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## National efficiency and social planning in Britain, 1914-1921

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Norman Richard Eder for the Master of Arts in History presented February 18, 1975.

Title: National Efficiency and Social Planning in Britain,  
1914-1921.

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

Charles LeGuin, Chairman

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Traditionally, improvements in the quality of life in Britain resulted from the temporary fusion of sometimes opposite interests which spurred Parliamentary action. Therefore, reform was rarely a party issue. Each reform question was treated separately and never as a part of a body of similar measures. Individuals were free to support or oppose particular reforms according to their own interests and motivations. The result of this lack of strong consistent reform-

ist sentiment was a pattern of piece-meal legislative action with a notable absence of comprehensive social planning. The First World War, however, brought new challenges to British society. As the traditional, haphazard method of dealing with problems of social organization failed to meet the needs of a nation engaged in a total war, British society came to accept a high degree of central control and guidance under the banner of national efficiency. This acceptance of social planning opened up new opportunities to those reformers who had long sought to undertake the cure of Britain's social ills on a massive scale.

The reformers saw the establishment of a ministry of health as the key to their success in the struggle against poverty and disease. After more than two years of political infighting the ministry was finally established in June 1919, and a housing program which promised to provide 500,000 new homes was placed under its authority. Launched with the approval of every political interest in the nation, the housing scheme proved to be a rout from the beginning and by the spring of 1921 the project came to an ignoble end. With it came the end of the national commitment to social planning. The movement for planning failed because old political and social differences proved to be a much more potent force than what remained of war-time harmony. While the nation was willing to tolerate rigid economic and social control in the name of victory over the Kaiser, no matter how much reform was desired, it would not accept centralized control and be swayed by appeals for national sacrifice in peacetime. Without the impetus provided by total warfare, massive social planning, rooted in a desire to use all the nation's resources efficiently, collapsed, drained of its political vitality.

The research and the writing of this study was carried out during the summer of 1974 in the University of Washington library system. The university's libraries offered all of the most important primary source material needed for the completion of the thesis, either in bound copy or on microfilm. Wide use was made of contemporary journals and newspapers. In addition, personal diaries and memoirs of several of the central characters of the period provided a wealth of material. The library also made available a large variety of official British Government documents without which this study could not have been completed. The only source materials not available were the official cabinet records of the period and certain private papers which are as yet unpublished or unavailable in this country. Fortunately, secondary works provided enough information to bridge major gaps between available primary source materials or point to new routes around unanswerable questions.

NATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND SOCIAL PLANNING IN BRITAIN,

1914-1921

by

NORMAN RICHARD EDER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

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## PREFACE

Any attempt to evaluate the impact of the First World War on British society is perhaps a futile effort to measure the immeasurable. The sheer magnitude of the struggle, the sacrifice of life and the loss of wealth overwhelm even the most casual observer. Despite this, historians have been unable to escape the "siren song" produced by the unmistakable death of one world and the birth of another in four short years. As a result uncountable studies have been done which attempt to retell the losses to Britain and the world during those bloody years. Yet while mourning the terrible waste of modern warfare, few have recognized the war as an agent for domestic social reform in Britain.

Traditionally, improvements in the quality of life in Britain stemmed from the temporary fusion of sometimes opposite interests which spurred Parliamentary action. Therefore, reform was rarely a party issue. Each reform question was treated separately and never as part of a body of similar measures. Individuals were free to support or oppose particular reforms according to their own interests and motivations. The result of this lack of strong consistent reformist sentiment was a pattern of piecemeal legislative action with a notable absence of comprehensive social planning. The First World War, however, brought new challenges to British society. As the traditional haphazard method of dealing with problems of social organization failed to meet the needs of a nation engaged in a total war, British society came to accept a high degree of central control and



guidance under the banner of national efficiency. This acceptance of social planning opened up new opportunities to those reformers who had long sought to undertake the cure of Britain's social ills on a massive scale. The aim of this present study is to trace, during the war years and after, the struggle for social planning which received its impetus from the wartime desire for national efficiency.

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## CHAPTER I

### BUSINESS AS USUAL

Britain entered the First World War completely unprepared to meet its demands on her military forces, industrial machinery, or civilian population. In response to the emergency created by the war, the Liberal government, serving under Herbert Asquith, devoted the bulk of its energies to the task of recruiting and training additional men for the army's expeditionary force. In August 1914, British land forces numbered little more than 250,000 regular troops, the bulk of which were spread thinly around the world in the various crown colonies. The active territorial force was limited to a garrison of 63,000 soldiers backed up by a 150,000 man reserve force and a separate ready reserve army that amounted to no more than another 63,000 trained officers and men.<sup>1</sup> Conscription, modeled after the continental system, was not the "British way", and the cabinet realized that all new recruits had to be volunteers.

Traditionally the War Office had been responsible for the raising of new recruits. However, the resignation of J. E. B. Seely during the Currah trouble in Ireland left the nation without a Secretary of State for War. Upon Seely's departure, Asquith had himself taken the War Office temporarily to avoid making a new appointment until the internal trouble was over, but the outbreak of hostilities made a new appointment im-

<sup>1</sup>Arthur Marwick, The Deluge (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970), p. 15.

perative.<sup>2</sup> In order to fill the ranks of the royal army, a full-time secretary for war who could inspire confidence in victory and attract volunteers to the colors was needed. Asquith's first thought was to send R. B. Haldane back to the War Office. Haldane had been responsible for organizing the expeditionary force under a general staff and Asquith felt that his experience and proven ability would be ideal for the post. Nonetheless, the politically sensitive Asquith found that he could not appoint Haldane to the War Office. The popular press had turned against Haldane, suggesting that his well-known interest in German philosophy meant that he was pro-German.<sup>3</sup> The temper of the early days of the war was such that this wholly unfounded claim was enough to prevent the appointment.

Public opinion, while rejecting Haldane, turned to Lord Kitchener, an authentic military hero. Kitchener, who was known as the conqueror of the Sudan, had been Commander-in-Chief of British Forces during the last two years of the Boer War, and still had a high standing in the public mind. Furthermore, Kitchener happened to be on leave from his post in Egypt when the war began. His presence in the country made him the natural focal point of popular attention. Christopher Addison, then serving in the government, observed that

When the country had recovered from the feeling of unreality engendered by the declaration of war, all eyes were instinctively turned towards Lord Kitchener 'the strong, silent man'. No man in the empire probably possessed the confidence of the 'man in the

<sup>2</sup>Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty-Five Years, Vol. II (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), pp. 69-70.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

street' quite the same way as he did. Public opinion clearly said that he was the man to organize the country for war.<sup>4</sup>

Even if the public was convinced of the necessity of Kitchener's appointment to the War Office, many within the government, including Asquith, were not. Politically, Kitchener was a Tory and had strong support among the conservative opposition. Asquith, in spite of the war, still intended to play party politics, and the thought of diluting his cabinet with a Tory did not sit well with him. The Prime Minister was also aware of Kitchener's lack of practical political experience and his reputation for being something less than a brilliant administrator. Public pressure, though, had rallied behind Kitchener and Asquith, in the name of national unity, decided that Lord Kitchener should go to the War Office.

Asquith had hesitated for so long that Kitchener had already reached Dover and was preparing to return to his command. He was called back to London and, amid a great deal of popular excitement, was installed as Secretary of State for War. Asquith, despite his concessions to public opinion, still had strong doubts about Kitchener's abilities. Asquith, who thought it strongly possible that Kitchener would bungle the job, wanted to be sure that the blame would not fall on the Liberal party. He publicly made it clear that Kitchener was appointed in light of the national emergency, as a non-partisan member of the government. He delicately reminded all parties, in the House of Commons on August 6, that

Lord Kitchener, as everyone knows, is not a politician. His association with the Government as a Minister of the Cabinet for this purpose must not be taken as in any way identifying him with any set of political opinions. He has, at a great public emergency, responded to a great public call.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Christopher Addison, Politics From Within, Vol. I (London: Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 1924), p. 41.

<sup>5</sup>House of Commons Debates, August 6, 1914, (col. 2082).

Asquith was hedging his bet, but his reservations would prove to be a shrewd political judgement.

Kitchener set to work immediately. Within hours of his appointment, he recommended to the cabinet that the initial call for volunteers be fixed at 500,000 men. He also made it known that an additional 500,000 troops would be needed in the following months, raising the number of new recruits needed to one million men. This request caught the cabinet totally off guard and Lord Grey commented afterwards that

Kitchener foresaw, to an extent that no one else did at first, the need for raising a great Army, larger than anything that had yet been contemplated. He based his demand for men on the opinion that the war would last for three years. That seemed to most of us unlikely, if not incredible. We thought only of a war of movement, that would bring a military decision one way or the other in less than three years; it also seemed to many of us that the terrific output of men and treasure that modern conditions made possible would bring exhaustion to every belligerent in much less than three years.<sup>6</sup>

The cabinet, doubtful of the need for such a huge army, approved Kitchener's proposal anyway, thinking that before a million men could be trained, equipped, and put in the field, the war would be over. That same day, August 6, Parliament accepted the proposal and authorized an initial £100,000,000 in war credits.<sup>7</sup> The next day the first recruiting posters were put up throughout the country, calling for an initial 100,000 volunteers to join "His Majesty's Regular Army". Within hours, men in large numbers began to line up in front of recruiting offices ready to give service.

The volunteers came forward so rapidly that the whole of the recruitment machinery was partially paralyzed and Kitchener was unwilling, if not

<sup>6</sup>Grey, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>7</sup>House of Commons Debates, August 6, 1914, (col. 2100).

unable, to straighten out the problems. Day after day, men were forced to queue and stand, moving at a snail's pace towards the recruiting office, only to be frustrated and sent home at the close of the day.<sup>8</sup> The lines soon became permanent and the volunteers stayed the night, hoping to enlist the next day. Addison, complaining in his diary about Kitchener's leadership in the War Office and the general inefficiency of his staff, concluded that "They have probably sent their best staff men on the E. F. (expeditionary force), but some of the retired colonels and majors whom they have put in charge of recruiting are 'the limit'". Rather acidly he pointed out that "If anybody could dampen down the enthusiasm to enlistment, these are the men to do it."<sup>9</sup>

The conditions in the standing camps, as the enlistment lines came to be called, grew worse as more and more men decided to join the ranks. The Local Government Board and some private charitable organizations, notably the YMCA, approached Kitchener and asked permission to organize concerts and educational lectures for the men. Grumbling something about not wanting civilian interference, Kitchener and his War Office staff refused all offers of aid.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of this confusion and inadequate planning, the first

<sup>8</sup>John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Nationalists, spoke before the House of Commons on August 3, offering the aid of the Nationalist Army. The Irish Unionists did the same a few days later. The War Office, in a miscalculation that would cost Britain dearly later, refused the support put forward by the Nationalists and accepted that of the Unionists. From this point on relations with the Nationalists, who were at first willing to delay Home Rule, grew more strained. House of Commons Debates, August 3, 1914, (cols. 1828-1839). A. J. P. Taylor, English History, 1914-1945, (Oxford, 1965), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup>Christopher Addison, Four and a Half Years, Vol. I, 3rd ed. (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1934), diary entry, October 21, 1914, pp. 37-39.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., diary entry, October 22, 1914, pp. 38-39.

100,000 men were not recruited until August 25. A call for another 100,000 men was issued on August 28. The response was so great that by September 15 500,000 men had volunteered for service, and the War Office asked for an additional 500,000 men.<sup>11</sup> The new flood of men now not only taxed the recruitment procedures, but also the facilities for training new soldiers for combat. Men moved from standing camps in front of recruitment offices to standing camps at training centers. By October, despite the high patriotic feelings and willingness to sacrifice, the standing camps were quickly falling into disorder. Finally, unable to make the War Office act, the government put together an advisory committee to investigate the possibility of having the County Education Authorities organize activities within the camps. The afternoon of October 22, the Committee on Standing Camps met with representatives of all the departments and several local authorities to draw up plans for recreational and educational activities in the camps. The Admiralty and the War Office were also invited, but only the representatives from the Admiralty were present. Although the navy only had men at the Crystal Palace and at camps in Dorset, they promised to cooperate with any efforts made by civil authorities to alleviate camp conditions. The primary purpose of the meeting was to create some sort of coordination between the War Office and civilian authorities; the absence of a representative from Kitchener was more than just a conspicuous oversight.

Mid-way through the meeting a messenger arrived saying that the representatives from the War Office were on their way. A few minutes

<sup>11</sup>Arthur Marwick, Britain in the Century of Total War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), p. 58.



later a letter from Kitchener arrived. Joseph Pease, chairman of the committee, reportedly read the note and then "sat tight for a few minutes to collect himself and then read the material parts for the Committee."<sup>12</sup> The letter from Kitchener, "in not over-polite language", said that "he had not understood the general composition and purport of the Committee". Addison asserts that

The purport of the letter was that he did not want civilians interfering! He did not think the Committee was necessary, and the War Office could do all that was required. He intended to build some huts; to give the men military lectures in the evenings and, as he was going to keep them at work all day, they ought to go to bed when they had finished.<sup>13</sup>

Kitchener's obstinance had put the committee in a delicate position. They could not openly challenge his authority because of his great popularity. On the other hand, they could not allow conditions to continue as they were or, what might be worse, to let Kitchener's proposals be implemented.

There was a general fear that Kitchener's "woeful lack of imagination" might hinder recruiting and take the edge off the volunteers' "keenness". To keep the men at military duties from dawn to dusk would, as the committee rightly argued, quickly tire the men of military life, even if Kitchener were able to organize such an operations staff. As yet, the War Office had not even managed to provide shelters against the rain, which led many on the committee to believe that any plan of Kitchener's would probably end in folly. Having no other recourse, Pease concluded that the committee's only hope was to appeal directly to the Prime Minister. This course of action won the support of the committee and immediately

<sup>12</sup>Addison, Four and a Half Years, op. cit., diary entry, October 22, 1914, pp. 38-39.

