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STATE INTERVENTION IN GREAT BRITAIN

A Study of Economic Control and Social Response,  
1914-1919

BY

SAMUEL J. HURWITZ

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Response, 1914-1919*

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SAMUEL J. HURWITZ, Ph.D.

*Brooklyn College*



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To  
*My Mother and Father*

## PREFACE

IN less than a generation, we have lived to see the re-affirmation of war as an instrument of national policy. No longer viewed as a rapidly disappearing abnormality of the body politic, war must be regarded as a threat to the civilization it is intended to defend.

This is a study of the impact of the First World War on the role of government in the economy of a country which was the prototype of modern industrial society. War now comprehends all the activities of society. It is not merely an affair of armies and navies, but of peoples and institutions; a total effort that encompasses the entire economy and compels the alteration of its structure. How permanent were the modifications of 1914-1918 and how they influenced the future fall outside the scope of this study. Yet, the development of economic controls in Great Britain, by adumbrating the future, provides lessons for our day in war, in preparation for war and, for that matter, in peace. This inquiry has, however, not been undertaken in the spirit of reading history backwards. The fact that in any presentation the selection of data inescapably conditions the conclusions should not discourage the attempt to state, elucidate, and explain in the spirit of *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.

The contrast between the decade of British history that immediately preceded the war and the four years of the war period does not reflect a lack of continuity. The events during the war and its aftermath cannot be comprehended without an understanding of the period before the war. Only in the perspective of the whole does each segment become intelligible. Accordingly, the history of the war period involves a consideration of the pre-war period, followed by an account of the slow, reluctant, and grudging response of the state to the imperatives of war. The more critical the situation, the more necessary it is for the state to manufacture the conditions of acquiescence, and to obtain active and even sacrificial

support. It becomes, necessary, therefore, to record the reaction of the people; fully as important as the acts of the state are the mass responses they evoke.

The fundamental purpose of the study is to use Britain as a representative case history; for the events of our time make this more than a record of a bygone and benighted age. As it becomes apparent that the First World War was the prototype of future wars, and as it becomes evident that Britain's response to that war helped to establish the pattern of response for the future, such a study becomes, perhaps, more than a matter of academic concern.

The pleasure of recording my gratitude for advice and criticism is tempered only by anxiety that no one but myself be held responsible for my faults. From his rich store of learning and understanding, Professor J. Bartlet Brebner helped me to clarify many problems of content and organization. Professor Robert Livingston Schuyler, by his sympathetic council and his editorial skill and historical judgement, saved me from numerous pitfalls. Professors Brebner and Schuyler have, in generous spirit, permitted me to draw freely upon the wealth of their knowledge and experience. Professor Jesse D. Clarkson, throughout my association with him, has presented intellectual challenges which have done much to shape my approach and methodology. My indebtedness to him runs long and deep. Professor Solomon F. Bloom has been a source of unfailing aid; I have gained much over the years. I am grateful to Professor Madeline R. Robinton for wise and sympathetic suggestions. I have profited greatly from the stimulating encouragement and insights of Professor Hans Rosenberg. In organizing my first draft, I leaned heavily on the assistance of Mr. Abraham H. Venit. Mr. Arthur Younger helped me with a number of problems. Professor and Mrs. Oscar Handlin have added to my burden of debt by critically reading an early draft as well as the galleys.

SAMUEL J. HURWITZ

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**SECTION I**  
**THE LIBERAL SCENE**

## CHAPTER I

### A DECADE OF LIBERALISM

THE problems of the pre-war decade in Great Britain, 1905-1914, were not born with the century, nor were they the Frankenstein-like creation of any political party. Implicit in a world-wide industrial revolution, spelled out by the rise of formidable rivals, the conditions of economic progress upon which rested the "classical" British civilization of the Victorian age seemed likely to disappear with Nineveh and Tyre. Many viewed the economic horizon with alarm. It seemed that the sunset was nearer than the sunrise, that senility pressed uncomfortably close upon maturity. There was no absolute decline in British trade and prosperity, indeed both were increasing; but many professed to read the handwriting on the wall by pointing to the inexorable fact that the rate of growth of British trade and industry had slackened, as contrasted with the acceleration so evident in other countries, particularly in Germany and in the United States.

The prospect of economic decline was the matrix of many other problems: imperial strains, foreign dangers, labor disputes. All these were linked up with the economic situation. But they were not the sole difficulties; among others were the heightened discontent of the Dissenters, the growing unrest in Ireland, and the garish, but none the less very real, suffragist movement.

To reverse the basic trend and thus save the British economy, the Tariff Reformers, headed by Joseph Chamberlain, offered and soon insisted upon what they claimed would be a simple solution. A protective tariff *could* tie the empire together and *would* shut out "unfair" competition; other countries would lower rather than raise their tariffs so as to take advantage of reciprocal agreements with Britain. With the consequent prosperity of British industry, wages would be raised, social reform would be realized, and a happy partnership of

industry and labor would be cemented by a mortar more substantial than mere good will.

This program appealed to the agriculturalists and to some industrialists, chiefly in the iron and steel and the woolen and worsted trades, but was not accepted by the coal, cotton, and shipping interests who lived by export trade. An effective tariff, argued the free traders, would serve only to raise the costs of production and give aid and comfort to Britain's aspiring competitors. With the "hungry-forties" almost literally engraved on the national consciousness, the blandishments of the exponents of a protective tariff were easily and bitterly resisted by the mass of the workers, haunted by the memory of the "dear loaf."

Harried by problems which even his subtle dialectic abilities could not resolve, Arthur James Balfour sought surcease, very temporary though he hoped it would be, from the cares of office on December 5, 1905.<sup>1</sup> Two years earlier, the resignation of both Joseph Chamberlain and the Free Traders from the Cabinet had done little to ease the situation in the Unionist Party, where disunity continued to belie the name of the Party. Chamberlain had helped to split the Liberal Party twenty years before. Was the Unionist Party to undergo a similar fate? The difference between the Free Traders and Tariff Reformers was real; it might become basic.

If Balfour could not heal the discord in his own Party, he hoped to take advantage of the dissensions in the Liberal Party. The Radical and Imperialist factions in the Liberal Party, faced with the task of creating a government, might destroy or at least neutralize each other. Balfour, however, underrated the Liberal passion for office. Within a week the Liberals organized a government under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and at the general election in January, 1906, achieved a result which astounded them fully as much as it shocked the Unionists and disappointed the Irish Nationalists, who had hoped to be

<sup>1</sup> Balfour, who was "so polished that he seemed to glow in the dusk." J. H. Thomas, *My Story* (London, 1937), p. 54.

able to hold the balance of power, as they had previously done under Liberal rule.<sup>2</sup> The new House of Commons was composed of 377 Liberals, 157 Unionists, 83 Nationalists, and 51 Labourites, including 29 candidates of the Labour Representation Committee.

The Radical and Imperialist Liberals, uniting in a Free Trade campaign, had not quite buried the hatchet but a superficial harmony had been established. Though the Cabinet was headed by the "pro-Boer" Campbell-Bannerman, three Liberal League imperialistic stalwarts—Asquith, Grey, and Haldane—held the key positions of Exchequer, Foreign Affairs, and War.<sup>3</sup> The question of what policies to pursue was not to be easily settled. The very size of the majority was cause for alarm to the Liberal leaders who might be unable to restrain the ardor of the rank-and-file, many of whom owed their election to the Labour Party's policy of limiting the number of its candidates and thus avoiding numerous three-cornered fights.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The election of 1906 was marked by rather "dirty politics." Churchill later admitted that the Liberals were guilty of "terminological inaccuracies." George Lansbury, *My Life* (New York, 1930), p. 203.

<sup>3</sup>Nevertheless to the sanguine all things are for the best. W. T. Stead, the influential Liberal editor, found comfort in the thought that "in each of these three offices the three Liberal Leaguers would be compelled to confront day after day, week in, week out, the disastrous results of the policy which they were weak and foolish enough to support." Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead* (London, 1925), II, 279.

<sup>4</sup>J. A. Spender, *The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London, 1923), II, 224. The party managers had in many instances put up "in what were regarded as hopeless seats, candidates of very extreme views who were never expected to get in." Their success embarrassed the Government. Earl Winterton, *Pre-War* (London, 1932), p. 26. The members of the 1906 Parliament "were more inclined to make bold, not to say daring, experiments in social life than had ever before been attempted at Westminster. Hamilton Fyfe, *T. P. O'Connor* (London, 1934), pp. 219-220. ". . . it was an assembly sprinkled—or ought I to say garnished?—with poor men," in addition to a "host of new M. P.'s who had pledged themselves very loudly indeed to fight for the masses." Charles T. King, *The Asquith Parliament 1906-1909* (London, 1910), p. 2. "On the other hand, only five of the LRC's twenty more successful candidates had been

Although the increased Labour vote seemed to show the line which the Government must follow, the Liberal leaders were reluctant to take hasty action. The Conservatives, no less than the Liberals, were worried. Not Liberalism, but "labour working with and through Liberalism," was the danger.<sup>5</sup> The Liberal Cabinet might realize that the Liberalism of the past century, the program of "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform," had become an anachronism; that even the perennial Gladstone had not survived the nineteenth century; that the future lay with the "masses" who had become the "masters"; but by training and temperament few could make the necessary transition.<sup>6</sup> No less than Balfour, who also was aware that "a new era" had been inaugurated,<sup>7</sup> the Liberals were ill-prepared to grapple with the new situation. Far more, of course, than Balfour, who reconsidered his decision to retire from public life,<sup>8</sup> they were confronted with inescapable responsibilities

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elected against Liberal opposition." Lord Elton, *The Life of James Ramsay MacDonald, 1866-1919* (London, 1919), p. 121. "The ranks of the Government supporters were not only swollen to repletion, but they contained a number of ardent Radicals, who had hitherto repeatedly failed to secure election, and having now at last reached the Promised Land, were determined to gather in all its riches and with as little delay as possible." James William Lowther, *A Speaker's Commentaries*, II, 35. "The General Election of 1906 brought the Liberals to power with a majority which, if vast, was perhaps the most heterogeneous collection of cranks, faddists, kill-joys, careerists, and Little Englanders ever assembled under a single party flag." Victor Wallace Germain, *The Tragedy of Winston Churchill* (London, 1931), p. 31. The defeat of the Unionists had been expected, but the defeat had turned into a "rout." Bernard Holland, *The Life of Spencer Compton* (London, 1911), II, 392. "In January, 1906, our party was scattered to the winds." Earl of Midleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939* (London, 1939), p. 267.

5 Austen Chamberlain, *Down the Years* (London, 1935), p. 89.

6 "... for despite all we said on platforms, we were not 'of the people,' nor did we truly understand their needs. We were in great measure Whigs still..." Elizabeth S. Haldane, *From One Century to Another* (London, 1937), p. 222.

7 Blanche E. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour* (London, 1936), II, 7.

8 Sir Sidney Lee, *King Edward VII* (London, 1927), II, 449.

and a very natural desire to stay in office.

To an electorate which had responded with such high hopes and huge majorities to the Liberal cause, the first year of Liberal government was singularly unproductive of legislative results. The promises of Campbell-Bannerman's election address were still unfulfilled. There had been no development of Britain's "undeveloped estates in this country"; and the Liberals had not succeeded in making Britain less "of a pleasure-ground for the rich and more of a treasure-house for the nation."<sup>9</sup> The only important measures passed were the Workmen's Compensation Act, extending the protection offered by the Acts of 1897 and 1900, and the Bill freeing trade unions from liability for tortious actions. Even this Bill, as finally passed, was the result of the efforts of the rank-and-file who revised, into almost unrecognizable shape, the feeble proposals of the Liberal Cabinet. To add to the Cabinet's difficulties, the House of Lords defeated an Education Bill exacted by the Nonconformists in spite of the bitter opposition of Anglicans and Catholics, and a Plural Voting Bill, designed to extend the principle of "one man, one vote." The Lords were fulfilling Balfour's promise, made on the morrow of the 1906 election, that the Unionists would continue to control "the destinies of this great Empire. . . whether in power or not. . . ." <sup>10</sup>

The Government now found itself in an awkward position. Balfour, as Curzon said, might be "eternally pirouetting on an

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Spender, *Campbell-Bannerman*, II, 209, for text of election address. Margot Asquith characterized it as "not as striking as Robespierre's. . ." Margot Asquith, *Autobiography* (New York, 1922), III, 115. The Government was reluctant to pass social legislation but a series of "sensational" Labor victories over both Conservatives and Liberals in by-elections made action imperative. Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left* (London, 1942), p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> George Wyndham expressed the same sentiments more strongly in letters to his family. "It is a good fight for huge stakes. . . we are going to have a 'fight to the finish'." The "English" would use extra-constitutional means "if need be" to attain Imperial policy and would deny the right of the Irish, Welsh, and Scotch to deflect Imperial policy. J. W. Mackail and Guy Wyndham, *Life and Letters of George Wyndham* (London, n. d.), II, 539, 541, 649.

eternal dialectical wire," but the Liberals could do little except to utter "yells of execration."<sup>11</sup> The Unionists, openly welcoming a battle with the Liberals, were too shrewd to trifle with measures demanded by the increasingly influential organized workers, and only opposed non-labor legislation. Frustrated in passing legislation dear to the hearts of many Liberal constituents, unable to present any clear case to organized labor, the Liberals, it seemed to many, faced a future as dreary as their barren immediate past. Even the Prime Minister admitted that "for the nonce we must submit," but promised that some way would be found to curb the Second Chamber; the "resources of the House of Commons," he said, "are not exhausted."<sup>12</sup> (Gladstone had once spoken of the "resources of civilization" in this vein.)

If not exhausted, the Government exhibited a state of extreme lassitude during 1907. It postponed or dropped various measures and the only significant act passed was the Budget which levied a super-tax on large incomes, and introduced into the system of taxation a distinction between earned and unearned income.<sup>13</sup> With "swift English resolve," the income tax, "having existed continuously for sixty-five years," was acknowledged as permanent.<sup>14</sup>

If little was accomplished in the way of legislation, the battle lines were becoming drawn. Even Asquith, the Liberal Imperialist, recognized the "urgent, long-delayed, and over-

11 Earl of Ronaldshay, *Life of Lord Curzon* (London, 1928), III, 28.

12 167 H. C. Deb. 4s., 1740. In 1907, by a vote of 432 to 147, the House of Commons passed a resolution stating that it was necessary to restrict the powers of the House of Lords so that the final decision of the Commons would prevail "within the limits of a single Parliament..." 176 H. C. Deb. 4s., 1518, 1523.

13 Bernard Mallet, *British Budgets 1887-88 to 1912-13* (London, 1913), pp. 274-275. Harcourt's Budget of 1894 had provided for some differentiation in the tax on inheritances.

14 J. H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1930-1938), III, 404.

due problems of social reform." <sup>15</sup> Pressed by the jostling of "radicals" like Lloyd George and Churchill and the loss of Liberal seats in by-elections, Asquith, who had become Prime Minister on the death of Campbell-Bannerman, proceeded to court greater popularity. In April, 1908, in rededicating the Government to the cause of social reform, he set the pace for the later perorations of Lloyd George: ". . . there is a lot of country still to traverse, steep hills to climb, stiff fences to take, deep and even turbulent streams to cross before we come to the end of our journey, but we know where we are going and we shall not lose our way." <sup>16</sup> Yet the achievements of the Liberal Government continued to fall short of expectations. The major bills of 1908 were the Old Age Pensions Act, passed without opposition, and the Liquor Licensing Bill, defeated in the House of Lords without the formality of debate after the Unionists had settled its fate at a meeting in Lansdowne House.

<sup>15</sup> Mallet, *op. cit.*, p. 276. He was, of course, merely stealing a leaf from the well known programs of Disraeli and Joseph Chamberlain. But the former was dead and the latter no longer able to participate in active political life. In December, 1906, Austen Chamberlain in a letter to his father, had emphasized "... the Democracy want two things; imperialism and social reform. We were successful just so long as we combined the two ideals. We lost when we failed to satisfy their aspirations on the second." Austen Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside* (New Haven, 1937), p. 41. George Wyndham expressed the same sentiments in a letter to his mother, January 24, 1906: "Two things that are real emerge: Labor and Imperialism..." Mackail and Wyndham, *Life and Letters of Wyndham*, II, 539. Sidney Low, by no means a radical, recognized that "Whether we like it or not, we are in for more State Socialism of one kind or another." Desmond Chapman-Huston, *The Lost Historian: A Memoir of Sir Sidney Low* (London, 1936), p. 237.

<sup>16</sup> J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, *Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith* (London, 1932), I, 299. Asquith's succession to the Premiership had been "undisputed [but] was hardly popular." Lee, *Edward VII*, II, 652. Ramsay MacDonald's view of Asquith is discerning. His "great genius," he said, "is shown in overcoming difficulties without settling them. No man can postpone the evil day with such success as he can. But he only postpones it..." In Elton, *MacDonald*, p. 306.



Once again the strategy of the Unionists had paralyzed the Liberals without giving them an issue on which they could carry the majority of the electorate. Reforms in education and the liquor trade were dear to the Nonconformists,<sup>17</sup> an important element of the Liberal Party, but were neither significant nor dramatic to the labor movement, which was becoming increasingly restless and, as its fears of the Conservatives vanished, increasingly independent. In 1908, at the Labour Party's Annual Conference, a resolution had been carried favoring "the socialization of the means of production, distribution, and exchange."<sup>18</sup> The trade unions, unable to win the recognition of collective bargaining by the employers, were becoming very restive.<sup>19</sup> The passage of the Trades Boards Bill and the Labour Exchanges Bill had failed to meet the needs or the aspirations of the organized and articulate labor movement.

The Liberals needed an issue, which, without alienating the non-labor elements would rally their deserting supporters.<sup>20</sup> If the Liberal Party was to retain power and survive, it was necessary to corral the vote of the workers, to alarm them with the alternative to Liberal rule, and to head them off from the Labour Party.<sup>21</sup> The Liberals must demonstrate that the

17 "The only Nonconformist Bill the Lords allowed to pass the first time was the Burials Bill. The Peers did not mind how the Dissenters were buried, so long as they were out of the way." Lloyd George, quoted in King, *The Asquith Parliament*, p. 222.

18 Labour Party, *Report of the Annual Conference, 1908* (London, 1908), pp. 76-77. The same Conference, however, rejected a motion calling for the formulation of a national program. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

19 By the "Osborne" Decision, a compulsory levy on members of trade unions for political purposes was illegal. As members of the House of Commons were unsalaried, this decision made the position of the Labour members difficult.

20 "We were losing every by-election and had nothing to offer." Lucy Masterman, *C. F. G. Masterman* (London, 1939), p. 134.

21 In 1903 Lloyd George had complained that there was "too much disposition to tune our lyre to the sounds that come from the street, instead of standing to the sound principles of Liberalism." But once in office, he recognized the power "of the street." It was necessary to appeal to the

Conservatives were the foes of progress, of social reform, of the mass of the British people. Soon after the General Election of 1906, Balfour, in a letter to Lansdowne, had predicted the probable course of Liberal policy:

. . . the Government methods of carrying on their legislative work will be this: they will bring in Bills in a much more extreme form than the moderate members of their Cabinet probably approve; the moderate members will trust to the House of Lords cutting out or modifying the most outrageous provisions: the Left Wing of the Cabinet, on the other hand, while looking forward to the same result will be consoled for the anticipated mutilation of their measures by the reflection that they will be gradually accumulating a case against the Upper House. . . . This scheme is an ingenious one, and it will be our business to defeat it as far as we can.<sup>22</sup>

Lloyd George, ever alert, began to develop a plan of joining issue on ground unfavorable to the Conservatives. Some of the Liberals found hope in the rumors that the Lords, flushed with a sense of power, might veto the Budget, but Lloyd George ridiculed the possibility.<sup>23</sup> The Peers would not disturb an ordinary Budget, but perhaps they could be goaded into rejecting a Budget dressed up to resemble a Land Bill which had been part of the Liberal platform. As early as November, 1906, as a representative from the Cabinet, he had asked Redmond's opinion on the plan to go before the Country on the issue of the Lords

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masses so that the Labour Party would "call in vain upon the working men of Britain to desert Liberalism . . ." David Lloyd George, *Better Times* (London, n. d.), pp. 1, 36. On the other hand, Lord Rosebery, representing another faction of the Liberal Party, predicted that the Liberals would lose out in the end, "squeezed out between Socialism and Conservatism. Socialism can promise much more to the predatory elements in politics; Conservatism can afford much more confidence to those who wish to keep things as they are." Marquess of Crewe, *Lord Rosebery* (London, 1931), II, 596.

<sup>22</sup> Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne* (London, 1929), p. 354.

<sup>23</sup> Lord (George) Riddell, *More Pages from My Diary, 1908-1914* (London, 1934), p. 10.

if the latter "hung up" the Education Bill and rejected the Plural Voting Bill, as well as the English Land Bill which the Government intended to introduce in the following year.<sup>24</sup> These issues, however, were not sufficiently popular to afford material for a dramatization to be entitled "the Peers against the People." Lloyd George was looking for "a larger issue."<sup>25</sup> This he found, or rather, created, in the Budget of 1909.

It was the root of all evil, nurtured by the calculated billingsgate of Lloyd George into a plant of the most luxuriant foliage, which was to camouflage the issues and give the Liberals a new lease on life. The Budget raised the death duties and, as recommended by the Select Committee of 1906, levied a super-tax of 6*d.* in the pound on incomes over £5000; taxes on liquor and tobacco were raised; a tax of a halfpenny in the pound was levied on undeveloped land valued at over £50 an acre; and there was a 20 per cent tax on "unearned increment" or future appreciation in land values. The land taxes, truly illusionary in their effects, as treasury returns during the next eleven years proved, (they yielded £1,300,000 at a cost of £5,000,000 for collection), were the bogey.<sup>26</sup> Three years earlier, Charles Trevelyan had said, that the Budget of 1906 was the modest prologue to a very considerable drama.<sup>27</sup> Lloyd George's four and a half hour speech in 1909 was for the purpose of creating a melodrama. Inflating the Budget's purposes and its potential achievements, he so frightened the Tory

<sup>24</sup> Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond* (London, 1932), p. 135.

<sup>25</sup> Lee, *Edward VII*, II, 457.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Mallet, *Mr. Lord George* (New York, 1930), p. 40. "The Bill was drafted by those who disliked it, and each amendment made it more impossible." Josiah C. Wedgwood, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life* (London, 1940), p. 69. Lloyd George admitted that he had expected that the "land taxes would not produce much..." Riddell, *More Pages from My Diary*, p. 65. The day after the Armistice he professed to be ashamed of the moderation of the 1909 Budget. "A mean, despicable, little thing, it required a microscope to discover the new taxes that were levied by it." *Times*, November 13, 1918.

<sup>27</sup> 157 H. C. Deb. 4s., 519.

landlords with his new land taxes that, fearing the revolution was on, they preached active resistance.

In the commotion created by Lloyd George and his unwitting allies—the “Dukes”—the British electorate lost sight of the much less theatrical, but much more exacting, increase in excise taxes.<sup>28</sup> The Chancellor proclaimed that “the industrial classes” had been paying “more in proportion to their income than those who are better off,”<sup>29</sup> and that the Budget was framed on the principle that “no cupboard should be barer, no lot should be harder. . . . We are placing burdens on the broadest shoulders. Why should I put burdens on the people? I am one of the children of the people.”<sup>30</sup> Yet an analysis of the Budget, as contrasted with the speeches made about it, reveals that the increase in indirect taxes would serve either to make the cupboard barer, or the lot harder, or both. “Food taxes” were replaced by what Asquith called “sumptuary taxation” and “taxes on luxuries and superfluities.”<sup>31</sup> The distinction was more apparent than real. As Mallet points out, “with human nature [as it] is at present constituted” the burden fell “on the working class family budget.”<sup>32</sup> Liquor and tobacco taxes, levied on commodities which the average male adult in Britain ranked as “necessaries,” yielded a greater percentage of the total revenue in the 1909 Budget than in any other Budget since the war Budget of 1900.<sup>33</sup> As a whole,

<sup>28</sup> Opponents of the Budget stressed the incidence of the excise taxes, but to no avail. Cf. J. Ellis Barker, *Sixty-two Points Against the Budget* (London, n. d.).

<sup>29</sup> 4 H. C. Deb. 5s., 502.

<sup>30</sup> Limehouse Address, in Lloyd George, *Better Times*, p. 156.

<sup>31</sup> Mallet, *British Budgets 1887-1888 to 1912-13*, p. 459.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Churchill incautiously let the truth slip out in a speech delivered on July 17, 1909. Winston Churchill, *Liberalism and the Social Problem* (London, 1909), p. 340. According to the statistician Bowley, “for the ordinary fairly careful man who drinks and smokes” expenditures on these items may amount to 10% of wages. Arthur Bowley, *Some Economic Consequences of the Great War* (London, 1930, p. 199.

the Budget "was of the old family of budgets in its combination of direct and indirect taxation, its gathering of a handful here and a handful there."<sup>34</sup>

Although there was little that was revolutionary in the Budget, Lloyd George knew that men lived not upon bread alone but also on catchwords.<sup>35</sup> It was perhaps not unfitting that the taxes on normal intoxicants should have been increased, for Lloyd George freely offered a very potent brew, even if his intoxicant was rhetoric.<sup>36</sup> He knew that abuse showered upon him was a political gain.<sup>37</sup> The Lords obliged. Lloyd George was aware that change came about as much because of the "foolhardiness" of "foes" as the "sapience and wisdom" of "friends."<sup>38</sup>

The Liberals themselves were alarmed but fascinated by the Budget. By no means united on the measure, they could not ignore the aura of progress which it gave them and which had been lacking in their past performances. And it might be useful in order to humble the Lords. John Burns has described the

34 R. H. Gretton, *A Modern History of the English People, 1880-1922* (New York, 1930), p. 761. "Mr. Lloyd George's social experiments were rather the development of an old, than the inception of a new creed, and his much-criticized finance was cuts off the standard joints." John Buchan, *Pilgrim's Way* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), p. 149.

35 The "land song" of 1909: "Why should we be beggars with the ballot in our hands?" Percy Harris, *Fifty Years In and Out of Parliament* (London, n. d.), p. 45.

36 "Mr. Lloyd George became to me a landmark... in the corruption of the electorate." R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (London, 1939), p. 156.

37 He was fond of a story: "Bless my heart," said the workman, "we never think you mean business until they squeals." Harold Spender, *David Lloyd George* (London, n. d. [1923]), p. 344.

38 Lloyd George, *Speech before the National Liberal Club* (n. p., n. d. [December 3, 1909]). Few politicians of his time so enjoyed and appreciated the value of publicity. Attending the Requiem Mass at Westminster Cathedral for Lord Ripon, the late elder statesman of the Liberal Party, Lloyd George exclaimed, "to think of all this being done for him, and he won't see the account of it tomorrow in the newspapers." Masterman, *C. F. G. Masterman*, p. 142.

Cabinet deliberations upon the proposed budget: "like nineteen rag-pickers round a 'eap of muck."<sup>39</sup> The Liberal Cabinet was desperate.<sup>40</sup> Only if the masses could be diverted from the growing appeal of the Labour Party, and the Liberal Party made to emerge as the true champion of the masses could the Liberals hope to win the next election. Although the Liberal Cabinet as a whole refused to believe that the Lords would throw out the Budget, Lloyd George thought otherwise, and took over the campaign.<sup>41</sup> His purpose was not so much to get the Budget passed as defeated. For that would supply the issue which the Liberals so needed. In his operations against the Lords, Lloyd George had the benefit of two great masters—Joseph Chamberlain and Sir William Gilbert (who, incidentally, had been knighted by the Liberal Government in 1907). He was fortunate, too, in that few in the Cabinet possessed his heritage of coming from the masses.

A quarter of a century earlier Joseph Chamberlain had led attacks on the House of Lords in phrases which, Lloyd George has acknowledged, supplied "that pungent truculence" which his own speeches "sadly lacked."<sup>42</sup> Chamberlain had once used the words of the Church litany in a prayer that the Peers might be "endowed with grace, wisdom and understanding"<sup>43</sup> and pass the Reform Bill of 1884. Lloyd George

<sup>39</sup> Sir Almeric Fitzroy, *Memoirs* (London, 1925), II, 430.

<sup>40</sup> Lloyd George's colleagues appeared "very unsympathetic" while he read his Budget speech. Chamberlain, *Politics From Inside*, p. 177.

<sup>41</sup> Spender, *The Prime Minister*, p. 170. Balfour suspected that Lloyd George was using the Budget "as a bid for position against Asquith." Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside*, p. 177. In November, 1908, Wedgwood had presented the Prime Minister with a petition in favor of taxation of land values in the coming budget, signed by 241 Liberal and Labor M.P.'s. Wedgwood, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life*, p. 66.

<sup>42</sup> Elsie E. Gulley, *Joseph Chamberlain and English Social Politics* (New York, 1926), pp. 238-239. "Joe Chamberlain is obviously his model, but he is more elastic...more dexterous in manipulating the Press and public opinion." Riddell, *More Pages from My Diary*, p. 177.

<sup>43</sup> William Sykes, *Before Joseph Came Into Egypt* (London, 1898), p. 76.

in 1909, on the other hand, devoutly wished that the Lords would veto the Budget.<sup>44</sup>

In 1909 many of the Peers felt that Salisbury's forebodings of twenty-five years earlier had come true: "We are on an inclined plane leading from the position of Lord Hartington to that of Mr. Chamberlain and so on to the depths over which Mr. Henry George rules supreme."<sup>45</sup> The "backwoodsmen" (as they were derisively styled by Lloyd George), who were aroused to come down from their country homes to override the 1909 Budget, could hardly have known the difference between Henry George and Lloyd George, and the latter did his utmost to confuse the more discerning. Lloyd George "had known in his young days how cowed men could be, how fearful of shadows, how frightened by ghosts,"<sup>46</sup> and he sought to frighten the Lords.<sup>47</sup>

That Lloyd George "possessed to an exceptional degree the capacity of exasperating political opponents . . ." <sup>48</sup> is undeniable, but that he should have maneuvered the Unionist leaders into the position of being forced to advocate the rejection of the Budget by the Lords is more difficult to understand unless they, too, were affected by the prevailing mood

<sup>44</sup> At a breakfast with his political cronies, Lloyd George remarked: rejection of the Budget by the Lords "would give us such a chance as we shall never have again." Masterman, *C. F. G. Masterman*, p. 140. Harold Spender, his friend and biographer, states that "the only shadow that would pass over his face would come when someone would half convince him" that the Lords might pass the Budget. Spender, *The Prime Minister*, p. 170.

<sup>45</sup> J. L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (New York, 1932), I, 462.

<sup>46</sup> Spender, *The Prime Minister*, pp. 343-344.

<sup>47</sup> The backwoodsmen came to the House of Lords only when there was "something for them to kill." King, *Asquith Parliament*, p. 260. Typical of these was Willoughby de Broke. Cf. Lord Willoughby de Broke, *Hunting the Fox* (Boston, 1921); and *The Passing Years* (London, 1924); Alice Wilson Fox, *The Earl of Halsbury, 1823-1921* (London, 1929), p. 233, for description.

<sup>48</sup> Newton, *Lansdowne*, p. 332.

of restlessness in the country.<sup>49</sup> What was lacking was a sense of balance, of common-sense; and Lloyd George knew it. He had six years before exclaimed: "There is one thing in common between Lord Milner and Lord Curzon. They are both very clever men, but they belong to that class of clever men with every gift except the gift of common sense."<sup>50</sup>

Lloyd George was aiming to fight the next election on an old demagogic platform. Years later he was to remark significantly that Gladstone's Midlothian speeches "convulsed as well as converted Britain."<sup>51</sup> In the General Election of 1885, his model, Chamberlain, had denounced the recipient of unearned incomes,<sup>52</sup> had raised the cry, "what ransom will property pay for the security which it enjoys?";<sup>53</sup> and Jesse Collings had promised "three acres and a cow" to the rural laborer.<sup>54</sup> Lloyd George was, in 1909, trying to convulse the Lords and convert the wavering masses. Believing that "Politics are very much a matter of temperament" and that

49 "The great secret of that [the English] governing class has always been its knowledge, its prophetic knowledge, of when it was necessary to retreat. It has more highly developed than any governing class since the great days of the Roman Republic that 'sense of the possible' which Cavour, most Anglophile of great modern statesmen, regarded as the most important gift of the statesman. This gift was not conspicuous in the years before the war of 1914. The English Tory party (with which had been incorporated most of the old Whig oligarchy) abandoned all prudence. It developed an ideology and began to think of following principles to their logical conclusion. Few less English remarks can be thought of than the 'damn the consequences' of Lord Milner." D. W. Brogan, *The English People* (New York, 1943), p. 9. Cf. also, John Buchan, *The King's Grace* (London, 1935), pp. 27-28.

50 David Lloyd George, *The Lords, the Land, and the People* (London, 1910), p. 21.

51 David Lloyd George, *Slings and Arrows*, edited by Philip Guedalla (New York, 1929), Preface.

52 Cf. also, H. W. Lucy, editor, *Speeches of Joseph Chamberlain* (London, 1885), p. 41.

53 Charles W. Boyd, editor, *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches* (London, 1914), I, 137.

54 *Cambridge Modern History*, XII, 43.



"enough logic" could easily be brought to satisfy "any ordinary mind of the reasonableness of any side of political argument,"<sup>55</sup> he exploited "temperament." His attacks on the "Dukes" served to cajole both them and the poor. The dukes were both expensive as individuals ("... a fully equipped duke costs as much to keep up as two Dreadnoughts and they are just as great a terror and last longer"),<sup>56</sup> and ruinous as a class. Consistently he held up drink and the land system as the chief causes of poverty and destitution "in the richest country in the world."<sup>57</sup> His friend, Riddell, saw through Lloyd George's land campaign: "This land scheme is a shrewd political move . . . framed to appeal to the Liberal politician who is not prepared to attack the commercial classes. . . ." <sup>58</sup> Beyond that, Lloyd George the Liberal, could not go.<sup>59</sup>

At the start, some of the leaders of the Lords, including Lansdowne, had opposed vetoing the Budget, but they were carried along by "rank-and-file" pressure. "Whig scruples have been ruthlessly sacrificed to Tory passion. . . ." <sup>60</sup> As the cam-

55 Lloyd George, *Slings and Arrows*, pp. 32-33.

56 Lloyd George, *Better Times*, p. 159.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

58 Riddell, *More Pages From My Diary*, p. 71.

59 "... this spirited voice was not quite the voice of revolution—though thus it sounded in the anxious imagination of the Conservative press. It was a voice which nobleman and worker might have equal cause to distrust; it was a voice which would have been utterly lost in a world where there were no dukes to hate and no poor to pity; it was the inspired and concentrated clamor of the middle classes. It was also Liberalism's extravagant last will and testament . . . it looked back to that great nineteenth century delusion of an England Where neither Wealth nor Work would ever combine . . . where social ills would be medicined but never cured . . ." George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (New York, 1935), p. 23. Lloyd George's and Churchill's "speeches when they courted public applause seem to my ears to be always full of Socialist principles; then in action or in later speeches they always express horror of Socialism." George Lansbury, *Looking Backwards and Forwards* (London, 1935), p. 91.

60 Fitzroy, *op. cit.*, I, 386. "The ground taken by the Conservative leaders could not have been weaker." Viscount Cecil, *A Great Experiment*

paign continued, numerous Peers became increasingly aware that they had been duped, but it was too late to turn back. The Lords could do no more than "damn the consequences"; the "tactical error had been committed of fighting the Bill so hard in the Commons that retreat had become almost impossible."<sup>61</sup> Many of the three hundred Peers who voted against the Budget, had "an uncomfortable conviction" that they were "walking into a trap. . . ." <sup>62</sup> They would have been more unhappy could they have been present when Harold Spender brought Lloyd George the news that the Lords had rejected the Budget. His "face shone. 'The Lord', he cried, 'has delivered them into our hands'." <sup>63</sup>

The Lord did not quite deliver the Lords, even though they "figured both as anti-constitutionalists and as tax evaders," into the hands of Lloyd George.<sup>64</sup> In the course of the General Election which followed, there was found no complete antidote to "the melancholy climate of public opinion, the gradual erosions of disillusion and boredom."<sup>65</sup> The Government lost 104 seats, but would have a majority of 125, with the support of the Labour Party and the 82 Irish.<sup>66</sup> Clearly

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(London, 1941), p. 34. Cf. Lord Askwith, *Lord James of Hereford* (London, 1930), p. 300.

<sup>61</sup> Newton, *Lansdowne*, p. 383. F. E. Smith held that "the leaders of the Conservative Party threw away every trump card they held by the stupidity with which they played their cards. . . . Only a desperate issue could stop the pendulum from swinging back. . . . Such an issue. . . [was] found in the cry of 'The Peers Against the People'." Earl of Birkenhead (Frederic Edwin Smith), *Last Essays* (London, 1930), p. 7.

<sup>62</sup> Newton, *Lansdowne*, p. 383.

<sup>63</sup> Spender, *The Prime Minister*, p. 359. Churchill's "hope and prayer" — that the Lords veto the Budget — had been answered. Wilfred Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries* (London, 1919), II, 275.

<sup>64</sup> Elton, *MacDonald*, p. 178.

<sup>65</sup> Dangerfield, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>66</sup> The loss would have been far greater but for the Budget. Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside*, pp. 228-229. Cf. also, John Viscount Morley, *Recollections* (New York, 1917), II, 326, 356, and Fitzroy, *Memoirs*, II, 431-432. "The Unionist Party would, without doubt, have been in Office now,"

the election was not an unmixed victory. The Government now needed the support of both Labour and the Irish. In 1907, Churchill had been sure that the Liberals "pulled the curtain up on a piece" that was "going to have a good long run,"<sup>67</sup> but the Liberals now found that the Irish Nationalists could drop the curtain at will.<sup>68</sup> The Irish incubus was again to intimidate the Liberals and obsess the Conservatives. For the moment, however, the Irish Question was held in abeyance pending the final outcome of the struggle with the Lords. The acceptance of the Budget by the Lords (who had always held that they would abide by the "wishes of the people," as expressed in an election), did not prevent the Liberals from pushing their attack. Pressed by the Irish, who demanded that the Lord's power be curbed in order to remove a positive obstacle to Home Rule, the Liberals sought to reorganize the House of Lords and redefine its powers.

The Parliament Bill introduced by Asquith was intended as a stopgap measure pending the permanent reorganization of the Second Chamber, a problem the solution of which caused the Liberals much trouble. Until the character of the reorganization could be defined, the Lord's power was, ostensibly, to be curbed. Once again, as in the tumult aroused over the Budget of 1909, the electorate would have done well to examine the nature of the reform itself. The House of Lords, for many years, had amounted to little more than a "watchdog" against "pernicious" and "special legislation" passed by the House of Commons "without the consent of the electorate." It merely asserted the right to "veto" such legislation in order that a

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but for the veto. Morley to Fitzroy, January 23, 1911. "He [Lloyd George], and he alone, saved the Asquith Government in whose throat the death rattle was already audible, by the land taxes of his notorious and most unscrupulous Budget." Earl of Birkenhead, *Contemporary Personalities* (London, 1924), p. 35. Cf. also, Lord Willoughby de Broke, *The Passing Years*, p. 265.

67 G. E. Raine, *Lloyd George and the Land* (London, 1914), p. 8.

68 Lloyd George rallied the Cabinet when the members wanted to resign. Harold Spender, *The Fire of Life* (London, n. d.), p. 140.

"referendum" might be held by the electorate. It did not maintain the right to veto such legislation if the electorate expressed its approval of it. Although the Liberals claimed that, with reference to specifically Liberal proposals, the "watchdog" had become, in Lloyd George's phrase, "Mr. Balfour's poodle," the Lords insisted that legislation clearly demanded by the majority of the British people was never opposed. The Parliament Act of 1911 by giving the House of Lords the power of holding up legislation (other than money bills) for at least two years, served, in some respects, to strengthen it at the expense of the electorate.<sup>69</sup>

Although it might seem now that the Liberals had little to gain and the Conservatives little to lose from such a reform of the Lords, the issues were not as clear then to the opposing sides. Two features of the debate are remarkable: the agitation and terror of the Conservatives, and the Liberal leaders' aversion to creating new peers.<sup>70</sup> Asquith had a draft list of about 250 suggested Liberal peers.<sup>71</sup> Had the Liberals gone through with this they could have passed Irish home rule, Welsh disestablishment, and a reform of the second chamber all in one session. "With the Diehards doing their utmost to bring this about, there seems something paradoxical about the con-

<sup>69</sup> According to the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Finance Bill of 1909 would not have come under the provisions of the Parliament Act as a "money bill." Lowther, *A Speaker's Commentaries*, II, 103-104.

<sup>70</sup> "It is usual for parties to be extravagant in denouncing measures which they dislike, and by dint of repeating their extravagances to become convinced of them. But here the gap between conviction and reality was abnormal." R. C. K. Ensor, *England 1870-1914* (Oxford, 1936), p. 431. The public, however, was less concerned with the remodeling of the British Constitution than with the "social question." Chapman-Huston, *op. cit.*, p. 241. "The effect of the delay is to make ordinary 'progressive' legislation extremely difficult." W. I. Jennings, *Parliament* (New York, 1940), p. 414.

<sup>71</sup> Spender and Asquith, *op. cit.*, I, 331.

servatism of the Liberals, who toiled to prevent it from happening." 72

It was no paradox. It was a plot, or, at least, a plan. Lord Newton was under no illusions:

. . . An unreformed House of Lords suited the Liberal Party admirably. It could always be utilized as a reward for deserving supporters; as a refuge for decayed Ministers; as a convenient safeguard for the purpose of reassuring those moderates who were afraid of moving too fast; and finally, upon occasion, as a horrible object lesson to the electorate.<sup>73</sup>

It is not easy to relinquish a whipping boy. Only the unsophisticated wondered why the Liberal Ministry was so reluctant to curb the Lords.

In fact, the Liberals attempted to arrive at an agreement which would avoid the necessity of forcing the issue of the reform of the Lords. Lloyd George, acutely conscious of pressing difficulties, approached some of the Unionist leaders with a proposal to unite the Liberal and Unionist parties on a common program.<sup>74</sup> The issues confronting Parliament and the

<sup>72</sup> Ensor, *England*, p. 431. Even in the heat of battle, Walter Long realized that the two year "waiting period" provided for in the Bill was to the Conservative advantage, since they had an assured majority in the House of Lords. Charles Petrie, *Walter Long and His Times* (London, (1936), p. 158.

<sup>73</sup> Newton, *Lansdowne*, pp. 361-362.

<sup>74</sup> Writing more than twenty years later Lloyd George expresses the fears he felt in 1910: "There were ominous clouds gathering over the Continent of Europe and perceptibly thickening and darkening... In the year 1910 we were beset by an accumulation of grave issues—rapidly becoming graver. . . . It was becoming evident to discerning eyes that the Party and Parliamentary system was unequal to coping with them. . . . The shadow of unemployment was rising ominously above the horizon. Our international rivals were forging ahead at a great rate and jeopardizing our hold on the markets of the world. There was an arrest in that expansion of our foreign trade which had contributed to the phenomenal prosperity of the previous half-century, and of which we had made such a muddled and selfish use. Our working population, crushed into dingy and mean streets, with no assurance that they would not be deprived of their daily bread by ill-health

country could not be solved by one party alone without courting "temporary" unpopularity. The common program would include universal military service, "settlement" of the Irish question (though not necessarily according to the wishes of the Irish Home Rulers), Imperial Preference, and other measures agreed upon after discussion. Many of the Unionist leaders were prepared to accept the proposals,<sup>75</sup> but the plan came to naught because of fear of opposing sentiment from the rank-and-file.<sup>76</sup>

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or trade fluctuations, were becoming sullen with discontent. Whilst we were growing more dependent on overseas supplies for our foods, our soil was gradually going out of cultivation. The life of the countryside was wilting away and we were becoming dangerously over-industrialised. Excessive indulgence in alcoholic drinks were undermining the health and efficiency of a considerable section of the population. The Irish controversy was poisoning our relations with the United States of America... Great nations were arming feverishly for an apprehended struggle into which we might be drawn by some visible or invisible ties, interests or sympathies. Were we prepared for all the terrifying contingencies?" David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (Boston, 1933-1937), I, 33-34.

75 As Birkenhead put it, and he was "absolutely satisfied of L. G.'s honesty and sincerity," even if Lloyd George proved "difficile or turbulent, where is he and where are we? He is done for and has sold the pass." Earl of Birkenhead, *Frederic Edwin, Earl of Birkenhead* (London, 1933-35), I, 205.

76 *Ibid.*, I, 203, 205-207; Austen Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside*, pp. 190-195, 283-296. The plan failed at the last moment. Chapman-Huston, *op. cit.*, p. 246. Cf., also, Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 34-36. Lloyd George, not over-fastidious, had in 1910 also approached MacDonald, as the outstanding figure of the Labour Party (although George Barnes was the nominal Leader), on the possibility of organizing a Coalition Government. MacDonald, whose lust for pomp, even if without power, is apparent at an early date, advised Henderson that he had tentatively accepted a position on his own behalf and was empowered to bring in two under-secretaries, if the Government was formed. Henderson and G. H. Roberts refused the offer. Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Arthur Henderson* (London, 1938), p. 74. Elton denies this, but does admit that perhaps "as a precautionary measure, MacDonald asked Henderson for his opinion of such a proposal, if it should be made." Elton, *Ramsay MacDonald*, pp. 184-185. Morley, too, recognized the value of MacDonald in the Liberal Cabinet and unsuccessfully urged him on his colleagues as a worthy acquisition. MacDonald, said Morley, had "a front bench mind." John H. Morgan, *John Viscount Morley* (Boston, 1924), p. 80. (Perhaps in more than one

Lloyd George's negotiations were carried on secretly and unofficially; on another level, other efforts were being made to bring the two sides together. In an attempt to arrive at a solution, King George, who had succeeded on the death of his father on May 6, 1910,—and many attributed the death of Edward to his despondency over the constitutional crisis—called a Constitutional Conference in June.<sup>77</sup> The Liberals and the Unionists could not agree on a common set of proposals, but the consequences of disagreement were so threatening, that it was not until November 10 that the Conference

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sense of the term.) According to the Guild Socialist, S. G. Hobson, MacDonald's ambitions extended to the Independent Labour Party, too. "...I was asked more than once by J. R. MacDonald to engage in intrigue obviously intended to displace Keir Hardie." S. G. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left* (London, 1938), p. 55. According to Josiah Wedgwood, MacDonald and some leaders would have joined the Liberals in 1913-1914 if they could have carried the Labour Party with them. Wedgwood, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life*, p. 79. Fenner Brockway of the I. L. P., who frankly evinces no love for MacDonald, makes the same charge, giving Keir Hardie as his informant at the time. He also describes Snowden's castigation of MacDonald over the issue. Brockway, *Inside the Left*, pp. 36-38. The Unionists, too, were not without dissension. Bonar Law, as leader, inveighed against the "reactionaries" dominating the Unionist Party. H. A. Taylor, *The Strange Case of Andrew Bonar Law* (London, 1932), p. 196. Balfour's personal failings have been well summed up by the Princess of Pless: "He lacked neither imagination, courage, knowledge, disinterestedness nor opportunity... what he lacked was faith... Believing in nothing he accomplished nothing. That, in spite of all its brilliance, is the real reason why his political career was constructively sterile." Daisy, Princess of Pless, *What I left Unsaid* (London, 1936), p. 72.

77 "... the King was annoyed with the Lords' action in throwing out the Budget, thus producing a deadlock between the two Houses which would prove embarrassing to him." *The Personal Papers of Lord Rendel* (London, 1931), p. 76. The death of Edward seemed to many "the end of a brilliant, secure and prosperous era." Viscount Mersey, *A Picture of Life* (London, 1941), p. 230. The German husband of the English-born Princess of Pless told her that an era had vanished. Hereafter "you will go there [Great Britain] to see your parents, and I to get my breeches and that's all." Daisy, Princess of Pless, *Daisy, Princess of Pless* (New York, 1929), p. 211. Her father, however, felt that the effect of the three mile long funeral procession "on the popular mind will do wonders for monarchical institutions and this alone will entitle King Edward to everlasting gratitude." *Ibid*, p. 212.

broke up. Differences centered in the insistence of the Unionists that the country be consulted by referendum on organic measures—that is, acts affecting the Crown and Constitution (such as Irish Home Rule)—before they became law by Act of Parliament. This the Liberals, obligated to the Irish, could not accept.<sup>78</sup>

The failure of the Constitutional Conference necessitated still another election before the Parliament Bill could be passed. The verdict of the electorate was not markedly different from the one it had rendered at the beginning of the year: 272 Liberals, 42 Labourites, 76 Irish Nationalists, and 8 Irish Independents were elected to office, as opposed to 253 Unionists and 19 Irish Unionists.<sup>79</sup> The Parliament Bill of 1911 was approved by the new House of Commons, but only after the most violent scenes.<sup>80</sup> Full of sound and fury, the opposition signified nothing: the very next day saw the publication of a letter from Balfour to Lord Newton advising the House of Lords to accept the Bill. Even Lord Curzon, who had earlier favored a fight to the "last ditch," now urged surrender.<sup>81</sup> But the

<sup>78</sup> Chamberlain, *Politics From Inside*, pp. 189-195.

<sup>79</sup> "The results of the election were singular and yet entirely logical. The political events of 1910 had been, on the balance, nothing; and the result of the election was to leave the relative strength of the parties entirely unchanged." D. C. Somervell, *The Reign of George the Fifth* (New York, 1935), p. 21.

<sup>80</sup> Asquith was hooted down with the cry of "traitor" and "who killed the King." Mrs. Asquith, sitting in the Ladies Gallery, was aghast and sent Grey a note pleading, "for God's sake, defend him from the cats and cads!" Margot Asquith, *Autobiography* (New York, 1922), III, 216. The gentlemanly Grey, who opposed single chamber government as "death, damnation, and disaster" (Newton, *Lansdowne*, p. 394), could not engage in such brawls; the Labourites and Irish had no such inhibitions, and the Speaker was forced to adjourn the House. Mrs. Asquith also wanted order kept in the galleries. One night she asked the Speaker to keep order amongst those in the Ladies Gallery. He responded, "I have as much as I can manage in keeping order amongst the devils below, without having to control the angels above." Lowther, *A Speaker's Commentaries*, II, 155.

<sup>81</sup> Ronaldshay, *Curzon*, III, p. 56. "The Conservative Leaders lost their nerve and, under the threat of a wholesale creation of Peers, they advised



"ditchers" did not yield gracefully.

On August 10, the Peers' debate entered its final stage. Outdoors it was 97 degrees in the shade, the highest temperature in seventy years. In the House of Lords the heat generated by the debate was even more abnormal. Lord Selborne concluded the debate: "The question is—shall we perish in the dark by our own hand, or in the light, killed by our enemies?"<sup>82</sup> The Lords passed the Bill by a vote of 131 to 114. Wyndham expressed the frustration of the defeated minority: "We have been beaten by the Bishops and the Rats." Some Press comment was in the same vein, expressing its contempt for the "ignoble gang, lay and clerical, of traitors." The punishment threatened was dire—to be "black-listed" in every Conservative Club.<sup>83</sup>

The struggle over the Budget and the humbling of the Lords had somewhat revived the failing Liberal fortunes, but other measures were manifestly necessary in order to prevent the drift away from the Liberal banner. Lloyd George thought he

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the acceptance of the Bill. Why the Conservative leaders should have provoked this battle and then when it had produced its inevitable result should have run away passes my comprehension." Cecil, *A Great Experiment*, p. 35.

829 H. L. Deb. 5s., 1073. The jeremiads were not all on one side. Earlier, when the Conservatives had moved an Amendment to the Bill in the Commons, to the effect that after the third rejection of a Bill a Referendum be held, Churchill, Home Secretary, exclaimed that if the Referendum were adopted, "Parliamentary and representative institutions which have been the historic glory of these islands would be swept away, and in their places we would have the worst forms of Jacobinism, Caesarism, and Anarchy." F. E. Smith was less impassioned, but more explicit, in a private letter to Austen Chamberlain: "... I hate the Referendum. We should win matters which don't much matter like the Licensing Question or Education on its sectarian side. But if the Referendum once comes it will spread and in the great predatory appeals of the future the Tory Party would always be beaten." Birkenhead, *Birkenhead*, I, 207.

83 Dangerfield, *op. cit.*, p. 65. Marquess of Reading, *Rufus Isaacs, First Marquess of Reading* (New York, 1940), p. 236. Mackail and Wyndham, *Life and Letters of George Wyndham*, II, 699. Wyndham, at least, should have had a fine time in the struggle. As he wrote to his wife, later, "I cannot deny it—I like fighting." *Ibid.*, II, 721.

knew the solution. For the Liberals, the only "alternative" to a coalition with the Unionists was "to formulate and carry through an advanced land and social reform policy."<sup>84</sup> Neither he nor his party was prepared to try such a wholesale remedy, but they did proceed to enact a limited program of social legislation. In 1911 the Invalidity and Unemployment Insurance Bill became law.<sup>85</sup> Bismarck had pioneered in Old Age Pensions and Health Insurance in Germany decades before. The Liberals could at least make a counter-claim to priority in Unemployment Insurance, but it was on a modest scale and the provision for contributory payments by the workers was bitterly assailed by many Labourites.

Still other developments during that torrid summer of 1911 kept passions at a high peak. If the portents of war were visible on the international horizon, on the domestic scene strife was actual. Labor, the Irish, and the Suffragettes revealed a restlessness, transmuted into active struggle, which augured ill for the "traditional" British abhorrence of direct action. Although force had cradled the British nation, infancy is easily forgotten. Strikes were not startling innovations, but accompanying violence was felt to be. Worse, unions were striving to increase their power through larger amalgamations. Individual workers and industrialists had benefited as a result of union. Now the unions carried the process one step further by amalgamating among themselves.

It is certain that few of the politicians and publicists who preached unity before the war and enjoined it during the war welcomed the show of unity exhibited by the three largest organized labor groups—miners, railwaymen, and transport workers—in forming a "Triple Alliance."<sup>86</sup> The Triple Alli-

<sup>84</sup> Riddell, *More Pages From My Diary*, p. 77.

<sup>85</sup> For the 1911 Act, cf. L. G. Chiozza-Money, *Insurance Versus Poverty* (London, 1912). It is characteristic of the times that the maternity benefit was paid to the father not mother. Cf. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *The Women's Victory and After* (London, 1920), p. 69.

<sup>86</sup> Although framed in 1911, the formal organization of the Alliance was not ratified by the three unions until December, 1915. The Miners' Feder-

ance tried to allay fears, but without effect. Disclaiming any intention of organizing sympathetic strikes, generally considered to be revolutionary and therefore un-English, the unions of the miners, railwaymen, and transport workers agreed to enter into contracts with employers which would terminate at the same time, so that they might be free to act in concert when renewing these contracts. The distinction between synchronous strikes arising from the termination of concurrent contracts and sympathetic strikes was too subtle for most Englishmen.<sup>87</sup>

Strikes were not only more numerous; the number of strikers was without precedent. More days were lost by strikes in 1912 than in the six preceding years combined.<sup>88</sup> In March, 1912, over one million miners were out, demanding a national minimum wage. The mine owners, who themselves could not agree to combine, would not countenance other than local negotiations. Forced to act, the Government introduced the Minimum Wage Act. The Act did not meet the demands of the miners, who thereupon voted to continue the strike. Despite the rank-and-file vote, the Executive of the Miners' Federation called the strike off. The Transport Workers, organized in the Transport Workers Federation, were not far behind in their action and resolved to consolidate their position by demanding the closed shop. Some trade union leaders invoked the aid of the Deity. Ben Tillett had the strikers repeat after him, "Oh God, strike Lord Davenport dead."<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the strike of the transport workers ended without victory.

The basic cause of the labor unrest was the decline in real wages, when contrasted with the general industrial prosperity.

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ation approved it on October 8, 1915. *Times*, October 9, 1915. Cf. too, Wilfrid H. Crook, *The General Strike* (Chapel Hill, 1931), pp. 233-234.

87 The Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress was instructed to investigate the possibility of arranging for "a common date period for all future agreements. As business men we must recognize the necessity for concerting our actions at all times." Trade Union Congress, *Report of Proceedings, 1913*, pp. 245-246.

88 Clapham, *op. cit.*, III, 475.

89 *Annual Register* (London), 1912, p. 194.

The pre-war period in Britain was no golden era of Peace, Progress, and Prosperity for the working class. Nominal wages of most workers rose, but they did not, on the average, keep pace with prices. That the miners were at once the "storm-troops" and "rearguard" in action is easily accounted for by the fact that even their money wages fell, representing a decline in real wages greater than that suffered by any other group.<sup>90</sup> Food prices were 14 per cent higher in 1912 than in 1900. At the same time, although it may be true that as a class the rich were not getting richer, "wealth was passing into the possession of persons who enjoyed ostentatious expenditure."<sup>91</sup> It may be true that, contrary to the general opinion, statistics indicate that the higher incomes fared little or no better than the workers' incomes;<sup>92</sup> however, the workers were of a quite contrary opinion. Furthermore, the decline in real wages was all the more onerous because during the greater part of the second half of the nineteenth century real wages had been rising.<sup>93</sup> To many it seemed that all progress had been halted, and that drastic action was necessary to remove the obstacles—though it was not always exactly clear what they were.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, reform "legislation could not allay the disquiet that compelled it."<sup>94</sup> Little wonder, therefore, that disillusionment with government action gradually began to take hold in the ranks of labor. The industrial boom and declining real wages of the three years immediately preceding the war gave this movement an almost irresistible impetus. The proportion of disputes settled by arbitration was smaller in 1913 than in any of the previous years (although the Board of Trade was contemplating seeking ad-

<sup>90</sup> Clapham, *op. cit.*, III, 475.

<sup>91</sup> Arthur L. Bowley, *The Change in the Distribution of National Income 1880-1913* (Oxford, 1920), pp. 20-21.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 26.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>94</sup> Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Mary Macarthur* (New York, 1926), p. 97.

ditional powers), and from 1911 to 1913 an average of over one million workers were involved each year in trade disputes.<sup>95</sup> The biographer of the Fabian exponents of the "inevitability of gradualness" states that on the eve of the war labor was in a revolutionary mood.<sup>96</sup> The Webbs themselves speak of the "disillusionment among trade unionists as to the immediate potency of parliamentary representation—a disillusionment manifested in the outbreak of rebellious strikes that characterized the years 1911-1914."<sup>97</sup> The Government's labor "trouble-shooter," Askwith, in November, 1913, warned that "within a comparatively short time there may be movements in this country coming to a head of which recent events have been a small foreshadowing."<sup>98</sup> Violence suggested itself as a "dangerous alternative to the tedious methods of persuasion."<sup>99</sup> The summer of 1914 seemed like the lull before the storm. There was a spirit of unrest which vaguely expressed itself in an often heard phrase "Wait till the autumn."<sup>100</sup>

Politicians like Lloyd George agreed with the union leaders and the labor experts. In the summer of 1914 it seemed clear "that the autumn would witness a series of industrial disturbances without precedent."<sup>101</sup> Morley saw in the general unrest a similarity to the continental revolutions of 1848.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs . . . , p. 64. (Cd. 7658 in Sessional Papers, 1914-1916, vol. XXXVI); Twelfth Report of the Proceedings under the Conciliation Act . . . p. 4. (H. of C. # 185-1919, in Sessional Papers, 1913, vol. XIII). Sessional Papers hereafter cited as S. P.

<sup>96</sup> Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Sidney and Beatrice Webb* (Boston, 1933), pp. 202-203.

<sup>97</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *History of Trade Unionism* (London, 1926), pp. 696-697. Cf. also, Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left*, p. 122.

<sup>98</sup> Lord Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (London, 1920), p. 349.

<sup>99</sup> Elton, *MacDonald*, p. 201.

<sup>100</sup> Askwith, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

<sup>101</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, IV, 170.

<sup>102</sup> John Viscount Morley, *Memorandum on Resignation* (New York, 1928), p. 6.

Ben Tillett has described the period as "strange, hectic. . . . It was a great upsurge of elemental forces. It seemed as if the dispossessed and disinherited class in various parts of the country were all simultaneously moved to assert their claims upon society. What it was in fact was a series of strikes, entirely spontaneous in their origin. . . ." <sup>103</sup> Frank Hodges confirms this view. "The year 1914 was the year of the greatest significance to the Trade Union movement. It is the year in which nearly all the great trade unions contemplated embarking upon a new and gigantic struggle. All the achievements of the previous decades were to be consolidated. . . ." <sup>104</sup>

The Government, not quite as sure as Tillett that "a sovereign common sense" would prevent "excess," <sup>105</sup> prepared for emergencies. The War Office made plans for domestic strife with at least as much facility as it formulated plans for a Continental war, and with less dissension in the General Staff. <sup>106</sup> Troops had already been widely used during the rail-

<sup>103</sup> Ben Tillett, *Memories and Reflections* (London, 1931), p. 239. The Labour Party "intellectuals"—MacDonald and Snowden—and even trade union leaders like Henderson "did not like strikes" which they regarded as "dangerous and irrational." Elton, *MacDonald*, p. 203.

<sup>104</sup> Frank Hodges, *My Adventures as a Labour Leader* (London, n. d.), p. 69. "There was trouble ahead for the rulers of Britain." Jack Lawson, *The Man in the Cap* (London, 1941), p. 125. "Indeed . . . all were going mad . . ." Wedgwood, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life*, p. 83. The years 1911 to 1914 "were all tumult and bitterness." J. A. Spender, *Sir Robert Hudson* (London, 1930), p. 134. It was a period of "bitter class warfare; . . . the time was ripe to attempt to win further concessions from the capitalists." Basil Fuller, *The Life Story of the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas* (London, n. d.), p. 97. Cf. also, John Marriott, *Memories of Four Score Years* (London, 1946), pp. 136-139.

<sup>105</sup> Tillett, *op. cit.*, p. 243. This was written in retrospect. Back in 1913 Tillett warned the "bloody Government" that future disputes would be "conducted with bloodshed." Trade Union Congress, *Report of Proceedings, 1913*, p. 69.

<sup>106</sup> For disagreements over strategy in the event of war against Germany, cf. Maurice Brett and Oliver Viscount Esher, ed., *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher* (London, 1934-1938), III, 58, 60; Richard B. Haldane, *An Autobiography* (New York, 1929), p. 240; Admiral Sir Bacon, *Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone* (London, 1929), II, 181-184, and Stephen

way strike of 1911 and during many smaller strikes. The police were likewise prepared. The *Reports of H. M. Inspectors of Constabulary* for the year 1914, made to H. M.'s Principal Secretary of State, contain the significant statement that "The general unrest at home in the years 1909-1913 had emphasized the necessity for expanding the police force to meet emergencies too great for its normal strength" and the Home Office had drawn up plans to cope with this danger.<sup>107</sup> The police were better able to concentrate on labor matters because the constantly decreasing crime rate tended to relieve them of their more usual duties.<sup>108</sup>

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Gwynn, editor, *The Letters and Friendship of Sir Cecil Spring Rice* (London, 1929), II, 113-114. The major question as Fisher put it in March, 1909 was relatively simple: "Are we or are we not going to send a British Army to fight on the Continent..." Brett and Esher, *op. cit.*, II, 376. Not until May, 1914, did Asquith definitely approve the sending of five divisions abroad in the event of war. Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell, *Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson* (London, 1927), I, 147. Special officers in the War Office were detailed to plan counter-measures in the event of civil disturbance and strategic plans were laid. Major-General Sir Wyndham Childs, *Episodes and Reflections* (London, 1930), pp. 95, 96, 175. Concern with domestic unrest was nothing new. In 1856 the Duke of Cambridge had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army "not on any grounds of military qualification but...because it was considered necessary that the Army should be commanded by a member of the Royal Family" so that, "in the event of a revolution...the troops would be used in defence of the Throne and not in obedience to orders of Parliament." Field Marshall Sir William Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen 1914-1918* (London, 1926), I, 3. Even in 1909, the King exercised control over army officers. Esher had asked the King whether a young officer of the Guards who married an actress would have to leave the Army. The King replied that the officer could remain if the actress was respectable, but not if she had "lived with the officer as his mistress." Brett and Esher, *op. cit.*, II, 405.

107 Reports of H. M. Inspectors of Constabulary, pp. 1-2 (H. of C. # 209-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXII). A major step was the organization of "citizen" reserves who could be enrolled as special constables should the need arise. Many individuals were buying up stores of small arms. Cf. Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside*, p. 444.

