junker but no war on the German people." Such an attitude provided Britain with ample moral justification for intervention because it made the decision seem more idealistic than it really was, particularly to those who shared a disdain for power-politics. Rather than relinquish power to the Unionists, Liberals did not recoil; there were only two resignations from the Cabinet. Lloyd George, to whom neutralists had mistakenly looked for leadership, kept his place, and ultimately emerged as "the man who won the war."<sup>6</sup>

Even if the dissident elements in the Cabinet, the radical backbenchers, and neutralists in the country had somehow stood together throughout the July crisis, the peace movement's hopes for Lloyd George's leadership were never, in fact, realistic. His occasional speeches in favour of economy and

friendship with Germany could not disguise the wide differences in outlook which separated Lloyd George from the backbench group called the Liberal Foreign Affairs Committee. Under the guidance of Noel Buxton, Philip Morrell, and Arthur Ponsonby, this body provided the principal parliamentary forum for dissenting opinion on foreign policy, specifically with reference to Anglo-German policy. In addition, to have remained in the Liberal government as a committed and practised dissenter, "would have required a fixity of principle and purpose far beyond Lloyd George's capacity or inclination." After eight arduous years in power the convictions and social conscience which had thrust him into the van of the anti-Boer war crusade burned much less fiercely for the Cabinet's leading Radical. Although the vast majority of the neutralists still clung to the illusion that Lloyd George might yet lead their scattered ranks in a peace crusade, the Chancellor, who had weighed both policy options and political calculations, had sat far too long with Asquith and Grey to walk away from responsibility and power.<sup>7</sup> Having thus consented to war, Lloyd George's decision shattered the forces of dissent as early as 4 August 1914 by rendering the early peace movement politically leaderless. Thereafter, wartime dissent proved to be politically impotent in its agitation to compel the British government to stop the fighting and to seek a peace without victory.

#### The Composition of Dissent in the Summer of 1914

When the crisis of late July and early August erupted, all the peace congresses, conferences, resolutions, sermons and good intentions counted for very little. Early, effective opposition to the war was frustrated by two factors: the speed of events, and the simple disbelief that the Liberal

Government, with Lloyd George the leading Radical, could betray its principles and plunge the nation into a major European conflict. Dissenters were forced to confront political reality: with the nation in grave danger, what did it mean to be a dissenter? Did dissent imply opposition in principle to all wars whatsoever or simply to the present war? Other testing dilemmas soon arose: the immediate and alarming invasion of civil liberties in the examples of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), the censorship of the press, and the disturbing calls for military and even industrial conscription, all raised fears that British society might fall victim to militarism. If conscription was introduced, should the dissenter refuse to enlist? If so, to what lengths should he carry his refusal? Equally perplexing, and equally divisive, was the extent to which dissenters should discuss the nature of the peace which would follow the ending of hostilities. Moreover, was it patriotic to advocate a peace-by-negotiation, regardless of whether defeat or victory seemed imminent? <sup>8</sup>

Brought together by the force of repulsion from its pro-war enemies and the force of attraction to each other, Liberal and Labour dissenters were fused together by the heat of wartime passions. The UDC was formed on 5 August 1914 by C.P. Trevelyan, a Liberal M.P. who had resigned as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education the previous day in opposition to Britain's entry into the war, and E.D. Morel, the organizer of the Congo Reform Association. Three other founders joined within a month: Arthur Ponsonby, James Ramsay MacDonald, the former leader of the Labour Party who condemned his party's support for intervention, and Norman Angell, the author of The Great Illusion, who gave this body a

broad range of contacts within political, religious and literary circles. In a private circular drawn up by Trevelyan in the second week of August the founders claimed that thousands of people in Britain were "profoundly dissatisfied with the general cause of policy which preceded the war", and stated their intention to gain: (1) parliamentary control over foreign policy; (2) an international understanding based on the consent of popular parties rather than on governments, and (3) peace terms that neither humiliated the defeated nation nor artificially rearranged borders so as to provide cause for future wars.<sup>9</sup>

However, the reluctance of the UDC to initiate an immediate public appeal for a negotiated peace reflected a general indecisiveness which swept across the politically leaderless anti-war movement. This mood of indecisiveness was rooted in "the fear of confronting hostile public opinion, or colliding with jingoist agitation, at a moment when the scales of war weighed against the Allied cause." Intent upon capturing the support of such notable Liberals as Lloyd George and C.P. Scott, the UDC leaders were preoccupied with the fear of alienating potential supporters while allowing for collaboration with those who rejected their approach whenever that was possible.<sup>10</sup> This tentative approach ended abruptly when the pro-war Morning Post published the Union's original private circular on 10 September 1914.

No longer willing to defer to the susceptibilities of moderate Liberals such as C.P. Scott who were distressed at the prospect of a wartime public attack on a Liberal government, the UDC publicly condemned the conduct of pre-war diplomacy in a second circular on 10 September and also advocated:

(1) the public, not the government, should consent to a redistribution of territory; (2) democratic control of foreign policy; (3) an end to secret diplomacy and the creation of an International Council to prevent further hostilities; and, (4) a post-war reduction in armaments. Moreover, the Union issued a public letter entitled, "Conditions of a Stable Peace", dated 17 September, which emphasized that their aim was not to undermine the Allied war effort, as its critics alleged, but to indicate clearly the

"fundamental principles which must mark the final terms of peace if the general policy for which the present Government presumably stands, and which nearly all writers, certainly all progressive writers, have from the beginning urged, is finally to be vindicated."

By publishing this material the Union probably ended any chance of any connection with the official Liberal party. In a letter to Morel on 25 September, for instance, Scott broke with the UDC: "It seems to me our clear duty to make the country safe first & to adjust our domestic differences afterwards." After losing Scott's, and by implication any remote chance of Lloyd George's possible patronage, the UDC was deprived of the only man who could have possibly mobilized the peace-by-negotiation movement and successfully agitated for a peace without victory!<sup>11</sup>

When the parliamentary Labour party decided to support the Government's request for war credits on 5 August, the ILP became the most important political party in opposition to the war. Even though it was little more than a sect, cut off from the mainstream of British politics, the ILP could serve as one part of an effective rallying centre against the war. No doubt, the ILP's attitude to the war was by no means uniform - while most leading members were pacifists who were opposed to all war in principle,

some of the rank-and-file were Marxists who saw the war as the inevitable product of capitalism. Still, the ILP cooperated closely with the UDC in its peace campaign. Within a month its National Administrative Council (NAC) had informed its branches not to take part in the government's recruiting campaign: "we refuse to take our stand by militarists and enemies of Labour with whose outlook and aim we are in sharpest conflict, and who will assuredly seize this opportunity to justify the policy leading up to the war." On 10 September the City of London ILP branch endorsed the NAC's statement and congratulated Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald's "courageous stand for peace against a hostile House of Commons... and hopes the NAC at the earliest suitable opportunity will take steps to inaugurate a great national campaign in favour of peace, international arbitration, and disarmament."<sup>12</sup>

Sympathy and support from Christian bodies such as the Society of Friends was helpful to some extent to the peace dissenters but the audience for its public pronouncements as a persistent foe of militarism was extremely narrow. Sects such as the Christadelphians, the Plymouth Brethren, and the Jehovah's Witnesses expressed their objections to the war as a subjective interpretation of the Christian ethic: service in the armed forces was thus irreconcilable with His teaching. While the Quakers were not the largest single body of religious conscientious objectors in Britain, the well-known houses of Buxton, Cadbury, Fry, and Rowntree contributed considerable financial funds to the activities of the UDC and the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) throughout the war. For instance, a report submitted to the War Cabinet in October 1917 reported,



regarding the finances of the UDC and the NCF: "the fact that they command the support of very wealthy Quaker families may account for their ability to carry on their present activities." Hence, the composition of the early peace movement consisted of many diverse elements - Liberal, Socialist, Christian - all of whom were deeply concerned about the erosion of individual rights, the militarization of civil life, and, most important, the prospect for peace and the negotiation of a democratic peace settlement.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Weapons of Warfare: Patriotism and the State

At the Queen's Hall, London, on 19 September 1914 the Chancellor addressed an audience of three thousand Welshmen, ostensibly to boost Lord Kitchener's recruiting campaign. It was an important occasion, for he committed himself wholeheartedly to support of the war and cleverly exploited a Welshman's sympathy with smaller nations such as Belgium with his castigation of the Prussian Junker as "the road-hog of Europe." The speech also emphasized, however, the price that would have to be paid: "We shall need all our qualities... prudence in council, daring in action, tenacity in purpose, courage in defeat, moderation in victory; in all things faith!" Finally, in order to defuse possible opposition to the outbreak of war, the speech called for "a new patriotism" and it became the theme of Lloyd George's career for the remainder of the war - "the need for internal unity and efficiency, coupled with a new spirit which would not only help to win the war but produce new solutions to internal problems."<sup>14</sup>

Reaction was unequivocal in its praise. The speech had "created a more profound sensation among people at large than any speech of Lloyd George's since Limehouse, though this time the effect was unifying rather

than divisive." According to Frances Stevenson, Asquith congratulated Lloyd George "with tears in his eyes", Grey said that "he wept when he read the peroration", and Charles Masterman, a Liberal M.P., called the speech the finest in the history of England. J.A. Spender of the Westminster Gazette, a pro-Liberal publication, described it as "wonderful", and William Robertson Nicoll of the British Weekly, the largest Nonconformist weekly, hailed it as "most notable and magnificent." Similarly, William Brace, a Labour M.P. and president of the South Wales Miners' Federation, told Lloyd George that Wales was "proud of her most brilliant son." In addition, rank-and-file Unionists, who had hitherto been blinded to his true nature by their own political prejudices, suddenly began to see him for what he was: "as robust a patriot as any of their own leaders but with a grander vision and a more inspiring eloquence as the agent of catharsis." Evidently, Lloyd George had become transformed into the country's civilian war leader in fact, if not in name. The overriding emphasis on the destruction of Prussian militarism had already become a powerful motivating myth and would be employed in the effort to secure American support for the Allied cause, rally public opinion, and undermine the German people's support for the war effort. <sup>15</sup>

The first obstacles Lloyd George confronted in the pursuit of victory were organizational: how to mobilize men and resources most effectively, and how best to deploy them once they became available. His concern for the enormous financial demands of the war led him into taking an active interest in the problems of munition production. For instance, at Bangor in February 1915, he gave dramatic emphasis to the importance of domestic

output: "During the war the Government ought to have the power to settle these differences [between employers and workmen] , and the work shall go on... Output is everything in this war." The Times described the speech as "a new departure on the part of Ministers", and praised Lloyd George's "courage and imagination."<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, on 9 March 1915, Lloyd George introduced the Defence of the Realm Amendment Bill, enabling the Government to take over any factories or workshops needed for war production and to cancel any contracts that stood in the way. When asked by Lord Riddell, a personal friend and a newspaper magnate, why he had introduced it, Lloyd George replied: "All the others were afraid. They thought there would be a terrible row in the House of Commons. It was not my job, but I agreed to do it." Lloyd George also issued an appeal in Parliament for a "good, strong businessman with some go in him and who will be able to push the thing through and be at the head of a Central Committee."<sup>17</sup> Consequently, Lloyd George had once again emphasized the urgency of organizing the country for war, and, at the same time, expressed his desire to utilize the power of the State to meet the nation's productive requirements.

It is against the background of his general approach to organizing the war effort that Lloyd George's relations with industrial dissent should be analyzed. In the words of Chris Wrigley,

"on the one hand he had a clear cut and sincere commitment to win the war; and he was determined to pursue this even though it might mean clashes with the War Office, Asquith, and with Labour. On the other hand, his belief in and reliance on private enterprise often led him to expect very unequal sacrifices from labour."

The contrast, for instance, between the generous incentives given to

engineering firms and his efforts to dismantle the "difficult and dangerous" nature of trade union's restrictive practices in the Treasury Agreement in March 1915 was not missed by Labour observers. In addition, Lloyd George was reluctant to introduce proposals for a general war profit tax. When Leo Chiozza Money, a Liberal MP, asked on 15 February 1915 if, "in view of the fact that certain trades were reaping extra profits from the war", firms and individuals "should pay a heavy graduated extra income tax," Lloyd George replied on 3 March 1915, "my Hon. Friend may rest assured that this, along with other proposals, will receive due consideration."<sup>18</sup> However, when Lloyd George submitted his second and final War Budget on 4 May 1915, he made no mention of such a tax.

During 17-19 March 1915 Lloyd George helped to negotiate the Treasury Agreement which he hoped would be the key to ensure a rapid increase of production and the prevention of further outbreaks of labour unrest. In addition to the relaxation of trade union restrictions, the representatives of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), and the chief unions connected with the production of war material agreed to accept compulsory arbitration as an alternative to the right to strike and to permit male and female dilution of labour. This voluntary agreement was signed by all except the miners, who withdrew on the second day of the conference, and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE). Lloyd George attempted to capitalize upon the patriotism of the trade union movement and exploit its willingness to contribute to the war effort. In return, the membership were offered a rather modest sacrifice from employers, while general grievances about working-class cost-of-living

were generally ignored. This critical oversight by Lloyd George precipitated a period of mutual distrust and intermittent conflict, which made his relationship with the Labour movement hereafter a tumultuous one. The failure to make the voluntary Treasury Agreement binding left the way open for the Government to take the alternative of legislating an industrial code for the duration of the war, and so control labour by law.<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, the Treasury Agreement was certainly a valuable and timely contribution to the war effort. The Government was seen to have negotiated with the chief unions independently of the employers, so treating them as an estate of the realm. More important for Lloyd George as the "hammer" of dissent, he shrewdly realized that once he had secured the voluntary agreement of the unions for the policy adopted at the Treasury meetings, it would be difficult for them to oppose the State's action in taking powers to see that the objects of the Agreement were achieved.

Moreover, the lack of Allied success on the Western Front at Neuve Chapelle and Ypres in the spring of 1915, due in part to deficiencies of munitions supply, coincided with an aggressive parliamentary and press campaign against the Liberal Government. The shell crisis strengthened Lloyd George's hand for the creation of a Ministry of Munitions in the new Coalition Government. This new Ministry played a crucial role in the rise of Lloyd George as the "hammer" of dissent: he personified the desire of a nation to proceed energetically with the war. In addition, he summoned the assistance of leading businessmen such as Eric Geddes from North-Eastern Railway in order to provide the push and go in improving industrial

output. As the official history of the Ministry of Munitions stated: "He laid the foundations of the Ministry's productive capacity on a scale so vast that was almost sufficient - as far as guns, gun ammunition, and trench warfare supplies were concerned - to carry the country to the end of the war."<sup>20</sup>

The support of organized labour was one of the gravest challenges when Lloyd George took office at Munitions. In Manchester on 3 June 1915 he demanded "greater subordination in labour to the direction and control of the State." When he introduced the Munitions of War Bill on 23 June he warned "if we cannot, by voluntary means, get the labour which is essential to the success of this country... we must use, as the ultimate resort, the means which every State has at its command to save its life. You have got to save the life of Britain." The Munitions Act became law on 3 July and is best understood "as the nearest approximation that could be devised in the absence of military conscription to the ideal of compulsory national service." It tackled the problem of creating a disciplined and mobile labour force on four major fronts. First, strikes on war work were declared illegal and arbitration was declared compulsory. Second, the War Munitions Volunteer scheme was granted statutory recognition. Here, workers volunteered to work wherever the government despatched them, in return for travelling allowances and a guarantee of no loss in wages. Third, "controlled establishments" were created where wages and workshop discipline were placed under the control of the Ministry and the amount of profit earned was monitored. Fourth, and most unpopular of all, the leaving certificate, restricted the mobility of labour and, in the words of Humbert Wolfe, who served in the Ministry of Munitions' Labour Department, "placed

no reciprocal restriction on the right of the employer to dismiss.<sup>21</sup>

Although Lloyd George firmly believed that industrial compulsion was the most effective way of increasing production, the new legislation gave the Minister of Munitions dictatorial powers to carry out his mandate to both mobilize labour and to crush industrial dissent in the pursuit of victory.

#### The Fight for Conscription: Flexible Principles and New Alliances

Almost alone among his Liberal Cabinet colleagues, Lloyd George viewed the traditional tenets of Liberalism such as peace, retrenchment, and reform as flexible programmes rather than rigid commandments. The supreme trial of war not only demonstrated his sense of duty but also his doctrinal flexibility, specifically on the issue of military conscription. By November 1914 Lloyd George believed that some variant of national service had become essential as the only method to fight what seemed to be an unprecedented form of trench warfare. For instance, he indicated to Nicoll of the British Weekly that perhaps some form of quota based upon the suitable male population of each county might offer an answer. Early in the new year, Lloyd George also complained to Riddell that had his 1910 proposals, specifically, the Ballot Conscription, been accepted Britain would have had one and a half million men already trained and sufficient rifles to equip them.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, Lloyd George did not publicly champion conscription at this stage in the war because he still feared the political ramifications from public support for compulsory service within the Liberal Party and within organized labour. Only after he had introduced an apparatus of state controls within the new Ministry of Munitions and was supported by

Unionists such as Sir Edward Carson and Lord Milner was Lloyd George convinced that conscription would be politically viable in Britain. "By the autumn of 1915", Gollin observes, "Milner could see that Lloyd George, in his own sphere of munitions production, was imposing upon the nation those very policies of industrial conscription and State regulation which had always been so dear to his own heart." The reasons for a closer political rapprochement were clear enough: Lloyd George's reputation as a dynamic war leader was firmly established, but he recognized that Milner could furnish him with further sources of strength among Unionist circles. In turn, Milner realized that Asquith could not be removed from office without an effective campaign among the foremost advocates of compulsion within the Cabinet itself.<sup>23</sup>

In order to avoid a cabinet break-up over the issue of military conscription, Asquith announced on 19 October 1915 the so-called Derby scheme, requiring all men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one to "attest" for military service. By mid-November, Asquith had secretly sanctioned preliminary work on a Bachelors' Bill under the supervision of Lord Curzon with the assistance of L.S. Amery. Lest momentum for the impending conscription bill be lost, Lloyd George gave Asquith what was both an ultimatum and a valuable offer of support on 27 December:

"unless the pledge [to married men] was kept in the letter and in the spirit, he would go. If the P.M. would keep it, he would stick to him as leader and, if necessary, carry on a campaign up and down the country and do any 'dirty work' required and generally back him with all his power."<sup>24</sup>

Two days later the Cabinet accepted the inevitable - the Derby scheme ensured the passage of the so-called Bachelors' Bill and only John Simon



resigned from the Cabinet over the introduction of a limited measure of conscription. Had it not been for Lloyd George's promise of conditional support, Asquith might not have lent his support for the new bill in favour of compulsory military service.

With the passage of the Military Service Act on 27 January 1916 the issue which had come to dominate the political agenda had seemingly been resolved. However, the conscriptionists acknowledged their victory as only a partial one. Under the threat of compulsory service, more men than ever sought the protection of exemption through employment classification. Ironically, this was increasingly possible because the ambitious production programmes at the Ministry of Munitions had only recently reached new contracting arrangements with non-traditional arms manufacturers and completed the transfer of a number of civilian factories into "controlled establishments." Moreover, news of the first German assault near Verdun on 21 February 1916 and growing demands for available manpower from the Army Council helped facilitate the passage of a new Military Service (No. 2) Bill in May 1916 which required all men regardless of marital status to be eligible for service.

In an effort to settle rival claims for manpower from civil and military authorities, Lloyd George circulated to his colleagues of the War Committee on 1 August 1916 a memorandum prepared for him by Adjutant-General Macready. The paper proposed the creation of a Board which could direct those of a military age to industry or to the military, wherever they happened to be most needed. However, the Ministry of Munitions and the Board of Trade opposed its formation and, instead, a new Manpower Distribution Board was created with Austen Chamberlain in the chair. Lloyd

George soon became frustrated with what he considered to be endless debates over the differentiation of the areas of responsibility. The chronic inability to solve the manpower dilemma led the Army Council to warn the Cabinet on 28 November 1916 of the dire military consequences if industrial compulsion was not adopted. Two days later, the War Committee capitulated to their demands, thereby accepting a policy almost all Cabinet ministers had denied Lloyd George as early as June 1915. This final source of controversy within the Asquith Coalition over manpower policy was therefore of enormous importance to the prosecution of the war effort. This issue went beyond national service to the most basic issue of all, should the Cabinet remain intact and continue to seek victory?<sup>25</sup>

#### The "Knock-out Blow" Policy: The Path to Victory?

On 28 September 1916 Lloyd George emphatically upheld the necessity for military victory in the famous "knock-out blow" interview with Roy Howard of the United Press of America. Before examining this interview one should consider briefly Lloyd George's attitude towards American mediation because without some knowledge of the antecedents it is all too easy to misunderstand and misjudge what Lloyd George said. For instance, at a meeting of the War Council on 19 March 1915, he observed that "we ought not to rule out the possibility of giving Germany a bone of some sort. She would always be a very powerful nation and it might eventually even be desirable to have her in a position to prevent Russia becoming too predominant." Almost a year later, on 26 February 1916, Lloyd George remarked to Riddell: "I still say we must beat the Germans, and when they are beaten I would endeavour to make the peace real and lasting. A great

nation like Germany must live." 26

Since the outbreak of war President Woodrow Wilson had been intrigued by the thought of achieving a just peace in Europe, with himself as mediator. He sent his confidante, Colonel House, on missions to European capitals to promote this ambition and in early 1916 House tried to convince the British Government that a mediated peace was more attractive than prolonged warfare without American assistance. On 17 February Grey and House drafted a memorandum and its final version was accepted on 23 February by the War Committee and the French Ambassador, Paul Cambon. Should a conference fail to secure terms of peace favourable to the Allies, because of the unreasonableness of Germany, the United States would probably join the fray as a belligerent on the Entente side. If, however, the Allies delayed excessively to render American mediation ineffective, the United States would dissociate herself from European affairs. However, at a meeting on 22 February, the War Committee had earlier adopted Lloyd George's proposal that nothing should be done at present and agreed that Wilsonian mediation would not be seriously considered unless the Entente was either in danger of losing or on the point of winning the war.<sup>27</sup>

The War Committee did not consider the prospect of American mediation again until 10 August 1916. Lloyd George, now Secretary of State for War, was well aware that he would be held directly responsible for any lack of military success. At the end of the month Lloyd George was conspicuously absent when Asquith asked the members of the War Committee to prepare memoranda on war aims. Lloyd George was opposed to any public discussion of peace terms; the insane spirit of war prevailed and the Allies must avoid

definite pledges and platforms. Buoyed temporarily by the German failure at Verdun and by the Somme and Russian offensives, Lloyd George chose a public forum for an expression of his views. 28

On 25 September 1916 Lloyd George received a note from Lord Northcliffe, who was unalterably opposed to any compromise settlement. He urged Lloyd George to meet Roy Howard, who had reported "certain disquieting things." Northcliffe had heard from a "leading member of the American embassy that a peace squeal designed to arouse world sympathy will come upon us unless headed off now." Consulting neither the Foreign Office nor the War Committee, Lloyd George followed Northcliffe's advice and sent the text of his interview with Howard for publication. It appeared in The Times on 29 September and was swiftly reproduced throughout the world. The message rang out: a fight to a decisive finish, to a knock-out; destroy Prussian military despotism, save civilization, and reject interference from neutral states. Such strong language from Lloyd George was clearly intended to refute a possible peace overture from Wilson and also to counter defeatism within the Government itself. 29

Was this interview at best superfluous, at worst disastrous in its effect on the British war effort? Or was it, as Lloyd George claimed, necessary and salutary? Grey feared that the interview would have a bad effect in America because Britain would be held responsible for warning the President off and Wilson might use Lloyd George's statement as an excuse for inaction in the future. Yet, these fears were not borne out. On 4 October the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, reported that the interview had enjoyed "a great effect", and two days later he noted that it

had "put a stop to the peace rumours which for some time [had] been prevalent" in America. Pointing to favourable reviews in America, Lloyd George explained to Grey:

"Any cessation of hostilities now would be a disaster; and although we could always refuse or put up impossible terms, it is much better that we should not be placed in the predicament. You could not have warned off the United States without doing it formally. I could commit a serviceable indiscretion: you could not. It would ruin you; I am inoculated." <sup>30</sup>

Moreover, Lloyd George suggested in his memoirs that he felt it "vitally important to throw out a sharp challenge to the defeatist spirit which was working from foreign quarters to bring about an inconclusive peace, and which appeared to find an echo in some responsible quarters in our own country." Although there was very little outright defeatism among Lloyd George's colleagues, there was a distinct lack of aggressive fighting spirit without which wars cannot be won. For instance, both Asquith and Grey were opposed to a compromise peace as much as Lloyd George, but their rhetoric did not match their convictions. On 11 October 1916 Asquith stated in the House that "the ends of the Allies are well known; they have been frequently and precisely stated. They are not vindictive ends, but they require that there shall be adequate reparation for the past and adequate security for the future." These certainly were not words to set the pulses racing. Besides, on 13 November, Lord Lansdowne, the Unionist statesman, circulated a paper to the Cabinet in which he questioned whether it was wise to pursue victory in a prolonged war, inviting exhaustion and staggering casualties. In deciding to give the interview, Lloyd George was no doubt backing a hunch, and the effect on the whole

was advantageous to himself. Not surprisingly, The Times praised the interview as "apposite in form, excellent in substance and most opportune in season." Certainly, nobody could doubt after the interview that Britain would stay in the war with victory as its sole aim and that the public viewed him as their "alternative war leader of faith and fire."<sup>31</sup>

#### The Assault on Dissent: Propaganda and Censorship

"The gradual transformation of the war from being effectively a war of limited aims into one of total commitment to victory, a transformation best symbolised by the introduction of conscription in 1916 necessitated the mobilisation of morale and the combating of war weariness and pacifism." By 1916, the weapon of propaganda employed by the Government to maintain the support of the British public began to play a more important role. Unlike the vast majority of his peers, Lloyd George was quick to appreciate that public opinion could play a decisive part in affecting the final result. His awareness of the power of official propaganda served to reinforce his strenuous efforts to convince the public that their sacrifices were of enormous importance to the war effort. At the same time, however, such a philosophy sanctioned the persecution of those individuals and groups who, in Lloyd George's mind, attempted to weaken the nation in its greatest hour of peril.<sup>32</sup>

The success of Lloyd George's tenure at the Ministry of Munitions owed a great deal to his "campaign of public indoctrination" with which he launched the dilution of skilled labour. As well as embarking on a speaking tour of the industrial districts in June 1915, Lloyd George involved his parliamentary colleagues in the work of the Ministry by arranging for

them to visit munitions factories, where they would address the workers. When a sceptical employer commented "it is only the good men" who show up, Lloyd George replied,

"if you can get a majority of the workmen with some sense of shame and decency, having regard to the plight the country is in I rather think they will have some restraining influence upon the others. At any rate it will make it so much easier for us to punish the others."

He also encouraged British, Allied, and neutral journalists to attend a programme which included "visits to the Clyde, munitions works... Chester (the type both of oldtime beauty and of liquor control), interviews with Cabinet Ministers, and finally a visit to the Fleet or the Army in France."<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, Lloyd George gave particular publicity to the potential use of women in industry to boost productivity, he hoped, by twenty-five percent. In gaining acceptance for women as munitions workers he was supported by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) which demanded "the right to serve." On 17 July 1915 the Ministry of Munitions partly financed a war pageant organized by Mrs. Christabel Pankhurst "up to a maximum of £3,500" out of the department's propaganda fund. The decision to subsidize the expenses of the demonstration was justified to the Treasury on the grounds that "the proceeding served in a marked degree the purposes of the Government in obtaining public attention to the needs of the country in the matter of munitions supplies."<sup>34</sup>

In order to achieve greater munitions output, Lloyd George had to make maximum use of the trade union leadership to ensure the successful implementation of dilution. On 9 September 1915 he addressed the TUC at Bristol, the first large-scale gathering of trade unionists since the outbreak

of war: "I beg you, as a man brought up in a workman's home, do not let the sympathy of the country be against labour by holding back its might by regulations, fetters and customs, when the poor old land is fighting for life." By speaking at the meeting, Lloyd George recognized the need to keep the majority of trade unionists committed to the war effort and, by implication, Government policy, thereby isolating dissidents amongst the rank-and-file. Thus, in preparation for his dilution campaign in the autumn of 1915, Lloyd George sought to win the cooperation of the trade union leadership and skilfully employed advance publicity to ensure the more efficient distribution of manpower.<sup>35</sup>

Nonetheless, Lloyd George's dilution campaign did encounter some significant union resistance, notably with the strength of feeling on the Clyde. On Christmas Day 1915 Lloyd George addressed a mass meeting in St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, to stress the need for more munitions to save the nation in its greatest hour of need. However, this plea failed to impress the members from the unofficial Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC), consisting of militant shop stewards, and the meeting broke up in disorder. Still, preparations taken before and Government actions thereafter demonstrated Lloyd George's willingness to apply the full force of press censorship to suppress and then isolate wartime dissent. During the evening before the Press Bureau had issued a request to the press that "no report other than the authorized version of his speech should be published. Should any disturbance occur at or in the neighbourhood of the meeting the Press are earnestly requested to refrain from publishing any reference to it." However, no such request was sent to Tom Johnston, editor of the



socialist Forward. When a full critical account and commentary on the meeting appeared in its 31 December 1915 issue, Lloyd George, on the advice of senior officials at the Ministry of Munitions, provisionally decided to seize the offending issue.<sup>36</sup>

Lloyd George's chief anxiety about the St. Andrew's Hall meeting was "lest reports of it should give the impression to the world that Clydeside was implacably opposed to him and his policy." In defence of his action, Lloyd George had linked quotations from Forward with others from Vanguard, which he labelled a more extreme seditious paper. The later decision to suppress Vanguard came as a direct consequence of the banning of Forward and this is clearly revealed in a report from the Ministry of Munitions: "On the grounds of consistency alone it would be undesirable to leave the Vanguard alone as it weakens the justification of the suppression of the Forward." The Ministry viewed Forward's critique of dilution, war profiteering, and the rising cost-of-living as very harmful to morale on the Clyde. As the notes of 6 January 1916 indicated, "it may be said that the set policy of the paper is (by constant interpretation) to make it as difficult as possible for any trade union leader to lend any support to the Government."<sup>37</sup> Hence, the ban on the Forward and the Vanguard in the aftermath of Lloyd George's stormy Christmas Day 1915 speech underlined his commitment to usurp the freedom of expression in the defence of domestic output and national security.

#### The Debate over Conscientious Objection

The No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) was formed as early as November 1914 when Fenner Brockway, the young socialist editor of Labour Leader,

had called together a group of men of military age who would not be prepared to take part as combatants if conscription should be implemented. With relatively little money and almost no popular support, the Fellowship attracted a remarkably able band of Christians, socialists and dissenters such as Catherine Marshall and its chairman, Clifford Allen. Together these individuals "caused the government more grief than any other body of dissenters against the war." At its founding convention on 27 November 1915, Allen explained that "there was one objection to conscription which we shared, with intense fervour, and that was a belief in the sanctity of human life." The delegates also rejected any alternative to military service, although the option was left open to the individual judgment of each member. Such a contradictory formula, however, meant different things to different people and as time passed political cleavages would fester and threaten its effectiveness to shape official policy.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the efforts of the NCF and the newly formed National Council Against Conscription (NCAC) to rally a wider spectrum of support such as organized labour, radical Liberals, and Irish M.P.s, the first Military Service Act was passed into law on 10 February 1916. As Jo Vellacott has put it,

"Labour - whose united resistance had been feared by the Government and hoped for by the anti-conscriptionist - was bought off ("bamboozled," [according to] Russell) by the promise that there would be no industrial conscription, the Irish Members by a clause excepting Ireland from the operation of the Act, and possible Liberal opponents (especially in the Cabinet) by the inclusion of the conscience clause."

Although the NCF leadership welcomed the inclusion of a conscience clause in the Act, provision for exemption was not the primary objective. For those more militant in the NCF, Vellacott argues, "conscription provided a

casus belli and the conscience clause merely gave them an arena." The NCF advised their members to apply for exemption at once. Meetings were held everywhere, material was sent to branches and to individual members, advice centres were set up to answer legal questions, a maintenance department was charged with support of conscientious objectors' families, and reports were gathered on tribunal hearings.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, on 8 and 9 April 1916 an emergency national convention of the NCF was held at Devonshire House in London in response to two new developments: the creation of the Non-Combatant Corps (NCC) on 10 March which granted certificates of exemption from combatant service only; and the formation of the Pelham Committee on 23 March to provide civilian alternative service for work of "national importance." The conference overwhelmingly endorsed the final resolution that "whilst leaving the decision open to the conscientious judgment of each member, the Convention endorsed the recommendation... that all final certificates of exemption other than absolute exemption would be returned." Still, the majority of delegates were unaware that most conscientious objectors "could not or would not seek absolute exemption and would be content, or even morally relieved, to engage in some form of government-sponsored alternative service." <sup>40</sup>

This apparent absolutist resolve of the NCF convention prompted Lloyd George through Frances Stevenson, his private secretary, to arrange a secret meeting at Walton Heath between himself and the NCF leaders Allen, Marshall, and Bertrand Russell. The purpose of the 25 April 1916 meeting "was clearly to enable Lloyd George to sound them out on the attitude of the

NCF toward alternative service, and to see whether they were as intransigent as the tenor of their public pronouncements indicated."

Russell later described the visit to Lady Ottoline Morrell:

"He was very unsatisfactory, and I think only wanted to exercise his skill in trying to start a process of bargaining... the men will have to suffer a good deal before public opinion and Government will cease to wish to persecute them. I got the impression that L. George expects the war to go on for a long time yet; also that he thinks the whole situation very black. He seemed quite heartless."

Writing about that meeting at a later date to General Cockerill of the War Office, Russell recalled that Lloyd George "informed me that he would prosecute a reprint of the Sermon on the Mount, if it interfered with the supply of munitions which he seemed to think not improbable." However, Lloyd George denied to Cockerill that he had ever made such a remark. If Russell's assertion is true, then it may account for his own allegation at the end of their meeting that the conscriptionists, namely Lloyd George, would make the stand of the absolutists a devastating personal ordeal.

Drawing on a Puritan tradition with some similarities to that of Lloyd George himself, Russell delivered "a speech of denunciation in an almost Biblical style, telling him his name would go down in history with infamy." Even though this odd encounter produced no tangible result, "it may reveal something about... the character of Lloyd George: outside of the landholding aristocracy, Lloyd George had no ideological enemies, only an ever-changing array of tactical opponents."<sup>41</sup> When the NCF leaders refused to concede the ideal of alternative service, Lloyd George set out to punish the absolutists and thereafter pursued an unyielding policy of intimidation.

The Government's hostility to the absolutists was vigorously expressed

by Lloyd George, the new War Secretary, on 26 July 1916: "With that kind of men (sic) I personally have absolutely no sympathy whatsoever, and I do not think they ought to be encouraged... I shall only consider the best means of making the path of that class a very hard one." This fateful statement, A.J.P. Taylor has argued, "drove the first nail in the coffin of Lloyd George's Radical reputation." Still, it is ironic that the Lloyd George Government, in a manner unrecognized by the NCF, made grudging concessions to conscientious objectors in order to appease moderate opinion. To some extent, then, Lloyd George was later unjustly accused by Brockway as "the personification of evil for the British peace movement."<sup>42</sup>

The "Hammer" of Industrial Dissent: A Case Study on the Clyde

Lloyd George played a key role in the formation of a Government policy towards strikers during the war by following the tactics of divide and rule: isolating militants and dividing them from the trade union leadership, playing the unskilled workers off against the skilled, and splitting those in favour of Britain's war effort from those opposing it. For instance, he spearheaded the campaign to apply the full force of the DORA against the militant CWC who were opposed to the Government's plans to introduce dilution in order to maximize industrial output and to increase the supply of able-bodied men for military service.