<sup>13</sup>Addison, Politics from Within, op. cit., p. 43.

after the meeting ended, Pease went to see Asquith to ask for his personal intervention. Asquith was found to be in full support of the committee's position and consented to see both Kitchener and Pease the next day, following a cabinet meeting, in order to secure the War Secretary's cooperation.<sup>14</sup>

The following day the conference between the three was held as Asquith promised. After the meeting Pease told Addison that the meeting was quite stormy, but the Prime Minister had supported him. Later in the day, after the anger of the meeting had worn off, Kitchener informed Asquith that the War Office would cooperate with civil authorities through a committee established to coordinate civil and military actions. This committee would, he promised, consult the Board of Education and the Local Education Authorities in an effort to make the standing camps more orderly. Furthermore, he agreed to establish local camp committees with laymen as members. These committees would organize activities for off-duty soldiers. Despite these concessions, Kitchener still dragged his feet on the matter. On Monday, November 16, Addison's diary reveals that Kitchener was still recalcitrant with regards to military and civilian cooperation. Addison commented

Every day that goes, however, shows what a terrible stumbling block Kitchener and his methods are to a real rallying of national enthusiasm. Our National patriotism is coming to the rescue of Europe not as the result, but in spite of the War Office.<sup>15</sup>

Later, on November 24, Addison adds to his evaluation that "there is no fathoming the thick-headedness of the War Office."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Addison, Four and a Half Years, op. cit., diary entry, October 23, 1914, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., diary entry, November 16, 1914, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., diary entry, November 24, 1914, p. 47.

Even though those inside government circles continued to bemoan Kitchener's obstinate presence in the War Office, they really could do very little but learn to work around him. By mid-November, the recruiting effort seemed to be going well and measures were being taken by civilian authorities to provide outside activities for the huge number of new recruits. The difficulties first encountered because of Kitchener's ineptitude and later as a result of his stubbornness seemed to slowly resolve themselves as Britain adjusted to war.

The war not only brought chaos to the War Office; it also played havoc with the home economy. The uncertainty that accompanied the outbreak of hostilities caused a near panic throughout British industrial life. G. D. H. Cole commented, in his contemporary account, Labour in the War, that

When the war broke out, the workers, the capitalists and the government seem to have been equally in the dark as to its probable effects upon industry. No one knew what would be its reaction upon the credit system and external trade; no one knew how far the home demand was likely to suffer contraction; no one foresaw the scale on which the war would be carried on, or the immense demands it would make upon production.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time as the first calls for volunteers for the army were being made, the war was making itself felt on the home front. Domestic consumer goods, and especially food prices, began to rise rapidly. On August 8, prices averaged 15 percent higher than those during the same week the month earlier. It was not, however, a uniform increase for all commodities. Milk rose an average of only a single percentage point, whereas sugar, in the larger towns, shot up 83 percent over its July price in a matter of days. This uneven advance was due partly to hoarding and shortages of

<sup>17</sup>G. D. H. Cole, Labour in the War, (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1915), p. 63.

certain goods, but as things calmed down after the initial shock of the war, prices fell off again. By the end of the first month of the war prices had slipped to an average of 11 percent higher in the larger towns and had retreated to an increase of only 9 percent in those with under 50,000 inhabitants.<sup>18</sup>

The unsettling effects of the war were not limited to a rapid increase in consumer goods; they also affected the rate of unemployment. Although certain industries, such as ship building, saddlery and harness, boot and shoe, military clothing and the hosiery trades, found that overtime was needed to keep up with the orders, generally the level of employment fell in most industries during August. Trade union unemployment jumped from 2.8 percent in July to 7.1 percent in August. The total number of unemployed people on the labor exchange registers as of August 14, 1914, was 194,580, in comparison to 112,622 on July 17 and 89,049 during the same week in August 1913. Moreover, in the insured trades, where the number of insured individuals was 2,341,508, 6.2 percent of the workers found themselves unemployed at the end of August. In comparison, only 2.6 percent of the insured workers had been unemployed at the end of July and 3.1 percent were out of work at the end of August the year before.<sup>19</sup>

The unemployment statistics alone do not indicate the full dimensions of the crisis. Many industries, rather than lay people off, chose to put them on short time until the domestic situation settled down. This was especially true in the tin plate and steel sheet, engineering, printing, bookbinding, building, pottery, and textile industries. Individual earn-

<sup>18</sup>M. B. Hammond, British Labor Conditions and Legislation During the War, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1919), pp. 32-33.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

ings, as a result, dropped and this decline did not appear in unemployment statistics. One figure that is available, for example, reveals that during one week in August, earnings in the cotton manufacturing trades were 58.8 percent less than the corresponding period in July and 60.9 percent below the same week the previous year.<sup>20</sup>

The hardship of unemployment, however, was very unevenly distributed between men and women. While the heavy industries, in which mostly male labor was employed, suffered from the early wartime industrial confusion, trades employing primarily women suffered the most. The cotton, linen, silk, lace, tailoring, dressmaking, millinery, and hat making trades all were forced to lay off their workers, mostly female, in large numbers. The demand for luxury goods plummeted during the first month of the war, as people found inflation cutting into their spending power. The rate of unemployment in other industries further reduced the market for luxuries. Although no figures are available for August, when the situation was at its most chaotic, in September only, 53.5 percent of all women employed in full time work in July were working full time the second month of the war; this is in comparison to 60.2 percent for men.<sup>21</sup>

This sudden surge of unemployment among both men and women meant that the number of people seeking public relief increased. Claims for unemployment benefits under Part II of the National Insurance Act amounted to 180,233 during the first four weeks in August. This was in comparison to 103,730 claims made during the five weeks of July. The insurance fund was well able to meet these claims, but many people who were not

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>21</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 68.

covered by the insurance act were also faced with unemployment. On August 4, the Prime Minister, fully expecting some dislocation to take place as a result of the war, appointed a cabinet committee that would be responsible for the prevention and relief of distress.<sup>23</sup> The committee's chairman, Herbert Samuel, President of the Local Government Board, put the committee to work immediately, dividing it into four sub-committees: Committee for London, Committee for Agricultural Districts, Committee on Urban Housing, and Committee on Women's Employment. On August 6, a memorandum was sent out to local authorities throughout the country, encouraging the establishment of local relief committees.<sup>24</sup> These committees were to be operated by each local authority and composed of representatives from the Board of Guardians, trade unions, philanthropic organizations, and soldiers' and sailors' families' associations.

By August 11, numerous local committees had been established and the central government committee began to issue a series of memoranda outlining the role of the local committees. These emphasized that working people, as far as possible, were to be kept working full time at their usual trades or on short time if this were impossible.<sup>25</sup> If this could not be accomplished, the local committees were

urged to use every effort to keep labour in the normal channels; where the demands of the normal labour market are inadequate the Committees are advised to consult the

<sup>23</sup>Cmd. 7603, "Memorandum on the Steps Taken for the Prevention and Relief of Distress Due to War," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Accounts and Papers, Vol. 14, 1914.

<sup>24</sup>Manchester Guardian, August 7, 1914.

<sup>25</sup>Percy Allen, "War and the Wage Earner," The Contemporary Review, September 1914, p. 379.

local authorities as to the possibility of expediting schemes of public utility, which might otherwise not be put in hand at the present moment; it is only when these fail that recourse should be had to relief works and only in the last resort that relief should be given without work.<sup>26</sup>

In order to finance the relief committees the Prince of Wales made an appeal for public contributions and appointed a special committee to oversee the distribution of relief money. The Executive Committee of the Prince of Wales' Fund placed themselves under the control of the cabinet committee, agreeing to act only on their recommendations.<sup>27</sup>

As money poured into the Prince of Wales' Fund and the network of local committees swung into operation, complaints began to be heard from representatives of the trade union movement. The committees, it was charged, were largely composed of "social workers" who

had long been connected with the Poor Law, the Charity Organization Society, and other relief agencies. The labour representatives, even where they were given seats on the committees, were nearly always swamped by the mass votes of the officials and charity-mongers. The social workers, long used to the relief of a peculiar type of distress, could not realize that the special distress created by the war was of a quite different character and demanded different treatment. Accustomed to bullying the very poor, the Committees set out with eagerness to bully the regular wage-earners whom the war had thrown out of work.<sup>28</sup>

In some cases the committees prepared case reports and made house-to-house visitations in order to gather more information concerning those who were receiving benefits. The unemployed workers, always distrustful of any charity that seemed to be like the Poor Law, often refused to ask the local committees for aid, preferring instead to "exhaust savings and accumulate debts".<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Cmd. 7603, op. cit., Appendix No. 3.

<sup>28</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>27</sup>The Nation, August 22, 1914, p. 251.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

The relief committees may have represented a cold and rather calculating approach toward the problem of unemployment, but in the long run they did help to ease the crisis while the nation's industries re-tooled for war. The Central Committee on Women's Employment gave assistance to the local committees in the formulation of women's relief. Workrooms were established for the purposes of re-training women and girls for work in industries other than those which produced luxury goods.<sup>30</sup> Grants were made by the central committee to road boards, which in turn allotted repair and construction money to highway authorities in areas of high unemployment. For this purpose, grants amounting to £209,259 were made. The relief committees also received £158,266 for the purposes of employing and training persons experiencing distress.<sup>31</sup>

The government, aside from the formation of the relief committees, made an effort to encourage war contractors to use the maximum number of workers in their factories. In late August a memorandum was issued from the War Office to all contractors, making certain suggestions for the minimization of unemployment. The note asked all employers to act upon the following as quickly as they reasonably could:

(1) Rapid delivery to be attained by employing extra hands in shifts or otherwise, in preference to overtime, subject always to the paramount necessity of effecting delivery within times requisite for the needs of the army. (2) Subletting of portions of the work to other suitable manufacturers situated in districts where serious unemployment exists, although contrary to the usual conditions of army contracts, is admissible during the present crisis.

<sup>30</sup>Arthur Patterson, "War Funds Co-ordination of Chaos," The Nineteenth Century, October 1914, p. 740.

<sup>31</sup>Hammond, op. cit., pp. 42-44. Lord Riddell, Lord Riddell's War Diary (Ivor Nicholson: Watson, 1933), diary entry, August 10, 1914, p.12.



The memorandum also issued a stern warning to employers, telling them that the government would not tolerate those who took advantage of the labor situation.

(a) The main contractor to remain solely responsible for due execution of the contract as regards to quality, dates for delivery and in every respect. (b) The fair wages clause to apply strictly with the exception of the passage permitting subletting. The main contractor will undertake to observe the other provisions of the fair wages clause. (c) Names and addresses of all firms to whom it is proposed to sublet work to be submitted for approval before work is actually given out to them.<sup>32</sup>

The object of the memorandum to contractors was to make use of as much manpower as possible until the industrial situation calmed down. During the early days of the war the government was primarily concerned with the worsening military situation in France and had little time for home affairs. It was hoped that the limited measures taken would enable the economy to recover from the shock of the war by itself.

The government's attempts to deal with unemployment at home seemed to do the trick. By the end of August, it appeared as if the panic had passed and the economy was readjusting itself to wartime conditions. Trade unions, which had experienced a 7.1 percent unemployment rate during August, reported that the total had decreased to 5.6 percent of their membership by September. Near the end of October, it had again declined to 4.4 percent, in November to 2.9 percent, and by the end of the year it had fallen off to 2.5 percent. The December figure was about the same as the rate of unemployment for the Decembers of 1912 and 1913.<sup>33</sup> In the uninsured trades recovery was even more rapid. From a high of 6.2 percent in August, the unemployment rate slipped to 4.2 percent in October and by the end of

<sup>32</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

December, it had fallen to 3.3 percent.

The economy had not collapsed as many had predicted it would during the early part of August. As the government began to place its war contracts, industry began to come out of its depressed condition. More and more labor shifted to the boom industries and in many cases unemployment proved to be short-term. The Manchester Guardian reported on August 25, 1914, that the

Government and other orders arising out of the war itself are exerting a widening influence on the engineering trade. Naturally the direct government orders fall mainly to regular contractors who are as a consequence, exceptionally busy. As a result they are leaving to other firms a proportion of the work they normally compete for, and are, to a certain extent, passing work to sub-contractors. Like the ring waves created by the dropping of a stone into a pool, the influence of the Government orders is spreading through in diminishing strength to the farthest boundaries of the trade.<sup>34</sup>

The elimination of foreign competition, especially that of Germany, further stimulated British industry and enabled it to pick up the slack in the employment statistics. Moreover, Lord Kitchener's recruiting efforts siphoned off large numbers of men into the army. Soon the surpluses in the labor market had, in some industries, become labor shortages and some skilled men in the engineering trades and the cloth trades were turned out of the army in order to return to work.<sup>35</sup> The way in which the economy was recovering created a sense of confidence in the minds of many that Britain would adjust easily to the demands of war time.

As early as August 11, H. E. Morgan of W. H. Smith and Son, suggested, in a letter to the Daily Chronicle, that the country's best

<sup>34</sup>Manchester Guardian, August 25, 1914.

<sup>35</sup>Lord Askwith, Industrial Problems and Disputes (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), pp. 360-361.

economic policy would be to allow business to perform much as it always had. Government, he pointed out, ought to practice non-interference. It was hoped that after the initial shock and dislocation caused by the war, conditions would settle down to normal. The market, Morgan concluded, would be self-adjusting to both the needs of the war and those of the home economy. Later in August, a meeting of business leaders "resolved that together in unity, they would fight the war on the slogan 'business as usual'".<sup>36</sup> Soon the snappy phrase, "business as usual", was being promoted by the government and the press.<sup>37</sup> At first the government espoused the concept in order to rebuild confidence in the home economy. There was a natural desire by the public to return to what seemed to have been days of stability and normalcy before the terrible convulsions of the war. The government played up to this public mood and "business as usual" caught on amazingly and everybody felt that to carry on as usual was a patriotic duty.<sup>38</sup>

By mid-September "business as usual" could be heard on every corner. As it became evident that the economy, although badly rocked by soaring inflation and a high unemployment rate, would not collapse, "business as usual" became more than calming rhetoric. The Liberal government, seeing that the economy was slowly recovering and that its emergency relief measures were working, adopted a "business as usual" economic policy. Already the protectors of free trade and governmental non-interference, the Liberals readily accepted the suggestions made by the nation's

<sup>36</sup>Marwick, Deluge, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>38</sup>Addison, Four and a Half Years, op. cit., diary entry, August 4, 1914, p. 36.

business leaders who were "anxious to unite duty with profit."<sup>39</sup> The government was told that industry could meet the demands of war and that industrial readjustment would take place rapidly if only the government would stay out of industrial affairs. By November, the economy had clearly regained some of its lost strength and any temptations the government might have had to tinker with the economy disappeared.

