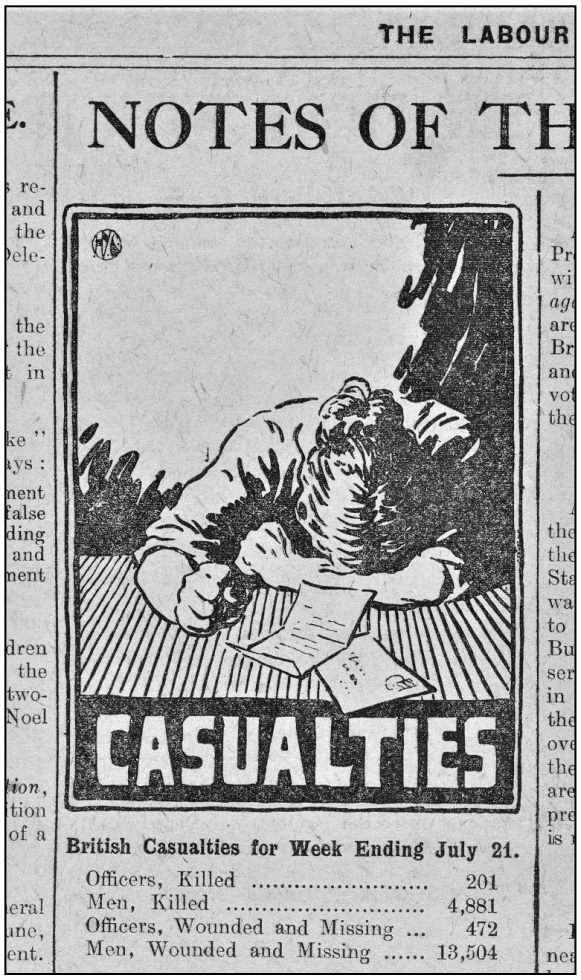
THE FIGHT TO A FINISH


THE LABOUR

NOTES OF TH

CASUALTIES

British Casualties for Week Ending July 21.

Officers, Killed	201
Men, Killed	4,881
Officers, Wounded and Missing ...	472
Men, Wounded and Missing	13,504

WAR-RESISTERS IN SOUTH LONDON

AND BEYOND

1917-19

J.H.Taylor

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CONTENTS

Introduction

An earlier publication – *Against the Tide* – sought to document and commemorate the anti-war campaigners who were active in Southwark in the first three years of the First World War. This volume takes the narrative forward into 1919.

The present London borough consisted then of three separate authorities: Camberwell, covering Camberwell, Peckham, Nunhead and Dulwich; Southwark, running south from the Borough and Bankside to Walworth; eastwards along the Thames was Bermondsey, which also included Rotherhithe.

This is the area of south London with which my research is primarily concerned. The task of recovery, it should be admitted, has proved more difficult for the latter part of the war than earlier. There are several reasons for this. Many fewer conscientious objectors came before the tribunals after 1916. Only one of the three local papers – the *Southwark and Bermondsey Recorder* – reported the tribunals systematically. In the south neither of the papers covered Camberwell tribunal, or hardly ever. At this stage in the conflict, moreover, none of the papers give any publicity to anti-war activity.

We know it went on, with rallies on Peckham Rye, for one thing. Part of the deficit in this volume comes also from my decision that some material from 1917 fitted better into the previous one. This applies particularly to the account in chapters 17 and 18 of the Dulwich branch of the No-Conscription Fellowship, or NCF. As shown there, the branch published a handsome booklet that year entitled *What are Conscientious Objectors?* which must have been used in local campaigning. But there's not a word in the press.

At national level, authorities like Jo Vellacott and John Rae have less to say about the later part of the war; certainly about 1918. With Catherine Marshall mostly off the scene after mid-1917 her archive is not very helpful either. But enough complaining: I have been able to recover evidence from other sources, certainly for the south of the present borough. The prison correspondence of Arthur Creech Jones was invaluable here.

The NCF was in the forefront of opposition to the war in 1916. Other organisations took the lead from 1917. Making extensive use of the two anti-war papers *The Herald* and *Labour Leader* I have tried to give a coherent account of all the players in what was a broad alliance which went well beyond the NCF and the conscientious objectors

There were something over 16,500 of these. The majority either accepted army service with the Non-Combatant Corps or joined civilian labour camps under the Home Office scheme or undertook work of national importance, so-called. A hard core of "absolutists"

refused these options on grounds of principle, and remained in prison, serving repeated terms of hard labour under the harshest regime, the third division. The precise number is unclear: probably between a thousand and 1,500.[1]

In the present borough objectors of all kinds totalled 241 - 57 from Bermondsey, 32 from old Southwark, and 152 from Camberwell. These figures, based on Cyril Pearce's expanding database, represent an increase over the numbers given in my first volume. An Honours Board at the end of this volume draws from the database what can be recovered of the individual experiences of these men.

As before I have sought to place and embed my research in a succession of enclosing contexts: that of the domestic front in London, that of repeated military failure and its impact on British politics, and that of wider world events in Russia, Germany and Woodrow Wilson's America. Arthur's Marwick's *The Deluge* and *Zeppelin Nights* by Jerry White have again proved prime sources of information about the home front. I have drawn extensively on John Grigg's biography of Lloyd George. Jo Vellacott's *Conscientious Objection* remains the best account of the NCF – at least up to the gaoling of Bertrand Russell. The conclusion attempts a summing-up of what, in my view, was a heroic endeavour. I won't pre-empt that here.

Cyril Pearce's *Communities of Resistance* appeared while this volume was held up by the pandemic.[2] In it he uses data from his Register to retell the generic story of the conscientious objectors in terms of the variable geography of resistance across the country: focusing in on "hot spots" to compare the motivation and intransigence of objectors and the cultures that shaped their opposition, and recovering with pictures much about the leading actors. It has a good section on Camberwell. It is rich, vivid, ambitious and original. *Salve Magister.*

This more modest enterprise has the virtue I think of giving a fuller account of the anti-war coalition and of the contexts just mentioned in which it developed over time.

The previous volume contained a number of typos, omissions and minor inaccuracies. It also requires a few points of elaboration. Readers who share my interest in this detail will find an *Addenda/Corrigenda* page immediately before the index.

July 2021

[1] I discuss the numbers in *Against the Tide*, chapter 16.

[2] See Bibliography for details.

1917

1: The Lloyd George revolution

I

The *Times* journalist Michael MacDonagh kept a diary throughout the war. Published in 1935, it's full of vivid detail, derived partly from his presence at significant public events - in the Commons, for example, as Lloyd George made his first speech as prime minister – but more still from his lively reporting of everyday life in a capital at war.

He notes with surprise how little excitement the cabinet reconstruction aroused in the wider public.[1] The turn of the year saw Sylvia Pankhurst and her people still defiantly demonstrating for peace at the gates of the East India Docks; a fairly large meeting was interrupted by half a dozen barrackers, and was then dispersed by the police. She says "peace talk" had stimulated and emboldened the pacifist movement, despite the new prime minister's rejection of the German proposal for peace talks.[2]

For all his previous talk of a knock-out blow Lloyd George, in his speech, dashed any expectation of a speedy victory.[3] So perhaps the change of leadership was experienced, on both sides, less as a turning-point than a moment of renewed determination. The Peace Negotiations Committee was still appealing, as late as March, for another strenuous effort to get more signatures on their petition. The peace by negotiation candidates in the Rossendale and Stockton by-elections were followed in South Aberdeen by Frederick Pethick-Lawrence; he came a poor third.[4]

However, the succession was quickly expressed in government by what Alan Taylor calls "a revolution, British style." A war cabinet of five (later six) replaced the old cabinet and war committee. The Labour leader Arthur Henderson remained a member. Five new ministries or departments were set up - shipping, labour, pensions, national service and food – the first and last of these headed by new men from the business world. Labour men were put in charge of the second and third. Businessmen were brought in to run the local government board and the board of trade. A ministry of reconstruction and a department of information followed shortly.[5]

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[1] Michael MacDonagh, *In London during the Great War*, p. 156.
[2] E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Home Front*, pp.431-2.
[3] Michael MacDonagh, p.159.
[4] *Labour Leader*, 15 March, 5 April 1917.
[5] A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, p. 73; John Grigg, *Lloyd George: from Peace to War 1912-16*, p. 491; Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*, pp. 212, 239.

Among other initiatives the ministry of munitions took on new responsibilities, including the development of agricultural machinery and the supply of fuel oil. (Aircraft production remained in the hands of the services, however.) By October 1917 the ministry operated 143 national factories. It had power to take control of any factory felt to be necessary for war production, which included such items as tents, boots, bandages and uniforms. By March 1918 these controlled establishments numbered 20,000.[1]

Lloyd George called the policy of state intervention "nationalism-socialism." Churchill called it "war socialism." [2] Marwick gives the fine bureaucratic detail. However he notes that while the arrival of Lloyd George in Downing Street marked a watershed in the conduct of the war, the pressure for collectivist action had long been building. There was a strong feeling that the Asquith government had failed to channel it effectively, as expressed in the *Economist*'s verdict that "the country was always ahead of the Government." [3]

That said, such action had already been implemented to an extent, as shown in the determined suppression of alcohol consumption. One might also cite the government's takeover of the railways and of inland shipping in the first month of the war. It went on to set up the ministry of munitions. At the end of November 1916, just before its demise, the Asquith government had already, under a new DORA regulation, taken over the mines in south Wales.[4]

Moreover, a summary of the main actions of the new government filters out the fact that much of the old bumbling continued while bureaucracy multiplied: most entertainingly, in the initiatives of the first Food Controller, Lord Devonport. The winter of 1916-17 was bitterly cold, temperatures falling in London to minus 10 centigrade. There was a shortage of not only of coal but of sugar, potatoes and margarine; butter was often unobtainable. Queues appeared for the first time all over the capital. The price of bread rose to a shilling for a quartern (4lb) loaf, more than twice what it had cost pre-war.[5]

Lord Devonport, a captain of the grocery trade, responded by prohibiting the display of luxury foodstuffs in shop windows, banning the consumption of crumpets and sugar icing and restricting the kind of food that could be eaten in tea-shops after three in the afternoon. He appealed for "voluntary rationing" of bread, meat and sugar and went on to introduce meatless days; but he and his reforms didn't last long.[6]

He was replaced in June by the coal-owner Lord Rhondda. He insisted on being given plenary powers before accepting the post: power to take over the country's whole food supply, power to reduce the price of the essential items by means of government subsidy, power to use local authorities for distribution purposes and power to check profiteering.[7] The whole basis of trade was changed from profit-making to working on a fixed commission for the Food Controller, since the ministry now owned all the supplies;

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[1] Arthur Marwick, pp. 246-50; John Grigg, *From Peace to War*, p. 284; Gerard DeGroot, *Back in Blighty*, p. 170. Aircraft production: John Grigg, *Lloyd George*: *War Leader*, p. 251.
[2] Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent*, p. 176; A.J.P.Taylor, p. 65.
[3] Arthur Marwick, pp. 179, 185.
[4] *ibid*., pp. 31,157,163,178-9.
[5] Jerry White, *Zeppelin Nights*, pp. 201-4
[6] Arthur Marwick, pp. 192-3.
[7] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 395-6.

the profit margin being set at a level that allowed traders to maintain their pre-war income. Under successive orders dealing with one food after another every food trader had to be registered.[1]

The mechanism established was, at local level, a food control committee, appointed by the council in every local authority area. Each had an executive officer who, with his staff, registered retail traders, adjusted supplies to retailers according to the number of registered customers, transferred customers from one retailer to another, inspected records of transactions and prices, and saw food orders were observed. They could also propose local variations in the prices handed down by the ministry.

Overseeing these local committees, registering wholesalers, acting as agents of the controller but given a great deal of autonomy, were fifteen regional food commissioners, each with an office and considerable staff. For livestock and meat there was a separate but parallel organisation under Live Stock Commissioners – a recurring cause of "internal unrest" within the ministry, as Beveridge gently puts it in his history.[2]

William Beveridge was part of the ministerial team. By the end of the war, he writes, 85 per cent of all food consumed by civilians in Britain was bought and sold by the ministry and its two formally independent commissions for sugar and wheat. Ninety-four per cent was subject to price control.[3] Over the year Rhondda also reduced the price of bread and potatoes by means of subsidies. White bread disappeared at the end of 1916, replaced by greyish "war" or "standard" bread, containing more roughage but later adulterated with potato and bean flour and the like. To reduce consumption by making bread less appetising it became an offence from March 1917 to sell newly baked loaves: they had to be 12 hours old.[4]

The food control committees provided the framework for food rationing. National rationing came in piecemeal over the end of the year, some councils and Co-ops having already introduced local schemes.

II

The government took control of the mines. How far did it succeed with the labour force? It is necessary here to go back to March 1915. This is the date of the so-called Treasury Agreement between the ministry of munitions, desperate to get women and less skilled men into factories engaged in war-work – a process known as dilution or substitution – and the trade unions. The latter undertook to relax current "trade practices", to forego the right to strike and to take disputes to arbitration instead. The agreement did not sweep away these practices but laid down a procedure under which they could be suspended in case of proven necessity. The signatories included not only the many metal-working unions, but representatives of the woodworkers and painters, the railwaymen, the textile workers, the boot and shoe operatives, as well as the general unions. The engineering union, the ASE, signed a separate agreement after securing

[1] William H. Beveridge, *British Food Control*, pp. 73, 177.
[2] *ibid*., pp. 60-4.
[3] *ibid*., 56-7.
[4] Arthur Marwick, p. 196; Jerry White, p. 203.

further assurances, one of which was that the relaxation of trade practices related solely to work done for war purposes.[1]

The Miners' Federation did not sign up, and in any case the agreements proved inadequate without the sanction of law. One of the first actions of the first coalition government of May 1915 was to put the treasury agreement on a legal footing. It did so via the Munitions of War Act, which prohibited strikes and lock-outs, replacing them with compulsory arbitration, and suspended all trade union practices for the duration of the war. Wage-rates were to be protected. Among much else the Act laid down that an employer engaged in war production could not take on a workman within six weeks of his leaving another firm in the field unless he (the worker) held a certificate stating that he had left with the previous employer's consent. The intention was to stop firms bidding against each other for scarce labour, but this restriction on free movement of labour was not matched any restriction on the employer's right of dismissal. The act set up munitions tribunals to deal with offences under the act. It also set up the "controlled establishments," mentioned earlier.[2]

At first it was hoped dilution schemes could be worked out locally. When this proved too slow the ministry began to operate a more centralised system, pioneered on the Clyde and on Tyneside, sending out its own enforcers to make sure dilution was being properly applied. Conscription of course extended the employment of women, who began to take on more highly skilled work. The result, by the end of the war, was that a million and a quarter more women were employed in industry compared with July 1915.[3]

The competing demands for men to fight and for men to produce the wherewithal persisted throughout the war. In July 1915 the government, as we saw, attempted to resolve this conflict by legislating for a national register of all men and women aged between 15 and 65. When the forms came in to Whitehall a star was placed against the names of those deemed to be in essential occupations.[4]

Meanwhile the already lively trade union militancy on Clydeside - influenced by ideas of syndicalism and industrial unionism – coalesced into full-scale opposition to dilution and other aspects of the act, led by the Clyde Workers' Committee. Marwick summarises the turbulent events of 1915. There were rumblings of discontent across the wider trade union movement. The government appointed a two-man commission of investigation into the unrest. Lloyd George travelled to Glasgow. Reduced to silence by vociferous hostility at a mass meeting in St. Andrew's Hall on Christmas Day that year, he nevertheless insisted on meeting with shop stewards from the whole area.

Acting with caution, he then delayed sending in dilution commissioners until the end of January 1916, by which time he had a sufficient stockpile of munitions to withstand a strike of six weeks on the Clyde. In this way he saw off a stoppage at Long's, where the men returned to work after a week. Further strikes followed in March, but by dint of the prosecution of some strike leaders and the deportation of others to further parts of Scotland, these collapsed too, so that by early April, says Grigg, the cause of dilution

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[1] G.D.H. Cole, *Trade Unionism and Munitions*, pp. 70-5, 73-4.
[2] Arthur Marwick, pp. 58-61; G.D.H. Cole, p. 78.
[3] John Grigg, *From Peace to War*, pp. 293-5; Cole, pp. 38, 108-9..
[4] Arthur Marwick, pp. 61-2.

was triumphant.[1] What he omits to say, however, is that after his meeting with the shop stewards Lloyd George sent up a separate group of commissioners to negotiate with them. Between them the two sides hammered out an agreement which in due course met the stewards' principle: that dilution, which they accepted, should be carried out under their control.[2]

In south Wales earlier that year the miners were locked in dispute over bonuses: the coal-owners wanted a new national agreement and war bonus to take precedence over a new local agreement. The government threatened penalties under the Munitions of War Act. The Miners' Federation opposed strike action but it began all the same in July 1915. So serious was the interruption of coal supplies that five days later Lloyd George, accompanied by Henderson and Runciman, of the board of trade, hurried to Cardiff to agree the strikers' demands in full.[3]

The issue here, it should be noted, was pay and conditions, not dilution. But it gives the context in which Lloyd George that summer urged the need for industrial conscription, quoted previously. "What we need is not compulsion for the army, but compulsion for the workshop." Despite the warnings of Arthur Gillian, Eddy Jope and Herbert Morrison however: when the government introduced compulsory military service the following year it imposed no additional compulsion on civilian labour beyond what was already in the Munitions of War Act. What happened instead over 1916, particularly after the Somme offensive, was that the war office made increasingly determined efforts to restrict or nullify exemptions by the tribunals, as seen locally in Southwark,[4] a process known as "combing out." It was paralleled on the factory floor by extended dilution.[5]

Combing-out sometimes produced strong reactions from the workforce. The wrongful enlistment of an engineering worker in Sheffield provoked the shop stewards there to an unofficial strike in November 1916. It lasted eight days and forced the ASE leadership to take the matter up with government. The outcome was the Trade Card Agreement, extended in December to other unions representing skilled workers, under which decisions on exemption were to be left in the hands of the unions themselves: a major victory.[6]

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[1] John Grigg, *From Peace to War*, pp. 297-301.
[2] Arthur Marwick, 69-75.
[3] *ibid*., pp. 75-6.
[4] J.H. Taylor, *Against the Tide*, chapter 7.
[5] Cole (pp. 36-7) identifies five stages of dilution.
[6] Arthur Marwick, p. 84; G.D.H. Cole, p. 133.

2: The US joins in; Russia offers hope

I

In January 1917 president Wilson, speaking to Congress, declared in favour of a "peace without victory", to be followed by the creation of a league of nations to prevent future wars. The old order would be replaced by a new order, the old diplomacy by a new diplomacy based on the equality of nations.[1]

This was exactly the intervention that Russell and other peace campaigners had hoped for. The *Herald* cabled its "heartfelt thanks." [2] The *Times* however responded:

> The can be no drawn war between the spirit of Prussian militarism and the spirit of real peace which the Allies, the Americans, and indeed all neutrals, desire. "Militarism" cannot be exorcised except by defeat in the field, and therefore the Allies can hear of no peace which is not a "victory peace."

To which Russell, writing in the *Tribunal*, retorted:

> If this were indeed true, it is impossible to see how militarism could ever be exorcised, since only militarism on our part can possibly enable us to inflict defeat upon Germany.

From this would follow an unending chain of tragedy and destruction. Instead he commended Woodrow Wilson's view that "Only a peace between equals can last – only a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in a common benefit." Such a peace, says Russell, "is not extorted by force, but must be the outcome of a recognition that war is folly." [3]

To head Wilson off without estranging him, Britain and her allies championed the principle of "self-determination" for the peoples of east-central Europe and the Middle East. "In this casual way," writes Alan Taylor, they thus committed the British people to objectives "infinitely remote from those with which they had entered the war".[4]

On the western front, general Robert Nivelle had replaced Joffre as French commander-in-chief. He proposed to break the stalemate on the western front by punching a hole in the German front line and then pouring through reserves in over-whelming force.

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[1] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 70.
[2] Raymond Postgate, *The Life of George Lansbury*, pp. 163-4
[3] *Tribunal* 45, 1 February 1917.
[4] Jo Vellacott, *Conscientious Objection*, p. 150; A.J.P. Taylor, pp. 79-80,118-19.

Impressed, Lloyd George and the war cabinet placed him in overall command of the Allied forces. In early April 1917 the preliminary British-led offensive north and east of Arras took Vimy Ridge (thanks to the Canadians) before getting bogged down again, but at the cost of 150,000 casualties, far higher than the German losses.

Nivelle's plan for a break-through on the Aisne lost its rationale when the Germans, unmolested, withdrew from their salient to new fortified positions on the much shorter Hindenburg line, leaving booby-trapped devastation behind them and freeing up a dozen or more divisions. Ribot, the new prime minister, and Painlevé, the new minister of war, tried to abort the offensive. Nivelle threatened to resign. So the surprise attack at Chemin des Dames, well signalled to the Germans, went ahead in mid-April – and proved yet another bloody failure. The only new thing this time was widespread mutiny in the French army, affecting sixteen army corps. Nivelle was removed and replaced as commander-in-chief by Philippe Pétain.[1]

Meanwhile the Germans had announced unrestricted submarine warfare. They had switched their strategic priority from defeating France to knocking Britain out of the war. All shipping in the Atlantic war zone was to be sunk on sight. It was their equivalent of the knock-out blow - but it was also a declaration of war on all neutrals trading with the Allies, a policy launched, moreover, within days of Woodrow Wilson's "peace without victory" speech. In February the president broke off diplomatic relations. In March the German foreign office secretly offered to help Mexico recover New Mexico, Texas and Arizona, seized by the US in the previous century. The offer (a fantasy in any case) was hacked, as we would say, causing public outrage. In April Congress declared war on Germany as an "associated power" alongside the Allies.[2]

Germany was still confident it could bring Britain to its knees before the Americans arrived. In April 1917 its submarines sent 850,000 tons of all shipping to the bottom. That month one ship in every four leaving British ports never returned. Reserves of wheat fell to six weeks' supply. Probably at no time in either world war was the country closer to defeat, writes John Grigg. The Admiralty was extremely resistant to accepting that Royal Navy convoys might be a solution. It argued that ships in convoy presented too large a target and could not maintain an orderly formation.

The accepted view, encouraged by Lloyd George's memoirs, is that the prime minister, secretly briefed and then backed by the war cabinet, went over the head of Carson, the first sea lord, strode into the admiralty, and there told the admirals: *Just do it*. Grigg suggests that the admirals were already moving towards adopting his solution. But we may be sure, he adds, that Lloyd George's announced visitation helped accelerate the process. The convoys proved very effective. They were not in general use until mid-August, by which time the sinkings were already in decline. In December that year a little over 170,000 tons of British shipping went down, compared with 525,000 tons the previous April. This was, in Alan Taylor's view, Lloyd George's most decisive achievement of the war, the equivalent, says Grigg, of the Battle of Britain in 1940.[3]

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[1] A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, pp. 126-7, 134; John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 21-5, 37-43, 82-6, 93-6.
[2] A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, p. 129; John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 3, 70-1.
[3] A.J.P. Taylor, *English History*, pp. 84-5; John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 49-53.

The change from American mediation in support of a negotiated peace into American military intervention on the British side was a severe blow to Russell. "If America's entry were certain to shorten the war, I should be glad that it has occurred, whatever might be said against such a view from the standpoint of theoretical pacifism," he wrote. However,

> the help of America is quite as likely to lengthen the war as shorten it. Without America, universal exhaustion might have driven all the nations to a compromise peace – obviously the best in the interests of international accord. With America, it may be possible for us, if we choose, to go on for another three years in the hope of that final and crushing victory which we have all along announced as our object. [1]

Crucially it meant that Wilson's ideals could only be hoped for *after* this decisive victory. The US army, small and unprepared, had to be built up by selective conscription, a process that went forward very slowly. Michael MacDonagh watched a first contingent march past in August on their way from Buckingham Palace to Waterloo station. "The Americans are fine fellows physically – tall, slim, athletic, with long, clean-shaven faces… They marched loosely in fours, carrying their rifles at ease." But it was to be the following year before they arrived in force.[2]

Against this disappointment Russell was immensely cheered by news that reached Britain from another direction in early March: the Russian Revolution. "[It] is a stupendous event," he wrote to an American friend. "Although one can't yet tell how it will work out, it can hardly fail to do great good. It has been more cheering than anything that has happened since the war began." With its Charter of Freedom, he wrote in the *Tribunal*, the provisional government now stood in advance of all the other countries in the war, "and notably in advance of ourselves".

> Whatever may be the effect on the war, all lovers of liberty will rejoice in the overthrow of an ancient, corrupt and cruel tyranny. There is hope at last of a better Europe; a beginning has been made in the East; it is for us in the West to claim the same rights as are being won by our brave comrades in Russia. [3]

The overthrow of the ancient tsarist tyranny was widely celebrated within the labour movement and by most liberal opinion. For opponents of the war it soon raised the hope that this first crack in the Alliance might have repercussions that could yet force the two western powers into peace negotiations. For the moment though the new provisional government was committed to continue the war.

II

Arthur Creech Jones watched these developments from Wandsworth where he was serving his second jail sentence of two years, later reduced to six months. His monthly prison letters are addressed in a small neat hand to his parents and brothers in Bristol and to his cousins and aunt in Goose Green – "My Darling Vi,/My dearest Mother,

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[1] *Tribunal* 55, 12 April 1917.
[2] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 73, 305; Michael MacDonagh, p. 210.
[3] Jo Vellacott, pp. 152-3; *Tribunal* 52, 22 March 1917.

Father and Aunt,/My dear Old Will, Fred and Flo" - and were then evidently passed between them. They show him eager above all for local news and contact.

He quotes Browning's "Oh! To be in England, adding" No budding Kent lanes & pretty valleys! No mediaeval Wells, romantic Glastonbury, Cheddar caves & Mendip cliffs this Easter! I must feast on memories." He says he has been working at French and keeping up his shorthand, despite not being allowed paper for notes. He asks cousins Vi or Flo to see Dr Salter and then pass back "the very latest news of our movement & of Peace tendencies." He asks for news of the Trades Council and Dulwich ILP branch. He asks, or says he is thinking about, or sends greetings to, the NCF branch and over a page of individuals including the Cahills ("I hope Miss Cahill has recovered") and Arthur Gillian.[1]

This is the pattern of his letters, both from Wandsworth and from Pentonville, where, from June 1917, he served his third term of hard labour. He asks, sometimes quite peremptorily, for news and visits, sends greetings to regular lists of people, and itemises his voracious reading. In May, for example, he lists three Hardy novels, two novels by Jack London, Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Tagore's *King of the Dark Chamber*, biographies of Browning and George Fox, plus five other titles: all read since his letter of a month before.[2]

At Wandsworth he was employed in the prison library. "It is a rare treat to be among books and dealing with books. It makes me feel that my previous reading & training have been worth while." Before that he worked in the wood yard sawing wood, worked in association on mail bags, and spent a few days in the kitchen.[3] Getting books in seems to have been no problem, then or later. Wary of censorship no doubt, Jones says nothing about the hardships, and little about fellow COs and other prisoners; Eddy Jope, for one, was in Pentonville that autumn. He seems in general to have led a quite pleasant monkish existence. Occasionally emotion surges in, in his outburst of grief in April for his friend Morris Rogers, "rotting away in the blood-soaked soil of France." [4]

Though expressed with feeling, Creech Jones's letters are high-minded, slightly formal and a little dull. Those to him from his cousin Violet Tidman, a school teacher aged 23, are altogether livelier. She too was an activist. A Miss Tidman was reported the previous summer as leading a deputation of nine "married ladies" to press Camberwell council on the need to set up infant welfare and maternity centres. The councillors decided on grounds of cost to take no action; but the mayor congratulated her on the way she had presented her case. That it was Violet rather than her sister Florence who spoke is suggested by a later article on the same subject which gives her first name. It is headed "The Woman's Trench." [5]

Violet's first letter in the archive opens with two pages of news of friends and family. "The Wednesday Evening [NCF] meetings still continue," she reports – "but owing to evening school I have not been able to get there until 10 o'clock. The attendance is very good and they have begun deputations again."

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[1] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 17 March 1917.
[2] *loc.cit*., 26 May 1917.
[3] *loc.cit*., 17 March 1917.
[4] *loc.cit*., 28 April 1917; see J.H. Taylor, *Against the Tide*, p. 134. On fellow COs, see below, p. 160.
[5] *CPT*, 1 July and 29 November 1916.

“The I.L.P. still exists although, of course, things are rather slack just now.” The reason for the “of course” is unclear. She goes on: “The Trades Council is still flourishing & to judge from the numbers of resolutions Flo has to send off it is still doing good work. No one knows, except us at home, how Flo has to work. Of course *you* know – but then we usen’t to see you doing it. It was done round about midnight!!!”

The sisters had recently been to three big meetings. Two were on suffrage. “I don’t know whether you have heard that there is some talk of electoral reform & suffrage for women of 30 or 35… Flo’ and I have joined the Workers’ Suffrage Federation which stands for Universal Suffrage.” Flo was ten years older than her sister.

The third was the “Great Russian Meeting,” held in the Albert Hall on 31 March 1917 to welcome the revolution. As cousin Violet reports, there wasn’t an empty seat to be had: 12,000 people with tickets crammed in, 5,000 others were turned away.

> I have never been to anything half so inspiring. We were very fortunate in having about the best-situated *box* in the place. Israel Zangwill & all the Chief Pacifist Trade Unionists spoke & Clara Butt sang, ‘Give to us Peace in our Time, O Lord.’ Everyone said what he thought he would & what he had been dying to say for the past 2½ years. They demanded an amnesty for all political prisoners & mentioned with reverence, amid peals and peals of cheers, you men in prison. It was certainly a great triumph.[1]

The zionist Israel Zangwill was a successful novelist and playwright. The other speakers included Robert Smillie, the miners’ president, Robert Williams, of the Transport Workers’ Federation, Maude Royden, of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and representing moderation (to quote Russell), the MP Josiah Wedgwood, who was interrupted at the start of his speech on account of his pro-war views. The chairman, George Lansbury, read a message from Bernard Shaw, who declared himself too much disgusted with the country to take part in the meeting, and a long letter from the anarchist Peter Kropotkin, who, out of step with the general view, urged vigorous prosecution of the war.

Violet Tidman wrote that she was saving the programme for her cousin, together with “a very fine report” from the *Herald*. Its full-page heading read “THE/ REVOLT/ AT THE/ALBERT/ HALL.” The text inside extended over six pages. It shows that the audience sang alternate verses of the “noble hymn” with the great diva, and then “cheered her as if they would never stop.” The twelve thousand also sang Edward Carpenter’s song “England, Arise!”

> “England, Arise! The long, long night is over,
> Faint in the East behold the dawn appear.”

The meeting opened and closed with “The Red Flag.” It was a very English mixture of socialist and religious patriotism.[2]

The meeting passed a resolution sending “joyful congratulations” to Russia and calling on the British and other governments to follow the Russian example by establishing industrial freedom, freedom of speech and the press, the abolition of social, religious and national distinctions, an immediate amnnesty for political and religious offences, and

[1] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 7 April 1917.
[2] *The Herald*, 7 April 1917; Jo Vellacott, p. 156; programme in Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/38.

universal suffrage. It was, as Vellacott says, a spontaneous mass demonstration against the war and its unfreedoms. But it was probably also more representative of the already committed and less representative of politically inactive opinion than she suggests.

Her good account quotes Russell's letter to Ottoline Morrell:

> The COs came in for their share of applause – that one had expected. But besides that people cheered for a republic, for freedom in India, for all the things one never hears mentioned…There was a lot said about Ireland – the Sinn Fein martyrs were enthusiastically cheered…
>
> The whole atmosphere was electric. I longed to shout at them at the end to come with me and pull down Wormwood Scrubs. They would have done it.[1]

The *Herald* was George Lansbury's paper and it sponsored the body that initiated the "Charter of Freedom" campaign which culminated in the great rally. Usually called the Anglo-Russian Democratic Alliance, its name matters less than the fact that it operated out of 4 Duke Street, Adelphi, which was the address of the NCF's parliamentary department. Several of those most active in putting the rally together – among them Russell, Charles Ammon and Catherine Marshall – were also leading officers of the Fellowship. Thus, as Vellacott shows, the core leadership of the NCF played a much bigger part than previously realised in shaping the first mass response to the revolution.[2]

Catherine Marshall admitted as much. In a letter to *Labour Leader* she disclaimed credit for the idea of the Albert Hall rally, which she says originated in the *Herald* office, "and all the arrangements were carried through by a small committee, of which Mr Lansbury was chairman." But she does say: "Immediately the news of the Russian Revolution was published the No-Conscription Fellowship conceived the project of a national campaign to rejoice with the Russian democracy, and to demand a Charter of Freedom for the people of this country." [3]

Creech Jones's response to his cousin did not match her enthusiasm. "I should love to have been at the great Albert Hall meeting," was all he said. Perhaps he was sobered by reading Edmund Burke. He went on to ask the family to keep copies of *Labour Leader* for him, and gave another long list of his reading, including "that provoking novel" *Mr Britling*;[4] he does not elaborate, unfortunately.

His subsequent letters show no interest in Russia or other world events. He tends rather towards abstraction, saying here that conscientious objectors have a heavy responsibility because of the implications of their stand. "How are we going to build if the citadel of militarism is stormed & do we sufficiently understand the roots of war & social misery?"

One has a sense of a man drawing strength from his family and their shared reminiscences, from his extensive circle of friends and immediate political associates in Camberwell, and from his reading. In his spare time he peopled his mind with many characters from fiction, he wrote. "It's the redeeming feature that one can enter other

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[1] Jo Vellacott, pp. 156-8.
[2] *ibid*., pp. 153-6.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 12 April 1917.
[4] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 28 April 1917.

worlds & the mind forget the bare & dismal surroundings & feast in the imagination. And what a splendid feast those great minds give us." [1]

The Albert Hall spectacular has overshadowed another Great Mass Meeting to celebrate the revolution, that held by the marxist BSP a few days earlier on the 26 March. There's a flyer in the Marshall archive. The speakers at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, included Ammon and Sylvia Pankhurst.[2]

Miss Pankhurst's lengthy memoir of the home front concludes at the end of 1916. Her anti-war campaigning continued, usually at a tangent from the rest of the movement. The Workers' Suffrage Federation of course welcomed the Russian revolution; the *Dreadnought* hoped it would take Russia out of the war and enable Britain to withdraw as well.

A letter in the *Tribunal* invited all who desired a speedy peace to support the East London Peace Demonstration in Victoria Park on 15 April and join in the procession from Beckton Road, Canning Town. "The big, orderly, sympathetic meetings which are being held in Victoria Park each Sunday," she wrote, "are exceedingly encouraging, and the canvass which is being taken reveals a widespread acceptance of the Socialist-Pacifist standpoint." [3]

[1] ibid.
[2] Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/38.
[3] Patricia W. Romero, *E. Sylvia Pankhurst*, pp. 120-1; *Tribunal* 54, 5 April 1917.

3: War and against in south London

I

These world-shaking events had only faint reverberations in south London. “Russian Revolution to Help Allied Cause” said the headline in the *South London Press*, which explained inside that “the German influence was everywhere about the Court of Petrograd.” Two weeks later “AMERICA TO JOIN THE ALLIES” went on to quote Woodrow Wilson’s speech declaring Germany to be the enemy of all mankind.[1]

These headings are from the paper’s regular feature “The War Week by Week,” placed, as ever, across two columns top left on the front page, then continuing inside. The main focus however was news from the front-lines. In January the paper previewed a film on the battle of Ancre which was coming, with special musical effects, to various local picture houses, including the Tower Cinema, Rye Lane, Peckham, the Cinematograph Theatre, Walworth Road, and Golden Domes, Denmark Hill. “Yes,” it enthused, “these are pictures to stir the souls of the patriotic! The ‘tanks’ digging out the hungry Huns, like spuds from a potato field.”[2]

Inside, usually taking up the whole of page 3, comes the aftermath, “South London’s Roll of Honour”. Under this overall heading, and sometimes spreading on to other pages, are individual news items, such as

- OLD OLAVIANS’ SACRIFICE
- CHAPLAIN’S THRILLING NARRATIVE
- LOCAL ATHLETES FINE WORK
- WALWORTH HEROES WHO HAVE FALLEN. [3]

The page includes more portraits now, mainly oval. Later in the year more “fighting families” are depicted: a family called Gadd from Maxted Road, Peckham, twelve of them “all doing their bit;” and a “splendid Walworth contingent” of twelve Robinsons, from no. 1 Mann Street.[4] Plus of course, the never-ending list of south London casualties.

[1] *SLP*, 23 March and 6 April 1917.
[2] *ibid.*, 19 January 1917.
[3] *ibid.*, 5,12,19 and 12 January 1917 respectively.
[4] *ibid.*, 6 and 13 July 1917.

By contrast the *Camberwell and Peckham Times* continues mostly to restrict its reporting to a single column headed "Our Roll of Honour" which is slotted in among other single-column items on (for example) Labour's proposals for education reform, inquest reports, "Camberwell Indicted" (for alcohol consumption), police court news and "Our Children's Corner." [1] Unlike the *SLP* the paper expresses forceful opinions on the war however. The *Southwark and Bermondsey Recorder* confines itself to reporting "Local War Casualties," an item which expands or contracts according to the numbers but usually has a single column heading. These two papers still have adverts on the front page. Inside, in February, the *SBR* carried a display ad by Glovers of Greenwich showing, among other ladies' hats, a "Smart Toque for young widow": 10/11 with veil, 8/11 without.[2]

Further "war shrines" are reported, including one at the corner of Wells Street and Albany Road, Camberwell, and two in Bermondsey: in Linsey Street and Alexis Street. All appear to be have been somewhat "official" rather than spontaneous: the first the result of efforts by the Rev. P.M. Herbert, vicar of St. George's, and nine local tradesmen; the last two the gift of Mrs Elliston and the *Evening News*. She was the wife of a local councillor.[3]

On 16 February the *SLP* carried the four-decker headline:

> HUNS TO BE BEATEN THIS YEAR
> Sir Douglas Haig Indicates Decisive Events to
> be near: 'German Western Front
> Will be Broken'

It commented that the "continued lull" on the various fronts was reflected in the "small lists" of casualties: just short of a broadsheet column that week of south London dead and wounded. On 2 March the front page proclaimed (again)

> HUNS ON THE RUN
> Brilliant British victories in France;
> Germans Retreating from Battered Ancre Front.

II

There are no reports of any rallies – on Peckham Rye or elsewhere - to welcome the Russian revolution. The main signs of the anti-war movement in the local papers are brief news items about objectors arrested and brought to court for failing to report for military service. Six such cases came before one or other of the Lambeth magistrates in January 1917.

George Thomas Montgomery, 37, a clerk, of Grove Lane, Camberwell, told the magistrate "I will have nothing to do with war in any shape or form.

- Mr Chester Jones: Have you got an exemption? Prisoner: No, sir. –Mr Chester Jones: Have you applied for one? - Prisoner: I applied for one but could get one.

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[1] *CPT*, 3 January 1917. "Our" had dropped out by April.
[2] *SBR*, 2 February 1917.
[3] *SLP*, 2 February and 2 March 1917.

- Capt. Cunningham said the prisoner's appeal was dismissed by the Appeal Tribunal. Since then he had disregarded several call notices."

Herbert Kingston, 22, a clerk, of Dowlas Road, Peckham, said, "I am a conscientious objector and under the Military Service Act a conscientious objector is exempted. Therefore I claim I am not amenable to the Act. - Mr Biron: You have not got a certificate of exemption? – Prisoner: No. - Mr Biron: Then you are liable to service."

Asked whether he was an absentee, George Percy Coverdale, 28, a Post Office sorter, of Glengall Road, Peckham, replied "that if the Tribunal had carried out the Military Service Act he would have been exempted. – Mr Chester Jones: Do you mean that you are a conscious objector? - Prisoner: Yes. - Mr Chester Jones: The tribunal would not grant you exemption. - Prisoner: They granted me exemption from combatant service. The prisoner proceeded to discuss his legal position under the Act, but the magistrate interrupted him… saying he had no power to go into the question."

Ernest Southern, 25, a shop assistant, of Grosvenor Terrace, Camberwell, said he had failed to convince the tribunal that he was a conscientious objector.

> He was not a soldier and never would be. Men were never intended to stick bayonets into one another's stomachs. He was a Socialist and an Internationalist, and he looked forward to the time when there would be no occasion for organised murder.

"I do not think it necessary to make a long speech," he concluded. "I am glad of that, said Mr Biron, drily." Headline: "Socialist's Tall Talk"

Ernest Graham Porter, 27, an assistant schoolmaster, of Barforth Road, Peckham, appeared next. "Capt. Cunningham said the prisoner, who had been exempted from combatant service, had had two calls."

Francis Leonard Parkes, 19, a bus builder, of Dalwood Road, Camberwell, said he was a conscientious objector on moral grounds. – Mr Chester Jones: Have you got exemption? – Prisoner: No, I don't consider a Tribunal should judge a man's conscience." Headline: "The Price of Conscience."

Parkes was fined £5, the others 40s – to be taken from their army pay – and handed over to a military escort.[1]

In February Harold Robert Gordon, of Fort Road, Bermondsey, aged 28 and a secretary, faced the same charge at Tower Bridge. The court there heard that Gordon had been arrested while conducting a Band of Hope meeting at Drummond Road school. He told the magistrate he was a conscientious objector, and objected to non-combatant as well as combatant service, from which he had been exempted. The magistrate insisted: "You must serve your country in some way," imposed a £3 fine and handed him over.[2]

In May Alfred Ashton Burall, 26, a civil servant, of Dunstan's Road, East Dulwich, appeared before Chester Jones at Lambeth. "When asked why he had not joined up the prisoner replied he had a conscientious objection to any form of military service.

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[1] Mongomery and Kingston: *SLP*, 5 January 1917; Coverdale: *SBR*, 12 January 1917; Gordon, *SBR*, 2 February 1917; the others: *SLP*, 19 January 1917.
[2] *SBR*, 2 February 1917.

Capt. Rawle, of the Camberwell Recruiting Office, said the prisoner had been called repeatedly. He went before the local tribunal but his case was dismissed and he was refused leave to appeal to the Central Tribunal." He was handed over with a £5 fine.[1]

These court appearances, eight in number, are (as far as I can see) the only ones involving men from our part of London reported over the first six months of the year, though of course there were other cases from outside the present borough. Only two conscientious cases are recorded as coming before any of the three tribunals in 1917, though this is in part because reporting from the tribunals was less systematic than the year before.

Montgomery, Kingston, Porter, Burrell, Coverdale, and probably Parkes were members of Dulwich's NCF branch The Pearce Register gives a little more personal detail, showing that Porter, an LCC teacher, was a member of the NUT; that Kingston belonged to the BSP, that Montgomery was branch secretary of the General Workers' Union. It shows that four of the eight – Porter, Southern, Kingston, Montgomery and possibly Parkes – were absolutists who resisted in prison to the bitter end. Southern took part in the disturbances in Wandsworth at the end of the war.[2] It is well to remember, amid the great events of the outside world, the lonely battle of the intransigeants. An Honours Board at the end of this volume outlines the trajectory of all eight.

In March the *CP Times* carried a letter from the trade unionist Arthur Gillian, not yet conscripted and now living in West Dulwich. Many people, he wrote, believed that alternative service and other works of national importance had solved the problem of the conscientious objector. But – "From Camberwell alone there are over 100 men who have been arrested, handed over to the military authorities, court-martialled for refusing service and sentenced. Of these nearly half are serving their second or third sentences rather than violate principles they hold by making a hateful compromise; by taking the easy path; accepting work of national importance."

> Men who have the physical and moral courage to refuse service at a time when national passions are running without reason… are anything but cowards and to apply such a term is a vile slander. No reasonable person, however much he disagreed with COs, can deny that their objection to military service is conscientious …The fact is that the Government, rightly or wrongly, inserted the clause making provision and giving legal status for COs, therefore the law should be carried out, unless, of course, laws are of no account.

The Dartmoor scheme was but an extension of alternative service, he concluded, and would contribute nothing but trouble and a waste of money.[3] In other words: objectors should be granted absolute exemption. It was a difficult argument to make, given that nationally so many had accepted the Home Office scheme.

Gillian's letter provoked a scathing response from Constance M. Johnson, of 112 Choumert Road, Peckham. "What morals has any man," she asked, who would stand behind his brothers and enjoy the comforts for which the latter [are] fighting?"

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[1] *CPT*, 2 May 1917.
[2] See below, chapter 30.
[3] *CPT*, 24 March 1917.

> Whatever he maintains, the fact that they are cowards is clear. It is a good thing our men of to-day are not all of his opinion. My work has brought me into contact with many of these faint-hearted darlings. One confessed that he was at Woolwich Arsenal "making shells," and another was a proud leader of the Boy Scouts! What are their ideas? As the sister of three brothers who joined on the outbreak of war I may say that I have nothing but absolute contempt for all conscientious objectors, also those who uphold them." [1]

Gillian then drew two supporting letters, from W.T. Andrews, of Clayton Road, Peckham, and W.T. Carter, of Landells Road, East Dulwich. Carter objected that "to call a man a coward because he wishes to live and die according to light within him is a vile slander, especially from an English woman." Andrews suggests she had overlooked the German CO. "He, surely, is not deserving of contempt, since he has refused to kill – possibly the three brothers of C.M. Johnson." He goes on:

"Men who have looked death in the face put to shame such petty taunts and need no further vindication. They know they are fighting a bigger battle… but their fight is less spectacular and their victory harder won because it is of greater worth, since it involves the immunity of humanity from the curse of war." [2]

This brought a riposte from C.W. Brister, a "working man", of 1 Whorlton Road, Peckham Rye, who asked,

> When have our conscientious objectors looked death in the face? By all accounts they are having a fine time at Princetown, with rations greatly in excess of the Devonport standard and no casualties and trench feet.

And had Mr Andrews ever met a German CO?

> Should he reside in Germany and decline to serve, he knows his fate. Therefore the conscientious shirker – as we know him here – does not exist. Conscription was not brought into force here to undermine freedom of thought and mind but because it was necessary to defend them.[3]

So at this stage in the war, the argument was still raging. A further letter signed CRICKET of Peckham, wound up the debate. He dispensed criticism on both sides, concluding: "We are on common ground at last in a general agreement that war is a curse, then let us be on equally common ground in giving due credit to everyone who is genuinely staking everything on his respective conviction to banish the curse." [4]

Wilfred Thomas Carter was an ILP man and a member of Dulwich NCF. Like Arthur Gillian, court-martialled the following August, he and Andrews trod the absolutist path of gaol and hard labour, though Andrews' fragmentary story is more dramatic. Arrested during a raid on the Friends' Service Committee, he broke out of the guardroom holding him in protest at his treatment but was then recaptured, sentenced and sent to Wormwood Scrubs. Again the Honours Board outlines their story.

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[1] *ibid.*, 7 April 1917.
[2] *ibid*., 14 April 1917.
[3] *ibid.*, 18 April 1917.
[4] *ibid.*, 25 April 1917.

Arthur Gillian reappears, briefly, in a small display ad for a South London Labour Demonstration to be held on Peckham Rye to celebrate May Day. “A.L. Gillian” is listed as one of speakers – his initials were in fact A.J. – along with J. Walton Newbould MA and Miss Eva Gore Booth, among others.[1] Newbold, a member of the BSP, went on to become Britain’s first communist MP. Eva Gore-Booth was an Irish poet, suffragist and feminist.

Meanwhile the activity of Dulwich’s NCF branch was continuing – the prison visiting, the picketing, the reporting to head office, the weekly meetings in Hansler Hall – as reported previously. [2] Much of the detail given there relates to 1917, including the publication in July of their booklet *What are Conscientious Objectors?*- used no doubt for local campaigning. Neither this or anything related to it is reported in the local papers. They prefer to raise their eyes above such unpatriotic proceedings.

[1] *Labour Leader*, 3 May 1917.
[2] J.H. Taylor, chapters 17 and 18.

4: The Derby murder plot

At national level, it was a year of *coups de théâtre*, staged both for and against the anti-war movement. The first of these, in March 1917, put Alice Wheeldon and members of her family in the dock on the sensational charge of conspiring to commit political murder. Alice, aged 51, was a second-hand clothes dealer from Derby. She, her son and daughters were on the marxist left in a town that was a centre of trade union militancy. One of the daughters, Hettie, had served as secretary of the Derby branch of the NCF. Son Willie, refused exemption as a CO, was in hiding, hoping to flee the country.

As anti-war radicals mother and daughter were involved in providing practical and emotional support, and sometimes accommodation, to young men fleeing from conscription. One day a man calling himself Alex Gordon turned up, claiming to be an objector on the run. Alice Wheeldon took him in and confided her worries about her son and son-in-law, both of whom she was trying to help secure a passage overseas.

Gordon was in fact an agent working for the intelligence unit of the ministry of munitions. PMS2, as it was styled, was concerned among things, to prevent trade union militants in the war industries linking up with anti-war networks like the NCF. It was also struggling to avoid incorporation into Scotland Yard's special branch. Gordon introduced a second more senior agent, Herbert Booth.

At the end of January Alice Wheeldon was arrested, together with her daughters Hettie and Winnie - both teachers - and her son-in-law Alf; the latter couple were living in Southampton. The trial was moved to London for greater impact. The attorney general, F.E. Smith, prosecuted with his usual florid rhetoric.

The allegation was that Alf Mason, who worked in a chemistry lab, had supplied phials of strychnine and curare for the purpose of poisoning Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson. The Wheeldons insisted that it was the agent Gordon who had requested the poisons – he said to deal with dogs guarding camps where COs were being held. He had promised to help Willie and other evaders. Willie meanwhile had been caught and sentenced to 18 months.

"Alex Gordon," though the principal witness, was not called to give evidence. Instead he was packed off to South Africa with £100. He returned to England in 1919, showing signs of serious mental disturbance. Both he and Booth were pretty clearly agents-provocateurs. The plot was a fantasy. The patriotic press went into frenzy however. The judge was very hostile, the defence inept. Alice Wheeldon confirmed that she would assist a man fleeing conscription and that she hated Lloyd George. She was sentenced

to ten years' hard labour. Her daughter Hettie was acquitted. Winnie and Alf Mason were sentenced to five and seven years respectively, despite the jury's recommendation of mercy on account of their age – 23 and 24.

Just before the end of the trial, extraordinarily, Emmeline Pankhurst was allowed to address the court. She dissociated herself and her organisation from these former members of the WSPU. "There is no life," she said, "which we think more essential to the safety of our country than that of the Prime Minister." Adam Hochschild points out that a mere four years earlier the WSPU had planted a bomb to blow him up and "wake his conscience" on the suffrage issue, as Mrs Pankhurst boasted at the time.[1]

Alice Wheeldon proved a defiant prisoner. First in Aylesbury jail, then in Holloway she went on hunger strike, as did Winnie and Alf Mason. After ten months they finally prevailed. Lloyd George did not want them to die in prison and become martyrs. So at the end of the year they was released on licence "as an act of clemency" at the express wish of the prime minister.

Alice Wheeldon and her daughter Hettie are vividly recreated in Pat Barker's novel *The Eye in the Door.* Her health weakened, Alice died of influenza in February 1919, saluted at her graveside as a socialist - "a prophet, not of the sweet and holy by and by but of the here and now." Her son Willie, newly released from prison, produced a large red flag and placed it over the coffin.[2]

In Derby Alice Wheeldon's former shop and home now has a civic society blue plaque. In London in March 2017, one hundred years after the trial, the Women's International League convened a gathering outside the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand. It was attended by Deirdre and Chloe Mason, Alice Wheeldon's Australian great grand-daughters. In November 2019 Chloe Mason lodged an application for a review of the conviction by the Criminal Cases Review Commission.[3]

[1] Adam Hochschild, *To End All Wars*, pp. 260-1.

[2] *ibid*., p. 351; Sheila Rowbotham, *Friends of Alice Wheeldon*. Curiously, Rowbotham omits the detail that Lloyd George was supposed to be shot with a poisoned dart as he played golf. Nor does she mention Mrs Pankhurst's intervention.

[3] See www.alicewheeldon.org

5: More wrangling at the tribunals

I

To return now to south London: hardly any conscientious objectors are reported as coming before the Military Service Tribunals, but these still had plenty of grist to grind on. When the Camberwell tribunal adjourned for a “well-earned holiday” in July, the first since the start of conscription, it had considered nearly 11,000 applications[1]. Tribunal proceedings are given less press coverage than previously. The *CP Times* had never reported them systematically. Now the *SLP* gives only excerpts, generally combining in one report items from Southwark, Camberwell and Lambeth, with greater emphasis on the last of these. Only the *Recorder*, covering Southwark and Bermondsey, gives the tribunals any space.

This space is regularly filled with arguments between tribunal members and their Military Representative. In Southwark these rows had started in 1916; they continued unabated. In February “a strong protest was made against the wholesale appeals made by the Military Representative against their decisions. It was held that the Tribunal were the final voice for the borough in view of the fact that the members were cognisant of the local and labour conditions generally.” Lieut. Butcher’s old adversary Mr Haynes proposed the tribunal adjourn in protest.

He cited the case of Mr Hurlock (misspelt Harlock in the report). He had charge of 24 shops, which was a big business asset to the borough. Lieut. Butcher retorted, “You do not suggest Mr Harlock will close his business because four men are going?”

> Mr Haynes: They are the pivots on which the firm is working. If you had been brought up in the commercial world you would not make that statement.
> The Military Representative: Will those shops have to close because two men have to go?

Mr Haynes replied that he knew for a fact that a tremendous amount of work was being done by the firm under enormous difficulties, and it was impossible to entrust the work to women.

William Hurlock had multiple outlets on the Walworth Road, selling drapery and clothing, footware, furniture, china and glassware. The tribunal adjourned to allow the recruiting officer Major Jackson to attend. Some members then met him in private but Haynes

[1] *SLP*, 20 July 1917.

declined to take part since he considered that such a matter of public importance - namely who had the final say - should be discussed in public. He was not prepared to walk into what he could only describe as British Prussianism in England, he said. He had seen enough of it elsewhere.[1]

The tribunal also wrote to the local government board. The board's reply endorsed Butcher's position, saying that "the increasing needs of the army required that from time to time exemptions which have already been granted be carefully revised in the light of altered circumstances." Haynes and Cllr. Layton said the board's letter did not cover the points raised; so it was agreed to send a deputation.[2]

Another case involved J. Sainsbury, "provision dealer" of Stamford Street. He applied in person for the exemption of 167 employees, the bulk of whom were managers of branch shops. In this case the tribunal members were noticeably less sympathetic. Cllr. Weaver said many one-man businesses had had to close down; now it was the turn of firms like this to share in the general misfortunes of the trade. Mr Sainsbury said they ought to tackle non-essential trades before they tackled the essential ones. The chairman, Cllr. Ward, said they then came to the problem of what was an essential trade. The firm must be prepared to close one or two of their shops.

> The Military Representative: They might easily close 50 of them. Mr Sainsbury said that would be a real hardship to the people. At the majority of their shops they were doing a very large trade." He admitted though that the firm had not had to close any shop. He asked for a little time to arrange matters. Mr Haynes, JP, asked if they could reasonably ask for that now. The country wanted men, and the firm wanted men, but the needs of the country must come first.

"The needs of the country" – Haynes had now switched sides, using the phrase he had objected to when lieut. Butcher had used it the year before. One can also see the inconsistent attitude of tribunal members towards the two employers. In the case of Sainsbury's the tribunal refused the appeals of 40 men, granted two months' exemption to 122 and gave the rest exemption until 15 March - that is, about two weeks.[3]

Curiously, when the abrasive Butcher and his assistant retired in April all was sweetness and light. Cllr. Ward paid tribute to the manner in which they had done their work - "their courtesy and kindness." Lieut. Butcher, in reply, said he was glad to have been associated with the tribunal and its work for, he explained, "he had learned much about the business, and had found many trades in the borough which were quite new to him."[4]

Butcher's successor was lieut. J.R. Cunliffe. But the same tensions persisted. In July Cunliffe drew attention to a new list of reserved occupations and pointed out that men previously granted exemption as being on that list were now removed from it, for example, persons engaged in the repair and upkeep of machinery. Ald. Boyd said many tribunals took no notice whatever of the certified lists.

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[1] *SBR*, 9 February 1917. My thanks to Lisa Soverall for this identification.
[2] *ibid.,* 16 February 1917.
[3] *ibid.*, 2 March 1917.
[4] *ibid.*, 13 April 1917.

At the same sitting Ald. Weaver referred to the case of a butcher in the London Road, against whose temporary exemption the Military Representative had appealed. “It was a matter of great public importance that a local Tribunal should have control over the food supplies and distribution in their district,” he said. It was more a matter for the local than the appeal tribunal to decide. Cunliffe said that under his instructions he was bound to appeal as the man was 30 years of age, and passed for general service.[1]

II

Similar “breezes” blew up at Bermondsey tribunal. In March the paper reported lieut. J.A. Davis, the Military Representative there, to be “in a somewhat aggressive mood” after he characterised as “absurd” a suggestion made by Cllr. Hanson relative to a particular applicant. The councillor objected to Davis indulging in personalities, saying,

> If the decision of the Tribunal did not accord with the representation of the Military Representative he appealed – he objected to the shadow of the Appeal Tribunal being everlastingly being held over their heads. If they were not allowed to give their own decisions it meant that the Military Representative decided the cases, and to this he objected.

These remarks were greeted with applause from the gallery, “some of those present observing that it was a ‘one-man Tribunal,’ nothing more or less.”

Cllr. Potten said that, having heard that Davis had been successful in 16 out of 18 appeals, they were compelled to pay some attention to his recommendations. He added: “He could not help thinking that in view of what was happening, their sitting was degenerating into something of a farce.” More applause; the chair, Cllr. Shearring, threatened to clear the gallery.[2]

In April F.J. Lardent, optician of Southwark Park Road, applied for exemption both on business grounds, and as a conscientious objector. When the Military Representative asked which ground he considered most important, Cllr. Mrs Richmond intervened to say she was prepared to consider both. “She knew,” says the report, “that the Military Representative had the strongest dislike to the conscientious objector, and was deliberately unfair.

> The Military Representative: That is rude, and it is a lie.
> Mrs Richmond: And you are rude, too, and shout everybody down. The Military Representative: I shall shout anybody down when they say I am deliberately unfair.

Cllr. Hanson proposed that the tribunal adjourn for a month to ascertain whether they should be ruled by the Military Representative. Cllr. Lawrence said he had very much pleasure in seconding the motion. The chairman said he thought it was very ungentlemanly to use such a remark to a lady. After more of the same the tribunal decided by four votes to three not to adjourn, but instead granted Mr Lardent three

[1] *ibid.*, 13 July 1917.
[2] *ibid.*, 9 March 1917.

months' exemption on business grounds. The Military Representative said he would appeal.[1]

The following week the Military Representative is quoted as saying the tribunal was "consistent only in its inconsistencies". His very public exasperation came after members, having granted a grocer's warehouseman a month's final exemption, decided to give him two months' more, with no new facts before them.

"Ald. Bulmer strongly objected to the remarks as well to other personal remarks made from time to time by the Military Representative. He said it was stated outside that the Military Representative was ruling the Tribunal. He would not even let the Mayor speak." And so on. Ald. Wills said the army had had its quota from Bermondsey, and if they took any more men from the borough he did not know what they were going to do.[2]

In May Cllr. Shearring said he understood lieut. Davis had attended the appeal tribunal to conduct appeals against their decisions. That was not fair, either to the appellants or the tribunals. The Military Representative interjected a remark while the mayor was speaking, whereupon Ald. Clarke objected, saying, "You are not going to rule the Tribunal whilst I am here."

The mayor said the tribunal ought to be represented at the appeal if Davis was present to support his appeals against their decisions. They had otherwise no chance of putting their side of a case, though they might have strong reasons for giving their decision. In response Davis said he had been called to a session of the appeal tribunal with reference to a particular case; and after that he had been asked to present further cases from his district as he knew the circumstances. He had not attended before because he had not had the time.[3]

And so it continued. Various other issues arose in Bermondsey. The tribunal voted in April not to make it a condition of exemption that a man should register for national service at the labour exchange. Ald. Wills, proposing, said the scheme was supposed to be voluntary. Indeed: it was called voluntary national service. Under the new ministry of that name men were encouraged to make themselves available for work in priority trades. To make it a condition, said Ald. Wills, showed the tribunal believed such men were not necessary to their employer, though the exemption or extension had been granted on the basis that they were. Cllr. Wallsgrove added that he did not like the condition, which savoured of compulsion.[4]

The scheme locally does not seem to have had many takers. The national director of enrolment, major Hamilton MP, had an argumentative reception when he spoke in March at a Sunday afternoon meeting in Bermondsey town hall. Even the MP was critical. Proposing a vote of thanks, H.J. Glanville said that had Bermondsey's union rate of 9½d an hour had been guaranteed if a man went to work elsewhere, they would not still be looking for the first signature to the volunteer scheme.

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[1] *ibid*., 13 April 1917. The Pearce register has Lardent on work of national importance, unspecified.
[2] *SBR*, 20 April 1917.
[3] *ibid.*, 18 May 1917.
[4] *ibid.,* 27 April 1917.

Seconding, Mr Spicer, secretary of the Society of Lightermen and Watermen, said it was folly to talk to them about self-sacrifice.

> Let them [the scheme's promoters] walk about Bermondsey and Rotherhithe and see the widows and fatherless children, and limbless men. Let them walk about the borough, go to Parker's-row and Tower Bridge-road, and see the sacrifices their wives were making to get enough to eat.

He went on to cite the price of onions: 5d. a pound, "which used to be five pounds for 2½ d." A voice: "And no tatties." (Cheers)[1]

The national service scheme proved a failure, and not only in Bermondsey. Neville Chamberlain resigned as director-general. The ministry was reorganised and, under Sir Auckland Geddes, took on overall responsibility for manpower.[2]

Bermondsey's Labour Co-operative Bakery was a continuing source of irritation to the tribunal. The previous autumn Charles Ammon had applied for the exemption of seven employees: three roundsmen, two bakers (both single men), an assistant caretaker in charge of the machinery, and a caretaker. With the exception of the assistant caretaker, who was given three months' extension, all were refused; two of the men had applied as COs.

Ammon asked what the bakery was to do without roundsmen. Cllr. Potten said, "Let the people fetch their own bread." The Military Representative added: "Do you think people will starve if you close down some of your branches? They will not go without their bread, but will get it from some other shop. They must put up with some inconvenience."[3]

At the beginning of June 1917 Ammon came before the tribunal again. Now seeking the exemption of a caretaker-cleaner, he was asked by the Military Representative whether they were employing COs. "I do not know, but we may be," he replied. "Are you not employing Edmund Backhouse, the late peace candidate at Stockport [he meant Stockton], as a checker and packer?" Ammon: "I cannot say."

"But he got his exemption at Darlington as a CO on the basis that he was doing work of national importance at your bakery. Cannot the COs who come to you do the dirty work of this cleaner? I think they should and let this man go." He claimed the bakery was not run in the national interest but to find jobs for conscientious objectors.

Cllr. Potten, however, said the bakery was keeping down the price of bread, and as this was only a C2 man – passed for service at home – he proposed a two month extension. Lieut. Davis insisted, "C2 men are wanted, and wanted badly," but Cllr. Shearring supported the extension for the same reason as Cllr. Potten; it was agreed on a majority vote.[4] One can see the inconsistency.

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[1] *ibid.*, 23 March 1917.
[2] Arthur Marwick, p. 253.
[3] *SBR,* 27 October 1916.
[4] *ibid.,* 1 June 1917.

III

About Camberwell tribunal there is not much to say. The reporting is too limited, with no mention of conscientious objectors. The main point of interest is the appearance of Mr Fred Karno, “the well-known public entertainer,” of Vaughan Road, Camberwell. He sought an exemption for his general manager, F. H. Sandy, and in February was granted three months’ deferment.

He applied again in June. He said Sandy, aged 41 and passed C1 (fit for garrison duty at home), managed all his business undertakings and supervised more than 100 people. Unimpressed, the mayor enquired why Mr Karno could not manage his own business. The Military Representative: “Apparently Mr Karno does no business. He seems to leave it to Mr Sandy.” His further application was refused.[1]

Mr Karno had given his name to a self-mocking soldier’s song - sung to the tune of “The Church’s One Foundation”

> We are Fred Karno’s Army,
> What bloody use are we?
> We cannot fight, we cannot shoot,
> So we joined the infantry.
> But when we get to Berlin,
> The Kaiser he will say,
> “Hoch! Hoch! Mein Gott,
> What a jolly fine lot
> Are the ragtime infantry!”

Did the tribunal know that? Probably not.

[1] *SLP,* 23 February and 15 June 1917.

6: Short rations and air raids

I

Advancing over the year is local news of the food crisis. “Poultry-Keeping on Progressive Lines” and “Hints for Allotment Holders” were already regular items in the *South London Press*. Under variant headings they joined were each week by “Tackling the Food Problem,” and other titles, so that by August 1917 these and similar items on food economy were regularly taking up a whole page.[1] They were prominent features in the other papers too.

As elsewhere, land in Bermondsey’s gardens and open spaces were turned over to vegetable growing. Other allotments were established on derelict sites taken over under the Land Cultivation Order, an extension of DORA. W.H. Aggett, the council superintendent, supplied plants, seeds and other requisites. Some of the LCC schools took up gardening.[2]

The *CP Times* reported a meeting of greengrocers in Camberwell council chamber to discuss the town clerk’s proposal for rationing potatoes in the borough by means of potato tickets. Mr Cleaver asked what use the cards would be if there were no potatoes to supply. In the whole of Nunhead there had not been a ton during the past week. All the supplies seemed to go to the large shops on the main roads – the smaller traders got none. To which a main road trader retorted “that the big traders waited at the markets for potatoes while the small traders were seeking coal and making money that way.”

The scheme is not fully explained in the article, which says vaguely that an endeavour would be made to ensure that Camberwell obtained its fair share of potatoes on the market. It was suggested that the consumption of potatoes per head per week should not exceed 2lb. It’s an example of the local initiatives mentioned earlier.[3]

In May Dr Marion Phillips is reported speaking on “The War and Food Prices” at the South London Ethical Society, in Camberwell New Road. She pointed out the “futility and absurdity” of urging people to use substitutes for bread and potatoes when they were completely at the mercy of the private competitive system. The only satisfactory solution, in her view, lay in communal kitchens, where people could buy cooked meals -

[1] See the *SLP* of 17 August 1917, for example.
[2] Henry Fuller Morriss, pp. 205-9; *SBR*, 28 September 1917; Jerry White, pp. 174, 205.
[3] *CPT*, 28 March 1917; Arthur Marwick, p. 194

“prepared in the most economical and efficient manner from those foodstuffs which from time to time should happen to be available in sufficient quantities.” [1]

Marion Phillips, though not identified, was a leading figure in the Women’s Labour League. Her solution was adopted, on an experimental basis, two kitchens being reported simultaneously later the same month. One was opened by the Queen and Mrs Lloyd George on Westminster Bridge Road. Another, “Camberwell’s war kitchen,” was set up near the canal in Kempshead Road hall, courtesy of the Rev. H. Vezey, vicar of St. Mark’s, Cobourg Road. It was also opened by Mrs George.

“The kitchen will serve the needs of a densely crowded district, in which children seem to be exceedingly plentiful,” said the *CPT* unctuously of the latter. “The one good feature about it is that there is not even the slightest taint of charity in the scheme. The people will pay for what they get – just as they would pay for a purchase at a shop.” According to the journalist Michael MacDonagh the aim was also “to instruct the poorer classes how food, by proper cooking, can be made to yield the most nutrition with the least waste.[2]

In June the *CP Times* gave a list of maximum food prices, as laid down by the Food Controller. They include: chocolate 3d an oz, lentils (large) 8d a lb, lentils (small) 7d a lb, maize flour 4d an oz, oatmeal 6½d a lb, potatoes 1½d a lb, peas (yellow split) 6d a lb, milk 2d a quart, meat - “no retail price fixed yet.” [3]

In August Bermondsey council is reported setting up a food control committee “in accordance with the instructions of Lord Rhondda.” The mayor said the controller had laid down three main principles: that supplies must be conserved, that supplies must be distributed equally between rich and poor, and prices must be kept down. “Strong powers would be conferred on the committee of fixing the price of food stuffs generally. They would have to deal with the distribution of sugar cards.” Twelve councillors were elected.[4]

Meanwhile a framed advert by David Greig, of Denmark Hill, asked, “WHY BUY BUTTER - Butter is dear, when you can get a fine wholesome/substitute like ‘Romo’ Margarine at half the price?/Why go on using Butter?/BUY/‘ROMO’ MARGARINE,/A Pure Nuts and Milk Margarine/11d per lb” The firm was also purveying “Nula ” – “a lard substitute made from the cream of nuts.[5]

II

The war impinged in innumerable other ways. For example: in February the mayor of Camberwell appealed by advert for subscriptions to the Victory Loan. “Every penny loaned for additional armaments and munitions hastens PEACE,” he promised, and secured £102,000. The same month Horatio Bottomley (“England’s War Orator”) was announced in bold as coming to speak at the Surrey Theatre in Blackfriars Road,

[1] *SLP*, 4 May 1917.
[2] *CPT*, 23 May 1917; *SLP*, 25 May 1917; Michael MacDonagh, pp. 193-4.
[3] *SLP*, 29 June 1917.
[4] *SRB*, 17 August 1917.
[5] *CPT,* 12 September 1917.

"supported by Star Vaudeville Company." At Newington Public Hall the mayor of Southwark, flanked by John Hodge, the (Labour) minister of labour and the comedian George Robey, drummed up female recruits for munition work. Pointing to the ladies on the platform, Hodge declared "They are specimens of vigor and beauty. If I was a young chap and hadn't a wife, I should be looking after some of them."[1]

A full-page appeal sought to fund a YMCA hut for Camberwell Green - somewhere servicemen could get a cup of tea or coffee and perhaps a meal, served by uniformed lady volunteers. It's pictured as a pavilion with a veranda on two sides. The hut opened at the end of May, offering four billiard tables, a "well-patronised lawn" a powerful gramophone providing good music and "concerts freely given."[2]

About this time Bermondsey, along with other councils, hosted a public meeting on "the hidden plague" of venereal disease. Dr Frank Collie warned that there were something like 465,000 syphilitics in London and three million in Great Britain. "[E]very towel and fork was capable of spreading the disease, and… a man who innocently kissed his sister or sweetheart might pass it on." It was of enormous economic importance that the disease be stopped. Treatment was absolutely free.[3]

These were exceptional times, obviously. And yet: to some extent, opined the *CP Times,* "the war has become part and parcel of our daily lives. The novelty has worn off… That is rather unfortunate, because it is important that the nation as a whole should never forget for one moment that we are engaged in a life and death struggle for existence…" [4]

III

The underfed civilian population were about to be reminded of that. Air-raids on London resumed in earnest in midsummer 1917, raids not by Zeppelin but by the mighty Gotha, a two-engine biplane with a wing-span of some 72 feet. The first major attack took place on the bright sunny morning of 13 June when a squadron of 14, too high for anti-aircraft fire, dropped bombs over a wide swathe of the capital: from East Ham and Stratford in the east to Holborn in the west, from Bermondsey and Southwark in the south to Stamford Hill in the north. A total of 145 people were killed and 382 injured; in terms of lives lost it was the most destructive raid of the war.[5]

That was only the beginning. On the morning of 7 July, a Saturday, Michael MacDonagh was on the top deck of a tram crossing Blackfriars Bridge when he saw what looked "like a flock of mighty eagles with large wings outstretched in the sunshine… The height at which they were flying was so low, their approach was so leisurely, and so well-kept was their fan-like formation, that to suppose they were enemies was preposterous." Then, at the northern end of the bridge, an anti-aircraft gun opened fire, bombs started falling, and he had to dive for cover in the underground station. White says that millions watched this stately progress by a fleet of 20 machines. They caused the greatest

[1] *CPT*, 3 and 17 February; 10 February 1917; Jerry White, p. 145.
[2] *CPT*, 17 February; *SLP*, 8 June 1917.
[3] ibid.
[4] *CPT*, 23 May 1917.
[5] Jerry White, p. 212.

physical devastation of the war, mainly in and around the City. This time 53 people were killed and 182 injured.[1]

"We British are a proud race," editorialised the *CP Times,* "and it hurts our pride to think that a squadron of enemy aircraft can fly over the capital of the empire in perfect formation, dealing out destruction to life and property, and then fly away again without the loss of single machine. That they subsequently suffered loss on their return journey is quite beside the point. The mischief had been done…"

The trouble was that planes which might have served as fighter defence had been moved to the western front to act as "the eyes of the army," to quote Lloyd George. The paper accepted this must be the government's priority – "But surely after nearly three years of war we ought to be in a position to supply all our needs, both at home and abroad."[2]

After the first of these attacks the home secretary, Sir George Cave, told the Commons that it was neither practicable not desirable to give warnings of possible air raids, which might never materialise and come to be disregarded. False alarms would also interrupt work. After the second attack he announced a volte-face. After various trials the government decided that warning would be given by "sound bombs" or explosive rockets, fired from the towers of 36 selected fire stations. These would be supplemented by policemen, usually on bicycles, blowing whistles and carrying "Take Cover!" signs.[3]

No warning would be given at night however, and it was night attacks that followed over the autumn. After 7 July the war cabinet appointed a committee under general Smuts to examine the arrangements for air defence and to review air policy generally. On the first the committee, reporting within a week, recommended establishing an air defence area under the executive command of a single officer. The man appointed, major-general E. B. Ashmore, established a ring of anti-aircraft guns at a 25-mile radius around the capital. They used sound-spotting techniques and a system of numbered squares on the map to meet enemy aircraft with vertical fire. At the same time the number of fighter squadrons available for the defence of London was gradually increased to eight by the end of the year.[4] In his second report Smuts proposed the creation of an air ministry to bring together the Royal Fying Corps, which was run by the army, and the Royal Naval Air Service. Predictably perhaps, the army and navy put up fierce resistance. The RAF only came into being in April 1918.[5]

The bombings provoked heated debate about retaliation, in Bermondsey council for example. There Cllr. Oake proposed there should be similar British raids on German open towns, subject to naval and military considerations. He did not ask that they should keep an army of airships here, but he did ask that the capital of the Empire and its people should be properly protected. "The soldiers and sailors fighting for the country bitterly complained that at the same time their women and children were allowed to be murdered at home."