108 Report of Commissioners of Prisons and the Directors of Convict Persons, p. 6 (Cd. 9174-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. XII). The figures are for convictions, but there is no evidence that the ratio of convictions to crimes was decreasing, despite the increasing preoccupation of the police with labor disturbances.

Forced to keep step with these events, the Labour Party was veering more and more away from the Liberals. On July 7, 1912, Riddell recorded in his *Diary*:

It is evident from what L. G. said today that the fight between the Liberal and Labour parties is pretty bitter. It is quite clear that the Liberals would like to wipe out the Labour Party, and that, failing this they are most anxious to keep it 'in its place.' The truth is that the aims and objects of these two parties differ far more than those of the Moderate Liberals and Conservatives, who are both pledged to improve the condition of the people, but shrink from drastic action directed against the commercial classes. In discussing the Liberal-Labour dispute over two pending by-elections, Lloyd George said 'I would rather see the Conservative get in than the Labour man.'<sup>109</sup>

It is extremely doubtful that Lloyd George favored the Conservative candidate because, as he claimed, the working classes needed the "assistance of able men in other walks of life" in order to improve their position by revolution.<sup>110</sup> Rather, the Liberals fearing the growing strength of the Labour Party, were forced to advocate measures that would stir the public into supporting the Liberal Party. In May, 1913, Masterman and Harold Spender urged Lloyd George to launch his Land Campaign without delay.<sup>111</sup> The Labour Party must be ditched, but not at the expense of injuring the business community nor at the expense of losing the votes of the laboring masses.

The accomplishment of this aim was not easy. In 1911 Lloyd George had asserted: "The great lesson of Christianity is this. You can't redeem those who are below except by the sacrifice of those who are above."<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless he would have to

<sup>109</sup> Riddell, *More Pages from My Diary*, p. 79.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>112</sup> J. M. Robertson, *Lloyd George and Liberalism* (London, 1923), p. 97.



give the appearance, if not the reality, of reform. Christopher Addison, Lloyd George's faithful understudy during this period and later during the war, who suffered disillusionment after the war, has characterized the Liberal era—war and pre-war—as one “of high sounding phrases and empty platitudes.”<sup>113</sup> If so, they were remarkably effective.<sup>114</sup>

The threat of Labor appeared real to the Government, but as individuals the members of the Government were more immediately and personally affected by the conduct or rather the misconduct of the Suffragettes. The dissatisfaction of women with their lot goes back to Eve. In striving to improve their status they attempted various measures ranging from persuading Adam to taste the apple of knowledge to Lysistrata's

113 Earl of Oxford and Asquith, *The Paisley Policy* (London, 1920), p. 101.

114 Lenin was, perhaps, not always the best of theoreticians, but he was to prove his remarkable gifts as a practical politician in 1917. In an article, *The Liberals and the Land Question in England*, he offered his analysis of the Liberal political strategy. “In England there is no standing army. The people cannot be restrained by violence—it can only be restrained by deception. The labor movement is growing without restraint... it is necessary... to promise sops in order to prevent the masses from turning away from the Liberals, in order that they may continue to follow the industrial and financial capitalists like the flocks of sheep following the shepherds.” *Lenin on Britain*, compiled by Harry Pollitt (London, 1934), p. 49. These “sops” did not match the promises of the Liberals and fell far short of meeting the plight of perhaps the great mass of British citizens, but State intervention on a wide, if not deep, scale became accepted by all political parties on the eve of the war. The Trades Disputes Acts of 1906, the revision of the Workmen's Compensation Act in 1906, various factory acts of 1907, the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 and the Coal Miners Regulation Act of 1908 and of 1911, the Labour Exchanges Act and the Trades Board Act passed in 1909, the National Insurance Act of 1911, the Coal Mines (Minimum Wage) Act of 1912, were the most important. Behind them all was a new philosophy of Government (or, rather, the revival of a very old one), that the State had an obligation to protect its citizens from undue distress. “In the past the operations of Government had been confined to the safeguarding of rights and liberties and the restriction of abuses. Now there was developing a new conception of government as charged with the active improvement of the social conditions of the people.” Stephen Tallents, *Man and Boy* (London, 1943), p. 161.

boycott. Their latest and most popular panacea was female suffrage. It was the gospel of "direct action," finding admirers and adherents in all strata of British society in the decade before 1914, which elevated (thereby, many held, degrading it) the suffrage movement to the forefront of public discussion and concern. Manchester, the home of textiles, free trade, and pacifism, was the birth place of the militant women's suffrage movement with the formation in 1903 of the Women's Social and Political Union, dedicated to the cause of women suffrage to be achieved by "deeds not words."

Perhaps only a Blanqui or a Bakunin could properly appreciate the feats of the suffragettes of Great Britain in the years preceding 1914.<sup>115</sup> Knit together by common frustrations, bound with an iron discipline, under the direction of austere leaders, the militant suffrage movement, never numbering more than a few thousand members, harassed the Liberal ministers, not unto death, to be sure, but to distressing pain and ineffable mortification. The story of their activities seems almost such stuff as nightmares are made of.

Although involved in demonstrations, not all of which had been peaceful, since 1905,<sup>116</sup> it was the definite rejection of

<sup>115</sup> The term "Suffragette" was at first used in a derisive sense, but the members of the W. S. P. U. cheerfully adopted it as their own. "Suffragist" was used for those advocates of female Suffrage who used "constitutional" means in attempting to win the vote. A. E. Metcalfe, *Women's Effort* (Oxford, 1917), p. 36. Cf. also, Kaethe Schirmacher, *Die Suffragettes* (Weimar, 1912), p. 2. Even female domestic servants were demanding their "rights." One of the rules of their union provided that "gentlemen friends shall not be barred from the kitchen or back porch." Henry Lucy, *Diary of a Journalist*, II, 271-272. The spirit of unrest also affected the Peeresses who threatened to boycott Parliament. Elizabeth Haldane, *From One Century to Another*, p. 274. The Suffragettes felt that patience had become "a vice." Frederick W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Women's Fight for the Vote* (London, 1910), p. 60.

<sup>116</sup> Even the leader of the "suffragists," who opposed the activities of the W.S.P.U. admitted that the "novel and startling methods" won more attention. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Women's Suffrage* (London, 1912), pp. 60-61. Mrs. Pankhurst characterized the activities of the W.S.P.U. prior to 1911 as "peaceful militancy." Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own*

their demands by Asquith in 1911 which set the WSPU on a course of action which might almost have made the war—with its accompanying cessation of suffragette activity—a welcome interlude to many Cabinet members.<sup>117</sup> The angry

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*Story* (New York, 1914), p. 79. Some of the psychological motivations of the suffragettes are explained in their own words. Yet, the explanation is more complex. "Possibly the absence of desire for marriage was connected with a vague feeling that I was not the kind of girl to attract a mate. Both of my sisters were pretty and I was not. Most of the girls of my own age were smarter and had much more self assurance... Perhaps deep down in my subconsciousness lingered the memory of 'Dimple' with the golden hair, who was always chosen instead of me by the biggest boy in the kindergarten school to head the march with him. Well! rather than wait to be turned down in the market, why not make the best of it and create my own values." Emmeline Pethick-Lawence, *My Part in a Changing World* (London, 1938), p. 67. "My father is part of me still. He imparted to me so much of his own nature that as long as his blood is still flowing in my veins, I feel that he himself is alive. He was a born rebel..." *Ibid.*, p. 38.

117 E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *Suffragette Movement* (London, 1931), p. 373. "The women were brave beyond all challenge, devoted and self-sacrificing beyond all precedent and wilful beyond belief." Lord Snell, *Men, Movements and Myself* (London, 1936), p. 184. A journalist described the suffragettes: "They fought like demons, bombed like anarchists, and generally made the lives of the Cabinet Ministers not worth living." James Dunn, *Paperchase* (London, n. d.), p. 129. "...we are all much perturbed over Women Suffrage which has left off being a joke and become quite serious." Chapman-Huston, *op. cit.*, p. 237. This was precisely the aim of the suffragettes. On the other hand, they only succeeded in hardening Asquith. "His only deep emotion seemed to be aroused by his firm determination that women should not have the vote." Lansbury, *Looking Backwards and Forwards*, p. 91. One Suffragette threw an axe at Asquith, and other ministers were assaulted, rather less drastically, but more successfully. They were sometimes in a dilemma as to whether to defend themselves. If they did, they were branded as cowards for "laying hands on a woman"—even if it were only to hold the wrists of a would-be assailant; but if they did not do even that they were considered even greater cowards because they "daren't." Herbert Asquith, *Moments of Memory* (London, 1937), p. 157. Later, Mrs. Pankhurst confessed that she "always felt sorry for them whenever I had to fight those dear policemen." R. D. Blumenfeld, *R.D.B.'s Procession* (London, 1935), p. 14. On at least one occasion, Mrs. Asquith stayed in the same room as her husband, while he received a deputation. Apparently it was for the purpose of protecting him. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *What I Remember* (London, 1925), p. 17.

Suffragettes began a campaign of open and unabashed, even blustering and hyperbolized violence. At first the objects were windows, the weapons, stones, but the Suffragettes soon moved on to more animate targets, and just as with practice they improved their understanding of the correct techniques of breaking windows ("There is nothing like a hammer for smashing plate glass; stones, even flints, are apt to glance off harmlessly"), so they learned *ju jitsu*.<sup>118</sup> Frankly following the "methods of war,"<sup>119</sup> some members risked and lost their lives in what even the gentle George Lansbury, who opposed "class war," described as "a holy war!"<sup>120</sup> Property damage in the years 1913 and 1914 only, easily amounted to over £1,000,000.<sup>121</sup> Just as the suffragettes submerged their lives in the "Movement," so was the latter absorbed by the larger maelstrom of war.<sup>122</sup>

118 Marchioness of Londonderry, *Retrospect* (London, 1938), p. 106. The suffragettes aimed at being proper. Thus one suffragette was accompanied by her mother during a protest march to Hyde Park because mother "did not think that an unmarried girl should walk unchaperoned through the gutter." Viscountess Rhondda, *This Was My World* (London, 1933), p. 118.

119 Cf. E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Life of Emmeline Pankhurst* (Boston, 1936), pp. 117, 124, 128.

120 E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 458. Although he later related that he found "fanatical women" very "difficult to deal with... they always seem to me to want the best, not merely of two, but of all worlds." Lansbury, *My Life*, p. 127. They suffered the punishments of martyrs. Cf. Constance Lytton, *Persons and Prisoners* (London, 1914), especially pp. 263-294.

121 E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 544; Metcalfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 306-317. The destruction in the first seven months of 1914 was greater than for all of 1913. E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 544. Yet it was the millionaire soap manufacturer, Joseph Fels, who helped to finance them. Lansbury, *Looking Backwards and Forwards*, pp. 104-106.

122 Some felt, however, that the suffragette activities had helped to orient women to a greater participation in the war effort; that, in a sense, the activities of the suffragettes anticipated the War and helped to pave its way. Annie Kenney, with her vision undistorted by facts and figures (which "prevent clear thought from flowing clearly"), holds that, "Unseen forces must have been at work, seeing into futurity and realizing the necessity of

Sorely afflicted as they were after 1911, the Liberals, despite trials and tribulations, nevertheless tenaciously clung to office, resisting all attempts to unseat them. Their course seemed, however, almost to be run, and the Unionists were doing their utmost to end it.

Their new device was to use the inevitable strife over Home Rule for Ireland as a lever to dislodge the Liberals from office. The memory of their great victory over the Liberals in 1886 on the question of Ireland always seemed to revive their drooping spirits. They proceeded to strengthen, to say the least, the determination of Ulster not to be separated from Great Britain.

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uniting women and rousing within them a desire to serve, thus preparing their mentality and making them ready for the Great War... The militant agitation worked miracles... It quickened the mentality of women and inspired them to action... It was a stage women had to pass through to prepare them for more useful fields of action." Annie Kenney, *Memories of a Militant* (London, 1924), pp. 136, 305-306. Even a more sober figure, perhaps rendered the more sympathetic by his own penchant for the turbulent, agrees fundamentally. "Is it to stretch a point too far to suggest that by the militants' movements—reprehensible though they have been in themselves—the women of England were brought to the frame of mind which was to make so effective their war work and to mark them out before all other women as helpmeets to their men?" Earl of Birkenhead, *Turning Points in History* (London, 1930), p. 197. The comparison with the war is not unwarranted. The reaction of participants was not dissimilar. Thus the Viscountess Rhondda describes her feelings: "The militant suffrage movement was a thrilling discovery. It supplied the answer to a thousand puzzling problems... I went into the militant movement, instinctively thrilled with this chance for action, this release for energy, but unaware that this at last was what I had, all unconsciously, been seeking for, and, at first, totally ignorant of, and unconcerned with, the arguments for our cause." Rhondda, *This Was My World*, pp. 118, 119. The movement "released vast stores of unconscious energy, just as the war did." Betty Balfour, editor, *Letters of Constance Lytton* (London, 1925), p. 129. As one of the three leading suffragettes explained in 1911: The movement tended to strip the littleness from my life, and to give it the character of an heroic mission." E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette* (London, 1911), p. 505. With the outbreak of war, the suffragettes sought to transfer their militancy to men: As "militant women we may perhaps be able to do something to rouse the spirit of militancy in men." Christabel Pankhurst, *The War* (New York, n. d.), p. 3.

Ulster, fearing "neither God nor devil—only the Pope,"<sup>123</sup> was urged to resist Home Rule by many of the most distinguished dignitaries of Britain. The Government must then be compelled to use force, which would alienate the British people, or lapse into inaction, which would cause the withdrawal of the Irish Home Rulers without whose support the Liberals could not hold office. The real struggle began after September, 1913, by which time a Home Rule Bill, applying to all of Ireland had twice passed the Commons and been rejected as many times by the Lords.

Agitation mounted, with increasing verbal violence, all aimed at frightening the Government. Only "force" could be used against a Government of "fraud," said Carson; and F. E. Smith, who had in 1911 been willing to jettison "the Orangemen" in order to arrive at an agreement on a coalition, proclaimed that the fate of the Home Rule Bill would be determined not in the House of Commons, but "in the streets."<sup>124</sup> With their deliberate repetition of threats of violence and incitements to mutiny, the Unionists were frustrated only in their plan to inflame the issue by martyrdom. The Irish Nationalists opposed prosecution of the disturbers as securing "for the victims an invaluable and much-coveted place in the annals of Irish martyrology."<sup>125</sup> The Liberal Government, rarely taking forthright action, accepted this excuse for inaction with extreme pleasure, and sought a compromise. Churchill saw the real plot—that the Tories were using Ulster as an "extra-Parliamentary force" to turn the Government out.<sup>126</sup> He tried to get Redmond to agree to a

<sup>123</sup> Shaw Desmond, *The Drama of Sinn Fein* (New York, 1923), p. 103. There was even a threat to go "right over to the Emperor of Germany..." Denis Gwynn, *Traitor or Patriot* (New York, 1931), p. 181.

<sup>124</sup> Earl of Birkenhead, *Birkenhead*, I, 205, 295.

<sup>125</sup> Earl of Oxford and Asquith, *Fifty Years of British Parliament* (Boston, 1926), II, 158.

<sup>126</sup> Gwynn, *Redmond*, p. 214.

compromise, but the Irish Nationalists always held Ireland "one land . . . one entity," and, of course, refused. Pleas proving vain, the Liberals turned to threats. Lloyd George told Redmond that he, in company with Grey, Haldane, and Churchill, would resign unless the Nationalists agreed to make concessions to Ulster. Redmond, however, holding the whip hand, forced Lloyd George to admit the hollowness of the Liberal ultimatum. Lloyd George conceded that, while the resignation of the Government would be a debacle for the Home Rulers, it would end his own career forever, and would set back the Liberal Party for at least a generation. The Liberal Cabinet then proceeded to mollify the Irish Nationalists by discounting Lloyd George's authority.<sup>127</sup>

Forced to continue the unhappy alliance with the Irish Nationalists lest they be summarily thrown out of office, the Liberals found their tenure none too secure even with Irish support. The Unionists were urging the King to dismiss the Liberal Ministry, not because it lacked Parliamentary support, but on the ground that it did not have the approval of the people. Asquith agreed that the King had the power to dismiss a Ministry, but pointed out to his Majesty that it had last been done in 1834 by William IV, "one of the least wise of British monarchs."<sup>128</sup> Impressed, the King decided not to interfere, but rumors persisted that he might be persuaded to veto the Home Rule Bill.<sup>129</sup> The Unionist strategy, essentially, was to create a situation so tense that the Liberals would not dare to enforce Home Rule, but it is now impossible to say

<sup>127</sup> Gwynn, *Redmond*, pp. 238-239. Redmond, at an earlier date (in October, 1910) had announced at a public meeting in the United States, "we have the power and we will make them [the Liberals] toe the line." Ian Colvin, *Life of Lord Carson* (New York, 1934), II, 50.

<sup>128</sup> W. Ivor Jennings, *Cabinet Government* (New York, 1936), pp. 304-305. Cf. Spender and Asquith, *Asquith*, II, 29-31, for Asquith's memorandum to the King.

<sup>129</sup> T. M. Healy, *Letters and Leaders of My Day* (London, n. d. [1928]), II, 535-536.

to what extent they had become victims of their own machinations. In March, 1914, many prominent Englishmen signed a "British Covenant," pledging resistance;<sup>130</sup> three months earlier Bonar Law had exclaimed that the country was "rapidly drifting to civil war." The Liberals introduced a compromise to permit any county to vote itself out of home rule for six years, but Carson denounced it as "a sentence of death with a stay of execution. . . ." <sup>131</sup> Having no alternative but to resign or fight, Asquith sent orders for troop movements to Ulster.

The Ulsterites, however, refused to be intimidated, while disaffection among many officers in the Army forced the resignation, among others, of the Minister of War and the Chief of the General Staff. In July the King called a conference to find some basis for the avoidance of rebellion, welcoming the conferees in an address which included the statement that "the trend has been surely and steadily towards an appeal to force and today the cry of civil war is on the lips of the most responsible and sober minded of my people." <sup>132</sup>

It was at this juncture that the prospect of a greater struggle swallowed up, for a while, the Irish troubles. On July 28, Grey made a statement in the House of Commons on the Austrian rejection of Serbia's reply to the ultimatum demanding satisfaction for the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo.

<sup>130</sup> Viscount Long of Wraxall [Walter H. Long], *Memories* (London, 1923), p. 201. Some signed the Covenant with their own blood. Ronald McNeil, *Ulster's Stand For Union* (London, 1922), p. 123. Almost seventy-five years ago, Disraeli had said that in England, "even treason to be successful must be patrician."

<sup>131</sup> Gwynn, *Redmond*, p. 274.

<sup>132</sup> The King was greatly troubled at the prospect, being "in low spirits" and lying "awake at nights." *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher*, III, 162. The general tension was not without its effects on the Irish. From 1910 to 1914 there was a steady increase in the lunacy rate in Ireland, and the Inspectors of Lunatics attributed this to the "social and political disturbances." Sixty-fourth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Lunatics (Ireland) for the year 1914, p. XIII. (In S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVI).



Clutching at straws—or so it must have felt then—both parties reacted quickly to halt domestic strife. The ranks were closed by many, not to prepare for war, but rather to prevent British involvement. A united Britain could “limit the area of the war.”<sup>133</sup> To others, however, the possibility of a European war was seized upon as an occasion which would serve to prevent a civil war.<sup>134</sup> Carson saw no hopes of solving the Irish difficulties “unless something happens—when we shall have once more to assert the manhood of our race.”<sup>135</sup> The alacrity with which all parties suspended their wrangling over the Irish question may be explained not only by fear of Germany, but by anxiety over the drift of events concerning Ireland. A farrago of bombast, malapropisms, and vacillation had created a crisis by August, 1914, which could only lead, the contestants themselves feared, to a conflict so dangerous that it would rock the very foundation of the country.<sup>136</sup> Concern with foreign difficulties served to distract attention from the Irish troubles. Foreign policy, crowded out of public discussion by labor, the Lords, the Suffragettes, and the Irish, had nevertheless been a vital concern of the chief members of the Liberal Cabinet no less than of the Unionist Governments.

British foreign policy aimed essentially at preserving the status quo. Just before the turn of the century, Joseph Chamberlain had suggested an agreement with Germany. The latter, viewing it as a self-denying ordinance, had not been quick to seize the offer. Disturbed by Russian expansion, the British

<sup>133</sup> *Times*, July 29, 1914.

<sup>134</sup> “... it is ultimately a question of war abroad or war at home and ... it is better to fight against a foreign foe than to fight against one's own countrymen.” A. Rifleman [V. W. Germain] *The Struggle for Bread* (London, n. d.), pp. 244-245.

<sup>135</sup> Colvin, *Carson*, II, 403.

<sup>136</sup> “... the politics of these years kindled passions that were beyond the control of organizers and when all the issues were still in doubt, a still greater suddenly presented itself and swept them all into limbo.” Spender, *Sir Robert Hudson*, p. 125.

had entered into the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902. The Russo-Japanese War was the fruit of that Alliance, but the virtual collapse of Russia shocked Britain even more than it gratified her. The doom of "splendid isolation" had already been sealed in the Anglo-French Entente of 1904. The French, seeking allies, had taken to heart Chamberlain's advice that they "mend their manners,"<sup>137</sup> and Britain and France sank their imperialist differences in favor of the "Entente-Cordiale." The "Entente-Cordiale" never blossomed into a formal and open alliance, and its fruits, therefore, were the more surprising to all but a few of the *Cognoscenti*. The sober *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy* might comment later that the declaration of war was "the logical outcome" of British policy or, quoting Lord Esher, the "inevitable sequel."<sup>138</sup> But the mass of the British people were astounded. Asquith, Grey, and Haldane, with the consent of Campbell-Bannerman, had continued and extended the foreign policy of the preceding Unionist Government, although even the Liberal Imperialist, Lord Rosebery, opposed it.<sup>139</sup>

Whatever the electorate may have thought in expressing its wishes with ballots, its ignorance of external policy was no fault of the future Foreign Secretary, who had made it clear in October, 1905, that the Conservative foreign policy was "non-controversial."<sup>140</sup> He reiterated this on later occasions

137 Earl of Loreburn, *How the War Came* (London, 1919), p. 72.

138 Sir A. W. Ward and G. P. Gooch, editors, *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy 1783-1919* (Cambridge, 1923), III, 507.

139 Crewe, *Rosebery*, II, 581; Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 3; Winston S. Churchill, *World Crisis* (New York, 1924), I, 15. The elder statesmen, Ripon, was opposed to the "entente." He was aware that the French would expect real support. If Britain declined, "as I think we ought to decline, to go farther than our diplomacy will reach, I cannot but fear a cry of 'perfidie albia'..." Lucien Wolf, *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon* (London, 1921), II, 292.

140 Sir Edward Grey [Viscount Grey of Fallodon], *Speeches on Foreign Affairs 1904-1914* (London, 1931), p. 26.

in February and November, 1908: "We have pursued the policy of Lord Lansdowne."<sup>141</sup> "For some twenty years or so foreign politics have not formed a dividing issue between parties. . . ." <sup>142</sup> Grey, says a Unionist leader, "conserved and developed" the Unionist foreign policy.<sup>143</sup> Although Grey might publicly proclaim that he was carrying out the foreign policy of the Opposition, such a policy could actually be continued by the Liberal Government only if many of its own members were kept in ignorance of the extent of Britain's commitments.<sup>144</sup> As J. H. Clapham has expressed it, the Liberal Government moved on two planes—that of "the public plane of domestic reform" and that of "the hidden plane of a possible war."<sup>145</sup> Churchill has stated that the British Government did not believe in the approach of a great war; yet at the same time the "sinister hypothesis" was continually present in their thoughts. For ten years "this duality and discordance were the keynote of British politics," with the Government living "in two different worlds of thought. There was the actual visible world with its peaceful activities and cosmopolitan aims and there was a hypothetical world, a

<sup>141</sup> 184 H. C. Deb. 4s., 1693.

<sup>142</sup> Grey, *Speeches*, p. 105.

<sup>143</sup> Chamberlain, *Down the Years*, p. 210. A modern student has remarked that there "was a veritable cult of the principle of continuity . . ." William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism 1890-1902* (New York, 1935), II, 790.

<sup>144</sup> "I have often amused myself by speculating what his [Grey's] reception would have been in the mad House of Commons of 1906 if he had informed the collection of hysterical sentimentalists who kept him in office of his . . . commitments . . . in which he was gradually, formidably but rightly involving the people. The necessity for such confidence did not happily . . . appeal to him, and therefore . . . everybody was satisfied. He and Lord Haldane, with the knowledge of Mr. Asquith, made preparations for the war that followed; their followers made perorations on behalf of the peace that preceded." Birkenhead, *Contemporary Personalities*, p. 169.

<sup>145</sup> Clapham, *op. cit.*, III, 446.

'world beneath the threshold' as it were. . . ." <sup>146</sup> The two, worlds rarely overlapped, except in rhetoric. Thus, although the formation of the Triple Entente was hailed by Grey as "in the interest of social reform and internal development in both countries," <sup>147</sup> one faction in the Liberal Party was at first hardly aware of what was being done, and when it finally did learn, was reluctant to leave office.

It is undoubtedly true that, as Lloyd George points out, the Cabinet devoted "a ridiculously small percentage of its time to a consideration of foreign affairs," <sup>148</sup> and that as a whole it was never called into a genuine consultation upon the fundamental aspects of the foreign situation; that "all the information was carefully filtered. . . [and] much of the information essential for forming a sound opinion was deliberately withheld." Nevertheless, as he admits, "Direct questions were always answered with civility. . . ." <sup>149</sup> It is impossible to imagine Lloyd George disconcerted because these questions "were not encouraged," embarrassed by the air of "hush hush," and abashed because "We were made to feel that in these matters we were reaching our hands towards the mysteries and that we were too young in the priesthood to presume to enter into the sanctuary reserved for the elect." <sup>150</sup> He ad-

<sup>146</sup> Churchill, *World Crisis*, I, 18. "It has been customary to say that the war took the Government unawares, and if by that is meant the exact month or week in which it was to break out was hidden from them, it is no doubt true. But the records will show that . . . the possibility of war was an unceasing anxiety to all members of the Government, . . ." J. A. Spender, *The Public Life* (New York, n.d.), I, 112.

<sup>147</sup> Grey, *Speeches*, p. 41.

<sup>148</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 43.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 43-45. As a biographer of Asquith remarks, "Lloyd George admits that they received civil answers. They might have troubled to ask a few more civil questions." R. B. McCallum, *Asquith* (London, 1936), pp. 106-107.

<sup>150</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 43-45. He forgot that in July, 1911, he had praised Grey "for showing him everything." His enthusiasm worried C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*. John L. Hammond, *C. P. Scott of*

mits that as early as 1910 he expected war.<sup>151</sup> Churchill confesses that he saw the dangers of the "discussions" with France. They entailed, he said in a letter to Grey, "the obligations of an alliance without its advantages. And above all without its precise definitions."<sup>152</sup>

Among the "elect"—Liberals and Unionists—the thought of a coming war with Germany was rarely absent. The First Sea Lord foretold it;<sup>153</sup> the Chief of Staff, Sir John French, studied the French language in order to be better able to converse freely with his future Allies, and mapped out campaigns;<sup>154</sup> the Director of Military Operations toured the future battlegrounds on a bicycle "time after time";<sup>155</sup> most pro-

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*the Manchester Guardian* (London, 1934), pp. 155, 157. In March, 1913, Riddell noted that Lloyd George was beating "the real war-drum." Riddell, *More Pages From My Diary*, p. 134. Back in 1910, during the negotiations for the formation of a coalition government, F. E. Smith in a confidential letter to Austen Chamberlain, remarked that Lloyd George was "sick of being wagged by a little England tail." Birkenhead, *Birkenhead* I, 205. Nor can Morley be wholly absolved. By August, 1914, his "days were dwindling" (Morley, *Memorandum on Resignation*, p. 15), but earlier, though he had not approved of the Government's "conversations" with France, he sanctioned them. Morgan, *Morley*, p. 43. Even after his resignation he did not raise his voice against the Government's action and refused to publish his *Memorandum*. It was published posthumously, but by his will he has refused to permit publication of other material. Cf. Morgan, *Morley*.

151 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 34.

152 Churchill, *World Crisis*, I, 116; George Macaulay Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon* (Boston, 1937), p. 247. This was, of course, precisely the point of Liberal diplomacy. Unlike the Conservatives who urged a formal alliance (Austen Chamberlain, *Down the Years*, pp. 66-68), Grey was bound down by the Liberal membership in the House of Commons.

153 Blumenfeld, *R.D.B.'s Procession*, p. 19.

154 Frances, Countess of Warwick, *Discretions* (New York, 1931), pp. 223-224.

155 Captain Peter E. Wright, *At the Supreme War Council* (London, 1921), p. 38. Even more, "the best of his [Wilson's] work was done obscurely; in the nature of things, it could not be advertised." Thomas Washington Metcalfe, *Memorials of the Military Life* (London, 1936), p. 190.

fessional soldiers expected it;<sup>156</sup> and some of the permanent officials of the Foreign Office freely spoke their minds in English society circles.<sup>157</sup> The Liberals have been exceedingly reticent, but the Unionists did not hesitate to put themselves on record. It is in their autobiographies and biographies that we find a candor so absent among the Liberals.<sup>158</sup>

Certainly the Agadir incident in the summer of 1911, even if it came as a shocking surprise to many or even most members of the Liberal Cabinet, gave them fair notice of the prospect for the future. As Asquith voiced it at the end of July, 1914, they could not "persuade" themselves that the Conservatives were better fitted to rule.<sup>159</sup> In describing the anxious hours spent awaiting the expiration of the ultimatum of August 3, 1914, to Germany, Churchill uses a figure of speech which perhaps has more significance than he realizes: "I had the odd sense that it was like waiting for an election result."<sup>160</sup> Morley accuses Lloyd George of swinging around

156 C. E. Callwell, *The Life of Sir Stanley Maude* (London, 1920), pp. 100, 332; Callwell, *Wilson*, I, 109, 121, 134, 135; Metcalfe, *op. cit.*, p. 136; Lady Wester Wemyss, *The Life and Letters of Lord Wester Wemyss* (London, 1935); Lord Chatfield, *The Navy and Defense* (London, 1942), p. 120; John Charteris, *Field Marshal Earl Haig* (London, 1929), p. 40. Duff Cooper, *Haig* (London, 1935), I, 127.

157 Elizabeth Haldane, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-248.

158 Cf. for example, Newton, *Lansdowne*, pp. 371-372; and Austen Chamberlain, *Down the Years*, pp. 55-57. "For some years prior to the outbreak of the war, the inevitability of a European conflict was almost an accepted article of the Unionist faith." Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 206. Haldane has been more frank than his liberal colleagues in confessing his "fascination" with war plans. Cf. Frederick Maurice, *The Life of Viscount Haldane* (London, 1937-1939), I, 163. George V and Grey, both agreed in 1912 that Great Britain could hardly permit "our friends" [Russia and France] to face Germany and Austria-Hungary alone. G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, *British Documents on the Origin of The War* (London, 1926-1936), X, Part 2, p. 658.

159 Morley, *Memorandum on Resignation*, p. 25.

160 Churchill, *World Crisis*, I, 22. This was Churchill who, in 1906, had declared: "War is fatal to liberalism." Churchill, *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, p. 67.

to war possibly because of "demagogic calculations." Because "the Liberal Party was already shattered and could not win the approaching election. . . ." <sup>161</sup> In the words of Lloyd George, "We pulled a lever which might land us on a star or land us in chaos." <sup>162</sup> To Grey, the prospect of the war was a great catastrophe, exceeded only by the prospect of Britain's remaining neutral. <sup>163</sup> Churchill, on July 27, 1914, when the probability of war had receded somewhat, told Asquith, "I am afraid that we shall have a bloody peace." The word "bloody" was meant as a mild epithet, but its significance was, perhaps, far greater. Asquith understood that the war would "settle" many of the outstanding domestic problems. The daughter and one time secretary of Gladstone told Asquith that she hoped the world war would take place "now." Asquith turned on her "with a look of understanding. . ." and told her what Churchill had said. <sup>164</sup>

Christopher Addison, later Minister of Reconstruction, and an important non-Cabinet member of the Liberal Ministry, in 1914, says that some Liberals, like Simon, stayed in the Government because a Coalition Government would be "the grave of Liberalism." Yet, he admits that "most of us felt that Liberalism was already in its grave. . . . When one thinks of all our schemes of social reform. . . one could weep. Nearly all the things we have been toiling at for years have come toppling down about our ears." <sup>165</sup> The biographers of Asquith sum up the situation with the statement that "there was a great desire among the Ministers not to let British

<sup>161</sup> Morley, *Memorandum on Resignation*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>162</sup> Lord George Riddell, *Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914-1918* (London, 1933), p. 12.

<sup>163</sup> Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916* (New York, 1925), I, 302.

<sup>164</sup> Lucy Masterman, editor, *Mary Gladstone, Her Diaries and Letters* (London, 1930), p. 477.

<sup>165</sup> Christopher Addison, *Four and a Half Years* (London, 1934), I, 35.

policy slip out of British hands.”<sup>166</sup> Perhaps this ought to read “there was a great desire among Ministers not to let British policy slip out of Liberal hands.” For example, Simon once resigned “with tears streaming down his face at having to leave,” but he returned to Asquith and Government.<sup>167</sup> Even “the Quaker President of the Peace Society” (Pease) was not “over-squeamish about having a hand in Armageddon.”<sup>168</sup> As the *Economist*, quoting the comment of “a cynical observer,” later explained, “office before principle” was the “natural corollary of Patriotism before Party.”<sup>169</sup> Lloyd George says that “the Conservatives entered the war with enthusiasm and the Liberals with reluctant conviction.”<sup>170</sup>

The Liberals—Imperialists and “Pacifists” alike—clung to office with a professional zeal, from which few embarrassments could budge them; and one might add, fewer scruples. The statements of Asquith on March 24, 1913, and Grey on April 28, 1914, and on June 11, 1914, denying that Britain was bound to assist France under any existing obligations or agreements are not false, but they were carefully drawn up with a will to conceal the truth half-suspected by many.<sup>171</sup> By that time no member of the Cabinet could plead ignorance. In 1912 the entire Cabinet (Lloyd George by 1911) was already acquainted with the arrangements which Lloyd George admits were regarded “as practically tantamount to a commitment on our part to come to the aid of France in the event of her being attacked by Germany.”<sup>172</sup> The majority of the Cabinet mem-

166 Spender and Asquith, *op. cit.*, II, 95-96.

167 Morgan, *Morley*, p. 44.

168 Morley, *Memorandum on Resignation*, p. 16.

169 *Economist* (London), LXXXII, 87.

170 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 191.

171 Esher, who was on the Committee of Imperial Defence, privately characterized Asquith's statement as “shifty.” Brett and Esher, *op. cit.*, III, 122.

172 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 47. On August 7, 1918, Lloyd



bers might be "aghast." "Hostility barely represents the strength of the sentiment which the revelation aroused; it was more akin to consternation." But "to attempt then to set right the impression produced in the minds of *our Allies* [italics added] would have created a new situation. . . ." <sup>173</sup> Though Lloyd George admits that the "Allies" regarded these arrangements as "practically tantamount" to a commitment to war, a page later he goes on to state that he accepted Grey's assurances that the agreements "left us quite free, in the event of war, to decide whether we should or not participate in the conflict." <sup>174</sup> In November, 1912, Morley, who as a member of the Government was helping to consolidate "two groups of powers" with irreconcilable purposes, stated that "he wouldn't be a party to a war arising out of such a situation," <sup>175</sup> but did not even threaten to resign.

This duality explains the dilemma of the Liberals. Affirmative action was impossible for the Liberal Government. Rather it was necessary to let the drift of events force, or appear to force, the hand of the Government. <sup>176</sup> The Unionists, on the other hand, were united. Their leaders on August 2, 1914, had sent a message to Asquith stating that "it would be fatal to the honour and security of the United Kingdom to hesitate

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George referred to it as a "compact," but under challenge, revised it to "an obligation of honour." 109 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1412, 1456.

173 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 47.

174 *Ibid.*, I, 47-48.

175 Fitzroy, *op. cit.*, II, 496. Morley "would heartily subscribe to a policy, and at the last moment suddenly rebel against the means which were plainly necessary to carry it into execution. He would consent to a course of action which plainly could have only one consequence, and then be greatly astonished when it followed." Spender, *The Public Life*, I, 104.

176 Not all were deceived. On August 17, 1914, Bryce asserted "we did not drift into the war; the Foreign Office meant all along that we should go in." Hammond, *Scott*, p. 182. A Conservative wrote in his diary on August 5, 1914, "I cannot come to the conclusion that war was inevitable, and that a way might not have been found to give time for thought and further consideration." Lord Parmour, *Retrospect* (London, 1936), p. 107.

in supporting France and Russia at the present juncture, and we offer our unhesitating support to the Government in any measures they may consider necessary for that object." 177

The Liberals had been unable to take such frontal action. Asquith and Grey bided their time, hoping for an event that would enable them to swing over a united Cabinet behind a course of action upon which they felt the fate of Britain depended. The invasion of Belgium on the morning of August 4, furnished the occasion for a defensible Liberal decision to embark upon war, although Asquith had privately advised the King on July 30, 1914, that if Belgium were invaded Britain's course would "be rather one of policy than of legal obligation." 178 The rank and file aversion to war was so strong among the Liberals that the Cabinet could not agree to bind the Government openly in advance. An outright pledge to France would

177 Immediately preceding the British ultimatum to Germany, Churchill had unsuccessfully sought to form a coalition government. Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War 1914-1916* (New York, 1928), pp. 7-11. The army (or rather the generals) were united in favor of supporting France. Believing, for a moment that Britain was going "to stand aside," one of them wrote, "What a disgrace! No wonder we are called a nation of shopkeepers, perfidious Albion... Surely, no nation will trust an Englishman's word again"—unless Britain supported France. Callwell, *The Life of Sir Stanley Maude*, p. 116.

178 Spender and Asquith, *op. cit.*, II, 81. Cf. also, Margot Asquith, *Autobiography*, IV, 33; and Earl of Oxford and Asquith, *Genesis of the War* (New York, 1923), p. 311. Asquith recorded in his diary his reaction to the news of the German invasion of Belgium: "This simplifies matters." Earl of Oxford and Asquith, *Memories and Recollections* (New York, 1928), II, 25. The fleet had been on manoeuvres but Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg countermanded on Sunday afternoon the orders for the fleet to disperse on Monday morning. When the ministers hurried back late Sunday they "cordially approved my action and we had the drawn sword in our hands to back up our urgent advice." Mark Kerr, *Prince Louis of Battenberg* (London, 1934), p. 243. Up to this point Liberal and popular opposition to a possible war was summed up in *John Bull's* phrase: "To Hell with Servia." Quoted in Irene Cooper Willis, *England's Holy War* (New York, 1928), p. 25. "Few public men were found to maintain that after the wanton attack on Belgium it was possible for England to stand aloof..." G. P. Gooch, *Life of Lord Courtney* (London, 1920), p. 579. Cf. Fisher, *Bryce*, II, 127.

have meant the break-up of the Cabinet. "I knew," says Grey in his intended *apologia*, "the desire to keep out of war to be very widespread and strong."<sup>179</sup> Lloyd George was later bitter about Grey. And, in a sense, Asquith and Grey brought the country into the war; not only because they did not explicitly warn Germany—in any event it was impossible to get a united Cabinet to deliver a warning—but because Asquith and Grey by their seeming dawdling and fumbling prevented a serious Cabinet split until the invasion of Belgium created the convincing occasion for a decision and the Liberals faced the enemy united amongst themselves and with the Unionists.

On August 4, 1914, a united Britain faced Germany, and although there were more fundamental and deep-seated causes for this, the role of Asquith and Grey in helping to bring this about, cannot be discounted.<sup>180</sup> Asquith sought to avoid "the break-up of the Cabinet. . . a war conducted by a Conservative government. . . the country divided. . . and an unknown number of people determined to stop the war at the

<sup>179</sup> Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, I, 326.

<sup>180</sup> In delivering a eulogy in the House of Lords on the occasion of Asquith's death in 1929, Grey stated that Asquith was instrumental in avoiding a "precipitate attempt to force a decision . . . . It is well known that in the early days of the last week of July, 1914, the Government were so deeply divided that the division was apparently irreconcilable . . . . It would be an error to suppose that Asquith in his own mind had not yet settled what the ultimate decision would be. But if the Prime Minister, as Asquith then was, had precipitated a decision, I believe the consequences would have been that at the moment of crisis we should have had a divided Government, a divided Parliament, a divided country." Trevelyan, *Grey*, p. 289. As Bernard Shaw later wrote, "what would the Daily News and the Manchester Guardian have said" if Grey had been blunt. Bernard Shaw, *What I Really Wrote about the War* (London, 1931), p. 40. Lord Ernle sums up the reaction to Grey's August 3, 1914 speech: "The story as he [Grey] told it, illustrated many of the qualities by which Englishmen like to think that they are distinguished—the love of peace and of fair play, the loyalty to friends, the chivalry towards the weak, the slowness to take offence, and when the time for action had come, the tenacity of purpose, the firm resolution, the deliberate courage." Lord Ernle, *Whippingham to Westminster* (London, 1938), p. 265.

earliest possible moment." He was, therefore, anxious not to force matters in the Cabinet and "not to move ahead of public opinion in the country."<sup>181</sup> Grey's bitterest critic would not take issue with him: "Looking back on it all, it seems to me that the course actually followed in these critical days was the only one that could have led to the entry of Britain into the war, immediately, wholeheartedly and with practical unanimity. This was the actual result."<sup>182</sup> Grey has delivered his own best epitaph: "I used to hope that I was meant to keep the country out of war. But perhaps my real business was to bring her into it unitedly."<sup>183</sup> This is emphasized by the thought of what the situation would have been if the Unionists had been in power. United Liberal support would by no means have been offered. "But out of the evil came good."<sup>184</sup> The success of the Liberals insured the carrying out of Conservative foreign policy. Margot Asquith has best summed up: "It is not easy for any Prime Minister to commit his Party to a war on foreign soil with an unknown foe, but it was lucky for this country that the Liberals were in power in 1914, as men might have been suspicious of acquiescing in such a terrible decision at the dictation of a Jingo Government."<sup>185</sup>

181 Spender and Asquith, *op. cit.*, II, 95.

182 Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, II, 41. The King's Secretary held that if Victoria were still alive, no war would have taken place, "so greatly in awe of her were all European sovereigns." Sir Basil Thomson, *The Scene Changes* (New York, 1937), p. 413.

183 Trevelyan, *Grey*, p. 288.

184 Lord George Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections* (London, 1916-1922), II, 327.

185 Margot Asquith, *Autobiography*, IV, 32-33. Alfred Mond said that "Asquith and Lord Grey had been the right men to represent the country in the dignified approach to war. They had been able to enter upon the deadly business without besmirching the prestige of the Government." His criticism, later was: "But they were the calm gentlemen of peace, the fine inheritance of British Culture and Statesmanship. They smelled of English lavender whereas a time had come when leaders must smell of blood." Hector Bolitho, *Alfred Mond, First Lord Melchett* (London, 1933), p. 190. Mond's utilitarianism apparently exceeded Jeremy Bentham's.

The war came as a climax to the general feeling of disturbance and unrest. A trade union leader has written of August, 1914, that the British people had long lived "in an atmosphere of war."<sup>186</sup> There was "a sense of imminent danger; I don't know what," H. M. Nevinson wrote in his diary, "God does not send in His Bill every week-end," but the feeling of uneasiness and unknown guilt was pervasive.<sup>187</sup>

The exceeding complexity of life. . . had produced an overstrained generation. Men's patience failed them in facing the great tasks of organization necessitated by new conditions. . . . The war . . . was a welcome relief from facing the difficulties inherent in the situation. . . . it was felt to be a war to save civilization, to clear a certain blocking of progress. . . . Men chose the hymn of hate rather than the song of revolution. . . . 'Let us fight,' they said, 'peradventure amidst the excitement of battling we shall stumble on life fit for heroes.' There was a feeling abroad that life without great excitement was no longer tenable, that explosive forces . . . had become too threatening, too dangerous to tolerate, too intractable to coordinate, impossible to subdue. Nations of men, fearing one another, glided into a suicidal attitude. Then

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Bentham's famous distinction between poetry and prose as the classical example of utilitarianism might give way to Mond: "I have always disliked watching the movement of the ocean. Ever since I was young I have been appalled by the waste of energy and effort." *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>186</sup> George N. Barnes, *From Workshop to War Cabinet* (London, n.d. [1923?]), p. 105.

<sup>187</sup> Henry W. Nevinson, *More Changes, More Chances* (London, 1925), pp. 369, 400. "...about the year 1912 I began to have a very strong feeling that I was living in a period like that of the Antonines, and that, in spite of most appearances to the contrary, there was some danger not merely of calamity but of collapse." E. L. Woodward, *Short Journey* (London, 1942), p. 43. One of Asquith's sons sums up his impressions: "sinister influences, hostile and imponderable, seemed to be moving behind the veils . . . there was a sense also of the tramp of some malign destiny marching forward to disaster." Herbert Asquith, *Moments of Memory*, p. 196. On the last day of 1913, Sir Henry Wilson wrote in his diary, "great and universal unrest, interior and exterior, in all parts of the world." Callwell, *Wilson*, I, 135.

they departed from the course of life and plunged into the adventure of death. They dethroned reason and espoused force, till large tracts of habitable earth became fatal playgrounds for maddened millions, whilst the masses of the home population watched and upheld and encouraged and loudly applauded the murderous game.<sup>188</sup>

Winston Churchill and Lloyd George both have expressed this feeling with eloquence, whatever the logic.

We have been living in a sheltered valley for generations. We have been too comfortable and too indulgent . . . and the stern hand of fate has scourged us to an elevation where we can see the great everlasting things that matter for a nation—the great peaks we have forgotten of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the great pinnacle of Sacrifice pointing like a rugged finger to heaven.<sup>189</sup>

The world on the verge of its catastrophe was very brilliant. Nations and Empires crowned with princes and potentates rose majestically on every side. . . . The old world in its sunset was fair to see. But there was a strange temper in the air. . . . Almost one might think the world wanted to suffer. Certainly men were everywhere eager to dare. . . .<sup>190</sup>

To Lord Curzon, who had spent many years in an older civilization, the answer, if not the solution, was simpler: "The real master of the situation is primitive man."<sup>191</sup> Lord Morley distrusted the serenity of his old age: ". . . is it possible that we were somnambulists, only half awake to strong currents racing in full blast over our heads and under the ground at our feet, and sweeping through the world . . .?"<sup>192</sup> The doyen of the

188 Caroline E. Playne, *Society At War* (Boston, 1931), pp. 12, 21, 25.

189 Lloyd George, *Slings and Arrows*, pp. 224-225, in September, 1914.

190 Churchill, *World Crisis*, I, 198-199. "Before the sun sets, as if in one despairing grasp at splendour and colour, the heavens blaze with splendid profigacy before the ranked shadows march ahead in darkness." Dunn, *Paperchase*, p. 126.

191 Ronaldshay, *Curzon*, III, 119.

192 Syed Sirdar Ali Khan, *The Life of Lord Morley* (London, 1923), p. 299.

pre-war Liberals wrote off "the old liberalism [which] had done its work. . . ." New landmarks were needed and old beacons had to be replaced.<sup>193</sup>

The coming of the World War was a culmination of diplomatic understandings and maneuvers conditioned by national rivalries, but it was also a climax in internal tensions and frustrations in the various national states. In Britain, as in other countries, the war served as a release to many a citizen. Despite the dukes and the syndicalists, the inhabitants of Britain were Britons first. The whole gamut of emotions held in check by tradition, uncertainty, bewilderment, and despair itself, was released by the declaration of war.

Some saw or pretended to see that the very foundations of British civilization were eroding at an accelerated rate. Others sought to alter the rules; almost none aimed at razing the basic structure. For when all is said, Lloyd George's rhetoric had never penetrated deeper than under the skins of a few hundred dukes and landlords who lived, to all intents and purposes, outside the mainstream of the country. The cockney audiences of Limehouse were amused; they were never really aroused by Lloyd George's heated verbiage. Here was a good show, with an excellent principal and a competent cast, but all concerned knew that this was no Moses come to lead his people into the promised land. All of what was said, all of what was promised, bore no more relation to their everyday reality of existence than Wesley's Evangelicalism. They were all the more pleased. Life might be intolerable but flights of fancy were free and served as a measure of compensation. No sober calculations, no shrewd analysis, would suffice. For such there were the Trade Unions, and even the Labour Party, but Lloyd George's followers—and they were legion as compared with the members of the Trade Unions and Labour Party—had not been attracted by such simple lures. They needed the magnetism of the Welsh Wizard to be hypnotized,

not into action—for what would Lloyd George and his Liberals have done if this had been the case—, but rather to be mesmerized into acquiescence and acceptance of the industrial status quo, relieved only by inflammatory language about the landed barons of Britain from whom all evils flowed. They were not aroused from their fundamental but increasingly restless apathy. Rather by being offered an opportunity to participate in an exciting spectacle, they were rooted all the more deeply in the very conditions which were responsible for their plight.

How long this situation would continue no one was in a position to predict. But prescient statesmen recognized the predicament and sought a unity of forces to prepare for the oncoming storms. If the attempts at domestic union failed, it is nevertheless impossible to claim that the alarms were false, the dread fanciful. Perhaps only because of the war was the full measure of the domestic terror never achieved. The War by no means came like a thief in the night, but it is also true that it was little expected as an immediate contingency in Britain in the summer of 1914. There were clashes nearer at home, and though they were not especially bloody they set the stage for conflicts which, it was felt, could only be met, ultimately, not merely by a show of strength, but by strength itself.



**SECTION II**  
**THE MOBILIZATION OF INDUSTRY AND LABOR**

## CHAPTER II

### “BUSINESS AS USUAL”

DESTINY has strange couriers. Paradoxically, the party of peace and retrenchment had best prepared Britain for war. The Army reforms of Haldane and the financial reforms of Asquith and Lloyd George laid the foundations for Britain's efforts in the war.<sup>1</sup> The Liberal ministers might speak of the expenditure on armaments as “sterile,” but in 1913, £74,500,000 were allotted for this purpose in a budget of £195,640,000. Income taxes, surtaxes, and death duties, plus heavy taxes on most of the comforts and “luxuries” of the working class—sugar, tea, beer, tobacco, and other items—enabled Britain to finance the war.<sup>2</sup> It was thus fitting that the Liberals should be in office in August of 1914.

That their preparations proved inadequate was less the fault of the Liberals than it was the outcome of the incredible magnitude of the war. The war of 1914 was bigger than the wildest nightmares of its makers. Long foreseen, predicted, and even, in a manner of speaking, arranged for, the war surprised the most pessimistic prophets by its length and by the immensity of its demands. Thinking and planning in terms of a war which was expected to bear some reasonable relationship to the historic past, all powers and parties, militaristic or liberal, were utterly stunned by the lavish scale of the sacrifices it demanded.

Britain was not alone in this. Germany's experiences with

1 Haldane wrote wryly in September, 1916: “It is curious that the men who did most to prepare for this war, Tirpitz, Moltke, Falkenhayn . . . and Fisher, Churchill and myself here, are now all six out of it.” Lucy, *Diary of a Journalist*, III, 279. For a dissenting view on the effectiveness of Haldane's reforms, cf. Earl of Middleton, *Records and Reactions*, pp. 279-285.

2 This was especially true during the first period of the war. The popular cry, “Business as Usual,” meant also, by tacit consent, “taxation as usual.” Sir Josiah Stamp, *Taxation During the War* (Oxford, 1932), p. 22. These were not the only advantages granted to Britain. Fox-hunting was a “first-class national asset.” Willoughby de Broke, *Hunting the Fox*, p. 1.

Austria and with France a half century before had given her an arrogance and assurance that led her onto the road to disaster.<sup>3</sup> Britain, less literate and less literal in ways of war, was at an advantage. She groped and stumbled, but the fumbling imbued her with a caution which helped her to avoid the precipice.<sup>4</sup> The "fog of war" was never fully penetrated by any power, and no country succeeded in fully keeping pace with and overcoming the problems and changes wrought in and by the war. Since the goals were ever shifting, the race went not to the swiftest. Britain's steps were faltering, but her very lack of general momentum enabled her better to meet the vast and inconceivable problems on a trial-and-error, *ad hoc* basis.

When the war broke out in August, 1914, the British Government faced a serious dilemma in its relations with the business community. In spite of many kinds of economic intervention by the state, the prevailing tradition of the country was in favor of non-interference with business interests, whether in war or in peace. The expectation that the war would be short, and the conviction that the country needed more than ever the profits and credits that accrue from normal enterprise, confirmed this attitude. At the same time, immediate exigencies forced the hand of the Government. The rise in shipping rates must be curbed in order to protect markets and supplies; the financial structure must not be allowed to topple; and troop movements must be carried out expeditiously—especially since the war would be decided (it was generally thought) in three months.

The traditional tendency to "muddle through" without any clear or logical enunciation of principles, or even in direct contradiction of those principles which were given lip-service, was never better exemplified than in the institution of war-time

3 "We were saved largely by the incredible folly of our foes." Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, III, Preface, p. VIII.

4 "The abyss was not generally seen even when the Governments came to the edge of it." Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, II, 32. Cf. also, Henry Wickham Steed, *Through Thirty Years* (New York, 1925), II, 38-39.

controls over the economy of the country.<sup>5</sup> Conscription had been an issue even before the war and yet it was only in 1918 that all males between the ages of 18 and 51 were made subject to military service. With such hesitancy and delay in instituting military conscription, it is not surprising that conscription of trade and industry was never adopted as a clear and consistent policy.

The subordination of private to national interests was accepted with the declaration of war. The difficulty lay in the application of this principle. "Business as usual," a phrase coined by Churchill, caught the popular imagination.<sup>6</sup> It was a happy and felicitous slogan ideally suited to the temper of the British people in 1914. Whatever may have been the political motive and result, it was not for the purpose of promoting selfish private interests that this phrase was reiterated by responsible public officials. Britain, as a hundred years before, was to be the paymaster of the Coalition. How could she better perform her time-honored function than by permitting the free exercise

5 "We are governed by idle rich men . . . [who] have been careful, time out of mind, to train us up in the belief that England has always muddled through and always will." *Statist*, LXXXIX, 1172. The second part of this assertion has been given repeated emphasis by various official commissions. The Balfour Committee on Trade and Industry pinned its faith with regard to some questions in "the same process of evolution" which operated in the past rather "than to any hard and fast scheme laid down . . . by any . . . external authority." *Final Report*, Cmd. 3282, 1929, p. 121. The (Macmillan) Committee on Finance and Industry Report stated this view even more explicitly: "Of our own nation pre-eminently it may be said that it has attained its great position not by the pursuit of any preconceived plan but by a process of almost haphazard evolution based on trial and error, and aided by the practical aptitudes and instincts of our race . . . There has been little conscious direction of the national activities to definite ends." Cmd. 3897, 1931, p. 4.

6 Christopher Addison, *Politics from Within* (London, 1924), I, 40. Even more, there was hope of supplying the former German markets—not only after, but during the war. Francis W. Hirst, *Political Economy of War* (New York, 1915), p. 316. Cf. also, Stephen Gwynn, editor, *The Anvil of War* (London, 1936), p. 42. Enterprising manufacturers sought to capitalize immediately. Some examples: corsets, Eau de Cologne, fountain pens. Cf. *Times*, August 25 and 28, September 1 and 29, November 12, 1914.

of private interests to promote the public weal? Yet almost immediately "business as usual" was supplemented by the dictum that "there must be as little interference as possible with the normal channels of trade." The difficulty arose, as in so many other human affairs, in the interpretation; there remained the question of who was to decide what "as little as possible" meant.

Agreement was general that the successful prosecution of the war must transcend all personal pursuits which hampered the war effort; the question at issue was the degree of interference with normal trade channels that was necessary for the fullest prosecution of the war. Difficulties arose not only from understandable, if not socially valid, private interests, but also from an almost universal antipathy to state interference with individual liberty and private enterprise.<sup>7</sup> The State was regarded as King Midas in reverse. All it touched would turn to dross. The clammy hand of bureaucracy would, in its incompetence, wither the fair fruits of private enterprise and rot the very roots of industry. The war would surely be lost if the State were to intervene in affairs traditionally within the sphere of purely private enterprise. How could the State be healthy when individual welfare was endangered? An assault on the domain of business would constitute in fact, whatever its intention, not merely a breach of faith, but downright treason. A Liberal Government which, informed men knew, had been sparing business and industry as much as possible while it railed at the landlords and paid "ransom" to Labor, seemed little inclined to heterodoxy.

In fact, it was prompt in proclaiming its orthodoxy. The Home Secretary (Reginald McKenna) on August 8, 1914, in discussing the Unreasonable Withholding of Foodstuffs Bill,

<sup>7</sup>This may be illustrated by a story, not apocryphal. The great Liberal, John Bright, once showed the then young John Morley the Cabinet Room in Downing Street and remarked: "More crimes and blunders have been committed within its four walls than in any other place in the island." Morley, *Recollections*, I, 218.

expressed the Government's attitude: "Our desire has been not to interfere with ordinary trade at all, but to leave the traders to conduct their own business."<sup>8</sup> As late as 1916, the Government's legal advisers held that the action of farmers in pouring milk down drains or feeding it to pigs was not "unreasonable withholding" of food, as forbidden by law.<sup>9</sup> The President of the Board of Trade (Walter Runciman), who on the basis of his "experience as a business man" was convinced that "Government cannot buy half as well as private individuals," stated on February 17, 1915, that the greatest contribution the Government could make was to reassure the business community that there would be no State interference.<sup>10</sup> Behind it was the feeling that "no government action could overcome economic laws and that any interference with those laws must end in disaster."<sup>11</sup>

Yet the Government was forced to intervene in some economic activities almost immediately after the outbreak of war. Such controls as were instituted, however, did not constitute "interference" as much as assistance to the free functioning of the businesses "controlled." Businessmen might have questioned whether even this government action did not infringe upon the "business-as-usual" philosophy, but the grateful recipients of government aid were in no mood to quibble.

Great Britain should have been least surprised in the fields of finance by the events of the war. Accustomed to financing her allies, she was better prepared for this phase of warfare than

<sup>8</sup> 65 H. C. Deb. 5s., 2217. So strong was this desire that although the bill giving the Board of Trade power to requisition, at "reasonable prices," stocks of food that were being held unreasonably, was drafted and enacted into law within two days (65 H. C. Deb. 5s., 2213); the powers were never used. *Monthly Labor Review*, IV, 392.

<sup>9</sup> Sir William Beveridge, *British Food Control* (Oxford, 1928), p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> 69 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1176-1179.

<sup>11</sup> Sir William Beveridge, *The Public Service in War and Peace* (London, 1920), p. 5. The war, of course, demonstrated the falsity of this thesis. "Economic laws" were overcome, though not abolished, "just as the airplane overcomes gravitation without abolishing it." *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

for any other. The measure of the war can best be taken when it is realized that even in this field the precedents of the past proved inadequate. Not waiting for the declaration of war, the Government undertook to protect the financial system from bankruptcy. This was made necessary by the fact that the financial institutions of Britain were not merely unprepared for the war; they could not, unaided, withstand even the threat of war. British finance had been international in character. Because of its international involvements, war, by upsetting international economic relations, caused panic, and this made clear Britain's dependence on other nations in its position as the "financial manager of the world." The emergency measures instituted by the Government were very definitely in the nature of assistance and prevented a breakdown in the financial machinery.<sup>12</sup>

Twenty-seven years later the (Macmillan) Committee on Finance and Industry still considered the City of London "the most highly organized international market for money in the world. Its freedom and elasticity are without parallel."<sup>13</sup> Even this great center could not, unsupported, withstand the shock of war. Towards the end of July, 1914, when British intervention seemed more than possible, the City of London, despite its control of the sinews of war, became panicky at the prospect of war. On Friday, July 31, the London Stock Exchange closed and the Bank of England doubled the bank rate, which the day before it had raised from 3 per cent to 4 per cent.<sup>14</sup> On Sunday evening, by royal proclamation, a month's moratorium was granted for bills of exchange, and the regular Bank Holiday of Monday, August 3, was extended through August 6. All financial activities had come to a standstill. If not panic, it was

<sup>12</sup> 65 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1197.

<sup>13</sup> (Macmillan) Committee on Finance and Industry, *Report*, p. 161. (Cmd. 3897-1931, in S. P. 1930-1931, vol. XIII).

<sup>14</sup> Subsequently the rate was again raised, from eight per cent to ten per cent. On August 1, 1914, the Governor of the Bank of England applied for permission to exceed the limits of the fiduciary issue of notes prescribed by the Bank Charter Act of 1844.

at least "paralysis."<sup>15</sup> "It looked as if international exchange had come to a dead stop and our foreign trade had been cut off sharp with a knife."<sup>16</sup>

On August 3, Parliament passed the Postponement of Payments Act empowering the Government to declare a General Moratorium; on August 6, it enacted the Currency and Bank Notes Act, authorizing the Treasury to issue legal tender currency notes in excess of the legal limit and without gold backing. Also on August 6, a General Partial Moratorium was proclaimed for all bills of exchange, negotiable instruments, and contracts (other than wage payments) until September 4.<sup>17</sup> Less than a week later a scheme was approved whereby the Bank of England undertook, under Government guarantee, to discount bills of exchange drawn before August 4 and to relieve their holders of all liability. The Bank of England also undertook to advance funds to acceptors to pay off bills at maturity and to postpone until a year after the end of the war any claim for repayment.<sup>18</sup>

15 Harvey E. Fiske, *English Public Finance from the Revolution of 1688* (New York, 1920), p. 6.

16 Addison, *Four and a Half Years*, I, 35. The forebodings of the bankers and financiers who had pleaded that Britain stay neutral was borne out by the employment figures on the Stock Exchange. Although 35 per cent of the employees enlisted, unemployment was still very high. Report of Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in February, 1915. (Cd. 7850-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXI). While financiers languished, stock exchange clerks became warriors or idlers.

17 Extended to October 5, 1914, on September 1, 1914. N. B. Dearle, *An Economic Chronicle of the Great War for Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1929), pp. 3, 8.

18 Lloyd George said he thought out the scheme while in his bath that morning. Bolitho, *Mond*, p. 181. Cf. also, Henry F. Grady, *British War Finance 1914-1919* (New York, 1927), Adam W. Kirkaldy, editor, *British Finance During and After the War 1914-1920* (London, 1912), W. R. Lawson, *British War Finance 1914-1915* (London, 1915), Frank L. McVey, *The Financial History of Great Britain 1914-1918* (New York, 1918), F. Fairer Smith, *War Finance* (London, 1936), and Hartley Withers, *War and Lombard Street* (London, 1915).



Control of the arteries of war was as necessary as control over the sinews of war. Upon the expiration of the ultimatum to Germany, the Government took over the railroads to facilitate the movement of troops.<sup>19</sup> State control of the railroads during time of war was one of the few Governmental actions—other than those exclusively military—that had been planned in advance. Control of the railroads was assumed under the authority of a series of Acts passed by Parliament between 1842 and 1888, the most important being the Regulation of Forces Act of 1871.<sup>20</sup> Under this act the Government was empowered to take over the railroads for not more than one week at a time, but with power of indefinite renewal. In 1912 an executive committee of railway managers had been formed, with the Under-Secretary of State for War as Chairman, to control and manage the railways as a whole in the event of an emergency.<sup>21</sup> With the outbreak of war, this Committee took over the running of the railroads; the Government being represented on the Committee by the President of the Board of Trade, who was the nominal Chairman.<sup>22</sup> Since he practically never interfered, the railroads were, to all intents and purposes, run by the Committee of Railway Managers.<sup>23</sup>

All railroads were thus technically under State control, but the ownership (as well as the essential management) remained in private hands. To avoid extensive bookkeeping, instead of paying the roads for the transport of troops and equipment (at lower than regular rates), the Government guaranteed the railroads their profits as earned during the banner year of 1913. There was a proviso that if the profits for the first half of 1914 were lower or higher, the payments during control would be

19 F. A. McKenzie, *British Railways and the War* (London, 1917), p. 4.

20 Edwin A. Pratt, *The Rise of Rail Power in War and Conquest* (London, 1915), pp. 175-177.

21 Sir Sam Fay, *The War Office at War* (London, 1937), p. 20.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

23 Conference with Members of Parliament, Statement by Sir Eric Geddes, p. 2. (Cmd. 493-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXX).

adjusted accordingly, but this provision was dropped in January, 1915, and the roads were guaranteed profits equal to those received in 1913.<sup>24</sup> Later the railroads were also paid interest for any additional capital expenditure brought into use since the beginning of 1913.<sup>25</sup> From August 5, 1914, through the year 1918 the Government paid the railroads over £95,000,000. It has been estimated that the Government traffic, if paid for at authorized pre-war rates, would have cost over £110,000,000.<sup>26</sup> Without the war the railroads would, of course, have received little of this revenue.<sup>27</sup> The limitations—self-imposed by the State—on the extent of railroad control may be seen from the fact that not until 1916 were any changes made in railroad service arrangements by discontinuance of competitive trains on different lines and by making through expresses serve intermediate stations.<sup>28</sup>

Military necessity required some measure of control over the railroads. Hardly less important was the need of protecting British oversea commerce. The Government followed up its declaration of war with an announcement of a scheme of State Insurance against War Risks, in order that merchants and business men might continue their usual foreign trade. The war must not be allowed to dislocate these vital enterprises.