The first official endorsement of a "business as usual" economic policy came on November 16, when Lloyd George unveiled the government's first war budget to the House of Commons. On that occasion he told the House that the government would propose to "levy no taxes that will interfere with any productive industry".<sup>40</sup> Rather, he proposed that additional revenues be raised from increased personal taxes and duties. Lloyd George, standing before the House, asserted that

It does not require very much courage to tax ourselves, to give part of our incomes to fight the enemy, but let us show that we civilians of all classes are perfectly prepared to take our share of the burdens of this war. It is for these reasons that the Government propose to submit to the House of Commons proposals for raising a substantial sum by means of taxes. On the ground of policy, as well as justice, it is expedient that a great war, involving national honour and existence, should be financed by contributions levied upon a section--upon a minority of the population. It is peculiarly a case for every class, every condition, every grade, to bear their share of the burdens. I therefore submit proposals which will bring in, so far as we are able, all classes of the community.<sup>41</sup>

The new budget proposal sought to raise an extra £225,000,000 for the purpose of prosecuting the war. This of course was in addition to the £100,000,000 already voted by the House.

The money was to come from two sources. War loans could have

<sup>39</sup>Marwick, Deluge, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 357-358.

<sup>40</sup>House of Commons Debates, November 17, 1941, (col. 357).

probably raised the total amount, but the government felt that, if at all possible, the war should be put on a pay-as-you-go basis. Therefore, only part of the amount was to be raised through loans. Lloyd George, in his memoirs, claims that at the time he (the government) reasoned that

War-time demands would stimulate our industries to unprecedented activity; and in addition, the closing down of the international commerce of Central Europe and the crippling of the industrial capacities of France and Belgium, would, for the time being, mean that a heavy extra demand for goods by other countries would fall on us.<sup>42</sup>

The result of this furious industrial activity, Lloyd George concluded, would be that more money would be circulating in the economy, thus making it easier "to pay for the war while this state of things lasted than later on". With this reasoning in hand, and the ideological palatability of raising the income tax schedule and commodity duties, the government put before the House a budget which was designed to maintain "business as usual".

Before the war, people earning between £160 and £500 per year were taxed at a rate of 9d. per pound. Those with incomes above £500 but below £3,000 paid a rate of 1s. 3d., and all incomes exceeding £3,000 were charged with an additional super-tax. Lloyd George proposed that all income brackets should have their rates doubled. This new rate would be payable until the conclusion of the fiscal year which ended on March 31, 1915. This meant that the new rate of taxation would apply only to incomes received the last third of the year. The other two-thirds were to be taxed according to the old, pre-war rate schedule. In order to supple-

<sup>42</sup>David Lloyd George, War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, vol. I, 3rd ed (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1935), p. 106.

ment the increased income taxation, the government further moved to raise the tax on certain commodities. The duty on beer was raised the equivalent of a penny a pint, increasing the average price per pint to 4d. In a show of national unity, the Liberal government, to placate the Tory brewing interests, also placed a heavier tax on tea. The rate was increased from 5d. to 8d. per pound.

The government argued in the case of beer and tea that although they were asking consumers of those two products to bear a heavy burden, for the most part they, in the past, had escaped added taxation. In 1909 tax on spirits, Lloyd George said, had at first caused a decline in revenue from the sale of hard liquor.<sup>43</sup> He noted that

Inasmuch as we are raising taxes for the immediate necessities of the time--for the conduct of the war, I am advised that to attempt to raise money by means of putting a considerable additional duty on spirits would be futile, and that you would not get your revenue but, on the contrary, might lose by it.<sup>44</sup>

Lloyd George further argued before the House that any tax on wine might damage the economics of wine-producing colonies and Portugal, France, and Spain. Pointing this out he suggested that a heavy tariff on wine might be "undesirable for diplomatic reasons and would not be very productive . . ." <sup>45</sup> The wine market, moreover, was primarily the preserve of the monied classes within society, and the government did not want to appear to be asking one class to sacrifice more than others.

As to the proposed tax on tea, the government assumed that "tee-totalers" were not beer drinkers and therefore it was a tax on hereto-

<sup>43</sup>House of Commons Debates, November 17, 1914, (col. 367).

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 367.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 368.

fore untaxed class of people. Lloyd George claimed that "one's only chance at getting at the teetotaler is by taxing tea".<sup>46</sup> He reminded the House that in 1904 the rate of taxation on tea had been at 8d. per pound and only recently had the rate fallen to 5d. The government, he said, "regretted having to propose an increase of this duty". But he added that if he "could find any other way of levying a contribution upon every class of the community I would certainly adopt it as opposed to this particular levy".<sup>47</sup> Mr. J. E. Allen expressed the view of many who thought that new taxes might be needed when he suggested that

The Cinematograph, an exceedingly foolish kind of entertainment and one which, in the opinion of elementary school teachers, is specially bad for children, cries out for taxation. Travelling shows and 'roundabouts' are undertakings which ought to pay in taxes what they save in rates, and music-halls should not be overlooked.<sup>48</sup>

Despite Mr. Allen's suggestions and those of others, Lloyd George and the government refused to impose new taxes, choosing rather to increase those already in existence.

Most orthodox opinion in the country felt that the government's proposals were reasonable and prudent. Money could be raised to finance the war through the regular channels and business could proceed as usual. The Economist remarked that the

Government deserves all credit for having boldly faced an unprecedented emergency by calling upon the nation to make

<sup>46</sup>The Liberal government was politically expected to tax tea, if it planned to tax beer, in order to prove that both Liberals and Conservatives were going to pay for the war. House of Commons Debates, November 17, 1914, (col. 368).

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>48</sup>J. E. Allen, "How to Pay for the War," The Contemporary Review, December 1914, p. 765.

an unprecedented sacrifice. And we must commend Mr. Lloyd George, not only for promptitude and courage, but also for the directness and simplicity of the scheme which he laid before the House of Commons on Tuesday.

The journal concluded that

There is no nonsense about it, no dodging, no attempt to impose taxes which will be profitable to certain interests and therefore popular with a section of the community. There are none of those petty devices which hamper trade without helping revenue and above all none of those protective duties in which the Exchequer shares with favored interests the plunder of the poor.<sup>49</sup>

From the other side of the political spectrum, The Nation noted in its November 21 issue that the budget seemed "admirably devised".<sup>50</sup> The budget was the affirmation of the official acceptance of "business as usual" as an economic policy. The government intended to let the economy float through the war adjusting "naturally" to each new situation as it came along.

In late 1914 it seemed to the government as if all the immediate problems had been worked out. Although prices continued to rise at a steady rate, the shock to home industry which had caused so many people to be thrown out of work was wearing off. The efforts to relieve dislocated workers and their families had been largely funneled through the normal agencies and they, as far as the government was concerned, had done a more than adequate job. Kitchener's problems in the War Office, despite the friction between the Secretary and civilian authorities, also seemed to be moving towards settlement. The question concerning the position of labor during the war, although widely discussed, was generally shunted into the background during the first month of the war. Patriotism demanded

<sup>49</sup>The Economist, November 21, 1914, p. 907.

<sup>50</sup>"Paying for the War," The Nation, November 21, 1914, p. 237.



that labor should try to cooperate with the government and industry during the war. Moreover, the position of labor at the beginning of the war was not exactly a strong one. Massive unemployment was the major threat to the working class, not exploitation. Hopeful of a short war, labor closed ranks with the rest of the nation, willing to make its share of sacrifices.

As soon as the war began, industrial and labor leaders with some prodding from the government moved to conclude an industrial truce. At the beginning of August there were over one hundred ongoing labor disputes in Britain. By the end of the month only twenty remained unsettled. Lord Askwith, Chief Industrial Commissioner for the government, claims that "disputes melted away as fast as the hours of the day and often of the night".<sup>51</sup> The London building trade dispute and the employers threatened nation-wide lockout was averted and both employers and the union asked for arbitration. The Marine Engineers' Union proclaimed a truce and their men went back to work. Electricians, shop repairers, boilermakers, and dock laborers all made quick settlements in the name of national unity, or at least went back to work. Electricians, shop repairers, boilermakers, and dock laborers all made quick settlements in the name of national unity, or at least went back to work pending further negotiation.<sup>52</sup> The Times reported to its readers that by August 8,

The coal trimmers and tippers in South Wales have intimated that they will work at any time, during day or night. The General Workers' Union are getting their men to remain at work, and are avoiding the raising of new questions. In South Wales the Miners' Federation have decided that all existing questions, including those relating to non-unionism, should be dropped. The Scottish coalowners have intimated

<sup>51</sup>Askwith, op. cit., p. 358.

<sup>52</sup>The Times, August 8, 1914.

to the miners in Scotland that in view of the existing position they will not proceed with their claims for a reduction in wages.<sup>53</sup>

All over the nation it looked as if the trade unions and the industrialists were prepared to postpone their long-standing conflicts. Patriotism, common sacrifice, and a desire to do one's bit was in the air.

On August 28, a conference of top labor leaders was held in order to more fully develop a wartime industrial policy. It was agreed by the representatives at the meeting

. . . that an immediate effort be made to terminate all existing trade disputes whether strikes or lockouts, and whenever new points of difficulty arise during the war period, a serious attempt should be made by all concerned to reach an amicable settlement before resorting to a strike or lockout.<sup>54</sup>

Fully expecting the war to be short and the peace a temporary one, the unions, as a rule, quickly moved to settle all outstanding trade disputes.

Even as the truce was being worked out, many in the trade unions were beginning to reconsider the concessions that had been made in the name of patriotism. Rising food prices and the abuses some experienced at the hands of the relief committees made the unconditional truce that labor had agreed upon look less than advantageous by October.

The results of the first half-million and then the second half million men being withdrawn from industries, the knowledge slowly sinking into some minds that the war would not end without a long and bitter struggle, the hope in other minds that it would soon end and business must be preserved, losses in one business, profits in another, competition for skilled men, efforts to fulfill contracts at any price, all the many dislocations of a sudden great war began to have an effect.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., August 8, 1914.

<sup>54</sup>Askwith, op. cit., pp. 358-359. <sup>55</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 108.

Labor opinion began to become unsettled and nervous over the prospects of a prolonged war. The industrial truce had been proclaimed primarily on impulse without much forethought. There had been no attempt to lay down any conditions and no provisions had been made in case of inflation or profiteering by industrialists. "They did not go to the government and the employers and say, 'If you wish us to keep the peace these are our terms.' Rather they said, 'We will keep the peace,' and then went to the Government, cap in hand."<sup>56</sup> The realization of this tactical error caused some of the union leaders to challenge the peace treaty with capitalism. The Chief Industrial Commissioner, who had helped to settle many of the August disputes, stepped in on behalf of the government in order to patch up the deteriorating industrial harmony. Askwith's efforts were generally designed to shore up the status-quo and insure uninterrupted production. Thus, the government's "business as usual" policy was being extended to mean "labor as usual", but the trade unions were slowly coming to the conclusion that the policy was asking them to make all the sacrifices. As a result, industrial tensions gradually increased during the fall months of 1914.<sup>57</sup>

In the ship-building and engineering trades, conferences had been held between employers and employees in order better to organize the industry. Attempts were made to deal jointly with questions concerning production, work restrictions, and better use of increasingly short manpower. However, the series of meetings failed to produce any significant recommendations. In December ship-builders and unions met again, this time to discuss the suspension of work rules, but here again the two

<sup>56</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

parties failed to reach common ground. Near the end of the year the general industrial situation appeared to be "a complete deadlock, and something like despair in the minds of those who had been most energetic in attempting to effect an agreement."<sup>58</sup> Perhaps the most dangerous problem was developing in the munitions industry where skilled men were needed everywhere, not only because of the soaring demand but because in the first days of the war many munitions workers had rushed off to enlist. Although many of them were being turned out of the military and returning to their old jobs, the increasing demands for munitions by the army could not be met. Long hours were being required and workers were often pirated by competing firms. In all industries by the end of the year there was confusion, hardship and uncertainty. Anxiety had generally replaced the almost rabid patriotism of most English working people and the government did very little to ease their confusion.

By the end of 1914 the industrial situation had become increasingly more critical, though the government and many observers were still painting pictures of industrial peace. John B. C. Kershaw, writing in the Fortnightly Review in December 1914, suggested to his fellow countrymen that "We may face the future with some degree of confidence that during the period for which the war lasts we will be able to maintain our mills and factories in fairly regular operation."<sup>59</sup> This widespread belief was based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the war in which

<sup>58</sup> Askwith, op. cit., p. 363.

<sup>59</sup> John B. C. Kershaw, "The Effects of Warfare Upon Commerce and Industry," Fortnightly Review, December 1914, p. 1024.

England found herself. Most planning, except Kitchener's, had been geared to a short war. Addison, in his diary, writes of a dinner in late November, at which government officials were still counting the months until peace would be declared.

There was an interesting little group at dinner in the House-- L. G., Simon, the Reas and Needham (Sir George). The whole talk, of course, was of the war. Simon has a fixed notion that peace will be declared on July the 18th of next year, whilst Montagu has decided on August 13th. Lloyd George thought it might be some time between the end of the summer and Christmas --probably nearer Christmas. Anyhow, he felt it would last longer than most people thought.<sup>60</sup>

Few people were speculating on the effects of an extended war on British domestic life. A prophetic exception to this prevailing attitude was Ramsey MacDonald, who in a letter to The Nation on September 8, wrote

In every respect, we have gone to war without counting the costs. We are to be menaced with military domination in Great Britain including compulsory military service, and with financial obligations--including debt to the dependants of the dead and to the maimed themselves--which are to be colossal . . . Peace appears to be far off, and national disaster threateningly near.<sup>61</sup>

MacDonald, however, was on the fringes of the political spectrum and most refused to listen. Instead, the government continued to pretend that society could operate as usual long after it should have become clear that the war would demand much more of British society.<sup>62</sup>

The experiences of the first four months of the war had shown the Liberal government that wartime domestic problems could work themselves

<sup>60</sup>Addison, Four and a Half Years, op. cit., diary entry, November 23, 1914, pp. 46-47.

<sup>61</sup>Ramsey MacDonald, Letter to the Editor, The Nation, September 12, 1914, p. 841.

<sup>62</sup>Askwith, op. cit., p. 259.

out through normal channels. A huge new army had been raised and was being put in the field despite the initial confusion in the War Office. The economy, severely shaken, had not collapsed and appeared to be re-adjusting to the war. Moreover, the unemployment among the working class had proved to be short-term and the resulting distress had been eased by the regular authorities. The government had also watched labor disputes melt away in a great expression of patriotism, self-sacrifice, and national unity. This course of events blinded those in the government to the danger signals and they concluded that the domestic situation would care for itself and adjust to each new situation. They ignored in December the rising dissatisfaction among the working class and especially the trade unions. The government also closed its eyes to the growing inability of industry to meet production schedules. Under the banner of "business as usual" the government pursued what was in reality a non-policy towards domestic affairs. Planning was on a short term basis only. The Liberal government all but ignored the possibilities of a protracted conflict requiring national organization and maximum efficiency at home as well as on the battlefields in France.