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[1] Michael MacDonagh, p. 198; Jerry White, pp. 213-14.
[2] *CPT*, 14 July 1917; Jerry White, p. 214.
[3] *ibid*., pp. 214-5; *SLP*, 27 July and 24 August 1917, Michael MacDonagh, p.202
[4] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 248-9.
[5] *ibid*., pp. 252-8.

Others agreed. Cllr. Layman said he could not support reprisals, as he could not agree to the killing of innocent women and children. There came a point when they could not compete with brutality. Cllr. Dr Richmond (Alfred Salter's partner) urged that there should be more attacks on the enemy's naval and military centres. Despite others speaking against reprisals the resolution in favour was agreed by 19 votes to nine.[1]

A Southwark town meeting in Newington public hall, described as not large but representative, also voted for reprisals. "Whilst there was practically a unanimity of opinion that reprisals were necessary to teach the Huns a much needed lesson," the *SLP* reported, "there was a divergence of opinion as to the most effective method to be used."[2]

The same paper canvassed the views of churchmen as well as civic figures on the bombing of German civilians. The mayors of Bermondsey and Southwark were both in favour - the mayor of Camberwell is not quoted. Some of the clergymen were more equivocal. The Rev. C. Coleridge Harper, rector of Newington, said that unlike the Germans, "we have stood for honour and clean fighting and Christian principles, and for these the majority of our soldiers fought and died. Are we now to prove that our principles were only nominally better than theirs?"

The Rev. F. H. Gillingham, rector of Bermondsey, queried the meaning of reprisals. "If… you mean that we should endeavour deliberately to kill and maim a lot of women and children, then of course no sensible man would be in favour of them." But, he went on, "War itself is one huge reprisal… We are setting up a deliberate blockade to starve Germany. Now to starve Germany or trying to starve Germany means death and untold misery to thousands of women and children. Is that a reprisal?"

He concludes: "Let us not be too squeamish. War is horrible, illogical, un-Christian, and if we go to war we must do horrible, illogical and un-Christian things. If by bombing German towns we could keep their airmen busy and prevent them from coming over here, I don't see any logical reason against our doing it, only in that case it isn't a reprisal, but a deterrent."

Dr F.B. Meyer, the Baptist minister at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, said: "There is no doubt as to the verdict of Christianity on this difficult question of reprisals and it is contained in the one great sentence: 'Vengeance is mine: I will repay.'" But then he added, "I can only ask… that [reprisals] should, as much as possible be confined to fortified places and that as much care as possible should be taken to avoid the slaughter of innocent victims."

The Rev. John Scott Lidgett, warden of Bermondsey Settlement told the paper: "Our business is with the enemy aeroplanes on the Western Front, and in their nests on the coast of Flanders. Let them be attacked and destroyed there. That is the only way… But let us above all avoid the criminal and short-sighted folly of doing to German women and children as the Germans have done to ours." [3] British aircraft did reach out to bomb cities in the west of Germany, but not until the following year.

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[1] *SBR*, 27 July 1917.
[2] *SLP*, 6 July 1917.
[3] *SLP*, 22 June 1917.

7: The Leeds convention and after

I

Events were on the move in Russia. In May the provisional government, under growing pressure from the soviets, issued a statement of war aims that included a speedy settlement on the basis of “no indemnities, no annexations.” It was a position warmly endorsed in the *Tribunal*. Russell wrote

> Russia has brought a new hope into the world – the hope that, after all the bloodshed and tyranny of these last years, it is still possible to bring liberty and fraternity to the actual operations of Governments, if the peoples will play their part.[1]

In Britain, the *Herald*’s “Charter of Freedom” campaign faded out and the initiative passed to a broad ad hoc body called the United Socialist Council, embracing both the ILP and the marxist BSP. It convened a conference of Labour, socialist and progressive organisations to celebrate the Russian revolution and consider how to emulate it. Though the NCF as a body appears to have played no part in the arrangements, Charles Ammon was one of the convenors, and 4 Duke Street was the address used by the committee.[2]

In advance of the conference the *Herald* ran an article across two pages headed “How Britain must answer Russia.” It exhorted,

> Every man or woman who loves Britain, every true patriot, every man that has fought and who is fighting in the war, every munition worker, every mother who has lost a son, every wife who had lost a husband in the war should join with us in demanding not a pro-German peace, not a peace dictated by German militarists, but a peace on the lines laid down by President Wilson and by the Russian Revolutionists – a peace based on equity and justice.

Beneath the headline however the paper quoted two lines from G.K. Chesterton’s poem “The Secret People”.

> It may be we shall rise the last, as Frenchmen rose the first;
> Our wrath come after Russia’s wrath, and our wrath be the worst.[3]

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[1] *Tribunal* 60, 24 May 1917.
[2] Jo Vellacott, p. 158. Philip Snowden in his autobiography (p.449) says he was chairman.
[3] *The Herald*, 26 May 1917.

According to Russell, delegates to the Leeds Convention on 3 June numbered 2,500 – representing 209 local Labour parties, 294 ILP branches, 371 trade union organisations, 88 BSP branches, 54 women's organisations and 118 peace societies, UDC branches and other bodies. The meeting was chaired by Robert Smillie. George Lansbury was absent, recovering from a gall-bladder operation. Alfred and Ada Salter were there on behalf of Bermondsey ILP. Russell, by his own account, was given the biggest ovation.[1]

There were four resolutions. One, proposed by Ramsay MacDonald, acclaimed the revolution. The second, moved by Philip Snowden, called on the British government to adopt the Russian policy of peace without indemnity or annexations. Charles Ammon, stepping up from his recent appearance before Bermondsey tribunal, proposed the third. It urged, on the lines of the *Herald*'s "Charter of Freedom" campaign, that Britain should follow Russia's example by introducing universal suffrage, freedom of speech and the press, freedom from restrictive labour laws and a general amnesty for political and religious prisoners. Russell spoke in support, focussing on conscientious objectors and stressing their part in bringing about the "new state of opinion in this country and the world." This short speech brought him his acclamation, confirmed by other witnesses.[2]

The second resolution drew hostile interventions from "captain" Tupper, of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union, and from Ernest Bevin. Tupper asked: how could the widows and orphans of the sailor victims of German submarines be compensated unless Germany was compelled to pay an indemnity? He was given a rough ride. "Burly Bevan [*sic*], of the Bristol Dockers," – so styled in *Labour Leader* – asked the fatuous friends of the ILP, as he called them, "When they had declared upon their policy of peace and there was no response from Germany, should there then be a vigorous prosecution of the war until Germany did respond?" Would they stand by their Bermondsey resolution? This was the one passed at the party's 1916 conference in Newcastle which called on socialists not to support any war, even of a defensive nature.

"For himself, he had little hope of any response from the German Socialists after his experience of them at the Newport Conference, where they refused a 'general strike' policy as against war on the ground that it would make their association an illegal one and cause them to be 'snuffed out.'" [3]

The fourth resolution called for the immediate establishment, in every town, urban and rural district, of workers' and soldiers' councils; with the aim of "initiating and co-ordinating working-class activity in support of the policy set out in the foregoing resolutions, and to work strenuously for a peace made by the peoples of the various countries, and for the complete political and economic emancipation of international labour." The resolution continued but this was the core of it.

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[1] Jo Vellacott., p. 161; Graham Taylor, *Ada Salter*, p. 150.

[2] Jo Vellacott, pp. 161-2.

[3] *Labour Leader*, 7 June 1917. The reference to Newport is obscure. The Second International never met there and here is no reference to any such conference in Alan Bullock's biography. He has a different version of the speech (p.75). *The Herald*'s report (9 June 1917) does not mention Newport but has Bevin asking whether there was any evidence that the German socialists were prepared to reverse their policy on the war.

Proposer and seconder differed as to what it meant, however. W.C. Anderson MP, of the ILP, advocated "the conquest of political power by an hitherto disinherited class" - but said the organisation it was proposed to set up was "not subversive, not unconstitutional unless the authorities care to make it so." Robert Williams, secretary of the National Transport Workers' Federation, said the resolution meant the dictatorship of the proletariat. He urged delegates, "Have as little concern for the British Constitution as the Russians you are praising had for the dynasty of the Romanoffs." [1]

For some, certainly, this was a revolutionary moment; though, as Vellacott notes, none of the four resolutions demanded more than basic liberal reforms, despite the promulgation of soviets. Moreover the provisional committee of the national workers' and soldiers' council included among its 13 members such parliamentary constitutionalists as MacDonald and Snowden. Ammon was a member, as was Tom Quelch, the Nunhead compositor and one-time columnist in the C*P Times*. He acted as secretary.[2]

The report on the *Tribunal*'s front page said, "A clear call has now gone out for a People's Peace," and "The ideal to be worked for is Revolution." Inside Russell wrote, "A new spirit is abroad. All who were at the Leeds Conference must have realised that British tyranny will soon go the way of the tyranny of the Tsar." [3]

A few weeks later Russell discussed the question as to whether pacifists could co-operate with social revolutionaries in their shared objective of bringing the war to an end. It was time, he wrote, for each individually to decide for himself. For his part, "It is impossible to doubt that the abolition of the capitalist would be a tremendous step towards the abolition of war, and ought therefore to be supported, if it becomes feasible, by those who aim at establishing a secure peace throughout the world."

> The argument that such movements may lead to a class-war and violence and hatred seems to me by no means sufficient to deter us from participation… It must be our business, if we participate, to do what we can to keep the pacifist spirit alive.[4]

II

The provisional committee issued a manifesto and sent guidance from 4 Duke Street on the formation and constitution of local workers' and soldiers' councils. Another circular announced it had divided the country, including Ireland, into 13 districts and was arranging a conference in each - setting out not only the date and place but also the agenda and the resolutions to be discussed.[5]

District 9 (London and Home Counties) held its conference at the Brotherhood Church, Southgate Road, Hackney on 28 July. It was the scene of probably the best known political disruption of the war, incited in advance and inflicted by the large gang of patriotic thugs. Vellacott quotes from Russell's letter to Ottoline Morrell:

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[1] *The Herald*, loc cit.
[2] Jo Vellacott, pp. 161-3; Quelch: report in *Labour Leader*, 12 July 1917.
[3] *Tribunal* no.61, 2 June 1917.
[4] *ibid. no.* 65, 5 July 1917.
[5] Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/22. Manifesto: *The Herald*, 7 July 1917.

> A vast crowd of roughs and criminals (paid) led, or rather guided from behind, by a few merely foolish soldiers (Colonials) broke in – it was only due to great self-restraint on the part of delegates that there was no bloodshed. There were two utterly bestial women with knotted clubs, who set to work to thwack all the women of our lot they could get at – the roughs had horrible degraded faces.

Russell gives a rather different account in his autobiography. In both he says he was saved from the mob by an unknown woman who flung herself between him and them. In the *Tribunal* he called the soldiers "decent young men" - probably every one of whom could have been won over by half an hour's quiet conversation; and suggested adopting a policy of passive resistance on such occasions.

> There would be a good deal of violence… some people would have arms and legs broken. But before long the soldiers would be impressed by the courage of those whom they had imagined to be cowards and by the ignominy of violence to which no resistance is offered.

According to Vellacott it is to Catherine Marshall that we owe the story – true or *ben trovato*? – that the police intervened to protect Russell, not as a distinguished mathematician and philosopher, but only when they were told he was the brother of an earl. Marshall appears not to have been present in fact, for writing on August 8 he assured her: "I was not knocked down or in any way hurt at Southgate Brotherhood Church – I only had my new hat stolen!"[1] Two weeks later the church was advertising cheerfully, "Meetings as usual - only more so!" The subject that Sunday: "Love in modern life." [2]

The *Herald* reported on district conferences in Swansea and Bristol. Both were modestly well attended. Swansea drew in 16 delegates from miners' lodges, 13 from the NUR, eight from the dockers, eight from trades councils, plus others from the ILP, the BSP and smaller organisations. "Rowdyism" broke up the Swansea meeting but that in Bristol took place without disturbance, as did district conferences in Leicester and Norwich. "Riotous scenes" disrupted the Newcastle meeting.[3] The *Labour Leader* too carried a couple of news items in August, including reports from district conferences in Glasgow, Portsmouth and Manchester.[4]

Ian Macpherson, under-secretary of state for war informed the Commons that, in accordance with army regulations, soldiers would not be allowed to join the workers' and soldiers' councils.[5] In September the *Herald* published a letter from Tom Quelch urging comrades everywhere to proceed with the formation of local councils. "Any day now may bring peace, and it is essential that the working-class movement should be in a position to reabsorb into its ranks our comrades in the Army as they are demobilised, and also to be able effectively to voice their demands and grievances." [6]

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[1] Jo Vellacott, pp. 170-1; Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography*, pp. 254-5; *Tribunal* no. 69, 2 August 1917; Catherine Marshall archive, *loc.cit*.
[2] *The Herald*, 11 August 1917.
[3] *The Herald*, 4 August 1917.
[4] *Labour Leader*, 9 and 16 August 1917.
[5] *The Herald*, 18 August 1917.
[6] *The Herald*, 8 September 1917.

Two weeks later readers learned that Quelch was under guard in Hounslow barracks. Court-martialled after failing to report, he was sentenced to 112 days hard labour. He served it in Wormwood Scrubs until opting for the Home Office scheme, under which he was transferred to Knutsford work centre in December.[1]

Former soldiers were apparently also bound by army regulations. In October ex-private Simmons – secretary of the Midlands section – delivered a speech in Town Hall Square, Rochdale, in which he appealed, "on behalf of his comrades" in three regiments, for a negotiated peace. The police warned him not to do it again. Two days later, when about to speak, he was arrested.

James Simmons, a Birmingham man, had joined the army in 1911, had seen war service in Egypt, the Dardanelles and France, had been wounded three times and had his left foot amputated. The meeting went ahead, after which the crowd gathered in front of the police cells, sang the "Red Flag" and cheered enthusiastically. The following day, says a lengthy report, Simmons limped through town to the station, on crutches and under military escort, en route for Chester.[2]

But then the general momentum faltered. Russell, to quote Vellacott, "believed that the revolution not only brought peace nearer but made a totally different kind of peace - a people's peace – possible." But on the other hand: "if the people of England and Germany did not at once follow the lead of the Russians the opportunity would pass and might not come again for a long time."[3]

He strove to involve the NCF in the new movement. But the national committee, meeting in mid-July, was divided and voted only 6-5 in favour of recommending that branches send delegates to the district conferences. The decision was reported in the *Tribunal* no. 67, of 19 July. Minutes of this meeting seems however not to have gone out, as evidenced by a later set of minutes, dated 1 September and annotated in the margin at this point "Why not done?" and then ticked.

Also in the Marshall archive is a note to her, dated 26 September, from her colleague Ernest Hunter in which he says the resolution is "rather dead now." He suggests, "It would serve no useful purpose to send the resolution and amendment at this late stage." A notice did go out, in October, but it set out the terms of the defeated amendment, explaining that as the NCF was set up for a specific purpose, it was not advisable for it to identify itself with a movement whose programme "must involve proposals of an economic, political and social character to which the organisation as such does not necessarily subscribe." In short: there seems to have been some foot-dragging. The other members of the Joint Advisory Committee – the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Friends' Service Committee – were also wary of involvement with these revolutionary initiatives.[4]

It is noticeable that George Lansbury – back at work in August - advocated a conciliatory and non-sectarian role for the new bodies in promoting labour unity. True, the *Herald* formulated "Plans for the People's Party" - proposing state ownership and workers'

[1] *The Herald*, 22 September 1917; Cyril Pearce, Register.
[2] *Labour Leader*, 4 October 1917.
[3] Jo Vellacott, p. 164.
[4] *ibid*., pp. 167-9; Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/24 and 25.

control - which it was hoped the district conferences would adopt. But its editor insisted: “We shall need unity and solidarity more than ever after the war. My great interest in the new Councils is that they shall bring us all together… in the great task of social reconstruction…This is the sort of work the Councils must undertake, and we must undertake it in order to prevent anarchy and confusion at the end of the war. I repeat, those who are using mob law and violence are doing a great disservice to the whole community.”

His column “The Way of the World” was explicit in September,

> What is intended is that Labour, Socialist, and other progressive organisations should unite through the Trades Councils and local Labour Parties, and by this means form the local Councils. There is and never has been any question of advocating or suggesting a physical force revolution.[1]

This is a far cry from the people’s wrath that the *Herald*, quoting Chesterton, seemed to envisage in May.

In November the *Leader* reported the first full meeting of the national Soviet. It listed the representatives of the (now) 12 districts (district 9: Miss Sylvia Pankhurst) and over the signature of Albert Inkpin printed a seven-point statement of the council’s objects. Inkpin was secretary of the BSP and Quelch’s replacement.

Point 1 reads: “The Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council has been formed primarily as a propagandist body, not as a rival to or to supplant any of the existing working-class organisations, but to infuse into them a more active spirit of liberty.” And so, denying any aspiration to seize power, the whole movement melted away.[2] It was not revived by events in Russia.

Vellacott gives a summary of the possible reasons. These included a disappointing response to the district conferences, differences between the ILP and the hard revolutionaries of the British Socialist Party and the failure of parliamentarians like Snowden to take the soviets seriously.[3]

Or vice versa: “Who can imagine MacDonald or the Andersons or even the Snowdens leading a revolution of the Russian type even if there existed the material for such a revolution in the British working class,” asked Beatrice Webb in her diary. She notes with an exclamation that the one example of workers’ control to follow from the Leeds convention was the refusal of seamen’s union members to allow MacDonald and E.C.Fairchild, of the BSP, to sail from Aberdeen to discuss peace and war with members of the Petrograd soviet. [4] Lansbury and his paper must also have had some influence in de-radicalising the councils.

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[1] *The Herald*, 23 June, 4 August and 8 September 1917.

[2] *Labour Leader*, 1 November 1917.

[3] In his post-war memoir Lansbury says the councils failed because of the “insane rivalry” between the two parties. *My Life*, p.188. Philip Snowden in his autobiography (p. 456) says nothing came of the resolution on soviets because when the organising committee met afterwards, “we considered it was unnecessary to carry out the proposals.”

[4] Beatrice Webb, *Diary* volume 3, pp. 280-1. W.C. Anderson was married to Mary Macarthur, head of the National Federation of Women Workers.

Vellacott remarks that none of the advocates of radical change sought to apply their rhetoric to the considerable unrest in the factories; though some elements at a local level may have merged into the shop stewards' movement. As she says, there's still something to be researched here.[1]

III

Working-class discontent was acute that year, fuelled by a variety of grievances which differed in emphasis from place to place. In March the government - not for the first time – sought to extend dilution to factories beyond those engaged in war production. Union leaders had accepted dilution in the latter - which, as we saw, extended far beyond munitions - on the undertaking that it would not be introduced into "civilian" enterprises of the sort their members were likely to return to after the war. In April the government withdrew the Trade Card Agreement which had given the ASE and other unions control of the call-up. It proposed replacing it with a Schedule of Protected Occupations to be operated by the new department of National Service.[2]

These grievances meshed with the format for unofficial shop steward-led action developed on the Clyde to produce the May strikes, which at their peak involved two hundred thousand engineering workers.[3] It started in Rochdale when a firm there put some of its women workers on skilled work without union agreement, then sacked the men who refused to induct them. In London the bus workers came out, and there were strikes of skilled engineers servicing the machinery of munitions production in Crayford, Erith and above all Woolwich, making thousands of operatives idle. Eight of the leading shop stewards were arrested under DORA. The police raided union offices.

A conference representing 100 strike committees met in Walworth and sought a meeting with Christopher Addison, the minister of munitions. With the backing of the war cabinet Addison refused to go behind the backs of the ASE leaders. These agreed however to a tripartite meeting at which the strikers' leaders put their case. They then left the union executive to negotiate. The result was that the Trade Card Agreement was dropped, the government's new schedule was accepted and later extended to other craft unions. The charges against the arrested men were withdrawn.[4]

Meanwhile the bill to extend dilution was suspended while the ASE balloted its members. Addison offered major concessions. The membership voted decisively against the proposal.[5]

Lloyd George took the unrest very seriously. In June he appointed eight regional commissions of enquiry, with a brief to report in three weeks. The report on London and the South East identified food prices as the chief grievance, combined with what was

[1] Jo Vellacott, pp. 163, 165-71.
[2] G.D.H. Cole, Trade Unions and Munitions, p. 134.
[3] This wartime disruption needs to be kept in perspective. Even in 1918, the worst year for strikes, far fewer working days were lost than in 1913, the quietest year pre-war. Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, p. 44.
[4] Arthur Marwick, pp. 203-7; Jerry White, pp. 206-7; John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 110-13.
[5] G.D.H. Cole, pp.148-51.

seen as the failure of the government to ensure fair distribution of both food and fuel. This feeling was intensified by the general belief that the high prices were due, in large part, to profiteering at the expense of the community, and especially the poor. Industrial fatigue was ranked next - a state of nervous exhaustion caused by long hours, overtime being a necessity to "pull through" economically.

Housing is mentioned as an issue in areas with large munition works. More generally there was resentment at "inequality of sacrifice," a category that embraced the leaving certificate system "which bound the men and left the employers free to discharge them;" the inability of the employees to negotiate a wage rise without government consent; and the fact that skilled workers were mostly on day rates while semi- and unskilled men and women were mostly on piece-work, so that the former as a whole earned much less than the latter.

Among the lesser factors was the price and shortage of beer. Pubs in Woolwich were frequently closed for days at a time. And lack of confidence in the government, due to breached undertakings and undue interference, plus the multiplication of departments and the continual changes in personnel. "From the evidence it would appear that the recent stoppages of work were directed rather against the Government than against the Employers." The report summed up forcefully:

> The unrest is real, widespread and in some directions extreme, and such as to constitute a national danger unless dealt with promptly and effectively. We are at this moment within view of a possible social upheaval or at least extensive and manifold strikes. No tinkering schemes will meet the requirements of the situation. It is necessary to secure to the working man a fair share of the product of his labour, and a just participation in the establishment of the conditions of industry. The workmen consider they should be dealt with as men.

Or more specifically: the frankly revolutionary element within the wider shop steward movement was at present a small minority, says the report; "but unless some satisfactory arrangement is made for representation of workpeople in shop negotiations there is a danger that a large section of the shop stewards proper will make common cause with [them]." A sign perhaps of such a convergence came in July 1917 when Addison and Robertson, the chief of the imperial general staff, addressed a meeting of 2,000 engineering workers at Woolwich arsenal. A section at the back of the audience met them with a chorus of "The Red Flag." [1]

In July Winston Churchill, returning to front-bench politics, took over as minister of munitions. He dropped the proposal to extend dilution into the "commercial and private" sector, and, with effect from October, abolished leaving certificates. This did not mean free movement of labour however, for a new order under DORA prevented anyone engaged on munition work from changing to work of "another class," ie. non-munition work. Thus, writes Cole, the munition worker acquired freedom to shift from one job to another, as long he remained on munition work, but even that freedom was somewhat

[1] Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest: Report of the Commissioners for the London and South-Eastern Area, Cd. 8666, 1917; Jerry White, p. 207.

constrained by regulation 8B of DORA, which prevented one employer poaching a munition worker from another.[1]

Nevertheless this represented a real concession to working-class unrest. Some workers - in an uncomradely way - also gained from the new Schedule of Protected Occupations. One of the terms of the agreement was that dilutees of military age and fitness should be taken for military service ahead of skilled men, a rule that was largely observed until the supply of dilutees ran out at the end of 1917.[2]

IV

The revolutionary surge served to revive and sustain the Womens' Peace Crusade. After a large demonstration in Glasgow in July 1916 in support of adult suffrage and peace negotiations, the crusade had faded away over the following winter. It was resurrected by its originator Helen Crawfurd, the radicalised minister's wife. She was inspired by the Russian revolution but provoked also by a visit to the country by Emmeline Pankhurst, the mother of the clan.

With Lloyd George's enthusiastic support Mrs Pankhurst had volunteered to go to Petrograd with Jessie Kenney on behalf of British women in order to try and shore up the country's fighting spirit. While there, in an incongruous scene in St. Isaac's Square, she reviewed a Women's Battalion of Death. They marched past cheering, behind a skull-and-crossbones flag. They were shaven-headed; she stood immaculate in a white linen suit, black bonnet and gloves.[3]

The crusade was, says Jill Liddington, a remarkable political mix: close to the Women's International League and the Peace Negotiations Committee, but also a grass-roots socialist movement with links to the Glasgow Women's Housing Association, and to Sylvia Pankhurst. A demonstration called in July 1917 pulled in between twelve and fourteen thousand people to Glasgow Green. It followed 22 preliminary open-air meetings held over the previous month.

On the day two processions converged around four platforms. The speakers included Ethel Snowden, Helena Swanwick and Helen Crawfurd herself. Messages were read from Mrs Despard, George Lansbury and Sylvia Pankhurst. Resolutions congratulating the Russian revolutionary government and calling for immediate peace negotiations were carried unanimously.[4] From there the crusade spread, as outlined below, to become with the ILP the lead organisation campaigning against the war.

[1] G.D.H. Cole, pp. 151-3.
[2] *ibid*., pp. 136, 138.
[3] Jill Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham*, p. 123; Adam Hochschild, pp. 281-3.
[4] Jill Liddington, pp.116-7; *Labour Leader*, 12 July 1917.

8: The lieutenant and the field marshal

I

At the end of the same month, July 1917, second lieutenant Siegfried Sassoon flung the anti-war equivalent of a Mills bomb into the public arena. And field marshal Haig launched the Ypres offensive, the so-called third battle.

A spectacularly brave officer, Sassoon had been awarded the military cross for going back into no-man's land and with two others hauling a wounded member of a raiding party from the bottom of a 25ft shell crater. That was at Flixécourt in June 1916. He took part in the Somme offensive before being invalided home with enteritis. During the battle of Arras in April 1917 he stormed an enemy trench with only a corporal in support, and was wounded in the shoulder.[1]

Sassoon came from a distinguished and well-connected family: his cousin Sir Philip, a conservative MP, was Haig's private secretary. His volume *The Old Huntsman and other Poems* was being reviewed that summer. It included such anti-war firecrackers as "Base Details", "They" and "In the Pink," which pictures a soldier writing a sentimental letter to his girl

> Tonight he's in the pink; but soon he'll die.
> And still the war goes on – *he* don't know why.

While convalescing in London that April he read some of Russell's writing. He read what he described as the lies of the newspapers. He read about aborted peace feelers, and came to the conviction that he must speak out against the war. Through Ottoline Morrell he found his way to Bertrand Russell, who with the critic Middleton Murry helped him plan his intervention and write his statement. His declaration said:

> I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence, has now become a war of aggression and conquest…I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust.

[1] Max Egremont, *Siegfried Sassoon: a Biography*, pp. 96, 107, 130-1.

The statement was published in the newly renamed *Workers' Dreadnought*. Russell arranged to have it read in the Commons by Hastings Lees-Smith, an MP with front-line service, and it appeared in the *Times* the following day, 31 July. Sassoon's and Russell's original hope was for a court-martial that would give the denunciation maximal publicity. Instead, Vellacott writes, the military authorities acted with unusual subtlety. "A breach of discipline has been committed," said a war office spokesman, "but no disciplinary action has been taken, since Second Lieutenant Sassoon has been reported by the medical board as not being responsible for his action, as he was suffering from nervous breakdown." [1]

"Has been reported" – the past tense is important. The sequence of events was triggered on 6 July when Sassoon sent the statement to his commanding officer in Liverpool together with a covering letter informing him of his intention to refuse to perform any further military duties. On reporting to his battalion there he was received sympathetically and told to go and reflect on his actions. Then he was instructed to attend a special medical board. His first response was to tear up the instructions. The next day he took a train to Formby and threw the ribbon of his MC into the waters of the Mersey estuary. Then his friend Robert Graves arrived and convinced him he would not be court-martialled, just shut up in an asylum. Graves had no grounds for saying this but, swearing on an imaginary bible, he persuaded Sassoon to go before a medical board after all.[2]

Graves and other influential friends had been lobbying to this end. Graves now sought to persuade the medical board. Partly by calculation, partly because of his own bad nerves he delivered, he said, such an overwrought plea – bursting into tears three times – that one of the board members told him, "Young man, you ought to be before this board yourself." [3] Graves, admittedly, has a gift for well-told tallish stories. The result was that Sassoon was referred to Craiglockhart psychiatric hospital, outside Edinburgh - "Dottyville," as he called it. He arrived there on 23 July, a week before his statement was read to the Commons.

At Craiglockhart he came under the care of W.H.R. (William) Rivers, an anthropologist turned neurologist and psychologist. Rivers believed in coaxing patients into realising why they had collapsed, then building up their power to conquer stress, a process he called "autogenesis." He became Sassoon's "ideal father," says his biographer." [4] At Craiglockhart Sassoon inspired and encouraged a younger fellow-patient in Wilfred Owen, who became perhaps the finest poet of the war. While referring to him patronisingly as "little Wilfred" he recognised Owen's talent and tried to get *The Nation* to publish his "Anthem for Doomed Youth." It's the poem that begins, "What passing bells for these who die as cattle?" [5]

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[1] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, Penguin ed, p. 270; Jo Vellacott,p. 209.
[2] Max Egremont, pp. 151-6.
[3] Robert Graves, pp. 271-4.
[4] Max Egremont, pp. 158,161-2
[5] *ibid*., p. 165-73.

II

North of Ypres the battle was still raging. “For the moment,” the *South London Press* had written at its launch, “the Allied front in Belgium is ablaze…

> But it would be folly to lead any British citizen to believe that the Germans are nearing exhaustion. Hence, the duty of everyone is not only to keep up courage and to make sacrifices cheerfully, but to do his daily task in full reliance on the victory which awaits the Allied cause.” [1]

At civic events to mark the third anniversary of the war enthusiasm was reported from “quite a large crowd” gathered in the rain outside Camberwell town hall – “Camberwell’s Stern Resolve” is the headline - but only a poor attendance at a town meeting in Southwark.[2] The *CP Times* concluded:

> Either Germany must be crushed or the German people must shake off the shackles which have bound them to a system which has bathed the world in blood. Until one of these two things happen we must fight on, and fight with all our might.[3]

Though, as we saw, Lloyd George put the half-Nelson on his admirals, he never got a grip of his military commanders. He relied on them of course for his knock-out blow. Haig, the commander-in-chief, was protected by his popularity with the press and his close relationship with the king. Robertson, the CIGS, was the war cabinet’s conduit to the military. He was appointed to give them an expert second opinion on whatever Haig proposed. But Robertson, being a loyal member of the military trade union, as Grigg puts it, suppressed his own doubts rather than let politicians have a say in operational matters. The war cabinet contained no-one with military experience. Lacking the confidence of expertise, they always in the end bowed to professional advice.

So it was at Ypres. Despite his bloody failure on the Somme, despite the severe misgivings of Lloyd George and the war cabinet, Haig stood out with unshakeable confidence for his cherished project of an offensive in Flanders. Its objective and justification was to capture the German submarine bases on the Belgian coast; then perhaps drive the Germans out of Belgium altogether. In reality the U-Boats were coming from Germany.[4]

It was another catastrophic failure. The Germans had deepened their defences: with trenches on a grid pattern reinforced by strong-points and concrete pillboxes. It rained on the first day of the offensive (31 July), rained relentlessly for the next four days, and continued raining at intervals until the end of August. The bombardment – which rattled windows in Camberwell - destroyed the water table, so that shell holes filled to overflowing and the earth turned to stinking, glutinous, corpse-filled mud. In this quagmire the main offensive under General Gough achieved next to nothing that first month, apart from 70,000 casualties.

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[1] *SLP*, 3 August 1917.
[2] *CPT,* 8 August 1917; *SLP*, 10 August 1917.
[3] *CPT*, 4 August 1917.
[4] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 32-5, Tonie and Valmai Holt, *Battlefields of the First World* War, p. 95.

At the end of August, during a spell of dry weather and on a narrower front, divisions under general Plumer began a step-by-step advance northwards, pushing uphill along the Gheluvelt plateau to the east of city. Broodseinde was taken on 4 October. The rain resumed. This was the point to stop but the war cabinet did not intervene. Haig, emboldened, pressed on for another month until at the beginning of November Canadian troops finally, after three months, captured the village now called Passendale: an advance of four miles into another untenable salient. The Germans used mustard gas. Thousands of the wounded drowned in flooded shell craters. Even fit men who slipped off the duckboards often found themselves up to their waist in mud and water, sometime up to their neck. In the three months of third Ypres 275,000 were killed or wounded.[1]

Haig claimed the horror had been "exaggerated" in some accounts. The war correspondent Philip Gibbs retorted, "I say now that nothing that has been written is more than a pale image of the abomination of those battlefields, and that no pen or brush has ever achieved the picture of that Armageddon…" [2]

The headlines in the *SLP* reported rather differently:

- 17 August: GRAND PROGRESS IN FLANDERS
- 21 September: ANOTHER BIG 'PUSH'
- 5 October: HUNS' PRECARIOUS HOLD ON FLANDERS
- 12 October: BLOW FOLLOW BLOW
  A Great Week: Huns Hurled From High Ground of Flanders
- 19 October: FLANDERS MUD AGAIN
  Battle For The Ridges Held Up By 'Cruel'/Weather
- 2 November: OUR RELENTLESS BLOWS IN FLANDERS

The paper's weekly lists of dead and wounded told their own story: 1¾ broadsheet columns of south London casualties on 10 August, 1¾ columns on 17 August, a column and a half on August 24 and on 14 September, a full two columns on 28 September, nearly two columns on 9 and 16 November.

Meanwhile the Germans transferred seven divisions from the East to the Italian front. There, on 24 October they dealt the Italians a crushing blow at Caporetto - driving their forces back from the river Isonzo to the river Piave, that is, from close to Trieste almost as far as Venice.[3] There's a sombre account of the retreat in chapters 28-30 of *A Farewell to Arms*. Hemingway was there as a volunteer ambulance driver.

[1] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 221-2, 335, 259-60, 274-9; Philip Gibbs, *Now It Can Be Told*, pp. 472-492.; Tonie and Valmai Holt, pp. 95-6; heard in Camberwell: *CPT*, 22 August 1917.
[2] Philip Gibbs, p. 474
[3] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 270-1.

III

Sassoon's protest soon dropped out of public awareness. His fellow officers wrote that they were having an exceptionally rough time in terrible conditions. His commanding officer asked him back. After three months he told Rivers he wanted to return to France. He had not changed his views on the war, but had come to feel he could not abandon the men under his command. His poem "Sick Leave" recounts a dreaming visitation by "the homeless ones, the noiseless dead" while he lies lulled and warm. It ends:

> And while the dawn begins with slashing rain
> I think of the Battalion in the mud.
> 'When are you going out to them again?
> Are they not still your brothers through our blood?' [1]

Sassoon returned to France circuitously, he and his battalion brought back from Alexandria to help stem the German offensive of spring 1918. On 12 July that year, in the Saint Floris sector, he crawled out on night patrol with a corporal and got within 50 yards of a German machine-gun post before hurling his grenades. As they returned he stood up to look back – and was shot in the head by someone on his own side who mistook him for a German. He survived; but wrote, "My wound is healed, but my soul is scarified for ever." [2]

[1] Max Egremont, p. 174. Sassoon gives a prose account of this conversion in *Sherston's Progress*, pp.18-19, published in 1936. His relationships in Craiglockhart and his emotional journey there are retold in Pat Barker's novel *Regeneration*.

[2] Max Egremont, pp. 193, 202-3, 214. Sassoon gives a vivid account of his "dying sentiments" in *Sherston's Progress*, p. 162. Pat Barker's *The Eye in the Door* paints his distracted state during convalescence in 1918. All three novels in her trilogy commemorate the dedicated humanity of William Rivers.

9: What did they know?

I

With Ypres the question again arises: what did the civilians know? The true abomination of the fighting was brought home to a select part of the public from two directions in 1917. The first was the work of British war artists. The scheme for finding artists and commissioning such work was initiated by Charles Masterman, head of the government's Propaganda Bureau in Buckingham Gate. He was an up-and-coming Liberal minister until 1915 but had then lost his parliamentary seat.[1]

The appointment of war artists evolved in a haphazard manner. The first to go out, despatched to the battle of the Somme, was the Scotsman Muirhead Bone. Haig was enthusiastic about his drawings. In February 1917 the bureau was incorporated into the new Department of Information under John Buchan, but it continued much as before, commissioning further artists who then had separate exhibitions of their work. In addition four volumes were published – one per painter - under the title *British Artists at the Front.*[2]

Crucially, and despite the propagandistic motive of showing that Britain was fighting on behalf of civilization, Masterman gave the artists a free hand. Writing to Eric Kennington, another artist, he said, "I am quite content that you should go on drawing whatever you think best. I cannot pretend to direct or control artistic inspiration." [3] As a result later commissions produced some of the indelible images which now shape our picture of the western front: C.R.W. Nevinson's "After the Push," for example, with its landscape of flooded shell craters, and the featureless desolation of "The Road from Arras to Bapaume." Both were painted in 1917.

There was some censorship nonetheless. Nevinson's "Paths of Glory" offended the military by showing two solid corpses face-down in the mud, thus, it was claimed, undermining civilian morale. The intervention generated much controversy.[4]

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[1] The convention then was that MPs had to seek re-election on entering the cabinet. Masterman lost two by-elections, but remained chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He was also chairman of the National Health Insurance Commission. Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War*, pp. 13-14.
[2] *ibid*., pp. 14, 29, 37. Haig: Lucy Masterman, p. 286.
[3] Sue Malvern, pp. 49-50.
[4] *ibid*., p. 45.

Beaverbrook took charge of a full-scale Ministry of Information in February 1918. He set up a British war memorials committee, later renamed the pictorial memorial committee, and the emphasis of the project changed. Masterman had used art primarily as a medium of propaganda. Beaverbrook's committee aimed to create what it called "a legacy to posterity." That said, most of the same artists were used, plus others, and all were again given a free hand once a subject had been agreed. Among the many works that followed were the better known battlescapes of Paul Nash. One, showing a terrain of shell hummocks and splintered tree-trunks, bears the title "We are Making a New World." [1]

Under the new regime Masterman's propaganda department became the literature and art department. According to Sue Malvern he was side-lined from decision-making, though this is not apparent from his wife's account. Muirhead Bone said that Arnold Bennett and Masterman shared the task of creating the legacy of artwork, writing later that Bennett's determination to back up fresh talent chimed in well with Masterman's originality of outlook in art. Bone was impressed too by the latter's knowledge of all the ways of departments "and his consummate ability to get things through." [2]

Bennett wrote in 1919 that the memorial committee had selected the best artists, "including new, young and, most importantly, untried artists," and had done so despite the obstruction and hostility of the war office and the treasury. The committee also developed plans for a hall of remembrance, a project never realised.[3]

As well as opening the public's eyes, the commissioning of young artists under the scheme also contributed hugely to the development of post-war British painting. In David Reynold's words, it infused the English tradition of representation and landscape with the attitudes and techniques of modernism.[4]

He challenges the assumption that the title of Nash's painting was intended to be a savage irony, "What we now see as a universal and abstract image of the horror of war," he writes, "was offered to British people as graphic evidence of Hunnish aggression in France and Belgium;" the Tommies defending England's green and pleasant land "were indeed making a new world." [5]

The painting first appeared, untitled, on the front cover of the third part of "British Artists at the Front", which was published by *Country Life* - not however in the magazine itself. Reynolds' view is rather contradicted by what Paul Nash himself said. Marwick quotes from a letter to his wife. After a vivid account of the desolation at the front - "one huge grave" - he concludes

> It is unspeakable, godless, hopeless. I am no longer an artist interested and curious, I am a messenger who will bring back word from the men

[1] *ibid*., p. 75. For this and the other works mentioned, see the Imperial War Museum's *Art from the First World War.*
[2] Lucy Masterman, p. 304. Bennett sat on the two memorial committees.
[3] Sue Malvern, pp. 69, 71, 75. The artists included Wyndham Lewis and Stanley Spencer. Not all were young and avant-garde though. They included the established society painter John Singer Sargent, aged 62 in 1918. He came especially from America to contribute the monumental frieze of blindfolded soldiers entitled "Gassed."
[4] David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow*, pp. 170-9.
[5] *ibid*., p. 177.

> who are fighting to those who want the war to go on for ever. Feeble, inarticulate, will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls.[1]

One might also quote from Bennett's introduction to Nash's 1918 exhibition. He writes there that the works, "seem to me to have been done in a kind of rational and dignified rage, in a restrained passion of resentment at the spectacle of what men suffer, a fierce determination to transmit to the beholder the full *true* horror of the war." [2]

Muirhead Bone's exhibitions pulled in the crowds – particularly in working-class areas, according to Sue Malvern. In the space of one month in January 1917 45,000 people came to Whitechapel Art Gallery to take a look. The work of later artists was mostly shown at the Leicester Galleries in central London.[3] Malvern gives no figures for visitors there, though Lucy Masterman mentions large numbers at William Orpen's exhibition in May 1918.[4]

II

A second revelation came with the publication in English of the French novel *Le Feu.* Its author was Henri Barbusse, who had enlisted in 1914, aged 41. He saw fierce fighting the following year and was awarded the Croix de Guerre before being invalided out, suffering from dysentery. His novel began to appear in August 1916 as a serial in the daily *L'Oeuvre.* It was published in book form in December, won the Prix Goncourt and went on to sell 200,000 copies by the end of the war.[5] An English translation by W. Fitzwater Wray appeared early in 1917.

Under Fire is sub-titled "journal of a squad" – "platoon" might be a better translation – and it follows the fate of the unit's 17 members. They are farm labourers and workers from all over France; officers hardly ever appear. Eventually the men are swallowed up in the great offensive and its aftermath.

It's a novel remarkable not only for its high literary qualities but as a *contemporaneous* account of the horrors of the war and the suffering and humanity of ordinary soldiers. We first see them as they emerge from their dug-outs "beneath the long desolation of dawn," muffled like Eskimos in blankets and sacking, lino and animal-skins, floundering in the mud like bears, impatient for breakfast to arrive.

The following day they pass a depleted company moving back from the front line, their uniforms stiff with ochre mud, their faces haggard and blackened, their eyes big and fevered. And yet they are merry, and through their dirt and their spasms of weariness they are triumphant, as if drunk. They have survived, survived for another six weeks – until their next tour of duty.

The narrative is episodic, by virtue of its origin, and though it builds up to the big offensive, it mostly takes place, with much discussion and argument, behind the lines.

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[1] Arthur Marwick, p. 221.
[2] Sue Malvern, p. 48.
[3] Sue Malvern, pp. 37, 41.
[4] Lucy Masterman, p. 302.
[5] Henri Barbusse, *Le Feu*, ed. Denis Pernot, introduction.

It's in these off-duty scenes that Barbusse is most affecting. In a cavern-like barn before the offensive, for example, one man lays out and inspects the contents of his pockets, all itemised. The others join in to compare and explain, discuss and argue. One shows a little whistle his wife has sent him, saying, "If you're wounded in battle, blow it so your mates can come and save your life." The others laugh at her simplicity.

Many of these scenes are also highly subversive of conventional patriotism. There's a derisory account of a visit by a party of journalists. The *poilus* are shown overcharged and exploited by the grasping peasantry. "What bastards these people are," mutters one man. The others chime in

> - These fine folk of the North.
> - Who welcome us with open arms.
> - With open hands, more like.

So much for the *union sacrée*, the sacred unity of a people bonded in self-defence.

The novel ends with a group of survivors, crouched on an outcrop of rock, being inspired by a vision of revolution: "the entente of democracies, the entente of multitudes [immensités], the people of the world rising up, the brutally simple faith." [1] It's quite a prophecy for 1915-16, though there's no suggestion of a mutiny as the means.

English reviews were rather slow to appear. It wasn't until September 1917 that the *Manchester Guardian* and the *New Statesman* gave their opinion. Both reviewers were powerfully impressed. M. Barbusse writes with a fierce sincerity and a pitiless imagination, wrote "WPC" in the former.

> It is a poignant and arresting work with its tale of simple-minded men bound to an endless chain of suffering. Some parts are pitiful in the extreme. Some are horrible and gruesome to the last degree. Some march as in a nightmare…

Such relief as M. Barbusse gave was to be found in the sympathetic handling of his characters, the very human victims of the fire.

> He says things that in our polite world of spectators are suspected but not said. His picture is of another existence than that drawn by the eloquent war correspondents, who cannot describe the soldier's life because they have not lived it, and would not be allowed to describe it if they had.[2]

In the *New Statesman* Gerald Gould, its regular reviewer of novels, devoted the whole of his space, unusually, to this one work. He wrote that to review such a book in the ordinary sense of the term would, he felt, be an impossibility, and would be an impertinence, were it possible. "A tribute can be paid to the extraordinary power and poignancy of it all, to its horror, its humanity, its tenderness, its humour… A tribute can be paid, but no estimate can be made."

Thoughout, Gould goes on,

> there is a passionate insistence that the people set to the filthy business of slaughter are not those who *ought* to be so engaged. They are not

[1] *ibid*., p. 439. My translation.
[2] *Manchester Guardian*, 3 September 1917.

> soldiers, they are men. They are not adventurers, or warriors, or made for human slaughter, neither butchers nor cattle. They are labourers and artisans whom one recognises in their uniforms. Throughout there is a long desire for "the end." Everybody should read this book; but, most of all, politicians and journalists who advocate at their ease the compulsion of other people into unimaginable suffering.[1]

The Herald eventually reviewed the novel in November; there "FJO." called it the greatest book of the war, challenging the best work of Tolstoy. He stresses the similarity between the *poilu* and the British Tommy, with their

> undying, implacable hatred of base-wallahs, trench-tourists, war-glorifying civilians, and profiteers; both tell comforting lies to inquiring ladies at home, and afterwards curse each other for doing so; and both resent the continuance of the war and yet accept much of the newspaper apologetics for it.

The reviewer overstates, I would say, the day to day internationalism of the soldiers. The conclusion almost overwhelms him.

> After a long and terrible description of bombardments, attacks and counter-attacks; of slaughter, suffering, weariness and degradation; …then comes from the mouths of the soldiers themselves a passionate declaration of the truth of the international idea. Great testimony as this is to the human spirit, it seems almost too optimistic for the lacerated nerves of the reader.[2]

In fact it is Barbusse, turned political commissar *avant la lettre*, who articulates the revolutionary vision.

Such emphatic endorsements would have been particularly influential, one would think. Sassoon and Owen both read the novel while at Craiglockhart.[3] Yet it was not taken up by anti-war campaigners. That's surprising and hard to explain. Whatever the reason, the novel did not impact on the wider public imagination. Nevertheless its savagely realistic picture of the war was there for those with eyes to read.[4]

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[1] *New Statesman*, 8 September 1917.
[2] *The Herald*, 3 November 1917.
[3] Max Egremont, p. 163; Tonie and Valmai Holt,p. 90.
[4] This account is taken from John Taylor, "Unbridgeable Differences," pp. 84-9. That article is not quite right in saying the book was not reviewed in *Labour Leader*. The paper gave it a belated mention on 7 February 1918, quoting two passages in what is just a short filler.

10: Women crusaders to the fore

From the great Glasgow demonstration in July 1917 the Women's Peace Crusade spread: to Nelson, Lancs, to Birmingham, to Manchester, to Leicester, to Leeds, Bradford and Burnley. In Leicester 3,000 listened to an all-woman platform in the marketplace. Three thousand women marched through Bradford, banners flying and bands playing.[1]

The *Labour Leader* carried regular weekly reports. One such listed useful literature, including the Crusade's own leaflet, "A Call to Socialist and Labour Women," plus "Who Will Make Peace, the People or the Diplomats?" "Peace by Negotiation. Objections Answered," and "Peace this Winter: Reply to Mr Lloyd George." It also printed a model resolution:

> This meeting, summoned by the Women's Peace Crusade, warmly welcomes the proposal made by Russia and accepted by the Government, that the Allies should meet for the purpose of revising the agreements entered into between themselves. It expresses the hope that such revision will produce a basis upon which the Allies and the Central Powers will be willing to enter into immediate negotiations for peace.[2]

The paper carried a colourful first-hand account of the demonstration in Nelson, worth quoting at length. Deprived of the brass band they had engaged because the band committee would not allow its members "to play for peace", the women proceeded through the town without one, a thousand strong.

> The procession was headed by the ILP Girls' Guild, who carried a beautiful banner - a green one with pale blue lettering, "Peace our hope." The members of the Guild (who are admitted over sixteen) wore white dresses, blue sashes inscribed "Peace," and wreathes of smilax on their heads. It was such a pretty sight. Then all the others followed.
>
> There were several banners. The girls of the Woodlands Sunday School carried one. The Workers' Suffrage Society had for their motto, "We want Peace, and no rest till we get it." A group of children whose fathers are all at the war carried one, "We want our daddy." The ILP women's banner was a red one with white letters, "Workers of the

[1] Jill Liddington, pp. 123-7. Apart from work pioneered in the North West and West Yorkshire by Alison Ronan and detailed in the bibliography, the Crusade remains surprisingly under-researched.

[2] *Labour Leader*, 26 July 1917.

> world, unite for peace." Everyone said the procession was just fine. We met with a good deal of opposition, but we passed many groups who cheered as we went, and shouted, "Stick it," "Carry on, girls," and lots of similar expressions.

At the Recreation Ground, the report continues, "a noisy and for the most part hostile crowd was waiting for them, but the processionists were allowed to form up round their platform and hold their meeting, although the speakers could only be heard a little way off." The correspondent, Gertrude Ingham, concludes,

> These things are distressing; but we only felt pity for the opposition, there being many young girls and boys and men who ought to have known better. I feel so proud of our women; they were so brave and walked unflinchingly along.

Jill Liddington paints the opposition in more aggressive terms. In her account of the event the demonstrators had to pass between onlookers shouting "Traitors! Murderers!" When they got to the recreation ground the hostile crowd had swollen to 15,000. Throwing clods of earth and other missiles the disrupters completely drowned out the speakers.[1]

The same month the Crusade advertised five meetings in Belfast.[2] In October the *Labour Leader* reported that, in addition to the centres already mentioned, the Crusade was "going ahead splendidly" in Edinburgh, Newcastle, Blackburn, Brierfield, Northampton, Long Eaton, Heanor, Merthyr, Port Talbot, Briton Ferry, and surrounding districts.

An account sent in from Bristol says that the Crusade there had accomplished its first week's mission, winding up with a great demonstration at Kingsley Hall, addressed by Mrs Swanwick, MA. "Our week's efforts have been mainly house to house canvassing with peace literature, working up Sunday's meeting, and the holding of door-step conversations." Attendance at the rally is not given, but the report does provide a view into the sources of local support.

> The Crusade was first started by the women of the Bristol ILP. They were quickly joined by the Women's International League, the latter contributing largely to the cost of literature. About £5 has been spent on literature and handbills. Letters were sent to all the Women's Organisations, and delegates to the WPC were sent from the Women's Labour League, Railway Women's Guilds, Women's Adult Schools, Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the No-Conscription Fellowship. These meet weekly and arrange the plan of campaign.[3]

Branches of the Crusade were concentrated in Scotland but also in the industrial north and midlands and in south Wales, where at the end of the year Ethel Snowden reported on "eight glorious meetings." [4]

As Jill Liddington notes, these were areas where the ILP was particularly strong.[1] London had ILP branches too – including Bermondsey and Dulwich of course - but no

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 16 August 1917; Jill Liddington, p. 125.
[2] *The Herald*, 4 August 1917.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 18 October 1917.
[4] *ibid*., 13 December 1917.

branch of the Crusade seems to have been established in the capital; even though it was to Mrs Snowden, at her home in Woodstock Road, Golders Green, that readers requiring literature or needing help in starting a new crusade were regularly referred. The reason – probably - is that Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Suffrage Federation already occupied that space.

In July and early August Mrs Nellie Best - one-time (or maybe still) secretary of Kennington's NCF branch - was reported to be hard at work for the crusade, and appealing for women willing to help with open-air work to send their names to 39 Doughty Street, London WC.[2] A meeting to set up a London crusade, held at Mrs Snowden's, foundered on differences between the eleven organisations which sent representatives.

Quite what these differences were is not clear. According to a rather opaque report, Margaret Bondfield declared it would be impossible to have one central committee for London, "opinions as to methods being so strongly held by the varying sections." Mrs Swanwick agreed. They and others, including Mrs Best, gave short statements of the lines on which their groups were working. Sylvia Pankhurst seems not to have been present. Violet Tillard suggested it would be useful to have a central committee to co-ordinate activities and exchange ideas, but the meeting would only agree to an information bureau, which never seems to have materialised.

The report seems to have been composed by Tillard, representing the NCF. Ethel Snowden wrote to her afterwards: "I agree with you it is a dreadful thing to have to confess so great a lack of the peace spirit in ourselves that we cannot meet & work together, but it is no use forcing things. And in the meantime I am doing all I can to soften the differences and gradually bring the various sections to a closer understanding of, and sympathy with one another." [3]

Nellie Best is not mentioned in the *Leader* again. Most likely she was absorbed into the Workers' Suffrage Federation, which now acted as the London arm of the crusade, its activities regularly included with other branch reports. There's just one mention of joint meetings of the federation and the peace crusaders: at Kensal Rise and Kilburn Lane. Here, we read, "the crowds were so great that the people could not get close enough to the speakers, and it was the talk of Peace which stirred them most." [4]

In early August 1917 the federation challenged the House of Commons with peace banners reading "Stop this Capitalist War," "Bring Back Our Brothers," "War is Murder," and "The Soldiers in the Trenches Long for Peace."

> Nowhere was any violence offered them. The passers-by seemed, many of them, thunderstruck by the bearers' courage after Saturday's scenes of violence [at the Brotherhood Church]. John Burns came up and shook hands. One soldier in Australian uniform who had not gone

[1] Jill Liddington, p.127.
[2] *Tribunal* 68, 26 July 1917; *Labour Leader*, 9 August 1917.
[3] Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/23, 17 and 24 August 1917.
[4] *Labour Leader*, 30 August 1917.

> to the front said it was terrible to come so far and be faced by such banners. Other soldiers, wounded and disillusioned, thanked the processionists for their action.[1]

Two weeks later four pickets outside the Commons proclaimed “Negotiate for Peace on the Russian Terms: No annexations: No indemnities.” At the end of month the federation organised pickets outside the Labour Party conference at Central Hall. It announced it would hold “Big Push” meetings every weekend until “Peace is declared and Socialism is established.” [2]

[1] *ibid.*, 9 August 1917.
[2] *ibid.,* 16 and 30 August 1917.

11: The NCF seeks gaol delivery

I

The NCF meanwhile was focussed on three things. Through the spring and summer some of its leading figures were active, as we saw, in support of a British revolution. More widely the leadership had to grapple with the fact that the great majority of COs had accepted transfer to the Home Office camps and to deal with the issue of slacking.[1] Thirdly, and increasingly over the year, the Fellowship concentrated on securing release for the thousand or so absolutists serving repeated court-martial sentences. They were no longer seen as a vanguard who might change the course of the war. Bertrand Russell in particular was concerned about the men's physical and mental deterioration.

The case was strengthened now, it was argued, by the fact that the genuineness of their conscientious objection had been recognised not only by the local tribunal, which had given them a conditional exemption they could not accept, but (in the majority of cases) also by the Central Tribunal which had offered them the option of the Home Office scheme, which they had refused.[2]

An unlikely advocate brought the issue to the war cabinet in May 1917 - namely Lord Milner, who was prompted by concern for his godson Stephen Hobhouse. The latter had given up his inheritance before the war, become a Quaker, gone to live and work in the east end of London, and was now in prison for resisting conscription. His forceful mother Margaret - sister to Beatrice Webb - was a supporter of the war but, alarmed that her son's health was deteriorating, was determined to get him released, and so approached Milner.

First Mrs Hobhouse - "Mrs Henry Hobhouse," as she styled herself - then Milner turned to the NCF, which fed them information and succeeded in generalising the issue: the case being that the Military Service Acts were defective, the tribunals were often in error, and the absolutists were in prison contrary to the intention of the law. Therefore the government had no option but to let the men go.

Milner lost the argument in cabinet thanks primarily to interventions by general Childs, director of personnel at the war office. He was opposed to favouritism but also hostile to COs in principle, and was further irritated by the reports of shirking at Princetown. His answer to the clamour about repeat punishment was to persuade Lord Derby, the war

[1] See J.H. Taylor, chapter 15.
[2] Jo Vellacott, pp. 190-3.

minister, to stop commuting sentences, so that the men came before courts martial less often.[1]

The Fellowship's focus on campaigning for the imprisoned absolutists did not go unchallenged. S.V. Bracher wrote to the*Tribunal* to argue that

> By singling out one special class for exemption you imply an acquiescence in the non-exemption of all the others. These others include, besides CO's of many sorts, the soldiers, who are the greatest sufferers from conscription. How can you reprint … that terrible description of the fellows going to the firing trenches, and then choose to agitate for these others rather than for them?

In a long reply Russell insisted,

> We desire to see the soldiers rescued from the war, and for that end we do all that lies in our power to bring peace, which is the only practicable way of liberating them. But all pacifist work at this time is rendered immensely more difficult and less effective than it might be by the imprisonment of the most vigorous opponents of the war. In seeking to liberate the friends of peace, we are also doing what we can to strengthen the agitation against the war.

He added that the NCF also wanted COs in the Home Office camps to be given absolute exemption. It seems a weak argument and a self-defeating one: why would the government want to strengthen agitation against the war?

The same issue carried a reply from Sarah Cahill, secretary of Dulwich NCF, saying "We are a No-Conscription Fellowship and not a Peace Society." She had worked for peace "which means saving the soldier" since 1914 and was still doing so, but that did not hinder her from working also for the absolutist.

> Peace might come tomorrow, but that would not mean Conscription would go; therefore, in my opinion it is necessary to get absolute exemption for these men – not only for their sakes but for the sake of future generations.

It's an interesting position, given her letter to *Labour Leader* the year before, urging socialist women to demonstrate against the war.

Fenner Brockway also wrote in to say,

> I am quite sure there is not a single CO in prison who would not be prepared to remain in prison for the rest of his life if by so doing he could save the lives of the soldiers of every belligerent country by bringing peace nearer.

Personally he had not suffered much but he knew how others had suffered.

> I know how their health is broken, how they cannot sleep at nights; I have studied their faces on "exercise" and have seen how white and worn they are. And worse than the physical effects is the mental and spiritual degeneration that confinement often causes… Let me not be misunderstood. We do not want those who are working for peace to

[1] *ibid*., pp. 204-7; John Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, p. 214

> relax their efforts in order to work for our release. But it would be hypocrisy to suggest we do not long for freedom…" [1]

A divergence opened up with the Quakers on this issue. Leading members of the Friends' Service Committee, their anti-conscription body, felt, to quote Alfred Barratt Brown, that all the Fellowship's energies should be devoted "solely to arousing the public conscience on war and conscription for war." Instead it had tended to become a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Conscientious Objectors and had involved itself in compromising dealings with the war office.[2]

Barratt Brown resigned from the national committee, albeit with expressions of friendship and esteem towards its other members; he also remained chairman of the Midland division and Birmingham branch. He and like-minded others persuaded the Quaker executive, the Meeting for Sufferings, not to take up the issue of repeat sentences. This remained official Quaker policy for the rest of the war. It was a position not shared by Alfred Salter and Edward Grubb, two Friends on the Fellowship's national committee. They both supported the NCF's line.[3]

II

At the other end of the spectrum some prisoners sought a more active resistance. Chief amongst these was Clifford Allen, the NCF's first chairman. He looked for a way in which imprisoned absolutists could play a larger part in the struggle. He first proposed men should hunger-strike after a second or subsequent sentence. Dissuaded by Catherine Marshall, he then convinced all but one of the 25 COs at Maidstone prison to support a work strike.

He wanted the Fellowship to adopt this policy and organise it on a national scale. The national committee did not agree. Allen accepted the decision but decided to proceed with the strike alone as a matter of principle. He explained his reasons in a long but diffuse open letter to Lloyd George written just after his third court martial in May 1917 and reprinted in the *Tribunal*.[4]

Catherine Marshall articulated his motivation more clearly in a letter to Robert Smillie. It had become apparent to Allen and other absolutists, she wrote, "that the government are simply using the COs in prison to get forced work out of them which they (the COs) would refuse to do outside prison under the compulsion of a Conscription Act… [B]y so doing the COs in prison are helping to make conscription work smoothly, & to allow the Government to get forced labour of one sort or another from all men of military age."[5]

Russell and Marshall failed to dissuade Allen. Both felt committed, out of respect for their imprisoned chairman, to giving his plan a fair hearing. After intricate arguments the

[1] *Tribunal* 51 and 53, 15 and 29 March 1917.
[2] *ibid.,* 63, 21 June 1917.
[3] *ibid.,* 65, 5 July 1917; Jo Vellacott, pp. 195-6.
[4] *ibid.,* 62, 14 June 1917.
[5] Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/20, 2 June 1917.

Tribunal published both the open letter, plus a supporting statement, and an opposite view from Alfred Salter, together with the national committee's decision.[1]

Salter argued that work, or some equivalent, was necessary for the preservation of sanity, the more so in prison. In accordance with NCF principles hard labour, like imprisonment, was part and parcel of the penalty for resisting conscription and had to be accepted. Dramatic action, like a work or hunger strike, would at most achieve the compassionate release of few individuals who had been brought near to physical and mental death. "Nothing would be accomplished for the movement as a whole."

> To win through we must succeed in influencing the heart and mind and conscience of the nation and the authorities. We have to *convince* them; we cannot threaten or compel them. Our methods must be those which will stand the test of time – the methods of all-persuasive reasonableness.[2]

While stating its opposition to work strikes in principle, the committee declared it would support those who adopted the practice as a matter of conscience. The issue was extensively debated, both in the *Tribunal* and in letters to the committee. In the event there was rather little support for Allen in the wider membership and some strong opposition from men in prison.[3]

III

The Fellowship not only provided information for Milner's memorandum to the war cabinet. After his arguments were rejected in June, Mrs Hobhouse decided to arouse public opinion on behalf of the jailed COs by writing a pamphlet. Bertrand Russell first supplied her with material from the NCF files. It became a small book. The classicist Gilbert Murray wrote an urbane and measured introduction in which he placed the absolutists in a tradition going back to the first Quakers and the early Christians. "Of course I think they are wrong - tragically wrong." But it was childish and "infinitely worse than childish," to keep sending the absolutist to prison with hard labour, and to keep sending him again and again, "until we achieve the sorry triumph of breaking his spirit or destroying his sanity." [4]

The bulk of the book consists of 18 short biographies, and an account of prison conditions in the third division, drawn largely from the statements and letters of prisoners themselves, and the effect on them of the silence and isolation, the lack of writing materials and dearth of books, the cold, the insanitary conditions, the contaminated food, the constant surveillance, the physical and mental strain. It makes a powerful case.[5]

Mrs Hobhouse contributes a foreword in which she explains the title: "As early Christians appealed unto Caesar I, too, in my weakness appeal to him" - Caesar being the Lords and Commons, the government offices concerned, the war cabinet, the king, "and the

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[1] Jo Vellacott, pp. 197-200.
[2] *Tribunal* 62, 14 June 1917.
[3] Jo Vellacott, p. 201.
[4] Mrs Henry Hobhouse*, I Appeal unto Caesar*, p. xi.
[5] *ibid*., pp. 23-74.

enlightened opinion of our fellow countrymen and women." She insists she has no desire to embarrass the success of the war. For her, as for President Wilson, it was "a people's war for freedom, justice, and self-government." [1]

In her text proper Margaret Hobhouse argues that it was not the intention of parliament that sincere conscientious objectors should be sent to prison in spite of the conscience clause, and quotes the then home secretary Herbert Samuel in support. She says there is no administrative or military danger in the unconditional release of these men: if they then indulged in seditious propaganda they could always be sent back to prison under DORA. She asserts that repeated punishment for the same offence is contrary to the practice of the criminal law. She suggests finally two routes to the men's release: they could be discharged from the army; or they could be granted a king's pardon, with the war office directed not to re-arrest them.[2]

To Jo Vellacott goes the credit for discovering that the foreword and these eight pages were ghost-written by Bertrand Russell. Now that we know, the suave Russellisms seem plain to see. In the foreword, for example, "Mrs Hobhouse" writes that there are plenty of men up and down the country who have secured comfortable, safe and well-paid jobs, such as many COs could have had for the asking. "In the War Office itself there are men who prefer driving the quill to wielding the sword."

And in the text proper: "These men believe that the greatest goods are spiritual goods. They believe, like Spinoza, that hatred can be overcome by love, a view which appears to derive support from a somewhat hasty reading of the Sermon on the Mount." It is difficult to resist quoting from the footnote appended to the regulation about prisoners not being allowed pencil and paper.

> It is curious to reflect that most of the Epistles of St. Paul were written when a prisoner under the more benign conditions of Roman detention; that tradition would have us believe Cervantes composed parts of the immortal *Don Quixote* in prison; Sir Walter Raleigh wrote much in the Tower; and the world would have been without the *Pilgrim's Progress* had the twentieth-century penal restrictions been in force in the seventeenth century.[3]

I Appeal unto Caesar was well received, even in the serious patriotic papers. It ran into four editions between July and October 1917 and sold 18,000 copies.[4]

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[1] *ibid*., pp. ixx-xx
[2] *ibid*., pp. 2, 7-9.
[3] *ibid.*, pp. xxi, 6, 45.
[4] *Tribunal* 71, 23 August 1917; Jo Vellacott, pp. 209-13. Rae (p.215) claims very few papers reviewed it.

12: Henderson and Morel

I

In the course of the summer Arthur Henderson, the Labour leader, had resigned from the war cabinet. He did so in August after a special conference of the party had voted, by a majority of three to one, to send delegates to a conference in Stockholm of socialist parties from both sides of the conflict – in effect re-convening the Second International. Originally floated by the Dutch and Scandinavian socialist parties, the idea was taken up by the soviets in Russia. Henderson was initially against the proposal, then he swung round to support it. He saw it as a way of relieving the pressure on Alexander Kerensky, the Russian prime minister, who was desperately trying to keep his country in the war.

Lloyd George and the rest of the war cabinet were fiercely opposed. Henderson was literally put on the mat outside the cabinet office while the other members discussed the issue. After the conference vote he was required to choose between remaining in the war cabinet and remaining party leader. He chose the party. However he resisted taking the other Labour ministers with him, on the grounds that it would embarrass the government in its prosecution of the war. Instead he was replaced in the war cabinet by George Barnes, the minister of pensions.

The issue generated an enormous amount of enthusiasm and argument within the labour movement. A wrangle now ensued as to whether only loyal patriots should go to Stockholm or whether the delegation should include all shades of opinion. The patriots and the TUC lost interest after the American Federation of Labour and the Belgian, French and Italian socialists declined to take part. At this point the war cabinet felt able to step in and refuse to issue passports.[1]

Ramsay MacDonald attempted to go as a private citizen. The seamen, led by “captain” Tupper, refused to take him on board. To rub in the humiliation the men were drawn from Lossiemouth, the town of his birth.[2] In the longer term, comments John Grigg, Henderson’s departure from government was a disaster for Lloyd George. It enabled Henderson to build up the Labour Party’s organisation and a few years later win power. It also made Lloyd George more dependent on the Conservatives.[3]

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[1] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp.206-10; A.J.P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers*, pp. 153-4; Brock Millman, pp. 211-15.
[2] Brock Millman, pp. 215-6.
[3] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 210-11.

II

In September the second show-trial of the year put E.D. Morel in the dock. The founder and leading light of the Union of Democratic Control was charged under DORA with having conspired to smuggle his pamphlet *Tsardom's Part in the War* to the French writer and musicologist Romain Rolland, using a literary lady, Ethel Sidgwick, as his courier. At that time, E.M. Forster later recalled, Rolland enjoyed a reputation almost equal to that of Tolstoy, based on his multi-volume novel *Jean Christophe,* chronicling the life of a German composer.[1]

When war broke out he published an appeal from "the high plateaus" of Switzerland to the youth of all nations and especially to young Frenchmen:

> Come, friends! Let us make a stand! Can we not resist this contagion, whatever its nature and virulence be – whether moral epidemic or cosmic force? Do we not fight against the plague, and struggle even to repair the disaster caused by an earthquake? Or must we bow ourselves before it…? No! Love of my country does not demand that I shall hate and slay those noble and faithful souls who also love their country, but rather that I should honour them and seek to unite myself with them for our common good.[2]

"Au-dessus de la Mêlée," or Above the Battlefield, turned Rolland into a literary pariah in his own country, even after he won the Nobel prize for literature in symbolic recognition of his humanitarian anti-war stance. In Geneva he laboured for the Red Cross on behalf of POWs while tirelessly engaging with the conflict through literary work and a wide-ranging correspondence. His friend and early biographer Stefan Zweig called him "the moral conscience of Europe." [3]

The affinity of view between Morel and Rolland is plain to see. But Switzerland was a neutral country; that was Morel's offence. Sir Archibald Bodkin, prosecuting before the magistrate at Bow Street, made no attempt to justify the regulations in question, though he noted that the Army Council had written to Morel the previous year to inform him that UDC publications sent overseas through the post had been, and would be, stopped as containing material that might be used by enemy propaganda.[4]

Morel pleaded guilty. He did not give evidence. His counsel Comyns Carr argued in mitigation that it was simply a case of one author attempting to acknowledge the compliment of another. His client was ignorant of the regulations, he thought he was merely circumventing the postal authorities, he believed Rolland was based in Paris. The case, in the light of seized letters, was not a strong one, but Carr made the most of his opportunity, quoting from the pamphlet to reject the charge that Morel was pro-German and to air his core view that the cause of wars lay

> not in the exclusive criminality of one or two Governments, but in the follies of all the Governments and in the inherent viciousness of the

[1] E .M. Forster, "Romain Rolland and the Hero," p. 236.
[2] Romain Rolland, *Above the Battlefield*, pp. 10-11,12.
[3] Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern*, pp. 276-80, 305-6; David James Fisher, *Romain Rolland*, pp. 43-4.
[4] UDC, Rex v. E.D. Morel: Trial at Bow Street, pp. 5-8.

> systems whence those Governments have derived their power. If [the peoples of Europe] perceive that, they will insist upon a speedy end of the war by conference and negotiation… The Russian people have reached this state of conviction. The British people have not, though they are travelling on that road. This pamphlet… may help them, I hope, to travel a little faster.

Carr went on to stress that there was nothing illegal in putting these views before the British people, who were Morel's prime audience. He concluded with a fulsome eulogy of his client's pre-war labours to improve the conditions of African natives –activities which were "universally recognised in all countries to be of the most highly beneficent and humanitarian character that one can very well imagine." [1]

The magistrate (E.W. Garrett) heard him out without interruption. Then he pronounced: dismissing the defence of a literary compliment, declining to judge Morel's motives, disclaiming any view on the effect the pamphlet might have on a neutral country; though he added that a publication bearing the imprint of the National Labour Press might have a good deal of influence. "The only people to decide are the Government of the country," he insisted.

It was not merely a question of this pamphlet; it was the principle of defying the regulation: a very serious offence. He felt it was his duty to pass a sentence that would deter others. And so, having previously refused Morel bail over the weekend – the case was opened and adjourned on a Friday – the magistrate now sentenced him to six months' hard labour in the second division, from which the efforts of his influential friends failed to rescue him.[2]

He was not of course forgotten. Ramsay MacDonald paid him a characteristic tribute in *Labour Leader*, writing that

> The Knighthood of the Broad Arrow is both ancient and noble. If it had a chapel, with banners and coats of arms and a register of names, its membership would be so rich in men whom time has honoured and for whom history is a shrine that such baubles as the Garter and the Thistle would be treated by this knighthood with condescending patronage.