The adoption of the scheme of State Insurance against War Risks was swift but not precipitate. Naval authorities had long urged that the State itself should undertake the insurance of war risks, because British naval policy was based on securing and

<sup>24</sup> Frank H. Dixon and Julius H. Parmelee, *War Administration of the Railways in the United States and Great Britain* (New York, 1918), pp. 84, 120.

<sup>25</sup> *Railway Working During the War*, p. 3. (Cmd. 147-1919, in S. P. 1919, Vol. XLII).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5. The latter figure excludes Ireland.

<sup>27</sup> In 1914 the railroads had a net income of £50,000,000, out of receipts of £139,000,000. Return Relating to the Railways, 1914, p. 2. (Cd. 8039-1915, in S. P., 1914-1916, vol. LX).

<sup>28</sup> John A. Fairlie, *British War Administration* (New York, 1919), p. 170. *Times*, December 21, 1916.

maintaining command of the sea and therefore was opposed to the dissipation of naval power in attempting to defend each and every British trading vessel.<sup>29</sup> It was believed that the actual loss of merchant vessels would not be great, but that the owners' fear of such losses might seriously dislocate trade. Insurance would enable the oversea trade to continue almost normally and thus contribute to the needs of the country.<sup>30</sup> As Britain's dependence on oversea trade had increased, the problem had become more urgent. As early as 1905, the Royal Commission on the Supply of Food and Raw Material in Time of War, under the chairmanship of Lord Balfour of Burleigh, had strongly recommended that shipping should be protected either by gratuitous indemnification or through state insurance. But in 1907 a Treasury Committee, opposed to State intervention and trusting to private enterprise, reported adversely on the proposals for war risk insurance "except that which is provided by the maintenance of a powerful navy."<sup>31</sup> The question was again officially considered by the Government in 1913, with the appointment of a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence to advise whether it was feasible to introduce a plan of *insurance*.<sup>32</sup> In the meantime shipowners had been seeking protection by their own efforts and with no necessary reference to the needs of the State. By 1914 almost three-fourths of the British steamship tonnage employed in oversea trade was insured. The insurance, however, was only for the protection of British ships as neutrals. In the event of Britain's being involved in war, it covered the ships only until they could reach the first safe port, whether British or neutral. No cargoes were

<sup>29</sup> Sir Norman Hill, in Sir Norman Hill and others, *War and Insurance* (Oxford, 1927), p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17; Archibald Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* (London, 1921), I, 228.

<sup>32</sup> "Any scheme prepared must be on the basis of reasonable contributions being paid by the owners of ships and cargoes towards the cost of insurance." Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

insured in any event. The shipowners' scheme thus failed to envisage the objective of maintaining the volume of British shipping during hostilities.<sup>33</sup>

The Sub-Committee reported on April 30, 1914; it recommended the adoption of the principle of state insurance of war risks and proposed a scheme of organization.<sup>34</sup> Insurance of cargoes by the State was recommended only to the extent that the open market was not prepared to accept war risks at reasonable rates even though this might mean that the open market would insure the good risks and leave the bad to be insured by the Government.<sup>35</sup> The vessels, however, were to be insured on the basis of a truer partnership arrangement between Government and business. The basis of the scheme was the utilization of the machinery of the existing private War Risk Associations. The State was to enter into partnership with these associations on a 4-1 basis. All ships were insured, but premiums, to be fixed by the State, were to be paid only on ships which began voyages after the outbreak of war. The whole of the underwriting business, including the control of the movements of the insured ships, was to be managed by committees of the Associations, upon which both the Admiralty and the Board of Trade were to be represented. The scheme assumed as probable the loss of 5 per cent of the tonnage actually engaged in foreign trade at the outbreak of war, and an additional loss of 5 per cent of the remaining tonnage during the first six months of the war. A 1 per cent premium per voyage would thus cover the losses both on hulls and cargoes.

The Government was, however, reluctant to introduce the scheme, and on July 30 the War Risk Associations were ad-

<sup>33</sup> C. Ernest Fayle, *The War and the Shipping Industry* (Oxford, 1927), pp. 55-56; Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>34</sup> Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34. This actually occurred. The scheme was adhered to until the end of February, 1915, with the result that the State suffered substantial losses while the open market made very substantial profits out of cargo insurance. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

vised that the Government would not adopt the Report, at least for the present. It was truly an ephemeral present. At midnight of Sunday, August 2, they were notified that the Government had reversed itself and on August 4, the day on which war was declared against Germany, the scheme was adopted by the various Committees and approved by Parliament.<sup>36</sup> Two days later ships registered in the British Dominions and possessions overseas were included, and on August 14 the Government undertook, as of that date, to reinsure 60 per cent of the risk on voyages current at the outbreak of the war on vessels entered in the ship owners' War Risk Associations; in December this was extended to new voyages. Although it had not been planned to insure cargoes afloat at the outbreak of war, rates on the open market were initially prohibitive and the Board of Trade sanctioned the insurance of such cargoes under the Scheme.<sup>37</sup> Not until March, 1915, were cargoes insured by the State.<sup>38</sup> The shipping industry, later in the war, complained bitterly about State intervention, but what the action of the Government meant at this stage may be illustrated by the fact that Government insurance rates were one-fourth of private rates.<sup>39</sup>

Even complete protection against shipping losses could not insure the supply of commodities formerly imported from the Central Powers. The problem of sugar was brought to the Government's attention as the war cut off sugar imports from Germany and Austria-Hungary, normally the source of two-thirds of Britain's sugar supply. A Royal Commission on Sugar Supplies was constituted on August 20 with power to buy and sell, and to regulate the supply. The step, which served to help the British consuming public, was taken to protect the large refiners, who were concerned about the cutting off of their supplies, as much as for any other reason.<sup>40</sup>

36 65 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1941-1948.

37 Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, p. 64; Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

38 Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, p. 65.

39 C. Ernest Fayle, *Seaborne Trade* (London, 1920-1924), I, 182.

40 Royal Commission on the Sugar Supply, *Reports*. (Cd. 8728-1917 in

Assisting the banker, the shipper, and the sugar refiner, the Government was also concerned about the problems of the storekeepers, whose men were leaving for the Armed Services. Napoleon would have been gratified at the British Government's unconscious confirmation of his characterization of the English as "a nation of shopkeepers" by the Government's early appeals in connection with retail establishments. In order to assist the retail trade, the Government appealed to the public to shop early, to carry home small purchases, and not to expect immediate service during busy hours.<sup>41</sup> Nothing was said about limiting purchases to needs or about making sacrifices by "doing without," and the Committee was thus able to report with considerable satisfaction that it had received co-operation from the shopkeepers. "The general tone . . . was a readiness to subordinate private and public needs in the national emergency; and we have every reason to think that the practical response has been considerable."<sup>42</sup> This happy state of affairs continued, and it was urged that the Trade Committees that were established to coordinate these activities take on other tasks, such as dealing with re-organization and technical training.<sup>43</sup>

In "intervening" in the retail trade, the Government limited itself to making public appeals. Its course of conduct in this trade was far more "normal" than the measures it took on behalf of the bankers and shippers. Only the most exceptional circumstances had caused the Government to intervene in those trades; the extraordinary conditions brought on by the greatest (until then) war in the history of mankind soon forced intervention in almost every phase of human effort.

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S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XVIII; Cmd. 1300-1921, in S. P. 1921, vol. XVIII). E. M. H. Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control* (Oxford, 1924), p. 262.

<sup>41</sup> Committee on Retail Trade, *Report . . .*, p. 10. (Cd. 8113-1915 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXV).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Government Committee on War Organization in the Distributing Trades in Scotland, p. 3. (Cd. 8220-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XV).

## CHAPTER III

### THE NEED FOR MANPOWER: EARLY GOVERNMENT ACTION

"BUSINESS as usual," tempered by prudent aid to distressed industries, proved inadequate in a war without parallel in its demands on the economies of the belligerents. Almost from the first hour of the war Britain was subjected to extraordinary strain, which eventually forced the adoption of a deliberate and consistent policy of State intervention based upon the conception of the whole nation as a single fighting unit.<sup>1</sup> The immensity, and the intensity, of the need was yet to be appreciated, especially by those who looked to the past for guidance, but the hard realities could not be eluded indefinitely. The transition was brought about, not by a clear realization and enunciation of general policy, but by patched-up adaptations and compromises, unco-ordinated and fitful, often directly contrary to proclaimed principles, or at least departing from and evading them.

The first measure of control came where the need was felt to be greatest—in the field of labor. But even here control was preceded by assistance, appeal, and persuasion. Faced by the need for an army of unprecedented size, the Government appealed to both industry and labor to help fill the army ranks. At first, as had been anticipated, a labor surplus developed because of the dislocations to business caused by the initial shock of war. The Government, averse to State intervention, sought to meet this emergency in a similar fashion—by private charity and public appeals to employers to spread work.<sup>2</sup> As

<sup>1</sup> This was never fully achieved, but the words and deeds of 1914 contrasted sharply with the deeds of 1918 (the words, too, changed, but to a much lesser degree).

<sup>2</sup> The Queen was of the "firm belief... that employment is better than charity." *Times*, September 4, 1914. The *Times* itself also contributed by accepting "advertisements of servants requiring positions" at special rates. *Times*, August 29, 1914.

pressure of recruiting for the Army and Navy mounted, and as war industries began to compete for workers, labor shortages forced some attempt to allocate the available men. The first step was utilization of the existing Labour Exchanges. In referring applicants to available positions, an attempt was made to shunt them—voluntarily—into the war industries most in need of additional workers. An applicant's refusal to accept a position in an industry deemed essential might be considered an unpatriotic act, but his refusal could attract no public notice and therefore entailed no public stigma. The voluntary rush of men to get into uniform suggested to the authorities that public recognition served to whet the spirit of private and personal patriotism. The notion of conferring some special distinguishing emblem on essential workers was seized upon by the Government, and it began to issue "badges" to munition workers.

As the war progressed, the need for additional men to carry arms increased. At the same time, the problem of utilizing the nation's manpower so as to achieve maximum production without stinting the armed forces brought the Government squarely against the need for qualitative dilution, a solution in defiance of all the traditions of the labor movement. Though the Government began with voluntary appeals, it soon found itself forced to use all the powers of the State in compelling workers to waive their pre-war practices. Fundamentally, all Government measures revolved around the attempt to utilize the available labor force in order to achieve maximum production. The keynote to all action was productivity. The quest was for that system of labor "control" which would prove most potent in producing the goods and services required by the nation in its effort to wage war most effectively.

The dual problem of compelling the Briton to work or fight and of placing him where he would do the most good should have led logically to universal conscription, for industry as well as for the armed forces. Universal conscription seemed to have the merit of fitting each individual, the citizen-soldier in very truth, into the industrial or military niche which



would enable him best to serve the war effort. Although the Government ultimately resorted to military conscription, it is debatable whether conscription for production would have proved as fruitful as some people imagined. In any event, despite all efforts, this "solution" was ruled out by the impossibility of conscripting wealth. If wealth could not be impounded, men's efforts for the creation of wealth likewise could not be controlled. That conscription of wealth was quite impossible, the Government was to learn from the resistance of the business community to a measure providing for opening the books of business concerns to the Treasury for the purpose of checking on tax evasions. The introduction in 1915 of special taxes on "excess" war profits was popular when first imposed, but only because, as a Treasury adviser during the war points out, "nearly everyone treasured some special circumstances of his own that he thought would distinguish him from all other cases . . . . The taxpayer . . . hugged to himself the fond delusion that his case" would be exempt under the tax provisions.<sup>3</sup> But the State's right to investigate the books of business firms affected all and was not admitted without criticism. Stamp exclaims that it "was an extraordinary commentary upon human nature at a time when men's liberties were being interfered with in every direction . . . and later when men were being sent to their death . . . [and when] the supreme possessions of life were at the mercy of the State that the State should have no power to look at a trader's books!"<sup>4</sup>

Herein lies the clue to the difficulties of labor control. In an economy of private property and production for profit, a general mobilization of industrial enterprise, even by majority consent, is a most hazardous undertaking. Success in war depends on relative unity and stability, with all important elements of the

<sup>3</sup> Stamp, *Taxation During the War*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80. An advocate of state intervention held that the power of investigating costs was "one of the most potent and valuable powers that the State assumed." Christopher Addison, *Practical Socialism* (London, 1926), I, 20.

population agreeing and working for fairly common ends, immediate and transitory as those ends may be. When the odds are in the balance, success depends on national solidarity. The "socialization" of industry, even if limited to the war period, would endanger that unity by arousing the hostility of the industrial community, with consequent jeopardy to the war effort. Whatever the ultimate effect of socialization, the immediate one would be to bring about a reduction of production rather than the required increase.

Labor conscription, superficially an extension of military conscription, might have been more easily instituted than conscription of wealth, but its effects would have been perhaps even more crippling. Under scrutiny the resemblance between military and industrial conscription fades. The soldier accepts military discipline because his exertions and sacrifices redound to the benefit of no individual pocket and because failure may mean his own death. The industrial worker, employed in a private plant, cannot ignore the fact that even with very high excess profits taxes, the owner of the enterprise reaps a reward for the workers' toil. Even in purely State enterprises not conducted for private profit, the lack of that imminence of death which spurs men to unlimited exertions in order to survive acts as a deterrent to total endeavor. Most important of all is the discontent engendered, which in its adverse effects on production far outweighs any possible advantages.

Undoubtedly, if some means could be devised to get labor to agree to increased control, the difficulties would be to that extent eased.<sup>5</sup> The best solution of the problem lay in the closest possible approximation to conscription acceptable to the British workers. With all its formlessness, with all its alarms, false starts, and retreats, the history of government labor regulation during the war is, in substance, that of an attempt to introduce

<sup>5</sup> It would be necessary to get the consent, not of a mere majority of labor, but of the overwhelming mass, otherwise the dissident minority would be an insuperable barrier.

controls approaching industrial conscription, but not so closely as to unite the workers against the Government.

The problem of labor control was the foremost and most pressing problem that occupied and bedeviled the War Governments of Britain from 1914 to 1918. It soon became apparent that if many British subjects were to shoulder arms, it would be necessary to rob industries, themselves no less essential, of their workers. That the war of 1914-1918 was a war of materiel rather than of men is a common assertion. It is a commonplace that never before in the history of warfare did the problem of equipment and supplies play such a major role in deciding the issue. What is sometimes overlooked and was certainly unforeseen by the Government, was that fundamentally the crux of the problem was that of men. The first and chief problem of the Government was to insure an adequate supply of men (and women) for the armed forces and for the civilian and military economies.

This problem, created by the industrial advances of the age, was intensified by the unprecedented size of the British army. About five and a half million men were called up before the end of the war. Thus, at the same time that the civilian population was called upon to supply the British army with equipment on a scale never approached in the history of warfare, the size of the army was increased in a similar ratio. The scale of the problem was thus multiplied because each man in the army decreased the possible size of the producing force while increasing the need of supplies. At the same time Britain could not pay less heed to the necessity of pressing its export trade, so as to make possible the financing of what was, to date, by far the most expensive war in its history.

The problem of man-power was brought sharply to the Government's attention by the "Colonial," Kitchener, who had been appointed Secretary of State for War at the eleventh hour and who complained of the lack of an army.<sup>6</sup> Generally con-

<sup>6</sup> Sir George Arthur, *Life of Lord Kitchener* (New York, 1920), III, 265.

sidered one of the enigmas of the war, Kitchener served to breathe confidence into the British people. Described as a "great poster,"<sup>7</sup> his physiognomy dotted the landscape with the attached inscription, "Your Country Needs You," his finger pointing at all who would look. It was a most effective recruiting poster. No other public figure could "command attention with the bearing or the glance of a Kitchener."<sup>8</sup> Even the irrepressible Churchill was apparently cowed. And that caustic critic of military men, Lloyd George,<sup>9</sup> has ventured an estimate which tends to the generous. "He was like a great revolving lighthouse. Sometimes the beam of his mind used to shoot out, showing one Europe and the assembled armies in a vast and illimitable perspective, till one felt that one was looking along into the heart of reality—and then the shutter would turn and for weeks there would be nothing but a blank darkness."<sup>10</sup>

Kitchener's claim to distinction in the World War rests on two insights: that the war would last four years instead of the more generally accepted three months,<sup>11</sup> and that a large British

7 Countess of Oxford and Asquith [Margot Asquith], *More Memories* (London, 1933), p. 135; Addison, *Politics From Within*, I, 42.

8 Sir Ronald Storrs, *Memoirs* (New York, 1937), p. 549.

9 Cf. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, VI, 13, for his estimate of Haig and Robertson "whose most outstanding faculty was stubbornness. Their abilities were average, their obstinacy was abnormal. . . . Their vision was too limited and too fixed. It was not a survey but a stare."

10 Beaverbrook, *Politicians and The War*, p. 195. Viscount Cecil has described Lloyd George himself in almost the same terms. Cf. Cecil, *A Great Experiment*, pp. 67-68.

11 According to the Duke of Portland, Kitchener, at a dinner party ten days after the declaration of war, stated that the war would last "four years at the least," because "we have as yet no army with which to defeat the enemy. . . . in four years' time I hope, and think, it will be strong enough to win the War." Duke of Portland, *Men, Women, and Things* (London, 1937), p. 207. Cf. also, Birkenhead, *Last Essays*, p. 239, and Sir William Robertson, *From Private to Field-Marshal* (Boston, 1921), p. 288. Other, and more typical opinion was represented by the Chief of Staff to General French who predicted a three-month war "if everything goes well," and a maximum of eight months. Cf. for example, Brett and Esher, *op. cit.*, III, 177. The *Economist*, in its issue of October 17, 1914, suggested that the war might

army would be necessary.<sup>12</sup> In this, Kitchener was, of course, very right, gloriously so in contrast to almost every other responsible figure in public life. But his belief was based not on what the war proved—that it was to be a war not merely of armies but of peoples, and all that is implied in such a phrase—but on a profound distrust of the French Army. Not because he had examined the French economy and compared it unfavorably with Germany's, but rather because as a British observer during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 he had become skeptical of the fighting qualities of the *poilu*.<sup>13</sup>

Whatever the relative effectiveness of the individual British, French, and German soldier, there is little doubt that, in a famous phrase, "God is on the side of the biggest battalions," qualified only, as the experiences during the World War demon-

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last longer than three months and quoted Leroy-Beaulieu, editor of the French counterpart of the London *Economist* that the war might "last a long time," one might, indeed, look "forward to a war lasting six months..." *Economist*, LXXIX, 631.

12 Pre-war plans called for an expeditionary force of six divisions, or 150,000 men. Lord Kitchener, in 17 H. L. Deb. 5s., 736. The House of Commons on August 6, 1914, voted authorization for 500,000 additional men, and a call was immediately issued for 100,000 recruits. A month later, on September 10, 1914, a second vote was taken for 500,000 men, and on November 16, 1914, the House of Commons voted to increase the army by another million men. On February 10, 1915, maintenance of land forces to an aggregate of three million men was authorized. 69 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1328. Kitchener, on assuming office on August 6, 1914, planned to put seventy divisions in the field. By January, 1916, sixty-seven divisions were afoot and three in the making. Arthur, *Kitchener*, III, 307. "Kitchener's mob" had indeed grown large. James Norman Hall, *Kitchener's Mob* (Boston, 1916), p. 1.

13 In 1911 Kitchener was sure that in a forthcoming war the Germans would "beat the French." Brett and Esher, *op. cit.*, III, 58. Admiral Fisher, who told King Edward in 1908 that war with Germany was inevitable, likewise did not consider the French important. Fisher, *Memories and Records*, I, 22. Cf. Reginald Viscount Esher, *The Tragedy of Lord Kitchener* (London, 1921), for a criticism of Kitchener; and Earl of Birkenhead, *Points of View* (London, 1922), I, 1-32, for a defense and appreciation. Also, Victor W. Germain, *The Truth About Kitchener* (London, 1925).

strated, by the even greater importance of superior materiel.<sup>14</sup> Kitchener tended to overlook the factor of weapons in the Franco-Prussian War and in the World War, too. In July, 1915, he asked for two machine guns per battalion as a minimum, four as a "maximum." By November, 1918, the British at the front had eighty per battalion.<sup>15</sup> He was, of course, not alone in this. French plans at the beginning of the war merely called for a program of the existing artillery, not for providing new, additional artillery. Only set-backs and defeats were to make clear the error of underestimating the needs of arms and munitions. But some materials of war had to be produced at once and Kitchener's stress on a large army forced the Government to consider early the question of the men without whom there could be no production. The first problem and indeed the last problem was that of "Manpower," to use a term which gained wide currency during the war.<sup>16</sup>

State intervention in labor matters was no innovation, but, in spite of some precedents, so great did the problem of labor become that labor regulation during the war was largely a matter of improvisation. Confusion and conflicts were never absent and were only resolved on an extemporised, piecemeal, "as is" basis.

The Statute of Labourers of 1349 and Elizabethan labor legislation lay too deep in the past and in traditional disrepute to be serviceable in this twentieth-century emergency. Yet State regulation of labor for the benefit both of labor and of the com-

14 "Victory casts her laurels upon the nation whose scientific genius invents the most atrocious weapons and the most convincing propaganda. . . the game is played on the farm and in the factory; the armies merely tally up the score." C. E. Ayres, in J. Maurice Clark and others, *Readings in the Economics of War* (Chicago, 1918), p. 102. It took "scores of highly skilled men to make one corpse." Quoted in Caroline E. Playne, *Britain Holds On, 1917-1918* (London, 1933), p. 211.

15 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, II, 62-67.

16 The "geopolitician" MacKinder claims to have coined the term, "man-power." Sir Halford J. MacKinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (London, 1919), Preface.

munity had assumed importance during the nineteenth century with the passage of the Factory Acts, and had been increased in scope with the Workmen's Compensation Acts, Health and Unemployment Insurance, and other measures. In an age of laissez-faire the growth of labor legislation had been neither logical nor consistent, and Government agencies to deal with its various aspects had mushroomed independently and without correlation. The Local Government Board administered the Poor Law of 1834; the Home Office administered the various Factory and Children's Employment Acts and Workmen's Compensation, and dealt with various other industrial questions.<sup>17</sup> The Board of Trade had departments dealing with marine labor, railroads, and labor statistics; it administered the Labour Exchanges set up in 1909; the Trades Boards were under the President of the Board of Trade; and under the Chairmanship of Sir George Askwith an Industrial Commission arbitrated labor disputes.<sup>18</sup> The Insurance Act of 1911 created the National Health Insurance Commission to administer its health insurance provisions. In addition the Government was a direct employer of industrial labor at Woolwich Arsenal, at Enfield, at the Government dockyards, and elsewhere. Carry-

17 For organization of Home Office, cf. Sir Edward Troup, *The Home Office* (London, 1925).

18 For the Board of Trade, cf. Sir Hubert Lewellyn Smith, *The Board of Trade* (London, 1928). Smith was permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade from 1907 to 1919. Although an ardent defender of the Board of Trade he does reveal that its organization was archaic in many respects. The Archbishop of Canterbury was a member of the Board of Trade by virtue of an Order in Council of 1786, never revoked. The 1786 Order had been issued because the old Committee on Trade and Plantations had, as one of its functions, the duty of advising on Colonial bishoprics and other ecclesiastical matters. Smith, *The Board of Trade*, p. 44. Not until 1918 was a Department established for the purpose of dealing with industries and manufactures. *Ibid.*, p. 147. The Trades Boards had been placed under the President of the Board of Trade instead of the Home Secretary "because there was in 1909 a timid Home Secretary" (John Burns) "and an unusually enterprising President of the Board of Trade" (Winston Churchill). H. A. Mess, *Factory Legislation and its Administration* (London, 1926), p. 195.

ing on within their respective spheres, the various Departments lacked the direction of a central integrating and unifying authority. Although the path for State intervention had been paved by previous legislation and by the existence of various agencies in the field, the problems confronting the Government soon after the declaration of war were nevertheless rendered difficult of solution by the lack of systematic machinery for grappling with them.

The absence of a single Government agency charged with the responsibility of handling all labor matters and the failure of the Government to announce any clear-cut policy were not without their blessings. As most prophets had predicted, the outbreak of the war caused, immediately, a surplus rather than a shortage of labor. Rationally, therefore, all Government energies should have been directed to encouraging employment; a special Cabinet Committee on the Prevention and Relief of Distress was, in fact, established for this purpose, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister.<sup>19</sup> Some Government departments and bureaus held other views, however, and were concerned with the problem of labor supply even while there was yet a surplus.

Originally prompted by a desire to facilitate recruiting, the Government sought to gather a labor reserve for employers who might encourage their employees to enlist. Early conferences were organized with employers and employees for the purpose of arranging for the relaxation of the provisions of the Factory Acts so "as to admit of the temporary substitution of women and young persons for men."<sup>20</sup> Committees were appointed to facilitate the enlistment of the male employees of retail trade establishments. The terms of reference of the Committee for England and Wales were more restrictive than those

<sup>19</sup> Report on the Special Work of the Local Government Board Arising out of the War (up to December 31, 1914). (Cd. 7763-1915, in S. P., 1914-1916, vol. XXV).

<sup>20</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1914, p. IV. (Cd. 8051-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXV).



of the Committee for Scotland. The former was not to interfere with the operation "of the trade";<sup>21</sup> the Scottish Committee's terms of reference recognized that stronger action would be necessary, but limited it to "the minimum interference. . . ."<sup>22</sup> The recommendations were otherwise similar. Everything was to be done on a voluntary basis. There was to be no pressure, no interference by compulsion. "We were very careful to remove the impression that we were asking employers to bring any sort of pressure to bear on their employees to join the Colours."<sup>23</sup> In the first flush of enthusiasm several unions agreed to the suspension of trade union rules and customs for the duration of the war on condition that the places of those men who enlisted be kept open.<sup>24</sup> Only a few unions agreed, however; the general problem was not so easily solved.

More significant in its immediate aspects and in its future consequences to a nation which had ostensibly gone to war to prevent the exploitation of the weak was the Prime Minister's announcement, before the end of the first month of the war, of the Government's policy toward child labor. Asquith assured the local authorities that the Education Board would not interfere with them if they wished to suspend the operation of the school laws.<sup>25</sup> Thus children under eleven years of age could now be employed at the discretion of the local authorities. The armies of Britain were, apparently, to be recruited directly from store clerks and more indirectly from the labor of children.

<sup>21</sup> Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for the Home Department to consider the Conditions of Retail Trade which can best secure that the Further Enlistment of Men or their Employment in Other National Services may not interfere With the Operations of that Trade. (Cd. 8113-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXV).

<sup>22</sup> Government Committee on War Organization in the Distribution Trades in Scotland. (Cd. 7987-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXVII).

<sup>23</sup> Cd. 8113-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXV.

<sup>24</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1915, pp. 4-5. (Cd. 8276-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. IX).

<sup>25</sup> 66 H. C. Deb. 5s., 274.

The problem of the proper allocation and distribution of labor supply swiftly assumed importance as shortages of industrial labor developed. Within two months of the beginning of the war, the war industries were going full blast, with neither men nor machinery idle.<sup>26</sup> By November there were shortages of workers in the engineering trades and in the woolen and worsted industry.<sup>27</sup> By December, 1914, the Board of Trade reported that "the labour market presents the appearance of a trade boom."<sup>28</sup> Nor was the need met by the employment of Belgian refugees in armament factories, woolen mills, mines, and in agriculture.<sup>29</sup> There was at first no shortage of women workers, since there was still 3.2 per cent less employment in December as compared with July, but the increase in overtime was an indication of things to come.<sup>30</sup> By February, 1915, there was "an actual shortage" of women workers in some industries and 10.9 per cent were working overtime.<sup>31</sup>

The War Office had appealed on September 11 to its contracting firms not to work overtime, but rather to engage additional workers or sub-contract to other firms in order to spread

<sup>26</sup> Report of the Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in October, 1914, p. 3. (Cd. 7703-1914, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXI).

<sup>27</sup> First Report of Departmental Committee . . . on Questions Arising in Connection with the Reception and Employment of the Belgian Refugees in this Country. Minutes of the Evidence, pp. 24-25, 27. (Cd. 7779-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. VII).

<sup>28</sup> Report of Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in December, 1914, p. 4. (Cd. 7755-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXI).

<sup>29</sup> First Report of Departmental Committee . . . on Questions Arising in Connection with the Reception and Employment of the Belgian Refugees in this Country, p. 38. (Cd. 7750-1914, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. VII).

<sup>30</sup> Report of Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in December, 1914, p. 2. (Cd. 7755-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXI).

<sup>31</sup> Report of Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in February, 1915, p. 2. (Cd. 7850-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXI).

employment,<sup>32</sup> but soon there was a severe shortage of workers. The Labour Exchanges of the Board of Trade diverted labor to munitions establishments, but, although by December, 1914, they had supplied 18,000 employees, there still existed a demand for an additional 6,000 armament workers.<sup>33</sup> In January, 1915, the Board of Trade began to induce engineering employers engaged in commercial work to spare skilled men for armaments. The men were guaranteed six months' work, and the railway fares to their new locations were paid for them. The results were negligible: only 942 men were thus secured in January as against a demand for 9,103.<sup>34</sup> Even the Police were utilized for unearthing fitters, mill-wrights, and machine-hands.<sup>35</sup> The Labour Exchanges were more successful with non-munitions work of "national importance"; they handled over 100,000 referrals to such jobs from August, 1914, to early January, 1915.<sup>36</sup> The Board of Trade then tried to enroll women for replacement of male labor. From March 16 to June 4, 1915, almost 80,000 women were registered, but only 1,816 of these were actually given jobs.<sup>37</sup> In March, 1915, the Local Government Board in a circular letter to local authorities urged them to release men for other occupations and to avoid new work.<sup>38</sup> The early effect of the allowance system for servicemen's dependents was also to encourage women to work. At first the separation allowance was 6d. a day for a wife and 1d. a day for each child. If the man serving in the Forces could not or would not have this allowance deducted from his military

<sup>32</sup> Dearle, *Economic Chronicle*, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Humbert Wolfe, *Labour Supply and Regulation* (Oxford, 1923), p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>35</sup> Arthur, *Kitchener*, III, 283.

<sup>36</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 59; 72 H. C. Deb. 5s., 428.

<sup>37</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 255.

<sup>38</sup> Forty-Fourth Annual Report of Local Government Board, Part III, pp. 75-76. (Cd. 8197-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. II). Cf. also, Twenty-First Annual Report of Local Government Board for Scotland, 1915, p. XXXVII. (Cd. 8273-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XII).

pay, the Government investigated the family situation. One member of the Select Committee on Naval and Military Services Pensions and Grants pointed out that "the woman with children," was being encouraged "to go out to work so as to relieve her husband."<sup>39</sup>

At the same time the Government was seeking to prevent indiscriminate recruiting at the expense of the munitions workers. A month after the war began, Vickers suggested that a badge be issued to men engaged on vital production. The Government authorized the Admiralty to issue war service badges; a period of confusion followed.<sup>40</sup> Unnumbered badges were distributed to the Royal Dockyards and to the Admiralty contractors for issuance to men designated as "indispensable" by their employer. In March, 1915, the War Office also began to issue badges. These, however, were numbered and were issued on a more selective basis—only to workers actually engaged in the production of finished munition products. By July, 1915, the War Office had issued nearly 80,000 badges, but the Admiralty had been responsible for the issuance of five times that number.<sup>41</sup>

At first the Army rigorously opposed any system of recruiting which might involve the rejection of any willing and physically fit recruit. But by the spring of 1915 even the War Office recognized that the need for production could not be met if the munition factories were depleted of their labor force. In May, 1915, Army recruiting officers were directed to discourage enlistments of men working in specified skilled trades or for certain firms producing materials directly for the War Office.

<sup>39</sup> Special Report from the Select Committee on Naval and Military Services, Second Special Report, p. 9. (House of Commons, # 196-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. IV). Cf. also H. of C., # 53-1915, H. of C., # 328-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. IV).

<sup>40</sup> *History of the Ministry of Munitions*, I, Part II, 4-5. Hereafter cited as *Ministry of Munitions*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, Part III, 8-10; cf. also H. of C. # 345-1915 for War Service Badge Rules. (S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LV). For a defense, cf. Tallents, *Man and Boy*, pp. 225-226.

Since coal, iron and steel, and food were seemingly more indirectly related to the war effort, no reference was made to miners, steel workers, and workers in the food industries.<sup>42</sup>

When the Ministry of Munitions took over direction of the production of munitions in June, 1915, it became the sole badging agency, though the employers were to decide on which workers were to be badged, subject to approval by the Ministry.<sup>43</sup> To designate some workers as indispensable, as differentiated from others, was no easy task. For many years employers and trade unions had been vexed by the problem of distinguishing and differentiating between skilled and unskilled workers; there was no easy solution that would find ready acceptance by all parties. Furthermore, the War Office and the Ministry of Munitions could not agree which men were more useful on the production line than in the trenches. The military authorities found the remedy against indiscriminate recruiting much too effective. To them "the problem was no longer one primarily of protecting men from the recruiting officer but . . . of protecting the recruiting officer from the Ministry of Munitions."<sup>44</sup> By September, 1916, almost two and a half million men were in possession of badges or exemptions of one kind or another.<sup>45</sup>

Such methods of persuading workers voluntarily to accept and retain jobs in the nation's essential industries did not, as the war needs expanded, begin to meet the real and almost incredible needs for materials of war. Labor was not merely to be entreated and exhorted, it was to be controlled and, if necessary and possible, to be coerced—but with some modicum of consent.

<sup>42</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>43</sup> H. of C. # 349-1915, H. of C. # 352-1915, Munitions (War Service Badges Rules), (S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LV).

<sup>44</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> Addison, *Politics From Within*, I, 198.

## CHAPTER IV

### DILUTION OF "ARISTOCRACY"

As the requirements for munitions rose and calls were issued for ever increasing production, the shortage of skilled labor became the chief bottleneck. Keeping industry from being drained of workers by the military and naval forces was not sufficient. The existing labor force had to be made more productive and new labor attracted. General labor shortages in the war industries might be met out of the reservoir of labor in less essential industries, by domestic servants, by housewives, and by others in the population, including children, the aged, and representatives of the "idle rich," but the supply of skilled labor could not be augmented so simply. The war effort could not wait until new men were trained or acquired the necessary skills. One solution seemed possible, and to the employers it was doubly attractive. The number of skilled men could not be increased to meet the ever growing needs of war production, but it was possible to meet these needs at the expense of the organized worker. Union practices built up through long years of effort might be waived; operations might be subdivided, simplified and mechanized, and taken over by unskilled labor—both male and female.

This was the process of "dilution." Dilution was essentially economy of labor. It was, of course, no new thing. It was merely an extension of the principle of the division of labor. The principle of dilution was that no skilled man should be employed on work which could be done by semi-skilled or unskilled male or female labor. Dilution involved four interdependent procedures—the subdivision of processes, the installation of specialized machinery, the upgrading of existing labor, and the introduction of new labor. Difficulties revolved mostly around the principle of upgrading and the simplification and subdivision of processes leading to a greater division of labor. Dilution could only be effective if the trade unions would

waive their restrictive rules. The pre-war trade union restrictions provided that only skilled men with certain definite qualifications could be permitted to carry out particular operations. The test of such qualifications was union membership and rank in the trade.

Established rules and customs included a limitation on apprentices, restriction of output, regulation of overtime, and curbs on newcomers. Could these be suspended, the difficulty created by the scarcity of skilled men would be considerably eased. To the employers who had conceded the restrictions only under duress and protest, the war seemed a golden moment in which to destroy what seemed to them artificial barriers to efficient and cheap production. The first call for the waiving of these restrictions was therefore naturally made by the employers. In a rising labor market the cause of the employers might have seemed hopeless; indeed, until the Government stepped in to assist them, they had achieved little in the way of meeting their needs. The subsequent process of government intervention in labor matters followed a pattern that was to become familiar by the end of the war to all sectors of the population. There were three main stages—appeals, persuasion, and compulsion—but these stages were cumulative rather than separate and distinct. The Government intervened only after private enterprise had found it impossible to meet the situation. The campaign was successful; the demands of the employers were ultimately granted; but the price paid in the way of controls on business enterprise, while never fully meeting the workers' demands, seemed costly to the employers. Once embarked, however, there was no turning back. The needs of the war were paramount. And the chief need, by far, was greater and ever greater production.

Attempts to secure, without government assistance, voluntary agreements on the waiving of rules followed immediately on the outbreak of war. Conferences were held in the Clyde and Tyne regions in the first two weeks of August, 1914, and pledges were given, in very general terms, to remove restric-

tions and to help the war effort.<sup>1</sup> In November, 1914, attempts were made to relax trade union restrictions in the shipbuilding industry on the grounds of the need for increased production and the lack of available manpower. The unions involved countered by offering to find the men required. Failing that, they would relax their rules to allow different classes of workmen to supplement each other, and if that proved inadequate, they agreed to take up the matter again at a later conference.<sup>2</sup> In one of the Vickers' plants difficulties arose in the same month when the skilled workers, organized in the engineers' and toolmakers' societies, objected to "setting up" work on machines which were to be operated by female labor.

In November, 1914, the Engineering Employers' Federation and the unions adopted the Crayford Agreement, which was to be operative "without prejudice" until the termination of the war: female labor was not to be employed in lieu of skilled men; "all machines requiring adjustment of tools by the operator, either before or during the operation, shall be operated by male labour;" and female labor was to be restricted to "purely automatic machines." A "purely automatic machine" was defined as one "which, after the job has been fixed, requires no hard adjustment until the operation is finished." Such machines were to be set up by "fully skilled mechanics."<sup>3</sup>

In December, 1914, the President of the Clyde Steamship Owners Association, having in mind the huge reservoir of illiterate Asiatics, called, though in vain, for the abolition of the Board of Trade language test for seamen.<sup>4</sup> Also in December, the Engineering Employers' Federation demanded the abrogation, for the duration of the war, of trade union regulations and customs. The unions responded with counter-

<sup>1</sup> Dearle, *Economic Chronicle*, pp. 5, 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ministry of Munitions*, I, Part II, 31, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Agreement quoted in G. D. H. Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions* (Oxford, 1923), pp. 53-54.

<sup>4</sup> Father [Charles P.] Hopkins, *National Service of British Merchant Seamen 1914-1922* (London, 1920), p. 21.



proposals that war work be spread to all firms; that firms not employing workers full time transfer them to firms doing Government work; that the Government be asked to pay subsistence allowances to men working at a distance from their homes; that skilled engineers from Australia, Canada, and South Africa be summoned; and that those of the ten thousand skilled engineers who had enlisted and were available for industrial purposes be withdrawn from military duties. The Engineering Employers' Federation rejected these proposals and denounced the Unions for regarding "strict adherence to their rules, regulations, and restrictions as of greater importance than the supply to the nation of its requirements in this crisis." The unions, denying these allegations as unwarranted, insisted that "our trade rights are of no less importance than are the interests of the Engineering Employers' Federation."<sup>5</sup>

Adam Smith might have viewed with equanimity this display of freedom of bargaining. Not so the Government departments which regarded the failure of the parties to enter into new contracts as damaging to the war effort. When negotiations between the parties proved abortive, government intervention became necessary.<sup>6</sup>

After the Government officials responsible for munitions had held a "Shell Conference" in December, 1914, the Cabinet instructed the Board of Trade to take "energetic action" for the purpose of securing an adequate supply of labor for armament contractors by coordinating the supply of labor, substituting Belgians, and diverting labor from less urgent or from unnecessary industries. Where employers refused to cooperate, the Board of Trade was instructed "to put pressure on them, first by persuasion, and then, if that failed, by refusal of railway facilities, etc., and by publicity for unpatriotic action," and by

<sup>5</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, pp. 54-57.

<sup>6</sup> Twelfth Report of Proceedings under the Conciliation Act, 1896, And Report on Arbitration under the Munitions of War Acts, p. 5 (H. of C. # 185-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XIII). Hereafter cited as H. of C. # 185-1919.

"any other" means.<sup>7</sup> Yet, for some time the Government did not go beyond the stage of appeal. Less than two weeks after the failure of the engineering employers and workers to reach an agreement, H. Llewellyn Smith, Permanent Secretary of the Board of Trade, called for a relaxation of trade union conditions, and on January 2, 1915, both the Admiralty and the War Office also called upon the employers and workers to make arrangements for overcoming the labor shortage.<sup>8</sup> At the request of the employers, a further conference was held at Sheffield, on January 13, 1915. The employers once again suggested relaxation of trade union practices "subject to the continued inability of the unions to supply suitable workpeople of the classes desired by the employers at district rates," although with the promise that this was for the duration of the war only and would not affect wages even during the war. The unions rejected these proposals on the ground that their acceptance would "hinder production by introducing factors inevitably leading to friction in the workshops of the country. . . ."; once again they advanced their suggestions of December, 1914.<sup>9</sup>

Following the failure of this Conference, the Government began to resort to pressure. A special committee, soon to be known as the "Committee on Production," was appointed early in February, 1915, to "inquire and report . . . as to the best steps to be taken to ensure that the productive power of the employees in Engineering and Shipbuilding Establishments working for Government purposes shall be made fully available so as to meet the needs of the nation in the present emergency."<sup>10</sup> Four days later the Under-Secretary of War, Mr. Tennant, without waiting for the committee to "inquire and report," called upon the trade unions to abrogate their restrictions during the war.<sup>11</sup> With the establishment of the Ministry

7 *Ministry of Munitions*, I, Part I, 124-125.

8 Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, p. 58.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 58-60.

10 H. C. # 185-1919, p. 6.

11 69 H. C. Deb. 5s., 285.

of Munitions in May, 1915, the functions of the Committee on Production were absorbed by the Ministry; the Committee then became an arbitration body and quickly developed into the principal arbitration tribunal for the settlement of labor disputes.<sup>12</sup> But in the meanwhile it had issued a number of reports. In its first Report it complained of bad time-keeping. In the second Report, the Committee, after asserting "that there is no reason to doubt that all sections of the community, and not least the workpeople, will desire that everything possible shall be done to maintain and accelerate adequate supplies of ammunition to the fleet and the troops," recommended that "restrictive rules or customs calculated to affect the production of munitions of war or to hamper or impede any reasonable steps to achieve a maximum output are under present circumstances seriously hurtful to the welfare of the country, and . . . should be suspended during the period of the war, with proper safeguards and adjustments to protect the interests of the workpeople and their trade unions." The restrictions to be relaxed were the ban on female labor and the custom of restricting production of those engaged on piece work rates to a certain standard in order to protect these rates.<sup>13</sup> On March 4, 1915, the Committee issued its Third Report, which advocated the transfer of surplus labor and the relaxation of all "demarcation restrictions," but with guarantee of the rates customarily paid; when "an employer is unable to secure the necessary labour customarily employed on the work," he should be permitted during the war "to make greater use of unskilled or semi-skilled labour," again "with proper safeguards and adjustments to protect the interests of the workpeople and their trade unions."<sup>14</sup>

The first general agreement involving dilution was the Shells and Fuses Agreement, early in March, 1915, between the Engi-

<sup>12</sup> H. of C. # 185-1919, p. II.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix.

neering Employers' Federation and the trade unions concerned. It was accepted, after a ballot vote, by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. It was to run only for the war period. The employers guaranteed that they would make no arrangements in the shops such as would effect a permanent restriction of employment of any trade in favor of semi-skilled or female labor, and that the "dilutees" would be the first to be dismissed either during or after the war period.<sup>15</sup>

This agreement was in effect merged into the "Treasury Agreement." The latter, entitled "Acceleration of Output on Government Work," was the result of a conference held at the Treasury, March 17-19, 1915, by a number of trade union representatives, headed by Arthur Henderson, and by Lloyd George and Walter Runciman, President of the Board of Trade. Under it the unions agreed to forego strikes on war work and to arbitrate disputes. The workmen's representatives also agreed that "during the war period the relaxation of the present trade practices is imperative," and that the unions would make "such changes in working conditions or trade customs as may be necessary with a view to accelerating the output of war munitions or equipment" on condition that these "changes shall be only for the duration of the war and that the permanent standards of wages and the rights of trade unions shall be safeguarded."<sup>16</sup>

On March 25, 1915, Lloyd George and Runciman entered into an agreement with the representatives of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers who, though present at the first meeting, had not signed the general agreement on the ground that they had not been empowered to do so. (The miners had withdrawn from the meeting altogether.)<sup>17</sup> This special agreement was more restrictive. The relaxation of trade practices was to relate

<sup>15</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, pp. 67-69; *Ministry of Munitions*, I, Part II, 110.

<sup>16</sup> *Times*, March 18-20, 1915.

<sup>17</sup> H. of C. # 185-1919, pp. 11-12.

“solely to work done for war purposes during the war period,” and profits were to be limited so that “benefit resulting from the relaxation of trade restrictions or practices shall accrue to the State.” Some doubt of the temporary nature of the relaxation of practices was apparent in the concluding sentence of the Agreement. Whereas the Agreement with the other trade unions definitely limited the relaxation for the duration of the war (though the Agreement was not legally binding), this Agreement invoked the aid of the Government which was to “undertake to use its influence to secure the restoration of previous conditions in every case after the war.” Lloyd George in opening the Treasury Conference had promised limitation on profits, but this was not included in the first Treasury Agreement, and the Agreement did not even begin to have any effect until profits were limited.<sup>18</sup>

As the Treasury Agreement did not sweep away the trade union restrictions and regulations at once, but merely laid down a procedure under which they could be abrogated, it was necessary to provide machinery for its implementation.<sup>19</sup> Immediately after the signing of the Agreement by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the labor members of the Treasury Conference were appointed on March 31, 1915, as a standing National Labour Advisory Committee to act as a consultative body to the Government on all questions arising out of the Agreement. The Committee remained in existence throughout the war, but soon proved to have little value because of the cleavage between the rank-and-file trade union members and their officials.

Almost immediately aware of the fact that voluntary agreements were inadequate, since they could not be enforced against recalcitrants, the Government proceeded to the final stage of compulsion. The Munitions of War Act was passed in July, 1915. Mainly a recapitulation, in statutory form, of the Treas-

<sup>18</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, p. 71. *Times*, March 18, 1915.

<sup>19</sup> The agreement “did little more than draw attention” to the difficulties. A. B. Dewar, *The Great Munitions Feat 1914-1918* (London, 1921), p. 259.

ury Agreement with the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, it also provided *inter alia* for the creation of "controlled establishments" in which profits were to be limited to a maximum of 20 per cent over pre-war profits (based upon the average of the last two years of peace). In these plants wages could not be altered without the permission of the Ministry of Munitions, dilution was to be enforced, and workmen were to observe model rules of conduct and maintain a proper standard of efficiency. The restoration of pre-war trade union customs at the end of the war was legally guaranteed.

These various agreements illustrate the steps, imperfect and overlapping as they were, in the dilution process. The Shells and Fuses Agreement was marked by the introduction of automatic machinery, to be operated by women. The Treasury Agreement continued this process with the substitution of semi-skilled workers on certain types of operations previously performed by skilled mechanics. Under the Dilution Scheme of October, 1915, the operations formerly performed by skilled men were sub-divided and simplified, and the simpler operations were now to be carried out by the unskilled. These changes involved what is generally called "up-grading," but to the skilled man they were rather "down-grading" in that they served to "degrade" part of his former job to the level of common labor.

Dilution was, in any event, inevitable. The development of automatic machinery threatened the existence of the "aristocracy of labor"; but if the machinery was automatic, the process of dilution was not. The ideal of dilution was by no means fully attained. Perhaps fighting with the courage of the doomed, many of the skilled laborers fought a rearguard action which, in the eyes of the Government, menaced the very security of the British nation. That the process of dilution was, on the whole, successfully carried out in four years is attributable to the patriotic fervor and the spirit of sacrifice which affected all classes in Britain.

## CHAPTER V

### LABOR ORDERING AND DISCIPLINE

DILUTION was the most controversial labor problem that the Government had to face throughout the war, but "labor troubles" were not caused solely by the reluctance of the skilled men to yield up their hard-won prerogatives. Dilution was but the roughest facet of the general problem of increasing production in almost inverse proportion to the reduction in the normal labor force, depleted by recruiting for the country's armed services. In addition to the expedient of dilution the Government attempted a stronger ordering and disciplining of labor. Faced with the paradox of the simultaneous need for a reduction of labor turnover and for an increase in labor mobility, the Government proceeded to take measures to restrict the freedom of movement of labor while, at the same time, seeking to obtain control over labor so as to be able to shift it wherever it was deemed most necessary. Labor was to be made more effective and more efficient, not only by relaxation of restrictive trade practices but by getting the labor force to produce at its maximum and wherever it was most needed. Where exhortations failed, the Government was prepared to adopt compulsion.<sup>1</sup> Because, in the minds of the workers, each step taken by the Government affected not only their present condition but their future status, the Government's course was not by any means easy. To the Government the road might seem a broad, clear highway; labor viewed it with caution, suspicion, and even real alarm.

With military demands not only assuming unprecedented proportions but also constantly changing with innovations in

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd George relates that he "toned up" the staff of the Ministry of Munitions "by every appeal that moves men to do their best—by praise; by emulation, by fear of exposure to criticism; and, above all, by the urge of a genuine spirit of patriotism." Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 247. His success with the whole industrial population was rather less marked but, nevertheless, it was no mean achievement.

tactics and strategy and with the fortunes of war, labor shortages were intensified in many local areas. A scheme was formulated in May, 1915, for the formation of a "mobile column," known as "The King's Squad" or "Flying Column of Armament Workers," the members of which were to agree to transfer themselves to any shipyard or engineering works engaged in munitions work on the northeast coast. They were promised that they would earn the same (or more) wages and be under no military restrictions whatever. (The notion of enforcing military law upon the employees was dropped.) Later, railway fare and subsistence allowances for the time spent away from home were also paid. In the two districts where the scheme was instituted, fifteen thousand men were enrolled in a month and a half, and six thousand were accepted by employers.<sup>2</sup> In June, 1915, following the recommendation of the National Advisory Committee, which had been set up under the Treasury Agreement in an attempt to avoid the industrial compulsion threatened in some quarters, the Government extended the King's Squad Scheme and applied it to all "controlled" factories.<sup>3</sup> By July, 1915, eighty thousand "more or less skilled men" were enrolled.<sup>4</sup> These are, however, misleading figures. The majority of those enrolled were already engaged in war work; others lacked the requisite skill; by January, 1916, only four thousand had been transferred.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the original War Munitions Volunteer Scheme was on a voluntary basis and the fines which it provided for breach of the enrollment contract were not statutory, the whole apparatus was given the force of law by Sec-

<sup>2</sup> Wolfe, *Labour Supply and Regulation*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>3</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, p. 81; Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 196. The alternatives would be, said Lloyd George, drastic. The scheme was "purely an attempt to avoid compulsion. . . . It is an experiment which if it fails will bring us face to face with compulsion. . . . by laying it down as a principle that every man in time of war must render the service that the State thinks he can render." *Ministry of Munitions*, I, Part IV, 36.

<sup>4</sup> Addison, *Four And A Half Years*, I, 103.

<sup>5</sup> Addison, *Politics From Within*, I, 178.



tion 6 of the Munitions of War Act of 1915, which made it an offence for the employee to breach his contract or for an employer to prevent a workman from enrolling. Although 160,000 were enrolled by the end of the war, the Mobile Corps never exceeded 40,000.<sup>6</sup> Adam Smith had long ago remarked that "A man is of all sorts of luggage the most difficult to be transported."<sup>7</sup> Siegfried Sassoon's comment about soldiers is even more apt in this connection: "They weren't mobile men, although they had been mobilized for the Great War. . ."<sup>8</sup>

Other schemes designed to increase labor mobility were also instituted. Early in 1917, the National Service Volunteers Scheme was inaugurated to procure labor required for national purposes during the war; enrollment, originally limited to men aged eighteen to sixty-one who undertook to work full-time wherever they were needed, was to carry no exemption from military service. It was later expanded to include women for agricultural work and ministers of religion for part-time service.<sup>9</sup> The extremely limited success of the plan can be seen from the statistics: of the 272,661 registered under this scheme, 8,842 were placed, including 2,267 who were placed as ordinary applicants for employment and not as National Service Volunteers.<sup>10</sup>

This plan was superseded by the War Work Volunteers Scheme instituted in October, 1917. The main provisions were similar to those of the earlier scheme but differed in that, after February 28, 1917, under a Defence of the Realm Regulation, all employers were required to get official permission before hiring any man, except a discharged veteran, between the ages

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 178-179.

<sup>7</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, edited by Edwin Cannan (New York, 1937), p. 75.

<sup>8</sup> Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (London, 1929), p. 315.

<sup>9</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-208.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

of eighteen and sixty-one. The new effort proved just as ineffective.<sup>11</sup> The "War Munitions Volunteers" were in all cases skilled men; the "Army Reserve Munitions Workers" were the less-skilled workers assigned to the munition shops under a pledge to remain there as long as required by the Ministry of Munitions or face the alternative of Army Service.<sup>12</sup> Although these schemes covered aliens, a special Enemy Alien Workers Scheme was inaugurated in March, 1918, for the purpose of utilizing the services of those male enemy aliens up to the age of 61 who had not been interned. The benefits they received were more limited than those of British citizens and the restrictions upon them more severe. By November 11, 1918, 8,849 aliens were registered under this plan, over 40 per cent of whom were either unfit for, or already engaged in, work of national importance. Of the other 60 per cent, 927 were placed on work of national importance; the cases of the remainder were not even acted upon.<sup>13</sup>

A scheme for transferring miners to districts especially in need of mine labor was accepted by the Miners' Federation in December, 1917, and negotiations were carried on concerning subsistence allowances and travel expenses. Unemployment in South Wales and other exporting districts in the early part of 1918 increased the enthusiasm of the Miners' Federation for the scheme. Some transfers were effected, but various problems, especially that of housing, proved insuperable.<sup>14</sup> Earlier in 1917, a plan had been drawn up to have British miners assist in the French Pas-de-Calais field but it was never put into effect.<sup>15</sup>

To provide a mobile, centralized labor reserve for dealing with local and temporary shortages caused by fluctuations in

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 211-214.

12 Cole, *Trade Unionism And Munitions*, p. 136.

13 Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-216.

14 Sir Richard A. S. Redmayne, *The British Coal Mining Industry during the War* (Oxford, 1923), pp. 148-149, 185.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

traffic, a Transport Workers' Battalion was authorized in March, 1916, drawn from men enlisted for home defence and paid at civilian rates when working in the ports.<sup>16</sup> Not only was the scheme opposed by the unions, but even the War Office found it "very uneconomical." For example, at Southampton only six hundred of the nine hundred members were available for work; the other three hundred acting as "housemaids" to the battalion.<sup>17</sup>

Creation of a reservoir of mobile labor was not very successful as a device for increasing production, but it was very useful in laying the groundwork for the conscription of labor. The need for information as to the labor resources of the country was apparent to all, and, while the more suspicious opposed any scheme which could serve as a structure for compulsion, the Government undertook a plan for a census of manpower. Aware that military conscription was in the offing, public announcements to the contrary notwithstanding, and with some members even advocating industrial conscription, the Cabinet deemed it best to be prepared. By October, 1915, the National Register, containing information as to the occupation and skills of all persons between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five, was completed.

As Lord Lansdowne explained in the House of Lords, the object of the census was to ensure "that every member of the community should bear not merely a part in the national task, but the part which he is best qualified to undertake."<sup>18</sup> There were available over five million men of military age, of whom over one and a half million were engaged in "indispensable" work.<sup>19</sup> Thus it was possible, on paper, to fill the War Office's demand for one and a half million men in 1916.

<sup>16</sup> Fayle, *Seaborne Trade*, II, 288.

<sup>17</sup> Fay, *The War Office at War*, p. 111. The union leader, James Sexton, refused to accept a commission as Colonel of the battalion because he did not want to wear a "Sam Browne belt and a sword..." James Sexton, *Sir James Sexton, Agitator* (London, 1936), p. 241.

<sup>18</sup> 19 H. of L. Deb. 5s., 388-389.

<sup>19</sup> The question of what civilian work was indispensable aroused widespread controversy, especially as to whether clergymen should enlist. Cf.

The possible, however, could not be so easily equated with the actual. The question was whether the military demands could be met without compulsion, or whether Britain would have to tread the conscription path taken by the other belligerents. The unions issued a strong appeal for volunteers, and in October, 1915, Lord Derby was appointed to direct recruiting, and he soon formulated what was known as the Derby Scheme. All males between the ages of eighteen and forty-one were asked to "attest," that is, to enlist subject to being called into active service at a later date. The men were divided into age groups, separately for married and unmarried men; single men of military age who could be spared from their jobs were encouraged to enlist. Essential workers were not to be called up and were starred as being in "reserved" occupations. By December it was estimated that, of the more than 5,000,000 men of military age, almost 350,000 single and almost 500,000 married men would be available for military service. There were over a million unmarried men and a slightly larger number of married men who had not "attested" or volunteered for military service.<sup>20</sup>

The results of the "Derby Campaign" are summarized in his *Report on Recruiting*. From October 23, 1915, to December 15, 1915, 103,000 out of 2,179,231 single men of military age enlisted in the Forces; and 112,431 out of 2,832,210 married men. The number "starred" was 690,138 single and 915,491 married men; 840,000 single men and 1,344,979 married men

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*Times* correspondence columns from February 19 to March 5, 1915. This problem was never settled, but gave way to a controversy as to whether racing should be abolished during the war, *Times*, March 5, 1915, ff.

<sup>20</sup> *Report on Recruiting*, pp. 5 ff. (Cd. 8149-1916, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXIX). Derby, frankly in favor of compulsion, was willing to give the volunteer system a trial, but set up a rather impossible condition: "To make a voluntary system a success in such a crisis as this really means that every man who would in a conscript country be taken compulsorily should offer his services voluntarily." *Times*, October 16, 1915.

attested; 207,000 single men and 221,853 married men were rejected. Over two million men never presented themselves to the authorities for "attesting."<sup>21</sup> To the opponents of conscription the Campaign was a failure; to the proponents of "compulsion," including Lord Derby himself, the results were most successful. Not only was the voluntary system proven to be ineffective, but an organization to serve as the basis for compulsory service had been established.<sup>22</sup>

The anticipated result followed. Asquith had announced in the House of Commons on November 2, 1915, that if the Derby scheme failed, "the very same conditions which make compulsion impossible now, namely the absence of general assent, would force the country to a view that they must consent to supplement by some form of legal obligation the failure of the voluntary system."<sup>23</sup> On January 5, 1916, Asquith introduced the first Military Service Act, which provided for compulsory military service for single men. It took effect March 2, and in May compulsion was extended to married men who had not attested.

To the workers the margin between military and industrial conscription always seemed too narrow for safety. Lloyd George, in June, 1915, had announced that the State must be able to say when and under what conditions it required a man's services.<sup>24</sup> But there was "a steady retreat from the suggestion. . . ."<sup>25</sup> In September, 1916, a Manpower Distribution Board was appointed, under the chairmanship of Austen Cham-

<sup>21</sup> *Report on Recruiting*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Repington recorded in his Diary, under date of November 11, 1915, the results of a "long talk" with Derby, who was "paying less attention to the number of recruits than to the creation of a system which will enable compulsion to be applied." C. à Court Repington, *The First World War 1914-1918* (London, 1921), I, 65.

<sup>23</sup> 75 H. C. Deb. 5s., 523.

<sup>24</sup> *Times*, June 4, 1915.

<sup>25</sup> Sir William Beveridge, *Some Experiences of Economic Control in War Time* (London, 1940), p. 9.

berlain, with the following terms of reference: "To determine all questions arising between Government Departments relating to the allocation or economic utilization of manpower for the purpose of the successful prosecution of the War, and . . . to direct the Government Departments concerned to create the machinery necessary to co-ordinate their activities in regard to the distribution or utilization of men and women."<sup>26</sup> When Lloyd George became Prime Minister in December, 1916, he returned to the question of industrial conscription, but it was again shelved after Henderson explored and reported the Labour Party's attitude. The Government, however, announced that if voluntary efforts failed to supply the necessary labor, Parliament would be asked to release it from any pledges given to avoid industrial compulsion and to enact legislation giving the Government power to apply it.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the Army Council, not waiting for this contingency, had drawn a plan for putting men who failed the Army physical examination into munitions work. Those who refused were to be drafted into the Army despite their physical condition. The Government, however, never approved the scheme.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, the Military Conscription Acts were not producing the inflow of required recruits, since many workers were exempted from service on occupational grounds.

The discontent of the military authorities at not being able to conscript all physically fit men was aggravated by the fact that soldiers were being released for the purpose of acting as workers in munitions plants and mines. Throughout the war it was found necessary to release men urgently needed in muni-

<sup>26</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, pp. 130, 133, 144. The Manpower Board's Report was considered so "highly confidential" that it was not released even to members of the House of Commons. 87 H. C. Deb. 5s., 766.

<sup>27</sup> Beveridge, *Some Experiences of Economic Control in War Time*, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> John W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience* (London, 1922), pp. 61-62.

tions production. The soldiers released were guaranteed their Army emoluments, but were subject to both civil and military discipline. In April, 1917, over 50,000 soldiers were on munitions work; many more had been temporarily released but had proved unsuitable.<sup>29</sup>

One side of the coin of labor supply was to get necessary workers; the reverse side was to keep the workers where they were most required. If the former offered difficulties, the latter was almost impossible of realization. While the Government actively encouraged and promoted labor "mobility" in order to fill the gaps in the labor supply of critical industries and areas, many workers became so "mobile" as seriously to affect production. Taking advantage of the rising labor market, workers shifted from one job to another, but not necessarily to the most "vital" job. The employers, forced to offer higher wages in order to lure workers away from other employers, complained bitterly of similar practices by their competitors, condemning them as "poaching." "Indeed the picture presented to a harassed Government was one of firms living mainly by taking in one another's employees. The picture was highly coloured, but it was not wholly fanciful."<sup>30</sup>

The Government took its first remedial step in March, 1915, by amending the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act of 1914. Under the Act the Government had the power to commandeer munition factories; now it was given the power to "regulate or restrict the carrying on of work in any factory or workshop" and to take over private factories and shipyards. This clause was reenacted in the Munitions of War Act of 1915, which also extended the Government's powers to embrace "the engagement or employment" of workmen on any class of work. These powers were, however, not used, and in April, 1915, another attempt was made to deal with the problem. Under a Defence of the Realm Regulation, employers in war

<sup>29</sup> 75 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1815; 92 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1870.

<sup>30</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

work (later all employers) were forbidden to hire workers living more than ten miles from the plant except through an Employment Exchange.<sup>31</sup> These regulations, ostensibly aimed at employers, proved ineffective. More drastic steps were needed.

Limitations were soon imposed on the employee directly. Under Section 7 of the Munitions of War Act of 1915 and the regulations made under it, employers were prevented from hiring workers who within "the last previous six weeks, or such other period as may be provided by . . . the Minister of Munitions" were employed in a war plant, unless the employee had a certificate from his last employer showing that he had left work with his employer's consent, or unless he "held a certificate from the munitions tribunal that the consent had been unreasonably withheld." This was the most contentious provision in the Act; in fact, it proved to be the single most unpopular clause in all the Munitions of War Acts. In effect, it prevented a worker who had left his job or had been discharged for cause, from getting another job for at least six weeks. Its purpose, as stated in the House of Commons, was to make it impossible for men who were slack or disobedient to walk "out at the moment, go to the works which are only five or ten minutes off, and be welcomed with open arms without any question being asked."<sup>32</sup> Lord Curzon expressed the real purpose of the Act as giving the Government power "to organize the skilled labour of the country for the purpose of the production of munitions of war."<sup>33</sup>

The hated "leaving certificate" proved effective in restricting the free movement of workers, but its effects on morale, resulting often in "slow downs" and strikes, were such that it is very questionable whether the net result was to further "the efficient manufacture . . . and supply of munitions," the stated purpose of the Munitions of War Act. Various amend-

31 *Ministry of Munitions*, I, Part III, 96.