Despite the general tendency during the first four months of the war to let the domestic situation drift and readjust itself to wartime conditions, a body of war laws was created by Parliament. The government saw that some measures were needed in order to ensure domestic security against enemy subversion and possible sabotage. In response to this need, the government introduced in the House on August 8, 1914, the first Defence of the Realm Act, otherwise affectionately known as D.O.R.A. The act was passed amid a landslide of other war-related legislation, receiving little in the way of individual attention, either in the House, by

the major journals, or the large daily newspapers. However, the first D.O.R.A. would soon take on a much larger role within British society than any of its sponsors had anticipated or imagined.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department, Mr. McKenna, introduced the Defence of the Realm Bill on August 8, saying that its purpose was to make regulations during the war for the defense of the realm. The bill was simple and straightforward, having two goals. They were:

- (a) to prevent persons communicating with the enemy or obtaining information for that purpose or any purpose calculated to jeopardize the success of the operations of any of His Majesty's Forces or to assist the enemy;
- (b) to secure the safety of any means of communication or of railways, dock or harbours.<sup>63</sup>

The bill was broad and wide open, allowing the military to see that these two goals were met. After a short explanation of the bill the House passed it without debate. The new act did not allow the imposition of the death sentence and the government promised that sufficient safeguards against the more abrasive qualities of martial law would be erected. Nonetheless, judgement for those accused of violations was to be based on military law. Almost no concern about the vagueness of the act was expressed; it seems that all parties in the House were convinced that the act would be used only against spies and saboteurs and could not possibly affect loyal Britishers.

On August 25, Mr. McKenna again went before the House, this time in order to propose an amendment to the original bill. The amendment was a

<sup>63</sup>House of Commons Debates, August 8, 1914, (col. 2192).

refinement of the earlier version, providing for an even wider exercise of military authority on British soil. Under the first act, power was given to enable the military, in conjunction with the civilian government, to exercise a degree of control over communications and transportation. The addition to the act extended these powers "to all areas in which trade is being carried on". The government's newest proposal sought to amend the earlier act by adding to paragraph (a) the words, "or to prevent the spread of reports likely to cause disaffection or alarm". Following paragraph (b) the government asked that the phrase "or of any area which may be proclaimed by the Admiralty or Army Council to be an area which it is necessarily to safeguard in the interests of the training or concentration of any of His Majesty's Forces" be added. A third paragraph (c) was also proposed. This would enable the Army or Admiralty to requisition vacant buildings for military barracks or storehouses.<sup>64</sup> The only objections raised to these amendments to the act had to do with the position of the press. Mr. C. P. Trevelyan asked if the bill might be used to "prevent the expression in speech or in writing of any political opinions on the actions of the government".<sup>65</sup> Mr. McKenna replied by giving his assurances, noting that the provisions would be used only in the most blatant of cases, "which may cause disaffection and do cause harm".<sup>66</sup> This explanation satisfied Mr. Trevelyan and the amendment to the Defence of the Realm Act passed easily.

<sup>64</sup>"Defence of the Realm Act," Sessional Papers of the House of Commons, Public Bills, Vol. I, 1914.

<sup>65</sup>House of Commons Debates, August 26, 1914, (cols. 87-88).

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., (cols. 88-89).



On November 16, the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Bill, which sought to combine D.O.R.A. with the Aliens Restriction Act, was introduced. It received its second reading on November 23, with the government's representative, Mr. McKenna, again in the House. During the debate, attention was centered on the possibilities of government censorship of the press as a result of the bill. Already some correspondents had complained bitterly that they were unable to observe the fighting at the front because of the army's failure to cooperate. Moreover, the press in general and especially the Liberal press, had become extremely sensitive to what it considered to be overzealous censors.<sup>67</sup> Lord Robert Cecil said of the previously enacted clause of D.O.R.A., that "They practically enable the Government to suppress any reports of any kind of which they [the government censors] disapprove". He added to this that, "It does not matter whether or not the reports are true or untrue. They may be perfectly true, but the Government are still entitled . . . . to suppress them altogether, and not only to suppress them, but to bring anyone who spreads them before a court-martial".<sup>68</sup> To this McKenna replied that the government had been very careful and felt that it had exercised its powers with extreme discretion. He noted that the only time so far the government had attempted to "muzzle" the press was in the case of one newspaper that was preparing an issue which declared there were 250,000 Germans in London. McKenna added that he did not think it was abuse of power for the government

<sup>67</sup>"The Press Bureau", The New Statesman, November 21, 1914, pp. 156-157.

<sup>68</sup>House of Commons Debates, November 23, 1914, (col. 910). Riddell, op. cit., diary entry, November 20, 1914, p. 41.

to pre-empt that particular issue of the newspaper in question.<sup>69</sup>

Action on the bill was deferred for two days until November 25, when the House again took up the issue. During the debate, McKenna put forward two new amendments to the Defence of the Realm Act. He proposed that

It shall be lawful for the Admiralty or Army Council:

- (a) to require that there shall be placed at their disposal the whole or any part of the output of any factory or workshop in which arms, ammunition or warlike stores or equipment, or any articles required for the production thereof, are manufactured;
- (b) to take possession and use for the purpose of His Majesty's Naval or Military Service any such factory or workshop or any plant thereof, and Regulations under this Act may be made accordingly.<sup>70</sup>

McKenna commented after presenting the government's proposal that these new powers were being requested so as to ensure an abundant supply of munitions for the war effort. The amendment was quickly approved with only one voice of dissent. One M.P., a Mr. Holt, representing Northumberland, noted that the military, when given control of anything, "are most unreasonable". While pointing out to his fellow members that "the requirements of the civil population are just as important to the Crown as any other section of the population", he was shouted down with a loud "NO!". The motives for Holt's objection are not clearly defined. What is clear, though, is that most of those in the House overlooked the possible wider applications of the amendments proposed by the government.

Following the passage of the consolidation bill, an article appeared in the December 12 issue of The New Statesman, entitled "War Law". This

<sup>69</sup>House of Commons Debates, November 23, 1914 (col. 914).

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., November 25, 1914 (cols. 1274-1275).

remarkably perceptive piece stated simply a larger view of the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act, which the House, for the most part, had overlooked. The commentator wrote that, "Put shortly, the point of the Act lies in the fact it gives the Cabinet power to legislate, within certain wide limits, without the cumbersome necessity of passing Acts through the House of Parliament."<sup>71</sup> Adding a hopeful prophecy, the writer supplements his evaluation by saying that

It would appear, therefore, that so far at any rate as quite a large sphere of the national life is concerned the democratic fabric of our government has been quickly, decently and legally transformed into a bureaucracy with wide legislative and judicial powers. There is, however, not much reason to anticipate that the actual exercise of these new drastic powers will itself be unduly drastic . . . . The Government have simply allowed a wide margin for contingencies; they have given themselves an ell in order that they may take several inches.

Continuing the analysis, the article is concluded by the author, who notes that

They have abolished trial by jury, the liberty of the subject, the liberty of the Press, but they have proceeded with a certain commendable discretion, masking the howitzers of their martial law behind the theoretically inviolate citadel of the British Constitution.<sup>72</sup>

The shroud of the constitution, however, was not to cover the howitzers of D.O.R.A. for long. The government, during the first months of the war, had not finally resolved any of its domestic problems and it had failed to develop an effective policy towards either home industry or labor. As a result, industry was totally unorganized and not meeting the production demands of the War Office, whereas labor was growing increasingly restless with inflation and low wages. As these factors threatened to impede the war effort, D.O.R.A. would take on a new importance by the spring of 1915.

<sup>71</sup>"War Law", The New Statesman, December 12, 1914, p. 239.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

## CHAPTER II

### THE END OF BUSINESS AS USUAL

The two issues of production and labor persistently plagued the Liberal government during the first four months of the war and these problems were carried into the new year. Labor, led by the trade unions, began to bring the industrial peace to an end, while at the same time the government was discovering that the troops on the front did not have enough munitions to carry on the war. Each of these problems had different root causes, but as they grew they tended to inflame each other, overlap and become a single complicated issue. The government, after months of trying to deal with them separately, found that its efforts had been fruitless. Finally, in the spring of 1915, the government dropped its "business as usual" policy towards the home front, realizing that, in modern total warfare, domestic efficiency was as important to victory as the soldiers in the trenches of France.

After the outbreak of the war in August, labor had agreed to participate in an industrial truce. It was expected by workers, but never guaranteed by the government or industrial employers, that existing rates of real wages and profits would be maintained. Prices from the beginning of the war continued to climb unabated, at a steady inflationary rate, whereas wages for the vast majority of workers did not keep pace with the increased cost of living. Using July 1914 as the normal price standard, prices on the first day of each month until June 1915 rose by the follow-

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ing percentages:

September, 1914 . . .	10%	February, 1915 . . .	22%
October, 1914 . . .	12%	March, 1915 . . .	24%
November, 1914 . . .	13%	April, 1915 . . .	24%
December, 1914 . . .	16%	May, 1915 . . .	26%
January, 1915 . . .	18%	June, 1915 . . .	32% <sup>1</sup>

Though organized labor had lain down the sword of industrial action, in an effort to do their bit during the war, it was always suspicious of both government and industry. As early as August 5, 1914, a group of labor leaders met to form an ad hoc group to voice the concerns of the English working class.<sup>2</sup> The Workers' National Committee proposed that the responsible central authorities should take measures for officially controlling "(a) the purchase and storage of food; (b) the fixing of maximum prices of food and trade necessities; and (c) the distribution of food." The committee further promoted the idea that citizen committees be set up to "guard against the exploitation of the people by unnecessarily high prices."<sup>3</sup> Later in the fall these demands were expanded to cover the full range of working class consumer goods, but the call for controls went decidedly against the grain of the government's expressed domestic policy. As a result the committee's demands concerning prices and profits "were treated either with a bare denial of their possibility or with a contemptuous 'wait until June'".<sup>4</sup>

Labor could not wait. Many among the working class, noting that the rapid advance in the price of necessities, especially foodstuffs and coal,

<sup>1</sup>M. B. Hammond, British Labor Conditions and Legislation During the War, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1919), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>G. D. H. Cole, Labour in the War (London: G. Bell and Son, Ltd., 1915), p. 118. The committee was made up of trade unionists but they envisioned that their role was to speak for all members of the working class.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

were not accompanied by an equal rise in their wages, began to suspect many industries of profiteering. Opinion differs as to how widespread profiteering was, but the psychological impact of the confirmed cases on an already doubting working class began to shake the foundations of the industrial truce. The trade unions took up the battle to bring prices down by ending what they saw as an inequality of sacrifice. While they were being asked to absorb a cut in real wages, they charged that their employers were making huge wartime profits. On January 14, 1915, the Worker's National Committee reissued a series of demands they had first made on October 5, 1914. The resolution declared that

The price of wheat having risen to a figure (38s. to 45s. per quarter) which allows a reasonable margin of profit for home-growers, who are being advised, against the truest interests of the nation, to refrain from growing more wheat until prices rule considerably higher, this Committee is of the opinion that the Government should appoint a Royal Commission on Wheat . . . <sup>5</sup>

The resolution suggested that the objectives of the royal commission should be to commandeer all stocks of English-grown wheat at prices from 35s. to 40s. a quarter. The committee also asked that the proposed commission then sell all the wheat at the current prices, paying a 5 percent bounty to the growers, and that the balance of the profit should be placed in the national treasury. Finally, the workers' committee insisted that one-fifth of all cultivated lands, other than market gardens under 5 acres, be set aside exclusively for wheat production. In addition to these specific recommendations, the committee reappointed the Food Prices Sub-Committee, which had been previously abandoned. The sub-committee was charged with making an intensive investigation into the causes of high food and coal prices.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

Two days later, the Manchester Guardian, in a rather lengthy article, condemned the government for its inaction with regard to the rate of inflation. The paper told its readers that

Whatever the causes may be, the result is a serious addition to the burden which the poorer classes of the country have already been called upon to bear. The Government has done much to safeguard the producing interests of the community. For the consumer they have so far done little.

The article continued to name what it assumed to be the causes of the continuing advance in the price of consumer goods, noting that

The employment of a very large number of ships on transport work and the loss by capture or internment of other ships (equal probably to the new construction of two or three years) have reduced the merchantile marine of all the belligerent countries to such an extent that ship owners are able to dictate terms as they have never been able to do before. This is a kind of monopoly profit wrung from the shipper of goods and through him from the consumer, for which there is no moral justification at all.<sup>6</sup>

This conclusion was echoed by the Sub-Committee on Food and Prices, which within a week of its reappointment delivered its first report.<sup>7</sup> The committee conceded in their memorandum that shipping costs had indeed gone up due to dockside congestion and the shortage of ships, but they pointed out that this alone did not justify the prevailing high shipping charges. Inflated food prices, the committee charged, were exacted by the ship owners from shippers, and therefore from consumers.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Manchester Guardian, January 16, 1915.

<sup>7</sup>An interesting, but rather callous response to labor's and the Liberal Press' charge of profiteering is, Edwin Cannon, "The Good Side of High Prices," The Contemporary Review, March 1915, p. 312. He likens Britain to a siege town and argues that high prices eliminate the need for rationing by eliminating the waste from the diets of the people. He notes that "nearly as much has been eaten".

<sup>8</sup>Lord Askwith, Industrial Problems and Disputes, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), pp. 372-373. A more moderate view is presented here but he explicitly denies that excess profits were being made.

After issuing their initial report, the committee turned their attention to the question of high coal prices, the subject of their second report published on January 28. The committee's investigation revealed that three distinct groups were making larger than usual profits from the sale of coal to the public: Mine owners, coal merchants, and coal shippers who had all unduly raised their prices. In most cases, the committee suggested that the greatest profits were being made by the coal merchants and manufacturers who sold their excess or low quality coal to the public. The committee also discovered that nearly all the coal being sold for household use in London had been contracted for at pre-war coal prices. When the war-inspired inflation began, those with existing coal contracts raised their prices even though they were still paying pre-war wholesale prices.<sup>9</sup>

Though the committee reported that the retail coal dealers were making larger than usual profits, they found that the mine owners and the coasting shipowners were not gaining as much. Even so, the report argued that they too were taking advantage of the situation. The workers' committee, as a result of these findings, issued a series of recommendations to the government for its consideration. They urged

1. That maximum prices for coal should be fixed by the Government.
2. That railway trucks, belonging both to the separate railway companies and to private traders should be pooled to run at their fullest economic use.
3. That in fixing shipping freights for vessels under their control, the Government should have regard to normal rates, rather than the excessive rates inflicted by private shipowners. We also reiterate

<sup>9</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 127. See comparison chart of both retail and wholesale prices before and after the beginning of the war.



our demand for public control of general merchant shipping.