The same issue of the paper urged that the wide circulation of his writings must be made to compensate for the temporary loss of the man himself, and reported that the Leicester branch had disposed of 1,000 copies of the Tsardom pamphlet in just twelve days.[3] In the Commons the independent-minded Liberal Josiah Wedgwood saluted Morel's services to humanity and declared his imprisonment a real national disgrace.[4]

Morel served his sentence in Pentonville, lodged between an open-faced young man who had stolen three bottles of whisky and a family man of "animal countenance" who had raped a young girl. His work, in silent association, was making rope mats for the navy, folding and pleating mailbags and stitching and stuffing mattresses, the air full of fine dust.

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[1] *ibid*., pp. 14-22; Morel quotation p. 19.
[2] *ibid*., pp. 29-30.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 13 September 1917.
[4] *ibid*., 15 November 1917.

After that the only excitement was supper, the last meal of the day, served at 4pm and eaten alone in the cell: “a piece of bread, half-a-pint of coldish porridge at the bottom of a tin which earlier in the day may have contained red herrings and still bears traces of them, and a pint of hot, greasy cocoa which one learns to regard as a veritable nectar of the gods, especially in cold weather.” After which he was locked in for the night.

In a memoir published after the war Morel wrote that the cold of a cold cell was “like nothing on earth. Nothing seems proof against it, and, truth to say, there is not much to fight it with.” He goes on to describe his “strange, haunted, restless nights.” Lord Devonport, the first Food Controller, had reduced prison rations, already designed to do no more than sustain life.[1]

At the Sunday service a swift glance behind afforded sight of “the grave, thoughtful countenances of the Men in Grey” – the conscientious objectors, who were otherwise kept apart from the criminal herd, albeit “with ever a kindly smile and an encouraging nod as one chances to cross them in the prison precincts.” Morel salutes them as “the advance guard of the new society which some day, perchance, will leaven the world.”

Both Arthur Jones and Eddy Jope were among the objectors held in Pentonville at the time. Morel seems to have encountered Isaac Hall there, before he was rescued by Alfred Salter. He writes of a new arrival treading one of the concentric circles on morning exercise: “His skin is a dull black, his hair woolly, his eyes lustreless, his clothes hang about him loosely, he drags his limbs wearily along.” [2]

Morel was released after five months for good behaviour, but this robustly built man of only 44 was broken in health, his hair completely white. “When he first came out he collapsed completely, physically & mentally, largely as a result of insufficient food,” wrote Russell to Gilbert Murray. And horror: “He says one only gets three quarters of an hour for reading in the whole day - the rest of the time is spent on prison work etc.” [3]

[1] E.D. Morel, “At Pentonville – September 1st 1917 to January 30th 1918”, pp. 56-63; Jo Vellacott, pp. 192-3.
[2] E.D. Morel, pp. 64, 66. For Isaac Hall, see J.H. Taylor, pp.96, 100.
[3] Bertrand Russell, p. 311.

13: Six peace initiatives, four debates

I

The *Labour Leader* makes much of the peace initiatives of that year. According to the UDC there were six such overtures in 1917, including the formula of the revolutionary government in Petrograd in favour of a general peace without annexations or indemnities.[1] The party and the paper seized on the Russian declaration and two other initiatives in particular.[2]

The first was the resolution in the German Reichstag in July which by 214 votes to 116 sought "a peace of understanding and the permanent reconciliation of nations;" a peace without forced annexation or political, economic or social oppression, with economic peace, not economic barriers, and with freedom of the seas. It committed the parliament to actively promoting the creation of international law organisations. The majority comprised the Social Democrats, the (catholic) Centre Party and the left Liberals.

A word on Germany's political development may be useful here. Golo Mann identifies two trends. One was towards a parliamentary democracy exercising power over an executive hitherto largely unaccountable, except through the Reichstag's control of the budget. Indeed even the term executive is somewhat misleading. There was no cabinet government in the British sense: ministers were individuals appointed by the chancellor and answerable only to him, in the same way that the chancellor was answerable to the kaiser.[3]

The other trend was towards military dictatorship. This was in fact already largely in place. Paul Hindenburg had become chief of the general staff in the summer of 1916, with Erich Ludendorff in command under him as "first quartermaster general." In reality Ludendorff was the generalissimo. Between them they dominated both kaiser and chancellor.[4]

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[1] Arthur Ponsonby and E.D. Morel, *Peace Overtures and their Rejection*.

[2] According to the UDC the other three overtures were the efforts of the Austrian emperor Karl and the Austro-Hungarian government in the first part of 1917; the German government's feelers of that autumn; and the note of the new Bolshevik government in November. There was, in addition, a further approach that autumn by the Austrian foreign minister, count Czernin; see Bertrand Russell's response below, p. 103.

[3] David Schoenbaum, *Zabern 1913,* p. 30.

[4] Golo Mann, The History of Germany since 1789, pp. 524, 531-2.

The vote in the Reichstag followed the fall of the chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg - engineered in part by parliamentarians who thought him an obstacle to a compromise peace but encouraged by Hindenburg and Ludendorff who thought him too soft. His successor, chosen by Ludendorff, was Dr Michaelis, a civil servant almost unknown to the Reichstag. He accepted the resolution, but with the evasive caveat "as I interpret it." [1]

Speaking days later Lloyd George made no reference to the resolution but maintained that Michaelis' speech "means annexations all round and military autocracy more established than ever." [2] Philip Snowden, in the *Leader,* charged him with responding "after the manner of a pettifogging attorney engaged in a police-court case. Instead of trying to extract something hopeful from the approaches Germany has made, he replies in an exasperating way, which, like the Allies' reply to the German peace offer last January, does not encourage further approaches." [3]

Military rule and the vision of victory were strengthened in Germany with the formation, in September 1917, of the *Vaterlandspartei*, or Fatherland Party. This was designed to be a party above parties, a national movement to save the country from a soft peace. Alfred von Tirpitz of the forked beard was persuaded to become its leader. "This was something new in Prussia: a retired [grand] admiral becoming a public speaker and perorating at the top of his voice against parliament, indeed even against his own government." [4]

After three months the parties of the peace resolution, acting in informal coalition, forced Michaelis to resign. He was succeeded by count Hertling, the aged Bavarian prime minister. He tried to be on good terms with all parties, according to Mann, but allowed Ludendorff to play the strong man.[5]

II

The second initiative taken up by the anti-war campaigners came from the Vatican, when in August 1917 Pope Benedict XV issued his third major appeal of the war. He had already issued an encyclical in November 1914, followed in July the following year by an apostolic exhortation. In his note he now urged talks between the belligerent governments for the purpose of ending the war; the total evacuation of Belgium and the occupied parts of France; the restoration of German colonies; a renunciation of indemnities; an examination in a conciliatory spirit of rival territorial claims, not only between Germany and France and Austria and Italy, but in Armenia, the Balkans and Poland. Beyond that he advocated a simultaneous and reciprocal reduction in armaments, international arbitration and "true freedom and community of the seas." [6]

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[1] *ibid*., pp. 530-1; A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, p. 141.
[2] Ponsonby and Morel, p. 14.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 26 July 1917. In fact Lloyd George rejected the German proposal for a peace conference in December 1916. See J.H. Taylor, pp. 144-5.
[4] Golo Mann, pp. 533-4.
[5] *ibid*., pp. 532-3.
[6] John F. Pollard, *Benedict XV*, pp. 86-7, 117, 126-7.

Snowden welcomed his intervention. “His concrete and practical proposals afford the basis of a just and lasting peace.” In “The Way of the World*”* Lansbury asked, “But what of the Church of England? Is the Pope the *only* follower of Christ?” [1]

The German reply expressed general agreement with the last group of more distant aspirations, but made no reference to any of the immediate territorial issues. Britain sent only a letter of acknowledgement. Woodrow Wilson gave what was in effect the Allies’ official reply. He welcomed the pope’s “moving appeal” but insisted:

> We cannot take the word of the present rulers of Germany as a guarantee of anything that is to endure, unless explicitly supported by such conclusive evidence of the will and purpose of the German people, as the other peoples of the world would be justifying in accepting.[2]

It was, in plain words, wrote H.N. Brailsford in *The Herald*, a refusal to consider peace on any terms, at any time, with the present rulers of Germany. How, he asked, “can one reconcile this with the Note of last November, which bade us negotiate before civilisation itself is destroyed, and summoned us all to a ‘peace without victory?” [3]

In this country the catholic hierarchy also rejected the pope’s note. While it approved some of the terms proposed *The Tablet* dismissed its assumption that the Allies could not win a complete victory. That assumption was not shared by the British, it said, “and certainly not by anyone connected with this journal.” The primate cardinal Bourne, the archbishop of Westminster, publicly expressed his disagreement:

> The Pope has proposed that all the belligerents should come to a compromise. No! We demand the total triumph of right over wrong. We do not want a peace which will be no more than a truce or armistice between two wars…We English Catholics are fully behind our war leaders.[4]

The only public support among catholics came from the Guild of the Pope’s Peace, founded after the introduction of conscription in 1916. The moving spirits were the typographers Francis Meynell and Stanley Morison. Meynell was head of the Pelican Press; this produced both *The CO’s Hansard* and Dulwich NCF’s booklet *What Are Conscientious Objectors?*

The guild published a little book of *Prayers for Peace*. It made its case in the catholic press, arguing that it was furthering the pontiff’s call for a negotiated settlement. Denunciations rained on its head. *The Universe* wrote that its advocacy of peace negotiations “borders on heresy;” its objects were indistinguishable from those of other anti-war organisations; it was “an essentially anti-patriotic society.” Above all perhaps, the paper objected to a “few laymen” presuming to act on the pope’s words without the approval of the hierarchy.[5]

Unintimidated, the guild now put Benedict’s 1917 appeal into an eight-page quarto pamphlet which it distributed free. How was it, it asked, that many catholics still rejected

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 23 August 1917; *The Herald*, 18 August 1917.
[2] Ponsonby and Morel, pp. 15-16; John F. Pollard, loc. cit.
[3] *The Herald*, 8 September 1917.
[4] Youseff Taouk, “The Guild of the Pope’s Peace,” pp. 265-6
[5] ibid., p. 263.

the Holy Father's terms? They would secure "all the firm objects for which our politicians claim to be fighting, and for which the masses of our soldiers are indeed fighting." Two further pamphlets followed that autumn; then silence. It was a brave effort, but the guild was tiny: its membership consisted of a committee of seven, according to Meynell. "I doubt whether propaganda has ever had such fine printing," he wrote afterwards, "and so little effect." [1]

From John Grigg's account it appears that Lloyd George, in his "impotent distress" at the failure at Ypres and the collapse of Russia, entertained, for a time, the offer of peace conversations conveyed that autumn from von Kühlmann, the German foreign minister. Painlevé, the French prime minster, was strongly opposed, fearing his country's war spirit might collapse if news got out. In the event, the idea was killed by the war cabinet.[2]

III

In addition to peace initiatives the *Labour Leader* also gave extended coverage to the major debates initiated in the Commons that year by the small contingent of anti-war MPs. They had their outpost below the gangway on the opposition side of the house. There were four such debates, held on 20 January, 16 May, 26 July and 6 November. MPs were not "struck dumb," as Alan Taylor claims.[3]

The third of these, which may be taken as representative, came in response to the vote in the Reichstag. It is worth reporting at some length for the account it gives of the arguments put forward by the two sides. The amendment tabled on this occasion asked the House to declare that the Reichstag resolution "expresses the principles for which this country has stood throughout" and called on the government, and the Allies, to restate their peace terms accordingly. It also urged that the Allies should accept the Russian proposal that the forthcoming Allied conference on war aims should comprise representatives of the peoples, and not solely the spokesmen of governments.

Speaking first, Ramsay MacDonald argued that, while not in control of the executive or of state policy, "nevertheless, the Reichstag is representative of the German people, and a Resolution passed, as this was, by the overwhelming majority of the representatives of the German people must be taken by us to indicate the mind, point of view, and opinion of the German people." He found it very extraordinary that such an important declaration had hardly found a place in the English newspapers.

> This Resolution clearly shows that the Reichstag, that the German people, are under the impression still that they are fighting a war of defence. Let us dispel it. The Government can do it. The second thing is that this Resolution makes it perfectly clear that the German people are not out for annexation.

He quoted German newspapers to this effect.

MacDonald went on to question the secret territorial commitments agreed with Italy and Rumania. They had to be careful "because with the Regulations under the Defence of

[1] *ibid*., p. 266-7; Francis Meynell, *My Lives*, pp. 90-1.
[2] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 236-42.
[3] A.J.P. Taylor, *English History*, p. 18.

the Realm Act suspended over one's head by a hair one does not know what to say… particularly when one finds that in French and Italian papers these things are very fully discussed."

> Our diplomatic documents occupy a place in the nation like our French novels in our private life. They are kept under lock and key, lest youths and innocent minded maidens should lay their hands upon them. It is perfectly absurd and monstrous that it should be so…
>
> We ought not to be treated as children. The Government ought to show us by the facts that there is no discrepancy between their moral declarations and the programme to which they have committed themselves.

He warned that the country could use America in one of two ways: as a great moral factor on our side - or as a military power and wait, in the expression used over and over in this House, "until America comes into the war."

> That means we are going to settle down deliberately to a war of attrition. Days and days, and months and months, pressing, pressing, pressing, using all the powers of slow starvation, exhaustion, death and destruction, waiting until the other side lies down unable to move.

Seconding the amendment, Charles Trevelyan threw back at the government benches the refrain he said had rung through all British speeches the past year: "We cannot think of making peace with the German militarists, or of dealing with a Junker-ridden Government; but give us the German people in a new frame of mind, and then we can talk of peace."

> Here you have this great mass of German opinion which has hitherto supported the war and the German Government moving and passing a resolution intended to repudiate the policy of annexation and aggression.

Very few newspapers, except the *Manchester Guardian* as far as he had seen, even stated what the resolution was. It was hidden from the British public, never mentioned even by the prime minister in his speech in reply to the German chancellor. It might never have been passed. No-one, he conceded, would dispute the justice of some of the prime minister's criticism of Dr Michaelis' speech. And yet:

> I cannot help feeling that there are many hon. Members here who feel that the German people, through their representatives… having said to the world, 'We are ready to make peace, repudiating our conquests and annexation,' it is the duty of the British Parliament to make the response and declare that we are ready to adopt that policy for ourselves.

He went on to quote Scheidemann, the leader of the Social Democrats, as saying "If a similar resolution were brought forward in the House of Commons and answered by the British Premier in the same way, then peace negotiations could begin tomorrow."

The war, Trevelyan declared, was in deadlock. If it could not be ended by conquest, if it had to be ended by agreement, by negotiation and by the abandonment of conquest by all parties, in whose favour was it going to end? "Assuredly not in the favour of German militarism... A non-annexation peace is the death-knell of militarism all the world over, and not only in Germany. That is why it is so hard to get consent to it in other countries.

H.H. Asquith, leader of His Majesty's loyal opposition, spoke next. "There is no monopoly in the desire for peace," he insisted. "Peace has become… the supreme interest and anxiety of mankind, but subject to the one all-important condition:

> that it is a peace which does not defeat the purposes for which the free nations have entered upon and have continued the War, and that it does not turn to waste the innumerable losses and sufferings which they have shared and are sharing in common.

Asquith had lost his eldest son Raymond, killed on the Somme the year before. A restatement of the Allies' purposes and aims was all the more desirable, he agreed, since the emergence of two new facts: the Russian revolution and the entry of United States into the war. "[T]hose two new facts mean that the Allied forces consist of none but free peoples…They mean, in a word… that the Allies are fighting for nothing but freedom, but – an important addition – for nothing short of freedom."

The policy stated excluded selfish schemes of territorial aggrandisement and the equally false supposition that we were aiming at the destruction or even the permanent mutilation and crippling of the German and Austrian peoples. "Their right to a free life… is just as good as our own or, if they choose to exercise it, as that of the smaller nationalities, whose independence and power of self-defence and self-development were our primary concern when we entered upon the War."

> But it follows… equally clearly that no peace… would be worth having which restored, under some thin disguise, the precarious *status quo ante bellum*, and left countries like Belgium, like Serbia, like Greece, at the mercy of dynastic intrigues or under the constant menace of military coercion.
>
> I think we are all agreed … that in any rearrangement of the map, the governing principle ought to be the interest and, so far as it can be ascertained, the will of the populations affected by the change…I am bound to ask whether it is a principle that is now accepted in substance or in spirit by the Central Powers?

And specifically: was Germany prepared not only to evacuate Belgium, not only to make full reparation for the colossal mischief and damage that her occupation had inflicted on the country: but to restore Belgium to complete, unfettered and absolute independence? "I ask the Chancellor that. I ask him now, as far as I may. It is a very simple question and it is one of many other concrete questions I could put."

Meanwhile, Asquith concluded, "We should not be helping the advent of peace if we were to give the impression that there is any halting in our determination or any doubt of our ability to carry on."

Next on his feet was George Wardle, chairman of the Labour Party. Against the Reichstag vote he quoted a resolution adopted the month before by the French Chamber of Deputies. This had unanimously declared in favour not only of the liberation of the invaded territories but for the return of Alsace-Lorraine and for just reparation for the damage inflicted by the invader. It also wanted, once Prussian militarism was overthrown, lasting guarantees of peace and independence for all peoples great and small, through an organisation just now being established for a community of nations.

He reminded his ILP colleagues of the Labour Party position, endorsed at two annual conferences and supported (he said) by Ramsay MacDonald: which was that the invasion of Belgium and France threatened the very existence of independent nationalities; and that a victory for German imperialism would defeat and destroy democracy and liberty in Europe. He declared:

> I want to see some sign of an alteration, a real, genuine alteration… Let them get out of Belgium. Let them go back across the Rhine, then we shall know whether they are sincere or not in their desire for no annexations.

Hastings Lees-Smith, Liberal, said he was both gratified and amazed to see Lord Milner's and Lord Curzon's sudden enthusiasm for democracy in Germany. "But I believe that the establishment of democracy in Germany and the dethronement of Prussian militarism will depend not upon the length of the War but upon the terms of peace. Give the German people a peace which will show them that Prussian militarism is not necessary… for their security or other legal rights."

The government has twice dismissed the idea of negotiations in favour, first of a knock-out blow, and then last December, of "the great, supreme, combined offensive on all fronts at once" that was going to take place in the spring. "We are in the midst of that great combined offensive now, but the knock-out blow seems further away than when the original boast was made." Though he did not say so, Lees-Smith, an academic, had served 16 months in France as a corporal stretcher-bearer before being invalided home.[1]

Now a third opportunity had come. He believed that if the government rejected it, it would immediately find itself immediately face to face with the greatest disaster in the history of the war.

> The public hero of our Press at the moment is Mr Kerenski. Mr Kerenski has most solemnly pledged himself to the Russian people and to the Russian soldiers that he will not call upon them to continue to fight unless the Allies, as the preliminary to a general peace, publicly announce that they abandon all projects for colonies and conquests and economic war… If the Government does not announce it, it pronounces Mr Kerenski's doom. It drives Russia straight into the hands of those who want a separate peace.

Speaking for the government, Bonar Law, the leader of the House, said he believed members would feel, as he did, that the promoters of the amendment were living in a world of unreality. At issue was not a struggle between one kind of imperialism and another. It was not even a struggle, as the late prime minister had said, between brute force and freedom. It was struggle between right and wrong. "It is a war to decide whether moral force or wickedness is to rule the world in the days to come."

The hon. Gentlemen below the gangway, he suggests, "can render no greater service to the cause of peace than by showing to the world how small are the numbers of those who advocate the views which they represent."

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[1] Wikipedia. The Marshall archive (D/Mar/4/16) contains Lees-Smith's letter on rank-and-file opinion in the army. On the Somme where he was, he wrote, the response to Lloyd George's knock-out blow interview during the offensive was "Let 'im 'ave a dose of this 'imself."

The amendment, he noted, omitted one phrase from the Reichstag resolution, the one stating that a peace agreement must secure the freedom of the seas. This had only one meaning, he claimed: “that in war a nation with naval power is not to use that power, but a nation with military power is to be subject to no restrictions.”

Bonar Law conceded the resolution did indicate a change in the feeling of Germany. But what was the good of basing anything upon the resolution of a body “which does not exercise the smallest power, when we know that those against who we are fighting are controlled by others who are not guided by these views and are not influenced in the least by any resolution of anyone?”

The gentlemen opposite asked the government to restate its aims. Why had the Germans never put down their peace terms in any shape or form? Did “no indemnities and no annexations” mean Belgium and France should be asked to accept peace with no reparation, and that Alsace-Lorraine should continue to be held by force in the German empire, “though it was torn away from France by arms and arms alone?”

Was there any suggestion of a peace from the Reichstag when Germany was carrying all before her?

> It came only when it began to look as if Germany was going to be beaten in this War, and I can say to this House and to those hon. Gentlemen that if they wish to get a real peace-feeling in Germany… the way to do it is not by indicating that there is any weakening in the will or the power of the people of this country, but by showing that we mean to go on until the end is attained.

That end was the destruction of German militarism. With that machine still unbroken, “have we any security that the same danger which has ruined this generation will not ruin our children when this War is over?” Bonar Law had already lost his second son Charlie in April during the fighting in Gaza. He eldest son Jim was killed a few months later.[1]

Philip Snowden opened by replying to Bonar Law’s question about indemnities and annexations. He believed Belgium should be fully restored. Beyond that he commended the Russian proposal for a general fund to which all the belligerents should contribute according to their ascertained responsibility for the damage committed, to be distributed by an international commission. The question of Alsace-Lorraine would be solved by allowing the people there to decide. He lambasted a recent statement by Lord David Cecil, under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, that whatever the French people decided on the matter “it was for the British people to back them up.”

> Surely a more absurd, ridiculous, and preposterous commitment than that was never made by the spokesman of any Government. I say that I am not prepared to sacrifice the life of a single English soldier for the sake of giving back these two provinces to France.

By defeating the amendment, he told the Commons, it would declare, not only to Germany, but to the Allies and the rest of the world, “that it does not want a reasonable peace.” (Hon. Members: No) The time had come for plain speaking, he insisted, “and I

[1] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 153-4

do not hesitate to say, after the speech of the Leader of the House this afternoon, that it is the British Government, more than any other of the belligerents now at war which is standing in the way of an early settlement."

Snowden had been elected chairman of the ILP in April, succeeding Fred Jowett. Michael MacDonagh, the *Times* reporter, offers a glimpse of him in oratorical flow. He has, he says, "none of the reasonableness and ingratiating friendliness of Ramsay MacDonald. He is wholly unconciliatory. His bitter jibes and the defiant expression of face with which he utters them touch the 'Die-Hards' on the raw." Unmentioned by MacDonagh, Snowden was also disabled and supported himself on a stick, the result of a cycling accident in his twenties.[1]

In this spirit he threw back Bonar Law's claim that he and his friends did not live in a world of realities.

> It is the Government who do not live in the world of realities. They do not know what is going on in the country. They do not know of the change that is rapidly coming over the minds of the people of this country. They know nothing of the scores of great demonstrations held in all parts of the country every week, attended by thousands of people, at which resolutions are unanimously passed denouncing the War and demanding that the Government shall at once enter into negotiations for peace.

And surely if the government were ignorant of that, he added, "they ought to know something of the discontent in the Army. They ought to know something of the change that has come over the opinions of soldiers on this question… Hundreds of thousands of soldiers are in prison through indiscipline. Every day I get letters from soldiers at the front, and they are all in the same tone… Now that is the state of feeling, that is the disillusionment in the British Army to-day, and it is a great deal worse in France."

What did a war of attrition mean? So far as the hope of a military victory in the war was concerned

> all those lives – approaching a million casualties since the push began in July 1916 – have been absolutely thrown away; and if you go on there is no more hope that at the end of another twelve months the military situation will be more hopeful than it is to-day. As a matter of fact it will not, but you will have sacrificed a million more men and added two or three thousand millions to the National Debt.

"With all the strength at my disposal, Mr Speaker," Snowden concluded,

> I protest against such a policy as that. In the name of our common humanity I say it is criminal, I say it is scandalous, and I will raise my voice against it. I say in the name of humanity we must stop this War now.

There followed well-honed speeches by two Liberal dissidents: Arthur Ponsonby, one of the founders of the UDC, and Philip Morrell, the seigneur of Garsington. After them came a Liberal of a rather different stamp – Robert Outhwaite, the member for Hanley in the Potteries. Contributing from his own experience, he said an Australian soldier had

[1] Michael MacDonagh, p. 231; Philip Viscount Snowden, *An Autobiography*, pp. 51-2, 82.

told him that the way his compatriots regarded the war was much in the way they would look upon a strike.

“When engaged in the strike they would expect their leaders to go on negotiating and would not stop while the negotiations were in progress. Thus they felt they were not striking for the mere sake of striking. That, I think, must naturally be the view of the soldiers in the trenches.”

Outhwaite was himself an Australian, born in Tasmania. So far as he had been able to test the feeling of workers in his constituency, he said a great change, “virtually a revolutionary feeling,” was taking place.

> There is only one thing that has kept the mass of the workers in this country quiet at the present time: that is regard for their fellows in the trenches, the fear that they might injure them. If for one moment they thought that their not taking action was leading to a sacrifice of these men then you would have in this country undoubtedly an explosion of almost revolutionary force. [1]

These were the regular spokesmen for the anti-war contingent, joined at times by Richard Lambert and Edmund Harvey, both Liberals. And these were the recurring arguments. The war was in hopeless deadlock. Soldiers’ lives were being thrown away. Britain’s war aims had moved from their original objectives and were now freighted with territorial ambitions and secret treaties. The people of Germany and Russia were sick of the war; it was essential to respond to their democratic initiatives towards peace and negotiation. Continued fighting would strengthen the grip of the German militarists and drive Russia into a separate peace. Only peaceful discussions could resolve the nationality issues of Austro-Hungary and the Balkans.

There had been calls for negotiation in 1916, but on none of these occasions had the dissidents divided the Commons – “evidence of their isolation,” says Alan Taylor.[2] They did so at the end of three of the four 1917 debates. They laboured under procedural difficulties: the government refused to allocate them a day for debate, so they had to frame their propositions as an amendment to successive Consolidated Fund Bills, ie. proposals for war credits.

The rebels mustered 32 votes in favour of Russian peace terms in May (against 238), 19 votes against 148 in favour of the Reichstag resolution in July, 31 votes against 282 in favour of peace negotiations in November. The figures are not impressive, says Taylor, representing less support than Charles James Fox and his friends received in their opposition to the war against revolutionary France.[3] They might equally be considered reasonable in difficult circumstances.

Parliamentary reports, as noted previously, were not subject to censorship, though the government’s Press Bureau could “advise” editors. It’s interesting therefore to see how the mainstream dailies covered the debate on the Reichstag resolution. The *Labour Leader* reported the anti-war speeches at length, referring readers to the capitalist press for speeches from the government side. The capitalist press, in the shape of *The Times*

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[1] *Hansard*, House of Commons, 26 July 1917, cols. 1480-1589.
[2] A.J.P.Taylor, *The Trouble Makers*, p. 141.
[3] *ibid*., p. 149.

and the *Daily Telegraph,* give the "peace-mongers," it must be said, a reasonable hearing in their parliamentary reports, though not as much space as the patriotic speakers they favour.

In the Reichstag debate, *The Times* gives MacDonald, Trevelyan and Snowden approximately one-and-a-half columns altogether, while Asquith gets one column and Bonar Law one-and-three-quarters. In *The Telegraph* the first group get three-quarters of a column between them, Asquith a little short of a column, and Bonar Law a column and a quarter.

Concealed in the decorous columns of *Hansard*, the debate of 6 November was in fact a disorderly occasion. "Organised Shouting Down of Speakers" is the *Labour Leader*'s second-tier headline. An account in the *Tribunal* says the seconder, R.C. Lambert, was assailed by organised interruptions. "To the onlooker the Mother of Parliaments resembled a pot-house debating society." Later,

> Mr Whitehouse attempted to reply to Mr Balfour, but was shouted down. Mr Bonar Law then took the unprecedented course of moving the closure, thus preventing criticism of the Government's case. Mr Balfour and Mr Asquith appeared to enjoy, very thoroughly, the scene of rowdyism set up by their supporters.[1]

The reason, perhaps, for this unruly behaviour was the news carried in the next day's papers: "Passchendaele/in/British Hands -Taken by Canadians" – taken after three months of pitiless fighting in the mud.[2]

IV

Snowden's claim that hundreds of thousands of soldiers were in prison through indiscipline was a wild exaggeration but it was shortly to acquire a kernel of truth – in the so-called "battle of Eetapps." Étaples was a major supply and training base on the coast south of Boulogne. Disturbances here broke out in early September. That seems agreed, but accounts differ as to the cause, the course of events and their duration. Was the trouble sparked by the arrest of a New Zealand gunner, or was it provoked by a failure of supplies, particularly jam? [3]

There's some agreement that the military police opened fire, killing one soldier. DeGroot (of the jam story) says the incident was handled quite sensitively. Dave Lamb writes that by the first evening a thousand men turned on the military police and pursued them as they fled into the town. In the days following the authorities sought to keep the men in camp but they repeatedly broke out to hold meetings and demonstrations, both in the town and round the camp.

The mutiny appears to have lasted from Sunday to the end of the following week. However Vera Brittain, who was a VAD at the base there, recalled later that she and the other nurses were shut up in their hospitals for over a fortnight and were not allowed to leave camp until mid-October. "Quite who was against whom I never clearly gathered,"

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 8 November 1917; *Tribunal* 83, 15 November 1917.
[2] *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1917.
[3] Dave Lamb, *Mutinies: 1917-1920*; Gerard DeGroot, p. 94.

she writes – but in a footnote citing later articles in the *Manchester Guardian*, she adds that the trouble was due to repressive conditions in the camp and was provoked by the military police. [1]

The *Workers' Dreadnought* reported the mutiny on its front page after a soldier wrote in. He is quoted:

> The men out here are fed up with the whole b-y lot. About four weeks ago about 10,000 men had a big racket at Etaples, and they cleared the place from one end to the other, and when the general asked what was wrong, they said they wanted the war stopped. That was never in the papers.[2]

This has an authentic ring, though it also fits the paper's line. How extensive was this radical sentiment? Probably quite widespread - as shown on pages 81 and 83.

V

Robert Outhwaite does not mention it in his speech, but it's worth recording here, without elaboration, that Australia had held the first of two referendums on conscription in October 1916 and rejected it by 72,000 votes. A second referendum held in December 1917 rejected it by 167,000. Narrow margins - but it was a small electorate, of course, of fewer than two-and-a-half million voters, comprising men and women equally.[3] Bitter disagreement on the issue split the Australian Labor Party. Rather like Lloyd George, from January 1917 its erstwhile leader William Morris Hughes, another Welshman, headed a national government.

Despite the readiness of Australian troops in Britain to start a fight at anti-war meetings, it seems they were equally split, with men on the front line in particular, it is suggested, voting no. "I have never solved the riddle as to why," recalled one veteran, sgt. Ted Rule. "The nearest I can get to a solution is that a catch-cry properly caught on: 'I would not bring my worst bloody enemy over here to go through this.' Men often repeated this, word for word." [4]

The NCF would appear to have played its part in the second referendum. The evidence comes from an intriguing item in the Marshall archive. Under the heading "Australian referendum," Ernest Hunter reports back that the national committee at its last meeting authorized him to take steps on the above matter,

> and as a result we were able to do one of the most useful pieces of work we have done lately… Many thousands of cyclostyled slips were circulated throughout the country and even in France, and it is true to say that unless we had undertaken the matter, it is very doubtful whether Warrant Officer McGrath would have found friends who would have seen him through.

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[1] Vera Brittain, pp. 351-2.
[2] *Workers' Dreadnought*, 3 November 1917, quoted in Katherine Connelly, *Sylvia Pankhurst*, chapter 4.
[3] Manning Clark, *A Short History of Australia*, pp. 210-12; franchise p. 181.
[4] Les Carlyon, *The Great War*, p. 262.

The slip in question, printed two to a foolscap page, advises on how to vote and reads, "The principle underlying question to be decided by referendum same as negatived last year. Australian Labour Party, federal and state, are opposed to the Government proposals." The note is over the name of Frank Tudor, the party leader, and instructs the recipient "Vote thus," with a cross in the No box. A message above identifies it as a communication from Tudor sent to Warrant Officer D.C. McGrath, the MP for Ballarat, "for circulation amongst Australian soldiers, nurses and munition workers." [1]

From this it looks as if the NCF ran off the advice notes – with English spelling - and delivered them to McGrath. He must then have distributed them through his own channels. How many Australian historians are aware of the Fellowship's role? It's an interesting sidelight on the referendum.

[1] Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/29 (10 January 1918) and D/Mar/4/33 (no date).

14: The ILP surges, the *Herald* sounds

I

The NCF's concentration on gaol delivery for the absolutists meant that in practice it was for the moment no longer campaigning against the war itself - despite what Bertrand Russell had assured Mr Bracher earlier in the year. The Women's Peace Crusade, supported and promoted by the ILP, now headed the anti-war movement at the grassroots; but the party was also campaigning on its own account. A July editorial in the *Leader* conveys well the mood of the moment.

"From all over Britain letters are pouring into our office telling of the steady turning of the tide of popular opinion. The sales of the Labour Leader are going up by thousands a week. If only there was no limitation of paper supply! [The paper now had eight pages instead of twelve.] And wherever an ILP meeting is held the welcome of the speakers is astonishing the most sanguine members of the Party. There is no excuse for any branch failing in propaganda work at this tremendous moment in the world's history."

The paper goes on to quote the experience of "our good comrade Councillor J.W. Kneeshaw". He was an activist from Birmingham.

> Three weeks ago I spoke at Southampton, which, being a port of embarkation for our troops, is, naturally, a strong military and naval centre. There were as many military and naval men in our audience as civilians, and *none applauded our "peace talk" as vigorously as they.* In announcing the collection, Councillor Perriman asked the soldiers and sailors not to trouble about it because of their small pay, but in spite of that the soldiers called the collectors to them and gave their contributions, one of them declaring that his contribution was "for peace – an early peace, mind you…"
>
> Last Sunday I addressed two large meetings of munition workers at Barrow-in-Furness, and just as the soldiers and sailors on small pay in Southampton had approved, so did these munitioners on big pay. So keen was the crowd at the evening meeting with questions - all of which were courteous and full of enquiry – that I had perforce to close the meeting down, my voice being quite exhausted…The people are hungering and thirsting for our message, and we should give it now without fear.[1]

[1] *Labour Leader*, 26 July 1917.

The ILP, campaigning hard, was on a roll, experiencing an upsurge of support and borne aloft by a sense that world events were flowing their way. This is clear from a reading of *Labour Leader*, which reports developments in Germany and Austro-Hungary as well as in Russia. It recorded for example a rally in Frankfurt at which a crowd of 50,000 had called for a peace in accord with the Reichstag resolution, and expressed the hope that "the enemy peoples" would bring pressure to bear on their governments in order to secure a peace by agreement.[1]

Fenner Brockway, writing in September from the guard room in Chester Castle after five months' seclusion, is witness to this euphoric mood. He was waiting for his third court martial. While in prison, he says

> I had gathered that a great change was proceeding in the views of the people, but in my most optimistic moments I have not imagined such a change as five days' association with civilians and soldiers has revealed…
>
> A *lasting* peace can only come as the *peoples* are educated by experience and pacifist effort to insist upon it. And, I repeat, I marvel that that education should be proceeding so rapidly as it is.[2]

Brockway wrote to Bertrand Russell that the change of atmosphere left him "almost intoxicated with hope." Now was the time, he believed, to launch a general strike to end the war.[3]

It's rather difficult from the various histories to find objective measures of increased support for the ILP at this period. In his history of the party Robert Dowse says that its membership began to rise in late 1917/early 1918 for the first time since 1909. In Scotland the number of branches was already up by 50 per cent and membership by 300 per cent. Other figures he gives are rather less impressive. Nationally from the number of branches went down 551 in 1916 to 499 in 1917, but rose to 659 in 1918.[4]

On the other hand the *Labour Leader was* announcing new branches almost weekly. Nine including Hounslow on 6 September; five on 13 September; nine including Keyworth, Notts, on 27 September; three on 4 October; four including Ibstock, Leics, on 11 October; three on 18 October and four on 1 November; then 10 including Bexhill and Hastings on 22 November and eight more on 29 November: these included Buckfastleigh, Devon, and the Home Office work centre at Knutsford; finally ten more on 20 December.

In October the party launched the Special Effort Fund. In so doing it said it had around 700 branches and had increased the circulation of the *Leader* during the war by 40,000 copies a week. The Special Effort seems then to have been subsumed in the Great Leap Forward Movement, Philip Snowden urging, "We must double, treble, quadruple the membership of the ILP. This must be done NOW." He went on:

> It is the ILP which has saved the reputation of Labour and Socialism. The ILP must reap where it has sown. The harvest must not be

[1] *ibid*., 18 October 1917.
[2] *ibid*., 6 September 1917.
[3] Brock Millman, pp. 223.
[4] Robert E. Dowse, *Left of the Centre*, p. 29.

> gathered by men who, when the great test came, proved that they were neither Labour, Socialist, Democratic, nor Internationalist. Such men if given the chance will fail the people again.[1]

The paper reported some jocular rivalry between branches. Jos. Davies, secretary of the Cwmavon branch ("no, it is not on the map") boasted they sold 170 copies weekly, while Briton Ferry, with five times their membership, sold only 300. "Fie, you Ferry boasters, go and do some work." The same issue recorded a second contribution from "twenty comrades in khaki." They accompanied their 5s. postal order with the message, "My comrades and I wish to express the renewal of their most sincere wishes for the success of your efforts, and ultimately for the triumph of peace and democracy." By the year end the Fund had raised £1,217 15s 2d in private subscriptions, plus £371 17s 6d from 123 branches. Bermondsey's £25 was the biggest single donation.[2]

Meanwhile the Women's Peace Crusade continued to expand. In November the *Leader* reported it now had 48 active crusades, with others in the course of formation. "More than a quarter of a million of the free leaflets, gifted by the Labour Press and the ILP, have been distributed with countless others, and many thousands of badges sold. Hundreds of banners have been made, and are displayed on suitable occasions in all their glory of red and blue."

> But we are not satisfied. There are a great many centres of industry still unawakened by the women's appeal. To them we urge their responsibility for all that another winter of war will mean of suffering and death. It is the solemn duty of women to rise to the defence and protection of their boys, and the sons of women everywhere.[3]

In December a letter sent by the WPC to branches of the Women's Co-operative Guild and to women's trade unions says the Crusade comprises "more than seventy active bodies in the country." [4]

In London that autumn the Crusade's allies in the Workers' Suffrage Federation paraded with peace banners outside Westminster Abbey "and met with the friendliest reception," says the report, their latest banner, "England Arise! Start Peace Negotiations and Save the World," attracting special interest. It was hoped to make the round of the big London churches.[5]

That was in September. In October "Big Push" meetings are briefly reported in Camberwell, as well as Greenwich and Lewisham – where, we read, "all the speakers met with a good reception. Men in khaki and wounded soldiers from the local military hospital took peace leaflets and bought the *Workers' Dreadnought*.[6] The same month the federation unfurled a new slogan outside both Westminster's catholic cathedral and Westminster Abbey. It read: "Support the Pope's Lead for Peace" and "made a deep impression." [7]

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 18, 25 October, 1917.
[2] *ibid*., 15 November, 13 December 1917.
[3] *ibid*., 1 November 1917.
[4] *ibid*., 6 December 1917.
[5] *ibid*., 20 September 1917.
[6] *ibid.*, 6 October, 3 November 1917.
[7] *ibid.*, 25 October 1917.

II

The *Herald*, of course, was also campaigning against the war. In some ways the paper was similar to the *Leader*. “The Way of the World,” on page two, unsigned but evidently written by Lansbury the editor, rounded up the news in the same way as Snowden’s “Review of the Week.” It differed in other respects. It was a tabloid, not a broadsheet. It has bolder typography and a sharper layout. The *Leader* is characterised by miscellanies - “Notes of the Moment,” “The Madding Crowd,” “Here and There,” “News of the Workers of all Lands;” the *Herald* presents the news in a more focussed format, using more specific headings: “Scottish Notes,” “Irish Notes,” “Trade Union and Labour Notes,” “Trades Council Notes”, and so on.

The *Leader* carried no editorial as such, just a generalised and perfunctory comment on page 2, beneath a table of the previous week’s war casualties. The editor, Katharine Glasier, is an invisible presence; it is Snowden who articulates the paper’s line. The *Herald*, on the other hand, carried a full editorial plus a separate analysis by H.N. Brailsford. Its other regular writers included Gerald Gould - usually uncredited - and Evelyn Sharp, who contributed lively social vignettes in the form of miniature short stories.[1] The paper bore the imprint of Lansbury’s Christianity, discussed below. Above all, the paper campaigned more explicitly than the *Leader,* via a poster-like front page of big headlines and a double-page spread inside.

The paper had its branches too, in the shape of the Herald League, though they were far fewer in number than the branches of the ILP: only a dozen or so in fact, down from 96 in the London area alone when the war broke out. [2] The League had begun life in 1912 as a network for fundraising - each supporter contributing 3d. a week – but it quickly developed into political activism, helping suffragettes on the run from the “Cat and Mouse” Act, for example.[3] In 1917 its doings are reported in genial fashion by one George Belt, who acted as co-ordinator.

At the end of May, for example, he records the formation of a branch in Stepney, notes forthcoming meetings in Glasgow, Finsbury Park, and St. Pancras. “Fulham Branch keeps on its persistent, plodding way,” he writes, and “Comrade Tudge reports good progress from Southampton and Cowes.” The Northern Division was the League’s power-house, holding two open-air meetings each Sunday in Finsbury Park. The coming Whit Monday, we read, members and friends there were going on a ramble to the Clarion club-house at Nazeing. “All are invited, but only those who can walk well should come.” [4] Stepney branch held a regular Sunday morning meeting at the corner of Philpot Street, off Commercial Road.

In June Belt writes that a street meeting will be held every Sunday evening in Hornsey with a view to forming a branch there. In July he says he has had four good replies in

[1] An advert in the paper of 30 June 1917 shows Evelyn Sharp also edited *Votes for Women*, the monthly of the United Suffragists.
[2] *The Herald*, 28 July 1917.
[3] George Lansbury, *The Miracle of Fleet Street*, p. 79; John Shepherd, *George Lansbury*, p.149.
[4] *The Herald,* 26 May 1917.

regard to Deptford. “Send in more names, good readers, and then we’ll see whether we can get a branch going.” [1]

The first and fundamental aim of the League, he explains, “is to educate and enlighten the workers in the means to take and the methods to adopt to transmute the shams, frauds and unrealities of our time into truths and actualities.” Leaguers have shown

> that whilst we honestly hold and believe in the Socialist theory in regard to surplus value and that ownership and control, &c., are absolutely necessary, yet the Syndicalist method in the workshop, the guilding of the industrial union, and State controls for the consumer, are to be the means and methods to our completed, if rough-hewn, ends.[2]

In another formulation the following year Belt wrote that the work of the League was to

> draw together all people of goodwill in an earnest endeavour to transform national and international capitalism and competition into International Socialism and Co-operation…. [C]hief of all it is our duty to unite people. That is why we have no constitution, no programme, no leaders in the ordinary sense. We are rebels against the existing order…[3]

The League was thus a vehicle for self-education and proselytizing in socialist ideas. The themes announced for the League’s meetings include Lancelot Hogben on “Biology and the Materialist Conception of History.” That was in October in Capmakers’ Hall, Stepney. In November George Belt flags up a lecture series on industrial history in St. Pancras, and a similar class with the same tutor, John Dawson, at William Morris Hall, Walthamstow. He writes that a “well-known and popular speaker,” unnamed, would address Stepney branch on “The Functions of the State,” while Percy Howard would lecture to Fulham branch on “The Life and Work of Jack London.” [4]

Ken Weller claims that the Herald League held meetings “all over” north London. By his account it was not a political organisation in the normal sense; it was, rather, part of an enormous matrix, its members active in a wide range of other organisations.[5]

III

On the war the *Herald* and the *Leader* propounded a line in favour of peace and negotiation that was virtually indistinguishable. Without breaking the narrative unduly, it’s worth pausing to explore the relationship between the two papers and the two men who edited or fronted them.

Lansbury and Snowden had had a dissonant relationship before the war. “I was always in hot water with the Party,” is how the Lansbury summed up his two years in parliament.[6] Elected as MP for Bow and Bromley in December 1910, he was dismayed

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[1] *ibid*., 30 June 1917 and 21 July 1917.
[2] *ibid*., 26 May 1917.
[3] *ibid*., 23 February 1918
[4] *ibid*., 6 October and 17 November 1917.
[5] Ken Weller, *“Don’t Be a Soldier!’* p. 47.
[6] George Lansbury, *My Life*, p. 115.

by Labour's lack of fighting spirit under the pragmatic leadership of Ramsay MacDonald. MacDonald, like the Irish party, was anxious to keep the Liberals in power after they lost their overall majority in the election of that year. Much under the influence of the Pankhursts at this time, Lansbury argued that the party should oppose the Liberals at every opportunity until they conceded the demand of the WSPU for equal voting rights.[1]

Snowden was a strong supporter of women's suffrage and wanted a more critical attitude generally towards the Liberal government; so he wrote later. Nevertheless, for him, Lansbury's policy was "obviously so farcical as not to deserve a moment's consideration." [2] In the elections of 1910 and 1911 Snowden maintained a close relationship with the Liberals in Blackburn, a two-member constituency to which he had been elected in 1906. The wider context was of course the House of Lords' refusal to accept Lloyd George's "people's budget." [3]

Lansbury was passionate on the suffrage issue. After Asquith's bland declaration in parliament that the ladies in prison could leave tomorrow if they would only promise not to break the law, he rushed shouting up the floor of the House to confront the prime minister and was suspended by the speaker. He was arrested and briefly gaoled the following year after a speech at a rally in the Albert Hall in which he urged men to support women in their fight: "[L]et them burn and destroy property and do anything else they will… Let us teach that make-believe Liberal Government that this is a holy war." [4]

Eventually, after strenuous but unavailing efforts to persuade the ILP and the parliamentary party to his point of view, he resigned from both party and parliament in order to force a by-election at the end of 1912. He stood as an independent socialist on the specific issue of votes for women. The ILP refused to back him, but endorsements and canvassers flowed from all branches of the labour and suffrage movement. Hardie and Snowden broke ranks to speak in his support, as did Josiah Wedgwood. It was a famous by-election - which Lansbury lost to the Conservative by 4,042 votes to 3,291.[5]

He was far more of course than a single-issue hothead. As a borough councillor in Poplar and a guardian for over 35 years, he was dedicated to improving the lives of the poorest through reform of the Poor Law and at this time sat on two royal commissions on the subject. Out of parliament, Lansbury increasingly lost sympathy with the WSPU as it became ever more autocratic and anti-male under Christabel Pankhurst. She rejected any association with the Herald League because it was class-based and primarily a man's movement.[6] Lansbury remained close to her sister Sylvia, who was similarly disaffected.[7]

The *Daily Herald* now became the primary focus for his energy. Originally chairman of the board of directors, Lansbury took over as editor at the end of 1913. He made the paper a tabloid, had Francis Meynell introduce new typefaces, and used it as a conduit for co-ordinating industrial action in a period of trade union militancy. Disruption peaked

[1] Jonathan Schneer, *George Lansbury*, pp. 89-97.
[2] Philip Snowden, pp. 217-8, 258.
[3] Keith Laybourn, p. 50.
[4] John Shepherd, *George Lansbury*, p. 131.Jonathan Schneer, pp. 118-20.
[5] *ibid*., pp. 98-110, 117; Wedgewood: John Shepherd, p. 123.
[6] John Shepherd, pp.136, 157.
[7] George Lansbury, *My Life*, pp. 139, 152-5; Jonathan Schneer, p. 121.

in 1912 when more than forty million working days were lost through disputes. Syndicalist propaganda began to take precedence in the paper, writes Postgate. It championed every strike.[1]

Syndicalism was the theory that amalgamated industrial unions and mass unionisation could lead to a revolutionary general strike, which would overthrow capitalism and the state and create a new society based on workers' control. Authorities differ as to how far such ideas were behind the disruption. Dowse, in his history of the ILP, says they were becoming widespread in the unions and cites such figures as Tom Mann, Jim Larkin and James Connolly. Thorpe, in his history of the Labour Party, admits a few leaders were so influenced, for example in the Rhondda coal strike of 1911. But he argues the main reasons were more prosaic, notably resistance to changing industrial practices and a levelling off in real wages.[2]

Whatever the case, there was a clear divide here between Lansbury and Snowden. The latter, according to his biographer, was not a believer in trade unionism, though he defended union rights on civil liberty grounds. He had opposed the pre-war strikes, Snowden wrote in his autobiography, and for two reasons. He did not believe striking as a general policy could ever be effective in improving the condition of labour. In these strikes moreover, "it was not the counsel of experienced trade union officials which was followed, but the wild appeals of the revolutionary spirits." Such defiance of authority, he added, "is always a deplorable spectacle." [3]

Snowden put forward alternatives to striking in a book written at the time. *The Living Wage* advocated instead extending the system of conciliation boards, arbitration courts, and the like. For this opposition, he recalled 20 years later "I was violently abused and cartooned in Mr Lansbury's paper." To be fair, this was largely due to Charles Lapworth, whom Lansbury sacked and replaced as editor in order to stop such *ad hominem* attacks. Lansbury always believed in being generous to opponents in the movement.[4] With no background in journalism he became one of the great editors of the twentieth century, according to Michael Foot.[5]

The war modified Lansbury's previous class-war militancy. Already a Christian, he became a pacifist, joining the Fellowship of Reconciliation when it was founded in 1914 and maintaining that pacifism was inherent in both Christianity and socialism. He wrote a year later: "I know now… that force and violence are not the weapons we must use for securing happiness and well-being; that these can only come to us when brotherhood, love and co-operation are the guiding principles of our life." [6]

Snowden in his autobiography gives a vivid picture of his chapel-going childhood in the Yorkshire Pennines. As a young man in Keighley he was involved with the Labour Church. Such churches, he explains, aimed at "the Realisation of Heaven in this Life by the establishment of a state founded upon Justice and Love to thy Neighbour." In this

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[1] *ibid*., p. 122; Raymond Postgate, *The Life of George Lansbury*, pp. 137- 43. 40 million working days: Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British* Labour Party, p. 30.
[2] Robert E. Dowse, p. 18; Andrew Thorpe, pp. 31-2.
[3] Keith Laybourn, p. 71; Philip Snowden, pp. 237-9.
[4] *ibid*., p. 239; Raymond Postgate, pp. 141-2.
[5] John Shepherd, p. 139.
[6] Jonathan Schneer, pp. 139-141.

spirit he wrote a pamphlet in 1903 entitled *The Christ that is to be*, which the IP reprinted many times.[1]

Snowden retained, by all accounts, a revivalist style of oratory - given austere dogmatism perhaps by his crippled state.[2] But his vision seems to have become thoroughly secularised. After his childhood there is nothing in the autobiography about any religious belief.

Snowden was never an absolutist pacifist. He opposed the war, he told a Blackburn audience in 1915: “not only because of its barbarity and of the universal suffering and ruin which it inflicts, but because of its futility… War inevitably sows the seeds of future wars, and war itself can never destroy militarism and establish universal peace.” [3]

Never strongly attached to the ILP, Lansbury must have quietly rejoined at some point; it was the only way to be an individual member of the Labour Party. But in the war, unlike Snowden, he played no part in its national deliberations.[4]

When he published his autobiography in 1934 Snowden was a viscount in the House of Lords, having abandoned Labour to join the Tory-dominated National Government. Lansbury was leader of a much reduced Labour Party. Snowden concludes his account of the events leading up to the Bromley by-election with the line, “Many instances could be given of Mr Lansbury’s desire to force himself into a position of leadership in the movement.”

Then however he praises Lansbury’s many good qualities: his vigour, his sincere devotion to the cause of the workers, his insight into the hard and sordid lives of the poor, his hatred of injustice and tyranny. An unwritten *but* follows. “He is impressionable and impulsive. He has the fatal gift of fluency.” [5]

It’s not a bad tribute from one political ally to another of a very different temperament and with a common history of mutual wariness. Lansbury’s slighter memoir, published in 1928, contains no equivalent assessment of Snowden; indeed he’s barely mentioned.

IV

Finally, how did the circulation of the two papers compare? It’s hard to say. In October 1917, as we saw, the party said it had increased the circulation of the *Leader* by 40,000 during the war. In January 1918 the paper reported it had “leapt up another thousand again last week,” but added “we want to reach the 100,000 by Easter.” [6] In February that year the *Herald’s* circulation was reported to be increasing by between five and ten thousand copies a week; it was now well above its highest level as a daily. Postgate claims the *Herald* was “incomparably the widest-circulated” anti-war journal in the

[1] Philip Snowden, pp. 25-9; Keith Laybourn, pp. 24, 165.
[2] *ibid*., p. 36. Laybourn (p.11) suggests the back injury may have been spinal tuberculosis.
[3] Philip Snowden, p. 362.
[4] “Never strongly attached”: Robert E. Dowse, p. 22. He did attend the Labour Party conference of January 1918 which debated the new constitution. John Shepherd., p. 176.
[5] Philip Snowden, pp. 259-60.
[6] *Labour Leader*, 31 January 1918.

country.[1] This seems at first sight unlikely, given how many more branches the ILP had to sell their paper compared with the Herald League.

One way to an answer might be to count the amount of advertising each paper carried, on the basis that advertisers learn from experience which outlet produces the best results. The calculation is complicated by the fact that the *Leader* was a broadsheet of four columns, while the *Herald* was a tabloid of three.

The comparative figures for the number of columns of advertising on six random dates are as follows. Excluded are the ILP's branch reports and listings and ads for National Labour Press publications in the *Leader;* likewise ads for the paper's own publications and an ad for the League in the *Herald*.

Leader		***Herald***	
5 April 1917	4⅓	5⅓	7 April 1917
19 July 1917	7	3¾	21 July 1917
4 October 1917	4⅓	6¼	6 October 1917
13 December 1917	7	8	15 December 1917
7 March 1918	4	2½	9 March 1918
27 June 1918	1¼	4	29 June 1918

From this it seems clear that except for June 1918 the *Leader* carried more independent advertising, since its columns comprised roughly twice the space of the *Herald*'s. That suggests it had the larger circulation; but of course it is only an approximate measure. [2]

[1] *The Herald*, 23 February and 2 March 1918 ("Herald League"); Raymond Postgate, p. 154. He was Lansbury's son-in-law.

[2] One should not forget that also campaigning in the same direction, though less influential, were the BSP and its weekly paper *The Call*. I haven't examined the latter in any detail.

15: Local echoes, more air raids

I

It's hard to find much evidence in present-day Southwark of the strenuous anti-war campaigning reported in the previous chapter. At the end of July Camberwell Trades and Labour Council issued a protest against the penal conditions imposed on conscientious objectors in the Home Office camps. It called on the government to substitute instead a scheme of "useful social service" under honourable conditions." [1]

The *Labour Leader* carried a notice for Bermondsey ILP's week-long open-air socialist mission at the end of July, to be conducted by R.C. Wallhead. It was to take place each evening at 8.30: Monday to Wednesday at the Reformer's Lamp, Upper Grange Road, and Thursday to Saturday at the corner of Beatrice Road. "Choir of 100 led by Cornet," it promised; "Every member expected to turn up punctually." The ILP advertised regular open-air meetings thereafter at the corner of Beatrice Road.[2]

One would dearly like to know what the speeches said. There were indoor meetings too. In September the Hon. Bertrand Russell was listed as coming to address the branch on "Tendencies of the Moment." It would be his second visit that year to the Labour Institute in Fort Road.[3] Unfortunately these activities leave no trace in the local papers.

All we have are brief references to COs. The *CP Times* carried a short item at the bottom of page 3 headed "Objectors in Prison." It listed a number of south Londoners, among them Arthur Creech Jones (his various secretaryships spelt out), W. Russell Frayling, of Brockley, secretary of the London Peace Committee of the Society of Friends, and E.T.Jope.[4]

From July on only a handful, literally, of COs from our part of south London make any appearance in the press. Three came up in Lambeth police court. Wilfred Samuel Newell, aged 27, a clerk, of Athenlay Road, Nunhead, was one. "Why have you not joined up before?" asked the magistrate, H.C. Biron. "Prisoner: I have not joined up because I am a conscientious objector. I don't intend to be a soldier."

Another was Albert Norton, 32, a salesman, of Denmark Road, Camberwell.

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[1] *SLP*, 3 August 1917.
[2] *Labour Leader*, 19 July 1917; 2 August-20 September 1917. Wallhead was a journalist and lecturer. After the war he became the ILP member for Merthyr.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 29 March and 20 September 1917.
[4] *CPT*, 22 August 1917.

> Mr Chester Jones: Why didn't you join up, Mr Norton?
> Prisoner: Because I have a conscientious objection to military service, sir."

William Henry Willoughby, 25, no occupation, of Howden Street, Peckham, was reported by PC Nead to have been called up three times but not presented himself. "Why do you say you are not liable to military service?" asked the magistrate.

> Because I have not joined the army, and am therefore not a soldier.
> I should just like to say that I am a conscientious objector on Christian grounds and that is the reason I decline to take part in the war.
> Mr Biron: That has nothing to do with me.

All three were fined and handed over to the military.[1]

George Budd, aged 17, a hairdresser's assistant of Keeton's Road, Bermondsey, is the only tribunal case reported. A member of Drummond Road Baptist Church, he told Bermondsey tribunal that all war was contrary to the teachings of the New Testament. He objected to non-combatant service as he would be under military rule but was ready to undertake work of national importance such as agriculture. Ald. Wills said that while he had every sympathy with conscientious objectors, "in this case the applicant has not satisfied the Tribunal that he was one." Exemption was refused.[2]

What came next for these men? Newell stayed on hard labour in a succession of prisons, emerging from York Castle in April 1919. Norton accepted the Home Office scheme but then, at Knutsford work centre, he either rejected it or was rejected by it, and returned to prison and a second court martial. He was released from Canterbury prison as late as July 1919. Willoughby, one of two brothers who refused to serve, accepted the Home Office scheme and ended the war at Princetown.[3] About George Budd there is no further information.

The numbers locally may have been small – but the *South London Press* remained alive to the danger. "Although the Stockholm menace has been scotched," warned its leader, "the peacemonger – who may be better described as a fugleman for the Hun barbarian – is still at large and busy." [4]

II

That summer Creech Jones reported from Pentonville: "Vi will be glad to know I have lost nearly a stone. I am thoroughly fit, my muscles develop by my work & when I was thoroughly examined by the Doctor the other day he complimented me on my condition." Later he writes, "Perhaps Dr Salter (whom I greet) could come on Sep. 29 or Oct. 6. Kindly see him & fix date." [5]

In September he sent the family a lively account of his hard labour:

> I never knew how pampered & domestically useless I was until a year ago. Prison has made me useful. Wash a flannel, scrub a floor, use a

[1] *CPT*, 25 July, 21 November and 7 November 1917 respectively.
[2] *SBR*, 9 November 1917.
[3] See the Honours Board for more detail.
[4] *SLP*, 24 August 1917.
[5] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 15 August 1917.

> needle, clean a copper, polish the metal work, saw up firewood, clean the windows, wash down scullery, wash up crockery, skin the suet, strain the vegetables, peel the onions, cut up meat, wash the cabbage, carrots & potatoes, carry a load etc. etc. – Mother & Aunt must keep me up to it.[1]

The following month he wrote, “I was grieved to learn of the apostasy of Hoggins.” The name of Victor Hoggins, of 18 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, appears, along with those of Jones and Sarah Cahill, on the early list of members of the South London Council Against Conscription. He remains a shadowy figure and surfaces only in a trio of listings: giving readings in Hansler Hall to members of Dulwich ILP from Shaw’s *Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion* and from Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People*, and chairing a meeting there with Bertrand Russell. [2]

Service records show that Hoggins, a clerk, joined the Royal Naval Air Service in September 1917 to become an aircraftsman second class – about as uncombatant a fighting role as he could have chosen. Promoted aircraftsman first class the following March, he was transferred to the BEF in September 1918 and served in France until March 1919. Jones’ letter goes on: “He had worked well & when he & I formed & organised the famous local branch I little guessed he would go that way. Bid the branch to hold together & not falter. I have thought much of the ILP branch. Dear Vi make things go & do not underestimate yourself.”

From this it is not entirely clear whether the “famous branch” refers to that of the NCF or the ILP. Possibly the latter, for Jones writes a few lines on, “My fraternal greetings to the Fellowship (the Cahills, Rose, &c &c all comrades)” He adds, “I am longing to be at work on the Trades Council again. Are they doing anything re. the new Labour Party developments?” And later: “Was it not good of Dr. Salter to write to you in Bristol? Tell him I appreciate it & and how much I anticipated and enjoyed his visit.”

He sums up his life as one of “a sad loneliness, a yearning for self-expression, a demand for initiative, a longing to expand the social, generous & affectionate impulses of one’s nature.” Though he knows “the tremendous warmth & sympathy you all have for me… you want to *feel*, to be conscious in some tangible way of the warmth of human kindness, the touch of sympathy & those softening influences which give the sweet to life.” [3]

III

In September, with dogged optimism, F. Herbert Stead, the warden of Browning Hall, Walworth, convened a meeting to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Hague Peace Palace. Opened in August 1913, this housed the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the body created to end war by the Hague convention of 1899. Stead is identified in the *SLP* as the convenor of the League to Abolish War; an organisation not encountered elsewhere. He argued for a system of policing the world and arbitrating on matters of

[1] *ibid*., 26 September 1917.
[2] *Labour Leader*, 8 and 15 February 1917; *The Herald*, 19 May 1917.
[3] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 24 October 1917.

dispute. “The problem, he admitted, was a grave one, but it was not insoluble. The alternative was the suicide of the human race.” [1]

That autumn there were also local resonances from Pope Gregory’s plea for peace. The Catholic League of South London, meeting in Vauxhall, agreed a resolution that “without making any pronouncement upon the suggestion of the Holy Father concerning the restoration of peace, unfeignedly thanks him for his Apostolic efforts to hasten the termination of the war.” [2]

The catholic hierarchy had opposed the pope’s stand; yet Dr Amigo, the bishop of Southwark, suggested that while the divine promise of inerrancy applied only to matters of faith and morals, was it not likely that “there would be granted to [the Holy Father] a mighty ‘gratia status’, a special guidance from the Holy Spirit, which apart from infallibility, would yet raise his every official utterance to a plane far above and beyond the weightiest pronouncements of mere secular potentates. We pray that it may be so.”

Alongside and more prominently, the *SLP* has Joseph McCabe telling a meeting of the South London Ethical Society at Surrey Masonic Hall that the pope’s initiative was prompted by “mere political opportunism.” He argued that the interests of the papacy were closely bound up with those of Germany and Austria, on account of the powerful Centre Party in Germany and the fact Austria had always been the strongest bulwark of catholicism in Europe.[3]

IV

Air raids and food shortages: Londoners continued to be ground down by both that autumn. The last week of September brought the “harvest moon raids” – the worst night-time assault on the capital to date and the most vividly remembered. The Germans flew in Gothas, and on one occasion the even bigger Riesen (“Giants”), which dropped their bombs five nights out of six, mainly north of the river. Altogether 47 people died; 226 were injured.[4]

When the night raids began the head of air defence, general Ashmore, set up barrage balloon aprons in the eastern suburbs, the balloons 500 yards apart and connected by horizontal steel wires. The balloons however could only force the attackers to fly higher and did not always work even if they flew lower.[5]

Bermondsey council improvised a night raid warning by means of coloured electric light bulbs positioned on top of the flagstaffs at its town halls in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. These would shine blue as long as all was safe, but as soon as a warning was received red bulbs would shine instead until the all-clear message was received. It was an

[1] *CPT*, 29 August 1917; *SLP*, 7 September 1917.
[2] *SLP*, 14 September 1917.
[3] *SLP*, 5 October 1917. Joseph McCabe (1883-1955) was an apostate Franciscan (author of *Twelve Years in a Monastery)* who became a committed secularist. He wrote many books and lectured regularly to the Ethical Society. My thanks to Robert Fyson for this identification.
[4] Jerry White, p. 216.
[5] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 249.

example, said the *CP Times*, that might very well be followed by Camberwell and other boroughs.[1]

Southwark established emergency ambulance stations or first aid depots at ten locations in the borough. These included the town hall in Walworth Road, the free library in the Old Kent Road, the Mint Street workhouse and the offices at Borough market. Later in the autumn Bermondsey's mayor opened a dressing-station in premises made available by Austin the chemist's opposite the old parish church.[2]

By the end of September perhaps as many as 300,000 Londoners were taking refuge at night across the whole underground system, including five thousand at the Elephant and Castle. However there were not enough deep tube stations to give safety to all who wanted it. Rotherhithe Tunnel, closed as a roadway since the start of the war, was opened up and was accommodating thirty thousand a night by early October. The Harvest Moon raids also prompted an evening evacuation to places like Richmond Park until the nights went dark again.[3]

The air raids received extensive coverage in the *SLP*: a whole page of reports on 5 October, for example. The main headlines read:

- SCOTCHING HUN MOONLIGHT RAIDS
- How the Metropolis Defended Itself Against Successive Nightly Intrusions
- MENACE WELL IN HAND; REPRISALS COMING

There are four photographs of children under the headline "'Take Cover' Time in the Royal Waterloo Hospital."

In the middle of October the Zeppelins returned. Four of a flotilla of five "failed in their object," reported the *SLP*, but one, the L45, caused considerable loss of life, in Lewisham and Camberwell as well as in Piccadilly. Michael MacDonagh was sent by his paper to inspect the damage near Camberwell Green. Though restricted from reporting it at the time, he notes in his memoir that so many houses were devastated that a thousand people were made homeless. He gives the death-toll as 10, including five women and two children.

He also records that this "silent raid," as it was dubbed, deliberately met with no anti-aircraft fire because the authorities did not want to reveal to the airship that it was over London - strange reasoning. White says the bombs were visited on Albany Road. The *SLP*, reporting the following week, does not locate the destruction at all and says merely that the bombs "unhappily cost several lives and did some material damage." [4]

So the raids were not quite the trivialities dismissed by Philip Gibbs. And they continued. It was less the damage, White observes, than the relentless disruption and accumulating strain that people felt so intolerable.[5] "AIR RAIDS" declared an advert in the *CP Times*:

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[1] *CPT*, 6 October 1917.
[2] *SLP*, 7 September and 30 November 1917. This must mean St. Mary Magdalen in Bermondsey Street. My thanks to Gary Magold for this clarification.
[3] Jerry White, pp. 216-17.
[4] Michael MacDonagh, pp. 223-7; Jerry White p. 219; *SLP*, 26 October 1917.
[5] Jerry White, p. 216.

“During these trying times,/to be fit and strong, take/LIQUID NERVE FOOD/which builds up and restores/perfect balance.” [1]

On the ground Lord Rhondda had reduced the price of bread in September to 9d a quartern loaf. He did so by subsidising the price of flour, at a cost to the Treasury of £50 million a year. In November a more complicated subsidy guaranteed a grower’s price for potatoes. On the seas meanwhile a reduction of tonnage was restricting food imports, which registered in the shops as a shortage of bacon, dairy products, margarine and tea. The ministry exerted itself to increase purchases of all kinds from the United States, to secure more tea from India and to boost the production of margarine.[2]

Despite these efforts there were queues for what seemed like everything. *The Times* in December listed the following as in short supply in London: sugar, tea, butter, margarine, lard, dripping, bacon, pork, condensed milk, rice, currants, raisins, spirits and (strange item) Australian wines. It reported that in some parts of London women on Saturday morning started to queue for margarine as early as 5am. One such queue in Walworth Road was estimated to number about three thousand, of whom a thousand went away empty-handed. Some shoppers from Southwark traipsed over the river bridges to the City, where the lines were reportedly shorter.[3]

[1] *CPT*, 7 November 1917
[2] William Beveridge, p. 195.
[3] Arthur Marwick, pp. 194-5; Jerry White, pp. 222-3.

16: The government clamps down

The *Labour Leader* serves as the journal of record for that autumn's increasingly severe repression. In October the paper reported that an issue of the *Workers' Dreadnought* had been suppressed under DORA while still in the press. The printer had been compelled to sign an undertaking that he would not print any further issues. However: "Mr J.E. Francis, of the Athenaeum Press, considering the suppression of newspapers in advance an interference with the rights of the printing trade, has very courageously informed Scotland Yard that he intends to print the paper." [1]

In November it reported that the London police, acting on a warrant issued by the military authorities, had raided the print-works of the National Labour Press and demanded that the manager sign an undertaking not to print any further issues of certain publications - "an interference with the most elementary principles of liberty," fumed Snowden in his 'Review of the Week.' "But we must console ourselves with the reflection that all this is being done 'to make the world safe for democracy.'" [2]

He reports further raids later in the month on a number of organisations involved with the peace movement. These included the Women's and Christian Peace Crusades, at 39 Doughty Street, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, at 17 Red Lion Square, both in Holborn, and (a new target) the International Free Trade League, in Victoria Street. In no case had the authorities dared bring a prosecution. The special branch confiscated papers from the NCF and without a warrant, seized (or broke up) the machinery of the printer Thomas Keeley, in Hackney, responsible for an unnamed pacifist pamphlet "distributed broadcast in certain parts of London," according to press reports.[3]

Snowden flags up the new DORA regulation 27c. This required every leaflet "intended or likely to be used for propagandist purposes in relation to the present war or the making of peace" to carry the name and address of the printer and be submitted to the Press Bureau for prior approval. Even to possess an unauthorized flyer was an offence unless the possessor could show he did not intend to distribute it. Snowden and his friends had tried to move the adjournment of the Commons in order to secure a debate on the regulation, but failed to gather the support of the 40 members needed.[4]

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 18 October 1917.
[2] *ibid*., 1 November 1917.
[3] *ibid*., 22 November 1917; *Tribunal* 84, 22 November 1917. Cuttings and addresses in Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/26. *The Tribunal* adds, "We now hear that Keeley is to be deported."
[4] *Labour Leader*, 22 November 1917; wording in Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/29.

Under the heading “The Methods of the Black Hundred in Britain” the same issue carried a letter from Bernard Langdon-Davies, of the National Council for Civil Liberties. He identified a rapidly growing campaign to suppress “by violence or otherwise” all discussion of views unfavourable to the authorities. He was not referring to press censorship and the manipulation of public opinion, he explained, nor to prosecutions under DORA or the imprisonment of agitators, nor to any of the other acts of oppression “to which the once free British people is now bowing its neck.” He meant the system by which certain organisations, individuals and journals were publicising meetings and calling on the ruffianly element in society to crush out free speech.

The situation had now got to the point where this gang was attempting not merely to suppress the utterances of known pacifists, but was using the war madness to crush out of public life all those who expressed views unwelcome to the extreme capitalist press. He cited two instances where the threat of disruption had caused bookings to be cancelled. One was for a reception planned by the United Suffragettes to welcome back George Lansbury and the radical journalist W.H Nevinson after serious illness; the other was for a series of lectures organised by the Guild Socialists.[1]

Writing to endorse Langdown-Davies’s letter, George Coldwell, hon. sec. of the Catholic Reading Guild, said that on 18 November “about 50 ruffians of the very lowest type” had made the speaking ground at Finsbury Park a complete shambles.

> One man who was talking on the principles of Socialism was struck from behind, and as he rose from the ground a burly bruiser picked up the man’s bicycle and simply dashed it on him. Another man had his teeth knocked out for speaking of Ireland, and I myself who have been a lecturer for the Catholic religion for eight years here, was abused with the most filthy and obscene language, and commanded to close my meeting.

Coldwell identified the thugs as members of the British Empire Workers’ Union.[2]

In December a display ad by the NCCL asked all who have been in the touch with it to communicate at once, as their literature, account books, correspondence and indices have been seized by the police from their office - 33 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden - and handed over to the war office. The Women’s Peace Crusade reported briefly that the police have seized thousands of their beautiful leaflet “Save the Children of all Nations.”

The same issue recounts the attempted suppression of the Herald League’s Sunday meetings in Finsbury Park.

> First collections were stopped by the LCC, then literature sales (amounting to 700 copies of the *Herald* and *Labour Leader*, etc.) were forbidden by the same body. Then a press campaign followed and an unsigned leaflet full of filthy lies (no other adjective can describe it) was given away by thousands in the district. But all to no avail.

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 22 November 1917.The Black Hundreds were the supposedly Christian mobs which the authorities unleashed on Jews in czarist Russia. *The Herald* (10 November) identifies Methodist Central Hall, in Westminster, as the place which succumbed to this “outrageous pressure.”

[2] *Labour Leader*, 29 November 1917.

> The meetings were larger and more enthusiastic than ever. Then, on Sunday, November 24, the chief inspector of the division of the Metropolitan police called on the secretary of the League and informed him that all *future meetings* of the *Herald* League in Finsbury Park were forbidden by the Home Secretary under section 9a of the DORA.