32 72 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1199.

33 8 H. L. Deb. 5s., 206.



ments were passed during the next two years to remove some of the grievances arising under Section 7 without impairing its principles; it was finally repealed in August, 1917. Less than a year later (in July, 1918), however, the Government again attempted to diminish labor mobility by restrictions seemingly levelled against employers, who were forbidden to hire workers without permission of the Ministry of Munitions. This "Embargoes Scheme" was abandoned as a result of the last serious strike of the war, that at Coventry, of which it was a direct cause.

Exhort as it did, strive as it might, the Government never succeeded in its attempts to discipline the labor force of the country in the image of the army. The workers never accepted the distinction made by Lloyd George, who declared that he did not "want conscription at all. All I want to do is to be able to place men where they are most needed. . . ." <sup>34</sup> Encountering fierce resistance on the part of the workers, forced into bitter struggles, the Government nevertheless reverted many times to the idea of industrial compulsion.

## CHAPTER VI

### WELFARE FOR EFFICIENCY

KEEPING workers on the job did not ensure the utmost in production. It was also necessary to remove or abate those common failings and impediments which, whether in peace or in war, constantly operate to diminish efficiency. Measures to curb drink, disease, overstrain—measures to improve the physical and moral status of the worker—were in order. Perhaps under the influence of its military members, the Government attempted to introduce “discipline” in the factories and on the merchant ships by fiat.<sup>1</sup> The first Munitions of War Act provided for the enforcement of good time-keeping, including a “reasonable amount of overtime,” and attempted other reforms. Workers were forbidden to bring liquor to a plant or to be “the worse” for it; nor were they to use “abusive language.”<sup>2</sup> To aid the workers in attaining the desired ends, the liquor trade was restricted in many communities. In the Carlisle District, where huge munition works had been built, the Government took over the entire liquor trade, including control of the brewing of beer and the blending of spirits.<sup>3</sup> The “city of dreadful Saturday

<sup>1</sup> In January, 1915, the Admiralty offered to double the wage increases demanded by merchant seamen if they would submit to naval discipline. Fayle, *The War and the Shipping Industry*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. H. of C. # 300-1915, # 347-1915, # 348-1915, # 350-1915, # 351-1915, # 32-1916, and # 33-1916 for rules and provisions for appeals to Munitions Tribunals by the workers. (S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LV; S. P. 1916, vol. XXIII). Cf. Cd. 8143 and Cd. 8360, *Return of Cases Heard Before Munitions Tribunals*. (S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LV and S. P. 1916, vol. XXIII). Although prohibitionists rushed to take advantage of the situation, the anti-drink agitation was raised because it was felt that more stringent liquor restrictions would increase production. Government purchase of the liquor trade was seriously considered. State Purchase and Control of Liquor Trade, *Reports of the English, Scotch, and Irish Committees* (Cd. 9042-1918 in S. P. 1918, vol. XI).

<sup>3</sup> Defence of the Realm (Liquor Control) Regulations: *General Manager's Report for Year Ending December 31, 1919*. (Cmd. 666-1920, in S. P. 1920, vol. XX). Government control of the liquor trade in selected areas was a profitable undertaking. Central Control Board, *Statement of Assets and*

nights" became a city of righteousness and production, especially after housing conditions improved and industrial canteens were provided.<sup>4</sup>

Just as the need of achieving maximum production led the State to attempt to guard the morals of the munitions workers,<sup>5</sup> so it felt forced to concern itself with their physical welfare. As the war developed, efficiency seemed to decline. The first action of the Government was, as usual, to appoint committees to investigate and report. The chief cause of declining productivity was excessive hours of work.<sup>6</sup> There "was something little short of a debauch of long hours."<sup>7</sup> Debauches of whatever

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*Liabilities as at March 31, 1919.* (Cmd. 318-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XLV). For an overall summary, cf. Thomas Nixon Carver, *Government Control of the Liquor Business in Great Britain and the United States* (New York, 1919), pp. 17-35, and Henry Carter, *The Control of the Drink Trade in Great Britain* (London, 1919).

4 Defence of the Realm (Liquor Control) Regulations. *General Manager's Report for Year Ending December 31, 1918*, p. 2. (Cmd. 137-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXIV). For the abolition of the "long pull," cf. *ibid.*, and also *Report for 1920.* (Cmd. 1252-1921, in S. P. 1921, vol. XIV).

5 The attempts to curtail Sunday labor sometimes hit unexpected snags. Some firms closed down on Saturdays rather than on Sundays as the great majority of their employees "did not go to church or chapel" and "they could amuse themselves and get fresh air on Saturdays in a way which Sabbatarian prejudices would prevent on Sundays." Ministry of Munitions, V, Part III, 101. There was some ecclesiastical authority for this. The "Gloomy Dean," W. R. Inge, had asserted, in February, 1916, that "the time given to prayers would be better occupied to the purpose of making munitions." Michael MacDonagh, *In London during the Great War* (London, 1935), p. 95. At the same time, however, the Ministry of Munitions was making grants for church sites and buildings in conjunction with munitions factories. *Return Showing Grants by Ministry of Munitions for Sites and Buildings for Churches, etc.*, pp. 2-3. (H. of C. # 60-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. XXVI).

6 The Home Office, yielding to clamor, had been forced to grant exemptions, on a large scale, from the Factory Acts. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1915*, p. 6. (Cd. 8276-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. IX).

7 Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

nature inevitably lead to bad time-keeping and lowered production. As early as the end of 1914, the Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops pointed out the disadvantages of excessive hours.<sup>8</sup> The Ministry of Munitions, soon after its establishment, appointed a Health of Munitions Workers Committee to consider and advise on hours of labor, industrial fatigue, "and other matters affecting the physical health and physical efficiency of workers in munition factories and workshops."<sup>9</sup> Its chief recommendation was that Sunday labor be abolished by government mandate, since competition rendered action by individual employers difficult. The foremen and managers, who showed "obvious signs of overwork," and other employees, and production itself, were expected to benefit from this reform.<sup>10</sup>

The Home Office, on the basis of independent investigations, reached the same conclusion. Fatigue became permanent when not relieved by Sunday rest. The process continued "from week to week until either the worker breaks down under the strain or, a more probable result, equilibrium is brought about"; so, too, in the case of overtime.<sup>11</sup> Even incentive wages were dangerous. The Health of Munitions Workers Committee pointed out that workers were encouraged to work hard, but as they worked long hours, the result might well be a decline

<sup>8</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1914, p. 60. (Cd. 8051-1915, in S. P., vol. XXV).

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, *Report on Sunday Labour*, p. 3. (Cd. 8132-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXIX).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Home Office, *Second Interim Report of an Investigation of Industrial Fatigue by Physiological Methods*, p. 4. (Cd. 8335, in S. P. 1916, vol. XI). The abolition of Sunday labor and very long hours did, as experience later showed, serve to increase the total output. Ministry of Munitions—Health of Munitions Workers Committee, *Hours of Work*, pp. 3, 18. (Cd. 8628, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XX). *Weekly Hours of Employment*, p. 7. (Cd. 8801-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XX).

in production because of greatly lowered efficiency.<sup>12</sup> Because "residual fatigue" became cumulative, overtime was "physiologically and economically extravagant."<sup>13</sup> Overtime might even result in a total drop in daily output; this was especially true in the case of a twelve-hour day.<sup>14</sup> Employers differed on long or short hours, "but it is significant that . . . no employer who has once adopted the shorter scale of hours ever desires to return to a longer period."<sup>15</sup> By 1916 there was a very notable decrease in employers' requests for permission to work their employees long hours.<sup>16</sup>

Excessive hours was not the only reason for loss of efficiency; patriotism offered insufficient pabulum for the adequate sustenance of workers engaged in heavy tasks for long hours. Both the Home Office<sup>17</sup> and the Ministry of Munitions<sup>18</sup> advocated the installation of industrial canteens. A good industrial canteen<sup>19</sup> would result not only in improved nutrition and increased efficiency but in "a lessened tendency to excessive consumption

12 Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, *Interim Report, Industrial Efficiency and Fatigue*, p. 12. (Cd. 8511-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XVI).

13 Cd. 8335, p. 22, in S. P. 1916, vol. XI.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

15 Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Memorandum # 5, Hours of Work, p. 5. (Cd. 8186-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XXIII).

16 Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1916, p. 4. (Cd. 8570-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XIV). It is estimated that the net gain in productivity during the war period as a result of overtime worked was equivalent to the labor of 200,000 men and 35,000 women. N. B. Dearle, *The Labor Cost of the World War to Great Britain 1914-1922* (New Haven, 1940), p. 74.

17 Cd. 8335, pp. 47-48, in S. P. 1916, vol. XI.

18 Ministry of Munitions—Health of Munitions Workers Committee, *Report on Industrial Canteens*. (Cd. 8133-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXIX).

19 For model canteens cf. Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Memorandum # 6, Canteen Construction. (Cd. 8199-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XXIII).

of alcohol" because of "the prevalence of the spirit of harmony and contentment engendered. . . ." <sup>20</sup>

Before the end of the war, canteens, built at first with funds raised by popular subscription,<sup>21</sup> were an accepted fact in many industrial establishments. One-half of all munitions workers worked in plants with canteens. Factories were encouraged to build canteens by permitting canteen expenditures to be written off against the Excess Profits Duty.<sup>22</sup> The Central Control Liquor Board hailed industrial canteens as "most effective instruments in securing and maintaining a high standard of industrial work and product."<sup>23</sup> And even more: "The absence of civilizing influences from factory industry has been its condemnation in the past. The industrial canteen aids in the destruction of this traditional reproach . . . and may be claimed as a substantial contribution to the humanization of industry."<sup>24</sup>

The influx of women and children into munitions work did most to make the welfare movement an integral part of the production process.<sup>25</sup> The industrial welfare movement did not, of

<sup>20</sup> Cd. 8133, p. 7, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXIX. Ministry of Munitions, Memorandum # 19. (Cd. 8798-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XX). Fourth Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), p. 10. (Cd. 9055-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. XI). First Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), p. 6. (Cd. 8117-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXV).

<sup>21</sup> Third Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), p. 10. So strong was the tradition against the Government's assuming responsibility, that funds for a recreation program were provided, not by the Government, but by the Maharajah of Scindia of Gwalior. Lloyd George, in E. Dorothea Proud, *Welfare Work* (London, 1918), p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Fourth Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), p. 11. (Cd. 9055-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. XI).

<sup>23</sup> Third Report of the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), p. 12. (Cd. 8558-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XV).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> "...if the present long hours, the lack of helpful and sympathetic oversight, the inability to obtain good and wholesome food...are allowed to continue, it will be impracticable to secure or maintain for an extended period the high maximum of output of which women are undoubtedly capable." Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee,

course, originate with the war. Welfare work, under various names, had existed in establishments throughout the country in the nineteenth century. The war, however, forced an extension of the welfare movement on a very large scale. Although the chief effects were felt in Government plants, especially after the creation of the Welfare Section of the Ministry of Munitions in January, 1916, many private establishments took a leaf out of the Government's book and instituted "welfare" plans in their own factories. As B. S. Rowntree, the first Director of the Welfare Section, pointed out: "Real betterment of conditions springs in the last analysis from the conviction in the mind of the employer that here lies his plain duty, a duty which does not conflict with his business interests but promotes them, since it is obvious that workers who are in good health and are provided with the amenities of life are more efficient workers."<sup>26</sup>

Welfare supervision "is simply the creation in a factory of those conditions which enable each individual worker to do his or her best."<sup>27</sup> Welfare superintendents were appointed and restrooms and canteens provided. Recreation was considered an "essential" part of the welfare scheme, and most welfare superintendents were concerned with schemes for recreation<sup>28</sup> as well as providing the necessary supervision and care for the thousands of women workers often employed outside the home for the first time. Welfare supervision was urged whenever women were employed,<sup>29</sup> and the Home Office permitted night work for women only if they were responsibly supervised; in 1916 the Home Office was given powers to require the establishment of

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Memorandum # 4, *Employment of Women*, p. 4. (Cd. 8185-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XXIII). Memorandum # 13, *Juvenile Employment*. (Cd. 8362-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XXIII).

<sup>26</sup> *Ministry of Munitions*, V, Part III, 12.

<sup>27</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, III, 774.

<sup>28</sup> Final Report, *Health of Mmunition Workers Committee*, *Industrial Health and Efficiency*, p. 128. (Cd. 9065-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. XII).

<sup>29</sup> *Health of Munitions Workers Committee*, Memorandum # 2, *Welfare Supervision*. (Cd. 8143, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LV).

supervision when it seemed necessary.<sup>30</sup> In 1916 the Ministry of Munitions began making grants to factories building nurseries, absorbing 75 per cent of the cost.<sup>31</sup> Medical service was also recommended.<sup>32</sup>

Closely associated with the Welfare Movement was the problem of housing, which assumed large proportions because of the shifts in industrial population and because of the fact that building of homes for private purposes practically came to a standstill after 1914. The building of houses costing more than £500 was forbidden without the permission of the Ministry of Munitions. Even without restrictive legislation the competition for labor and materials as a result of the building of factories would have adversely affected private buildings. To meet the needs of munitions workers, the Ministry of Munitions provided houses in a limited number of areas, encouraged the erection of hostels, and used the powers of the Billeting of Civilians Act of 1917, under which householders could be required to accept munitions workers as lodgers at maximum rates in specified munitions areas.<sup>33</sup> The evils were not eliminated, but they were alleviated.

The exigencies of war even forced the Government to concern itself with "the drudge of commerce,"<sup>34</sup> the merchant seamen. The demand for seamen could not be met by "dilution," and the regular permanent fringe of unemployed was absorbed by the war. In the effort to retain seamen, their praises were sung, their wages raised, and their conditions bettered. All this was in marked contrast to pre-war days, when sailors

30 W. R. Scott and J. Cunnison, *The Industries of the Clyde Valley during the War* (Oxford, 1924), p. 178.

31 Cd. 9065, p. 25, in S. P. 1918, vol. XII.

32 Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Memorandum # 10, Sickness and Injury, p. 9. (Cd. 8216-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XXIII).

33 Rules For Billeting of Civilians. (Cd. 8704-1917, Cd. 8705-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XXXVIII).

34 L. Cope Cornford, *The Merchant Seaman in War* (London, 1918), p. XVI.



were considered of such little importance that the scheme of shipping insurance adopted by the Government at the beginning of the war did not cover the crews.<sup>35</sup> Not until later were they gradually given protection under the Workmen's Compensation Act and special insurance provisions.<sup>36</sup> This insurance did not, however, cover them for loss of wages incurred by the loss of the ship. Under the Merchant Shipping Acts the legal right to wages terminated on the loss of the ship, and this was taken to include ships lost as a result of enemy action.<sup>37</sup> The shipowner and the shipper were both insured against loss, but the sailor had no such protection. In March, 1915, he was enabled to insure his personal effects, but the maximum insurable value was fixed at £5, which did not cover replacement cost. Nor was he compensated for the expense of travelling to his home port from the ports to which ships had been diverted because of submarines or other causes.<sup>38</sup> Not until the late summer of 1917 were these grievances met by the Government's providing for increased insurance payments,<sup>39</sup> payment of one month's wages to survivors of ships sunk by enemy action,<sup>40</sup> and free railway travel for crews of diverted ships.<sup>41</sup> The problem of food supply was not peculiar to seamen, but the State was forced to take direct action because the lack of food for crews held up the sailing of ships. In 1917 special arrangements were worked out by the Government, the shipowners, and the unions in order to supply merchant seamen with food.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>37</sup> Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Fayle, *War and the Shipping Industry*, pp. 259-260.

<sup>39</sup> Hopkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>40</sup> Fayle, *War and the Shipping Industry*, p. 263.

<sup>41</sup> Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76; *cf.* p. 188 for copy of agreement. *Cf.* Cmd. 545, p. 9, for changes in food rations for seamen.

The object of the welfare movement was increased output. A healthy and contented labor force was not only efficient, but also regular and punctual in attendance. One of the reasons for the introduction and application of the welfare movement was the widespread and serious degree of "absenteeism," and where the welfare movement lagged, other methods were attempted to decrease the amount of time the worker stayed away from his job.

"Absenteeism" was to be a problem in all industries during the war, but in the coal mining industry it very early became the concern of the Government. It was estimated that the irreducible minimum of absenteeism, made necessary by illness and accidents, was 5 per cent; the average percentage of absenteeism was about 10 per cent; thus one-half was avoidable.<sup>43</sup> The *Minutes of the Evidence* of the Coal Mining Organization Committee (Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into the Conditions prevailing in the Mining Industry due to the War), appointed in 1915, abound with references to the problem, but no completely satisfactory solution was being offered.<sup>44</sup> The closing of the "public houses" on Sundays, and possibly on Saturdays, might reduce absenteeism, usually heaviest on Mondays, "provided it did not result in getting barrels of beer into the house, because that might have more disastrous consequences."<sup>45</sup> Testimony was offered that there was less drinking at the collieries than ten or fifteen years earlier. To the question whether that included women also, a witness spread on the record his prejudices regarding inhabitants of the

<sup>43</sup> Coal Mining Organization Committee, Report of the Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into the Conditions prevailing in the Coal Mining Industry due to the War, I, 6, 17, 24. II, 2 (Cd. 7939-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LIII and Cd. 8147-1915 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII).

<sup>44</sup> The practice of taking holidays "was of long standing in an industry requiring arduous labour." Cf. Thomas S. Ashton and Joseph Sykes, *The Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 1929).

<sup>45</sup> Coal Mining Organization Committee, *Minutes of the Evidence*, p. 18. (Cd. 8009-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII).

Tyne: "I do not know that there was drinking amongst the women at all in our colliery villages, unless you take a few villages on the banks of the Tyne, such as Wallsend. . . . It is almost unknown, a women would be scorned if she drank." <sup>46</sup> National traits were likewise held to be responsible. The Acting Divisional Inspector of Mines for Scotland suggested that "a Scotsman may not be so desirous of wasting his time as an Englishman." <sup>47</sup> Absenteeism was lowest in Scotland and highest in England because the Scots could less easily afford to be absent. "The districts having the thinnest seams of coal and where the coal is hardest to get show, generally speaking, the best results in respect of regular attendance at work." <sup>48</sup> A union leader agreed that the miners would respond to a plea based on patriotism, but deplored the lack of reliable information on the progress of the war, coupled with the optimistic Government announcements, which had "destroyed any fear or doubt in the breasts of our men about the ultimate victory on the field of battle. . . . We have made sufficient progress now to have crossed the earth if what the papers say is true. . . . I wish the Government would trust the people more and take them into their confidence. They need not doubt them. The people will rise better to the necessity of the nation then." <sup>49</sup> The Secretary of the North of England United Coal Trade Association testified to the same effect. Patriotism was a good ground for appealing for better attendance, especially if the miners "were not led to believe, as they are in the newspapers day by day, that everything is going swimmingly, and that we can drive the Germans back whenever we choose to do so. I think that impression is having a very bad effect on the working classes." <sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>48</sup> Coal Mining Organization Committee . . . , p. 3. (Cd. 8147 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII).

<sup>49</sup> Cd. 8009, p. 51.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

At the suggestion of the Government, the South Wales Miners' Federation issued an appeal "to every workman . . . to work as regularly as possible with the assurance that his work in a mine is as necessary as the operation in the trenches. . . ." <sup>51</sup> Just before Easter, 1915, Kitchener, supported by the Executive of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, exhorted the miners to limit the Easter and Whitsuntide Holiday. It is estimated that as a result of the reduction in the Easter Holidays alone there was an increased output of nearly one million tons. The miners were thanked by His Majesty the King, by Proclamation. It was characteristic of Kitchener and of many members of the Liberal Government, that they were at first opposed to making the appeal. <sup>52</sup>

Supervision of the workers' moral and physical welfare, together with appeals to their patriotism, did result in increased production, but the efficacy of money as a stimulus to effort was not ignored. No less experienced a man than the Chief Inspector of Mines, who served as chairman of the Coal Mining Organization Committee, suggested that extra pay be given the workers as a reward for regular attendance in the coal mines. The Vice President of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain opposed the idea as "blood money," a stricture to which its proponent could only mildly reply that "it would be nicer to call it a war bonus than blood money." <sup>53</sup> The opposition was one of principle. The organized workers demanded increased wages as of right and looked upon the various welfare schemes as devices intended to distract them from the main issue and to increase the employers' control over their workers.

<sup>51</sup> Coal Mining Organization Committee . . . , (Cd. 7939 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII).

<sup>52</sup> Sir Richard A. S. Redmayne, *Men, Mines, and Memories* (London, 1942), p. 182.

<sup>53</sup> Coal Mining Organization Committee, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 207. (Cd. 8009-1915).

## CHAPTER VII

### WAGES OF WAR

ENTHUSIASTIC as were the advocates of welfare policies for the worker, the question of wages was the most important aspect of employment. "The work-people wanted to 'addle more brass' and no amount of philosophic discussion or philanthropic sectional improvement could make up for the desire for more secure and better pay."<sup>1</sup> The workman's major criterion in judging the desirability of a job was the remuneration; the lure of higher pay was the chief factor in his determining to give up one job for another. The wage problem is therefore closely tied up with labor turnover and efficiency. It was a problem highly difficult of solution and was never satisfactorily solved. If it was true of the Government's labor policy in general that it had none,<sup>2</sup> the aphorism was particularly true in the case of wages. Wage regulation was undertaken by the Government with extreme reluctance. As in other fields of State intervention during wartime, the Government had few precedents to go by. The Fair Wages Clause in government contracts, which provided that "prevailing" wages and hours must be observed by contractors on government work, the Trades Boards Act of 1909, and the Coal Mines Minimum Wage Act all dealt with wages, but experience under them could not offer much assistance.

The State's role during the war was made especially difficult by the fact that wage rates varied widely and that, despite the high degree of business and labor organization, the employers and workers had not agreed on any uniform method of arriving at them. In many industries, including some of the major ones—steel and textiles—, wage rates were fixed by collective agreements made on a more or less national basis. In the coal, engineering, and shipbuilding trades, however, most wage

<sup>1</sup> Askwith, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

agreements were by districts. Although usually incorporated into written agreements, wage rates were sometimes in practice recognized without any written agreement. The district standard wages did not, by any means, embody any standard principles. Sometimes they were regarded as a minimum for all classes of skilled workers; sometimes there were different rates for different branches of the engineering and allied industries. Generally, but by no means universally, wages were higher in shipbuilding than in general engineering; ship-repairing had an even higher standard. There were usually special standard rates in the same locality for railway and textile engineering workers; these were, as a rule, lower than the general engineering rate. In many districts members of special crafts received different and, usually, relatively high wages.

Below the skilled workers, with their diverse wage rates, there was the whole range of semi-skilled and unskilled labor. For these categories general district wage rates under written agreements did not exist; their wages were governed by customary rates, sometimes applicable to a particular plant, sometimes extending over a whole area.<sup>3</sup> These varying practices were complicated by the fact that in the engineering industry craft unions had flourished so luxuriantly that often there were as many as twenty unions in a single plant, with all of which the employer had to negotiate separately.<sup>4</sup> Although most of these unions were represented in the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades Federation, and the employers in the National Engineering Employers' Federation, practically all matters subject to collective bargaining were determined, not by the Federations, or even on a national scale by the various special groups concerned, but rather locally, with provision for a national appeal only in case of local "failure to agree."<sup>5</sup>

The largest union in the engineering trades, a group consisting of workers engaged in the working up of iron and steel

3 Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, pp. 47-48.

4 Wolfe, *Labour Supply and Regulation*, p. 236.

5 Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, p. 50.

into machinery or other finished products, was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers; it had 150,000 members, out of a total of about 1,500,000 workers engaged in the industry. (This does not include the iron and steel trades proper.)<sup>6</sup> The lines of demarcation as between unions were very blurred in both directions. Although the organized workers in the engineering trades were mostly members of craft unions, these unions also included workers engaged in other industries. On the other hand, the general labor unions had invaded the engineering field, taking advantage of the fact that, with the increasing use of general and automatic machinery, many formerly distinct occupations had begun to merge. The theoretical test of skill was mainly that of apprenticeship.<sup>7</sup> Jurisdictional conflicts had long been common and led to difficulties throughout the war period. More serious was the situation of the unorganized trades which, despite the gains after the great London Dock strike, tended to depress all wage rates. Traditionally and typically, the agricultural laborers remained isolated and insulated, Joseph Arch and the Agricultural Labourers Union notwithstanding.

The first wage problem to confront the Government was caused by the rise in prices. In August, 1914, the major unions, goaded by the disaffection of their members which was caused by the decline in real wages, were girding for a struggle, but the patriotism and panic engendered by the declaration of war made them happy to accept terms "freezing" wages. Fearing a recession and believing that the war would not last long enough to raise prices for any length of time, the unions accepted terms fixing current wage rates. Although prices did rise 10 per cent in the first six weeks of the war, the forecast of the union leaders was partially borne out in that prices remained at this level for eight months. Thereafter prices rose

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 21, 27. In 1919 the membership rose to 320,000. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 485.

<sup>7</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, pp. 22, 25, 41.

rapidly and almost regularly. From August, 1914, to December, 1917, prices increased 27 per cent per year, which is equivalent to a cumulative 2 per cent monthly. For the next ten months, until the end of the war, prices increased much more slowly, rising only  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.<sup>8</sup> As the cost of living and employment rose, demands for increased wages revived. At first, increases were made by means of "war-bonuses," which varied with bargaining abilities, jobs, industries, and localities, and kept the pre-war normal rates unchanged. It was on this principle that the Committee on Production, established in February, 1915, made its awards.

Asquith in the House of Commons on February 11, 1915, was able to demonstrate that prices were below the heights reached in 1871, and gave the impression that the rise in the cost of living was inevitable.<sup>9</sup> The employers and unions continued to make agreements fixing money wages "for the duration of the war."<sup>10</sup> Yet competition for workers soon forced up wage rates in some districts, compelling the Government to take its first hesitant step in wage regulation by enacting Section 4 (2) of the Munitions of War Act, 1915; this merely provided that the consent of the Minister of Munitions was necessary before wage rates could be altered in a controlled establishment. The same Act also provided that all differences as to wages on munitions work could be compulsorily settled by the Committee on Production, which had begun its functions on February 2, 1915, as a voluntary arbitration board. To avoid conflicts between the Minister of Munitions, who had the power to prevent changes in wage rates, and the Committee on Production, which was given the

<sup>8</sup> Arthur L. Bowley, *Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom 1914-1920* (Oxford, 1921), pp. 7, 8, 50.

<sup>9</sup> 69 H. C. Deb. 5s., 758-776. This observation was, of course, bitterly resented by the workers who knew that wages always tended to lag behind prices. Cf. 69 H. C. Deb. 5s., 776-784, 1151-1170, for speeches by Clynes, Anderson, and others.

<sup>10</sup> Beveridge, *British Food Control*, p. 9.



power to act as a compulsory arbitration board, the Minister of Munitions automatically approved, in practice, all increases granted by the Committee.<sup>11</sup>

The Committee on Production acted as an arbitration tribunal until it was merged into the Interim Court of Arbitration at the end of 1918; from May, 1917, it included workers' and employers' representatives.<sup>12</sup> It was the principal arbitration tribunal for the determination of differences between employers and workers.<sup>13</sup> Wage increases were difficult to resist because of the pressure, not only of workers, but of employers, too. Employers faced with the need of meeting schedules were often willing to go much further than the Committee. This situation was accentuated by the fact that many contracts were what is known as "time-and-line," or "cost-plus," i.e., a definite percentage of profit on gross expenditure. Therefore the higher the wages, the greater the profit.

In November, 1915, in an attempt to halt general wage increases, the Government restricted the powers of the Committee on Production. The Committee was, henceforth, to have the power of approving increases only for the purpose of adjusting local differences where such adjustments were proved to be necessary.<sup>14</sup> Thus labor, which had abandoned the right to strike and accepted compulsory arbitration in its stead, found that the intention was to "freeze" wages. Rising prices and shortage of labor proved irresistible, however; from the spring of 1916 wage increases were again permitted.<sup>15</sup>

11 Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

12 H. of C. # 185—1919, pp. 7, 8.

13 Committee on Production and Special Arbitration, *Memorandum on Proceedings of the Committee on Production*, p. 2 (Cd. 9126—1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. XII).

14 Cf. 80 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1369.

15 For example, workers in the engineering and foundry trades received increases in March, 1915; July, 1916; March, 1917; July, 1917; March, 1918; July, 1918; and November, 1918. H. of C. # 185—1919, pp. 36 ff.

In February, 1917, the Engineering Employers' Federation and the Engineering Unions, at the suggestion of the Committee of Production, entered into an agreement to suspend, for the war period, the existing machinery for altering wages. The Committee on Production was authorized to review wages three times a year and to make awards which would be of national application.<sup>16</sup> The agreement served as a precedent for similar arrangements in other industries in 1917 and 1918. Thus the Government was forced to a step advocated by Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, as early as February, 1915, though for a different reason. After expounding the dangers of state intervention in industry and of any attempt to regulate prices, Runciman had suggested that the line of escape from rising prices must be found in raising wages.<sup>17</sup>

Beginning only with "controlled" establishments, the Munitions of War Act of 1915 did not apply to Government establishments or to industry in general. It left uncovered wages of new employees, who could be taken on at any rates of wages without violation of the terms of the Act. The Munitions of War Act of 1916 extended the provision for wage regulation to include government establishments. By Section 7, also, the Minister of Munitions was given power "to give directions as to the rate of wages, hours of labour, or conditions of employment of semi-skilled and unskilled men" doing work which "was customarily undertaken by skilled labour" before the war. This latter provision was inserted to meet labor's insistence and was designed to protect wage rates despite dilution. The Munitions of War Act of 1915, providing that wage rates should not be adversely affected, had not proved effective. It was hoped that more detailed regulations might prove more efficacious.

Although the Munitions of War Acts had provided for several alternative methods of arbitration, the Committee on

16 Cd. 9126, pp. 3-4, in S. P. 1918, vol. XII.

17 69 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1189.

Production became the recognized arbitration tribunal for dealing with general wage claims for a variation in the district rates applying in a particular locality. Women's wages seldom came before the Committee on Production, and after the establishment of the Women's Special Arbitration Tribunal in March, 1916, the latter body dealt with almost all cases of women's wages. It had no power to issue binding awards, as did the Committee on Production, but could merely recommend that certain rates be fixed by the Minister of Munitions, who was the final authority.

The Committee on Production, in acting on claims, maintained the pre-war practice of the engineering and allied industries by issuing purely local awards "dealing in a piecemeal fashion with such local claims as were brought before it from particular districts." However, the ubiquitous factor was the increasing cost of living, and the Committee found itself issuing practically identical awards in all districts. To save time and effort, it encouraged, beginning in February, 1917, the principal trade unions in the engineering and foundry trades and the Engineering Employers' Federation to enter into a "National Agreement on General Wage Applications." Fifty trade unions ultimately signed it. The Agreement did not apply to shipbuilding, but the Committee on Production extended it to shipyards. Almost identical agreements subsequently affected the chemical, soap, Scottish building, and other industries.

The National Agreement contained a clause allowing the unions also to bring forward for special consideration the case of any district where they claimed the "rates of wages are unduly low or that the total amount of war advance is not adequate."<sup>18</sup> The Committee on Production granted increases totalling 28s. 6d. per week by December, 1918.<sup>19</sup> In addition, in many districts rates were "levelled up" by the unions taking advantage of the clause in the Agreement providing for an

<sup>18</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, pp. 158-160.

<sup>19</sup> *Memorandum on Proceedings of the Committee on Production*, p. 4 (Cmd. 70-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXVII).

appeal for special district advances. This clause the Unions also utilized for the purpose of replacing the purely local rates of the pre-war period by regional, if not national, rates, though they were by no means entirely successful in this attempt.<sup>20</sup> In an effort further to simplify and unify wage rates, Section 5 of the Munitions of War Act, 1917, extended statutory awards compulsorily in cases where wage awards covered a majority of employers in the trade.

The Government was further plagued by the change in the basis of wage payments for many workers during the war. "Payment by result," that is, by work or other means of measuring output, was often an integral part of dilution, made possible by the dividing up of a job into component parts separately performed by relatively unskilled workers. The growth of automatic machinery and of national factories, attended by the introduction of untrained and untried workers, stimulated the establishment of systems of payments by results, which had always been resisted by skilled and organized workers. Another complication in the problem was that the unskilled worker often earned as much as or more than did the skilled man. The least skilled operations could be most easily speeded up; the difficult and delicate work could not. Friction increased when the skilled man, who had worked many years at his trade, found the newcomer better off than he was.

Because of a tendency to reduce piece rates when the total weekly wages rose steeply as a result of increased output, labor resisted the introduction of piece work rates on the ground that it was but a synonym for the "speed-up" system. To overcome this rather natural reluctance of the workers and thus to encourage dilution, the Minister of Munitions on September 13, 1915, pledged that the Government would prevent reduction of piece rates as a consequence of the increase of output owing to the suspension of restrictions;<sup>21</sup> this pledge was given statutory force by the Munitions of War Act of 1917.

<sup>20</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>21</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

Though one problem was thus partially solved, others were created. The general problem was not completely settled because the skilled workers, especially the engineers and wood workers, refused to consider any extension of the piece work system. In January, 1917, the Government, acting through the veteran Labourite, John Hodge, then Minister of Labour, called a conference in an attempt to break down the opposition to piece work for the duration of the war; the conference yielded no results.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the problem of wage differentials between the skilled and unskilled was aggravated by the guarantee not to reduce piecework rates. As a result of simplified production processes constantly introduced with the growth of war experience and also, in all probability, of the growth of "speeding-up," relatively unskilled workers were receiving wages not approached by skilled workers of many years' experience, who, for a variety of reasons, were still paid on time rates. Labor solidarity notwithstanding, this condition aggravated the general problem of rising prices and increasing competition for workers.<sup>23</sup>

The Amending Act of 1917 empowered the Minister of Munitions to give directions with regard to the remuneration to be paid for munitions work on time rates when necessary "for the purpose of the maintenance and increase of output." This was the genesis of the 12½ per cent "bonus" on time rates granted by the War Cabinet in October, 1917. It is clear that one of the principal sources of discontent was the relatively low wages of the skilled men at a time when they were so indispensable.<sup>24</sup> With the prospective abolition of the odious "leav-

<sup>22</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, pp. 166-167. Later another Labourite, George Barnes, member of the War Cabinet, strove mightily to convert his fellow union members to this point of view; but with the same lack of results. The workers, in addition to opposing him on this issue, spent their time, he charged, "in talking of all sorts of things, of philosophical affairs...and various other things, all very interesting in their way..." 103 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1322.

<sup>23</sup> 99 H. C. Deb. 5s., 2014.

<sup>24</sup> 97 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1301 ff.

ing certificate," it was feared that there would be a general exodus of the skilled workers from many plants in search of newer and better-paid jobs, often involving less skill.<sup>25</sup> Churchill, as Minister of Munitions, advocated a limited application of the bonus; the Cabinet overrode him, and an order was issued on October 13, 1917, providing "that fully qualified skilled time-workers in the engineering and foundry trades should be granted an increase of 12½ per cent upon their weekly earnings, provided that their wages equalled or exceeded the district time-rate payable to fitters and turners. Such increase to commence in the first full week after the 14 October, 1917. This increase shall not apply to men with upstanding wage or salary covering overtime."<sup>26</sup> On October 15, 1917, the leaving certificates were abolished. On November 21, the Cabinet extended the bonus to the 1,400,000 munition workers on time rates in the engineering, foundry, and ship-building industries.<sup>27</sup>

Although the "bonus" had been intended to equalize wages as between time and piece workers by raising the wages of the former, discontent on the part of the latter forced the granting of a 7½ per cent increase on piece work. This helped to raise wages all around, but it would be a mistake to think that on the whole the British worker was better off because of Government intervention. State interference in wage settlements "acted to keep the level of wages rather lower than would have otherwise been the case."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> 99 H. C. Deb. 5s., 2012.

<sup>26</sup> *Ministry of Munitions*, V, Part I, 180.

<sup>27</sup> 101 H. C. Deb. 5s., 492.

<sup>28</sup> Alan G. B. Fisher, *Some Problems of Wages and Their Regulation in Great Britain Since 1918* (London, 1926), p. 12. This is just what David Kirkwood, a leader of the Clyde workers complained of: "The worker followed the politics of the employers; he had only one thing to sell—his labour—and he considered it proper political economy to sell his labour to the highest bidder... The outstanding feature of the Munitions Act was that it denied the men the right to sell their labour to the highest bidder." David Kirkwood, *My Life of Revolt* (London, 1935), pp. 99, 101.

The State, which had undertaken control so reluctantly and fragmentarily, sought to rid itself of its burden as soon as possible. Churchill, as Minister of Munitions, in an interview with the Management Committee of the Engineering Employers' Federation on October 4, 1918, looked forward to a return to more normal conditions. "I tell you frankly (we are speaking quite confidentially) that in my opinion, until the conditions of economic bargaining are restored to their freedom, I doubt very much whether you will get a satisfactory result. . . ." <sup>29</sup>

## CHAPTER VIII

### WOMEN

WAGE costs mounted, but throughout the war employers found a source of relatively low cost labor in the employment of women on jobs formerly reserved for men. Before the war women workers had been little organized and worse paid. The largest union exclusively for women was the National Federation of Women Workers, founded in 1909<sup>1</sup> and growing to twenty thousand by 1914. There were, however, appreciable numbers of women in the General Workers Union and the textile unions which admitted women members on equal terms with men.<sup>2</sup>

Women workers had offered little trouble to industry and to the State before the war. A shocked social conscience and business competition, rather than the women workers affected, were instrumental in securing the passage of the Trades Boards Act of 1909. For if they had been articulately and actively discontented, there would have been no need for these Trades Boards. Before the war minimum wages had been established under the Act in the chainmaking, ready-made tailoring, paper-box, and lace-finishing industries.<sup>3</sup> During the next two years (and largely independent of the war) four other industries—sugar confectionery and food-preserving, hollowware, tin-box, and shirts—were included. These eight industries employed 320,000 women and 80,000 men in 1914. By the proceedings taken

1 Margaret Bondfield and Mary MacArthur, *English Women in the Labor and Cooperative Movements* (Chicago, 1919), p. 20.

2 L. Grier, A. Ashley, and A. W. Kirkaldy, *British Labour Replacement and Conciliation 1914-1921* (London, 1921), p. 32.

3 Cf. Dorothy Sells, *British Wages Boards* (Washington, 1939), for operation of trades boards. Cf., also, R. H. Tawney, *The Establishment of the Minimum Rates in the Chain-making Industry under the Trades Boards Acts of 1909* (London, 1914), and R. H. Tawney, *The Establishment of the Minimum Rates in the Tailoring Industry under the Trades Boards Acts of 1909* (London, 1915).



under the provisions of the Trades Boards Act, minimum hourly rates were set; or if compensation was on a piecework basis, a minimum rate on piece work was fixed so as to yield an ordinary worker at least as much money as the minimum time rate. This minimum wage was not, however, a living wage.<sup>4</sup>

In what were to develop as the great war industries, women had been barely employed prior to the war. In July, 1914, the total number of females in Great Britain was 23,721,000. Of these, 5,966,000 were in occupations; 12,946,000, ten years of age and over, were not in occupations; and 4,809,000 were under the age of ten.<sup>5</sup> Although they were represented in the textile trades by 863,000 as compared to 625,000 men, and in the clothing industries by 612,000 to 287,000, in the metal trades, employing 1,634,000 men, only 170,000 women were employed.<sup>6</sup> The great majority of the women employed in the metal trades were in the minor metal trades and did not come into direct competition with male engineering labor.<sup>7</sup> Geographically they were mostly confined to a comparatively small area in Birmingham and the Black Country.<sup>8</sup> According to the 1911 census, 3,787 women were employed in the railway industry in England and Wales. By 1914 the number was tripled, but was still only 2 per cent of the total number of employed in the industry.<sup>9</sup> Eighty thousand women were employed in agriculture in July, 1914, fifty thousand as casual laborers.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Journal of Political Economy*, XXII, 629.

<sup>5</sup> Even before the war, women were coming, more and more, into the labor market. *Times*, October 3, 1916.

<sup>6</sup> *Women In Industry, Report of the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry*, p. 10. (Cmd. 135 in S. P. 1918, vol. XXXI). Hereafter cited as Cmd. 135 in S. P. 1919, Vol. XXXI.

<sup>7</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Adam W. Kirkaldy, editor, *Industry and Finance*, Supplementary Volume (London, 1920), p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> G. D. H. Cole and R. Page Arnot, *Trade Unionism on the Railways* (London, 1917), p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> Cmd. 135, p. 98, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

The employment of women underground in the mines had been forbidden by law before the war, but about 6,500 women and girls were employed in surface work at the mines out of a grand total of over 1,100,000, which included a total of over 200,000 surface workers.<sup>11</sup> The average wage for all workers, surface and underground, men and women, boys and girls, was 6s. 5.64d. per shift on the eve of the war. It was 5s. 2.23d. for male adult surface workers, 2s. 5.4d. for youths and boys on surface work, and 1s. 11.4d. for female surface workers.<sup>12</sup> The War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry estimated that before the war the wages of women in all industry averaged one-half of men's wages.<sup>13</sup>

Although the free-play of the market did not ensure freedom from discontent, and strikes were not unknown, female labor was generally as docile as it was under-paid. Sporadic strikes were hailed as harbingers of revolution, but all fizzled out, including the strike of 672 match girls in 1888,<sup>14</sup> which was, Engels thought, "the light jostle needed for the entire avalanche to move."<sup>15</sup> It was rather the militant suffragette movement, led by the redoubtable Pankhursts, which hounded the Government and haunted the responsible members of the community. The declaration of war gave the suffragette leaders a new and greater enemy, and the reaction on the police force was immediate. Extra police were removed from the Royal Palace and other public buildings because, in the laconic words of the Committee on Public Accounts, "the Suffragette agitation succumbed from the moment of the war."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Coal Industry Commission, 1919, III, 3. (Cmd. 361-1919 in S. P. 1919, vols. XI, XII, XIII). Hereafter cited as Sankey.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 109.

<sup>13</sup> Cmd. 135, pp. 151-152, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

<sup>14</sup> Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 402.

<sup>15</sup> Allen Hutt, *This Final Crisis* (London, 1935), p. 115.

<sup>16</sup> First and Second Reports from The Committee on Public Accounts, p. 4. (H. of C. # 270-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol IV). No general

The war not only deprived the suffragettes of their accustomed activities; it deprived many more women of their usual employment. Unemployment came hard on the heels of the declaration of war, but promptly became negligible for male workers; for women workers the dread of unemployment was borne out for a longer time. In September, 1914, employment among women workers was  $8\frac{1}{2}$  per cent less than in August, and short time was being worked by 36 per cent of the women employed.<sup>17</sup> In anticipation of the widespread distress which was expected to ensue, a Central Committee on Women's Employment was appointed on August 20, 1914, "to consider and from time to time report upon, schemes for the provision of work for women and girls unemployed on account of the war."<sup>18</sup> This Committee gave advice on general projects and relief, issued recommendations for work projects that might be set up locally, and recommended a maximum forty-hour week and a minimum wage of 3*d.* per hour.<sup>19</sup> Workshops were set up by the Queen's Work for Women Fund;<sup>20</sup> but as the unemployment figures for women decreased, no new workshops were set up, and later all were disbanded.

The next step was the recruitment of women to replace men enlisting in the armed forces; later they became the chief element in dilution. By the end of the war women performed the whole range of operations on machines "except the setting-up of the work and setting up the tool."<sup>21</sup> Thus the Government

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estimate has ever been made of the total expenditure incurred in guarding public buildings against the operations of the suffragettes, but the cost was, on any but a war standard, considerable. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

17 Report of the Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in October 1914, pp. 3, 5. (Cd. 7703-1914, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXI).

18 Central Committee on Women's Employment, *Interim Report*, p. 4. (Cd. 7848-1915 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXVII).

19 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

20 Irene Osgood Andrews, *Economic Effects of the War upon Women and Children in Great Britain* (New York, 1918), p. 25.

21 Cmd. 135, p. 82, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

was forced to do as much recruiting of women workers as of men for the army.<sup>22</sup> The results were to be very gratifying.

The total number of females in Great Britain rose from 23,721,000 in July, 1914, to 24,538,000 in July, 1918.<sup>23</sup> As against this increase of 817,000, the number of women workers increased by 1,345,000, to a total of 7,311,000.<sup>24</sup> Women workers in the metal trades numbered 594,000 by July, 1918, of whom roughly 195,000 had directly replaced men. In Government establishments there were employed 225,000 women by July, 1918, of whom at least 197,000 had directly replaced men.<sup>25</sup> One of the smallest gains was in agriculture, from 80,000 in July, 1914, to 113,000 in July, 1918. By April, 1918, 37 per cent of the workers in industry and agriculture were females.<sup>26</sup> One and a half million had directly replaced men.<sup>27</sup> Women in commercial employment increased by 364,000 or from 29 per cent to 54 per cent of the total number employed in these occupations.<sup>28</sup> The production of munitions was ultimately carried on with the help of over 700,000 women and girls.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The Board of Trade was very active in recruiting women workers, but some women were "hanging back." The employers were loathe to take the advice of the *Times*: "offer adequate wages... the sooner employers . . . grasp that elementary fact the sooner their requirements will be met." *Times*, March 8, 1916.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 80.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80. Cf. also, Kirkaldy, *Industry and Finance*, Supplementary Volume, pp. 1-105.

<sup>25</sup> Cmd. 135, p. 81 in S. P. 1909, vol. XXXI.

<sup>26</sup> Report of the Board of Trade on the Increased Employment of Women During the War . . . (Cd. 9164, pp. 4, 13, in S. P. 1918, vol. XIV).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Cmd. 135, p. 100, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

<sup>29</sup> Cd. 9164, p. 9, in S. P. 1918, vol. XIV. One of the popular names for the female munitions workers was "Lloyd George's Munitions Girls," recognizable, said one publicist, by the "willing way they toil for their country, from their readiness to face difficulties with a smile, from their loving natures and kindly hearts . . ." Monica Cosens, *Lloyd George's Munitions Girls* (London, n. d. [1916]), p. 6. Another name was "munition-

These women workers were recruited mainly from housewives, debutantes, and growing girls, but 400,000 came from domestic service and small dressmaking establishments.<sup>30</sup> The average wage rates rose from 3*d.* per hour or 13*s.* 6*d.* a week to nearly 35*s.* a week at the end of the war. Wages rose, not only absolutely but relatively to men's wages, too. Women's wages, which before the war had been one-half of men's wages, now were two-thirds.<sup>31</sup> Bowley estimates that, taking into account the overtime instead of the broken time more prevalent before the war in many industries, women's earnings in industry as a whole were, near the end of the war, about two and a half times their average earnings in 1914.<sup>32</sup> For women on women's work the average was undoubtedly lower, but was about 30*s.* for a normal week, so that even here the increase was about 120 per cent.<sup>33</sup> The comparison with time rates does not reflect the full increase, as from 1918 onward most of the trades fixed a piece-work rate higher than the ordinary time rate.<sup>34</sup>

The increase in the number of women workers and the advance in their wages were not accomplished at one stroke, either by the Government or by the women themselves. The Trade Unions, which had resisted the introduction of women members and women labor, were forced, with the introduction of women labor, to insist upon conditions which would protect, not only the women but, even more importantly, the interests of the men replaced and the trade union principles. A distinction thus arose between wages payable for "men's work" and wages for

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ettes." C. S. Peel, *Life's Enchanted Cup* (London, 1933), p. 175. Women were also employed on the police force. Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties. (Cmd. 877-1920, in S. P. 1920, vol. XXII).

30 Cd. 9164, p. 3, in S. P. 1918, vol. XIV.

31 Cmd. 135, pp. 150-153, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

32 Bowley, *Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom, 1914-1920*, p. 188.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 194.

"women's work," complicated further by the demand of "equal pay for equal work."<sup>35</sup>

In 1913 the total female trade-union membership was 356,963; of these, 257,281 were in the textile trades.<sup>36</sup> Many unions opposed the taking of women workers into their ranks, but the war-time entrance of women into "new" occupations and into those in which only men and boys had been employed—a penetration which the unions bitterly but vainly opposed—, forced them to open their membership and to grapple with the new problems created by the difficulties in fixing rates of wages. The Cabinet Committee on the Employment of Women characterised the pre-war attitude of the unions to women workers as a mixture of chivalry and self-interest. "The attitude of Trade Unions toward the employment of women, in part dictated by men's ideas as to what work it is decent and proper for women to perform, has also been influenced by the fear of the effect of women's competition in ousting men from occupations or lowering their standards of life; a fear justified by the fact that degradation of the standard invariably followed the introduction, on account of its cheapness, of female labour."<sup>37</sup> Even the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies "recognized that the woman's expectation of marriage made her a less valuable worker in many occupations by making her less ambitious and enterprising and also tended to make employers . . . look upon her work as temporary. They admitted the existence of marriage as a natural disability."<sup>38</sup> Before the war female labor had not been a great problem to male workers, especially in the skilled trades, because of the lack of employer interest. But the war had

<sup>35</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-276. Cf. also, *Times*, October 5, 1916, correspondence columns.

<sup>36</sup> *Ministry of Munitions*, V, Part II, 3.

<sup>37</sup> Cmd. 135, p. 27, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

revealed new possibilities, a fact not unknown to employers, workers, and the Government.<sup>39</sup>

The need of incorporating women into their ranks as partners rather than as competitors soon impressed itself upon some unions, although others, more sure that female labor could never replace them, held their ground and kept the door tightly closed.<sup>40</sup> In March, 1915, the Women's Trade Union League, a federation of the women in unions which enrolled both men and women, and the National Federation of Women Workers,<sup>41</sup> jointly opened a campaign for the organization of women employed on munitions work. The Trade Union Congress in 1915 urged trade unions which had hitherto excluded women to admit them to membership.<sup>42</sup> In June, 1915, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, rather than admit women "dilutees," decided to ally with the National Federation of Women Workers. The attempt to organize women on a separate basis was, however, a failure. The majority remained unorganized, and a large number of those who joined unions did not join the N.F.W.W.<sup>43</sup> The National Union of Railwaymen admitted women to its membership (but not to unemployment benefits) after a discussion on whether the term "railwaymen" could include the female sex. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen refused to admit female applicants on

39 "It is certainly the case that in the past there had always and everywhere been a tendency on the part of men to rate lowly the services of women . . . [but] the necessity which brought them into factories and all kinds of work during the war has opened the eyes of many employers to hitherto unrealised sources of industrial strength." Cmd. 135, p. 70.

40 The Waiters' Union even opened up classes to train women to replace the interned foreigners. Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

41 The latter had eleven thousand members in 1914. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 495.

42 Trade Union Congress, *Report of Proceedings*, 1915, pp. 371-377.

43 Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 80. The N. F. W. W. was the only important union of women workers during the war. Adam W. Kirkaldy (editor). *Labour, Finance, and the War* (London, n. d.), p. 95.

the ground that the work was not suitable for them.<sup>44</sup> The Engineering Unions' rules prohibited female labor, but in November, 1914, the "Crayford Agreement" was signed by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Engineering Employers' Federation by which women could be employed on purely automatic machines used for the production of "repetition work," but all such automatic machines were to be "set-up" by fully skilled mechanics.

In February, 1915, the Committee on Production suggested the extended use of female labor. On March 5, 1915, the Shells and Fuses Agreement provided that semi-skilled and female labor might be admitted to operations on which skilled men were at present employed, subject to their being paid "the usual rates of the district obtaining for the operations performed."<sup>45</sup> This agreement, however, did not apply to the vast majority of the early cases of dilution, where the women were not doing the work ordinarily done by skilled labor. Disputes arose between the Engineering Employers Federation and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers as to the wages of women performing work formerly done by semi-skilled and unskilled male workers. No settlement was reached by the unions and employers; generally the rates paid to women bore no relation to the demands for equal pay.<sup>46</sup>

The terms of the Treasury Agreement of the same month provided that "where the custom of a shop is changed during the war by the introduction of semi-skilled men to perform work hitherto to be performed by a class of higher skill, the rates paid shall be the usual rates of the district for that class of work. A relaxation of existing demarcation restrictions or admission of semi-skilled or female labour shall not affect ad-

<sup>44</sup> Cole and Arnot, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-64. The police felt differently before the end of 1915. In October, 1915, the ban on the employment of women as tramcar and omnibus conductors in London was removed. *Times*, October 21, 1915.

<sup>45</sup> Cmd. 135, p. 109, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

<sup>46</sup> Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, p. 84.



versely the rates customarily paid for the job." The meaning of these two clauses was later to be the subject of broad controversy, but the suffragette E. Sylvia Pankhurst (one of Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst's daughters), with almost characteristic troublesomeness, raised the issue immediately. In a letter to the Minister of Munitions, Lloyd George, on behalf of the East London Federation of the Suffragettes and on behalf of "all women who want equal pay for equal work," she asked whether women replacing semi-skilled men were to receive the same rates of pay.<sup>47</sup>

Lloyd George, speaking for the Government, in a letter dated March 26, 1915, returned a soft, but not a clear, answer. Women undertaking the work of men would get the same piece rates as men were receiving before the agreement. If "the women turn out the same quantity of work as men employed on the same job, they will receive exactly the same pay." Miss Pankhurst's reply was to ask whether this principle applied to war bonuses and wage increases and to time rates. But if she anticipated the future course of the wage problem, so apparently did Lloyd George, and he prudently did not acknowledge this letter.<sup>48</sup> In July, however, addressing a women's deputation, he made it clear that the pledge did not include or apply to time rates. He held "that a woman should be paid exactly the same price as a man for any piece of work she turns out. . . . But Mrs. [sic] Pankhurst asked a little more than that. She wanted the same rate of wages even for time work."<sup>49</sup>

The process of getting women into war industry was slow. In August, 1915, one of the principal firms in the country making shell lathes proposed to introduce female labor but, meeting resistance, gave up the attempt. The Ministry of Muni-

<sup>47</sup> Cmd. 135, p. 205, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>49</sup> *Ministry of Munitions*, IV, Part I, 57. Lloyd George reiterated his pledge of "equal pay for equal output" in December, 1918. *Times*, December 7, 1918.

tions, fearful of stirring up violent opposition, did nothing.<sup>50</sup> In September and October, 1915, the Government, faced by the fact that dilution was lagging, undertook adjustment of the wage question. The Central Munitions Labour Supply Committee recommended that women employed on skilled men's work receive equal pay; that piece work be paid at equal rates for men and women; and that the minimum wage for women be £1 for a normal working week. These provisions were not to apply to work recognized as women's work before the war. The Government adopted these recommendations (only modifying, with the consent of the Committee, the minimum rate to read as a definite rate of £1 a week), and issued Circular L2 in October, 1915, as an instruction to Government munition factories and as a recommendation to "controlled" establishments.<sup>51</sup> As the Ministry of Munitions *History* points out, this Circular "like the twin circular L3 was set up to provide a ring fence, or rather (as appeared later) a system of barbed wire entanglements, round the skilled workman's standard rates."<sup>52</sup>

The question of equalizing time rates for men and women on unskilled and semi-skilled work was hardly raised. In November, 1915, an agreement was made between the Midland Employers' Federation and the Workers' Union to regulate the wages of those female munition workers not included in the Order of October, 1915. The time rate for women over twenty-one years of age was fixed at 16s. instead of the pre-war rate of 12s.; where, because of war bonuses previously granted, the women already earned this much, the minimum increase was to be 2s. on current rates.<sup>53</sup>

In November, Arthur Henderson sent the Government a memorandum, approved by the Munitions Labour Supply Committee, on the conditions of remuneration in the new Shell

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, Part I, 36-37.

<sup>51</sup> Cmd. 135, pp. 110-111, 207-208, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

<sup>52</sup> *Ministry of Munitions*, V, Part II, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Bowley, *Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom*, p. 186.

Factories to be "manned" mostly by women. Piece-work rates were to be equal to those paid to men; time rates were to be 1d. per hour more than for work not recognized as men's work prior to the war. The Munitions of War (Amendment) Act passed at the end of January, 1916, enabled the Ministry of Munitions to regulate the wages of women employed in all munitions works, but no further action was taken.<sup>54</sup>

Restlessness increased in 1916, and Miss MacArthur on behalf of the National Federation of Women Workers demanded that "women engaged continuously on time or semi-skilled men's work should receive the rate current in the district for that work."<sup>55</sup> In July, 1916, orders were issued fixing a minimum rate of 4½d. an hour for time workers and 4d. an hour for piece workers in national factories and controlled establishments. In danger zones and on woodwork processes in aircraft manufacture the rate was an additional ½d. per hour.<sup>56</sup> Finally, in December, 1916, under the Munitions of War (Amendment) Act of 1916, a new order fixed a minimum wage of £1 for a week of 48 hours or less, whether for women's or men's work. For hours above 48 an additional 6d. per hour was to be paid, and beyond 54 hours overtime rates became applicable. Women employed on piece work were to be paid the same rates as men, and women employed at time rates were to be paid £1 per week.<sup>57</sup>

Although the Government was forced to regulate wages of women doing men's work, chiefly because of the insistence of the men, it soon found itself forced also to regulate wages of women who were doing women's work. The rising cost of living and the striking anomalies that arose as more and more industries were brought into munitions work led to grievances

<sup>54</sup> Cmd. 135, p. 208, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI.

<sup>55</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>56</sup> Bowley, *Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom*, p. 186

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*; Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, p. 88; Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-286.

which could not be overlooked. In July, 1916, the Government issued an order applying to women on women's work which provided for a guaranteed minimum for piece workers. In September, by a new order, overtime and holiday rates were provided for. In December, 1916, minimum time rates were established and in January, 1917, these regulations were extended to controlled establishments in a wide range of industries.<sup>58</sup>

Up to March, 1917, women doing fully-skilled men's work in the engineering trades had received the same advances as men, but after this date advances to women were regulated separately. This was made necessary by the fact that in April, 1917, the increases given to men since the beginning of the war were levelled up to a minimum of 7s. and this amount or more became part of the permanent time rates. In April, 1917, wages of women on fully-skilled men's work were increased 4s. over the December, 1916, rates. The time rates for other women on men's work were also advanced by 4s. to 24s. for 48 hours or less. The time rates for women on women's work were increased to 5½d.<sup>59</sup> In August, 1917, all earnings of women in munitions work were increased by 2s. 6d. per week. "The scope of this order was far wider than any such previous statutory order and the 'munitions advance' was in fact very widely applied among women, whether strictly on munitions work or not."<sup>60</sup> In December, 1917, a further advance of 3s. 6d. was granted, and in September, 1918, 5s.<sup>61</sup> About one million women workers were covered by these orders; at the time of the Armistice the bulk of the women were getting a weekly rate of not less than 30s. to 35s. Average earnings were considerably higher than these minimum rates. In April, 1918, although the minimum rates for women working on shells in a number of

<sup>58</sup> Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-293.

<sup>59</sup> Bowley, *Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom*, pp. 126-127. •

<sup>60</sup> Cmd. 135, p. 118 in S. P. 1919, Vol. XXXI.

<sup>61</sup> Bowley, *Prices Wages in the United Kingdom*, p. 187.

National Factories was 32s. 8d., and 34s. 8d. for projectile work, the average earnings were 42s. 4d. on shells, 56s. 8d. on projectiles.<sup>62</sup>

This was the general position of women's wages at the end of the war. Yet, despite a more general levelling of women's and men's wages (paralleled by a convergence of wage rates for skilled and unskilled workers), women's wages had not reached a plateau, but had climbed, or rather had been raised, to a jerry-built perch. The Committee appointed in September, 1918, by the Prime Minister on behalf of the War Cabinet, to make recommendations on the relation "between the wages of women and men, having regard to the interests of both, as well as to the value of the work" and also to the "necessity of output during the war, and the progress and well-being of the industry in the future,"<sup>63</sup> was well aware of this. "It is impossible," they therefore reported, to assert that "the improvement in the position of women in industry has been due to causes of such a nature as can be expected to endure. The closer approximation to the wages of men has mainly resulted from Government interference"; otherwise the gap might have been widened as a result of the diminished supply of skilled labor.<sup>64</sup> Subscribing to the principle of "equal pay for equal work," the Committee foresaw insurmountable difficulties in the enforcement of the doctrine. Its immediate adoption was urged for "the manipulative branches of the government service";<sup>65</sup> but if laid down and enforced on private work, it would result in unemployment for women, as employers would not hire them at equal pay.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the Committee apparently did not believe that women were as efficient as men. The solution was for some agreement on "the relative value of the work done by women

<sup>62</sup> Cmd. 135, p. 121, in S. P. 1919, Vol. XXXI.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

and men on time on the same or similar jobs" by "employers and Trade Unions acting through the recognized channels of negotiation, as for instance Trade Boards or Joint Industrial Councils."<sup>67</sup> Much, of course, would have to be determined, because, in general, the employers opposed the principle while the Trade Unions favored it.<sup>68</sup>

The apprehensions that women's wages would fall with the end of the war did not materialize immediately. In fact, wage increases for women continued after the Armistice. In January, 1919, an advance of 5s. was granted, and in December, 1919, a further advance of 3s. 6d., but as munitions work ceased, these rates became applicable only in the engineering trade.<sup>69</sup> The ill wind of war blew some good. If half a million women were deprived of potential husbands<sup>70</sup> and supporters, wages of all women were raised so that they might have found it easier, had war wages continued, to support themselves. This must be immediately qualified, however, because of the rising prices for almost two years after the Armistice and because of the general reduction of hours to forty-eight by the summer of 1919. Consequently, while "on the whole . . . women's wages for a normal week were definitely rather more than double the corresponding rates before the war, at the end of five years the general increase was little, if at all, more than the increase in the cost of living on the official measurement."<sup>71</sup> Moreover the proportion of females employed in 1921 was in the aggregate smaller than before the war, falling from 35.7 per cent of the

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Report of the War Cabinet on Women in Industry, *Summaries of the Evidence*. (Cmd. 167-1919 in S. P. 1919, vol. XXXI).

<sup>69</sup> Bowley, *Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom*, p. 187.

<sup>70</sup> Francis Hirst, *Consequences of the War to Great Britain* (New Haven, 1934), Preface. This was the most "terrible consequence" of the war in Britain. A. Andreades, *La population anglaise avant, pendant, et après La Grande Guerre* (Ferrara, Italy, 1922), p. 90.

<sup>71</sup> Bowley, *Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom 1914-1918*, p. 190.

total number of females in 1911 to 33.7 per cent in 1921.<sup>72</sup> Even this fact did not quite satisfy a Committee dealing with the post-war position of women. Contrary to the general adage, the Committee felt that women's work was done—with the end of the war—and recommended that employment of married women outside their homes be discouraged.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Bowley, *Some Economic Consequences of the Great War*, p. 58.

<sup>73</sup> Ministry of Reconstruction, *Report of the Women's Employment Committee*, pp. 68-69. (Cd. 9239-1919 in S. P. 1918, vol. XIV).

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MATERIALS OF WAR

By the end of the war, labor was not as fully controlled as an army in the field, but there is little doubt that a further extension of regulation would not have been possible without a complete transformation of industrial organization. Such an alteration in the basic pattern of industry was never sought by the Government, much less achieved. Yet State intervention did reach a scale which even the Mercantilists had not envisioned. The Mercantilists might have found practical difficulties in organizing State controls of industry in the years 1914 to 1918; the Liberal Government found theoretical rather than practical difficulties in instituting State regulation. It was slow to yield, but the imperatives of war could brook no doctrinaire objections. As a matter of fact, such theoretical opposition was not very widely or deeply raised during the course of the war. Myths die hard; while enormously weakened during the war, the Liberal non-interventionist creed, as an article of faith rather than as a course of conduct, was hardly disturbed even as the Government proceeded to violate all of its canons.