The first important trial of strength occurred when four hundred men at Lang's works in Johnstone went on strike on 2 February 1916, essentially in protest against the introduction of a substantial number of women workers. The Clyde Dilution Commissioners (Lyndon Macassey, Sir Thomas Munro, and Isaac Mitchell), who had arrived in late January to oversee the

dilution offensive, provided police and military protection to those who stayed on the job. Within a week the strikers were back at work. To avoid problems about the details of wages, Macassey suggested, "I have made it a condition of each scheme that a Joint Shop Committee be formed of Employers and Shop Stewards to discuss and adjust any difficulties in regard to the working out of dilution." This policy met with rapid success and by August, over 10,000 dilutees had been introduced, 9,000 of them women, centred primarily in the munitions firms and shipyards. Similarly, almost 7,500 skilled engineers on the Clyde had been transferred to new jobs by the summer in what could be described as a major industrial upheaval.<sup>43</sup>

Success in the introduction of dilution, however, did not alter Lloyd George's determination to smash the CWC and thus strengthen the authority of the official trade unions on the Clyde. On 9 February Macassey suggested that the Government ought to strike "a sharp line of cleavage between the local workmen, who undoubtedly comprise the great majority of munitions workers, and the disloyal socialist minority who are the pawns" of the CWC, and "those whoever they may be behind the Committee." Before this suggestion, the Government had already taken decisive action by the suppression of both Forward and Vanguard, possibly in order "to warn the trouble-makers on the Clyde that the government's tolerance was at an end." According to the radical Plebs, "Halls let for meetings have been cancelled by the score, and even where meetings have been held, summonses against the speakers have been issued and fines imposed." Moreover, on 2 February the police had raided the Socialist Labour Press, broke up the machinery, and suppressed the forthcoming (fifth) issue of

the Worker, the CWC's organ, with an article entitled "Should the Workers Arm?" as the pretext. However, the authorities were clearly not interested in technicalities because the article in question had argued in favour of peaceful Industrial Unionism. On 7 February the CWC leaders were arrested and the following day were charged under the DORA and refused bail. Clearly then, the Ministry of Munitions regarded the CWC as "a danger to the war effort and to the maintenance of social order quite independently of its desire or capacity to obstruct dilution." <sup>44</sup>

Despite the conclusion of the dilution agreement, Sir William Beardmore's decision to revoke the right previously granted to David Kirkwood as convenor of the shop stewards to move freely about the works precipitated a strike of Parkhead engineers on 17 March. Within a week the strike had spread throughout Glasgow. Lloyd George and Thomas McKinnon Wood, Secretary of State for Scotland, deported the ringleaders. Christopher Addison, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions, defended the deportations in the Commons and claimed that such a measure enjoyed the support of "the vast majority of the munitions workers on the Clyde, who are opposed to the dangerous and disloyal action of the Clyde Workers' Committee." Immediately after the deportations, posters threatened strikers with prosecution under the DORA and the Munitions Act, and promised that no action would be taken against those who returned to work. On 30 March, thirty men from three leading factories were prosecuted under the Munitions Act and fined £5 each. Emergency powers were employed to prevent any direct press reporting of the strike until 30 March, and meanwhile the Ministry publicized its own version of the strike as "a

systematic and sinister plan" operated by the CWC to blackmail the Government into repealing the Munitions Act and the Military Service Acts. By early April 1916, an isolated and discredited CWC had abdicated its leading role in favour of a District Committee; Lloyd George's dilution campaign had been successfully implemented. 45

Moreover, the Commissioners could not have chosen a better issue on which to challenge the authority of the CWC. At its peak, 29-30 March, there were no more than 4,500 strikers compared with at least 10,000 in the strike of February 1915. "A tough line had been taken with the militants", Wrigley observes, "when they struck on relatively poor issues, namely the suppression of the Worker and the rights of Kirkwood at Parkhead, so ensuring that the minimum of public opinion was alienated." Not only did the CWC fail to transcend its craft base and become an effective vanguard for the entire local working class, but the authorities skilfully exploited the biases of the skilled and unskilled labour force and also wisely mobilized the instruments of the State to emasculate militant labour unrest. By utilizing the Munitions of War Act, amendments to DORA, and also successive doses of dilution, Lloyd George effectively smashed Clydeside dissent and thus ensured that munitions production was sufficient to meet the demands of the Army in anticipation of the Somme campaign by the summer of 1916. 46

#### The Peace Offensive of 1916: Perceptions of the "Hammer" of Dissent

The introduction of conscription and the war-weariness at the lack of results after continuous sacrifices, especially after the enormous slaughter throughout the Somme campaign throughout 1916, began to undermine



popular support for the war. In particular, the creation of the Peace Negotiations Committee (PNC) on 28 April 1916 from various peace bodies to seek a negotiated end to the war demonstrated the growing popularity of the demand for a democratic peace. Organizations such as the UDC, the NCF, and the ILP undertook a petition campaign for a Peace Memorial during the late spring and summer to present to Asquith just how many Britons supported a compromise peace. In the 12 October 1916 issue of the Labour Leader it was estimated that over 150,000 individuals plus trade unions representing an additional 75,000 members had signed the petition in an effort to end the war. Although not successful in its campaign to alter Government policy, the peace without victory message heralded a promising rallying point for dissent and posed as a tiresome irritant to Lloyd George's efforts to maintain public support for the war.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, the UDC asserted that an immediate negotiated peace was in fact possible but was blocked by an Allied insistence on Germany's defeat in order to gain economic and territorial benefits. The central assumption underlying the Union's campaign was that Germany was willing to reach a compromise peace because she possessed no aims of conquest before the war. In April 1916, for example, the U.D.C., the paper of the UDC, asked whether there was a "sinister significance" behind Allied war aims. "That it is not so much Belgium, as Constantinople, which keeps back peace" was one expression of their suspicion that the Allies were continuing the war to achieve their own nationalistic and annexationist aims.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, the UDC had "little factual ground for its belief in Germany's willingness to negotiate. It relied, rather, upon the liberal faith

in men's reasonableness." Despite the charges of its critics that it had one standard for Germany and another for Britain, the UDC applied the same argument to both nations. Once the public were fully informed of international relations, they would oust the politicians swayed by petty nationalistic interests from office; then Britain could make peace. When the UDC applied this simplified argument to wartime politics, their view of reality turned out to be only half-correct. The UDC's judgment of British war aims was generally correct, of Germany's incorrect. Even so, the UDC was "no more misguided than its right-wing enemies who considered correctly, that Germany sought the fulfilment of annexationist aims but, wrongly, that Britain continued to wage war for unselfish ends."<sup>49</sup>

Concerned lest Lloyd George at the War Office was preparing for a "knock-out blow", the UDC launched a bitter attack on 10 October 1916: "a lasting settlement cannot be secured by a peace based upon the right of conquest and followed by a commercial war, but only by a peace which gives just consideration to the claims of nationality, and which lays the foundation of a real European partnership." In addition, on 22 October in Glasgow, Morel asked his audience, "Is the manhood of Britain being sacrificed today upon the altars of national necessity and honourable obligations contracted before the war, or upon the altars of British and foreign Imperialism and selfish Capitalistic interests?" A month later, Morel urged workers in Bradford to use their influence in unions and guilds to pass resolutions advocating the start of peace negotiations sent to the government.<sup>50</sup> Hence, in direct response to the militarization of civilian life, growing war weariness, and privation on the domestic front, the

British peace movement, and in particular, the UDC, became more assertive in two respects: it clearly articulated the theme of peace-by-negotiation in its campaign to forge closer bonds with the working classes and organized labour, and, more important, it had identified Lloyd George as its most powerful adversary.

This popular perception of Lloyd George as the "hammer" of dissent was strengthened by his sharp rebuke to the criticism directed at the War Office's decision to restrict the civil liberties of Russell. In response to Russell's demands for immediate action on peace terms during his Welsh speaking tour from 1 to 24 July, the War Office accepted the suggestion of Colonel Kell of MI5 that Russell must be prevented from spreading "his vicious tenets amongst dockers, miners and transport workers." With Lloyd George as War Secretary, the Government banned Russell from all prohibited regions on 1 September 1916, an area encompassing one-third of the country. In effect, the War Office depicted Russell as "a potential, but not actual, agent of the German war effort." <sup>51</sup>

The protest in parliament was led by C.P. Trevelyan on 18 October 1916 who demanded to know how Russell's proposed autumn lectures titled, "The World As It Can Be Made" contravened the regulations of the DORA. Lloyd George responded that the lectures "interfere with the prosecution of the War in this country, and lead to weakness, inefficiency, and if tolerated, would hamper us in the prosecution of the war. It would be unpardonable weakness on our part if we allowed it." Trevelyan raised Russell's case again in the Commons on 28 November: "a different story is given by the Government every time they speak... when they circumscribe the liberty of a very distinguished man they should at least know why they do it." By

his own testimony, Lloyd George declared, Russell had written a document "which if it had been responded to by the people, would have left this country without an army to face our foes." <sup>52</sup> In the period immediately prior to his bid for the premiership in December 1916 Lloyd George was both identified with the most bellicose sections of the Unionist party and the right-wing press and was therefore perceived as the implacable enemy of wartime dissent.

### Conclusion

Between August 1914 and December 1916 Lloyd George established a record of solid achievement unequalled by any of his colleagues: no one could rival his success at the Ministry of Munitions nor possess his dynamism and resilience. His success was founded on his "swift and accurate appreciation of the frightening character of the new warfare, of the demands it made and would make on its demolition of the old Britain and the old Europe." In his rowdy speech to Clydeside workers on Christmas Day 1915, Lloyd George recognized the impact of the war, "It is the deluge... It is an earthquake which is upheaving the very rocks of European life." At this time of uncertainty Lloyd George argued that old traditions and Liberal principles must be jettisoned if necessary and he believed that the State possessed a fundamental right to command the services of all its citizens. In Manchester on 3 June 1915 he argued that the enactment of compulsory measures should be interpreted as "a question not of principle but of necessity... to be decided from time to time as the emergency arises during a period of war." Finally, it was his commitment to ensure an efficient prosecution of the war effort, synonymous with the "knock-out blow"

mentality, that ultimately propelled him to the premiership.<sup>53</sup>

In the aftermath of the battle of the Somme, the military stalemate on the Western Front diminished hopes for a decisive end to the war and increased popular dissatisfaction with Asquith's leadership. The War Committee, in particular, was deteriorating under the sheer weight of such unresolved problems as shipping losses, food supply, and manpower. Buoyed by ambition and patriotic ardour, Lloyd George's aptitude for war leadership and his proven talent for organization and improvisation earned him the support of leading Unionists such as Andrew Bonar Law and Sir Edward Carson and newspaper magnates such as Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Northcliffe for his plan for a new war council which would enjoy supreme control of military policy. Moreover, Asquith was increasingly seen by Lloyd George as "increasingly hopeless", unable to "make up his mind about anything, & seems to have lost all will-power." In these circumstances, Lloyd George's impatience with "the cumbrous methods of directing the war" and his desire to overhaul the traditional machinery of government in terms of the new central body and the need for State control of the mines, shipping, and food supply highlighted his deep concern for the future survival of the war effort.<sup>54</sup> However, the formation of a new political coalition under Lloyd George's direction was not a uniquely British phenomenon. Political upheaval in Britain followed a pattern in all belligerent countries whereby the worsening military stalemate had significant repercussions on the home front and precipitated the eventual downfall of the political leaders in France, Russia, and Germany who led their respective nations into war.

By contrast, wartime dissent regarded Lloyd George in a much less straight-forward manner: on the one hand, he was viewed as an accomplice in the creation of the military state and, on the other hand, so unprincipled a politician that as Prime Minister he might abruptly turn around and negotiate peace. For example, Lloyd George's part in the amendments to the DORA, the dilution of skilled labour, the passage of the Munitions of War Acts, his vocal support for industrial conscription and his exploitation of the power of propaganda and censorship, all contributed to his well-deserved reputation as the "hammer" of dissent. Moreover, the peace movement feared that the new Prime Minister would commit the nation to an even more horrific campaign. While Russell expected that a massive military commitment from Lloyd George would "mean hell for the next six months", he believed that such an ambitious strategy would fail to end the war and, by implication, eventually lead people to "consent to peace." Similarly, Russell wrote to Marshall on 1 January 1917: "I think we shall have peace in the autumn, after Lloyd George has drunk the blood of half a million young Englishmen in an offensive which he knows will affect nothing." 55

Oddly enough, dissenters also harboured the illusion that Lloyd George might somehow have been converted to their views. Ponsonby, for example, later wrote that Lloyd George represented "the only man in the world who could turn the scales if he could free himself from the materialist point of view and really dictate to the world"; underneath the Prime Minister was a "responsive sympathetic human being appreciating the larger issues, but unfortunately buried by his atmosphere and associates." Perhaps this

mentality explains why, despite his recent combatant speeches and the invective they hurled against him, the dissenters in parliament occasionally refrained from attacking Lloyd George when he seemingly kept the door open for a negotiated settlement. As Philip Snowden, a leading ILP M.P., reasoned, "the best thing... was to allow the matter to take the course indicated by the Prime Minister; bitter controversy would serve no useful purpose, but might arouse opposition... and give Mr. Lloyd George the chance to surrender to the jingoes in his own party." This attitude was not only an admission that the dissenting Left could not supply independent political leadership for the task of a peace crusade it had undertaken but shows how strangely the antiwar movement viewed the "hammer" of dissent as perhaps their illusive yet alluring saviour who could as Prime Minister bring the nation its most valuable commodity, peace.<sup>56</sup>

## NOTES

1. Fry, 184-185.
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6. Jaffe, 10. See also Grigg, 146-147.
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24. Addison quoted in Grigg, 331-332.
25. Adams and Poirier, 141-148, 176-186.
26. Fry, 246-247; Riddell, 157.
27. Fry, 218, 227-228.
28. *Ibid.*, 230-232.
29. Grigg, 423. See also Fry, 233.
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33. Grigg, 267; Wrigley, 136; Ministry of Information Files: INF 4/4A, H.O. Lee, "British Propaganda During the First World War."
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36. Reprinted in Wrigley, 154-155.

37. Grigg, 299; Wrigley, 155-156. [underlining made by Lloyd George] .
38. Kennedy, 56; Vellacott, 29.
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40. Rempel, Ivix.
41. Vellacott, 65-66; Rempel, 448-449; Kennedy, 118-119.
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56. David Lloyd George Papers: F/94/1/36, Arthur Ponsonby to D. Lloyd George, 14 December 1916, and Philip Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 21 December 1916, 51, 13, 1, both quoted in Weinroth, 385.

Chapter III:

The Revolution in Government: The First One Hundred Days,  
December 1916 - March 1917

"The prospect of life for the Government was placed in influential circles at six weeks. However I decided to undertake the duty entrusted to me by the Sovereign and to do my best to form a Government that would organise the strength of the Nation for victory and thus gradually command its confidence." <sup>1</sup>

At a time of national crisis when the fortunes of the Allies were at their lowest ebb, King George V entrusted Lloyd George with the task of forming a new political coalition to replace the ineffective Asquith regime. In order to prosecute the war more efficiently and to undercut political support for wartime dissent, the Lloyd George Coalition embarked upon a programme which should be understood as the "Revolution in Government": the temporary obsolescence of the party system, the permanent expansion of State controls at the expense of traditional civil liberties, and, general plans for post-war reconstruction through a more sophisticated application of government-controlled propaganda which pledged the creation of a new and just post-war Britain. To the consternation of the peace movement, the formation of the Lloyd George Government thus represented a new and formidable weapon in the arsenal of a home-bred Prussianism, a significant milestone on the road to the "servile state." <sup>2</sup>

Ironically, Lloyd George, the self-professed champion of the "knock-out blow", became Prime Minister at a time when there were a number of concurrent developments, at home and abroad, which led the British peace movement to believe that a negotiated peace was imminent. On 12 December, Germany proposed peace negotiations, and a week later, on 18 December, the

American President asked the belligerents to state their peace terms. These two events helped to strengthen the UDC-ILP peace-by-negotiation alliance's efforts to undermine the pro-war patriotism of the working classes and compel the British Government to seek a non-vindictive peace. The "Peace Offensive" of December 1916 - January 1917 therefore presented the new Prime Minister with the most daunting challenge of his political career: how to convince doubting elements of British society that the current struggle was justified, thereby maintaining the support of public opinion until victory was assured.

#### The Lloyd George Government: A New Autocracy?

The issue of whether or not the system of government instituted by Lloyd George in December 1916 represented "a watershed in British constitutional history" has perplexed critics and admirers alike. For instance, John Turner has argued that it is a "mistake to see the December crisis as an encapsulated palace revolution; equally a mistake to represent it as a climacteric in the development of British politics, in which the structure of party and government was remade by great forces of change." John Bourne has agreed with Turner's analysis by emphasizing that the real differences between Lloyd George's government and Asquith's were of "style rather than substance." However, Bourne has also argued that the history of the Asquith Coalition is that of "Asquith's attempt to win the war while preserving as much as possible of the pre-war order in politics and strategy", and has emphasized that Lloyd George's triumph was "a watershed in British politics." <sup>3</sup>

By contrast, historians such as A.M. Gollin, John Grigg, R.J. Scally, and

Martin Pugh, have all rightly underlined the innovative features of the Lloyd George Government, for example, the creation of the War Cabinet, the Cabinet Secretariat, and the "Garden Suburb", and the appointments of Labour Ministers, businessmen of "push and go", and Unionists to important positions of influence. Moreover, Weinroth has articulated the reaction of the British Left which condemned the new regime as a further sign of the steady encroachment of the "purest Prussianism" with respect to the breakdown of constitutional government and to the erosion of civil liberties. <sup>4</sup>

The new Prime Minister created a War Cabinet of five to whom the whole of the War should be entrusted in order to create a more efficient system of war government. So long as the war committee had to be ultimately subject to the traditional Cabinet, there was bound to be muddle and delay. Yet, how could the Cabinet, with its accepted position of supreme executive power, abdicate in favour of a mere committee? The only plausible answer lay in transforming the committee into the Cabinet for the duration of the war to function as a directing body of ministers without departmental ties, with the exception of Andrew Bonar Law, who was named Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons. War Cabinet members also presided over inter-departmental committees for the study of issues, unburdened by everyday routine. All other Ministers, whatever department they controlled, were outside the War Cabinet. Ministers were encouraged to invite permanent officials and experts to facilitate decision-making, and the chairmen of committees were also urged to attend when the affairs they were responsible for were under discussion. For efficiency in meeting the

urgent requirements of war, the traditional idea of executive responsibility thus applied only to members of the War Cabinet, virtually demoting the vast majority of traditional Cabinet posts to sub-Cabinet rank.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, this plan was not so novel as it might appear. In a memorandum to Bonar Law on 14 February 1917, Maurice Hankey, recently appointed Secretary of the War Cabinet, explained that the new Cabinet was "a development of the War Committee system with which Members of the late Government are familiar, although it has been tuned up to meet the larger range of business dealt with." In addition, Hankey stressed that this system was, "a direct development of the old system of the Committee of Imperial Defence extended to cover the whole range of Government." As Pugh admits, Lloyd George "is often credited with techniques which were practiced regularly, if discreetly, by his predecessors."<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, when the new executive held its first meeting on 9 December 1916, reasonably rapid decisions were to be ensured by the existence of a nucleus of powerful men unhampered by departmental prejudices, whose sole standpoint was that of winning the war. Decisions were recorded and circulated by an organized secretariat the same day to all concerned. Ministerial or departmental delays were reduced in this new organization and it was increasingly difficult to evade the disapproval of the Prime Minister. For example, Hankey supported Lloyd George's idea of a weekly report to the War Cabinet by the Government departments "showing developments during each week." In addition, the functions of the Cabinet Secretariat were formalized: the preparation of agendas, recording of minutes, circulation of decisions for immediate action, arrangements for the attendance of Ministers and advisers for certain items, and distribution

of memoranda from the departments. In short, the new system represented a major innovation in efficiency, for traditionally British Cabinets functioned entirely without the aid of minutes; and it was therefore not uncommon for ministers to be uncertain as to what decisions, if any, had been reached. <sup>7</sup>

Under this new administrative model Lloyd George was free to devote the whole of his energies to the daily conduct of the war; to fulfil his sole aim for victory, he released himself from the exacting task of leading the House. This duty fell to Bonar Law and Lloyd George only appeared to address the House. As Hankey observed, "the plan was not popular in the House of Commons, which at first resented the frequent absence of the Prime Minister, but it worked well inside the Government, and for the first time since the out break of the war the Prime Minister really had the time to do his job." As Unionist Party leader who provided the majority of the Government's support, Bonar Law's membership in the War Cabinet was automatic and essential. During the December crisis Lloyd George acknowledged Bonar Law's important role in the formation of the new government when he wrote: "Addison tells me 126 Liberal M.P.s have already & privately promised support if I form an Administration & the numbers are still coming in. Can I send for Milner and Stanley now?"<sup>8</sup> Hence, Bonar Law assumed the role of deputy leader in the War Cabinet and served as loyal first lieutenant, thus binding the majority of the Unionist party to the fate of the Government.

Perhaps the most surprising choice to the War Cabinet was Lord Milner, widely perceived as an angry, frustrated figure of the far Right in British



politics, anathematising the Liberal government and all its works. Yet, the former proconsul represented the outspoken minority of efficiency enthusiasts. In the words of Lloyd George, Milner also "made a special appeal to the [Conservative] young intelligentsia. The Diehard element also trusted him in the essentials of the faith." By recalling Milner from the political wilderness to the very centre of power, the new premier therefore demonstrated considerable skill in winning over a formidable political critic and, in turn, disarming the far Right.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, throughout the first two years of the war, Milner and his supporters had grudgingly perceived in Lloyd George "the one minister who both understood the need for drastic action and was capable of carrying out, while Lloyd George found much to agree with in Milner's criticisms of the country's war leadership and organization." In a letter to Conservative party manager Arthur Steel-Maitland on 2 December 1916, Milner had declared that,

"The nation wants a super-Cabinet, a small (the smaller the better) supreme Directing Council, standing in all our national war activities, military, naval, diplomatic, civil - the whole thing - in the same relation as the Army Council stands, or ought to stand, to the purely military side."<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the strictly political value of recruiting Milner was not to be judged solely in relation to the Right: his advocacy of state sponsored social welfare led Lloyd George to remark to Riddell, "I think Milner and I stand for very much the same things. He is a poor man, and so am I. He does not represent the landed or capitalist classes any more than I do. He is keen on social reform and so am I." Milner's part in the founding of the British Workers' National League (BWNL) in early 1916, a body to mobilize the pro-

war and Imperialist forces within the working classes, provided Lloyd George with an organizational framework to counteract the attempts of peace-by-negotiation groups to gain the political support of the working classes. This organization had "some usefulness as an antidote to pacifism and other troublesome movements on the Left, and it provided an additional, though lesser, reason for bringing Milner into the Government." <sup>11</sup> The BWNL's task was to launch a counter-attack against labour and anti-war agitation and thus challenge them for the wartime loyalty of the working classes.

Arthur Henderson, leader of the Labour Party, was a vital asset to the new War Cabinet and carried with him the votes of a majority of the Labour members in the House of Commons. It was necessary for Lloyd George to win the active co-operation of British Labour in an attempt to implement industrial compulsion, to reduce industrial strife, and, ultimately, to bring victory: "I deemed it essential to forestall trouble by bringing the Labour leaders into more active and effective co-operation with the Government of the day in the prosecution of the war." <sup>12</sup> As chairman of the Labour M.P.s and a reassuring figure among leading trade unionists, Henderson provided Lloyd George with a valuable ally within the Labour movement and also symbolized the loyalty of the working classes to the pursuit of victory.

Beyond the War Cabinet and the Secretariat, the multiplication in the number of new ministerial positions such as Shipping Director, Food Controller, Director of National Service, and the new Ministries of Labour and Pensions all underlined Lloyd George's commitment to "national

efficiency." By gathering a phalanx of successful businessmen, Lloyd George could dismiss them more easily than party politicians if their performance fell short. Nonetheless, he recognized that "it was essential for the Government to secure the support of Parliament during the first testing months, when its schemes were developing but could not hope to fructify in any decisive achievement."<sup>13</sup> The refusal of Liberal Ministers to join the Government forced Lloyd George to promote relatively minor figures Dr. Addison, Lord Rhondda, and Sir Gordon Hewart, while the leading positions fell entirely to Conservatives Arthur Balfour, Sir George Cave, Sir Edward Carson, and Lord Derby. The appointment of two Labour M.P.s, George Barnes and John Hodge, gave the appearance of a truly national Government, operating on an all-party consensus to win the war.

While accepting the need for a change in Government but suspicious of the reactionary inclination of the new regime, the Left lamented the Lloyd George configuration as a triumph for the forces of military autocracy. In an editorial for the Labour Leader on 14 December 1916, Philip Snowden warned that "the more vigorous prosecution of the war, according to Mr. Lloyd George's idea, means the more vigorous application of the policy of military and industrial compulsion." In the New Statesman Beatrice Webb expressed the misgivings with which most pro-war Fabians viewed the new regime: "the Lloyd George-Curzon group want to mobilize labour whilst retaining for the ruling class property intact and the control of trade and industry." The advent of the Lloyd George Government was therefore interpreted by its left-wing opponents as a negation of all democratic values

and its unusual formation raised fears of its alleged willingness to abandon representative government in the pursuit of victory.<sup>14</sup>

The Lloyd George Government was described by Hankey, as a "Dictatorship in Commission", in which an authoritarian regime assumed office at a time of national crisis, provided it operated in a constitutional form and governed with reasonable deference to Parliament and to public opinion. Beatrice Webb described the creature as "reactionary in composition and undemocratic in form. For the first time (since Cromwell) we have a dictatorship by one, or possibly by three men." With the inclusion of Milner and non-party experts, its autocratic appearance does lend a certain credence to Scally's opinion that the advocates of "Social Imperialism" were now able to "exert a meaningful influence on the making of government policy." Whether Lloyd George genuinely supported the gospel of Social Imperialism with its tenets of imperial solidarity, tariff reform, and national efficiency, or whether political opportunism enabled him to overcome past differences, this coalition adeptly combined "a belief in the positive application of state power for social purposes with the need to adopt a strong, nationalist line in matters of defence, empire, and foreign policy." <sup>15</sup>

#### The Peace Offensive: December 1916 - January 1917

While the Lloyd George regime committed itself to the intensification of the war, the peace-by-negotiation coalition hoped that international events would compel the belligerents to open peace negotiations. On 18 December the War Cabinet decided that the Allies should issue a joint reply to "refute the statements made in the preamble of the German Note, and state that a

general offer of peace, without defining terms, was useless." Doubtless, the gravity of the Allied position had produced anxiety in official circles, but the prevailing mood was not in favour of a peace without victory; it was for a more vigorous war effort. With the exception of the Unionist statesman Lord Lansdowne and the peace dissenters, Britain's new leaders did not want to consider a negotiated peace - at least not while they still believed Germany could eventually be defeated by a "knock-out blow." As Kernek explains: "The talk was of tighter import restrictions, rationing, turning ships around more quickly in port, of using more machinery and female labour to produce food, of avoiding waste, introducing industrial conscription, and of the need to reorganize the government." For instance, in a letter to Ponsonby on 11 December 1916 Lloyd George stressed that "the one predominant task before the Government is the vigorous prosecution of the War to a triumphant conclusion & I feel confident they can rely on your effort as long as they devote their energies effectively to that end." Since the current military advantage in Europe rested with Germany, their peace terms would be bound to reflect this ascendancy. Still, the War Cabinet did not wish to appear guilty of slamming the door to peace and jeopardizing the vital supply of American supplies of money and munitions.<sup>16</sup>

On 19 December 1916 Lloyd George made his first parliamentary address as Prime Minister and announced the two underlying priorities of the Government's policy: first, the rejection of the German peace offer with a new statement on British war aims, and; second, a scheme of industrial conscription. Lloyd George warned that negotiations would "put our heads into a noose with the rope end in the hands of Germany." "The only terms

on which it is possible for peace to be obtained and maintained in Europe", he declared, were "complete restitution, full reparation, effectual guarantees." His unequivocal rejection of the German peace offer thus highlighted his commitment to victory and to the defeat of Prussian menace, the only danger from a British point of view being that Germany might, after all, state terms which would appear plausible.<sup>17</sup>

By contrast, the German Note gave dissenters a golden opportunity: if Wilson could be persuaded to intervene there was a good chance that the war could be brought to an end. Most significantly, the peace moves of December 1916 spurred the growth of the peace-by-negotiation coalition within Britain in opposing Lloyd George's military agenda and in encouraging Wilson's mediation. Morel's disillusionment with the new Government, for instance, prompted his appeal to Labour, to join his crusade for a negotiated peace: "what is wanted is the breath of PASSION. We British pacifists, as a body, are lacking in the sacred fire." Moreover, Wilson's peace efforts had been inspired in part by a regular stream of material from the UDC leaders and the more cautious dissenting views of Noel Buxton through an attache at the American Embassy, W.H. Buckler. He sent many of their reports, which would otherwise have been seized by the British Censor, to Wilson via Colonel House, the President's most influential policy adviser. In addition, the PNC chose this moment to present a petition to the Prime Minister signed by over 200,000 individuals and it was alleged that three times that figure belonged to organizations which had also given their support. On 14 December Ponsonby appealed to Lloyd George not to reject the German initiative in a dismissive fashion and cautioned him that,

"You can hardly be aware of the extent of sane and moderate opinion in this country, which owing to the press & official restrictions cannot be articulate and is often drowned in mere clamour." <sup>18</sup> The German Note had therefore bolstered the morale of the peace-by-negotiation alliance which looked for guidance not from the new Prime Minister but to an American President who seemingly possessed the power to compel the belligerents to make peace.

Evidence indicates that the President wanted his Note of 18 December to forestall Lloyd George's speech to the House of Commons, which was to be delivered a day later and would outline the new Government's composition and war policy. Since informed British and American opinion expected Lloyd George to dismiss the German peace initiative, Wilson hoped to make his own position clear before the door was closed on any negotiations. To that end, Colonel House requested that the British Embassy on 17 December ask Lloyd George to delay his speech on the German note until receipt of the President's Note. This request fell on deaf ears, for the Prime Minister would not negotiate without learning of Germany's specific terms. However, he attempted to avoid antagonizing American public opinion by an outright rejection. It was difficult for Lloyd George to discuss peace at the moment when he had promised to inject more vigour into the conduct of the British war effort. As Trevor Wilson aptly points out, "here was an important test of Lloyd George's liberalism: was he now prepared to respond more positively to President Wilson's approaches, and to define specific objectives in the war rather than pursue the unlimited goal of a 'knock-out victory'?" <sup>19</sup>

In contrast, the peace-by-negotiation coalition welcomed Wilson's Note as a constructive development in the war aims debate. For example, C.P.

Trevelyan wrote to Norman Angell on 22 December: "It is a great event, and I do not now see how the belligerents can with any semblance of reason avoid now stating their terms. In any case we are placed in a most powerful position for agitation, if they do." Likewise, G. Lowes Dickinson, also a UDC member, told Ponsonby on 28 December that "the whole fate of the world seems to me to depend on America." Moreover, Francis Johnson, Secretary of the National Administrative Council of the ILP, sent a letter to the President dated 6 January 1917 informing him that his efforts had raised

"a fervent hope that negotiations may be begun now which will lead to a settlement on such terms as will be just and honourable to all the countries involved, and which will begin the formation of a League of Nations for maintaining Peace, to which idea you have given such valuable support." <sup>20</sup>

At an Anglo-French Conference scheduled for 26-28 December 1916 in London the Allies drafted their reply to the German and American Peace Notes. Their position had been made easier by the reply already sent by the German Government to Wilson on 26 December which was "a snub for the President." Germany rejected American mediation and suggested direct negotiations between the belligerents. In their reply to the German Note on 30 December the Allies dismissed the German proposals as a ploy to create dissension among the Allied peoples. The Allied reply concluded that "no peace was possible until reparation could be secured for the violation of national rights, and a settlement achieved which would prevent a repetition of such outrages." <sup>21</sup>

By contrast, the reply to the President's note was treated with greater care and left the London Conference as a draft for consideration by the other Allies. As Hankey put it, "in form it was sympathetic to the President's



high-minded initiative, but it made clear that, in the opinion of the Allies, the moment was unfavourable to peace negotiations." In an effort to meet pressure for a statement of terms, the Allies issued a comprehensive definition of their war aims on 10 January, 1917: Belgium, Serbia, and Montenegro were to be restored and compensated; France, Russia and Roumania were to be evacuated with just reparation; Europe was to be reorganized on the basis of self-determination, the Ottoman Empire would be dismantled, and a free Poland would be created. <sup>22</sup> All in all, the Allied reply signified the first real disclosure of British war aims, going well beyond Asquith's Guildhall speech in November 1914, and had been drafted as a direct challenge to Wilson and to peace sentiment at home and abroad.

On the other hand, the peace-by-negotiation movement was deeply critical of the Allied reply to Wilson. For instance, the UDC expressed its regret that "these terms go far beyond the objects for which this Country entered the War, and have been interpreted in a sense which indicates that the war is being continued on the part of Great Britain and her Allies for the purpose of aggression." Similarly, in the Labour Leader on 18 January 1917, Snowden described British war aims "as those of a completely victorious Power dictating conditions of surrender to a completely vanquished enemy", and warned that the only hope for a reasonable peace lay with the German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg. This distrust of the Allies was "an indication of the extent to which the Prime Minister's announcement had successfully embarrassed the pacifists." As Robbins explains: "Lloyd George well knew that, before the war, many of them had keenly supported the 'suppressed nationalities.' They could hardly

denounce Lloyd George's supposed concern for their future as wicked."<sup>23</sup> The Allied replies to the German and American Notes thus demonstrated a keen awareness for domestic and international opinion in order to justify their unyielding prosecution of the war.

In delivering his speech to the United States Senate, which had the legal power to ratify treaties, on 22 January 1917, President Wilson's famous "Peace Without Victory" address had shown that he had not yet given up hope that he might emerge as the peacemaker. In this appeal over the heads of the politicians to the peoples at war he declared that victory would mean a peace forced on the loser; only a peace between equals could last. In terms that were almost all that the advocates of a negotiated peace could have wished, Wilson's words also foreshadowed the creation of a League of Nations. The General Council of the UDC was delighted with Wilson's appeal and it expressed its determination to "give every support to the President's efforts to establish Peace Between Nations upon an enduring basis." In the Labour Leader on 25 January Snowden echoed the UDC's sentiments when he described Wilson's address as "the most powerful condemnation of the war which has yet been uttered" and also boasted that peace dissenters in Britain "are entitled to feel and to express special gratification with the fact that the head of the greatest neutral Power in the world has come to the support of the same ideas and proposals which they have prominently put forward during this War." In addition, Russell helped capture the prevailing political mood in an article for The Tribunal: "the truth of what he [Wilson] says is evident to all who are not caught up in the madness of war, as a study of neutral opinion shows. But during war it is difficult for

either side to believe that there is anything more important than victory." <sup>24</sup> Thus, the peace-by-negotiation alliance eagerly promoted the dissemination of Wilson's foreign policy views, which were similar to its own, in order to put renewed pressure on the British Government to negotiate a compromise peace.

If Wilson could encourage the Allies to the peace table, Bethmann-Hollweg believed that a satisfactory peace might be negotiated without having to resort to pressure from the German High Command for an all-out submarine campaign. If the Allies were recalcitrant, Germany could blame them for prolonging the war; this would help Germany justify unrestricted submarine warfare and might keep the United States neutral. With the failure of the peace notes, the German High Command declared its intention to adopt a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare on 31 January 1917, to be effective the following day. However, on 3 February the United States cut diplomatic relations with Germany. What appeared to have been the best opportunity for peace had suddenly vanished; the Allies' refusal to enter peace talks had been superceded by the provocative decision on the part of Germany. As Russell wrote to his mistress, Lady Constance Malleon, that same day, "the world looks very black again, after the little gleam that Wilson brought us. God help us all!" <sup>25</sup>

"Far from being able to bring the belligerents together to settle a peace", Robbins observes, "it looked increasingly to pacifists as if the United States would intervene on the side of the Allies." Such a trend confronted them with a difficulty. Since the declared Allied war aims appeared both sinister and absurd, it appeared inconceivable that the United States

would support such policies. Even though German-American relations had deteriorated, the peace dissenters still believed that the desire in Germany to see militarism discredited was still intense. In turn, dissenters blamed the shortcomings of the Allied war aims and the intransigence of the British Government towards Wilson's "peace without victory" speech as factors which had precipitated the German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. Morel was also convinced that America would not enter the war to secure the Allied annexationist aims: "If she comes in, she will come in on the programme of the Union of Democratic Control, which President Wilson has made his own." <sup>26</sup> Deeply suspicious of Allied motives, the peace-by-negotiation coalition clung to their belief in the sincerity of the Germans to negotiate in good faith and in the ability of Wilson to mediate a fair peace settlement.

By contrast, Wilson's call for a "peace without victory" was rejected by Lloyd George because only decisive victory would destroy Prussian militarism, thereby making impossible a repetition of German aggression. In preparation for a speech in Caernarvon on 3 February 1917, Philip Kerr, an adviser on foreign and imperial policy, offered the Prime Minister some advice on the "Peace Question":

"Is there the slightest chance of founding a permanent peace in Europe on an understanding with a militarist machine centreing in Berlin and holding all the people between Belgium and Bagdad, conscribed in mind and body, beneath its grasp. Could there be any disarmament, any confidence, any security in Europe on such terms?"

In a Lincoln Day message, Lloyd George continued to discourage any ideas of a "peace without victory" by emphasizing that "we are fighting not a

war of conquest but a war of liberation... from that body of barbarous doctrine and inhuman practice which has estranged nations, has held back the unity and progress of the world." Lloyd George's rise to power therefore marked a political triumph for those who believed that an intensification of the war effort would deliver a successful new offensive where previous ones had failed. After the inability of the peace initiatives to bring the war to a close, the proponents of the "knock-out blow" successfully used what Vellacott describes as "a few purely ceremonial gestures" to justify their military agenda.<sup>27</sup>

#### The Dangerous Mixture of Labour Unrest and Peace-By-Negotiation

A vexing challenge to the new Lloyd George Government was the peace-by-negotiation alliance's strategy to propagate the merits of a compromise peace by exploiting growing public dissatisfaction with the military stalemate. The combination of labour unrest, war weariness, extensions of conscription and doubts as to Allied war aims threatened to weaken working class support for continuing the war until victory was achieved. In recognition of these challenges to the effective organization of the war, Lloyd George tackled four important challenges within his first three months in office: (1) the manpower crisis and the debate over industrial conscription; (2) the limits of wartime criticism and the application of censorship; (3) the Government's involvement in official propaganda to create a sense of national purpose, and, (4) the role and direction of post-war reconstruction policy.

In order to exert complete control of the domestic labour force, the War Cabinet sought the power to dictate workers' employment and outlaw the

remaining traditional labour rights such as strikes. When Sidney Webb asked Lloyd George during his address to the joint deputation from the Labour Party and the National Labour Executive on 7 December 1916 whether compulsory service applied to labour, he replied that "there would be no change from the old Administration as regards labour. But it was necessary to have a complete mobilisation of labour in order to utilise to the fullest extent the country's resources." On the same day in the Labour Leader, Snowden warned that the advent of the new regime would mean "the logical development of the taking away of political and civil liberty which has been going on for the last two years." When he learned of Lloyd George's accession to the premiership, Russell knew that they were in for "a rough time" which would not only affect conscientious objectors to military service, but might also spread the net of compulsion much wider throughout civilian life.<sup>28</sup> Although the new Government wished to conscript men for the military and for industry, it appeared that both organized labour and peace dissenters would not readily submit to industrial compulsion in order to alleviate the manpower crisis.

The War Cabinet agreed on 12 December to discuss the plan presented by the sub-committee of the War Committee dated 5 December as a basis for implementing national service. The so-called Montagu plan recommended the appointment of a Director of National Service to regulate the supply of manpower from the ages of sixteen to sixty. Two days later the War Cabinet decided that there would be a clear line of demarcation between the civil and military sides of the directorate "to allay any suspicion that the adoption of Compulsory National Service for Civil purposes would bring the

persons affected under Military control." Henderson was authorized to define the functions of the new Ministry of Labour and the Directorate of National Service in consultation with his Labour colleagues. In closing, the War Cabinet suggested Montagu as a "good selection" for the post and agreed that women should be included in the scheme. 29

Nonetheless, at a War Cabinet meeting on 19 December, Henderson warned that the Labour movement would not accept industrial conscription, with its implications both of quasi-military discipline and the further sacrifice of trade-union privileges. Fearing an open confrontation with organized labour, the War Cabinet agreed to proceed "on the lines of voluntary enrolment and transference of labour without a Bill." However, the War Cabinet cautioned that if this voluntary campaign failed, the Government would ask Parliament "to release them from any pledges heretofore given on the subject of industrial compulsion, and to furnish them with adequate powers for rendering their proposals effective." 30

Although the Prime Minister was unable, in the event, to implement industrial conscription, opponents of the Government had every reason to believe that he would succeed, given the ease of past wartime governments in carrying through virtually every war measure they desired. Lloyd George had also publicly called for civil conscription as early as June 1915. In addition, Lloyd George's rise to the premiership, Snowden warned, had placed him "in a position to carry out this long-cherished desire - an aim in which he has hitherto been restrained by the opposition of certain members of the late Government." 31

At a meeting of the Joint Advisory Council (JAC) on 19 December 1916 members from the NCF, Friends Service Committee (FSC), and Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) believed that immediate action was essential to prevent the introduction of industrial conscription. Dr. Alfred Salter, the Acting Chairman of the NCF, had learnt from government officials that the provisions of a National Service Bill had already been drafted and that the "Conscience clause [was] not likely to give more than [an] option for agriculture instead of munitions if as much as that." This meeting ended with the creation of a sub-committee to draw up a letter to JAC representatives and a "reasoned" pamphlet for the general press. Meanwhile, readers of The Tribunal were warned that the advent of industrial compulsion would "greatly" increase the number of conscientious objectors because people over the military age would be legally pressed into state employment. On 21 December Russell informed Lady Malleon that he had "spent almost every minute writing a memorandum on Lloyd George's universal national service - for the JAC - to be sent to NCF, FOR and FSC." <sup>32</sup> Thus, civil libertarians feared that the prospect of compulsory national service represented an assault on individual rights and, as a further threat, to the militarization of civil life.