This allowed the prohibition of meetings deemed likely to result to grave disorder.

The news item, headed "Well done, Tottenham!" goes on to draw readers' special attention to a report from that branch. This tells how, "without announcement or advertisement," it had held a meeting in Finsbury Park the previous Sunday morning at which comrade H.J. Stenning addressed a quickly-attracted audience of about two thousand people. The meeting, with only two dissentients, enthusiastically carried a resolution strongly protesting against the home secretary's action in forbidding the meetings, "which for the past few years have been conducted with order and increasing success, and calls on him to at once restore the democratic right of Free Speech."

The War Aims Committee on the adjourning pitch, the report concludes, were despite special speakers unable to attract half-a-dozen people, "and after a vigorous and vain attempt closed down, sadder, if not wiser, men." [1]

These examples illustrate the more systematic suppression of anti-war opinion and activity inaugurated by Lloyd George's home secretary Sir George Cave. "For the first time," writes Brock Millman, "we can speak of a unified policy against dissent." [2] According to Millman, prosecution of both *Labour Leader* and the *Tribunal* was considered in January 1917 on the grounds that they were beginning to advocate civil disobedience, but was shelved to avoid compromising the efforts of Lloyd George and Henderson to keep the Labour Party onside. The government likewise held its hand over some of the views expressed at the Leeds convention.

At the same time, tighter surveillance, co-ordinated by a special unit of the CID, led to the more frequent prosecution of lesser activists under DORA. The watchers also paid close attention to industrial unrest.[3]

Millman recounts the patriotic hysteria whipped up by Horatio Bottomley and the Northcliffe press. It was directed not only against anti-war subversion but, increasingly, against supposed treason in high places. D.H. Lawrence is worth quoting here. His novel *Kangaroo* is set in Australia after the war but from there his protagonist looks back:

> From 1916 to 1919 a wave of criminal lust rose and possessed England, there was a reign of terror, under a set of indecent bullies like Bottomley of *John Bull* and other bottom-dog members of the House of Commons. Then Somers had known what it was to live in a perpetual state of semi-fear; the fear of the criminal public and and the criminal government. The torture was steadily applied, during those years after Asquith fell, to break the independent soul in any man who would not hunt with the criminal mob.[4]

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 6 December 1917.
[2] Brock Millman, pp.176-80.
[3] *ibid*., pp. 178-9, 185,
[4] *ibid*., pp. 218-20; D.H. Lawrence, *Kangaroo* (1923), Penguin ed, p. 235.

Millman gives an extended account of the National War Aims Committee, mentioned in the report of the banned Finsbury Park meeting. It was a government-funded, non-party and nominally unofficial body. It sought to counter pacifist subversion on the home front by ensuring that discontents "resolved themselves into renewed resolution rather than in dissent… It also had a secret repressive agenda." [1]

From September 1917 it started consolidating local patriots into a national network. It organised meetings with speakers great and small, often preceded by a razzamatazz of music and film. The speakers included national figures like Milner and Churchill, but also big names from the States and the Dominions: Billy Hughes, for example, the combative prime minister of Australia, and Samuel Gompers, of the American Federation of Labour. The War Aims Committee published leaflets, with titles that included "A Kalendar of Kultur," "How the Hun Hates," Germany's Plot Against the Peace of the World," "There Must Be No Next Time." It put on photographic exhibitions and screened short films in mobile cinemas. It sent reliable working men on organised tours of the front.[2]

In November 1917 it was arranged, on Cave's suggestion, that the committee should get prior notice of dissident meetings from the home office in order that their local sub-committees might arrange a counter-blast – or a disruption, using perhaps the British Workers' National League. The committee soon began receiving copies of CID and military intelligence reports and at the end of the month these branches began to receive notice of impending meetings directly from the local police. Since all meetings had to be registered with the police under DORA it was a perfect arrangement.[3]

In this spirit there was that autumn a second fracas at the Fellowship Church in Hackney. Bertrand Russell came to speak on the international situation, but an organised band of roughs broke up the meeting, and singing "Keep the Home Fires Burning" attempted to set fire to the church. "No-one was seriously injured," reported the *Tribunal*, "though several members of the audience were assaulted; in particular a gentleman prominent in organising these riots, who, on mounting a chair to encourage his followers to do their bit in the gallant fight for freedom, was mistaken for a pacifist and knocked to the ground!" [4]

The local sub-committees in turn sent intelligence on dissidents and trouble-makers back to the executive in London. Both they and the visiting speakers also reported back on general discontents and the state of morale.[5]

Critical MPs tried and failed to get a figure put on the blank cheque the House of Commons was asked to write for this patriotic work. Millman calculates the committee received something like £12 million over its year-and-a-half's life. Philip Snowden echoed the complaint of his parliamentary friends that the campaign literature contained

[1] Brock Millman, p. 229.
[2] *ibid*., pp.230-41
[3] *ibid*., pp. 245-6.
[4] *Tribunal* 78, 11 October 1917.
[5] Brock Millman, p. 246.

no reference to British and Allied war aims beyond “hackneyed and meaningless phrases about the destruction of German militarism.” [1]

Brock Millman, to whom we owe this piece of recovered history, says the National War Aims Committee operated in 468 constituencies and staged perhaps 9,000 meetings.[2] In the light of this it’s remarkable there are no press reports of any meetings in our part of south London. The sole evidence of any activity in 1917 is a single small display ad among the public notices in the *SLP* announcing twelve meetings in Southwark between 25 September and 7 October 1917. The locations given – including Sumner Street, Nelson Square, Webber Row, Flat Iron Square and Garden Row – suggest they were small local affairs.[3] The lack of press coverage must mean there were no big names.

[1] *Labour Leader*, 22 November 1917; Brock Millman, p. 233; *Labour Leader*, 20 December 1917.
[2] Brock Millman, pp. 233-4
[3] *SLP*, 21 September 1917. In 1918 there was a one-off rally in Kennington. See below, p. 150.

17: Hard labour softened (a little)

I

In October Lord Milner failed for the third time that year to persuade the war cabinet to agree to the release of the absolutists. But by now public attitudes towards them were softening. A leader in the *Times* headed “Conscience Recalcitrant” asked a long italicised question:

> When a man has deliberately refused to avail himself of two alternative ways of escape from prison labour; when he has more than once, of his own deliberate choice, gone back to gaol; when he shows himself resolute to go back again and again rather than submit to that military service against which he asserts that his conscience raises for him an insuperable barrier – when he thus proves repeatedly his readiness to suffer for what he proclaims to be his beliefs – is it either justifiable or politic to go on with the punishment? [1]

Well over two thousand clergymen signed a petition headed the “Majesty of Conscience.” This was circulated on the back of a pamphlet of the same title, written by the Rev. F.B. Meyer, which the NCF sent that autumn to 10,000 Free Church ministers with the request that they bring it before their congregations. Dr Meyer, as noted earlier, was Baptist minister at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road. “Let me not be understood,” he wrote,

> We have given the only boy in our family to die on Vimy Ridge, and are proud to have made this supreme sacrifice in the cause of humanity and, as we believe, of God…
>
> But though I do not hold their views, I sincerely respect the men who, out of reverence for the Majesty of Conscience, have endured tortures which, in some cases, could hardly have been exceeded by the Inquisition.

Meyer goes on to give details and concludes: “Is it conformable to national traditions to punish people who differ from us in opinion, where they give evidence of perfect good faith?” [2] A memorial in the name of Mr and Mrs Hobhouse urging an end to repeat sentences attracted support from 18 diocesan bishops, eight suffragan bishops, seven

[1] Quoted in *Tribunal* 81, 1 November 1917.
[2] Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/24 (8 August 1917). Vellacott (p. 213) suggests Russell may have a hand in this text too; petition: D/Mar/4/29 (10 January 1918).

deans and 200 other Church of England clergy. Trade unionists also passed resolutions, though not so impressively.[1]

In the Upper House Lord Lansdowne and others called in November for a "court or commission" to look into the matter. Lord Derby, the war minister, responded with a statement that, perhaps deliberately, confused the issue. In it he said the "clemency" of commuted sentences was evidently futile in softening the resistance of imprisoned objectors; in future therefore "there will not be successive punishments, but the punishment that is given in the first instance by the Court-Martial." This articulated a change in policy, urged on him by general Childs, which had in fact been introduced in May. It seems clear that in talking about successive punishments Derby was not promising there would no further court martial and punishment after the first uncommuted sentence expired. None of the noble lords picked him up on this sleight-of-hand, however, and the NCF chose to interpret the statement that way, and campaigned on that basis in 1918.[2]

In response to these and similar representations the government in December offered some concessions to absolutists who had served terms of hard labour of twelve months or more. Most were trivial. The most valuable perhaps were those that allowed the men to wear their own clothes, to have books sent in four at a time, and to have two periods of exercise a day and to converse the while. An internal NCF report noted that many prisoners eligible for concessions were refusing to take them up "and feel that the offer of these is a positive insult." The new regulations were not always applied, and there was no change in the work regime or the starvation diet.[3]

At the same time the government announced that seriously ill prisoners might be released from prison. Stephen Hobhouse and Clifford Allen were both discharged, together with a handful of other men. Allen's health was permanently damaged after the additional punishments imposed for his repeated acts of defiance. As Vellacott remarks, the release of prisoners who by dying in prison might have damaged the government in the eyes of public opinion does not seem an enormous concession.[4]

Rae suggests moreover that even this last concession may have been won behind the scenes only by the *quid pro quo* that the government would support the disenfranchisement of all conscientious objectors - except those serving in the Non-Combatant Corps - for a period of five years from the end of the war. It had opposed the proposal five months previously. An amendment, passed by 209 votes to 171, was now incorporated into the Representation of the People Act of 1918, which extended the parliamentary vote to all men and to women over 30. In practice the penalty was applied only erratically post-war.[5]

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[1] John Rae, p. 224; Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar//27.
[2] NCF, *Scraps of Paper*, April 1918, p. 5; Jo Vellacott, p. 206. *Hansard*, House of Lords, 14 November 1917, cols. 965-1014. Curiously, neither Vellacott, Rae or Boulton mention Derby's speech.
[3] Jo Vellacott, p. 216; David Boulton, p. 260; Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/29.
[4] Jo Vellacott, pp. 216-18.
[5] John Rae, pp. 222-3, 235; A.J.P. Taylor, *English History*, p. 116.

II

The situation by the end of 1917 was thus the reverse of the year before when the NCF had offered the most active opposition to the war, with a divided ILP was tucked in behind. Now the Women's Peace Crusade and the ILP were in the van, with the Fellowship absorbed in the plight of the absolutists.

This withdrawal needs admittedly to be somewhat qualified: because, as we saw, Bertrand Russell was writing regular opinion pieces in the *Tribunal* in which he commented, in characteristic style, on the latest developments. Thus in July he welcomed the peace resolution of the German Reichstag, commenting

> The reply of Mr Lloyd George … presents only one really serious obstacle to negotiations now: we are told that we could negotiate with a free and democratic Germany, but not with the aristocracy. We all desire to see Germany free and democratic. But suppose the Prime Minister got his wish… Is it not possible that the German democrats might refuse to negotiate with us until we became free? They might maintain – not without plausibility – that the United Kingdom is governed by a self-appointed clique of convicted incompetents, who rule through terror, imprisoning their political opponents, preventing free speech, muzzling the Press, shooting those of their subjects who attempt to secure freedom for a small nation which hates their yoke.

"There can be no end to such a battledore and shuttlecock war," he concluded. "The Germans must be allowed to have whatever Government they choose, even if it is as bad as our own.[1]

In October Russell welcomed the speech by count Czernin, in which the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister offered to enter into peace negotiations. Such a speech, writes Russell, "is an event of first-class importance. One asks oneself why, in spite of it, the war continues?" [2]

The situation appears therefore that while the *Tribunal* provided a platform for Russell and others to make this sort of argument, the NCF as an organisation was no longer campaigning, and using its membership to campaign, for negotiations and an end to the fighting. This is not something picked up explicitly by either Vellacott or Boulton, but it seems plain from the Fellowship's second manifesto, published at the beginning of December 1917. Entitled "What We Stand For," it proclaims the Fellowship's deepened conviction that war is wholly evil, that it tramples on the most sacred rights of human personality, "and that an essential factor in its abolition is the refusal to take part in it by those to whom it appears to be wickedness as well as folly."

> We are not indifferent to the interests of our country. We honour the devotion of those who have given their lives, and the lives of the men they love for its sake. But it is our profound conviction that, unless the causes of war are removed, these appalling sacrifices will be all in vain. It is our part to devote our lives to the removal of these causes; and this we cannot do if we surrender our liberty of soul by entering the military organisation…

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[1] *Tribunal* 68, 26 July 1917.
[2] *ibid.* 78, 11 October 1917.

> In particular, our task is to work for the abolition from the world of compulsory Military Service. We believe that the close of this war will afford a unique opportunity for the nations to put an end to Conscription by mutual agreement; and that this should be made a leading feature of the Settlement.[1]

The manifesto goes on to promise opposition to the efforts being made "to militarise the schools of the nation." It concludes with a further look towards a peace settlement. "We are deeply convinced that in thus working for permanent Peace on Earth we are acting in the spirit of true loyalty to our own country and to humanity as a whole." The militarisation of schools seems a minor issue to set against the horrors of Flanders. It's of a piece with the focus of the NCF, as expressed in the manifesto, on opposing war in principle rather than war in particular. It's noteworthy that just as "the Somme" the previous year was almost taboo in print, so in autumn 1917 the word "Ypres" never appears in the *Tribunal.*

How to explain for this turning away? It is not because the NCF and similar organisations were "besieged remnants," as Brock Millman claims was the case by the end of 1916.[2] On the contrary: the Fellowship's organisation appears to have remained in good shape. As noted already, much of the branch activity detailed previously relates to 1917, including the picketing, the visiting, the choirs, the publication of Dulwich's booklet, and the north London rally of ten branches.[3] The Maintenance Committee continued its work. The *Tribunal* appeared each week. In August 1917 it included a vivid account of a day in the record department of the COs' Information Bureau.[4] This is not deny that 1917 saw a more systematic repression of anti-war opinion, as outlined above.

It almost certainly had something to do with a hiatus at the top of the organisation. Close to breakdown from overwork, Catherine Marshall withdrew from political work in July to concentrate on restoring the Fellowship's administrative efficiency. This followed criticism from inside the national committee of her close relations with general Childs and others at the war office.[5] Russell, as acting chair, reluctantly stepped into the role but quickly felt himself both unsuited to the task and too busy with a forthcoming lecture course on mathematical logic. So from September onwards the work was effectively set aside.[6]

That said, it is evident from Joe Vellacott's account that political work meant lobbying on behalf of the imprisoned absolutists. So this is, at best, a partial explanation for the NCF's lack of direct anti-war activity. It derived rather from the focus on gaol-delivery; and from the fact, I suggest, that hopes for an end to the conflict were invested overseas in the evolving Russian revolution and, until the autumn, in the soviet initiatives at home which the Fellowship had helped along. From the manifesto - and elsewhere - one gets a sense that peace was now felt to be close at hand.

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[1] *Tribunal* 86, 8 December 1917.
[2] Brock Millman, p. 83.
[3] J.H. Taylor, chapters 17 and 18.
[4] *Tribunal* 70, 16 August 1917.
[5] Jo Vellacott, pp. 207-8.
[6] *ibid*., pp. 214-15.

18: Lansdowne and Lenin

I

The year ended with two bombshells, one domestic, the other on the world stage. In November, a year after his confidential memorandum to the cabinet, Lord Lansdowne went public. In an open letter, refused by the *Times* but published over two columns in the *Daily Telegraph*, the former foreign secretary and viceroy of India aligned himself with those who believed that a "wanton prolongation" of the war would be a crime differing only degree from that of the criminals who provoked it.

While Britain was not going to lose the war, he wrote, "its prolongation will spell ruin for the civilised world, and an infinite addition to the load of human suffering which already weighs upon it."

> To end the war honourably would be a great achievement; to prevent the same curse falling upon our children would be a greater achievement still.

Lansdowne had lost a second son in the fighting that year. Citing president Wilson, the pope and the German chancellor, he too urged the powers to bind themselves, by solemn pact, to submitting future international disputes to arbitration. More immediately, he argued the Allies should strengthen the hand of the German peace party by offering assurances that they did not desire the annihilation of Germany as a great power, did not seek to impose any form of government on her people other than of their own choosing, had no wish to deny Germany her place among the great commercial communities of the world. Matters such as freedom of the seas and the re-arrangement of south-eastern Europe should be left for negotiation post-war.[1]

The *Telegraph*'s respectful editorial focussed on what it saw as the letter's principle point, that the co-ordination of war aims should be added to current measures of co-ordination in strategy and war policy. The leader agreed with that, and endorsed the specifics proposed to reassure Germany.

At the age of 72 Lansdowne became once more a national figure. He was, predictably, widely attacked. But he enjoyed private support from distinguished figures in public life – among them Haldane, the former Liberal lord chancellor, an archbishop, a director of the Bank of England - and even from within government, says Alan Taylor. Asquith, according to his wife, declared it "an excellent and sensible letter." No-one spoke out

[1] *Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 1917.

publicly however. He also received a large number of letters of endorsement from officers serving at the front. [1]

Before going public Lansdowne had consulted Balfour, the foreign secretary, who dissuaded him from raising the matter in the Lords. The government said afterwards there had been no consultation, nor indeed any communication with any of its members.[2] Bonar Law, the Tory leader, declared it nothing less than a national misfortune that the letter should have been published, now of all times. Lloyd George, in his first speech after the letter appeared, said the danger was not the extreme pacifist. He was not afraid of him. But he warned the nation to watch the man who thinks there is a halfway house between victory and defeat, who thinks that you can end the war now by setting up a League of Nations with conditions as to arbitration. "That is the right policy after victory. Without victory it would be a farce." [3]

The man was acclaimed by opponents of the war. Greatly cheered, Bertrand Russell jested in the *Tribunal* that "one expects to see him mentioned in inverted commas, as Lord 'Lansdowne,' with various aliases in brackets after his name. Before long it will probably be discovered that his great aunt was born in Kiel, or that his grandfather was an admirer of Goethe." [4]

The *Times* had refused the letter because it believed it reflected no responsible body of opinion in the country. Michael MacDonagh, who worked for the paper*,* felt it was "not lightly to be dismissed," having regard to its source. In his diary he complained that "die-hard" newspapers enlightened their readers as to the force of the opposition to Lansdowne, but left them in the dark as to what support he might have, if any.

According to Lansdowne's first biographer, the daily papers supporting the letter included the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Yorkshire Post*, the *Birmingham Post*, the *Sheffield Independent*, the *Edinburgh Evening News*, and in London the *Daily News* and the *Star*.[5]

MacDonagh adds that the government had been asked to have a secret sitting of the Commons for a full and free discussion of Lansdowne's letter. "But no, no, no; they brushed the thing contemptuously aside." They turned instead to the little matter of the Royal Mint's inability to keep pace with the increased demand for farthings – caused by the Food Controller's inclusion of ¼d and ¾d in his list of fixed prices.[6]

Early in the New Year Francis Hirst, editor of the free-trade journal *Common Sense*, decided to take up Lansdowne and his letter in a movement to promote a negotiated peace. A Lansdowne Committee, formed under the chairmanship of Lord Beauchamp, held two public meetings in February and March – detailed below - and published a 34-page booklet elaborating the marquess's views. [7]

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[1] Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: a Biography*, pp. 469,472; Harold Kurtz, "The Lansdowne Letter," pp. 86-7; A.J.P. Taylor, *English History*, p. 94; Margot Asquith, *Autobiography,* vol. 2*,* p. 212. Lansdowne and Gilbert Murray lunched with the Asquiths in Cavendish Square the day the letter appeared.

[2] Simon Kerry, *Lansdowne: the Last Great Whig*, e-book, ch.38.

[3] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp.322-3.

[4] Jo Vellacott, p. 219; *Tribunal* 86, 6 December 1917.

[5] Lord Newton, pp. 469-70.

[6] Michael MacDonagh, pp. 234-6.

[7] Hirst, says Kerry (chapter 39), called it a "Lansdowne-Labour movement." The booklet can be found in MS 1152, box 2, file 5, Senate House Library.

II

Lansdowne's letter was preceded by a bigger but more distant detonation. On 7 November (by our calendar) the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd, an event reported just two days later in the *South London Press* under the crosshead "Russian Sensation: Kerensky Overthrown/ by Hun Conspirators." The report comes on page 4 in the continuation of its regular front-page feature "The War Week by Week".

> The Soviet (the Workmen's and Soldiers Delegates) have issued a proclamation stating that the capital is in its hands, that the new Government will propose an 'immediate and just peace' with Germany, that the land will be handed over to the peasants and that a Constituent Assembly will be summoned. Trotizky [*sic*] is nominally the leader of the movement, but Lenin, the notorious German agent, is apparently at the head of the conspiracy …In view of what is happening in Petrograd, it is not reassuring to learn officially that Russian and German troops are fraternising on the northern front.[1]

Two weeks later the new government offered the Germans an immediate ceasefire, and through their ambassadors invited the western Allies to join in negotiations for a general peace. The ambassadors advised their governments to leave the proposal unanswered, as the soviet regime was illegitimate.

When negotiations opened at Brest Litovsk on 9 December the German and Austrian representatives declared they were indeed ready to conclude a general peace, one moreover on the Russian formula of no annexations or indemnities. When the Western allies persisted in their refusal to take part, the offer was withdrawn. Only a separate peace was available, Trotsky was told when he arrived at the end of the month to take over as head of the Russian delegation. Its terms proved a far cry from "no annexations." [2]

The *Labour Leader* was rather slow to make sense of what was happening. At the end of the year it carried a piece on the secret documents released by the "Lenin party" in Petrograd and republished in the *Manchester Guardian*. These set out the territorial acquisitions – on the Rhine, in the Balkans, in the Ottoman lands and beyond – which were to follow an Allied victory. The upshot, wrote Charles Buxton,

> is that our Government has made, behind the backs of the people, proposals and agreements involving direct or indirect annexations without reference to the wishes of the populations concerned, while in its public utterances it has given an account of its war aims which was not only incomplete but grossly deceptive. Whilst it was talking about a war of self-defence, for the sanctity of treaties, for democracy, for a secure and lasting peace, it was secretly putting its hand to agreements which give the lie to these high-sounding phrases.[3]

[1] *SLP*, 9 November 1917.
[2] Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, pp. 349-62.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 20 December 1917.

19: Hopes and prospects

I

In November Creech Jones was in a troubled mood. His letter home opens abruptly: “There is a long, straight desolate road outside Audierne” - one he had walked with a friend on holiday.

> The road was now a switchback; we saw and lost that town repeatedly & all we were aware of was that sooner or later we should reach it. There is no need to indicate the parallel. Sometimes I am on top of the curve & think the goal is near: then I sleep fitfully and fretfully; sometimes I am down in the hollow & I acquiesce and sleep well. The first state is when I’m disturbed by some happy news or gleam of hope. I toss and turn & build extravagant visions of the immediate future. It is foolish, for that happy tomorrow never comes**.**

He explains: “I’m in the grip of something I can’t grapple with just as we all feel the power of circumstance in our lives. I’ve had my season of homesickness & prison weariness. Do I not get them now? My reflections often sadden me. There is that long line of martyrs in the struggle for liberty & toleration & that cruel & endless persecution of obscure men & women who dare for righteousness sake…Is the 20th century too early to learn the lesson?” [1]

Jones doesn’t seem to have been cheered by a letter from cousin Violet dated ten days earlier. In the archive there’s a gap in her correspondence after the April letter about the Albert Hall rally. But now she breezes excitedly back:

> On the Sunday… you’d never guess – I tub thumped on P’ham Rye!! Honour Bright! on the subject nearest my heart. Chaired for Mrs Bouvier & yarned for ¼ hr at least & got a big crowd. It’s surprising how sympathetic people are now. As I told them. I needed no pluck as the Ch. of England had now taken up your cause. I alone sold 4/- worth of Dreadnoughts. Flo’ and Rose got 1½ doz signatures.

She goes on: “These meetings are held every Sunday afternoon and I am convinced that if anything is done for you it will be during the next month or two. You would not recognise me in my new rôle! Shall we both be so very changed when we meet again?”

After the animated opening the letter concludes on a note of self-doubt. “I hope you will be satisfied with this letter. Is it that you expect so much more from me that you always

[1] Creech Jones archive, box1 file 3, 21 November 1917.

feel a little disappointed? It isn't half as warm and affectionate as I should like to write to you, but I, as of old, object to wearing my heart on my sleeve for everyone's inspection… With my fondest love/Your own/Vi." [1]

In December she writes again ("My dear Arth")

> The NCF has this winter been holding open air meetings & has done its best to keep your case before the Public eye. We still gather round on Wednesdays where 'News from Comrades' always forms an interesting feature of the proceedings. We have affiliated to us now a Dartmoor branch so that when the Grand Reunion comes it will not result … in a free fight between the HO'ers & the Absolutists. Such would not be the case under any circumstances as there will be too much work to be done to waste time in wrangling.[2].

Violet's letters give a glimpse of the campaigning that was taking place beneath the notice of local papers. As with the NCF's manifesto, one gets a sense here that peace was felt to be near - hence the orientation to the post-war.

II

The end of November brought a sudden surge of military hope. A leader in the *CP Times* headed "The Joy Bells" begins,

> Flushed with the splendid news from the Western Front, cheered by the intelligence from the other theatres of war, Camberwellians felt the hot blood course wildly through their veins when on Friday afternoon the bells of St. Giles, Camberwell, awoke from their long silence and broke forth into a glorious peal…[3]

For the first time since the war started the bells rang out all over London to celebrate the breakthrough by British tanks south-west of Cambrai.

Extraordinarily, Haig and Robertson gave the politicians no notice of the planned assault. Under the command of General Byng the massed tanks - 476 of them - drove a hole six miles wide and five miles deep in the Hindenburg line. Alas, the cavalry (!) in the rear were too far away to consolidate the advance, were anyway unsuited to the terrain; and infantry reserves were lacking. The tanks alone, one-third of which were out of action, mainly through breakdown, could not hold the ground they had won. The Germans brought up their reserves, and a fortnight later they had recovered almost all they had lost, apart from a small salient. MacDonagh records the cloud of despondency that settled over London at the news.[4]

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[1] *ibid*., 11 November 1917. Mrs Bouvier was a Russian member of the Workers' Suffrage Federation. In May 1917 she travelled to Liverpool to speak at a meeting celebrating the revolution in the hope of addressing the hundred Russian sailors based there; but the Russian consulate forbade them to attend. (Katherine Connelly, ch. 5.) Her name crops up periodically in the ILP listings. *The Dreadnought* cost 1d, so Violet sold almost 50 copies.

[2] *ibid*., 21 December 1917.

[3] *CPT*, 28 November 1917.

[4] Toni and Valmai Holt, p. 123; John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 313-14; Michael MacDonagh, p. 236.

In early December there was some consolation from further away when the British Egyptian Army, under general Allenby, entered Jerusalem, relinquished by the Turks. It was an army consisting largely of volunteers from the Indian sub-continent. Church bells rang again, and *Te Deums* were sung at St. Paul's and Westminster Cathedral.[1]

All the same, the Christmas thoughts of the various papers were not cheerful.

> Instead of brilliantly lighted shops, loaded with the good things of this month and crowded with eager purchasers, we see shops with slender stocks and long queues of women and children outside them waiting in some cases for hours …The grim spectre of death hovers over the mansion of the rich and the cottage of the poor… [Yet] amid all our sorrows we must try and be of good cheer. It is a duty we owe to the kiddies.

So said the *CP Times*; the *SB Recorder* wrote:

> Once again we are called upon to spend another Christmas 'midst the clash of arms and the thunder of cannon, hoping that this may be the last year spent under such unhappy conditions. There is no glory in war, when the food runs short, and the poor suffer… Undoubtedly when the women and children suffer, as they always have to in times of warfare, the sadness of it all comes home to everyone. But, after all, it should be everyone's endeavour to lighten the load, especially at what has been called the "Festive Season"… That should be the ruling spirit this Christmas time. A speedy end to the war, a lasting and abiding peace and as much festivity as possible for the children.[2]

On the other hand, when he walked out on Christmas Eve, Michael MacDonagh noted the abundance of meat and poultry, and "the brisk buying by the crowds, obviously with plenty of money in their pockets," a recurring theme of his.[3] He doesn't say where he went, but it's an observation endorsed up by the *SLP*.

> It seems strange that, in the fourth year of a most costly war, there is sweeping over the kingdom a wave of prosperity such as few of us expected when the tumult began in 1914. The danger is that most people will not realise that this burst of prosperity is a very artificial thing, which has small chance of being prolonged when peace conditions once more prevail…Hence it is to each individual's own interest … to save to-day that he or she may spend advantageously on that glorious tomorrow following the scotching of the greatest menace the world has ever known.[4]

Indeed: Jerry White describes the improvement in working-class living standards in London from 1915 as astonishing. Wages, it's true, generally failed to keep up with the cost of living; with the important exception, he notes, of unskilled men in the building trades and on the docks. Food prices in May 1917 were almost exactly double what they had been in July 1914 and continued to rise until they peaked in September.

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[1] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 343.
[2] *CPT*, 22 December 1917; *SBR*, 21 December 1917.
[3] Michael MacDonagh, pp. 240-1.
[4] *SLP*, 14 December 1917.

What made up the difference was, firstly, that earnings were frequently augmented by overtime, made necessary by staff shortages; and secondly, full employment. This made the biggest impact of all on living standards, especially for families with children over the school-leaving age of fourteen. War moreover ironed out the fluctuations of demand that had long kept earnings low and irregular.

The poorest felt the improvement most. The middle classes, on the other hand, carried the burden of wartime taxation: it seems likely their real incomes fell by a third. In late 1918 the standard rate of income tax stood at six shillings in the pound, an eight-fold increase since August 1914. The tax threshold was also lowered, which with the rise in wages meant that six million more paid tax, though at lower rates. Despite this there was, says White, "an unprecedented decline in inequality." He provides indices and illustrations.[1]

For public attitudes to the war at this fourth Christmas of the conflict the local press, with its conventional patriotism, is perhaps not the best place to look. Brock Millman writes of a crisis of morale, even a crisis of defeatism, in the form of a "generalised dissent, less revolutionary than angry and despairing." He quotes A.M. Thompson, Northcliffe's man in the North and Midlands, who took a similar bleak view of industrial unrest. He found, "a weary population, susceptible to pacifist propaganda, and increasingly willing to listen to the more radical elements in the labour movement." [2]

We saw the exultation of Fenner Brockway at the unexpected turn in the public mood, a change confirmed by other contemporary witnesses. Writing to E.D. Morel, for example, Seymour Cocks, a fellow member of the UDC, wrote of a "distinct alteration in the public temper" since the former went to prison. "They never talk now about 'the knock-out blow,' 'fighting to a finish' and 'marching to Berlin.' The opinion is rapidly spreading that the war will never be ended by military means and that a decisive blow is impossible for either side." Ramsay MacDonald wrote of "an enormous change in public opinion" since Morel began his enforced rest cure.[3]

Rather than revolution – though no less utopian - the *Herald* now advocated a down-to-earth parliamentary policy. On 17 November it proclaimed across two pages,

- LET LABOUR TRY ITS HAND - AND CLEAR OUT THE BUNGLERS

and on 22 December:

- LLOYD GEORGE MUST GO, AND LABOUR MUST COME IN

"We have no illusions," said "The Way of the World" after Christmas in words that can only be Lansbury's,

> But we have faith in the common people, those who are "hewers of wood and drawers of water" in the days of peace and who, in days of war, almost entirely bear on their own shoulders the burden and heat of the day. It is these who must bring us peace.[4]

[1] Jerry White, pp. 206, 225-32; income tax: Gerard DeGroot, p. 153.
[2] Brock Millman, p. 221-2.
[3] *ibid*., p. 223.
[4] *The Herald*, 29 December 1917.

“1917 was in every country the great year of discussions for a negotiated peace,” writes Alan Taylor. Such high, and sometimes millennial hopes were not fulfilled as it ended. Yet looking back, Bertrand Russell wrote that, while the year had not brought peace,

> it has brought a very great advance towards peace in the public opinion of Europe, and it has made it nearly certain that the peace, when it does come, will bring a vast economic and political upheaval of a kind to diminish the power of injustice and tyranny in the world.[1]

[1] A.J.P. Taylor *The Trouble Makers*, p. 145; *Tribunal* 89, 27 December 1917.

1918

20: Rhetoric and resistance

I

So the war entered its fifth calendar year. In its leader column the *Camberwell and Peckham Times* predicted that Germany, like a desperate gambler, was "staking her all upon a last throw of the dice. She will make a determined effort, born out of the frenzy of despair, to shatter the Allied forces in Flanders, France and Italy before the legions of America can enter the field…"

> But the prospect leaves us unmoved and undismayed. The dawn of 1918 finds us unshaken in our determination to offer a united front to the foe and to carry on the struggle, grim and terrible though it is, until Germany has learned the lesson, once and for all time, that might is not always right, and that in the end justice must prevail…
>
> Let the German nation clearly understand that we are not out for the extermination of their race… Let the pacifists make no mistake. There can be no enduring peace until mankind is freed from the menace of the Mailed Fist.

The writer of "Notes and Comments" in the *Southwark and Bermondsey Recorder* acknowledged there were certain signs abroad of a universal desire for peace, but maintained, "The time is not yet ripe, so we shall have to tighten our girdles for another time of struggle, which, it is to be hoped, will not last long." [1]

The war coverage of the three local papers continued very much as before. That is to say, the *SB Recorder* and the *CP Times* – both still with small ads on their front page – tucked a single column without pictures, headed respectively "The Local Casualties" and "Roll of Honour", in amongst civilian news items and features.

By contrast the *South London Press*, carries news from all the fronts in "The War Week by Week," starting top left across two columns on page one and continuing at length inside. Separately, "South London's Roll of Honour" brings together stories of valour and sacrifice by both individuals and collectives, who are regularly portrayed. Six Southwark brothers are celebrated on 4 January, the sons of Mr and Mrs Pratt, of 128 Long Lane: "Two Killed; Two Invalided Out; Two Serving." Running below that week: approximately a column of south London casualties.

1 *CPT*, 2 January; *SBR*, 4 January 1918.

II

It was the low point of public confidence in the conduct of the war, says Gregory.[1] Lloyd George, exasperated at yet another botched offensive, at Cambrai, despatched two emissaries to France to try and find a substitute for Haig. The South African general Jan Smuts, and Sir Maurice Hankey, secretary of the war cabinet, reconnoitered; but were unable find anyone they could recommend to replace him as commander-in-chief.[2]

In public Lloyd George addressed a conference of trade unionists in London at which he set out an authoritative statement of war aims on behalf of the nation and empire. The first requirement must be the complete evacuation of Belgium, together with reparation for the devastation inflicted on the country. The same must also apply to Serbia, Montenegro, and the occupied parts of France, Italy and Rumania. Britain would stand by French democracy in its demand for the return of Alsace-Lorraine. It believed an independent Poland was an urgent necessity for the stability of Europe. While the break-up of Austro-Hungary was no part of its war aims it believed genuine self-government should be granted to those nationalities who had long desired it. Britain likewise regarded as vital the reunion of all Italians with those of their tongue and race.

Outside Europe, said Lloyd George, the same principles should apply. The German colonies should be held “at the disposal” of a peace conference. “We are not fighting a war of aggression against the German people,” he insisted. Nor had Britain entered the war to change the German constitution, though the adoption of a truly democratic constitution would be the best evidence that the old spirit of military domination was dead.

He ended with an appeal for something like a League of Nations; or in his words: “[W]e are confident that a great attempt must be made to establish by some international organisation an alternative to war as a means of settling international disputes.” [3]

Writing in the *Tribunal*, Bertrand Russell said the speech showed a great advance in tone over any of the Prime Minister’s previous utterances. “There is nothing about a knock-out blow, and there is a welcome definiteness about most of the conditions of peace. But when we pass from the tone to the substance, there is little that is new.” However: “if they are merely to be regarded as a basis for bargaining, they afford some ground for hope.” [4]

In *Labour Leader* Philip Snowden welcomed the “clear and definite” statement of war aims but regretted the government had been so long in “reaching the point of moderate reasonableness which they have now attained:” at the cost of millions of lives, a great waste of treasure and incalculable suffering. He noted that it differed in no very material way from the joint memorandum on war aims agreed just before New Year by Labour and the TUC.[5]

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[1] Adrian Gregory, pp. 213-14.
[2] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 411.
[3] *ibid*., pp.381-2.
[4] *Tribunal* 91, 10 January 1918.
[5] *Labour Leader*, 10 January 1918.

This in turn built on the programme which the Union of Democratic Control had been promoting. It included the complete democratisation of all countries, the abandonment of imperialism, the suppression of secret diplomacy, the abolition of compulsory military service, a limitation on arms production, the creation of a League of Nations and the establishment of an international high court to settle disputes between states, and much else. The Labour document noticeably does not preach reconciliation with Germany, and in a lengthy section on territorial adjustments it insists that Germany should pay reparations to Belgium; in this it differed from the position of the ILP. [1]

In Washington President Wilson was annoyed that Lloyd George had pre-empted the address he was preparing to make to Congress. He went ahead anyway and unveiled his programme for peace, the famous Fourteen Points, which in the event diverted attention from Lloyd George's speech and embedded themselves in history. There was a considerable overlap between the two pronouncements, notably in terms of the evacuation of occupied territories, self-determination, Alsace-Lorraine and Poland; and on the need to create "a general association of nations for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small nations alike."

Point 1 proposed "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at;" point 3 the removal as far as possible of all economic barriers; point 4 the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety; point 5 "a free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims," giving equal weight to the interests of the populations concerned. These were contentious enough from the British point of view. But point 2 – "absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas … alike in peace as in war" was totally unacceptable.[2]

In the anti-war camp the *Herald* welcomed Wilson's pronouncement. "It gives up finally the nonsensical idea of refusal to negotiate with the German Government, and it applies – as Mr Lloyd George's speech did *not* – general principles to *both* sides of the conflict equally… It leaves the difficulties of detail; but it lays down the principles."

In *Labour Leader* however Snowden criticised the Labour Party and TUC for their unreserved acceptance of the Fourteen Points. While there was much in the programme on which there would be general agreement, there would be strong disagreement among the Allied democracies on many points of detail. He cites the surrender of territory by Austro-Hungary and the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France. "These are terms not for negotiation, but terms which would only be accepted by a nation which had been completely defeated in the field." [3]

It is significant that Lloyd George should have summoned a gathering of trade unionists rather than use the House of Commons for such an important policy announcement. He attended the House rather infrequently, it's true, but he was also aware that this was the fractious section of society which he most needed to mollify and win over. He showed this awareness again when he addressed a second meeting of trade unionists later in

[1] A.J.P. Taylor, *The Trouble-Makers*, pp.154-5; Robert Dowse, p. 28. Text in *The Herald*, 22 December 1917.
[2] A.J.P. Taylor, *English History*, pp. 118-19.
[3] *The Herald*, 12 January 1918; *Labour Leader*, 17 January 1918.

the month and tackled the peace party head on. “Believe me,” he said, “If there are men who say they would not go into the trenches, then the men who are in the trenches have a right to say, ‘Neither will we remain here.’”

> Suppose they did it, would that bring the war to an end? Yes, it would, but what sort of end? When the Russian soldiers ceased fighting and fraternised, and simply talked great ideals and principles to the German army, what did the Germans do? Did they retreat? No, they took Riga and the islands… and if Petrograd had been nearer they would have taken that too.
>
> The Channel ports are not so far from the firing line, and unless we are prepared to stand up to the whole weight of the people who are dominating Germany now – and will dominate the whole world tomorrow, if we allow them – you will find that Britain and British democracy and French democracy are at the mercy of the cruellest military autocracy that the world has ever seen… My conviction is this, the people must either go on or go under.[1]

III

One can feel the persuasive force of this rhetoric even in cold print. Lloyd George also had a more immediate motive, which was to reconcile the trade unions to a “combing out” of men from civilian work who up to then were exempted from military service under the Schedule of Protected Occupations agreed with the unions the previous year. Speaking in the Commons in December, Lloyd George argued that the collapse of Russia and the crisis in Italy had created a new situation.[2]

Sir Auckland Geddes, the minister of National Service, put his proposals to the assembled trade unions two days ahead of Lloyd George’s speech on war aims. The ASE immediately withdrew its delegates, arguing that the agreement between union and government could only be varied by mutual consent. The Miners’ Federation also wanted to negotiate a new agreement.[3]

Undeterred, Geddes introduced a new Military Service Bill in mid-January, saying it was necessary to raise between 420,000 and 450,000 men immediately, and perhaps larger numbers in the future. He proposed to do so by giving himself power to cancel by administrative order any certificates of exemption granted on occupational grounds; not however on other grounds.

The intention was to remove only those who were fit for general service and to secure the number required by a “clean cut” determined on an age basis, ie. by taking men up to a given age. At the same time, said Geddes, his department would be returning a large number of men from the forces to civilian life, so that the reduction in the country’s industrial strength would be much less than the total number of those withdrawn.[4]

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[1] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 385-6.
[2] *ibid*, p. 370.
[3] G.D.H. Cole, pp. 138-9.
[4] *Hansard*, House of Commons, 14 January 1918, cols.66-74.

During the Bill's rapid progress through parliament it was clarified that any order would apply to exemptions granted by government as a class, rather than to individual exemptions by a tribunal, unless, that is, the exemption fell into that particular class.[1] Geddes offered the concession in Committee that any order would be "laid upon the table" of both Houses of Parliament for 14 days to allow members to present an address of objection.[2] Thereafter a man would have at least seven days before being called to the colours. During this time he would be able to apply to a tribunal for exemption on other grounds.[3]

The Bill became law on 6 February. The only division consisted of an attempt – defeated by 136 votes to 48 – to compel the government to commit itself to extending conscription to Ireland. Precisely which occupational exemptions (if any) were in fact cancelled, and up to what age, is unclear, since the orders placed before MPs and peers leave no parliamentary record.

Opposition from the unions continued. The ASE balloted its members: they overwhelmingly rejected the government proposals. The miners called a national conference, which referred the question to its constituent area associations.[4]

Resistance to the new powers undoubtedly stemmed in part from the self-interest of skilled men: the previous year's agreements laid down that dilutees should be called up first. But mixed in was opposition to the war itself. The *Herald* and the *Labour Leader* both tried to present the latter as the main motivation, though George Lansbury was honest enough to admit to doubts: "I do not believe either miners or engineers will go on strike to save their own skins. I prefer to think and believe the resolution passed at the Albert Hall on February 2 more truly represents the mind of organised Labour right throughout the country." [5]

This unofficial rally, called by the London District Vigilance Committee of the ASE, pulled in 10,000 men, according to the *Herald*; a further 4,000 more had to make do with an overflow meeting outside. It repudiated a statement by Robert Young, the union's general secretary, that all dilutees should be compelled to join the army before any skilled men were taken. It passed instead a unanimous resolution calling on the government to enter into immediate negotiations with the other belligerent powers for an armistice on all fronts, with a view to arranging a general peace on the basis of the self-determination of all nations, no annexations and no indemnities.

> Should such action demonstrate that German Imperialism is the only obstacle to peace, we express our determination to co-operate in the prosecution of the war until those objects are achieved. Failing such action on the part of the Government, we pledge ourselves to act with the organised workers of Britain in resisting the man-power proposals of the Government. We further demand acceptable Labour representation of all countries at the proposed International Conference in order to assure a people's peace.

[1] *ibid.*, 24 January 1918, col. 1207.
[2] *ibid*., 21 January 1918, co. 760
[3] *ibid*., 24 January 1918, col. 1202.
[4] G.D.H. Cole, p.139.
[5] *The Herald*, 30 March 1918.

Alongside speakers from the ASE were Robert Williams of the Transport Workers Federation and representatives of the toolmakers and woodworkers. “The meeting”, we read, “began with the singing of ‘The Red Flag;’ it continued with the singing of ‘The Red Flag;’ it ended with the singing of ‘The Red Flag.’ There were, however, gaps left for a series of admirable speeches.”

One of the speakers was from the shop stewards at Woolwich Arsenal, where the previous week a mass meeting had passed an identical resolution. The paper said it had received a number of similar resolutions from branches of the NUR rail union, the miners and other working-class organisations.[1]

Another London mass meeting – of members of the Amalgamated Society of Toolmakers – is reported. It declared its determination to assist the Government by every means in its power – “upon the Government abolishing the Defence of the Realm Act and censorship, and recognising the present Russian Government and adopting their Peace Proposals, and adhering to such for concluding a just, democratic and durable peace.” Failing that recognition, “we hereby resolve to resist any withdrawal of manpower by determined revolutionary industrial action.” [2]

In February the *Herald* commented, “The flood of peace resolutions mounts higher. We are almost submerged under it.” On the other hand it reported that combing out of “dilutees first” was the aim of at least some unions, among them the Friendly Society of Ironfounders and certain districts of the Miners’ Federation. In March *Labour Leader* reported a resolution from Doncaster Trades Council calling for the formation of a new government “pledged to make proposals for an armistice of at least three months’ duration.” Similar resolutions were being sent in from all parts of the country, including the miners of Northumberland and Lanarkshire.[3]

At the annual hiring fair in Dorchester – shades of Hardy - the Dorset branches of the National Agricultural Labourers’ Union voted to do their best to increase food production in line with Lloyd George’s recent appeal and not to press for a reduction in their working hours. “At the same time this Conference knows it can best assist its comrades in the trenches by doing all it can to secure peace, and therefore demands that the Government seek to enter into peace negotiations immediately.” Two mass meetings are reported: one of 1,500 outside the gaol, another of 900 in the Corn Exchange; hundreds were turned away.[4]

The comb-out continued to divide union members. In late March another unofficial delegate meeting of the ASE, this time in Manchester, announced a strike – subject to ratification by the district committees - to protest at the call- up of young skilled engineers while dilutees “liable and fit for military service” continued in work.[5]

Among other events crowding into those first few months was a Labour Party conference held in Nottingham, which in the view of the *Herald* and the *Leader* “killed

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[1] *ibid*., 2 February 1918; Woolwich meeting: 26 January 1918.
[2] *ibid*., 26 January 1918.
[3] *The Herald*, 9 and 23 February 1918; *Labour Leader*, 7 March 1918.
[4] *Labour Leader*, 21 February 1918. The report carries the uncomradely heading “The British Peasant Awake.”
[5] *The Herald*, 30 March 1918.

jingoism" and united the party around the ILP position in favour of a "people's peace" based on the Russian formula, disarmament and a League of Nations. In its focus on ending the war the conference was thus more radical and more immediate than in the war aims policy formulated at the end of December.

A long resolution called on the working-class organisations of the Central Powers to declare their war aims and set in train the process of trying to find agreement among Labour and socialist parties on the Allied side. The ultimate goal was an international congress in some neutral state, in other words to realise the aborted Stockholm conference of the previous year. Another successful resolution demanded the release of imprisoned objectors and protested against their disenfranchisement.

The one outstanding figure of the conference, wrote the *Herald*, was Arthur Henderson. He was cheered when he said,

> I have the opinion very strongly that this war has been unnecessarily prolonged because of the refusal during the last six or eight months to state the war aims of the allied countries, and especially when the conditions for negotiations were much more favourable than they are now.

Henderson had lost his eldest son on the Somme. Another "great unanimous cheer" greeted his statement that his experience of serving in a capitalist government had determined him never again to serve in any ministry except one dominated by Labour.

> Capitalism and its accompaniment, secret diplomacy, landed the peoples of the world into the present war; the forces of privilege and vested interest cannot secure a 'People's Peace.' [1]

IV

In February the tentative hopes raised by Lloyd George's speech on the subject were dashed when the supreme war council, meeting at Versailles, declined to issue a collective statement of Allied war aims. The reason, Bonar Law explained to the House of Commons, was that members of the council failed to find in recent speeches from the other side "any real approximation of the conditions laid down by the Allied Governments."

Until there was a joint statement, wrote Snowden, no value could be placed by the Central powers on the more moderate programme set out by particular members of the Alliance. The decision of the war council put an end, he said, to any hope of peace through the existing governments and carried the country back to the policy of the knock-out blow. This was a direct challenge to the democracies of the belligerent powers. "The time has now come for the democracies to unitedly rise up and sweep their stupid and incompetent governors aside and take the settlement of the war into their own hands." [2]

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[1] Quotations: *Labour Leader*, 31 January; *The Herald*, 2 February 1918; eldest son: John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 201

[2] *Labour Leader*, 7 February 1918.

In practice this uprising took the form of an amendment tabled to the King's Speech. It regretted that in accordance with the decision of the supreme war council "the prosecution of military effort" was to be "the only immediate task' of the government." The proposer was the Liberal Richard Holt, the seconder colonel Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, a Conservative, two members not usually associated with the anti-war party.

In response Balfour, the foreign secretary, took exception to the word "only." Of course the tasks of diplomacy and of reconstruction after the war were also before the government. But "the view of the government is that at present the attitude of the Central Governments shows that diplomacy at the present moment is entirely out of court as far as they are concerned."

In his speech Snowden pointed to an article in the *Times* setting out in parallel columns Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and the responses given to them by count Hertling, the German chancellor, and the Austrian foreign minister, count Czernin. He insisted that there was in their recent speeches a real approximation to those principles. He ranged widely in fierce denunciation of the territorial aggrandisement revealed in the secret treaties. W.C. Anderson, J.H. Thomas and Charles Trevelyan also spoke in support of the amendment.

Winding up for the government, Lord Robert Cecil said, "We recognise we have to do whatever we can by diplomacy to bring this War to an honourable end." He defended the secret treaties, saying they were "thoroughly justifiable," even though his government was not responsible for any of them: as long as they exist, he said, "we are bound by them." [1]

The amendment was lost by 159 votes to 28. Apart from the ILP members J.H. Thomas was the only Labour man to vote for the amendment. Secretary of the general rail union, the NUR, he was a supporter of the war but had opposed conscription. Nine Labour members voted against the amendment, complained the *Leader*, "thus definitely disassociating themselves" from the declared policy of the party conference and its memorandum on war aims.[2]

Just before the Commons debate president Wilson had, in a message to Congress, added to his Fourteen Points four principles for a peace settlement. It was his attempt to keep the public dialogue going. These principles were that

- Each individual "war aim" must be decided by its essential justice;
- There must be no bartering of people and provinces as if they were pawns in the great game of the balance of power;
- Every question of territorial change must be governed by the interests of the people concerned;
- Well-defined national aspirations must be accorded as much satisfaction as will not lead to new antagonisms.

The parliamentary argument resumed at the end of February during a debate on Supply. Richard Holt said that chancellor Hertling had accepted the four propositions "almost without demur." If that was so, it was the duty of members to insist on knowing whether

[1] *Hansard*, House of Commons, 13 February 1918, cols. 185-94, 221-2, 229-31.
[2] *Labour Leader*, 21 February 1918.

HM government and its allies gave them an equal acceptance. Hertling moreover had committed himself quite definitely to the evacuation of Belgium, subject to "some rather ridiculous phrases" asking for security as to Belgium's future conduct towards Germany.

In reply Balfour said that while President Wilson was "most well advised" to lay down his broad principles of international equity; yet "it never occurred to me that I should have to get up in this House and say that with the spirit of all those four propositions I was in thorough agreement." He repeated his statement that diplomacy was out of court at present.

Outside Germany, he claimed, the MP was alone in regarding Hertling's statement on Belgium as satisfactory. On Wilson's second principle that people and provinces should not be bartered about, Balfour said the Germans had done just that with Polish territory when they settled the boundaries of the Ukraine. They desired to see Armenia, Palestine and Mesopotamia "restored to the Turk." So much for the four principles which the hon. Gentleman says Count Hertling accepts, and which he thinks His Majesty's Government are backward in not accepting." [1]

Snowden wrote a week later that Balfour's refusal to entertain peace negotiations was "a crime against humanity." The *Herald* quoted Arnold Bennett. He had written in the *Daily News*: "Is Mr Balfour so incredibly stupid as not to be able to see that in thus dismissing Hertling he is simply playing into the hands of the Prussian militarists?" [2]

V

In early March Lord Lansdowne wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* again. He analysed Hertling's speech at length, noting his acceptance of the four principles as a basis for discussing a general peace, his commitment to evacuate Belgium and restore Belgian independence on the basis of the papal note and his welcome of an international court of arbitration. He was unable to see why the present dialogue should not be usefully continued or even be allowed to evolve into the "intimate discussion" proposed by Hertling. The territorial issues presented much more formidable difficulties, however, and should therefore be remitted to a peace congress at the close of the war.[3]

To coincide with this letter the Lansdowne committee held a second public conference. The first, in February, had attracted 360 people, including "many men of weight and importance." The second, on 6 March, was yet more crowded and successful. One account says Thomas and Henderson were among the Labour members present at the meetings.[4]

Lansdowne continued to be regarded by some on the Left as a potentially active player. In February Snowden claimed there were important negotiations going on "in inner political circles" for a change of government. "In the event of the resignation of Mr Lloyd George it is probable that the King would send for Lord Lansdowne, who, it is believed, would be willing to undertake the task of forming a Government solely for the purpose of

[1] *Hansard*, House of Commons, 27 February 1918, cols. 1459-70.
[2] *Labour Leader*, 7 March 1918; *The Herald*, 9 March 1918.
[3] *Daily Telegraph*, 5 March 1918.
[4] Lord Newton, p. 473; Simon Kerry, chapter 39; Harold Kurtz, p. 86.

bringing the war to an end." In the peace debate that month Charles Trevelyan declared that a Lansdowne government would "respond to the real will of the moderate British people." [1]

The Lansdowne committee wanted the marquess to place himself at the head of its campaign and circulated a memorial to this effect. Yet Lansdowne himself disclaimed any such role early on and did not attend either of the two public meetings.[2]

In March an inter-allied socialist conference issued a statement of war-aims. Unlike the domestic Labour memorandum of December, it proved a disappointment to Snowden. The ILP (like the BSP) had been excluded from the deliberations. Its cardinal fault, wrote Snowden, was that while its preamble states that the present war like all others was the outcome of capitalism and imperialism - "its concrete proposals are based upon the assumption that the fruits of capitalism and imperialism which have been gathered by the Allied Powers may be justly retained, and that only those fruits in possession of the Central Powers must be disgorged to ensure the future peace of the world…"

"The Memorandum, as it stands, is one which no Socialist or Democrat can attempt to justify, and it is utterly impossible as a basis of consultation between the Socialists of the Allied and the enemy countries." [3]

VI

Meanwhile, at Brest Litovsk, Trotsky had been contending over peace terms with Kühlmann and Czernin, the foreign ministers of Germany and Austria, and with general Hoffmann, representing the supreme command of the military. The difficulty of his position was acute: not only was Russia shattered militarily – its army had simply melted away – but the party's central committee was split. It was divided between those, led by Lenin, who urged acceptance of the harsh German terms and a party, led by Bukharin, which advocated a revolutionary war against the invader and had hope of revolutionary upheavals in Germany and Austria.

Trotsky precariously reconciled the two factions with a policy of "neither war nor peace." He was authorised to delay signing peace terms by every means possible, a position approved by the congress of soviets. The policy was ambiguous in that it made no provision for what should happen if the Germans and Austrians resumed hostilities.

Back in Brest general Hoffmann displayed a great map showing the full extent of the proposed annexations. Trotsky responded with a passionate denunciation, at the end of which he announced that Russia was withdrawing from the war. At the same time he declared, "We refuse to endorse terms which German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism is writing with the sword on the flesh of living nations."

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 7 February 1918; *Hansard*, 13 February 1918, cols. 221-2.
[2] Simon Kerry, *loc.cit*.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 7 March 1918.

The *South London Press* reported rather differently. “Trotsky (alias Braunstein) and his chief Onlianoff Lenin (alias Zederblum) have completed the ruin of Russia and earned the blood-money which it is openly asserted has been paid to them by Germany.” [1]

The German offensive resumed on 17 February. It met no resistance. After complex wrangling in the party’s inner councils the government on the 19th sued for peace. The German reply took four days to arrive; meanwhile their armies continued to advance. A committee of revolutionary defence was formed to protect Petrograd, with Trotsky at its head. The reply, when it came, allowed the Russians only 48 hours for a reply and only three days for negotiations.

The terms were worse than those that had been offered before. They were agreed, after further vehement debate, for the sake of avoiding a split in the party leadership; the worst peace was preferable to that. Trotsky resigned as commissar for foreign affairs, and so it was a reluctant Sokolnikov who signed the treaty on 3 March. He made it clear the government was acting under duress.[2]

Under Brest Litovsk Germany acquired all the territory occupied during the war. Finland, the Baltic provinces and the Ukraine were to be German protectorates, though nominally independent. Russian Poland was to be divided between Germany and Austria. In the south German rule extended to the river Don and took in the Crimea. Russia lost 34 per cent of its population - little, it’s true, ethnically Russian – 32 per cent of its agricultural land, 34 per cent of its industry, 89 per cent of its coal mines: reducing it to something like 17th century Muscovy.[3]

In *Labour Leader* Philip Snowden wrote that the terms being imposed on Russia were not peace terms but war terms. Germany was giving proof of the real character of her militarist and imperialist rulers – “and proving that no satisfactory peace can be made except between the democracies of the various countries.” [4]

VII

Lloyd George, as we saw, failed to replace Haig. He did however get rid of Robertson when Robertson refused to accept the new arrangement, agreed by the supreme war council at Versailles, for an executive war board under general Foch. This, rather than the CIGS in London, would control reserve forces in the west and so determine strategy. Robertson did not go quietly. He instigated a campaign in the press, and wrote to Asquith, who pressed Lloyd George hard in the Commons. The king backed him up. Lloyd George faced resignations from his cabinet, and threatened to resign himself if the king insisted on Robertson’s remaining in post. The king gave way, and there was no division in parliament. It was Robertson who by his refusal was deemed to have resigned. He was replaced by general Sir Henry Wilson.[5] This was evidently the context in which Snowden envisaged a change of government.

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[1] “The War Week by Week”, *SLP*, 15 February 1918.
[2] Isaac Deutscher, pp. 359-94
[3] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 434.
[4] *Labour Leader* 14 March 1918.
[5] A.J.P. Taylor, *English History*, pp. 98-9; *The First World War*, p. 165.

Military opinion was divided as to Germany's intentions in the west. They could launch an offensive before the Americans arrived, bringing into play men and weaponry deployed from the east. Or they could use those reinforcements to make their defences stronger than ever, so that even an American army could not make a difference. At the same time they would be securing food and other vital supplies from Russia and the east, in effect lifting the blockade. Robertson took the former view, Haig the latter.[1]

[1] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 402-3.

21: South London carries on

I

Such were the perspectives in the great world of war and peace. In the small worlds of south London the rolls of honour continued to unfurl in the newspapers, as we saw. Barker's of the Borough continued to advertise black wear, proclaiming "Immense Stock at Moderate Prices." [1] Mingling with the black on the streets was the hospital blue of convalescent servicemen.

At the end of January two major air-raids targeted London on successive moonlit nights. In the first of these, a fleet of Gothas and a single Giant rained havoc over a wide swathe of central London: from Poplar in the east and Vauxhall in the south to St. John's Wood in the west and Kings Cross and Camden Town in the north. It was the most destructive raid of 1918, killing 46 people according to contemporary report (White says 65) and injuring 162.

"Our barrage developed to an intensity that surpassed all previous raids," wrote the *SLP*, and for the first time maroons were employed at night to give warning. "The police whistles followed some time later, but the rockets, bursting in red stars, had effectively served their purpose, and most of the people had sought shelter." Shelter though was no guarantee of safety. The worst disaster of the night occurred when a bomb penetrated the cellars beneath Odhams printing works in Long Acre and exploded, severing the gas main, setting fire to the building and causing part of the structure to collapse. Of 600 or so people sheltering there, 38 were killed and 85 injured.[2]

A further cluster of three successive moonlight raids followed in mid February. In one of these a single Giant dropped five high-explosive bombs on St Pancras station, badly damaging the Midland Hotel. Three weeks' respite followed. Then, on the night of 7 March, three Giants, approaching from the north on 7 March, wreaked major destruction on homes in Maida Vale. They narrowly missed Lord's cricket ground. In these and later attacks those who could sought to get out of London.[3]

Writing to the paper after the February raids, Bert Amos, of Cadbury Road, claimed that this time, unlike previously, there had been an entire absence of panic – "and this is in

[1] *SLP*, from 4 January 1918.
[2] Jerry White, pp. 249-51; *SLP*, 1 February 1918.
[3] *SLP*, 22 February 1918; Jerry White, pp. 251, 254.

no small measure due to the promptness of the warnings, there being sufficient time for most people to get to a refuge without unduly distressing themselves." He added

> If the enemy's effort is to demoralise folk by these raids, as far as Bermondsey is concerned he has lamentably failed - all seeming to look upon it as their "little bit" in the world's conflict.[1]

There were differing views about taking to the shelters, however. Dr F. Millson, Southwark's medical officer of health, reported to the council that the stress of war time and exposure to air raids were responsible for an increase in deaths among infants and elderly people. In response the public health committee drew attention to the fact that the borough had been placarded for months with appeals to people to stay at home "and not increase the danger to life and limb by fleeing to outside air raid shelters" - advice recently endorsed by the home secretary.[2]

Controversy arose too over the role of voluntary air raid patrols after the mayor of Southwark, Cllr. Fred Bird, said a meeting of his fellow mayors had concluded that they were a great nuisance; this on the grounds that they might give unnecessary warnings, charged fees and induced people to leave their homes. Personally he was convinced they were doing splendid work in allaying the anxieties of women left at home while their husbands were fighting for their country. The mayor of Bermondsey, Cllr. Shearring, was also strongly in favour of patrols.

The *SLP*'s report includes letters from, among others, the hon. secs. of the Addington Square patrol in Camberwell , the Peabody estate patrol, Stamford Street, the Temple Street, Southwark, patrol, and the Paragon patrol on the New Kent Road, all protesting their usefulness and probity. In doing what we do, wrote the unnamed secretary of the Addington Square patrol "we are assisting the police and also allowing the inhabitants to go to bed with an easy mind, knowing they will be called if an attack is made." [3]

In Peckham the South East London Air Raid Protection Association, meeting in the billiard room at Rye Lane station, wrote with petitions to Camberwell council urging that railway arches and another recognised places be sandbagged for use as shelters. They also wrote to their MP, Albion Richardson, but appear to have been effectively ignored; and no further meetings are reported.[4]

They may have been placated by headlines in the *SLP*'s "The War Week by Week" feature reading

> AERIAL WAR IN FULL BLAST
> Reprisal Raids on Big German Towns; Our Airmen's Battle Front Mastery

The text says the large Rhine towns are being pelted almost daily with high explosives. "Mayence [Mainz], a first class fortress and garrison town, Stuttgart, the capital of Wurtenburg [*sic*] and Coblenz have been heavily bombed in broad daylight… At Stuttgart the Daimler motor works were attacked… This was the first time that these places have been visited by British airmen… On Wednesday our squadrons attacked

[1] *SBR*, 22 February 1918.
[2] *ibid.*, 12 April 1918.
[3] *SLP*, 8 March 1918.
[4] *ibid*., 6 and 10 April 1918.

Freiburg in Germany." The report does not reveal where exactly the aircraft were flying from. It says merely that the first two towns are 130-140 miles from Nancy, behind the French lines.[1]

II

Food continued to be an issue, despite the efforts of Lord Rhondda. A report in the *CP Times* in January gives a lively account of the hunt for food in Peckham.

> On Saturday there were queues everywhere and in some instances the main streets were rendered almost impassable. There were meat queues and margarine queues, butter queues and tea queues, and queues for the odds and ends which they sell at the shops dealing in 'edible offal'…All these articles were sold at stiff prices, which must have greatly gladdened the hearts and swollen the pockets of the retailers. The greatest problem of all was meat. The supply was altogether inadequate…The really extraordinary thing was the absence of rabbits. The previous week they could be seen by the hundred; on Saturday they were as rare as golden sovereigns. The producers had taken their revenge on Lord Rhondda for controlling the price…

Jerry White reports disorder in some places, but in Peckham, according to the *Times*, "the one thing that was particularly noticeable was the remarkable good temper displayed by the crowds. Everywhere there seemed to be a grim determination to make the best of the situation and to let the Germans see that the old British lion is still full of strength and vigour." [2]

Rationing in London and the Home Counties was introduced in late February. Each household in this population of some ten million was provided with two cards of coupons, one for meat and bacon, one for butter and margarine. They could be used for eating out, but otherwise they could only be traded at a shop with which you were registered.

"A good many people are puzzled as to how to put their coupons to the best possible use," said the *CP Times*. To help them it printed a detailed list of what could be bought for a fivepenny coupon. For example, mutton or lamb: leg 4½ oz; shoulder 5 oz; neck 6 oz; mid neck (stewing) 6 oz; breast 7 oz; chops 3½ oz; scrag 7 oz. Or again: poultry or game with offal 12¼ oz; without offal 9oz; rabbit or hare with offal 10 oz; without offal 7½ oz; bacon or ham, uncooked, with bone 4 oz; without bone 3 oz; sausages with 67 per cent meat 6 oz; with 50 per cent meat 8 oz; and so on.[3]

This enormous administrative operation proved an almost instant success. By mid-March queues for rationed commodities had virtually disappeared, though smaller numbers continued to queue for cheese, jam and syrup until about the end of April.

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[1] *ibid*., 15 March 1918.
[2] *CPT*, 23 January 1918; Jerry White, p. 248.
[3] *CPT*, 27 February 1918.

By then the London scheme had been rolled out across the rest of the country. A further change followed in July when the cards were replaced by ration-books, containing pages of different coloured coupons for sugar, butter, margarine, lard, meat and bacon.[1]

Each of the three boroughs, as we saw, had a food control committee. The minutiae of their day-to-day operation is illustrated by a report on the Bermondsey committee. In March the executive officer, Mr Buckman, told members that applications from manual workers for extra rations were coming in very slowly; only 500 had been received out of an anticipated 25-35,000. He had written to the regional food commissioner complaining that the order relating to extra rations was unfair because it excluded women workers, for example those driving heavy railway motor vans and lorries. The committee agreed and supported his action.

Cllr. Mrs Richmond drew attention to the fact that butchers were not allowed to sell bones for soup without a coupon. Surely a butcher with a stock of bones should be able to sell threepennyworth of them. The committee was in strong agreement and voted to inform the commissioner so. It agreed to support representations from the Shoreditch committee to allow offal, apart from kidneys and tongues, to be sold without coupons in coffee shops in poor districts.

The committee refused a licence to Bermondsey Labour Co-operative Bakery to trade from a new shop in Dockhead. The mayor said it was unfair to allow the Co-op to compete with poor, struggling bakers, some of whom had to join up, when it had an almost unlimited supply of labour in the shape of conscientious objectors from all parts of the country. Lastly on the agenda, the committee considered a list of shopping hours submitted by local butchers, which included an end to Sunday trading. In adopting the proposal, members decided it should apply to all street traders in meat.[2]

The committees also initiated “food prosecutions” – a regular headline in the papers. Thus Edward Kingston, a butcher of 348 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, and his manager George Archer were summoned before the Lambeth magistrate for selling a loin of mutton at over the maximum price. Archer was fined £75 and Kingston ordered to pay £55 costs. Two bakers were summoned for selling bread that had not been baked at least twelve hours earlier. One case was adjourned; in the other Josephine Standt, of Frankton Road, Peckham was fined £20. “It is a very serious matter,” said the Lambeth magistrate, Mr Leycester, “and there can be no doubt that you have done it before.” [3]

In the *SB Recorder* the poet “Decka” exhorted readers over three verses

> To increase the nation’s food,
> Plant potatoes.
> Where there is an empty road,
> Plant potatoes.
>
> In this war we’ve not yet won,
> It may yet much longer run;
> Do your best to beat the Hun:
> Plant potatoes.

[1] Jerry White, pp. 247-9; Michael MacDonagh, pp.268-71, 311.
[2] *SBR*, 29 March 1918.
[3] *SBR*, 11 and 25 January 1918.

In addition to the regular items on food economy Walter Aggett, Bermondsey's superintendent of gardens and open spaces, contributed intermittent rather erudite articles on horticulture, with such headings as "the origin of soils" and "the philosophy of plant foods." [1]

"Tank Days" in March put the three boroughs in "honourable rivalry" as to which would raise the most in war savings: war bonds at £5 and war savings certificates at 10s 6d were endorsed with a tank stamp. In Southwark the tank stood at the corner of Borough Road and Newington Causeway; in Camberwell at the foot of Vestry Road, Peckham, opposite the town hall; in Bermondsey at the junction of Southwark Park Road and Jamaica Road. "The [latter] place was tastefully decorated with bunting and electric lights lit up the space at night. A large tent was erected to act as the 'Bank,' while a platform was also put up for the benefit of the bands who played during the day, and for the speakers at night."

Southwark raised £284,000, including £10,000 from Messrs Sainsbury's, of Stamford Street, well over double Bermondsey's £117,000. This more modest total included large contributions from Messrs Peak Frean (£25,000) and Pearsons (£30,000). Camberwell's tank day is reported by the *CP Times* in a column of patriotic doggerel. The *SLP* records the total contributed there as £251,000, "without any large individual amount." The sums thus raised in early 1918 were an indication that civilian morale was not as bad as the government feared, writes Gregory; though, as here, they also varied strikingly from place to place.[2]

Also in March Bermondsey town hall hosted a Grand Ball in aid of the mayor's fund for the entertainment of wounded soldiers: tickets 2s, gallery to view 6d, dancing 8pm to 2am. Headed "Moonless Night!" the display ad says: "Come and enjoy yourselves and at the/ same time help to give the Wounded/Tommies a Treat." [3]

In Walworth the Southwark branch of National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers opened a club at 153a East Street. The facilities included a "splendid billiard table," a reading room, card rooms, and concert and meeting rooms. The branch, self-supporting and non-party, was reported to have a thousand members. Its objects: "to watch over all matters concerning discharged men, widows and orphans of the fallen and dependents." All men currently serving in the forces would be treated as honorary members, with the club at all times at their disposal.[4]

III

The tribunals, meanwhile, continued to process applications for exemption. The Military Representative was now styled the National Service Representative. As before, the *SB Recorder* was the only paper to cover the tribunals systematically, so that we only have

[1] *SBR*, 5 April 1918 ("Decka"); 25 April, 24 May, 6 September 1918 (Aggett).
[2] *SBR*, 22 February, 1 and 8 March 1918; *CPT*, 9 March 1918; *SLP*, 15 and 22 March 1918; Adrian Gregory, pp. 220ff.
[3] *SBR,* 22 February and 15 March 1918.
[4] *SBR*, 29 March 1918.

reports from Southwark and Bermondsey; they are a staple of the week's news. Camberwell tribunal conducted its business without anyone at the press table.

The pattern that emerges from Bermondsey and Southwark over the winter and spring is of tribunals calling in conditional exemptions and requiring the men, or their employers, to "show cause" why the certificates should not be withdrawn. This procedure appears to have been an initiative of the tribunals themselves, unconnected with the Military Service Act, discussed earlier, which provided for the cancellation of exemptions granted on occupational grounds. The process presented by Auckland Geddes during the passage of the Bill specified that cancellations would be issued by his department and sent directly to the men concerned, allowing them a right of appeal to the local tribunal on grounds other than employment.

None of the cases reported from Bermondsey and Southwark appear to be appeals of this kind. It's noteworthy that few of the men who lose their conditional exemption are despatched immediately to the armed forces. Two men reported on 8 February are given until 1 March to join up. But most have their conditional exemption replaced with a temporary exemption of usually two or three months, but sometimes four or six.[1]

The main excitement at Bermondsey tribunal was a further outburst of anger directed at the Labour Co-operative Bakery. Lieut. Davis, the National Service Representative, said that six bakers and ten roundsmen were employed there; of the latter eight had been granted exemption by outside tribunals, conditional on their finding work of national importance. To suggest this was work of national importance was manifestly absurd, he said. Recruiting the proprietors of one-man bakery businesses could not be justified when men such as these remained at home. Mr Edmund Backhouse, the late peace candidate at Stockton, was one of those so employed. He lived at Purley, "apparently in ease and luxury," while other men were being sent into the army.

Cllr. Hart agreed. He said it was intolerable that such men should be inflicted on the neighbourhood. They could not exempt their own men, so why should they put up with these other men from other tribunals. Members voted unanimously to ask the Pelham committee to receive a deputation from the tribunal with a view having the certificates revised and withdrawn. This was the committee that regulated work of national importance. The tribunal's letter pointed out that the bakery was "chiefly run by Socialists and opponents of the nation's military requirements." It had become a public scandal that the bakery, by reason of being so favoured in the matter of employees, was obtaining a local monopoly in the sale of bread and robbing the businesses of those men whom the tribunal had sent into the army to fight for the country. Its output is given as 30,000 to 35,000 quartern loaves a week.