If we accept R. H. Tawney's characterization of the English, the reason is clear. "It is a commonplace that the characteristic virtue of Englishmen is their power of sustained practical activity, and their characteristic vice a reluctance to test the quality of that activity by reference to principles."<sup>1</sup> This "characteristic vice" became the great virtue. Without giving up cherished shibboleths, which would have involved soul-searching and enervation, the British people were enabled to meet the problems as they arose, belatedly to be sure, but with the advantage of a pragmatic approach so serviceable in a changing world.

The changes in Government policy towards the basic industries of Britain are illustrative of the degree of control exercised

1 R. H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (New York, 1920), p. 1.



over the entire economy before the end of the war. Not that the control of industries was uniform; rather was it haphazard, based on no *a priori* principles, but evolved or improvised to meet the exigencies of the particular time and situation. Thus the general term "Government control" had but little meaning to the owners and managers. Except to the unregenerate and platonic Liberals the important issues were the nature and the degree of control, how it was exercised, and by whom. There was no general pattern of development. If the war needs were the cause and the chief conditioning factor behind control, the special position of each industry—and its labor force—tended to set the mould for the specific controls. This may be illustrated by the changes effected in the industries directly supplying the needs of the armed services, in the great industries of Britain—coal, iron and steel, shipping, and textiles; and, too, in agriculture—the ghost without whom there would have been not merely no feast, but a fast sufficient to lose the war.

The pressure of exigent circumstances, the need for greater production in a "war of materiel," forced the Government to embark, or rather set it adrift, on the wide sea of control. There were numerous currents and cross-currents, but the Liberal Government and the two Coalition Governments that followed were all much less concerned with their course than with the great task of staying afloat. Totally taken by surprise, not so much by the war as by the needs of war, the very magnitude of the operations called for by the struggle forced the scrapping of pre-war plans and thrust upon the Government the task of meeting new needs in new ways. Since its pre-war plans were not extensive, they could be jettisoned without upsetting the ship of state.

The pre-war preparations were almost exclusively along the traditional military and naval lines. The Committee on Imperial Defence had made meticulous plans, including the complete drafting of all telegrams to be sent out, on the outbreak of war, to all necessary agencies. The King always kept with him, even

on his travels, the official seals in order that all action could be formally authorized without any delay.<sup>2</sup> Yet the military and naval action envisaged by the Committee on Imperial Defence and by all leading military and naval officials was but one element in the war which was truly between nations. The ideal of the "nation in arms," so long bruited about, was achieved, but in a way not dreamt of by its proponents. Although only about 10 per cent of the British people were in the armed forces during the war period, almost the entire population was indirectly involved in the waging of the war. The vast majority of the able-bodied (in the literal, not the military sense) in the population did not kill Germans, but they forged the weapons or grew the food of those who did.

Britain, along with the other powers, was least prepared in the field of production. History offered no precedents, and the road to the conquest of production had to be mapped and built by the State in a setting traditionally hostile to State action. The going was delayed and slow, but the very fact that it lagged behind public opinion, that action was taken belatedly instead of anticipatorily, gave insurance not only against prematurity but also a degree of public approval and support which no other nation could match. Discontent was rife in Britain, especially as the war stretched out and the sacrifices were piled higher, but in the final balance the war was won by Britain in the field of production. It was with the expedients, for literally they were expedients, that the Government was concerned; by them the people were affected in a way in which they were never touched by the actual warfare.<sup>3</sup>

Government intervention in production and distribution was, in its larger aspects, untried in Great Britain before the war.

<sup>2</sup> Richard B. Haldane, *Before the War* (New York, 1920), p. 185; Julian S. Corbett and Henry Newholt, *Naval Operations* (London, 1920-1923), I, 21.

<sup>3</sup> "Of all the problems which Governments had to handle during the Great War, the most delicate and probably the most perilous were those arising on the home front." Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, IV, 169.

Lacking the guidance of the precedents in some degree established in State control of labor on the eve of the war, it was natural that control of production should be more extemporaneous and less well organized at the start than control over labor. Yet a predilection in favor of the business community, coupled with the belief—and essential reality—that maximum results could only be obtained with the whole-hearted cooperation of the owners and managers of production, served so to temper the control that few business men complained of the restrictions imposed upon them during the war. The first important steps in the direction of control were taken in March, 1915; one month later, a member of Parliament, Samuel Roberts, who described himself as the “only Member of the House” on “the board of one of the large armaments companies,” expressed the attitude of business men which, on the whole, remained unchanged until the latter part of 1918. Roberts did not oppose Government control because, in his words, “we know that . . . we shall not incur injustice” at the hands of the Government.<sup>4</sup> Any lingering ideological opposition was likewise abated by the Government’s policy of administering production controls through agencies headed and directed by business men. When Lloyd George became Prime Minister in December, 1916, he claimed that one of the changes his Government would introduce would be the “choosing of men of administrative and business capacity” for Government posts.<sup>5</sup> Yet this had been the policy pursued since March, 1915, when, as a Government spokesman, Lloyd George had exclaimed that “We are on the lookout for a good strong business man, with some go in him, who will be able to push the thing [war production] through. . . .”<sup>6</sup>

The first need for increased production was in munitions. The nature of the war was at least dimly seen even in its early

471 H. C. Deb. 5s., 309-311.

588 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1341.

670 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1277.

stages, not only in the sheer size of the armies, but in the vast proportions of equipment required in a war of artillery, of rapid-firing machine guns, and of protection against both. At first, attempts to increase production in these essentials were made by endeavoring to assist the firms in securing a necessary supply of labor. But as these devices were soon found to be inadequate, the stress was placed on increasing the efficiency of the plants through improvements in the productivity of management and labor.

As was to be true of the entire war period, the powers of the Government, whether inherent in the structure of the British State or specifically granted by Act of Parliament, were rarely utilized to their utmost extent. Constantly, powers were asserted by the Government or granted to it by Act of Parliament, but the authority was rarely utilized until much later. Unhampered by any "due process" clause, the Government had a degree of discretion limited only by the consent of Parliament and its own view of the fitness of things. The first Defence of the Realm Act, passed on August 8, 1914, gave the Government power to make regulations for the "public safety and the defence of the Realm." The second, passed twenty days later, extended these powers to include control over munitions factories and workers. In November, 1914, additional powers were conferred.<sup>7</sup> Early regulations gave the Admiralty and the Army Council the right to requisition land and factories and to require manufacturers to produce goods for military and naval purposes.<sup>8</sup>

Since it was claimed that the Crown had the right to take possession of any private property by virtue of the Royal Prerogative, compensation was purely a matter of grace. "It was

<sup>7</sup> 68 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1270-1279, for McKenna's explanation of these powers.

<sup>8</sup> The War Office was advised in October, 1914, that there was sufficient legal power to make firms give the Department priorities. These powers were, however, not used. The War Office used the powers granted in November, 1914, to take control of certain chemical works and to force coal tar producers to place all tuluol at the War Office's disposal. Ministry of Munitions, I, Part I, 110-112. In order to stimulate production, "generous" prices were paid. *Ibid.*, VII, Part I, 5

by virtue of the absolutist theory that the subject had no legal right to compensation against the Crown, that the tyranny of market prices was overthrown." <sup>9</sup> Compensation was allowed only to those who could prove that they had suffered damage, not merely through an Order which was of general application but through exceptional interference specially directed against themselves. The loss or damage had, also, to be "direct and substantial." <sup>10</sup> The Defence of the Realm Losses Royal Commission set up in March, 1915, to decide on compensation, praised the subjects of the Crown for causing so little trouble and "cheerfully" acquiescing in the rulings of the Commission. "We regard this as the more noteworthy tribute to the general sense of patriotism because the complexity of the problems arising out of the present emergency has necessitated the application of State interference in a number of fields which had previously been left to the unrestricted effort of private enterprise, and where such interference would previously have been regarded as arbitrary unless it had been accompanied by liberal or even lavish compensation." <sup>11</sup>

If the acquiescence was indeed "cheerful," it may be questioned whether this was a result of the "general sense of patriotism." According to critics of the whole doctrine and of the Government procedure of taking property at less than current market prices, the decisions of the Commission were accepted only because there was a lack of alternatives. Believing that they were without remedy, claimants accepted what they could get as better than nothing at all. <sup>12</sup> Hindered by the provision of the Army Act, which forced it to pay "the market price" for requisitioned articles, the Government amended the Defence of the Realm Regulations in February, 1916, to give

<sup>9</sup> Lloyd, *Experiments In State Control*, p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> Defence of the Realm Losses Royal Commission, *First Report*. (Cd. 8359-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. VII).

<sup>11</sup> Defence of the Realm Losses Royal Commission, *Second Report*, p. 3. (Cd. 8751-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. X).

<sup>12</sup> 128 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1781.

it the power to requisition food, war materials, and "any articles required for or in connection with the production thereof" without any reference to price. Not until a year later were the Regulations amended so as to lay down express provisions as to prices.

Although some merchants contested the legality of these measures even during the war, the Government's acts were not seriously challenged, and it proceeded at its own pace, limited not by law but by public opinion. Nor was Parliament dilatory in granting Government requests for authority for action or even legalization of past illegalities. Thus even before many of the Government's acts with respect to requisitioning were held to be illegal under the case of the Attorney-General *v.* De-Keyser's Hotel (1920), a measure had been introduced in Parliament to validate all actions taken. Since the war was now in the past, protests were raised, but the prospect of having to pay upwards of £700,000,000 if the Act was not passed<sup>13</sup> forced consent from Parliament to the Indemnity Act of 1920, even if the critics were not silenced. The Defence of the Realm Losses Royal Commission went out of existence on August 20, 1920, and its functions were taken over by the War Compensation Court.<sup>14</sup>

The third Defence of the Realm Act, passed in March, 1915, gave the Government full legal power to take over any factory and to control completely its processes and output, and to annul any contracts which might hinder the production of war material. Even Bonar Law, who "asked" the Government "not by way of criticism, but by way of suggestion, are we doing everything that we can do to end this war?"<sup>15</sup> expressed concern over the enormous powers given to the Government, "the most drastic that have ever been put to any House of Commons."

<sup>13</sup> 128 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1765.

<sup>14</sup> Defence of the Realm Losses Royal Commission, *Fifth Report*. (Cmd. 1044-1920, in S. P. 1920, vol. XIII).

<sup>15</sup> 70 H. C. Deb. 5s., 606-607.

It is characteristic of the times that the Conservative leader, who could exclaim that the industries were not fully mobilized "in the way in which it was possible to mobilize them for the purposes of war," could criticize the Bill.<sup>16</sup>

The Government forces tended to minimize the effects which the Bill might have, but did search for a "strong" man to take charge of war production. The latter was apparently as difficult to find as it was for the Government to use its granted powers, and two months later, in May, 1915, the Liberal Government was dissolved and a Coalition Government formed, with Asquith still at the head.<sup>17</sup> The dissolution of the Liberal Government was precipitated by the resignation of Lord Fisher from the Admiralty and by the publicity given to the "Shells Scandal" by the Northcliffe Press, which had been supplied with material by no less a personage than the Commander in Chief in the field, Sir John French.<sup>18</sup>

The publicity given to the shell shortage led to the formation of the Ministry of Munitions, charged with organising the supply of munitions of war. The Ministry of Munitions was to set the pace for Government "interference" in control of, and in competition with, private enterprise, so that by the end of the war "the Army had become practically coterminous with the community and the scope of Government activities extended over nearly the whole of civilian life."<sup>19</sup> Heading what was

1670 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1275.

17 A year and a half later Asquith was to be pushed out when he refused to yield the helm. The split in the Liberal Party was foreshadowed by the events of the autumn of 1914 and the spring of 1915. "Party politics and party bitterness disappeared. In fact, the Liberal Government received more unanimous and cordial support from Unionists confronting them than from the Liberal and Labour benches behind." Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 190.

18 Copies of the *Daily Mail* were burnt on the floor of the Stock Exchange by the infuriated members. F. A. McKenzie, *The Mystery of the Daily Mail* (London, 1921), p. 73. Cf. also, Gerald French, *Life of Field Marshal French* (London, 1930), pp. 298 ff.

19 Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control*, p. 6.

soon to become a vast enterprise, unsurpassed in history, was David Lloyd George, the Conservatives' ogre.<sup>20</sup> Lloyd George had exchanged a position in which he "had been initiating and carrying through schemes of social amelioration which were very congenial to my disposition and upbringing" for "the terrible task of manufacturing engines for human mutilation and slaughter."<sup>21</sup> The popular prestige asquired in his advocacy of social reforms proved of the utmost assistance in ameliorating the critical situation that confronted him in his new position—the "serious conflict with organised labour over trade union regulations, hours of labour, wages, restrictions on mobility, and, most serious of all, over what I called dilution, i.e., the mixing of the skilled labourer with the unskilled."<sup>22</sup>

These problems were not the concern solely of the Ministry of Munitions, but the formation of the Ministry, dramatizing the inadequacy of current production, brought them into sharper focus. Before the end of the war, the Ministry of Munitions was to become the greatest employer of labor in the country.<sup>23</sup> In less than four years, from June, 1915, to March, 1919, the Ministry spent close to £2,000,000,000.

Increased production could only be attained by establishing new plants which, however, would aggravate the developing shortage of labor, and by the promotion of the efficiency of labor and management. The need for increased production was urgent, and it fell upon the Ministry of Munitions to achieve it. Since the Ministry of Munitions, established in May, 1915, was "from first to last a business-man organization,"<sup>24</sup> it is not

<sup>20</sup> To the Conservatives' initiated leaders, Lloyd George was rather an elf. He "had for years been a personal friend" of and on terms of great cordiality with the Conservative leader, Bonar Law. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 200.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 208.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 210.

<sup>23</sup> Trade Union Congress, 1915, p. 353.

<sup>24</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 215.



surprising that if new demands called for new sacrifices, the Ministry looked to labor for them rather than to management.<sup>25</sup>

Management, too, was controlled, but in a manner befitting that of a State built up and ruled by the middle class. The summary of state control over the railroads presented on February 17, 1915, by the President of the Board of Trade (Runciman), has a wider application than as a mere description of railroad regulation. It was to be true of a large sector of the economy "taken over" by the Government during the war: ". . . not that the Government undertook the management of the railways, but that it brought together those who controlled the railways and allowed them to go on managing them. The next characteristic of Government control . . . has been that although we have control . . . we are not managing. . . ." <sup>26</sup> This was certainly the ideal sought after, but special circumstances and seemingly unlimited needs required the State to exercise a greater degree of control in many other industries.

Even if labor was, in the eyes of the Government, the chief reservoir from which increased production could be drawn, the consent, or at least the acquiescence, of labor was necessary in order to tap the supply. That acquiescence, let alone consent, could only be had on some *quid pro quo* basis. Labor's sacrificial mood outlasted the expected three-months duration of the war, but it could not be sustained without the employers' example. The first Munitions of War Act (July, 1915) gave the Government extensive powers over labor in munitions plants, but only in "controlled establishments," in which profits were limited by a maximum of 20 per cent over prewar profits.<sup>27</sup> Throughout the war the prime motive of the Government in controlling industry was to enable the Government further to regulate

<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the Ministry "from the first received the fullest and most cordial assistance from business men of the Country." *Munitions Journal*, December, 1916, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> 69 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1184.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. H. of C. # 353—1915, Limitations of Profits Rules. (In S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LV).

labor. Yet this was not the only reason. By the middle of 1915 it was starkly clear that the existing facilities for production were inadequate to meet the very immoderate needs for munitions.

Before the war there were in existence four Royal Factories for the production of munitions, useful in supplying part of the required needs, but more important for experimental purposes and as setting a standard for quality and prices. By the end of the war 218 National Factories for the manufacture of munitions were in operation,<sup>28</sup> and the Government was buying 98 per cent of all steel produced.<sup>29</sup> The undertaking of housing developments for its workers, and even ownership of liquor dispensing establishments, euphemistically named canteens,—all these and more, followed from the fact that the Government was engaged in a business enterprise of tremendous scope. In addition, the Government contributed to, or bore the whole cost of, needed extensions and adaptations of existing private factories. The price of shell steel was fixed in 1915; in March, 1916, the prices of pig iron and other steel, as well as materials entering into the production of iron and steel were also fixed. As costs changed, it was necessary to subsidize the various producers, but the controlled prices remained constant.<sup>30</sup>

Trench warfare, an innovation of the World War, was responsible for another important step toward Government control over the commodities essential for waging war.<sup>31</sup> If trenches

28 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, II, 34.

29 Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 66-67.

31 To speak of it as an "innovation" is perhaps an understatement. Forecast by I. S. Bloch (*Cf. Major General J. F. C. Fuller, War and Western Civilization 1832-1932*, London, 1932), it caught the military men completely by surprise. Field Marshal French wrote in his diary under date of August 29, 1914: "Perhaps the charm of war lies in its glorious uncertainty." Earl of Ypres (John French) *Some War Diaries, Addresses, and Correspondence*, edited by Gerald French (London, 1937), p. 148. However, he writes, "all my thoughts, all my prospective plans, all my possible alternatives of action, were concentrated upon a war of movement and

are associated with the first World War, sandbags are synonymous with trenches. The extension of the trench barrier from the North Sea to Switzerland created an unprecedented demand for sandbags; by the end of December, 1915, the Army was calling for forty million a month. Even as early as March, 1915, although prices soared, the open-market supplies did not keep pace with the demands. Powerless under the existing Defence of the Realm Act, the Government utilized an old clause in the annual Army Act giving it the power to requisition horses and vehicles at the "fair market price in the opinion of the purchasing officer," which had recently been amended to cover all warlike stores. On a Saturday afternoon, when many of the owners were away from their offices, two Army Officers, acting under this clause, requisitioned one and a half million second-hand grain sacks in Liverpool. The price set, 2d. per bag (one-third the price at which one firm offered to supply the Government), meant a loss for many dealers, who had paid more on speculation.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time the War Office began to organize the sandbag manufacturers, using the power under one of the earliest regulations made under the Defence of the Realm Act, which required manufacturers to place their output at the disposal of

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manoeuvre." Field Marshal John French, 1914 (Boston, 1919), p. 11. Grey reports that "no one was more perplexed than Kitchener. 'I don't know what is to be done,' he said to me more than once; 'this isn't war'." Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, II, 72. Four years before the war, French wrote a preface to an English translation of a German book on Cavalry, in which he emphasized his faith in the great role in the future of cavalry. F. Von Bernhardt, *Cavalry In War And Peace* (London, 1910), Preface, p. V. In 1905 he was more specific: "... it must never be forgotten that it is only by employment of shock tactics and the superior morale of the highly trained horseman wielding sword and lance that decisive success can be attained." *Cavalry in Action in the Wars of the Future* (London, 1905), Preface by John French, p. VI. Cf. also, Frederick Von Bernhardt, *Cavalry in Future Wars* (London, 1909), in which French, writing the introduction, states: "Cavalry soldiers must of course learn to be expert rifle shots, but the attainment of this desirable object will be brought no nearer by ignoring the horse, the sword, or the lance." p. XXII.

<sup>32</sup> Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control*, pp. 37-39.

the Admiralty or Army Council. Likewise, the Allied Governments were induced to make their purchases jointly, and the export of jute goods was prohibited, even to Allied countries. "Co-operation with the Allies was thus rendered effective by preventing them obtaining their requirements in any other way."<sup>33</sup> In this phrase is summed up the experience of Britain during the war. Co-operation was generally a failure; compulsion proved more effective.

From such humble beginnings, which saved the Government about three million pounds a year on sandbags, evolved a degree of government control of a kind and magnitude unprecedented in all history. The call for sandbags was as unforeseen as the new mode of warfare, but the demand for army shoes was unexpected only to the extent that the British Army grew to unprecedented numbers. A hundred years before, the Duke of Wellington pronounced army shoes "the most important item of a soldier's equipment" and countered Napoleon's dictum that armies march on their stomachs with the less rhetorical observation that armies march on their feet.<sup>34</sup> In April, 1915, a year before the Defence of the Realm Regulations legally conferred the authority, steps were taken to enforce what the Army Council considered to be reasonable prices, by requesting manufacturers to furnish cost figures and to justify the prices asked by disclosing their estimated net profit. The Defence of the Realm Regulation power was taken "almost surreptitiously and without explicit avowal." The War Office didn't ask the House of Commons to sanction the power for fear that the power would be refused.<sup>35</sup>

This was the beginning of the "costing" system, i.e., the examination and comparison of costs, which received a great stimulus and a special application during the war. The "costing system" is based on "the principle of determining fair prices

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 97.

by reference to the cost of production and a reasonable profit" as contrasted with "profiteering," or the "taking advantage of the state of the market to obtain exorbitant profit."<sup>36</sup> The costing system was, of course, made necessary by the fact that the old competitive tendering system fell short of meeting the needs during the war, and was generally discarded for the war period. Profits were kept to a "reasonable figure." The definition of "reasonable figure" was subject to wide variation and was influenced by many factors. Prices and margins under the costing system were fixed higher than average costs would have justified so that the smaller businesses might be kept going. To do otherwise would have meant a radical reorganization of trade and industry entailing the elimination of the marginal producer. "But the policy of the Government was to interfere with normal trade organization as little as possible, and under such circumstances the granting of a rather more generous margin of profit to a larger and more efficient business was inevitable."<sup>37</sup> Generous as the profit margin was to many firms, the whole principle of "costings" testified to the fact that businesses were not free of government supervision and control. One of the first actions of the Federation of British Industries, founded during the war, was to protest the Government's costings methods. The Federation demanded that fixed scales of profit be laid down, varying with the commodity and the period of production, and objected to the Government's policy of sometimes reducing the rate of profit. The Colwyn Committee, in its second Report, October 31, 1918, opposed any plan calling for stereotyped scales of profit. Nor had it any objection to reducing profit rates as long as the total profits increased.<sup>38</sup> Within less than two weeks the Armistice put an end to such issues.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>38</sup> *Ministry of Munitions*, III, Part II, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the costings system set up by Webb and E. F. Wise "has been useful to many a manufacturer since..." Ben Turner, *About Myself* (London, 1930), p. 264.

Government supervision, merging into Government control during the course of the war, was delayed in some industries, which, highly organized, could be controlled by the trade itself, under Government "supervision." Thus, industrial combination enabled the Government to avoid early state intervention in the leather industry. The tanning industry, consisting essentially of eighty large tanners, was well organized and had a representative body in the United Tanners Association. It was possible to get the tanners to agree not to pay more than a set price for the hides and the Government was therefore supplied with leather at a price considerably below the market price.<sup>40</sup> Early in 1916, however, with demand far outstripping supplies, the Government fixed the price of domestic hides. Later, the whole output of tanneries suitable for military purposes was requisitioned under the Defence of the Realm Regulations, and the leather was rationed to manufacturers.<sup>41</sup> Shoes were necessary on the home front, too, and even the military authorities were forced to recognize, as the war progressed, that the distinction between military and civilian needs must become increasingly blurred. With the continuance of the war, the provision for civilian supplies began to assume great importance. In August, 1917, certain leathers were released for civilian consumption at fixed prices. Early in 1918 leather supplies began to be rationed, and the War Time Boot Scheme was introduced. Leather was allotted to manufacturers at prices below the market value, and profits were limited by a costings system. All shoes were branded with a fixed retail price, allowing a reasonable profit to wholesaler and retailer.<sup>42</sup>

The relationship between the State and the leather trade was so idyllic during the war period that the industry was very reluctant to have the Government relinquish all control. The

<sup>40</sup> Howard L. Gray, *Wartime Control of Industry* (New York, 1918), p. 130; Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control*, pp. 101-103.

<sup>41</sup> Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control*, pp. 103, 105.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

President of the Tanners Federation desired state control over the raw materials for two years after the cessation of hostilities.<sup>43</sup> To say that "this attitude, which was contrary to the usual attitude of merchants and manufacturers towards State intervention, is largely explained by the corporate feeling already existing in the industry and the degree to which the trade itself participated in the administration of control,"<sup>44</sup> is not sufficiently revealing. Trade participation in the administration of control "was directly dependent" on the "corporate feeling" and organization existing or set up with the benevolent approval of the Government or, sometimes, by direct Government direction. The boot and leather trades were organized during the war "with less friction and sectional controversy than many other industries." The reason was that "the boot and leather trades were less individualistic and had already reached a higher stage of organization and efficiency than was general in British industries."<sup>45</sup> Even if business combinations resulting from the war "rarely took the form of actual amalgamations," Government control encouraged combinations "since without some form of organic unity no common plan and no common purpose could possibly be realized. . . . Control would indeed have been simplified if amalgamation had been more widely adopted."<sup>46</sup>

Where the industry was more "individualistic," the lack of Government control proved fatal to the purposes of the State. As in the case of shoes, a standard clothing scheme was introduced, whereby hosiery, blankets, suits, and other items were to be produced according to standard specifications. Costs and

<sup>43</sup> Ministry of Munitions, *Trading Accounts*, p. 18. (Cmd. 788-1920, in S. P. 1920, vol. XXX).

<sup>44</sup> Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control*, p. 111.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 351-352. "Where a trade had already a representative association, we discussed matters with it; and if no such body existed, we sought to promote its formation." Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, II, 33.

profits were fixed for each stage of manufacture and distribution, and a standard selling price was fixed. Its success was limited. "The chief weakness of the scheme was that it was worked on a voluntary basis."<sup>47</sup>

Control of the woolen industry was somewhat delayed. In June, 1916, all dealings in British wool were prohibited and during the next two months machinery was set up for purchase of the domestic clip which continued in operation until May, 1919. The price set was 35 per cent above the 1914 market price, but 40 per cent below the existing market price. The 1917 price was set at 55 per cent above the 1914 price, the 1918 price at 60 per cent. In November, 1916, the Government authorized the purchase of the whole Australian and New Zealand clip, amounting to about thirty-five million pounds, at a price 55 per cent above 1914 prices, but 10 per cent below the existing market price. Many Departments co-operated in the venture, including the Postal Censorship, which held up about five hundred cables relating to wool while negotiations were in progress, in order to avoid speculation and price fluctuations.<sup>48</sup> In December, 1916, the Government began rationing wool at fixed prices, generally set at the market price. Government contractors had first call, then manufacturers for the export trade, and, last, those who manufactured for essential home requirements.<sup>49</sup>

As with wool, the control of oils and fats originated from military needs. Objections by the industry forced the Government to give up its plan of prohibiting all private trading in these commodities, with the Government acting as the distributing agent.<sup>50</sup> However, in December, 1917, the Government acquired control over all private stocks and stimulated the organization of the United Kingdom Oilseed Brokers Associ-

<sup>47</sup> Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control*, p. 154.

<sup>48</sup> Fairlie, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-184; Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control*, pp. 118-119, 129-130.

<sup>49</sup> Lloyd, *Experiments in State Control*, pp. 121, 147.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.



ation. Brokers dealing in oilseeds, oils, and fats were required to join the Association, which became the sole Government agent authorized to deal in oleaginous products. The Association decided to permit its members to compete freely for customers, but the brokerage fee went to the Association, which allotted profits on the basis of pre-war, not current business.<sup>51</sup>

Control of the munitions and clothing industries involved adaptation and extension of powers long residing in the State. In days when horses and vehicles had been the supplies most difficult to procure by normal business methods, Parliament had granted the Government the power to requisition them. Now, in the greatest of all wars, as other war supplies became scarce, it seemed natural and logical that they, too, be requisitioned and controlled as the need arose. In total war, total control of production of commodities essential for the war effort would be but the natural culmination of established principles and practices. However, the total nature of the war was never admitted. The British Government and people might accept control over a certain segment of their economy without qualms, but if *all* commodities essential for war were to be regulated—as was to a greater or lesser extent true by the end of the war, the entire economic structure of Britain must be controlled. Control over the basic industries of Great Britain was achieved before the war ended. Forced to acquiesce in a state of fact, the British people and the British Government never quite brought themselves to its acceptance as theory. Yet, although its eventual results were negligible, control was fraught with almost endless possibilities, and, even in the absence of any “philosophy of control,” the fact of control was startling.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

## CHAPTER X

### COAL

THE British people lived not by bread alone. Britain's position as a significant industrial power rested truly on a foundation of coal. Coal mining was, after agriculture, the foremost industry of Great Britain, as well as one of the oldest, having been born, it seems, almost simultaneously with the Great Charter.<sup>1</sup> It was a, if not *the*, key industry, around which the others revolved; nearly all industrial production was fundamentally dependent upon it.<sup>2</sup> Britain's commercial supremacy was not due solely to her geographic location or to the "spirit and enterprise of her people." Coal was used to fuel and ballast the ships which brought bulky raw materials to Britain and left with the more compact manufactured articles. Britain owed her commercial supremacy in large part to her coal.

The coal supply of Britain was not inexhaustible, but its limits had not been approached. Estimates varied, but even the lowest placed the easily available coal reserves at well over

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Review of Coal Mining* (London, n. d.), p. 1; John U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry* (London, 1932), I, 3; Newcomen Society, *Transactions*, 1928, p. 108. Although no such relationship has ever been demonstrated the coal mine operators have often been epithetized as "feudal."

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd George was given to rhetoric, but his characterization of the importance of the coal industry is apt: "In times of peace coal is the most important element in the industrial life of this country. The blood which courses through the veins of industry in the country is made of distilled coal. In peace and in war King Coal is paramount Lord of Industry. It enters into every article of consumption and utility; it is our real international coinage. When we buy goods, food, and raw material abroad we pay not in gold but in coal." Sir R. A. S. Redmayne, *The British Coal Mining Industry* (Oxford, 1923), p. 2. Fifty years earlier W. Stanley Jevons had pointed out the crucial importance of coal: it was "the main-spring of modern industrial civilization . . . the material source of the energy of the country . . . the factor in everything we do. With coal almost any feat is possible or easy; without it we are thrown into the laborious poverty of early times." W. Stanley Jevons, *The Coal Question*, edited by A. W. Flux (London 1906), pp. 1-2.

100,000,000,000 tons.<sup>3</sup> Yet the warnings of Jevons, first uttered in 1865, although exaggerated by his epigones, contained a fundamental basis of truth. In the age of steam, coal had become the chief source of power, and Jevons viewed the problem of coal supply with a pessimism reminiscent of Malthus' approach to the problem of food supply.<sup>4</sup>

Although Britain's competitive position with respect to coal had deteriorated as compared to the United States and Germany, she was still, in 1913, by far the largest exporter of coal and second only to the United States in production. In 1913 the United Kingdom produced over 287,000,000 tons or over one-fifth of the world's output, with an average value of 10s. 2d. per ton. About one-third of this, amounting to 10 per cent of the total value of all British exports, was either exported or used for bunker coal for foreign trade. Total shipments of coal amounted to 97,000,000 tons of which about one-fourth was for bunkers. The value of coal, coke, and manufactured fuel exported was over £53,000,000.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Statistical Tables Relating to ... Coal...* pp. 7-8. H. of C. # 285—1913, in S. P. 1914, vol. LXVII.

<sup>4</sup> Ignoring Elizabeth, Cromwell, Pitt, and others, Jevons blamed Watt for the industrial backwardness of Ireland. "The manufactures of Ireland have been abolished by the steam-engines of England." But Britain, too, was doomed. "We have to make the momentous choice between brief but true greatness and longer continued mediocrity." If the consumption of coal multiplied for the next century at the same rate, the average depth of the coal mines would reach 4000 feet and the price would rise "to a rate injurious to our commercial and manufacturing supremacy." There was basically no hope. Even new discoveries in fuel economy would have an adverse effect by encouraging increased use of that "power [which] is at present our staple commodity . . . It is wholly a confusion of ideas to suppose that the economical use of fuel is equivalent to a diminished consumption. The very contrary is the truth." The "conclusion is inevitable that our present happy progressive condition is a thing of limited duration . . . we must not only cease to progress as before—we must begin a retrograde career." Jevons, *The Coal Question*, pp. 78, 140, 189, 201, 203, 274, 275, 460.

<sup>5</sup> Finlay A. Gibson, *A Compilation of Statistics of the Coal Mining Industry of the United Kingdom* (Cardiff, 1922), p. 19; Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, pp. 5, 6, 8; Sankey, III, 206; Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, pp.

The capital invested in the 3,000 coal mines of the United Kingdom, worked by 1,500 companies and individuals, was about £135,000,000, yielding, on the average, an 11 per cent return on the capital invested. Over 1,100,000 persons, producing a per capita average of 259 tons, were employed in the coal mining industry. The coal properties, or royalties, as they were commonly termed, were vested in the hands of about 4,000 owners.<sup>6</sup> Profits amounted to about one-fourth of the price of coal: average wages were 5s. 6d. per ton, stores and pit wood 1s., general expenses inclusive of everything except depreciation and interest, 1s. 3d., and profit 2s. 5d.<sup>7</sup> The average value at the pithead was 8s. 9d. per ton.<sup>8</sup> Put in another way, the total profits before the war amounted to £19,000,000 a year, less £6,000,000 for royalties.<sup>9</sup>

Custom and the plentiful supply of labor at relatively low costs hindered the introduction of machinery. Fifty per cent of the coal produced in the United States was mechanically cut, as compared to eight per cent in the United Kingdom.<sup>10</sup> The output of coal had greatly increased in the twenty-five year period of 1889-1913, but not to the same extent as the augmented labor force. The number of miners employed underground had increased by 90 per cent; the number of surface workers by 185 per cent. This, however, was not necessarily a sign of inefficiency. A large part of this extra increase is accounted for by the introduction or expansion of new processes, such as screening and washing. Thus any comparison of pro-

16, 25; Statistical Abstract, United Kingdom, Cmd. 1246, 1921, pp. 202, 219. Cf. D. William Lloyd, *The Coal Export Trade of the United Kingdom, 1910-1921* (Cardiff, 1922), for convenient compilation of figures.

<sup>6</sup> Home Office, Mines and Quarries, *General Report 1914*, p. 9. (Cd. 8035-1915 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LXXX); Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 6; Sankey, III, 143, 210; Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Sankey, III, 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Sankey, I, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 64; Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

ductivity per worker is better made on the basis of the numbers employed under-ground than on the basis of the total number of workers.<sup>11</sup> Most of the mines were small; few were very large. At the turn of the century 80 per cent of the steam coal in South Wales was produced by twenty firms; in 1907, one company produced 50 per cent of the entire output of Scotland.<sup>12</sup> Nearly one-third of the coal operators each had an output of less than two thousand tons a year.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, about one-third of the South Wales Coalfield was in the hands of three combines organized by Lord Rhondda.<sup>14</sup>

As in most other industries, the first effect of the war on coal mining was to disorganize it by closing down some of its markets abroad and reducing the demand at home, because of the serious recession in business and industry. Prices declined and the abnormal rise in freights and the increasing cost of materials, especially of pit-timber, further enhanced the difficulties of the industry.<sup>15</sup> This was not reflected in the unemployment figures because the slack in employment was taken up by large-scale recruitment for the armed forces.<sup>16</sup>

Economic crises, induced by whatever forces, were no novelty in the coal mining industry, and this one was of very short duration. The great problem until after the close of the war was to supply the almost unlimited demands for coal. The

11 J. W. F. Rowe, *Wages in the Coal Industry* (London, 1923), p. 15.

12 D. J. Williams, *Capitalist Combination In the Coal Industry* (London, 1924), p. 92.

13 Sankey, I, 2.

14 *Journal of Political Economy*, XXVI, 588. Cf. Viscountess Rhondda and others, *D. A. Thomas-Viscount Rhondda* (London, 1921), for activities of Rhondda.

15 Cf. Lucy, *Diary of a Journalist*, III, 189-190, for Lloyd George's pre-war attempts at afforestation.

16 The miners were more accustomed to injury and death than most. As a union official put it graphically, a man was killed in the mines every six hours on the average. Injuries were one hundred and twenty times as frequent—one miner was injured every three minutes. Frank Hodges, *Nationalisation of the Mines* (New York, n. d.), p. 48.

Admiralty, railroads, shipping, munitions manufacture—all reached heights of activity never before approached, and all demanded coal. Foreign calls for coal also greatly increased. Supplies not only did not increase to keep pace with the demand but fell in inverse ratio because of the surge of miners to the enlistment offices. By the beginning of March, 1915, 195,156 miners had joined the military forces. This was 40 per cent of the miners of military age and 18.9 per cent of the number of all persons, including women and minors, employed in the mines at the beginning of the war. As fifty thousand persons went into the mines during this period, there was a net reduction of 13.5 per cent in the mine labor force.<sup>17</sup> The immediate decrease in output was 13.5 per cent.<sup>18</sup> Even at the end of 1914, with only five months of war during the year, production had fallen to 265,000,000 tons.<sup>19</sup>

However important the coal industry was, and however unique its treatment during the war might turn out to be, in one respect all problems were, to begin with, treated exactly alike by the appointment of the inevitable Committee. Faced by a growing shortage of coal, the Government appointed the Coal Mining Organization Committee in February, 1915, "to inquire into the conditions . . . with a view to promoting . . . the necessary production of coal during the war."<sup>20</sup> The Committee was composed of representatives of the operators, the miners, and the Mines Department of the Board of Trade; the miners agreed to join only after a proposed term of reference directing the Committee "to facilitate enlistments among mine

<sup>17</sup> Coal Mining Organization Committee, I, 6, 8. (Cd. 7939 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII). The percentage of Scottish recruits was even higher—21.3 per cent joining the colors by the end of February, 1915. The coal production of Ireland was negligible and but few miners were employed in Ireland but only .8 per cent of the Irish miners joined the Forces by this date. Coal Mining Organization Committee, I, 81. The figures given are those as officially corrected.

<sup>18</sup> Coal Mining Organization Committee, I, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 284.

<sup>20</sup> Coal Mining Organization Committee, I, 4.

workers" had been deleted.<sup>21</sup> The Committee appointed so early in the war was dealing with an industry which had been subject to perhaps more solicitude and regulation (often unsolicited by the coal-mine owners and operatives) by the State than any other. Various laws laid down sanitary and safety regulation; the employment of women and children underground had been forbidden; and the Eight Hour Day Act of 1908 and the Minimum Wage Act of 1912 had accustomed, if not reconciled, the operators to State regulation. To a large degree regulation was both fostered and made easier by the high degree of organization in the coal mining industry.

The Coal Mining Organization Committee was primarily concerned with increased production. This could be achieved by better mine management and by increased exertions on the part of miners. Opposed to intervention and regulation, depending at first on appeals and exhortations, the Government therefore concentrated on getting the miners to produce more coal. Entreaties would be more effective with the miners than they would be in securing a re-organization of the mining industry. The operators found little cause for complaint on this score. Whatever it meant to the workers, to the operators the Government's efforts were in the nature of "assistance" rather than interference.<sup>22</sup>

Increased demands for coal at home and abroad, coupled with decreasing production, caused rising prices and discontent, and in February, 1915, a Departmental Committee was set up by the President of the Board of Trade to inquire into the situ-

<sup>21</sup> G. D. H. Cole, *Labour in the Coal Mining Industry* (Oxford, 1923), p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> The reluctance even to "assist" may be illustrated by the problem of pit timber which early occupied the attention of the Government. Both the Board of Trade and the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries issued reassuring reports, trusting to private initiative and competition to ensure a supply of pit timber at reasonable prices. Supply of Imported Pit Wood, pp. 3, 5. (Cd. 7728-1914 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII). Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Supplies of Home Grown Pit-Wood*, pp. 4, 13. (Cd. 7729-1914 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII).

ation. The Committee, reporting in the next month, recommended the restriction of exports to neutrals, the use of prize ships as coal transports, and the accumulation of coal reserves in London for the use of small consumers during the next winter. If these measures failed to reduce prices to a reasonable level, the Government was advised to take over the control of the coal industry during the war.<sup>23</sup> It is apparent that the Committee did not believe that State control would be necessary. In the light of the Committee's orientation against control and restrictions, the wish can be said to have been father to the thought. Only as a last resort, and very reluctantly at that, did the Committee recommend drastic action. Even price-fixing was viewed as extremely difficult of application; the Committee preferred "to turn to remedies which in our opinion are at once simpler and more immediately practicable."<sup>24</sup> The London coal merchants, however, recognized a condition which the Government refused to face. The situation was without precedent; as one coal merchant pointed out, there had never been "a war like this."<sup>25</sup> Eventually, if very slowly, the Government was forced into action.

The pattern of development, as in war controls generally, was voluntary action followed by compulsion. In May, 1915, the President of the Board of Trade arranged with the London retail merchants on a voluntary basis to limit retail prices to a maximum margin of 7s. 6d. (to cover expenses of distribution and profit) over cost to them at the depot.<sup>26</sup> Later on this arrangement was extended to other areas.<sup>27</sup> The agreement by retail merchants did not, of course, prevent rising prices at the mines. The question whether coal prices should be limited by

<sup>23</sup> Board of Trade Coal Committee, I, 1, 8, 10, 11. (Cd. 7866 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXIX).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Board of Trade Coal Committee, *Minutes of Evidence*, II, 15. (Cd. 7923 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXIX).

<sup>26</sup> List of Coal Merchants . . . (Cd. 8070-1915 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LXI).

<sup>27</sup> Sankey, I, 43.



law was referred to the Coal Mining Organization Committee in June, 1915, but events moved so rapidly that before the Committee could arrive at a decision, the Government announced that maximum coal prices would be set and asked the Committee to advise on the best method. Before the end of July, 1915, the Price of Coal (Limitation) Act was enacted on the recommendation of the Committee, limiting the price of coal at the pits to 4s. per ton above pre-war rates. The Act did not apply to Ireland and only affected the price of coal sold in the domestic market.<sup>28</sup> Since the Committee was composed mostly of operators and miners, the recommendation was in the nature of a "self-denying ordinance," as maximum prices limited profits and wages. But it must be remembered that the Committee was actually confronted with a *fait accompli*, because the Government had announced its intention of limiting prices and merely asked the Committee as to the best method.

Retail prices were limited under the Retail Coal Prices Order, which empowered the local authorities to fix maximum prices for their districts. The power was permissive, not mandatory, and some local authorities did not avail themselves of it.<sup>29</sup> In September, 1917, a new scale of prices, based on a margin above cost "intended to bear roughly the same relation to each other as the margins of profit . . . of business prior to the war," was established for all dealers. The margins ranged from 3d. per ton on railway locomotive coal to as high as 2s. for other classes. For coal sold to retailers for resale to consumers, the margin was set at 1s. per ton.<sup>30</sup> By Government order the maximum pit prices for coal became the minimum, too, in order to maintain prices at a fixed level; in June, 1918, and again in the following month, coal prices were raised beyond the June, 1915, rate. In 1918 the retail coal trade was further controlled by the Household Fuel and Lighting Order.

<sup>28</sup> Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>29</sup> Sankey, I, 62.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 43.

All dealers were licensed and the trade closed to newcomers. Consumers were obliged to register with dealers, and "advertising and touting" were forbidden. Deliveries were restricted and coordinated, and an attempt was made to distribute the supply available (which was 75 per cent of the normal supply) on an equitable basis.<sup>31</sup>

Limitation of prices was, until the State took over outright control of the mines, perhaps the most drastic example of state intervention in the coal mining industry, but it was not the first step in Government control. Earlier, the State had already limited exports of coal. The chief means of increasing the domestic supply of coal was the curtailment of exports. This involved not assistance, but interference. The question of controlling the export trade was, like that of controlling prices, referred to the Committee on Coal Mining Organization. It recommended restrictions on the export of coal only if home needs could not be met.<sup>32</sup> As home needs were not being met, the President of the Board of Trade in April, 1915, appointed a standing Committee to consider and advise on the export of coal.<sup>33</sup> In May, 1915, an Order in Council prohibited export to neutrals except by license; in August this was extended to the Allies.<sup>34</sup> The object was to reserve supplies for necessary home consumption and allied needs, and then permit the balance to go to neutral countries. Drastic though the remedy, an attempt was made to utilize the existing trade machinery. Wherever possible, committees of operators and shippers were set up to allocate exports and to effect necessary adjustments. In the words of the Chairman of the Coal Exports Committee, this was better than the "abhorred shears" of a Licensing Committee.<sup>35</sup>

31 *Ibid.*, I, 57, 59-60, 62.

32 Coal Mining Organization Committee, I, 22.

33 Ministry of Reconstruction, Coal Conservation Committee, *Final Report*, p. 42. (Cd. 9084-1918 in S. P. 1918, vol. VII).

34 Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 25.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 26. Coal was of course not the only commodity the export of which was forbidden. In an attempt to cut down on all exports, the Govern-

Restrictions on coal exports instituted to safeguard the domestic supply served other purposes, too. Neutral shipping was very largely dependent upon British coal for bunkering. The fact was very useful in "persuading" neutrals to conform to British national interests. Coal for neutrals was controlled to prevent it from falling into enemy hands, to force neutrals to deliver supplies to Britain and her Allies, as well as to keep supplies from going to the enemy. Control had other uses, too. For example, in 1916, because of a surplus of coke, it was often made a condition to the supply of coal to neutrals that they take a certain portion of their fuel in coke.<sup>36</sup>

The limitation on coal exports was a two-edged sword, affecting allies as well as neutrals. Short supplies would have raised prices in any event; soaring freight rates and the lack of control on the price of export coal served to aggravate the situation abroad. The French and Italians, hard pressed on the battlefields by the Central Powers, also found themselves suffering on the home front as the result of the high prices they were forced to pay to their British comrades for coal. By September, 1916, prices of coal exported to France and Italy were limited by the "voluntary action" (stimulated by a Government "suggestion") of a committee of coal exporters appointed by the President of the Board of Trade.<sup>37</sup> As in other "controls," however, voluntary self-regulation was superseded by State rule. By the summer of 1917 the whole business of exports was under State control, and prices were fixed by the Coal Controller.<sup>38</sup> As a result of pooling arrangements for the exports, changes had to be made in fixing "profits"; these were now paid into a common pool and then divided among all the approved shippers on a *pro rata* basis.<sup>39</sup>

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ment sought the help of college professors as well as of the business community. Cf. J. R. Weaver and A. L. Poole, *Henry W. C. Davis* (London, 1933), p. 36.

36 Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, pp. 32, 75.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74, 83-84.

38 Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

39 Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 130.

Price and export restrictions proved beneficial to the British coal consumers, but did not, as such, ensure an equitable distribution as among the various areas, nor give priority, at a time of scarcity, to war industries. Here, too, "guidance"—on a voluntary basis—was the first step, later to be succeeded by legal compulsion. A Coal and Coke Supplies Committee was appointed in January, 1916, to effect, from the standpoint of war needs, the best allocation of coal. Lacking legal powers to enforce its "directions," the Committee labored in vain until the Government was granted powers of compulsion.<sup>40</sup>

Another method of increasing the supply of coal for essential purposes was to limit the use of coal for less essential needs. At first, the Government attempted to reduce the consumption of coal chiefly by means of appeals. Legal steps to curtail fuel consumption were instituted from the middle of 1916, but they were, on the whole, few, and affected the total consumption but little, although they may have had some psychological value.<sup>41</sup> Millions of pamphlets were distributed; newspaper campaigns were undertaken; and, just before the end of the war, all churches were asked to hold church services only during daylight hours. By way of compulsion, the Daylight Saving Bill of May, 1916,<sup>42</sup> and the Order closing most shops by seven o'clock were the major attempts to reduce the consumption of coal by cutting down on fuel and light.<sup>43</sup> Much more fuel was saved by linking up many of the electric power supply stations, although the maximum possible savings in this field were never

<sup>40</sup> Coal Conservation Committee, *Final Report*, p. 42. (Cd. 9084-1918 in S. P. 1918, vol. VII).

<sup>41</sup> It was not possible, in the age of steam, to do as did Good Queen Bess. Ever solicitous of her subjects, Elizabeth sought to protect the health of her sturdy commoners. The burning of coal in London was forbidden during the sitting of Parliament because "the health of the Knights of the Shire might suffer during their abode in the Metropolis." Harold M. Watkins, *Coal and Men* (London, 1934), p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> Summer Time Committee, *Report*, p. 3. (Cd. 8487-1917 in S. P. 1917-1918 vol. XVIII).

<sup>43</sup> Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, pp. 76-77, 78, 81, 133, 197.

attained. A Committee appointed to investigate the problem reported that the coal supply, properly utilized, could produce three times as much power as was being currently produced.<sup>44</sup>

All restrictions on exports, prices, and the use of coal, significant as they were in illustrating the direction in which the Government was moving, fade into the trivial as compared with the control of the mines by the Government. Along with munitions, food, and shipping, the coal industry was before the end of the war legally under the complete control of the State. Lloyd George and the War Cabinet which he headed from December, 1916, on, are generally given the credit, if it be such, for taking over the control of the major industries of the country. The "push-and-go" Lloyd George, who replaced the "wait-and-see" Asquith, is, by almost common consent, deemed to have inaugurated a new era in the British War Government. Whereas under the dull and sluggish Asquith, State action was dilatory and retarded, under the alert and mercurial Lloyd George it was prompt and expeditious. So at least runs the tale.

There can be no denying that, shortly after the Lloyd George Government began its career, a Ministry of Labour was established, along with Controllershops of Food, of Shipping, and of Coal Mining. But the schemes of these Controllershops had been under consideration for many weeks. Before Asquith was even aware that there was serious danger of a new Government being formed, he had asked Lord Milner (soon of the War Cabinet) to become "Food Director," and when Milner declined, Asquith wrote to him on December 2, 1916, asking whether he would take charge of the coal problem "should occasion arise."<sup>45</sup> The day before, the Government had assumed control of the South Wales coal fields, and there was every indication that the reasons impelling the Government to do so were also operating, if to a somewhat lesser degree as yet, in

<sup>44</sup> Coal Conservation Committee, *Interim Report on Electric Power Supply in Great Britain*, pp. 5-7, 11. (Cd. 8880-1918 in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XVIII).

<sup>45</sup> Redmayne, *Men, Mines and Memories*, pp. 191-192.

the rest of the industry. For some months prior to December, 1916, Milner had functioned as Supervisor of the Supply and Distribution of Coal by being chairman of an informal committee consisting of himself and of the chairmen of the three committees dealing with coal.<sup>46</sup>

As in food and shipping, control was not entirely an innovation. What was new was the extent and degree of control. But this control, even under the Lloyd George Coalition, was introduced slowly and hesitantly, with no more precipitateness than under the Asquith Coalition. If Lloyd George had a vision of a fully regimented population, he was not very impetuous in introducing control measures. He did institute many more rigorous controls than Asquith, but it must be remembered that even under Asquith the institution of controls followed a pattern of acceleration almost in a geometric ratio. The South Wales coal fields were taken over on December 1.<sup>47</sup> Lloyd George soon formed his new Government, but not until March, 1917, was a Coal Controller appointed; even his appointment did not mean immediate control, although back in December, Lloyd George had announced the Government's intention of taking over the coal mines.

The first Coal Controller—a former general manager of a railroad—was selected with a definite view that he be favorably accepted by the colliery companies. By July, 1917, an agreement had been worked out. Although signed by the representatives of the operators and of the miners, some operators refused to accept the agreement as legally binding, and the Government was forced to introduce a Bill, enacted by Parliament in November, based upon the agreement.

The Coal Mines Control Agreement (Confirmation) Act, 1918, provided that mines be continued under their existing ownership subject to the right of the Controller to take over.

<sup>46</sup> Coal Conservation Committee, *Final Report*, p. 43. (Cd. 9084-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. VII).

<sup>47</sup> 88 H. C. Deb. 5s., 475.

Based upon a standard output, profits equal to the highest profits in any one of the three years preceding the war were guaranteed. If profits exceeded this figure, the excess was to be divided as follows: 80 per cent to the Treasury, 15 per cent into a pool to be used by the Controller to subsidize any mine which did not earn the guaranteed profits, and 5 per cent to the colliery operator. To prevent evasions, the Controller issued an Order providing that all changes and additions in expenditure for salaries, wages, or mine developments required notice to the Controller.<sup>48</sup> The royalty owners, under fire before the war, found their rights violated in order to facilitate the working of convenient adjacent deposits for which they sometimes asked exorbitant rates. An Order of April, 1918, empowered the Board of Trade to authorize any person to work any unworked seam of coal near an open mine, provided it did not involve the opening of new surface works.<sup>49</sup> Royalty owners receiving payments on a sliding scale, who reaped special benefits from the high prices of coal, were taxed 50 per cent of their "excess profits."

The limitation and guarantee of profits was the culmination of Government control of the industry. But there had been many steps on the way. In July, 1917, in an attempt to alleviate the crisis in transportation, the transportation of coal between producing areas was restricted.<sup>50</sup> Britain was divided into twenty areas of production with the aim of making each area as self-sufficing as possible and cutting down on the transportation of coal. Nearly 700 million ton-miles per annum were thus to be saved by carrying 42 million tons of coal shorter distances than formerly.<sup>51</sup> It was also planned to deal with the flow of coal within each area, which, it was estimated, would provide even greater economies, but the limited staff prevented

<sup>48</sup> Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, pp. 198-201.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 104.

<sup>51</sup> Sankey, I, 79-81.

realization of this.<sup>52</sup> Another intended economy was the pooling of the 700,000 coal cars,<sup>53</sup> but the Board of Trade had originally opposed this step,<sup>54</sup> and even after the Board was authorized to take over and direct private coal cars, the power was little used.<sup>55</sup>

That the Government should shrink from pooling the coal cars at a time when the coal mines of the country were under State control may appear to be but another example of the lack of a coherent and consistent policy. And yet, the distinction is more real than apparent. Although the mines were under State control, they were, essentially, not controlled. The *raison d'être* for the control of the mines was the unwillingness of the most highly organized group of workers in the country, in an industry of vital importance, to lay aside aspirations and real needs for the greater profit of private individuals. State "control" of the mines was, in reality, but a glorified Excess Profits Duty, with a guaranteed profit. The Chief Inspector of Mines sums up the position of the Government when he asserts that the "system of control of such a vast and complicated industry . . . is only warranted by the abnormal circumstances which inaugurated it. It was a necessary evil, at best, and of necessity, a policy of expedients." Like the Chief Inspector, the Government looked to rapid decontrol as "the better for all concerned."<sup>56</sup> In this case, it took three to make the bargain—of control. When the war was over, the miners insisted upon a continuation and extension of control, and the Government and the operators discovered that it was easier to enter into a relationship than it was to escape from it.

George Stephenson, the colliery engineman who brought the locomotive into successful use "for the purpose of loading coals

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 80.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 110; III, 89.

<sup>54</sup> Board of Trade Coal Committee, II, 219. (Cd. 8147 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII).

<sup>55</sup> Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 109.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212-213.



from the pit to the shipping place,"<sup>57</sup> very appropriately summed up the position of coal in the economic and political life of the country. "The strength of Britain lies in her iron and coal-beds; . . . The Lord Chancellor now sits upon a bag of wool, but wool has long ceased to be emblematical of the staple commodity" of Britain. If the significance of the seat of the Lord Chancellor was to be perpetuated, he "ought to sit upon a bag of coals."<sup>58</sup> And, as the Chief Inspector of Mines somewhat wryly remarked, this would not be "a more uncomfortable seat than that occupied of late years by more than one of His Majesty's Ministers of State who have had to deal with the coal-mining industry and the problems arising in connexion therewith."<sup>59</sup> As another observer put it, "many Cabinet Ministers have had to discover that coal is indeed capable of generating heat."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Jevons, *The Coal Question*, p. 124.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Jevons, *The Coal Question*, p. 126.

<sup>59</sup> Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Raynes, *Coal and Its Conflicts* (London, 1928), p. 11. For a French view of the British coal problem, cf. M. Olivier, *La Politique du Charbon, 1914-1921* (Paris, 1922).

## CHAPTER XI

### THE "JUGULAR VEIN": SHIPPING

IF coal was the "blood which coursed through the veins" of British industry, shipping was "the jugular vein" of the nation.<sup>1</sup> Not only Britain's economic position, but her very survival depended on the shipping industry.

On the eve of the war over 40,000 ships (including 8,000 sailing vessels) flew the British flag; of these, 8,587 were ships of 100 tons and over, having an aggregate tonnage of almost 19 million gross or 41.6 per cent of the entire steam shipping of the world.<sup>2</sup> These figures are, however, not entirely revealing. Only ships of 1,000 tons net or over (1,600 tons gross) could be used for ocean traffic; and there were fewer than 4,000 British ships of this size. Nevertheless, measured by tonnage, 87 per cent of all British ships were engaged in foreign trade.<sup>3</sup>

Although British ships carried an increasing amount of goods in the period before the war, the growing merchant fleets of other countries accounted for the fact that a dwindling proportion of the world's trade was being carried in British ships.<sup>4</sup> As in shipping, so in shipbuilding. Although still the only country building ships for export on a large scale,—one out of

1 88 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1345.

2 *Annual Statement on the Navigation and Shipping of the United Kingdom, 1913.* (Cd. 7616-1914, in S. P. 1914, vol. LXXXII). The "British Flag" is used to include ships of the United Kingdom and British Colonial and Other Possessions.

3 Gross tonnage represents the total cubic contents of a vessel, calculated at 100 cubic feet to the ton, including all permanent deck structures. It is the most common form used in general statistics, and all official figures of losses were given in gross tons. Net tonnage represents the gross total, less crew, navigation and engines space. It is used for most official statistics. Deadweight represents the weight of cargo and bunkers a ship can carry without sinking below her marks. A rough formula is 5 tons net = 8 tons gross—but this is sufficiently accurate only for general purposes. Fayle, *Seaborne Trade*, I, 7.

4 Departmental Committee on Shipping and Shipbuilding Trades After the War, *Report*, pp. 75, 86-89. (Cd. 9092-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. XIII).

every five ships built was for foreigners—Britain by 1914 was producing a smaller percentage of the world's tonnage of new ships than it had earlier.

The merchant fleet of the United Kingdom employed 292,000 men and boys, including nearly 47,000 Lascars and over 32,000 foreigners. These figures, however, are inclusive of the crews of the larger fishing craft; the number employed in trading vessels was 256,000 of whom 178,000 were British.<sup>5</sup> Just before the war, in England and Wales alone, 44,000 men were employed in the fishing industry with a capital investment valued at £15 million, catching about £8 million worth of fish annually.<sup>6</sup> The total book value of the merchant marine was about £160 million, exclusive of offices and wharves. Closely allied with the shipping industry were three other trades—Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering, employing 200,000 persons and a capital of £35 million; Ports, Docks, and Harbors with a capital of £150 million and employing 300,000; and Marine Insurance with a capital of £60 million.<sup>7</sup> It has been estimated that London controlled, directly or indirectly, three-fourths of the entire marine insurance of the world.<sup>8</sup> The average annual output of the British shipyards from 1910 to 1914 was about 1,660,000 tons gross or over 60 per cent of the world's total output of new merchant tonnage.<sup>9</sup> In addition to new tonnage, foreigners purchased older and obsolete vessels from British owners so that of the total British steam tonnage at the end of

<sup>5</sup> Cd. 7616, pp. 300-1.

<sup>6</sup> *Fisheries in the Great War*, p. 1. (Cmd. 585-1920, in S. P. 1920, vol. XVI). Cf. also *Report on the Sea and Inland Fisheries of Ireland for 1918*. (Cmd. 601-1920, in S. P. 1920, vol. XVI). Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Annual Report on Sea Fisheries for Year 1914*, pp. vi, xxiv. (Cd. 8102-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXII).

<sup>7</sup> Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, pp. 3-4. The Port and Harbor authorities alone employed 60,000 persons and had expended £140 million in capital up to the end of 1914. Their annual revenue was £11 million. Edgar Crammond, *The British Shipping Industry* (London, 1917), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> In Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

1913, 68 per cent had been built since 1900 and British owners replaced 23 per cent of their tonnage in the five-year period of 1909-1913.<sup>10</sup> Including these allied activities, more than 800,000 persons were employed and almost £1 billion of capital invested.<sup>11</sup>

Government regulation of the shipping industry was primarily through the Board of Trade. Two independent institutions—the Corporation of Lloyds and Lloyds Register—exercised a great deal of control, the first as marine underwriters, the second because it registered only ships built in conformity with specified rules.<sup>12</sup> Control within the industry was made easier because shipping was highly organized. The Shipping Federation, Ltd., represented fourteen million tons of shipping and the Liverpool Employers' Association, five million tons, with one million tons not represented in any association.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the Liner Conferences regulated freights, aiming at stabilizing rates by freezing out or absorbing recalcitrant competitors who would not accept the Conference schedules. The Conferences operated by an elaborate system of deferred rebates, by which shippers who did not give all their business to the Conference lines forfeited a rebate or discount, usually of 10 per cent, on the gross freights paid during the half-year.<sup>14</sup>

The shipowners were also strongly organized for dealings with their employees: the Shipping Federation represented the owners who belonged to the Chamber of Shipping and its affiliated bodies, with the Liverpool Employers' Association acting

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Crammond, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Frederick Huth Jackson, *et al.*, *Lectures on British Commerce* (London, n. d.), p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Adam W. Kirkaldy, *British Shipping* (London, 1914), pp. 182-183, 188. Increasingly, trade was becoming specialized. The main distinction was between "liners," on fixed schedules, and tramps or general traders, with no scheduled sailing date or route, each voyage being a separate venture. In 1914 trade was about evenly divided between tramps and liners, with the latter having the edge. Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, pp. 9, 12, 15.

in general cooperation.<sup>15</sup> The Shipping Federation, formed in 1890 after the great dock strike, had been reorganized after 1911 in order better to fight the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union.<sup>16</sup> In turn, the workers were also organized, but not nearly as strongly. The cleavage between officers and men was reflected in their organizations. The masters and deck officers were represented by the Imperial Merchant Service Guild, the Marine Service Association, the British Shipmasters' and Officers' Protection Society, and the Association of the Coastwise Masters, Mates, and Engineers. The marine engineers had an association of their own, but many preferred to belong to the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Workers in the catering departments divided their loyalties between the National Union of Ships' Cooks, Stewards, Butchers, and Bakers and the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union. The latter, since the seamen's strike of 1911, had absorbed many smaller local unions and now represented the great majority of the petty officers, sailors, and firemen. There were also the British and Scottish Seafarers' Unions, established at Southampton and Glasgow, respectively, which had split off from the National Union, and the Hull Seamen's Union, nominally independent, which worked closely with the National Union. Although it claimed to represent 90 per cent of the organized labor in the industry, a large body of non-union labor, mainly foreigners and Asiatics, served as a sharp brake on the Union. The National Union's relations with the Shipping Federation were marked by hostility and bitterness; on the eve of the war, both sides were preparing for a new trial of strength.<sup>17</sup> As in other fields, lesser struggles were laid aside, temporarily, at least, in the face of the larger conflict.

15 Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, p. 27.

16 Hopkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6. Labour Research Department, *Labour and Capital in Shipping* (London, 1923), p. 49.

17 Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, pp. 27-28.

The shock of war slowed down most industries; its immediate effect was to paralyze the shipping industry. Recovery was, however, very rapid. The war emphasized the importance of the shipping industry; "Fortress Britain" had to be supplied with the essentials of peace as well as of war and armies had to be transported. The English "moat," which had for so long protected Britain, would serve to hem in her armies unless a large enough fleet could be mustered to transport them to the Continent.<sup>18</sup>

The early success of shipping in maintaining its operations was an important factor in bolstering the "business as usual" policy although the shipping industry, itself, was immediately affected by State intervention. As in the case of the railroads, military necessity forced State intervention. Using the Crown Prerogative, the Government, by Proclamation on August 3, 1914, authorized the Admiralty to requisition ships as transports and auxiliaries.<sup>19</sup> All ships used for fighting purposes were taken up on "net charter" with the Government assuming all expenses of operation. All other ships, including transports, colliers, tankers, supply ships, and hospital ships, were taken up on "gross charter" terms under which the owners remained responsible for ordinary expenses of running the ship.<sup>20</sup>

Compensation was fixed by a committee of seventy-two, representing the Government, shipowners, cargo owners, the marine insurance business, deck officers, and seamen; the owners, with twenty-four, formed the largest group.<sup>21</sup> The rates

18 By the end of the war, almost ten million men and 800,000 animals, and over fifty million tons of stores had been transported to and from France. Fay, *The War Office at War*, pp. 253-255.

19 This was a result of the lessons learned during the Boer War, when the Government had gone into the market as an ordinary charterer and had been forced to pay unprecedented rates. J. A. Salter, *Allied Shipping Control* (Oxford, 1921), p. 39.