In contrast, the moral distinctions which preoccupied the NCF were not what angered other opponents of industrial conscription. The Labour movement, for example, opposed the measure because such legislation would threaten exemption from military service in such essential industries as coal and munitions which had hitherto protected workers from conscription. Important ILP leaders such as Snowden and Ramsay



Macdonald shared Labour's misgivings on the prospect of civil compulsion. In his pamphlet, "Labour in Chains", for instance, Snowden wrote that "workmen and women will have no voice in determining their conditions of employment" and warned that "if Labour accepts Industrial Conscription now, it may be willing to agree to a permanent state of things, servile in nature, as some relief from a more intolerable state of things." Although these labour leaders were aware that Henderson had balked at the introduction of civil compulsion, they had no faith either that he could or would arrest its momentum. For all that he was Labour's representative in the War Cabinet, he was perceived by ILP leaders as weak and subservient to the Lloyd George-Milner vision of the "knock-out blow" and thus powerless to resist their attacks on popular liberties. Snowden also alleged that industrial conscription would be carried out "with the active assistance of the Labour members of the Government, and with the support of the Labour members of Parliament." In addition, Snowden cited Henderson's comments at Northampton on 2 December, 1916: "I am convinced that there is not anything that we need at this moment so much as the proper organisation of the entire manhood and womanhood to be placed at the service of the nation for winning the war."<sup>33</sup> Hence, there were deep suspicions within the Labour movement and the ranks of the ILP about the complicity of the Labour Party representatives in the Government with regards to the advent of national service and its implications for industrial and civil liberty.

In his appeal for the formation of an 'Industrial Army' on 20 January 1917, Neville Chamberlain, the newly appointed Director of National

Service, warned that the government would take steps to introduce compulsory national service if there was an inadequate response to the voluntary appeal. In Caernarvon on 2 February Lloyd George shared his vision of a disciplined and mobile work-force which would reflect the civilian population's recognition of the supreme right of the government to demand specific work "for the good of the State." In closing, Lloyd George proclaimed, "let all roads lead to the Industrial Army, and let the Industrial Army pave the road to peace." <sup>34</sup>

The national appeal for voluntary enrolment in the National Service scheme was launched on 6 February 1917, less than a week after the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare. In order to combat this new menace, the Director established the National Service Volunteers who consisted of men over age or unfit for service who were to make themselves available for employment in munitions or other essential work and substitute for those who could then be eligible for military service. A separate department for women's National Service was also created. The Ministry of National Service Bill received the Royal Assent on 28 March.

The Government's interest in the creation of a comprehensive yet still voluntary system of manpower supply and control sparked a flurry of activity within the ranks of wartime dissent. After Chamberlain delivered his public appeal for "a new Industrial Army", there were renewed fears that if he failed, as Lord Derby had in the case of military recruitment, a system of compulsory industrial service would be implemented. The Labour Leader stated on 25 January its unequivocal objection to the

"imposition of an industrial tyranny which would establish the Servile State." On the same day, the paper reproduced the manifesto of the United Socialist Council of the ILP and the British Socialist Party (BSP) addressed to the Trades Councils and local Labour Parties of Great Britain. Co-written by Joint Secretaries Francis Johnson and Albert Inkpin, the document asked: "Are the workers to sacrifice all their individual, civil, and industrial liberties in order to continue the war? What gain can it be to win the war if the military victory has involved the loss of all our liberties?" Moreover, Russell declared in The Tribunal on 15 February that, in the event of industrial conscription, all work ordered by the Government would have the sole purpose of increasing the intensity of the war effort and freeing men to fight.<sup>35</sup> Despite official plans to alleviate the manpower crisis by the creation of a Ministry of National Service, civil libertarians and peace dissenters were determined to uphold the principles of freedom and liberty in an effort to prevent the further expansion of militarism on the home front.

By early 1917 the Chamberlain policy of the 'clean cut' and the growing demands of the Army for more manpower came headlong into conflict with the rival needs for the production of munitions, food, and shipbuilding. The War Office was given permission to proceed immediately with the preparation of a new Military Service Bill and pledges given in Parliament as to the re-examination of medically unfit men were to be re-evaluated. On 1 March, in recognition of these drastic suggestions, the War Cabinet appointed a committee chaired by Lord Rhondda, President of the Local Government Board, to recommend a new manpower policy.

Within one hundred days of assuming office, military needs were so pressing that the Lloyd George Coalition was forced to allocate additional manpower even at the expense of individual and industrial liberties, first, through the formation of a Department of National Service, and second, by the reconsideration of all previous pledges to organized labour on the controversial subject of exemption from military service.

#### The Role of Censorship and the Importance of National Morale

In recognition of the need to govern with the support of the Labour Party, the new Government recognized that its determination to prosecute the war more efficiently depended upon its ability to uphold national unity. Consistent with the decision not to impose compulsory civil conscription immediately after taking office, Lloyd George was aware that the lack of an organizational base limited his ability to set not only the domestic agenda but to compel, or at least, persuade his opponents to respect his policies and decisions. In these circumstances, Lloyd George was often reluctant to act upon warnings about the expanding subversion of anti-war organizations such as the UDC and the ILP. Until the new Prime Minister could establish a more secure base of political support, no Government department was willing to accept the political responsibility involved in employing legal action against such dissenting publications as the Labour Leader and The Tribunal.<sup>36</sup> Instead, the Government generally respected the power of Labour opinion in the press, except in the case of small and rather ineffectual organs of wartime dissent. By discussing the Government's attitude towards Ponsonby's leaflet, "Why the War Must Go On?", the raid on the offices of the Britannia, the objectionable articles in

the Labour Leader and The Tribunal, and, finally, Morel's Truth and War, it may be possible to evaluate the Government's attitude to censorship with respect to its rigorous prosecution of the war.

The appointment of Sir George Cave, Solicitor-General in the previous Asquith Coalition, to the post of Home Secretary helped accentuate the new regime's predominantly Unionist character. The new Home Secretary was determined to enforce the DORA and was therefore sensitive to violations of the law which jeopardized the conduct of the war. At the same time, Cave understood that there were political consequences in the application of the full weight of the DORA against opponents of the war, namely the loss of political support of moderate opinion which was reluctant to support strict legal restrictions on civil liberties. While considering the legality of "Why the War Must Go On?", first published in October 1916, Cave wrote to Ponsonby on 23 December 1916 that, "I am satisfied that it is calculated to prejudice the conduct of the war and our relations with foreign powers, and I am advised that it contravenes the regulations under the Defence of the Realm Act." However, Cave emphasized that the leaflet "should not be further circulated, and I hope I may assume that in view of the above statement it will be forthwith withdrawn from circulation." The decision of the new Home Secretary to challenge the previous Government's ruling on this leaflet underlined the change in official policy towards the interpretation and enforcement of the State's legal powers. Although Cave did not recommend the prosecution of Ponsonby's leaflet, he clearly demanded a voluntary withdrawal on the part of the author and expected an immediate compliance with his wishes. In reply, Ponsonby

pledged that "no further copies are issued by the central office of the Union of Democratic Control or by any branch office, and the few hundred copies in stock will be destroyed." <sup>37</sup> Cave's moderate yet firm attitude towards the leaflet in question signalled a renewed determination to check the spread of dissenting literature, but without resorting to legal prosecution which might jeopardize Labour's tentative support for the recently installed Government.

There was much less discretion exercised by the Government in early January 1917 when the London police raided the offices of the small newspaper Britannia and the flats and offices of persons connected with the WSPU. As Commissioner of Police, Basil Thomson wrote to Sir Edward Troup, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Home Office on 5 January, asking that the Home Secretary "issue warrants to the Postmaster-General for the censorship of all letters and postal matter" addressed to the people who have been most active in the paper's publication. In the House of Commons, over a month later, Ian Macpherson, the Under-Secretary of State for War, defended the raid as a justifiable response against "false statements and outrageous attacks which were persistently made upon those responsible for the foreign and military policy of this country, and which were calculated to prejudice good relations with our Allies."<sup>38</sup> In this case, a selective but heavy-handed campaign against a designated foe would, it was hoped, isolate criticism of the Government's action to a small segment of the anti-war movement.

The debate whether or not to initiate legal proceedings against objectionable articles in the Labour Leader and The Tribunal, a

fortnight prior to the Labour Party Conference in Manchester, best illustrates the new Government's uncertain political future and its cautious approach to the thorny question of censorship. On 12 January 1917 Cave enclosed a number of cuttings from the two papers and informed the Prime Minister that the papers could be prosecuted under DORA No. 27. For instance, in a Labour Leader editorial on 4 January, Snowden had written that "the responsibility for the continuation of the war and for all that is connected with the loss of human life and property will in future be laid at the door of the Entente." On 12 January Lloyd George told Henderson that Cave is "anxious to take steps to suppress these papers and seize their printing presses. What would be the effect of such action on the Manchester Conference?" In his reply to the Prime Minister the next day Henderson admitted "their serious nature, but having regard to the limited circulation, I am doubtful as to whether the effect would be sufficiently great to justify our taking proceedings." In addition, Henderson pinpointed the dilemma posed to the Labour Members of the Government: "I am convinced that were proceedings instituted, the position of the Labour members of the Government would be rendered quite intolerable." Accepting Henderson's advice, Lloyd George notified Cave on 15 January: "I am reluctant to add to the difficulties of Mr. Henderson and his friends, who have so loyally fought these extreme men, unless you think the matter so urgent so as not to brook delay." Acknowledging that Henderson's opinion had "great weight", Cave agreed to postpone the prosecutions "for a time."<sup>39</sup> This correspondence clearly illustrated how sensitively Lloyd George acted with respect to maintaining Labour support and his

reluctance to threaten such a delicate alliance by authorizing a vigorous legal prosecution of publications from an increasingly influential peace-by-negotiation coalition.

Nevertheless, Government departments such as the Home Office, the Press Bureau and the Foreign Office continued to monitor the activities of the Labour Leader in particular and pressed for legal measures to prevent its publication and distribution abroad and at home. For instance, Sir Charles Matthews, the Director of Public Prosecutions, warned the Home Secretary that the publication's "power is said to be considerable, and its influence far-reaching amongst the labouring classes, and, according to its own estimate, it has now a weekly circulation of over 25,000 copies." Moreover, there was a great deal of concern about the overseas circulation of anti-war literature, specifically in providing valuable material for German propaganda. Hubert Montgomery from the Foreign Office wrote to Troup on 25 January 1917, enclosing a copy of an intercepted German wireless message dated 20 January which contained quotations from Snowden's provocative article in the Labour Leader issue of 4 January. Montgomery added that the Foreign Secretary had urged that "vigorous steps should be taken to prevent the publication in that paper of these articles which, far from showing an improvement, continue to become more and more harmful to the national interest." In response to this request to launch formal legal proceedings against the Labour Leader, Troup reminded the Foreign Office on 17 February that the paper was "being watched with a view to action being taken if possible, at a suitable time." On 22 February the Press Bureau issued a press release, requesting



that "no quotations from that paper [ Labour Leader ] should be made for any purpose; otherwise the object of the prohibition is likely in some measure to be frustrated." <sup>40</sup> In retrospect then, neither the Foreign nor the Home Office was willing to assume direct political responsibility for taking legal action based upon the effects of a Labour Leader publication. Given the precarious political support for the new coalition, the War Cabinet counselled moderation and discretion in respect to the growing threat of anti-war propaganda and therefore refrained from applying the full measure of legal powers at its disposal.

E.D. Morel's Truth and the War, published by the National Labour Press in July 1916, was "a particularly vexatious book for governmental opponents of the Union." After encouragement from the Foreign Office, an order prohibiting the export of Truth and the War was issued on 20 October 1916. Despite the ban, some copies reached Holland and the new regime was forced to confront whether further action was necessary to prevent the spread of such literature. Referring to "Morel's poisonous book", M.N. Kearney, a Foreign Office clerk, asked on 13 February 1917: "Can nothing be done to bring Mr. Morel to book for his action which will be of more use to Germany in vilifying our cause than anything which the Germans themselves could invent?" An Assistant Legal Adviser, C.J.B. Hurst suggested on 23 February that the Foreign Secretary should be empowered with the authority "to issue a warrant for the seizure and destruction of any publication which he is prepared to certify would, if it reached foreign countries, prejudice our relations with foreign powers."<sup>41</sup>

The Foreign Office welcomed the Hurst proposal as a means of exerting

control over anti-war propaganda. Recalling what had been done in the case of "the egregious Sylvia Pankhurst who produced a few dozen copies of a single sheet in a taxi-cab", Lord Newton asked, "Why should it not be done in the case of more serious offenders, such as Morel and the Labour Leader?" Lord Robert Cecil, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, also approved of Hurst's proposal but conceded that it would be "useless against Morel's book. I am afraid the opportunity for taking proceedings against him is gone. Sir C. Matthews' [sic] [the Director of Public Prosecutions] timidity is a public danger." The Foreign Secretary admitted that Morel "must be left alone. The H.O. should be consulted on Mr. Hurst's proposal." Accordingly, Maurice de Bunsen, acting Assistant Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, explained the Hurst proposal to the Home Office on 13 March: "its object was not to suppress the right of citizens of this country to criticise their own Government, but merely to ensure that publications were not exported which would have a detrimental effect on the Allied cause in foreign countries." However, Troup replied on 21 March that the Home Secretary did not believe that a new regulation was necessary. If any "similarly mischievous" article which threatened inter-Allied relations was published, Troup assured the Foreign Office that Cave "will be prepared to arrange that the Police should obtain the necessary authority for the immediate seizure of all copies under Regulation 51 (or 51A) of the Defence of the Realm Regulations." The Foreign Office accepted this reply as satisfactory and Montgomery wrote the following day, "I think if we can really get the Home Office to act when the moment comes this will meet our point." <sup>42</sup> By analyzing the new Government's response to the

export of Morel's Truth and the War, likely to prejudice relations with foreign powers, we have witnessed an attempt, on the one hand, to apply the weapon of censorship to combat the exploitation of war weariness by the peace-by-negotiation coalition, and, on the other hand, to respect its tentative partnership with Labour and operate within existing statutes to limit the spread of dissenting literature.

#### The Weapon of Propaganda

The decision made at the very first meeting of the War Cabinet to give the entire question of propaganda its urgent attention marked a growing awareness of the importance of civilian morale and a recognition that the proliferation of anti-war propaganda should be met by a spirited government-financed campaign. With the presentation of the Donald report and the creation of the Department of Information the Lloyd George Government boldly addressed the role of official wartime propaganda with the creation of a new centralized authority directly responsible to the Prime Minister. On 1 January 1917 Lloyd George invited his friend Robert Donald, editor of the Daily Chronicle, to make recommendations on the conduct of government propaganda. On the following day the War Cabinet decided in principle that a "separate Department of State should be set up to deal with the general question of propaganda, but no question was taken to its composition." On 9 January, Donald reported that the essential aims of British propaganda should be: (1) to maintain unity of opinion amongst the Allies; (2) to "influence and nurse" public opinion in neutral countries; (3) to assume an offensive strategy; (4) to explain our peace terms to politicians, publicists, the intelligentsia in neutral countries.

Donald also called on the Allies to issue a statement of war aims and recommended a more rapid distribution of information to the foreign press. In short, he believed that there was "no clear cut organization, no system of efficient delegation, no definite line of distinction between the work of one branch and that of another." He thus proposed the creation of a centralized organization under the direction of an overall head.<sup>43</sup>

Although the War Cabinet had already accepted the idea of a central propaganda organization when Lloyd George received Donald's report, it decided on 24 January to: "select the head of the new organization and invite him to report on the whole question with a view to the establishment of a good home organization as a preliminary." Later that year, Donald confided to C.P. Scott, "I did not refer to individuals or recommend anyone for the position of Director. The position was offered to a number of Members of Parliament and others but they declined." Exactly a week prior to the War Cabinet's decision on 24 January, Milner recommended one of his disciples, John Buchan, who had served as Lord Newton's liason officer with GHQ in France, for the position and urged them not to rely "on ill-informed hearsay." In a letter to J.T. Davies, one of Lloyd George's private secretaries, Lord Northcliffe warned that "unless the new Department has absolute power and is responsible to the Prime Minister or Lord Milner, it will be a sheer waste of time." <sup>44</sup> On Milner's advice, Buchan was therefore appointed the new Director on 9 February at the not inconsiderable salary of £1,000 per annum.

The final step in the establishment of a "Department of Information" to counteract the spread of peace-by-negotiation literature was laid on 20

February when the War Cabinet approved the proposals contained in Buchan's memorandum, "Propaganda - a department of information." His scheme was almost a classic example of compromise: in theory, the Department of Information was set up as an independent, centralized bureau directly responsible to the Prime Minister but working in close connection with the Foreign Office. Its functions were defined by Buchan as: "propaganda, or the putting of the Allied case in neutral countries, and the explanation of the British effort in Allied countries, with the object of ensuring a wholesome state of public opinion; and, at the same time, the direction of British opinion when direction is needed." The Department was divided into four main sections. First, the art and literary section was housed at Wellington House, responsible for the production and distribution of books, pamphlets, photographs, and art work. Second, a press and cinema division was created for the transmission of the official cable and wireless messages through Reuters, Marconi, and the normal diplomatic channels. Third, an intelligence branch was established to ensure a rapid supply of news and information from government departments to the propagandists. Fourth, the administrative division was responsible for the direction of policy and for liaison with other departments. There were also fourteen sub-departments responsible for geographical areas and an advisory committee to provide guidance on policy issues. 45

Although the War Cabinet did not comment on the absence of a section to deal with home propaganda, the new Director was expected to take the necessary steps to establish "a good home organization as a preliminary"

measure towards improving domestic propaganda in order to minimize the impact of dissenting literature. Rationalization had taken place with central financial control, a central record office, and with greater emphasis placed upon liaison facilities in order to secure more effective co-ordination not only within the Department of Information itself but also with those other departments which continued to deal with propaganda. Thus, the Lloyd George Government had acted decisively to recognize the importance of working-class morale and to satisfy the pressures for increased centralization of propaganda in order to mobilize the entire resources of the State to undercut the growing support for peace-by-negotiation sentiment.

#### The Importance of Reconstruction

In an atmosphere of acute war weariness and growing calls for a negotiated peace which characterized the early months of 1917, Lloyd George understood that a renewed emphasis on idealistic war aims was needed to convince the British people that the sacrifices they had already endured and those still being demanded of them were necessary in the struggle for victory. The issue of reconstruction, that is, the direction of official policy on such post-war issues as housing, civilian demobilization, and economic development, was shrewdly used by the new Premier to defang the growing popularity of the peace-by-negotiation coalition and maintain the wartime loyalty of the British public.

The general direction of policy for the post-war period was first evident in Lloyd George's choice of personnel to replace the Asquithian Reconstruction Committee with its mandate to reshape the nation's

institutions. When Montagu offered to assume personal control with two of the secretaries of the previous committee, Vaughan Nash and Maurice Bonham-Carter, the new Prime Minister responded brusquely, "this is a mere shadow of Asquith... Bring me a list of persons with ideas." According to Thomas Jones, an Assistant Secretary to the War Cabinet, a list of fourteen names, including such diverse individuals as Fabians Arthur Greenwood and George Bernard Shaw, progressive Conservatives Leslie Scott and J.W. Hills and two members of Lloyd George's secretariat, Philip Kerr and W.G.S. Adams, was approved by the Premier with a couple of alterations: the names of Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells were struck out, Seebohm Rowntree was added, and the list was trimmed - with the provision that it must have "one of the Webbs." On the whole, the new Reconstruction Committee could be described as "a cameo of the coalition itself", and by Lloyd George's inclination to recruit as many outsiders into the new government, it demonstrated his profound desire to establish a sound political base for the uncertain post-war era. <sup>46</sup>

In his address to the inaugural meeting of the Reconstruction Committee on 16 March 1917 Lloyd George spoke about "his high hopes for it, the need of painting a new picture of Britain with fewer grey colours in it; duty of being ready with schemes for demobilisation, reform of local government, land, health, trade policy, etc." Lloyd George appealed to "the crusading, almost messianic, social consciousness which he felt moved most of its members, a consciousness shared by himself, though in a more instinctive than systematic way." Interestingly enough, Kerr submitted a paper entitled "Copy Notes for Opening Remarks to Reconstruction

Committee" to the Prime Minister sometime in either February or March 1917. In his analysis of the "two halves" of the challenges of reconstruction Kerr argued:

"The first and in some ways the most important half is to formulate some clear ideas about the new Britain, which will, or at any rate ought to exist after the war... The second aspect relates... to the restoration of peace conditions, for instance, Demobilisation of the army, the allocation of the disbanded men and women to new jobs and so forth."

The main questions Lloyd George wished the Committee to consider were first, those "which would arise immediately at the end of the War, and would require settlement without delay", and second, "those which looked to laying the foundations of a new order." In closing, Lloyd George reminded the Committee that "no such opportunity had ever been given to any nation before - not even by the French Revolution. The nation now was in a molten condition: it was malleable now, and would continue to be so for a short time after the war, but not for long." <sup>47</sup> Thus, the exuberance projected by the Prime Minister to create a "new Britain" underlined his deep commitment to check the political appeal of wartime dissent. By promising the British public a better post-war world, Lloyd George also endeavoured to forge a new political coalition to steer the nation towards military victory and personal triumph.

### Conclusion

Accepting the call to the Premiership, the system of government instituted by Lloyd George in December 1916 represented a milestone in British constitutional history. With the origins of a "Revolution in Government", Cabinet government gave way to prime ministerial rule; Parliament's rule diminished, and was slow to recover; even political



parties lost their centrality in a regime whose guiding principle was the pursuit of military victory. Denouncing the arrogant spirit of the German Note and sceptical of "peace without victory", the new Government reiterated its basic understanding about the purpose for which the war was being waged as a crusade against Prussian militarism and as a precondition for a just and fair post-war Britain. <sup>48</sup>

Perhaps the greatest single threat in this mobilization for victory lay in the mounting discontent in the Labour movement as a result of growing food lines, distrust as to Government war aims, restricted industrial relations under the Munitions of War Acts, and the widening incidence of conscription. Labour's receptivity to the ideas of the peace-by-negotiation coalition which included such organizations as the UDC, the ILP, and the NCF threatened the new Government's resolve to restrict individual and industrial liberties in the pursuit of military victory. On contentious issues such as national service, press censorship, and reconstruction policy, the new regime recognized the importance of maintaining the support of the Labour Party by methods of persuasion rather than of compulsion. Aware of the power of government-assisted propaganda in the struggle to uphold morale on the home front, Lloyd George evoked almost messianic images of a "new Britain" as an effective weapon in the relentless quest for the defeat of Germany.

## NOTES

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3. Martin Pugh, Lloyd George. (1988), 100; John Turner, British Politics and the Great War. (1992), 151; John Bourne, Britain and the Great War 1914-1918. (1989), 115, 127, 130.
4. Weinroth, 374.
5. Grigg, Lloyd George: From Peace to War 1912-1916, 481; Gollin, 392; Lord Hankey, The Supreme Command. 1914-1918. I, (1961), 579; Adams and Poirier, 188
6. Andrew Bonar Law Papers: BL 78/3/6, Maurice Hankey to A. Bonar Law, "Coordination of Work under New War Cabinet System", 14 February 1917, 1.3; Pugh, 100.
7. Lord Alfred Milner Papers: MS Milner dep. 358, Maurice Hankey to Lord Milner, "Proposed Weekly Reports from Government Departments", 22 January 1917, 1; Pugh, 102. See also Hankey, I, 580.
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10. Grigg, 486; Lord Beaverbrook Papers: BBK/G/8/III & IV, Lord Milner to Arthur Steel Maitland, 2 December 1916, 1; See also Adams and Poirier, 189.
11. Riddell, diary entry 18 February 1917, 243. See also Grigg, 486-487 and Pugh, 101. The BWNL later shortened its name to the British Workers' League (BWL).
12. Lloyd George, I, 624.
13. Pugh, 104-105; Lloyd George, I, 620.
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Chapter IV: Spring in Crisis: March - May 1917

The sudden overthrow of Tsardom in March 1917 and the appearance of a moderate Liberal coalition had enormous repercussions on the political future of both the British Government and the forces of wartime dissent. Would the Triple Entente remain intact? If not, could Lloyd George continue his advocacy of the "knock-out blow" policy. If Russia left the war, would there be a compromise peace? Thereafter, the attitudes and actions of the Lloyd George Government and the peace-by-negotiation alliance alike were shaped by two crucial developments arising from the creation of the new Provisional Government: first, the publication of the Russian "Charter of Freedom" on 16 March, promising the restoration and extension of civil liberties, and, second, the subsequent announcement of the "Petrograd formula" issued on 9 April, endorsing a peace based upon "no annexations, no indemnities."

Lloyd George hoped that the escape from the corruption and inefficiency of the Tsarist regime and the substitution of a more enlightened coalition removed the embarrassment for Britain of an alliance with an autocracy against the Kaiser and might lead to a more efficient prosecution of the war. However, there was also deep anxiety within Conservative circles, particularly among Milner and Bonar Law, about the future of Russian participation in the war, especially as the adoption of the "Petrograd formula" by the Provisional Government contradicted earlier pledges to honour the Allied secret treaties negotiated with the late Tsar. On the home front, the British Government feared the formation of an effective political alliance between the revolutionary Shop

Stewards' Movement and the peace-by-negotiation coalition which would undermine popular support for the prosecution of the war effort.

For the moderate Left, the creation of a Provisional Government raised enormous expectations: first, for the restoration of civil liberties at home, and, second and somewhat later, for a European-wide peace settlement. When the Provisional Government followed the lead of the Petrograd Soviet in April and proclaimed its support for a non-vindictive peace, the UDC boasted that the new Russian Government had accepted its principles for a negotiated and democratic peace. Nonetheless, the revolution in Russia highlighted deep ideological divisions within the British Left: on the one hand, the militant Left was preoccupied with industrial action and economic emancipation, and, on the other hand, the peace-by-negotiation coalition were concerned with the further erosion of individual rights and with the campaign to end the war. In this climate of political turmoil and given the fluidity of events, these markedly different interpretations must therefore be analyzed as typical of the opening salvos in what was to develop into a lengthy and acrimonious public debate over the true meaning of the Russian Revolution. <sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, the British Government faced growing doubts as to whether military victory was possible. With France still exhausted from the failure of the Nivelle campaign in April 1917, and with America many months from becoming an effective military factor, mounting casualty lists, spiralling food prices, stories of profiteering, and hostility against the wartime suspension of trade union privileges had begun to weaken support for the war among the more militant sections of the working class. This

spirit of political uneasiness was accompanied by a growing concern with the general militarisation of civil life, along authoritarian Prussian lines. The expansion of military modes of obedience thus helped to shift the focus of most peace dissenters not only from a negotiated peace but also to the protection of individual rights. <sup>2</sup>

Faced with this potentially lethal combination of internal subversion and loss of will on the part of her Allies, the Lloyd George Government confronted five challenges during the spring of 1917 to the effective prosecution of the war: (1) the threat that the ideals of the March Revolution would unify all the disparate elements within wartime dissent and lead to a reinvigorated peace campaign; (2) the entry of the United States into the war and its political importance to the ongoing war aims debate; (3) the concern for the growth of exported dissenting literature to the enemy which prompted the Government's decision to ban the foreign circulation of the liberal Nation newspaper; (4) the outbreak of the "May Strikes" in the engineering industry prompted by the Government's decision to abolish the Trade Card scheme and to extend dilution to private work, and, (5) the civil libertarian campaign to alleviate the brutal treatment of absolutist conscientious objectors which demonstrated the State's readiness to restrict civil liberties and pursue its military agenda.

Impact of the March Revolution in Russia:  
Part I: The Campaign for Civil Liberties

The peace-by-negotiation coalition responded to the formation of the Provisional Government in three main ways. First, in the wake of the publication of the Russian "Charter of Freedom" in the British press on 17



March 1917, Russell and Marshall formed a Committee for Anglo-Russian Co-operation, which advocated a British "Charter of Freedom", demanding equal liberties and the granting of an amnesty to all political and religious prisoners, including conscientious objectors. This group appears to have been the same as, or else a sub-group of, the one referred to in most sources as the Anglo-Russian Democratic Alliance. Led by the Labour pacifist politician and journalist George Lansbury, this Alliance was sponsored by the Herald, and included as its members, Robert Williams of the Transport Workers, Robert Smillie from the Miners' Federation, and W.C. Anderson, an ILP M.P. This second, more influential, organization focused its efforts on a mass meeting in support of the Russian Revolution to be held at the Albert Hall at the end of March. Thirdly, Ramsay MacDonald led an ILP campaign to make contact with the new Russian Government, specifically with its socialist Minister of Justice, Alexander Kerensky, to publicize the ILP's support for a negotiated peace, and to follow Russia's lead with the establishment of all-inclusive committees, provocatively named Workers' and Soldiers' Councils.<sup>3</sup>

The NCF Anglo-Russian Committee took immediate action on 17 March by drafting a British "Charter of Freedom" in order to capitalize on the new spirit of democracy and civil liberty. Influenced by the recent Russian publication, the paper demanded the release of conscientious objectors and Irish prisoners, the cessation of prosecutions under the DORA and the Munitions Acts, the suppression of agents provocateurs, and the implementation of Home Rule and adult suffrage. In an attempt to transcend the political differences between groups such as the peace-by-

negotiation alliance and militant labour activists, the draft ended with this inspiring challenge: "It is vital to seize the moment while the effect is at its height. A dramatic action now may decide hundreds of thousands of waverers and alter the whole course of future history." This determination to exploit the spirit of the Russian "Charter of Freedom" was evident in Russell's letter to all NCF Branch secretaries, dated on 21 March, urging them to devote all their energy "to promote the agitation for the introduction of the newly won liberties of Russia into this country." Russell's enthusiasm for the events in Russia mirrored the sense of joy throughout the antiwar movement and was obvious in a letter to Lucy Donnelly, an old friend, on 23 March: "The Russian Revolution is a stupendous event. Though no one can tell how it will work out, it can hardly fail to do great good. It has been more cheering than anything that has happened since the war began." <sup>4</sup>

The Anglo-Russian Co-operation Committee approached a long list of people such as John Burns, the former Liberal Cabinet Minister who had resigned in opposition to Britain's entry into the war, and Philip Snowden for potential support in their campaign to initiate a debate on the issue of a British "Charter of Freedom" in Parliament. In addition, Lord Parmoor, a Conservative peer, was approached to speak in the House of Lords and John Dillon, the influential Irish Nationalist, was asked to introduce the issue of absolutist conscientious objectors in the anticipated debate on the Russian Revolution on 22 March in the House of Commons. However, the hopes of the NCF were dashed when Bonar Law refused to permit debate on the Government's resolution in support of the Russian Revolution and its hopes

for a more vigorous prosecution of the war effort. As a result, the canvassing efforts on behalf of the NCF Committee fell on deaf ears: both Burns and Snowden, for instance, believed that the time was "not ripe" to ask the Government to apply the provisions of the Russian Charter to Britain, particularly with regard to the release of conscientious objectors. Despite Parmoor's interest in the plight of the absolutists, most other sympathetic peers agreed with Lord Bryce, the former Liberal Cabinet Minister, that "the cause of civil liberty has nothing to gain" by associating with the Russian Charter "which has not yet been carried into effect." By 24 March, just a week after the creation of the NCF Committee, the campaign for a British "Charter of Freedom" had failed to influence Parliament and, consequently, its efforts to seize the moment were effectively abandoned. <sup>5</sup>

The momentum passed from the "Charter of Freedom" campaign to preparations by the Herald group for a large anti-war demonstration against the restrictions to which the war had given rise. For the ranks of wartime dissent the Albert Hall meeting represented "the major celebration of the [civil libertarian] hopes aroused in Britain for sweeping changes modelled on the Russian example." Over twelve thousand people packed the meeting, which was chaired by Lansbury, and passed a resolution sending "joyful congratulations to Russia and other countries to follow the Russian example by establishing the same freedoms." Lansbury also appealed to the British Government to implement the programme sent out by the Revolutionary Labour Party of Russia which would serve as "a bulwark for the future freedom of the whole of the human race." In the words of the

Manchester Guardian, "perhaps the biggest storm of applause... was roused by Mr. Smillie's demand for religious freedom and the release of the conscientious objectors." The jovial atmosphere was heightened by Clara Butt's rendition of "Give to us peace in our time", and the rally concluded with the crowd's singing of the "Red Flag." <sup>6</sup>

A noteworthy feature of this demonstration was its remarkable glimpse of a section of public opinion disaffected from the Government's domestic and military agenda. The presence of nationally known Labour figures such as Smillie and Williams represented the first occasion on which the Labour Movement's welcome for the Russian Revolution had found organized expression. The day after the Albert Hall meeting Russell enthused that "the Russians have really put a new spirit into the world, and it is going to be worthwhile to be alive." Hence, this open rally against the war and its celebration of civil liberty and democracy highlighted the temporary unity within wartime dissent to take direct political action for the restoration of individual rights and to put pressure on the Government to conclude an early peace.

Nonetheless, the absence of leading Labour representatives in the Government and powerful Labour leaders who supported the war effort "rendered ephemeral the aspirations of the Albert Hall enthusiasts." As long as Arthur Henderson remained a member of the War Cabinet, or even as one of the leading spokesmen of Labour outside the Government, the overwhelming majority of the Labour Party would remain committed to the pursuit of victory. By implication, patriotic labour were opposed to any move on the part of dissenters which would promote open defiance of the

Military Service Acts or undermine Allied military fortunes. Any attempt to exploit the revolutionary spirit of the March Revolution was undermined by a fundamental division between a handful of revolutionaries and the vast majority of moderates within the British Left - the latter holding very different views on what the fall of Tsardom meant to the prospect of a negotiated and non-vindictive peace.<sup>7</sup>

For the militant Left, the Russian Revolution had immediate relevance both to the issue of peace and to the prospects of socialism in Britain based on the Russian model of the "Soviet." By contrast, Labour supporters of the war effort, particularly those within the patriotic TUC, applauded the downfall of Russian autocracy in the name of freedom and democracy, whereas moderate opponents of the "knock-out blow" such as the UDC supported the Revolution as a means of winning Labour's support and compelling the British Government to negotiate peace. However, most members of the peace-by-negotiation coalition did not support more far-reaching initiatives such as the "May Strikes" to exploit working class unrest with armed insurrection. In any case, the initiative passed from the Albert Hall meeting to the ILP Conference in early April and the efforts of Ramsay MacDonald, among others, to reach out to Russian Socialists and to support their campaign for the restoration of civil rights and the implementation of a negotiated peace.<sup>8</sup>

Prior to the ILP Conference set for 7-9 April 1917 in Leeds, MacDonald lost no time in identifying himself and his associates with the Provisional Government. On 29 March he dined with a group of UDC members, including Morel, Ponsonby, Trevelyan, and the Liberal journalists

Massingham and Gardiner to discuss how to make contact with the new Russian Government. They decided to send a telegram to Kerensky: "We must strengthen this spirit... [I]f Russia will keep democratic, she could now end the war very shortly, spread her revolution over Europe, each country being influenced in accord with its own conditions, & open the door for a real international democracy." MacDonald also worked for the deeply class conscious weekly of the Scottish ILP, Forward, and in his column, "From a Labour Bench," he ridiculed the suggestion that the revolution would "aid the war." The Russian Socialists were, in his mind, the spiritual cousins of the ILP and left-wing Liberals. In the programme of the Petrograd Soviet, he argued, "the ILP finds a new justification and expression of its policy." At the ILP Conference on 9 April MacDonald moved, at the request of the NAC, the following resolution, expressing "warm approval" for a revolutionary agenda which included an "amnesty for political prisoners, religious liberty, liberty of speech and conscience, right of combination and the setting up of free political institutions... [as] ... the prelude to economic and social freedom in the year ahead."<sup>9</sup>

The atmosphere at the ILP Conference fed on the enthusiasm of its delegates who believed that events were justifying "more and more the attitude of the Party on the war and the problems to which it has given rise." Snowden, for example, lamented the loss of political and industrial liberty at home and asserted that "it remained for the people of this country to overthrow the despotic and autocratic Government of the Lloyd George and Northcliffe dictatorship." In addition, Tom Richardson pleaded for ILP members to "follow the example of their Russian comrades,

and throw in their own lot with the workers to rebuild a new and nobler world." The Conference was described by the Labour Leader as "an inspiration which will be of incalculable service to the Party."<sup>10</sup> Inspired by the Russian Revolution, then, the ILP banged the revolutionary drum and championed the inter-related themes of political freedom, civil liberty, and a democratic peace settlement.

Impact of the March Revolution in Russia. Part II:  
The "Petrograd Formula" vs. The "Knock-out Blow"

With the publication of the "Petrograd formula" in the West on 11 April 1917, the peace-by-negotiation coalition shifted its focus from the campaign for the restoration of civil liberties to the creation of a new political and social order in Europe. On the other hand, alarmed by this new ideological offensive, the British Government's decision to solicit the support of Labour leaders to undertake a special mission to Russia demonstrated Lloyd George's political cunning to contain the domestic appeal of the "Petrograd formula" and also to prevent Russia from concluding a separate peace.

In its appeal to the peoples of the world to press their rulers to give up conquests, annexations, and indemnities, the Provisional Government was compelled by the Petrograd Soviet to abandon the Allied secret treaties and invited other belligerents to make peace on these bases. "The Russian Provisional Government has followed President Wilson in endorsing the principles of the UDC", proclaimed an editorial in the U.D.C., the Union's monthly journal. Moreover, Snowden reminded readers in the Labour Leader on 19 April that the "Petrograd formula" "might, indeed, be regarded as a paraphrase of the declarations of the ILP or the UDC upon the

war and the peace settlement." In response to this dramatic shift in Russian policy, it was now "clearly necessary for a new statement of war aims by the Entente powers." The UDC, encouraged by developments in Russia, publicly declared that the real war, the one the dissenters had been fighting all along, was found on the home front between those who "uphold the principles of the UDC," and those who "persist in sacrificing the manhood of Europe to their ambitions, their hatreds and the lively fears they entertain." <sup>11</sup>

By contrast, the task of welcoming the Russian Revolution and absorbing it into the Allied war effort fell to Lloyd George and Bonar Law. Given the uncertainty surrounding future Russian involvement in the war and the prospect of revolution disintegrating into civil war, the British Government was determined that the Provisional Government would remain firmly in the hands of the pro-Allied forces. Aware of the potential political value from the collapse of Russian despotism and the formation of a new liberal regime, Kerr submitted a draft to the Prime Minister in preparation for Lloyd George's statement in the House of Commons on 19 March. Kerr proposed that Britain should officially recognize the new Government when "it is able to give its assurances as to its ability to prosecute the war with energy and decision." He also hoped that the Russian people will show no "confusion or slackening in the conduct of the war, but [will work] in the even closer and more effective co-operation between the Russian people and its Allies in the cause of human freedom." <sup>12</sup> The Prime Minister repeated verbatim the above statement and, in so doing underscored Kerr's important role as Lloyd George's



principal speech-writer on foreign policy and war aims.