The Pelham committee took almost two months to reply. When it did, it said that after careful consideration of the facts it did not see any ground for modifying its advice as to the placing of men in the bakery. This response produced general indignation. Lieut. Davis noted that the bakery had opened a new shop – he didn't say where – which showed it had a superfluity of labour. Tribunal members resolved to write to the local

[1] *SBR*, 18 January, 5 and 15 February, 15 March 1918.

government board to say they did not feel justified in sending any more bakers into the army as long as these conscientious objectors were working in the borough.[1]

In February the *CP Times* published a letter from J. Benford, chairman of Dulwich NCF, in which he compared the Bolshevik trial of a Russian aristocrat, Countess Panin, with the failure of tribunals to grant complete exemption to conscientious objectors. What was a tribunal composed of, he asked? - "margarine sellers, other petty tradesmen, etc., in the main without any technical or legal knowledge, positively bigoted against the men they sit to try, totally ignorant of the fact that conscience can only be known to the person implicated." [2]

"Jack" Benford, of Ondine Road, Peckham, was a clerk, aged 22 in 1917, who had already served three terms of hard labour, beginning in December 1916. He was court-martialled again in December 1918 and only released in April 1919.[3] His disparaging comparison provoked no response. Altogether only two conscience cases from our area are reported coming before the tribunals in 1918, one in Bermondsey and one in Southwark.[4]

IV

Evidence of local anti-war activity is hard to find. There's nothing in the papers, and Violet Tidman's letters to Creech Jones make no further mention of tub-thumping on Peckham Rye. The rallies seem to have lapsed. At any rate a small ad appeared in two successive issues of the *Tribunal* in March reading "Dulwich branch will be glad to have the names and addresses of members of London branches willing to speak for them on Peckham Rye on Sunday mornings. Apply Mrs Cahill…" etc.[5]

There was activity nonetheless. In February Vi Tidman wrote to her cousin that she had just come from the NCF meeting. "There were about 25 people there so it still keeps going.*"* The following month she reported,

> I have just returned from such a successful Branch meeting & am so excited I shan't be able to sleep so I am beginning your budget. Dr Salter gave a lantern lecture on Militarism & the operator was Toby E. & the hall was crowded. He [Salter] is an inspiration!! He asked after you and told me one or two little tit-bits …
>
> There are to be three deputations on your behalf led (1) by the Free Church Council (2) by Robert Smillie asking that the Labour Party Conference Resolution demanding your release might be put into force (3) by Mrs Hobhouse. We at Dulwich have begun our Thursday Evening deputations again & of course I am still writing round.[6]

The weekly listings in *Labour Leader* show this to have been a meeting of the Dulwich's ILP branch rather than the NCF. Both bodies were evidently active on the ground, but

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[1] *SBR*, 1 February and 29 March 1918.
[2] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 6 and 13 February, 10 March 1918
[3] Cyril Pearce, Register.
[4] *SBR*, 15 March and 21June 1918.
[5] *Tribunal* 100 and 101, 14 and 21 March 1918.
[6] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 1 February, 10 March 1918.

the ILP of course had a much wider agenda than the war and conscientious objectors, as can be seen from the listings. In the first three months of the year the Bermondsey branch had meetings on the poor law, the Workers' Educational Association, trade unionism, public health, and the needs of working women, among other topics. In Dulwich the themes included Turkey, education and the modern teacher, Labour and socialist policy after the war and Mrs Bouvier on the Russian situation; Sylvia Pankhurst also spoke.

Vi Tidman had previously written with less welcome news.

> Weren't you absolutely amazed at the step Fred has taken? …If only he had made some protest before he gave in! Will has adopted the attitude that as Fred has done it, it is all right, but I don't feel like that at all. I felt it to be terribly galling to you when you were suffering for principle, to hear that your own brother was doing his share to counteract the resistance you have put up. Moreover the work of his section is combatant of the vilest kind!!!"

Will was another brother. It was he who introduced Jones to the no-conscription campaign.[1] Unfortunately for this narrative Fred Jones, of 21 Stephen Street, Whitehall, in Bristol, leaves no trace in the National Archives; his apparently is among the Great War service records destroyed by enemy action in World War II.

Jones reacted with surprising mildness. He wrote back, "I am ever so glad to know that Fred is making the best of things and finds conditions comparatively cheerful." And later: "I am very glad to have so favourable a report from Fred… No doubt the first month or so will try him & perhaps pull him down, but after that he ought to become a young Hercules. I hope, however, he will obtain clerical work & have a reasonably easy time. I can fully grasp how it has all happened & know the difficulties in which Fred had to make his choice & know that he acted disinterestedly." [2]

Among other news Jones writes that he has caught his first cold since arriving at Pentonville; and has sent off an appeal to the central tribunal on the basis of a parliamentary statement by Lord Curzon. Curzon had asked the local government board to circularise tribunals requesting them to forward the names of objectors to whom they would have given absolute exemption if they had known it was in their power to grant it. Jones said he had no glimmer of hope that the statement meant anything for him, and he was right.[3]

He gives his family his views on the proposed changes to the Labour Party constitution. These, in brief, provided for individual membership through constituency parties (thus depriving the ILP of part of its function); they in turn would be combined with local trades councils. They gave the unions dominance in elections to the national executive. And they created in clause 4 the famous goal of the common ownership of the means of production.[4] "Is it not maddening that I should in here at such a time?" Jones complains; then in small neat writing he argues at length that the trades and labour council should not be submerged in the party. Rather a carefully drafted constitution should link the two

[1] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 13 February 1918.
[2] *ibid*., 20 February and 6 March 1918.
[3] *ibid*., 23 January and 20 February 1918;*Tribunal* 92, 17 January 1918.
[4] Ross McKibbin, The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924, pp. 92-102.

bodies together without overlapping and duplication. He devotes part of one letter and the whole of the next to elaborating his future vision of the anti-war movement; evidently a questionnaire had gone out. [1]

Cousin Violet meanwhile tells him: “Local branches are terribly disappointed with Head Office – as they act so incompetently and slowly. We are always sending resolutions to wake them up.” From the context she is clearly talking about the NCF. She gives him an account of the pamphlet, *Labour and the New Social Order*.[2] The new party programme committed Labour to full employment and a comprehensive system of benefits, to progressive taxation, and the nationalization of land, railways, canals, coal and electricity.[3]

Violet ends her report of the lantern lecture by adding, “Dr Salter says we shan’t speak [to him] when we go into suburbia…” This refers to the family’s imminent move from Goose Green to Addiscombe, on the eastern side of Croydon. The new house at 83 Ashburton Avenue, she wrote, was only three years old, was beautifully decorated and fitted with electricity, and had three bedrooms (two large, one tiny), a fine lawn at the back and a view of the Shirley hills.

It cost £340 leasehold. According to sister Flo’s scheme it would take ten years to pay off. The two were both elementary school teachers. In an interesting measure of relativities Vi mentions the proposed new salary scheme that would give them each a maximum of £210 per annum, still £90 a year less than male teachers.[4]

The pay increase was the result of the Fisher education act of that year: it doubled the average salary of such teachers. In London the question of equal pay was a live issue. There, as Vi’s figures show, the LCC’s new salary scheme gave women teachers less than the three-quarters which H.A.L. Fisher had recommended; and, it was claimed, actually widened the gap between men’s and women’s salaries.

A mass meeting of women teachers protested in February. In April the National Union of Teachers at its conference voted against equal pay by a majority of nearly 17,000; “but at least,” said the *Herald*, “it is to be followed up by a referendum of members.” In June many women were reported to be leaving both the London Teachers’ Association and the NUT and joining instead the National Federation of Women Teachers. In July a mass meeting of 3,000 Federation members at Queen’s Hall voted unanimously to strike if their demands for more equal pay were not favourably considered. Were the Tidman sisters involved in these battles? It seems not, as there’s no mention in Violet’s letters.[5]

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[1] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 6 February, 6 and 20 March 1918.
[2] *ibid*., 13 February and 10 March 1918.
[3] Andrew Thorpe, p. 49.
[4] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 17 January, 13 February, 10 Mar 1918.
[5] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 571; *The Herald,* 2 March, 13 April, 29 June 1918; *Labour Leader*, 25 July 1918.

22: The opponents

I

At national level there were three main bodies ranged against the government's war policy. The first was the NCF. Violet Tillard was now general secretary; Catherine Marshall, still in precarious health, was no longer playing an active role.[1] Alfred Salter replaced Bertrand Russell as chairman, on a temporary basis. Gladys Rinder, another of the women who kept the organisation running, described him at work: "Dr. S. is like an auctioneer in the Chair, we rattle through the agenda… No time for smiles or slow statements!" [2]

Was the Fellowship was as ineffective as Violet Tidman complained it was? It's hard to judge from the Marshall archives, and Jo Vellacott has little to say about the organisation's final year. What's clear is that it was still heavily focussed on the plight of objectors, both in prison and in the camps. An NCF circular in February 1918 urging branches to do more public work on the continued imprisonment of COs gave three pages of advice, including notice that the first *Tribunal* of each month would be a special propaganda issue available at a price of 2/6d per 100.[3] The argument was "that by our refusal [to serve] we are doing our best to bring war to an end, and to save men from the horrors which are now endured in Picardy and Poland." [4]

The emphasis is reflected in the journal's content. Among the opinion pieces it is full of news items about the men of conscience. On the lighter side it reports the refusal of three comrades from Dundee to act as beaters on the Cruachan estate, where they were engaged on forestry work. For this disobedience they were sent back to the Wakefield work centre.[5] Others reports are headed:

- COs in the Post Office.
- Death of Arthur Horton in Shrewsbury Prison.
- Court-martialled Four Times but Still Resolute
  [about J.W. Hill of Anerley]

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[1] Jo Vellacott, p. 218.
[2] Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/29. Miss Rinder had taken over as secretary of the information bureau COIB in April 1917 (D/Mar/4/17).
[3] D/Mar/4/29, 14 February 1918.
[4] *Tribunal* 99, 7 March 1918. This statement of the NCF's position is a shortened version of an article by Bertrand Russell in *Tribunal* 30, of 12 October 1916.
[5] *Tribunal* 91, 10 January 1918.

- Terrible Treatment of a CO in [Hereford] Detention Barracks [the case of Maurice Andrews, a Russian Jew aged 22] [1]

There's an account of the one day work strike, memorial service and inquest that followed the death of H.W. Firth at Princetown. Suffering from diabetes, he had been put to work quarrying. The whole settlement of 700 men formed a cortege to accompany his body to the station for return home to Norwich. As the train moved off, a choir on the platform sang Newman's hymn "Lead, Kindly Light." [2]

"Prussianism in the British Army" tells the story of 17 men of the Non-Combatant Corps in France who refused to handle what they considered war materials, namely ammunition, barbed wire and rum. For this insubordination they were sentenced to two years' hard labour, commuted to 80 days' field punishment no.1, which meant being tied to a fixed object like the wheel of a gun-carriage, often in a splayed position known as crucifixion, for up two hours a day.[3]

After sentence, says the report, they were "frog-marched round the square, forced to run… with their hands held behind their backs, and forced up and down in the most brutal manner. After they got about half-way round most of them fell to the ground from sheer exhaustion. They were then lifted up in the air and dashed to the ground again and again, and kicked and punched in the most inhuman manner. This was done by two, three and four military police, under the supervision of about a dozen officers… Everybody who witnessed this horrible sight was absolutely disgusted".

The torment continued next day. When the men again refused to work they were flung out of their tents and tied to stakes in the snow. The writer, Jas. Crawshaw, says the events occurred the previous December; the full facts had only recently come through. He names the 17 men.[4]

The failure to secure their release led an increasing number of objectors in prison to go on hunger strike. John Graham, the Fellowship's first historian, writes that in early 1918 there were prison hunger strikes in Newcastle, Maidstone, Winchester, Wandsworth, Carlisle, Canterbury and Hull.[5]

Though not encouraged by head office, these actions and their consequences are also reported in some detail. One of the first to take this step was Emmanuel Ribeiro, a gold and silver engraver from Manchester. Aged 35, he began hunger-striking on his arrest in January 1917. Transferred to Lord Derby's War Hospital in Warrington, he endured forcible feeding for 14 months. In March 1918 he was finally court-martialled – in the hospital ward since he was too weak to stand – and given two years' hard labour. He continued to strike when taken to Wormwood Scrubs; but was released in June.[6]

"Inquest on W.E. Burns/'Death Accelerated by Forcible Feeding'" is the heading on another item. Burns, we read, had been hunger-striking in Hull prison because he could

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[1] *Tribunal* 92 (Post Office), 93 (Horton and Hill), 100 (Maurice Andrews), 17 and 24 January, 14 March 1918.
[2] *Tribunal* 97 and 99, 21 February and 7 March 1918.
[3] Field punishment: Wikipedia.
[4] *Tribunal* 101, 21 March 1918.
[5] John Graham, p. 303.
[6] *Tribunal* 97 and 112, 21 February and 20 June 1918. Age and occupation: Pearce Register

get no answer from the home secretary to his petition asking to be reinstated on to the Home Office scheme or to be transferred to Manchester prison in order to be near his home in Failsworth. The doctor who made the post-mortem stated that death was due to pneumonia, the result of inhaling some irritating fluid into the bronchial tubes.[1]

II

Comment on the war and accompanying diplomacy from an anti-war perspective had been largely confined, as we saw, to the contributions by Bertrand Russell. He however disappeared from the *Tribunal* shortly after his article on early January on the German offer of a general peace on the Russian formula of no annexations, no indemnities. The piece contained the throw-away sarcasm that when it arrived the American garrison – whether or not it proved effective against the Germans – "will no doubt be capable of intimidating strikers, an occupation to which the American Army is accustomed when at home." [2]

Russell immediately found himself charged under DORA with uttering words likely to prejudice His Majesty's relations with a foreign power and was summoned to appear at Bow Street in early February. There the magistrate, Sir John Dickinson, told him, "Blind to all sense of decency and fairness you have gone out of your way to insult the army of a great nation that has joined us to fight for the same ideals of justice and freedom that have inspired us. This is a most despicable case…" He sentenced Russell to six months' imprisonment in the second division. Joan Beauchamp, who admitted she was responsible for publishing the article, was fined £60, with 15 guineas costs.[3]

Russell, like Miss Beauchamp, appealed and like her remained at liberty pending the hearing. However he withdrew from the scene and, determined to finish his book *Roads to Freedom* before he disappeared into prison, wrote no more opinion pieces.[4]

David Boulton says the NCF was a smaller and weaker organisation in 1918 than in 1916. This is almost certainly true. He says the *Tribunal*'s circulation had dropped from 100,000 to 6,000.[5] Despite this and despite the lack of any direct expression of anti-war sentiment in the first months of 1918, the NCF drew on itself a disproportionate amount of government attention.

The issue with Russell's editorial also carried an article entitled "A Guard-Room Message." It contained extracts from a letter written by an unnamed CO after his release from Wormwood Scrubs. He had found himself in Waterloo station, where he was hailed by many soldiers he had got to know in camp six months before. "We had not forgotten each other and our greetings were most cordial." He went on:

> The fellows here have a great respect for COs who defy the authorities; they trust us a great deal and admire our stand. I have found a marked alteration in their attitude. Not one man reproached me for being a CO,

[1] *Tribunal* 102, 4 April 1918.
[2] *Tribunal* 90, 3 January 1918.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 14 February 1918.
[4] Jo Vellacott, p. 229.
[5] David Boulton, p. 273; as usual he gives no sources.

> but all of them do not hide their opposition to the continuance of the war, and feel that the COs are the only persons who are really bringing peace nearer…[1]

At Bow Street Joan Beauchamp faced a second charge of publishing "false statements" in this letter. When however the defence asked for an adjournment to allow the writer to be called, the prosecution hurriedly asked for the case to be postponed *sine die.* As Vellacott notes, the charge had been unwisely worded in that it made the truth and not the effect of the statements the issue.[2]

Six weeks later the *Tribunal* carried an article by Joan Beauchamp headed "The Moral Aspect of Conscription." In it she quoted a report that the military authorities had recently opened a brothel for the use of British soldiers in the French town of Cayeux, and had done so in the face of a petition against it by local citizens. "What is to be the effect on the future of humanity of the conscription of our fit young men into such conditions as these," she asked, "where vice is not only condoned, but encouraged and made easy?"

The article appeared on 14 February. On the 15th police raided the *Tribunal*'s offices, and without a warrant seized stocks of the offending issue, as well as lists of subscribers and distributors. They raided the print-works of the National Labour Press, took away files, proofs and manuscripts and dismantled the machinery. On the 16th they called on several of the distributors and confiscated their copies of the paper.

As the article makes clear, it derived, via a report in the *Times*, from a debate that had taken place in the upper house of convocation of the Church of England. In the Commons Sir George Cave said the police had acted under regulation 51 of DORA, and on his telephoned instructions; no warrant was necessary. In the Commons Robert Outhwaite demanded to know whether he had taken similar action and dismantled the machinery of the *Morning Post*, - "or is it only the Labour Press that is assailed?" Cave replied, "In that case we think appropriate action has been taken."

The *Tribunal* was defiant. In "Our Stand for Freedom" it promised resistance as a point of principle. "The Government, having succeeded in stopping all discussion on the issues of war and peace by leaflet and circular, is now gagging all periodicals who dare to tell unpalatable truths." Their action in confiscating the *Tribunal* and dismantling the National Labour Press "demands the strongest action in defence of freedom of the press. This we shall take." It went on:

> Our forefathers went to prison again and again … in order to hand on to their successors the right of free-born men to speak freely… It does not matter how small the paper, or how limited its circulation, it still has the right to express its views and to influence public opinion… [I]t is unspeakable treachery to those who went before us to accept for one moment the present position where a periodical can be suppressed by lynch-law and governmental robbery. [3]

Joan Beauchamp and Lydia Smith now adopted cloak and dagger tactics to evade surveillance and future seizures. According to John Graham, "Copy for the press never

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[1] *Tribunal* 90, 3 January 1918.
[2] *Tribunal* 96, 14 February 1918; Jo Vellacott, p. 226.
[3] *Tribunal* 97, 21 February 1918.

went direct to the printers in their remote premises in North London. It was taken out by an old woman with a baby, who used to call at the office, apparently for relief, and was never suspected by the police. She took the proofs home and somebody else conveyed them to the printing press. The copies were distributed and posted from six different localities in succession, so that no single post office or post pillar could be raided." [1]

III

It was the ILP that continued to mobilise the most powerful opposition to the war. It did so in concert with its protégée, the Women's Peace Crusade. The *Labour Leader* voiced that opposition, chiefly through Philip Snowden's front-page "Review of the Week."

The party and its paper both appear to have continued to grow. The head office staff moved into larger premises at the beginning of the year, and Henry Brockhouse, the national organiser, issued an appeal to members in support of the Great Forward Movement: As soon as the Easter conference had approved policy, he wrote, "our message to the people must be thoroughly delivered in a big campaign of meetings, by carefully organised advertisement, and by the fullest possible number of Parliamentary candidatures." [2]

At the end of January the paper, as noted before, reported its circulation had "leapt up another thousand again last week," but (it added) "we want to reach the 100,000 by Easter." [3]

New branches are regularly announced: five on January 31, including Watchet and Wigston Magna; ten on February 14, all but one in Scotland; a further ten on March 7, including Dalton-in-Furness and Hitchin; 11 on March 21, including Dartford, Hebburn and Okehampton. An item on the forthcoming party conference in April reports 158 new branches and an increase in membership of over 50 per cent, mainly in the previous six months.[4] These are the paper's figures of course and, as noted earlier in relation to Bermondsey and Dulwich, the listings and reports of meetings show that branches – like the party itself - were by no means solely focussed on issues of war and peace. But crucially: they sold the paper, which got the anti-war message out.

The Women's Peace Crusade had that focus. The Crusaders' activities seem in part to have concentrated on established areas of support. In January, for example, Ethel Snowden is reported to have addressed "entirely successful meetings" in Doncaster, Colne, Burnley, Cowling, Bolton and Blackburn. A resolution in favour of an immediate peace was carried unanimously at every meeting – bar one, where there were three dissentients. Nine hundred gathered in Nelson to hear Mrs Despard's "noble denunciation" of militarism in all its forms. In Glasgow the Crusade joined one of the biggest peace demonstrations ever held on Glasgow Green. "There were several platforms and enormous crowds at all of them." [5]

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[1] John Graham, pp. 202-3.
[2] *Labour Leader*, 10 January 1918.
[3] *ibid*., 31 January 1918.
[4] *ibid*., 28 March 1918.
[5] *ibid*., 24 and 31 January 1918.

In February “close on” two hundred branches are reported. 60,000 copies of the Crusade’s “A People’s Peace” leaflet had been circulated. “But this is not nearly enough. The crusades would do well to get a copy of ‘Labour’s Peace Aims” into every householder’s hands in their respective districts.” The following week the number of branches is corrected to one hundred. Meetings are reported in Lesmahagow, Blantyre, Partick, Govan, Nelson and Leeds.[1]

At the end of the month Ethel Snowden set off for a speaking tour of the West Country. The paper reported the following week: “Mrs Snowden has held splendid meetings, with unfailing success in Bath, Bristol, Street, Yeovil, Taunton, Wiveliscombe, Wellington, Exeter and Newton Abbot. Everywhere a peace resolution was carried practically unanimously, the total number of dissentients only reaching four!” A week later she is reported addressing meetings in Plymouth, Penzance, Okehampton, Swindon – 400 in the audience - and Ipswich. “Long may Mrs Snowden’s physical strength be equal to her courage and devotion!” New crusades, we read, were started in Derby, Wakefield and Nottingham, while Reading held its first meeting, with Mrs Despard as speaker.[2]

These broke some new ground territorially, yet the Crusade was still making small impact in the southern counties. In London the year before, Sylvia Pankhurst and her Workers’ Suffrage Federation had acted as a kind of surrogate for the Crusade. But in 1918 they hardly feature in that capacity. It is not entirely clear why. The answer must be that she and the Federation were increasingly taken up with the Russian cause, as Patricia Romero says.[3] But she and the other biographers – Shirley Harrison and Katherine Connelly – do not shed further light on the matter.

In the early part of the year the main mention in the *Leader* concerns demonstrations to “socialise” the food supply. In January a contingent of 500 women from Bow, Poplar, Canning Town, Leyton, Kentish Town and St. Pancras was dispersed by the police, on foot and on horseback, when they were a mile-and-a-half from parliament. Some managed to get through to see MPs however “and powerfully described the sufferings they were enduring.” They were also demanding that the government accept the Russian invitation to join in the peace negotiations.[4]

The WSF, together with other trade unionists and socialists, held a similar but larger demonstration in February. This one converged on Trafalgar Square from seven assembly points, including St. Pancras, the Dun Cow in the Old Kent Road, the dock gates at Poplar, and the Shepherd’s Bush Empire. It demanded control of the food supply by the workers, equal rationing and distribution, and abolition of private profit in food. The report says soldiers formed a large part of the crowd and were unanimous and enthusiastic in support of the speeches and resolutions.[5]

The *Leader* continued to fight the cause of COs, Snowden writing in March, “Men are being driven mad and are dying in prison almost every week as a result of the inhuman

[1] *ibid*., 7 and 14 February 1918.
[2] *ibid*., 7 and 14 March 1918.
[3] Patricia Romero, p. 124.
[4] *Labour Leader*, 24 January 1918.
[5] *The Herald,* 9 and 16 February 1918. There is a flyer in MS 1152, box 2, file 10, Senate House Library.

treatment they receive… The administration of the Home Office scheme is brutal, and men are being sent back to the Army every week without any charge being made against them, and who are unconscious of having committed any offence." [1]

It carried a regular round-up of news from abroad, including Germany. It reported, for example, a strike meeting in Berlin whose delegates - from both the majority and anti-war minority of the Social Democratic Party – had adopted a six-point programme along the lines of the "people's peace" but including the reform of food control, the abolition of the state of siege and the militarisation of industry and for the democratisation of the whole fabric of the state.[2]

In March it reported: "Scores of letters come to our office of grateful greeting from soldiers at the front. Many of them contain gifts of money for the ILP and *Labour Leader* for propaganda work. A five franc note arrived only last week from a soldier in France. No other name attached. Our hearty thanks for it, and the kind words that accompanied it." [3]

The paper also documented cases of persecution from beyond the ranks of the NCF. In January it reported the gaoling for four months of R.C. "Dick" Wallhead, prospective ILP candidate for Coventry, for speeches delivered in south Wales the previous September. His offence, under regulation 27 of DORA, was to have warned mothers that "the present militarist-mad government" intended to keep their conscript sons of 18 under arms when the war was over in order to form a standing army of the British Empire. He was released in February after promising in writing not to repeat the statement.[4]

In February it reported the sentence of six months imposed on Arnold Lupton, a Unitarian, life-long pacifist, retired professor of mining engineering and eccentric former MP, his platform mainly opposition to vaccination. His offence under DORA was to be in possession of leaflets - *written by himself* - advocating peace by negotiation rather than military victory. Aged over 70, he lost his appeal in April and was despatched to gaol in the second division. The printer was fined £88.5s including costs for not including his name and address and failing to keep a file copy.[5]

In March it reported the seizure by police of the Christian Peace Crusade's "Confession of Faith" and its pulping by government order. This crusade, mentioned from time to time in the *Leader,* appears to have been the creation of the writer and Quaker Theodora Wilson Wilson. It operated out of at 39 Doughty Street, probably her home, on the borders of Bloomsbury and Holborn, an address also used by the Women's Crusade. The authorities, says the *Leader*, also destroyed 18,000 copies of the cheap edition of her book *The Last Weapon*, which had been on sale for two years, together with copies of *The Wrestlers*, written before the war. "Friends able and willing to help in this crisis" were invited to write in to her.[6]

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 7 March 1918.
[2] *ibid*., 7 February 1918.
[3] *ibid*, 14 March 1918.
[4] *ibid*., 24 January and 21 February 1918.
[5] *ibid*., 21 February and 25 April 1918; vaccination: Philip Snowden, p. 309.
[6] *ibid*., 21 March 1918.

The same month ex-private Simmons, still a regular speaker on the anti-war circuit, was arrested for an offence – whether under army regulations or under DORA is unclear – committed in a lecture to an ILP meeting in York entitled "A message from the trenches." Though pleading guilty, he was fined £25 and sentenced to three months' hard labour, or such as he could perform in his disabled state.[1]

IV

The third force campaigning against the government's war policy was the *Herald*. Like *Labour Leader* it advocated a "people's peace" and it covered similar ground in its reporting. Its inner double-page spread carried such headings as

- 5 January: What Then Are We Fighting For?
- 12 January: Now or Never – a People's Peace
- 26 January: We Accept Lloyd George's Challenge: Labour Must Take Control

  ("Mr Lloyd George tells us the choice is – 'Go on or go under!' But that is not the choice at all. If we go on we *shall* go under – not we alone, but all the European peoples together.")

- 9 February: The Murder of Democracy- Who is Preventing Peace? –

  (This week has seen the triumph of Prussianism in Prussia – and at Versailles.)

Lansbury's faith is a continuing strand - sometimes explicitly as when, under the heading "Where are the Christians?" he urges them to follow the lead of organised labour.

> Followers of the lowly Nazarine, men and women baptised into the Church, cannot any longer resist the call. It is we in our ignorance who have permitted this evil thing war to grow up, and it is we who in God's name must go out and with His strength and His name put an end once and for all to the conditions which have produced war." [2]

It shows also in his conciliatory attitude to Labour men on the other side of the argument. After the Labour Party conference he writes that Arthur Henderson's present popularity "makes it necessary for us to remember that we are all too much inclined to cheer and praise Labour leaders when we agree with them and denounce them as traitors and liars when we disagree. It is time we all accepted each other in good faith until our faith is *proved* to be false" [3]

Lansbury did not however show the same understanding for the Food Controller. "Get Rid of Rhondda" and "Round Up Rhondda" are two of the headlines.[4] In this he differed from his usually more acerbic confrère Philip Snowden. When Rhondda retired in July Snowden said his department was the one comparative success of government

[1] *ibid*., 28 March and 4 April 1918.
[2] *The Herald*, 26 January 1918.
[3] *ibid*., 2 February 1918.
[4] *ibid*., 2 and 25 February 1918.

administration in the war, due in the main to his "able and strenuous work." [1] Rhondda was replaced by his deputy, the Labour MP J.R. Clynes.

As we saw, the *Herald* followed the response of the unions to the latest Military Service Act. Like the *Leader*, it championed the cause of the imprisoned objectors and published letters of support from soldiers. "The correspondence would fill pages." These are extracts from three.

> For the benefit of all let us get rid of the present unrepresentative ring of Never-endians, and I say unto Labour, for Heaven's sake arise! You have it in your power.
>
> I came out with a good heart, I can assure you, and I had no fear of my life, for we had a good cause to fight for, but now I and almost the whole of the soldiers here who have been here any time and seen the horrors of war are for a speedy finish.
>
> As men who have been some years at the front, we have seen a good deal of what the Press are pleased to call "glorious fighting," which has impressed us as being inconceivably cruel and useless slaughter. We do not believe the reckless policy of our Government is helping to bring peace any nearer. That does not appear to be their aim at all, but rather the triumph of one form of militarism over another.[2]

The paper reported that "huge batches" of trade unionists were being invited to "go on a jaunt" to the front at government expense. The invitations were not receiving a unanimous welcome. "Numbers of resolutions of indignant refusal have reached us, complaining of the colossal and useless waste that the scheme involves."

One who did go was R. Palmer, of the National Union of General Workers. In a conscientious account of all he had seen he wrote:

> I met many soldiers, and I took every opportunity of talking with them. Everyone to whom I spoke said, "You at home have got to finish this b- war, we cannot do it out here." When I said to them, "What about the terms?" they would answer, "B- the terms. What do we care as long as we get the b- thing finished? You have got to do it at home.

He concludes: "I only want to say that anyone who thinks it is a joy-ride or a Cook's tour they are greatly mistaken… My one impression, from all the desolation and destruction which surrounded me, is that the whole thing is useless and wrong." [3]

The stronghold of the Herald League, as we saw, was the northern division, based in Finsbury Park. This held regular open meetings, both in the park and in Argyle Hall, on Seven Sisters Road. At the end of January it appealed to "lovers of freedom" to come to the park early to see that free speech was maintained against a bodyguard of seamen announced for the coming Sunday afternoon. Two months later the northern division established itself in a new base - the Liberty Club and Institute, at 318 Green Lanes.[4]

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 11 July 1918. Lord Rhondda died shortly after.
[2] *The Herald*, 23 February, 9 and 23 March 1918.
[3] *ibid*., 16 February and (Palmer) 16 March 1918.
[4] *The Herald*., 26 January and 23 March 1918.

George Belt continues to write up branch activities. The report of 9 February gives a good overview, namely record paper sales in Glasgow; a weekly food demonstration in Croydon; a debate in Stepney; an "absolutely full house" in Hornsey to hear an old railway comrade. The following Sunday S.J. Looker would share his thoughts on modern poetry, while Fulham's next meeting was "Tolstoi on War."

Meetings are also reported in Liverpool and Stratford, while individuals as far away as Gloucester and Burslem were, in Belt's encouraging words, "going well" or "getting a move on." Belt invited sympathisers in North Camberwell and Newington "desirous of forming a branch" to communicate with J.E. Barber, of Albany Road, Camberwell; but the initiative appears to have come to nothing, since he reports no further developments. However, at the end of March he was able to announce a central London branch and in April a branch in Tooting.[1]

In February – "on the eve of peace," as many correspondents suggested - the League held a reunion at the Holborn Halls, in Red Lion Square, which were reportedly crammed from end to end, with hundreds turned away. The speakers had a great reception, says Belt; Lansbury transferred his applause to Brailsford, Gould, Evelyn Sharp and other *Herald* writers who were present. "In his speech [he] referred to Bertrand Russell, and when our glorious comrade was seen in the midst of the audience, the applause and enthusiasm which burst out passes my powers of description." Russell was seized and despite his protests chaired to the platform by a group of young engineers. Mention of Arnold Lupton also produced prolonged cheering. "Toward the end of the evening a raid warning was given. The dancing and singing went on just the same." [2]

It's clear that, like the ILP branches, those of the Herald League interested themselves in a wide range of issues going beyond war and peace - from the Russian revolution as expounded by Mrs Bouvier before an enthusiastic audience in Stepney to "Esperanto for All, and Why We Should Learn it" in Croydon. From April the League went on to run classes in public speaking at Ashburton Hall, in Red Lion Square.[3] But, week by week, like the ILP branches, they also sold their paper with its anti-war message.

It is also clear from the above account that neither the *Leader* or the *Herald* was subject to the same oppressive attention from the authorities as the *Tribunal* and other small publications, among them the *Workers' Dreadnought* in London and *Satire* in Manchester; this despite the fact that (for example) the *Leader* repeated the offending statement that put R.C. Wallhead in gaol and the *Herald* quoted the defeatist views of serving soldiers.[4]

The *Herald* also published "War and Immorality," a piece by Evelyn Sharp on the soldiers' brothels in Cayeux and elsewhere. They and the "devil's crop" of social

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[1] *ibid.*, 19 January, 2 February (Camberwell), 30 March, 13 April 1918.

[2] *ibid*. Gladys Rinder, in a letter to Catherine Marshall, gives a more satirical account: how the four puny youths almost dropped their hero and left him to clamber up the balustrade at the front of the stage. Russell was accompanied by Lady Ottoline Morrell, whose presence probably added to the comedy of the occasion. Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/29. "On the eve of peace": *Herald* 16 February 1918.

[3] *The Herald*, 26 January, 9 March, 27 April 1918.

[4] *Labour Leader*, 2 May 1918.

problems arising from the separation of husbands and wives were not a by-product of war, she respectfully corrected the archbishops. *They were its direct consequence*.[1] Yet the *Herald*, unlike the *Tribunal*, suffered no police visitation.

Why was this? Above all, one presumes, in order not to provoke a reaction from the Labour Party and the trade unions. Brock Millman's chapter on 1918 talks up the suppression of dissent, claiming that it had developed to the point that Britain possessed "something like a Ministry of the Interior armed with emergency powers." But he says nothing about the anomaly that while individuals were prosecuted, small presses were dismantled and individual meetings were banned or allowed to be broken up, these influential organs of opinion were left untouched. His researches in the home office archives for 1918 seem to have turned up nothing about the two papers.[2]

Snowden, in his autobiography, confirms this light touch on the *Leader*, apart from one police raid in 1915. On this occasion the stipendiary in Manchester, sitting in camera, dismissed the case and ordered that the confiscated papers be returned.[3]

His retrospective account, we might note in passing, praises the general toleration of peace propaganda shown by both the public and the authorities: it displayed, he wrote, "the best traits of the British character." He recalls some disturbance at only four of the many meetings he addressed. His wife was a speaker at another three meetings which were broken up. But these were exceptions. She was attacked in their street in Golders Green by a well-dressed man who slashed her face with a cane. He walked home from the tube at night "in my laborious way" without ever thinking of the possibility of assault. The papers in Blackburn moreover always reported him in full.[4]

[1] *The Herald*, 16 February 1918.
[2] Brock Millman, p. 252.
[3] Philip Snowden, pp. 421-2.
[4] *ibid*., pp. 414-21.

23: Griff nach der Kanalküste

I

In the event Robertson was proved right, not Haig, when on 21 March Ludendorff unleashed his knock-out blow in the West. After a massive preliminary barrage he attacked on the Somme, at the southern end of the British line. The aim of the operation, code-named Michael, was to drive the British back towards the sea, forcing them to abandon Flanders and separating them the French.

By the end of the first day the Germans had advanced four-and-a half miles, which was as much as the British and French had achieved in the entire Somme campaign of 1916. The number of prisoners taken – 21,000 – was considerably in excess of the 17,500 killed and wounded. “The general picture,” in Grigg’s words, “was of retreat, if not of rout.” General Gough was dismissed, and the remnants of his fifth army were absorbed into the fourth army under General Rawlinson.

Over the next fortnight the Germans continued to press forward at a pace unheard of since 1914. By April 4 they had advanced 40 miles and occupied 1,200 square miles of territory. Of the 200,000 British casualties 90,000, or almost half, were prisoners.

Yet German losses were also very heavy – 250,000 - and not so readily replaced as the British, since Ludendorff had left a million men in Russia holding down the occupied territories there. The Germans also problems in supplying their advancing troops, since their transport was much inferior to that of the Allies. Grigg also notes a breakdown in discipline, as entire divisions, according to one observer, “gorged themselves on food and liquor”.

Moreover Ludendorff became distracted from his original aim of destroying the British army, or at any rate separating it from the French by driving it back to the Channel. Instead he ordered two of his armies to attack the French, rather than merely holding them. They reached the Marne, 40 miles from Paris. Further north, the British held Arras and Amiens - but only just.

The French general Foch had been placed in supreme command of the allied armies, but in practice he exercised no effective co-ordination in the field. However the crisis, by general consent, brought out the best in Lloyd George. He in effect took over the war office, and on his own authority despatched all available troops to France, and increased threefold the number of cross-channel transports. A correspondent in *The Times* complained at the coldness of these departures, columns of men being hurried to the

trains behind a policeman rather than led through the streets by a brass band. “Would not a band cheer [them] on their way?” he asked.[1]

Churchill appealed to munition workers to forego their Easter bank holiday, which they did.[2] Lloyd George addressed a long message to Woodrow Wilson in which he urged the paramount importance of sending more American troops “with the utmost speed possible.” The German offensive prompted much domestic criticism of the president for the inadequacy of the country’s war effort. It also converted Wilson to viewing Germany as a country bent on world domination; it prompted the vision, in his war message of 2 April, of a world “made safe for democracy.” He now undertook to commit 120,000 infantrymen to Europe in each of the three months April to June. Lloyd George’s intervention at this point was, in the view of Alan Taylor, almost as decisive as his insistence on the Royal Navy providing convoys the previous year.[3]

A little later in April Lloyd George appointed Viscount Milner secretary for war in place of Lord Derby – his merits acknowledged even by Philip Snowden. “However much we may differ, as we do, from his views and methods he is undoubtedly a man of extraordinary capacity and strength of will.” [4]

On 9 April Ludendorff further extended his operation by attacking the British in Flanders, a sector that operation Michael had previously ruled out. The Germans broke through, advanced three miles on the first day, captured Armentières and retook part of the Messines ridge. “[T]he whole Allied position in northern France began to seem acutely dangerous,” writes Grigg.

Enjoying a day off on Wimbledon Common about this time MacDonagh of the*Times* became aware of “a curious atmospheric sensation – a kind of pulsation of regular beats… silent but very perceptible to my sense of feeling. It was the guns, - the terrible cannonade of the Great Battle in France, which was shaking the earth literally, and indeed the whole world metaphorically.” He had to hurry away -

> For the fearful thought took possession of me that this atmospheric shuddering, this subterranean terror- for it appeared to be both these combined – was caused not so much by the guns as by the accompanying screams and groans of tens of thousands of mangled and terror-stricken men, German and British.[5]

In the event the German offensive was halted a long way short of most of the Channel ports; only Dunkirk was seriously at risk. Much territory was evacuated for tactical reasons, including Passchendaele and most of the ground taken at terrible cost the previous autumn. But the symbolic city of Ypres remained in British hands, as did Hazebrouck. By the end of April Ludendorff tacitly abandoned his attempt to win the war by destroying the British army. “Months of peril lay ahead while he turned the heat on the French; but his best chance of victory in the West had gone.” [6]

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[1] Michael MacDonagh, p. 282.
[2] Jerry White, p. 256.
[3] A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, p. 169; David Reynolds, pp. 37.
[4] *Labour Leader*, 25 April 1918.
[5] Michael MacDonagh, pp. 281-2.
[6] The above account and the quotations are taken from John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 440-461.

II

For once the war headlines in the *South London Press* were quite accurate.

- 22 March: GERMAN GUNS ROARING
  50 Miles of British Front Attacked Yesterday
- 29 March: HUNS' DESPERATE BLOWS
  British Back on The Somme
- 19 April: GRIM FIGHT FOR CHANNEL/PORTS

A leader in the *CP Times* in early April is headed "A Time of Trial".

> To-day we are facing what is unquestionably the final onslaught of the mad dog of Europe; he is trying hard to fasten his poisonous fangs in our flesh. But we have already got his throat in our grasp and presently we shall strangle the last vestige of breath out of his body…
>
> [N]aturally we shall deplore the awful toll that death will exact from the ranks of our gallant lads in khaki… But let us be cheered by the thought that the lives of our dear ones will not have been sacrificed in vain if the result of their devotion to King and country is to bring about the dawn of a new era in which war shall be unknown and a universal spirit of brotherhood shall animate the entire world…(etc.)[1]

Vera Brittain, in Étaples, recalled, "I could never forget the crushing tension of those extreme days … for into our minds had crept for the first time the secret, incredible fear that we might lose the War." Everyone in England, she claimed, was certain the Germans would reach the Channel.[2]

At the height of the crisis field marshal Haig issued his defiant Special Order of 11 April. "There is no course open to us but to fight it out," he said. "Every position must be held to the last man: there must be no retirement. With our back to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each of us must fight to the end."

Whatever this instruction did for the fighting men, it seems to have steadied civilian morale. The leader in the *CP Times* the following week is a virtual paraphrase. Vera Brittain wrote afterwards that despite later revelations about Haig as the colossal blunderer, the self-deceived optimist of the Somme, "I can think of him only as the author of the Special Order, for after I had read it I knew that I should go on, whether I could or not." [3]

The time of trial lasted four months. In the *SB Recorder* a letter supposedly from the front said some people at home were glum because Fritz has won a bit of ground, "but little they know the price paid for it in human life.

> We want them to buck up and be cheerful, for we will win through. This is Fritz's last bid for victory, but he will never win. He is throwing his men to their destruction, thinking that his huge masses will break through our line. This is our chance and we simply mow them down… This plan of attack is too costly for them, but still they keep it up, much

[1] *CPT*, 3 April 1918.
[2] Vera Brittain, pp. 375, 385.
[3] *CPT*, 17 April 1918; Vera Brittain, p. 383.

> to our delight. It is weakening his forces, and when his forces are weakened to exhaustion, then we will have our kick, and we will kick hard.[1]

Local propaganda for the American surge took the form of a "mass meeting" promoted by the National War Aims Committee to welcome the American mission to Great Britain. The main speakers advertised for the event in Kennington Theatre were two American trade union figures: Martin F. Ryan, president of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, and Agnes Nestor, president of the Women's Trade Union League of Chicago. Labour's John Hodge took the chair. The meeting was a one-off: no others were announced in this part of London. It was not reported, and it is in fact the last evidence of local activity by the War Aims Committee.[2]

With a time-lag of some five weeks the weekly casualty lists in the *South London Press* now show the German offensive in terms of in British lives. Two broadsheet columns of south London dead and wounded are reported on 3 May, 2¾ columns on 10 May, 2¾ columns on 17 May, the same on 24 May, 2¼ columns on 31 May.

III

In response to these military reversals the government put through another Military Service Act, detailed below. The engineers in the ASE promptly reversed their opposition to the comb-out. The miners' ballot produced a majority against of 30,000, narrow enough to allow the union executive, after a meeting with Lloyd George, to drop its opposition too. Writing in the *Herald* G.D.H. Cole and W.H. Hutchinson addressed "A Word to Labour." They warned: "There must be no strike during the present crisis… Whatever we may say or think of the Government, the present is not the time for an industrial upheaval, the consequences of which would be disastrous, not only to the nation but also to the working class."

In the same issue "The Way of the World" sounded a note of sombre patriotism. "The main thoughts of us all are with the soldiers in this dark week of anxiety… The nation which has sent these men to war can give them at the moment only sympathy and admiration. In that tribute, at least, the nation is united." [3]

The tone of human empathy, expressive of Lansbury's tender Christianity, is stronger still the following week.

> We Socialists never forget that whilst we at home are fighting our fight for righteousness, it is our own flesh and blood, our own people, who are suffering out there in the hell of war. We all must render our mead of homage to those who heroically give themselves to what they conceive their highest duty, and our hearts go out in love and sympathy to all those who are sorrowful and bereaved because of the war.[4]

In the *Leader* Philip Snowden responded more abrasively, writing that the German offensive was the reply of the central powers to the Versailles declaration that the war

[1] *SBR*, 10 May 1918.
[2] *SLP*, 10 May 1918.
[3] *The Herald*, 30 March 1918.
[4] *ibid*., 6 April 1918.

must be prosecuted with the utmost military vigour. “It is the consequence of the refusal to listen to all approaches to peace, of the refusal of Allied statesmen to adopt the advice of Lord Lansdowne and explore every avenue which might lead to a reasonable settlement of the war.” [1]

The *Herald* took its stand on an immediate peace, “believing with Robert Smillie that a peace now would be a victory for humanity, and a peace in two years’ time, *whichever side won*, and on whatever terms, a disaster for humanity.” It wanted a Labour government to make the peace, but if that proved impossible, “we should welcome a Lansdowne-Labour coalition.”

Two weeks later “The Way of the World” launched a diatribe against Lloyd George and his associates, men who “have all proved themselves utterly incapable of either conducting war or making peace…”

“We cannot strike, we cannot interfere with work connected with the war. But from every branch of a Trade Union, from every Socialist society, and from every organisation that stands for freedom, there should go forth a demand to Parliament to throw out the present Government.”

Labour may not wish to undertake the business of administration and government alone, it continues, “but Labour must lead. All the old parties are played out… Arthur Henderson, J.H. Thomas, J.R. MacDonald, Philip Snowden, Lord Henry Bentinck, Sir Mark Sykes – all men who believe that ‘righteousness exalteth a nation’ – must get together and form a National Government in its truest and best sense..” [2]

The most radical and uncompromising reaction to the military crisis in the anti-war quarter came from the NCF. *The Tribunal’s* “propaganda issue” of 11 April carried a poster-like front and back page. In a panel page one carried a brief report of Lieut. Max Plowman’s court martial in Stockton for disobeying a command to rejoin his regiment. The heading above read “On Active Service” and the one below “These Anti-Militarists are actually serving their country.” Page four was headed

STOP THE WAR!

It Need Not Go On Unless the People Chose [*sic*]

- Across the Channel the cannon are booming. Every day thousands of lives are cut short; every day thousands of men are maimed for life; every day millions of women watch for the post with fear and dread of the news it may bring…
- The Armies opposing each other are too evenly matched for a decisive victory to be possible. If the war continue, it can only end in the utter ruin of the whole world…
- In all countries the people must say

We will not go on’
Do Not Remain Silent Any Longer
COME OUT FOR PEACE!

[1] *Labour Leader*, 28 March 1918.
[2] *The Herald*, 6 and 20 April 1918.

The government response, somewhat delayed, is reported two issues later: it's a single sheet, printed on one side only, headlined "HERE WE ARE AGAIN!!" In it Samuel Street tells how six policemen descended on his print works in Blegborough Avenue, Streatham, and without a warrant proceeded to dismantle the machinery, despite his protests that part of the equipment belonged to the landlady, Mrs Love.

"They started taking the machines to pieces by unscrewing them, but when they found any difficulty, they simply broke the piece off… They then started throwing the parts into separate boxes, and put them in the cart." They also took the books, invoices and stationery, together with two-and-a-half tons of type and 4 cwt. of paper. Street was the printer fined in the case of Arnold Lupton. He gives precise details of the items damaged and concludes, "The same amount of plant could not be bought to-day for less the £480 or £500."

The same day three detectives from Scotland Yard called on Joan Beauchamp in her office at 5 York Buildings. Questioned, she acknowledged that she was still the publisher of the *Tribunal* and, yes, had been responsible for the back page of the issue in question. She declined to say who was the editor. The detectives then conducted a prolonged search and went off bearing books and papers.

The report ends on a renewed note of defiance. "The press in this country is no longer free; it is bound hand and foot, and is the servile tool of those who would fasten militarism upon us…"

> We are not daunted. We shall go on with the message which we believe it is our duty to deliver. We are trying to show the world - Scotland Yard included – the vision of that new way of life in which the methods of violence have no part.[1]

In the intervening issue of the *Tribunal* Alfred Salter articulated a similar, maximalist view of the situation. He argued that, from the point of view of humanity, exemption for a few persons was as nothing compared with the defeat of conscription itself - that is, "the compulsory militarisation of multitudes of unwilling men" He asked, "What is the Fellowship doing for these men?... What are we doing to save the coming generation?" Personally he would not have lifted a finger to get a conscience clause inserted in the Act. Instead members should

> concentrate their thoughts and sympathies on those hopeless, helpless multitudes, who, like similar multitudes in Germany, have been thrust into and become part of the military machine, and who no more wish to take part in the wretched business of war than we do, but for whom Circumstances and the State are too strong.[2]

This, it seems to me, comes close to advocating the simple message: "Refuse to serve."

The Fellowship also found time in this crisis to publish a penny pamphlet, entitled *Scraps of Paper.* This detailed the number of objectors court-martialled more than once and set out the cumulative sentences they had served. By the end of the year, it claimed, 766 men would have served two years or more. It quoted from a letter by Fenner Brockway

[1] *Tribunal* 105, 25 April 1918.
[2] *Tribunal* 104, 18 April 1918.

on the health impacts of continued imprisonment. It cited the rising tide of protest in the world outside.

Its main focus though was on Lord Derby's undertaking of the previous November that objectors would not suffer successive punishments - hence the title. It also quoted the Army Act as saying offenders shall not be imprisoned for more than two consecutive years. As explained earlier, this seems a misreading of what Derby actually said. The clause in the Army Act implies the words "for any one offence." A repeated refusal to serve was technically another offence. But morally and humanely the pamphlet made a substantive point.[1]

IV

The new Military Service Bill, introduced in early April, did two main things. It raised the upper age for conscription from 41 to 50, and for certain specialist categories, including doctors, to 55; it also contained provision for raising the upper age to 55 overall at any time deemed necessary for the defence of the realm. Secondly, the Bill extended the principle of compulsory military service to Ireland.

On the latter point Lloyd George was extremely reluctant. However he bowed to Conservative insistence. He also hoped the inclusion of Ireland would soften trade union resistance to combing out. At the same he knew that bringing it in would, in John Grigg's words, be tantamount to opening another military front. He therefore asserted the principle by taking the power to introduce it by Order in Council, ie. via the Privy Council. But he did not intend to do so.[2]

Opposition in Ireland was not assuaged by the undertaking, made by George Barnes at the end of the third reading, with Lloyd George nodding approval, that conscription there would only become operative after home rule was on the statute book. Faced with mounting resistance, the aspiration was formally abandoned in June.[3]

On the conscription of older men Lloyd George explained it did not necessarily mean they would be put in the firing line, but rather that they would take over military roles that did not require the best physical capacity, including home defence, in order to relieve younger and fitter men. The proportion the government expected "would be available" - ie. called up – was not very high, something like seven per cent. The measure was merely a dramatic gesture, comments Alan Taylor.[4]

Auckland Geddes, the minister of National Service, promised that the other 93 per cent would remain in civilian life. Hayes Fisher, president of the local government board, assured MPs that older men called up would have the same grounds for appeal as at present. But he warned that in view of the gravity of the military situation "hardship" would be construed more against the applicant and more in favour of the army. "It must be so: the tribunals must really harden their hearts." [5]

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[1] NCF, *Scraps of Paper*, 1918; see above, p. 102.
[2] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 470.
[3] *Hansard*, House of Commons, 16 April 1918, col. 312; *Labour Leader*, 27 June 1918.
[4] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 469; A.J.P.Taylor, *English History*, p. 103.
[5] *Hansard*, House of Commons, 15 April 1918, cols. 170, 74-7.

A close reading of the statements by Lloyd George and Geddes leaves some doubt as to how far the provision in the previous Act for a clean cut of certain occupational exemptions had actually come into effect. Speakers tend to use the continuous present tense, as in "We are issuing Orders" (Lloyd George); and: after the measures adopted in January "have been put into force, as they are being…" (Geddes)[1]

John Grigg writes that in the first three months of the year only 32,000 munition workers had been recruited into the army. In the five weeks from 1 April however 40,000 were combed out, a figure which rose to 100,000 by mid-July.[2]

At all events the new Bill included a clause allowing the government, in a national emergency, to proclaim a clean cut of exemptions granted, on *non-occupational* grounds, to any class or body of men. Home secretary Cave clarified that, of the three categories involved, he was willing to exclude medical and conscientious exemption – "Frankly, [the latter] class of man is of very little military value." That left men exempted on grounds of business or domestic hardship. He conceded the democratic safeguard of an Order in Council that could by challenged by an address in parliament.[3]

A fourth clause in the Bill proposed a reconstitution of the tribunals, hitherto elected locally. It was desired still to consult local opinion, said Hayes Fisher, but it was the government's intention to nominate members itself, and where it chose, to adjust tribunal areas. Initially the government sought to remove the right of appeal from a tribunal decision except by leave of the tribunal itself; but Cave retreated on this in committee. He made it open to both sides, but reduced the time for the process.[4]

Another concession concerned ministers of religion. Their conscription for the first time, approved in committee, was dropped by Cave at the third reading. We leave it to the judgment of clergymen and their churches, he said. The reason for their exclusion, claimed the MP John Whitehouse, was that there had been a "great revolt" of the churches behind the scenes.[5]

In what was perhaps just another dramatic gesture, Auckland Geddes appealed to wounded and discharged ex-soldiers who were now fit to fight, to come forward voluntarily, as in the old days. These men were trained. They would be of extraordinary value to our armies in the broken battalions now reforming in France. Their patriotism "would never be forgotten by the nation," he promised. To which Philip Snowden retorted across the chamber, "They cannot even get a job!" [6]

The "national emergency" clause raising the age limit to 55 was never invoked. The *Tribunal* reported in early May that a proclamation had been issued summoning the first group of men, aged 41 to 44, for medical examination. It provided a detailed briefing on the procedure involved and on how and at what point to apply to a tribunal for exemption.[7]

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[1] *ibid.,* 9 April 1918, col. 1353; 10 April 1918, col. 1590.
[2] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 468. He gives no source.
[3] *Hansard*, 12 April 1918, cols. 2044-6. Exceptionally, this was a Friday sitting.
[4] *ibid.,*15 April 1918, cols. 80-1, 78, 104.
[5] *ibid.,* 16 April 1918, col. 279.
[6] *ibid.,* 10 April 1918, col. 1589-90.
[7] *Tribunal* 106, 2 May 1918.

Creech Jones, in Pentonville, watched these developments with alarm. “I was hoping Dad would never be reached. The fight to a finish is becoming an alarming possibility, for all generations are being slowly consumed. Why won’t the women of the nation stir?” [1]

There’s a suggestion later in the correspondence that Dr Salter, then approaching 45, considered pre-empting any summons by the military by appearing before the tribunal and refusing to serve. Tell him, Jones writes, “how extremely sorry in many ways I am that he will be called on to pass this way, altho’ I’m filled with admiration for the boldness & bravery of his course & I think it will make a tremendous testimony & appeal.” [2] It’s not clear where Jones got this idea from – possibly from one of the letters he asks cousin Vi to thank Salter for. There’s a mystery here as Violet had already written to say, “Have you heard that Dr S. has decided not to go before the Tribunals? I feel it’s a great shame, as I couldn’t help hoping he might be exempted.” [3]

In his “Town Topics” column in the *CP Times* “Meteor” noted that several pacifist MPs – Trevelyan, Outhwaite, Ponsonby and Anderson – were well within the new age limit for military service. “It can hardly be contended that the work done by these members is work of national importance, and if the latter is left to the tribunals without instruction from the Government it will be interesting to see what view is taken by the claims of these men.” [4]

V

At the height of the onslaught on Allied forces in the West both the *Herald* and *Labour Leader* carried reports that before the offensive there had been diplomatic contacts with the enemy. The *Leader*’s source is a speech delivered by count Czernin to Vienna city council in which he talked of informal negotiations between France and the Central Powers. The *Herald* says Britain was also a party. Both papers quote Czernin as saying that France’s desire for Alsace-Lorraine was the one obstacle to an understanding. A week later the *Leader* reported that the Austrian foreign minister, believed to be a moderating influence, had been “driven from office.” [5]

[1] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 17 April 1918.
[2] *ibid*., 29 May 1918.
[3] *ibid*., 9 May 1918.
[4] *CPT*, 24 April 1918.
[5] *Labour Leader*, 11 and 18 April 1918; *The Herald*, 13 April 1918.

24: A closing of ranks?

I

"In Great Britain," writes Grigg, "the mood at the time was intensely patriotic, and the reaction of most people to the crisis at the front was to close ranks at home and co-operate with the government." [1] This was true of the big trade unions, as we saw, but it was not true of everybody. Home secretary Cave claimed – or said he was told – that "pacifism was no longer to any great extent holding meetings, or holding up its head." Cave however, was wrong, like Brock Millman who cites him.[2] Not only were the anti-war publications defiant but that defiance was also articulated on the ground, primarily by members of the ILP.

In early April the *Leader* carried a self-confident, not to say triumphalist, account of the party's annual conference in Leicester, where Ramsay MacDonald was one of the MPs. It talks up the town's civic achievements, and highlights its claim to have the premier ILP branch with 2,400 members, and 30 more branches in the county.

"The dark shadow of the war, the world tragedy working itself out round the banks of the Somme, bore heavily for personal as well as for public reasons upon many of those present. Yet there was an outstanding warmth in Leicester's welcome to us, expressed in marked fashion by the hotel folk, with whom the senior member for Leicester is extremely popular…"

The *Leicester Daily Mail* had declared it an insult to the town for pacifist demonstrations to be arranged "in this hour of sorrow and trial." We are no advocates of violence, it went on, but "[i]f those who feel strongly on the matter showed their resentment in an emphatic manner it would be neither surprising nor reprehensible."

Despite this encouragement the procession on Easter Sunday morning was offered no hostility, and no counter-demonstrations are reported. The procession, headed by a band, was led by children of the Socialist Sunday School who were followed by "other little flag-bearers" carrying such messages as "I want my daddy," "Stop killing our daddies," "We want peace," etc. Older lads had "Down with the profiteers." The Women's Labour League and the NCF were there with their banners, as was the Women's Peace Crusade; it had a hard fight with the wind, but refused all masculine offers of help. The Christian Peace Crusade followed, and then "The only way is

[1] John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 468.
[2] Brock Millman, p. 257. Cave's speech is reported in *The Times*, 22 April 1918.

socialism" and many smaller banners leading up to the huge "Join the ILP" of the Leicester stalwarts. The Russian revolution had a banner of its own and a fluttering array of trade union banners brought up the rear.

> On the whole route nothing but the friendliest sympathy was shown. There must have been several thousand in the procession, and its members poured into the great hall like bees into a hive, and by 11am the singing of "God Save the People" sounded thunderously through the corridors.

Among other resolutions MacDonald proposed a lengthy Soldiers' Charter which, among much else, urged that the pay, separation allowances and pensions of soldiers and sailors and dependents should be substantially increased. Dick Wallhead and Charles Ammon moved a motion denouncing the persecution of conscientious objectors. Both were approved with unanimous acclamation. So was the peace resolution moved by Robert Smillie and Ethel Snowden. This opened with a reaffirmation of the party's belief that

> a democratic and unaggressive peace, secured by negotiation at the earliest possible moment, alone can save the nations from mutual destruction, ruin, and bankruptcy, and urges in the interests of civilisation that no opportunity be lost of examining honestly the possibilities of world settlement.

It ended with a repudiation of the secret treaties, concluded by governments and rulers behind the behind the backs of their peoples

> and insists that such treaties, involving imperialist conquest and territorial aggression, are the real stumbling blocks to an early and lasting peace, and must be swept away with all the governments that are bound by them.[1]

In short: there was no closing of ranks there. The week following the Women's Peace Crusade reported that Mrs Despard's recent visit to Birmingham had given a fresh impetus to the Crusade. "Many new members were made." During Dreadnought week members had picketed every day, standing opposite the model ship with disarmament leaflets. "The Crusade has now begun an active open-air campaign. We are hoping to have a fine choir for open-air singing." [2]

In south London the ILP listings included a Great Labour Demonstration in Bermondsey Square on Sunday 21 April. "Procession leaves the Labour Institute at 2.45. All members expected to rally behind the ILP banner." We don't unfortunately know what the placards and the speakers said about the war. At the first session of the open-air season the following Tuesday the speaker, at the corner of Beatrice Road and Southwark Park Road, was Charles Ammon, with Alfred Salter in the chair. If the war was a topic – and it's hard to imagine that it would not have been - they are unlikely to have toned down their opposition.[3]

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 4 April 1918.
[2] *ibid*., 11 April 1918.
[3] *ibid*. The local papers, as usual, ignored both the demonstration and the speeches.

A more definite snapshot of public opinion is shown in the result of the Keighley by-election. There the ILP candidate, Mr Bland, standing on an out-and-out peace programme, secured over 30 per cent of the vote – 2,349 against 4,873 cast for Somervell, the Liberal candidate. Somervell moreover declared that he too was in favour of negotiations at the earliest possible moment.[1]

All that said, it should be noted that after the German offensive and across the summer there are no more letters from serving soldiers or resolutions from union branches opposing the war and calling for peace talks. They are absent from both the *Leader* and the *Herald*.

On May Day Sunday a massive event was planned for Finsbury Park, involving seven processions, eight platforms and 50 speakers. “Everything pointed to a demonstration of such strength as to deal a serious blow to an already tottering administration*,”* wrote Snowden. In the days beforehand the *Daily Express* had launched one of its familiar campaigns, claiming the demonstration was unpatriotic, was the work of a few cranks, would provoke a riot, and so on – “whereupon the authorities obediently stopped it.” The *Herald* reported that Mrs Despard and others made short speeches, and that at more than one meeting a resolution affirming faith in the International and support for peace by negotiation was carried unanimously and with acclamation. May Day demonstrations went ahead unimpeded in18 other centres, including Edinburgh, Bristol, Merthyr, Bradford and Northampton.[2]

II

While battle raged on land, naval raids on Zeebrugge and Ostend sought to blockade the exits through which German submarines launched into the Channel to attack Allied merchant ships. At Zeebrugge two of the three blockships, loaded with rubble and cement, penetrated the harbour, despite fire from shore batteries, and were sunk as planned by their crews. Unfortunately they did not fully block the exit and U-boats remained free to come and go. At Ostend the markers laid to guide the blockships were destroyed by German artillery and the ships finished up on sandbanks well away from the harbour entrance.

The operation, led by Admiral Keyes, was extremely dangerous; only unmarried men were allowed to take part. Seven hundred were killed. The raids, on 23 April, St. George’s Day, were a failure. Nevertheless they were hailed as a triumph – by for example the *CP Times:* “The whole thing had the Nelson touch about it” [3]

The submarine war was in fact being won, despite Zeebrugge. One measure is the mass transfer of troops across the Channel in April and May, which was accomplished without the loss of a single ship. Similarly thousands of American troops were safely transported across the Atlantic. Moreover, the number of new merchant ships being built was now outstripping the number sunk by U-boat action.[4]

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[1] *ibid*., 2 May 1918.
[2] T*he Herald*, 4 and 11 May, 1918; 18 other centres: *Labour Leader*, 9 May 1918.
[3] *CPT*, 1 May 1918.
[4] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 513-6.

A major political crisis blew up a fortnight later. One of Henry Wilson's first actions as CIGS was to replace major-general Sir Frederick Maurice as director of military operations. Maurice was a close associate of Wilson's predecessor, William Robertson. At the beginning of May, and with Robertson's encouragement, Maurice had letters published in four newspapers in which he alleged Lloyd George had misled the House of Commons as to troop numbers on the Western front. In his speech of 9 April the prime minister had said inter alia that the army was "considerably stronger" in January 1918 than it had been in January 1917. Maurice briefed Asquith. Lloyd George and his colleagues were convinced they were facing a conspiracy to blame them for the reversals that had followed the German offensive.

Bonar Law offered Asquith a judicial enquiry, with judges of his choice. Asquith demanded instead a select committee of the House and tabled a motion to that effect. Lloyd George turned it into a vote of confidence.

In the debate that followed two days later he rejected the distinction between combatant and non-combatant strength; and maintained that even on a narrow definition of "combatant" the figures showed that the strength of the army was higher in January 1918 than the previous January and March. He also claimed that Maurice had been the official primarily responsible for furnishing some of the statistics. His speech, wrote Snowden, was "a successful act of political jugglery." [1]

The convoluted truth of the matter need not detain us. Lloyd George deplored the effect of the letter on army morale, called it a flagrant breach of King's Regulations and warned that the motion was a vote of censure on the government, which could not remain in office if defeated.

Asquith's motion was defeated by 293 votes to 106, a majority of almost three to one. Yet, as Grigg points out, those supporting the government were fewer than half the total membership of the House, even allowing for the absence of the 80-odd Irish nationalists. He suggests the result was more a rejection of Asquith as alternative prime minister than a wholehearted endorsement of Lloyd George. It was the only time in the war that the official opposition divided the House. The Liberal Party split 98 to 170 for and against the motion. It committed suicide, says Alan Taylor. The Labour Party was also divided: twelve members supported Lloyd George, while seven, mostly ILP-ers, voted with Asquith.[2]

III

In his April letter Arthur Jones in Pentonville notes that on the coming Friday he will have completed half his present sentence, so that in six or seven weeks he will have completed two years, excluding time spent waiting for court martial. He has evidently been making a computation.

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 16 May 1918.

[2] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 489-499; A.J.P.Taylor, *English History*, p. 105. Liberal vote: *ibid*., p. 74n; Labour vote: *Leader,* 23 May 1918.The papers that published Maurice's letter were *The Times*, *Morning Post*, *Daily News* and *Daily Chronicle*; the *Telegraph* declined it.

> Last night in the gathering darkness… faintly I could hear the "tinkle" of some piano, as I often hear the noise of the youngsters at play in the street. I wonder when next I shall play my Heller studies! But the melancholy tinkle gave me that desolate feeling – it linked me up strangely with boyhood…the tinge of regret at days gone by. I feel, you see, that at times I am getting very ancient…

Later he adds, "I suppose that I am now a dead letter in C'well, a past member almost forgotten by the present caucus (save Flo & Alf, of course) and with the reshuffling and changes since my removal there is no place for me or speculation about my return." To console himself he quotes William Morris on fellowship - "Forsooth, brothers, fellowship is heaven, & lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life and lack of fellowship is death" – then gives an account of trying to achieve it during prison exercise, where talk was now permitted.

Here fellowship was "a bewildering medley… You naturally make partners with congenial fellows, old friends or well read & thoughtful men. Some men are naturally sociable, some difficult conversationalists. You sometimes exhaust yourself in 5 mins. or have to make all the conversation yourself. Some are conventional & without ideas, [with] others you can discuss various problems for hours to much profit." Often however the time ran out with only the fringe of the subject touched. It was then difficult to pick up the threads again, "so we become very scrappy. Yet you discover the diversity of mankind & our fixtures are like a dance programme!" It is I think the only time Jones writes about his fellow prisoners. One has a sense of his making an effort to engage but not finding it very easy.[1]

In his next letter Jones assures the family he is not going to hunger-strike. In her next letter Violet, addressing him "my dearest old kid," says, "I am afraid you will come out a Colossus in Mind" - from all his reading - "but perhaps I shall be able to tone you down socially" – meaning presumably take him in hand, smarten him up.

She goes on: "Last Sunday Flo' & I went to the May Day in Finsbury Park before we knew it had been forbidden by the government. It was a terrible day, and in spite of this thousands of sympathisers rallied. All was extremely orderly except for the punches of those who were there to protect life & maintain order." She also mentions general Maurice, saying, "The debate took place today & I shall scan my paper eagerly tomorrow to see how things go as it is a great indictment against the Gov." [2]

IV

In the meantime the appeal of Bertrand Russell and Joan Beauchamp came up for hearing at the Session House, Clerkenwell. Russell had been actively seeking elevation to the first division should the appeal fail. He was anxious about the effect on his mind of imprisonment in the second division, especially after seeing the ravages that gaol had wrought on Morel and Clifford Allen. At the same time he did not want to compromise himself by agreeing to withdraw from anti-war activity.

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[1] Creech Jones archive, box 1file 3, 17 April 1918.
[2] *ibid*., 1 May (Jones) and 19 May 1918 (Violet).

Vellacott gives a full account of the lobbying that took place behind the scenes, principally by Gilbert Murray, but in the end it's not clear by what mechanism Russell secured his promotion. Mr Lawrie, the presiding justice, was in her words altogether more civil than the Bow Street magistrate had been. He dismissed both appeals but said "the bench felt it would be a great loss to the country if Mr Russell, a man of great distinction, were to be confined in such a form that his abilities would not [have] full scope." So, unlike Arnold Lupton, he was sentenced to the first division, as was Joan Beauchamp, when she announced she would not pay the £60 fine. Her sentence of one month was reduced from three in the second division.

A memorial for Russell's release, signed by such leading lights as Shaw, Edward Carpenter and the Webbs, was unsuccessful. But he served his sentence in Brixton prison in some style. He was able to rent an extra large cell. He was allowed all the books and writing materials he wanted under the provision that exempted first-division prisoners from compulsory labour and allowed them to have the tools of their trade. He did a considerable amount of work: he claimed to have read 200 books and written two during the four-and-half months he served before being discharged on 14 September.[1]

[1] Jo Vellacott. pp. 233-40.

25: “Hun thrusts towards Paris”

I

There were two peace debates during this military crisis. In the first on 6 May – an adjournment debate on the Whitsuntide recess, - government speakers deployed the line that the various diplomatic initiatives from the other side were part of a “peace offensive.” That is, Balfour explained, they were propositions made by one party who did not desire peace himself, “but who does desire to divide his enemies by making proposals of peace.” In Robert Cecil’s definition, a peace offensive was diplomatic or semi-diplomatic action “undertaken not with a view of producing peace, but with the view of promoting war.” It was intended to be of indirect assistance to the German army in the field.[1]

Despite this barricade of negativity Philip Snowden felt able to welcome Balfour’s assurance that it would be unwise to reject any offer of negotiations. He focussed on the secret treaties. The original war aims were the restitution and independence of Belgium and the restitution of Serbia and Montenegro. He asked: were these the only war aims to which the country was committed, or had these been considerably and unreasonably expanded? He protested at the influence that Italy appeared to be exercising in the counsels of the Allies.[2]

On the western front Ludendorff prepared a new offensive towards the French army further south, his aim to draw reserves from the British front. Throughout May he moved his forces by night towards the Aisne, and here, on the 27th they broke through. In five days they reached Chateau-Thierry on the Marne, only 37 miles from Paris, which came under long-range artillery bombardment. “Hun Thrusts Towards Paris” was the headline in the *SLP*.[3] Fifty-thousand allied troops were taken prisoner. For a short while it seemed possible the French army might disintegrate.

Clemenceau however pulled in reserves, including five divisions of the American Expeditionary Force. After four days visiting the front at great personal risk he told Churchill – in the capital on munitions business, “I will fight in front of Paris; I will fight in Paris; I will fight behind Paris”; words Churchill may have remembered in 1940.
As Ludendorff’s offensive lost momentum, his men suffering disproportionately from

[1] *Hansard,* House of Commons, 16 May 1918, cols.580, 621.
[2] *ibid*., cols. 617-19.
[3] *SLP*, 31 May 1918.

"Spanish" influenza, the advance was held.[1] This was largely the work of the French themselves, although American action at Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Wood frustrated a break-through in early June.

At the end of May there were nearly half a million US troops in France and Britain, of whom 290,000 were in combat divisions. Vera Brittain recalled some of the first ones marching past. "They looked larger than ordinary men: their tall, straight figures were in vivid contrast to the under-sized armies of pale recruits to which we had grown accustomed." [2]

In the second peace debate, on 20 June, Snowden supported Philip Morrell when the latter tabled an amendment to the Consolidated Fund (No.2) Bill. The amendment sought an assurance that the government would lose no diplomatic opportunity to settle the problems of the war by agreement. To this end it expressed the view that the secret treaties should be revised: they were inconsistent with the objects for which the country had entered the war, and were therefore a barrier to a democratic peace.

He could well understand, said Morrell, that at a time like this, when the Germans were thundering at the gates of Paris and the Austrians approaching Venice, there were many in the House who would think that no word should be uttered in regard to peace. He however felt that parliament would be failing in its duty if it did not once more ask the government "for a statement of their policy, for a restatement of their war aims, and for some expression of opinion as to the prospect of achieving them."

He quoted the statistics for British losses – 71,000 officers and men killed in the first five months of the year, 300,000 wounded and missing - saying, "These are appalling figures." The losses of the enemy were "infinitely more severe and more terrible."

> It seems to me it is lamentable now, after nearly four years of war, that we have still no declaration, with one possible exception, to which we can refer binding on all the Allies and expressing the terms on which peace would, in our opinion, be possible.

The exception was President Wilson's note, now long out of date. The secret treaties, Morrell went on, "have become a useless cumbrance to us. They are mere material for propaganda in the hands of the enemy with which to reproach us".

> Nothing, I believe, was ever nobler or more disinterested than the spirit which led thousands of youths in this country to volunteer their service to go to the help of Belgium and France. They never thought the War was going to be carried on for the purposes which are divulged in the secret treaties.