20 Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, pp. 74-75.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

thus arrived at, printed by the Admiralty and circulated as a Government document or "Blue Book," became known as "Blue Book Rates." Though not binding either on the Admiralty or on the shipowners, they were, from the first, accepted by both sides.<sup>22</sup> As set, they yielded an average annual profit of over 10 per cent on the book value of the ships. This was less than the 15 per cent realized during the boom years of 1912 and 1913, but it was higher than the return obtained immediately after the beginning of the war.<sup>23</sup>

Generous as were the Blue Book rates, they were soon outstripped by the "free" market rates. The fortunate shipowners whose vessels had not been requisitioned by the Admiralty were showered with "immense and possibly unique" profits.<sup>24</sup> In the first twenty-six months of the war, the total net profit of British shipping amounted to at least £262,000,000, with an appreciation in value from £175,000,000 to about £500,000,000.<sup>25</sup> The high profits were simply the result of high freight charges arising out of a scarcity of tonnage.

Whatever the equities of the situation, as between those whose ships were requisitioned at Blue Book rates and those who were permitted to carry on "normal" activities at a very abnormal rate of profit, there would have been little need and less inclination for State intervention but for the fact that the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78-82.

<sup>23</sup> Shipowners had expected a drastic fall in profits in 1914. Salter, *op. cit.*, p. 114. The world was "oversupplied" with shipping. J. Russell Smith, *Influence of the Great War upon Shipping* (New York, 1919), p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> Salter, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115. The Excess Profits Tax was not inclusive enough to tax all shipping profits and a special section of the 1916 Finance Act aimed at profits derived from the buying and selling of ships. Robert M. Haig, *Taxation of Excess Profits in Great Britain* (Princeton, 1920), p. 80. A more drastic proposal providing for a tax on capital in the shipping industry was put on paper but withdrawn before it came to the House. "Certain members of the Government were aghast at the sudden introduction of the hated principle of taxation of capital which is always so alarming to British ideas..." Stamp, *Taxation during the War*, p. 187.

high profits were achieved at the expense of high prices. Government action was forced by public indignation directed against the "profiteers" as a result of soaring prices.

Despite public clamor, the Government was not to be thrust precipitately into control of the shipping industry. As with other industries there was to be much preliminary fumbling with the usual advisory committees. First, the Government convened a conference of shipowners, hoping to arrive at a voluntary agreement. The shipowners, however, were divided among themselves, the Chamber of Shipping recommending an extension of requisitioning, while the Liverpool Steamship Owners' Association recommended a prohibition of non-essential imports. Without trying to decide on which imports were "non-essential," the Government accepted the advice of both organizations. In November, 1915, it appointed a Requisitioning (Carriage of Foodstuffs) Committee, with power to requisition ships for the transportation of foodstuffs and of any other articles of commerce. At the same time, British ships carrying cargoes between ports outside the British Empire were required to procure a license from a Ship Licensing Committee. Later, by Order in Council, licenses were required of all British ships sailing between British or foreign ports. Ships engaged in unnecessary or relatively unimportant work were to be denied licenses, but in practice it seemed that very few ships were so engaged. Both Committees were appointed by, and responsible to, the Board of Trade, which, interested in preserving permanent trade connections, encouraged the rather free granting of licenses. It is further illustrative of the attitude of the Board of Trade that the Requisitioning Committee did not use its powers to requisition ships but merely directed additional ships into the North Atlantic trade, hoping that additional shipping space would force down freight rates.<sup>26</sup> In December, 1915, a Port and Transit Executive Committee with wide powers was organ-

<sup>26</sup> Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, pp. 157-158; Salter, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 51.



ized.<sup>27</sup> The Committee was, however, strongly opposed to "centralized direction," and used few of its powers.<sup>28</sup>

A further step toward control was taken in January, 1916, with the appointment of a Shipping Control Committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Curzon. Possessing general advisory powers, it had no direct executive powers nor an administrative staff, but its function was to decide on the allocation of tonnage, and it was generally able to get Cabinet backing for its more important decisions.<sup>29</sup> In order to release tonnage for essential goods, the Shipping Control Committee, the Ship Licensing Committee, and the Port and Transit Executive Committee repeatedly urged the imposition of curbs on imports. With its "business as usual" attitude, however, the Board of Trade blocked the adoption of adequate restrictions on imports.

The Government was reluctant and, to a degree, unable to take further action. Fixing maximum rates or even the use of requisitioned shipping to break freight rates was impracticable. What was true of all other controls held good here, too. Partial control would create many more problems than would be solved. The imposition of maximum freight rates could apply only to British ships. If freights were fixed below the market, neutrals would seek other employment and thus aggravate the shortage of shipping for Britain. Even on British ships, a reduction of freight charges would necessitate government allocation of shipping space, since lower rates would increase the demand and result in an even greater scramble for the available shipping. The use of requisitioned shipping to break freights would create

<sup>27</sup> Fayle, *Seaborne Trade*, II, 197.

<sup>28</sup> Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, p. 152.

<sup>29</sup> Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, pp. 161, 199. Lord Curzon, who early urged military conscription and considered its introduction almost as a personal victory, was much less concerned about the control of shipping. He took as much "interest in arranging for the conveyance of some marble from Italy to India for some purpose connected with the Victoria Memorial Hall in Calcutta, as he did in dealing with a communication of the highest importance . . . touching on the whole question of shipping requirements . . ." Ronaldshay, *Curzon*, III, 67.

the same problem. Only by assigning requisitioned shipping for the importation of all of a particular commodity could the State prevent unfair advantage accruing to those importers who would benefit by the lower freights. The President of the Board of Trade, Runciman, expressed the attitude of those opposed to control:

There is only one way by which, by commandeering the whole of the mercantile marine, you can hold the balance fairly as between all routes and all merchants and all consumers, and that is that you must become not only shipowners but merchants. Indeed, you must become not only an individual merchant; you must become a super-merchant, the only merchant . . . [some think] that is next door to the Millenium . . . I implore [them] not to try to bring about the millenium in the middle of a great war.<sup>30</sup>

Logically and ideally, perhaps, the State should have become the "only merchant" for all commodities. Lagging as always, it merely limited the freights on three essential foodstuffs—wheat, sugar, and meat.<sup>31</sup> The requisitioning of ships for the transportation of meat offered additional difficulties because of the special nature of the shipping space required. Two great groups of liner services controlled the transportation of this commodity. Requisitioning would have to include the taking over of an elaborate organization, and also the taking over of passenger accommodations and the holds devoted to general cargo. As finally arranged, the Board of Trade took over the refrigerated space on the homeward voyage, giving the lines complete control of the outward cargo, and of the non-refrigerated space on the homeward voyage. If there was insufficient meat, the Board of Trade took other cargo for which it charged the market price. The rates paid to the liners by the

<sup>30</sup> 69 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1186.

<sup>31</sup> The eminent statistician, Sir George Paish, estimated that one half of all price rises in 1915 and 1916 were due to increased freight rates. Simon Litman, *Prices and Price Control in Great Britain and the United States during the World War* (New York, 1920), p. 62.

Board of Trade were fixed at a point between the Blue Book rates and the current market rates.<sup>32</sup> Two committees of ship-owners conducted the operations under the supervision of the Board of Trade. The actual running of the ships remained in the hands of the owners, who were paid on a voyage basis.<sup>33</sup>

Curiously, control seemed invidious, even to preclude direct enemy attacks on shipping. Enemy action had, it is true, not yet become alarming. Although a vessel had been sunk by submarine action as early as October, 1914, less than 750,000 tons of British shipping, including sailing and fishing vessels, were lost up through October 31, 1915; and this included enemy action and all other causes.<sup>34</sup>

Measures for the protection of merchant ships against enemy action had, of course, been planned even before the war. An Admiralty Committee had recommended the arming of all ships. At the opening of the war, however, only thirty-nine ships had been so fitted at private expense, with the Government providing the guns and ammunition.<sup>35</sup> None of them carried ammunition until after the war began.<sup>36</sup> The Admiralty took further action early in the war by establishing a new Department—the Defensively Armed Merchant Ships Department—known popularly as “Dam Ships.”<sup>37</sup> After January, 1915, the British flag, proud symbol of a great seafaring people, was shrouded by Government decree. By a “confidential” Admiralty order, all British ships were required to display the

<sup>32</sup> Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, pp. 143-144; Salter, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>33</sup> Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, pp. 144-146.

<sup>34</sup> Merchant Shipping Casualties (House of Commons # 430-1916, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. LV).

<sup>35</sup> Hurd, *op. cit.*, I, 120, 124.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 231-232.

<sup>37</sup> David W. Bone, *Merchantmen-At-Arms* (London, 1929), p. 47. Until “unrestricted” submarine warfare was instituted, those ships which were armed were reasonably protected against submarines. Cf. F. A. Hook, *Merchant Adventurers 1914-1918* (London, 1920), p. 88.

ensign of a neutral country or show no colors while anywhere in the vicinity of the British Islands, except when meeting British or Allied men of war.<sup>38</sup> Of limited effectiveness at all times, such measures were almost futile when the Germans began sinking all vessels without warning. The Government seriously considered the building of an "unsinkable ship," but the increased cost of labor, material, and time rendered this impracticable.<sup>39</sup> Some slight progress was made in designing ships which were less susceptible to destruction by torpedoes.<sup>40</sup>

It is now well known that unrestricted submarine warfare was instituted by the German Government with a full knowledge of its possible consequences in drawing the United States into the war. Although it may be considered almost in the nature of a last desperate gamble, in reality it was by no means a venturesome undertaking. Germany risked little not already in jeopardy. According to its proponents, the unrestricted submarine policy would merely have the effect of making *de jure* what was already *de facto*—America's entry into the war. On the other hand, there was the possibility, and the only real hope of success, of preventing American supplies from reaching Britain. The success of the submarine would have insured German victory; its failure did not directly lose the war for Germany, but it enabled the Allies to marshal all the requisites for victory.

The submarine was finally worsted only by the system of convoys, i.e., a group of merchant vessels sailing together under the protection of an armed escort. The convoy system was so

38 Shipping Casualties (Loss of Steamship Lusitania) . . . (Cmd. 381-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXV).

39 Clement Jones, *British Merchant Shipping* (London, 1922), p. 140.

40 Cf. Eustace H. D'Eyncourt, *Note on some Proposals made during the War for Protecting Merchant Ships against Submarines* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1921), for various designs. The Government had previously tried "dazzle painting." This was ineffective against submarines but useful for morale purposes. Hurd, *op. cit.*, III, 212, 225, 228.

successful that the long delay in instituting it has become the subject of one of the great controversies over the proper direction of war policy. Controversy still rages as to whether the civilian authorities interfered too little or too much in military affairs.<sup>41</sup> The question as to the ultimate responsibility for the delay in introducing the convoy system is still a matter of debate, but there can be little doubt that the Admiralty was dilatory in meeting the problem of submarines. Early in 1917, at a conference convened by the Admiralty, the merchant ship captains held that the difficulties of instituting convoys were insurmountable.<sup>42</sup> Even when naval authorities insisted that convoys must be attempted, the merchant captains rejected them as impossible.<sup>43</sup> This is the Admiralty side of the picture. On the other hand, its neglect in meeting its responsibilities may be seen from the fact that not until the spring of 1917 did the Admiralty institute a scheme of instruction in anti-submarine measures for officers of the merchant marine.<sup>44</sup> Nor was the scheme made compulsory until a later date.<sup>45</sup> When the success of the convoy system was demonstrated in the French coal trade in February, 1917, and, later (in April) in the Scandinavian trade, the Admiralty exaggerated the difficulties of extending the system to ocean shipping by over-estimating the number of voyages to be protected, and by insisting that

41 Jellicoe admits the Government was "responsible for the policy," but holds that since the navy is a specialized profession, the Government had no right to interfere in the operations. Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War*, pp. 258-259. The confusion inherent in this position may be obvious and it is very real. The difficulty was enhanced because military and naval figures are "as a rule accustomed to carry out their ideas without having first to bring conviction to the minds of men..." Admiral Viscount Jellicoe, *The Grand Fleet* (London, 1919), p. 422.

42 D'Eyncourt, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

43 Hurd, *op. cit.*, III, 371.

44 Bone, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

there were insufficient destroyers and patrol craft to provide the necessary escort.<sup>46</sup>

Not until May, 1917, did the Admiralty appoint a Committee to draw up a general scheme of convoy organization for ocean shipping.<sup>47</sup> By July regular convoys were being organized from North American ports.<sup>48</sup> In the next month, outward ships were organized in convoys and the system was rapidly extended until the majority of ships, on all routes, were being escorted through the danger zones. Towards the end of 1917, one-half of the total overseas traffic of the United Kingdom was being convoyed and by the end of the war the proportion had reached 90 per cent. It was unquestionably successful. Over 99 per cent of the nearly 17,000 vessels escorted in ocean convoy arrived safely. In the first six months of unrestricted submarine warfare, the losses were 2,305,000 tons; in the next six months 1,400,000, and in the six months ending July, 1918, the losses had fallen to 1,150,000 tons.<sup>49</sup>

The menace of the submarine was finally neutralized by direct action. But, in the meantime, other steps were necessary to overcome the very serious shipping situation which became marked toward the end of 1916. The problems in the first two years of the war were the rise of freights and the effect on the general price level, and the public demand for reduction of ship-owners' profits. By December, 1916, submarine warfare which

46 Fayle, *Seaborne Trade*, vol. III, *passim*, for inception and organization of convoys; Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War*, pp. 102-118, for difficulties from the naval point of view; and Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. III, chap. iii, for criticism of the professional authorities by an exponent of civilian control and direction of all phases of the war effort. Jellicoe denies that the decision to institute convoys was the result of pressure on the Admiralty from the War Cabinet. Earl Jellicoe, *The Submarine Peril* (London, 1934), pp. 130-1.

47 Fayle, *Seaborne Trade*, III, 129; Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War*, p. 132.

48 Salter, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

49 The figures include coasters and sailing vessels. Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, p. 287; Salter, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

had been causing progressively greater losses, was working havoc with British shipping. By February, 1917, the number of ships lost was increasing at such a rate that the fate of Britain literally hung in the balance.<sup>50</sup> The problem became that of importing essentials. There were not even sufficient ships to import the bare necessities of a nation at war. The old methods had failed; new methods were imperative for the survival of Britain.

The Asquith Government had already been forced to consider the situation, but had not arrived at a decision before the Lloyd George Coalition replaced it. The new Prime Minister promised that "during the war shipping will be nationalized in the real sense of the term." Perhaps to offset this, he also announced that Sir Joseph Maclay, a leading shipowner, had consented to accept the post of Shipping Controller, yet to be created by an Act of Parliament.<sup>51</sup> Three days later, the New Ministers and Secretaries Act (6 and 7 George V, c.68) became law. Under it, the Shipping Controller was to regulate shipping, but the Government "had no very clear idea of what was meant by the promise to nationalize shipping in the real sense of the term."<sup>52</sup> As a first step, the Government instructed the Shipping Controller to extend requisitioning at Blue Book rates, so as to make it "as nearly as possible universal."<sup>53</sup> On March 31, 1917, the importation without license of a large number of commodities was prohibited. The licenses were to be granted by a new Committee, the Tonnage Priority Committee formed in

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Merchant Shipping Losses*, pp. 162 ff. (House of Commons # 199-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XLII) for itemized account of losses. The sinking of the unarmed *Lusitania* (which, however, carried 5,000 cases of cartridges as part of its cargo) with a loss of 1198 lives (Cd. 8023) was striking and tragic but it did not—in relation to the whole of British shipping—seriously affect the situation. Cf. also, Corbett and Newbolt, *Naval Operations*, vols. V and VI, for menace and problems created by submarine warfare.

<sup>51</sup> 88 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1345-1346.

<sup>52</sup> Fayle, *War and Shipping Industry*, p. 206.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

February, 1917.<sup>54</sup> By the Armistice almost all imports were selected, directed, and controlled in the national interest.<sup>55</sup>

Though finally almost complete, "control" of the shipping industry, as in other activities, was *not* arrived at by a conscious and deliberate policy. Ben Tillett of the Transport Workers Federation, who devoted his time during the war "in a fight for efficiency in transport," was bitterly indignant over what he described as "a lack of unity, a lack of decision, a lack of constructive organization. . . ." <sup>56</sup> J. A. Salter's description of the steps leading to ultimate control in the shipping industry is applicable to all the State controls instituted during the war: "It is important to remember that control was extended step by step by the compelling force of circumstances. It was already almost complete before it was adopted as a deliberate policy. Each new extension was normally undertaken reluctantly as the only method of meeting an immediate emergency."<sup>57</sup>

As in coal, in munitions, and in various lesser commodities, government "control," sometimes equated to "nationalization," meant simply that the industries were practically (and in many cases this qualifying adverb may be omitted) guaranteed a minimum profit far exceeding their pre-war profits. The sole consolation the consuming public and the taxpayer (who paid for the subsidies) might find in this state of affairs was that these profits were lower than they would have been in the absence of state intervention. Yet it cannot be said that had there been no intervention by the Government in the form in which it did take place, a policy of *laissez-faire* would have continued. The alternative is rather that state intervention would have been far more drastic and far more costly to the industrialists of Great Britain.

<sup>54</sup> Chiozza-Money, *The Triumph of Nationalization* (London, 1920), p. 88.

<sup>55</sup> Well over 90 percent of the total imports were under the control of five Government Departments: The Ministry of Food, the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Munitions, the War Office, and the Admiralty. Salter, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>56</sup> Tillett, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>57</sup> Salter, *op. cit.*, p. 62.



## CHAPTER XII

### COTTON

PERHAPS nothing better illustrates the stringency of the war and the sense of urgency in its last two years than does the control of the cotton industry. The cotton industry was one of the sources, if not the traditional fount of British prosperity. From the end of the eighteenth century on, the needs and the growth of the textile industry had to a large extent conditioned the source of industrial and political development of Britain. The British lion of the nineteenth century was made of no sterner stuff than cotton. A Shakespeare of the nineteenth century might well have written: "He who touches the cotton trade touches the heart of Britain." Fair Marianne might clothe the world in silk, but British cotton served to shroud French pretensions to economic power and hence, as three great wars have demonstrated with repetitive horror, to political power.

In 1914, though many observers saw the shadow of decline, cotton (yarn and cloth) was still the most valuable single item in the British list of exports (£127,000,000 in 1913), accounting for 25 per cent of the total value of exports from the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> On the eve of the war, the cotton industry employed 689,000 persons, divided as follows: 134,000 males and 155,000 females in spinning, and 140,000 males and 260,000 females in weaving. The cotton trade was not in the most prosperous condition in July, 1914; the first effect of the war was to deepen the depression. In October, 1914, more than 40 per cent of the employees were working short time,<sup>2</sup> but by February, 1915, employment had risen practically to the July, 1914, level.<sup>3</sup>

1 Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Note on the Textile Industry* (London, 1933), p. 20.

2 Report of the Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in October, 1914, p. 7 (Cd. 7705-1914, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXI).

3 Report of the Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in February, 1915, p. 8 (Cd. 7850-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXI).

Paradoxically, it was American intervention which proved mainly responsible for the grave difficulties that faced the cotton trade from the summer of 1917 to the end of the war. American intervention and the flood of American credit destroyed the very *raison d'être* of the cotton trade during the last two years of the war. It was no longer necessary to sacrifice shipping space to the importation of raw cotton for conversion into cotton goods. Financial credits with which to purchase food and essential supplies of war could be established by other means.<sup>4</sup> Exports had furnished the sinews of war. The United States, after it entered and added to the conflagration, offered more and better means at less immediate cost.<sup>5</sup> Some cotton was needed for military and essential civilian purposes, but these demands could be supplied with only a fraction of the normal output of the British textile mills and factories. Cotton production now became a luxury in a beleaguered fortress.

Up to the summer of 1917, state intervention in the cotton trade had been indirect. Through its control of shipping, the Government had limited the allocation of tonnage for the importation of raw cotton. The need of building up credits through the exportation of finished cotton goods had acted to restrain the Government from cutting down too drastically on the importation of raw cotton. American intervention eased the financial situation for Britain. This factor, coupled with the very serious shipping situation brought on by the submarine campaign and the need of ships for transporting American troops,

<sup>4</sup> The Bradford worsted spinners and manufacturers had persuaded the Education Authorities to reduce the school-leaving (and factory-entering) age from fourteen to thirteen, in order to enable the export trade, so "essential to the finances of the country," to carry on. *Economic Journal*, September, 1919, p. 293. The cotton industry was ranked as "vital" and had secured exemptions from military service for some of its operatives on this ground. 82 H. C. Deb. 55., 25.

<sup>5</sup> Not until a year after the war began did Britain place cotton on the contraband list. W. Haslam Mills, *Sir Charles W. Macara* (Manchester, 1917), pp. 165-166. Importation of cotton goods into Britain was prohibited in April, 1916. 81 H. C. Deb. 55., 1765.

led the Government to cut down drastically the importation of raw cotton in order to conserve shipping space for more essential purposes.<sup>6</sup> The immediate reaction of the cotton exchanges indicated the seriousness of the situation and pointed up the necessity for Government action. Following a rise of 300 points (3*d.* per pound) in a single week, the Liverpool futures market was closed down; before it was reopened ten days later, the Board of Trade had established, on June 28, 1917, the Cotton Control Board.<sup>7</sup>

Appointed by the Board of Trade, and technically subject to its authority, the Cotton Control Board was composed of representatives of the cotton industry's merchants, employers and workers, and of two Government officials. Following the precedent set in other industries, especially those highly organized, the Government selected almost all members from those who represented the organized interests.<sup>8</sup> The employees' representatives were in a minority on the Board, but even more weakening to their economic interest was the pervasive influence of patriotism and what, to many workers, who later felt betrayed by their own representatives, seemed like the insidious influence of office. This was especially important because, as the Secretary of the Cotton Control Board pointed out, the Board issued its decrees with "sovereign freedom," the Board of Trade being "merely called to ratify . . . a *fait accompli*."<sup>9</sup>

The problem before the Cotton Control Board, indeed, the very reason for its creation, was the need to regulate consumption within the available supplies. A plan for controlling alloca-

<sup>6</sup> "I am sure that in determining which should be done, to bring over cotton or American soldiers to fight with us, the people of Lancashire would have no hesitancy in deciding that American soldiers should have the preference." A. Stanley, President of Board of Trade, in 106 H. C. Deb. 5s., 403.

<sup>7</sup> Raw cotton prices had begun to rise after the middle of 1916. 81 H. C. Deb. 5s., 526.

<sup>8</sup> Hubert D. Henderson, *The Cotton Control Board* (Oxford, 1922), pp. 7-8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

tion of raw cotton on any long-term or duration-of-the-war basis could not be instantly instituted, but the immediate emergency was met by the Raw Cotton Order of 1917, which prohibited dealings in cotton except under license from the Cotton Control Board.<sup>10</sup> This was a stop-gap measure to enable the Board to restrict immediate demands. The problem before the Board was to tailor the demands of the industry to the available supplies on some equitable basis which would tend to protect the interests of the industry in so far as possible.

Had the Board begun its activities in August, 1914, it would have most simply and effectively achieved a reduction by limiting the maximum hours each mill could work. The industry had "long been famous for its use of the method of short time to limit output. . . ." <sup>11</sup> In the interim of almost two years, however, although recruiting and war industries had sapped workers everywhere, some mills lost more than others. A shortage of certain essential grades of male operatives had caused a material restriction in the output of many plants, while others hardly suffered. Those mills not utilizing all their machinery insisted that any plan must mitigate, rather than aggravate, these differences. A general reduction of hours would accentuate the "inequalities" and would only lead to intensified search, with increasing blandishments, for the necessary labor. In the scramble for workers, the mills would, of course, be outbidding each other. The employers' associations naturally looked with disfavor on such prospects, and even the trade union officials were worried lest the method of collective bargaining be undermined.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, the Board decided not to order short time, but to restrict the consumption of cotton by limiting the percentage of machinery which could be worked by any mill.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Dearle, *Economic Chronicle*, p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> S. J. Chapman, *War and Cotton Trade* (London, n. d.), p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

The next problem was that of providing some measure of assistance for the workers who would be thrown out of work by the substantial curtailment of production. Except for the "cardroom," all workers were "laid off" periodically on a principle of rotation. Although workers of other industries had been thrown out of employment as a result of government action, in no other industry was the problem so serious.<sup>14</sup> Eight million people lived within a radius of fifty miles of the Manchester Exchange. The bulk of the men of military age were already in the Armed Services, the others, with special skills, and peculiar traditions, could not be shifted very easily to other occupations and other areas. Even the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops, who stressed the need of transferring workers to areas and industries with labor shortages, recognized that special conditions—including the "relatively high wage rates and specialized factory skill"—in the cotton trade operated to prevent mobility.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas the building trades workers, for example, who were thrown out of employment by the prohibition of private building, soon found employment, if they were not in the Army, in munition factories, shipbuilding yards, and other essential industries requiring the same skills as the building industry, the operatives of the Lancashire mills could not solve their problems as easily. Relief had to be provided for them. Since there was little possibility of the Government's providing unemployment assistance at a time when there was a general over-all shortage of labor, the industry would have to provide for its own. The plan evolved and brought into operation by September, 1917, provided for compulsory "levies" upon employers. Acting under the Cotton (Restriction of Output) Order, 1917, issued by the Board of Trade, the Cotton Control Board ruled that plants using more than 60 per cent of their spindles were to pay a levy to the Board. Firms engaged in spinning Ameri-

<sup>14</sup> At one time, production was cut 60 per cent. Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the year 1914, p. 33. (Cd. 8051-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXV).

can cotton, the shortage of which was responsible for the creation of the Cotton Control Board, could work a maximum of 70 per cent of their spindles, while those engaged in spinning Egyptian cotton, which was in greater supply, could work on a 100 per cent basis. All paid  $1\frac{1}{4}d.$  per mule spindle and  $1\frac{3}{8}d.$  per ring spindle per week on all spindles worked in excess of 60 per cent. In November the maximum of American cotton was reduced to 60 per cent and in March, 1918, to 50 per cent, at which time the "free" percentage was also reduced to 50 per cent. Previously, in December, 1917, the levy rates, the great bulk of which were paid by the spinners of Egyptian cotton, were reduced by half.<sup>16</sup>

The levies collected by the Board provided unemployment assistance for the workers whose employment was reduced as a result of the Board's restrictions. Benefits were 25s. a week for men, 15s. for women, and 12s. for "young people"; later an additional allowance of 1s. per week was given to parents for each child under thirteen. Because of the high degree of trade union organization in the industry, the Cotton Control Board decided to utilize the trade unions to dispense the benefits to all operatives, instead of setting up a separate and expensive agency. In doing so, and in allowing the union officials a wide discretion in the working of the system, the Cotton Control Board won over the trade union leaders at the very start. Labor's approval of the Board was manifest.<sup>17</sup>

At the start, the workers, no less than the trade union officials and the employers, approved of the Board. The monotony of work was interrupted by what amounted to paid vacations. Since the great majority affected were women, many with home loyalties and responsibilities, the extra time allowed for domestic duties and leisure was welcomed, even if it meant

<sup>16</sup> Henderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18. By May, 1918, the levy fund had reached £1,000,000. 106 H. C. Deb. 5s., 404. By this date, cotton imports had been reduced to one-half the normal pre-war imports. 106 H. C. Deb. 5s., 458.

<sup>17</sup> "No other industry . . . has caused less trouble and less anxiety . . ." 106 H. C. Deb. 5s., 403.

a reduction in the total earnings. For others the rota system served as a measure of compensation for the lack, because of the dearth of men of military age, of pleasurable distractions. For the employers, the rota system was worth the price of levies. At a time of excess profits taxes, they were quite willing to bear the cost of the levies, especially as the rota system protected their labor supply for the future, and as the payments under it served to restrain the unions and the workers from demanding increased wage rates. The Board was very popular with the employers. Pride, patriotism, and profits seemed to go hand in hand. Little wonder that the employers approved of the Board and that "their attitude approached an ecstasy of appreciation. . . ." <sup>18</sup>

The rota system was much less defensible from the point of view of the country at large. The alternating period of employment and paid leisure acted to prevent even those employees who could have secured jobs in other industries from doing so, and at a time when the shortage of manpower was at its most critical stage. The Government, and more particularly, the Board of Trade, nodded when the scheme was presented. The shortage of cotton rendered unnecessary further action by the Government to curtail a non-essential industry in order to release manpower for more essential occupations, but the rota system acted to prevent the transference of workers to the war industries so desperately short of labor. <sup>19</sup>

That partial control was bound to result in failure, the lesson learned in other fields, was not learned vicariously by the Cotton Control Board, but only through its own experiences and failures. As in other industries, control was at first partial, not complete. Since the weaving industry was not so closely

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26. In February, 1919, a spokesman for the industry denied in the House of Lords, that profits had averaged 45 per cent. It was, he said, nearer 25 per cent to 30 per cent. 33 H. L. Deb. 5s., 189. He was thrown almost in "despair" when one of the "most fair-minded of the Labour leaders"—J. H. Thomas—complained of the high profits. *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> In May, 1918, 47,000 cotton workers were unemployed at a time of a great labor shortage in war industries. 106 H. C. Deb. 5s., 403.

divided into Egyptian and American sections, any scheme of allocation was rendered especially difficult. The Board therefore decided not to place restrictions on the output of looms except for the purpose of raising funds. The "free" percentage was accordingly fixed at 60 per cent; for each additional loom used the manufacturer was required to pay a weekly levy of 2s. 6d. In December, 1917, this levy, like that of the spinners, was halved.<sup>20</sup> The manufacturers then found themselves in the awkward position of being permitted full production (subject to a small levy), while competing for a supply of yarn which ran almost 35 per cent below normal. Although the difficulty was to some extent mitigated by the fact that the export of yarn to the Continent had been severely curtailed during the war, some of the manufacturers' associations took matters in their own hands. The local associations of manufacturers at Burnley, Nelson, and Colne, for example, curtailed their output to a "free" maximum of 70 per cent; manufacturers running additional looms paid 5s. per loom on the excess.<sup>21</sup>

Local action was not a sufficient substitute for national control; by Christmas, 1917, the Control Board limited the number of all looms to 70 per cent of the maximum, thus making no distinction between looms weaving American or Egyptian cotton. This did not work out in practice, however, as the substitution of Egyptian for American yarn was not always feasible. The Board was thus forced to take further action. It "embarked upon a series of concessions," and by March the output of manufacturers using Egyptian cotton was practically freed from the compulsory limitation, except for a graduated scale of levies.<sup>22</sup> Manufacturers using American yarn still found

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22, 70-73.

<sup>20</sup> Henderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20. The basis of the levy system was the traditional formula for twenty-four mule spindles to one loom, which had long been used by employers' associations for assessment of contributions. The formula attempted to measure financial strength; the weaving industry employed more operatives but accounted for much less capital than the spinning branch of the cotton industry. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Henderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 22.



that their permitted capacity was greater by 10 per cent than the available supply of American yarn, only partially supplemented by Egyptian yarn. In March, 1918, when "American" spindles were reduced to 50 per cent, the looms were reduced to 60 per cent; the "free" percentage being reduced to 50 per cent for both. Not only did the manufacturers now have to pay high prices for the yarn, but they had to pay a levy on the 10 per cent of production which was the chief cause for the increased price of yarn. Little wonder that complaints were raised that the Board's policy favored spinners at the expense of weavers. On the other hand, because of the far higher proportion of labor in weaving as compared to spinning, and because of a large number of women employed in weaving in districts where the opportunities for alternative employment were scarcer than in spinning, it was the weaving operatives who received the bulk of the Cotton Control Board's unemployment benefits; because of the formula used to assess levies, the funds were contributed mostly by spinners.<sup>23</sup>

Disputes between the weavers and spinners were ended by the discontinuance of the rota system in August, 1918. By that date military recruitments had counterbalanced the effects of the successive curtailments of machinery, and many spinners found themselves with insufficient male labor to run their permitted percentage of machinery. The rota system prevented its full utilization. The system of levies was discontinued in December, 1918; the limitation on machinery in February, 1919.<sup>24</sup> Thus the cotton industry returned to "normalcy" and "freedom."

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-25.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 65-66.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AGRICULTURE

THE approach to the problem of food supply best exemplifies the compartmentalization of military and civilian affairs so characteristic of government policy up to the first World War. It was in the field of agriculture and food supply that Britain was least prepared for the waging of a war for which history offered no precedents and few lessons. The "War Book," a compendium of measures drawn up by the Committee on Imperial Defense for dealing with the problems that were expected to confront the Government in the event of hostilities, barely touched on the food problem. Even the Royal Commission on the Supply of Food and Raw Material in Time of War had failed to recognize, in its report of 1905, the full seriousness of the problem. It has been suggested that its Report "became the Bible and textbook" of the Government on the whole subject of food in time of war;<sup>1</sup> but, more properly put, the Report was merely an exegesis on the very well known and universally accepted text of the unquestioned superiority of British sea power which would, beyond doubt, prevent any interference with the British shipping trade. It is impossible to envisage any practical alternative to the policy of relying on the importation of food. British agriculture had begun its relative decline at the very time that Burke was lamenting that the age of chivalry was to be replaced by that of economists and calculators.<sup>2</sup> Unless all economic calculations were to be thrown overboard

<sup>1</sup> Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation, *Final Report*, p. 209 (Cmd. 2145-1924 in S. P. 1924, vol. VII). In some quarters, however, the fear of a coming war stimulated thoughts of increasing the domestic food supply. Cf. for example, Sir Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memoirs, 1902-1914* (London, 1925), p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> If we are to accept the words of Government spokesmen at face value, the age of chivalry had not vanished by 1914. Had not Britain declared war from "the motives of purest chivalry?" Lloyd George, in John R. Clynes, *Memoirs* (London, 1937), I, 177.

and Britain become a second-rate power, it could not restore its agricultural position. The Great Depression, beginning in 1873, had accentuated the recession, but decline was inherent in the revolution in transportation which brought the low cost food supplies of the Americas, Australia, and Russia within the reach of the British consumer. A manufacturing nation had prayed, "God speed the plough on every soil but our own," and under the drive of economic forces had boldly taken up the cry, "Down Corn, Up Horn."<sup>3</sup>

The economic impossibility of reviving British agriculture was almost universally recognized. The Royal Commission on the Supply of Food and Raw Material in Time of War accepted the decline in food production as an incontrovertible fact.<sup>4</sup> Nothing could undo the ravages of time and progress. Even during the war, various committees charged with finding ways to increase agricultural production agreed that British policy during the last seventy-five years had been, from the standpoint of economic welfare, correct and proper. Agricultural production *could* be restored to the nineteenth century level, but only at a heavy price.<sup>5</sup> The assurance of national security in food supplies might be worth the cost, but cost there would be.<sup>6</sup> The Assistant Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, in testifying as to the "positive unattractiveness" of rural life, stated that it was *possible* to make it better, but he was less certain as to whether it was *practicable*.<sup>7</sup> If men remained on the farm, it

<sup>3</sup> Roland E. Prothero Ernle, *English Farming, Past and Present*, edited by Sir A. D. Hall (London, 1938), p. 394; Lord Ernle, *Whippingham to Westminster*, p. 273.

<sup>4</sup> Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation, *Final Report*, p. 215.

<sup>5</sup> Departmental Committee... on Employment on the Land... of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, p. 37. (Cd. 8182-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XII).

<sup>6</sup> Reconstruction Committee, *Part I of the Report of the Agricultural Policy Sub-Committee...*, p. 4. (Cd. 8506-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XVIII).

<sup>7</sup> Departmental Committee... on Employment on the Land... of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 208. (Cd. 8347-1916 in S. P. 1916, vol. XII).

was not because of material advantages, but rather because "life on the land . . . has its amenities and attractions . . . which reconcile many men to the acceptance of lower remuneration for their services."<sup>8</sup>

By 1914 there had been an absolute decline in cultivation and, compared with Germany, a relative decrease in productivity.<sup>9</sup> The decline had been arrested about 1907 but the damage had already been done.<sup>10</sup> "It would be difficult to paint in too black colours the depression of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. . . ." <sup>11</sup> Stagnation in production was reflected in a static social structure. The class system in British agriculture was rather rigid. There was no "insurmountable barrier" between the landowner, the farmer, and the manual laborer, but interchanges were "not sufficiently frequent or widespread" to make the "class indefinable."<sup>12</sup> The whole "tradition and social environment [was] inimical to change," a sentiment "shared by all classes of the agricultural community." The aversion to change, plus low wages, tended to "stereotype methods

8 Agricultural Wages Board, *Report of the Committee . . . on . . . the Cost of Living of Rural Workers*, p. 37. (Cmd. 76-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. VIII). The barons of old disagreed. "Most of the lay barons rebelled against the minute and continuous labour of farming and this contempt for the bucolic life may be illustrated from heraldry." Ernie, *English Farming, Past and Present*, p. 32.

9 Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *The Recent Development of German Agriculture*, pp. 6-7. (Cd. 8305-1917 in S. P. 1916, vol. IV). Nevertheless, it has been held that, "judged by the economic test, the British farmer was more skillful and successful" than farmers of other lands. British agriculture was organized for profit, not production or population. Sir R. Henry Rew, *Food Supplies in Peace and War* (London, 1920), pp. 140, 152.

10 Reconstruction Committee, *Agricultural Policy Sub-Committee*, p. 5. (Cd. 8506-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XVIII).

11 Reconstruction Committee on Home-Grown Food Supplies, *Report*, p. 11. (Cd. 9079-1918, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XVIII).

12 Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Conditions of Employment in Agriculture, General Report*, p. 2. (Cmd. 24-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. IX).

of production" and prevent the ready adoption of modern machinery.<sup>13</sup>

Not that the role of agriculture was negligible in the British economy on the eve of the war. Though British agriculture was no longer, as in 1870, "in the forefront as the most efficient and productive system of agriculture in any country,"<sup>14</sup> it was still the largest industry in Great Britain, employing over 1,500,000 persons. The total area under cultivation in the United Kingdom was almost 20,000,000 acres of arable land and 27,000,000 acres of permanent pastures and meadows. In addition, there were fifteen million acres of rough grazings on mountains, moorlands, and heaths. In England and Wales the agricultural holdings totalled over 27,000,000 acres. Fifteen and eight-tenths per cent of the total, or 4,286,064 acres, consisted of holdings of fifty acres or less; 60 per cent of the holdings were of fifty to three hundred acres each; 25 per cent were over three hundred acres each. Only 11 per cent of the occupiers were owners. There were 125,000 holdings of more than fifty acres each.<sup>15</sup> Not more than one-tenth of the agricultural land was "owned by those immediately responsible for its cultivation."<sup>16</sup> Requiring a "minimum of labour and manure," three-fifths of the cultivated area was permanently under grass. With the climate especially suitable for it, stock-rearing was by far the most important branch of the agricultural industry. The value of the livestock marketed annually, after deducting the

13 Report of the Departmental Committee on Agricultural Machinery, p. 5. (Cmd. 506-1920, in S. P. 1919, vol. VIII). According to a critic, the land was not being ploughed, it was being tickled and annoyed." Smell, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-240.

14 Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation, *Final Report*, p. 86. (Cmd. 2145-1924, in S. P. 1924, vol. VII).

15 Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *The Recent Development of German Agriculture*, p. 13. (Cd. 8305-1917, in S. P. 1916, vol. IV).

16 Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Conditions of Employment in Agriculture, General Report*, p. 2. (Cmd. 24-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. IX).

cost of imported feeding stuffs, amounted to about £125,000,000, while the value of the two chief tillage crops sold—wheat and potatoes—amounted to £27,000,000.<sup>17</sup>

These figures are by no means precise. Lack of statistics makes it difficult to determine the exact condition of British agriculture.<sup>18</sup> Within limits of reasonable accuracy, however, it may be stated that the United Kingdom produced at home 22 per cent of its wheat, 98 per cent of its potatoes, 60 per cent of its meat, and over 90 per cent of its fish.<sup>19</sup> Measured in monetary terms, the total soil products of the United Kingdom amounted to over £170,000,000 plus £9,000,000 in fish and fish products. Omitting sugar, tea, and coffee, the United Kingdom produced, in monetary value, more than half of its food requirements. Including £3,000,000 of fish and fish products, £26,000,000 of sugar, and £13,000,000 of tea, coffee, and cocoa, its food imports were valued at over £190,000,000.<sup>20</sup> In value, meat was the largest item of food imports—over £50,000,000 annually. Somewhat less in value—£46,000,000—were wheat and flour imports.<sup>21</sup> In caloric value Britain was worse off, producing 17,000,000 calories, while importing almost twice as much.<sup>22</sup> The country thus produced only a little over one-third of its necessary food supply, or, if spread out over fifty-two weeks, merely its week-end supply, "from Friday night until Monday morning."<sup>23</sup>

17 Thomas Hudson Middleton, *Food Production in War* (Oxford, 1923), pp. 18-28.

18 Sir Robert H. Rew, *An Agricultural Faggot* (London, 1923), pp. 129-130.

19 Dominions Royal Commission, *Food and Raw Material Requirements of the United Kingdom*, pp. 1, 3, 5, 7. (Cd. 8123-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XIV).

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 112-114; Middleton, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

21 Rew, *An Agricultural Faggot*, pp. 131, 133. Total grain and flour imports amounted to £85,495,000. Cd. 8123, p. 112.

22 Middleton, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

The first effects of the outbreak of the war were a rush of housewives to stock up with supplies and a sharp increase in prices.<sup>24</sup> Although the Government issued lists of prices of provisions as prepared by an "Advisory Committee of Retail Traders," the prices were not binding and the lists were discontinued after two months.<sup>25</sup> Britain then settled down to "feeding as usual" for the next two years.<sup>26</sup> Like "business as usual," the phrase is rather idealistic. Food prices did not settle down "as usual." The Government was forced to intervene immediately to take over all sugar imports and beginning in November, 1914, it also made secret purchases of wheat, although only as a reserve against the risk of a temporary interruption of supplies. The regular trade was left in private hands.<sup>27</sup>

The immediate problem in food production was that of labor. The farmer, who rarely kept books, and was generally untutored in business statistics and forecasting, arrived, by a process of simple arithmetic, at a conclusion not reached until later by merchants and manufacturers, namely, that the absorption of men by the Armed Forces would create a shortage of labor. The Government Agriculture Departments, farther removed from the simple life, anticipated a surplus of labor rather than a shortage. The Board of Agriculture for Scotland, troubled by the expected unemployment, urged the preparation and execution of plans to take up the slack.<sup>28</sup> The Board of

<sup>24</sup> To housewives anxious about the future, an advertisement that there was "no shortage of grape-nuts" may have been reassuring. Especially as they were "delicious, nutritious, and wonderfully sustaining" and would keep for months. *Times*, August 25 and September 4, 1914.

<sup>25</sup> Beveridge, *British Food Control*, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Middleton, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Beveridge, *British Food Control*, pp. 13-14; Frank H. Collier, *A State Trading Adventure* (Oxford, 1925), p. 8. At first the Government bought wheat "surreptitiously." Tallents, *Man and Boy*, p. 231.

<sup>28</sup> Board of Agriculture for Scotland, *Report for 1914*, p. LIX. (Cd. 7899-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. VII).

Agriculture and Fisheries (for England and Wales), silent as to a possible labor scarcity, likewise urged increased production.<sup>29</sup> The Irish Department also stressed the need for greater production and distributed a pamphlet containing an appeal from the Lord Bishop of Ross.<sup>30</sup> The only reference to a shortage of labor appears in the Report of the Board of Education which opposed a suggestion that the vacation period be prolonged to allow children to aid in harvesting.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, a number of children were exempted from school in the agricultural districts to work on the farms.<sup>32</sup>

Although, because of favorable weather, the wheat crop of 1915 was 30.7 per cent higher than the annual 1904-1913 average, the loss of 12.4 per cent of the agricultural labor supply by January, 1915 (over 15 per cent of the employed farm laborers in England and Wales had joined the Forces by this date),<sup>33</sup> gave the Government concern about the future.<sup>34</sup> This involved, inevitably, the appointment of a committee, and in June, 1915, a departmental committee was appointed by the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries. With Lord Milner as Chairman, it was "to consider and report what steps should be taken, by legislation or otherwise, for the sole purpose of maintaining and, if possible, increasing the present production of food in England and Wales on the assumption that

<sup>29</sup> Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Annual Report on the Education Branch, 1914-1915*, pp. 3, 109. (Cd. 8066-1915 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. V).

<sup>30</sup> Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, *Fourteenth Annual General Report*, pp. 24-25. (Cd. 7839-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. VI).

<sup>31</sup> Board of Education, *Report For Year 1913-1914*, p. 1. (Cd. 7934-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XVIII).

<sup>32</sup> Board of Education, *Report of Chief Medical Officer for 1914*, p. 225. (Cd. 8055-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XVIII).

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Board of Trade on the State of Employment in the United Kingdom in February, 1915, pp. 11-12. (Cd. 7850-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXI).

<sup>34</sup> Middleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 109, 112, 113.



the war may be prolonged beyond the harvest of 1916." <sup>35</sup> Separate committees were appointed for Scotland and Ireland. <sup>36</sup>

The Milner Committee in its interim report of July, 1915, foreseeing no shortage of labor, unanimously agreed on the need of increasing the area under wheat by at least one million acres, in order to produce five million additional quarters of wheat in the first year alone, equivalent to six weeks' supply for the United Kingdom. <sup>37</sup> To achieve this goal, the Committee recommended that the Government guarantee a minimum price of 45s. per quarter for a four-year period. The news of the enormous harvests in the United States, Canada, and Argentina eased the fear of a food shortage. It was against a background which also included a good supply of shipping that the Committee issued its final report in October, 1915. A majority of the Committee nevertheless recommended an increase in agricultural production; the minority, accepting the Government's assurances that the food supply was adequate, held that such a recommendation was outside the terms of reference. <sup>38</sup>

The Scottish Committee contented itself with unanimously recommending the formation of District Agricultural Committees and other means of providing guidance for farmers. It unanimously opposed guaranteed prices and split on the question of compulsory tillage. <sup>39</sup> The Irish Committee was much more contentious and could not agree unanimously on any recommendations. The Irish majority report, which itself had

<sup>35</sup> Board of Agriculture and Fisheries Departmental Committee, *Interim Report*, p. 3. (Cd. 8048-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. V).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Board of Agriculture for Scotland, *Report for 1915*. (Cd. 8282-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. IV); and Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, *Fifteenth Annual General Report*. (Cd. 8299-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. IV); and *Report of Departmental Committee on Food Production in Ireland*. (Cd. 8046 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. V).

<sup>37</sup> Cd. 8048-1915, pp. 3-6. (In S. P. 1914-1916, vol. V).

<sup>38</sup> Board of Agriculture Departmental Committee, *Final Report on Production of Food in England and Wales*. (Cd. 8095-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. V).

<sup>39</sup> Middleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-124.

dissenting notes attached to it in respect to some provisions, recommended an increase in the food supply; if necessary, it urged the Government to guarantee prices on wheat and oats for one year only.<sup>40</sup> The Minority Report, drafted by Sir Horace Plunkett, urged, as might be expected, an extension of the cooperative movement.<sup>41</sup>

That the Government was not greatly alarmed about agricultural production may be seen from the fact that it was not until September, 1915, that it used the appeal to patriotism so customary in other fields at an earlier date. Despite Samuel Johnson's dictum, the Government generally used this appeal as a first expedient rather than as a last refuge. Rejecting proposals for guaranteeing prices, the Government called upon the farmers to increase production in order to assist "King and Country."<sup>42</sup> Begun somewhat belatedly, the attempts to increase the domestic food supply ran the familiar war-time gamut of expedients, culminating in compulsion. The attempts to improve agricultural production and livestock had preceded the war.<sup>43</sup> Before the war the emphasis had been on quality; now the Government was concerned with quantity. Leaflets were printed and widely distributed, monthly reports on prices of feeding stuffs and artificial manures were published, local committees were appointed and prodded into action, and the Scottish Board

<sup>40</sup> Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Food Production in Ireland*, pp. 2-6. (Cd. 8046-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. V).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-18. Cf. also *ibid.*, *Minutes of the Evidence*, p. 15. (Cd. 8158-1916, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. V).

<sup>42</sup> Middleton, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>43</sup> Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Annual Report... of the Live Stock Breeding Industry 1914-1915*, pp. 3-4, 18-25. (Cd. 8017-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. V). Departmental Committee on the Irish Pig-Breeding Industry, *Report*, p. 1. (Cd. 7890-1915 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. VI). *Ibid.*, *Minutes of Evidence* (Cd. 8004-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. VI). Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Report on Agricultural Education and the Improvement of Live Stock in Wales, 1912-1915*. (Cd. 8222-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. IV).

of Agriculture even contributed to the local committees engaged in dealing with plagues of rats, sparrows, rooks, and pigeons.<sup>44</sup>

The shortage of labor began to be serious before the end of the first year of war. Attempts to recruit female labor met with little success at first, but the spur of competition and the public statements by many local officials that there were many types of work that women could not do provoked many dormant and inarticulate feminists to volunteer for farm work.<sup>45</sup> Children, too, were employed in larger numbers. While it would be an exaggeration to say that the schools were depleted in attempting to cope with the problem of the agricultural labor supply, school attendance did suffer. In England and Wales alone, in 1916, the number of children excused from school attendance doubled and the number of children between the ages of eleven and twelve who were employed in agriculture increased by 280 per cent.<sup>46</sup> The protests of the Board of Education went unheeded.<sup>47</sup> By the middle of 1916, one-third of the farm workers had left the land for the Armed Services or other occupations.<sup>48</sup> To fill the ranks of agricultural labor the Government found it

44 Board of Agriculture for Scotland, *Report for 1915*, p. XXII. (Cd. 8282-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. IV). Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, *Fifteenth Annual General Report 1914-1915*, p. 16. (Cd. 8299-1916 in S. P. 1916, vol. IV). *Ibid.*, *Sixteenth Annual General Report 1915-1916*, p. 12. (Cd. 8574-1917 in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. IV). Board of Agriculture for Scotland, *Fifth Report, 1916*, p. XXIX ff. (Cd. 8624-1917 in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. IV).

45 Middleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 110, 142-143.

46 *School Attendance and Employment in Agriculture, May 31, 1916*. (Cd. 8302-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XXII). Cf. also *ibid.*, Oct. 16, 1916. (Cd. 8171-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XXII) and *ibid.*, January, 1916. (Cd. 8202-1916 in S. P. 1916, vol. XXII).

47 Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1915 of the Chief Medical Officer*, p. 103. (Cd. 8338-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. VIII).

48 Departmental Committee on Employment on the Land, pp. 6-7. (Cd. 8277-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XII).

necessary to sanction the use of soldiers in agricultural production.<sup>49</sup>

The disappointing harvest of 1916 spelled the doom of voluntary measures. The Government was galvanized into action by the almost dramatic recession in 1916 from the great cereal harvests of 1915 in the new world granaries. The 1916 crops in the United States, Canada, and Argentina were poor and the Government was thus to a large extent forewarned of short supplies even before the German submarine campaign reached its heights.<sup>50</sup>

The First Coalition Government, already *in extremis*, prepared belatedly to deal with the problem. The first action was taken on very small holdings called "allotments," used to supplement regular commercial farm production. The allotment movement was strongly encouraged by the Government because of its advantages in adding to the food supply, as well as its recreational value for war workers and others. Game grounds, parks, golf links, and suburban lawns and playgrounds were broken up in the interests of food production. Some of the glasshouses in Hyde Park were used to grow vegetables, instead of the customary flowers, and even the flower-beds in front of Buckingham Palace were utilized as potato grounds.<sup>51</sup> "Cabbages appeared out of concrete and broccoli from brick-bats."<sup>52</sup> The readily available land was quickly taken up and many would-be cultivators were unable to obtain allotments. Early in December, 1916, under authority of the Defence of

49 Benjamin H. Hibbard, *Effects of the Great War upon Agriculture in the United States and Great Britain* (New York, 1919), p. 185. Board of Agriculture for Scotland, *Fifth Report*, 1916, p. XXXIV. (Cd. 8624-1917, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. IV).

50 88 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1346-1347. "The feeding of the people was still in the middle of 1916, a submerged problem." Tallents, *Man and Boy*, p. 230.

51 Report by the First Commissioner of Works on the Cultivation of Certain Areas in the Royal Parks, p. 2. (Cd. 8296-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. XII). Rew, *Food Supplies in Peace and War*, p. 51.

52 Ernle, *Whippingham to Westminster*, p. 305.

the Realm Act, the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries issued the Cultivation of Lands Order, giving urban local authorities the power to create allotments out of unoccupied land even without the owners' consent. In January, 1917, this power was extended to rural areas and in February, 1917, occupied land could be used for this purpose.<sup>53</sup>

Whatever the justice of the criticism aimed at the Government's policies in other directions, its lack of a new policy for agriculture is justified by the fact that up through 1916 the population had managed well with its food supplies. A Committee of the Royal Society reported in July, 1916, that, although high prices had somewhat dislocated equitable distribution, Britain's food supply was nutritionally 5 per cent higher than its normal needs, and that there was an even greater margin in terms of energy or calories.<sup>54</sup> There was an untouched safety zone in the bread supply. Dealing only, as it said, with the physiological and not with economic, social, or other questions, the Committee reported that although the millers were obtaining only 70 per cent of flour and 30 per cent offals, a "wholesome and palatable bread," if somewhat less digestible, could be made from wheat milled to 80 per cent flour.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Royal Commission on Agriculture, *Evidence Taken*. (Cmd. 665-1920, in S. P. 1920, vol. IX).

<sup>54</sup> *The Food Supply of the United Kingdom*, pp. 18-19. (Cd. 8421-1917, in S. P. 1916, vol. IX).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25. This was later to be done with much psychological and some physiological anguish. Bread became "a drab unfamiliar substance which not all the lectures of food experts could make attractive." Beveridge, *British Food Control*, p. 99. In 1917 when the Government called for a reduction in bread consumption, the resulting situation was not without its bright side. As bread "is the staple food of the masses," those "who can afford it are doing a really patriotic act by not consuming the costlier foods of all kinds, if at the same time they leave the cheaper foods to their poorer neighbors. Not the least of the many strange changes produced by the war is that it is now possible to eat caviare and *pate de foie gras* and baskets of peaches and turtle soup, and to feel positively virtuous about it." *Times*, April 4, 1917.

Since it was the aim of the Government not to disturb existing relations unless the pressure of circumstances made it absolutely necessary, there was no interference until the end of 1916. By that date, it became evident that new measures would have to be taken. Even then the Government's first step was merely to repeat its calls for increased production on a voluntary basis. The author of the standard history of British agriculture (R. E. Prothero, later Lord Ernle) became President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, with the motto of "Back to the seventies and better," and a renewed campaign for increased food production opened December 20, 1916.<sup>56</sup> This was to be attained by the organization of War Agricultural Committees, the survey of land not fully cultivated, the stimulation of potato-growing and pig-keeping by villagers,<sup>57</sup> and the ploughing up of grassland. The last aroused warm debate, especially among those who questioned the ability of agriculturalists fully to exploit the land already under tillage.<sup>58</sup>

A further step to increase food production was taken on January 1, 1917, with the creation of a special department of the Board of Agriculture, with T. H. Middleton as director. To prevent it from falling under the sway of the dead hand of tradition, it was turned into an independent department under a Director-General responsible to the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, but otherwise having no connection with, or responsibility to, the Board.<sup>59</sup>

The Food Production Department undertook to increase agricultural production not merely by "educational" efforts, but also by trying to meet the farmers' needs for seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural requisites, including labor. Al-

<sup>56</sup> Ernle, *English Farming, Past and Present*, p. 400.

<sup>57</sup> Among the slogans coined were: "walk a pig instead of a puppy" and "pig, potatoes, and Prothero." Ernle, *Whippingham to Westminster*, pp. 306, 307.

<sup>58</sup> Middleton, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175. For organization of Ministry of Agriculture, cf. Francis L. C. Floud, *The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries* (New York, 1927).

though its fundamental policy was, "as far as possible, to ensure adequate supplies by negotiations with manufacturers and dealers," it was compelled, in the case of a number of commodities, to undertake their direct purchase and resale to farmers, when "there appeared to be a danger of the needs of the agricultural community not being met through the ordinary trade channels. . . ." <sup>60</sup> Thus it engaged in the business of buying and selling, among other supplies, superphosphate, potato sprayers, fruit preserving bottles, seed oats, binder twine, seed potatoes, and California onions. <sup>61</sup> In January, 1917, the Board was empowered to apply compulsion by Regulation 2M, which gave it the power to make orders bearing on the better cultivation of land. The Board could enter on and take full possession of land, buildings, and machinery so as to increase food supply. Fearful of the Board's use of this power, the farmers generally obeyed the Board's directives as to the cultivating of land. <sup>62</sup> The Irish were more recalcitrant. There the Government's taking over of 271 holdings totalling 4,650 statute acres exercised "a most salutary effect" on those farmers who "were inclined to be remiss or dilatory. . . ." <sup>63</sup>

Other efforts were made to increase the labor supply and to stimulate production. The Board of Education, in addition to publicizing the food economy program, issued instructions on

<sup>60</sup> Food Production Department, *Statement of Financial Results of Principal Trading Schemes*, p. 2. (Cmd. 304-1912, in S. P. 1919, vol. VIII).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>62</sup> Board of Agriculture for Scotland, *Sixth Report, 1917*, p. XXXII. (Cd. 9069-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. V); Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, *Seventeenth Annual General Report 1916-1917*, p. 13. (Cd. 9016-1918, in S. P. 1918, vol. V). The *Times* editorialized a month earlier, "In future, we shall not, we hope, see land set aside for mustard and daffodils." *Times*, December 21, 1916.

<sup>63</sup> Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, *Eighteenth General Report 1917-1918*, p. 78. (Cmd. 106-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. IX). For Scotland, cf. Board of Agriculture for Scotland, *Seventh Report, 1918*, p. XLIII. (Cmd. 185-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. IX).

gardening.<sup>64</sup> In 1918 it suggested that children be employed to pick blackberries, and children were granted holidays for this purpose.<sup>65</sup> Some adult male labor was supplied by utilizing prisoners of war, interned enemy aliens, and British soldiers, totalling about 75,000 men.<sup>66</sup> A major contribution to the solution of the man-power problem was women's labor. By June, 1917, over 120,000 women were at work on the farms with 20,000 to 30,000 additional women workers available.<sup>67</sup> Greeted at first with suspicion, especially by the farmers' wives, they soon found eager welcome.<sup>68</sup>

All these efforts barely touched even the periphery of the problem. Food production could only be increased in a material way by the conversion of grassland to corn and this would only be done, the question of labor aside, if the farmer was guaranteed a return for his efforts. Simple fiat would be as ineffectual as More's Jeremiad or the efforts of Parliament dating back as early as 1488. The farmer would not reverse the trend of many years based on economic realities, if not political necessities, unless he was assured of no economic loss. The Agricultural Policy Sub-Committee of the Reconstruction Committee, appointed in August, 1916, "to consider and report upon the methods of effecting an increase in the home-grown food supplies, having regard to the need of such increase in the interests of national security," recommended, in January, 1917, a guaranteed price of 42 shillings per quarter for wheat and 23 shillings for oats.<sup>69</sup> In order to maintain an adequate labor supply,

<sup>64</sup> Board of Education, *Report 1916-1917*, pp. 2-3. (Cd. 9045-1918, in S. P., 1918, vol. IX).

<sup>65</sup> Board of Education, *Report 1917-1918*, p. 5. (Cmd. 165-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXI).

<sup>66</sup> 25 H. L. Deb. 5s., 660-661.

<sup>67</sup> 25 H. L. Deb. 5s., 688.

<sup>68</sup> Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, *Wages and Conditions of Employment, General Report*, p. 54. (Cmd. 24-1919 in S. P. 1919, vol. IX).

<sup>69</sup> Reconstruction Committee, *Report of Agricultural Sub-Committee*, p. 10. (Cd. 8506-1917 in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XVIII).



it recommended the establishment of Wage Boards for each district patterned after the Trade Boards.<sup>70</sup> In its final report it concluded that the country could become self-sufficient in important food items in time of war. "With sufficient land under the plough and in good heart this is a perfectly practicable policy."<sup>71</sup> All this, however, depended on guaranteed prices, minimum wages, and the right of the state to influence the use of the land to the greatest national advantage.<sup>72</sup>

On February 23, 1917, Lloyd George promised specified minimum prices on wheat, oats, and potatoes. As for maximum prices, "the only guarantee . . . is . . . that if the State commandeers either potatoes or cereals the price will not be fixed without the consent of the Boards of Agriculture of England, Scotland and Ireland. . . . Obviously, you cannot limit the power of the State to commandeer for national purposes."<sup>73</sup> In April the Corn Production Bill was introduced to give effect to the Government's policy.<sup>74</sup> It provided for guaranteed minimum prices, gave the Government power to order the proper cultivation of land, and made provision for the establishment of minimum wages for agricultural laborers.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>71</sup> Reconstruction Committee, *Report on Home Grown Food Supplies*, p. 89. (Cd. 9079-1918 in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XVIII).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89. The Royal Commission on Agriculture appointed in 1919 "to inquire into the economic prospects of the agricultural industry in Great Britain," likewise recognized that the prospects for increased agricultural production were hopeless without guaranteed prices. Guaranteed minimum prices, and four years notice of withdrawal, for wheat, barley, and oats were recommended. Royal Commission on Agriculture, pp. 2, 8. (Cmd. 473-1919 in S. P. 1919, vol. VIII).

<sup>73</sup> 90 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1606.

<sup>74</sup> 92 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1484-1485.

<sup>75</sup> Under authority of the Act, a Wages Board was set up for each agricultural district, under the supervision of a central Board. After hearings, each district committee laid down the minimum wages in its district for a specified amount of work. Cf. *Wages Board Gazette*, from August, 1918 to September, 1921, for the working of the Board and its district committees.

The Government's power to compel the best utilization of the land, together with its assurance of guaranteed minimum prices, had the desired effect. The area under tillage had fallen by 148,000 acres in 1916 as compared with 1915, but in 1917 the trend was sharply reversed by an increase of 975,000 tillage acres over 1916 (638,000 acres of the total being accounted for by Ireland).<sup>76</sup> Once again profit and compulsion succeeded where patriotism and persuasion had failed.

The plans for the 1918 harvest called for a very ambitious program. A million acres, or three-fourths of the land converted from tillage to grass in the past fifty years, were to be reconverted.<sup>77</sup> The 1918 harvest's contribution is estimated at stocks of food and fodder equivalent to some four million tons of shipping space. Over 1,000,000 more tons of wheat (or 59.3 per cent), almost 1,500,000 more tons of oats (or 38.5 per cent), over 2,500,000 more tons of potatoes, and 24,000 more tons of barley were grown than the annual average yield for 1904-1913. About 1,250,000 acres of permanent grassland were ploughed in England and Wales between June, 1917, and June, 1918. Despite dire predictions, the average yield of the cereal crops on the new lands was not less than the average yield on arable land. The policy of the "plough-maniacs" had proven successful.<sup>78</sup> Measured in food energy units, the net gain was four trillion calories, or 24 per cent. In monetary terms the campaign was less successful, as the Food Production Department spent £9,000,000 in achieving its program. Its savings to the Government were considerably less.<sup>79</sup>

Control sat uneasily on the agriculturalists even while they were reaping great profits. Unlike industry, agriculture did not wait until the war ended before demanding the lifting of coercive restrictions and orders. The Corn Production Act of 1917

<sup>76</sup> Middleton, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>77</sup> 94 H. C. Deb. 5s., 981.

<sup>78</sup> Middleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 239-240, 249-251, 254-257.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 301, 309-310, 322.

had included a provision for the lapse, after a year, of the Defense of the Realm Regulations in so far as they affected agriculture. Such termination would, of course, hamper the Government in its campaign to increase grain production and the Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries brought in an Amending Bill, in 1918, to repeal the provision. He admitted that the "measure really breaks a bargain," but urged the exigencies of war.<sup>80</sup> Because of Parliamentary opposition, the measure as finally passed permitted the allegedly negligent cultivators, who might be recalcitrant, to appeal to an arbitrator. These changes plus the difficulties caused by the conscription of farm laborers practically ended the efforts to increase the area under grains.

The agitation for the relaxation of controls was but a fore-taste of the situation to be encountered in all sectors of the economy on the morrow of November 11, 1918.