Addressing the House on 22 March, Bonar Law introduced a resolution which expressed its confidence that the Allied war effort would be imbued "with renewed steadfastness and vigour... against the stronghold of an autocratic militarism which threatens the liberty of Europe." However, before the closure of the debate, Bonar Law outraged dissenters when he expressed "a feeling of compassion for the late Tsar... our loyal ally, and who had laid upon him by his birth a burden which has proved too heavy for him." These remarks did not go unchallenged. Ponsonby, for instance, ridiculed the notion that the revolution had taken place to insure a more vigorous prosecution of the war, and asked that the new regime be permitted to proceed unhindered by internal or external pressure. However, no debate was allowed, thereby demonstrating the Government's contempt for the institution of Parliament. Typical of widespread peace-by-negotiation sentiment and growing war weariness, Ponsonby's remarks revealed an unbounded sympathy for the Provisional Government; whereas, Bonar Law's action was indicative of a vague unease with the Tsar's fall, and coincided with Lloyd George's imminent decision to send a deputation of Labour representatives to Russia in an attempt to strengthen Russia's participation in the Allied war effort.<sup>13</sup>

Acting upon the advice of Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador in Petrograd, the Government supported the Constitutional Democrats in the Duma who were committed to the establishment of responsible, constitutional government. In order to strengthen the authority of the Russian parliament, he issued a telegram on 15 March, recommending

that British labour leaders send letters of support "expressing their confidence that Kerensky [ a Social Revolutionary] and Chkheidze [ a Menshevik] and their comrades will support free peoples fighting German despotism." A telegram was accordingly drafted by the Foreign Office which proclaimed that "the despotism of Germany must be overthrown if the way is to be opened for free and peaceful development of European nations." Any slackening of the war effort "means disaster to comrades in the trenches and to our common hopes of social regeneration." <sup>14</sup> In addition, on 26 March the War Cabinet sent two pro-war Labour MPs, Will Thorne and James O'Grady, on an Anglo-French Mission to Petrograd, their object being to keep Russia in the war. Recognizing the importance of Russian involvement in the Allied war effort, the Lloyd George Government had therefore enlisted the active support of Labour to undercut the appeal of the "Petrograd formula" within the British Left.

These events coincided with the suggestion from the joint Dutch-Scandinavian Committee of neutral Socialists, presided over by Karl Branting, in April 1917, for a meeting in Stockholm of the International Socialist Congress to discuss war aims. When the executive committee of the Petrograd Soviet approved of such a conference, the British Labour Party voted on 9 May to send a delegation consisting of Henderson, G.H. Roberts, and W.F. Purdy, to Petrograd to ascertain the Soviets' intentions. In a further development, the Petrograd Soviet had proposed an Allied Conference for the discussion of war aims in Russia. In addition, the Dutch-Scandinavian Socialists decided to arrange a series of separate and

successive conversations between the delegates of the various belligerent nations' Socialist parties. 15

To their alarm, the War Cabinet learnt on 21 May that M. Vandervelde, the Belgian Socialist leader, had participated in such talks, and the arrival of Russian and German representatives appeared imminent. In response, the War Cabinet admitted that "a British refusal to participate would have a very serious effect in Russia and would strengthen the German anti-British propaganda in that country." Aware that Ramsay MacDonald and F.W. Jowett of the ILP and Albert Inkpin of the BSP had applied for passports for Petrograd, presumably with the intention of stopping at Stockholm en route, the War Cabinet believed that a strong pro-war delegation of the Labour Party ought to accompany them to argue that the war must be brought to a successful end. 16

"Holding that the success or failure of the Allies in this war depends, on a great extent, on what Russia is going to do," the War Cabinet dispatched Henderson on 23 May on a special mission to Petrograd to report on the political situation and to suggest the steps necessary to keep Russia in the war. Simultaneously, the War Cabinet granted passports to MacDonald and his colleagues allowing them to accompany the delegation of the Majority Section of the Labour Party led by Roberts. On 8 June, Lord Robert Cecil announced in Parliament that MacDonald would be given a passport on the understanding that he would not be permitted to communicate directly or indirectly with enemy subjects. That night, MacDonald dined with Lloyd George, whom he remembered as "particularly friendly," and who spoke of the war as one of "liberation." MacDonald was also asked to arrange a

meeting between Lloyd George and Kerensky.<sup>17</sup> However, MacDonald's visit to Petrograd was halted when Havelock Wilson's Sailors' and Firemen's Union refused to allow him to leave Aberdeen because of their strong dislike for the ILP leader's anti-war views. The Labour Party Executive, challenged by this unexpected development, agreed to do nothing till after Henderson's return. Despite the inability of the Labour Mission to proceed to Petrograd in early June, the decision to encourage Labour delegates to visit Russia highlighted Lloyd George's political savvy in limiting the political appeal of the "Petrograd formula" at home and strengthening Britain's commitment to victory.

#### America Enters the War

The idealism generated by the overthrow of Tsardom within the British peace-by-negotiation coalition and their hopes for American mediation to end the war were dampened by President Wilson's war message on 2 April 1917. Moreover, America's entry magnified the internal divisions within wartime dissent as to whether the war would be shortened or lengthened. To Snowden, the metamorphosis of the "peace without victory" message into American military intervention was a heavy blow, for Wilson's ideas were to be realized only after the "knock-out blow" had been delivered. In the Labour Leader on 12 April, for instance, he feared that war fever in the United States would "inflame the worst passions" and "excite cupidity and aggression." Russell, too, feared that militarism would increase and he believed that "without America, universal exhaustion might have driven all the nations to a compromise peace - obviously the best in the interests of international concord." By contrast, Morel believed that Wilson would

surely use his considerable influence to "curb the ambitions and emotions of those states with which the United States was now associated." Wilson's refusal to enter into a formal alliance with the Allies was also interpreted as an encouraging sign that the United States would be able to dictate the terms at a peace settlement. In any case, the American entry into the war left peace dissenters "with little alternative but to invest their hopes in democratic revolt, unaided by the trans-Atlantic *deus ex machina*." 18

The Lloyd George Government lost no time in capitalizing on the propaganda value of America's entrance into the war. In order to place the peace-by-negotiation coalition on the defensive, the Government portrayed the recent champion of a negotiated peace as its most imposing opponent in their common struggle to set the world free from the scourge of Prussian militarism. Yet, with Wilson in a stronger position to advocate a League of Nations and other idealistic goals, Lloyd George sought to assure both American as well as domestic public opinion that he had similar war aims, especially, a reformed post-war world. On 3 April the War Cabinet agreed to send a special mission to Washington to explain the material needs of the Allies; on the following day, Balfour was chosen to lead the mission. But when Balfour tried to brief the President with the contents of the Allied secret treaties, Wilson refused to discuss them in any great detail and explained that the treaties would be unpopular in America. By preserving his political independence, Wilson believed that the United States "might exercise powerful and valuable influence" at a peace conference. Still, Balfour remained optimistic that America "will use every endeavour to prosecute it [the war] successfully." In short, Balfour's

Mission served to underline the common aim of both countries to establish peace with victory, as a necessary precondition for a secure peace.<sup>19</sup>

As part of the British Government's strategy to rally public opinion to the flagging war effort and to deflate hopes for a compromise peace, Lloyd George heeded Kerr's political advice and skilfully exploited the War-for-Democracy-against-Autocracy theme. Here he emphasized the historical significance of America's new commitment to the defeat of the Prussian menace. Public statements by Lloyd George and Bonar Law welcomed the President's "noble deliverance" and described America's intervention as the "turning point" in the struggle. These public remarks not only recognized the importance of American resources, but placed an equal emphasis upon the common ground between their moral justification for entering the war. It once and for all stamped the conflict as a "struggle against military autocracy", whereby neither country was animated by lust of conquest nor any other selfish ends. Thus, the British Government exploited the American intervention for obvious political gain: first, to capitalize on the divisions within the peace-by-negotiation coalition confused about Wilson's views on the "Petrograd formula" and his new determination to defeat Prussianism, and, second, to re-energize the weary Allied war effort with a new propaganda offensive in the defence of democracy and civilization.<sup>20</sup>

#### The Anvil of Censorship: The "Nation" Newspaper

In a meeting on 16 April 1917 the War Cabinet upheld the earlier decision taken by the War Office to prohibit the export of the liberal weekly, the Nation. This action once again demonstrated the

Government's resolve to counteract the "detrimental influence" of dissenting literature which threatened Allied morale and prejudiced its chances of military success. Ironically, this particular publication, despite its limited circulation, had been recognized as the most responsible and influential journal of the pre-war phenomenon, the "New Liberalism", of which Lloyd George was once considered the most prominent spokesman. By providing weekly lunches, which leading Liberal politicians such as Lloyd George and Churchill, and "New Liberal" theorists such as J.A. Hobson and L.T. Hobhouse frequented, the Nation urged the Liberal Government to extend State intervention with an emphasis upon social reconstruction and progressive taxation.<sup>21</sup> More ominously, the restriction on the export of anti-war literature foreshadowed the Government's decision later that year to pass DORA Regulation 27C requiring all publications relating to the war or to the conclusion of peace to submit their work to the Press Bureau for approval.

The War Office reported to the War Cabinet that the tone of certain articles in the Nation "amounted to an encouragement of the various Associations organised in this country to promote peace, and a continual suggestion that peace, however inconclusive would be better than a continuation of the struggle." When extracts from the Nation of 3 March had been quoted extensively in an intercepted German Wireless Communique of 26 March, in which British strategy was compared unfavourably with that of the Germans, the War Office swiftly prohibited the export of the Nation. The Prime Minister was particularly concerned lest "at the moment when the enemy was war-weary and feeling that the

end might not be far off, the effect of such articles would be to encourage him to continue the struggle." 22

The parliamentary protest against the suppression of the Nation was led by W.M.R. Pringle, the anti-war Liberal M.P. He lambasted the Government's double-standard towards the censorship of the press and praised Massingham, the paper's editor, as "one of the most fearless and courageous men in British journalism... [who] ... has had the courage not to take in every respect his marching orders from the Press Bureau or from 10 Downing Street." In response, the Prime Minister explained that it was the late Liberal Government which had initiated the policy of prohibiting the export of certain newspapers, and pointed to the decision in July 1916 to ban the export of the Labour Leader. Accordingly, the British Government was "entitled, for the protection not merely of our own soldiers, but for the protection of the people at home, and in order to prosecute this War, to save bloodshed and to bring it to an end at the earliest possible moment, to stop its export." In closing, Lloyd George dismissed the accusations of dissenters who decried the expansion of legal tyranny by appealing to the House not to be "misled by a very natural sentiment against anything which appears to be like a restriction on freedom of speech. There is no restriction of freedom of speech and discussion within the limits of this country." 23

Although the military stalemate on the Western Front had a greater impact than the prohibition of dissenting literature upon the growing fatigue and war weariness of the British soldier, the ban on the Nation had illustrated how far Lloyd George had betrayed the ideals of the "New Liberalism." Once the tireless advocate for social legislation, Lloyd George



had usurped the power of the State to deprive Britons of their basic individual rights and had demanded even greater sacrifices of them in the pursuit of victory. While the Prime Minister expressed his deep concern for the well-being of the British soldier, this unyielding dedication to the "knock-out blow" policy was perhaps the principal reason for such low morale within the British Army which had witnessed the horrors of the Somme, but as yet had not experienced the impending slaughter of Passchendaele later that year.

#### The "May Strikes": A Potential Revolution?

The May engineering strikes were the largest of the war and involved 200,000 workers over a three week period. In this climate of economic and political uncertainty, the War Cabinet feared the formation of a unified Labour, peace-by-negotiation coalition powerful enough to impose its will upon the direction of the war effort and usurp the authority of representative government. The Lloyd George Coalition thus understood the need to isolate support for the militant Shop Stewards' Movement and to gather information about specific labour-related problems and then, if possible, solve them. Nonetheless, the Government overestimated the strength of the "May Strikes" and failed to understand that an effective alliance between the shop stewards and the peace dissenters was highly unlikely. For the leaders of the militant Left, the "May Strikes" represented a battle in defence of craft privilege and the struggle for exemption from military service, not as an opportunity to rally support for the adoption of the "Petrograd formula." By contrast, the peace-by-negotiation coalition refused to risk a bloody revolution by exploiting industrial unrest in order

to force the British Government to forsake the "knock-out blow", let alone join in the struggle to establish a workers' state. <sup>24</sup>

Unwittingly aided by this division between the aspirations of the moderate and militant Left, Lloyd George moved swiftly to contain support for the Shop Stewards' Movement by bringing criminal actions against its leaders. Simultaneously, he tried to conciliate moderate labour opinion by appointing a Commission on Industrial Unrest with George Barnes, the Minister of Pensions, in the chair to report on the causes of the disturbances. Moreover, the War Cabinet held a conference on 15 May to gather information about specific labour problems from all Government departments that were involved with the Labour Movement, and authorized the Director of the Department of Information on 22 May to place greater emphasis on the application of home propaganda. <sup>25</sup> By a skilful policy of conciliation and coercion, Lloyd George thus averted, for the time being, the very real danger that the frustrations and hardships within the rank and file might jeopardize the vital production of munitions, precipitate a General Strike, and plunge the country into industrial chaos.

The Government faced considerable opposition from the Shop Stewards' Movement led by self appointed leaders such as Arthur MacManus and J.T. Murphy who were prepared to usurp the industrial status quo. In early April, Lloyd George had received a full report entitled "Notes on the Strike Movement", written by Major W.M. Lee, an associate of Milner, which reported with considerable alarm that the war had brought together a disparate group of left-wing organizations. The so-called "Revolutionary Ring" included relatively moderate groups such as the UDC,

the NCF, and the ILP, along with more subversive organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the CWC, and the Shop Stewards' Movement. The author warned: "considered as a whole, the combination may truly be said to be formidable, even perilous to the State." At the Second General Conference of the Rank and File Movement in Birmingham on 3-4 March 1917, attended by over 120 delegates, "their first business was to discover some suitable ground for a General Strike." This particular group was led "by an active and intelligent inner circle of agitators" who were engaged in a "mutiny against the official leaders of the [A.S.E]." 26

The author also suggested several measures which incidentally resembled the line Lloyd George had adopted a year earlier on the Clyde such as the immediate redress of all genuine grievances, the sole recognition of legitimate Trade Unionism, and swift legal action against the mutineers. Deeply concerned at the rise of revolutionary groups, Lloyd George informed the War Cabinet on 6 April that there was

"a very considerable and highly-organised labour movement with seditious tendencies, which was developing in many industrial centres. At bottom there appeared to be genuine and legitimate grievances, but there was a danger of these being exploited by violent anarchists."

In response, the War Cabinet decided that "as soon as further evidence was forthcoming the Government should endeavour to remove the grievances without delay, in order, as far as possible, to forestall trouble." A week later, Milner, Henderson, and Hodge were authorized to investigate these "labour grievances and seditious tendencies" and to "take such measures as they saw fit" to prevent the spread of labour militancy. 27

When the Government failed to respond to a dispute over the extension of dilution on private work at a textile engineering firm near Rochdale in March 1917, unofficial leadership seized the reins from the ASE and persuaded the workers to strike at the end of April. Despite a tentative agreement between the Government and the ASE in early May that skilled men or apprentices would not be called up until all the dilutees fit for military service had been recruited, the strikers defied the authority of the ASE and failed to return to work. The Government adopted an increasingly hard line as of 9 May when the strike had spread to the Midlands and the Ministry of Munitions threatened to take "effective action against those responsible for instigating the strikes." At a conference with fifty unions representing the Engineering and Shipbuilding Federation the next day, Henderson promised that the Government would be "prepared to go to any length - at any rate, reasonable length - with you to stamp this pernicious influence and policy out of the ranks of organised labour, because it is going to be disastrous to the country and disastrous to organised labour." On 11 May Henderson, Addison, and Hodge met with the Public Prosecutor and Scotland Yard to settle on the procedure with respect to prosecutions and decided to issue a proclamation and take legal action the following week. But the prosecutions were delayed as His Majesty was scheduled to make a tour of the northern industrial areas. On 17 May, at a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, which included Milner, Henderson, Addison, Matthews, and Thomson, it was decided to prosecute ten of the most militant ringleaders. In an effort to end the impasse, the Government had therefore rendered the strike movement leaderless and made it more

susceptible to the power of legal intimidation.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, one hundred delegates from thirty-four district shop steward committees had summoned a national conference in London for 15 May to deal with the work of organizing and co-ordinating the districts affected and to decide on a common line of action. However, when the delegates attempted to open direct talks with the Ministry of Munitions, Addison made it clear that he would negotiate with only the official representatives of the unions. On 17 May warrants were issued for the ten strike leaders and the police raided the Conference, confiscated documents related to the strike, and effectively broke up the meeting. During talks between Addison and a joint deputation from the ASE Executive Council and the unofficial conference on 19 May, the shop stewards agreed that they "should advise the men to return to work at once" and "use their best endeavours" to prevent the resumption "of any stoppage of work in the future." In return, Addison pledged that there would "no victimisation in consequence of the present strike in any Government or Controlled Establishment."<sup>29</sup> When the arrested men signed a pledge on 23 May to adhere to the terms agreed to on 19 May, Lloyd George agreed to drop the charges, and the strikers resumed work. The "May Strikes" were finally at an end. Although the War Cabinet had seemingly reversed its policy of not recognizing the shop stewards by indirectly negotiating with them at a joint meeting on 19 May, the Government had effectively isolated support for the Shop Stewards' Movement and averted an industrial catastrophe.

Throughout the "May Strikes", several leading Government figures felt certain that the Shop Stewards' movement was secretly supported by

German agents and professional agitators whose intention was to organize a revolution that would end British participation in the war. Aware that the survival of the coalition hinged on its ability to tap the vast body of patriotic sentiment within the Labour Movement to support the war, the Government was determined to prevent the formation of an alliance between industrial militants and peace dissenters. For instance, Lord Derby, in a letter to the Prime Minister on 11 May, suggested that "if you could lay about 25 of the prime instigators of this trouble by the heels, I believe the whole thing would subside. Action has got to be taken immediately or it will be too late." A week later, Troup informed the Chief Constable that "all reports with regard to (1) strikes, (2) impending strikes and labour unrest generally and (3) sabotage should in future be sent to the Home Office who will forward them to the Department or Departments concerned." On 24 May General J.C. Smuts expressed his concern about "the grave dangers to this country in this war and thereafter" if the workers' grievances were not alleviated. Two days later, Frances Stevenson recorded in her diary that industrial unrest was "the most sinister thing at present, & is simply being engineered by German agents and Pacifists who are trying to corrupt the workers." Commenting on an intercepted letter from C.P. Trevelyan to a friend in Petrograd, she described it as "a most malicious document" which gloated over the fact that the poor would soon be hungry for revolution.<sup>30</sup>

Deeply worried about the activities of the peace movement during the "May Strikes", Milner submitted a most alarmist document to the Prime Minister on 26 May and included a report by Victor Fisher, secretary of the BWL. Fisher warned that "the combination between the UDC, Quaker money,

the ILP, the vast number of shirkers, together with the discharged and dissatisfied soldiers is a very ugly one." Afflicted by a deep sense of paranoia, he alleged that the object of the UDC-ILP alliance has been to

"bring about a strike, followed by rioting of such a nature that troops would be obliged to fire, and from this they hoped to evolve a general strike which would bring the War up with a jerk here, in much the same manner as the Revolution has stopped all military proceedings in Russia."

Fisher also misrepresented Morrell [sic] (De Ville) as "a German agent" who "very nearly succeeded at the end of last week in bringing about a complete Labour revolt in this country." In recognition of "the deliberate agitation of mischief-makers, who sow discontent among the workmen," Milner supported the "systematic work" by patriotic Labour men "to counteract the very systematic and active propaganda of the Pacifists, and to prevent their capturing the Trade Councils and other bodies, who profess to represent though they often misrepresent the working classes." He also proposed that Lloyd George meet Fisher, "whose information about the state of feeling in the Labour world I have always found very reliable." Pretending only a casual knowledge of the BWL, Milner concluded that if the Prime Minister approved of Fisher, the War Cabinet could provide this new organization "with a little encouragement and guidance" in its task of "counter-mining" the seditious influence of the UDC and the ILP.<sup>31</sup>

On 1 June, Milner again wrote to Lloyd George about his fears, enclosing a copy of the Labour Leader for 31 May which had printed copies of the resolutions for the upcoming Leeds Convention, scheduled for the first week in June to celebrate the ideals of the March Revolution and discuss its relevance to Britain. Milner also forwarded a copy of a

memorandum by Fisher entitled "Mission of the ILP and BSP Leaders to Russia." Fisher advised the Government to ban the Leeds Convention and to halt the visit of MacDonald and Inkpin to Russia. Milner echoed Fisher's recommendations, warning that "we shall have to take some strong steps to stop the "rot" in this country, unless we wish to "follow Russia" into impotence and dissolution. <sup>32</sup> Thus, in the aftermath of the March Revolution, the "Petrograd formula", and the "May Strikes", the Lloyd George Government was particularly apprehensive about the explosive potential of an international Socialist revolt which, if combined with domestic industrial unrest, threatened to topple the political and military status quo.

As part of a concerted effort to "countermine" domestic unrest, officials from the Home Office, War Office, the Ministry of Munitions, the Ministry of Labour, Admiralty Shipyard Labour Department, and the National Service Department were summoned by the War Cabinet to a "Labour Intelligence" Conference on 15 May. The Ministry of Labour was authorized to collate information from all other departments; not later than Wednesday in each week, the Ministry of Munitions, Army Contracts Department, Shipyard Labour Department, and the Coal Controller were to provide the Ministry of Labour with information within their jurisdiction. In addition, Scotland Yard, the War Office (Military Intelligence), and GHQ Home Forces were to furnish the Ministry of Labour with all reports on labour questions and with information obtained through the means of censorship. Although not asked to provide regular reports, the War Office (Recruiting) and the Department of National Service were expected to



inform the Ministry of Labour of any noteworthy developments in the labour situation. 33

Under the supervision of David Shackleton, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry was to make a special study of all publications relating to the labour situation, indicating the directions it thought official propaganda might take. Not later than Thursday in each week, the Ministry was to furnish Henderson with "a statement as to stoppages, disputes and settlements, and labour propaganda brought to their notice during the week, together with a general appreciation of the labour situation." Hereafter, weekly reports revealed the growing sophistication of official strategy to contain the threat of labour unrest and were generally divided into four main sections: (1) introductory remarks; (2) press remarks collected from dissenting and socialist publications on military, foreign, and domestic affairs; (3) district reports on the labour situation in London and the South East, Yorkshire and the East Midlands, the North West, the North, South Wales, and Scotland; and (4) labour disputes and work stoppages. 34

On 18 May Buchan, Director of the Department of Information, notified the War Cabinet that he had grown increasingly disturbed at the state of "popular feeling" within Britain and "the almost entire cessation of public speaking, one of the best means of informing the country." He was especially concerned about the morale of organized labour and therefore suggested the organization of "various lines of direct propaganda" throughout the nation. Moreover, he proposed visits to the Western Front and reoccupied zones by workers' delegations who could relate their

observations to their peers on returning home. However, the Department could not be expected to supervise the domestic propaganda campaign unless the Treasury was willing to sanction the necessary expenditure. On 22 May the War Cabinet accepted Buchan's proposals, granted his department "the allotment of necessary funds", and authorized him "to make the necessary arrangements for the conduct of such propaganda."<sup>35</sup> With this decision, the War Cabinet had thus recognized the complicity of the peace-by-negotiation movement in fanning the flames of discontent throughout the "May Strikes" in their hope of gaining the support of labour for a compromise peace.

Nonetheless, the Government failed to comprehend that the peace dissenters "instinctively preferred to work through existing political institutions, not revolutionary bodies." Fundamentally, the goals of the peace-by-negotiation alliance and the Shop Stewards' Movement were in opposite directions: while the predominantly middle-class campaign for civil liberties and a mediated peace gave limited attention to social and economic grievances, the proletarian leaders of the "May Strikes" were more interested in preserving their craft status and opposing dilution than aligning themselves with the peace-by-negotiation coalition. In the Labour Leader, for instance, Snowden regretted the outbreak of the "May Strikes" because "they may imperil the lives of our men at the fighting line." Moreover, labour militancy had been unleashed by the Government's challenge to craft privilege, not by the publication of the "Charter of Freedom" nor by the "Petrograd formula." The intrinsic weakness of wartime dissent was therefore evident throughout the "May Strikes" as

neither side took the initiative to link their particular grievances and force the Government to both address working class disaffection and bring the war to an end. <sup>36</sup>

Lacking a clear understanding of the deep divisions within wartime dissent, the Prime Minister announced to the House of Commons on 25 May that the Government would "appoint separate Commissions to investigate the causes of unrest" throughout various regions of the country. The commissioners should "interpret their terms of reference in a broad spirit" and "report within a period of four weeks." Speed was essential, as Lloyd George believed they were in a brief "industrial lull", which would not last in view of the rising cost of food. <sup>37</sup> Barnes presented the findings of the eight regional commissioners, together with his own summary, to the Prime Minister a month later. Given the inaccuracy of Francis Stevenson and Victor Fisher's knowledge of "pro-Germans and pacifists", the Lloyd George Government adopted an ambitious two-part policy of conciliation and coercion to "countermine" the phenomenal growth of the militant Shop Stewards' movement and prevent their possible alliance with the peace movement which threatened the prosecution of the war.

#### The Campaign for the Freedom of Conscience

When Lloyd George became Prime Minister the immediate responsibility for conscientious objectors passed to the new Secretary of State for War, Lord Derby, who readily endorsed Lloyd George's policy of no concessions to the absolutists and opposed the release of absolutists or even any measure of relief in their prison conditions. Despite the efforts of the NCF throughout the winter of 1916-17 to convince the War Cabinet to grant

absolute exemption to the men who had proved the sincerity of their convictions by remaining in jail, the issue of relief for genuine absolutists was unable to penetrate the highest circles of the Government. Significantly, it was not until an initiative in May 1917 to secure the release of Stephen Hobhouse, a well-connected young absolutist, that debate on this contentious issue was elevated to the Cabinet level. When he was court-martialed and sentenced to a second prison term in April 1917, his mother, Margaret Hobhouse, approached Milner, who had stood as proxy godfather at Stephen's baptism, and asked him to intercede. At the same time, Marshall of the NCF had contacted both Milner and Lt. General Childs, Director of Personal Services of the War Office, to provide the former with information on the condition of conscientious objectors and to elicit the cooperation of the latter to help alleviate their suffering.<sup>38</sup>

This campaign to secure the release of all genuine conscientious objectors received a large boost when Milner submitted a memorandum to the War Cabinet on 9 May condemning the Government's present policy as too lenient to those whose sincerity was in doubt and too rigid where convictions were genuine. On 22 May, however, the War Cabinet rejected Milner's proposals and agreed with both Childs and Derby that such a release would swell the ranks of dissenters and undermine public support for the war. No further action was therefore taken at the Cabinet level, except for Lloyd George's instructions to Kerr to investigate the treatment of the absolutists and to make recommendations for future policy. <sup>39</sup> With this Cabinet decision, the liberal-minded campaign led by the NCF and Mrs. Hobhouse had been thwarted temporarily by the

Government's refusal to acknowledge the freedom of individual conscience and its decision to apply draconian restrictions on civil liberty.

Meanwhile, the NCF pursued new opportunities in their attempt to influence official policy by supplying Milner with information to support his case for a revision of the Government's treatment of genuine conscientious objectors. Major Hugh C. Thornton, Milner's private secretary, met Marshall on 26 April and corresponded with her while Milner prepared his memorandum. On 2 May she asked Thornton to arrange a meeting with Milner "before the government was committed to any fresh scheme, so as to give him, at first hand, some of my personal knowledge of the types of men concerned." A week later, Milner expressed to Lord Selborne that "the only way out of it [the mistreatment of absolutists] is to deal with individual cases on their merits - just the thing you can never get a Department to do." <sup>40</sup>

Milner lamented the inconsistencies of War Office policy in so far as "we have neither obtained credit for our endeavour to meet the case of genuine religious conviction, nor have we escaped the charge that we are treating too kindly those whose genuineness is more open to doubt." He also warned that "we are merely sowing the seeds of future trouble by allowing the Acts to be administered in a way which directly defeats the object of those who framed them." Finally, he recommended "a greater elasticity of administration," thereby preventing civil libertarians from exploiting the persecution of religious objectors and jeopardizing support for the war. <sup>41</sup>

At a meeting on 22 May to discuss Milner's memorandum, the strongest opposition to any change in policy was voiced by Childs who explained that

there were two types of absolutists:

"those who adopted an attitude of resistance to every attempt to make them work, and those who not only refused to undertake any service for the State, but were increasingly busy in their endeavours to induce their fellow-citizens to defy the Government."

Childs was particularly worried about the latter class who were working "in close co-operation" with the UDC and the NCF and other "unpatriotic and dangerous" groups. "Such men, if they were to be released by the Military Authorities," Childs cautioned, "would have immediately to be imprisoned under the Defence of the Realm Act." The Home Secretary shared Childs's view that "whereas religious objectors were generally harmless... political objectors were often dangerous propagandists and their conduct in work centres constituted a grave scandal." Despite Milner's opposition, the War Cabinet decided that "the case for further enquiry [into the revision of the MSAs] had not been established; and that, in the circumstances, no action on their part was necessary."<sup>42</sup> Thus, the War Cabinet feared that the release of genuine conscientious objectors would facilitate a new dynamic alliance between peace activists and industrial agitators who were both willing to exploit growing war weariness and overthrow the Government.

Nevertheless, Milner's campaign on behalf of the absolutists did win converts among the more liberal members of the Lloyd George Government, specifically Herbert Fisher, the President of the Board of Education, and Kerr. On 30 May, Fisher agreed with Milner that there were a number of genuine cases where the tribunals had erred in not granting absolute exemption. While supporting the release of those men who had suffered "unjust hardship", Fisher suggested that

"a display of equity in the comparatively small number of cases involved, could not be of detriment to the conduct of our Military purposes and would only be welcomed as a sign of civil courage on the part of a Government secure of the fighting spirit of the nation."

Milner presented a copy of Fisher's letter to the Prime Minister the next day and thought Lloyd George "might like to see the opinion of whose judgment I am sure you will agree is worth considering on a matter of this kind." <sup>43</sup> Clearly then, Milner had won the support of a prominent Liberal Cabinet Minister who would be willing to support his campaign to secure the release of all genuine conscientious objectors.

Sometime after the War Cabinet's discussion of 22 May Kerr was instructed by the Prime Minister to examine the position of the absolutists and to offer recommendations for future consideration. Lloyd George may not have known that the source of Kerr's information was Mrs. Hobhouse, and indirectly the NCF, although he would have been aware that Kerr's previous association with Milner in South Africa might have disposed him favourably to Milner's cause. On 28 May, Mrs. Hobhouse wrote to Kerr that public figures such as Milner and Gilbert Murray agreed with her that "an injustice is being done", and they had advised her that it was "highly desirable to make public the treatment these men are receiving." She also enclosed an article in the New Statesman on 19 May, ghostwritten by Russell according to Vellacott, which had condemned the imprisonment of genuine objectors as "a miscarriage of justice." <sup>44</sup>

On 1 June, Kerr replied to Mrs. Hobhouse and he recommended that "some Tribunal should revise all the cases of absolute objection under the Military Service Acts, after the prisoner has been in prison long enough to

establish his bona-fides with a view to total exemption." In his mind, the tribunals had erred, the absolutists were imprisoned contrary to the law, and there was no other course open to the Government except to free all genuine conscientious objectors. The support of Lloyd George's private secretary for an extensive re-evaluation of the official treatment of conscientious objectors ensured the resumption of bitter conflict within the government throughout the summer of 1917. On the one hand, Kerr and Milner supported their release on the grounds of administrative efficiency and, by upholding the letter of the law, criticism of the imprisonment of innocent men would be muted; whereas, the War Office feared lest a release would encourage an onslaught of dissenting propaganda and weaken morale. <sup>45</sup> For the moment, the civil libertarian campaign sponsored by the NCF, Mrs. Hobhouse, and Milner to pressure the War Office to grant absolute exemption from military service and release all genuine absolutists had been resisted by a Government obsessively committed to the fulfilment of military victory.

#### Conclusion

When word of the Russian Revolution began to filter into Britain in mid-March 1917, many civil libertarians and peace dissenters interpreted the fall of autocracy as a moment in history that had to be grasped by those who truly desired human freedom and social justice. The advent of wartime governments had revealed a willingness to abandon the trappings of legality and democracy, to suspend basic liberties, and issue jingoistic appeals to rally public support and defeat the enemy, however costly the struggle. For the Left, the democratic spirit of the March Revolution helped



to ease its disappointment over the failure of the "Peace Offensive" during the winter 1916-17 and raised its expectations that organized labour might unite with the peace-by-negotiation coalition and develop into a powerful anti-war force and even precipitate a democratic revolution. The high point for these idealistic hopes lay in the Leeds Convention, planned for early June, designed originally to welcome the revolution but evolved into an attempt to discuss the extension of the Russian system of Soviets to Britain and make a democratic peace a reality. Given the unprecedented levels of war weariness and labour unrest throughout the spring, the peace-by-negotiation coalition felt a growing sense of urgency: if the European peoples did not follow at once the Russian lead, the opportunity to establish once and for all a democratic peace would pass and might not return for a long time. <sup>46</sup>

Organized political and industrial resistance to the effective prosecution of the war posed as a significant challenge to the future of the Lloyd George Coalition already confronted with a truly bleak political and military situation. To almost everyone in ruling circles the only satisfactory answer to such mounting domestic and foreign pressures seemed to be to press on for victory, thus vindicating their leading position in society. To that end, the Lloyd George Government devised an effective strategy to publicly support the March Revolution and the entry of the United States into the war and closely monitored potentially dangerous labour unrest through a sophisticated application of Labour intelligence, official propaganda, and Commissions of Industrial Unrest. In addition, the War Cabinet rejected the call to re-examine the official treatment of

conscientious objectors, despite the efforts of Milner to free genuine absolutists on the grounds of administrative inefficiency and legal injustice. However, the War Cabinet's rejection of Milner's proposals had not been the last word. Even though the Prime Minister had neither the time nor the inclination to become entangled in the complexities of this issue, Lloyd George did take steps to ensure that the case for release received a proper hearing.<sup>47</sup> Aware of the demands for a revision of war aims and also for a new political and social order, the War Cabinet implemented a dual policy of coercion and conciliation: it upheld its monopoly of repression to intimidate opponents, whether unofficial shop stewards or absolutists, and, in admitting the importance of Labour support, attempted to ameliorate legitimate working-class grievances such as high food prices in order to maintain maximum industrial productivity.

## NOTES

1. See John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Brest-Litovsk. The Forgotten Peace. March 1918. (1956), 30; Arno J. Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918. (1969), 83; James Hinton, Protests and Visions. Peace Politics in Twentieth Century Britain (1989), 58-59; Swartz, 157; Rempel, "Russia Leaves the War", unpublished draft material, 6, 12.  
Note: The "moderate Left" refers to those groups such as the ILP, the UDC, and the NCF among others, who co-operated in the peace-by-negotiation coalition and opposed the "knock-out blow" policy of the government. The "militant Left" refers to groups such as the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), the British Socialist Party (BSP), and the unofficial Shop Stewards' Movement (also known as the Rank and File Movement) who were more interested in resistance to the effects of war (dilution, wages, rents) rather than to the war itself. These particular groups also advocated direct political and industrial action through the use of the general strike.
2. Young, Campaigns for Peace, 30-31. See also Adams and Poirier, 204, Wrigley, 184, Marquand, 207, and Rothwell, 96.
3. See Vellacott, 153-154; Rempel, 6-7, 11; Marquand, 207-209.
4. Vellacott, 154-155; Rempel, 7-8.
5. Rempel, 1-2, 6-7. See also Vellacott, 155-156.
6. Rempel, 12; Raymond Postgate, The Life of George Lansbury. (1951), 167; "The Albert Hall Meeting", in the Labour Leader, 5 April 1917, 14, 14, 6. See also Vellacott, 156.
7. Rempel, 14-15. See also Vellacott, 158; Ralph Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism. A Study in the Politics of Labour. (1961), 54.
8. See Miliband, 55-57; Swartz, 158; Weinroth, 386; Vellacott, 158.
9. Marquand, 207-208; "The ILP Conference, Leeds, 1917 - Great Albert Hall Demonstration", in the Labour Leader, 12 April 1917, 15, 14, 4.
10. Philip Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 12 April 1917, 15, 14, 1; "The ILP Conference...", in the LL, 12 April 1917, 4. See also Marquand, 208.
11. Editorial, U.D.C., May 1917, quoted in Swartz, 157-8; Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 19 April 1917, 16, 14, 1. See also Rempel, 18. In To End All Wars. (1992), 314, Tom Knock has argued that the UDC pressed the President to give his public endorsement - and allay suspicions that America shared the Allied war aims - to the Petrograd formula in a letter of 29 May 1917. However, House withheld the letter from

Wilson until 28 June because he, House, did not agree "altogether" with its purpose.

12. The Papers of Philip Henry Kerr, 11th Marquess of Lothian: GD/ 40/ 17/746, Copy draft [for statement made in the House by Lloyd George, 19 March on the Revolution in Russia [1917] , 1-2. See also Lloyd C. Gardner, Safe for Democracy. The Anglo-American Response to Revolution, 1913-1923. (1984), 131, Mayer, 70, and Vellacott, 151.

13. Bonar Law quoted in S.R. Graubard, British Labour and the Russian Revolution 1917-1924. (1956), 18-19. See also Rempel, 6.

14. Lloyd George, II, 1117-1118; Gardner, 130.

15. See G.D.H. Cole, "The Labour Party During Stockholm", in Peter Stansky, ed., The Left and War. the British Labour Party and World War I (1969), 254; Marquand, 213; Graubard, 23; Lloyd George, II, 1121.

16. WC (141,15), 21 May 1917, CAB 23/2, 4-5. See also Lloyd George, II, 1121.

17. WC (144, 1-2), 23 May 1917, CAB 23/2, 2; Marquand, 214. See also Lloyd George, 1121-1123.

18. Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 12 April 1917, 15, 14, 1; Robbins, 117-118. See Vellacott, 151. See also Knock, 130-131, for the impact of the American entry on the ongoing war aims debate and on the hopes of wartime dissent for the implementation of the "Petrograd formula."

19. Kernek, "Distractions of Peace During War", 44. See also Jaffe, 68; Lloyd George, I, 993, 999.

20. Kernek, 44-45. According to Knock, 131, British peace-by-negotiation groups were confused as to Wilson's true objectives - if he truly supported the "Petrograd formula" or, instead, was fully committed to the fulfilment of the Allied war aims.