Snowden devoted much of his speech to attacking Lloyd George: ranging from his "notorious" knock-out blow interview of autumn 1916 to his "wicked and gross misrepresentation" of German and Austrian responses to Woodrow Wilson at the beginning of the current year. He concluded:

> This War will never be settled between victor and vanquished. It will be settled round a table by men who are representatives of people who out

[1] While 900,000 German soldiers were taken out of action, three-quarters of French troops and half the British also fell ill. Gavin Francis, "The Untreatable," p. 6.
[2] Vera Brittain, p. 384; John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 521-31, for the military campaign.

> of bitter experience, out of travail and pain, have come to the conclusion that militarism is an enemy which must be uprooted, and that military power is futile to serve any reasonable and honourable human purpose.

Ramsay MacDonald also spoke. In his reply Balfour targeted Snowden, contrasting his "tone of petulance" with the obvious sincerity of Morrell's desire to see the war brought to an honourable end - a desire of course shared by His Majesty's government. Whatever Snowden's intention might be, "his acts in this House have the effect of doing everything that can be done… to discourage the Allies and their friends and to encourage the Central Powers and their friends. I must honestly say that I think that is a lamentable performance".

He was not going to discuss the secret treaties, declared Balfour; except to say they were made in obedience to motives that he believed would have moved any government in power at the time to make the same or similar arrangements.

Certainly the government and its allies was not going to "shut their ears to anything that can be called a reasonable suggestion" from the enemy side. However this was the very last moment in which we were likely to make peace proposals or - as far as he could judge – in which the Central Powers were likely to make proposals to us, except for the purpose of a peace offensive.

> I do not blame the Central Powers for making such attempts. The people I blame are those who fall into the trap; and the people I blame most of all are those who, like the hon. Gentleman opposite, appear to think it almost criminal not to fall into the trap.[1]

The debate closed without the amendment being put to a vote.

II

In May 400 wounded soldiers were delivered to Bermondsey town hall by bus, charabanc and tram for afternoon tea, a raffle and entertainment, all funded by the recent grand ball. Over 50 artistes were lined up to perform, though not all got to do so, as the men had to be back in their hospitals by eight o'clock. At the end of the evening the mayor, Cllr Shearring, was pleased to announce that Mr Wallie Rice, proprietor of the Rotherhithe Hippodrome, had arranged to entertain up to one thousand wounded Tommies at the theatre every Monday afternoon.[2]

Later in the month the Hippodrome advertised a benefit ticket performance ("both houses") in aid of the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers, Rotherhithe branch. The Bermondsey branch of the same benefited from a concert at the Great Central Hall, on Tower Bridge Road. The display ad promised the band of the Royal Artillery and a large number of well-known artistes.[3]

Over the Whitsun bank holiday weekend of 18-20 May London experienced a major air-raid, the first for two months. The *SLP* reported that of probably between twenty and thirty machines, one group came up the Thames, while the other flew in over the Essex

[1] *Hansard,* House of Commons, 20 June 1918., cols. 538-74.
[2] *SBR*, 3 May 1918. Grand ball: p. 131 above.
[3] *SBR*, 10 and 17 May 1918.

coast. White says that this, the largest force yet assembled again London, bombed at random over a large area: from Beckenham to Tottenham and from Kilburn to Ilford.

Michael MacDonagh was sent to inspect the damage in Lewisham and on the Old Kent Road. Close to the Bricklayer's Arms he saw a row of about a dozen fairly good class houses "reduced to hideous piles of wreckage." Even the houses that ecaped demolition had scarcely a window left intact. It was the abomination of desolation. Half a dozen of the attacking aircraft were brought down, either by fighters or by anti-aircraft fire. On the ground 44 people were reported killed and 179 injured.[1]

This was to be the last aerial attack of the war. According to Jerry White Zeppelins and bomber planes had all told killed 668 people in the Metropolitan Police District and injured 1,938 more. Damage to property was put at over £2 million.[2]

The following week the *SLP* rejoiced in its war coverage with the crosshead "Reprisals: Panic in Rhineland." It read on, "Happily our reprisals are having their effect on the Boche population in the Rhine towns. The Germans have been thrown into a state of panic by our ceaselessly energetic and irrepressible airmen …"

There's a report of a further offensive in July. It mentions Mannheim and its chemical works – bombed four times in three days – as well as Treves [Trier] and Coblenz.[3]

The various food control committees continued their deliberations. Food prosecutions are regularly reported, as are the drinking offences of treating and serving a long pull. Bermondsey borough council considered the desirability of allowing people to keep pigs. Strong views were expressed. Cllr. Vezey maintained the pig was one of the cleanest animals if properly kept. Cllr. Delderfield replied that it was the very nature of the beast to wallow in mire and filth. And so on. Asked his opinion, the medical officer of health, Dr Brown, said that in normal times it was not a good thing to keep pigs in Bermondsey; but these were not normal times. In the end the council decided to grant permission in cases where there was no probability of the animals being a nuisance.[4]

In June 1918, national kitchens were opened in both Southwark and Camberwell, each an initiative of the local food control committee. The first of these, at the corner of Scovell Road and Borough Road, was in the nature of an experiment, says the report; if successful it would be extended to other parts of the borough. It was not a charity, insisted Cllr. F.W. Ward, the chairman at the opening ceremony, but a work of national importance intended to serve those who were prepared to pay a fair price for their food. It would relieve five hundred families of having to cook dinner daily, thereby saving waste. And it would not, declared the mayor, speaking next, interfere with the livelihood of local traders.

After a vote of thanks the servers got busy supplying "the following appetising fare" to a large crowd, namely lentil soup 1d; roast beef (½ coupon) 5d; meat pies (no coupon) 3d;

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[1] *SLP*, 24 May 1918; Jerry White, p. 252; Michael MacDonagh, pp. 295-7. White and MacDonagh give slightly different casualty figures.
[2] Jerry White, *loc. cit*.
[3] *SLP*, 31 May and 5 July 1918.
[4] *SBR,* 31 May 1918.

savoury pudding 3d; cabbage 1d; potatoes 1d; jam tart 1½d; currant roll 1½d; rice pudding 1d.[1]

In Camberwell the kitchen was fitted out in the disused wash-house in Wells Street. (The one opened the previous year in Kempshead Road appears to have lapsed.) Designed to provide 2,000 portions daily, it was a superintended by Miss Haggo, "a lady with much experience as hotel chef." The mayor, Ald. H.J. Raiment, who performed the honours at an elaborate opening ceremony, congratulated the food control committee on the choice of location – "among the very poor and in the midst of factories." The vegetables used at the luncheon provided for a large assembly of local worthies, the report notes, were sent from the estate of Sir Evan Spicer, at "Belair" in Dulwich.[2]

In Bermondsey council there was no support for such a kitchen. Cllr. Fogden said he did not think there was any need. Cllr. Bustin thought the "cruxical point" of the food shortage was over.[3]

III

The tribunals continued processing applications for exemption, though as before only Bermondsey and Southwark are reported. The sole mention of Camberwell tribunal occurs when its members pay tribute to George Helmore on his retirement as National Service Representative.[4] The detailed weekly coverage in the *SB Recorder* shows over the spring and summer a continuing pattern at Bermondsey and Southwark tribunals, particularly the former, of conditional exemptions being replaced by temporary ones, usually of three months. Presumably the conditional exemptions were "called in", though this is not spelled out.

In May Bermondsey tribunal expressed its sympathy with the chairman on the fact that his son, previously wounded, had been gassed and was now in hospital in London. Members also commiserated with the town and tribunal clerk, whose wounded son was a prisoner in Germany.[5]

In May lieut. Davis, the National Service Representative at Bermondsey, settled a libel action out of court against one Thomas Simmons, of Tanner Street. Simmons had alleged in a notice of appeal from a decision by the tribunal, that Davis had behaved in a cowardly manner by getting himself appointed and "and that he was shirking his duty by sheltering himself in that position instead of going to the front." Davis's counsel said that his client had given up his solicitor's practice and volunteered in 1914, but had been invalided out with rheumatism after five months. "Not a Cuthbert" is one of the headlines." [6]

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[1] *SLP*, 7 June 1918.
[2] *ibid.*, 14 June 1918.
[3] *SBR*, 26 July 1918.
[4] *CPT,* 4 May 1918.
[5] *SBR*, 3 May 1918.
[6] *SBR*, 17 May 1918. "Cuthbert" was a name coined by the *Evening News* cartoonist Percy Fearon ("Poy") for fit men who shirked military service by getting a government job. *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* says he depicted them as frightened rabbits.

A month later, lieut. Davis resigned. He shortly reappeared as prospective Liberal candidate for West Bermondsey. His duties were taken on by lieut. Cunliffe, the National Service Representative for Southwark.[1]

Not for the first time Bermondsey tribunal was exercised by reports of young dock and transport workers who (despite combing-out) still held protection certificates exempting them from military service. A local soldier wrote to the tribunal in June. Married with three children, he had served three years, he said, had been twice wounded and was now suffering from shell shock. He had been a transport worker and now found “strong and healthy” single men with no dependents but with protection employed at his former workplace. “He thought these men ought to be sent into the army instead of the wounded, married men who were being forced to go back to France again.”

The tribunal forwarded the letter to the government’s Transport Committee. In reply a spokesmen conceded it was “unfortunately true” that, while some had had their certificates withdrawn, there were young men, protected for the transport trade, still working in the docks while older married men were serving. If concrete cases of “young men shirkers” were forwarded, the committee would do everything in their power to meet the suggestions of the tribunal.

A few weeks later the tribunal raised the matter with the local government board and the ministry of National Service. It called for all such certificates to be reviewed at once, now that the tribunal was having to decide applications for exemption from men aged forty and fifty. They should only be made renewable on application by employers or men or the appropriate local tribunal.[2]

In July Bermondsey council received a deputation from the local branch of the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers. Their spokesman, Mr Pearce, said that some members of Bermondsey tribunal – he was told five – were of military age. After four years of war the branch thought they should now do something for their country.

Did Mr Pearce know the medical qualifications of those members, asked Cllr. Hansom? He did not. Would he object to any man of military age sitting on the tribunal if he was in a very low medical category, asked Cllr. Bustin? No, he would not. When asked to give the ages and medical grades of tribunal members, the mayor, as chairman, declined, saying the information had been supplied to the local government board.

So the representation was foiled. Mr Pearce withdrew an accusation by the branch secretary that there were tribunal members holding pacifist views. After the deputation had retired, the figure of five members of military age was confirmed. Two were said to have been rejected, one said he was in grade 3, another that he was in a very low category. There’s no mention of the fifth.[3]

Meanwhile Southwark tribunal took umbrage at comments made in the House of Commons by Sir Auckland Geddes. According to the *SBR* these were that there were men using their social pull to protect their young healthy sons and that there were many

[1] *SBR*, 21 June 1918.
[2] *ibid.*, 28 June and 12 July 1918.
[3] *SBR*, 5 July 1918.

men protected by tribunals because their fathers were friends of tribunal members. There was general indignation at this. Cllr. Weaver said Geddes's complaints were not supported by facts, and it was untrue that there had been any jiggery-pokery or favouritism shown. He had gone out of his way to attack people who had given their time and services to the work of the tribunals.

Attempting to calm the discussion, lieut. Cunliffe said he did not think Sir Auckland had been referring to the London tribunals, as they did their work in the full glare of publicity. No doubt he had in mind some of the provincial tribunals, more especially in rural districts, "who had acted in an extraordinary manner," notably in the west of England and Wales. The tribunal fired off a unanimous resolution nonetheless, copied to the president of the local government board, urging Geddes to either "withdraw the aspersion or verify his statement." [1]

[1] ibid.

26: War resistance continues

I

Throughout the summer, while the success of the German offensive was an active possibility, the NCF reiterated its anti-war position. At the beginning of May Alfred Salter, in a call to action, admitted that some of the Fellowship's members and friends were getting disheartened and wearied in the long drawn-out struggle. To such people he would point out that

> it will not be meetings, it will not be speeches, it will not be striking and dramatic actions, which in the end will influence the public mind and heart. It will be the patient testimony of men who are willing to suffer anything rather than sacrifice their convictions. The younger men have done their part; it is for us older men to show ourselves worthy comrades of those gone before.
>
> We have to testify to the eternal verities as against the passions and fears of the moment. We have to tell and shew the world that behind everything, both for the individual soul and for Society, there is an everlasting Moral Order… which is the ground plan of the Universe. He who puts himself in line with that Moral Order is doing right and acting with true wisdom…

Salter was addressing the London convention of the Fellowship, one of six in held different parts of the country since, in the words of the *Tribunal*, "the lack of travelling facilities" made a national convention impossible. Charles Ammon spoke at the conventions in Manchester and Bradford. All six unanimously reaffirmed their opposition to conscription, as embodied in the various Military Service Acts. They resolved to continue the work, "whatever the consequences," of those who had already suffered for conscience sake, "being convinced that such refusal, if generally adopted, would end all wars and enable the peoples of the world to live in harmony with each other." [1]

In this spirit the *Tribunal* continued to highlight the suffering and testimony of the absolutists. Thus the same issue contained the death notice of T.D. Matchett, a schoolmaster from Bath, who died of consumption contracted in prison; it's not clear where. Another schoolmaster, G. Sutherland, formerly at Harrow, is reported telling his

[1] *Tribunal* 107, 9 May 1918.

fourth court-martial, “I stand with Jesus Christ for the belief that hatred can never purge out but by love, and evil never overcome but by good.” [1]

The Tribunal reported attacks on COs attending Home Office work centres in Knutsford and Wakefield. In Knutsford many men were badly knocked about in a succession of assaults. The police collared eight of the assailants. The judge bound them over for six months but his summing up, says the paper, was “in manner and to a large extent in substance a vindication of mob rule, and he indulged freely in epithets against conscientious objectors.” The *Tribunal* commends them for not only for not retaliating against their attackers, but for declining to give evidence against them. In its report *Labour Leader* says those responsible for the violence were young men who had just received notice that they were to be combed out for the army.[2]

In Wakefield a letter in a local paper suggested that imitation was the sincerest form of flattery, and so a week later, over the Whitsun bank holiday, violence broke out there. A large number of men were assaulted. Several were knocked down and kicked as they lay on the ground. Some of the injured men were robbed of their watches and bicycles. Except in a very few cases, said a letter from the work centre to the home secretary “the police played the part of bystanders.” The rioting extended to people suspected of sympathy with the objectors. A Quaker family – its adult members all women – had their windows smashed, their rooms broken into and their furniture destroyed.[3]

The sabotage of Mr Street’s printworks continued to reverberate. According to a rather opaque report, Street was summoned before a “private committee” at the Law Courts, convened to consider the question of returning his machinery. When asked to give an undertaking not to print anything further for any pacifist or socialist society, he refused, and was then told there was nothing more to be said, and the proceedings closed. The *Tribunal* launched an urgent appeal for £500 on Street’s behalf. “Strong resolutions” were received from 62 trade union organisations indignant at the “tyrannical smashing” of his plant. By mid-July the appeal had raised £117.[4]

One group of imprisoned absolutists determined that summer to knock a hole in the oppressive regime that held them. Fenner Brockway, the *Tribunal* reported, had with others written from Walton gaol, where he was serving his third term, to inform Cave, the home secretary, that he no longer recognised any obligation to obey prison rules. “The first effect,” he announced, “will be to ignore the rule ‘prisoners shall preserve silence.’” That is, in addition to the “talking exercise” that COs who had served twelve months were allowed for two periods of 40 minutes a day - one of the concessions of the previous winter. Among the absolutists mass resistance to the silence rule followed, as Brockway recounts in his memoirs, until he and other ring-leaders were moved elsewhere.[5]

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[1] *Tribunal* 107 and 113, 9 May, 27 June 1918.
[2] *ibid.* 110, 30 May 1918; *Labour Leader*, same date.
[3] *Tribunal* 112, 20 June 1918.
[4] *ibid.*108 and 116, 16 May, 18 July 1918.
[5] *ibid.* 109 and 121, 23 May, 22 August 1918; Brockway, *Inside the Left*, pp.107-111.

II

The ILP and its vanguard the Women's Peace Crusade continued to campaign hard over the summer. The crusade took part in the Keighley by-election. Ethel Snowden addressed over a thousand people there, and was given "unanimous and enthusiastic" support. The Birmingham branch of the crusade was reported in May to be conducting a "house to house visitation" and to have distributed ("dealt with") 43,00 leaflets in one month. Members had appointed Miss Margaret Haley as their own special organiser.[1]

At the end of the month new and active branches were reported in Barrow-in-Furness, Norwich, Exeter, Rothwell and Market Harborough. In Sheffield a successful eight-day mission had been conducted under the auspices of the Women's International League, with the crusade's founder, Helen Crawfurd, as speaker. "With so fearless and clever an exponent as Mrs Crawfurd," says the report, organised attempts to break up meetings were frustrated – it's not clear what happened – and the crowds, over the whole week, listened to her "with intense interest."

In the same report comes the first mention of the Lansdowne memorial, promoted in the first place, we are told, by the women of the Burnley crusade. Appealing for money to disseminate it, Ethel Snowden writes that 100,000 names are wanted from the new electoral register. Non-electors of 21 and over may also sign, but on separate sheets. The memorial says

> We appreciate the moral courage you have shown as the first statesman of International reputation in this country to oppose the persistent view of the press that peace can only come through victory, and believing that a peace settlement honorable to all nations is possible and desirable, entreat you to make a further public pronouncement, and place yourself at the head of a movement which, we believe, has the support of a large section of the people of all classes.[2]

Coming from a women's crusade it's a rather extraordinary invitation. Not only was the fifth marquess a former Conservative foreign secretary, viceroy of India, etc. More specifically, he was against both Irish home rule and women's suffrage, and in 1911 had led the Lords' opposition to the "people's budget." Mrs Snowden explained her thinking in a letter to the *Herald*. She acknowledged that Lansdowne's general politics were not the politics of the paper and its readers. "He would certainly be hostile to many things which Labour has at heart. But there are bigger things immediately at stake than the best-conceived political programme – the lives of millions of innocent men and boys." She went on:

> Lord Lansdowne can rally the support of people to whom Labour cannot appeal. No section of the people, it matters not what their motive, which can help to bring a speedy and righteous peace can be dispensed with. The war will have to be settled by the united efforts of men and women of goodwill in all parties…[Lansdowne] is the only man in the front rank

[1] *Labour Leader*, 25 April and 16 May 1918.
[2] *ibid*., 30 May and 6 June 1918.

> of orthodox statesmen who has had the courage to express, in the face of much opposition from his own people, his desire for peace and his belief in its possibility.[1]

The pursuit of signatures on the memorial was to occupy crusaders for the rest of the summer. The invitation is also difficult to understand because Lansdowne, as we saw, had already declined this role in relation to the committee formed in his name. He told the Lords in May that he had taken no part in their meetings, had not helped convene them, had not even authorised the use of his name. That said, he did not wish to dissociate himself from the efforts of Lord Beauchamp and his friends. Sounding Lansdowne out that summer, the MP Arthur Ponsonby found him sympathetic - but still unresponsive to the idea leading a political movement.

Lansdowne's first biographer, Lord Newton, makes no mention of the Women's Peace Crusade. His most recent one says that he hold the Crusade his health and deafness prevented him from playing that part; he was at the time undergoing operations for neuritis on his left arm and hip. Simon Kerry doesn't say when this was. It would be interesting to know, given how long the crusade persisted with the memorial.[2]

As to the ILP itself, the *Leader* reported that over the quarter to the end of May the party had added 34 new branches, 14 of them in Scotland. As ever, the editorial comments on page two are generalised and perfunctory. This, for example, on the 13th of June:

> An awful curtain of blood and flame in Northern France, vaster than the world has yet conceived of, still conceals the future of humanity from our eyes… And in grave editorials the War Press still discusses the possibility of the war continuing till 1920. But on the other hand, the saving thought that it is war itself and the roots of war that need to be destroyed is steadily growing.

The news items report a range of anti-war activity not covered by *The Tribunal*, In May Eva Gore Booth and four others write in to offer themselves as "person for person" substitutes in place of men suffering in prison for their conscientious refusal to take part in war, "whose imprisonment we consider to be a crime." Two months later the paper reported that between 300 and 400 men and women had offered themselves as substitutes and were due to hand in a petition to this effect. It's not clear to whom, and nothing more is recorded.[3]

Also in May Reuben Farrow, an ILP councillor from Derby, was sentenced in Mansfield for statements he had made in the market place there which were "intended and likely" to cause disaffection and prejudice recruiting. These statements included, "Our sons are giving their lives for the benefit of the capitalists;" and "I could take six men from any British crowd and they could not make a greater muddle than the Cabinet has done." He was gaoled for four months.[4]

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[1] *The Herald*, 29 June 1918.
[2] Simon Kerry, chapter 40.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 16 May, 11 July 1918. Or nothing until the autumn when the *Tribunal* reported that a number of ladies who had offered themselves as substitutes for objectors in prison were touring the country: distributing appeals, holding parades with banners, and conducting open-air meetings outside prisons where the men were held. *Tribunal* 125, 19 September 1918.
[4] *Labour Leader*, 30 May 1918.

The same month saw another by-election, this time in Wansbeck. The peace candidate here was Ebenezer ("Eb") Edwards, a working pitman from Ashington, who was also on the executive of the Northumberland Miners' Association. His opponent, described by the *Leader* as the "Coalition, win-the war" candidate, was Robert Mason, a Newcastle businessman said to have made his money out of ship-owning.

The constituency was 30 miles wide from north-east to south-west. "With practically no vehicles available, petrol banned, printing reduced to the barest minimum, the miners' official election agent a 'CO' and, consequently, not available to organise the contest, the marvel is that the division *did* get covered after a fashion, and that the result of the contest was so astonishingly good." It was good: Edwards polled 5,267 votes, coming in fewer than 600 behind Mason with 5,814. Snowden said the result pointed to the great and growing strength of the peace-by-negotiation movement in the constituencies.[1]

In June Charles Trevelyan completed a week's circuit of eleven open-air meetings in his Elland constituency in west Yorkshire. "Large and attentive audiences listened to their member denouncing the secret treaties and urging the policy of an immediate peace by negotiation." Six thousand people must have heard him, says the report, with no disturbance and hardly any interruption. Mrs Trevelyan also spoke.[2]

In Glasgow the same month a UDC meeting packed the Metropole Theatre, while 2,000 gathered in an overflow meeting outside. The speakers included Mrs Pethick-Lawrence, John Graham, Trevelyan, Morel and MacDonald. "The meeting," we read, "was unanimous and enthusiastic throughout." [3]

III

The Herald League too was going strong. George Belt reports that the first class on public speaking was, if anything "just too well-attended," but that there were still vacancies in a second class. He suggests later that classes should be split into three – for beginners, advanced, and established public speakers. He makes space to appeal for the John Arnall Defence Fund. Arnall had been fined £50 and gaoled for three months for speaking at the banned May Day meeting in Finsbury Park.[4]

Writing after an air-raid ("and it was a whacker this time") a correspondent from Stepney reported on an anniversary branch social held at the WSF Hall, in Old Ford Road.

> I was at the latter, and it was just clinking. A crowded, good, happy time, a neat little speech from Lancelot Hogben, a surprise presentation to the Secretary.., some recitations, some dances, and so home in the moonlight, happy and safe. [5]

Among the topics discussed by the branch in June were "Wages and Prices," "Determinism" and "Man the Martyr." The northern division enjoyed a recital in the

[1] *ibid.*, 6 June 1918.
[2] *ibid.*, 20 June 1918.
[3] *ibid.*, 27 June 1918.
[4] *The Herald*, 4 May and 29 June 1918; Arnall: 25 May 1918.
[5] *ibid.,* 25 May 1918.

Allison Hall, Green Lanes, by the "famous Russian violinist" (and Bolshevik agent) Edward Soermus. It was also favoured by a new speaker named H. Pollitt, who promised to be one of the "best and cleverest speakers" in the movement of the future. Meeting secretaries should take note of his name.[1]

Over the summer new branches of the Herald League were started in Bootle, Bristol and Twickenham. Busy though the league was with a mixture of campaigning, self-education and social activity, the small number of branches can have had only a limited impact.

Like the ILP branches they sold their paper, with much the same message as the *Leader*. The *Herald*'s centre-spread gave particular publicity to the secret treaties, publishing all the texts, with explanatory notes and maps. The author was F. Seymour Cocks, who had written a booklet on the subject.

The treaties "will produce, we know, the most profound indignation," said the paper. "Let the Government know what you feel. Bring the matter before your Trade Union Branch and your National Executive; send copies of your resolutions to the Prime Minister, the Minister of 'Information,' the Labour Members of the Government, and to the *Herald* and other papers. Heckle the paid orators of the War Aims Committee. Hold protest meetings."

> It is the lives of our brothers and sons that are being bartered for these infamous war aims which the Governments have tried to keep secret from them and from you. AS LONG AS THE SECRET TREATIES ARE UNREPUDIATED THERE CAN BE NO PEACE.

In a framed box in the centre of each page the paper printed one of its own war aims: "No dismemberment of Germany," "No territorial acquisitions," and so on. Below it contrasted the government's public professions with its practice, as revealed in the treaties.[2] Lansbury's exhortation seems to have produced little response; at least, no supportive resolutions appear in the *Herald*.

The paper did however report "a crop of resolutions and protests" from trade unionists all over the country, angry at the War Munitions Volunteer Scheme. The issue here was that if a munitions worker volunteered, he was liable to transfer from factory to factory and from one part of the country to another. If he refused, he risked losing his exemption from military service. It was, in effect, industrial conscription by indirect means. That was the contention. In the face of these protests, the government dropped the scheme in July.[3]

There are references in *The Herald* of two demonstrations not mentioned elsewhere. One was "a great mass movement" called to Finsbury Park to protest against the arbitrary action of the authorities in banning the May Day demonstration; and to uphold Labour's right, in George Belt's words, "to express itself publicly, and in the way it thinks

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[1] *ibid.,* 8 (Soermus) and 29 June 1918 (Pollitt). Soermus prompted Sylvia Pankurst to set up the People's Russian Information Bureau, which printed and distributed pamphlets such as Lenin's *Appeal to the Toiling Masses.* He was arrested in July 1918 and later deported. See Pankhurst's biographers: Patricia Romero, p. 131, Katherine Connelly, ch. 5. The *Leader* (27 June 1918) gives an account of the recital.

[2] *The Herald*, 11 May 1918.

[3] *ibid.*, 15, 21 June, 13 July 1918, "Trade Union and Labour Notes."

fit, proper, accurate and right." There would be six platforms and a host of well-known speakers, says the advance notice, but no procession. A very brief report afterwards says that strong internationalist speeches were made; the resolution was carried without any dissentient voice.[1]

A small display ad announced a joint demonstration for peace to be held at Tower Hill at the end of June. It was supported by branches of the BSP, the ILP, and the NCF, plus the WSF, trade unions, the Labour Party and the Christian Peace Crusade. Advertised speakers included Sylvia Pankhurst, W.F. Watson, of the ASE, Lancelot Hogben (Stepney Labour Party) and Theodora Wilson Wilson. The event itself is not reported.[2]

IV

In Pentonville that summer Creech Jones writes that he is continuing to attend extremely good Quaker meetings each month on their basis of silence: "men tell of the little feathers of truth they've picked up on the way & each of us meets the chaplain at least once a month for a private talk." He praises passages from the Quaker Yearly Epistle as a revolution in their social philosophy: "a confession that socialism is the only way." He says the scheme he sent in about the future of the NCF has received wide attention and discussion. He believes it was discussed at a special conference of the Fellowship and asks for a report.

At the same time Jones expresses deep weariness of prison. "Like Maeterlinck's dead we only live in the land of memory." He's been re-reading Morris with rekindled enthusiasm, plus Chaucer, Euripides and Wilkie Collins. "The tendencies of life here lead… to the shadows of morbidness. But the vital figure of Morris, his exuberant full life, his love of earth, of fellowship, of the joys & things of life claim my affection still." He writes later, "The roses were lovely. I grieved you had to take them away;" and ends, "My letters are not half warm or affectionate enough, but you are all dear to me in my mind." [3]

Cousin Violet begins her June missive by saying she is afraid her letters are becoming duller and duller "as the longer you are away the less news there seems to be to give. Shut off as we are from Dulwich there is not a great deal to tell." In fact she finds plenty to say. "I'm afraid if I gave you a detailed account of my life you would think it a round of pleasure with ne'er a thought of you. This really isn't the case and when I am out on my rambles I [think] of times ahead when I shall go over the same ground with you."

The family was now on the edge of the North Downs. She goes on:

> We have made good use of the ordnance map & have found some glorious spots. Last Thursday Flo' & I were out cycling when a fox leisurely walked across our path. This was only 3 miles from home!! The cuckoo in the trees behind annoys us every moment of the day with its two monotonous notes. We are therefore truly rural. Yes. Kid. Tennis

[1] *The Herald*, 21 June ("Herald League") and 6 July 1918 ("Way of the World.")
[2] *ibid.*, 21 June 1918.
[3] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 15 May, 12 and 26 June.

> has begun and the courts are very handy, just 2 mins. walk away. I am having my Racquet restrung. It has cost me 13/6. How dear things are now!

She continues: “A fair amount of Propaganda is being done & people continue to be clapped in gaol. On June 30th there’s to be a Procession & meeting at Tower Hill. Glading’s girl is organising it. We shall go. July 14th is a Hyde Park one.” [1]

And later: “You ask me what I think and read. Beyond getting through the ordinary journals not much other reading is being done.”

> My chief topic of thought just now is how far one’s pacifist principles ought to extend to green fly. As my casualty list from the rose bushes far outnumbers that of Belligerents. I am not making light of this. Just lately all day long we have heard the incessant drone of the guns of Flanders and one almost despairs of a return to sanity.”

And so she rattles on. It’s a chatty letter, intended no doubt to keep her cousin cheerful but expressing too the vivacity of the writer herself. It gives a glimpse of the co-existence between political activism, the summer pleasures of suburban life and the existential slaughter that was taking place just over the horizon.

Alas: dated 6 June, this letter is the last in the archive from Violet to Creech Jones, though there are plenty more from him. So there’s no more news about Dulwich NCF and its anti-war activity or about her.[2]

[1] See previous page and p. 179 below.
[2] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 6 June 1918.

27: In the balance

I

The period mid-June to mid-July was one of relative quiet. It saw the beginning of serious western intervention in Russia. This had begun in March with the landing of a contingent of marines in the northern port of Murmansk. The war cabinet had been concerned that after Brest Litovsk the huge stock of military equipment stored there and at Archangel, as well as at Vladivostok in the east, might fall into Russian hands. There was also a fear that the million or so German and Austrian prisoners of war might be rearmed and brought back into active service; and most menacing of all: that the Germans would now be free to dominate the whole Eurasian land-mass.

In April Japanese and British marines landed briefly in Vladivostok before being withdrawn. In May the force in Murmansk was increased to 600. Lloyd George and his colleagues realised that only the Americans and Japanese had the forces necessary to counter the Germans in Russia. Woodrow Wilson had strongly resisted US involvement there, but on 6 July the allies announced that Vladivostok and the surrounding area were to be put temporarily under their protection. Some 9,000 Japanese troops arrived and roughly the same number of Americans. Within two months the Japanese numbered 70,000. In August a mixed force of 1,500 men landed in Archangel, to be reinforced in September by 4,000 US troops.

Beyond securing the arms depots all these interventions were ineffectual. They fell far short of creating an eastern front against the Germans. They failed to join up with the Czech Legion of former prisoners of war who had control of the trans-Siberian railway and who might - in alliance with other forces in the emerging civil war – have formed the nucleus of anti-Bolshevik movement in Siberia. But they alarmed the Left in Britain and were a gift to soviet propaganda.[1]

II

At home the authorities were excessively exercised – one might think – by regulation 27c of DORA – the one which stipulated that the name and address of printer and publisher be included on literature dealing with peace and war. For war-resisters it was an important point of principle.

[1] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 560-9.

In May Violet Tillard and Lydia Smith of the Fellowship were charged at Bow Street with failing to disclose the name and address of the printer of the March issue of "NCF News." Tillard said that as it was a private – ie. internal – document issued to members of the NCF, neither she nor the printer believed an imprint was necessary. If there was a mistake, the responsibility was hers and she must therefore decline to give the printer's name. The magistrate fined her £100, plus 10 guineas costs. The summons against Smith was dismissed.

Violet Tillard appealed. In July her appeal was dismissed. She declined to pay the fine and was gaoled for 61 days. Before being taken to Holloway she decided she would refuse to obey those prison rules she felt to be immoral and enforced with the object of degrading prisoners. She had had experience of these, she said, when imprisoned ten years previously after a suffrage demonstration.[1]

Equally resolute were the FSC Three, as we might call them today. Harrison Barrow, Edith Ellis and Arthur Watts, were the chairman and two secretaries of the Friends' Service Committee, which had been pursuing its own quiet opposition to conscription and the war. They went on trial at the Guildhall in May charged under regulation 27c with not submitting their leaflet "A Challenge to Militarism" to the censor. The men received six month sentences; Edith Ellis was fined £100, plus £50 costs.

At the appeal hearing in July Harrison Barrow, a member of Birmingham city council, emphasized that the FSC took full responsibility for not submitting the leaflet. They were "guided in their action by the deepest religious conviction and a strong sense of duty towards humanity." The clerk of the Friends' Yearly Meeting gave evidence that the meeting had endorsed that position. Harrison Barrow submitted that, contrary to what the prosecution claimed, there was a privileged class of exemptions to the regulation. He cited the Liberal Publication Department, the Labour Party, Lord Grey. His evidence was disallowed.

Dismissing the appeal, the chairman of the bench, Sir Alfred Newton, said he could "hardly contain his indignation" at the way the defendants had "deliberately flaunted [*sic*] the authorities and gloried in it." Just as the court was adjourning a barrister rose to say he represented a large number of Friends who wished him to state that they were law-abiding subjects of the realm. They did not identify themselves in any way with the views of the appellants.[2]

Edith Ellis refused to pay her fine, surrendered to the police and was taken to Holloway. She had explained in court that the FSC had been specially entrusted by the Society with the duty of making known the facts concerning the conscientious objectors in prison. "We believe this to be our religious duty, and have endeavoured to be faithful to our charge." The *Herald* saluted her untiring ministration to COs, her good counsel and her serene faith in the outcome of the struggle. "Thousands will wish her well." [3]

In June the *Tribunal* published an NCF manifesto. Signed by Alfred Salter, Edward Grubb, treasurer, and E.E. Hunter, the acting hon. sec, it repeated the sentiments of

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[1] *Tribunal* 108, 117 and 120, 16 May, 25 July, 15 August 1918.
[2] *ibid.,* 110 and 115, 30 May and 11 July 1918.
[3] *ibid.,* 116, 18 July 1918; *Herald*, 13 July 1918.

Salter's article of the previous April, (p. 152 above) and in virtually the same words. In particular

> [L]et us not worry about exemptions, absolute or otherwise; let us unflinchingly so what we severally believe to be right, and let us stand courageously and unitedly for International Solidarity against the spirit of hate and strife which are threatening to engulf the whole of Western Humanity in one common desolation and ruin. The greatest service we can render to mankind is to bear uncompromising testimony against war and the spirit of war.[1]

Thus the Fellowship reaffirmed the principle of resistance to war through refusal to serve. It documented the struggle and suffering of the men in prison and stood out bravely for freedom of speech. However, it seems its supporters on the ground were no longer actively campaigning about the war. This is shown, I suggest, in a report in the *Tribunal* on north London's second rally (the first was the previous year). Opening a discussion on the future of the NCF, Francis Meynell said, "We must be prepared, we must think out a complete pacific philosophy of life. It is no use being merely anti-war, we cannot face the future with a negative attitude, but must have a constructive program."

Though he was a member of the national committee, Meynell was not perhaps a central figure in the organisation. Nevertheless: not to be anti-war at the height of the fighting is a revealing statement. The report says further: "The North London NCF branches are still very much alive, to judge by the Rally on June 1. Crowds of purchasers buzzed round the Sale of Work, and Ye Olde Bookstalle did a roaring trade." About £8 was raised for the Maintenance Fund, including 7/3d for 2lb of "that rare commodity known as sugar." There has to be fund-raising, of course, but this sounds much like any other summer fete.[2]

III

The Women's Peace Crusade and the ILP continued to battle on. In June a crusade meeting due to be held in the Bull Ring, in Birmingham, was prohibited by the mayor and chief constable on the ground that steps were being taken to break it up with violence. Other gatherings passed off without disruption, including a service of intercession for peace, held jointly with other women's societies in Stevenson Square, Manchester.[3]

In July the Crusade was reported to have joined the Women's International League in the latter's country-wide campaign for peace by negotiation. This would include a demonstration in Hyde Park on the 14th. Enthusiastic and practical support was being given by many male trade unions and labour bodies. Over 60 organisations had allowed their names to be printed on the handbill endorsing the demonstration.[4]

The number of signatures on the Lansdowne memorial grew rather slowly. Five thousand are reported at the end of June, 8,000 on 11 July, 14,000 on 18 July. On 25

[1] *Tribunal* 111, 6 June 1918.
[2] *ibid.* 112, 20 June 1918.
[3] *Labour Leader,* 13 and 20 June 1918.
[4] *ibid.*, 4 July 1918.

July, with 17,000 signatures gathered in, Mrs Snowden writes that it has been decided to extend the deadline until the end of August, ready for presentation of the memorial in the first week of September.

In July Philip Snowden and the party treasurer, T.D. Benson, appealed to sympathisers who were not members to contribute towards the cost of running 60 to 80 candidates in the general election that was expected before the end of the year. The target was £50,000. It was essential that there should be a strong body of International Socialists inside the parliamentary Labour Party. Potential donors were reminded:

> It is a plain and unexaggerated statement of fact when we say that the ILP during the last four years has borne the brunt of the battle for Peace and Internationalism. The ILP Members of Parliament have waged an unceasing fight against conscription, against the attack on industrial and civil liberty, and has persistently urged the policy of peace by diplomatic effort.[1]

The *Leader* continued over the summer to report new branches: four, including Whitechapel, on 2 May, seven more on 23 May, six, including Basingstoke and Netherton, on 27 June, four more, including Whitley Bay and Kidderminster, on 4 July, then three, among them Redruth, on 11 July. Thereafter only one or two new ones are reported.

In the *Leader* Philip Snowden continued to track the nuances of government statements, the twists and turns of the enemy's diplomacy, and the state of play within the labour movement. The Labour Party conference, he reported in July, was somewhat disappointing. Though meeting at this most critical time, as far as the discussions were concerned there might have been no great war. The Allied socialists had accepted the party's war aims memorandum; so the party seemed to consider it unnecessary to exert any further influence on international diplomacy. The ILP had tried to bring forward a resolution calling for a diplomatic effort to bring the war to an end and for a revision of the secret treaties, but had not succeeded. Snowden consoled himself that in the first election held under the new constitution, the socialists and 'pacifists' had greatly increased their representation on the executive.

Conference was roused by the dramatic appearance of Alexander Kerensky. Delegates were torn between respect for the man's role in the February revolution and dismay at his unmistakeable call for intervention. Introduced by Arthur Henderson, he said Russian working men understood the meaning of the dictatorship - not of the proletariat, but over the proletariat. They had lost all the political rights which the revolution gave them and lived again under the police terrorism of the old regime. The strength of Bolshevism, he said, lay in the disorganisation of the worn-out masses of soldiers. The actual result of its actions was to be the vanguard of triumphing German imperialism.

> Perhaps, abandoned by all, Russia will perish from want of blood, but she will never of her own will submit to the humiliating and shameful treaty of Brest Litovsk. It is for you, the oldest and most mature democracies of the whole world, to settle the question whether it is or is not possible to remain a calm spectator of that unheard of tragedy.

[1] *ibid*.

Loud cheers greeted this peroration. In the same issue Snowden commends the offer of talks by von Kühlmann, the German foreign secretary. The minister had stated that, despite his country's military successes, he did not expect the war to be ended by a military decision.[1] The following week Snowden refers to Lloyd George's "remarkable statement" that if the kaiser and his advisers would accept president Wilson's just reiterated four conditions of peace [2] they could have peace with France, America and Britain tomorrow. The statement was "audaciously inaccurate," writes Snowden, since the German chancellor had accepted the conditions five months earlier.

Two weeks after his speech von Kühlmann was dismissed. Snowden was not discouraged. He took comfort from the assurance of chancellor Hertling that whatever might be the personal views of the new German foreign minister the Reichstag resolution of the previous summer would still remain the policy of the German government.

> But the most sensational and welcome declaration in Count Hertling's speech was his definite statement that Germany has no intention of keeping Belgium in any form whatever … The cause for which, according to Lloyd George, 95 per cent of the people of Great Britain were induced to give their support to the war can now be realised without sacrifice of further blood or treasure.

Snowden goes on to say that the Central Powers realise that both the military and political weapon must be used at the same time in order to bring the war to an end. It's a curious endorsement of the German offensive.

At no time during the war, he claims, have the socialist and Labour parties in Germany, France and Austria been so determined in their demand for peace as during the last few weeks. "Never since the outbreak of war have the circumstances been so favourable as they are today for International Labour making its influence felt." [3]

At the end of July Balfour dismissed the Hertling's statement on Belgium as insincere. "But the sensible way to deal with any offer of peace…" insisted Snowden, "is to take such an offer at its face value and to test its sincerity by further enquiry." [4]

So he argued over the summer as the outcome of the furious conflict swayed in the balance. The Germans were still within striking distance of Paris and the Channel ports. Their new offensive came on 15 July, launched east and west of Reims. It failed to take the city. Within 72 hours came a counter-attack, involving 19 French divisions and four American - their divisions twice as large - supported by 750 tanks, over two thousand guns and more than one thousand aircraft. The Germans conducted a fighting retreat, withdrawing from most of the Marne salient and leaving behind 25,000 prisoners.

Prior to the counter-offensive Ludendorff had travelled north to Mons and given orders for artillery to be moved from Champagne to Flanders, ready for an attack in the Ypres sector. This, he still believed, would deliver the decisive blow. Now he admitted the attack in the north would probably never take place. For the Germans, it was the

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[1] *ibid.*, 4 July 1918.
[2] See above, p. 122.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 18 July 1918.
[4] ibid., 25 July 1918.

beginning of the end.[1] That was by no means obvious at the time of course. Wilson, the CIGS, did not expect the Germans to be defeated until 1919 at the earliest. Milner, the war minister, questioned whether even this was achievable.[2]

The *Leader* also reported battles at home. In Manchester the police authority "yielded to the threat of mob rule, openly invoked by the local yellow press" and prohibited a service of intercession for peace planned for Stevenson Square. Several well-known clergy and the headmaster of the Manchester Grammar School were among those to have taken part. "The character of the patriotic rowdies," adds the *Leade*r, "may be gauged by their after attack upon the Friends' Meeting House, and the disgraceful scenes which followed."

In Edinburgh "an organised band of bullies" broke up a meeting at the Mound called by the Friends and local peace and freedom societies, including the ILP, to protest against the repeated prison sentences being passed on absolutists. In both cases the paper blames members of the Federation of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers.[3]

The Herald reported another punch-up, this time in Woolwich, where a crowd of "many hundreds" had come to hear Ramsay MacDonald speak. The account lacks detail. Most of the couple of hundred disrupters were ex-soldiers. No-one was seriously hurt, though "it is said that men with loaded revolvers were in the crowd." Most of the damage consisted of broken furniture. The paper warns the "silver-badge" men that, if they are workmen, the worst service they can render their class is to take sides against the organised labour movement. "Already the Shop Stewards at Woolwich are declaring that the meeting shall be held, that MacDonald shall make his speech at whatever cost." [4]

In the *Herald* H.N. Brailsford commented on the fall of von Kühlmann:

> [He] fell because he stood for a policy of conciliation with a foe who refuses to be conciliated… The Junkers are quite right. It is useless as yet for any German statesman to talk to our rulers of peace. Our rulers are waiting for the American millions and they have recurred to the policy of the "Knock-out Blow."

Elsewhere the *Herald*, like the *Leader*, grasped at every shred of hope that might offer a way out of the bloodbath. In the same issue "The Way of the World" pointed to a "peace wave" in the form of recent speeches by Lord Wimborne in the House of Lords and Baron Burian, the Austrian foreign minister. Arthur Henderson drew a "new hope for peace" from the replies the inter-Allied socialist memorandum on war aims had drawn from the socialist parties of the Central Powers. "We are endeavouring to reinforce – not to supplant but to supplement – the military effort of the free peoples by political conversation and a distinctive Labour diplomacy." [5]

These insubstantial expectations were joined on the last day of July by another: the third and last conference of the Lansdowne committee, again convened by Francis Hirst, the editor of *Common Sense* and held as before at Essex Hall, in the Strand. The platform

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[1] John Grigg ,*War leader*, pp. 521-51.
[2] *ibid*., p. 551.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 25 July 1918.
[4] *The Herald*, 13 July 1918.
[5] *The Herald*, 20 July 1918. Lord Wimborne had recently retired as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

included Lord Parmoor, Dean Inge, of St. Paul's, Snowden, and Ramsay MacDonald. Lansdowne did not attend but sent a letter, warning again that

> The civilized world is being drained of its resources, and is spending its energies in purely destructive efforts… The tide of carnage and destruction continues to flow and carries all before it.[1]

For this "ludicrous letter" he was comprehensively attacked in the *CP Times* as "Lord Letusdown". "Town Topics" called him a relic of the Victorian era with all its Germanic traditions, a has-been, an exploiter of his Irish tenantry. Moreover, did he submit his latest letter to the Press Bureau before publication, or was he not amenable to DORA, unlike "we poor unfortunate scribes?" He should be made to read out, at least once a day, a long list of German infamies, beginning,

> Germany is the only country in the world that murders the wounded, bombs hospitals, sinks hospital ships and shoots Red Cross workers. It is the only country in the world that poisons wells and spreads disease germs. It is the only country that murders babes and strikes medals to commemorate the event.[2] [And so on]

Despite Snowden's optimism about the influence on the war of international labour, there are indications that in this country the pressure may have been diminishing. The Lansdowne memorial seems to have been something of a cul-de-sac for the Women's Peace Crusade, a laborious distraction from more effective forms of campaigning. Within the ILP the expansion of branches had slowed somewhat compared with the previous year. A clearer sign perhaps of this loss of impetus is the result of the appeal to sympathisers for contributions to fight the general election. In July Snowden had set a target of £50,000. In mid-August the paper reported a "very encouraging" response of just £2,185.[3]

IV

The Amalgamated Society of Leatherworkers voted unanimously that summer to refuse to work with any Germans in future and called on employers to help them carry out this boycott. The resolution was motivated by the "outrageous atrocities" committed by the Germans during the war, "culminating in the murderous attack on a British hospital in France, when hundreds of helpless soldiers and nurses were killed and injured." [4]

It's rather surprising that Germans were still employed in the trade. But evidently some were still at large. In July Bermondsey Council debated a resolution put forward at a conference of metropolitan borough councils that all enemy aliens over the age of 18 should be interned for the duration of the war whether naturalised or not. There was some resistance. Cllr. Hansom said there were many naturalised British subjects of enemy alien origin who had three or four sons fighting for the country. Cllr. Bustin enquired whether the conference realised it was asking for the internment of Lord Milner

[1] Simon Kerry, ch. 40.
[2] *CPT*, 14 August 1918.
[3] *Labour Leader,* 15 August 1918.
[4] *SLP*, 5 June 1918.

- not an alien in fact, though born in Germany. However the motion was carried, it's not clear by what margin.[1]

In the East End the internment agitation was accompanied by what the *Herald* called "terrorism" against Jews and foreigners: men insulted in the street by having their beards pulled, shopkeepers forced to submit to nothing less than organised blackmail; and in Hyde Park a Jewish soldier, "British born, wounded and gassed fighting for Britain" assaulted because he made an approving remark about Mr Asquith.[2]

The council resolutions echoed a wider hysteria, promoted by the sensationalist MP Noel Pemberton Billing. He not only demanded that all aliens, whether naturalised or not, should wear "distinguishing badges" in their button-holes. He proclaimed that the Germans held a "Black Book" of 47,000 leading British figures - including Asquith and Haldane - which recorded their moral and sexual weaknesses and so exposed them to German pressure. He made the fantastical accusation during a libel action in May brought by the dancer Maud Allan and her impresario over an article Billing had written about her performance as Oscar Wilde's *Salome.* Jerry White has the lurid details. Billing won his case, despite assuring the trial judge that he too was in the black book. [3]

Giant "intern 'em all" meetings followed each other across July, culminating in the presentation in August of an enormous petition. Supposedly two miles long and bearing 1,250,000 signatures, this was carried by lorry, rolled up like a big drum, from Hyde Park to Downing Street. It called on the administration to intern all enemy aliens "without distinction of any kind" and to take drastic steps to eradicate all German influence in government and society.

Behind marched a procession with bands and banners almost as long as the petition and "of so diversified a composition," wrote MacDonagh, "as to be possible only in London in War-time:" namely discharged soldiers and sailors, dominion servicemen on leave, branches of the British Empire Union, trade unions, and deputations from the committees of public safety. The latter, according to the *Times* man, had been formed throughout the country for the purpose of hunting down German spies. Bringing up the rear: a large contingent of the general public, both men and women, and including many representatives of the City – "an impressive array of silk hats and frock coats." [4]

The government in response had already set up a committee under Mr Justice Sankey to scrutinise the lists of enemy aliens still exempted from internment, and to review all certificates of naturalisation granted since the war. Every foreigner, said Cave the home secretary, whether friendly or neutral, would be provided with an identity-book, to be shown whenever challenged. The proposals were voted unanimously. The principled contrarian Josiah Wedgwood was the only MP to speak against. He called the treatment of these poor people "a blot against Great Britain." [5]

In Southwark, nevertheless, a town meeting held in Newington Public Hall endorsed a resolution demanding immediate internment, the cancellation of all certificates of

[1] *SBR*, 5 July 1918.
[2] *The Herald*, 27 July 1918.
[3] Jerry White, pp. 258-9.
[4] Jerry White, pp. 89-90; Michael MacDonagh, pp. 309-10.
[5] Jerry White, pp. 90-1; Michael MacDonagh, pp. 308.

naturalisation and the removal of enemy aliens from every government and public office. It also urged an indefinite ban on any future naturalisation of alien enemies.

The numbers present are not given, but the passion of speakers and the enthusiasm of the audience are evident from a lengthy press report; headline “The Alien Menace.” The mayor of Southwark, Cllr Fred Bird, presided. He said that enemy victories in the past had been “obtained by treachery under the spy system.” It was not merely a matter of chance that Lord Kitchener had lost his life. (Hear, hear). It was not merely a matter of chance that Russia had caved in, nor that many things had happened which had helped the enemy in past days. (Hear, hear)

Moving the resolution, Cllr Hewitt said, to loud applause, “We have allowed these people to remain too long. We must see they are put in the cage and kept there.” [1]

In a similar spirit Dr F.B. Meyer, Baptist minister at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, is reported explaining why the National Free Church Council, of which he was secretary, would not be attending a proposed international conference in Uppsala “for bearing witness to spiritual unity among Christians.” Meyer, it will be remembered, had been a serviceable emissary for Catherine Marshall and had written *The Majesty of Conscience* supporting the release of imprisoned absolutists.

Now he said the time was not ripe for such a gathering. “It would be impossible for me at least to pray with German or Austrian professing Christians, unless they were prepared to acknowledge that their churches reprobated the outrages which have staggered humanity.” [2]

It’s surprising perhaps the Germans were not blamed for the flu epidemic which hit south London a month earlier. The *SLP* noted the singular fact that the death of Lord Rhondda, “the queue breaker,” coincided with the formation of queues outside chemists’ shops and even doctors’ surgeries. Fortunately, it claimed, the disease was of a mild type, “a fact, however, that induces many victims to neglect early treatment, with the result that serious consequences follow.” The remedy: a frequent nasal douche of salt and water, and a small daily dose of quinine as a preventative, “and without hesitation, bed and the doctor as a cure.” In all 697 Londoners died. This was the first of three outbreaks. It returned in a much more virulent form in the autumn.[3]

An advert for Aeroplane Week shows a biplane dropping war bonds and war savings certificates. The message is “Send the Huns/a Bomb/from SOUTHWARK: the Huns will feel the power of <u>your</u> money when the Aeroplane ‘Southwark’ comes swooping down to spray their massed ranks with death from its machine-gun; or when the drone of its engines and the crash of its bombs resound through the cities beyond the Rhine.” [4]

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[1] *SLP*, 16 August 1918.
[2] *ibid.*, 9 August 1918.
[3] *SLP*, 5 July 1918; Jerry White, p. 265. In fact the paper had raised a brief alarm about a “new disease from Germany,” namely botulism, which caused a number of London deaths earlier in the year. The term, it explained, derived from the Latin word for sausage and, “singularly enough, it had its origin in that land of many deadly horrors – Germany.” The best way to avoid it was to cook all tinned meat and fish. *SLP*, 26 April and 3 May 1918.
[4] *SLP*, 19 July 1918.

In August able-seaman Albert McKenzie was welcomed back to his home in Shorncliffe Road, off the Old Kent Road – now close to Burgess Park - from an investiture in Buckingham Palace. His picture in the paper, he had been awarded the Victoria Cross, "by the unanimous vote of his comrades," for the bravery he displayed with the storming party at Zeebrugge.[1]

Treats for the wounded continued. Rotherhithe Hippodrome advertised gala matinees: proceeds to be devoted to the mayor of Bermondsey's entertainment fund. The mayor of Southwark announced a garden party for 600 wounded soldiers and sailors, to be held in the grounds of the county secondary school, Southwark Park Road. This would bring to a thousand the total number of men entertained to date. [2]

Good news on the home front was contained in a display ad by David Greig, of Denmark Hill and Lordship Lane that announced "NO MORE BACON COUPONS." It explained: "Thanks to Mr Hoover, the American people, the Navy and the Mercantile Marine, the British Ministry of Food is in such a good position in regard to Bacon and Ham that from to-day you can buy

AS MUCH BACON OR HAM AS YOU PLEASE WITHOUT COUPONS [3]

V

On the fourth anniversary of the war a service of intercession took place in Southwark Park. "The Mayor and Corporation of Bermondsey attended in state," says a brief report, "accompanied by the Bermondsey Volunteers and others." Southwark Council held a drumhead service in Kennington Park.[4]

On Peckham Rye, after a procession from Camberwell town hall led by a Salvation Army band, some 20,000 people assembled round the bandstand in an act of prayer: "for victory and peace and of self-dedication to God's will and the good of their country." Over 50 places of worship sent contingents. They sang "O God, our help in ages past," and recited the Lord's Prayer. The ceremony concluded with the Last Post, sounded by boy scouts, and the national anthem.[5]

In Pentonville Arthur Creech Jones marked the anniversary by letting his indignation rip, not against the patriots and masters of war but against the general population. "I am not a sentimentalist," he wrote to his family,

> but it distresses me that men & women show not the faintest glimmer of imagination, sit idle & pursue their ordinary habits & course of life while the agony & criminal outrage is protracted. The public of old men, club loungers, politicians, profiteers, workers supplying war needs & alas millions of women seems to show a callous apathy, a narrow self-seeking, an engrossing pettiness & a complacency that knows no sense of responsibility or shame." [6]

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[1] *ibid.*, 2 August 1918. On the anniversary of the raid a hundred years later a memorial to AB McKenzie was unveiled, not on the Old Kent Road but at the junction of Tower Bridge Road and Bermondsey Street.
[2] *SBR*, 19 July and 23 August 1918.
[3] *SLP* 2 August, *CPT*, 7 August 1918.
[4] *SBR*, 9 August 1918; *SLP*, 9 August 1918.
[5] *CPT*, 24 July and 7 August 1918.
[6] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 7 August 1918.

28: Breakthrough

I

The tide turned on 8 August, when the Allies launched the battle of Amiens, an assault along a 13-mile section of front to the east of the city. At 60 divisions, with Canadians and Australians in the vanguard, the army was the biggest the British Empire had ever put into the field. Four hundred and fifty tanks and 800 aircraft took part, in support of 2,000 guns.

The Germans were driven back seven miles on the first day. With many tanks out of action progress then slowed. Nevertheless at the end of five weeks, over ravaged terrain, three of the British armies had advanced some 14 miles to reach the Hindenburg line, now greatly reinforced since the Germans' tactical withdrawal in the spring of 1917. This was Haig's hour, writes Grigg – the commander for whom the war cabinet at the start of the year had been trying to find a replacement.

At home parliament adjourned in early August until the middle of October. Messrs Anderson, Ponsonby and Lambert contributed to the adjournment debate with speeches from an anti-war perspective. Balfour in reply said the true obstacle to any legitimate peace was German militarism. "We have an opportunity of knowing exactly what it is that the German Government wish to do, and what the German people are ready to approve, because we can see them at work" – in Belgium, on her eastern frontier, in Romania. In summary: "German soldiers, wherever they have been, have produced a desert, and left a desert." [1]

There had, wrote Snowden, been no reference to the Allied invasion of Russia. That "indefensible and outrageous proceeding" was condemned by the ILP's national council as precisely analogous to the German invasion of Belgium.[2]

In September Snowden praised Henderson's speech to the Labour Party in Birmingham as more outspoken than any of his previous public utterances in advocating a reasonable war policy. It is the only policy on which the party can fight the election, he says. "If it puts forward the ideal of a democratic peace arrived at by the agreement of the democracies, the Labour Party may not sweep the country, but it will have saved its soul and established itself on principles which must eventually triumph." [3]

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[1] *Hansard*, 8 August 1918, cols. 1627-33.
[2] *Labour Leader*, 15 August 1918; *The Herald*, 10 August 1918.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 5 September 1918.

A little later the TUC conference held in Derby passed a compromise resolution on war and peace. It pledged, on the one hand, to continue to try and bring together an international conference of socialist and Labour parties from belligerent and neutral countries to discuss war aims. On the other hand it declared that peace negotiations should be entered on only when the enemy had evacuated the territories it occupied in the west. "That," wrote Snowden, "is either a meaningless or an impossible condition. That is a condition of a settlement, not a preliminary to negotiations." [1]

At this juncture Austria put out a proposal for a confidential and non-binding conference to try and find a common basis for peace. Robert Williams in the *Herald* and Snowden in *Labour Leader* both seized on the idea. Ethel Snowden urged every women's crusade – now numbering 123 - to meet at once and pass a resolution calling on the government to give it favourable consideration.[2]

The middle of September saw the first big all-American operation, when Pershing's men eliminated the Saint-Mihiel salient, south of Verdun. They then joined with the French armies under Foch to attack north-west towards the Meuse and the Argonne. Thanks to their style of "open warfare" – gung-ho attacks with rifle and bayonet – the inexperienced Americans suffered huge losses: 26,000 dead in little more than a month - a carnage far worse than in the civil war battles of Shiloh, Antietam, Gettysburg and Cold Harbor put together. Fortunately for Pershing, adds Reynolds, the death toll never sank in at home.

Haig's forces meanwhile took Cambrai, in the centre of the front. Offensive operations by the British and the Belgians unfurled all the way north to the Channel. At the end of September two symbolic landmarks, to quote Grigg again – the Messines ridge and the Passchendaele ridge - changed hands for the last time. Soon the Germans had abandoned the whole of the Belgian coast and much of French Flanders.[3]

So the war accelerated towards its end, taking almost everyone by surprise. The headlines in the *South London Press* mark its breathless progress.

- 16 August: TRIUMPH OF GREAT BRITISH/PUSH
- 23 August: STAGGERING BLOWS AT THE/HUNS
- 13 September: HUNS' GREAT RETREAT
- 27 September: TURKS & BULGARS ROUTED

British, Anzac and Indian troops under General Allenby occupied Syria. Turkey signed an armistice. Anglo-French forces advanced from Salonika, drove the Bulgarians out of Greece and Serbia, and occupied Bulgaria too. On the Italian front the Austrians began to give ground.

- 4 October: HUNS' FRONT SHATTERED/ Hindenburg
  Line Broken After Terrific/Fighting

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 12 September 1918.

[2] *ibid.,* 19 September 1918; *The Herald*, 21 September 1918; 123 crusades: *Leader*, 12 September 1918.

[3] John Grigg, *War Leader*, pp. 556-60, 597-602; David Reynolds, pp. 35, 108, 270.

After the triumphant headlines came the familiar “Roll of Honour,” a page of short individual reports, many with portraits, most recording a life-changing bereavement. On 13 September the headings read: “How DCM’s Were Won, “Killed Saving Others,” “Lieut. Clegg Killed by a Stray Shell, “Camberwell Lieutenant Falls” - plus “3,000 South Metropolitan Gas Men Still Serving.”

Alongside on the right: the list of south London dead and wounded, which that particular week ran to a broadsheet column and a third. The numbers increased steadily over the following weeks to over two columns on 20 September, almost three columns on 4 October, over three columns on 18 October, two and two-thirds of a column on 25 October.

That autumn, it should be recorded, saw a surge of industrial militancy. In London a strike for equal pay by conductresses on the trams and buses was followed by an unofficial walk-out by women Underground workers. Firemen, railwaymen and, most spectacularly, metropolitan policemen also went on strike.[1] The police strike, swiftly brought to an end by a pay increase, a war bonus and other benefits, lasted only two days, from Friday morning to Saturday evening. Locally all but one of the constables attached to Tower Bridge police station joined in, there were no street patrols in the division on the Friday; and seventy burglaries were reported.[2]

In September Mr Justice Sankey, head of the advisory committee appointed to scrutinise the bona fides of non-interned aliens, reported back. In none of the several hundred cases investigated had any complaint been made by the military, the police or the public. His committee recommended that all should continue to be exempted.[3]

Southwark Council nevertheless endorsed a resolution adopted by a conference of London mayors that no person of alien birth, whether naturalised or not, should be allowed to vote in parliamentary or local government elections. The government should legislate to remove such persons from the electoral registers. They should be prevented from becoming MPs or holding any other public office.

Dissenting, Cllr Moreton asked what would be the treatment of a naturalised alien whose five sons had joined up, four of whom had been either killed or wounded. “Would they say that man should have no voice in the voting power of this country?[4]”

Even at this stage in the war further Gun Days are announced, the boroughs to be visited by a captured German gun, christened Haig, in a “mute appeal” for war bonds and certificates. In Southwark it was stationed in Wansey Street, Walworth, next to the town hall, and raised £161,800. In Camberwell it stood at the foot of Vestry Street, facing the town hall. It was joined there by a damaged plane “sent by some Americans,” which was positioned against a picture of a shattered French village. The band of the Licensed Victuallers’ School played at intervals. Here, with these extra attractions, “Haig” raised £236,765.[5]

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[1] *The Herald*, 14 September and *passim*; Jerry White, pp. 259-61.
[2] *SLP*, 6 September 1918.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 19 September 1918.
[4] *SBR*, 4 October 1918.
[5] *SLP*, 4 and 11 October 1918.

Influenza now returned for its most deadly visitation. In the period from mid-October to Christmas it killed over a thousand Londoners a week, 11,471 in all. On this occasion, the *SLP* reported, it appeared principally in a gastric form, "with the usual accompaniments of sneezing and nasal discharge." The paper noted the extent to which the young (up to 25 or so) were falling victim. It quoted Sir Arthur Newsholme, medical officer to the local government board, as to the most effective way of preventing the spread of the disease, which was isolation of the infected. "[E]very patient who has a severe cold or fever should go to bed and stay there for three or four days."

There was no medical remedy. Sir Arthur recommended that victims gargle with a weak solution of permanganate of potash dissolved in salt water, the solution sniffed up through the nostrils and spat out through the mouth. General measures of prevention, apart from isolation of the infected were: a liberal amount of food, fresh air and exercise, flannel and warm clothing, and the avoidance of crowded places and conveyances.[1]

One of the most notable victims of the flu - aggravated by septic pneumonia - was Albert McKenzie VC, the local hero of Zeebrugge. He died in Chatham just as the war was ending. His funeral – at St. Mark's, Cobourg Road, Camberwell – is reported at length. He was just 20.[2]

II

On 29 September Ludendorff, supreme commander of the military and, with Hindenburg, Germany's de facto ruler, told an astonished kaiser and chancellor that Germany must seek a cease-fire. At the same time he insisted they make the government more democratic by bringing in representatives of the main political parties. Hertling resigned in protest and was replaced as chancellor by prince Max von Baden, a noted moderate. He wanted the army to hold out for at least another month but Ludendorff insisted on an immediate armistice.

So it was the kaiser who granted by decree what the democratic parties had long demanded: proper representative government with an executive responsible to parliament. On 3 October Hindenburg broke the good and bad news to a shocked Reichstag.[3]

Ludendorff was not thinking of unconditional surrender. He wanted to save his armies and hoped an armistice would allow them to withdraw to their own borders. He handed power to the civilians so they could, in his words, "ladle out the soup" for him – ie. take the blame.[4]

On 3 October the new government telegraphed Woodrow Wilson to request an armistice and accepting his Fourteen Points as the basis for peace negotiations. The headline in the *South London Press* of 11 October was

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[1] The flu returned in a third but less destructive attack in February and March 1919. Jerry White, p. 265; *SLP*, 25 October and 1 November 1918.
[2] *SLP*, 8 and 15 November 1918.
[3] Golo Mann, pp. 541-2; Margaret MacMillan, in John Grigg, *War Leader*, p. 621.
[4] A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World* War, p. 182; James Hawes, *The Shortest History of Germany*, p. 144.

BROKEN AND BEATEN: HUNS WHINE FOR PEACE

"So began a very public series of negotiations," writes Margaret MacMillan - conducted, as Alan Taylor puts it, "in a hugger-mugger of haste and confusion" as the Allies continued to advance in the west. The Germans kept up a fierce resistance in places, but elsewhere were surrendering en masse.[1]

It is not necessary to follow the exchanges in detail, except to note that they were complicated by suspicions and differences on the Allied side between Woodrow Wilson and the Europeans. They feared he might agree to an armistice unilaterally and they were by no means happy with the Fourteen Points. The British balked at point 2, which proclaimed "absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas." A second German note on 11 October accepted Wilson's points without reservation, but asked whether the European allies did so too.[2]

The *CP Times* over this period was the only local paper to carry leaders and editorial matter. Its opinions on these events were forthright and maximalist. In September it warned against the Austrian peace initiative. "To patch up a peace now would only be to give the War Lords of Potsdam an opportunity of preparing for another war in the near future... The Allies must fight on until Germany has been taught that in these days right must always triumph over might…

> Much as we shall deplore the further loss of life which must inevitably result from the continuance of the war, we feel that it is only by the further sacrifice of our sons, our brothers, our fathers that the world can be freed for ever from the menace of militarism.[3]

In October, under the heading "Retribution," the paper wrote

> The future is hidden from us. But this we know – that Germany's crimes can only be atoned for when the allies have so completely destroyed the military power of our enemies that they will be compelled not only to make full reparation, so far as that is possible for their wrong doing, but to give that guarantees that never again shall the hellish dogs of war be let loose upon the world.

It went on hopefully: "War is a relic of barbarism; surely in these days of enlightenment we can find some better way of settling international disputes than recourse to sword, shot and shell." [4]

Two weeks later the heading is "Beaten":

> Never in the long and glorious history of the British Empire has there been such a succession of victories as those we have won during the past month or so… As a preliminary to an armistice we must insist that Germany should put her neck under the heel of the conqueror… [W]e have to remodel the map and to take such steps as are possible to prevent another outbreak of war.

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[1] A.J.P. Taylor, *English History*, p. 112; Philip Gibbs, pp. 503-4.
[2] Margaret MacMillan, pp. 621-6.
[3] *CPT*, 21 September 1918.
[4] *ibid.*, 2 October 1918.

Alongside, in his “Town Topics” column Meteor urged that the kaiser be brought to the bar of justice to answer for his unspeakable crimes,” adding, “It is up to the trade unionists to-day to say whether they will suppress the defeatists or whether they will believe the sloppy thinkers who mistake the whine of the beaten German bully for the genuine repentance of the world’s most criminal nation.[1] This, presumably, is intended as a riposte to the efforts of the *Herald* and *Labour Leader* to secure a settlement based on the Fourteen Points.

It was in anticipation of such a settlement that Camberwell celebrated peace ahead of the rest of the country. “The news that Germany had accepted President Wilson’s conditions gave cause for some excitement on Saturday night and Sunday,” says a brief report in mid-October. “The Mayor of Camberwell (Ald.H.J. Rayment, JP) held a demonstration on the steps of the Town Hall on Sunday at 3 o’clock when a band played many popular sacred tunes.”

“Town Topics”, commented sourly that a gathering of burgesses should be held on the same historic spot for the purpose of offering up a prayer because we did *not* accept the Hun’s acceptance of the terms - “which was obviously intended as an artful trap for the Allies. The people who cheered the good news - for it is good news, though not so good as it soon will be – will be well advised to wait calmly like sensible Britishers for the end of the war to be announced by the victor, not the conquered.” [2]

III

It was at this fault line of disagreement between the Allies that the anti-war forces attempted to intervene and apply pressure. The *Leader*’s editorial page carried the heading “Out with the Peace Banners!” and asserted, “The notion zealously fomented by the war press that Germany’s object in suing for peace is but a cunning and cynical device to withdraw her retreating armies in safety within her own borders is wholly discredited… Meanwhile an overwhelming duty and responsibility rests with the Socialist and Labour movement in our own and all the allied countries to take immediate action for peace.”

The *Herald*’s “Way of the World” column urged every trade union branch, every local Labour Party and trades council – “that values the life and limbs of our boys at the front” – to immediately pass and forward to Lloyd George a resolution demanding that the British Government unequivocally declare its adherence to the Fourteen Points, and to the terms of the inter-allied labour memorandum. “Go to it Labour! The soldiers’ lives depend on it.” [3]

The following Saturday, 26 October, the *Herald* issued an appeal for meetings to be held over the weekend. Their demand should be a peace based on disarmament, a League of Nations, universal free trade, self-determination for all nations and the abolition of secret diplomacy. “We know that a just and honourable peace is obtainable *now,* that

[1] *ibid.*, 16 October 1918.
[2] ibid., 16 and 30 October 1918.
[3] *Labour Leader* 17 October; *The Herald*, 19 October 1918.

the maiming and slaughter can stop if only the Voice of Reason can be heard." It does not seem many such meetings took place; at least none are reported.

Branches of the Herald League continued through October and early November with much the usual activities. The northern division welcomed John Arnall on his return from prison with appreciative speeches, announced the opening of a socialist Sunday school; also a lantern lecture on "Wonders of the Heavens." The central London branch offered a debate on "Internationalism versus Irish Nationalism." Stepney gave notice of two lectures by Kwaja Kamal ud Din on socialism and universalism in Islam.

Outdoor meetings were admittedly also announced for Sunday 3 November: two in Stepney - one with an array of speakers including Robert Williams, Hogben and (surprising name) Mrs Fawcett, and two in Finsbury Park. These could well have taken up the *Herald*'s demand, though the matters addressed are not reported.[1]

The ILP's branches too were mostly focused on topics other than the immediate issue of the Fourteen Points. Branch reports on 17 October include Lansbury speaking in Bolton on "Labour and Internationalism" and Brailsford delivering an address in Leicester: subject not specified but presumably about the impending peace. However these themes are heavily outnumbered by other matters, such as "British Prussianism" in Aberdeen, "Socialism and the Ethics of Christianity" in Grimsby, and in Kilmarnock "Capitalism, Militarism and the White Slave Trade." It's a similar picture in the listings for coming branch meetings.[2]

That said, the Women's Peace Campaign kept its focus on the war. Ethel Snowden told members the greatest need at the moment was propaganda in support of the Fourteen Points. She urged members to organise as many public meetings as possible, to arrange small meetings or social gatherings for women in particular, and to make house to house visits with their latest leaflet. "It is especially valuable just now, for it not only pleads against 'Military Training in Schools' and the whole Prussian conception of safety through militarism, but supports 'A League of Nations.'"

With remarkable tenacity Mrs Snowden wouldn't let go of the Lansdowne memorial. The deadline having again been extended, she wrote that they now had over 40,000 signatures in hand, but that many forms had not been returned. "I want this work to continue until peace is absolutely secured… Lord Lansdowne may be needed yet." [3]

In this connection it's interesting to note his lordship's response to the union militancy of that autumn. According to *The Herald* he expressed the view that in essential services anyone dissatisfied with his (*sic*) conditions should not be permitted to leave the job without ample notice, on pain of being "held guilty" for a criminal offence. Moreover, why not take away the pensions of all men who strike? [4]

In the same issue the *Leader* reported the "unbounded enthusiasm, the almost ecstatic welcome" given to the Snowdens at a week-long series of packed meetings in Philip's

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[1] *The Herald*, 5, 11, 26 October, 2 November 1918. There's nothing in George Belt's report of 9 November, which is mainly about the Herald League reunion in Holborn Hall.
[2] *The Herald*, 17 October 1918. Again one must enter a caveat in that some listings give only the name of the speaker, not the topic.
[3] *Labour Leader*, 24 October 1918.
[4] *The Herald*, 9 November 1918 ("Trade Union and Labour Notes").