4. That the Government commandeered coal supplies and distribute to the household consumers through municipal or co-operative agencies.
5. That district conferences on this and kindred subjects be organized in various industrial centers.<sup>10</sup>

The fifth point was added in order to force the findings of the report into the public view and to create pressure on the government which would force it to act. It was hoped that the meetings, which were slated to be held on February 13, would help to solidify working class opinion around the committee's report and behind the larger actions of the Worker's National Committee.

Events, however, began to move much faster than the workers' committee or anyone else had anticipated. Labor disputes during most of January had been kept at a minimum, but near the end of the month new disputes began to break out. The day after the committee's final report was made public a long festering coal miner's controversy in Yorkshire became inflamed.<sup>11</sup> The mine owners had proposed a cut in wages for the miners, while the workers demanded more money to meet the rising cost of living. A strike was threatened but the miners had mixed feelings about breaking the industrial truce. One of the leaders of the miners' union is quoted by the Manchester Guardian as saying that

At this moment of national crisis the men are exceedingly reluctant to take drastic action, but after months of delay and the failure to obtain anything definite we feel the time has come to enforce the carrying out of our agreements, even at the risk of a strike. Our one desire from the beginning of the war has been to maintain the industrial truce, but the

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>11</sup>The New Statesman, February 6, 1915.

actions of the coal owners has compelled the men to insist upon the carrying out of agreements.<sup>12</sup>

Prior to the war, certain wage agreements had been made between the miners and their employers. The miners' claims were dropped at the start of the war, and further negotiations took place. As the union leader noted, nothing came of the meetings and the trade unions felt they had no choice but to demand that employers honor all previous agreements.

On January 26 the Engineers' Union refused to go along with a suspension of their trade rules, despite a shortage of labor. They feared that an influx of cheap labor into their shops might destroy the power of the unions which would result in lower wages. The Salford section of the Dockers' Union threatened to go out on strike if they did not receive a raise amounting to 1s. a day. The Ship Canal Workers announced that they too were considering asking for higher wages and called a meeting of their members to discuss the issue.<sup>13</sup> Finally, on February 2 the Executive Council of the National Transportation Workers' Federation announced that they had decided to call an emergency conference of their affiliated unions. The purpose of this meeting was to consider "the necessary measures to obtain such an advance of wages amongst transport workers as to meet the increased cost of living".<sup>14</sup> This announcement presented the prospects of the most serious breach of the industrial peace yet. The Federation, which consisted of 28 different unions with a total membership of 400,000 workers, were moving towards a strike that could play havoc with the war effort.

<sup>12</sup>Manchester Guardian, January 25, 1915.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., January 27, 1915.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., February 3, 1915.

In February the rank and file membership of the railway workers, a member union of the Transport Workers' Federation, demanded that their leaders secure for them an increase in wages. In November the union had agreed to suspend their long-standing demands for better conditions, but by February they were asking the railowners for an increase in wages. The hesitant union leadership was pushed by their membership into threatening a strike if the employers did not come forward with an advance, which the companies flatly refused to do.<sup>15</sup> Fearing the consequences of a national rail strike, which might easily spread to the entire transportation industry, the government stepped in and proposed a system of war bonuses. At first the union balked, arguing that the bonuses were only temporary and not permanent raises, but by mid-February the railway men accepted the compromise and entered into the nation's first war bonus agreement, thus avoiding a strike. The railway companies agreed to pay a 3s. bonus per week to all men earning less than 30s. weekly and an extra 2s. each week to all men whose incomes exceeded 30s. This increase was not enough to bring the men back to pre-war real income levels, but, still swayed by patriotism, the men settled their dispute in the national interest.<sup>16</sup>

The more radical labor leaders objected to the war bonus compromise settlement, fearing that it would set a new precedent and make it much harder for unions to bring real wages back up to pre-war levels. Robert Williams, Secretary of the Transport Workers' Federation, commented at the time that

In London the position was certainly not helped by the settlement of the Railwaymen's proposals. For us as transport workers,

<sup>15</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>16</sup>Cole, op. cit., p.143.

the position has been appreciably worsened by this example. In Hull, Bristol, Leith, Cardiff, advances have been secured ranging from 4s. to 7s. per week. In London, the Employer's Committee countered the claim by the Dockers' Union for an increase of 2d. per hour by saying that the cost of living had not increased more for dock labourers than for railway men, and the increase was accordingly fixed at 3s. per week for the permanent men and 7d. per day for casuals.

Williams continued by complaining that an unsatisfactory precedent had been established by the railway workers. He rather gloomily forecast that

There is not the slightest doubt that the Manchester Ship Canal Co. will adhere to their similar offer to the Salford Dockers, on the same lines, and there is a warrentable presumption that the demands submitted in Liverpool for an increase of 1s. per day will be dealt with similarly.<sup>17</sup>

The fears expressed by Williams proved to be well founded. Throughout the first two weeks in February the government advised employers to make similar settlements with their employees in order to assure uninterrupted production.<sup>18</sup>

Patriotism was a strong restraining factor among most of the working class. They hesitated to resort to the pre-war tactics of work stoppages, slow downs and strikes, even though as each day passed they were being asked to accept a reduced salary despite overtime. The promise of war bonuses helped to ease the sting of inflation, but they were insufficient to keep up with its steady advance. If there had been any doubt about the reality of profiteering in the minds of the working class, it had disappeared by early February. Mr. H. I. Mitchell, a contemporary commentator, pointed out that "the labour difficulty has been largely caused by the men being of the opinion that, while they were being called upon to be patriotic and

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>18</sup>The New Statesman, Feb. 20, 1915, p. 475.

refrain from using the strong economic position they occupied, employers, merchants, and traders were being allowed perfect freedom to exploit to the fullest the nation's needs."<sup>19</sup> "The Government," The Nation wrote, "might prove its good faith by intervening to prevent the exploiting of the workers . . . . It should now be possible to consider the interests of the workmen and offer them a wage in some way commensurate with the rise in prices."<sup>20</sup>

Two days before the labor conferences called by the Workers' National Committee were due to meet, the government finally stepped forward with an official statement. In an effort to patch up the industrial truce the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, went before the House to explain the government's position. The Prime Minister drew attention to two points in his address which he felt mitigated the need for strong action from the Liberal government. He argued first that the rise in the cost of living

stated in its most extreme terms which the facts permit, is, I think, substantially below the level at which the most somberminded and the best informed judgements in the country would have apprehended or anticipated if they had been told that a war upon this scale . . . . had been continued for so long a time as six months.

Asquith further noted that, even though there had been substantial rises in the prices of food and other commodities, that

The level they have obtained, or are likely to obtain, so far as one can form any forecast at all, does not exceed, and in many respects falls short of, the level

<sup>19</sup>I. A. Mitchell, cited in Asquith, op. cit., p. 373. Mitchell was a civil servant in the Industrial Commissioners' Department of which Asquith was head.

<sup>20</sup>The Nation, February 13, 1915, p. 607.

which those of us who are living now, and still more those who went before us have experienced and been accustomed to in times of profound peace.<sup>21</sup>

Adding insult to injury to those who had hoped for some decisive action, the Prime Minister predicted that by June prices would level off as the new crops became available. Asking for patience until then, he concluded his remarks by calling on the nation "to make the sacrifices which patriotism and public spirit demand."<sup>22</sup> This was blatant denial of the claims of injustice being made by working people throughout the country. It was clear that the government was refusing to act and was hiding its inaction behind appeals to working class patriotism.

Feeling somewhat abused, Mr. J. R. Clynes, a Labour M. P. from Manchester, rose and took Asquith to task for trying to minimize the problem. Clynes charged that whereas most Members of the House were fortunate enough not to feel the effects of the change in the cost of necessities, the poor were not so lucky. He pointed out that a 10 to 20 shilling rise in the cost of nearly all basic commodities had the effect of reducing many workers to a bare subsistence level, thus wiping out recent advances made in the average laborers' standard of living. Furthermore, he accused the government's policy of allowing a free play of competition of being just the opposite of that. Clynes asserted that "What we have got is combines, syndicates and rings, which arrange for prices for themselves."<sup>23</sup> The Labour M. P. issued the following warning to his colleagues in Parliament:

<sup>21</sup>House of Commons Debates, February 11, 1915, (cols. 758-759).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 776.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 779.

We are as anxious as anyone in the country to keep trade and business going without disruption, disturbance or quarrel with the employers, but it is quite patent to us, who are perhaps a little nearer to the conditions of the working men than other Members of this House, that a bid truce in industry cannot be continued unless some effective relief is given.<sup>24</sup>

The implications of the M. P.'s warning were clear, but the general opinion among both Liberal and Tory members was that the government could do little to curb the rate of inflation. After some debate the House adjourned, agreeing to meet the following Wednesday, February 15, in order to continue the discussion.

Before the House again took up the issue of prices, the meetings sponsored by the Worker's National Committee were held as planned, on February 13, 1913. The conferences were held in the larger cities, London, Liverpool, Bradford, Cardiff, Leicester, Birmingham, and Portsmouth. The trade unionists, socialist societies, cooperatives, and industrial women's organizations who came together were angry at the government's insensitivity towards the working class.<sup>25</sup> The New Statesman pointed out that "What seemed to be the cold heartlessness of Mr. Asquith's speech--notably his assumption that a rise of twenty percent in prices, after all, a small hardship for the wage-earners to bear as the result of a world war, has considerably embittered those workmen whom it has reached."<sup>26</sup> As a result of Asquith's statements the meetings on the 13th passed a strongly-worded

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 783.

<sup>25</sup>Manchester Guardian, February 13, 1915.

<sup>26</sup>The New Statesman, February 20, 1915, p. 474.

resolution, which stated

That this conference expresses its deep indignation and disappointment at the refusal of the Government to take effective measures to deal with the alarming rises in the cost of food and fuel. It appeals to the House of Commons to force the Government to take immediate steps to relieve the unsupportable burden which the cost of the necessaries of life is imposing upon the working classes . . .

The resolution added that the recommendations of the sub-committee on prices be accepted by the House in place of "the policy of inaction put forward by the Government."<sup>27</sup> Several of the meetings proved to be more militant than had been expected and these made further demands. The London conference congratulated Mr. Clynes on his stand in the House and proposed the Labour M. P.'s try and force the conference's recommendations through the House. In Manchester a resolution was passed that urged a nationwide work stoppage if drastic action was not forthcoming.

The debate in Parliament was renewed on February 17. An amendment was moved by Labour, advocating the fixing of maximum prices and government control of basic commodities, which might be subject to artificial costs. The government, represented by Mr. Runciman, opposed the motion and the Labour attempt to secure a division was defeated by the speaker with the support of both Liberals and Conservatives.<sup>28</sup> The time for talk, however, had passed the Commons by. On the previous day (February 16), the first real break in the industrial truce had begun. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers employed in the Clyde Shipyards, after having their application for a 2d. per hour wage increase denied by the owners and ignored by the government, went on strike.

<sup>27</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>28</sup>House of Commons Debates, February 17, 1915, (cols. 1151-1224).



Before the war the Clyde workers had been promised a 2d. increase per hour, but implementation was delayed when hostilities began. Prior to the war, engineers in other districts had secured large wage boosts by renegotiating earlier contracts, but the Clyde workers had adhered to their original contract dating from 1912. Because of this they found that they were earning considerably less than fellow workers in other districts and were at a marked disadvantage when the war came. As the nation weathered the last four months of 1914, the Clyde workers waited patiently for the promised raise, which was made increasingly meaningless by inflation. Finally, after months of waiting, on December 16, 1914, the union made their application for the 2d. raise. The employers, taking advantage of a technical flaw in the application, delayed their response until December 30, when they finally informed the union that the demand was unreasonable. The refusal issued by the owners had come so late that there was not enough time for the union to submit the dispute to the government-sponsored Central Conference for Arbitration, whose next meeting was not scheduled to be held until February 12. This meant that the workers, if they waited, would have to go another month without receiving an increase in wages.<sup>29</sup>

The union's district committee, seeing the cost of the delays, sought to bring the issue to a head. They ordered the men to cease work on January 20 if a settlement could not be reached. The employers became frightened of the possibility of a strike and agreed to meet the union at a local conference to be held on January 19 the day before the union's deadline.

<sup>29</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 148-149.

The meeting was held, and following it the workers' representatives postponed the strike and decided to sit down once again with the owners in order to work out an agreement. At this second meeting on January 22, the employers put forward their proposal. They offered an immediate raise of a farthing per hour, which would after three months be supplemented by an additional farthing. Then after the passage of three more months the owners said they would increase the workers' wages by another 1/2 d. The labor representatives rejected the offer, demanding the promised 2d. advance immediately. The two sides were at loggerheads and the question was again put aside, to be submitted at the February 12 meeting of the central conference.<sup>30</sup>

The membership of the union, unhappy with the long delay and the small sum offered by their employers, took the matter into their own hands. An unofficial meeting was held and the men in attendance voted to refuse to work overtime until a special conference was called to settle the dispute. The union officials, fearing that the refusal to work overtime would be interpreted as a work stoppage, argued that the men should wait. They refused and in the larger shops overtime came to an end. Finally on February 12, the central conference met to arbitrate between the Clydeside owners and their employees. The employers raised their previous offer but refused to increase wages more than 3/4 d. per hour, while insisting that the raise be classified as a war bonus and not as a permanent advance. The union negotiators, aware that their constituency would not accept the new deal, agreed to recommend the terms of the offer

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-150.

to the membership. Apparently afraid of the government's reaction if the compromise was turned down, they asked the workers "to accept a settlement which they knew to be wholly unjust and inadequate."<sup>31</sup> The union officials sent out ballots with their recommendations, which were not due to be returned until March 9. Again the issue was postponed for nearly a month.