21. WC (119, 24), 16 April 1917, CAB 23/2, 6-7. See also Peter Weiler, The New Liberalism. Liberal Social Theory in Great Britain. 1889-1914 (1982), 105; H.V. Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics 1882-1914. (1973), 216.

22. WC (119, 24), 16 April 1917, 6.

23. "The Week in Parliament", in the Labour Leader, 26 April 1917, 17, 14, 5; U.K. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5 ser., vol. 92, 17 April 1917, cols.1605-1614.

24. See Wrigley, 184; Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement, 16; Robbins, 122. According to T. Wilson, The Myriad Faces of War, 226, it is a mistake to assume there was constant industrial unrest throughout the war. For instance, working days lost by stoppages, which had reached an unprecedented 41 million in 1912, 10 million in 1913 and 1914, dropped to 3 million in 1915, 2.5 million in 1916, 5.5 million in 1917, and under 6 million in 1918. Notwithstanding these figures and the influence of patriotism within the working class, the real significance of the "May Strikes" lay in the challenge by the shop stewards to a Government hard pressed to meet the material requirements of war.

25. See also Adams and Poirier, 203; Swartz, 160-161; Sandars and Taylor, 66-67.

26. Lord Alfred Milner Papers: MS. MILNER DEP. 377, 104-115, W.M.L., "Notes on the Strike Movement: Part II, 1917", Volume V. See also Wrigley, 190-191.

27. WC (115, 9), 6 April 1917, CAB 23/2, 2; WC (118, 6), 13 April 1917, CAB 23/2, 3.

28. Hinton, 201; Wrigley, 194. See also The Lord Addison Papers: Box 45, G.T. 742, "Proceedings of a Conference", 17 May 1917, 1.

29. Hinton, 206. See also Addison Papers: Box 45, Report by Christopher Addison and J.T. Brownlie, 19 May 1917, 1-2.

30. Lloyd George Papers: F/14/4/42, [J/8(139)], Derby to the Prime Minister, 11 May 1917, 1-2; HO 144/1484/349684/1, Memorandum by Edward Troup to the Chief Constable, 18 May 1917; Gen. Smuts quoted in Jaffe, 74; A.J.P. Taylor, ed. Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson, diary entry of 26 May 1917, 159; Robbins, 120.

31. Swartz, 173-174; Lloyd George Papers: F/38/2/5, Lord Milner to the Prime Minister, 26 May 1917, 2-5. As secretary of the BWL, Fisher had enjoyed regular contacts with Milner since early 1916, and given the outbreak of the March Revolution, the urgency of their task - to prevent a British Revolution - reached new levels of hysteria.

32. Lloyd George Papers: F/38/2/8, Lord Milner to the Prime Minister, 1 June 1917. See also J.O. Stubbs, "Lord Milner and Patriotic Labour, 1914-1918", in the English Historical Review, Vol. 82, 1972, 739-740.

33. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 733, "Labour Intelligence: Notes of a Conference", 15 May 1917, CAB 24/13, 2. See also Swartz, 161.

34. Swartz, 161-162. See also G.T. 733, 15 May 1917, 1-2.

35. Sandars and Taylor, 66-67; War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 774, "Propaganda at Home", John Buchan, 18 May 1917, CAB 24/13, 1; WC (142, 9), 22 May 1917, CAB 23/2, 3.

36. Weinroth, 387. See also Snowden, "Review of the Week", in LL, 17 May, 1917, 20, 14, 1, quoted in Weinroth, 387.

37. U.K. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5 ser., vol. 93, 25 May 1917, col. 2675; F/78/6/3, Copy of Lloyd George's notes, 12 June 1917. See also Wrigley, 198.

38. See Rae, 206-207; Vellacott, 190-191, 204-208; Kennedy, 187.

39. See Rae, 209-212; Kennedy, 186.

40. Vellacott, 204-205; Milner Papers: MS. MILNER DEP. 354, (VI), 95, Lord Milner to Lord Selborne, 8 May 1917, CAB 24/12, 2. See also Kennedy, 187-188.

41. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 677, "Conscientious Objectors", Lord Milner, 9 May 1917, CAB 24/12, 2. See also Rae, 207-210.

42. WC (142, 14), 22 May 1917, CAB 23/2, 6-7. See also Vellacott, 206.

43. Lloyd George Papers: F/38/2/7, Herbert Fisher to Lord Milner, 30 May 1917, 1-3; Lord Milner to the Prime Minister, 1 June 1917, 1.

44. Kerr Papers: GD/40/17/44/1-2, Mrs. Hobhouse to Mr. Kerr, 28 May 1917. See also Rae, 212.

45. GD/17/44, Philip Kerr to Mrs. Hobhouse, 1 June 1917. See also Vellacott, 205, 207; Rae, 213.

46. See Kennedy, 226, 228; Young, 30; Robbins, 120; Martin Ceadel, Pacifism in Great Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith (1980), 52; Vellacott, 161, 164; Rothwell, 97.

47. See Rothwell, 97-99; Swartz, 161-162; Rae, 212-219; Young, 36; Wrigley, 198.

Chapter V:

The Counter-Attack on Dissent: June - August 1917

The high hopes of the British Left were evident in the convening of the Leeds Convention on 3 June "to hail the Russian Revolution and to organise the British Democracy to follow Russia." Organized by the newly formed United Socialist Council, comprised of ILP and BSP members, it was an inspiring affair for delegates from local Labour parties, trade unions, women's groups, and peace societies. All contended that the Russian Revolution and, in particular, the creation of local Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, pointed the way to secure a negotiated peace. Moreover, throughout the summer, political discontent continued to fester as a result of the proposed meeting of the Second International in Stockholm to discuss the prospects for peace. Henderson's resignation from the War Cabinet was greeted with enthusiasm by dissenters who hoped that he might become a leader of a new Labour-peace coalition committed to the negotiation of a non-vindictive peace.<sup>1</sup>

Alarmed at this prospect of revolutionary unrest, the Lloyd George Government unleashed a potent counter-offensive against the forces of wartime dissent while maintaining the support within the general population for a policy of military victory at home. In the aftermath of the "May Strikes" and the Leeds Convention, the War Cabinet was sufficiently worried by the growing appeal of anti-war agitation that on 5 June it felt that "the time had come to undertake an active campaign to counteract the pacifist movement, which at present has the field to itself." As a direct consequence of this decision, the National War Aims Committee (NWAC) was

established as an organization entirely separate from the Department of Information. In an ambitious reorganization of official propaganda, the War Cabinet authorized the Prime Minister to undertake a lecture tour throughout Scotland to "keep up the moral of the nation", and the Government responded quickly to the recommendations prepared by Barnes to alleviate industrial unrest. Moreover, a new Ministry of Reconstruction was created under the direction of Addison, and Sir Edward Carson was appointed to assume "general supervision over propaganda as far as action in this country." <sup>2</sup>

In addition, a good example of the Government's strategy to marginalize the efforts of wartime dissent to shape the direction of public policy was evident in the NCF's inability to legitimize the political justification for absolute exemption to military service. Despite the efforts of Kerr, Milner, and Hobhouse to persuade the Government to grant absolute exemption throughout the summer of 1917, the Lloyd George Coalition upheld the War Office position that the release of genuine absolutists would encourage further outbreaks of domestic unrest and thus undermine the struggle for victory. Furthermore, Lloyd George's refusal to grant passports for British Labour's participation at the Stockholm Conference demonstrated his unassailable position in an all-party coalition. Despite Henderson's exit, the bulk of the Labour Movement still supported the war, and Henderson was replaced by the amenable Barnes as Labour's representative in the War Cabinet. The departure of the leading Labour spokesman therefore failed to establish a viable alternative political combination with a public mandate to negotiate a democratic peace. Finally,



as a complement to its strategy to develop an efficient propaganda machine, the Lloyd George Government mobilized existing powers in the DORA to prosecute E.D. Morel, the Executive Secretary of the UDC and the leading propagandist of the peace-by-negotiation coalition. Fearful lest Morel's indictment of secret diplomacy and the "knock-out blow" policy would articulate the grievances of the Left in the aftermath of the Leeds Convention and the Stockholm Conference, the Government undertook a politically motivated strategy to first silence, and then punish, the driving force behind the peace movement. <sup>3</sup>

The Leeds Convention: "Follow Russia"?

In a campaign of great enthusiasm, the Leeds Convention was given a special cachet by the presence of nationally known figures, such as Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden, Smillie, and Williams. The rank-and-file adopted four resolutions on the topics, "Hail! The Russian Revolution", "Foreign Policy and War Aims", "Civil Liberty", and "Workmens' and Soldiers' Councils." It was described shortly afterwards as "the most spectacular piece of folly for which [the Socialist Left] during the whole war-period, was responsible - which is saying not a little." However, Jowett, the ILP Chairman, referred to the Convention as the "highest point of revolutionary fervour he had seen in this country." <sup>4</sup>

Modern studies have debated whether the meeting was called "to inaugurate the British Revolution", or was "as an end in itself, a national demonstration of opinion in favour of an early democratic peace." The former argument has interpreted the Convention from a revolutionary perspective in which the most celebrated of the four resolutions called for

the formation of what have been termed "extra-Parliamentary Soviets with sovereign powers" to usurp the authority of Parliament. The latter, a dissenting perspective, has attributed the half-heartedness of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils which were set up following the Convention to the indifference of the ILP and trade union leaders who feared them as potential rivals of organizational power. In spite of these reservations, the momentum behind "the spirit of Leeds" to establish the Councils as British Soviets was not checked until the remarkable breach of the peace by a patriotic mob on 28 July at the Brotherhood Church in London. When the Government chose to ignore the criminal actions of pro-war demonstrators, the campaign for a 'people's peace' was quickly absorbed into the attempt to convene the Stockholm Conference, and later became that of the Labour Party as a whole. In a climate of official hostility and internal disunity, the Councils lost their *raison d'être* and withered away.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the differences of opinion expressed at the Convention, particularly as to the utility of the Councils, enabled the Government to mobilize its significant resources to exploit existing divisions within dissent and thus sabotage their attempt to weaken the war effort.

The first resolution, congratulating the Russian people on their revolution, was moved by MacDonald, who also acknowledged their having taken "a foremost part in the international movement for working-class emancipation from all forms of political, economic, and imperialist oppression and exploitation." Snowden followed with a resolution supporting the "Petrograd formula", and urged the British Government "immediately to announce its agreement with the declared foreign

policy and war aims of the democratic Government of Russia." The third resolution, moved by Charles Ammon of the ILP and the NCF, urged that Britain should adopt the "Charter of Freedom" by introducing universal suffrage, restoring freedom of speech and of the press, freedom from all restrictive labour laws, and granting a general amnesty for all political and religious prisoners. Russell then spoke on behalf of the conscientious objectors still in prison, underlining the role he considered them to have played in bringing about this "new state of opinion in this country and the world." 6

Much more controversial was the final resolution moved by W.C. Anderson who demanded the formation "in every town, urban and rural district" of Councils of Workmen and Soldiers' Delegates "for initiating and co-ordinating working-class activity." To those who might interpret this suggestion as a call to insurrection, he declared that if a revolution "be the conquest of political power by a hitherto disinherited class, if revolution be that we are not going to put up in the future with what we have put up in the past... then the sooner we have revolution in this country the better." At the same time, Anderson emphasized that the resolution was not intended to be subversive or unconstitutional - unless the attitude of the authorities made it so. However, the seconder of the resolution, Robert Williams, declared that the resolution meant nothing more nor less than the "dictatorship of the proletariat." British workingmen should "use the power that lies in their hands to give or withhold their labour in the place where wealth is produced", Williams asserted, "we want to assert our right to the ownership and control of the country." This fiery but still rather

vague wording of the resolution went unchallenged in the euphoria of the meeting, although few were clear as to how such a proposal should be properly implemented. All in all, the Leeds Convention highlighted the sense of urgency to hasten an early peace within both the moderate and militant factions of the British Left. It was as yet unclear whether the Convention was a well-staged demonstration which applauded all things Russian, or a revolutionary attempt to exploit the new Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in collusion with the Shop Stewards' Movement to overthrow the constitutional authority of Parliament.<sup>7</sup>

In an effort to convert the Councils into effective organs of labour militancy, the recently established Provisional Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils unveiled their ambitious plans in the Labour Leader on 21 June "to restore peace, dethrone militarism, and to establish freedom." This committee proposed the division of Britain into thirteen districts, from which District Committees would co-ordinate the activities of all Labour, Socialist, and Democratic organizations in order to implement the resolutions of the Leeds Convention. What the Convention would mean in terms of a national movement was, however, by no means clear. Did the Convention sanction "the extension of the Russian system of Soviets" throughout Britain? As Steven White argues, "the functions entrusted to the new Councils were limited and scarcely revolutionary ones." Indeed, the "most striking feature" of the proceedings at Leeds, the U.D.C. commented, was their "moderation." There had never been any question, Lansbury stressed, of advocating a violent revolution. Even prior to the Convention, he had emphasized that the Councils should be in every

district, "not for the absurd, ridiculous reasons attributed by the Press, but in order that the working-class may be united." Snowden foresaw the Councils assuming the task of "combining some of the activities of the various Labour and Democratic bodies." The controversial fourth resolution was a "very harmless" one and "largely unnecessary", he later wrote in his autobiography, since the Councils would duplicate work already being done by the Labour Party and the trade unions. <sup>8</sup>

In this atmosphere of political uncertainty, the ILP feared the formation of the Councils as "potential usurpers of organizational power." At the end of June the ILP National Executive agreed upon five points: (1) the Councils should be constituted as war emergency organizations; (2) the Councils must not interfere with the work of any existing body; (3) the Councils must not be allowed to drain the energies of members of the party; (4) the Councils should act as a local co-ordinating body, and, (5) the Councils should function in an advisory capacity. By early July, the Provisional Committee agreed with the ILP's reservations and decided that there must be no attempt on their part to "encroach upon or supersede organizations already established. All friction must be avoided... and overlapping must be eliminated as far as possible." A further directive from the Provisional Committee reminded local Councils that they must serve "primarily as a propagandist body, not as a rival to, or supplant any of the existing working-class organizations, but to infuse into them a more active sense of liberty." In retrospect, few envisaged the Councils as Soviets and the objections raised by the ILP to the formation of such extra-parliamentary bodies may have dampened the effectiveness of the

Provisional Committee. <sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, the hopes of the Councils' movement were not dashed until the spectacular riot at the Brotherhood Church in which the Government turned a blind eye to the actions of a violent mob intent on denying the right of peace dissenters to demonstrate in a public place. The meeting was supposed to be private, and the Council organizers had expected no violence. However, its location was publicized by the pro-war Daily Express, and leaflets were circulated in local pubs where bombs had fallen near them in the most recent air raid. Shortly before the meeting was to begin, a mob of two or three hundred men, known as "public house loafers", led by colonial troops in uniform, stormed into the Church singing *Rule Britannia*. Incited by press headlines such as, "We shoot Huns at the front. Why are we more tender with the treacherous pro-Germans at home?", the mob broke up the proceedings and injured some of the delegates. Snowden later described the event as the "worst riot seen in London in years." The National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) alleged that although the complicity of patriotic organizations such as the BWL in disrupting anti-war demonstrations was well-known, few arrests were made by the police who, in this case, had "looked on calmly" while damage to person and property was being inflicted. At the trial where three persons had been subsequently charged with causing over £ 500 worth of damage, they received no punishment. To the consternation of dissenters, the Magistrate explained that "persons who let halls for such meetings ought to expect trouble." Such flagrant legal hostility no doubt influenced the decision of organizers in Leeds, Liverpool, and Stockport to conclude

that the time was "not opportune" to call further conferences. <sup>10</sup>

Acting upon a memorandum prepared by Sir Robert Munro, Secretary of State for Scotland, the War Cabinet also banned the proposed meeting of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council for 11 August in Glasgow by issuing an Order under the DORA Regulation 9A in the interests of public order. Later that month official permission had still been withheld for a meeting of the Provincial Court of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council, and thereafter it appeared that the Glasgow Council did not undertake any further activity. In the wake of the Brotherhood Church riot and legal suppression of the Council movement, the basic commitment of the Leeds Convention to the negotiation of a democratic peace became absorbed into the Labour Party's campaign to participate at the Stockholm Conference and formulate a united socialist policy against the war. Given ILP hostility and the attitude of the Labour Party Executive in mid-July that it have "nothing to do with the Leeds Convention", deep internal divisions on the exact role of the Councils festered within the ranks of wartime dissent. On the one hand, peace dissenters in the ILP viewed the Convention as an endorsement of the "Petrograd formula" and as a further commitment to resist the encroachment of Prussianism at home; on the other hand, militants within the BSP interpreted the Council as a vehicle of working-class militancy to agitate for civil disobedience in conjunction with the general strike. Aware of the potential threat of the ideals of Leeds to working-class morale, the War Cabinet thus acted swiftly to employ the weapons of physical intimidation in the Brotherhood Church fiasco and legal hostility to crush the spirit of Leeds and emasculate the potential effectiveness of the

Councils as instruments of industrial militancy.<sup>11</sup>

Dissent in Retreat - Part I: A Propaganda Offensive

In deliberating over the seriousness of the Leeds Convention, the War Cabinet received alarmist reports from Government agents which cautioned that this agitation was liable to cause "much mischief among people who are in an excited and revolutionary condition." Another document warned that "unless steps are taken as early as possible... to stop the treasonable activities of these persons and societies responsible for the Leeds Conference... there can be no reasonable doubt of very serious trouble in this country at an early date." Alarmed by the prospect of a powerful movement comprised of peace activists, conscientious objectors, shop stewards, and professional agitators, the Government embarked upon an ambitious propaganda offensive to convince the British public and the working classes in particular that, despite mounting hardship, the war had to be seen through to an uncompromising victory. To that end, the Prime Minister visited Scotland on a lecture tour, the War Cabinet acted quickly to address legitimate labour grievances, a new Ministry of Reconstruction was established to promote a vision of a better society once victory had been attained, the NWAC was instructed to employ prominent speakers such as Government Ministers, trade union leaders, and the clergy to stress the importance of unity on the home front, and, finally, Carson was granted full responsibility for official propaganda in an attempt to discredit the pernicious influence of dissenting publications.<sup>12</sup>

In preparation for his forthcoming tour to Scotland, the War Cabinet urged the Prime Minister to "thank the people for the way in which they



maintained the level of output, notwithstanding three years of incessant unrest" and to "make an appeal for public opinion to keep steady, and more particularly, to the Press not to rattle public opinion." In Glasgow on 29 June Lloyd George appealed to both employers and workmen to "pull together with all their might, between them they will pull us through." While reminding them that "it is he who endureth to the end that will win", he concluded that "we are fighting for the essential principles of civilization, and unless we insist upon it we shall not have vindicated what is the basis of right in every land." <sup>13</sup>

On the whole, peace dissenters such as C.P. Trevelyan and Snowden were impressed with Lloyd George's speeches in Scotland, particularly in respect to the prospects for peace. In his notes for a speech at Selly Oak on 30 June, Trevelyan admitted that the "'Knock-out blow' has gone - hateful catchwords - and false hopes - kept war spirit aflame. All sane men now know negotiated peace, no overwhelming victory within bounds of reasonable probability. Now that P.M. given lead in a few months 'said so all along'." Similarly, in the Labour Leader on 5 July, Snowden believed that the Government "are now beginning to think about the conditions of a peace settlement." More significantly, Snowden categorized the Prime Minister's comments as "an invitation to the Central Powers to make a reply and to state their war aims with more definiteness and precision." <sup>14</sup> Thus, Lloyd George's tour helped to put peace-by-negotiation advocates on the defensive and, for the moment, had won him some grudging respect within dissenting circles.

In mid-July Barnes presented to the Prime Minister the findings of the

eight regional commissions set up to investigate the causes of the "May Strikes", together with his own summary. "The most important of all causes of industrial unrest", he wrote, was a prevalent dissatisfaction with how "the cost of living has increased disproportionately to the advance in wages, and that the distribution of food supplies is unequal." Other grievances included popular resentment towards war profiteering, the operation of the Munitions of War and Military Service Acts, a shortage of adequate housing, liquor restrictions and industrial fatigue. In conclusion, the report listed fourteen recommendations, some of which included lower food prices, closer co-operation between management and labour, and amendments to the Munitions Acts. <sup>15</sup>

"The findings of these Commissions", Lloyd George later wrote, "proved invaluable to the Government in its task of dealing with the grievances of the workers, and allaying industrial discontent." In particular, the Government responded quickly to rising food prices and the anomalies in wages. Recognizing that a contented working class was "indispensable" to the vigorous prosecution of the war, the War Cabinet reduced bread and meat prices by offering a direct State subsidy to the purchase of meat and by the elimination of speculative middlemen in the sale of cattle. The War Cabinet also identified the domestic production of food as a high priority and decided that if the Corn Production Bill was not passed by Parliament, the Government would be prepared "to dissolve and appeal to the country."

The Government's immediate concern in preventing further outbursts of labour unrest resulted in the passage of a new Munitions of War Amendment Act. It sought to alleviate a long-standing grievance in which

skilled men on time rates often earned less than the semi-skilled men on piece-rates whom they supervised. The new Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill, was authorized to increase the skilled labourers' hourly rate of pay in order to remove financial incentives for skilled men to transfer to less skilled work. In light of the Government's swift reaction to spiralling food prices and disruptive industrial relations, the Prime Minister understood the vital connection between civilian morale and the efficiency of the war effort. <sup>16</sup>

In order to undercut support for the peace-by-negotiation movement, the formation of the Ministry of Reconstruction addressed the growing need to maintain the loyalty of the working classes behind the war and ensure the future survival of the Lloyd George Coalition. After the completion of the Reconstruction Committee's detailed report on such issues as industrial policy, housing, and poor law reform in early July, Addison's appointment signalled a new awareness on the part of the Government to secure a public mandate for their post-war plans. Despite opposition from some Unionists who alleged that the new post represented yet another case of Government interference, the establishment of this new Ministry highlighted Lloyd George's determination to counter dissenting propaganda and promise a new and fair post-war Britain. Although the Ministry lacked executive powers, Addison identified the demobilization of workers as his first priority and was able to persuade the War Cabinet to endorse the idea of a Demobilization Committee. Moreover, half a dozen initiatives and new committees on various topics such as finance, industrial councils, and housing were launched under Addison's supervision in an

effort to bolster morale and invigorate the prosecution of the war towards military triumph. 17

Amidst an onslaught of publicity funded by the public purse, the NWAC was officially formed on 4 August 1917, the third anniversary of the war. Its aims were declared to be: "To keep before our nation both the causes which have led to the world war and the vital importance to human life and liberty of continuing the struggle until the evil forces which originated this conflict are destroyed forever." At its inaugural meeting at the Queen's Hall, London, the Prime Minister pinned the responsibility for the war on "the most dangerous conspiracy ever plotted against the liberty of nations", and reminded his audience that although the war was "a ghastly business... it is not as grim as a bad peace." While praising the valour of British troops, he warned that

"Anyone who promotes national distrust or disunion at this moment is helping the enemy and hurting his native land... If you sow distrust, discontent, and disunion in the nation we shall reap defeat. If, on the other hand, we sow the seeds patience, confidence, and unity we shall garner in victory and its fruits." 18

Moreover, a confidential NWAC memorandum entitled "Aims of Home Publicity" succinctly captured the tone of the Prime Minister's address and underscored the importance of home propaganda to the state of national morale. The document also recognized the need to publish "the advantages of an Entente peace", and the necessity to "render nugatory the insidious and specious propaganda of pacifist publications." Most significantly, the document boldly set out, on the one hand, to "inspire all war workers at home, especially those hidden from view, with a living sense of their

responsibility and share in the great task", and, on the other, to

"encourage unity and stifle party and class dissensions by dwelling insistently on the momentous issues at stake, on the gravity of the crisis... and on the records of history which make it impossible to conceive that the people of this country will waver in their fixed purpose." 19

The organizational model for the conduct of official propaganda at home relied upon its predecessor, the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC), created within the first month of the war to act as a national co-ordinating agency for voluntary recruitment. The same all-party emphasis was evident: Lloyd George, Asquith, and Barnes served as its joint presidents; F.E. Guest, the Government's chief whip since March 1917, served as its chairman; and Lt.- Colonel R.A. Sandars, a Unionist whip, served as vice-chairman. In addition, Thomas Cox, the general secretary of the NWAC, and G. Wallace Carter, one of the four honorary secretaries, had both served in the PRC and therefore provided some sort of continuity in personnel and experience. The creation of sub-departments to co-ordinate publicity and the organization of local committees based upon party branches helped lay the groundwork for the NWAC's central role, namely, to commission lecturers to tour the country and reinforce the need for still further sacrifices on the domestic front. 20

This involvement of the civilian population in the war effort was certainly a prominent theme in the domestic propaganda campaign. It was essential to convince the home front, and the labour world in particular, that a negotiated peace with the enemy on its terms was impossible. To that end, the NWAC issued a memorandum entitled, "Suggested Model Speech for National War Aims Speakers", designed to educate its lecturers such as

J.C. Smuts, the Boer General and new member of the War Cabinet, on the justification for British involvement in the war and the insincerity of German peace proposals. All NWAC speakers were instructed "to keep before the nation the causes which led to the Great War, and, next, to impress upon the nation the vital importance to human life and human liberties of continuing the struggle is attained." With subheadings such as "THE SPARK WHICH CAUSED THE EXPLOSION", "HOW LONG WILL THE WAR GO ON?", and "PEACE FOR ALL TIME", the document pinned "the true causes of this most terrible World War" upon Germany's "immortal doctrine that Might is Right." To be content with anything less than a victorious peace would be "false to ourselves, false to those who are to come after us, false to the memories of those who have - and who even to-night at this moment - are making for us the great sacrifice." By shrewdly exploiting the dual themes of duty and self-sacrifice, the speech promised that "to-day the greatest of all our Aims is... not merely to end this war but to end all war." For example, at a meeting organized by the NWAC in Sheffield on 24 October 1917, and attended by over 6 000 people, Smuts contended that the Government was determined not only to defeat the enemy but also to create a new post-war Britain. Moreover, he proclaimed the destruction of militarism as the overriding war aim and for the first time the South African General called for the abolition of standing armies.<sup>21</sup> By utilizing such gifted speakers as Smuts and by linking the defeat of Germany with the pledge of a just Britain after the war, the NWAC therefore sought to counteract what it perceived to be the debilitating effect of anti-war propaganda on working class morale, gravely weakened by economic

deprivation and war weariness.

As a corollary to the establishment of the NWAC, Carson was entrusted by the Government to supervise the overall direction of domestic publicity in a concerted effort to reorganize the administration of official propaganda. He reported to the War Cabinet on 30 August that as much as £100,000 might be required to undertake this responsibility. Meanwhile, during the past six months since the creation of the Department of Information, there was still little co-ordination between the conduct of domestic and foreign propaganda. The absence of a ministerial position to champion the interests of the Department of Information was a further handicap, particularly as Buchan lacked the necessary authority to deal with other competing government departments on an equal basis. Moreover, Buchan's disinclination to accept the advice of the Propaganda Committee, an advisory body consisting of leading newspapermen, sparked a mounting chorus of criticism in the press. In early September, Buchan asked Milner, his old mentor, to suggest to the War Cabinet that his department be placed under the direction of a Minister, "someone to whom I can have access." Shortly afterwards, Carson was asked by the War Cabinet on 10 September to extend his sphere of responsibility to include overseas propaganda and he was notified that Buchan would be placed directly under him. As a member of the War Cabinet, Carson's appointments were interpreted by Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of The Times, in a letter to Lord Northcliffe, as follows: "He has been deputed... to look after Propaganda - not with any idea of running itself, but simply to keep them [the War Cabinet] informed." After his meeting with the new co-ordinator

of Government propaganda, Dawson warned Northcliffe that, according to Carson, "the pacifists are very active and successful in the work of quiet corruption." <sup>22</sup> Deeply concerned about the prospect of a revolutionary summer, the Government constructed a sophisticated propaganda network which mobilized its significant resources to exploit the spirit of sacrifice and patriotism in the relentless pursuit of the "knock-out blow."

Dissent in Retreat - Part II: The Denial of Absolute Exemption

Encouraged by the revolutionary spirit unleashed by the March Revolution in Russia and the "Petrograd formula", Allen, writing from prison, issued an open letter to the Prime Minister on 31 May 1917, explaining the reasons why he would refuse to do prison work during his recently imposed two-year sentence. In his campaign to embarrass Lloyd George, the NCF leader triggered a fierce debate on the propaganda value of conscientious objectors in prison to wartime dissent. Allen declared that the Government's policy was "nothing less than the most deliberate persecution of genuine opinion", and alleged that the Prime Minister's motive in denying absolute exemption must be a "secret determination to retain some form of Conscription in this country after the war."<sup>23</sup>

However, Allen's campaign also caused serious embarrassment to influential members of the NCF such as Dr. Salter who feared it would further alienate public sympathy against a background of rumours that a revision of policy was imminent. Similarly, Russell was concerned for the physical health and mental balance of the imprisoned men, which would be seriously at risk if the men were pushed beyond their endurance. Despite Allen's efforts to proceed with his work-strike, few absolutists



joined him, and a majority within the NCF remained firmly opposed to his stand. As so many times before, the disagreement within the NCF's leadership undermined its ability to influence the direction of official policy. What was at stake in this dispute was the extent to which wartime dissent involved the passive acceptance of Government policies towards the treatment of political prisoners. This was a persistent and contentious issue of controversy for the NCF, and this dilemma closely resembled the recurring debates within the anti-war movement itself about whether the dissenter could support violent action if the goal consisted of the replacement of the Lloyd George Government with the formation of a peace-by-negotiation coalition.<sup>24</sup>

Following the publication of Allen's "Open Letter to Mr. Lloyd George", the Prime Minister considered a reply, and instructed Kerr to draft one for his perusal. In advising the Prime Minister not to respond to Allen, Kerr notified him on 15 June that "it was the intention of Parliament that people having an absolute conscientious objection to Military Service should be given absolute exemption if they could honestly accept nothing else." Kerr described their imprisonment as "an accident" and suggested that if any of the absolutists who were released engaged in unpatriotic activities "they ought to be arrested under the Defence of the Realm Act and imprisoned as a menace to public safety." Before Kerr submitted his conclusions to Lloyd George, he circulated a copy of his memorandum dated 16 June on the subject to Milner, Cave, Childs and Lord Salisbury for their comments. While arguing that the imprisonment of genuine absolutists was "a miscarriage of justice", Kerr disagreed that many were "political agitators

of the most dangerous kind" and, disputed that their release would "multiply the number of Conscientious objectors."<sup>25</sup>

Reaction to the memorandum was swift and unequivocal. On the one hand, Hugh C. Thornton, replying on behalf of Milner, reported that he agreed "entirely with the conclusions you have reached... [and] ... hopes you will be more successful than he was in getting the Prime Minister to give his mind to this subject!" However, Childs replied that "your information is at fault" and cited a recent article in The Tribunal which proclaimed that "the granting of the right to absolute exemption will prove one of the death blows to militarism." He also warned Kerr that his proposals would "manufacture conscientious objectors by the thousand." Such hostility from Childs undoubtedly compelled Kerr to modify his position and by a month later, on 16 July, he submitted a revised document for further consultation. In this new draft Kerr suggested that the absolutists were "not really conscientious objectors to military service, but passive resisters on conscientious grounds to the policy of the Military Service Acts." If absolute exemption was granted, it would threaten "the reign of law itself, by admitting that the citizen can reasonably claim to be exempted from the duty of obeying any law to which he entertains strong objection a proceeding which would be fatal to the development of free and civilised society." No longer in sympathy with the absolutists, Kerr proposed that "passive resisters" who refused any form of national service should remain in prison till the end of the war.<sup>26</sup>

It is not known whether Childs officially replied to Kerr's new authoritarian stance but Milner believed that Kerr no longer believed that

the persecution of genuine absolutists remained "an obvious miscarriage of justice, and that the plainly expressed intention of Parliament and the Government has been frustrated." Perhaps Kerr's shift in direction can be explained in part by Childs's successful efforts to persuade Derby to abandon the practice of commuting the sentences of two years' imprisonment with hard labour given to absolutists to just 112 days. In a letter to Derby on 13 June repeated court martials were described by Childs as expensive, disruptive, and provided an easy opportunity for the proliferation of dissenting propaganda. If Derby approved of his proposal, Childs vowed that "we shall defeat the absolutist movement fully and finally." In a letter to Lord Emmott on 22 June Derby endorsed Childs's position and wrote that "the system of giving remission is to cease." <sup>27</sup>

By describing absolutists and alternativists as "the scum of the nation", Derby contended that any release from their obligations to the nation would grant them the freedom to preach their "pernicious propaganda and flood the country with the literature which is familiar to me." Undoubtedly, this hostile reaction from the War Office either intimidated Kerr to modify his liberal recommendations, or convinced him that the mitigation of sentences would help undercut the effectiveness of anti-war propaganda. In any event, Kerr's support for the War Office position that the release of genuine absolutists would encourage further outbreaks of domestic unrest thwarted Milner's campaign on behalf of the freedom of conscience. <sup>28</sup>

Just when political efforts on behalf of the absolutists stalled, Mrs. Hobhouse, in co-operation with Russell, launched a public campaign to win support for the liberty of conscience and to convince the Government to

release imprisoned conscientious objectors. In early June she notified Russell of the urgency to expose "the injustice of continuing punishment and the barbarity of the punishment." In reply, Russell supplied her with material from the NCF and helped her to publish a pamphlet to publicize the plight of the absolutists. The final outcome was a small book, published in August 1917 under the title I Appeal unto Caesar, one of the most important dissenting publications of the war. With an evocative title, the book opened with an eloquent introduction by Gilbert Murray and included declarations of support from a number of distinguished politicians such as Lords Parmoor, Selborne, Bentinck, and Hugh Cecil. According to Vellacott, the bulk of the work was ghostwritten by Russell who "knew that the book would lose all its special effectiveness if it were known to emanate from the NCF." Indeed, the publication was "calculated to reach an influential audience with whom the NCF had little credibility." After defending the position of the absolutists, Russell argued that "their mistreatment has caused criticism abroad, and has tended in this country to rouse sympathy for the very class which, of all others, right-minded people would least wish to invest with the halo of heroic endurance."<sup>29</sup>

Even though the book had been circulated by Milner to King George V and had earned favourable reviews in The Times Literary Supplement and the Observer, little direct progress was made throughout the summer. For instance, Derby took no action in response to Asquith's request in early August that the Government should release all sincere conscientious objectors. Later that month, Milner submitted his second memorandum on the subject and reiterated his position that "the plain intention of

Parliament and of the Government of the day as expressed in the Military Service Acts has been frustrated by the action of the tribunals." Accordingly, he believed that there was "a strong case for inquiry as to what action should be taken to clear up a situation which it is quite impossible to defend." <sup>30</sup> However, Milner's pleas once again failed to influence the direction of public policy within the War Cabinet which upheld the stance of the War Office. Despite the combined efforts of Allen, Milner, Mrs. Hobhouse, and Russell to defend the right to absolute exemption, the dramatic shift in Kerr's position had demonstrated how widespread support remained for the legal persecution of conscientious objectors by a Government which was willing to apply its full legal powers against those it perceived as its enemies in the defence of national security.

#### Dissent in Retreat - Part III: The Stockholm Conference

The political turmoil generated by events in Russia and most recently visible in the Leeds Convention reached a climax in August 1917 over two developments: the proposed international Socialist Conference in Stockholm, and Henderson's resignation from the War Cabinet. Influenced by Unionist fears that an international socialist accord would result in an inconclusive peace, Lloyd George denied British Labour delegates the opportunity to attend Stockholm. Henderson's refusal to put the War Cabinet before his position as Secretary of the Labour Party led to a personal rupture with Lloyd George and threatened to undermine Labour support for the Government. Despite Henderson's support for a moderate and democratic peace settlement, the initial optimism within the peace-by-negotiation movement generated by Henderson's exit, however, never

materialized into gaining official Labour support for a negotiated peace short of victory. <sup>31</sup>

This debate was initiated when the Lloyd George Coalition reversed an earlier decision to send British Labour delegates to Stockholm to discuss the possibility of a negotiated peace. As noted earlier, as late as May 1917, the British Government still hoped that the Russian Revolution would revitalize the country for a greater military effort, and accordingly, supported the conference as a way to strengthen the Provisional Government and to prevent a separate Russo-German peace. To that end, the War Cabinet sanctioned Henderson's mission to Petrograd. Prior to this visit Henderson was sceptical of such a conference and decided to reserve judgment until he met members of the Russian Socialist Party. Upon his return towards the end of July, however, both Henderson and Lloyd George had reversed their positions on the Stockholm proposal, each claiming that new developments in Russia had altered their views on the utility of such a conference.<sup>32</sup>

While Henderson supported an international socialist conference as a means of keeping Kerensky in power, Lloyd George grew suspicious of any gathering which threatened the conduct of the Allied war effort and he therefore refused to allow British delegates to attend. After his visit, Henderson convinced the Labour Party Executive on 25 July that it would be folly to allow the Russians to discuss a non-binding declaration of democratic war aims with socialists of all countries - allied, enemy, neutral - without a British Labour representative there. The Executive therefore sent Henderson, MacDonald, and George Wardle, acting chairman of the Labour Party, to Paris to arrange Allied Socialist co-operation and

they also agreed to submit the Stockholm proposal to a special Labour conference on 10 August. At a War Cabinet meeting on 1 August Henderson argued that Labour's participation at a consultative conference would promote unity within the ranks of organized labour and thus strengthen the Allied war effort. <sup>33</sup>

By contrast, the prime reason for Lloyd George and the War Cabinet's change in attitude on the Stockholm Conference was the deteriorating situation in Russia. At the Allied war conference in Paris on 25-26 July the Prime Minister learned that the Russian summer offensive had failed, "and with it went his enthusiasm for the revolutionary spirit in general and for Russian socialists in particular." Accordingly, Lloyd George was furious when he learnt that Henderson had visited Paris with Ramsay MacDonald

"who was openly opposed to the War, and to all measures for its effective prosecution, and had been organising pacifist propaganda, to talk over... the arrangements for an International Conference of which his own Government did not approve, and to which our Allies, the French, the Italians and the Americans were strongly opposed."

With Henderson in Paris, the War Cabinet met at a secret session on 30 July to discuss "the danger of the Left exploiting the situation against the Government." The War Cabinet was particularly distressed lest

"one or other of the Allied Governments might find itself practically committed to terms of peace which did not meet the views of the Allies as a whole; and that the situation in regard to the making of peace might be taken, to a great extent, out of the control of the Government." <sup>34</sup>

On the morning of 1 August at a special War Cabinet meeting the Unionist members pressed the Prime Minister for Henderson's removal from the Cabinet. They argued that his endorsement of the Stockholm conference had "gravely compromised" the Government's position.