## **SECTION III**

### **THE REACTION OF THE NATION**



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RINGING OF BELLS

THE declaration of war by the British Government united all classes, parties, and factions. Even the Irish Nationalists, so long accustomed to strife, hastened to join in the attack on belligerent Germany.<sup>1</sup> So, too, the embittered suffragettes called off their struggle when confronted by the larger conflict.<sup>2</sup> With no Walpole to tell the excited throngs that the ringing of bells must be followed by the wringing of hands, the news of the war was cheered by eager, enthusiastic crowds. Waiting to hear of the war, they were full of "a breathless hope rather than a breathless apprehension, a hope that the monotony of life was going to be broken."<sup>3</sup> Britain, like the other nations, "slithered

1 Some of the Irish, disliking the Irish owning classes and the English ruling classes in equal measure, held that "England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity," Nora Connolly O'Brien, *Portrait of a Rebel Father* (London, 1935), p. 188, but Redmond moved, and his followers in the House of Commons approved, "... God Save England..." 66 H. C. Debs. 5s, 1020. Connolly wanted "neither King nor Kaiser." Desmond Ryan, *James Connolly* (Dublin, 1924), p. 113. Connolly felt that Irish armed insurrection was impossible with Britain at peace, but was feasible with the British being occupied in the war. James Connolly, *A Socialist and War 1914-1916* (London, 1941), pp. 123-124. Those of the Irish who enjoyed battling were not to be disappointed. An Irish soldier described his first battle in Flanders as similar to "a Belfast riot on the top of Mount Vesuvius..." James Dunn, *Paper-chase*, p. 138.

2 John Burns, who, with Morley, resigned his Cabinet seat over the issue of war, wrote two weeks later that "it was almost worth having war to get rid of the suffragettes." Margot Asquith, *Autobiography*, IV, 56. "The virago became an angel!" Blumenfeld, *R.D.B.'s Procession*, p. 14. Christabel Pankhurst now discovered the real opponent of the suffrage movement: "We now know where anti-suffragism has its home. We know where it has its real leader. It has its home in Berlin and its leader in the Kaiser." Christabel Pankhurst, *International Militancy* (London, n. d.), pp. 3-4. The suffragists did not lag behind. Cf. Fawcett, *The Women's Victory—and After*, p. 88.

3 John Langdon Davies, *Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1926, quoted in Jonathan French Scott, *Five Weeks* (New York, 1927), pp. 241-242. "The war meant a decision: a crystallization of vague projects: an immediate accept-

over the brink into the boiling cauldron of war without any trace of apprehension or dismay." <sup>4</sup> All ills were forgotten, all evils dissolved in the fraternity of common hatred.<sup>5</sup> In John

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of the challenge of life." Herbert Read, *Annals of Innocence and Experience* (London, 1940), p. 140. It was a "blessed distraction." Wedgwood, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life*, p. 87. "The suspense is all over... Now we have taken the plunge one feels better already... The great war that we have had in our innermost thoughts... is here." Tom Clarke, *My Northcliffe Diary* (London, 1931), p. 52. "... there is a feeling that things have been working up to this issue... a sense of relief is experienced by the ending of it." Gwynn, *The Anvil of War*, p. 37. The war meant "a relaxation of habit, a freedom from responsibility, a deliverance from the torment of hesitation." Henry W. Nevinson, *Last Changes, Last Chances* (London, 1928), p. 13. The war was welcomed as "a licensed break-up of detestable lives." Caroline E. Playne, *The Pre-War Mind in Britain* (London, 1928), p. 29. "To us the relief is truly great." Brig. Gen. F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No-Man's Land* (New York, 1930), p. 15. Of course, Crozier was a professional soldier who, he tells us, "loved" war. "Why not? I had been brought up to it from my earliest days; I had heard men talk of nothing else; I had prepared for it..." Brig. Gen. F. P. Crozier, *Impressions and Recollections* (London, 1930), p. 159. But even the generals were not as pleased as a clerk in the Mobilization Branch of the War Office, "who for seventeen years had been working for this moment... the dream of his life." Charles Harington, *Tim Harington Looks Back* (London, n. d.), p. 39. It was a "glorious opportunity, at once a magnificent awakening and a superb release." L. P. Jacks, in the *Hibbert Journal* wrote of "The Peacefulness of Being at War"—the "heavenly release from responsibility enabled him to sleep o' nights." Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Remembering My Good Friends* (London, 1944), p. 68. Another military figure recalls, "Lord! in that first flush of enthusiasm, how anxious one was to cross the channel! How one chafed at the delay!" Metcalfe, *Memorials of A Military Life*, p. 210. "... I was becoming idle, dependent on creature comforts, and with a diminishing interest and power of application. To this growing slackness the war, ... supplied a needed tonic..." Viscount Mersey, *A Picture of Life 1872-1940* (London, 1941), p. 243. To the sober and unruffled Webbs, however, it was but "a nuisance," merely "an interruption to serious business." Margaret Cole, *Beatrice Webb* (New York, 1946), p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 49.

<sup>5</sup> Within a week of the declaration of war the *Times* editorialized: "The spectacle we are witnessing furnished convincing proof that the tie of nationality is still incomparably stronger than that of class, and that when it is invoked by national war the class war shrivels into an empty phrase. With one accord employers and employed have called a truce in the stubborn and widespread conflicts which were being waged in continuance of

Bunyan's phrase, "Passion will have all things now."

Nor was this a spectator's game only. Not all who applauded rushed joyously to the recruiting depots in order to participate in the happy event, but so many did that the Armed Services were swamped with recruits jostling one another, concealing physical defects, and lying like the traditional troopers they hoped to be, lest they be left out. Support came not only from the jingoes; the most ardent liberals and pacifists feverishly hustled to defend their country. All groups in the population flocked to support the war with a passion and unanimity that must, had they paused to consider, have shocked the thrilled participants.<sup>6</sup>

The unanimity is the more overwhelming if it be recalled that, before war was declared, opposition to war had seemed well nigh universal in Britain.<sup>7</sup> Yet there was more than an absence of opposition; from the start the war won almost unanimous championship, regardless of suspicions as to the purity of its origins. The National Free Church Council ex-

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the industrial warfare that has signalized the last four years." *Times*, August 10, 1914. "England sprang together." All strife was "drowned in the thunder of cannon." Herbert Asquith, *Moments of Memory* (London, 1937), p. 181. Cf. also, Lord Parmour, *Retrospect*, p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. for example, Lansbury, *My Life*, p. 205. As another early opponent of the war put it, "As I do not want my country to be beaten, I shall certainly support this Vote of Credit." Wedgwood, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life*, pp. 88-89. He soon joined the Navy. *Ibid.*, p. 90. As Morley wrote to a friend: "Hell is ablaze in every quarter." Gooch, *Life of Lord Courtney*, p. 579. Criminals, too, responded. "...the country's call... appealed as strongly to the criminal as to other classes..." Report of the Commissioners of Prisons..., p. 6. (Cd. 8342-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XV).

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd George has said that a poll taken in Great Britain on August 1, "would have shown 95 per cent against embroiling this country in hostilities... A poll on the following Tuesday (August 4) would have resulted in a vote of 99 per cent in favour..." *Pearson's Magazine*, March, 1915, in Loreburn, *How the War Came*, pp. 241-242. But as Lord Courtney, a Liberal peer who had opposed the Government's foreign policy wrote, on August 5: "The difference between today and yesterday is infinite." Gooch, *Life of Lord Courtney*, p. 578. Though war was "insensate deviltry," it must be supported. Ray Strachey, *Millicent Garrett Fawcett* (London, 1931), pp. 274, 275.



pressed the distress of many at the fact that "the crime and horror of a universal war has fallen upon European civilization" but asserted, in tones that were truly representative, it "is useless to seek nicely to apportion blame."<sup>8</sup> Some were still torn by doubt, but Gilbert Chesterton helped to resolve the dilemma in a series of articles in the *Daily Mail*. "Let no one worry, whether it was really right to fight with the 'Russ' against the 'Pruss.'"<sup>9</sup> For Rudyard Kipling, "the Hun" was "at the gate."<sup>10</sup> As Hyndman explained, "When a man is called upon to act, he must put up the shutters on one side of his intellect."<sup>11</sup> That leading Liberal, C. P. Scott, editor of the influential *Manchester Guardian*, who as late as August 3 had opposed war, and had warned Lloyd George that "no man who is responsible can lead us again," felt on August 7, that once in, it was necessary to wage it to a victorious conclusion, though he was still "strongly of opinion that the war ought not to have taken place."<sup>12</sup>

The *Nation*, in its issue of August 1, 1914, opposed war as being contrary to good sense and public opinion, and warned that any minister "who led this country into war would be responsible for a war as causeless and unpopular as any war in history, and he would cease to lead the Liberal Party."<sup>13</sup> Yet a week later it asserted that "the feeling is unanimous that

8 Playne, *Society at War*, p. 30.

9 Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

10 *Times*, September 2, 1918.

11 Rosalind T. Hyndman, *The Last Years of H. M. Hyndman* (London, 1923), p. 82.

12 Hammond, *Scott*, pp. 181-182. On August 4, 1914, the *Manchester Guardian* had called Grey and others, "conspirators." *Manchester Guardian* August 4, 1914. So, too, John R. Clynes, who had opposed the declaration of war and who wrote, "Hell is now located. It stretches across the frontiers of nations." But "it seemed to me that we could no longer declare for peace when the country was already at war." John R. Clynes, *Memoirs* (London, 1937), I, 173.

13 *Nation*, XV, 653.

the struggle must now be carried on with the utmost energy . . . " <sup>14</sup> And on August 15 it ran an article by H. G. Wells on *The Opportunity*. For Liberalism had "come at last, an overwhelming opportunity. . . . Let us make a truce of our finer feelings. . . ." <sup>15</sup> A week earlier the Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges, had rushed into print with "much suffering shall cleanse thee. . . . To Beauty through blood." <sup>16</sup>

Lord Loreburn, who later published a damning account of British diplomacy preceding the World War and who, according to Lloyd George, was always "rubbing Grey the wrong way," <sup>17</sup> felt that "now that we are in . . . we must do our best to win. . . . We need every man, and no one has a right to say anything that will discourage the manhood of the country from doing everything to save the existence of our country and of all the seeds of good for the world which it contains. . . ." <sup>18</sup> In his *Autobiography*, H. G. Wells explains that the "fount of sanguine exhortation in me swamped my warier disposition towards critical analysis and swept me along." <sup>19</sup> The journalist and novelist Arnold Bennett recorded in his diary that "All one's pacific ideas have been rudely disturbed. One is becom-

<sup>14</sup> *Nation*, XV, 689.

<sup>15</sup> *Nation*, XV, 734. "Intellectuals as well as Christians, whether Socialists or Tories, may usually be relied upon to support Imperialism, Jingoism, and Nationalism once war is declared. Socialist principles are, on these occasions, as loosely held as the principles of Christianity." Lansbury, *My Life*, p. 199.

<sup>16</sup> *Times*, August 8, 1914.

<sup>17</sup> Hammond, *Scott*, p. 157.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 183. Many felt as did a young Oxford graduate: "... we all assumed that, if your country were at war, and needed an army, there could be no question whether you should or should not serve in this army. I followed the admirable reasoning of Socrates that, if you had enjoyed without question the benefit of the laws, you must not rebel against them when it suits you to disobey them, no matter even if you think they are wrong. I had enjoyed the benefit of the laws." Woodward, *Short Journey*, pp. 73, 75.

<sup>19</sup> H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (New York, 1934), p. 570.

ing a militarist." <sup>20</sup> Another literary figure admits that "a war which appeared so callously unreasonable robbed me of reason." <sup>21</sup>

Most financiers and business men opposed Britain's involvement no less than had the pacifists.<sup>22</sup> Asquith, on returning from a conference with the country's business and financial leaders, disgustedly described them as "the greatest ninnies I have ever had to tackle. I found them all in a state of funk, like old women chattering over tea in a Cathedral town."<sup>23</sup> The Governor of the Bank of England "with tears in his eyes," asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to "'Keep us out of it. We shall all be ruined if we are dragged in.'" <sup>24</sup> The "banks and commercial elements" all "begged" the Government to remain neutral.<sup>25</sup> "Money was a frightened and trembling thing: Money shivered at the prospect." The financial and trading interests of the City of London were "totally opposed" to British intervention.<sup>26</sup> So, too, the "great industrial districts

<sup>20</sup> Arnold Bennett, *Journal* (New York, 1933), p. 519. There "was something almost idyllic about those early weeks of the war." Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, p. 291.

<sup>21</sup> Horace A. Vachell, *Distant Fields* (London, 1937), p. 218. Even those who "didn't feel with Rupert Brooke, like a swimmer into cleanness leaping" soon enjoyed the new emotion. "The war came as an unwelcome, an alarming, yet, as I realized gradually and with considerable surprise, a curiously exhilarating adventure." Lord Elton, *Among Others* (London, 1938), pp. 79, 80. For the members of the House of Commons the joy was immediate. Even the indurate Margot Asquith was revolted by the scene in the Commons on August 3, after Grey's speech. "I looked at the excited cheerers and...the happy expressions on their faces...they welcomed the war." She had been unable to "imagine any man loving war." Margot Asquith, *Autobiography*, IV, 63.

<sup>22</sup> On the eve of the war, many businessmen scoffed at the possibility of either side going to war because of the financial cost. The Germans, "wouldn't last till Christmas"—financially, that is—it was said. R. D. Blumenfeld, *R. D. B.'s Diary 1887-1914* (London, 1930), p. 246.

<sup>23</sup> Margot Asquith, *Autobiography*, IV, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Riddell, *War Diary*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 61, 68.

. . . were most averse to war.”<sup>27</sup> Morley, in his *Memorandum on Resignation*, published posthumously, reports that the Cabinet was made well aware of the fact that the Governor of the Bank of England, and “other men of light and leading in the City, also cotton men, and steel, and coal men, etc. in the North of England, in Glasgow, etc., . . . were all *aghast* at the bare idea of our plunging into the European conflict; . . . how it would cut up commerce and manufacture, how it would hit labour and wages and prices, and, when the winter came would inevitably produce violence and tumult.”<sup>28</sup> They feared the truth of Wedgwood’s prophecy: “The poor will raid the country, they will take food. War! Yes—it is War today; tomorrow—Revolution.”<sup>29</sup>

On August 1, 1914, the *Economist*, in attacking the attitude of the pro-war *Times*, as utterly opposed to “the feelings of the business community and to the instincts of the working class,”<sup>30</sup> truly summed up the immediate reaction of the business men. Even after the declaration of war, the *Economist* was still opposed to war and extremely pessimistic, but not wavering in its support of the Government. “Millions of men have been drawn from the field and the factory to slay one another by the war lords of Europe. . . . Death, anguish, starvation

<sup>27</sup> Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, I, 325.

<sup>28</sup> Morley, *Memorandum on Resignation*, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 77. A group of businessmen early in August, 1914, offered to put up “well over a million pounds sterling” in order to have a volunteer force “to be available to defend their property in case of riots or in case of panic when the invader arrived.” Harris, *Fifty Years in and out of Parliament*, p. 52. “What haunted me . . . was the thought of what my constituents . . . in poor and overcrowded districts would do.” Addison, *Politics From Within*, I, 38. E. D. Morel felt differently. The first effect of the war, he wrote, “is to shatter for a generation all the schemes of social betterment upon which the masses were at last beginning to build high hopes.” E. Seymour Cocks, *E. D. Morel, The Man and His Work* (London, 1920), p. 221. “Social reform . . . and all other reforms . . . are now clean out of the picture.” Union of Democratic Control, *The Prussian in our Midst* (London, n. d.).

<sup>30</sup> *Economist*, LXXIX, 218.

and despair are written over Western Europe . . . the present is black, and the future is hidden in impenetrable gloom," but there was nothing to do but to fight and to hope.<sup>31</sup>

The politically organized working class behaved very much like their employers. In striking contrast to what many had hoped and anticipated while war had been merely a menacing shadow over coming events, Labor supported the Government once war came. To preserve the Government's majority, the Labour Party entered into an arrangement with the Liberals and Unionists not to contest by-elections; each seat becoming vacant was to be retained by the party to which the former member had belonged.<sup>32</sup> As were the socialist and labor parties in other countries, the British Labour Party was "caught in the same contradictions of national interests and international ideals."<sup>33</sup> In the spirit of Clausewitz's classic definition,<sup>34</sup> the politically organized labor groups of all countries had anticipated war, impotent though they had been to implement their opposition to it. With the adherence of the British delegation, the International Socialist Congress of 1907 had solemnly proclaimed that "the duty of the working class" was "to use

31 *Economist*, LXXIX, 20.

32 *Labour Party*, 1916, p. 4.

33 Lewis L. Lorwin, *Labor and Internationalism* (New York, 1929), p. 146. The first World War, more than most preceding wars, spared no one. Ben Tillett, at the 1915 Trades Union Congress, pointed out the futility of opposition. "I want us to come down to the brutal facts of the case, and I want to appeal to the clever and cynical persons who have recently developed objection to secret diplomacy. It may be that Sir Edward Grey is either the biggest rogue or fool in Christendom. It may be that Lord Kitchener is the worst possible military organizer, and that Mr. Asquith is the most cunning and incapable of Premiers this country has ever had. It may be that the Government is a corrupt Government. It may be that the Houses of Parliament are manned by men without sincerity, conviction, or brains. It may be that the capitalists of the country manoeuvred this war . . . We have entered upon this fight as a democracy without being consulted." But 96 per cent of those doing the actual fighting belonged to the working class, and those back home couldn't let them down. *Trades Union Congress*, 1915, pp. 323-324.

34 "War is an extension of politics by other means."

every effort to prevent war." In January, 1914, the Labour Party of Great Britain, had denounced "War and war-mongering in any disguise" as the "common foe."<sup>35</sup> In the last week of July, 1914, as war appeared more imminent, socialist and labor organizations in France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy met the threat by passing resolutions opposing war and, in order to be better prepared to take appropriate action, plans were made for advancing the scheduled meeting of the International Socialist Congress. On July 30, the Parliamentary Labour Party expressed its opposition to the country being "dragged into the European conflict in which as the Prime Minister had stated, we have no direct interest" and called "upon all Labour organizations in the country to watch events vigilantly so as to oppose, if need be, in the most effective way any action which may involve us in war."<sup>36</sup> On August 1, 1914, the British section of the International Socialist Bureau called on all to "stand together for peace."<sup>37</sup> The next day, Sunday, August 2, a huge and enthusiastic anti-war demonstration was held in Trafalgar Square.

Even after the ultimatum to Germany, Ramsay MacDonald still stoutly insisted on the floor of the House of Commons that "this country ought to have remained neutral."<sup>38</sup> The Labour Party supported the Government immediately upon the declaration of war, but it was extremely critical of the Government's actions leading up to the war. For a while, too, the Labour Party sought to re-establish the relations existing between the Powers on the eve of the war. On August 5, 1914, the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, in a report subsequently

<sup>35</sup> *Labour Party*, 1914, p. 93.

<sup>36</sup> *Labour Party*, 1916, p. 51.

<sup>37</sup> Cole, *Labour in Wartime*, pp. 24-26. Robert Smillie was ready to pledge the miners to a general strike, but thought it was too late. William Stewart, *J. Keir Hardie* (London, 1921), p. 344.

<sup>38</sup> 65 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1831. For a hostile interpretation of MacDonald's speech, cf. L. Macneil Weir, *The Tragedy of Ramsay MacDonald* (London, n. d.), pp. 55-59.

endorsed by the Parliamentary Labour Party, denounced the Government for having, along with other Powers, "produced the war." It was especially bitter about Sir Edward Grey who, "as proved by the facts which he gave to the House of Commons, committed without the knowledge of our people the honour of our country to supporting France in the event of any war in which she was seriously involved and gave definite assurance of support before the House of Commons had any chance of considering the matter." Logically, therefore, the Party's duty was "to secure the peace at the earliest possible moment. . . ." <sup>39</sup> The next day the Executive Committee reaffirmed the fact that it had been opposed to Britain's "engaging in a European War," and that it was eagerly "watching for the earliest opportunity for taking effective action in the interests of peace and the reestablishment of good feeling between the workers of the European nations. . . ." <sup>40</sup>

By the end of August, however, though the Labour Party's stand remained unaltered, a shift had taken place in its views as to the best means of attaining the desired end. "Peace" had been transmuted into "Peace through Victory." Thus the Party, in the words of its official *Report*, gave "general support to the Government in the conduct of the War and has voted for all the Votes of Credit, believing that the main object today is the prosecution of the War to a speedy and successful conclusion." <sup>41</sup>

The Annual Report for 1916, containing, as it does, a record of events since the previous meeting held in January, 1914, <sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Labour Party*, 1916, pp. 3-4. Individual leaders were often less critical. For example, George N. Barnes, one time Chairman of the Labour Party, wrote in the first week of the war that "Grey did everything then that mortal man could have done to avert the catastrophe." Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 107. "In any event we must go through with it." *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>40</sup> *Labour Party*, 1916, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> The regularly scheduled January, 1915, meeting had been a casualty of the war.

reflects the confusion of the Party. Doubtful whether Britain was blameless for the conflict, revolted by the facts of war, fearful of the future, the Labour Party nevertheless took no effective action to destroy the entente (little cordial though it was) with the Government. The Presidential address at the January, 1916, Conference and the debates on conscription illustrate the Party's perplexities and frustrations. The period of the last two years, "seems more like twenty. Very shadowy and remote seem the questions which then agitated and divided us, questions of party policy and social reform. . . . War was never as mechanical, brutalized, unromantic as in our own day . . . ." But "to the mass of the people the war appeared as a fight for freedom. The pre-war diplomacy of the different Powers has been a matter of some controversy and may be a matter of even sharper controversy with the return of peace, but at all events there was no mistaking the generous instinct of the people."<sup>43</sup> The Conference denounced Conscription: "the experience of other countries and other wars teaches that when once the departure we are now making has been taken it is not easy to get back to the old road. . . . Militarism and democracy cannot live together, either in Germany or Great Britain . . . . We are meantime engaged in forging fetters for the future."<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, as if to give point to its foreboding that conscription rendered the democratic movement "sterile and ineffective," the Conference, which expressed its opposition to the Military Service Bill by a vote of 1,716,000 to 360, refused, by a vote of 649,000 to 614,000, to agitate for its

<sup>43</sup> *Labour Party*, 1916, p. 95.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96. The Military Service Bill was also attacked, by the Conference President, on the ground that it exempted "curates, many of whom are among the most martial and ferocious members of the community." *Ibid.*, p. 97. Many urged that clergymen be drafted. Cf. Correspondence columns of *Times*, February 10 to March 3, 1915. The following year, Ben Tillett at the Trade Union Congress wondered why "parsons . . . who talk so much about heaven should be so afraid of entering there through the gateway of the trenches. The trenches are very good gates to heaven . . ." Trade Union Congress, *Report of Proceedings*, 1916, p. 270.



repeal.<sup>45</sup> Frederick the Great's remark about Maria Theresa: "She wept and she wept, but she took and she took," might be adapted to describe the attitude and actions of the Labour Party. The Party protested and protested, but supported and supported.<sup>46</sup>

If arrived at tortuously, the position of the Labour Party was clear; that of the Independent Labour Party was clearly tortuous. On August 11, 1914, it issued a manifesto on the war recalling its forebodings "that the diplomatic policies pursued by European rulers including our own, and supported by the force of murderous armaments, would lead inevitably to universal war. . . . That prediction based upon facts and tendencies, has been only too swiftly and tragically fulfilled. . . ." <sup>47</sup> The manifesto, however, contained no statement of the Party's position on the immediate issue of supporting or opposing the war then already raging, or even on the question whether the Government should have declared war. "It is difficult and perhaps futile to try to apportion at this moment the exact measure of responsibility and blame. . . ." <sup>48</sup> It is against this lack of an enunciated policy that must be read the resolution of the National Administrative Council of the Party, which, incidentally, reveals an implicit dichotomy between the "Party" and its "members." "We place on record with great satisfaction the firm adherence of our members to the principles and policy of the Party throughout this trying time." <sup>49</sup> The Chairman of the April, 1915, Conference attempted to clear up the admitted ambiguity. "It had been said that the Independent Labour Party holds the view that, notwithstanding the circumstances binding Great Britain to France and France to Russia, the Government ought to have declared for neutrality. I do not ac-

<sup>45</sup> *Labour Party*, 1916, pp. 95, 124.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Labour Party*, 1916, 1917, 1918, *passim*.

<sup>47</sup> *Independent Labour Party*, 1915, p. 115.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

cept this statement as a correct representation of the position of the I.L.P. I agree that the Government was in honour bound by its secret understanding with France to declare for intervention." The Party, which had "for many years [been] . . . warning the public against secret diplomacy," was not, however, under any obligations to remain silent. "Now is the time to speak and ensure that never again will the witch's cauldron of secret diplomacy brew the broth of Hell for mankind."<sup>50</sup> This was the position of the Party which had held its "Coming-of-Age Conference" in April, 1914, when it had been predicted that "if we are faithful and faint not by the way, . . . the very gates of triumph" would be reached within the next twenty-one years.<sup>51</sup> "Our goal is Socialism. There must be no swerving or turning aside from the vision of our great ideal."<sup>52</sup> In the words of Keir Hardie, who, "like Joan of Arc . . . obeyed an inner voice,"<sup>53</sup> the "warming influence of Socialism" was beginning to liberate "the toiling masses . . . frozen and hemmed in by a cold, callous greed. . . ." <sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>51</sup> Henry Snell, looking back after more than two decades, criticizes the I.L.P.: "The whole power of the organization was used . . . to protest against the war; but to my great regret, the protest quickly assumed the form of a perpetual and acrimonious discussion as to the measure of responsibility for its origin which belonged to the separate nations. After a war has broken out and national passions are inflamed it is too late to make a detailed inquiry as to the amount of responsibility which belongs to the respective combatants . . ." Lord Snell, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>52</sup> *Independent Labour Party*, 1914, p. 29.

<sup>53</sup> Clynes, *Memoirs*, I, 70.

<sup>54</sup> *Independent Labour Party*, 1914, p. 50. Twenty years later, George Lansbury could still insist that the people had "set their faces towards the sun, and in spite of the cynicism and pessimism of our intellectuals, this great people will once again lead the world . . ." Lansbury, *Looking Backwards and Forwards*, p. vii. However, Fenner Brockway of the I.L.P. admits that his organization "had no unifying anti-war philosophy . . . our assumption was that the war would prove merely an interlude in the normal peacetime advance of the Labour movement toward socialism." Brockway, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 52.

On some issues it was certainly prepared to be uncompromising: thus if the enfranchisement of women could not be secured "on a comprehensive basis," the Party would "oppose the further extension of the male franchise."<sup>55</sup> As a general proposition it recognized that "If we, as Socialists, are to get the benefit of the support of our Trade Union Allies, it must involve some sacrifice of our own independent action as an Independent Labour Party."<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, it opposed the recruiting campaign of the Labour Party.<sup>57</sup>

Early in 1915 the Independent Labour Party was aware of the "new problems forced upon us by the war," the solution of which would require "much thought and energy."<sup>58</sup> Its ideals, however, were the announced aims of the Government: to "establish a system in which the nations will abandon national rivalry and the rule of brute force for federation of the nations and the reign of international law."<sup>59</sup> Although the *Times* article of March 8, 1915, entitled "Why We Are At War" which had significantly asserted that ". . . we do not set up to be international Don Quixotes, ready at all times to redress wrongs which do us no hurt," was quoted in the 1915 Conference, they had not given up hope.<sup>60</sup> ". . . there is one gleam of hope shed by the war on the picture, and it is that the sheer futility of it will do for the world what victories on the one hand and smashings on the other would never do, namely, sicken it once and for all with the hateful and horrible business."<sup>61</sup> Even MacDonald supported the war, now that Britain was involved, and in May, 1915, Snowden reiterated his support of the "nation in its present difficulties." Upon this point

<sup>55</sup> *Independent Labour Party*, 1914, p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1915, p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 1915, p. 25.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25. Cf. Asquith's Guildhall Address.

<sup>60</sup> *Independent Labour Party*, 1915, p. 97.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1916, p. 46.

"the whole Labour movement" was united. The only point of difference was that some thought the Labour Party could "be much more useful outside the Government than inside it."<sup>62</sup>

Those who looked forward to revolutionary activity were especially disappointed. William Gallacher, who was to confine his war-time activities to violent tirades against the Government and employers, reflects, "What terrible attraction a war can have! The wild excitement, the illusion of wonderful adventure, and the actual break in the deadly monotony of working class life."<sup>63</sup> As H. M. Hyndman pointed out, "Mere pacifism" could not "influence great masses of mankind." In any event, it was "absurd to preach the class-war at home and non-resistance abroad."<sup>64</sup>

The trade union movement of Great Britain, of no exotic growth, but British to its very roots, naturally did as everyone else in Britain was doing. One of the reasons Grey gave for advocating a declaration of war was that although war was terrible, it would be even worse for Britain to stay out. The *Economist* countered it with the statement that rather by staying out, "we shall be in a far better position later on—if the worst comes to worst—to mediate effectively between exhausted combatants."<sup>65</sup> Generally speaking, however, the trade union officials supported Grey. As late as January, 1917, the President of the Trade Union Congress justified his personal course of action in 1914:

<sup>62</sup> Carl F. Brand, *British Labour's Rise to Power* (Oxford, 1941), p. 34. For MacDonald's position cf. Elton, *MacDonald*, especially, p. 252, and H. Hessel Tiltman, *Ramsay MacDonald* (New York, 1929), especially, p. 113.

<sup>63</sup> William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde* (London, 1936), p. 18.

<sup>64</sup> Hyndman, *H. M. Hyndman*, p. 121. Some, however, did. Maxton, Kirkwood, Wheatley, Shinwell, Johnson, "and others in Scotland concentrated on the class struggle... In England we failed to unite the anti-war struggle with the class struggle sufficiently, with the result that we became isolated from the mass of the workers and too often tended to become bourgeois pacifist rather than working class Socialist." Brockway, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>65</sup> *Economist*, LXXIX, 218.

For my part, hating war, suspicious of Courts and Chancellories, and intensely desirous of peace, it did not take me long to make up my mind and I am convinced today as I was at the outset that there could only have been one greater tragedy than the war and that would have been for Britain to have kept out of it.<sup>66</sup>

While its members offered life and limb, the trade union movement proceeded to offer its sacrifices too. Hyndman, shrewd bargainer, not averse to taking gold from both Tories and Liberals,<sup>67</sup> complained that the trade unions "lost the opportunity of bargaining with the Government for the support of the workers when the war began in return for far-reaching social changes. . . ." <sup>68</sup>

The outbreak of the war was the occasion for the renunciation of labor's most potent threat and ultimate weapon—the strike. Viewed in radical circles as the only means of compelling Governments to forego war, not only was the strike not used to prevent the war, its use was forfeited in order to promote the war effort. "With the outbreak of war a great calm settled on the industries of the United Kingdom, and indeed for a high-hearted space the Kingdom deserved its adjective in industrial as in all other affairs." <sup>69</sup> Following numerous instances of local action, the Joint Board of the Trade Union Congress, the Labour Party, and the General Federation of Trade Unions, agreed to effect the termination of all existing trade disputes and announced the adoption of the following resolution on August 24, 1914:

That an immediate effort be made to terminate all existing trade disputes whether strikes or lock-outs, and whenever new points of difficulty arise during the war period a serious at-

<sup>66</sup> *Trade Union Congress*, 1917, p. 82.

<sup>67</sup> He won the admiration of Bernard Shaw by his use of the classical quotation "*Pecunia non olet.*" Bernard Shaw, *Essays in Fabian Socialism* (New York, 1931), p. 133.

<sup>68</sup> H. M. Hyndman, *Evolution of Revolution* (New York, 1920), p. 329.

<sup>69</sup> Wolf, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

tempt should be made by all concerned to reach an amicable settlement before resorting to a strike or lock-out.<sup>70</sup>

The results are apparent from the strike figures. From January to March, 1914, over 120,000 workers were involved in industrial disputes, with a loss of almost 3,000,000 working days; from April to June the figures are almost 250,000 strikers and over 5,000,000 days lost; from July to September, more than 65,000 men and over 2,000,000 days lost; from October to December, 21,128 men and 161,437 working days lost, of which only about one-tenth were caused by disputes in the engineering, shipbuilding, and metal trades, peculiarly vital to the war.<sup>71</sup> At the beginning of August, 1914, there were one hundred strikes in progress; at the end of the month the total had fallen to twenty.<sup>72</sup>

In some corners there was a lack of acclamation for the war even after it had been declared, but there was no open opposition to it. Thus, even those who were outside the torrent, like the skeptical, aged Wilfred Scawen Blunt, held their peace while there was no peace. Blunt "realized now as he had realized in the Egyptian War of 1882 that England would tolerate a dissentient minority only if it did not interfere with the majority. To undertake any public crusade for peace was useless."<sup>73</sup> Organized to work for the maintenance of peace, the Union of

70 *Trade Union Congress*, 1915, pp. 171, 185.

71 Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.

72 H. of C. # 185-1919, p. 5. These figures take on added significance when compared to pre-war statistics on strikes. For the five-year period 1909-1913, the number of workers involved in strikes ranged from a low of 300,000 in 1909 to 1,463,281 in 1912. *Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs*, 1913, p. 11. (Cd. 7658-1914, S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXVI).

73 Edith Finch, *W. S. Blunt* (London, 1938), p. 344. Philip Snowden, opposing the war, and unwilling to aid in the recruiting drives, turned his activities "into other channels." He could not appeal for an early end of the war to what he described as the "mass mind." It needed a longer experience of horror and suffering before peace "appeals would receive consideration." Philip Viscount Snowden, *An Autobiography* (London, 1934), I, 363, 366.

Democratic Control, despite its origins, offered no opposition. Its spokesmen included Charles Trevelyan, who had left his post as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education because of his opposition to the declaration of war by the Government; Ramsay MacDonald, who had similarly left the leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party because of his opposition to the declaration of war; Norman Angell, who had "demonstrated" the futility of war in *The Great Illusion*; and E. D. Morel, the nemesis of King Leopold of Belgium and critic of the very basis of the Entente with France.<sup>74</sup> The Union announced that "the immediate need [was] . . . to prepare for the issue of books, pamphlets, and leaflets dealing with the course of recent policy and suggesting the lines of action for the future. . . . When the time is ripe for it, but not before the country is free from danger. . . ." It was not "a stop the war" movement.<sup>75</sup>

The war, in its early stages, won overwhelming support and encountered practically no resistance. Yet, the seeds of opposition were not lacking; under favorable, or rather, unfavorable, conditions, they might sprout dangerously. The more mundane and less exhilarating aspects of human existence could not be forgotten. War with one's best customers meant, it was certain, loss of trade and a sharp increase in unemployment.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Charles Trevelyan, *The Union of Democratic Control* (n. p., 1921).

<sup>75</sup> H. M. Swanwick, *Builders of Peace* (London, 1924), pp. 31-32. As Morel's biographer makes plain, the Union of Democratic Control was never "a Stop-the-War or Peace Society." Cocks, *Morel*, p. 223. Cf. also, Union of Democratic Control, *Pamphlets* (London, n. d.), and Hermann Lutz, *E. D. Morel* (Berlin, 1925).

## CHAPTER XV

# THE RENEWAL OF INDUSTRIAL STRIFE

WHILE supporting the war, the organized working class acted to protect itself economically in the time of crisis. On August 5, 1914, the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress took the lead in organizing the War Emergency Workers National Committee for alleviating the expected distress.<sup>1</sup> The Committee urged the Government to control food prices and distribution, to provide employment through public works projects, and to feed school children.<sup>2</sup> Hyndman had envisioned it as "a potential Committee of Public Safety,"<sup>3</sup> but it never offered the Government any trouble. The Labour Party Executive Committee also recommended State action to "mitigate the destitution which will inevitably overtake our working people whilst the state of war lasts."<sup>4</sup> The trade unions urged the Government to extend financial assistance and to induce employers to spread employment by working their employees short time.<sup>5</sup>

The Government, too, was troubled by fear of labor unrest caused by unemployment, but did little to allay the workers' fears. On the first day of the war the Prime Minister appointed a Committee on the Prevention and Relief of Distress, which merely suggested that local committees be constituted to cope with the situation.<sup>6</sup> Relief activities were financed not by the

<sup>1</sup> It had been, originally, the "Workers' Peace Emergency Committee." Hamilton, *Webb*, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> *Labour Party*, 1916, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> Hyndman, *H. M. Hyndman*, p. 85. Like Robespierre, he was a dandy, and was usually costumed in a top hat and frock coat.

<sup>4</sup> *Labour Party*, 1916, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Trade Union Congress*, 1915, p. 185.

<sup>6</sup> Local Government Board, *Report on Special Work arising out of the War*, pp. 4-5. (Cd. 7763-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXV).



Government, but by private subscriptions contributed as a result of appeals by the Prince of Wales, the Queen, the Queen Mother,<sup>7</sup> and numerous private individuals.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the Government assumed control of most of the relief funds, and in March, 1915, cautioned the local committees to tighten the purse strings.<sup>9</sup> On its own part, the Government proceeded to economize. The National Relief Fund received almost £5,000,000 up to March 31, 1915, but allocated less than £2,000,000 of this amount up to this period,<sup>10</sup> of which sum Scotland received only £43,000.<sup>11</sup> By the end of September, 1915, the National Relief Fund no longer gave relief to able-bodied men or women except under very special circumstances.<sup>12</sup>

The workers appreciated the assistance that the Relief Fund had rendered to those who had been pushed below the poverty line by the dislocations of war. The relief funds had, indeed, taken care of an emergency situation.<sup>13</sup> What concerned the workers was the *ad hoc* and transitory character of the relief organization. They were opposed to the idea of private rather than public assistance. Originally the theory behind the granting of military pensions was that the State grants should be supplemented by private charity.<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of the war,

7 National Relief Fund, *Report on Administration up to March 31, 1915*, p. 2. (Cd. 7756-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXI).

8 War Charities Committee, *Report*, pp. 2, 3, 5. (Cd. 8287-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. VI).

9 Local Government Board for Ireland, *Annual Report, 1915*, pp. xxx-xxxi. (Cd. 8016-1915 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXV).

10 Cd. 7756, p. 3.

11 Committee on Administration of the National Relief Fund in Scotland, *Report, March 31, 1915*, p. 5. (Cd. 8129-1915 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXI).

12 National Relief Fund..., *Report, September 30, 1915*. (Cd. 8227-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XIV).

13 Cd. 7756, p. 2 ff.

14 Edward T. Devine, *Disabled Soldiers and Sailors Pensions and Training* (New York, 1919), pp. 180-183. Cf. also Cd. 7762-1914, Cd. 7682-1914, and Cd. 8131-1915—for allowances and pensions. (S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XL).

almost a stigma and, certainly, special obligations, were attached to receiving pensions. All women in receipt of separation allowances were kept under police surveillance.<sup>15</sup> Allowances were distributed through private agencies and recipients were often asked to account for their use of the allowances.<sup>16</sup> The whole theory of private charity in lieu of public obligation was repudiated by responsible workers, who agreed with John Burns' disgust over the "philanthropic mischief of the social butterflies and sentimental busybodies."<sup>17</sup>

Nor was it only a matter of principle that led the workers to demand a systematic scheme of state assistance. Although the crest of unemployment had, in fact, been reached by October, 1914, and a labor shortage, not surplus, was the problem by March, 1915,<sup>18</sup> the workers' opinions never quite caught up with the situation. Unaccustomed to such a phenomenon, the workers viewed full employment as merely temporary.<sup>19</sup> The haunting fear of impending unemployment, pervasive at all times, had been intensified at the start of the war by the sharp increase in unemployment.<sup>20</sup> War demands would not last for-

15 68 H. C. Deb. 5s., 51. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Home Front* (London, 1932), p. 99.

16 68 H. C. Deb. 5s., 50.

17 Margot Asquith, *Autobiography*, IV, 55.

18 Local Government Board, *Report, 1914*, p. 6. (Cd. 7763-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXV). Board of Education, *Annual Report of Chief Medical Officer, 1914*, pp. 223-227. (Cd. 8055-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XVIII). Local Government Board, *Report, 1914-1915*, Parts I and II. (Cd. 8195-1916, Cd. 8196-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XII). Local Government Board for Scotland, *Report, 1915*. (Cd. 8273-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XII). Local Government Board, *Report, 1915-1916*, Parts I and II. (Cd. 8309-1916, Cd. 8331-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XIII). Local Government Board for Ireland, *Report, 1916*. (Cd. 8365-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XIII).

19 For that matter, unemployment never disappeared. Throughout the war "a measurable percentage of unemployment persisted..." Beveridge, "Unemployment Insurance in the War and After," in Hill *et al.*, *War and Insurance*, p. 231.

20 Cd. 7703, pp. 5, 28. The reduction of employment varied, of course, with firms and industries. It was greater in small firms than in large firms (*ibid.*, p. 7), and thus may have early set the pattern for industrial concentration.

ever and many soldiers would survive to flood the labor market. The Government, too, expected post-war unemployment, but during the first year of war, made no plans for the alleviation of the expected distress other than to advise the Prince of Wales that when the time came, he would be asked to renew his "appeal to the generosity of the public."<sup>21</sup>

Although unemployment soon declined, the dread remained and colored the attitudes and the activities of the working class. With the Government's main contribution to the whole problem coming in the form of taking up manpower into the Army and the munitions industries, the working class had little cause to expect any assistance from the State.<sup>22</sup> What the workers were to obtain must be through their own efforts and their own sacrifices. This left them in no mood for benevolence—beyond expressions of sympathy—toward the first victims of the war, the refugees from overrun Belgium.

"Little Belgium" might be the chief rallying cry at the start of the war, but the trade union movement displayed little of the spirit of international brotherhood for the 100,000 Belgians who fled to Britain. Belgium for the Belgians meant not only driving out foreign invaders from Belgium; it also, apparently, meant keeping Belgians from competing with British labor, at

<sup>21</sup> National Relief Fund, *Report on Administration, March 31, 1916*, p. 6. (Cd. 8286-1915, in S. P. 1916, vol. XIV). There was a surplus in the National Relief Fund during the first year of the war, but it dwindled away by the end of March, 1921. National Relief Fund, *Report, September 30, 1915*, p. 3. (Cd. 8169-1915, in S. P. 1916, vol. XIV). Administration of the National Relief Fund, *Report, March, 1921*, p. 3. (Cmd. 1272-1921, in S. P. 1921, vol. XV).

<sup>22</sup> The only direct Government assistance came through the Provisions of Meals Act for school children, passed on August 7, 1914, but in process long before. Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1913*, p. 249. (Cd. 7730-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XVIII). The Government also assisted the trade unions temporarily to meet their special war expenditures on unemployment. If the trade unions levied an extra *1d.* or *2d.* per week on their members, a grant of one-sixth or one-third, respectively, of the benefits they paid out was given to the Unions by the Government. The grant was terminated in May, 1915, after a total of £84,000 had been paid to 185 unions. Dearle, *Economic Chronicle*, pp. 12, 40.

least in the British Isles. Great sympathy was expressed for the refugees, but the trade unions opposed the admission of Belgian workers into British trades. The representatives of the women's trade unions were even harsher than the men to their hapless Belgian sisters. Mary MacArthur, representing the Women's Trade Union League, held that there were "no openings for Belgian women in British industries."<sup>23</sup> Some of her male compatriots, though complaining that the influx of the foreigners had adversely affected wages and conditions of labor, were willing to accept them, but only on the condition that the principle that they be "the last hired and the first fired" be adhered to.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cd. 7779, p. 65. Even the *Times*, pointing out that the "stream" of Belgian refugees had become a "cataract," recognized that they ought not to be allowed to compete in the labor market. *Times*, October 17, 1914. By January, 1914, about 5,000 Belgian refugees were arriving each week. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1915. Although a severe congestion was reported at the Port of London because of a shortage of dock laborers, the Transport Workers Union refused to permit the importation of Rotterdam dock laborers, holding that the domestic labor supply was more than sufficient to meet the needs. *Times*, January 2, 1915, January 14, 1915.

<sup>24</sup> Cd. 7779, pp. 30, 36, 51, 56. Even Lawrence Housman, a sensitive and humanitarian literary figure and ardent advocate of the suffragettes' cause, could not quite embrace the Belgian refugees: "... we found that the Belgian refugees were themselves the problem... Many of them greatly resented the fact that Germany had not been allowed a peaceful walk-over; for they suspected that if Germany had not done it first, France would have done it later... What then were they fighting about?... Some of them seemed to combine the acquisitiveness of the Scotch with the cunning of the Red Indian; we did not understand their ways, they did not understand ours; and constantly they were trying to get round us by means which we thought shady." Lawrence Housman, *The Unexpected Years* (New York, 1936), p. 250. For a more favorable view of the Belgian refugees, cf. Ben Turner, *About Myself*, p. 184. The artist, William Rothenstein, aided by sketching the Belgian King at the front, for the purpose of having it reproduced and sold for the benefit of the Belgian needy. William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories* (New York, 1931-1940), II, 303. Curzon also assisted by entertaining the King and Queen of Belgium for many weeks in Great Britain. Harold Nicholson, *Curzon: The Last Phase* (London, 1934), p. 30. As a "further contribution to the National Cause," sanctuary was also provided for their horses. Lionel Dawson, *Hugh Lowther, Fifth Earl of Lonsdale* (London, 1946), p. 272.

More immediately pinching than the threat of impending unemployment was the omnipresent actuality of rising prices. Prices began to rise on August 1, and they continued to soar at an accelerated rate after the declaration of war on August 4, 1914. The organized working class demanded, from the start, that the State intervene. Ultimately the Government did step in to control the prices of essential commodities, but as in other matters, the steps were hesitant, and above all, late.

The working class of Great Britain, committed by the political and trade union representatives to an acceptance of the status quo, to a "freezing" of the situation as it existed in August, 1914, found out—in the course of time and through the hard school of experience—that the Government had offered nothing in return. It was no agreement that had been entered into; rather a gift had been offered to and accepted by the Government. The *Labour Year Book* of 1916, in reviewing the situation, admitted that there had never been any "express agreement," but complained that "there certainly was the tacit understanding that the maintenance of the truce depended on equal sacrifices on both sides."<sup>25</sup> But the Government had not pledged itself to anything, and all indications (and current lack of action) pointed to the probability that it had no intention of interfering with "the natural course of prices." True, as early as September 17, 1914, the Board of Trade was authorized to commandeer, at agreed prices, or at prices fixed by arbitration, articles of commerce unreasonably withheld,<sup>26</sup> but these powers were not employed for the benefit of the consuming public. As the Government took no action, and their own officials offered only verbal protests, some members of the working class proceeded to take independent action. They were not quite as articulate, but they agreed with the summation of the situation made some time later by the *Labour Year Book*:

<sup>25</sup> *Labour Year Book*, 1916, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Dearle, *Economic Chronicle*, p. 10.

Labour alone has been expected to make every sacrifice without return or gratitude. Employed, the worker was handed over to the sweater; unemployed he fell into the clutches of the Relief Committee; as consumer, he was the victim of profiteers whom the government would not control; but as soon as he stirred a finger in his own interest, he was proclaimed a traitor . . .<sup>27</sup>

Many of the workers came to agree with the views of Hyndman, who had early maintained that the "one object of the Government . . . [was] to help the very rich and to safeguard the capitalists."<sup>28</sup> Their grievances were of long standing; the oncoming of the war had delayed the anticipated struggle, but all the efforts of their trade union representatives could not banish it. Within less than six months after the "Truce" was inaugurated, industrial strife was renewed.

The first labor dispute during the war was of pre-war origin. In July, 1914, the Clyde District Committee of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers had demanded an increase of 2d. per hour (from 8½ to 10½d.) as of the expiration of their three-year contract, due in January, 1915. Under the existing agreement, strikes were barred until the issue had been discussed by a central conference, but when the conference scheduled for January was postponed, discontent overflowed the confines of agreements and, soon, of trade union organization itself.<sup>29</sup>

For some years the Amalgamated Society of Engineers had exercised control over its members in each factory through a system of shop stewards, appointed by and responsible to the District Committees of the Union. Sometimes known also as "Vigilance Committees," their functions included that of "per-

<sup>27</sup> *Labour Year Book*, 1916, p. 46.

<sup>28</sup> Frederick J. Gould, *Hyndman* (London, 1928), p. 196.

<sup>29</sup> G. D. H. Cole, *Workshop Organization* (Oxford, 1923), p. 29; Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140. The Clydeside workers were merely demanding that their rate of pay be brought up to the level paid in other districts. J. T. Murphy, *New Horizons* (London, 1941), p. 44.

suading" workers to join the Union.<sup>30</sup> Schooled in direct action, a committee of these stewards, sensing the rank and file sentiment, called a meeting over the opposition of union officials. The more than five thousand workers attending the meeting resolved not to work overtime unless their demands were met. Both the District Committee and the National Executive of the Union sought to put down the revolt, but the "embargo" on overtime spread to other factories. From this time on, the Shop Stewards became practically independent of the District Committee; they were to be appointed, not by the District Committee, but by the rank and file of the workers in the departments of engineering works, "being within the ordinary union but not of it, and threatening its disruption and the revolution of its government."<sup>31</sup> Working in the shops, securing tangible results without delay, it is no wonder that the stewards commanded more allegiance than did the regular trade union officials.

The rift soon widened, as the trade union officials, at a February Conference, agreed to a compromise of a  $\frac{3}{4}d.$  advance and arranged for a ballot vote a month hence.<sup>32</sup> If the aim of the Union executives had been to allow the membership time to reconsider hasty action, it backfired badly. Beginning at one plant on February 16, 1915, the strike spread rapidly. The Shop Stewards' Committee enlarged its representative membership and became "The Withholding of Labour Committee."<sup>33</sup> It was really a strike committee, assuming its euphemistic title in order to evade prosecution under the Defence of the Realm Act.<sup>34</sup> It had no "rules of a definite character." A

<sup>30</sup> *Labour Party Report on Deportations*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, p. 140. Cf. also, Murphy, *New Horizons*, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> Cole, *Workshop Organization*, p. 29.

<sup>33</sup> *Labour Party Report on Deportations*, p. 12. After July, 1915 the Committee reconstituted itself as the "Clyde Workers' Committee." *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 43.

witness before a Labour Party investigating Committee characterized it as "a collection of angry trade unionists."<sup>35</sup>

The demand of the Withholding of Labour Committee was ominous for reasons other than its name: it asserted that the Committee, not the Union Executive, was to be responsible for negotiations with the employers. However, though the Union Executive had lost its grip over the Clyde members, it still held the power of the purse, and it ordered the cessation of strike pay. Although the strikers, by an overwhelming ballot vote (more than 10 to 1), had rejected the offer of the  $\frac{3}{4}d.$  advance, they were forced to return to work early in March. Even the Withholding of Labour Committee was forced to bow, but urged that the workers apply "ca'canny" methods.<sup>36</sup>

Although less than ten thousand men were involved, the spell of industrial peace—never before seen in modern Britain—was over; the truce had been broken. The industrial struggle had become dormant as a result of the first impact of the war, but, with the continuation of the war, latent tensions were aggravated and intensified until they burst forth with what seemed like revolutionary force. The Clyde, which had stood out in the autumn of 1914 in its spirit of sacrifice and its eagerness to aid the war effort, became an industrial battlefield, threatening to rival the Central Powers as an "enemy" to be put down—through diplomacy or force—by the British Government.

Even more serious than the tension on the Clyde, was the situation in the mines. There the conflict also began over a pre-war issue about wages. On the eve of August, 1914, the coal miners were demanding increased wages and a national contract. Pre-war "labor trouble" in the mining industry had culminated in the great strike of 1912. The trial of strength had

<sup>35</sup> *Labour Party Report on Deportations*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>36</sup> Cole, *Workshop Organization*, p. 30; Ministry of Munitions, vol. IV, Part II, 38-41; Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141. "The strike continues, but now inside the factories. We call on all workers to operate a stay-in strike!" Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 48.



been inconclusive and the ferment continued. The 1912 Minimum Wage Act had conceded a major demand, but in an attenuated form. The miners were made conscious, more than ever, that the Government would yield only under the full weight of industrial action. The first demand in 1914 was for a national minimum wage rather than district minima, as established by the 1912 Act. Simultaneously, the Miners' Federation, which, as the name implies, was but a federation of district unions, had been acquiring more central power, as the miners were advocating national instead of district agreements. Paving the way for a national contract, the Miners' Federation at its 1911 Annual Conference, had resolved that all agreements made by the district associations must terminate simultaneously.<sup>37</sup> Among many sectors of the mining population the demand for a national minimum was regarded as only a step forward towards nationalization. The atmosphere in mines was murky, but to many of the miners not gloomy. Public ownership would, they felt, serve to clear the air.<sup>38</sup> Officially, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain did not go so far in its demands, but its actions on the eve of the war boded no good for any Government which would resist its claims. Already in the most powerful union in Great Britain, the miners were organizing for greater strength. In no other industry had the workers clashed so sharply in the past with employers and the Government. Even their own leaders were astonished at the force of the rank and file sentiment.

With the coming of the war, the miners' disputes, along with others, were submerged by the wave of patriotism that swept over the country. It is a tribute both to the permeating magnetism of war and to the miners' sense of national duty that, isolated as they were from most national currents and sentiments by the nature of their occupation, the outbreak of war caused the miners to act—and even more so—like their compatriots

<sup>37</sup> H. Stanley Jevons, *The British Coal Trade* (London, 1915), p. 471.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *The Miners' Next Step*.

in other occupations. The miners either surged to the recruiting offices (45 per cent of the miners of military age enlisted within the first six months of the war) or remained behind to increase the per capita production, with a labor force stripped of so many of its most physically fit men.<sup>39</sup>

As the months went by, the tide of exaltation and self-sacrifice receded. Even had they not been outraged by the increased coal prices and profits<sup>40</sup> at a time when their own wages remained stationary, the sharply rising cost of living, would have driven them to demand wage increases. The Miners' Federation seized the opportunity in February, 1915, to demand a 20 per cent wage increase on a national basis. To break the deadlock without resorting to direct action, the miners agreed to have the Prime Minister arbitrate the issues. The award providing for increases on a district basis, was a clear victory for the owners, and the miners accepted it only under protest. Once again they felt they had been tricked by the Asquith of the "Featherstone Murders."<sup>41</sup> As in the Minimum Wage Act of 1912, the miners had not achieved the substance of their demands. Faith in Government promises and action, never strongly entrenched in the mining communities, was further strained by what the miners felt was this latest betrayal. They soon renewed the struggle; once again they agreed to Government intervention, but this time they refused to accept the decision. An employer-worker dispute was thus transformed into an act of disobedience—almost revolt—against the State at war.

In April, 1915, the miners had served three months' notice of termination of existing agreements. New agreements were

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Home Office, *Reports of Divisional Inspector for Mines, 1914*. (Cd. 8023-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII); Coal Mining Organization Committee, vol. III. (Cd. 8345 in S. P. 1916, vol. VI). J. P. Dickie, *The Coal Problem* (London, 1936), p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Sankey, I, 3-5.

<sup>41</sup> As Home Secretary in 1894, Asquith had authorized troop action, which had resulted in bloodshed, at Featherstone during a strike. J. R. Raynes, *Coal and Its Conflicts* (London, 1928), p. 60. Cf. Earl of Oxford and Asquith, *Speeches* (London, n. d.), pp. 53 ff. for Asquith's own defence.

negotiated on a district basis, establishing higher wage standards in some districts, but merely renewing old standards in others.<sup>42</sup> The workers in the latter districts were not pleased, but it remained for the miners of South Wales to push their discontent to the point of striking. The first Clyde strike was a portent, the South Wales Miners' strike was its realization. Special circumstances and social conditions furnished the tinder of discontent; war conditions provided the spark which kindled discontent almost to revolt.

The South Wales area was the stormy petrel of the coal mining industry, but its reaction was merely the open eruption of the spirit of simmering discontent and protest in all of the coal fields.<sup>43</sup> Along with the demand for higher wages the Welsh miners raised the issue of the closed shop.<sup>44</sup> In an effort to force recalcitrants to join the Union, they demanded that wage increases be limited to union members. To the operators this presented no dilemma. They urged the continuation of the

<sup>42</sup> Cole, *Coal*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>43</sup> A mine leader (Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain) has characterized the Welsh miner as "a queer complex. He is temperamental, he is mercurial. He is either on the mountain-peak of ecstasy or down in the slough of despond... If they have a fault, it is the fault of impetuosity. And they have this to a marked degree." Hodges, *My Adventures as a Labour Leader*, pp. 73-74. A student of the mining industry speaks of "the peculiar Welsh temperament, essentially imaginative, intellectual and impatient [which] manifests itself continually in industrial disputes." H. Stanley Jevons, *British Coal Trade*, p. 125. The *Times* characterized the Welsh miners as being "very impulsive." *Times*, August 14, 1915. Objective conditions were perhaps more basic and responsible. Thus, although few of the mine villages were noted for their "attempts at beauty or amenity," conditions in the narrow South Wales valleys were even more wretched. Cole, *Coal*, p. 6. As does R. H. Tawney, they must have wondered at the "alchemy by which a gentleman who has never seen a coal mine distills the contents of that place of gloom into elegant chambers in London and a place in the country..." Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society*, p. 88.

<sup>44</sup> To the miner, "the union" was "an integral part" of his life, "in the texture of his thought..." Jack Lawson, *A Man's Life* (London, 1932), p. 218.

old contract for the duration of the war and appealed to the Government which, reluctant to intervene, did nothing. Finally, towards the end of June, confronted with the seriousness of the problem that would arise on July 1, the Government stepped in. Only the cynics or the pessimists could have correctly foretold the future. The employers had placed themselves unreservedly in the hands of the Government; the latter was represented by the President of the Board of Trade, a business man to be sure, but his associates were Arthur Henderson, G. H. Roberts, and William Brace—all labor members of the Government since the end of May; and Brace had been President of the South Wales Miners' Federation before joining the Government. The proposed settlement settled nothing. A strike was averted, at least for the moment, when, by a narrow majority, the delegates accepted the recommendation of the Executive of the South Wales Miners' Federation that discussions be continued. With the strike called off, or at least postponed, Runciman precipitated action when he announced that "more investigation into local circumstances" was necessary and would be undertaken by the district Conciliation Boards. This was obviously a defeat in principle for the miners, but the Executive, perhaps dazzled by the labor members of the Government, proposed that discussions be continued and that the miners remain at work in the meanwhile. The Delegate Conference, however, resolved to strike.<sup>45</sup> The next day the Executive of the parent union, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, issued a vain appeal for the miners to remain at work.

Faced with the strike threat, the Government threw down the gauntlet by invoking the Munitions of War Act. Earlier, in March, 1915, the miners' representatives had walked out of the Treasury Conference, which drafted the Act, on the ground that they were not authorized to agree to the principle of compulsory arbitration. The Munitions of War Act which followed a few months later (it was introduced in June and enacted in July) hedged. In return for a pledge by the miners' leaders that

<sup>45</sup> Cole, *Coal*, pp. 27-29; Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 58.

there would be no strikes, the mining industry was not specifically included,<sup>46</sup> but the Government refused expressly to exclude the industry from the clause empowering the Government to extend the provisions of the Bill to other industries by Proclamation.<sup>47</sup>

Two hundred thousand Welsh miners began their strike on July 15, 1915. Penalties against a fifth of a million men could not be readily enforced and the Government quickly (after only four days) took other action. Lloyd George, Runciman, and Henderson went to South Wales and arrived at a settlement after six days by conceding most of the demands of the miners.<sup>48</sup>

With the Government itself ignoring the Act passed at the beginning of the very same month and adding injury to the insult by granting most of the miners' demands, it is not surprising to find employers condemning the action even beyond the immediate question: "the whole method of regulating industrial operations, even to the point of suspending existing law or framing new legislation, will ultimately be found involved. . . ." <sup>49</sup> More immediately, the miners returned to work pending the drafting of an agreement setting forth the terms of the settlement. Once more snags developed, but the miners had discovered the secret of success and secured their demands by threatening to renew the strike.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, in order to prevent a threatened strike over the question of non-

46 Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 59.

47 The miners were, apparently, not excluded because of the insistence of the other unions that the miners not be shown any special favors. Robert Smillie, *My Life for Labour* (London, 1924), p. 158.

48 The strike was apparently settled by Lloyd George, over Runciman's head. Askwith, *op. cit.*, pp. 394-395; Hodges, *My Adventures as a Labour Leader*, pp. 71-72.

49 "Colliery Guardian," in Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 60.

50 Cole, *Coal*, p. 30; Redmayne, *Coal Mining Industry*, p. 60.

union labor, the Government induced the South Wales operators to consent to a closed shop for the war period.<sup>51</sup>

The lessons of the strike of the South Wales miners was not lost either on the miners or other sections of the labor movement. "It only required the unwavering and unhesitating trade union pressure" to overawe the Government. Government action "was no more formidable than a house of cards, and could be knocked down by one blow from Labour's Strong Right Arm."<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Cole, *Coal*, p. 43. The coal operators in agreeing to a closed shop were acting on the recommendation of the Coal Mining Organization Committee which unanimously agreed on the need for "harmonious cooperation between employers and employed through the medium of the organizations on both sides thoroughly representative of the parties. Unless the organizations possess this power, and are able to act with authority for both owners and workmen, friction may arise and stoppages of work take place... In the highest interests of the nation it is especially desirable that during the period of the War the employers should co-operate with the representatives of the workmen on such questions as non-unionism..." Coal Mining Organization Committee, p. 24. (Cd. 7939 in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXVIII).

<sup>52</sup> Robert Williams, *The New Labour Outlook* (London, 1921), p. 79. The official leadership realized this a bit later. "The worn-out method of going cap in hand to ministers should be buried with the battle-axes and bows and arrows of Plantagenet England." *Trade Union Congress*, 1917, p. 55.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE GREAT DILUTION STRUGGLE

THE scene of the first important war-time wage dispute was the stage for the even greater struggle over dilution. Lacking the cohesiveness of the miners, and split into a number of unions, the Clyde workers were no less restless than the miners. The Clyde workers had more provocation, their leaders were more dramatic, but their efforts were less productive of result. Yet the Clyde disturbances do more than merely emphasize this difference. Just as the glare of the South Wales blaze bares the war-time labor difficulties in the coal fields, so is the whole picture of the labor difficulties in the munitions industries reflected in the glow cast by the seething Clyde Valley. The spark of war-time difficulties ignited an area in which social conditions antedating the war, but aggravated by it, furnished ready kindling.

The Clyde Valley district, with an area of 1,339 square miles, had a population of 2,000,000 conditioned by a common social life. Certainly modern means of communication were not necessary to spread the new ideas in the city of Glasgow. Sheer propinquity (in some districts 700 persons lived within the area of one acre) was sufficient. The influx of population from the Highlands to industrial centers and the practical cessation of building and repairs aggravated a condition which might have seemed impossible to all but the inhabitants of what is commonly held to be the worst slum area in the world,<sup>1</sup> although this unenviable distinction may perhaps be challenged by Dublin.<sup>2</sup> Rents rose too, despite the fact that at the beginning of

1 Cf. Royal Commission on the Housing of the Industrial Population of Scotland, *Report* (Cd. 8731-1918, in S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XIV).

2 Glasgow has been described as "earth's nearest suburb to hell." Quoted in William Bolitho, *Cancer of Empire* (New York, 1924), p. 17. Dublin, however, presented "a picture hardly less lurid than the scenes of Dante's *Inferno* . . ." Quoted in J. D. Clarkson, *Labour and Nationalism in Ireland* (New York, 1925), p. 242. A Dublin clergyman had stated that 107 persons

the war the Glasgow landlords had voluntarily agreed not to raise rents.<sup>3</sup> A rent strike, coupled with the threat of a general strike, forced the enactment of the Rent and Mortgage Interest (War Restriction) Act of 1915, which limited increases.<sup>4</sup>

The indecent living conditions in the midst of unparalleled production and high money wages, and without the military discipline of life in the trenches, furnished a draughty haven for the smoldering discontent. It hardly helped matters when employers, His Majesty the King, and Government spokesmen, looking for a reason for the bad time-keeping among the workers, and refusing to ascribe it to fatigue and unrest, accused the workers of drunkenness.<sup>5</sup> The indignant wrath of

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lived in one tenement containing two toilets. The Dublin officials challenged these figures: the tenement contained only 95 persons, and there were three toilets, not two toilets, for their exclusive use. Arnold Wright, *Disturbed Dublin* (London, 1914), p. 30. Conditions in even the worst mining towns compared favorably with these, although Hodges pointed out that even a single pig "has a two room dwelling, one for the pig to sleep in and one to eat in..." Sankey, II, 755, 756. Cf. Local Government Board for Scotland, p. 11, for rules for building pig-sties. (Cmd. 230-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XXV). On the other hand, proposals for "a sitting-room and bathroom in every house" were denounced as "Socialistic." Viscount Elibank, *A Man's Life* (London, 1934), p. 244.