The result of this added delay was a wild-cat strike, aimed as much at the union's leadership as at the shipyard owners. On February 16, work stopped and strikes quickly spread to all the shops until almost 10,000 men were idle.<sup>32</sup> Led by shop stewards who were often socialists, the rebels created a new authority called the Shop Stewards Committee. Around this committee, the industrial unionists, syndicalists, and guild socialist elements rallied, claiming to represent the largest group of Clyde engineers. Demanding that they exclusively carry on all future negotiations, the committee denounced the A.S.E. Executive Committee as not having at heart the best interests of the Clyde workers. The leaders of the union, faced with open insurrection, forced the issue. The date for the counting of the ballots was moved up to February 24, and the results confirmed the membership's disaffection. The men decisively rejected the wage settlement offer and their leadership, by a vote of 8,927 to 829.<sup>33</sup> The crisis had reached a critical stage and it seemed that the government now had no choice but to step in and try to restore the industrial truce.

The Liberal government did act, and to everyone's surprise it acted decisively to bring the controversy to an end. Nonetheless, its motives for involvement were far different than anyone suspected. The government did not involve itself because it thought the workmen were being unjustly

<sup>32</sup>The New Statesman, February 27, 1915, p. 498. <sup>33</sup>Hammond, op.cit., p.65.

treated; nor was it motivated by a desire to protect the interests of the owners or even the fragile industrial truce. The government's actions were guided by the stark realization that "business as usual" could not produce enough shells for the front. As a result, a new policy came into being that treated both domestic industry and labor as a valuable national resource which had to be mobilized for total war.

Britain was short of many of the necessities of war in August 1914, but none of these shortages had to be remedied as quickly as the inadequate supply of munitions. Machine guns, heavy artillery rifles, and ammunition of all sizes were needed immediately if British forces were to be able to help slow down the German advance into Belgium and France. Lord Kitchener and his War Office staff not only had the responsibility of raising new recruits, but also of securing supplies for them. Unhappily, just as the War Office was hampered by traditionalism and an abhorrence of civilian interference with the raising of volunteers, similar handicaps hindered its effort to procure armaments. The policy of the War Office seemed to be to prepare for the previous war rather than for the present engagement. Just as the military planners of the Boer War had been guided by the mentality of the Crimean War, Kitchener and his colleagues were governed by their irrelevant experiences in the African veldt. Lloyd George wrote in his War Memoirs that

Totleben's famous earthworks at Sebastopol had no meaning for them, nor had the trenches of Magersfontein and the Tugela, where our massed troops were slaughtered by riflemen they never saw. But the thin red line of Inkerman and the glorious charge which sabered the gunners at Balaclava, and the Boer horsemanship which rushed Methuen's camp at Klip's Drift dominated the military mind. Military imagination makes up in retentiveness what it misses in agility.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup>David Lloyd George, War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1935), p. 113.

Most of the leading military figures had made their reputations as horsemen. French and Haig were cavalrymen, while Kitchener had been a sapper. Collectively, their wartime experiences had taught them the value of mobility as a more than adequate counterweight to gun emplacements and high explosive shells. As a result of this emphasis on speed, lightness and mobility, the first munitions orders placed by the War Office were for small arms and artillery shrapnel. The high explosive shells being used by the Germans against the fortresses of Liege were thought to be experimental and in short supply. The War Office, noting the successes of the Belgian tactical retreat, became obsessed with shrapnel as the key munition in the arsenal of a light, mobile army. Shrapnel, of course, had been very effective against Boer horsemen as they charged British positions on the African plains. The military had been caught short of shrapnel shells in 1900, and Kitchener himself had complained. The War Office, determined not to be caught again, ignored all suggestions for other types of artillery shells and ordered its contractors to produce as much shrapnel as possible.

By the first week of September 1914, British general headquarters in France was writing the Master-General of Ordnance in the War Office for an increased supply of high explosives. This request for 15 percent of all shells to be high explosives was repeated again on the 15th and the 21st of the month. By November 6, as the trenches became deeper, the Commander of the Expeditionary Force was asking that fully 50 percent of all shells for field guns be high explosives, but the War Office steadily refused to meet these demands from the front, declaring that "the nature of the operations may again alter as they have done in the past".<sup>35</sup> The

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

military planners in London refused to listen to their field commanders and chose to ignore the fortified trenches stretching across Europe, from the Alps to the North Sea. Not only did the War Office not take the advice of its own field commanders, but it passively ignored the French General Deville, when on October 22 he informed them that the French General Staff was giving up shrapnel completely in favor of high explosives. Nothing seemed to shake the olympian certainty of the aging veterans in the War Office.

More devastating to British military operations in France than the lack of high explosives was a more general insufficiency of all types of shells. As early as September 17, Sir John French was writing the War Office, warning of the increasing shortage of shells for his howitzers; his reserve, he wrote, had fallen to about ten days' supply and further stores of ammunition should be sent immediately. The War Office replied that it could do nothing to remedy the situation because the manufacturers had not yet reached their maximum output.<sup>36</sup> By September 28, French was writing letters to London almost daily in an effort to draw attention to the pending ammunition shortage. The War Office responded by saying he could have 15,000 rounds per week. This allotment, French replied, meant that his guns could fire less than seven rounds per day and he pleaded for more. French pointed out that

During the last fortnight there has been an average daily expenditure of 14 rounds per gun, notwithstanding the fact that these guns, as a whole, have been comparatively speaking, but lightly engaged during the action on the Aisne . . . in order to maintain the Army in an efficient fighting condition I am

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 128. The French had expected that the British army would be of little use and slow to mobilize. They felt the greatest contribution Britain would make would be from her industry. The French were surprised when the contrary happened. Lord Riddell, op. cit., diary entry, April 25, pp. 81-82.

compelled to represent that the proposed rate of ammunition supply cannot possibly suffice to meet demands.<sup>37</sup>

All through October and November French wrote the War Office, literally begging for more shells for his guns.

London continued to reply that it was doing the best it could under the circumstances of industrial readjustment. Finally, French, exasperated at the seeming lack of concern for his position, bluntly wrote the War Office on December 31, that

The present supply of artillery ammunition has been found to be so inadequate as to make offensive operations, even on a small scale, quite out of the question. Recent experience has shown that the ammunition available suffices for scarcely an hour's bombardment of a small portion of the enemy's line, and that even this operation leaves no ammunition to repel a counter-attack or to give assaulting columns sufficient support. Owing to the nature of the operations in which we are, and shall continue to be engaged, the supply of artillery ammunition is the governing factor . . . . It is on the supply of ammunition for artillery that the future operations of the British Army will depend.<sup>38</sup>

The War Office kept the field reports of shortages secret even from the cabinet who were unaware at the time of the gravity of the situation. Nonetheless, some members of the government, notably David Lloyd George, had already heard rumors of the shell shortage developing at the front.

Already in September, Lloyd George had urged the cabinet to appoint a special committee to look into the production of guns, shells, and rifles. Kitchener had objected so strenuously to so-called cabinet interference that the matter was dropped, but after the War Minister's prestige had faded among the cabinet ministers because of his continued ineptness, Lloyd George again brought up his proposal. In October the ministers approved his plan, and a

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 130-131.

committee consisting of Lord Kitchener, Lord Haldane, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, McKenna, Lord Lucas, and Runciman was formed to explore ways to meet future munitions needs.<sup>39</sup> The new committee was to meet on six different occasions from October 12, 1914, to January 1, 1915.

It soon became clear to the members of the committee that the means of securing armaments were less than adequate. The munitions firms were ready to accept war contracts, but they already lacked the manpower to deliver on time the quantities needed at the front. A badge system was instituted so as to protect able-bodied male munitions workers from overzealous recruitment officers and ladies as they handed out white feathers on the street corners.<sup>40</sup> But the badge system was ineffective in the face of the rapidly rising demand for munitions. The War Office insisted that the problems were due not to any organizational problems, but that delays in delivery were the result of small unforeseen difficulties, such as machinery failures and temporary labor shortages. These, the War Office insisted, could be overcome in time. The cabinet committee, on the other hand, argued that more manufacturers should be given munitions contracts, if the established firms could not keep up with the demand. The War Office, still contending that only expert firms were able to produce munitions, asked the Board of Trade for help in securing more labor for the armaments firms. The request was made in order to stave off increasingly hostile criticism from the committee, which military men viewed as enemies challenging their authority. In the end, however, the result of the War Office's

<sup>39</sup>Lord Lucas was the President of the Board of Agriculture. He was later killed in action. Runciman was the President of the Board of Trade.

<sup>40</sup>Lord Beveridge, Power and Influence, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), p. 126. Women appeared on busy street corners and passed out white feathers to men of military age who were not in uniform as a sign of cowardice.



tactical retreat was the complete undercutting of its position. Lord Beveridge later wrote that

The Board of Trade, having used all the men on the labour exchange registers, canvassed engineering firms throughout the country inviting them to release men for the armaments factories. The chief result was to provoke a vigorous demand from the firms canvassed that, in place of surrendering men, they should be allowed to tender for contracts.<sup>41</sup>

The board made its report to the War Office on January 23, 1915. It recommended that the production methods of some of the simpler shells and fuses be exhibited in engineering centers throughout the country. This, the Board of Trade told the War Office, would show outside firms what was needed, so that they in turn could tell the government whether they had the skill to produce munitions. The War Office had no choice but to go along with the proposal and exhibits were slated to begin on March 10, 1915.

The industrial problem of how to produce sufficient munitions for the front was two-fold. Expanded and more efficient production was desperately needed; in order to accomplish this more workers were needed. Labor was already growing short in key industries due primarily to enlistments and the lack of skilled workmen. Production, even if new methods were devised, could not be greatly increased unless some answer to the labor shortage was found. The first response was to call on the trade unions to suspend their shop rules and allow non-union workers, primarily Belgian refugees, women and unskilled men (although these too were becoming scarce as a result of enlistments) to work at semi-skilled or skilled positions in the munitions factories. The unions of course saw this as a threat to their very existence and would have rejected any proposal that even slightly resembled dilution. The second possible alternative was to recall even more men from service in

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

the army and put them to work making munitions. The recall of skilled workers would, some suggested, have to be accompanied by placing restrictions on civilian laborers in vital industries in order to keep them at the most important jobs. Such a solution smacked of conscription, which was not only feared by labor but ran strongly against the grain of British volunteerism.

In an effort to work out some way to accommodate all conflicting interests with the needs of the nation, the government appointed the Committee on Production in the Engineering and Ship Building Establishment on February 4, 1915. Headed by Sir George Askwith and having as members Sir F. Hopwood and Sir G. Gibb, the committee was a collection of the government's best industrial arbitrators. Their duties were to

inquire and report forthwith, after consultation with the representatives of the employers and workmen, as to the best steps to be taken to ensure that the productive power of the employers in engineering and ship building establishments working for government purposes shall be made fully available so as to meet the needs of the nation in the present emergency.<sup>42</sup>

The appointment of this committee by the cabinet meant that for the first time, after months of struggling with the War Office, the munitions question was seen as one of organizing both manufacturers and labor. Sir George Askwith, the committee's chairman, viewed the committee as having two primary goals. First, to make the best use of the available skilled work force, and second, if not enough of these could be found for munitions employment, to find ways to fill in with semi-skilled and unskilled labor.<sup>43</sup> The committee issued four reports, from February 16 to March 4, dealing with the subjects of (1) Irregular Time Keeping, (2) Shells and Fuses and Avoidance of Stoppages

<sup>42</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>43</sup>Askwith, op. cit., p. 367.

of Work, (3) Demarcation of Work and (4) Wages in the Shipbuilding Trade.<sup>44</sup>

Before the committee made their first report public, Mr. H. J. Tennant, Under Secretary of State for War, delivered a speech in Parliament that suggested that trade union rules be lifted.<sup>45</sup> He urged that the Labor Members help the government to "organize the forces of labour, so that where one man joins the colours, either another unfitted by age or disability, or a woman, may take his place."<sup>46</sup> He promised that the government was asking that this be done only for the duration of the war, but Tennant made no mention of the delicate issues involved. Nothing was said about inflation, excess profits, or protecting the unions during the war. The Labour representatives in the House saw Tennant's remarks as just one more effort by the government to run the war at the expense of the working class.<sup>47</sup> Although an error in tact, Mr. Tennant's speech seemed to mark something of a turning point in the government's relations with the working class and specifically the trade unions.

Shortly after the under secretary's speech, the first report of the Committee on Production appeared, on February 16. Dealing with the problem of irregular time keeping, the committee's report noted that the failure to attain maximum output in the shipyards was due partly to time lost by riveting squads. Riveting, the committee disclosed, was carried on by squads and when any one man was absent from a squad, it stood idle

<sup>44</sup>Cole, op. cit., pp. 155-158.

<sup>45</sup>House of Commons Debates, February 8, 1915, (cols. 282-286).

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>47</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 173.

until his return. The committee pointed out that this caused a considerable amount of lost time and urged both employers and laborers to resolve the problem by working out a more efficient system. If an agreement could not be arrived at within ten days, the committee asked that the issues be submitted to them for arbitration.

The second report of the committee concerned the production of shells and fuses. Released on February 20, the study, like its predecessor, dealt with the limiting effect of union rules on production. The committee wrote that

Restrictive rules or customs calculated to affect the production of munitions of war or to hamper or impede any reasonable steps to achieve a maximum output are under present circumstances seriously hurtful to the welfare of the country, and we think they should be suspended during the period of the war, with proper safeguards and adjustments to protect the interests of the work people and their trade unions.<sup>48</sup>

The committee furthermore recommended in the second part of their report, "Avoidance of Stoppage of Work," that labor disputes should never be allowed to become strikes or lockouts, insisting that employers and trade unions should "under no circumstances allow their differences to result in the stoppage of work." In order to secure continued production, the Committee on Production proposed that all government contractors and their workers adhere to the following statement:

With a view to preventing loss of production caused by disputes between employers and work people, no stoppages of work by strike or lockout should take place on work for government purposes. In the event of differences arising which fail to be settled by the parties directly concerned, or by their representatives, or under any existing agreements, the matter shall be referred to an impartial tribunal nominated by His Majesty's Government for immediate investigation and report to the government with a view to a settlement.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>49</sup>Askwith, op. cit., p. 375.

The committee also drew up a statement of good faith designed to further protect the positions of the trade unions, and they suggested that all industries sign. The statement assured the unions that "Any departure during the war from the practice ruling in our workshops and shipyards prior to the war shall only be for the period of the war."<sup>50</sup>

The third report issued by the committee in many ways reiterated the two reports previously released. It urged that demarcation of work be suspended on all government contracts for the duration of the war. The second part of the third report dealt with the utilization of semi-skilled and unskilled labor in situations where skilled labor could not be secured. The committee also proposed that greater use of women be made in jobs that they were physically able to perform.