However, they admitted that the loss of Henderson would be "equivalent to a repudiation of the plan of a Stockholm Conference in the most dramatic manner, and that the effect of this in Russia might have the most serious reaction on the whole prospects of the Allies in the war." On his return from Paris, Henderson was, in his own words, left "on the door-mat" for an hour while the rest of the War Cabinet sat in judgment upon his conduct in Paris. Despite this reprimand, Henderson defended his visit in Parliament later that evening as consistent with his duties as secretary of the Labour Party, and was in no way related to his membership in the War Cabinet. During the debate Lloyd George defended Henderson's contribution and praised "all the great services he has rendered... in the prosecution of this great War." 35

However, a serious misunderstanding at the War Cabinet meeting on 8 August as to how Henderson would vote at the special Labour conference on 10 August ensured his exit from the Government. The War Cabinet agreed that "the working men themselves... should refuse to attend [rather] than that the Government should announce their decision and thereby appear to dictate to the Labour Party." At the same time, it was decided that, regardless of the vote at the Conference, "the attendance of British delegates at the [Stockholm] Conference would be illegal." However, when the Labour leader supported the case for British representation at the special Labour conference, Lloyd George was livid that Henderson had not read the contents of a telegram from C. Nabokoff of the Russian Embassy in London. Dated 8 August, it revealed the new attitude of the reconstructed Russian Government to the Stockholm proposal "as a Party concern, and its



decisions in no way binding upon the liberty of action of the Government." Had the delegates been aware of this new knowledge, Lloyd George believed the Labour conference would not have endorsed British participation at Stockholm. On 10 August the War Cabinet decided to fire Henderson; and on the following day he submitted his resignation. It was accepted by Lloyd George and was debated on 13 August in the Commons.<sup>36</sup>

In his resignation letter Henderson admitted that his position as secretary of the Labour Party "was no longer compatible with my membership of the War Cabinet." He therefore asked Lloyd George "to release me from further membership of your Government." In his reply, Lloyd George stressed that Henderson had misled the War Cabinet on 8 August and had also deliberately misrepresented the Russian Government's revised attitude to Stockholm at the Labour Party Conference. In the House on 13 August Henderson defended his controversial position at the Labour conference. By contrast, Lloyd George explained that the War Cabinet had expected that Henderson "would use the whole of his influence to turn down the Stockholm Conference at the Friday meeting" and that he would inform the delegates that there had been "a most drastic change in the whole policy of the Government in Russia."<sup>37</sup> The Prime Minister had thus outmanoeuvred Henderson by an eloquent display of oratorical skill, depicting the Labour leader as somewhat confused and out of touch with the realities of international politics and foreign relations.

However, Lloyd George misunderstood the significance of the affair. By placing so little political value on Henderson, the Prime Minister believed that by elevating Barnes to the War Cabinet as the new Labour

representative he automatically made Barnes the new Labour leader. As A.J.P. Taylor has argued, "Labour did not take its leader by nomination from Lloyd George, and Barnes was civilly dead so far as Labour was concerned from the moment that he entered the war cabinet." Although the Labour Party continued to support the war and Labour ministers, other than Henderson, remained in office, Lloyd George believed mistakenly that "nothing had happened." Yet, the Labour Ministers who still held office were seen "as the creatures of Lloyd George rather than as the representatives of the organized working class." In the Labour Leader on 16 August, Snowden warned that those Labour Ministers who remain in office have "no representative authority." As an example, the Norwich Trades Council repudiated G.H. Roberts, the new Minister of Labour, as their official Labour candidate late that month. In addition, Samuel, the former Liberal Home Secretary, predicted on 14 August that "the net result so far is that another section of the House and the country - the centre of the Labour movement - is now alienated from the Government." Moreover, Henderson's exit earned the Prime Minister further distrust within Labour circles which identified his name with repressive measures such as the Military Service Acts and the Munitions of War Acts. What Lloyd George failed to appreciate was that once Barnes and the other Coalition Ministers had severed themselves from the Labour Movement, they added little prestige, in the minds of dissenters, to a Ministry already hostile to the peace-by-negotiation campaign. <sup>38</sup>

Despite the Government's failure to appreciate the political consequences of Henderson's removal, the Unionist members of the

Government feared that the prospect of an international socialist accord might drive one or more of Britain's allies out of the war and therefore prevent an Allied victory. For instance, the Attorney General, F.E. Smith, reminded the War Cabinet as early as 6 August that "it is a general principle of our common law that in time of war, intercourse between subjects of this country and enemy subjects is forbidden." Two days later, Carson warned Lloyd George that "to allow delegates of any party or organization to usurp the duties and functions of Government would be fraught with the most disastrous of consequences to the future of this country." In his reply Lloyd George informed Carson, who was unable to attend the War Cabinet meeting on 9 August, that "we unanimously decided to turn down Stockholm - but on the advice of anti-Stockholm Labour men decided to postpone announcement until Monday [13 August] ." The Prime Minister explained that "they want to capture the Labour Conference and think they can do so provided the Government does not put up the backs of the trade unionists by telling them in advance that we take no heed of their opinions." <sup>39</sup> Thus, the War Cabinet's opposition to British participation at Stockholm was predominantly shaped by Unionist fears that an inconclusive peace would undermine the nation's military agenda.

By contrast, Henderson's resignation was greeted with enthusiasm by peace dissenters who hoped that he might become the leader of a new Labour-peace coalition committed to the implementation of "peace without victory." For example, C.P. Trevelyan wrote to Ponsonby on 12 August: "The Labour decision is so great an event that it may be better to let them make the running now." Ponsonby responded enthusiastically a day later:

"Labour will rally to Henderson & new recruits will come in & H himself will be forced more & more in our direction... International socialism will see by the refusal of passports that the Gov'ts are determined that labour shall have no say in the settlement & I think we can expect a pretty hot agitation."

Nevertheless, Ponsonby's hopes for a reinvigorated peace campaign were dashed when the Stockholm controversy did not lead to an immediate break with the Labour Party or seriously weaken the Government's political position. In a letter to C.P. Trevelyan on 17 August Ponsonby stated that he was "as pessimistic as ever", and conceded that "Stockholm & the Pope[']s new peace proposal] are hopeful factors but I do not believe anything will come of either of them." By the end of the month, a discouraged Ponsonby told Trevelyan "I am becoming pretty sure that nothing but a change of government will alter the situation." Moreover, in light of the failure of the Inter-Allied Conference in London on 28 August to agree on war aims, the optimism generated by Henderson's exit did not lead to the ascendancy of a Labour-Socialist peace movement nor did it halt the Government's assault on wartime dissent. Even though Lloyd George's "fears of cunning pacifist, extreme Left or German manipulation at such a Conference seem - with hindsight - to have been unrealistic", the Labour Movement continued to support the war and Henderson's resignation strengthened Lloyd George's reputation as the only credible wartime leader who could still deliver the promise of victory.<sup>40</sup>

#### Dissent in Retreat - Part IV: The Persecution of E.D. Morel

Strengthened by the ambitious reorganization of official propaganda and the removal of Henderson from the War Cabinet, the decision to prosecute Morel on a trivial charge was indicative of a new spirit of

determination on the part of the Lloyd George Coalition to punish the most prominent dissenter and thus destroy the morale of the peace-by-negotiation movement. Indeed, Morel's trial has been interpreted as "an unconscious tribute to his persuasiveness and skill as a propagandist." His tireless energy in initiating and executing policy, whether in fundraising or in publishing, had earned him the commanding position of authority within the UDC, subject to the consent of the Executive Committee, and the hostility of officials in the Home and Foreign Offices.<sup>41</sup>

On 23 August 1917 the Competent Military Authority at Whitehall issued a warrant authorizing the police to search Morel's house and the UDC offices; within a fortnight Morel was arrested, tried, convicted, and imprisoned for soliciting a correspondent, Ethel Sidgwick, to send two of his publications to Roman Rollard, the French peace activist temporarily living in Switzerland, thus violating Regulations 24B and 48 under the DORA. The regulations, which prohibited conveying, or inciting another to convey, anti-war literature to neutral countries or to the United States, did not apply to Allied countries. Thus, were it not for Rollard's temporary stay in Switzerland, no violation of the regulations would have occurred. On the following day, Thomson submitted a police report to the Foreign Office which emphasized Morel's alleged "pro-Germanism" since the outbreak of war. Thomson concluded that "there is a complete understanding between the two [Morel and Germany] and that the German authorities have decided not to compromise MOREL abroad. His friends and correspondents abroad are almost all entirely pro-German." At his trial on 1 and 4 September the Magistrate, E.W. Garrett, sentenced Morel to six months in the second

(criminal) division "which will deter others... for acting in a similar manner." Refusing to comment on whether the pamphlets would have a detrimental effect upon neutral opinion, the Magistrate warned:

"once you establish a principle by which in defiance of this regulation literature may be sent to a neutral country you may have matter sent which would be very grave in the interests of the country, and therefore for that reason I think your offence is a very serious one." 42

Dissenting reaction to the trial was unequivocal in its outrage. Two days after the end of the trial, Lord Courtney, the noted Liberal dissenter, expressed to Mrs. Morel how "indignant" he felt "at the character of the proceedings... and the severity of the sentence pronounced" upon her poor husband. Courtney also condemned "the Prussian organization and character" of the proceedings and he believed that "the motive of the trial was the suppression of opinion." "The prosecution not only wanted to suppress opinion", he alleged, "but to lock-up in silence, anyone who could form an opinion they would like to suppress." In his notes for a speech at Merthyr on 16 September, C.P. Trevelyan described Morel as "our unflagging champion of truth, democracy, [and] humanity", and wondered how such a man who "speaks of peace & urges peace & dares to say peace" could be "housed with thieves & swindlers for six months." On 18 October the Tenth General Council Meeting of the UDC registered its formal protest against Morel's prosecution "for an offence which they ought never to have made an offence in a free country, and against the vindictive sentence of the Court, and calls for his immediate release." On 31 October J.C. Wedgwood, a Liberal MP, and C.P. Trevelyan raised in Parliament "the shameful sentence of six months recently passed upon Mr. Morel."

Wedgwood, though not a peace dissenter, described Morel's imprisonment as "a real national disgrace" and as "one of the most serious blots on the history of this country." 43

Yet, despite the condemnation of Morel's sentence and even the efforts of Courtney and others to obtain Morel's transfer to the first and non-criminal division, the Executive Secretary of the UDC was not released until 30 January 1918. Due to mental and physical deprivation in prison, Morel suffered permanent damage to his health and several months passed after his release before he was able to resume his work. For the UDC, the only consolation was that the Government did not have evidence of serious treason or it would surely have been employed. Nonetheless, the decision to prosecute the unofficial leader of the peace movement on such a frivolous charge demonstrated the Government's readiness to employ its full legal powers in order to render the ranks of wartime dissent divided and leaderless.

#### Conclusion

The combination of the Leeds Convention, the campaign for absolute exemption, the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils' movement, and the Stockholm controversy forced the Lloyd George Government to re-evaluate its military agenda and re-assess its ability to defeat Prussian militarism. However, fundamental differences in opinion between the peace-by-negotiation advocates from the ILP and the UDC and the civil libertarians in the NCF and Mrs. Hobhouse undermined the possibilities for success by dissenters. In addition, the different interpretations over the future role of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in the aftermath of Leeds was a further

example of the inability of wartime dissent to agree upon a common set of priorities and force the Government to comply with their wishes. Finally, Henderson's unwillingness to lead a Labour-Socialist Coalition ensured that the political position of the Lloyd George Government, however maligned in the dissenting community, would remain relatively secure.

Given the Prime Minister's concern with war weariness and the state of popular morale, political dissent throughout the summer of 1917 was turned aside by several Government tactics: first, the authorities recognized the importance of propaganda as an effective weapon and embarked on an energetic reorganization which included the formation of a new Ministry of Reconstruction and the NWAC to appeal to the patriotic impulses of the working classes and offer the promise of a revitalized post-war nation; second, the refusal to release genuine conscientious objectors underlined the ascendancy of the War Office's position that any administrative concession would swell the ranks of the anti-war movement and weaken the war effort; third, the refusal to allow British Labour to attend the Stockholm Conference and Henderson's resignation highlighted the Prime Minister's resolve to prevent an inconclusive peace and strengthened the Coalition's political position to fulfil its military agenda, and lastly, the prosecution of Morel indicated a new spirit of ruthlessness on the part of the Government to harass prominent dissenters and weaken the efforts of the anti-war movement to exploit growing domestic unrest and jeopardize the nation's capacity to wage war.



## NOTES

1. Steven White, "Soviets in Britain: The Leeds Convention of 1917", in the International Review of Social History, XIX, I, 1974, 171. See also Wrigley, 197, and Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement, 239.
2. Sandars and Taylor, 67; WC (171), 27 June 1917, CAB 23/3, 1-2; WC (221, 13), 21 August 1917, CAB 23/3, 5. See also Weinroth, 387.
3. See Young, 33; Robbins, 127; Vellacott, 205; Wrigley, 216; C.A. Cline, E.D. Morel 1873-1924. The Strategies of Protest. (1980), 111-112.
4. "Follow Russia! Joint Conference at Leeds, June 3rd, 1917", in the Labour Leader, 31 May 1917, 22, 14, 5; W.A. Orton, Labour in Transition. (1921), 104, quoted in White, 165.
5. White, 165-166. See also Hinton, 239; Weinroth, 387.
6. Graubard, 37-38; Vellacott, 161-162. See also Miliband, 55.
7. Graubard, 38-39; Vellacott, 162-163. See also Miliband, 55-56 and Hinton, 239-240.
8. "After the Leeds Conference: A Workers' and Soldiers' Council for Great Britain & Ireland", in the Labour Leader, 21 June 1917, 25, 14, 5; White, 176-178. Labour Leader, 7 June 1917, 23, 14, 1; Philip Snowden, An Autobiography. (1934), I, 456. See also Rothwell, 97.
9. Weinroth, 387; White, 179.
10. White, 189-191. See also "Workers' & Soldiers' Councils", in the Labour Leader, 9 August 1917, 32, 14, 2, White, 189-191, Hinton, 240, Vellacott, 170, and The Times, 13 and 22 August 1917.
11. White, 192. See also War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 1625, Secretary of State for Scotland, "Proposed Prohibition of a Meeting in Glasgow", 6 August 1917, CAB 24/22; WC (207, 6), 8 August 1917, CAB 23/3, 2-3; Iain Maclean, The Legend of Red Clydeside. (1983), 94.
12. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 1049, "Report on the Russian Revolution Conference at Leeds", (Initialed) B.E.B., 12 June 1917, CAB 24/16, 1-6. (Circulated by Lord Robert Cecil); Home Office Files: HO 45/10810/311932/40a, 187621/M.I.5. G.1, Report from Colonel Kell to G.W. Chrystal, 12 June 1917, 5-6. See also Sandars and Taylor, 139; Jaffe, 74.
13. WC (171), 27 June 1917, CAB 23/3, 1-2; Lloyd George Papers: F/160/1/14, "Lloyd George's Speech Delivered at Glasgow", 29 June 1917, 60-63.

14. C.P. Trevelyan Papers: CPT 46, "Notes for Speeches, 1917: Selly Oak, 30 June 1917", 3; Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 5 July 1917, 27, 14, 1. See also Robbins, 121.

15. Lloyd George Papers: F/78/5/1, "Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest", Summary by the Right Hon. G.N. Barnes, MP, 17 July 1917, 5. See also Wrigley, 178.

16. Lloyd George, II, 1159; WC (190, 1), 19 July 1917, CAB 23/2, 2. See also Wrigley, 198-203.

17. See Barton Johnson, 40, 73-77; Addison Papers: Box 13, "Duplicate. 145.0 Committee Reports: 1918", "Reconstruction", 1.

18. Lloyd George Papers: F/160/1/10, "National War Aims Committee - Inaugural Meeting at the Queen's Hall, London", 4 August 1917, 9-13, 18-19. See also Sandars and Taylor, 68.

19. Treasury Records: T 102/16, [NWAC], "Aims of Home Publicity", unnamed, undated, 1.

20. See Sandars and Taylor, 16-17, 67, 139-140.

21. James Ramsay MacDonald Papers: PRO 30/69/1799, "Pamphlets - The War: Anti-War Leaflets - Suggested Model Speech for National War Aims Speakers", 1-8. See also Jaffe, 75-76.

22. Sandars and Taylor, 72; Lord Northcliffe Papers: ADD. MSS. 62245, Geoffrey Dawson to Lord Northcliffe, 27 August 1917, 87. See also Swartz, 177-180. At this time £1 = \$4.70-4.80 U.S. and, to place the sum Carson suggested into proper perspective, the average skilled working class wage was approximately £2/week.

23. War Office Files: WO 32/5472/4, "Open Letter to Mr. Lloyd George from Clifford Allen", 31 May 1917, 3; Vellacott, 198. See also Kennedy, 231, and Vellacott, 199.

24. See Robbins, 127-128; Vellacott, 199; Kennedy, 234, 239.

25. Philip Kerr Papers: GD/40/17/520, Philip Kerr to Mr. Lloyd George, 15 June 1917, 1; WO 32/5472/3A, Memorandum by Philip Kerr, "Conscientious Objectors", 16 June 1917, 4-6.

26. Kerr Papers: GD/40/17/525, Hugh C. Thornton to Philip Kerr, 18 June 1917, 1; WO 32/5472/3B, Lt. General Childs to P.H. Kerr, 18 June 1917, 1-3; GD/40/17/528/3, [? Final Form] Philip Kerr's Revised Memorandum on the Absolutist Conscientious Objector", 16 July 1917, 1, 4-6. [Underlined by Kerr]

27. Kerr Papers: GD/40/17/530/2, Lord Milner to Philip Kerr, 19 July 1917, 2-3; WO 32/5472/2, Lt. General Childs to Lord Derby, 13 June 1917, 3; WO

32/5473/3A, Lord Derby to Lord Emmott, 22 June 1917, 8. See also Vellacott, 206-207.

28. WO 32/5473/3A, Derby to Emmott, 22 June 1917, 9-10.

29. Kennedy, 188-189; Vellacott, 209-211.

30. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T.1833, Lord Milner, "Conscientious Objectors", 24 August 1917, 1. See also Vellacott, 212-216, Rae, 216, and Kennedy, 190.

31. See Weinroth, 388, 388n; Gardner, 141.

32. See Pugh, 109; Swartz, 163; Wrigley, 209-210.

33. See Robbins, 139; Wrigley, 211; Swartz, 163; Graubard, 25.

34. Wilson, ed., The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, 294-295; Lloyd George, II, 1127; WC Special Minutes (199a), 30 July 1917, CAB 23/13/47-48. See also Wrigley, 211-213.

35. WC Special Minutes (201a), 1 August 1917, CAB 23/13/57; WC (202), 1 August 1917, CAB 23/3, 2-3; U.K. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5 ser., vol. 96, 1 August 1917, cols. 2207-2208. See also Wrigley, 214, Hankey, 691; Marquand, 219, and Graubard, 26. When Ramsay MacDonald resigned as chairman of the Labour Party in August 1914 over the Party's decision to support the war, Henderson, already secretary of the Party, replaced him. Throughout the Stockholm debate Henderson argued that a consultative conference of socialist parties would strengthen, not weaken, the war effort.

36. WC (207,5), 8 August 1917, CAB 23/3, 2-3; Lloyd George, II, 1134-1135. See also Wrigley, 215, and WC (211,3,5), 10 August 1917, CAB 23/3, 1-2.

37. Lloyd George Papers: F/27/3/15; Arthur Henderson to the Prime Minister, 11 August 1917, 1; F/27/3/17, David Lloyd George to Arthur Henderson, 11 August 1917, 1-5; U.K. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5 ser., vol. 97, 13 August 1917, cols. 909-929; After the Commons debate, Henderson admitted to Arthur Murray on 13 August: "The dual position of a member of the War Cabinet and Secretary of the Labour Party was of course becoming quite impossible." [Wrigley, 216]

38. A.J.P. Taylor, 142; Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 16 August 1917, 33, 14, 1; Herbert Samuel Papers: A/157/894, H. Samuel to his wife, 14 August 1917, 1. See also Pugh, 110, Marquand, 220, Robbins, 139-140, and Wrigley, 217, 234-236.

39. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 1624, Memorandum by the Attorney General with a covering note by Sir Edward Carson, 6 August 1917, CAB 24/22, 1; Lloyd George Papers: F/6/2/44, Edward Carson to the Prime

Minister, 8 August 1917, 1. [Underlined by Carson]; F/6/2/45, D. Lloyd George to Edward Carson, 9 August 1917, 1. See also Swartz, 163.

40. Arthur Ponsonby Papers: MS. Eng. hist. c.666, Charles Trevelyan to Arthur Ponsonby, 12 August 1917, 91; C.P. Trevelyan Papers: CPT 78, Arthur Ponsonby to Charles Trevelyan, 13 August 1917, 2-3, Arthur Ponsonby to Charles Trevelyan, 17 August 1917, 3-4, and Arthur Ponsonby to Charles Trevelyan, 28 August 1917, 3. Wrigley, 217.

41. Cline, 111-112. See also Swartz, 50, 62-65.

42. Foreign Office Files: FO 395/140/168072, "Mr. E.D. Morel - Police Report", By Basil Thomson, 24 August 1917; Union of Democratic Control Papers: DDC/5/105, "Rex v. E.D. Morel", September 1917, 30. See also Swartz, 178, 179n, and Cline, 112.

43. Lord Courtney of Penwith Collection: Vol. 12, Item 76, [Courtney, Leonard] to Mrs. Morel, 6 September 1917, 140-141; C.P. Trevelyan Papers: CPT 46, "Merthyr: 16 September 1917", 1; DDC/1/1, Tenth General Council Meeting, 18 October 1917, Morning Session, Report: 20 February 1918, Compiled by H.M. Swanwick; "E.D. Morel in the House of Commons", in the Labour Leader, 15 November 1917, 46, 14, 4.

## Chapter VI

### The Nemesis of Dissent: September 1917 - February 1918

Throughout the autumn of 1917 and into the winter of 1917-1918 the Lloyd George Government intensified its systematic offensive to intimidate and discredit the forces of wartime dissent while maintaining the support of the British public in the pursuit of unequivocal victory. First, an investigation into the finances of anti-war organizations, the authorization of secret-service funds for the NWAC, and the introduction of regular reports on pacifist and revolutionary agitation all improved the effectiveness of official propaganda to counteract the harmful effect of dissenting agitation. Second, in order to limit the circulation of anti-war literature, the Home Secretary introduced Regulation 27C requiring all publications "relating to the present War or the conclusion of peace... [to] bear the names and addresses of the author or printer, and... be submitted to the Press Bureau for approval." Third, even though the campaign on behalf of the absolutists did lead to the release of the medically unfit, Parliament passed a draconian motion to disfranchise conscientious objectors who had been court-martialled or exempted from all military service for five years after the end of the war. Fourth, when confronted by growing labour unrest precipitated by the Shop Stewards' Movement's opposition to the proposed 'comb-out' of skilled men for military service, the Government utilized a shrewd policy of concession and coercion to undercut potential support for a general strike. Fifth, in recognition of the domestic and international pressures which might jeopardize the Allied war effort, the Lloyd George Coalition understood that a restatement of

British war aims was needed to rally Labour opinion and to demoralize the morale of the peace-by-negotiation movement. Finally, the Prime Minister mobilized existing powers under the DORA to prosecute Russell, the former Acting NCF Chairman, shortly after Morel's release from prison, in a calculated effort to punish the enemies of the "knock-out blow" policy. <sup>1</sup>

The Reorganization of Government Propaganda:  
The Cloak of Repression

Before any action should be taken by the authorities Carson believed that the War Cabinet would need more accurate information on dissenting propaganda than the Ministry of Labour's weekly reports. In a memorandum on 3 October he drew a link between the agitation for peace with the problem of labour unrest. He once more expressed his concern about the anti-war activities of the UDC, ILP, NCF, and the Shop Stewards' Movement and suggested that "the Cabinet should have reports from the various Secret Services to show whether there is any evidence at all that the enemy are supplying funds, either directly or indirectly, for the pacifist propaganda." For the Government to counteract effectively anti-war propaganda, he recommended that the Home Office submit a weekly intelligence report to the War Cabinet. On the following day the War Cabinet considered Carson's proposals and examined the current state of dissenting and Government propaganda. The War Cabinet acknowledged that "the only really efficient system of propaganda at present existing in this country was that organised by the pacifists, who had large sums of money at their disposal and who were conducting their campaign with great vigour." <sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, both the NWAC and the Ministry of Labour reported on the alienation of organized labour and on official approaches to counteract the pernicious influence of peace-by-negotiation propaganda. On 3 October, for instance, G. Wallace Carter wrote that "the chief need for our work is not so much to combat anti-war agitation, as to overcome war weariness and to encourage our people in this great struggle." A week later, he observed that trade unions were unwilling to co-operate in the creation of local NWAC committees "on the grounds that our [War] Aims are not defined. It is desirable that this reason or excuse should be removed as quickly as possible." By contrast, the Minister of Labour, G.H. Roberts, responded to Carson's allegations of an enemy conspiracy on 10 October by defending the work of the Ministry's Intelligence section which "has at present far more complete material for estimating the various currents of labour unrest than any other Department." As to whether anti-war organizations were being sponsored by German agents, Roberts concluded:

"No evidence has at present come to light which shows that the [UDC] or the [NCF] are financed from enemy sources, and the fact that they command the support of very wealthy Quaker families may account for their ability to carry on their present activities." <sup>3</sup>

Ignoring Roberts's report, the War Cabinet agreed with Carson on 19 October that the Ministry of Labour's weekly reports, although of great value, did not cover the whole field of dissenting agitation in the country. "It was particularly desirable", the War Cabinet decided, "to investigate the sources from which the funds for purposes of anti-war propaganda were being obtained." Owing to suspicions that peace propaganda was funded by enemy pockets, the Home Office was authorized to undertake "the co-

ordination and control of the investigation of all pacifist propaganda" and submit a full report to the War Cabinet. By acknowledging that visits to the front "formed the very best education for propagandists in this country", the War Cabinet also "approved in principle that there should be greater facilities for war-workers, farmers, and especially for Members of Parliament, to visit the front." <sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, the Home Secretary had assigned the task of preparing reports on peace agitation in the country to Basil Thomson, Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and head of the CID at Scotland Yard. On 22 October Thomson recorded in his diary:

"Being persuaded that German money is supporting these [pacifist] societies, they [the War Cabinet] want to be assured that the police are doing something. I feel certain that there is no German money, their expenditure being covered by the subscriptions they receive from cranks."

For the benefit of the War Cabinet, however, Thomson filled his account on "Pacifist and Revolutionary Organizations in the United Kingdom" with carefully phrased allusions to, what were in fact, non-existent connections between dissenters and the enemy. He listed "pacifist" and "revolutionary" organizations in their order of importance, the latter being more likely to resort to violence: "pacifist" - the UDC, the ILP, the BSP, the NCF, the PNC, the Herald League, the Women's International League, and the Women's Peace Crusade; "revolutionary" - the Shop Stewards' and Rank and File Movement, the IWW, the Workmen's and Soldier's Councils, and the Herald League again. Thomson was mainly concerned with the activities of the ILP and the UDC; the former had over eight hundred branches, sixty thousand members, a strong parliamentary connection, and many legitimate sources



of income. The latter was equally formidable, for it "has been more before the public eye than the other pacifist bodies", and had received significant funding from leading Quaker families. Although Thomson failed to prove any direct or even indirect connection between the UDC and the enemy, he stressed that "there can be little doubt that there is a good understanding between him [Morel] and a number of prominent Germans as to his activities during the war." Cave later admitted to the War Cabinet that Thomson's report was rather inconclusive in regard to German support for anti-war groups. Thereafter, he arranged with Scotland Yard to confiscate their records and to trace their sources of income, if possible. On 13 December Thomson concluded again that there was no evidence of enemy money or influence within such anti-war organizations as the FOR, the NCF, and the NCCL. 5

In conjunction with the Home Office's investigation of dissenting finances, there was an acrimonious debate in the House of Commons on 13 November on whether the NWAC should have access to secret-service funds in their campaign to counteract the activities of the peace movement. After examining some sixteen NWAC pamphlets, Ponsonby complained that he could not "find any trace or indication of what our war aims really are." C.P. Trevelyan also wondered, "What is the use of having a war aims campaign when you do not tell the people your aims?" Amidst such criticism, Carson played upon the fears of an enemy conspiracy and warned that "the amount of subterranean influence of a pernicious and pestilential character that has been developed, particularly within the last few months, goes far beyond anything that has been described in this

House." 6

In light of this parliamentary decision, the Home Office co-operated more closely with the NWAC in terms of collating information and planning strategy to contain the troublesome effect of anti-war agitation. For instance, Cox wrote to the Home Office on 15 November, and asked "if you would let us have the particulars of any such [pacifist] meetings in order we may set our local committee machinery going." In reply, Troup suggested on 18 November: "I think it wd. perhaps meet the Committee's requirements if he [Thomson] supplied them with extracts from his daily reports relating to pacifism - adding any additional information not included in the daily reports." Thomson met Cox on 22 November and recorded: "I arranged to let him have early intimation of any pacifist movement which came to our notice and he will try to arrange outdoor or indoor meetings as a counterblast." The Home Office officially confirmed this new arrangement in a letter to Cox at the end of the month and this episode highlighted the extent to which governmental co-operation had improved the Government's ability to counterminimize the potentially menacing effect of dissenting propaganda on working class morale.<sup>7</sup> By appointing a member of the War Cabinet the head of British propaganda, supplying the NWAC with secret-service funds, and sanctioning regular reports on "pacifist" and "revolutionary" agitation, the authorities thus embarked on an ambitious reorganization of domestic propaganda in order to undercut the peace movement's efforts to secure a compromise peace.

#### Dissent on the Defensive Part I: Censorship

Still alarmed by the "very large number" of dissenting pamphlets and

leaflets, "the expense being borne out of funds supplied by the enemy or by anarchists or peace cranks in this country", the Home Secretary suggested on 13 November 1917 two new DORA regulations to the War Cabinet. The first required that all leaflets, pamphlets, and circulars concerning the war and the future peace include the names and addresses of both author and printer and be approved by the Press Bureau prior to publication. The second allowed the Home Secretary to suspend offending newspapers. Two days later, the War Cabinet approved the proposed first addition to DORA (27C) but it expressed "considerable doubt" about the second because it believed that "existing powers, [in DORA 51] whereby the authorities can seize the printing press of any publisher who contravenes the Regulations, were sufficient to deal with dangerous publications." Aware of the solidarity of the press, the Cabinet believed that it was "practically impossible" to prevent a storm of controversy should the Government endeavour to prosecute a leading daily such as the Daily News, and, in any case, such overt repression would provide great publicity for a paper.<sup>8</sup> When the Home Secretary introduced DORA 27C in the House of Commons a week later, the Government once again demonstrated its readiness to subvert the legal system in order to establish its right to suppress anti-war propaganda in the defence of national security.

Dissenters were outraged by the grave implications of this new regulation, which went far beyond previous Government policy to harass and prohibit the export of small and relatively ineffectual anti-war papers. Such a drastic provision prompted two main responses: the first, an unhappy but compliant decision made by most publications to submit

their leaflets for prior approval, while working behind-the scenes in an attempt to limit the powers of the Press Bureau; the second, an uncompromising response by the FSC, a small and dogmatic body within the Society of Friends, which refused to recognize the Government's legal right to restrict the freedom of publication. In the first place, the Manchester Guardian condemned those "among our governors who think that every time they trample upon a British liberty they are defeating the enemy." The Labour Leader warned that "if this regulation is maintained it completes the establishment of an uncontrolled Government dictatorship, and it removes the one means by which the professed aims of the war, namely, a democratic peace, can be established." Similarly, J.A. Hobson, a leading spokesman of the "New Liberalism", interpreted the "infamous" regulation as only a part of a concerted "attempt to strangle freedom of opinion." While the Government "subsidises from the public funds its own political propaganda [the NWAC] ," Hobson observed, "it stops all effective criticism by legal penalties." Even though the UDC disliked the new provision, its Executive Committee complied, along with most other publishers, with its requirements and on 27 November it submitted three copies of each of its current publications. The UDC agreed that any of its leaflets which had been approved by the Press Bureau should be distributed with the note "Passed by Censor" (with the date), and also respected the directive that those which had been rejected should be destroyed. <sup>9</sup>

This apparent acquiescence by the organs of the popular press contrasted with the defiant but ineffective response from the militant FSC which was prepared to incur the wrath of legal persecution to defend its

faith in the freedom of expression. On 6 December the Peace Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings, the executive body of the London Yearly Meeting (LYM) of the Society of Friends, announced that the "declaration of Peace and Goodwill is the duty of all Christians and ought not to be dependent upon the permission of any Government official" and resolved to "continue the publication of such leaflets as we feel it our duty to put forth, without submitting them to the Censor." On the next day the Meeting for Sufferings sent this resolution to the Government and to the press, stating: "It is for Christians a paramount duty to be free to obey, and to act and speak in accord with the law of God, a law higher than that of any state, and no Government official can release men from this duty." Acting on behalf of the LYM, the FSC defied the authority of the Press Bureau and printed and distributed nearly seventy-five thousand copies of a leaflet entitled, "A Challenge to Militarism." The conscientious objectors in prison were depicted as the "'Die-Hards' of the peace movement" and their crusade was described as one "to deliver future generations from the yoke of conscription and the fear of war." Proceedings were later launched by the Government against three executives of the FSC - Edith Ellis, Harrison Barrow, and Arthur Watts - for violating the new regulation. At their trial in May 1918 all three were sentenced to fines and imprisonment. Although the FSC had proven the strength of their convictions, their campaign to defy the Government and risk legal prosecution failed to attract any support from other civil libertarians or peace dissenters.<sup>10</sup>

By contrast, strong objections raised from within the Home Office and Opposition circles, including a deputation of the Labour Party, against the

new legal powers forced the War Cabinet to rescind the authority of the Press Bureau to forbid the issue of a pamphlet even though it may not have offended any regulation. Henceforth, leaflets were to be submitted to the Press Bureau seventy-two hours prior to publication, so that the authorities could determine whether or not a particular article was objectionable and, if so, decide upon what measures were necessary to prevent its issue. In a memorandum to the Home Secretary on 27 November, for instance, Samuel complained that the new regulations "create a new offence, if a leaflet is circulated which has not been approved by the censor, although there might be nothing in its contents that infringed the law." H.B. Simpson also warned, on behalf of the Home Office, that inconsistencies in judgment would "discredit" the work of the Press Bureau, and that the wide terms of the regulation would meet considerable opposition from a "large body of moderate and reasonable opinion." <sup>11</sup>

Acknowledging these objections, and after receiving a Labour deputation, Cave submitted a memorandum to the War Cabinet on 5 December: "the requirement that leaflets should be passed by the Press Bureau... has been found in practice to be somewhat inconvenient, as there are pamphlets which cannot be stopped but to which it is undesirable to give an official sanction." He proposed that publications should not be "passed by" but rather "submitted to" the Press Bureau at least seventy-two hours prior to printing, publication, or distribution. At a meeting two days later, the War Cabinet authorized the Home Secretary to inform the House that the Government "might find it necessary to apply the new proposal." Although the storm of protest compelled the War Cabinet to make slight

modifications in the wording of DORA 27C, the Government could still apply existing powers in DORA 51, which gave the police the right to seize any pamphlet or property without the permission of any court. In the words of the Daily Chronicle, "this concession does not satisfy the pacifists, who contend that the old Regulation 51, plus the modified 27C, can still be used for harassing purposes." <sup>12</sup> Despite the howls of protest on the expanding perimeters of the State to the detriment of individual liberty, the War Cabinet had thus sanctioned an ambitious strategy to restrict the proliferation of anti-war literature by unleashing the weapon of the DORA against the sacrosanct right of a civil society, freedom of the press.

Conscientious Objection and the Role of Government:  
Deference and Disfranchisement

Owing to the success of I Appeal unto Caesar and the growing concern felt towards the plight of the absolutists within the Church of England and on the fringes of pro-war opinion such as The Times, the civil libertarian campaign to win the release of genuine conscientious objectors secured two concessions from the Government. By the end of 1917 the medically unfit were released and absolutists were given a second chance to establish their right to absolute exemption; nonetheless, the Government also supported a draconian amendment to the Representation of the People Act that disqualified conscientious objectors from voting in local or parliamentary elections for five years.

Although Milner's second memorandum of 25 August urging the release of all genuine absolutists had failed to influence official policy, he was an indispensable member of the Government and the one member of the War Cabinet on whose support Lloyd George placed increasing importance

throughout the war. In these circumstances, his views on the topic of the absolutists could not be ignored. Coupled with the publicity surrounding I Appeal Unto Caesar, the need to avoid alienating Milner was undoubtedly foremost in the War Cabinet's decision on 8 October to establish a committee to re-examine the treatment of conscientious objectors.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, the appointment of the Home Secretary as Chairman and the composition of the committee failed to inspire much hope among civil libertarians: of the six members, only H.A.L. Fisher was known to share Milner's support for the release of the absolutists. In addition, the presence of Childs further diminished the possibility of the committee advocating a fundamental change in official policy. In its report of 16 October the committee endorsed Childs's argument that the release of selected absolutists could not be arbitrarily ignored without abandoning the whole basis of the Military Service Acts. To agree to such a release would therefore mean "a surrender to anarchy and the recognition of the right of an individual to disobey a statute if he disagrees with it." By placing its faith in the legal system, the committee concluded that "the proper course is to uphold the law."<sup>14</sup>

In response to the committee's report, both Milner and Fisher launched a spirited campaign to convince the Government to reconsider its persecution of genuine conscientious objectors. In two letters to the Prime Minister on 18 and 20 October, Fisher first warned him that the "reputation of the Government is being defamed by the long sentences" and then wondered how "there can be any danger of releasing this handful of honest fanatics... [when] ... we have the tremendous weapon of the Defence



of the Realm Act if any should offend." Moreover, in his third memorandum on 20 October, Milner pointed out that "the essential vice of our present policy" was the fact that "we have singled out for severest treatment the very class... to whom we could most afford to be lenient, whereas the men whose cases are more doubtful are being treated with comparative indulgence." Finally, Milner warned that this policy will be found "increasingly difficult to defend against public criticism in Parliament and elsewhere." 15

Despite the efforts of Milner and Fisher, the War Cabinet endorsed, with Milner's dissent, the committee's conclusions on 25 October and decided that "under no circumstances should absolute exemption be granted to men alleging conscientious objection, now undergoing sentences in prison." However, the War Cabinet thought it advisable to offer some palliative and promised that the men who had served twelve months with hard labour "should receive mitigation of prison treatment." In light of the decisions made on 25 October, the case for the release of the absolutists had received a proper hearing and it appeared that the issue was now closed as long as the war continued. 16

However, by the end of the year, the Government had agreed upon a formula that resulted in the discharge of over three hundred absolutists including Stephen Hobhouse in return for the disfranchisement of all conscientious objectors for five years after the end of the war. One reason for this dramatic reversal lies in the relentless campaign led by Mrs. Hobhouse to enlist the support of prominent citizens for a memorial on the plight of the absolutists and a petition to the Home Secretary. In addition,

the remarkable leading article of The Times on 25 October which called for the release of all absolutists demonstrated the extent to which public opinion had become more sympathetic to the treatment of the absolutists. However, the policy's apparent generosity must be analyzed in view of a number of considerations: namely, the Government's favouritism in Hobhouse's case, its refusal to admit possible errors made by the statutory tribunals, and, most important, its support for the disfranchisement of conscientious objectors. <sup>17</sup>

On the morning of the War Cabinet's discussion of the Cabinet committee's report, The Times carried a surprising leader urging the Government to reconsider its current policy. Civil libertarians reacted with delight over an article from a pro-war paper that criticized the mistreatment of genuine absolutists and supported their campaign to free these prisoners of conscience. The paper asked: "when he thus proves repeatedly his readiness to suffer for what he proclaims to be his beliefs, is it either justifiable or politic to go on with the punishment?" In The Tribunal on 1 November Russell predicted optimistically that the release of the absolutists "will come with the approval of the community and will mark a definite victory of liberty over intolerance." Similarly, The Times' s editorial was welcomed by Ramsay MacDonald who hoped that the Government "is at last seeing the necessity of turning over a new leaf." In addition, G. Lowes Dickinson viewed the article as "a remarkable testimony to the change of public opinion which has taken place." <sup>18</sup> Hence, the leader from The Times had not only illustrated the change within public

opinion towards the plight of the absolutists but also raised the hopes of civil libertarians seeking the release of their comrades.