Blackburn constituency. At these he contrasted the wholly beneficent results of a peace of justice won on Woodrow Wilson's terms with the evil results of a dictated peace won by the knock-out blow. What would be the cost of the latter, he asked? "We might get to Berlin, [but] after having sacrificed at least another million of our men - our husbands, brothers and sons." Ramsay MacDonald too is reported to have been given a magnificent reception in Leicester's Corn Exchange. He maintained that the president's policy was substantially the same as that which the ILP had been pressing on the Allied governments since May 1915. [1]

The Herald hoped the collective strength of its campaign would be demonstrated via a rally in the Albert Hall, to be held on Sunday 3 November. It was called by the London council of the National Union of Railwaymen. Its secretary, said the paper, hoped it would be representative of all those who desired a real "People's Peace." [2]

The mass meeting was reported a tremendous success, the hall packed long before the advertised starting time. In many ways it was a repeat of the famous gathering of March 1917 that welcomed in the Russian revolution. The organ recital that filled the gap before the speeches was interspersed with songs by the audience – "The Red Flag," of course, "England Arise," "Lift Up the People's Banner." Madame Ada Crossley alternated verses with the audience in singing "Give to Us Peace in Our Time, O Lord," and William Morris's "The March of the Workers." The audience cheered the International and the Russian revolution.

The *Herald* report, running over four pages, gave pride of place to J.H.Thomas, the rail union's general secretary. He said there was never a time in the history of the country, and certainly in the past four years, when it was so urgent for organised Labour to express itself. It was entitled to do that not only because of our number but because our country had contributed more to the cause of the Allies than any other country in the world – "and, I believe, to-day is equally prepared to make any sacrifice that will ensure not only a clean, but – what is more important – a lasting peace:

> not a peace dictated by the war map, not a peace that buys off one nation at the expense of the another, not a peace determined in the passionate spirit of war, but in the calmer sphere of reason and justice.

He believed they had such a peace in President Wilson's terms. (Cheers) Millions of the bravest and best had made the greatest of all sacrifices because they believed that militarism was something that ought to be crushed. ""When I talk of militarism, I do not mean the crushing of German militarism and the substitution of English militarism. (Cheers) I mean the stamping out of militarism everywhere."

He wanted to see brought to justice those responsible for crimes on land or sea and reparation made for the loss of what all people had suffered. "But don't let us in our anxiety, yea, and in our passion, clutch at the shadow and miss the substance." He pointed to the negative precedent of Germany's vindictive peace of 1871 and the better precedent of Britain's accommodation with the defeated Boers.

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[1] *Labour Leader*, 24 October 1918.
[2] *The Herald*, 2 November 1918.

Thomas's sentiments were embodied in a resolution that demanded an effective voice for organised labour in the peace negotiations. It also demanded the repeal of conscription and the restoration of civil liberties. Other speakers included Ramsay MacDonald and Robert Williams, of the Transport Workers' Federation. Willams launched into an extravagant oration that ended, "God-speed the day when there will be a notice 'to let' outside Buckingham Palace. Long live the Socialist Republic!"

George Lansbury, who spoke next, delivered a powerful rebuke, telling the audience cheering these revolutionary sentiments, "I wish to goodness you would get on with the job! - You do not make revolutions by shouting in the Albert Hall… You do not, it seems to me, help forward the work we have got in hand unless you are going, in your Trade Unions, to go to your branch meetings and attend them every time they are held; there you have to got to lay the foundations of whatever Soviet Government or whatever Government you want; until you do that you are only beating the air."

He went on, defining the immediate job in hand:

> In France, in Russia, Austria, everywhere where there is fighting, there are your brothers, your relatives, friends, and at this moment, much as I want that the class war should be fought right out, *the first thing is to stop this war that is going on*, and the way to stop that war is to say that we who belong to the organised Labour movement are by resolution, and by every means in our power, going to let the government understand that we will not carry on the war merely for exploitation, revenge, or any of those kinds of things.[1]

IV

The No-Conscription Fellowship was far less engaged with these world-shaping events. Reading the *Tribunal* one would hardly be aware that the tide of war had turned so decisively. For two weeks running the journal carried an appeal from the Fellowship of Reconciliation. This called - "In Christ's Name!"- for a positive allied response to the Austrian note of September proposing an unofficial discussion between belligerents.[2]

At the end of October it proclaimed "No Conscription:" saying "We must work unceasingly for the abolition of this menace to freedom." Under the obscure heading "To Your Tents, O Israel!" it urged: "We anti-conscriptionists must strain every nerve in the next few days to make vocal the demand for peace. Every day of the war means a strengthening of the hands of the militarists." The exhortation, presumably, was directed at the Fellowship's branches.[3]

At the same time the *Tribunal* kept up its spirited fight for freedom of the press. In late summer Miss Beauchamp was summoned to appear at Bow Street, charged that the newsletter's imprint naming her as the printer was illegal, since she was in not in fact the printer. A long article headed "Joan Beauchamp – Printer" began: "Since its first appearance on March 8, 1916, every possible method, legal and illegal, has been

[1] *The Herald*, 9 November 1918.
[2] *Tribunal* 126 and 127, 26 September and 3 October 1918.
[3] *Tribunal* 130 and 131, 24 and 31 October 1918.

employed by the authorities to prevent its coming out." It went on to detail these interventions - with the refrain "And the 'Tribunal' still came out."

On taking over from Samuel Street she had "omitted" to move her press to the publishing offices of the *Tribunal*. "Scotland Yard is feeling very sore about this, and is still more hurt because Miss Beauchamp resolutely refuses to disclose the location of her printing works. Her attitude… is this:

> I have a valuable printing press, and in view of the destructive propensities of this freedom-loving Government, I think at advisable not to say where that press is situated. I am the printer of the "Tribunal;" if I break the law, prosecute me; you have my imprint and know where I am to be found.[1]

It still came out, but with a greatly reduced circulation: just 2,000 compared with 6,000 previously and 100,000 in its heyday.[2] The magistrate decided there had been a deliberate attempt to suppress the name of the printer and imposed a fine of £200, plus 25gns costs. Miss Beauchamp appealed. At Clerkenwell Sessions her counsel argued ingeniously that under the Act penalties could be imposed on the publisher only in respect of each copy of the publication "printed by him". Since the court had held that Miss Beauchamp was not the printer, no penalty could be imposed on her. "There as much amusement in court when this anomaly was pointed out," says the report. Sir Archibald Bodkin, prosecuting, pleaded that this made the Act into a nonsense, but the judge was forced reluctantly to allow the appeal.[3]

Between these hearings two other principled women were discharged from prison. One, Edith Ellis, of the Friends' Service Committee, was released after three months in a poor state of health, having spent some time in the prison hospital. The other, Violet Tillard, was given nine days' remission off her sentence of 61 days, this even though she had work-struck and held to her resolve of not obeying any rules she regarded as degrading. "She looked well and had many interesting experiences to relate." [4]

Bodkin went on to lodge an appeal himself in Joan Beauchamp's case, but by then the war was over. The case was concluded only in January 1920. She was sentenced to 21 days in the first division, but released after eight. Her press was never discovered.[5]

The main focus of the Fellowship continued to be on the plight of the absolutists and on efforts to secure their release. A few COs were released: the *Tribunal* lists their names. It reprinted another letter from Bernard Shaw to the *Manchester Guardian*. In it he says the repeat punishment of the absolutists amounts to perpetual hard labour. Three hundred and fifty thousand copies of the Quakers' "Appeal to the Conscience of the Nation," issued in May on behalf of COs, are reported to have been circulated, eliciting nearly 1,000 sympathetic replies.[6]

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[1] *Tribunal* 122, 29 August 1918.
[2] John Graham, p. 203.
[3] *Tribunal* 122 and 129, 29 August and 17 October 1918. Graham (p. 202) says Beauchamp refused to divulge the name of the *editor* but this is not the term used in *The Tribunal*.
[4] *Tribunal* 127, 3 October 1918.
[5] David Boulton, p. 272.
[6] *Tribunal* 121 and 125, 22 August and 19 September 1918.

The *Tribunal* made much that autumn of the resistance by absolutists to the regime at a new work centre in Wakefield prison. The food was much better, the men ate together, they had a canteen and pocket money and after work they had freedom of movement within the prison until lights out. Men who had served more than two years in gaol were moved there from various parts of the country. It was an attempt by the authorities to respond to criticism from the likes of Bernard Shaw.

Among those lined up for transfer was Arthur Creech Jones. “I ought to feel like a schoolboy off for his holidays!” he wrote. Yet he had mixed feelings. And sure enough, once assembled, the absolutists saw the scheme to be a ruse designed to inveigle them into accepting work on the lines of the Home Office camps. They briskly organised themselves and issued a manifesto declaring they could not accept either military service, or any compulsory work organised to facilitate the prosecution of the war.

A general meeting of the men endorsed the manifesto by 74 votes to four, with one sick absentee. The Wakefield scheme was quickly abandoned, and the men were dispersed again to continue their gaol sentences. Creech Jones never got there.[1]

The Fellowship’s national committee welcomed the manifesto with “joy and admiration.” It now seems a very minor issue compared with the people’s peace that the *Leader* and particularly the *Herald* were campaigning for.

V

The latter’s packed rally at the Albert Hall and the passionate speeches made there were a powerful and timely intervention in the fast-moving end-game. But they made absolutely no difference. Woodrow Wilson’s position had hardened after German U-boats sank an Irish mail boat, the *Leinster*, with the loss of 450 lives; they also sank a passenger ferry, the *Hiramo Maru*. Replying to the second German note he said the armistice terms must be left to the Allied military advisers; they must ensure Allied supremacy. He told the Austrians he had changed his mind on point ten of the Fourteen. This had called for the autonomous development of the various nationalities within Austro-Hungary. Wilson now said they should be allowed to control their own destinies.[2]

A third German note undertook to stop further submarine attacks on passenger ships and trusted Wilson would not agree to any demand that would damage the honour of the German people or the prospect of a just peace. Ludendorff and Hindenburg decided the terms on offer were unacceptable and gave orders for a fight to the finish. Prince Max, the new chancellor, demanded the kaiser dismiss them. On 28 October the German government informed Wilson it was waiting to hear, in effect, its fate.

In Paris, Wilson’s emissary, colonel House, joined the other Allied leaders at the supreme war council. They instructed general Diaz, chief of the Italian general staff, to negotiate with the Austrians. Under the armistice signed at the Villa Giusta, outside Padua, on 3 November Austro-Hungary was to demobilise its forces, to allow allied troops to move freely throughout its borders, to hand over most of its navy, and to

[1] *Tribunal* 124-6, 12, 19, 26 September 1918; Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 18 September 1918.

[2] This and the following draws heavily on Margaret MacMillan, pp. 626-38.

evacuate all occupied territory, as well as that promised to Italy in the secret Treaty of London. A separate armistice was to be signed in Belgrade with the Hungarians.

Meanwhile the supreme war council wrestled with Allied differences over the Fourteen Points. There were essentially two: freedom of the seas, and reparations. Under points 7 and 8 Wilson had said occupied territories had to be restored. Britain and France took this as meaning that Germany would make reparation for all damage its forces had caused to Allied property and civilians. In the end Lloyd George proposed a compromise formula: that discussion on these matters should be postponed until the forthcoming peace conference. Colonel House concurred.

The military terms agreed were that Germany should withdraw its forces from Belgium, Luxembourg, Alsace-Lorraine and its own territory west of the Rhine, together with a strip of about 30km deep east of the Rhine. Allied forces would hold the bridgeheads. Germany would be required to halt its systematic destruction of Allied property as it retreated; to hand over almost all its weapons, as well as huge numbers of locomotives, railway cars and lorries; to return the cash and securities stolen from Belgium. In the east it was evacuate all territory outside its 1914 borders. As to the Germany navy, the supreme war council decided to intern all ships in neutral ports, if they could be found, and if not, in Allied ports.

Meeting for the last time on 4 November, House, Clemenceau and Lloyd George decided that President Wilson should send a final note to the Germany government telling it to send emissaries under a white flag to ask for an armistice.

In Germany the government's request for an armistice caused civilian morale to explode: not in joy at imminent peace but in anger against the leaders who had put them through such suffering and privation, all to no purpose. In the port of Wilhelmshaven the admiral ordered the high seas fleet into action against the British. The men refused to put to sea. Revolutionary disorder spread quickly to other Baltic ports, then across Germany and finally to Berlin: bringing strikes, occupations and peace demonstrations.[1]

The German delegation made its way by car to the forest of Compiègne. It was headed by Matthias Erzberger of the catholic Centre Party, the deputy who had proposed the Reichstag peace resolution in July 1917. There in Foch's railway carriage they signed the peace. Foch made one significant concession, reflecting the general fear of Bolshevism: German troops would remain on Russian soil until the Allies decided the time was right to withdraw them. He refused to relax the blockade that was starving, and continued to starve, the civilian population.[2]

The kaiser, at military headquarters in Spa, resisted social democrat demands that he abdicate. The government made the announcement for him. The fellow princes of the empire went likewise. Prince Max resigned as chancellor and was replaced by the social democrat Friedrich Ebert.

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[1] Bernt Engelmann, *Wir Untertanen*, pp. 347-8

[2] A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, p. 192. The blockade on food imports was not fully lifted until after Germany signed the Versailles treaty at the end of June 1919. Erzberger became minister of finance in the new republic; he was murdered by a nationalist hit-squad in 1921. Golo Mann, p. 592.

By the time the fighting stopped, two republics had been proclaimed: a parliamentary one from a window of the Reichstag by Philipp Scheidemann, of the Social Democrats, who now headed the new government; a Bolshevik one from a balcony of the imperial castle by Karl Liebknecht. A socialist deputy, Liebknecht was the only member of the Reichstag to vote against additional war credits in December 1914. In 1916 he was gaoled for high treason following an anti-war May Day rally in Berlin. Soon front-line columns with oak-leaves round their helmets came marching home to cheering crowds. In their own eyes and those of much of the population they were undefeated.[1] Germany's post-war travail was just beginning.

VI

The *Tribunal*'s headline was "WAKE UP, BRITAIN!/ LIEBKNECHT IS FREE" It returned to the theme the following week, saying, "Germany has led the way with regard to political prisoners, and her prison doors have been opened… Over 2,000 men and women are political prisoners in the gaols of this country. When are they going to be set free?" [2]

A little earlier the newsletter announced that the Friends' Service Committee, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the NCF and the Alternative Service Guild had established the CO Employment Agency, to be run by an independent committee. The central office in the Grays Inn Road would serve London and the home counties; a sub-office was opening in Manchester. Sympathetic employers were invited to make contact.[3]

Shortly afterwards Afred Salter announced the opening of Fairby Grange, in the Kent village of Hartley, as a convalescent home for discharged COs. He did not himself buy this venerable but modernised farmhouse and its 20 acres, as Brockway states, but appealed for the money, raising £8,200 in the first place. With this he furnished the house and bought livestock and agricultural material.[4]

A report in the *Tribunal* says that, once in full working order, it would be able to accommodate at least 30 convalescent men, plus staff. "Already a great deal has been accomplished; those of the resident COs who are strong enough are working with great enthusiasm, looking after goats, rabbits, poultry, bees, a cow and horse, felling timber, putting up sheds and outhouses, growing and preparing for the market all kinds of fruit and vegetables, collecting and sending the produce up to town." [5]

Fairby Grange also took over the village shop. The following summer a "home team" of COs staged a cricket match against a team of discharged and wounded soldiers: the result a draw. In the 1920s, after Labour took control of Bermondsey Council, the Salters handed the Grange over for use by the council as a convalescent home for local mothers, the first of its kind in the country.[6]

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[1] Golo Mann, p. 547, Adam Hochschild, p 340; A.J.P. Taylor *The First World War*, p. 202; Liebknecht: Wikipedia.
[2] *Tribunal*, 131 and 132, 31 October, 7 November 1918.
[3] *Ibid.,* 128, 10 October 1918.
[4] NCF duplicated papers 1914-19, file 5.
[5] *Tribunal* 130, 24 October 1918.
[6] NCF papers, *loc.cit*.; *Tribunal* 163, 3 July 1919; Fenner Brockway, *Bermondsey Story*, pp. 100-1.

29: Peace – and polling

I

On 8 November the *SLP* headlined its front page:

HUN WHITE FLAG ON WESTERN FRONT.

A week earlier the paper had featured St. Mark's "little army" on its Roll of Honour page. The church, in Cobourg Road, stood amid close-packed streets and industrial premises off the Surrey Canal, and the report celebrates the 3,323 men from the parish who were, or had been, serving. The death lists had largely increased over the past month, it says, bringing the total to 408 [12 per cent]. In addition at least 597 had been wounded, 65 were prisoners and 69 were missing. The names of the recent dead are listed. Five new Military Medals are reported - with four of the recipients pictured – which increased the parish war honours to 60, including one VC, seven MCs, 13 Distinguished Conduct Medals and 25 Military Medals, two of them with bars.[1]

In the forenoon of Monday the 11th Creech Jones in Pentonville heard the guns boom out to mark the cease-fire. They were preceded by a fusillade of maroons and followed by buglers signalling the all-clear. Then hundreds of church bells rang out. At midday Big Ben sounded for the first time since the start of the war. Girl clerks in Whitehall offices showered official forms on to the heads of those below. Crowds in central London blocked the streets, dancing and cheering and growing more riotous as evening descended and rain came on. Canadian soldiers lit a bonfire at the plinth of Nelson's column. Another was set ablaze in the centre of Piccadilly Circus. Total strangers copulated in public, says Alan Taylor. By his account the celebrations, becoming increasingly destructive, went on for three days. In the end the police cleared the streets.[2]

Jerry White tells it rather differently, remarking that "the good humour and restrained boisterousness of the crowds were most generally remarked upon, with little complaint of disorder or riot." He makes no mention of copulation and says the celebrations went on for something like a week.[3]

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[1] *SLP.*, 1 November 1918.The church, on the edge of Burgess Park, still stands. It is now a mosque.
[2] Jerry White, pp. 268-70; Michael MacDonagh, pp. 329-30; A.J.P.Taylor, *The First World War*, p.195.
[3] Jerry White, p. 270.

Meanwhile in Camberwell, “flags and bunting appeared as if by magic. Crowds gathered in the streets and there was plenty of excitement. In the evening the bells of St. Giles rang out a joyous peal. The Town Hall, gay with bunting, was naturally a great centre of attraction.” The new mayor, Ald. Evan Cook, led a couple of impromptu patriotic meetings, with speeches and popular songs. A thanksgiving service followed in the afternoon, and after dark (“tell it not to Dora”) a fireworks display. In Rye Lane, Peckham, the Tower Cinema, many of the shops and even the police station blazed in unaccustomed illumination.

At Southwark town hall in Walworth there was general jubilation when the news was received. The green in front of the building was converted into a dancing lawn. Bermondsey saw a gathering on the town hall steps in Spa Road.[1]

At the next meeting of Bermondsey council the mayor, Cllr. Arthur Fells, said he must express their joy at the dawn of peace. “They severely trusted that the whole world would rest in peace, and that the people of the country would stand shoulder to shoulder to establish the unity between the nations which would be for the welfare of the whole world.” [2]

More formal religious thanksgivings followed, including one at the war shrine erected in 1916 in Barry Road, East Dulwich. A photograph shows the backs of those attending facing a display of honours boards, hung above with flags. Conducting the ecumenical service, the Rev. Eric Waterhouse, pastor of the Barry Road Wesleyan Chapel, said “no words of praise were needed for the men whose names were written on the Shrine; especially those who had died for freedom and right.” [3]

The poet Richard W. Mould, who had saluted Southwark’s departing territorials in August 1914, now welcomed the peace. Verse two of three reads

> Oh! it is good to wake
> To a world war-free!
> And see the dawn of Freedom break
> O’er wrecks of Tyranny! [4]

The casualty lists streaming into the *South London Press* continued to tell the human cost. There were two broadsheet columns of south London dead and wounded on 15 November, the same the week following, 1¾ columns on 29 November, 1⅓ columns on 6 December, almost two columns on 15 December.

The members of the various Military (now National) Service Tribunals could now retire, taking a retrospective view their labours. The Bermondsey tribunal had held 144 sittings to deal with over 12,000 applications. There had been 673 appeals, in 307 of which the original decision had been varied, usually very slightly.[5]

In Camberwell members of the tribunal had a group photograph taken and then enjoyed a lengthy exchange of patriotic speeches, mutual congratulation and votes of thanks. These occupy a full column in the *CP Times*.

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[1] *SLP* 15 November; *CPT*, 16 November 1918.
[2] *SBR,* 22 November 1918.
[3] *SLP,* 22 November 1918.
[4] *ibid.*, 15 November 1918.
[5] *SBR*, 29 November 1918.

“Britain is her usual traditional spirit has won,” said the clerk (and town clerk), C.W. Tagg. “Right has conquered might. This little island has found the same indomitable spirit in her sons that characterised their fathers…The tribunals have played a great and important role in this great war; their task has been a very difficult one …” Over the past three years, he said, Camberwell tribunal had held 490 sittings and received approximately 14,500 appeals (ie. applications); some 1,100 firms had appeared on behalf of their employees. Amongst the various tributes the meeting voted to send a telegram to the prime minister congratulating him on the Allied victory.[1]

II

Immediately after the armistice Bonar Law announced a general election, with polling day set for Saturday 14 December. He and Lloyd George fought it in coalition, putting up a joint candidate in each constituency with their endorsement – sarcastically dubbed “the coupon” by Asquith in reference to war rationing.

Alfred Salter stood as Labour candidate for West Bermondsey, Charles Ammon as Labour candidate for North Camberwell. It is noteworthy that neither man in his speeches or election material said anything about his central part in campaigning against the war. Nor do the papers allude to it, despite their own fierce patriotism during the fighting.

In the *SLP*’s round-up of candidates Ammon’s biography runs through his numerous positions, including: secretary of the Oakley Place [Methodist] Brotherhood; president of the Fawcett Society (the postal sorters’ union); editor of its magazine *The Post;* president of the London Workers’ Educational Association; president of Bermondsey ILP; general and organising secretary of the Port of London Docks’ and Wharves’ Staff Association; and (if that wasn’t enough) treasurer of the Prison Officers’ Federation.

Alfred Salter’s biography is shorter: triple first-class honours and gold medal in the London University Bachelor of Medicine [MB] examination 1895, “a feat never since accomplished” - Bermondsey University Settlement – then in practice as “a poor man’s doctor” – a Quaker – “the great success of the Bermondsey Co-operative Bakery is ascribed to his business acumen” – finally: “Dr Salter stands for the workers and the workers’ cause.” [2]

In neither biography does the NCF or the NCCL get a mention, let alone the project to set up workers’ and soldiers’ councils on the soviet model. Salter met some criticism for his war-time position. Lieut. Davis, the erstwhile National Service Representative and now Liberal candidate, said, “Dr Salter and his party advocated the brotherhood of man, and consequently would sympathize with the Germans, who were responsible for detestable crimes in France and Belgium.”

A supporter of lieut. Harry Becker, standing as silver badge candidate for the National Federation of Demobilised and Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, said Salter’s views “did little to help the boys who ‘went over the top’, nor the boys that were in the water after

[1] *CPT*, 23 November 1918.
[2] *SLP*, 6 December 1918. In fact it was Ada Salter who initiated the bakery and was the driver behind it. Graham Taylor, pp. 122-3.

their ship had been torpedoed." Becker himself, who ran a pulp and paper business in Bermondsey Wall, focussed on his core theme of a better deal for ex-servicemen and their dependents. According to an example he cites, the widowed mother of a dead soldier was allowed only 5s a week.[1]

These rather mild strictures are the only ones reported; none at all were directed at Ammon. It was he in his speeches who came closest to his recent past. He said he was out for the abolition of conscription and of DORA. He was concerned that the government had spoken of demobilizing but not discharging the men from the army. Was it, he asked, for the purpose of using the army to quell industrial strife as in 1911? At another meeting, with Lansbury in support, he told hecklers "from the more advanced section of the Socialist party" - interruptions "taken in good part" - that "he stood now, as he had always done on the left wing of the Labour Party, and he had been in the movement long enough to realise that the workers were unconquerable and invincible. They could not be beaten…" [2]

For Alfred Salter the two great questions of the moment were "how to make permanent the peace so recently attained so that there shall be no more wars and so that the world may be made safe for democracy, and secondly, how to rebuild our shaking and crumbling civilisation so that we may really attain Democracy and life may be worth living for the mass of the people." He believed that president Wilson's Fourteen Points, if liberally interpreted and wisely applied, should secure the world against a recurrence of the tragedy of the past four years.[3]

An appeal in the*Tribunal* said that helpers were urgently wanted in the Bermondsey division. As part of its election campaign the publication urged readers to press for the immediate release of COs and for an end to conscription. It came out in support of the Labour manifesto which pledged to sweep away every wartime restriction on personal and civil liberty, including the Military Service Acts – "the greatest instrument of tyranny" – and every form of conscription, industrial as well as military.[4]

Ammon and Salter were both critical of Lloyd George and the Conservatives for contesting the election on a coalition basis. As part of this arrangement lieut. Davis, was replaced as candidate for West Bermondsey by a coalition Liberal, C.R. Scriven. But then the previous but discarded Liberal MP, H.J.Glanville, reinstated himself as a candidate, declaring that though he admired Lloyd George, indeed thought he was the genius of the war, he was not going to "blindly bind himself" for him and the coalition. He defended his voting record, saying he had voted against the wartime coalition on domestic issues only: for a rise in agricultural wages, for example, and against an additional duty on sugar.

To confuse the issue further, Bermondsey Conservative and Unionist Association protested at the deal done by their national headquarters. They wanted lieut. Davis to stand, presumably in order to field a candidate against him. On the other hand, John

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[1] *SBR*, 22 November 1918. The Bermondsey branch had been advertising all year in the paper, asking in bold caps "Are you an ex-serviceman?" - then "Join to-day."
[2] *SLP,* 22 and 15 November 1918.
[3] *ibid.,* 29 November 1918.
[4] *Tribunal* 134 and 136, 21 November and 5 December 1918.

Lort-Williams, Unionist coalition candidate in Rotherhithe and critic of Dr Salter back in 1914, spoke up for Scriven, the coalition Liberal, at the latter's adoption meeting in Bermondsey.[1]

At his own adoption meeting Lort-Williams said he was proud to have been selected by Lloyd George. The coalition government had brought the war to a triumphant end – "and now the best brains of every political party must be brought to bear on the problems of peace… Peace must be a National Work as War had been."

Why was the Liberal incumbent, capt. Hubert Carr-Gomm, not the official candidate, he asked his party workers? "The reason was that they could not trust Mr Carr-Gomm to support Mr Lloyd George... In the most difficult and critical times in the House of Commons Mr Carr-Gomm had voted against the Government, and he had throughout supported Mr. Asquith. Could they support the man who was in charge of affairs at the beginning of the war, and who was driven from power because he was found incompetent?" [2]

Carr-Gomm responded in similar terms to Glanville: "He gave Lloyd George credit for the splendid work he had done, but he was not going to tie himself up in the dark, and, if returned, was not going to go blindfold into any lobby in the House of Commons at the dictation of the Government Whips." (Applause) [3]

The man himself came to the Old Kent Road baths to speak in support of the coalition candidates. He said there were many patriotic men in the Labour Party whose common sense he was very proud to have met. But they were not the men running the party. "The Labour Party has been run by an extreme pacifist, Bolshevist group… It was they who pulled the Labour Party out of the Government at the moment when you needed the help of Labour to reconstruct in this country… Why? What they really believe in is Bolshevism." [4]

The leader-writers were divided over the coupon. The *CP Times* expressed the resentment felt by "the more thoughtful" at being compelled to accept "not the men whom they would prefer to represent them in Parliament but the men who are sent to them with the label of Coalition upon them." It conceded the continuing need for a coalition but argued that criticism was essential for the proper discharge of public duties. "We fear there will be but few critics in the new House of Commons… It is pretty obvious that whether we like it or not we shall have to give Mr Lloyd George a blank cheque. We sincerely hope that he will use it wisely…"

The *SLP*, on the other hand, having revived its editorials, condemned the "despicable policy" of the Liberals in turning their back on the coalition at the most critical point of the war. "It is now that the People's Government, more than at any other stage of the conflict, needs support to wind up a hateful business." [5]

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[1] *SBR*, 6 December 1918.
[2] *ibid.*, 22 and 29 November 1018.
[3] *ibid.*, 13 December 1918.
[4] *CPT*, 18 December 1918.
[5] *CPT*, 27 November; *SLP, 13* December 1918.

Coalition candidates of both parties fought on a platform of retribution against the Germany. “There,” said Lort-Williams, a barrister, “were the men who personally directed the atrocities. Every man, from the lowest up to the Kaiser, should be brought to trial. The criminal law of this country was the model for the whole world, and the culprits, including the Kaiser, could be tried by that law, and, if found guilty, just punishment must be meted out to them.” (Applause)

In North Camberwell, Ammon’s Conservative coalition opponent, capt. H. Newton Knights, said, “In my opinion Germany and her allies in devilry must be made to pay in full… but if unable to pay in cash, then we must secure their railroads, docks, mines and factories until they do pay.” [1]

Polling day 14 December was wet and miserable. “The one outstanding feature of the contest was the deplorable indifference of the electors,” reported the *CP Times*. “They had for the most part to be literally dragged to the poll and many of them resisted all efforts to induce them to register their votes at all.” All the candidates made the same complaint. The *SB Recorder* wrote that in some districts the turn-out was less than 50 per cent, and noted that at many polling stations women voters outnumbered men.[2]

The result was declared at the year’s end. “THE COALITION TRIUMPH,” was the *SLP*’s headline: “Clean Sweep Through the Country; South/London Nearly Solid.” Nationally the landslide returned 339 coalition Conservatives, 136 coalition Liberals, 59 Labour MPs but only 26 independent Liberals. Even Asquith lost his seat. In a sign of things to come Labour received nearly 23 per cent of the vote.[3]

Leading opponents of the war were rejected however: not only Snowden, MacDonald and Lansbury but also Trevelyan, Ponsonby, Anderson, Outhwaite and Lees-Smith; Philip Morrell did not stand. Henderson also lost his seat.

In south London – in the *SLP*’s circulation area at least – only two independent Liberals were returned; one of them was H.J. Glanville in West Bermondsey. Coalition Liberals elected included Albion Richardson in Peckham and Dr Macnamara in Camberwell North-West.

Everywhere they stood Labour did poorly, mostly coming last. Ammon in North Camberwell got 2,175 votes against 6,010 for the coalition Conservative Newton Knights, polling just two votes below the Liberal. In West Bermondsey Dr Salter (1,856 votes) beat the silver badge candidate, Harry Becker, but fell well short of the two Liberals: Glanville with 4,260 votes and Scriven with 2,998. In the north proletarian Rotherhithe elected a coalition Conservative – Lort-Williams – as did affluent Dulwich in the south.[4]

[1] *SBR*, 6 December; *CPT*, 11 December 1918.
[2] *CPT*, 18 December; *SBR,* 20 December 1918.
[3] David Reynolds, p. 58.
[4] *SLP*, 3 January 1919.

1919

30: Freedom at last

I

On 14 December Violet Tillard wrote to Catherine Marshall: “I have just come back from voting. The women were streaming in. A Coalition-y looking lot!” She was afraid Lloyd George would get a big majority. “The spirit abroad just makes me feel suicidal. 1900 years of ‘Christianity’ and people are just savages.”

She added, “A small section in Wandsworth is running amok. Smashing things and making a noise. The warders there told the men they were likely to come out on the 14th and the hopes and fears have had a very bad effect. We are hoping to back up the pacifist section all we can. The ringleaders of the other party are both somewhat unbalanced.” [1]

In fact there was already a general break-down of order at the prison, according to a later official inquiry. One wing there was a detention barracks under a military governor. The civil part under a civil governor held some 560 prisoners, among them 108 COs. From the middle of 1918 some of these started protesting against their continued imprisonment. They did so by holding meetings, proclaiming socialistic views and singing “The Red Flag.” Nearly every night they disturbed the prison by banging on their cell doors with stools and bed-boards, causing other prisoners to protest against this disruption to their peace and quiet. One petitioned the home secretary on the matter. Local residents also complained.

From November, COs in cells overlooking the square where military prisoners were drilled started inciting the latter to mutiny and attack the sergeants in charge of them. In fact, says the inquiry report, a carefully planned mutiny just before Christmas was narrowly averted. The state of disorder, it continued, was largely due to the laxity with which the prison rules were enforced. Warders were given to understand that objectors were not to be punished. The visiting justices declined to intervene. The body of disorderly prisoners grew, though many other COs refused to join in and used their best efforts to prevent the disturbances. On 17 February 1919 some of the military prisoners confined in the civil prison - following court martial – attacked their warders.

[1] Catherine Marshall archive, D/Mar/4/30, 14 December 1918.

Into this confusion stepped major Blake, appointed acting governor to restore order.[1] Blake took charge on 20 February; and was quickly accused of using abusive and violent language to and about COs, of picking on them indiscriminately for excessive punishment and on two specific occasions of treating prisoners with excessive violence.

The complainant was Edward Harby, the Lewisham member of Dulwich NCF whom we met before.[2] According to him the new governor came in declaring, "I have full powers from the Secretary of State! To Hell with the CO's! To Hell with them!" and threatening everybody with bread and water. Pointing to one CO, he had said, "Look at that b – y swine!" He had told another he ought to be "wiped out" or sent back to Germany where he came from. A third he threatened with the "cat." Harby claimed to have witnessed almost all these incidents. He wrote to the NCF's head office, which passed the letter to Josiah Wedgwood. He raised it in the Commons.

The result was a public inquiry into Blake's action "against certain disorderly persons." It was chaired by Albion Richardson, the MP for Peckham. Blake denied saying "bloody swine" but admitted to "damned mutinous swine." He explained, "I wanted – to use a vulgar expression - to put the fear of God into them… That was calculated. I wanted them to think they had a pretty ferocious man to deal with." Albion Richardson duly found that, while he had not been antagonistic to objectors as a whole, he had used strong and violent language and "objectionable epithets."

He agreed that one prisoner removed to his cell had been subjected to a considerable degree of unnecessary violence. But he dismissed the allegation by several witnesses that Blake had incited the warders to use violence. Rather buried in the report Richardson acknowledges that the governor had acted irregularly in sentencing the prisoner Victor Beacham to loss of all privileges without a time limit.

Victor Beacham (or Beecham) – either the painter and decorator from Peckham or his double from the North London Herald League [3] - crops up in another account of the disorder, written in December and January, before the arrival of Major Blake. It comes in a pair of letters to his mother in Hampstead written by Joseph Hoare, a mild undergraduate of University College, Oxford. Beacham was plainly one of the disorderly persons. Hoare depicts him and Guy Aldred, another prisoner, bawling out lectures, initially through the outside windows, then when the weather worsened, across the landing inside. To listen the men knocked out the glass of the spy-hole in their doors.

"Guy Aldred with his head in the square gas box lectured to us on 'Was Jesus a poet?', Marriage, Richard Carlile, Marx & his political writings, & Bakunin." There much discussion and argument. Saturday was a regular night for concerts. Before then "Beecham used to give us the news from the afternoon's visits…opening with the declaration that he had only a few words to say, but being a very long winded actor he would sometimes take an hour …Proceedings usually closed with the singing of the Red Flag and the International at eight o'clock."

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[1] He is not to be confused with lieutenant colonel Brooke, who as commandant of the Military Detention barracks in 1916, had been dismissed for persecuting C.H. Norman. J.H. Taylor, *Against the Tide*, p. 97.
[2] *ibid*., pp. 108, 111, 121.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 121.

Aldred, 31, from Shepherds Bush, had been court-martialled three times, but had also been at Dyce quarry before, it seems, rejecting the Home Office scheme. He features in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a major figure in anarchist and anti-parliamentary communist circles. Over a long life he wrote and published many pamphlets, books and journals and set up a number of presses.[1]

These proceedings took place in the basement where 22 men, including Joseph Hoare, occupied "discipline" cells. A Christian pacifist who had been vouched for by William Temple, no less, then rector of St. James, Piccadilly, Hoare complained there was much useless shouting and cat-calling. "Southern" was one of the worst offenders. This must be Ernest Southern, the Peckham shop assistant who, when arrested for not reporting to the military, told the court that as a socialist and an internationalist, he was not a soldier and never would be.[2]

Hoare also deplored the spirit of intolerance towards both prison officials and COs who happened to approve a different line of action. The friction, he explains, was between the men upstairs who had spent most of the day in the workshops and resented the loss of time for peaceful thought and reading and the "basement oligarchy" from where the lectures emanated. There the men had no lights – "through their own fault perhaps" – and hardly any books and were allowed no letters, visits or exercise. Later, he adds, many men upstairs began to take an interest in the lectures and the whole wing took part in concerts, especially the great Christmas Eve concert.

From 1 January 14 of the men in the basement – though not Hoare – decided to hunger-strike until they were released or granted political prisoner status; a fact not mentioned in the inquiry report. And they were released, "weak but not ill" after six days without food. "It is now definitely stated," writes Hoare "that men will be left 7 days without food & then turned out for 28 days under the Cat & Mouse Act: at the end of that time if they do not report at a prison they will be re-arrested."

"After tea Beecham took the chair & kept order: when an officer's footstep was heard we listened attentively: sometimes he would call out, asking which cell so-&-so was in: Beecham called out the name of the man who was leaving, & as he came from his cell each man called out Good-bye comrades all & had a final serenade or perhaps a raucous rendering of 'He's a jolly good fellow' as he walked down the hall." In the end, adds Hoare, there were only five of us left out of the old gang, or six according to his second letter.[3]

That's a view from the inside. Albion Richardson, on the outside, concluded that major Blake had acted throughout with a single-minded desire to discharge the duty of restoring order with which he had been entrusted - a task which warders and prisoners alike agreed he had accomplished. "[W]ith the exception of the epithets which he permitted himself to use," Richardson's judgment was that the acting governor's conduct was "free from reproach." [4]

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[1] Prison record: Cyril Pearce, Register.
[2] See above p. 19.
[3] J.E. Hoare papers, Imperial War Museum.
[4] Report of Inquiry into Allegations against Major Blake, the Acting Governor of Wandsworth Prison, concerning his Action against certain Disorderly Persons, Cmd. 131, April 1919.

II

At the armistice some 1,500-1,600 absolutists were still in prison. Violet Tillard promptly dispatched a letter to them outlining what the organisation was doing to secure their immediate release: telegrams to Lloyd George, an emergency resolution at the Labour Party conference, a petition by MPs and others, deputations. “You may rely on our straining every nerve until you are all free.” [1]

Both *Labour Leader* and the *Herald* added their voices. The latter organised two meetings in the Albert Hall, at which a huge NCF banner – 18ft by 12ft 6 inches - and bearing the words, “Set the Captives Free” was unfurled from the gallery.[2]

Eighty-three MPs signed the NCF’s petition. In the New Year the Fellowship handed Lloyd George an imposing memorial signed by five groupings of “representative persons” (Literary and University, Labour, Clergy, Representative Men, Representative Women). London COs and sympathisers held a rally in Essex Hall. In February the *Tribunal* advertised for poster paraders. “Women are needed for the banner parades down Whitehall which are taking place each Wednesday afternoon. Meet at 5 York Buildings at 2pm.” NCF choirs seem to have been revived for Christmas and were still singing outside Wormwood Scrubs and Pentonville in February 1919 – “and if you cannot sing you can at least join in the cheer at the end,” said the notice in the *Tribunal*.[3]

Yet the government resisted. Home secretary Cave had explained that “the men in prison who claim to be COs” could not be released at present as that would give them preference in obtaining work over the soldiers who had been fighting at the front.[4]

In February 1919 Arthur Creech Jones was despatched once more to Hounslow Barracks. He again refused to put on uniform and so underwent his fourth court martial. Lydia Smith and Violet Tillard attended “and I got all the news of everything and everybody,” he wrote. Returning after another two-year sentence, “I saw the careless life of the streets, the traders & hurrying people – the air of prosperity & apparent unconcern about impersonal issues. Why should I be travelling this road?” he asked. “Why was I going back to prison?” Back inside, “I met the eager worn faces of my comrades, the daily familiars of two years, men who in past days had given much and worked hard for human betterment.” [5]

Jones seems to have considered seeking release on health grounds, but then dismissed the idea. Writing to cousin Violet in pencil on grey toilet-paper, he described his health as “prison normal.” That is, “My eyes have deteriorated, rheumatism is about my body, my nervous system needs rest, my energy is much sapped & course one’s mind is not what it used to be or ought to be – less alert, more scatterbrained, woolgathering, absent-minded and memory worse. To be expected after 3 years.” However, such a course

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[1] John Graham, p.309; *Tribunal* 134, 20 November 1918; Marshall archive, D.Mar/4/30, 18 November 1918.
[2] *Tribunal* 136, 5 December 1918.
[3] *Tribunal* 135, 28 November (petition) 140, 9 January (memorial*),* 147, 27 February (poster parades), 136 and 144, 5 December, 6 February (choirs).
[4] *ibid.,* 136, 5 December 1918.
[5] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 2 and 3 March 1919.

> seems to involve desertion from the ranks of the valiant ones compelled to endure continued impmt… I feel the right thing for me is to take my stand & bear the consequences." [1]

The government's unwillingness to release conscientious objectors ahead of men from the armed forces was compounded by the slow and cumbersome process of demobilization itself. The object was to avoid mass unemployment. Demobilization would be therefore not by unit but on an individual basis, priority for discharge being determined not by length of service, but on the ability of industry to take a man in. Each serviceman was allotted to one of five categories, of which only two, numerically very small, were to be released at once.

The provision of employment was left entirely to individual employers. The whole process proved to be a bureaucratic leviathan. In January there were demonstrations and mass meetings in Folkestone, Dover and Brighton. Soldiers in lorries paraded along Whitehall with placards reading, "We won the war. Give us our tickets," "We want civvie suits" and "Promises are not piecrust."

Churchill, war minister in the new government, in effect jettisoned the whole demobilization scheme. He announced instead something closer to a first-in, first-out system, by which all but 900,000 men would be released. This substantial residue attracted further criticism from those who wanted an immediate end to conscription and feared a return to intervention in Russia. Demobilization now proceeded rapidly; the demonstrations dropped away. All the same, in February 1920 there were still 125,000 men awaiting discharge. Compulsory military service was formally ended in March 1920.[2]

In April Churchill turned his attention to the COs. He announced that all those who had served two years would be released at once, the others at the end of their present sentence or on completion of two years, whichever was the earlier.[3]

Arthur Creech Jones was let out immediately and joined cousins Vi and Flo and his uncle and aunt in Addiscombe. He evidently wrote a letter of appreciation to the NCF, or perhaps to Violet Tillard personally. At all events she wrote back, "I cannot tell you what a pleasure it was to us to meet you… Letters such as yours make one feel extraordinarily humble… I hope you are really resting." Among lesser dramatis personae Arthur Gillian, Edward Harby, Victor Beecham and Ernest Southern were also released that month. Eddy Jope had been discharged in March on medical grounds.[4]

It took longer in other cases. Releases were staggered and took place in small batches on account of the press, much of which was hostile to any objector being released before demobilization was complete. At the beginning of May 650 remained in prison. A few men were still being court-martialled. As late as July 55 men were still inside; one of

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[1] *ibid*., undated. The envelope, addressed to Violet in a strange hand, is postmarked Hounslow, 20 April 1919. That's a bit of a mystery; perhaps Jones entrusted the letter to a fellow CO for posting.
[2] Arthur Marwick, pp. 266-71; end date: David Reynolds, p.96.
[3] *Tribunal* 153, 10 April 1919.
[4] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 2, 10 April 1919; Cyril Pearce, Register.

them, in Dorchester prison, was E.S. Cato, from East Dulwich. The last contingent came out in August, shortly after the Home Office scheme was disbanded.[1]

John Graham says that 71 men altogether died "under imprisonment," ie. in gaol or shortly after. His list includes Frederick Wilkinson from Dulwich and A. Hurst from Southwark. [2] An unknown number went out their mind.

The No-Conscription Fellowship (and the *Tribunal*) continued. After discussions in 1919 the leading figures decided it was, in Alfred Salter's words an "adhoc body, created for one job only, viz: to resist the Military Service Acts. This work is done and done for ever." [3]

They decided to dissolve the Fellowship, and concluded with a farewell convention in the Quaker headquarters at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate. The event, held in November 1919, included a museum of photographs, sketches, magazines, etc, a 72-page souvenir brochure, a sit-down supper for 1,500 people, and of course many speeches. The convention resolved to appoint a committee to create two successor organisations: one to oppose any re-introduction of conscription, a second to spread the pacifist doctrine of life, and of resistance to all forms of militarism. David Boulton says a third was set up to oppose military training in schools.[4] But all that's another story.

[1] David Boulton, pp. 281-2, 283; Cato: *Tribunal* 167, 24 July 1919.
[2] John Graham, p.323. He was mistaken about a third man included there. William Hurley from Dulwich joined up after a spell of hard labour and was killed at third Ypres. The Honours Board gives more detail about him and Wilkinson.
[3] *Tribunal* 180, 13 November 1919.
[4] *ibid.,* 181 and 182, 20 and 27 November 1919; Boulton, p. 291.

Conclusion

I

I have shown over the whole research how, after conscription in 1916, the No-Conscription Fellowship and the conscientious objectors initially headed the anti-war campaign, and how the NCF played an important role in promoting the Russian revolution as a force for peace. It then faded from mid-1917 as it concentrated increasingly on securing the release of imprisoned absolutists.

In the last eighteen months of the conflict the lead was taken over by the Independent Labour Party, its branches and its paper the *Labour Leader*, and by the Women's Peace Campaign. At their shoulder, but probably less influential, stood *The Herald* and the section of the labour movement it mobilised. It was a broad and powerful coalition, supported in parliament by a small band of dogged and eloquent MPs. But together, despite passionate commitment, they all failed.

On one level, it is hardly surprising they could not derail the war machine once it had been set rolling, accompanied by fanfares of state propaganda. Kurt Vonnegut has written that for all the difference they made, American protesters against the Vietnam war might as well have been throwing cream buns.[1]

In the case of 14-18 one might point to specific shortcomings. The relatively limited number who refused military service, to begin with, and the fact that most of those accepted alternative service. After that, the focus of the NCF from about mid-1917 on getting the absolutists out of prison rather than opposing the war – except, that is, during the German offensive of 1918. Then there's the obsession of Ethel Snowden and the Women's Peace Crusade with getting signatures on the Lansdowne petition. That seems a waste of effort which might have been directed to more effective forms of campaigning.

On the other hand, the *Herald,* the *Leader* and the ILP could hardly have done more to activate those sections of the labour movement that looked to them. It seems to me they collectively failed, not through specific mistakes or lack of effort, but because they made only limited inroads into the mindset that made men go to war and made wives and families accept their going.

[1] Help required to locate this reference.

It wasn't that the men cared much about little Belgium after 1914. Whatever they thought of the kaiser - except in spasms of revenge they didn't hate the men in field grey on the other side. They were generally disgusted by the cheap jingoism on the home front.

What did their patriotism consist of? The poet Edward Thomas seized a handful of English earth to explain why he had joined up, saying "Literally, for this." [1] Earlier, in the articles he wrote for the *English Review* on the impact of the war in 1914 he quoted a man for whom England was a place where "one isn't forbidden to do what one wants to do or forced to do what someone else wants." "I take this to be the foundation of patriotism." For Sassoon peace was "hunting and nature and music and pastoral scenes" wrote Robert Graves; for himself it was "chiefly children." [2]

And for the soldiers of Bermondsey and Peckham? Apart from family, the cherished images of home and peace that motivated them are beyond recovery now. The other things that sustained fighting men though horror, fear, discomfort and failure, as set out by Niall Ferguson, ranged from warm kit and good rations, through alcohol, tobacco and comradeship, to the excitement of action and risking death.[3] At least until the end of the war, I argued, families at home had little idea what the men at the front had to endure.

But in addition to the factors listed by Ferguson, both soldiers and their kin were undoubtedly impelled by motives that fall under the general heading of "duty." Firstly: the courage to put oneself in the way of death and mutilation. Edward Thomas, who had doubts about his own physical courage, agonized for months about leaving wife and children to volunteer; he was too old to be conscripted. In the end he decided on the basis of a line of verse by his friend Robert Frost that "the best way out is always through." So Thomas enlisted, reached the front at Arras in February 1917 and was dead within two months.[4]

Another part of duty, less heroic, was fatalism. The artist and writer David Jones, wounded on the Somme, wrote afterwards

> I don't recall that we felt anything like the shock & distress felt by many at home in contemplating the wastage of life, etc. etc… we took much of this for granted – rather as though it were part of some unavoidable natural calamity – or a *bit* like that.[5]

Under fatalism was the belief that if a bullet had your name on it, that was it; or conversely, that the odds of rather more than one chance in two of becoming a casualty did not apply in your case.[6] There also fatalism about the future and the duration of the war, which was widely expected to go on, in stalemate, into the 1920s; and fatalism in the sense of not feeling able to do anything about it.

A third component, I suggest, was community solidarity. We saw previously how "rolls of honour" started appearing in 1916, first in individual working-class streets and then

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[1] Matthew Hollis, *Now All Roads Lead to France*, pp. 287, 164.
[2] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to all That*, p. 289, 1929 edition.
[3] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, chapter 12.
[4] Matthew Hollis, pp. 232-7, 321-332.
[5] Thomas Dilworth, *David Jones in the Great War*, p. 95. Jones' account of the attack on Mametz Wood forms the concluding section of his *In Parenthesis.*
[6] Niall Ferguson, p. 364.

outside churches. Soon there were regular portraits in the *South London Press* of "fighting families" as well as competition between streets as to how many residents were serving the colours, as the phrase was. An alternative term for this could be "social pressure." It would certainly have acted as such; but to me it feels more like something spontaneous, prompted by the need to come together in the neighbourhood as consolation against collective loss and foreboding – the constant fear of the war office telegram.

We noted before Adrian Gregory's suggestion that those who had lost children in the war were less willing to contemplate a compromise peace than those who still had children fighting. He refers to "contemporary observers" but cites no evidence, apart from the fact that the ultra-patriotic Seamen's Union lost more members than any other trade union. He might have quoted John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields," reportedly the best-known poem of the war after it appeared in *Punch* at the end of 1915.[1] It's the one beginning

> In Flanders fields the poppies blow
> Between the crosses, row on row…

It ends with the exhortation:

> Take up our quarrel with the foe;
> To you from failing hands we throw
> The torch; be yours to hold it high.
>
> If you break faith with us who die
> We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
> In Flanders fields.

In other words: to compromise now would be to betray the dead and mean they died in vain. This "diabolical argument," as Russell calls it in his autobiography, was occasionally made;[2] but as a motivation for fighting on it is not generally apparent in either the editorials or the pro-war reporting of local papers. Moreover it did not stop soldiers writing in to the *Herald* and *Labour Leader* in 1918 to urge those at home to bring the conflict to an end.

For Sassoon, the "exploitation of courage" was the essential tragedy of the war - "which, as everyone now [in 1928] agrees, was a crime against humanity."

Later he wrote,

> In and out; in and out; singing and whistling, the column swayed in front of me… It was queer how the men seemed to take their victimization for granted.

And: Against the background of the War and its brutal stupidity those men had stood glorified by the thing which sought to destroy them…[3]

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[1] Alan Judd and David Crane, *First World War Poets*, p. 60.

[2] In the *CP Times* leader of December 1916, for example, quoted on p.145 of the previous volume; and in Asquith's speech in the Commons debate on the Reichstag resolution on page 73 above. Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography*, p. 252. Paul Fussell (p. 249) savages the last six lines as "recruiting-poster rhetoric."

[3] Siegfried Sassoon, *Fox-Hunting Man*, p. 256; *Infantry Officer*, pp. 78, 174.

Lawrence's verdict on the "awful years" between 1916 and 1919 is similar but harsher:

> Plenty of superb courage to face death. But no courage in any man to face his own isolated soul, and abide by its decision. Easier to sacrifice oneself. So much easier! [1]

Facing their own isolated soul was what the absolutist objectors achieved.

But of course once they were locked up, there was little more they could do to oppose the war. That is what lay at the heart of Clifford Allen's frustration. In Walton prison Fenner Brockway learned about the slaughter at third Ypres from a CO who had been in a guardroom with a survivor. "As I read [his account], existence seemed intolerable: the thought that while I sat there in my cell, men were being shattered to bits in their thousands." [2]

II

In late May 1916 the explorer Ernest Shackleton and two companions staggered into the whaling station of Husvig at the eastern end of South Georgia island. It was the last gasp of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, which became a series of escapes from disaster after their ship the *Endurance* was trapped and crushed in the ice. Shackleton and his men camped on ice-floes, sailed in small boats through hundreds of miles of pack ice and stormy sea, and, leaving most of the party on Elephant Island to be collected later, finally made landfall on the other side of South Georgia. From there the final three had to cross 32 miles of precipitous terrain on foot.

The expedition had left London on 3 August 1914 and South Georgia on 5 December. When welcomed by the manager of the whaling station, Shackleton asked "Tell me, when was the war over?" The answer: "The war is not over. Millions are being killed. Europe is mad. The world is mad." [3] And so it was. In Golo Mann's words, "None of the parties to the struggle could admit that the war was a nonsense." [4] More specifically, or so Edward Grey told a gathering of clubmen in February 1918, none of the governments *dared* make peace because "they could offer nothing to their peoples to show for the war." [5]

David Reynolds is clearly right when he says that had the fighting ended with a negotiated peace in 1916, its impact would have been less cataclysmic. "By going for broke, the belligerents broke Europe's old order." Germany's defeat of Russia in 1917-18 "unhinged the whole of eastern Europe." [6]

In December 1916 Germany, as we saw, proposed a conference to discuss peace terms. Woodrow Wilson called on both sides to define their war aims. In January 1917

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[1] D.H. Lawrence, p. 237.
[2] The ex-editor of *Labour Leader* compensated for this powerlessness in a professional way: disseminating the facts via the *Walton Leader,* hand-written on toilet paper. With a characteristic flourish Brockway commented later: "The press outside was not allowed to publish the story; you had to go to prison to get uncensored news!" *Inside the Left*, p. 99.
[3] Ernest Shackleton, *South*, p. 206. My thanks to Paul Davies for clarifying this reference.
[4] Golo Mann, p. 526.
[5] Arnold Bennett, *The Journals*, p. 420.
[6] David Reynolds, pp. xxiii, 432.

he declared in favour of peace without victory, to be followed by the creation of a league of nations. In Britain these initiatives were lost amid Lloyd George's successful bid to provide a more forceful and energetic war leadership.[1]

In words that apply to all German peace initiatives, Mann argues that Germany, as the strategic attacker who had penetrated far into enemy territory "should not just have offered peace, but a peace clearly renouncing all gain." That alone might have had a chance of success.[2] True enough, one might reply, but how realistic is it that Germany would do that in advance, given that she was so solidly entrenched in France and Belgium?

So the war continued for a further two years, devouring ever more young men. Hochschild writes that of every twenty British men aged between 18 and 32 years in 1914, three died and four were wounded in the fighting. In all 722,000 were killed. Gregory calculates that the war left 4.5 million bereaved close relatives in Britain, representing ten per cent of the population. As Wilfred Owen foresaw

> The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
> Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
> And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

France, with a smaller population, suffered a military death toll that was almost double that of Britain, representing a quarter of men between 18 and 30. In Austro-Hungary it was fifty per cent higher; in Germany three times. Some 13 million civilians died.[3]

When the war did end, after four years three months, it left a "crippled, broken world" in the words of Churchill.[4] Not only that. "The war to end war" unleashed the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, a country which before 1914 had been making rapid industrial progress.[5] Russia's withdrawal from the war in 1917 was acclaimed by peace-campaigners; but the revolution led to one of the two great murderous tyrannies of the 20th century.

It also led less directly to the rise of Hitler and so the next Great War – though here one must distinguish between the war itself and the peace treaty of Versailles, signed on 28 June 1919. The Germans had accepted an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points, plus other addresses by Woodrow Wilson, one of which promised "no annexations, no contributions, no punitive damages." Points 7 and 8 of the fourteen provided for the evacuation and restoration of Belgium and northern France. The Europeans wanted more: reparation for all damage done to all Allied civilians and their property. The president's note of 5 November 1918 appeared to agree; but in the end, as we saw, the leaders agreed to park the issue until the peace conference.[6]

John Maynard Keynes attended the conference as chief adviser to the treasury, but resigned before the treaty was signed, returning to write *The Economic Consequences of the Peace.* Under the influence of this polemic, published in December 1919, public

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[1] *Against the Tide*, pp. 144-5; p. 10 above.
[2] Golo Mann, p. 556.
[3] Adam Hochschild, p. 348; Adrian Gregory, p. 253; Margaret MacMillan, p. 28.
[4] Quoted in Adam Hochschild, p. 347.
[5] See W.H. Parker, *An Historical Geography of Russia*, pp. 276, 282.
[6] Wilson references: J.M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, pp. 57,105.

opinion in Britain and the United States came increasingly to see the treaty as "Carthaginian" in its treatment of Germany: slicing off territory in the east, confiscating its colonies, shrinking its army and navy, compelling it and its allies (under article 231) to accept responsibility for all the damage caused by the war, and imposing impossible reparations to recover the whole cost, including separation allowances and war pensions.[1]

Indeed it was seen on the Left in this way at the time, most powerfully perhaps in the cartoon by Will Dyson showing the hard-faced Allied leaders emerging from their discussions. Clemenceau in front, turning his massive head, remarks, "Curious! I seem to hear a child weeping!" Sobbing behind a pillar, face to the wall, a naked infant is identified as "1940 class." The drawing appeared in the *Herald*, now a daily again, on 17 May 1919.[2]

When the treaty was signed the *Herald* reported scenes of jubilation, only surpassed by armistice night. Inside Arthur Henderson was writing that on territorial questions, on reparations, on armaments, "the provisions are more in the nature of an emulation of the brutal demands made at Brest Litovsk than an application of the principles for which the Allies and America were said to be fighting." "The moral sense of all intelligent men and women in every country is outraged by such a Treaty," wrote Philip Snowden in *Labour Leader*. Until it is revoked, "the nations of Europe will… live in an atmosphere of fear, hatred and the menace of war." [3]

Dyson's cartoon is not included in Margaret MacMillan's book on the treaty. The leading authority on the subject, she argues that "the picture of a Germany crushed by a vindictive peace cannot be sustained." It did lose territory, but if Germany had won in the west it would have taken a slice too, as Brest Litovsk showed. When reparations were finally set in 1921 at 132 billion gold marks, or £6.6 billion, Germany in reality was committed to pay less than half that sum. In the end she may have paid 22 million gold marks (£1.1 billion), probably rather less than France paid Germany after the Franco-Prussian war.[4]

MacMillan concedes that Germany's first democracy never recovered from the double burden of the "stab-in-the-back" myth and the signing of the treaty. Presented with an ultimatum, it signed after much debate and agonising, under the threat of invasion and a renewal of the blockade, partially lifted at the end of March. By way of mitigation she maintains that article 231, denounced inaccurately as the "war guilt" clause, only became an issue because the Germans chose to make it so, unlike the Austrian and Hungarian governments who had similar clauses in their peace treaties.[5]

The fact remains that the perceived injustice and bad faith of the *Diktat* fractured civil society, discredited democracy and prepared the ground for Hitler. True, the treaty

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[1] This outcome Keynes blames on Clemenceau's implacable determination to keep Germany down and on Wilson's ill-prepared slow-mindedness in his dealings with him and Lloyd George. (pp. 31-2, 36-42) Margaret MacMillan's meticulous account shows this to be a gross simplification.
[2] The cartoon is headed "Peace and Future Cannon Fodder."
[3] *Daily Herald*, 30 June 1919; *Labour Leader*, 3 July 1919.
[4] Margaret MacMillan, Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World, pp. 480-2.
[5] *ibid*., pp. 466, 471, 478; blockade: p.160.

opened with a vision of a new world order in the shape of the covenant of the League of Nations; but initially Germany was not allowed to join. Keynes largely ignores the League. Instead he stresses that the treaty contained "no provisions for the economic rehabilitation of Europe,- nothing to make the defeated Central Powers into good neighbours, nothing to stabilise the new States of Europe, nothing to reclaim Russia.." [1]

It was not Versailles which brought Hitler to power, MacMillan concludes elsewhere, but rather the economic slump that devastated Germany from 1929 on, plus "the folly of those upper-class Germans" who thought they could use Nazi support and discard it.[2] Reynolds adds in other factors, including the argument that post-war inflation was in part engineered by German governments, and that a relentlessly deflationary policy in 1930-32 exacerbated Germany's depression.[3] But - pursuing this question into the Weimar Republic would take us too far from the matter in hand.

The war, as sealed by the peace treaty, brought liberation and nationhood to other peoples: to the Poles under Jósef Piłsudski, to the Czech and Slovaks under Tomáš Maseryk, and to others further afield. Both men had headed national legions, a Polish one formed to fight with Austria against the Russians, the Czech one formed of prisoners-of-war by the Russians to fight the Habsburgs.[4]

Just before the great crash Lord Lansdowne's first biographer surveyed the international landscape and asked, "[H]as the knock-out blow…brought the benefits which were anticipated?" He enumerates:

"Germany was crushed and the Allies were able to force their own terms upon her; but she is rapidly recovering…The Austro-Hungarian Empire has been destroyed, but can it be claimed honestly that the disappearance of that Empire has been an unmixed benefit? … The injustices contained in some of the treaties, and the violation of the ethnographic frontiers, have created feelings of exasperation which may some day find vent in another explosion; the War which was to "make the world safe for democracy" has resulted in the setting up of half a dozen dictatorships, and every belligerent country is hampered by a crushing debt, while the lowering cloud of Bolshevism threatens Western civilization."

Newton might have added the weakness of the League of Nations. He published the above in 1929, and so must have written it in 1927-8 when the Nazis were at their low-point. It's a weighty charge-list, even without Hitler. He concludes:

> A negotiated peace, though it might have disappointed many aspirations, would certainly have erected a more permanent European settlement than exists at present day. Millions of lives would have been saved and the load of human misery substantially reduced.[5]

Reynolds quotes historians, memorialists and cultural commentators to the effect that the Great War was nothing less than the greatest error of modern history, that it started a descent into darkness that normalised collective violence, that it was the primal

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[1] J.M. Keynes, p. 211.
[2] Margaret MacMillan, "The Consequences of Mr Keynes".
[3] David Reynolds, pp. 135-9.
[4] *ibid*., pp. 8-12.
[5] Lord Newton, pp. 482-3.

catastrophe determining the flow of the entire twentieth century.[1] However you massage and try and qualify their verdict, it seems to me they are right.

Lord Lansdowne had foreseen something of this when he wrote, "[J]ust as this war has been more dreadful than any war in history, so we may be sure would the next war be even more dreadful than this. The prostitution of science for purposes of pure destruction is not likely to stop short." [2]

During the fighting, from the perspective of Vienna, the satirist Karl Kraus mocked and flayed the patriots and military on his side of the conflict. Afterwards he put his critique together in a 209-scene drama. It mixes cabaret sketches and argument with scenes of grim realism. It ends with an expressionist phantasmagoria of despair in which finally an unborn child pleads to be aborted. Kraus called it *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* - The Last Days of Mankind.[3]

In the light of such judgments, in the light of the slaughter, the suffering and the serial military incompetence - the sustained and often heroic resistance of the COs and other anti-war campaigners seems absolutely justified. Were they naïve about German good faith? Yes probably, though there were genuine partisans of compromise over there - not only in parliament, as we saw, but also within the German foreign office.[4]

All honour to the resisters. They deserve to be remembered and celebrated, in Southwark as elsewhere. Arthur Creech Jones, in his cell in Pentonville, heard the guns boom out on the morning of Armistice Day. He wrote that he wanted to creep away and weep. "I saw in a gradual vision the despairing minds & sad & desolate hearts, the tragedy of it all, the cruelty & wrongs it had brought, the fair, joyous youths who had gone – those of my own friends who by turns had laughed & played with me - the happiness gone for ever, the ghastly cost that had impoverished so much of the essential richness of life…"

> Yet the guns boomed, the sirens whistled, the crowds cheered, the bells rang & the streets were full of song. And in my secret heart I was glad that I had been able to hold firm & see it through. My protest against war was "my bit," my contribution to the nation's life & thought. Joy came to me that destiny had given me this work. [5]

[1] David Reynolds, pp. 409, 398. He is quoting Niall Ferguson, the TV series "The Great War and the Shaping of the Twentieth Century" and the Historial de la Grande Guerre at Péronne – a joint French, German and British commemoration of the Somme. Reynolds, pp. 409 and 398.
[2] *Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 1917.
[3] Niall Ferguson (pp. xxiii-iv) records watching a rare staging by Glasgow Citizens' Theatre. It was, he writes, "the most powerful theatrical experience I have ever had."
[4] Simon Kerry, chapter 39. They included count von Brockdorff-Rantzau, who as foreign minister led the German delegation at Versailles. Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, p. 460.
[5] Creech Jones archive, box 1, file 3, 13 November 1918.

Honours board

What follows is a narrative version for Bermondsey, Southwark and Camberwell extracted from Cyril Pearce's national database of conscientious objectors, as it stood in April 2019, and to which I have contributed. During the centenary of 14-18 the Imperial War Museum converted the database to a user-friendly search facility. This remains available in the museum's permanent digital memory of the First World War at

https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/searchlives/filter/contribution%3DConscientious%2BObjector – but is no longer updated. Up-dated versions in Microsoft Access are available to readers at the library of Friends House in London and at the Working Class Movement Library in Salford. The Register, as I call it, is supplemented where relevant with information from the service records of the Friends' Ambulance Unit at http://fau.quaker.org.uk

Despite Cyril's superhuman efforts over many years it remains a fragmentary record, often very much so. Even where the facts are clear it is inevitably a summary account and so in a way fails to do justice to the principled tenacity of the absolutists (marked *) in putting themselves through repeated terms of hard labour. Yet: if we read in sequence it does collectively convey the determination with which these mostly forgotten men in particular remained true to their consciences.

The Register brings them into slightly clearer focus as individuals, showing the streets they lived in, what their occupation was - though by no means always. The question of motivation is more problematic. Membership of the ILP or the Society of Friends gives an indication, but often the record is blank, and doubtless the claims of religious allegiance put before tribunals were sometimes a fiction. Equally a good many COs in prison claimed to be Quakers in order to be visited by a sympathetic Quaker chaplain. He also provided a means of keeping in touch with family, friends and the wider anti-war movement. Sometimes a man's religious belief seems to be in conflict with his political views. When he has doubts Cyril puts these professions of faith in inverted commas. I have omitted membership of the FoR branch at Princetown, which quite a few men joined after arrival there.

From the evidence before us it's clear that clerks, white-collar workers and lesser managers predominate over manual and craft workers. Within Bermondsey and Camberwell at least there are clusters of resistance, some more obvious than others. I say more about this in the introduction to each borough. The figures given there for absolutists include men who were not offered the Home Office scheme and a handful who for whatever reason returned to prison from the camps.

The Register does necessarily spell out the verdict of the Military (later National) Service Tribunal. Where exemption was refused altogether or they wanted absolute exemption, objectors could appeal. If turned down again, they had to choose between complying or refusing to serve.

A reminder of the process which followed may be useful here. "Arrested for failing to report" means that the individual ignored the summons to the recruiting office. He might do this either without applying to a tribunal, or alternatively after having lost his case for exemption. Such men were then arrested, taken before a magistrate, fined, and marched off under escort. At the barracks the resisters would refuse to obey orders, which meant court martial and gaol. Many men granted conditional exemption rejected alternative service – with the Non-Combatant Corps, or by undertaking work supposedly of national importance under the Pelham committee – and so came before a court martial by that route.

In June 1916 the government sought to clear the prisons by having cases reviewed by the Central Tribunal. Those whose conscientious objection was deemed genuine were offered the opportunity of transferring to custodial work camps under what was known as the Home

Office scheme. A majority of the men accepted, but a hard core rejected this option on principle. Approximate figures are set out in chapter 16 of *Against the Tide.*

The numbers locally have been adjusted compared with the figures given in that previous volume. On the one hand, more objectors have come to light; on the other, a few turned out to be doubles, while one or two lived over the borough boundary. Finally, a number leave so little trace in the record that they have been quietly laid to rest.

Dulwich's NCF branch took in men from the whole of the borough. It also attracted men from Lewisham and Deptford, which did not an NCF branch of their own. I have as far as possible excluded these from the Camberwell list which follows. The biographies of all COs from those two boroughs can be found in Ann O'Brien's excellent compilation on: http://lewishamfww.wikidot.com/conscientious-objection-in-lewisham-and-deptford-1916-1919 I have also separated out a small number of men who, having resisted compulsion, then went on to accept military service. Their names appear at the end of the Southwark and Camberwell lists.

Names that recur as places of court martial are Fovant and Hurdcott – next to each other on Salisbury Plain – Chiseldon, near Swindon, and Denton, outside Newhaven. Blackdown, near Farnborough (Hants), is now known as Deepcut Barracks.

The location of most Home office camps and work centres is obvious enough. Princetown was the old prison on Dartmoor, now cleared of its convicts. Less familiar perhaps are Balachulish and Caolasnacon – both near Glencoe in the Scottish highlands. At Balachulish COs laboured in the quarries, as they did at Dyce, outside Aberdeen.

Finally, FoR is the Christian-pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation. IBSA is the International Bible Students' Association, a forerunner of the Jehovah's Witnesses. BSP is the marxist British Socialist Party. RAMC stands for Royal Army Medical Corps.

BERMONDSEY

Total: 57. Absolutists: 10. There are a couple of clusters here. Though not always apparent in what follows, we know from press reports that objectors included men associated with the Adult School at Bermondsey Settlement, either as students or teachers. It's not necessarily clear what their involvement was, though they evidently came under the influence of Alfred Salter. Rather fainter is a grouping of men attached to the Baptist Church in Drummond Road (still going as City Hope Church).

BALLIET Arthur B.
no address
Engineer's fitter, single. Told the tribunal he was a believer in Jesus Christ: granted conditional exemption. No further information.

BIGNALL G.R.
no address
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Winchester September 1917: one year's hard labour, sent to Wormwood Scrubs. No further information.

***BOULTER Harold Cornelius**
32 Union Road, Rotherhithe
Aged 22 in 1918, jeweller's assistant, Christadelphian. Court-martialled Blackdown June 1917: six months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Deemed unconvincing (class B) by Central Tribunal, so was not offered transfer to the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Blackdown November 1917: one year's hard labour, but with remission from December 1917 to April 1918, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Blackdown November 1918: 18 months' hard labour. Temporarily released from Winchester prison for 28 days from February 1919, then transferred to Wormwood Scrubs.

BOWES Jack W.G.
229 Lynton Road, Bermondsey
Refused exemption March 1916. Court-martialled Hurdcott June 1916: nine months' hard labour, commuted to six months. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred to road-mending at Clare (Suffolk) August 1916, ending in Princetown August 1918.

BOXALL Bertram John
135 Long Lane, Bermondsey
Aged 24 in 1916, draft stamper with the Inland Revenue, Sunday school secretary at Drummond Road Baptist Church, single.
Refused exemption March 1916. Court-martialled Fovant June 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to four. He accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred to Dyce August 1916. No further information.

BOXALL William James Lewis
same address,
Brother of the above**, a**ged 31 in 1916, advertising clerk, member of the ILP and NCF, "Congregationalist", single.
Refused exemption March 1916, he was arrested for failing to report and refused to serve when referred to the Non-Combatant Corps. Court-martialled Seaford June 1916: 84 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme, and was transferred from Maidstone prison to Dyce August 1916, like his brother. A member of the men's committee there. Transferred thereafter to Ballachulish, Wakefield and Princetown.

***BROWN Frank E.**
Bermondsey, no address
Caretaker/machine-minder at Bermondsey Labour Co-operative Bakery
and ILP member.
Previously exempted on business grounds. September 1917 granted conditional exemption on grounds of conscience: referred to the Non-Combatant Corps but refused to serve. Court-martialled Kingston on Thames February 1918: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Canterbury June 1918: two years' hard labour. Still in Canterbury prison May 1919.

BUDD George
Keeton's Road, Bermondsey
Aged 17, hairdresser's apprentice, member of Drummond Road Baptist Church. Refused exemption. No further detail.

BUZZARD Robert A
Bermondsey, no address
Aged 18 in 1916, clerk.
Accepted work of national importance August 1916: employed on farm work at Moreton-in-Marsh and Stratford upon Avon August 1916 to February 1917.
No further detail.

CALLEN Walter William
25 Keeton's Road,
Bermondsey
Aged 21 in 1915, YMCA worker, single.
Served with the Friends' Ambulance Unit November 1915 to April 1919: initially in York, then from April 1916 as an orderly in Dunkirk.

CATCHPOLE G.
Bermondsey, no address
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow December 1916: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Accepted the Home Office scheme: at Princetown August 1917.

CAUSTON William
219 Alderminster Road,
Bermondsey
Aged 34 in 1916, tailor's cutter, single.
Told the tribunal he believed in the sanctity of life and the brotherhood of man. Refused exemption March 1916 and, claiming tuberculosis of the knee, was referred to the doctor. Discharged as unfit from Mill Hill Barracks June 1916.