Before the fourth and final study, concerning wages in the shipbuilding trade, was prepared, the government announced that it concurred with the committee's earlier reports. As a result, the cabinet appointed the three members of the Committee on Production as the tribunal that was to arbitrate labor disputes. Acting under this authority, the committee intervened in the Clyde controversy. Unsure of his power to impose a settlement, Askwith moved quickly, hoping to bluff his way through. He drafted a strongly-worded letter and sent it to all parties. Askwith wrote:

From inquiries which have been made as to the position of the disputes in the engineering trade in the Glasgow district, it appears that the parties concerned have been unable to arrive at a settlement. In consequence of the delay, the requirements of the nation are being seriously endangered.

<sup>50</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 72.

I am instructed by the Government that important munitions of war are urgently required by the Navy and the Army are being held up by the present cessation of work, and that they must call for a resumption of work on Monday morning, March 1.<sup>51</sup>

The letter added that representatives of the several parties were to meet with the committee in order to settle the dispute. If the owners and the union could not come to terms, Askwith threatened that the committee would impose a settlement. No mention was made of where the committee had gotten such far-reaching powers; in fact, the committee themselves doubted their authority. As G. D. H. Cole notes, "The Government was 'trying it on'" and left "a loophole for escape should the men prove obdurate." Their "command had no binding force; it was at most a threat of future action."<sup>52</sup> The government seems not to have had any clear notion of what it would do if the unions or the employers refused to cooperate, but it huffed loudly about taking "stronger measures".<sup>53</sup>

The government's new tone frightened the Executive Committee of the Clyde Engineers Union and they called for a resumption of work. The shop stewards leading the strike, acting under the name of the Withdrawal of Labour Committee, told the men to stay off the job until March 4, three days after the government's deadline. They also instructed the men, once back in the shops, not to work overtime until the dispute was settled. Work was resumed on March 3, but the discontent remained. On March 6, a conference was held, but neither the employers or the union were willing to budge from their previous positions. The question was then referred to the Committee on Production. The employers agreed that the committee had the authority

<sup>51</sup>Askwith, op. cit., p. 375.

<sup>52</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>53</sup>"The Times Cure for Labour Troubles," The New Statesman, March 6, 1915, p. 525. The Times, March 3, 1915.

to settle the question, but the union, still badly split, put the question to their membership. The withdrawal committee opposed the whole process and asked the men to vote "no" on the issue, but with only a small number of men voting, the ballot was decisively in favor of accepting the government's authority. The committee moved quickly and on March 24 settled the Clyde strike by awarding the engineers a war bonus of 1d. per hour. The union complained bitterly that the raise was not sufficient to bring the standard rate up to the level paid in other parts of the country and that it was well below the amount needed to meet the higher cost of living. Despite the union's complaints, the dispute ended.

The final settlement of the Clyde strike was somewhat overshadowed by the government's activities earlier in March. The final report produced by the Committee on Production was circulated among the cabinet ministers on March 8. The committee proposed far-reaching governmental controls over war-related industries. They concluded that "The Government should assume control of the principal armament and shipbuilding firms." They pointed out that

The general labour unrest of the previous few weeks was accompanied by a widespread belief among work people that abnormal profits were being made, particularly on Government contracts. There were consequent demands for higher wages. It seemed to be thought that limitations of profits might be decided to be impracticable, and the men were claiming the freedom to ask the maximum price for their labour.<sup>54</sup>

In order to remedy this situation, the committee recommended that amendments be made to the Defence of the Realm Act, which would make it possible for the government to assume control

over the principal firms whose main output consists of ships, guns,

<sup>54</sup>The History of the Ministry of Munitions, cited in Askwith, op. cit., p. 378.

equipment or munitions of war . . . . An Executive Committee, on the lines of the Railway Executive Committee, should be established (a) to search for new sources of supply, and (b) to exercise continuous responsible supervision.<sup>55</sup>

The committee concluded that if such steps were taken, some important advantages would be gained. First of all, trade unions would be more willing to lift their trade restrictions if it were understood that only the government and not private industry would benefit. Secondly, a central executive would be better able to coordinate production and utilize labor to its maximum efficiency. Finally, small manufacturers would hopefully do with less labor if they were assured of the national need. "Such control," the committee promised, "would enable a confident appeal to be made to work people, and would restore national unanimity. It would also impress upon the nation that the country was at war and industrial resources must be mobilized."<sup>56</sup>

The recommendations of the committee were promptly accepted by the cabinet, but it was decided not to release the report until after the government had a chance to meet with industrial and labor leaders.<sup>57</sup> The Treasury Conference sponsored by Lloyd George was to be held on March 17-19; he hoped to convince those in attendance that they should cooperate with the government. Before the conference met, however, the entire tone of the nation's understanding of the war seemed to shift. On March 8, the Manchester Guardian ran two large photographs of munitions at a naval dock yard. The caption under one of these read: "an aspect of the immensely

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., cited in Askwith, p. 378. <sup>56</sup>Ibid., cited in Askwith, p. 379.

<sup>57</sup>The report was never released to the public. See Askwith, footnote, p. 377.



important work of supplying the country's armed forces with the essentials of war."<sup>58</sup> The Spectator wrote in an article:

Experience shows that greater efficiency and greater profit are secured by private than by public management, but in certain cases it is necessary to superadd public control to private management in order to protect the consumer against possible extortion on the part of monopolistic producers. In time of war the whole situation is altered. Then the questions of profit and of economy are thrown to the winds. All we have to think about is how to secure the materials we want of the required quality in the quickest possible time, and with this end in view direct management by the State may be essential.<sup>59</sup>

The nation finally seemed to understand the nature of total war and the demands that would have to be made upon the civilian population.

On March 15 the Defence of the Realm Act, Amendment No. 2, became law. It was approved essentially without opposition, even though it gave the government almost unlimited power.<sup>60</sup> The government was empowered

- (c) to require any work in any factory or workshop to be done in accordance with the directions of the Admiralty or Army Council, given with the object of making the factory or workshop, or the plant or labour therein, as useful as possible for the production of war material; and
- (d) to regulate or restrict the carrying on of work in any factory or workshop, or remove the plant therefrom, with a view to increasing the production of war material in other factories or workshops; and
- (e) to take possession of any unoccupied premises for the purpose of housing workmen employed in the production, storage, or transport of war material.<sup>61</sup>

The measure was the strongest ever taken in Britain and, if proposed before

<sup>58</sup>Manchester Guardian, March 8, 1915.

<sup>59</sup>"The Defence of the Realm," The Spectator, March 13, 1915, p. 391.

<sup>60</sup>House of Commons Debates, March 9, 1915, (cols. 1281, 1283, 1293, 1296).

<sup>61</sup>"Defence of the Realm Act, Amendment No. 2," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Public Bills, Vol. 3, 1914-16.

the war, it would have been declared unconstitutional. In 1915 no one questioned the government's need for such far-reaching powers. Lord Landsdowne remarked that the "Government was amply justified in asking for powers to deal with labour employed in factories and workshops." He added that he trusted "it would not be necessary to exercise the powers; but if the occasion arose, he felt sure that they would be exercised fearlessly" because there "should be some power in the Government of the country to intervene if abuses took place."<sup>62</sup> Lord Kitchener expressed the same sentiments while standing before the Lord's during the bill's second reading; he pointed out that the war effort had been jeopardized by a lack of home industrial organization and now the government at least had the means to increase the munitions output.<sup>63</sup>

Armed with the persuasive new powers, Lloyd George and Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, called for a Treasury Conference. The purpose of the meeting was to "consider the general position in reference to the urgent need of the country in regard to the large and larger increase in the output of munitions of war, and the steps which the government propose to take to organize the industries of the country with a view to achieving that end."<sup>64</sup> Nearly all those invited came the first day. Besides government officials there were representatives from thirty-three trade unions, among whom were some of the largest: engineers, shipbuilders, iron and steel and other metal trades, wood workers, laborers, transport workers, boot and shoe makers and woolen mill workers. The Miners' Federa-

<sup>62</sup>The Times, March 16, 1915. Lloyd George, op. cit., p. 171.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., March 16, 1915. House of Lords Debates, March 15, 1915, (cols. 719-724).

<sup>64</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 75.

tion also sent representatives, but they withdrew after the first day because they were opposed to, and unwilling even to consider, compulsory arbitration.<sup>65</sup>

Calling attention to the newest Defence of the Realm Act, Lloyd George made an appeal to the workmen and their employers to sink their differences and concentrate their energies on production. He went on to explain that the government did not propose to take over the factories and put admirals and generals in charge; he claimed that the government would not have to use its new powers if there was "perfect cooperation between employers and workers."<sup>66</sup> After three days of meetings, all but the engineers, whose members were still on strike at the Clyde Shipyards, agreed to recommend to their members a resolution that provided that no stoppages in munitions-related industries would take place during the war. The conference also accepted the authority of the Committee on Production in all disputed matters. Furthermore, the unions agreed to a relaxation of trade rules where "it is imperatively necessary". Overtime, the employment and training of semi-skilled labor, and the hiring of women was approved by the unions, with the provision that all labor be paid at prevailing district rates. Lloyd George, in turn, promised the trade union representatives that these war-time measures would only be enforced until the war came to an end. He further agreed that the government would endeavor to see that the trade unions were in no way weakened by their war-time concessions.<sup>67</sup> The next day Ben Tillet, the radical leader of the

<sup>65</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>66</sup>The Spectator, March 20, 1915, p. 391.

<sup>67</sup>The Nation, March 27, 1915, p. 819.

London dockers, published a manifesto in The Times. He declared that

Every delay in manufacture of guns and ammunition or in transport will cost many lives, some of which are our members, and we cannot afford to lose them. Humanitarianism as well as honour imposes its obligations upon us to succor our brothers who are fighting to make our homes and our women folk and our children safe . . . . These men at the front and on the sea are protecting us against the ravages of bombardment and looting and it is up to us to honour them.<sup>68</sup>

Out of the Treasury Conference came a new willingness on the part of labor to make sacrifices for the national interest. The radical socialists screamed that the unions had surrendered to the government, as indeed they had.

The failure of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers to sign the document was seen by the government as a serious omission, in view of the strength of the union in the munitions factories.<sup>69</sup> The representatives of the union felt that the agreement did not sufficiently safeguard their members, and they complained that it did not effectively lay out the government's promise to curb profits. Complicating the union's stand was the continuing Clyde dispute. The union leadership, already badly split from their rank and file membership, might well have been stalling until a settlement was reached. The government, however, wanted their signatures on the agreement and Lloyd George and Runciman asked to meet again with the engineers on March 25. The Clyde dispute was settled on March 24, the day before the meeting, and the union's executive committee, reassuming their leadership role, worked out a separate agreement with the government. This new document was similar to the earlier

<sup>68</sup>The Times, March 20, 1915.

<sup>69</sup>Hammond, op. cit., p. 77.

one, though it contained what the union felt were more explicit safeguards. The major new provision in this amended version added that "profits will be limited with a view to securing that benefit resulting from the relaxation of trade restrictions or practices shall accrue to the state."<sup>70</sup>

The conclusion of the Treasury Agreement marks the end of a flurry of government activity during March, which resulted in the scrapping of "business as usual". For months, the Liberal government hesitantly played the role of an interested mediator trying to balance the needs of industry, labor, and the war with some justice. This proved to be a futile effort, but by the end of March, the government had become the most powerful of the three quarreling partners. It had increased its own power, not because it wanted to, but because war-time pragmatism demanded it. Necessity let ideology and liberal dogma go by the boards. Even so, the government did not replace its "business as usual" policy immediately with one that made full use of its newly acquired unilateral powers. The Liberals, constrained by Asquith's inability to act decisively, refused to make effective use of their recently granted authority, and instead used it as a supplement to their older policy. As a result, April began with the government empowered to take charge but refusing to act, waiting, hoping that threats would produce sufficient munitions and maintain the industrial truce.

Beginning on March 10, British forces in France, having saved shells for weeks, launched an offensive at Neuve-Chapelle. After only three days, Sir John French wrote Kitchener that he was forced to stop his

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

attacks on the German lines because his forces were fatigued and "above all by the want of ammunition." In a March 16 communique, he wrote the War Office that "The supply has fallen short, especially in 18-pounder and 4.5-inch, of what I was led to expect and I am, therefore, compelled to abandon further offensive operations until sufficient reserves are accumulated."<sup>71</sup> This note was followed up by one on March 18, in which French stated that the scale of offensive operations demanded a huge increase in the supply of ammunition if any results were to be obtained. He added bluntly that up until March the combined effect of mud and the lack of shells had limited British operations. Not allowing the subtlety of his remark to be misunderstood, he claimed that

The weather and the state of the ground have no longer to be reckoned with as limiting the scope of our operations . . . . I desire to state with all the weight of my authority as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in France, that the object of His Majesty's Government cannot be attained unless the supply of artillery ammunition can be increased sufficiently to enable the Army to engage in sustained offensive operations and I further desire to impress on them the very serious nature of the effort that it is necessary to make to achieve this end.<sup>72</sup>

Kitchener replied angrily to this letter by insisting that the Commander had wasted ammunition by using in the first sixteen days of the month, which included the short-lived offensive, from 200 to 220 rounds per gun, or about 13 rounds per gun for each day.

The cabinet knew nothing of these letters from the front, but the ministers were well aware of the staggering casualty figures. The total ground gained during the Neuve-Chapelle offensive came to little more than one square mile, and British losses amounted to 12,894 officers and men.

<sup>71</sup>Lloyd George, op. cit., p. 169.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

Addison wrote in his diary on March 10, the first day of the battle of Neuve-Chapelle, that

The adequate supply of munitions of war is the most pressing question just now. More and more is coming to the front. L. G. can scarcely contain himself about the War Office. I do not know any of the details, but, apart from what is generally known, all the indications that have come to us at the Board support the view of War Office methods and their lack of vision.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the absence of confirmed information, rumors began to float through the government bureaucracy and hints that a problem existed were given in the press.<sup>74</sup> There was "vague talk" that the operations at Neuve-Chapelle had not been as successful as they should have been.<sup>75</sup>

The commotion soon died away for lack of confirmation, and during the first few weeks in April, there was a lull in the reports concerning munitions shortages. With some digging, the cabinet might have discovered the severity of the situation, but with the possible exception of Lloyd George, the ministers continued to believe in the illusion painted by the War Secretary. In a letter to Asquith, dated April 14, Kitchener informed the cabinet that French had asked him to tell the ministers for him that "With the present supply of ammunition he will have as much as his troops will be able to use on the next forward movement."<sup>76</sup> Asquith was especially pleased with the report and, wholly believing its validity, he made his famous Newcastle speech on April 20. The address was extremely optimistic and laid stress on the need for patriotic volunteerism among all of the

<sup>73</sup>Christopher Addison, Four and a Half Years, vol. I, 3rd ed., (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1934), diary entry, March 10, 1915, p.69.