The campaign to secure the release of genuine absolutists received a further boost when the Howard Association and a group of prominent citizens submitted memorials to the Prime Minister. On 30 October the Howard Association, consisting of leading Anglican churchmen, argued that the imprisonment of the absolutists represented "a grave contravention of justice" and requested that all genuine cases should be discharged from the Army. Three days later Lord Weardale, a Liberal peer, presented two additional memorials and raised such issues as the provision for absolute exemption in the Military Service Acts, the inadequacy of the tribunals, and the sanctity of moral or religious opinion. More significant, the first memorial warned that the imprisonment of these men "constitutes a serious weakening of the national force, promotes a kind of 'Pacifism' which is a hindrance to the national purpose, increases the difficulty of maintaining unimpaired the national will and produces a dangerous sense of injustice and tyranny." At the Home Office, Simpson warned Troup on 9 November that the Howard Association's signatories were "men of weight" and deserved a reply from the Government. In response, Troup reminded him of the War Cabinet's decision of 25 October and the refusal of conscientious objectors in prison to accept a conditional release.<sup>19</sup> Despite the public campaign to pressure the authorities to discharge all genuine absolutists, the Home and War Offices upheld the Cabinet committee's recommendations and the letter of the law.

In the aftermath of The Times' s editorial and the public memorials, the

subject of conscientious objectors was debated in the House of Lords on 14 November 1917. While there was not a strong case for releasing the absolutists, Curzon said that he was willing to consult the Home Secretary about "greater elasticity" in their treatment. "As a member of the War Cabinet", Rae has observed, "Curzon would have known about the proposed relaxation of prison discipline under [Prison] Rule 243A and it may have been this to which he referred. Or he may have been ready to press for something more." Hopeful that Curzon meant the latter, H.A.L. Fisher wrote to him the next day. Although admitting that the absolutists were "*ex hypothesi* cranks", Fisher underlined his concern "lest the Muse of History should attach a reproach to the otherwise good name of our Government." Curzon replied to Fisher on 19 November after meeting with Derby, Childs, and Cave at the War Office to "consider certain points arising out of the recent debate in the House of Lords on the subject of conscientious objectors." In the words of Rae,

"It must have been a difficult meeting with Derby and Childs reluctant to discuss the question of release, Curzon anxious not to go away empty-handed, and Cave torn between his respect for the law and his desire to see the Home Office relieved of the responsibility for men whose presence was a continuing threat to the standards of prison service."

Significantly, the War Office agreed that any medically unfit absolutist would be released. Although the name of Stephen Hobhouse had not been raised, such a formula seems to have been "tailored to fit" him and met all the War Office objections: it did not undermine the law, it would not encourage the growth of the absolutist crusade, and it did not make an arbitrary distinction between genuine absolutists and the alternativists. After the meeting Curzon wrote a brief note to Fisher: "I fought a good

fight for them this afternoon at the W.O. and think that I got something substantial." <sup>20</sup> Thus, Curzon played a critical role in attempting to pressure the War Office to practice a certain degree of elasticity in its repressive treatment of conscientious objectors.

Despite the conclusions of the meeting of 19 November, there was no immediate announcement of the release on medical grounds. On 29 November, a memorial signed by prominent members of the Church of England urging the release of all absolutists was presented to Derby and a petition from Mrs. Hobhouse calling only for the release of Stephen was sent to Cave, with a copy for Derby. The signatories to the memorial aimed to include representatives "of every shade of political and ecclesiastical opinion", and it pressed the Government to "alter its present mode of treatment of imprisoned conscientious objectors." Although the memorial demanded the release of all genuine absolutists, the letter which Hobhouse presented to Cave urged the Government to consider that "the case of Stephen Hobhouse stands somewhat alone." Citing that he should have been granted absolute exemption, and was suffering from ill-health, the letter requested that "the Home Secretary will recommend his case as one where the prerogative of mercy should be exercised." In the copy sent to Derby on 30 November, Mrs. Hobhouse warned that "my son's case is doing infinite harm and giving a handle to agitation. It is not to be wondered that his treatment makes some, both at home and abroad, who are loyal and patriotic, waver in their support of those in charge of the War."<sup>21</sup> On 4 December Curzon announced in the Lords that the Army Council would release and transfer to the Reserve those absolutists reported to be in poor

health. He also declared that all conscientious objectors would be given a second chance to apply for absolute exemption before a hearing at a new local tribunal. Four days later Stephen Hobhouse was released from prison. He had been preceded into civilian life by Clifford Allen and they were among the first of about 300 absolutists released through the War Office scheme during the next eighteen months.

Despite the Government's two concessions, reaction was critical among those who believed that very little had changed in the plight of the absolutists, those who alleged that favouritism was involved in the Government's motives, and those who were outraged at the removal of the franchise. In retrospect, "permitting the release of prisoners who might otherwise have died in prison", Vellacott has argued, "does not seem an enormous concession, and indeed was one which was likely to save the Government a great deal of adverse publicity and embarrassment." In an article for The Tribunal on 13 December entitled, "The Government's 'Concessions,'" Russell wrote indignantly that the recent measures were given not to do justice to the absolutists but to quiet government critics. Despite Marshall's hope that Curzon's statement would help "reopen a large number of cases", it was unrealistic to assume that tribunals would readily admit their past errors and thereafter grant absolute exemption. Although Mrs. Hobhouse had rejoiced over the release of her son, she later told Gilbert Murray on 22 January 1918 that she was "not at all satisfied with the manner in which the concessions announced to the House of Lords... are being carried out." 22

While the Government responded constructively to the campaign of

influential people involved in the Hobhouse case, it is questionable whether it would have responded to a public campaign without access to prominent members of the Government such as Milner, Curzon, and Derby. Although public opinion had softened towards the plight of the absolutists by the autumn of 1917, the War Cabinet was still aware of widespread hostile feelings towards conscientious objectors. Similarly, the release of some of the absolutists would by no means be popular with many Unionists who feared that any leniency would encourage opposition to the war and weaken the morale of serving soldiers. In the Commons, the Government's motives in allowing the release of Hobhouse were questioned by Joseph King, the Liberal MP and UDC member:

"Why has he been let out? Because you dare not keep him in. He comes of a very distinguished family; he had an uncle in the House of Lords...You will keep many men in even when you are warned that if you keep them in they will die... There is but one chance for many of these men - either release by death or release by favouritism." <sup>23</sup>

The most visible sign of the Government's mistreatment of conscientious objectors was evident in its support for the amendment in the name of Sir George Younger, the Unionist Chief Whip, that was designed to disfranchise all men who had been courtmartialled or exempted from all military service. Although the unexpected leader of The Times of 25 October had urged the release of the absolutists, this critical point was added: "Men who, for whatever reason, persistently decline to do their duty as citizens place themselves permanently outside the community and have no title either to its protection or to the enjoyment of civil rights." Such a proposal had already been advocated by Unionists and by the right-wing

press, but the Government never considered this option as a quid pro quo for the release of the absolutists. In fact, when a similar motion had been proposed in June 1917, Cave emphasized that "the House will be best consulting its own dignity and the interests of justice by declining to accept this amendment." 24

The reasons for such a dramatic reversal in policy can be traced to two key considerations: first, the motivation behind The Times's support for a release coupled with disfranchisement, and; second, the rationale for the War Office's decision to allow the release on medical grounds. First, Rae has suggested that "a leading article echoing many of the arguments Milner had used in his memoranda should have appeared on the morning of the decisive War Cabinet meeting cannot be accepted as a mere coincidence." Since Northcliffe was in the United States, and Dawson, one of Milner's disciples, was free to draft editorial policy, the article was certainly intended to shape the course of official policy. Even though the article had failed to influence the War Cabinet on this particular occasion, this new formula for the release of genuine absolutists with the concomitant disfranchisement had not been rejected outright. Secondly, it is difficult to suppose that Childs would have agreed to the release of the medically unfit "without securing a comparable concession from their opponents, such as the loss of civil rights proposed by Milner in The Times." The following day Bonar Law announced that the amendment would be left to a free vote in the House and he declared his support for the measure, which he viewed as a 'direct deterrent' to the growth of the absolutist cause. With such overt Government backing, the amendment was passed, despite considerable



Liberal and Labour dissent and the opposition of the prominent Unionist MP Lord Hugh Cecil, by 211 votes to 173. <sup>25</sup> The Government's volte-face on the disfranchisement of conscientious objectors thus represented the quid pro quo for the War Office to grant the release of the medically unfit. More important, this episode highlighted how the Government had limited the embarrassment from the spectacle of public support by pro-war intellectuals, churchmen, and parliamentarians in their campaign for the release of all genuine absolutists. In addition, the passage of the draconian amendment demonstrated how ineffectual parliamentary dissent was to mount sufficient support in order to resist the further erosion of individual rights and civil liberties.

The Revival in Labour Militancy:  
On the Brink of Industrial Catastrophe?

Despite the Government's decision to grant a flat-rate 12 1/2 per cent increase to all time-workers, opposition to the 'comb-out' of men from the mines and workshops for the Western Front throughout the winter of 1917-18 threatened to unite the Shop Stewards' Movement with the peace-by-negotiation coalition. Aware of this potentially lethal threat to the prosecution of the war effort, the War Cabinet prepared a four part counter-offensive: first, a flat 7 1/2 per cent increase was awarded to piece-workers; second, negotiations were opened between Auckland Geddes, the Minister of National Service, and the leading pro-war unions most affected by the 'comb-out'; third, Lloyd George delivered his most definitive statement on British war aims at a conference of trade union executives in order to gain their support for the new reforms, and, fourth, the Government's resolve to press ahead with the manpower reforms not only

exposed the internal divisions within the Shop Stewards' Movement, but more important, once again demonstrated the underlying failure of wartime dissent to compel the Government to negotiate peace.

Throughout the early winter, the War Cabinet debated whether or not to extend the bonus to all piece-workers. As labour unrest became "more troublesome", the War Cabinet agreed on 5 January to issue "a proclamation in the most public manner declaring that the Government would go "so far and no further" in their concessions." Two days later, the recently established co-ordinating Committee on Labour Disputes was replaced by the Ministry of Labour which would supervise the settlement to piece-workers. On the advice of the Committee of Production, the War Cabinet awarded a 7 1/2 per cent increase to piece-workers "as an equivalent to the 12 1/2 per cent given to time workers." <sup>26</sup> As a first step in their plan to implement their new manpower reforms, the War Cabinet therefore addressed a legitimate working class grievance over wages and removed the potential for a possible alliance between disgruntled piece-workers and the militant agitators of the Shop Stewards' Movement.

Recognizing the need to secure trade union support for the passage of a new Military Service Bill, the Minister of National Service attended group conferences with trade union executives on 3 and 18 January to discuss the impact which the reforms would have on each industry. However, the ASE refused to participate in the initial session unless all dilutees were withdrawn from industry before the recruitment of skilled men. Despite this setback, Geddes introduced a Military Service Bill on 14 January which authorized him to cancel exemptions on the basis of occupation and to

abolish the two months' grace period provided to workers in the event of a withdrawal of exemption. Two days later Geddes asked Lloyd George to address the conference on 18 January because "it is so essential to show that the Government is definitely behind the Man-Power proposals."<sup>27</sup> At this gathering Lloyd George emphasized the dire necessity for additional manpower, appealed to the patriotism of the trade unionists, and reviewed the Government's recent statement on war aims. Despite opposition from the ASE, the Government sponsored general conferences in order to appeal for the co-operation of trade union executives to implement the new manpower proposals.

Aware of the danger of grave industrial unrest provoked by the 'comb-out', the Prime Minister articulated the most comprehensive set of British war aims before a conference of trade union leaders on 5 January 1918. At a meeting of the War Cabinet on 3 January, "it was agreed that a statement to the trade unionists was desirable." A telegram was sent to President Wilson two days later notifying him of "negotiations with the trades in regard to the release of the Government from certain pledges made earlier in the war, such release being indispensable to the development of our manpower for military purposes." Wilson was not consulted prior to Lloyd George's national address because "the negotiations had reached a point at which success turned mainly on the immediate publication of a statement of War Aims by the Government."<sup>28</sup> Thus, Lloyd George's war aims speech to a trade union conference was directed in the hope of securing their valuable co-operation for a drastic 'comb-out' of skilled labour in order to prosecute the war more efficiently.

Despite the Government's efforts to co-opt the support of organized labour, there were many indications that the Shop Stewards' Movement would fuse industrial unrest with anti-war agitation. Nonetheless, the refusal to submit to the demand that all dilutees be withdrawn before skilled workers exposed the lack of consensus within the ASE and the unofficial shop stewards on whether or not to challenge the authority of the Government to end the war or to defend their exemption against the extension of conscription. A national conference was organized by the Shop Stewards' Movement for 5-6 January in Manchester where forty delegates were instructed to "ascertain from the workers in the districts, what form this action should take, and to at once acquaint the National Administrative Council [NAC] ." On 25 January the NAC learned that the rank-and-file in Manchester and Sheffield "were opposed to strike action in the war." When delegates from London and Glasgow refused to hold a strike ballot, the NAC abdicated its responsibility, resolving "that they were not the body to deal with technical grievances arising out of the cancellation of occupational exemptions, but that such grievances should be dealt with by union executives." <sup>29</sup>

Deprived of leadership from the NAC, the initiative passed to the ASE which held a ballot in mid-February on whether to oppose the 'comb-out' of manpower until an agreement was reached by separate negotiations. An overwhelming majority endorsed this line and the Government agreed to meet with the ASE Executive separately. However, Lloyd George offered no guarantee that the dilutees would be recruited first. When the ASE finally voted in favour to accept the manpower proposals, it appeared that the ASE,

like the NAC, had failed to win sufficient support among its membership to challenge the authorities. Ironically, on 21 March, the same day which militants from the ASE attended a conference to plan how to defy the results of the ballot and organize a strike against the 'comb-out', the German Army launched their last great offensive of the war, and their belated efforts came to nothing. <sup>30</sup>

The inability of the Shop Stewards' Movement to link industrial dissent with the anti-war movement can also be explained in part by the unwillingness of the peace-by-negotiation coalition and the Labour Party in particular to support violent action to force the Government to end the war. For instance, the general consensus of the Labour Party Conference in Nottingham on 23-27 January 1918 was expressed by W.C. Anderson who had been one of the organizers at the Leeds Convention: "A terrific industrial upheaval at the present moment might be dangerous from the standpoint of a democratic People's Peace." Similarly, the Labour Party "instinctively recoiled" from encouraging class war and civil strife." <sup>31</sup> It instead focused its energies on the upcoming Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference in February to be held in London to draft an international memorandum on democratic war aims. Despite the potential for a powerful alliance between shop stewards and peace dissenters, the Government withdrew the exemption from military service for skilled labour in order to meet the manpower requirements of the Army. In short, the Lloyd George Coalition contained the spread of labour unrest by a shrewd mixture of conciliation and coercion: by exploiting divisions throughout the ranks of wartime dissent, the Government thus

consolidated its political position to deliver a "knock-out blow."

The Prime Minister's War Aims Speech: A Weapon of Victory?

When Lloyd George delivered his famous war aims speech at an important trade union conference on 5 January 1918, one of his most pressing domestic objectives was to respond to Lansdowne's letter to the Daily Telegraph on 29 November 1917 and to the draft of the Labour Memorandum on War Aims of 28 December 1917. The active support of organized labour was essential to alleviate the manpower crisis and help smooth the way for the controversial 'comb-out' of the civilian workforce. Moreover, the Prime Minister was also troubled by international events, namely, the Bolshevik's Decree of Peace, the publication of the Allied secret treaties, and the start of peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, all of which were part of a new propaganda offensive by Germany and Bolshevik Russia to weaken popular morale in the Allied countries. Confronted by the prospect, however unlikely, of a potentially influential Tory-Labour coalition led by Lansdowne and Henderson, Lloyd George recognized the expediency of placating the moderate Left by stressing three major themes: (1) the sanctity of treaties, (2) the right of national self-determination, and (3) the creation of "some international organisation to limit the burden of armaments and diminish the probability of war." Followed three days later by Wilson's Fourteen Points address, Lloyd George's speech represented an astute ideological offensive which not only succeeded in winning all-party support for the intensification of the war effort but also in banishing the peace dissenters to the fringes of political respectability.<sup>32</sup>

Pressure upon the British Government for an official statement on war

aims had increased sharply when the peace-by-negotiation coalition exploited the Lansdowne letter and the Labour Party's Memorandum on War Aims to strengthen its appeal for the conclusion of hostilities. Lansdowne's plea for an immediate declaration of Allied war aims and an invitation to Germany to open peace negotiations echoed conservative fears for the established order and raised the possibility of a new political consensus encompassing moderate opinion in all parties. The letter was condemned by pro-war opinion which believed that the timing of its publication was "inopportune." The Leeds Mercury, for instance, feared: "it may be regarded in Germany as a symptom of war weariness and a desire for peace in Britain." In his diary entry on 30 November Milner worried that this "rather startling letter... will give a handle to the Pacifists."<sup>33</sup>

To refute the notion that Lansdowne's initiative was synonymous with official policy, the Government insisted that Reuters insert a communique in The Times that Lansdowne "only spoke for himself", and that His Majesty's Ministers read the letter "with as much surprise as did everyone else." At the Inter-Allied conference at Paris on 1 December Lloyd George said that he had been prepared to issue a public statement on Allied war aims but that he was now opposed to any measure which could be interpreted as an endorsement of the Lansdowne letter. In his first public response to the letter at Gray's Inn on 14 December, Lloyd George stressed that "there is no halfway house between victory and defeat" and declared that "Victory is an essential condition for the security of a free world." <sup>34</sup>

Nonetheless, leading members within the Government, including Lloyd George himself, became increasingly worried that the Lansdowne letter

"represented a powerful and growing section of the people not only in social, but also in industrial circles." At the end of November, Carson circulated a memorandum to the War Cabinet prepared by Gerard Fiennes, editor-in-chief of the NWAC, which cited that the lack of suitable housing, long food lines, and the shortage of beer has provided "a field in which the Pacifist seed may be sown." Although there was "little direct evidence that a Desire to end the War by compromise is making any headway", Fiennes warned, "doubts as to the future are unquestionably tending to bring about a condition of affairs which might in time undermine the resolution of the people." Of particular concern was the creation of a special Lansdowne Committee, of which F.W. Hirst, editor of Common Sense, was Honorary Secretary, and Lord Beauchamp as chairman, and which included Gilbert Murray and Ramsay MacDonald as its members. In addition, the Executive Committee of the UDC "very heartily welcomed Lord Lansdowne's movement both in London and in the provinces", and distributed about 1500 copies of the 29th November issue of the Daily Telegraph to its Branch Secretaries "for distribution to Liberals and Conservatives." 35

The prospect of an alternative all-party coalition in favour of peace-by-negotiation undoubtedly increased the pressure on the Government for a declaration of war aims. For example, "what people want now", Kerr suggested on 5 December, is the "setting forth [of] our peace aims - aims which will only be attained as the outcome of the defeat of the Prussian machine." In addition, the NWAC reported on 8 December that "the force of [our] campaign would be greatly increased if our War Aims could be stated in something like definite terms." Similarly, Guest informed Lloyd George



on 13 December that the Government needed to "satisfy the country at this moment... That our War Aims are 'pure' and 'simple.' They must be understandable to the rank and file at home and in the field." Although Lloyd George believed that Lansdowne's action was a "sovereign reason for *not* making a declaration on war aims", this celebrated letter demonstrated unmistakably how the demand for a clarification of Allied war aims "was no longer limited to the negligible UDC-ILP minority."<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, the publication of the Allied secret treaties by the Bolshevik regime in the Manchester Guardian from 12 December onwards and the Central Powers' statement of war aims, issued by Count Czernin, the Austrian Foreign Minister, on 25 December convinced Lloyd George that a re-evaluation of war aims "was necessary in order to counter the propaganda value of the enemy's announcement." By issuing the Peace Decree on 8 November, the Soviet Government launched a propaganda offensive designed to galvanize the Allied working classes into concerted action in order to enact the "Petrograd formula." In addition, the publication of the Allied secret treaties, referring to the annexation of Constantinople, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and to Italian aggrandisement, seemed to confirm accusations that the original Allied intentions in the war had long been overtaken by imperialistic ambitions. The Labour Leader, for instance, was convinced that the Bolshevik revelations proved that the Allied war effort had been "secretly carried out to satisfy lust of power and the greed of Imperialists and financiers."<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, the Czernin statement, which offered the Allies peace discussions based upon the "Petrograd formula", represented a threat to

the loyalty of the working classes which could not be ignored. Accordingly, on 3 January 1918, the War Cabinet decided "to issue such a declaration of our own war aims" in order to "maintain our own public opinion, and, if possible, lower that of the enemy." The Prime Minister was quite explicit that "he did not believe that the enemy's statement was a *bona fide* offer. Its object was to sow dissension among the Allies and to rally the German people." Lloyd George also believed that his declaration would serve as "a counter-offensive to Count Czernin's recent statement."<sup>38</sup> Thus, the publication of the Allied secret treaties and the Czernin statement of democratic war aims, heightened the pressure upon the Prime Minister to reassess his position and deliver a clear statement on war aims.

Furthermore, the approval of a new Memorandum on War Aims by a combined subcommittee of the Labour Party Executive and the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC on 28 December prompted Lloyd George's decision to deliver a public statement of war aims. Although Labour did not endorse a settlement based upon "peace without victory", it demonstrated the extent to which UDC-ILP principles had permeated the foreign policy of the Labour Party. For example, the memorandum demanded an end to Imperialism and to secret diplomacy, the limitation of armaments, and the creation of a League of Nations. Although Lloyd George was still evasive in his reply to C.W. Bowerman, leader of the TUC, just one day prior to the conference as to whether he would issue a statement on war aims, the Labour declaration signified the first concerted campaign by the Left for a revision of war aims since Henderson's resignation.<sup>39</sup>

Alarmed by mounting political and labour agitation, Lloyd George met

with a Labour party delegation on 31 December and informed the War Cabinet that "the view of the Labour Party seemed to coincide with that of the Government." Two days later, Hankey submitted a report to the Prime Minister prepared by W. Ormsby-Gore, Assistant Secretary to the War Cabinet, which echoed earlier NWAC reports that it was "absolutely essential that the long standing demand for clearer definition of our War Aims and those of France and Italy will have to be made if Labour is to be reassured." It is therefore evident that the Labour Memorandum on War Aims and departmental reports of Labour disaffection were contributing factors in Lloyd George's statement on war aims. Such a pronouncement was thus delivered as a "counter-offensive" to the Russo-German propaganda campaign and to the growing strength of British dissidents in the hope of maintaining Allied unity, securing trade-union co-operation for new manpower reforms, and achieving a peace *through* victory. <sup>40</sup>

As a direct reply to the peace proposals discussed at Brest-Litovsk and to placate dissenting sentiment at home, the War Cabinet authorized Smuts, Cecil, and Lloyd George, who delegated his task to Kerr, on 31 December to prepare draft statements for a new declaration of war aims. In the words of Tom Jones, Assistant Secretary to the War Cabinet, the atmosphere at that meeting had "completely changed":

"Everybody talking of peace... The line now is to publish a declaration on War Aims as a counter-offensive to the offer of the Central Powers to the Bolsheviks... Their idea is to make it ultra-democratic, to go to the furthest concession, so as... to support the war spirit at home."

On 3 January the War Cabinet considered the memoranda by Smuts, Cecil, and Kerr's abbreviated version of the Smuts draft. In order to "secure a

good and lasting peace", Smuts suggested that British war aims should seek the abolition of conscription, the limitation of armaments, and the creation of a League of Nations. Cecil supported the principle of self-determination, the sanctity of treaties, and the creation of an international organization "to limit the burden of armaments and diminish the probability of war." Kerr moulded both drafts into a single address and suggested the abolition of conscription, the limitation of armaments, the restoration of conquered territory, and the formation of international conferences to resolve future disputes. Two days later, after a consultation with Asquith and Grey, Lloyd George announced the most complete set of British war aims drafted during the entire war. 41

In response to the international peace offensive and to the mounting domestic pressure for a restatement of war aims, the Prime Minister emphasized that the Allies were fighting for "a just and lasting peace." However, before a permanent peace could be attained, Lloyd George warned that "unless treaties be upheld, unless every nation is prepared at whatever sacrifice to honour the national signature, it is obvious that no Treaty of Peace can be worth the paper on which it is written." He also demanded the restoration of Belgium, together with an appropriate reparation, and the evacuation by enemy armies from all occupied territory. With regard to Russia, he condemned her "economic and political enslavement to Germany" but, at the same time, warned that if the Russians themselves would not resist, the Allies must leave them to their fate. In addition, the Prime Minister proclaimed that "government with the consent of the governed must be the basis of any territorial settlement in the war." As for

Germany, he stated that her destruction or disruption had never been an Allied war aim. While deploring "the crushing weight of modern armaments, the increasing evil of compulsory military service, the vast waste of wealth and effort involved in warlike preparation", Lloyd George also adopted the peace-by-negotiation's idea of a post-war international organization as an effective instrument for preserving peace. By championing the principle of self-determination, the creation of an international body to settle disputes, and by rejecting the destruction of Germany, Lloyd George skilfully reassured the war-weary British public that he had spoken "not merely the mind of the government, but of the nation and of the Empire as a whole." 42

By and large in harmony with the Prime Minister's statement, the President delivered his famous Fourteen Points speech three days later. However, there is considerable historical debate as to the motivation for Wilson's address. On the one hand, historians such as Mayer, Kernek, and Gardner have argued that the speech was given as a direct answer to the Brest-Litovsk peace offensive and to enlist the support of the Allied moderate Left in a renewed pursuit of a democratic peace achieved by military victory. This assertion has been recently interpreted by Tom Knock as a Cold War analysis which has overestimated the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution on Wilson's speech. By contrast, Knock has alleged that domestic political aims, namely, "to engender a fresh environment for progressive internationalism and the League" [of Nations] , played an integral role in the speech. On balance, however, Wilson's speech was primarily intended as a response to the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk and it

served two functions: one, to reassure the Allied Governments of America's intention to win a peace with victory, and, second, to assure dissenters in the United States and the Allied nations that there would be a just and non-vindictive peace settlement. Notwithstanding this historical controversy, there were some important differences between the two pronouncements. Unlike Lloyd George's refusal to condemn secret diplomacy, his limited endorsement of the principle of self-determination, and his willingness to abandon Bolshevik Russia to Germany, Wilson sponsored such idealistic aims as open diplomacy and the freedom of the seas, and expressed his sympathy with the "Petrograd formula."<sup>43</sup>

While the former's speech was met with guarded approval from the British Left, the bulk of these dissidents were much more enthusiastic towards the latter's promises for a new post-war world. For instance, C.P. Trevelyan expressed cautious optimism to Ponsonby on 8 January: "So Lloyd George has come round. He now says what we have said for two years. The saying of it by him a year ago would have saved two or three million lives. But better late than never! I do believe it to be the beginning of the end at last." Yet, there was still considerable distrust among dissenters of Lloyd George's political aspirations to continue the war. Ponsonby, for example, warned Trevelyan three days later: "there is some danger that people in this surprise & pleasure at LL.G. at last stating aims should think that all we want has been done... But he would like much to trap pacifists into an acceptance of his formulae and we must be thoroughly on guard."<sup>44</sup>

By contrast, in the afternoon following the President's speech, a joint meeting was held by the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC, the National

Executive of the Labour Party, and the Cooperative Parliamentary Representation Committee. A joint statement was issued by C.W. Bowerman, Arthur Henderson, and H.J. May which applauded "the moral quality and breadth of vision" of Wilson's address. By speaking "in favour of open diplomacy and [in] support of revolutionary Russia", Wilson had met the supreme test of statesmanship. In closing, the statement interpreted that the President's "programme [was] in essential respects so similar" to the recent Labour Memorandum on War Aims "that we need not discuss any point of difference in detail." Thus, Lloyd George drafted a strategy which was calculated: (1) to counter the dissenting propaganda of the peace-by-negotiation coalition; (2) to induce the leading trade unionists to agree to supply more manpower for the fighting forces, and, (3) to respond to the peace offensive at Brest-Litovsk and, by mixing liberal war aims and power politics, offer an alternate vision for a post-war world.<sup>45</sup>

Dissent on the Defensive Part II:  
The Persecution of Bertrand Russell

Shortly following Morel's release at the end of January 1918, the Government took steps to persecute Russell. Although not as influential as Morel, his criticism of the Government's contempt for individual liberties, whether as a contributor to The Tribunal, or as a supporter of peace demonstrations, most likely prompted his arrest. One of the last tasks Russell accepted for the NCF as he stepped down as Acting Chairman was to write a front page article for The Tribunal of 3 January 1918. One particular remark which was peripheral to the main theme of the work entitled "The German Peace Offer" led to Russell's arrest, trial and

imprisonment of six months for violating the DORA. In a passage on the expected effects of starvation throughout Europe caused by the military stalemate, Russell turned his attention briefly to the part that America might play, and argued, as he had on an earlier occasion a few months earlier: "The American Garrison which will be by that time occupying England and France, whether or not they will prove efficient against the Germans, will no doubt be capable of intimidating strikers, an occupation to which the American Army is accustomed at home." Russell later admitted to Gilbert Murray on 15 February that if he had known that a "blaze of publicity" was going to be focused upon that one particular sentence, he would have "phrased it very much more carefully, in such a way as to prevent misunderstanding by a public not used to the tone of exasperated and pugnacious pacifists." Russell also suspected that "the authorities realised that if they wished to punish me they must act at once, as I should not be committing any further crimes." 46

On 9 February Russell and Joan Beauchamp, the publisher of The Tribunal, heard the Crown Prosecutor, Travers Humphreys, declare that the offending passage would have a "diabolical effect" upon the morale of the Allied armies if published without contradiction. Despite the introduction of an American Senate report which confirmed the use of federal troops against strikers, Russell was found guilty and was sentenced to six months in the second division, without the option of a fine. Beauchamp was fined £60 and court costs. In pronouncing sentence, the Magistrate, Sir John Dickinson, proclaimed that Russell "seems to have lost all sense of decency and fairness, and has gone out of his way to insult by a



deliberate and designed sneer the army of a great nation which is closely allied to us... The offence is a very despicable one." <sup>47</sup>

Reaction to the unexpectedly harsh sentence was swift. Russell wrote to Lady Morrell on 9 February that he never "felt anything equal to the concentrated venom of the magistrate." In a letter to Russell the following day Gilbert Murray expressed his "indignation at this further prosecution", and wondered "how any magistrate can have persuaded himself that there was anything in it [the article] to deserve punishment." The Tribunal wanted to turn Russell's trial into an onslaught on the DORA and it proclaimed on 21 February that "our forefathers... were outlawed and banished in order to hand on to their successors the right of free-born men to speak freely. In our day and generation, we must keep inviolate the principles they have established." On 1 May Russell's appeal was dismissed by the Magistrate, Mr. Lawrie, but he was transferred to the first division to serve his sentence. Later that month Snowden condemned the verdict as "a spiteful and vindictive persecution of a man... [whose] ... opinions are not acceptable to the Government... [and] ... is one of those incidents of the war which will leave for all time an indelible stain upon the honour and fair-mindedness of Great Britain." <sup>48</sup> In the end, the authorities punished Russell for his past association with the NCF, and when he was finally released from prison in mid-September, long after the unsuccessful German offensive, the prospects for an Allied victory never looked better.

The issue Russell raised in his letter to Murray of the Government's motivation in his arrest on such an innocuous charge is still of some historical controversy - but still, for the most part, unexplainable. Possibly

the authorities believed that Russell's reputation in the United States would be discredited by giving publicity to such an anti-American statement. As Vellacott has pointed out, Russell was "always most bitter when he was attacking a fallen idol, and now that America had moved away from the role of neutral peace-maker... her faults were very apparent" to him.

Alternatively, perhaps Russell's trial symbolized a more unforgiving resolve on the part of the Government to sustain its "counter-attack" against the forces of wartime dissent. In light of Lloyd George's unsuccessful meeting with NCF leaders in the spring of 1916 to convince the Fellowship to accept alternative service, Russell's trial may have been instigated by a vindictive Prime Minister who wished to punish the NCF for its refusal to accept Lloyd George's earlier proposals on conscientious objection. Ironically, Russell's article was published on the same day that the Army Council suggested that the banning order issued in September 1916 which forbade Russell to enter prohibited areas be reconsidered.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the persecution of Russell, and that of Morel in the previous September, were indicative of a new strategy by the Lloyd George Coalition to employ legal powers against the leaders of the peace movement in an effort to counteract their campaign to force a negotiated peace.

#### Conclusion

Confronted by military stalemate on the Western Front in which the Allies were facing a call for renewed sacrifices for 1918, the British Government faced widespread disaffection at home resulting from war weariness, food shortages, and the prospect of an industrial explosion. Throughout the latter half of 1917 and early into the new year it was

crucial to prevent popular unrest from spilling over into a major social and political catastrophe - a national anti-war strike in the munitions factories - which was bound to strengthen the growing public demand for peace. By deploying a cunning political strategy of coercion and conciliation to alleviate the intensifying domestic pressures, the Lloyd George Coalition delivered a domestic "knock-out blow" against peace dissenters, civil libertarians and industrial malcontents.

The integral components of this campaign included an ambitious reorganization of official propaganda under the supervision of Carson, public financing for the NWAC, and an investigation into peace-by-negotiation finances. In addition, the introduction of DORA 27C was a calculated ploy to limit the spread of anti-war literature and the persecution of Russell was part of a politically motivated strategy to silence and then punish the leading dissenters for their anti-war activities. Although the War Office granted the release of all medically unfit absolutists, the Government supported the disfranchisement of all conscientious objectors for five years after the conclusion of hostilities. Similarly, by holding firm on the divisive issue of the 'comb-out', the War Cabinet averted a potential industrial explosion and alleviated the transitory military and economic strain. Alarmed by the diplomatic and ideological challenge emanating from Brest-Litovsk and by the compelling arguments for the opening of peace negotiations, Lloyd George's declaration on war aims incorporated elements of Labour's Memorandum on War Aims in order to secure their vital support for an intensification of the war effort. By launching a potent Allied propaganda offensive, the Prime Minister successfully contained the threat posed by wartime dissent

throughout the winter of 1917-18 and the revolutionary momentum that had been building up since the Russian Revolution a year earlier in favour of a peace "without annexations or indemnities" was sharply checked. 50

## NOTES

1. Kennedy, 242. See also Rae, 223.
2. WC (240, 19-20), 4 October 1917, CAB 23/4, 7. See also Swartz, 180-181.
3. Treasury Records: T102/5, G. Wallace Carter to Wilfrid L. Hill, 3 October 1917, 1; T102/16, "[NWAC]: Meetings Department Report", G. Wallace Carter, 10 October 1917, 3; War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 2274, "Pacifist Propaganda", G.H. Roberts, 10 October 1917, CAB 24/28, 1. See also Swartz, 181-182.
4. WC (253, 1, 4), 19 October 1917, CAB 23/4, 1. See also War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 2268, "Propaganda: Suggested Visit of Workers and others to Theatre of War", 12 October 1917, CAB 24/28, 1, 3, and Swartz, 183.
5. Quoted in Swartz, 183-188. The son of an Archbishop of York, Thomson shared a high Tory's dislike of peace dissenters. Since the outbreak of the war, he had investigated subversive activities and the causes of labour unrest. Since December 1916 he directed the Labour Intelligence Service of the Ministry of Munitions and in August 1917 he played an important part in the arrest of Morel.
6. U.K. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5 ser., vol. 99, 13 November 1917, cols. 291-311.
7. Home Office Files: HO 45/10743/263275/265, Thomas Cox to the Secretary, Home Office, 15 November 1917, 1; Troup and Thomson quoted in Swartz, 190.
8. Swartz, 189-190; WC (274, 17), 15 November 1917, CAB 23/4, 6.
9. Manchester Guardian, 16 November 1917; Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader 22 November 1917, 47, 14, 1; Gilbert Murray Papers: MSS. GILBERT MURRAY 35, J.A. Hobson to Gilbert Murray, 22 November 1917, 65-66. See also Robbins, 147-148, Kennedy, 242, and Swartz, 191. The FSC was a numerically small body, no more than 15-20, consisting of militant, socialist Quakers. They believed in the martyrdom of suffering, opposed the NCF's efforts to improve prison conditions of the absolutists, and disagreed with the alternativist position on conscientious objection.
10. Files of the Society, Friends' House, London: MSS. Vol. CVI (1916-1921), Minutes of the Peace Committee, 6 December 1917; Minutes of the Meetings for Sufferings, 7 December 1917; FSC Correspondence and Publications, 051-56, "A Challenge to Militarism", November 1917. See also Robbins, 147-148, and Kennedy, 242-243.
11. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 2820, Herbert Samuel, "Censorship of Leaflets", 27 November 1917, CAB 24/34, 1; Home Office Files: HO 45/ 10888/ 352206/1, Memorandum by H.B. Simpson, 14 November 1917, 1. See also G.T. 2865, G. Cave, "Censorship of Leaflets", 5 December 1917, CAB 24/34, 1.

12. Cave, G.T. 2865, 1; WC (294, 1), 7 December 1917, CAB 23/4, 2; Daily Chronicle, 11 December 1917. See also Swartz, 192.

13. Vellacott, 212; Kennedy, 192, 194; Rae, 217; Gollin, 419.

14. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 2321, Report of the Committee Appointed by the War Cabinet to Consider the Question of Conscientious Objectors, 16 October 1917, CAB 24/29, 2. See also Rae, 217-218.

15. Lloyd George Papers: F/16/7/12-13, Herbert Fisher to the Prime Minister, 18 and 20 October 1917, 1; War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 2354, "Conscientious Objectors", Memorandum by Lord Milner, 20 October 1917, 1.