CLARK William Thomas
25 Lynton Road, Bermondsey
Aged 22 in 1916, civil servant, single.
Served in the Non-Combatant Corps: at home from March 1916, in France from May 1916.

COCKETT William Harold
8 Drappers Road,
Bermondsey
Aged 19 in 1916, chemist's assistant, Unitarian.
Exempted as belonging to a certified occupation March 1916. Court-martialled Longbridge Deverill (Wilts) January 1917: six months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown.

***COLMAN** (or COLEMAN)
Ernest William
no address
Aged 20 in 1917, draughtsman, single.
Refused exemption as "political" March 1916. Arrested for not reporting. Court-martialled Longbridge Deverill December 1916: six months' hard labour. Refused the Home Office scheme. Transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Wandsworth, released March 1917 by order of the GOC. Court-martialled Teignmouth April 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Exeter prison. Court-martialled Blackdown September 1917: eighteen months' hard labour. Released from Wandsworth December 1918.

COLMAN (or COLEMAN**)**
Harold
no address
Brother of the above. Granted conditional exemption March 1916. No further detail.

CONS George Joseph (or James)
36 Larnaca Street,
Bermondey
Aged 23 in 1916, teacher, member of Bermondsey Adult School, religious, single.
Granted absolute exemption March 1916. Sought to renew his exemption January 1917: directed to work of national importance and employed on farm work (or market gardening) at Isleworth February 1917 to December 1918. Convalesced at Fairby Grange after a breakdown in health.

***DAKIN Samuel Herbert**
Fort Road, Bermondsey
Aged 24 in 1916, employee at a leather factors, "Quaker", single. Told the tribunal he was unwilling to undertake non-combatant service: refused exemption March 1916. Court-martialled Hurdcott June 1916: one year's hard labour, commuted to four months. Accepted the Home Office scheme and transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Clare (Suffolk) August 1916. Rejecting (or rejected by) the scheme, and returned to his unit, he was court-martialled Fovant October 1916: nine months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs and Wandsworth. Court-martialled Newton Abbot May 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to one year, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Blackdown March 1918: two years' hard labour, served in Wandsworth.

***DENNETT Frank Cecil**
243 St. James' Road, Bermondsey
Aged 18 in 1917, laboratory assistant, "Quaker" involved with Adult School, single
Court-martialled Wimbledon October 1917: two years' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme, transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford November 1917. Rejected (or rejected by) the scheme, he returned to prison. Released from Pentonville June 1919.

EARY Charles William
72 Upper Grange Road, Bermondsey
Aged 35 in 1916, commercial clerk,
Granted conditional exemption March 1916. No further information.

ESMOND Alfred William
104 Lower Road, Rotherhithe
Aged 24 in 1916, manufacturing milliner.
Accepted work of national importance: employed on farm work at Edgware August 1916 to December 1918.

GAMBLE Charles
5 Catlin Street, Bermondsey
Aged 36 in 1917, Quaker.
Court-martialled Hounslow July 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Wakefield August 1917, then to Princetown and Knutsford.

GORDON Harold R.
269 Fort Road, Bermondsey
Aged 28, secretary, involved with Drummond Road Baptist church.
Arrested - while conducting a Band of Hope meeting there - for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow February 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Brockenhurst (New Forest) July 1917, and from there to Princetown.

GUEST Cyril
31 Credon Street, Bermondsey
Aged 30 in 1916, shipping clerk, single.
Arrested for failing to report. Refused to sign army papers. Court-martialled Winchester January 1917: two years' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown March 1917: member of the Orpheus choir there. Transferred to Penderyn waterworks December 1918

HAZLITT William Joseph
Maze Pond, Bermondsey
Told the tribunal he was a disciple of Tolstoy, single. Given absolute exemption March 1916; the Military Representative said he would appeal. No further information.

***HOARE Albert James**
c/o Dr Salter, 5 Stork's Road, Bermondsey
Aged 21 in 1916, tailor, Wesleyan (or Congregationalist).
Court-martialled Hurdcott July 1916: six months' hard labour, served in Winchester prison. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Hurdcott November 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to four months, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Court-martialled Newton Abbot April 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to one year, served in Exeter prison. Court-martialled Blackdown February 1918: two years' hard labour. Released from Wandsworth on health grounds October 1918.

HOLMES Bertie Reginald
462 Southwark Park Road, Bermondsey
Aged 19 in 1916, engineer and YMCA worker, Church of England, single.
Served at home with the Non-Combatant Corps August 1916 to December 1919.

JACKSON Herbert Spenser
43/47 Jamaica Road, Bermondsey
Aged 20 in 1915, engineering student, Church of England, single.
Served with the Friends' Ambulance Unit November 1915 to January 1919, initially at York, then from April 1916 as a driver and mechanic based at Dunkirk. Awarded the Croix de Guerre 1918.

LARDENT Frederick Jethro
95 Southwark Park Road, Bermondsey
Aged 30 in 1916, optician.
Applied to the tribunal on both conscientious and business grounds. Granted exemption on the latter as work of national importance.

Le CLERQUE Francis Renouf
143 Keeton's Road, Bermondsey
Aged 42 in 1918, clerk, Quaker, member of FoR and Bermondsey Adult School, married.
Referred to the Non-Combatant Corps but refused to serve. Court-martialled Mill Hill June 1918: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown August 1918.

***LEVY William**
5 Ernest Street, Bermondsey
Aged 25 in 1916, baker and trade unionist, "Quaker."
Court-martialled Hurdcott June 1916: nine months' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Fovant November 1916: two years' hard labour, commuted to 112 days, served in Exeter prison. Court-martialled Newton Abbot February 1917: two years' hard labour commuted to one year, served at Exeter. Court-martialled Blackdown January 1918: two years' hard labour. Released from Wandsworth on health grounds March 1919.

LEWIS Archie F.
92 Southwark Park Road, Bermondsey
Dr Salter's private secretary, ILP member, secretary of Bermondsey NCF branch. Granted conditional exemption subject to undertaking work of national importance. Employed on farm work at Restbury Park, Cheltenham, September 1916 to February 1917, then as a pig man on the Cliveden estate, near Maidenhead.

LUKER Charles
Bermondsey, no address
Boot and shoe salesman. Granted conditional exemption subject to undertaking work of national importance. Initially employed on farm work, then he fell ill and moved to British Ever-Ready, in Holloway, October 1916. Tribunal not happy. Worked at the Throat Hospital, Golden Square, November 1916 to August 1918

***McLEOD C. Norman**
78 Delaford Road, South Bermondsey
Aged 23 in 1917, baker, Quaker and NCF member.
Court-martialled Hounslow March 1917: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Hounslow July 1917: two years' hard labour. Released from Pentonville April 1919.

McLEOD William Andrew
same address
Probably a brother of the above, aged 20 in 1917, Quaker.
Court-martialled Hounslow July 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Wakefield August 1917, and from there to Knutsford.

***MUNDY James**
12 Fawcett Road, Rotherhithe
Aged 25 in 1916, clerk, "Primitive Methodist/Quaker"
Court-martialled Hurdcott July 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to 112 days, served in Winchester prison. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Fovant October 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to four months, served in Wormwood Scrubs and Wandsworth. Court-martialled Torquay April 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to one year, served in Exeter prison. Court-martialled Blackdown February 1918: two years' hard labour. Released from Wandsworth on medical grounds February 1919.

NIX John William
5 Catlin Street, Bermondsey
Aged 23 in 1916, railway booking clerk.
Court-martialled Hurdcott June 1916: one year' hard labour, commuted to eight months. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs, reported at Denton October 1916.

NIX Leonard Thomas
same address
Brother of the above**,** aged 18 in 1916.
Court-martialled Hurdcott June 1916: nine months' hard labour, commuted to six months. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs, reported at Denton October 1916.

NIX Sidney Richard
same address
A third brother, aged 25 in 1916, carrier's clerk.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Fovant December 1916: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs, reported at Princetown May 1917.

PHILLIPS Edgar Hallier
no address
Aged 18 in 1916, clerk.
Granted conditional exemption subject to undertaking work of national importance. Employed on farm work September 1916 to February 1917 first at Moreton-in-Marsh, then at Tintern. Concerned that he was being paid too little, the tribunal and Pelham committee insisted he should get at least 10s a week. No further detail.

PURDY F.W.
20 Beatrice Road, Bermondsey
Clerk, Methodist, single.
Granted conditional exemption, he was referred to Non-Combatant Corps but refused to serve. Court-martialled Shoreham-by-Sea June 1916: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Lewes prison, reported at Denton August 1916.

REYNOLDS Walter Ernest
104 Southwark Park Road, Bermondsey
Aged 19 in 1916, Baptist.
Court-martialled Fovant June 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to four months. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Winchester prison to Clare (Suffolk) August 1916 and from there to Dyce, Wakefield and Princetown.

ROSE William
30 Arnold's Place, Dockhead, Bermondsey
Aged 18 in 1917. Wesleyan.
Court-martialled Welbeck camp (Worksop) June 1917: one year's hard labour, served in Wandsworth and Derby detention barracks. No further detail.

SADLER James Leslie
1 Neptune Street, Rotherhithe
Aged 36 in 1918, carpenter and joiner, married.
Granted conditional exemption subject to performing work of national importance. The Pelham committee considered his work at Rotherhithe Infirmary counted as this, but Bermondsey tribunal insisted he work on the land. Employed on farm work, first at Colchester, then at Loughton (Essex) February 1917 to August 1918. Thereafter worked as a carpenter and joiner at Fairby Grange.

SCOTT P.H.
no address
LCC clerk.
Granted conditional exemption subject to undertaking work of national importance. Worked in a local bakery (probably the Labour Co-op Bakery) from September 1916: not approved by Bermondsey tribunal. From December 1916 employed on farm work at Swanley (Kent). Transferred to farm work at Fairby Grange August 1918.

SIMS W.O.
Bermondsey, no address
Accountant's clerk.
Granted conditional exemption subject to performing work of national importance. Allowed to stay in post until October 1916, then transferred to farm work at Edgware, followed by market-gardening in Enfield and similar work at Waltham Cross. After an appendix operation in September 1917 transferred to clerical work with British Farina Millers, address unclear.

SLOAT Alfred George
45 Lafone Street, Bermondsey
Court-martialled Teignmouth February 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Balachulish April 1917 and from there to Wakefield and Princetown.

SMITH Thomas George
76 Weston Street, Bermondsey
Aged 22 in 1916, clerk, member of the Plymouth Brethren.
Served at home with the Non-Combatant Corps July 1916 to December 1919.

STUBBS W.G.
Bermondsey, no address
Warehouseman. Granted conditional exemption subject to performing work of national importance. Worked as a labourer at Yardley's Flour Wharf, Rotherhithe, August 1916 to March 1917. Sought a transfer to a wholesale druggist's in Bermondsey, as the work was too heavy for him. No further detail.

THURSTON John J.
no address
Single, he applied on both conscientious and domestic grounds: granted three months' exemption. Outcome unclear.

VIRGO Sydney James Edward
31 Balaclava Road, Bermondsey
Aged 21 in 1915, undergraduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, single.
Served in the Friends' Ambulance Unit as an orderly in Dunkirk and Abbeville July 1915 to January 1919.

VOLLER Albert Edward
no address
Clerk at Peek Frean's biscuit factory, single.
Told the tribunal he had been accepted for missionary work in Australia: granted conditional exemption. No further information.

VOLLER J.E.
no address
Brother of the above.
Spoke to the tribunal of the "fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man." Refused exemption. No further information.

***WHITEMAN Walter William**
189 Lynton Road, Bermondsey
Aged 26 in 1916, tea-blender, NCF member, "Quaker."
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Newton Abbot December 1916: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Blackdown June 1917: 18 month's hard labour, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Blackdown April 1918: 18 months' hard labour, served in Wandsworth. Released temporarily January 1919 after a hunger strike. Released finally April 1919.

WIGGINS Albert
23 Catlin Street, Bermondsey
Aged 18 in 1916.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Torquay January 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown.

WIGGINS Henry
Same address
Brother of the above, aged 21 in 1916, accountant, single, member of the NCF and ILP.
He told the tribunal he had resigned from Oakley Place (Methodist) chapel because of their support for the war.
Granted conditional exemption and referred to the Non-Combatant Corps, he refused to serve. Court-martialled Seaford June 1916: 98 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Maidstone prison to Dyce August 1916, and from there to Princetown.

ZUCH William Charles
10 Parker's Row, Bermondsey
Aged 31 in 1916, clerk, born in Germany, son of a registered German.
Refused exemption. No further information.

SOUTHWARK

Total: 32. Absolutists: 7. No clusters apparent here.

***ABEL, Walter John**
1 Furley Cottages, Nelson Square, Blackfriars
Aged 36 in 1917, manager, ILP member, 'Unitarian.'
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Winchester October 1916: six months' hard labour. Refused the Home Office scheme. Hunger-struck in Wormwood Scrubs December 1916 and was force-fed nine times. Transferrred to Wandsworth. Court-martialled Winchester April 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Winchester September 1917: two years' hard labour, served in Wandsworth. Released April 1919.

There's a mystery here: an "Abel, W.J." is listed in Dulwich NCF's 1917 booklet as one of the Dulwich absolutists still in prison, having come before Camberwell tribunal.

ALLEN Robert William
99 Darwin Buildings,
Crail Row, Walworth
Aged 22 in 1916, postman, married.
Granted conditional exemption: served at home in the Non-Combatant Corps from June 1916.

BENWELL Frederick Henry
88 Deacon Street, Southwark
Aged 30 in 1917, head of family grocer's, Wesleyan, single.
Court-martialled Kingston on Thames December 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford January 1918

CLARK Albert
Southwark, no address
Window-cleaner.
Told the tribunal human life was sacred. Granted conditional exemption and referred to the Non-Combatant Corps July 1916. No further information.

***CLEMENCE Henry Edward**
21 Falmouth Road, Borough.
Aged 32 in 1917, baker's roundsman, trade unionist and Congregationalist. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Winchester February 1917: two years' hard labour, evidently commuted, served in Winchester prison. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Winchester May 1917: two years' hard labour, served at Winchester. Court-martialled Heacham (Norfolk) February 1919: two years' hard labour. Temporarily released from Winchester February 1919. Finally released April 1919.

DAWS William David
75 Douglas Buildings,
Marshalsea Road, Borough
Aged 38 in 1916, postman, married.
Granted conditional exemption and referred to the Non-Combatant Corps August 1916. Court-martialled February 1917 while with the NCC at Aldershot: six months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown April 1917.

GUTTERIDGE A. E.
Southwark, no address
Commission agent.
Told the tribunal he had promised his mother he would never join the army.
Refused exemption. No further information.

HAWKES Albert James
15 Phelp Street, Walworth
Aged 30 in 1916, lithographic machine minder.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hazeley Down (Winchester) October 1916: 23 months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme November 1916: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Ballachulish, and from there to Caolasnacon, Wakefield and Knutsford.

HAWKES John William
same address, brother of the above.
Provisions dispatcher for a restaurant and former Fircroft College student. Granted conditional exemption and referred to the Non-Combatant Corps but refused to serve. Court-martialled Warwick September 1916: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred March 1917 from Wormwood Scrubs to Wakefield, then to Knutsford.

***HAWKINS William Albert**
5 **Industrial Buildings,**
Gambia Street, Blackfriars
Aged 28 in 1917, NCF member and "Quaker."
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Wimbledon August 1917: two years' hard labour. Refused the Home Office scheme. Served his sentence in Wormwood Scrubs, Wandsworth and Brixton prisons. Released April 1919.

HILLIARD Walter Ernest
293 New Kent Road
Aged 28 in 1916, market porter, Baptist, single.
Granted conditional exemption. Served with the Non-Combatant Corps initially in Bedford, then from May 1916 to January 1919 in France.

***HOLNESS William**
Walworth.
Aged 27 in 1917, Congregationalist
Court-martialled Hounslow March 1917: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Hounslow July 1917: two years' hard labour.

HURST A.
Southwark, no address
Named by John Graham (p.323) as one of the 71 conscientious objectors who died in prison or after release. No other information.

JARVIS Robert
59 Larcom Street, Walworth
Aged 24 in 1916, clerk, Baptist, married.
Granted conditional exemption June 1916. Served at home in the Non-Combatant Corps, transferred to the RAMC October 1918.

JEACOCK William Robert George
1a Alsace Street, Walworth
Aged 18 in 1918, clerk, single.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Chelsea February 1918: two years' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme and transferred from Wormwood Scrubs April 1918. No further detail.

***KING Arthur Douglas**
13 Beckway Street, Walworth
Aged 24 in 1917, tobacco stower, NCF member.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hazeley Down (Winchester) October 1916: two years' hard labour, evidently commuted, served in Wandsworth. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Winchester February 1917: two years' hard labour, evidently commuted again, served in Winchester prison. Court-martialled Winchester July 1917: two years' hard labour. Court-martialled Chelsea March 1919: two years' hard labour. Released from Wandsworth April 1919.

LEARY Albert Thomas
65 Long Lane, Borough
Member of the ILP, NCF and FoR. Court-martialled Fovant June 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to two months, served in Winchester prison. Accepted the Home Office scheme: at Dyce October 1916 and at Denton August 1917.

LINDARS Cecil Henry
no address
Brewer and Christadelphian
Referred to the Non-Combatant Corps March 1916. No further information.

***MASON Alfred**
42 Union Road, Borough
Aged 27 in 1916, tobacco worker, NCF member.
Court-martialled Fovant June 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to two months.
Court-martialled Hurdcott August 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to 112 days.
Accepted the Home Office scheme and transferred first to Dyce, then to Denton. Rejecting (or rejected by) the Home Office scheme, court-martialled Torquay March 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Exeter prison.
Court-martialled Chisledon December 1918: 18 months' hard labour. Released from Portsmouth prison April 1919.

NYE Oscar Sears
70 Boyson Road, Walworth
Aged 26 in 1916, stock clerk, Baptist, single.
Offered to join the RAMC or Red Cross. Referred instead to the Non-Combatant Corps, where he served at home September 1916 to November 1919.

RICHARDS Ernest Melville
and
RICHARDS Henry Burnleigh
no address.
Brothers, they sought exemption on religious grounds. One, given one month's exemption, asked for non-combatant service. The other – unclear.

ROGERS James P.
Southwark, no address
Post office sorter and member of Plymouth Brethren.
Refused exemption March 1916. No further information.

***ROSE Aylmer**
Nelson Square, Blackfriars
Organising secretary of NCF, member of the ILP and Fabian Society.
Refused exemption, then arrested for failing to report.
Court-martialled Felixstowe June 1916: two years' hard labour, commuted to one year.
Court-martialled Guildford January 1917: eighteen months' hard labour. His health broken, he accepted the Home office scheme: transferred at Princetown April 1917, where he was contact man for NCF head office in the factional disputes there. His health restored, he returned to prison.
Court-martialled Colchester June 1917: two years' hard labour, served in Ipswich prison.
Court-martialled Clacton February 1919: two years' hard labour. Released from Ipswich prison April 1919.

SCRACE George William
8 Fremantle Street, Walworth
Aged 43 in 1918, rent collector, Congregationalist.
Granted conditional exemption: served in the Non-Combatant Corps at home September 1918 to January 1919.

SLY Charles Edward
11 Berryfield Road, Newington
Aged 37 in 1917, boot clicker, member of IBSA, married.
Referred to the Non-Combatant Corps but refused to serve.
Court-martialled Canterbury November 1917: six months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford January 1918, and from there to Princetown.

SMITH James Mack
130 Lorrimore Road, Walworth
Aged 24 in 1916, printer's warehouseman.
Applied to the tribunal on religious grounds, Granted conditional exemption but refused non-combatant service.
Arrested for failing to report June 1916. No further information.

STANISLAS William
42 Paragon Road, Walworth
Aged 24 in 1916, bookseller's assistant, single.
Detained at Mill Hill barracks after refusing to sign his army papers but seems not to have been court-martialled. Served at home with the Non-Combatant Corps from September 1916; transferred October 1918 to the RAMC training depot, Blackpool.

STEIN –
no address
Two brothers in the bakery business, their parents of German origin. The elder quoted the fifth commandment. Exemption refused. No further information.

TOWNSEND W.
no address
Upholsterer, married.
Work of national importance: the tribunal felt he would serve his country in his present job, on condition he joined the special police.

WOOD George
New Kent Road
Aged 28 in 1917, Pentecostalist missionary.
Referred to the Non-Combatant Corps but refused to serve.
Court-martialled Warley July 1917: six months' hard labour.
Accepted the Home Office scheme and transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford December 1917.

The following enlisted after initially resisting the call-up:

RIVETT Henry Charles
60 New Street, Kennington
Aged 26 in 1916, stock clerk, married.
Told the tribunal he did not think it right to fight. Refused exemption March 1916, then joined up, serving with the King's Royal Rifle Corps, first at home, then July to September 1917 in France, where he was wounded in the arm.

STYLES Leonard James
Tabard Street, Borough
Aged 22 in 1916, basket maker, single.
He cited Christ's teachings and said he was making "medical" baskets: refused exemption March 1916. He may then have enlisted with the Royal West Surreys

CAMBERWELL

Total: 152. Absolutists: 30; possibly a handful more (W.T. Andrews, Thompson, Thorne) where the record is unclear. The overall figure is fairly evenly divided between the three parts of the borough. Forty-five men (including 13 absolutists) lived in Camberwell and 50 in Peckham, which I distinguish by the present-day postcode, SE5 being Camberwell and SE15 Peckham or Nunhead (total 5).

Forty-three came from Dulwich, and predominantly from East Dulwich - essentially SE22 but here concentrated within the wedge of streets bounded by East Dulwich Road, Lordship Lane and Barry Road. (My thanks to Brian Green for his local expertise.) Hansler Hall, just off Lordship Lane, was located here. This was the centre for the meetings and social activities of Dulwich Independent Labour Party. It was also the base from which the Dulwich branch of the NCF operated, drawing in men from across the borough and from Lewisham and Deptford, as explained in the introduction.

"Dulwich NCF" means the individual is named in the booklet *What are Conscientious Objectors?* published by the NCF branch in 1917. This contains two lists, one headed "Dulwich 'absolutists' still in prison," the other "Dulwich men who, after court-martial, have served terms of imprisonment because of their principles." The latter are men who accepted the Home Office scheme, though the distinction is not spelled out. Despite the headings not all of them lived in Dulwich or in Camberwell, so where addresses are missing it's possible one or two from Lewisham or Deptford may have slipped through.

***ALBERY Reginald Wyvil**
45 Farmers Road, Camberwell
Aged 24 in 1917, box-maker, secretary of Lambeth Labour Representation Committee, member of Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Ware-housemen and Clerks. Dulwich NCF.
Granted conditional exemption but arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Newton Abbot February 1917: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Blackdown May 1917: one year's hard labour, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Blackdown April 1918: 18 months' hard labour, served in Wandsworth. Hunger-struck February 1919. Released on medical grounds March 1919.

ANDREWS J.
Camberwell, no address
ILP member.
Arrested for failing to report and handed over to military February 1918. No further detail.

ANDREWS. W.T.
17 Clayton Road, Peckham
Arrested for failing to report February 1918 during a raid on the Friends' Service Committee. Broke out of the guard room in protest at his treatment. Recaptured, taken to Bury St. Edmunds, court-martialled Felixstowe March 1918: two years' hard labour, commuted to 56 days, served in Wormwood Scrubs. No further detail.

***ASHTON John**
Dulwich NCF
Aged 21 in 1916, clerk, member National Union of Clerks. Court-martialled Hurdcott August 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to 112 days, served in Winchester prison and Wormwood Scrubs. Judged not to be a genuine CO, so not offered transfer to the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Torquay January 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Exeter prison. Court-martialled Blackdown June 1917: 18 months' hard labour, served in Wandsworth. Transferred October 1917 to Long Grove mental asylum, Epsom, after suicide attempts.

BACON Albert Arthur Frederick
113 Woodwarde Road, Dulwich Village
Aged 21 in 1916, commercial traveller, single.
Served in the Non-Combatant Corps, initially at home. No further detail.

BAYLEY A.W.
Oakhurst Grove, East Dulwich
Solicitor's clerk.
Granted conditional exemption, referred to non-combatant service. No further detail.

BAYLEY Howard Samuel
4 Rosenthorpe Road, Nunhead
Aged 28 in 1916, clerk, single.
Granted conditional exemption, he served with the Non-Combatant Corps in France from May 1916.

BEDFORD –
no address
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Teignmouth December 1916:112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. No further detail.

***BEECHAM (or BEACHAM) Francis Victor**
9 Costa Street, Peckham
Aged 29 in 1916, painter and decorator, member of the painters' trade union. Dulwich NCF.
Court-martialled Hurdcott August 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to 112 days. Judged not to be a genuine CO so not offered transfer to the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Exeter December 1916: nine months' hard labour, served in Exeter prison. Court-martialled Blackdown May 1917: 18 months hard labour, commuted to one year, served in Wandsworth. Evidently underwent a further court-martial: the record's incomplete. Still in prison, he was involved in the disturbances at Wandsworth at the end of the war. Released April 1919.

BELCHEM Robert Henry
4 Muscatel Place,
Dalwood Street, Camberwell
Aged 19 in 1918, Baptist, single.
Court-martialled Falmouth December 1918: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown February 1919.

***BENFORD John ("Jack")**
83 Ondine Road, Peckham
Aged 22 in 1917, clerk**,** chair of Dulwich NCF in 1918**.**
Granted conditional exemption but refused the options. Court-martialled Newton Abbot December 1916: 112 days' hard labour. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Newton Abbot April 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Exeter prison. Court-martialled Blackdown September 1917: 18 months' hard labour served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Chisledon December 1918: 18 months' hard labour. Released from Portsmouth prison April 1919.

BERWICK Maurice George
26 Grove Hill Road,
Camberwell
Aged 22 in 1916, clerk in a wholesale grocery, Dulwich NCF.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Winchester May 1916: one year's hard labour, commuted to 112 days, served in Gosport prison. Court-martialled Portsmouth July 1916: 18 months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormswood Scrubs to Warwick settlement October 1916, and from there to Belmont workhouse and Princetown.

BERWICK Percy John
same address
Brother of the above, aged 23 in 1916, likewise a clerk in a wholesale grocery, Dulwich NCF.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Leicester September 1916: 84 days hard labour, commuted to 56 days. Record unclear. He served time in Wandsworth but then accepted the Home Office scheme: at Denton November 1916 after having been at Wakefield.

BROWN H.W.
Copleston Road, Peckham
Granted conditional exemption, he told the tribunal he was prepared to serve in the RAMC. No further detail.

BURALL (or BURELL) Alfred Ashton
Dunstan's Road, Dulwich
Aged 26 in 1917, civil servant, Dulwich NCF, married.
Refused exemption, arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Blackdown May 1917: six months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown July 1917.

***BURGESS Henry**
37 Barry Road, East Dulwich
Aged 36 in 1916, shorthand writer, Wesleyan, Dulwich NCF, single.
Arrested for failing to report. Referred to Non Combatant Corps, he refused to serve. Court-martialled Newhaven August 1916: six months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Lewes prison to Warwick November 1916, then Princetown. Rejected (or rejected by) the scheme and recalled to the colours July 1917. Court-martialled the same month: two years' hard labour. Certified insane February 1918 and transferred from Exeter prison to Devon County Lunatic Asylum, Exminster.

BURT R.H.
Choumert Road, Peckham
Civil service clerk.
Granted conditional exemption. No further detail.

BUSH Albert Langley
26 Carlton Road, Peckham
Aged 25 in 1916, tailor's cutter, ILP member, Dulwich NCF.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow December 1916: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred to Health Insurance, Chelsea, March 1917 then to Princetown the following August.

CAREY Charles
41 Tyrrell Road, East Dulwich
Aged 29 in 1916, cutter, married.
Granted conditional exemption, served in the Non-Combatant Corps at Hounslow.

***CARTER Wilfred Thomas**
102 [or 162] Landells Road,
East Dulwich
Aged 31 in 1917, ILP member, Dulwich NCF**.**
Court-martialled Blackdown June 1917: six months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Blackdown December 1917: one year's hard labour, served in Winchester prison. Court-martialled Blackdown October 1918: two years' hard labour. Transferred from Winchester to Home Office scheme at Princetown December 1918. He seems to have refused the transfer. Moved to Exeter prison January 1919, released April 1919.

CARTWRIGHT Clarence Hugh
41 Tyrrell Road, East Dulwich
Aged 24 in 1916, theology student, Weslyan.
Served with the RAMC, first at home, then at Salonika. Ended the war as an army chaplain.

***CATO E.S**.
East Dulwich
Court-martialled Wyke Regis (Dorset) June 1918: one year's hard labour, commuted to eight months, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Deemed not a genuine CO so not offered transfer to the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Weymouth October 1918: one year's hard labour. Still in Dorchester prison July 1919.

CHALMERS G.E.
Choumert Road, Peckham
Granted conditional exemption. No further detail.

CHAMPION Harold Walter
139 Peckham Rye
Aged 19 in 1917, joiner in family building firm.
Accepted work of national importance: packing and loading flour for Burgess Martin, flour and corn factors, Camberwell.

CHAMPION William Alexander
same address
Brother of the above, aged 30 in 1916, junior partner in family building firm. Accepted work of national importance: engaged in farm work September 1916 to December 1918.

CHARLESWORTH A.C.
Dulwich, no address
Arrested for failing to report and handed over April 1916. No further detail.

CHINN E.
no address
A buyer of trimmings in drapery. He raised religious objections and was referred to the Non-Combatant Corps.
No further detail.

CHIPPERFIELD A.D.
Carlton Grove, Peckham
French polisher with a firm of antique dealers. An ILP member, he told the tribunal he was an international socialist.
Refused non-combatant service but accepted work of national importance: employed by the United Lens Company, Holborn October 1916 to September 1918. After suffering from dermatitis he worked for Aerial Motors & General Repairs, Camberwell.

CHRISTENSEN Christopher C.
19 Vicarage Grove, Camberwell
Aged 24 in 1916, painter, married.
Granted conditional exemption and referred to the Non-Combatant Corps. Served in France from May 1916.

***CLARK William Morley**.
3 Bushey Hill Road, Camberwell
Aged 31 in 1916, solicitor's clerk, member of the ILP and the National Union of Clerks.
Dulwich NCF.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Winchester December 1916: two years' hard labour, evidently commuted, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Winchester April 1917: Two year' hard labour, again commuted, served in Winchester prison. Court-martialled Winchester October 1917: two years' hard labour, served at Winchester. Released March 1919.

CLEMENTS Robert
49 Grosvenor Terrace, Camberwell
Aged 30 in 1918, clerk, Church of England, married.
Granted conditional exemption, he served at home with the Non-Combatant Corps from January 1918. Demobilized January 1920.

CLEOBURY J.
Dulwich NCF
Accepted the Home Office scheme, reported at Wakefield and Princetown.

COLE Philip
85 Camberwell Grove, Camberwell
Aged 18 in 1918, student - later architect, single.
Court-martialled Wrentham August 1918: one year's hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office Scheme. Released April 1919.

COLLINS Alfred George
11 Pitt Street, Camden Avenue, Peckham
Aged 28 in 1917, clerk, married.
Served in the Non-Combatant Corps, initially at home. No further detail.

COLLINS Joseph Henry
27 Nutfield Road, East Dulwich
Aged 23 in 1916, boot salesman, Dulwich NCF.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hurdcott June 1916: 112 days' hard labour, served in Parkhurst and Wormwood Scrubs. At some point suffered field punishment at Salisbury. Accepted the Home Office scheme. Tranferred to road-repair work at Clare (Suffolk) August 1916, and from there to Princetown.

***COLMAN Frederick Charles**
23 McDowell Road, Camberwell
Aged 23 in 1918, draughtsman, "Christian" (denomination unclear), single.
Court-martialled Fovant July 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to 112 days, served in Winchester prison. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Hurdcot October 1916: two years' hard labour (commuted), served in Wormwood Scrubs and Wandsworth. Court-martialled Blackdown May 1917: 18 months' hard labour, commuted to one year, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Blackdown March 1918: two years' hard labour. Released from Wandsworth on medical grounds April 1919.

COVERDALE George Percy
38 Glengall Road, Peckham
Aged 28 in 1917, post office sorter, Dulwich NCF.
Granted conditional exemption, arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow January 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown.

DAVIS Percy
no address
Aged 25 in 1917, member of the NCF and Herald League.
Failed to report: arrested at a League meeting in Holborn town hall November 1916. Court-martialled Sutton Veny (Wilts) the same month: six months' hard labour. Not clear whether he was offered the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Winchester May 1917: two years' hard labour. No further detail.

DAWES Eric A.
Beauval Road, East Dulwich
Bank clerk.
Granted conditional exemption, accepted work of national importance: employed on farm work in Kent July 1916 to November 1917. No further detail.

DEAN A.L.
Peckham, no address
Blacksmith.
Accepted work of national Importance: employed on farm work with Chivers at Lakenheath (Suffolk).

DEAN Thomas Collyer John
59 Landcroft Road,
East Dulwich
Aged 40 in 1916, law clerk, member of Peckham Quaker meeting, married.
Granted conditional exemption and referred to work of national importance: employed from October 1916 under FAU supervision on farm work with Chivers; then from March 1918 in the YMCA employment department for discharged soldiers and sailors.

DIVAN Morgan
87 Rye Hill Park, Peckham Rye
Aged 37 in 1916, civil service clerk, single.
Granted conditional exemption, he joined the Non-Combatant Corps November 1916. No further detail.

DRIVER S.W.
Camberwell, no address
Post office sorter.
Accepted work of national importance: the GPO allowed to retain him.

DURBRIDGE Ernest William
18 Pitt Street, Peckham
Aged 22 in 1916, printer, member of the BSP and ILP,
Dulwich NCF**.**
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Westbere October 1916: 10 months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme. Transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Wakefield November 1916 and from there to Princetown.

EDWARDS George William
15 High Street, Peckham
Aged 24 in 1916, coffee room proprietor, clerk to Peckham Quaker meeting, single.
Granted conditional exemption, accepted work of national importance: engaged on canteen work with the YMCA May 1916 to October 1918, thereafter employed at the Riverside Village for boys and girls, Melton Mowbray.

EVANS I.P.
Camberwell, no address
Aged 23 in 1916, correspondence clerk, single.
Accepted work of national importance: engaged on farm/market garden work and tractor driving July 1916 to November 1919.

EVANS M.L.
no address
Clerk.
Accepted work of national importance: engaged in farm work July 1916 to May 1918. Transferred to lighter work in Birmingham after illness, he had to leave Messrs. Hockley because of the hostility of other workers. Ended the war with Tyler Garages, also in Birmingham.

EVERSHED Frederick Francis
179 Peckham Rye
Aged 22 in 1916, commercial traveller, single.
Granted conditional exemption, he joined the Non-Combatant Corps July 1916. No further detail.

FARLEY Percy William
10 Reedham Street, Peckham
Aged 18 in 1916, clerk, single.
Granted conditional exemption, served with the General (agricultural) Service of the FAU in Dorset and Nottinghamshire August 1916 to February 1919.

FIELD Harold Alfred McDonald
153 Camberwell Grove,
Camberwell
Aged 21 in 1916, railway clerk, member of Peckham Quaker meeting, single.
Refused exemption March 1916. Served with the Friends' Ambulance Unit May 1916 to January 1919, at first in training at King George's Hospital, Jordans (Bucks), then from January 1917 as an orderly in Dunkirk.

FIELD Malcolm W.
same address
Brother of the above, aged 24 in 1916, post office engineer, member of the FoR, single.
Granted conditional exemption: accepted work of national importance. The Pelham committee was ready to let him stay with the GPO but Camberwell tribunal directed him to work on the land. No further detail.

***FRICKER Harold**
113 Overhill Road,
East Dulwich
Aged 21 in 1917, surveyor, NCF member, Church of England.
Arrested for failing to report, remanded for possessing false papers. Court-martialled Ashford (Kent) March 1917: 18 months' hard labour (commuted), served at Wormwood Scrubs. Deemed a class C (political) objector he was seemingly not offered the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Tonbridge July 1917: two years' hard labour, served in Maidstone prison. Contracted influenza January 1919, was subject of a petition to the Home Office. Released April 1919.

GARD Thomas Jnr
14 Hill Street, Peckham
Aged 29 in 1916, disinfectant manufacturer, married.
Served with Non-Combatant Corps, initially at home, then from March 1916 in France.

GEORGE Charles Richard
16 Bonar Road, Peckham
Aged 24 in 1916, flour packer, married.
Granted conditional exemption: referred to the Non-Combatant Corps. Served at home May 1916 to December 1919.

GHINN Ernest
322 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich
Aged 22 in 1916, draper and buyer, single.
Granted conditional exemption. Served with the Non-Combatant Corps at home June 1916 to December 1919.

GHINN Frank
same address
Brother of the above, aged 18 in 1916, draper's assistant, single.
Granted conditional exemption. Served with the Non-Combatant Corps at home October 1916 to January 1920.

GIBB Edward Bevan Tench
33 Red Post Hill, Herne Hill
Aged 30 in 1916, accountant's clerk, single.
Told the tribunal he was a disciple of Jesus Christ. Granted conditional exemption and referred to the Non-Combatant Corps. No further detail.

***GILLIAN Arthur James**
86 Park Road, West Dulwich
Aged 30 in 1917, a shop assistant and founding member of Bermondsey ILP, later an official with Amalgamated Society of Engineers, married.
Originally exempt because of his union work, he lost his exemption after a clash with army drivers during a strike at Finsbury. Court-martialled Wimbledon August 1917: two years' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs and Wandsworth. Refused the Home Office scheme. Released April 1919.

GOODFELLOW Alfred George
1 Beauval Road, East Dulwich
Aged 24 in 1917, civil service clerk, single.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Wimbledon July 1917: two years' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford November 1917, and from there to Princetown.

GOTT Alfred John
270 Upland Road, East Dulwich
Aged 33 in 1916, clerk, single, Dulwich NCF.
Granted conditional exemption and referred to the Non-Combatant Corps: but refused to serve. Court-martialled Newhaven July 1916: six months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred August 1916 from Lewes prison to Road Board Camp, Denton.

GOUGH Herbert
49 Lyndhurst Grove, Peckham
Aged 32 in 1916, clerk, Baptist, single.
Granted conditional exemption, served in the Non-Combatant Corps: initially at home, then May 1916 to November 1919 in France.

GRAVES J.E.
Darrell Road, East Dulwich
Granted conditional exemption, he told the tribunal he was prepared to serve in the RAMC. No further detail.

***GREEN John B.**
69 Ondine Road, Peckham
Aged 29 in 1918, tinsmith, member of the BSP, Dulwich NCF, married. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Kingston on Thames September 1916: one year's hard labour, evidently commuted, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Watford December 1916: two years' hard labour, commuted to 112 days, served in Pentonville. [A gap here] Court-martialled Bordon (Hants) March 1918: one year's hard labour, served in Maidstone prison. Court-martialled Hastings March 1919: two years' hard labour, commuted to one year. Released from Maidstone April 1919.

GRENGER Robert Charles
St. Margaret's, 7 Court Lane, Dulwich Village
Aged 25 in 1916, merchant's clerk.
Sought exemption on both health and conscientious grounds: exemption refused. No further detail.

GROVER Edgar William
81 Grove Lane, Camberwell
Aged 29 in 1917, clerk, Church of England, single.
Served with the Non-Combatant Corps, first at Gravesend, then from March 1917 to December 1919 in France.

***HADDEN S.E.**
173 Cronin Road, Peckham
Aged 26 in 1916, civil service clerk, member of the ILP and the National Union of Clerks. Dulwich NCF.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Barham Camp (Kent) October 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to two months, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Canterbury February 1917: nine months' hard labour. Court-martialled Sandwich August 1917: one year's hard labour. Court-martialled Tunbridge Wells June 1918: two years' hard labour; all three sentences served in Canterbury prison. Released 1919.

HALL F.J.
4 Azenby Road, Peckham
Promoter of the Peckham Life Boat Mission, single.
Granted conditional exemption, he appealed March 1916: the appeal tribunal removed his exemption. No further detail.

HAMMOND A.
no address
Referred to the Non-Combatant Corps March 1916. No further detail.

HANSFORD Charles Edgar
27 Clayton Road, Peckham
Aged 33 in 1916, labourer, married.
Served with Non-Combatant Corps at Newhaven harbour from September 1916. Court-martialled Lewes January 1917, presumably after the munitions strike: six months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred to Llanddeusant waterworks. No further detail.

HATTON A.A.
Dulwich, no address
Dulwich NCF, imprisoned. No further detail.

HATTON Richard Robert
83 Ondine Road, Peckham
Aged 27 in 1916, leather tyer, socialist, married.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Winchester November 1916: two years' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Wakefield March 1917 and from there to Princetown.

HAWKES J.
Dulwich, no address
Dulwich NCF, imprisoned. No further detail.

HELYAR Ebenezer John
25 Tyrrell Road, East Dulwich
Aged 30 in 1916, telegraphist, member of the Plymouth Brethren.
Served with the Non-Combatant Corps at home August 1916 to December 1919.

HOLCOMBE H. Edgar
11 Alder Street, Sumner Road, Peckham
Aged 30 in 1916, postman, Dulwich NCF.
Refused exemption March 1916. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Mill Hill September 1916: six months' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Wakefield November 1916 and from there to Denton.

HOLLINGTON Cecil Arthur
36 Shard Road, Peckham
Aged 27 in 1917, carpenter, Church of England.
Court-martialled Winchester May 1917: two years' hard labour. Transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to the Non-Combatant Corps September 1917. No further detail.

HORNE G. Egerton
East Dulwich, no address
Shipping clerk.
Accepted work of national importance: employed on farm work at Erith from December 1916.

HUNT Ernest
136 Underhill Road,
East Dulwich
Aged 26 in 1917, accountant, married.
Granted conditional exemption: served with the Non-Combatant Corps in Aldershot.

HUNT H.
Edmund Street, Camberwell
He applied on religious grounds: exemption refused. No further detail**.**

JACKSON John Merton
30 Avondale Square,
Old Kent Road
Aged 18 in 1917.
Court-martialled Wimbledon October 1917: two years' hard labour. Initially refused the Home Office scheme but then accepted it. Transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown April 1918.

JELLEYMAN William C.
99 Beresford Street,
Camberwell
Former missionary in south India.
Granted conditional exemption and referred to work of national importance. No further information.

***JONES Arthur Creech**
46 Keston Road, Goose Green,
Peckham
Aged 25 in 1917, civil service clerk, single. Secretary of Camberwell Trades and Labour Council and Dulwich ILP, founding member of Dulwich NCF.
Granted conditional exemption. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow September 1916: six months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Hounslow January 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Hounslow June 1917: two years' hard labour, served in Pentonville. Court-martialled Hounslow February 1919. Released from Pentonville April 1919.

JONES C. J.
Dandcroft Road – address no longer in the A-Z
Refused exemption March 1916. No further information.

***JONES Horace John**
Parkstone Road, **Peckham**
Aged 30 in 1916, insurance agent, ILP member, Dulwich NCF, married. Granted conditional exemption subject to undertaking work of national importance. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Mill Hill September 1916: six months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Mill Hill, December 1916: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Mill Hill June 1917: six months' hard labour, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Mill Hill November 1917: two years' hard labour. Released from Wandsworth April 1919.

JONES William Roger
277 Southampton Street,
Camberwell
Aged 38 in 1917, sculptor, married.
Granted conditional exemption: served in the Non-Combatant Corps at home.

JONES William Stanley
22 Telfourd Road, Peckham
Aged 26 in 1916, clerk/assistant cashier, member of Peckham Quaker meeting, Dulwich NCF, single.
Granted conditional exemption, he was arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Mill Hill October 1916: six months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. [A gap here] Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from the Scrubs to Wakefield work centre, there in May 1918.

***JOPE Eddy Thomas**
86 Crofton Road, Camberwell
Aged 36 in 1917**,** member of the National Union of Clerks, Dulwich NCF. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow July 1916: one year's hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme. Transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Dyce (August 1916) where he was secretary of the men's committee. On closure of the camp he opted to return to prison. Court-martialled Hounslow January 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served at Wandsworth. Court-martialled Hounslow June 1917: two years' hard labour, served at Pentonville. Released on medical grounds March 1919.

JULLIE Frederick Gustave
2 Everthorpe Road, **Peckham**
Aged 22 in 1916, clerk, Baptist, single.
Granted conditional exemption and referred to the Non-Combatant Corps but refused to serve. Court-martialled Lewes (or Newhaven) July 1916: 14 days' hard labour. Record then unclear. Transferred to the Home Office scheme February 1917.

KEMP Charles
2 Hooks Road, Peckham
Aged 29 in 1916, bread-maker, single.
Granted conditional exemption, served with the Non- Combatant Corps in France May 1917 to December 1919.

KING Llewellyn
113 Underhill Road,
East Dulwich
Aged 37 in 1916, warehouseman/ironmonger, member of Peckham Quaker meeting, married.
Granted conditional exemption and referred to work of national importance. Employed September 1916 to June 1917 as granary foreman at Royal Flour Mills, Albert Embankment. No further detail.

***KINGSTON Herbert**
8 Dowlas Street, Camberwell
Aged 22 in 1917, clerk, BSP member, Dulwich NCF, single.
Refused exemption March 1916. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Winchester January 1917: two years' hard labour, evidently commuted. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Winchester May 1917: one year's' hard labour, commuted to six months, served at in Winchester prison. Court-martialled Winchester November 1917: two years' hard labour, served at Winchester. Temporarily released February 1919 after a hunger strike. Finally released April 1919.

***KNOTT Ernest**
3 Lilford Head,
Coldharbour Lane, Camberwell
Aged 37 in 1917, NCF member, atheist.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Torquay January 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Blackdown: one year's hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Winchester prison. Court-martialled Blackdown November 1917: 18 months' hard labour, served at Winchester. Court-martialled Shoreham March 1919: two years' hard labour. Released from Winchester April 1919.

LEAMY Albert Douglas
8 Ferris Road, East Dulwich
Aged 35 in 1917, post office telegraphist and counter clerk, member - Church of God.
Court-martialled Hounslow October 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme. Transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford December 1917, and from there to Princetown.

LEICESTER Edward Frederick
18 Edith Road, Peckham
Aged 29 in 1917, post office sorter, United Methodist, married.
Granted conditional exemption, served with the Non-Combatant Corps in France from March 1917. Transferred to Royal Engineers (postal section) August 1919.

LINNEY Cecil Frederick
Culmore Road, Peckham
Aged 23 in 1916, accountant, Congregationalist, married.
Served with the Non-Combatant Corps at home August 1916 to December 1919.

MALLINDINE (or Mallendine)
Thomas
86 Park Road, West Dulwich
Aged 26 in 1916, fountain pen repairer, Dulwich NCF.
Granted conditional exemption. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow December 1916: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Accepted the Home Office scheme: at Princetown in July 1917.

McMICHAEL Leslie
Peckham
Member of Peckham Quaker meeting.
Granted conditional exemption for work of national importance, the condition being that he remain in his current employment. Not clear what this was.

MILLER Robert J.
Peckham, no address
Aged 36 in 1917, carpenter, atheist.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hazeley Down (Winchester) January 1917: two years' hard labour. Appears to have accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown February 1917; but then transferred June 1917 first to Plymouth, then to Exeter prison. Returned to Princetown November 1918.

***MONTGOMERY George Thomas**
65a Grove Lane, Camberwell
Aged 37, clerk, branch secretary of the Workers' Union, Dulwich NCF.
Refused exemption, arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow February 1917: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Hounslow May 1917: two years' hard labour, served in Pentonville. Released on medical grounds April 1919.

MOORE Charles O.
Peckham, no address
Managing clerk.
Accepted work of national importance: employed January 1917 to September 1918 at British Ever-Ready, Holloway.

NEVARD Frederick
37 Amott Road, Peckham
Aged 32 in 1916, guillotine cutter, married.
Served briefly with the Non-Combatant Corps at Aldershot; discharged October 1916 as physically unfit for service.

***NEWELL Wilfred Samuel**
31 Athenlay Road, Nunhead
Aged 27 in 1917, clerk, NCF member.
Arrested for failing to report, court-martialled Wimbledon July 1917: two years' hard labour, served initially in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Transferred to Wandsworth September 1918. Released on remission March 1919. Finally discharged from York Castle April 1919.

***NICHOLSON Frederick**
55 Grove Hill Road, Denmark Park, Camberwell
Aged 35 in 1916, financier's clerk, Baptist.
Court-martialled Hurdcott August 1916: nine months' hard labour, commuted to 112 days, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Exeter December 1916: nine months' hard labour, served in Exeter prison. Court-martialled Blackdown May 1917: 18 months' hard labour, served in Brixton and Wandsworth prisons. Released on health grounds April 1918.

NORRIS Reginald Frank
39 Glengarry Road,
East Dulwich
Aged 26 in 1916, clerk, married. Served with the Non-Combatant Corps at home from July 1916; transferred the following year to the Home Office scheme at Princetown.

***NORTON Albert**
5 Denmark Road, Camberwell
Aged 32 in 1917, salesman. Arrested for failing to report, court-martialled Kingston November 1917: 112 days' hard labour, served initially in Pentonville. Accepted the Home Office scheme, transferred February 1918 from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford. Then rejected, or rejected by, Knutsford. Court-martialled Dover April 1918: two years' hard labour. Released from Canterbury prison July 1919.

OWEN William Benjamin
38 Marmora Road, Honor Oak
(previously 125 Jamaica Road, Bermondsey). Aged 34 in 1915, private secretary to the biographer Sir Sidney Lee, involved with Bermondsey Adult School, single. Served with the Friends' Ambulance Unit in Dunkirk January 1916 to February 1919.

PALMER J.R.
no address
Machine-minder. Accepted work of national importance October 1918: allowed to stay in post at HMSO printing works.

PARKES Donald Sinclair
58 Dalwood Street, Camberwell
Aged 21 in 1916, assistant in family boot repair business, Dulwich NCF.
Arrested for failing to report, subjected to a "mock execution" at the guard-room in Whitehall. Sylvia Pankhurst (p.314) says it happened at Winchester. Court-martialled there May 1916: one year's hard labour, commuted to detention. Court-martialled Portsmouth June 1916: two years' hard labour, commuted to 22 months, served in Portsmouth, then Winchester prison. Accepted the Home Office scheme, transferred to Denton, then to Princetown: there August 1918.

PARKES Francis Leonard
same address
Brother of the above, aged 19 in 1917**,** bus builder, Dulwich NCF. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Torquay February 1917: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. [A gap here] Reported at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, August 1918.

PELL Albert E.
Dulwich NCF
Aged 29 in 1916, clerk, member of the National Union of Clerks and Herald League.
Failed to report: arrested in a raid on a League meeting in Holborn town hall November 1916. Court-martialled Sutton Veny (Wilts) November 1916: six months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. No further information.

PHILLIPS Charles Albert
23 Rainbow Street, Camberwell
Aged 28 in 1917, cabinet maker, attender at Peckham Quaker meeting, former Baptist - told to "clear out" because of his peace views - married.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Wimbledon September 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to one year. Initially he refused the Home Office scheme, then accepted it: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown July 1918, then to Aylesbury.

***PORTEOUS Richard**
145 Athenlay Road, Nunhead
Aged 21 in 1917, clerk, attender at Quaker Peckham meeting, Dulwich NCF, single.
Served as an orderly with the Friends' Ambulance Unit in France January to June 1916. He must have been one of those who left the unit "to champion the cause of peace at home" when conscription came in [See *The Friend*, 16 June 1916]. Granted conditional exemption September 1916, he rejected work of national importance. Arrested for not reporting January 1917. Rejected the Non-Combatant Corps, court-martialled Worcester the same month: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Weymouth May 1917: one year's hard labour – evidently commuted - served in Dorchester prison. Court-martialled Weymouth October 1917: two years' hard labour, served at Dorchester. Released April 1919.

***PORTER Ernest Graham**
5 Barforth Road, Nunhead
Aged 29 in 1917, LCC teacher, NUT member, Dulwich NCF. Refused exemption March 1916. Arrested for failing to report January 1917. Court-martialled Hounslow February 1917: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Hounslow May 1917: two years' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Court-martialled Hounslow January 1919: two years' hard labour. Released from Wandsworth April 1919.

PRATT Harry Frederick Richard
26 Grosvenor Street,
Camberwell
Aged 31 in 1916, cellarman, married.
Told the tribunal taking human life was against Christian teaching. Granted conditional exemption: served with Non-Combatant Corps at home from November 1916.

PREUDHOMME F.G.
Camberwell, no address
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hurdcott August 1916: six months' hard labour, commuted to 56 days. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred to Denton August 1917. No further detail.

QUELCH Thomas Eugene
35 Limesford Road, Nunhead
Aged 34 in 1917, compositor, BSP member, married. After the Leeds convention he served as secretary of the workers' and soldiers' council.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow September 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferrred from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford December 1917, and from there to Rickmansworth.

RAMSDEN S.H.
Dulwich, no address
Clerk and Christadelphian. Granted conditional exemption and referred to work of national importance: placed in farm work towards the end of the war.

ROBSON Edward
24 Choumert Grove, Peckham
Aged 40 in 1916, railway machine fitter, single.
Granted conditional exemption, served in the Non-Combatant Corps. Court-martialled Lewes December 1916, presumably for taking part in the munitions strike at Newhaven: six months' hard labour. Transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to the Home Office scheme March 1917. No further detail.

RUSSELL Walter Cyril
76 Edmund Street, Camberwell
Aged 21 in 1916, aerograph poster writer.
Told the tribunal he objected as a Christian. Granted conditional exemption: served with the Non-Combatant Corps in France April 1916 to November 1919.

SCOTT Philip
42 Hollington Street, Camberwell
Single, he worked in the London office of the Friends' Ambulance Unit May to August 1917. No further information.

SEARLE John
1 Huguenot Road, Peckham
Aged 28, plumber**.**
Arrested for failing to report July 1916. Discharged as medically unfit September 1916.

SIBLEY William G.
Grove Lane, Camberwell
Dulwich NCF.
Refused exemption March 1916. Court-martialled Winchester October 1916: two years' hard labour. Accepted Home Office scheme and transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Wakefield December 1917.

SIMS J.W.
Dulwich NCF
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Mill Hill October 1916: six months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Accepted the Home Office scheme: at Denton August 1917. No further detail.

SINYARD John James
Camberwell, no address
Aged 35 in 1916, clerk.
Accepted work of national importance: from January 1917 employed as a packer for Wills & Son, edge tool makers in the City (St Mary Axe).

***SOAR Stanley James**
65 Havil Street, Camberwell
Aged 21 in 1917, clerk, attender at Peckham Quaker meeting, Dulwich NCF.
Granted conditional exemption. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow November 1916: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs and Wandsworth. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Hounslow March 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months. Court-martialled Hounslow September 1917: two years' hard labour. Released from Pentonville April 1919.

***SOAR William Josiah**
same address
Brother of the above**,** aged 20 in 1916, clerk, attender at Peckham Quaker meeting, Dulwich NCF. Granted conditional exemption. Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Hounslow December 1916: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Hounslow March 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Wandsworth. Court-martialled Hounslow September 1917: two years' hard labour, served in Wandsworth and Pentonville. Released April 1919.

SOULSBY H.F.
Peckham
Clerk. Accepted work of national importance: employed from August 1918 as a nurseryman at Waltham Cross.

***SOUTHERN Ernest**
126 Grosvenor Avenue, Camberwell
Aged 23 in 1917, shop assistant. Arrested for failing to report, he told the magistrate he was a socialist and internationalist**.** Court-martialled Torquay February 1917: 112 days' hard labour, served in Winchester prison. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Blackdown May 1917: one year's hard labour, served at Winchester. Court-martialled Blackdown April 1918:18 months' hard labour, served in Wandsworth. Took part in the disturbances there at the end of the war. Released April 1919.

STALLWORTHY Frank
Camberwell, no address
Taxi driver and Christadelphian**.**
Accepted work of national importance: directed to repairing boots 1917. Fell ill due to conditions in the factory; transferred to another repair works in Norbury.

STANTON Richard Amyas
56 Clayton Road, Peckham
Aged 23 in 1917, clerk in oil and produce broker's office, Pentecostalist.
Granted conditional exemption, accepted work of national importance: engaged on farm work near Hounslow May 1916 to May 1917 but left because of low wages. Unable to find other farm work: referred back to tribunal. Court-martialled Hounslow June 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Wakefield August 1917.

STAPLEY Frederick Silas
155 Choumert Road, Peckham
Aged 24 in 1916, litho machine minder, single.
Granted conditional exemption, served with the Non-Combatant Corps in France April 1916 to October 1919.

STEVENSON Charles Frederick
29 Ivanhoe Road, Camberwell
Aged 32 in 1918, clerk in the Ministry of Shipping, single.
Granted conditional exemption. Court-martialled Mill Hill May 1918: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown July 1918.

STOTT Robert J.
30 Edith Street, Peckham
Aged 21 in 1916, engineer, member of Camberwell FoR, Buddhist, Dulwich NCF, single.
Granted conditional exemption: served in the Non-Combatant Corps. Took part in the Newhaven munitions strike. Court-martialled Lewes January 1917: one year's hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme and transferred April 1917 from Wormwood Scrubs to Newhaven.

TALBOT Ernest Edward
56 Nutbrook Road, Peckham
Aged 25 in 1917, school-teacher, IBSA member, married.
Refused exemption by Southwark tribunal March 1916. Two years later he applied from this address to Camberwell. Not clear what happened in the interim. Served with the Non-Combatant Corps at home July 1918 to January 1919.

TASKER G.
no address
Clerk.
Granted conditional exemption July 1917 and directed to work of national importance on the land. No further detail.

THOMAS Harry Dawson
52 Marmora Road, Honor Oak
Aged 21 in 1916, insurance clerk, single.
Told the tribunal said he was serving Christ. Granted conditional exemption: served in the Non-Combatant Corps at home May 1916 to December 1919.

THOMPSON Albert Edward
12 Cornflower Terrace, Dunstan's Road, Dulwich
Aged 32 in 1916, glass packer, Baptist, married.
Court-martialled Shoreham July 1916: 112 days' hard labour, served in Lewes prison. Judged by the Central Tribunal not to be a genuine CO, so not offered Home Office scheme. [A gap in the record here] Court-martialled St. Albans January 1917: nine months' hard labour, commuted to 112 days, served in Pentonville. Court-martialled St. Albans April 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months. Released from Wandsworth September 1918. [A further gap] Discharged September 1919.

THORNE Cyril Bleckley
Peckham
Trainee teacher, attached to Ackworth School, West Yorkshire, Quaker. Granted exemption March 1916 subject to remaining with the Friends and reporting monthly. The exemption revoked January 1918. The tribunal decided teaching was not work of national importance and referred him to the Non-Combatant Corps. He refused to serve. Court-martialled Hounslow September 1918: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. No further detail.

THROWER Stanley F.
9 McKerrell Road, Peckham
Dulwich NCF, socialist.
Court-martialled Winchester January 1917: two year's hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Penderyn March 1918, and from there to Knutsford.

***TREHERNE Francis William**
27 Landells Road, East Dulwich
Aged 33 in 1918, city missionary, Baptist, married.
Court-martialled Isleworth September 1918: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Felixstowe January 1919: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wandsworth, released on remission April 1919. Court-martialled May 1919, released the same month.

WARD William Edward
Maple Lodge, Park Road, West Dulwich
Aged 25 in 1915, insurance official, single.
Served with the Friends' Ambulance Unit as an orderly and dresser in Dunkirk December 1915 to January 1919.

***WELLS George J.**
33 Domville Grove, Camberwell
Aged 24 in 1917, clerk, Dulwich NCF; worked at some point in the office of the Friends War Victims' Relief Service.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Teignmouth January 1917: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Refused Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Teignmouth April 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to six months, served in Exeter prison. Court-martialled Blackdown September 1917: 18 months' hard labour, served in Wandsworth. Released April 1919.

WHITE G.J.
Camberwell, no address
Compositor.
Accepted work of national importance: employed on government contracts at the print works of Messrs Keliher, in Southwark.

WHITEHEART John Robert
232 Rye Lane, Peckham
Aged 31 in 1917, self-employed hat cane maker, Pentacostalist.
Court-martialled Kingston December 1917: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted Home Office scheme: transferred February 1918 from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford.

WHITTINGTON Frederick Leonard
18 Coleman Road, Camberwell
Aged 22 in 1918, postman.
Accepted work of national importance: no further detail.

***WILKINSON Frederick John**
32 Thurlow Hill, West Dulwich.
Aged 28 in 1917, LCC teacher, FoR member and first secretary of Streatham NCF branch.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Kingston November 1916: 112 days' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs and Wandsworth. Refused the Home Office scheme. Court-martialled Chatham March 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to one year, served in Maidstone prison. Court-martialled Chatham August 1917: two years' hard labour, served at Maidstone. Died there of pneumonia January 1919, his wife beside him.

WILLOUGHBY Thomas Yates
19 Howden Street, Peckham
Aged 30 in 1916, traveller, single.
Served with the Non-Combatant Corps at Newhaven, took part in the munitions strike there. Court-martialled Lewes January 1917: six months' hard labour, served in Wormwood Scrubs. Accepted the Home Office scheme: first at Newhaven, then at Princetown December 1917.

WILLOUGHBY William Henry
Same address
Brother of the above, aged 24 in 1917, unemployed.
Arrested for failing to report; refused medical. Court-martialled Kingston October 1917: two years' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Knutsford January 1918, and from there to Princetown.

WILLY Walter Harold
38 Beauval Road, East Dulwich
Aged 28 in 1916, export clerk, single.
Granted conditional exemption: served at home with the Non-Combatant Corps from April 1916.

WOOD Cyril
Dulwich NCF
Aged 22 in 1917, Church of England.
Court-martialled Hounslow April 1917: two years' hard labour, commuted to 112 days. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Wormwood Scrubs to Princetown July 1917.

WOOD Donald George
4 Commercial Way, Peckham
Aged 23 in 1916, Dulwich NCF, Quaker.
Court-martialled Hurdcott July 1916: 112 days' hard labour. Accepted the Home Office scheme: transferred from Winchester prison to Dyce August 1916 and from there to Princetown and Minehead.

WOOLLEY Charles
Camberwell, no address
Clerk and Christadelphian.
Granted conditional exemption: accepted work of national importance September 1918. Employed as a chaff cutter in Camberwell but the work affected his health: transferred to an artificial limb maker in Clapham.

WRIGHT Philip A.
72 Landcroft Road,
East Dulwich
Member of Peckham Quakers.
Claimed absolute exemption April 1918, excused combatant service only. No further information.

The following enlisted after initially resisting the call-up:

COOLEY Victor George
286 Lordship Lane, East Dulwich
Aged 27 in 1916, artist and designer, single.
Arrested for failing to report May 1916, but then joined up, serving at home with the 2/5 East Surreys.

HURLEY William
5 Westmacott Street, Dulwich
Aged 21 in 1916, clerk, Dulwich NCF.
Arrested for failing to report. Court-martialled Longbridge Deverill, December 1916: six months' hard labour, served initially at Wormwood Scrubs. Refused the Home Office scheme. Released from Wandsworth March 1917 on grounds of illness. John Graham (p. 323) lists him among those who died as a result of imprisonment. In fact he joined up, served in the London Regiment with the Finsbury Rifles and was killed in November 1917. His name appears on panel 151 of the Tyne Cot memorial outside Ypres.

SCIPIO Albert Edward
281 Crystal Palace Road,
East Dulwich
Aged 26 in 1916, Oxford undergraduate, single.
Granted conditional exemption by Oxford tribunal March 1917, but the following month joined the Royal West Kents.

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Addenda/Corrigenda

These corrections to the previous volume add some elaborations and put right various typos and minor inaccuracies. They also repair a number of mis-transcribed quotations. All of these are trivial, none are significant, but together they grate on one's perfectionism. Still – it's better to own up and keep the record straight.

Page

14: "Holocaust: Our Duties and Obligations." The quotation should read:
"Our country has never in the past *centuries*…"

17**:** The quotation at the top should read:
"We have entered *into* this war…"

19: Paragraph 1: Fenner Brockway wrote that the ILP "had no unifying anti-war philosophy." *Inside the Left, p. 52.*

20: Middle paragraph: Lance-*Sergeant* H. Potter.

21: The first line of the poem should read:
"Yet we have here in Bermondsey."

22: "A Patriotic Appeal." – the *not* in line 3 is obviously redundant.
The next paragraph urges housewives to purchase their bread *at* the under-mentioned shops
The penultimate line of the newspaper quotation reads
"much loss *in* life and treasure."

24: Lord Derby: "But my opinion is that *that* is what they may do…"
The *SLP*'s seasonal message says "we must keep *high* our patriotic spirit"

25: Corporal Ridley's second paragraph reads: "with each arm through a *German's* arm."

Paul Fussell (p. 245) says sentries on both sides were ordered to shoot anyone attempting to re-enact the truce. Nevertheless it was repeated, as David Jones learned on the Richebourg sector of the front. Thomas Dilworth, p. 72.

29: Final paragraph: "A parlour for the wives and mothers of soldiers *and sailors."*

30: Final paragraph: no exclamation mark.

31. Footnote 1: *SBR*, *26* February 1915.

33: Lansbury quotation: capital A for army, *insuring*, *realised*.

35: The picture in the *SLP* shows the crowd in front of the wrecked shop facing a line of police.
Jeffreys was fined for *damaging* the hairdresser's shop.
The *SBR* commented, "The attacks *showed*…"

36: The Buxton quotation ends "*a second* war."

37: The Bowers quotation says conscription "has made this *wicked* war possible."
Liberty in the Camberwell Trades and Labour Council statement has a capital.

38: The first quotation claims, "there *are* more 'knuts'…"
Corporal Bird wrote, "I had to look twice to see if my legs were there."

39: The *SLP* report says, “All *fires* were promptly and effectively dealt with…”

40: The change in the *SLP*’s war reporting started in July 1915.
The portraits of the Camberwell men are square, not oval.
The Cheerful Chum in the heading is “*sorely* wounded.”

44: “Splendid achievement” in the headline is lower-case and preceded by a colon and no slash.

55: “A Soldier’s Father” is writing not about his son but about an encounter he says he saw on a late-night tram between a mud-caked soldier and his mockers. They taunt, “*You’re one of the fools*”- then as quoted.

58: Penultimate paragraph: Hansler Hall, lately converted into a residence, featured on Channel 4’s “Grand Designs”, 4 October 2017.

Last paragraph: I don’t know where Winifred came from. Mr and Mrs Ewer, leading Guild socialists, were called William Norman and Monica.

60: Adrian Gregory’s sympathetic account of the Bureau in “A Clash of Cultures” claims that the range of permissible press comment was wider than between 1939 and 1945. See bibliography.

61: Footnote 5: on the first raid in November 1917 the police only seized papers.

67: J.E. Voller said he thought England could be saved by forcing the teachings of Jesus *Christ*.

68: John Bowles: the Pearce Register identifies him as John *Bowes*.

70: Mrs Richmond says, “They could do wonders in a month *to a man suffering from tuberculosis*” – then as quoted.

71: In Mrs Richmond’s case the phrase “a grave imputation *upon* her” comes from the solicitor’s letter. The *SLP* added that it regretted it had given publicity to the statements.

The Town Clerk’s final line is, “If you talk to me like *you do* I shall leave the room.” The “quiet member” was Cllr. Wallsgrove, not Wingrove.

73: The Military Representative says, “The country *wants* men.”

78: H.B.T. Gibb is reported as repudiating ”*such* passages as tended otherwise.”
Mr Sayer “declared that *the* members were biased…”
Last paragraph: “We don’t want to hear all *this* trash.”

79 The SLP criticised conscientious objector “who wants to be left at home ‘strafing’ his fellow-*citizens*…”

80: In the *CP Times* leader, line 2, the second *best* is a typo.

88: The quotation in paragraph 1 begins, “The friction among members *regarding the conscientious objectors…”*

91: First paragraph, line 2: “so given to *obscenity*…”
Second paragraph, line4: “folly of *waging* the war…”

92: At Spurgeon's Tabernacle (paragraph 2) the *SLP* reports that "beyond the distribution of literature *by some of the conscientious objectors*, *the service* passed off in an orderly manner."

The cry from the crowd in paragraph 4 is "How much longer are you going to *stand* this?"

94: The headline of 21 July is entirely in capitals.
The *CP Times* report, last line, talks of the "*terrible* struggle."

95: "Lions led by donkeys." According to his biographer Ion Trewin (p. 189) Clark admitted at the end of his life to having invented the phrase. Or more accurately, he invented the reference to Falkenhayn's memoirs, where the words are attributed to general Hoffman. Trewin does not pin down the origin of the phrase but it appears to lie somewhere in Alexander Kinglake's eight-volume history of the Crimean War.

95: The formulation in Reynolds' book of the same name reads (p. 407), "The term 'learning curve,' borrowed from business psychology, sticks in the gullet of many people in Britain because the curve was lubricated so plentifully with soldiers' blood."

100: COs served their sentences in the third or harshest division.

107: Footnote 3. It does not look like *Labour Leader*.

110: Miss Marshall's voice? No, the report is signed Lester Smith.

111: Sarah Cahill's letter: line 4: no second "l";
line 8: *&* not *and*;
seven lines from the bottom: "the stand he was *making*…"

113: Footnote 1: The report is signed *Recorditis*.

114: Mrs Curtis's letter: line 1: no "that";
line 4: *&* not *and*;
line 5: "a very dangerous *person*."

117: Para 5: An accomplished artist, Sylvia Pankhurst had herself studied there under Walter Crane.

128: Footnote 1 and bibliography: it should be N.A.M. *Rodger*.

130: Last para: it should be Mary *Kenney*. The meeting was in late February.

138: One might also quote Vera Brittain, who writes (p. 328) of "the uncomprehending remoteness of England from the tragic, profound freemasonry of those who accepted death together overseas."

142: Though summarised by opponents and others as "a knock-out blow" the actual phrase was "The fight must be to a finish – to a knock-out" - something slightly different. The interview was given in September 1916 not to *The Times,* but to Roy Howard, of the United Press. After the interview Lloyd George added to it as follows:

> This ghastliness must never again be re-enacted on this earth, and one method at least of ensuring that end is the infliction of such punishment upon the perpetrators of this outrage against humanity that the temptation to emulate their exploits will be eliminated from the hearts of the evil-minded among the rulers of men. That is the meaning of Britain's resolve.

John Grigg notes that the interview was given without the leave or knowledge of either the prime minister or foreign secretary. (*Lloyd George: From Peace to War*, pp. 424-8.)

142: Last paragraph: the pamphlet was published anonymously by C.W. Daniel. His company, based in Tudor Street, Temple, regularly advertised anti-war titles in *Labour Leader* under the heading “Antidotes to Prussianism” (see 1 November 1917, for example). Writing in 1988, Nicolas Walter celebrates him as the man responsible for the publication of more libertarian and other alternative writings in English during the first half of the 20th century than any other person.

In this instance Daniel declined to pay the fine and was gaoled for two months. In 1918, at the very end of the war, he was prosecuted again under DORA for publishing *Despised and Rejected* by Rose Allatini, a novel whose anti-war hero is also openly homosexual. The court imposed fines and costs of £460, or three months’ imprisonment in default. Persephone Books republished the novel in 2018 and included Walter’s research on Daniel and other material in its newsletter *The Persephone Biannually*, no. 23.

144: Down the page: Alfred Salter said, “The *original* enthusiasm… was only being stoked *up..”*

145: To the bullish delight not of the *SLP* leader, but of “The War Week by Week

Note: For this volume all quotations have been double-checked, so (hopefully)…

Index

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due first of all to other researchers in the field: to **Cyril Pearce** for his comradely responses to my enquiries, particularly in relation to the Honours Board; to **Valerie Flessati** and **Joanna Bornat**, of Haringey First World War Peace Forum, for some valuable pointers as to sources; and to **Ann O'Brien** for her general encouragement.

The Haringey Peace Forum's work in recovering and publicising the story of the borough's objectors has been the most effective such initiative in London. See their website: www.conscientiousobjectionremembered.wordpress.com. Their work informs Cyril Pearce's section on the borough. As well as Camberwell his *Communities of Resistance* also features Croydon.

My thanks again to the helpful staff at:

the British Library
the library of the Society of Friends
the Bodleian Library, Oxford
Cumbria County Record Office, Carlisle
Southwark Local History Library and Archive
the library of the German Historical Institute London
the library of the London School of Economics
the research room of the Imperial War Museum
Senate House Library, University of London
Special Collections, London Metropolitan University

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to **Heath Mason,** CEO of Park Communications Ltd.
A fellow cyclist, I met him with his companion as we stretched our legs at the refreshment hut at High Beach in Epping Forest. Fenner Brockway (it turned out) had been a family friend. Committed and sympathetic, Heath created this volume by patient personal attention, despite having to steer a major company through the storms of Covid. Without him – nothing.