3 Committee... [on] Recent Increases in the Rental... in Industrial Districts in Scotland, pp. 5, 7 (Cd. 8154-1915, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXXV).

4 Cf. Working Classes Cost of Living Committee, 1918, *Report*. (Cd. 8980, in S. P. 1918, vol. VII).

5 Lloyd George, *Through Terror to Triumph* (London, 1915), p. 84; Arthur Shadwell, *Drink in 1914-1922* (London, 1923), p. 15; H. of C. # 220, 1915, Report and Statistics of Bad Time Kept in Shipbuilding, Munitions, and Transport Areas. Beaverbrook remarks that "the abolition of vodka in Russia went to the Chancellor's [Lloyd George's] head." Beaverbrook, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67, but the Bishop of London was no less outspoken in denouncing the "men who drink at home [who] were murdering the men in the trenches." In C. E. Peel, *How We Lived Then, 1914-1918* (London, 1929), p. 62. Cf. also Herbert Hensley Henson, *Retrospect of an Unimportant Life* (London, 1942), I, 182.



the Clyde workers was made righteous by the report of the Clyde Factory Inspector who exonerated the men.<sup>6</sup>

The irritations, the latent dissatisfaction, the fatigue caused by long hours<sup>7</sup> and the increased tempo of the production, the unrest engendered by high prices, overcrowding, and bad living conditions, and the sudden sense of power brought on by industrial prosperity and a shortage of labor, all came to a head in the opposition to the attempt to enforce dilution of labor. The storm gathered slowly, and, though perhaps inescapable in any event, the activities of the Government were not such as to provide protection. The Welsh miners had successfully resisted the Government. Seemingly, by united action, the baptism of the Munitions of War Act had become its wake; the workers of the Clyde decided to emulate the miners. Without going out on strike, they nevertheless resisted the attempts of the Government to enforce dilution as provided for by the first and subsequent Munitions of War Acts.<sup>8</sup> No appeals or exhortations could move them, especially when they felt that the employers

6 H. of C., # 220, 1915, p. 24. If convictions for drunkenness are a criterion, then heavy drinking declined during the war years. Cf. *Convictions for Drunkenness* (H. of C. # 57-1919, in S. P. 1919, vol. XLII) for statistics.

7 A "condition of staleness... attributed almost wholly to persistent long hours, and the deprivation of weekly rest... has grave accompaniments, which paradoxically appear not only in a state of lethargy and indifference, but also in a craving for change and excitement." Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Memorandum No. 7, *Industrial Fatigue and Its Causes*, p. 9. (Cd. 8213-1916, in S. P. 1916, vol. XXIII).

8 Dilution was never a cause of contention in the mining industry. The nature of the operations tended to limit, if not to exclude, the possibility of the widespread use of women and children, and unskilled labor. Despite all efforts of the Government to recruit women for surface work in the mining industry (Cf. Coal Mining Organization Committee, I, 21; III, 97), the number of women employed increased only from 5,546 in August, 1914, to 6,810 in November, 1918. Sankey, III, 97. The abuses so graphically portrayed by Parliamentary commissions in the first half of the nineteenth century and broadcast by Karl Marx in his *Capital* had been tending to disappear and had been outlawed by Parliament as the result of a scandalized public opinion and a realization on the part of the operators that such policies were more deplorable than lucrative. Talleyrand would have said that such practices were worse than criminal, they were mistakes.

were not ready to share in the sacrifices. Kitchener appealed to the workers on grounds of patriotism and profits; the latter were to be shared. The plan failed because of the opposition of the armament firms,<sup>9</sup> but Kitchener continued to beseech the workers.<sup>10</sup> He also appealed to Lloyd George, as Minister of Munitions, for assistance.<sup>11</sup>

Kitchener might have little faith in the French soldier, and the British Government, at times, longed for a more aggressive French Army, but the workers in the French factories pleased the British Government by their lack of belligerency. Lloyd George and others, including trade union officials, contrasted the attitudes of the French and British workers. Since the beginning of the war, there had been no strikes in French munition factories, nor had the workers applied for wage increases; there were no trade union restrictions; there was no limitation of profits and the workers had not raised the issue. All agreed "that the increase of production in France was due to one cause and one only,—patriotic enthusiasm."<sup>12</sup> The need in Great Britain, therefore, was clear: "patriotic enthusiasm" must be instilled. Lloyd George released his heaviest verbal artillery first. At Bangor he stressed the nature of the war: "We are conducting a war as if there was no war. . . . This is an engineer's war. . . . Output is everything in this war. It is not going to be fought mainly on the battle-fields of Belgium and Poland. It is going to be fought in the workshops of France and Great Britain. . . ." <sup>13</sup> On December 20, 1915, he

9 Ministry of Munitions, I, Part II, 78.

10 J. B. Rye and Horace G. Groser, *Kitchener in His Own Words* (London, 1917), pp. 512-513.

11 Arthur, *Kitchener*, III, 284.

12 Ministry of Munitions, *Report... on the Output of Munitions in France...*, p. 7 (Cd. 8187, in S. P. 1916, vol. XIII). In Britain the "year 1915 was one of disillusionment. Optimism still persisted in high places but the public became increasingly suspicious of its leaders as the chain of failures lengthened." John E. Wrench, *Struggle 1914-1920* (London, 1935), p. 127.

13 In *Slings and Arrows*, pp. 230-231, 235. *Times*, March 1, 1915. In another sense, a real "war" was fought in the workshops of the Clyde over the question of dilution.

made his famous "too late" speech, which was aimed not only at the workers. "In this war the footsteps of the Allied forces have been dogged by the mocking spectre of 'Too late.' . . ." <sup>14</sup> Asquith was conciliatory. Accepting the restrictions on dilution as reasonable he pleaded for their relaxation. He denied that the trade unions had been pursuing "chimeras or indulging in a passion for domineering and restrictive regulation . . . the great bulk of the rules and customs which they have adopted, as the fruit of long experience, are justified by that experience, and have not tended to diminish but to increase the output of our industries." <sup>15</sup>

The voice was the voice of Jacob, but organized Labor thought it felt the hand of Esau. On the eve of the war many rank and file members had been turning away from political action and dependence on Government promises. The Government's assurance that the *status quo ante-bellum* would be restored therefore sounded the more hollow to them. The dictum of the old miners' leader, Noah Ablett, held good: "If a man fools you once, shame on him—if he fools you twice, shame on you!" <sup>16</sup> To many of them the Government's promises were but the echo of the employers' "guarantees" that conditions now waived would be restored at the end of the war. Years of effort and bitter strife had enabled the skilled men to build a special preserve, hedged in by restrictions slowly evolved and jealously guarded. All this was now to be destroyed—only for the duration was the solemn promise—but who knew better than the workers involved, that once revoked, these privileges, wrung from the employers usually without formal recognition, might never be returned. Although ultimately surrendered, the "restrictions" were not freely offered up and their relinquish-

<sup>14</sup> 77 H. C. Deb. 5s., 121.

<sup>15</sup> *Times*, April 21, 1915.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Home Front*, p. 224. Even the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress believed that "the biggest fight that has ever been known" would be necessary in order to regain their privileges. Trade Union Congress, *Report, 1915*, pp. 317-318.

ment by no means followed closely upon the appeals of Government spokesmen.

Making little headway, Lloyd George, as Minister of Munitions, finally presented a personal appeal as a "trade unionist" (which he, too, claimed to be) before the Trade Union Congress.<sup>17</sup> The official leadership responded quickly and assisted in the formation of the Central Labor Supply Committee to assist in extending dilution. The leadership might assent, but the workers were rather less than zealous in heeding the appeals of the Government and their own officials. There was a chasm—growing ever wider—between the Government and the trade union leaders on the one hand, and the rank and file union workers on the other. Arthur Henderson sought to bridge the gap by bringing the two sides together physically.<sup>18</sup> Toward the end of October he urged Lloyd George to institute a campaign in the munition centers and especially to meet the shop stewards and the local representatives of the trade unions.<sup>19</sup>

Arriving in Glasgow two days before Christmas, Lloyd George received little cheer. Kirkwood, the leader of the shop stewards, who considered Lloyd George "a natural hypnotist," was "determined that the Welsh Wizard should not bamboozle us."<sup>20</sup> Even the Lloyd George of Limehouse and "the Dukes" found it difficult to proceed after being introduced by Kirkwood as "an enemy of the workers."<sup>21</sup> "I can assure him that every word he says will be carefully weighed. We regard him with suspicion, because every action with which his name is associ-

<sup>17</sup> *Trade Union Congress, 1915*, p. 353.

<sup>18</sup> The subsequent repudiation of Henderson by the Clyde workers is indicative of the tension.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Munitions, IV, Part I, 67.

<sup>20</sup> Kirkwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>21</sup> Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 79. For "a moment or two he [Lloyd George] seemed to find it difficult to articulate." Gilbert McAllister, *James Maxton* (London, 1935), p. 41.

ated has the taint of slavery about it." <sup>22</sup> Little wonder that Lloyd George was "flabbergasted. The radiance had left his face." <sup>23</sup>

Speaking before the Shop Stewards, Lloyd George attempted to meet the arguments for nationalization and to disclaim responsibility for the Munitions Act. He exclaimed that the workers were incapable of managing the workshops. In any event, it was a revolutionary proposal and the present was not a time for revolutions. <sup>24</sup> As for the Munitions Act, it emanated from the workers' leaders themselves, men like Brownlie and Henderson, the latter being present. Kirkwood retorted with a declaration of their aims and of their strength.

These men for whom I ask a say in the management carry the confidence of the workers and have confidence in themselves. They brought out the men of the Clyde in February in defiance of you, in defiance of the Government, in defiance of the Army, and in defiance of the Trade Union leaders. They not only led them out, but they led them back victorious... Masters might force them to the workshops... [The Muni-

<sup>22</sup> Kirkwood, *op. cit.*, p. 108. With slight changes, this is also in 77 H. C. Deb. 5s., 839, and in Ministry of Munitions, IV, Part IV, 102. It is interesting to imagine what would have been the introduction by Gallacher, if he had been Chairman. Gallacher, who admits, "I know I have a very provocative manner." William Gallacher, *The Chosen Few* (London, 1940), p. 45. Lloyd George had said at Bangor, in February, 1915, that the war was "an engineers' war," to be "won or lost owing to the efforts or shortcomings of the engineers." Lloyd George, *Through Terror to Triumph*, p. 81. Kirkwood was thinking of this when he characterized Lloyd George as a "lawyer," with one engineer "worth a dozen lawyers." Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 79. Kirkwood did not go as far as the respectable *Statist*, which attacked the Government "of the idle rich who have never been taught to do anything for themselves, even to put on their clothes, without the assistance of servants... men who cannot act for themselves cannot act for others." *Statist*, XC, 51.

<sup>23</sup> Kirkwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109. Lloyd George had been more successful with Lord Derby when the latter sought to have him take a definite stand on the munition workers: "Lloyd George... dealt with his visitor as a snake charmer deals with a snake." Tallents, *Man and Boy*, p. 226.

<sup>24</sup> Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 94.

tions of War Act] bound the workers to Beardsmore as effectively as if they had branded a capital B on them . . . but could not make them work.

He repudiated Henderson and Brownlie, as not representing the workers: "If you wish to do away with the discontent in the workshops do away with the cause."<sup>25</sup>

Kirkwood was frank in announcing his aim: nationalization of industry with the workers having an effective share in control. "As a Socialist," he welcomed dilution, "We are not like the Luddites of old, who . . . looked upon the machine as an enemy. We look upon it as a friend." He "believed in the machine."<sup>26</sup>

The next day a deputation of Clyde workers presented Lloyd George with similar views.<sup>27</sup> There was little comfort in them for the Government. There was no objection to dilution—under other conditions.

We regard it as progressive . . . it simplifies the labour process, makes labour more mobile, and tends to increase output. In short, it is a step in the direct line of *industrial* evolution. But—and this is where the present difficulties arise—its progressive character is lost to the community unless it is accompanied by a corresponding step in *social* evolution.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> 77 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1398; Ministry of Munitions, IV, Part IV, 102. Kirkwood was, independently, carrying out the policy advocated by Lenin in *Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, to support "traitorous leaders . . . in the same way as a rope supports one who is hanged." Quoted in Brand, *op. cit.*, p. 207. Kirkwood was no pacifist and bitterly opposed the activities of a small group led by John MacLean to stop the war at any cost. He did not want the Clyde "to become known as a nest of vipers." Kirkwood, *op. cit.*, p. 114. Henderson stated at the meeting that the proposals for dilution had come from the Munitions Committee on which he and other trade unionists were represented. *Times*, December 27, 1915.

<sup>26</sup> Kirkwood, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>27</sup> At the start of the meeting, Lloyd George passed out cigars, but the workers' representatives took out their pipes. Nothing phased, Lloyd George put away the cigars and took out his own pipe. Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 90.

<sup>28</sup> They believed in increased output and wealth, but they agreed, probably without ever having heard it, with Bacon's epigram: "Wealth is like

The workers had no faith in a return to pre-war conditions. No Government guarantees could be effective and an act compelling a reversion to pre-war conditions "would set back the hands of industrial progress, and would continue to hold them back during the period fixed, and that at a time, too, when we are told we may be engaged in a commercial war. But even at the expiring of the time limit, the employers would be free to take advantage of the experience gained during the war, while we would not be so free to resist. . . ." The remedy, they asserted was nationalization and workers' control.<sup>29</sup>

On Christmas morning, Lloyd George addressed three thousand shop stewards and trade union delegates at St. Andrews Hall, with Arthur Henderson in the Chair. The "modern St. George was going to slay the dragon of unrest and conquer the unruly Clyde."<sup>30</sup> It was a noisy meeting and Lloyd George was subjected to constant interruption and heckling. Even his assertion that "Boys, I'm as keen a Socialist as any of you, and when the war is over, I'll be back among you," couldn't quell the din.<sup>31</sup> He continued, however, to "beg the skilled workmen of this country, in whose keeping are the destinies of labour, to lift up their eyes above the mists of distrust and suspicion, and ascend to the height of the greatest opportunity that ever opened before their class." If they but did so, there would "emerge after the war that future of hope which the great leaders of democracy in all ages have pictured in their dreams." The meeting broke up in disorder,<sup>32</sup> the workers refusing, as Lloyd George had earlier suggested, "to plant the flag" on

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muck. It is not good but if it be spread." Quoted in Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society*, p. 58.

29 Ministry of Munitions, IV, Part IV, 103-104.

30 Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 97.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 155. Lloyd George's profession of "socialism" was of long standing. During the Boer War he had attended a lecture on socialism and "endeavoured to persuade us that he was a better socialist than any of us." Lansbury, *My Life*, p. 200.

32 Ministry of Munitions, IV, Part IV, 105.

their workshops by recruiting and enlisting "every lathe" into "battalions."<sup>33</sup>

The Government proceeded to mix repression with conciliation.<sup>34</sup> An official report of the meeting, which was described as "highly satisfactory," had appeared in the *London Times* and other newspapers, but the *Glasgow Forward*, which published an unauthorized (and unexpurgated) verbatim report, was suppressed. The grounds were that the published account was untruthful and likely to interfere with the introduction of dilution and thus impede the production of munitions. Of the truth of the latter charge there is no doubt, but suspicions have been levelled against the validity of the first.<sup>35</sup> The official *History of the Ministry of Munitions*, published some years after the war as *Confidential For Official Information Only*, admits that there was no clear case against the *Forward* under the Defence of the Realm Regulations.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> E. W. Walters, *The "New" Lloyd George*, p. 164; *Times*, June 12, 1915.

<sup>34</sup> Lloyd George must even then have been aware of the futility of words without action. He later characterized Kerensky as "a master of the eloquence that stirs masses, but he trusted too much in his remarkable gifts in that direction, and ignored the fact that there comes a time when words must be translated into action." Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, IV, 147-148. He knew that: "Unless there are deeds behind them, they [words] are but dead leaves which the first storm will scatter, and reveal your strangled and abandoned purpose to the world." Lloyd George, *The Great Crusade*, (New York, 1918), p. 254. Six months earlier, at Cardiff, he warned the workers: "I do not want to talk about compulsory powers. It is an unpleasant topic but there is no harm in reminding anyone who is likely to be a shirker of the existence of the Defence of the Realm Act." *Times*, June 12, 1915. Earlier, however, the *Times* had advised the Government that it would be "a grave mistake at this juncture to use threatening language to the men or talk of strong measures. If it becomes necessary to take strong measures the less said about them beforehand the better." *Times*, March 3, 1915.

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Munitions, IV, Part IV, 111, 114, 176-180; 77 H. C. Deb. 5s., 804. Lloyd George denounced the Glasgow account as "absolutely untrue." 77 H. C. Deb. 5s., 839. Cf. *Times*, December 27, 1915 and *Manchester Guardian*, December 27, 1915 for the "authorized" version.

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Munitions, IV, Part IV, 114. Cf. Sir Edward Cook, *The Press in War Time* (London, 1920), for the principles behind, and the activities of the Censorship. For propaganda activities, cf. Sir Campbell



At the same time, the Government appointed the Clyde Dilution Commission as a partial concession to the workers' demand for the control of dilution. The Commission was careful to consult the Unions and their members, as well as the employers. The Clyde Workers Committee again declared in favor of dilution, though on grounds which could hardly appeal to the employers and the Government:

They as socialists welcomed dilution of labour which they regarded as the natural development in industrial conditions. They were not like the Luddites of another generation who smashed the new machinery. But this scheme of dilution must be carried out under the control of the workers. They recognized that if they had not control, cheap labour would be introduced and unless their demand was granted they would fight the scheme to the death.<sup>37</sup>

More typical, but not much more helpful to the Government, were the views of shipyard boilermakers:

The purpose of the Munitions Act is to expedite the output of ships and munitions without prejudice to trade union rules, principles or customs at the end of the war. This we accept and endorse, and we are willing to cooperate.<sup>38</sup>

The findings of the Commission were not new, nor were its recommendations especially pleasing to the discontented workers. The majority of workers did not object to the principle of dilution, but did oppose its application in their particular workshops. Although the workers had demanded an end of the "leaving certificate," the Commission recommended its reten-

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Stuart, *Secrets of Crewe House* (London, 1920); F. A. MacKenzie, *Lord Beaverbrook* (London, 1931), pp. 120-138; Masterman, *Masterman*, pp. 272-308; James Duane Squires, *British Propaganda at Home and in the United States From 1914 to 1917* (Cambridge, Mass., 1935); and Sir George Cockerell, *What Fools We Were* (London, n. d.), pp. 60-66. In any event, Lloyd George was more sensitive, or, at least, had more power than the members of the Royal Family who had been previously attacked in the *Forward*. No punishment had ever been meted out for those "offensive references." 77 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1404.

<sup>37</sup> Labour Party, *Report on Deportations*, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

tion and did not favor the granting of a leaving certificate "merely because the worker could get another job at higher pay." <sup>39</sup>

Their grievances not met by the Government, the restless Clyde workers united once again to wrest by force what they could not attain by consent. The strike began in the Parkhead Forge Works on March 17, 1916; its immediate cause was the refusal of the company to allow David Kirkwood, the convener of the shop stewards, free access to departments during working hours in order to check on dilution. Although immediately repudiated by the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, it spread rapidly. The manifesto issued by the strikers made their position plain and clearly revealed the rupture between the strikers and their union officials:

... all these things and various smaller changes made it obvious to us that our Trade Union representatives were to be bound and blindfolded while the trade by which our means of life are obtained was being reduced in the interests of capitalists to the level of the most lowly occupation.

We feel that during the period when unskilled labour is engaged in our industry more than ordinary freedom is required by our shop-stewards to ensure that under the cloak of patriotism greedy employers are not allowed to ruin our trade.

In reply to this question as to why we did not act through official channels, we wish to state that we submitted our grievance about the introduction of non-union soldiers to the Board of Trade, but as far as we know, our complaint was not noticed. We directed the attention of our paid officials to the cheap labour in the shell shop but they have failed to protect us. Therefore when the restriction was imposed on our Shop Stewards we felt that our only hope lay in the drastic action by ourselves.

<sup>39</sup> *Report on Clyde Munition Workers*, pp. 2, 3. (Cd. 8136-1916, in S. P. 1914-1916, vol. XXIX).

Fellow workers, we are fighting the battle of all workers. If they smash us they will smash you. Our victory will be your victory. Unite with us . . . <sup>40</sup>

Reluctant to take action, or perhaps wishing to build up a case for drastic action, the Government levelled grave accusations against the strikers. Addison and other speakers in the House of Commons stated that it was all a plot to hold up a particular type of howitzer, urgently needed at the front.<sup>41</sup> Even H. G. Wells wrote of "the labour curs of the Clyde."<sup>42</sup>

These charges did not succeed in getting the strikers back. Thereupon the Government invoking not only the Munitions Acts but the Defence of the Realm Regulations, arrested and fined thirty strikers, and "deported" the six principal members of the Clyde Workers' Committee to various parts of the country.<sup>43</sup> The whole action was carried through in a high-handed manner unlike the traditional process of English law. The arrests were made without warrant and no trial was given to the "deportees," the military authorities removing them to other parts of Scotland from which they were forbidden to return to their homes. Soon, however, the Government was forced to pay allotments to the dependents left behind. Ultimately, the deportees were permitted to return to their homes; at first, on condition that they would agree to "ventilate their grievances" only through the "orthodox trade unions," and later, unconditionally.<sup>44</sup>

The attempt on the part of the Government to force the workers to take up all grievances through orthodox trade union channels was not part of a political bargain between the Gov-

<sup>40</sup> In Scott and Cunnison, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-216.

<sup>41</sup> 80 H. C. Deb. 5s., 564-566.

<sup>42</sup> Geoffrey West, *H. G. Wells* (New York, 1930), p. 207.

<sup>43</sup> The arrests were postponed until the King and Queen had left the strike area. Basil Thomson, *The Scene Changes* (New York, 1937), p. 368.

<sup>44</sup> 82 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1979, 2737-2738; 88 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1633; 98 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1624, 2012.

ernment and the unions. Rather, the Government realized that only by a strengthening of the official leadership could a program of dilution be imposed upon the workers.

Although the "unofficial" leaders of the Clyde workers did not oppose dilution *per se*, there is no doubt that their hold over the rank-and-file rested on the latter's opposition to dilution. And that opposition was both deep and widespread. Lloyd George might publicly endorse the viewpoint that the men at the front were not considering "what will happen when the war's over" or "what individuals may profit by their sacrifice,"<sup>45</sup> but he knew that the problem was not so simple. ". . . men at the front, daily confronted with death and needing shells to protect and defend themselves, wrote home to their fellow trade unionists entreating them not to surrender any of the privileges of their craft, although strict adherence to these privileges was impeding the supply of munitions they so sadly needed."<sup>46</sup> As Kirkwood told the Dilution Commissioners, "These trade rights are not ours to surrender. They are ours to defend. Our fathers fought for them. It is our duty to guard them."<sup>47</sup> Men risked death against the Germans; they could do little less against their employers. As the *Nation* exclaimed: the employers "covet the territory of trade union restrictions . . . as the German militarists covet Belgium."<sup>48</sup> In the words of a Sheffield shop steward, there was "a growing conviction that the workers at home were *the custodians of the conditions of labour* for those in the armed forces, as well as *for themselves*. It became so blatantly apparent that, however lofty the ideals which the politicians told us were the issues of the war, the employers and capitalists were more concerned about the exploitation of the 'National Emergency' to increase rent, interest, and profits."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Boyd Cable, *Doing Their Bit* (New York, 1916), p. 140, and Preface, by Lloyd George.

<sup>46</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, 270.

<sup>47</sup> Kirkwood, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>48</sup> *Nation*, XX, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Murphy, *New Horizons*, p. 44. Italics in original.

Although no one should have known the attitude of the workers better, and perhaps no one did, than the craft union leaders, they strove mightily to achieve dilution. It was the responsibility of office and the consciousness of danger, external and internal, that convinced the leadership that opposition to dilution would, in the last analysis be futile, and could lead only to repression and rebellion. Even if they were not convinced that the Government would and could crush dissidents, the alternative offered prospects just as dark. The trade union leaders therefore divided their time between urging the Government to make labor restrictions more palatable and entreating their own members to accept the restrictions as necessary for the war effort.

For example, on the last day of 1915 the Amalgamated Society of Engineers sent a deputation to Asquith and Lloyd George and demanded concessions "as the basis of our continued cooperation." Brownlie frankly stated that the concern of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers over the question of wages for other than fully skilled men arose only because the interests of the skilled men were affected and that the whole question of dilution was combatted by many of the membership, regardless of the pronouncements of the Government and the trade union leaders. "We are very anxious to see that the semi-skilled and unskilled men coming into the shops shall receive the rates of wages set out" in Government announcements, "not so much in the interest of the semi-skilled and unskilled but in the interests of the highly skilled men." Asquith praised the Amalgamated Society of Engineers Executive, but not the men behind them and Lloyd George exclaimed that dilution "has not been fought by the Executive; it has been a guerilla fight." Asquith acknowledged the difficulties confronting the Union leaders.

. . . no doubt it is a very difficult thing to persuade men who regard what I may call the priorities and privileges of skilled labour as almost Gospel, to forego for the time being those privileges . . . They have a fear—one which is perhaps not

altogether unnatural that when the War comes to an end the reestablishment of the old conditions will be impossible and that all these elaborate safeguards which have been built up by generation after generation of Trade Unionists for the protection of their members will be found to be undermined. I suspect that is the feeling, and I agree it is one which it is difficult to eradicate in a moment or even in a month. The only way is . . . by the Unions exerting all their force to remove these suspicions and to encourage the men, and indeed, as far as they can, I will not say coerce but bring every influence they can to bear upon them . . . <sup>50</sup>

Praise for the trade union leadership came from other Government figures, too. Haldane and Grey "both agreed that the Labour Members gave them much less trouble than gentlemen in closer political connection—a fact which they were inclined to ascribe to the circumstance that most of the Labour Party had through their Trade Unions become men of affairs, capable of apprehending any practical issue submitted to them." <sup>51</sup> As J. R. Clynes explains the situation: "Curiously enough, one of the most difficult of my tasks [as a trade union secretary] was to persuade the workmen I represented that arbitration often paid them better in industrial disputes than the fierce strikes in which their repressed emotions so eagerly sought outlet. . . . But masses of men, at times, do not understand the object of arbitration, and officials have to lead up to it tactfully." <sup>52</sup> Robert Smillie, "still a Socialist," who when asked what he had done in the war, replied "tried to stop the bloody business," points out that the Government and the employers now regarded some of "the much maligned" Labor leaders "as 'a

<sup>50</sup> *Ministry of Munitions*, IV, Part I, 84-85. The *Economist*, in May, 1917, stated that relations "between employers and trade union leaders have rarely, if ever, been more harmonious; the unrest among workmen . . . has rarely been more widely spread . . ." *Economist*, LXXXIV, 843.

<sup>51</sup> Fitzroy, *Memoirs*, I, 329-330.

<sup>52</sup> Clynes, *op. cit.*, I, 63.

man and a brother.' " 53 As the Webbs remark, " this enormous draft on the patriotism of the rank and file [the relinquishment of trade union conditions] could only be secured by enlisting the support of the official representatives of the Trade Union world—by according to them a unique and unprecedented place as the diplomatic representatives of the wage-earning class." 54

The confidential official *History of the Ministry of Munitions* discloses that the Treasury Conference of March, 1915, which resulted in the Treasury Agreement of the same month, was called by the Government at the instance of the trade unions. More than twenty-five years after the close of the war, despite the fact that the leading Government figures and many of the labor leaders have published memoirs including accounts of their war-time activities, this fact is not revealed in any other source. The *History*, with characteristic understatement, declares that "It is a point of considerable interest" that the Treasury Conference was called at the suggestion of the trade union leaders who needed help in carrying their members. Truly this fact was and is "not publicly known." 55

Yet, at the Treasury Conference, the Union leadership, goaded on by their members ("It is not altogether so much that we require to be convinced as our members generally. . . .") and bearing a responsibility to them, sought to win concessions from the Government, conscious though they were that any Government promises, with the best of intentions, could not be kept. Once yielded up, their privileges could not be easily reclaimed. They were aware of this no less than the Clyde Workers Committee. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers delegation at the Treasury Conference very frankly stated the viewpoint of labor's "aristocracy"—the skilled men: ". . . the introduction of unskilled and semi-skilled labor into this industry is a standing menace to the skilled. We have no desire

53 Smillie, *op. cit.*, pp. 174, 177.

54 Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 637.

55 Ministry of Munitions, I, Part II, 40.

to prevent anyone rising in the social scale, but we do not think we are called upon to allow him to rise in the social scale to the detriment of the skilled workers . . . we represent certain interests—if you like, vested interests and a monopoly skill which is our duty to safeguard . . . [that is] the job for which we are paid. . . .” No Government guarantees could be effective. A delegate “reached the heart of the trouble” in questioning Lloyd George: “. . . could you see your way clear to give guarantees and assurances that at the end of the war, semi-skilled men will be removed?” Lloyd George: “That is an essential part of the bargain.” The Delegate: “But could you devise ways and means of eliminating the skilled knowledge which the semi-skilled men will have acquired?” Lloyd George: “Well!”<sup>58</sup>

Thus, both the union officials and the rank-and-file members understood the situation. Where they differed was on the question of direct action. Many of the rank-and-file felt that their interests could be preserved only by dramatic action. That these tactics were better calculated to attain the end in view than those of the official leadership was admitted by the leaders

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, V, Part I, 20-21. The workers were much less certain than a Committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science that the problem after the war would be a shortage of labor. Grier, Ashley, and Kirkaldy, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxiv-xxxv. The unskilled and semi-skilled workers were likewise concerned with the future. The refrain of a highly popular song of the period was “what shall we be when we aren't what we are.” Peel, *Life's Enchanted Cup*, p. 224. The introduction of semi-skilled and unskilled labor went hand in hand with the use of labor saving machinery; the latter would not be given up so easily. *Annual Report of Chief Inspector of Factories . . . 1917*. (Cd. 9108, p. 14). Almost unconsciously, the union officials felt that they, like the feudal barons of old, were fighting for a lost cause. They were not “stubborn, obstinate [or] indifferent to the needs of the nation,” but like the barons of old, they were guarding their rights; their “heritage [was] handed down to them in the interests of the nation.” Ministry of Munitions, I, Part II, 89. Technological progress could, perhaps, not be halted, but it could be retarded. Valets, too, faced the prospect of unemployment after the war: “. . . for the victims of the manservant who have suffered his tyranny for generation upon generation have found how easy it is, and that a man can live just as happily without being valeted!” R. D. Blumenfeld, *All in a Lifetime* (London, 1931), p. 107.



themselves after the close of the war. At the Industrial Conference held in March, 1919, when it was already obvious that the policy of the Government did not tend to favor the workers, the trade union officials admitted their error. During the war, they said, it had been "much more difficult to get prompt attention to industrial grievances . . . in those cases in which the workers, from patriotic motives, have remained at work and endeavored to act by constitutional methods than where they have come out on strike or threatened immediate or drastic action."<sup>57</sup>

Lloyd George recognized that many of the difficulties faced by the Government were not caused by discontent directed only against the Government. "The revolution is far more a revolt against official leaders of trade unionism than against the Government."<sup>58</sup>

Kitchener, with brilliant insight, very early in the war foresaw the cleavage, with the Government and trade union officials on one side, opposed by the rank-and-file. He told Ben Tillett that "before this thing [the war] is over" they might both be hanging from lamp-posts.<sup>59</sup> Conditions never quite reached that stage, but to the uneasy trade union officials it seemed that all events were leading to it.

<sup>57</sup> The *Times* remarked in October, 1917: "The men have learnt that not only legitimate but any demands have only to be backed by a strike to be immediately conceded." *Times*, October 15, 1917. The Director of Personal Service in the War Department, part of whose duty it was "to be fully informed" as to industrial conditions, and who cannot be accused of being in favor of any strikes, let alone police strikes, "felt that the [police] strike was justified up to a point" because otherwise "their grievances would never have been heeded." Childs, *Episodes and Reflections*, pp. 175, 179. Even Lansbury remarked that "the policy of the Government in all matters of prices, wages, and commissions was that everybody got what they asked for . . ." Lansbury, *My Life*, p. 207.

<sup>58</sup> 77 H. C. Deb. 5s., 851. As the *Times* editorialized, "If it depended on the trade union leaders there would be no doubt at all" of peaceful labor conditions, but "it does not depend on them." *Times*, March 24, 1915.

<sup>59</sup> Frances, Countess of Warwick, *Discretions* (New York, 1931), p. 228.

## CHAPTER XVII

### OTHER LABOR DIFFICULTIES 1916-1918

DISCONTENT naturally grew with the lengthening of the war, which eventually broke down "all patience and nearly all other virtues."<sup>1</sup> Long hours and increasing restrictions were having their inevitable effects. The lavish promises of the Government had awakened an enthusiasm; the failure of realization not merely disappointed, but disillusioned many. As early as April 15, 1916, the *Economist* had demanded a peace settlement before a new "masque of anarchy supervenes."<sup>2</sup> Yet the Government, as Grey later explained, dared not make peace even if it could: along with the other belligerents, it "could offer nothing" to the people "to show for the war."<sup>3</sup> D. H. Lawrence, with the prescience of an artist, wrote in November, 1916, "We should say 'enough of war' while yet we are alive. . . . It is foolish to drop down at last in inertia, and let the world end so—in inertia. While we have the vitality to create, we ought to stop the fighting—otherwise, when the end comes, we are spiritually bankrupt. Which is final disaster. . . ." <sup>4</sup> The "people," as Repington later reported, "are deadly tired of war. . . . The worst danger is the dour, vengeful, and almost revolutionary attitude of labour

1 In J. D. Clarkson and T. C. Cochrane, *War as a Social Institution* (New York, 1941), p. 106. "More and more the cricks showed through our stolid English surfaces" as the war continued. Rhondda, *This Was My World*, p. 272. "This is not war: it is a permanent industry for making death," wrote one soldier. Jack Lawson, *A Man's Life* (London, 1932), p. 233.

2 *Economist*, LXXXII, 707.

3 Bennett, *Journal*, p. 653.

4 D. H. Lawrence, *Letters* (New York, 1936), p. 385. Siegfried Sassoon, in December of 1916 had similarly suffered anguished at the thought of "the victory that is more terrible than defeat..." Siegfried Sassoon, *Siegfried's Journey* (New York, 1946), pp. 60-61. Cf. also, Churchill, *World Crisis*, III, 509.

. . .the workers are physically exhausted and angry, they no longer trust their parliamentary labour leaders. . . ." <sup>5</sup>

The psychological malaise in labor circles was punctuated by a host of issues and incidents of a deepening significance. Opposition to conscription was becoming as universal as the early eagerness to volunteer for military service. The drafting of an engineer named Hargreaves touched off the spark and a strike which began at Sheffield in November, 1916, threatened to spread elsewhere. Called by the local Engineers' Shop Stewards Committee over conscription of skilled men for military service, the strike was settled only by the release of Hargreaves from the army and the introduction of the "Trade Card Scheme." As finally put into effect, the Trade Card Scheme authorized thirty-two trade unions to issue certificates exempting their skilled members from military service.<sup>6</sup> Other unions vigorously demanded that they also be included, bitterly assailing the special privileges granted to their rivals.<sup>7</sup> The opposition of the unions excluded, plus the fact that the scheme seriously handicapped the military in their insistent demands for men, caused the Government to abandon the scheme in March, 1917, though not without a bitter struggle. The scheduled withdrawal of the Trade Card Scheme and prospective conscription stimulated many workers into action. A large strike of the engineers began on April 30, 1917, over the issue of the Trade Card Scheme and the Government's insistence that dilution be extended to private work, despite previous guarantees to the contrary.<sup>8</sup> The strike ended only after the

<sup>5</sup> Repington, *op. cit.*, I, 591-592.

<sup>6</sup> Addison, *Four and a Half Years*, I, 263. "Whatever else the Sheffield strike of November, 1916 achieved, it certainly broke the spell of industrial peace which fell on the workshops of Britain after the defeat of the Clyde strikes in 1915. Whether it was that a certain amount of war weariness began to creep over the country or that disillusionment was growing as all the class contrasts of the time were accentuated, the fact remains that from this time onward disputes followed quickly on the heels of each other." Murphy, *New Horizons*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> 90 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1574-1576.

<sup>8</sup> 93 H. C. Deb. 5s., 1878.

provisions for dilution in the new Munitions of War Bill were deleted, but in the meantime two hundred thousand men had lost a total of one and a half million working days.

Even the miners, so many of whom had dashed to the recruiting stations at the beginning of the war, were now backward in reporting for military service. By the end of December, 1916, 289,000 miners (282,000 by March, 1916) were in the military service,<sup>9</sup> but of these, 193,000 had joined before March, 1915, and an additional 56,850 had joined from March to August, 1915.<sup>10</sup> The miners had feared that military conscription was a step towards industrial conscription. In November, 1915, the Miners' Federation, along with other labor groups, had secured a promise from the Government that those who attested under the Derby Scheme would retain their full civil rights.<sup>11</sup> Although coal was vital, the need for recruits forced the Government to draft miners in large numbers, beginning before the middle of 1917. The Miners' Federation protested, but it did not take further action, and the Government proceeded on its policy of "combing out" miners.<sup>12</sup>

Serious in 1916, the labor unrest seemed to be getting out of hand in 1917. The Government knew the causes; its own commissions to investigate industrial unrest listed and described them; but it was no easy task to eliminate high prices, restrictions on personal freedom, industrial fatigue, and lack of confidence in the Government and in some of the trade union leaders without creating a worse situation.<sup>13</sup> The funda-

<sup>9</sup> Board of Trade, *Committee on Coal Trade after the War*, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Coal Mining Organization Committee*, II, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Cole, *Coal*, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> The very phrase was objected to by the workers on the ground that they "were being treated as lice," to be combed out. Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 145.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest. Cd. 8662; 8663; 8664; 8665; 8667; 8668; 8669; 9696. (In S. P. 1917-1918, vol. XV).

mental policies of state regulations were necessary, and in the last analysis they were accepted as such by most of the citizens who were not in favor of overthrowing the traditional order of things. A small minority, however, was seeking to utilize the discontent as a lever for revolution.

It was in these circumstances that news came of the revolution in Russia. The news "lit up the skies with a lurid flash of hope for all who were dissatisfied with the existing order of society."<sup>14</sup> As Lloyd George saw it, discord was fomented, discontent organized, by the "habitual malcontents in the ranks of labour. . . Fishers in troubled waters, they did not create the unrest, but they took full advantage of it."<sup>15</sup>

The Government sought to strengthen the official leadership of the trade unions. For example, the Government promoted the extension of collective bargaining procedures in the shipping industry in order that the unions themselves might deal with the "habitual malcontents." The absence of collective bargaining in the shipping industry before the war proved a boomerang. Because of the great shortage of seamen, advances in pay were frequently conceded in order to secure a crew for a particular ship. Once granted, this led to a fresh general demand, and to a circle which the employers and the Government could only consider vicious.

After the State took over control of the shipping industry, a Marine Conciliation Committee was set up in July, 1917, for the adjustment of disputes with neither seamen nor shipowners being represented. In the meantime, the Shipping Federation, acutely conscious of the disadvantages of its former position,

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"The sore rankling most in the hearts of workmen is called profits and the unanswerable argument in their eyes is the dividend list." *Times*, October 27, 1917. The system of "queues" was greatly resented. Munition workers at Coventry downed tools in November, 1917, in order to relieve their wives in the queues outside the food shops and by February, 1918, soldiers at the front were threatening to do the same. Tallents, *Man and Boy*, pp. 241, 243.

<sup>14</sup> Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, IV, 176-177.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 177.

was beginning to make overtures to the Unions.<sup>16</sup> As a result of negotiations, the National Maritime Board was formed in November, 1917, representing the Government, the employers, and the seamen, with separate panels for sailors and firemen, for Navigation Officers, for Engineering Officers, and for the Catering Departments.<sup>17</sup> The object of the new body was to secure "closer cooperation between the employers and employed of the British Mercantile Marine in the maintenance of the maritime supremacy of the British Empire. . . ." <sup>18</sup> During its existence "no material stoppage of work" occurred.<sup>19</sup> It continued in operation until the establishment of a Joint Industrial Council for the industry.

The ever greater role the unions were playing in controlling the lot of the workers is exemplified in the reluctant concession to the sailors unions, in the summer of 1917, over the crucial question of the supply of labor. The hiring of sailors was now to be under the joint control of employers and unions, the Government providing the hiring halls.<sup>20</sup> In the past the shipping industry had opposed union control as "a subversion of the principles of liberty of labour, and freedom of contract, and an intolerable form of industrial conscription."<sup>21</sup> Now, they welcomed collective bargaining on the part of their employees "provided they are prepared to carry out the engagements entered into on their behalf" by their representatives. The complaint was, rather, that the men did not heed their leaders.<sup>22</sup> Control by the unions over their restless members was now welcomed by the shipping industry.

16 Fayle, *The War and the Shipping Industry*, pp. 265-266.

17 National Maritime Board, *Report 1917-1919*, p. 21 (Cmd. 545-1920, in S. P. 1920, vol. XXI).

18 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

20 Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

22 Chamber of Shipping, *Report of the Committee as to the Measures Requisite for the Maintenance of the British Mercantile Marine* (London, 1917), p. XVII.

The year 1917 was perhaps the stormiest of the war. Although, normally, unrest tended to be cumulative, the great March, 1918, offensive of the German Army resulted in almost a renewal of the industrial truce. Even the rank-and-file members of the trade unions were now convinced that more drastic Government action was necessary. Taking advantage of the situation, the Government enacted a new and more drastic military service law in April, 1918.

The labor situation of 1918 was less serious only by contrast with 1917. Although the period of May to September, 1918, was one of relative industrial peace—in fact the quietest since March, 1915,<sup>23</sup> the interlude was marred by the Coventry strike of July, 1918, and the Police strikes of August and September.

The cry of "traitor" had often been hurled at strikers, but the events leading up to the Coventry strike might give point to an accusation of treason against the managers of one of the munition factories in the Coventry area. On July 1, 1918, the Ministry of Munitions issued instructions to three firms in Coventry forbidding them to hire any additional skilled men without the consent of the Ministry. One firm issued a "confidential" notice—which became generally known—to its foremen stating that the Ministry had categorically forbidden the employment of any additional skilled men except discharged sailors or soldiers and defined skilled men as those in receipt of standard district wages. ("Unskilled" or "semi-skilled" men could continue to be hired.)<sup>24</sup>

All the suspicions of the skilled trade union members were now confirmed. The "embargo" on employing additional labor would have the same effect—and even more—as the leaving certificates, and the definition of "skilled men" incorporated all the "dilutes," thus wiping out the distinctions

<sup>23</sup> Askwith, *op. cit.*, p. 449.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Munitions, VI, Part II, 64.

which would be important at the end of the war, when the Government had promised the restoration of the trade union restrictions. Behind it all was seen the attempt at industrial conscription. A strike which began in Coventry on July 23, spread to Birmingham and was beginning to affect other areas, was only called off when the Government stepped in and explained the full situation.<sup>25</sup>

The spirit of unrest was infectious, or rather the conditions making for disaffection operated widely. The London Police strike, beginning on the last day of August, as well as police strikes in Birmingham, Liverpool, and other cities, in the words of the official reports, "met with a regrettable amount of success"<sup>26</sup> and the London police service "was practically paralyzed by the withdrawal from duty of the bulk of the Force."<sup>27</sup> The Government and certain classes of the community were frightened by the symbolic significance of police striking. It was "as if the Bank of England had stopped payment. That and the Metropolitan Police seemed to be pillars of the Constitution."<sup>28</sup>

No sooner were the police strikes over, than forty thousand cotton spinners stopped working.<sup>29</sup> This strike proved that the leaders of the engineers and the miners unions did not have a monopoly on rank and file disaffection. The cotton industry was strongly organized; the chief unions were the Amalgamated Society of Cotton Operatives and the Amalgamated Weavers Association, the latter a federation of district unions.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-70.

<sup>26</sup> Reports of His Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary, 1920. (H. of C. # 91-1920, p. 3, in S. P. 1920, vol. XXII).

<sup>27</sup> Reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, 1918-1919, p. 4. (Cmd. 543-1920 in S. P. 1920, vol. XXII).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Askwith, *op. cit.*, p. 449.

<sup>29</sup> Dearle, *Economic Chronicle*, p. 217.

<sup>30</sup> Mills, *Macara*, pp. 81, 84.



The employers were likewise well organized, and more readily accepted union organization than did other industrialists.<sup>31</sup>

The strike was forced upon the union leaders by the discontinuance of the unique "rota" system.<sup>32</sup> This system had been largely responsible for the lack of serious protest on the part of the cotton workers who had received a smaller increase in wages during the war (less than 20 per cent by July, 1917) than the workers of other large industries. Further wage increases were granted subsequently, but with prices and profits reaching dizzy heights, a new demand for another 30 per cent increase over pre-war wages was made. Instead, the abolition of the rota system was announced. This would have the effect of reducing weekly earnings by 28 per cent at a time when the President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce had announced, with pardonable pride and satisfaction, that "more money had been made in the Lancashire cotton spinning trade . . . than in any similar half year in the history of the industry."<sup>33</sup> Eventually, after long, involved, and bitter negotiations, an agreement was reached on May 22, by which a further 25 per cent advance on the basis of the Standard Lists was granted, and the rota system extended. Its subsequent discontinuance was responsible for the strike which began on September 14, despite all efforts of the union leaders. A spontaneous rank and file movement could not be restrained.<sup>34</sup>

Work was resumed after a week, on the appeal of the Prime Minister, who promised action following an inquiry by a Gov-

31 A leading figure in the industry, Charles Macara, asserted that: "The great staple industries can only be dealt with by the organization of capital and labour" and advocated that a monument be raised in Lancashire for James Mawdesley, a leader of the Operative Spinners. Mills, *Macara*, pp. 161, 176. This affection for the union leaders was not always subscribed to during the war by the cotton workers. To many of them it seemed that they were being immolated in order that their leaders might be considered worthy of memorials by the employers.

32 Cf. *supra*, pp. 200-202.

33 Henderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 42, 55.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 52-62.

ernment tribunal. The official Report supported the workers, who were "substantially worse off than before the war" at a time when the industry was in its most prosperous state. The operatives had been "seeking the wrong remedy" for their grievances, however, and the tribunal recommended that the employers and workers negotiate a new agreement. But this was not done.<sup>35</sup>

Strikes by the police and the relatively docile cotton workers, on the eve of the Armistice, give a pointed indication of the trend of events. The Armistice ended the war between nations; it had no such effect on war-like relations between employers and workers in Great Britain. It put an end to war-time labor difficulties in Great Britain, not by doing away with labor troubles, but by terminating the war. Future disputes, however war-like their nature, were carried on during what was alleged to be international peace.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### “RECONSTRUCTION”

TIMES of trouble, of stirring discontent, of vague longings for what is not, breed apocalyptic visions. The vexatious present is the more acceptable, much that is evil is glossed over, if only some future millennium offers an escape from the frustration of unrealized hope. Throughout the war, almost in direct ratio to the strains it imposed, the people of Britain were promised a new future if only they could, and would by their sacrifices, suffer the severities that seemed so necessary for survival and victory.

Ambiguous though it appears to be, the history of Great Britain during the war period of 1914-1918 may be best summarized in two expressions coined at the time: “Business as usual” and “Reconstruction.” Almost exclusively conditioned by the war and its problems, these slogans, so contradictory in their implications, and the reality behind them, affected the entire domestic, social, and economic strategy of the war. These two phrases characterize, however roughly, the two phases of the war. Their use overlapped, but no more so than the fact that these were never two clearly-distinct, “clean-cut” stages of the war. “Business as usual” held sway during the first two years when, within the patterns of a traditional war, the tried and tested formulas of the past could be trusted to “pull Britain through.” Yet, even early in 1916, it was becoming increasingly evident that the “good old ways” were inadequate, that new expedients must be wrought if Britain were to emerge victorious. The year 1915 had been, on the whole, tolerable; by 1916 the horrors were plain, as were the sacrifices which had to be made and which could not be delayed. There were some who recoiled when they realized the nature of the burnt-offerings that were required to propitiate the God of War. They joined and gave added strength to those who had been less than enthusiastic about the war even at its

outbreak. Their numbers were still small at the beginning of 1916, but with disappointment at the course of the war increasing, with restrictions and hardships beginning to assume shape and pressing down on the civilian population, an ever larger number proved susceptible to the blandishments of those who sought an end to the war. Disillusionment and disheartenment are breeders of discontent and notorious carriers of the dread virus of pacifism.

"Reconstruction," its origins obscure, was to furnish, or at least, go a long way toward furnishing, the psychological solution for what seemed an insoluble difficulty—the necessity of tightening the civilian economy and extending restrictions on the population at the very time when the latter was growing increasingly restless on account of the war and the controls already instituted. The word "reconstruction" might imply a return to previously existing conditions, but it was almost never used in this sense. Its use was, however, characteristic. The Britain which went to war to preserve the status quo, expressed itself in that language even when it was resolved and ostensibly preparing to change the face of Britain, if not of the world. During the war, "reconstruction" was synonymous with change. It was proclaimed to a population which had seen the world change and which was preparing for greater changes. Not merely a return to the past, but a recognition of the present and a hope for the future were all encompassed in the term. As Britain proceeded on the road to suffering, humiliation, and sacrifice, a new world was promised for the future to those who had to endure the sufferings of the present. Government emphasis on reconstruction grew out of the sufferings and the low spirit of the citizens during the three bitter years beginning in 1916.

As with wartime controls, the administrative machinery for reconstruction was evolved slowly. And the stages were the same. No more than in the case of controls, did the approach to the problem vary. In March, 1916, Asquith set up a Cabinet Committee on Reconstruction to investigate and report on the

after-war problems that were expected to arise. A year later this Committee was reconstructed by Lloyd George into a Reconstruction Committee, of which he was the nominal head, but which otherwise consisted of members who devoted their full time to the Committee. In August, 1917, by statute, a Ministry of Reconstruction was established. The Ministry of Reconstruction was an innovation, perhaps in its implications one of the startling innovations of the war. It was to be a "thinking" ministry. The act setting up the Ministry asserted "the primary importance in relation to reconstruction of organized thought as distinct from executive action." The purpose of the Ministry was to engage in research and to encourage action on the results obtained. Its scope was majestic in concept, and its administrative machinery was as elaborate. Separate administrative branches were to deal with Commerce and Production; Finance, Shipping and Common Services; Labour and Industrial Organization; Rural Development; Machinery of Government, Central and Local; Health; Education; Housing; and Internal Transport.

To ensure its adequate functioning, or perhaps, to cushion against its failure, the war-time device of a consultative committee was established. Like the Ministry, the Advisory Council was divided into sections: Production and Commercial Organization; Finance, Transport and Common Services; Labour and Industrial Organization; and a section dealing with Social Development, including Agriculture, Education, Health, and Housing. To guard against exclusive control by the special interests involved, each section consisted of representatives of all groups in the entire Council. But each group was to be separate and distinct; this discrete privacy was to be maintained in order to encourage the free communication of information to the Council as a whole without the possibility of its being short-circuited amongst the various subdivisions. On the other hand, though the Council was advisory, it was not permitted *carte-blanche* even in advice. It was to deal only with specific references submitted to it by the Minister of Recon-

struction. By the end of 1917 the following subjects had been submitted to it: railway equipment, standardization, post-war rationing of industries, the establishment of Industrial Courts, housing, agricultural labor, and even the future organization of voluntary women's work.

Whatever were to be the future and permanent accomplishments of the Ministry, the extent of its activities at the beginning of 1917 was little less than universal. Britain was to be reconstructed, or at least the possibility of reconstruction was to be investigated, from the very foundations. In conjunction with Committees from the Treasury, the Board of Trade, the Department of Overseas Trade, the Ministry of Munitions, the Ministry of Labour, the Priority Organization of the Cabinet, the War Office, the Admiralty, the Board of Agriculture, and other Departments, the Reconstruction Ministry was conducting inquiries into practically every aspect and phase of British life during and after the war. In the field of commerce and production, the supply and control of raw materials, preservation of industries, establishment of new industries, stockholding, trusts and combinations, improvements in trade organization for the purpose of more economical production, distribution and marketing, were some of the subjects investigated, although the immediate problem was that of reconciling an expected shortage of raw materials, goods, and shipping with the almost unlimited demand for manufactured goods. The sale of surplus property in the hands of the war departments might tend to alleviate this, but the danger of glut and consequent fall in prices and the dislocation of industry and labor was inherent and haunting. Rationing was inevitable, but the emphasis was to be on industrial self-control subject to certain general principles to be laid down by the Government.

The impetus given by the war to the formation of trade associations of employers was recognized, accepted and approved. A " concerted effort " was to be made to increase their number and representation, pending the formation of Joint Industrial

Councils. In the field of labor, a general survey of industrial policy as a whole was prepared and inquiry was being undertaken of special problems in this category. In a program which was to call for a "land fit for heroes," the policy of rural development could not be neglected. The submarine campaign emphasized the country's dependence on agriculture and the Ministry hoped to recommend a policy to aid demobilization as well as food production. The whole machinery of government, the process of education, and the field of health were likewise investigated. Housing, which was soon to be the test of reconstruction, did not achieve, at this time, any greater prominence in the Ministry's activities or publicity than, for example, the problem of Inland Transport. In the last analysis the law was the *sine qua non* and the Ministry's legal department was busy drafting laws and amendments.

The Government appointed hundreds of committees and sub-committees to study the problems of the post-war world, but in the words of Andrew Lang in another connection, the Government used the committees "as a drunken man uses lamp-posts—for support rather than for illumination."<sup>1</sup>

The original inspiration and the continuing stimulus for reconstruction came from the need to urge the people on at the very time when they were tending to lag. Other reasons, too, were not lacking. Many persons must have felt, as did the man who, as an individual, bears a greater responsibility for bringing Britain into the conflict than perhaps any of his countrymen, that "the lamps are going out all over Europe," and must have tried to avoid his prophecy, "we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."<sup>2</sup>

Little was expected in this direction during the war, and very little was accomplished. Most of the British people, however, agreed with Government spokesmen that the war period was no time to make a revolution. But, in biding their time,

1 G. A. Lowndes, *The Silent Social Revolution* (London, 1937). Preface.

2 Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, II, 20.

they were all the more eager and expectant once the war was over. Lloyd George, ever attuned to the public spirit, had forecast: "The men and women of this country will be burnt into fine building material for the new Britain in the fiery kilns of war" and expressed the inarticulate inner thoughts of the people when, in his speeches during the 1918 Election, he promised a "home fit for heroes to live in. . . . There is no time to lose. . . . Don't let us waste this victory merely in ringing joybells."<sup>3</sup> Two days before, Lloyd George and Bonar Law had issued an election manifesto to the voters, in which they outlined a program which they promised to institute if returned to office. A new heaven on earth was to be the reward for bitter sacrifice. "It is a source of pride to be of this age and to be members of this nation. In the whole course of the world's history no generation has been compelled to face sacrifices such as we have steadfastly endured, or perils such as we have victoriously confronted."<sup>4</sup> As Lloyd George put it, the old "mismanagement" could no longer be tolerated. "We cannot return to the old conditions. . . . Timidity is fatal to great action, and these are the days when great action is required."<sup>5</sup>

The new Parliament was, as the Prime Minister stated, "pledged up to the eyes" to deal with "the question of social conditions,"<sup>6</sup> and Government spokesmen still addressed the country in the language of change; but in truth, reform had lapsed. The months passed by, and little was being done to implement the war and election promises. Even had they been so minded, the leaders of the Coalition Government could not have put through their program.<sup>7</sup> The Parliament elected

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd George, *The Great Crusade*, p. 118; *Times*, November 25, 1918.

<sup>4</sup> *Times*, November 22, 1918. Even Curzon knew "that the old programmes are obsolete." Ronaldshay, *Curzon*, III, 197.

<sup>5</sup> *Times*, November 18, 1918.

<sup>6</sup> 112 H. C. Deb., 5s., 74.

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd George characterized the new Government as "comradeship not coalition."



in 1918 with the aid of the "coupon" was composed of "hard faced men who. . . had done very well out of the war" and they were in no mood for reform.<sup>8</sup> "The war did not pinch them, it had caressed them."<sup>9</sup> They were strengthened in their convictions by the great price boom and by the seeming prosperity of the immediate post-war period.

Economic control during the war had not come about through any intellectual conversion and had not lasted long enough to condition new social habits.<sup>10</sup> As was true during the war, public statements lagged behind actual events. The new Parliament, opening on February 6, 1919, was greeted with the statement in the King's speech that, "the aspirations for a better social order which have been quickened in the hearts of my people by the experience of the War must be encouraged by prompt and comprehensive action." The Government paid lip service to the ideal of a new and better Britain. "We must stop at no sacrifice of interest or prejudice to stamp out unmerited poverty, to diminish unemployment and mitigate its sufferings, to provide decent homes, to improve the nation's health, and to raise the standard of well-being throughout the community" and pleaded for "resolute action." Yet reconstruction was now in limbo. The emphasis was to be put on achieving the desired goals by "increasing industrial and agricultural output. . . ." <sup>11</sup>

The Prime Minister had stated during the war, "there must be no patching up."<sup>12</sup> In March, 1917, he had told a deputation of the Labour Party that "audacity" was the thing; that it would be necessary to "seize" the opportunity "to remake

8 John M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York, 1920). Cf. also, *Times*, January 19, 1919, and Chamberlain, *Down the Years*, p. 243.

9 *English Review*, XXII, 201.

10 R. H. Tawney, "The Abolition of Economic Controls, 1918-1921," *Economic History Review*, XIII (1943), p. 7.

11 33 H. L. Deb. 5s., 7-8.

12 Lloyd George, *Slings and Arrows*, p. 192.

Britain." "Don't always be thinking of getting back to where you were before the War; get a really new world."<sup>13</sup> But the fire of the pre-war period was lacking; men were too weary to engage in building anew. In Britain, as in the United States, men wanted "not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy; not revolution but restoration; not agitation but adjustment; not surging but serenity; not the dramatic but the dispassionate; not experiment but equipoise. . . ."<sup>14</sup> "Tranquillity" was the English translation of "normalcy." D. H. Lawrence felt that he "had enough of the social passion."<sup>15</sup> But others felt as did T. E. Lawrence:

It felt like morning, and the freshness of the world-to-be intoxicated us. We were wrought up with ideas inexpressible and vaporous, but to be fought for. . . . Yet when we achieved and the new world dawned, the old men came out again and took from us our victory and re-made it in the likeness of the former world they knew. Youth could win, but had not learned to keep, and was pitifully weak against age. We stammered that we had worked for a new heaven and a new earth, they thanked us kindly. . . .<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Labour Party, *Report of Proceedings*, 1917, p. 169. Even as late as November 12, 1918, he urged that Britain avoid "the fatal example of 1815 when advantage was taken of victory to deny reform." *Times*, November 13, 1918.

<sup>14</sup> Senator (later President) Warren G. Harding, May, 1920.

<sup>15</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Letters* (New York, 1938), p. 460. Cf. also, Woodward, *Short Journey*, p. 117. For another point of view, cf. Charles Trevelyan, *From Liberalism to Labour* (London, 1921).

<sup>16</sup> T. E. Lawrence, *Letters* (New York, 1939), p. 262. "I thought that the future was in our hands...that our elders would...for very shame be ready to give us a directing control over the management of affairs." But they did not. "Everything went on as before." Woodward, *Short Journey*, pp. 109, 112, 116. Cf. also, Read, *Annals of Innocence and Experience*, p. 158, and Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (New York, 1936).

The essential tragedy of the war was, as the poet Sassoon exclaimed, the "exploitation of courage."<sup>17</sup> With the end of the war, the British people had "a dull feeling that their terrible sacrifices" had been to little purpose.<sup>18</sup> As Bonar Law said later, a drummer boy who had been an asset in the hour of battle, was now a nuisance among the casualties in the hospital ward.<sup>19</sup> The foundations for "tranquillity" were present. Writing in the autumn of 1919, John Maynard Keynes explained the mood of the time: ". . . we are at the dead season of our fortunes. The reaction from the exertions, the fears, and the sufferings of the past five years is at its height. Our power of feeling or caring beyond the immediate questions of our own material well-being is temporarily eclipsed. The greatest events outside our own direct experience and the most dreadful anticipations cannot move us. . . . we have been moved already beyond endurance and need rest."<sup>20</sup> Writing in retrospect, the critic Herbert Read explains: "we had acquired only one new quality: exhaustion."<sup>21</sup> The new "keyword was Disillusion. Not the Byronic melancholy and Sorrows of Werther in fashion after the Napoleonic wars, but hard, cynical, gay disillusion."<sup>22</sup>

Against this general background the restless labor groups were helpless. At bottom British labor was, as the *Round Table*

17 Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man* (London, 1929, p. 305. Cf. also, H. M. Swanwick, *I Have Been Young* (London, 1945), p. 243, and Siegfried Sassoon, *Sherston's Progress* (London, 1936), and Charles E. Montague, *Disenchantment* (New York, n. d.).

18 *Statist*, XCIV, 286.

19 Sommervell, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-304.

20 Keynes, *op. cit.*, 297. "Victory was . . . bought so dear as to be almost indistinguishable from defeat . . ." Churchill, *op. cit.*, II, 1.

21 Read, *op. cit.*, p. 157. "A vast fatigue dominated collective action . . . revolutionary rage like every other form of energy burnt low . . ." Churchill, *op. cit.*, III, 17.

22 Robert Graves and Alan Hodges, *The Long Week-End* (London, 1940), p. 115. Cf. also, Sir Arthur Newsholme, *The Last Thirty Years in Public Health* (London, 1936), pp. 232-234.

assured its readers, " British in instincts, habits, and ultimate aims." <sup>23</sup> The great " crucible of war " had not only fused the whole population, <sup>24</sup> it had " consumed the moral energies " of the people. <sup>25</sup> Labor, however, did not give up the struggle without a quarrel.

An armistice is, technically, merely a suspension of hostilities, but the Armistice of November, 1918, was, as in fact it was intended to be, a surrender. On the home front, it seemed but a prelude to hostilities. It was a truce and not an uneasy Peace which the trade union leaders had arranged so eagerly in August, 1914. The outbreak of war was almost more of a pretext than a cause. The twenty-five years preceding the war had not only seen a great spurt in trade union organization, especially among the unskilled, they had everywhere aroused a spirit of protest, almost revolt, against the existing trade-union leadership. Hastily taking advantage of the feeling of sacrifice and unity engendered by the declaration of war, and fearing, too, that the Government might likewise take advantage of the situation, the trade union leadership rushed to the sacrificial altar. Nor may one overlook the fact that the war came at what was generally considered the beginning of a trade depression which the war, it was universally felt, would deeply accentuate. Wiser than the impatient and restless rank and file, the trade union leaders knew that trade union advantages could not be secured in a falling market. Now the picture of the market was reversed, and the years 1919 and 1920 were years of resentment and great strikes. <sup>26</sup> Demobili-

<sup>23</sup> *Round Table*, X, 630.

<sup>24</sup> " The whole state of society is molten, and you can stamp upon that molten mass anything . . ." In *Labour Party, Report of Proceedings, 1917*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>25</sup> Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, p. 89.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left*, p. 213, and Basil Thomson, *My Experiences at Scotland Yard* (New York, 1923), pp. 307, 337. The War Cabinet had anticipated and prepared for industrial unrest. George Glasgow, *The General Strike and Road Transport* (London, n. d.), p. 11.

zation of the army augmented the labor forces; many former soldiers continued fighting not against the "Huns," with whom it had been so easy to fraternize, but against their employers and against the Government for which they had fought so valiantly. All the forces of unrest which had seemed to many to be hovering on the brink of catastrophe before the war, held in substantial check during the war, were now unchained with an impetus that appeared to be well nigh irresistible. It needed no rationalization on the part of the workers for them to feel that in pushing their demands they were but helping the Government to realize its promises of a better world.<sup>27</sup>

"Time had not stood still" between the years 1914 to 1919, but "across that gulf of chaos" no bridge had been built.<sup>28</sup> The problems of the past were the torments of the present.

<sup>27</sup> The year 1919 had been welcomed "as an antechamber to the millennium . . ." Siegfried Sassoon, *Siegfried's Journey* (New York, 1946), p. 239.

<sup>28</sup> Viscountess Rhondda, *This Was My World* (London, 1933), p. 294. "Every war has been followed by misery and the greatest war is now followed by the greatest misery of all." *Nation*, XXVI, 165.

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