16. WC (257, 3), 25 October 1917, CAB 23/4, 4. See also Vellacott, 216, and Rae, 218-219.

17. See Rae, 219-223; The Times, 25 October 1917; Kennedy, 191-194; Vellacott, 212.

18. The Times, 25 October 1917; The Tribunal, 1 November 1917. See also Rae, 219.

19. HO 45/10886/348601/4, Howard Association, "Imprisonment of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service", 30 October 1917, 1-2; HO 45/10886/348601/3, "Memorial in the Case of those Conscientious Objectors known as Absolutists", No. 1, 2 November 1917; "Memorial on the Conscientious Objectors in Prison", No. 2, 2 November 1917; HO 45/10886/348601/4, Minute by H.B. Simpson, 9 November 1917, 1; HO 45/10886/348601/3-4, E. Troup, 17 and 24 November 1917, 1.

20. Lord Curzon Papers: 72, Herbert Fisher to Lord Curzon, 15 November 1917, quoted in Rae, 220; War Office Files: WO 32/5474/21A, "Meeting of the Earl of Derby, Lord Curzon, Sir George Cave, and Lt. Gen. Childs", 19 November 1917, 1; Rae, 221; H.A.L. Fisher Papers: I, Lord Curzon to Herbert Fisher, 19 November 1917, quoted in Rae, 221-222.

21. WO 32/5474/22A, "Memorial on Behalf of Conscientious Objectors From Members of the Church of England", 29 November 1917, 1; Vellacott, 216; WO 32/5474/22A, "Petition to the Home Secretary", M. & H. Hobhouse, 29 November 1917, 1; WO 32/5474/22A, Margaret Hobhouse to the Earl of Derby, 30 November 1917, 1. See also Rae, 223-224.

22. Vellacott, 216-217; MSS. GILBERT MURRAY 376, Mrs. Henry Hobhouse to Gilbert Murray, 22 January 1918, 3. See also Rae, 219, and Kennedy, 184, 193-194.

23. Quoted by Joseph King in Kennedy, 194. See also Robbins, 144; Rae, 225.

24. Rae, 219, 222; Kennedy, 194.

25. Rae, 219-223. Lord Hugh Cecil's opposition to the disfranchisement of the C.O.s rested upon what he described as "the belief in that higher region of allegiance which imposes upon us something more than the State can ask from us...", in the Labour Leader, 29 November 1917, 48, 14, 3.

26. WC (315, 1), 5 January 1918, CAB 23/5, 2; WC (317, 1), 7 January 1918, CAB 23/5, 4. See also Wrigley, 221. Auckland Geddes, the Director of Recruiting, replaced Neville Chamberlain as the Minister of National Service in August 1917.

27. Lloyd George Papers: F/17/5/8, A.C. Geddes to the Prime Minister, 16 January 1918, 1. See also Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement, 255, Grieves, 181-182, Adams and Poirier, 226-227, and Lloyd George, II, 1593-1597.

28. WC (313, 1), 3 January 1918, CAB 23/5, 1; WC (315, 2b), 5 January 1918, CAB 23/5, 5.

29. Hinton, 256, 261-262. See also Wrigley, 224.

30. See Wrigley, 225; Adams & Poirier, 228; Hinton, 265-266.

31. Hinton, 259; Weinroth, 391.

32. WC (314, Appendix), 4 January 1918, CAB 23/5, 8. See also Peter Stevenson, The First World War and International Politics (1988), 191-192, 195, Wrigley, 222, Arno J. Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918. (1969), 312-314, and Rothwell, 153.

33. Leeds Mercury, 1 December 1917; Lord Milner Papers: MS. MILNER DEP. 88, "Annual Diaries 1917: Friday 30 November", 334. See also Swartz, 192, Rothwell, 145-146, Robbins, 149-151, and Mayer, 282-283.

34. Mayer, 284-285; Jaff, 77. See also Rothwell, 146, and Robbins, 150.

35. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 2798, "Causes of Discontent and Labour Unrest", Memorandum by Sir Edward Carson, 29 November 1917, CAB 24/33, 1-2; Mayer, 284. See also Lloyd George, II, 1491.

36. David Lloyd George Papers: F/89/1/10, P.H. Klerr] to the Prime Minister, 5 December 1917, Introduction; Treasury Records: T 102/16(iv), [NWAC], "Report up to 8 December 1917", G. Wallace Carter, 4-5; David Lloyd George Papers: F/21/2/10, F. Guest to the Prime Minister, 13 December 1917, 1, [underlined by Guest]; Mayer, 313. See also Swartz, 196, and Rothwell, 146.

37. Jaffe, 78; Snowden, "The Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 6 December 1917, 49, 14, 1. See also Mayer, 279, Morton H. Cowden, Russian Bolshevism and British Labour 1917-1921. (1984), 10, Robbins, 153, and Kernek, 72.

38. WC (312, 8), 3 January 1918, CAB 23/5, 4-5; Wrigley, 223. See also Jaffe, 77-78.

39. See WC (308, 9), 31 December 1917, CAB 23/5, 3; Mayer, 317-322; Robbins, 153; Kernek, 72.

40. WC (308, 9), 31 December 1917, 3; Lloyd George Papers: F/23/2/1, M.P.A. Hankey to the Prime Minister, 2 January 1918, enclosed with "The Labour Situation", Memorandum by W.Ormsby-Gore, 1. See also David R. Woodward, "The Origins and Intent of David Lloyd George's January 5 War Aims Speech", in The Historian, XXXIV, 1, November 1971, 37, Jaffe, 79, and Kernek, 77.

41. Middlemass, ed., diary entry, 1 January 1918, 42; War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 3180, "War Aims", Draft Statement by General Smuts, 3 January 1918, CAB 24/37, 1-9; G.T. 3181, "War Aims", Draft Statement by Lord Robert Cecil, 3 January 1918, CAB 24/37, 1-9; G.T. 3182, "War Aims", Draft based on General Smuts' Draft, 3 January 1918, CAB 24/37, 1-6. See also Rothwell, 150-152, Woodward, 38, Robbins, 154, and Kernek, 72.

42. WC (314, Appendix), 4 January 1918, CAB 23/5, 5, 8; Mayer, 328. See also Robbins, 154, and Stevenson, 193.

43. Knock, 136-137. See also Kernek, 73, Mayer, 340, 353-354, and Gardner, 161-162.

44. Arthur Ponsonby Papers: MS. Eng. hist. c.667, Charles Trevelyan to Arthur Ponsonby, 8 January 1918, 9; C.P. Trevelyan Papers: CPT 79, Arthur Ponsonby to Charles Trevelyan, 11 January 1918, 1-2. See also Mayer, 327-328, 371.

45. Mayer, 387-388. See also Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 10 January 1918, 2, 15, 1.

46. The Tribunal, 3 January 1918; Gilbert Murray Papers: MSS. GILBERT MURRAY 166, Bertrand Russell to Gilbert Murray, 15 February 1918, 2.

47. Vellacott, 225. See also Kennedy, 245.

48. Vellacott, 225-226; MSS. GILBERT MURRAY 166, Gilbert Murray to Bertrand Russell, 10 February 1918, 1; Robbins, 164; Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 23 May 1918, 21, 15, 1.

49. Vellacott, 224, 228. See also Foreign Office Files: FO 395/234/2069, Minute by R. Brade, 3 January 1918, 1.

50. See Mayer, 311-312; Hinton, First Shop Stewards' Movement, 256; Cline, 112; Robbins, 144.



Chapter VIIThe Man Who Won the War: Dissent in Disarray,  
February - November 1918

Weakened by Lloyd George's successful containment of peace agitation, wartime dissent's fortunes sank further as a result of two critical international events: first, the signing on 3 March of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and, second, the German offensive on 21 March. Both developments effectively, 'cut the ground' from under the dissenters' claim that Germany possessed a genuine desire to reach a just peace, and therefore shattered all hopes for a negotiated peace. With the option of peace talks out of the question and facing a serious military reversal on the Western Front, the British Government passed the second Military Service Act of 1918 which set the recruiting age limits from eighteen to fifty, expanded the operation of the Act to Ireland, and extended the 'clean cut' on all but essential work. Consumed by the proliferation of Bolshevik propaganda, Basil Thomson submitted regular reports throughout the spring to the War Cabinet entitled, "Pacifism and Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom." By the summer, the Prime Minister had also become "clearly aware of the propaganda value of the aliens issue in fostering hatred of the enemy and helping to galvanize the support of a weary nation for the war effort." <sup>1</sup> Armed with this three-part strategy, the Lloyd George Coalition successfully directed the frustration of its bitter domestic population away from the aspirations for a compromise peace towards what it propagated as the most formidable obstacle to a lasting peace - Prussian militarism.

In response to the humiliating terms set by Germany in the Treaty of

Brest-Litovsk and the decision of the German Army to attack the Allies in the West, talk of a negotiated peace gave way to the fight for survival. Despite numerous UDC and ILP editorials which demanded the formation of a peace government, the failure of the Maurice Debate and, in particular, Asquith's inability to discredit Lloyd George's competency in military affairs in early May, and the unlikely prospect of a Lansdowne/ Labour coalition demonstrated that there was "little chance of a parliamentary revolt to bring down the Government." <sup>2</sup>

After Germany accepted Wilson's Fourteen Points and agreed to cease submarine warfare, an armistice was signed on 11 November. Soon thereafter, the most pressing issue throughout the electoral campaign became whether or not the victorious coalition should be given a new mandate to shape the peace settlement. In an atmosphere of festering anti-German sentiment in such popular slogans as "Make Germany Pay!" and "Hang the Kaiser!", the peace movement could hardly be expected to do well. By launching an ambitious program of reconstruction in order to "make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in" and by exploiting popular xenophobia, Lloyd George won an unprecedented victory and crushed parliamentary dissent. For those who had risked their political future by opposing the war, the repudiation of their political platform gave them little scope for influencing the peace settlement. For the moment, then, basking in the adulation of victory, Lloyd George could now devote himself wholeheartedly to the task of winning the peace. <sup>3</sup>

The Domestic "Knock-out Blow" Agenda:  
Manpower, Surveillance, and Persecution

In a frantic effort to maximize the nation's manpower strength in the

aftermath of the German breakthrough on the British front, the Prime Minister assumed personal control of the War Office and dispatched Milner to France to restore co-operation with Marshall Foch, who was later granted the strategic direction of military operations. Lloyd George also shipped all available reserves from Britain to France and secured Wilson's assent to the engagement of American troops. More ominously for the fortunes of organized labour and peace dissenters, Lloyd George also implemented an ambitious three-part strategy: (1) to pass a new Military Service Bill which eliminated a number of exemptions and extended conscription to Ireland; (2) to extend the War Munitions Volunteer Scheme, which brought outright industrial compulsion much nearer; and (3) to enforce DOR regulations and introduce the so-called 'labour embargo' proposal to restrict labour 'hoarding.'<sup>4</sup>

On 25 March Geddes was instructed by the War Cabinet to prepare a Bill which granted such drastic powers "to raise the age limit for military service to 50 or 55, to conscript the clergy and ministers of religion, to send conscientious objectors abroad for labour services, and to extend conscription to Ireland." The story of how opposition from Irish Nationalists, *Sinn Fein*, the Catholic Church, and the Irish TUC prevented the introduction of conscription to Ireland need not be repeated here in any great detail. With the exception of the Irish proposals, the Military Service Bill received the Royal Assent on 18 April. Under its strengthened provisions, particularly the elimination of a large number of exemptions, able-bodied workers were withdrawn from munitions shops, shipyards, coal mines and farms and were made available for military service.<sup>5</sup>

In order to make the most efficient use of what labour remained, the Government extended the War Munitions Volunteer scheme, whereby skilled men were subject to relocation by the Ministry of National Service or enlistment by the military. Although the Trade Union Advisory Committee refused to endorse this drastic scheme, it did agree on 5 June to urge trade unionists to enrol voluntarily - and sufficient men enrolled to avoid the need to implement direct industrial compulsion. By allocating manpower resources more efficiently, the British Government thus secured further concessions from organized labour and this particular directive, formally announced to the public on 8 June, "clearly amounted to industrial conscription in all but name." <sup>6</sup>

Later that month, the Government adopted the 'embargo' policy which restricted the mobility of skilled labour to contractors such as the Admiralty in order to prevent certain industries from gaining a disproportionate quantity of skilled men. When the Government refused to withdraw the 'embargo' policy, 10,000 engineers at Coventry struck on 23 July, followed by 12,000 men at Birmingham the next day. In an attempt to prevent further strike action, the War Cabinet accepted Churchill's suggestion to have the Trade Union Advisory Committee communicate to the strikers that "unless the embargo scheme were allowed to operate the Government would have no alternative but to withdraw the exemptions from military service of the men on strike." On the following day the Committee agreed to call the men back to work and in turn Churchill promised to establish an inquiry into the causes of the strike. On 26 July the Prime Minister warned the strikers to return to work within three days or

face enlistment.<sup>7</sup> In light of the harsh provisions of the new Military Service Act, the extension of the War Munitions Volunteer scheme, and the implementation of the 'embargo' policy, the Government exploited the grave military situation in order to justify the further erosion of industrial liberties in defence of the "knock-out blow" agenda.

Official concern about the proliferation of Bolshevik propaganda in Britain had reached its wartime peak early in 1918 after the appointments of M. Litvinoff as the Bolshevik representative in London and of John Maclean as the Bolshevist "Russian Consul" in Glasgow. Despite the ineffectiveness of the Shop Stewards' Movement's campaign to prevent the 'comb-out' in January 1918, the Government was worried lest the working classes would extol the virtues of Bolshevism and weaken morale for the war effort. Thomson was authorized by the Home Office to monitor the activities of Bolshevik agents in Britain and to prevent the spread of their propaganda. For instance, he warned Cave on 20 February that Litvinoff "has been trying, with some success, to get British and American soldiers of Jewish descent to visit his office to induce them to engage in propaganda in their regiments." In turn, Cave prepared an urgent memorandum for the War Cabinet two days later, warning that Litvinoff's efforts may cause "serious trouble among Russian and Jewish soldiers and munition workers and in the mixed population of the East End." At a meeting of the War Cabinet on 25 February the Home Secretary cautioned that Litvinoff's recent actions "had been such to necessitate the consideration of what measures should be taken by the Government to put a stop to his activities." Similarly, the Director of Military Intelligence reported that the War Office

was "considerably perturbed by the attempts being made by Bolshevik agents to undermine discipline in the British Army, and hoped that action would be taken to put a stop to such proceedings." In the end, the Home Office was authorized to keep "a careful watch" over the Bolshevist agents in London, and "in the event of sufficient evidence of malpractices forthcoming, should at once take appropriate action against them, including deportation in case of necessity." <sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the Secretary of State for Scotland submitted an alarmist memorandum to the War Cabinet on 7 March, warning of Maclean's open defiance of the DORA as the new Bolshevist Consul. Supplied with reports regarding the "mischievous" proliferation of Bolshevik agitation on the Clyde, the War Cabinet approved of "proceedings to be taken in any case where the Lord Advocate was of opinion that conviction would be probable." Accordingly, Maclean was brought to trial on 9 May where he was sentenced to five years' penal servitude. Despite recent Government successes to undercut support for peace sentiment, it became increasingly apparent from Thomson's regular reports that the defeat of Germany "was becoming politically less relevant than the impending struggle with a new enemy, Bolshevism." <sup>9</sup>

Drained by almost four years of war, weary of hardships and privations at home, and disillusioned at the slaughter of its youth, the nation "needed little prompting from the propagandists to direct its frustration and anger at the easily accessible 'enemy in our midst.'" The way in which Britain treated its enemy aliens - estimated at between 70,000 and 75,000, excluding British-born women and children under the age of fourteen - during the

war has already been thoroughly studied by J.C. Bird. There was a fundamental difference in the attempts by the Asquith and Lloyd George coalitions to resolve the fundamental dilemma of reconciling the requirements of national security with respect for individual rights, in the face of hostile public opinion and a patriotic popular press. Lloyd George displayed a "shrewder appreciation than had Asquith of the implications of the aliens question and the powerful passions it aroused. Although he privately shared Asquith's disdain for the extremists, he was prepared on occasion to exploit the aliens issue for political and propaganda purposes." For instance, Cave quickly adopted a firm line on internment, and one of his first initiatives at the Home Office was "to order a survey of the cases of all German men who had been exempted from internment or repatriation to determine whether their continued freedom was justified."<sup>10</sup>

Under growing pressure from rank-and-file Unionists, the recent formation of the right-wing Nationalist Democratic and Labour Party (NDP), and a virulent campaign in the Northcliffe press to impose a more stringent internment policy, anti-alien sentiment reached its highest intensity in the summer of 1918 since the sinking of the Lusitania in May 1915. Foreshadowing his skilful exploitation of anti-German sentiment during the 'Coupon' election later in the year, Lloyd George understood the propaganda value of the aliens issue and bowed to popular pressure to impose harsher restrictions on enemy aliens. By appointing a committee of six MPs, the majority of whom advocated draconian measures, to suggest what steps might be taken to allay public anxiety, and by fostering hatred of the enemy in a speech to the House on 11 July, the Prime Minister sought

to re-energize a war weary public for yet another campaign of sacrifice against the Prussian menace. <sup>11</sup>

The committee's report, submitted on 8 July, proposed fifteen recommendations, the most important of which were the internment of all enemy alien men over eighteen, with exceptions on 'national' or medical grounds to be within the discretion of the Home Secretary; the review of all naturalization certificates; and the dismissal of all persons of enemy origin from all Government departments. Moreover, on 11 July Lloyd George described the aliens question "as a matter of great concern affecting the prosecution of the War." Responding to public sentiment, he condemned alleged German "outrages" committed against British prisoners-of-war and claimed that he had received anonymous letters, with British postmarks, gloating over British military reverses. Although he pledged that the search for dangerous aliens would not bring Britain "into competition with Germany in inhumanity, injustice, and unfairness", he warned "do not let us commit the folly of over-trustfulness, to the extent of injuring the country we love best." <sup>12</sup> With the passage of the British Nationality and Status Aliens Act, the creation of a parliamentary group known as the "Aliens Watch Committee" with Carson in the chair, and the reconstitution of the Aliens Advisory Committee to review of all cases of enemy aliens at large, the Lloyd George Government acted swiftly to exploit the internment issue to deflect popular dissatisfaction with the flagging war effort. As a complement to the drastic manpower proposals which brought industrial conscription that much closer, the intensive scrutiny of Bolshevik activity, the introduction of repressive controls on enemy nationals



further demonstrated Lloyd George's determination to silence the final few isolated voices of wartime dissent.

Dissent Discredited: The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the German Offensive, the Maurice Debate, and the Labour/Lansdowne Initiative

The humiliating terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk followed by the German offensive in March 1918 made it clear that only a decisive military victory would bring peace. Deeply disappointed at the turn of events in Russia, the peace-by-negotiation coalition was reluctant to condemn Germany for imposing such staggering losses on the Soviet state. "If German militarists had used the opportunity of the weakness of Russia," Robbins argues, "so would their counterparts in the Allied countries in similar circumstances." By acting as apologists for the German High Command, the peace movement refused to acknowledge Germany's expansionist foreign policy and instead focused their attention on the annexationist aims of the Allies which they claimed had needlessly prolonged the war. Clinging to this illusion, the Lansdowne/Labour movement could not have possibly established a new peace-by-negotiation government and open negotiations for a democratic peace. A more serious threat to the Prime Minister's political future presented itself in the famous Maurice debate on 9 May in which Asquith, acting on behalf of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, Director of Military Operations, accused Lloyd George and Bonar Law of making false statements in the House of Commons and demanded an investigation. However, Lloyd George foiled Asquith's attempt to discredit his war record when he delivered a powerful speech which was, "by common consent, his most brilliant

parliamentary performance for many a long day." <sup>13</sup> The critical military situation therefore rallied the weary British public behind the war and strengthened Lloyd George's political reputation as Britain's *only* credible wartime leader.

The high hopes of the Lansdowne/Labour initiative to promote "the twin objects of an early peace and a change of Government" were effectively dashed with the news of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the German offensive. The Labour Leader, for instance, reported that the conference on 25 February in London brought together "Ex-Ministers, peers of the Realm, great financial magnates, eminent journalists, Trade Union leaders, and Socialists." The participants were certain that "there is now a favourable opportunity to make a just and permanent peace if a Government can be put in office which will express and carry out the desires of of the overwhelming body of opinion in this country." Hopes for the creation of a peace-by-negotiation Government rose with the publication of Lansdowne's second letter to the Daily Telegraph on 5 March, which drew attention to the similarities between the recent suggestion of German Chancellor Count Hertling for an 'intimate meeting' and the ideas of President Wilson. Speakers at the second Lansdowne/Labour meeting scheduled for the next day included F.W. Hirst, the editor of the liberal weekly, Common Sense, Jowett, Hobson, and Noel Buxton, all of whom believed that "the militarists could never be trusted to make the peace, only Labour could do that satisfactorily. It was claimed that the British failure to 'diplommatise' had done more than anything else to maintain militarism in Germany." On 9 March Common Sense boasted that

"the Lansdowne/Labour Movement is now an accepted fact and a growing force, which will ultimately save the country." <sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, by blasting the Allies for failing to give "positive encouragement to the civilian authorities in Germany who were reputed to be struggling to obtain civilian supremacy over the militarists", the peace dissenters failed to understand that "the opportunity for a negotiated peace had been lost." Snowden, for instance, insisted that the recent German attack was exacerbated "by the refusal of the Allied statesmen to adopt the advice of Lord Lansdowne and explore every avenue which might lead to a reasonable settlement of the war." In addition, the UDC ignored the deteriorating military situation and preferred instead to "arouse the working class against the government by fiercely assaulting the secret treaties as embodying selfish aims that prolonged the war." In April 1918, for example, the UDC published The Secret Treaties and Understandings and Morel embarked upon a speaking tour to publicize the secret treaties among the ranks of organized labour. With the upturn in Allied military fortunes by the summer, the efforts of the third and final Lansdowne/Labour conference on 31 July failed to generate any significant popular support for a negotiated peace. By refusing to acknowledge the territorial designs of the German High Command, the dissenters failed to convince the public that the Lansdowne/ Labour initiative was a viable foreign policy alternative to the "knock-out blow" and the fight for national survival.<sup>15</sup>

Under enormous strain created by the German onslaught, the British Government was accused by Major-General Maurice in a letter to The Times on 7 May 1918 of misleading Parliament so as to conceal its responsibility

for the recent setback in France. The most serious charge levelled against the Government implied that Lloyd George had lied to the House of Commons on 9 April about the state of British reserves in January 1918. On 9 May Asquith took up the allegations in the Commons, rejected Bonar Law's suggestion for the appointment of a judicial inquiry, and insisted upon the formation of a Select Committee. By challenging Maurice's credibility and treating Asquith's motion as a vote of confidence, Lloyd George "warded off this threat with a triumph of passionate oratory rather than of factual argument." Unleashing a scathing attack against his political opponents, Lloyd George stressed that his military figures had been supplied by Maurice's own department, and appealed in the name of national unity to defeat this "vote of censure."<sup>16</sup> Demoralized by this devastating attack, the debate fizzled out; Asquith's motion was put to a vote and was soundly defeated by 293 to 106.

Although the Maurice controversy has been described as a "resounding triumph" for the Prime Minister, this episode demonstrated the lengths to which Lloyd George would go to fight for his political survival - even at the cost of close relations with prominent members of his Government. The evidence has suggested that Maurice's allegations were correct, though whether Lloyd George knew this is less certain. For example, Lloyd George's assertion that the general overall strength of the British Army in France was greater on 1 January 1918 than it had been on 1 January 1917 was *not* correct, because the 1918 totals inadvertently included British troops stationed in Italy and also some of the non-combatant divisions. "It is inconceivable that Kerr refrained from showing these amended figures to

Lloyd George before he made his speech", Rowland has argued, "and it is clear that the Prime Minister quite simply did not wish to know about them." In addition, when Milner, the new War Secretary, CIGS Sir Henry Wilson, and Hankey learned on 15 May that the War Office figures were incorrect, Lloyd George refused to accept responsibility for mistakes made by Maurice's department and stated that he had no intention of issuing a statement of clarification.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, relations between Milner and Lloyd George deteriorated and their close working relationship, formed in December 1916, never regained its former brilliance.

More significantly, the Maurice Debate confirmed the inability of parliamentary dissent to defeat the Lloyd George Coalition and exacerbated the deep split in Liberal ranks. Indeed, there was no figure within the Asquithian Liberals and the peace-by-negotiation advocates in the House of Commons who could rally the forces of political dissent and censure the Lloyd George Coalition's conduct of the war. Despite the clear defeat of Asquith's motion, Lloyd George failed to win the support of the majority of Liberal MPs: only 71 supported him while 98 voted against him. Since the official Liberal machinery and constituency organization remained firmly in Asquithian control, Lloyd George turned his attention to his immediate political future. On 17 May, a group of Liberal advisers, led by Churchill, Addison, Albert Illingworth, Hewart, Montagu, and Geoffrey Shakespeare, formed the nucleus of a Coalitionist Liberal group and confirmed F.E. Guest as their chief whip. "From this moment on, inspired by the political centre, as was typical of Coalition Liberalism throughout its shadowy history," Kenneth Morgan has asserted, "the pressure mounted up for building a

specifically Lloyd George brand of Liberalism, a creed that would merge almost imperceptibly with the coalitionist spirit of wartime."<sup>18</sup> The failure of the Maurice debate therefore discredited Asquith as an alternative political leader and encouraged Lloyd George and his Liberal supporters to take immediate steps to create their own separate political organization. In cooperation with the Unionists, the "Coalition Liberals" isolated parliamentary dissenters in the forthcoming election and ensured the survival of the Lloyd George Government into the post-war era. All in all, Germany's separate peace with Russia and the dramatic Allied military reversals further eroded the political influence of wartime dissent either to embarrass the Lloyd George Government, or to replace it with the peace-by-negotiation coalition.

#### A Formula for Electoral Success: The Proscription of Dissent

With the German peace note of early October, what had been intended as a wartime election became transformed into a post-war campaign in which Lloyd George sought a further term of office to settle the terms of peace. After Guest and Sir George Younger, the Unionist chief whip, concluded an agreement in July 1918 in which official coalition candidates were to be furnished with a letter of endorsement - the famous coupon - signed by Lloyd George and Bonar Law, coalition supporters focused their attention on a list of agreed priorities in a common programme. Despite the manifesto's Liberal emphasis on social reform and reconstruction, Lloyd George also issued a chauvinistic appeal which pandered to popular demands for a punitive peace on Germany. By adopting a hard line on the punishment of Germany and by smearing the Labour Party with

allegations of Bolshevism, Lloyd George's dual electoral strategy set out, on the one hand, to retain power and shape the nature of the forthcoming peace, and, on the other hand, to exact a devastating political revenge on the forces of wartime dissent. <sup>19</sup>

While the Coalition manifesto could be described as a mandate for peace, reconstruction, and reform, Lloyd George turned on "both the Asquithian Liberals and the Labour Party as the 1918 general election campaign developed." The primary focus of his strategy to make Britain "a fit country for heroes to live in" was replaced with promises of trying the Kaiser, making Germany pay, and expelling all Germans from the country. For instance, at Wolverhampton on 24 November, Lloyd George gave a detailed account of his proposals for regenerating the rural life of the nation. Yet, his address at Wolverhampton also demonstrated the strength of anti-German feeling whipped up by the Daily Mail and The Times when the audience heckled him on whether enemy aliens were to be expelled. In the words of Rowland, Lloyd George

"began to realise, as the shoals of letters and reports from the constituencies poured in, that the interruptions at his own meeting had not been an isolated phenomenon: the country was thirsting for blood, and he would have to satisfy that thirst if he was going to retain the premiership."

After the War Cabinet agreed on 28 November that the Kaiser must be punished and that Germany should be made to pay all she could towards the war, Lloyd George informed an audience in Newcastle-on-Tyne the next day that he was "just as anxious as the ordinary patriotic man in the street - such as it might be Lord Northcliffe or Horatio Bottomley - to secure the humiliation and punishment of Germany." Moreover, Lloyd George

continued to exploit popular xenophobia in a speech at Bristol on 11 December by endorsing the figure of £24 billion for German reparations and by insisting that Germany should pay to the uttermost farthing - "we will search their pockets for it." 20

In addition to calling a khaki election and exploiting anti-German hysteria, the Prime Minister attempted to destroy the credibility of his political opponents and minimize their potential influence on the post-war settlement. Despite Labour's platform of socialism, the 'conscription of riches', a democratic peace, and general disarmament, "the election of 1918 became a referendum on the character and patriotism of Lloyd George." Not content with using his enormous prestige to appeal for a just peace, Lloyd George launched a virulent assault on "the extreme pacifist, Bolshevist group", namely, Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden, and Smillie, "who are running the Labour Party." At an eve-of-poll meeting on 13 December at Camberwell, he warned his audience that if they voted Labour they would discover that this "pacifist clique" which believed in Bolshevism "would really run their Government. That is exactly what happened in Russia." An embittered Ramsay MacDonald, who was soundly defeated in Leicester, was furious:

"I a Bolshevist! I a pro-German! I am truly sorry that George condescended to that kind of thing. It was not quite the game... I stood by him as you know in bad times, and though he and I profoundly disagree with each other now, he might have criticised severely without joining in a howl which he knows quite well is one of ignorance."

By taunting the Labour Party with the stain of the 'Red Peril', promising a punitive peace settlement, and presenting himself as a national statesman, Lloyd George capitalized upon the politically volatile mood of the electorate.



As the initial euphoria of the armistice turned to sympathy for those who had been lost, and thence to bitterness against those responsible for the war, Lloyd George's shrewd electoral strategy enabled him to guide the nation to peace, and, at the same time, rout the "pacifists" and "Bolsheviks" on election day. <sup>21</sup>

When the results were known the Government had won an overwhelming endorsement from the British public. The Asquithian Liberals were reduced to barely thirty M.P.s, and Asquith, McKenna, Runciman, Simon, and Samuel were all defeated. Although the Labour Party polled almost twenty-five per cent of the popular vote, less than sixty members were elected and its leaders - Ramsay MacDonald, Henderson, and Snowden - were all defeated. For the peace dissenters, the devastating verdict of the electorate left them despondent about Britain's immediate future. In his diary on 29 December, MacDonald reflected:

"I have become a kind of mythological demon in the minds of people... I am truly sorry that my Parlia: and public work is broken, & that, though there are one or two good men in it, the Labour team is altogether inadequately equipped for the part it ought to play. The degradation of this Parliament is not merely a step down but a precipice."

In a letter to Ponsonby dated the same day, Seymour Cocks, a UDC member, expressed his astonishment that "the Electorate (just over 50 per cent voting) evidently preferred the Bottomleys and Pemberton Billings to serious politicians." All those who voted, Snowden wrote perceptively in the Labour Leader on 2 January 1919, had been "swayed by unreasoning passion, by the determination to carry into the political settlement of the war the same spirit which prompted its military continuation of the knock-

out blow." Catherine Marshall feared that, in the aftermath of the election, Lloyd George would become even more autocratic and was worried that "we may yet have revolution by violence in this country. In any case the character of the new House of Commons is bound to turn more and more people's hopes towards direct action." The election campaign, MacDonald wrote in January 1919 issue of the Socialist Review, had been "an assassination rather than a battle"; and he feared, amidst growing Bolshevik agitation, that Lloyd George's success "would strengthen the anti-parliamentary tendencies at work in the Labour movement."<sup>22</sup>

The results of the election represented both a personal triumph for Lloyd George and the unmitigated failure of political dissent. Still, he faced the daunting challenge of governing in an uncertain post-war climate with the Conservative Party on the Right and the Labour Party on the Left. As far as dissenters were concerned, Lloyd George's subsequent role in the drafting of the Treaty of Versailles, the 'troubles' in Ireland, and his stern treatment of organized labour provided ample opportunity for them to restore their political respectability and to "ensure that after Lloyd George's fall from office in October 1922 he remained an isolated and much distrusted figure on the Left of British politics."<sup>23</sup>

### Conclusion

In the final analysis, Lloyd George's most noteworthy contribution to the winning of the war lay in his tireless dedication to organizing the nation for victory and in identifying and then undermining support for those individuals and groups who were intent on forcing the British Government to conclude a peace-by-negotiation. He had devoted all his

talents to the one supreme objective of victory and "his freedom from preconceived ideas and his capacity to make swift, brutal decisions were just the qualities needed by an 'organizer of victory.'" <sup>24</sup> By adopting repressive positions on the issue of individual liberties, selecting the right men for the proper job such as Milner, Hankey, and Bonar Law, and unleashing the power of his demagogic oratory, Lloyd George lent his influential support to the militarization of the home front. Moreover, his decisions to employ Government propaganda as a weapon of war, to expand the censorship of the press, and to oppose the release of absolutist conscientious objectors, were integral in the transformation of his pre-war reputation as the most noteworthy democratic reformer into an untrustworthy autocrat who was vilified by peace dissenters, civil libertarians, and labour leaders as the "hammer" of dissent.

Nonetheless, despite his overwhelming prestige as "the man who won the war", Lloyd George's alliance "with the Conservatives after the Armistice ensured a gulf between himself and the Labour Movement." His part in the introduction of extraordinary war measures and his anomalous position as a Premier increasingly dependent on Unionist support, ensured that he would remain as the *bête noire* of British dissenters. In the immediate post-war period, Lloyd George's role in the drafting of the punitive Treaty of Versailles, and the Government's readiness to exploit the 'Red Peril' to disarm industrial militancy all made it increasingly improbable that his pre-war relationship with organized labour and middle-class social reformers could have been restored.

Amidst growing recognition that the Treaty of Versailles was a victor's

peace which created a minefield of unresolved problems in central Europe, it did not take long for the defeated parliamentary candidates of the UDC and ILP to gain some favour with the electorate. For example, thirty members of the UDC, including Morel, Ponsonby, and Trevelyan, were elected to Parliament in 1922 and, a year later, Ramsay MacDonald formed the first Labour Government. Although closer ties between the trade union movement and the Labour Party, the failure of a 'Centre' Party, and growing sectional and class cleavage accounted for the growing popularity of the Labour Party, the UDC contributed to Labour's rise and "strongly influenced British opinion and foreign policy during the inter-war period." <sup>25</sup> In retrospect, Lloyd George's willingness to jettison Liberal principles, to expand the perimeters of the "Revolution in Government", and to risk the hostility of wartime dissent, all in the defence of national security, had exacted a devastating political price upon "the man who won the war."

## NOTES

1. J.C. Bird, Control of Enemy Alien Civilians in Great Britain 1914-1918. (1986), 123. See also Hankey, I, 738, Robbins, 160, and Wrigley, 230-231.

2. Robbins, 159. See also Swartz, 200.

3. See Rowland, 466-475; Robbins, 176-179; Kenneth O. Morgan, Consensus and Disunity. The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-1922. (1979), 39-40; Pugh, 126-128.

4. See Robbins, 157; Rowland, 437; Wrigley, 227-228; Adams and Poirier, 241-242.

5. Lloyd George, II, 1597. See also Adams and Poirier, 237-241.

6. Adams and Poirier, 242. See also Wrigley, 227-228.

7. War Cabinet Minutes: WC (451), 24 July 1918, CAB 23/7/43-44. See also Adams and Poirier, 242-243, and Wrigley, 230.

8. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 3674, "Pacifist Bolshevik Propaganda", Report by Basil Thomson, 20 February 1918, CAB 24/42, 4; G.T. 3704, "Bolshevist Propaganda", By the Home Secretary, 22 February 1918, CAB 24/43, 1; WC (353, 10), 25 February 1918, CAB 23/5, 3-4.

9. War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 3838, "Revolutionary Agitation in Glasgow and Clydeside with Special Reference to the Cases of John Maclean and Others", By the Secretary of State for Scotland, 7 March 1918, CAB 24/44, 1; WC (364, 14), 12 March 1918, CAB 23/5, 4; Deian Hopkins, "Domestic Censorship in the First World War", in the Journal of Contemporary History. Vol. 5, No. 4, 1970, 168.

10. Bird, 123, 115-116.

11. See Ibid, 120-124.

12. U.K. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5 ser., vol. 108, 11 July 1918, cols. 573-577. See also War Cabinet Memoranda: G.T. 5075, "Enemy Aliens", Report to the Prime Minister of Sir H. Dalziel's Committee, 9 July 1918, CAB 24/57, 1-3, and Bird, 125.

13. Robbins, 157-158; Rowland, 440. See also Swartz, 203.

14. Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 28 February 1918, 9, 15, 1; Robbins, 158.

15. Robbins, 160; Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 7 March 1918, 10, 15, 1; Swartz, 203-204. See also Snowden, "Review of the Week", in the Labour Leader, 28 March 1918, 13, 15, 1.

16. U.K. Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5 ser., vol. 105, 9 May 1918, cols. 2371-2373. See also Hankey, 799, Wilson, ed., The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, 344, Morgan, 28, and Pugh, 116-117.

17. Rowland, 443-445. See also Morgan, 28.

18. Morgan, 28. See also Kenneth O. Morgan, "1902-1924", in David Butler, ed., Coalitions in British Politics. (1978), 38, and Rowland, 446.

19. See Morgan, Consensus and Disunity, 34; Morgan, "1902-1924", 38; Pugh, 125-128; Turner, 317-318.

20. Chris Wrigley, Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour: The Post-War Coalition 1918-1922. (1990), 8; Rowland, 467-468; The Times, 12 December 1918. See also Morgan, Consensus and Disunity, 42, Lloyd George Papers: F/168/2/1, "The Coalition Manifesto", 21 November 1918, 1, and Pugh, 127-128;

21. Rowland, 470; Marquand, 234; The Times, 14 December 1918; Master of Elibank Papers: 8808, J. Ramsay MacDonald to Elibank, 14 January 1919, 3, quoted in Wrigley, 8-9. See also Pugh, 128, Hinton, Protests and Visions, 71-73, and Morgan, "1902-1924", 39.

22. Diary, JRM, quoted in Marquand, 236; Arthur Ponsonby Papers: MS. Eng. hist. c.667, F. Seymour Cocks to Arthur Ponsonby, 29 December 1918, 114; Snowden and Marshall quoted in Robbins, 178; Ramsay MacDonald quoted in Marquand, 239.

Note: Pemberton Billings was a xenophobic, right-wing, nationalist Independent MP who had outspoken views on the aliens issue and the treatment of Germany; Horatio Bottomley was an 'unscrupulous character' who as editor of the right-wing journal, John Bull, urged his readers to invest their savings in his fraudulent scheme for the sale of 'victory bonds.' In addition, Bottomley was notorious for his support for a punitive peace for Germany, anti-alien sentiment, and the leader of the fringe Independent group in Parliament.

23. Wrigley, 9-10.

24. Creiger, 259. See also Rowland, 459.

25. Wrigley, David Lloyd George and the British Labour Movement, 234; Swartz, 222. See also Hinton, 71, 75, Robbins, 200, and Morgan, Consensus and Disunity 373.

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