<sup>74</sup>Sir John French, 1914, (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1919), pp. 354-355.

<sup>75</sup>Addison, op. cit., diary entry, March 29, 1915, p. 71.

<sup>76</sup>Lloyd George, op. cit., p. 173.

nation's interests. He ignored the new powers held by the government, thus giving the distinct impression that there would be no need to use them because everything was going so well.<sup>77</sup> The following day Lloyd George was called on to defend the government's munitions policy before the House of Commons. Several members roundly criticized the War Office and Lloyd George found that he had to defend its actions. He ended his remarks on a note of optimism, pointing out that the nation had already made significant progress. He emphasized that there was no reason to think that it would not continue to meet the new challenges of the future.<sup>78</sup>

This false illusion was crushed the very next day when the Germans opened a fresh offensive at Ypres, using poison gas for the first time in the war. Huge gaps were made in the allied lines and the general staff in France found that they could not cover the retreat of thousands of outflanked infantrymen because of a lack of artillery shells. As a result, the trapped infantry units were doomed to die. Although the government censors blocked the reports, the public grew anxious over British "unpreparedness to cope with a foe that had at his disposal the resources of science directed by a skilled and highly organized industrialism, and who was resolved to make the most ruthless use of all of his advantages."<sup>79</sup>

In an effort to relieve the pressure on British troops at Ypres, Sir John French decided to attempt a counter attack at Festubert on May 9. The

<sup>77</sup>The Spectator, April 21, 1915, pp. 577-578.

<sup>78</sup>House of Commons Debates, April 21, 1915, (cols. 277-374). Lloyd George, op. cit., p.174.

<sup>79</sup>Lloyd George, op. cit., p. 176. The British, up to this point in the war, had displayed only occasional outbursts of hatred for the Germans. For the first time, with the introduction of gas by the Germans, a sustained hatred is evident in the popular press. The Germans became Huns, the barbarians of the Western world.



losses were staggering and no significant gains were made. The British commander wrote later that his "mind was filled with keen anxiety."

After all our demands, less than 8 per cent of our shells were high explosive and we had only sufficient supply for about 40 minutes of artillery preparation for the attack. On the tower of a ruined church I spent several hours in close observation of the operations. Nothing since the Battle of the Aisne had ever impressed me so deeply with the terrible shortage of artillery and ammunition as did the events of that day. As I watched the Anders ridge, I clearly saw the great inequality of the artillery duels, and, as attack after attack failed, I could see that the absence of sufficient artillery support was doubling and trebling our losses in men.<sup>80</sup>

The British commander could no longer stand still while the War Office ignored his demands. He decided to circumvent Kitchener and make a public appeal even if it meant his removal from command. French returned to his headquarters and found there a telegram from London. It ordered him to ship fully twenty percent of his scanty reserve supply of ammunition to the Dardanelles. This reinforced his decision and he gave orders that the complete story of the shell shortage be given to Colonel Repington, the military correspondent for The Times. French also directed that copies of the information be carried personally by his private secretary, Brinsley Fitz Gerald, and another aide, Captain Frederick Guest, to England, to be put before Lloyd George, Arthur Balfour, and Bonar Law.<sup>81</sup>

On May 14, The Times released its story and laid bare the long hidden truth about the shell shortage. Soon all the papers were filled with the news that "The want of an unlimited supply of high explosives was a fatal

<sup>80</sup>French, op. cit., p. 356-357.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 157. Lloyd George, op. cit., p. 177.

bar to our success."<sup>82</sup> At the same time First Sea Lord Fisher, after weeks of personal conflict with Winston Churchill over the Dardanelles campaign, informed the cabinet that it was his intention to resign.<sup>83</sup> Asquith, anticipating demands from Parliament, called the leadership of the opposition to Downing Street in order to see if a coalition government could be constructed. The arrangements went with remarkable speed and on May 19, 1914, it was announced that a new ministry would be forthcoming. On May 26, the coalition cabinet was completed and unveiled to the public.

The fall of the government that had ruled Britain since the beginning of the war was a confirmation of what should have been understood in March. The nation needed more resolute leadership than the Liberals alone were willing to provide. The shell shortage, labor unrest, and even Lord Fisher's resignation were only component parts in a much larger issue that had been developing for some time. The Liberal ministry was swept from its monopoly on power because it had consistently failed to consider the home front as if it were part of the war effort and relegated it to the back seat. They failed to treat it with the seriousness and energy required of commanding generals. The majority of Englishmen in March would have probably accepted the government's authority, had it been exercised. When the Liberal ministry failed to capitalize on this, it lost the confidence of a large portion of the British population. By May, dissatisfaction with the existing govern-

<sup>82</sup>The Times, May 14, 1915. The Times was at that time owned by Northcliff, who, Lord Riddell says, "spoke in contemptuous terms of Asquith and Kitchener. He says that the former is indolent, weak and apathetic. He exercises no control over the various departments. He will never finish the war." Northcliff was more than pleased to help make his prophecy come true by printing the story of the shell shortage. Lord Riddell, op. cit., diary entry, April 20, 1915, p. 78.

<sup>83</sup>Peter Fraser, Lord Fisher, (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1973), pp. 279-287. Lloyd George, op. cit., pp. 198-207.

ment had grown to such proportions that the Liberals were not able to ride out the storm and they were forced to bring the opposition into the cabinet.

The new coalition government moved strongly to deal with the home question. The entire job of securing munitions was removed from the War Office and placed under the control of a Ministry of Munitions, which was created on June 3. David Lloyd George, because of his long-standing concern with the munitions question, agreed to resign as Chancellor of the Exchequer and take up the job of Minister of Munitions. The provisions of the Munitions of War Act, which became law on June 23, gave the new minister far-reaching and almost dictatorial powers over the men, women, and machines of the nation's armaments industry. On June 3, shortly after his appointment, Lloyd George, while on a tour of the nation's industrial centers, said in Manchester

It is a war of munitions. We are fighting against the best-organized community in the world; the best organized whether for war or peace, and we have been employing too much haphazard, leisurely, go-as-you-please methods which, believe me, would not have enabled us to maintain our place as a nation, even in peace, very much longer. The nation now needs all the machinery that is capable of being used for turning out munitions or equipment, all the skill that is available for that purpose, all the industry, all the labour, and all the strength, power, and resource of everyone to the utmost, everything that would help us to overcome our difficulty and supply our shortages . . . . When the house is on fire, questions of procedure and precedence, of etiquette and time and division of labour must disappear.<sup>84</sup>

The implications of the minister's remarks were wider than most of those listening and perhaps even the speaker could have imagined. Working people for the first time were officially seen as a valuable national resource and not just as victims to be cared for by distress committees. Their health

<sup>84</sup>Lloyd George, op. cit., pp. 226-227. Manchester Guardian, June 4, 1915.

and well being superceded political boundaries and became important to a larger audience than socialists, philanthropists, liberal politicians, and assorted do-gooders. On this matter, all interests were being welded by the necessities of total war. The establishment of the Ministry of Munitions gave the government, for the first time since the earliest industrial reforms began, its own laboratory in which to carry out its social experiments. Furthermore, it had in Lloyd George a man who, possessed of unprecedented powers, could exercise persuasion, pressure, and if necessary compulsion, upon employers to see that the newly-discovered national resources were protected.

## CHAPTER III

### TOWARDS AN EFFICIENT AND PLANNED NATION

Writing to Cynthia Asquith from France in the spring of 1915, a young friend, Billy Grenfell, complained that "death selects our bravest and best . . . . We are a nation of foolish and courageous volunteers fighting against the luriest of professionals, and we are paying the price."<sup>1</sup> Few within British society would have substantially disagreed with the young soldier's evaluation of the first year of the war. While the future held the even more terrifying news of the Dardanelles debacle, Loos, the Somme, and the second battle of Ypres, the realities of ten months of total war were frightening enough. On June 9, Herbert Asquith announced before the House of Commons that, excluding deaths caused by disease, 10,955 officers and 247,114 enlisted men had been killed or seriously wounded.<sup>2</sup> The old contemptables no longer existed. Since the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914, Britain, led by the Liberals and advocates of "business as usual", had simply assumed that her supposed moral superiority over the Kaiser's militarism would bring her final victory. The British self confidence and the bravery of her soldiers, however, were no match for German high explosives, machine guns, and fortified trenches on high ground.

By June the illusions had all but faded, and under the reconstructed

<sup>1</sup>Lady Cynthia Asquith, Diaries 1915-1918 (London: Hutchinson, 1968), diary entry, June 12, 1915, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>House of Commons Debates, June 9, 1915, (col. 257).

Liberal government of Herbert Asquith, the nation, aided by the incessant bombardment of the Northcliff press, began to reshape its war effort.<sup>3</sup> The war had become, in most minds, a total test of national resolve that pitted Britain's squarely against that of Germany's. The struggle required the complete mobilization and organization of material and human resources. Confirming this, Herbert Asquith, in a surprise appearance before Parliament on June 16, firmly insisted that the first concern of the new cabinet was to "bring to the service of the state the willing and organized help of every class in the community."<sup>4</sup> Every corner of British society was to be organized and above all made efficient in order to bring the war to a victorious conclusion.

A large slice of the responsibility in reaching the goal of an organized and efficient Britain was given to David Lloyd George. Stepping down from his duties as Chancellor of the Exchequer in order to become Minister of Munitions, he took upon himself what he later claimed to be one of the greatest challenges of his political career.<sup>5</sup> As the first Minister of Munitions, he was given power over the lives of individual citizens that far exceeded any that had been previously granted to a minister of the crown. The war had become a life or death struggle between workshops and in Britain, the foreman in the munitions factories was David Lloyd George. His sole duty as Minister of Munitions was to secure an adequate supply of armaments for

<sup>3</sup>Lord Riddell, Lord Riddell's War Diary (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1933), diary entry, June 1915, pp. 99-103.

<sup>4</sup>House of Commons Debates, June 16, 1915, (cols. 554-561).

<sup>5</sup>David Lloyd George, War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, vol. 1 and 2, 3rd ed., (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1935), vol. 1, p. 210.

British forces in the field. The liberal press argued that the lack of restraint on the new ministry and its untrusted minister would impair the hard-won rights of workers and the trade unions. On the other side of the political scale, the conservative spokesmen harbored a long-standing dislike for Lloyd George as author of the Old Age Pensions Act, the Peoples Budget, the Parliamentary Act and the National Insurance scheme. Despite this widespread opposition, very few failed to agree that he was the only man for the job. A solid majority of both liberal and conservative opinion might have, for quite different reasons, agreed with the New Statesman's editorial assessment of Lloyd George. The New Statesman did not

in the least quarrel with his appointment to the New Department; on the contrary, of all the recent changes there is none that we more thoroughly endorse. But it is certain that at this juncture he is the best of all possible Minister of Munitions; it is still more certain that he would be the very worst of all possible dictators.<sup>6</sup>

All eyes were now focused on the new minister, whose road, strewn with the political land mines of conscription, dilution of labor, and confiscation of private property, would prove to be an avenue towards the improvement of the nation's quality of life, an opportunity of which Lloyd George and his staff would take full advantage.<sup>7</sup>

The Ministry of Munitions was established by the Ministry of Munitions Act, which was approved by the House of Commons on June 8, 1915. The act, which gave cabinet rank to the head of the ministry, placed under its authority the undivided administrative control of all armaments production. Prior

<sup>6</sup>The New Statesman, June 19, 1915, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup>Lloyd George, op. cit., p. 302.

to the passage of the act, these responsibilities had been spread incoherently among the various governmental departments with the bulk of the duties allocated to the War Office. The act consolidated these responsibilities by stipulating that the new ministry, if expediency required, could with the assent of the cabinet, transfer both statutory and customary powers of the departments to itself.<sup>8</sup> Despite this broad and sweeping authority, specific limitations on the power and duties of the new cabinet post remained undefined. These were left by the government to be worked out on a day-to-day basis, with the ministry developing procedures and taking powers as they were needed to accomplish the end of increased arms production.<sup>9</sup> The prerogatives of the Minister of Munitions were only loosely, if at all, limited by the Ministry of Munitions Act. Lloyd George, the almost universally mistrusted Welsh radical, found himself in the position of being bound only by the tolerance of a disenchanted Parliament, a wobbly cabinet, and public opinion; all of whom were desperate for victory. In a very real sense then, the ultimate boundaries of Lloyd George's power were those imposed by his own sensibilities.<sup>10</sup>

Even before the bill formally establishing the Ministry of Munitions had been passed by Parliament, Lloyd George had begun to apply himself to the task of putting together the machinery for the new ministry's efficient operation. Lacking even a desk for himself, he raided other governmental

<sup>8</sup>"Ministry of Munitions Bill," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Public Bills, Vol. 5, 1914-16. There can be little doubt that this portion of the act, while applicable to every government department, was specifically aimed at and resented by the War Office. Riddell, op. cit., diary entries, July 1-31, 1915, pp. 107-115.

<sup>9</sup>House of Commons Debates, June 23, 1915, (cols. 1217-1218).

<sup>10</sup>Ministry of Munitions Bill, op. cit.



departments for both the supplies and personnel that would be needed to get the Munitions Ministry off the ground. Setting up a central office was not the only obstacle before Lloyd George. From his experiences with labor earlier in the year, he clearly understood that their cooperation was vital to the success of any scheme aimed at achieving an increase in the production of munitions. Before and just after the passage of the bill establishing the new ministry, Lloyd George embarked on a speaking tour of all the major industrial areas of the country. His speeches were loud, patriotic, and confident; he repeatedly told the workmen that he had come seeking their advice and comments on the shape of his new plans for the nation's home front. Whether or not he already had decided on the specific programs of his ministry is not clear, but his political tactics were superb. Lloyd George faced the workers with his hat in hand, wanting nothing less than to instill a sense of participation and rekindle the flickering patriotism among those who listened. In Cardiff on June 11, the minister announced to his fellow Welshmen that he "came to do business", and to tell the workers and employers alike the truth about the war and show them just what had to be done. He declared in another speech that received (as did all his addresses) wide press coverage, that

I have often heard that time means money. Time here means lives. The more shells, the surer the victory, and the speedier the victory. We want to turn out so much that when the hour arrives we shall just crash our way through . . . . Plant the flag on your workshops. Every lathe you have, recruit it. Convert your machinery into battalions and we will drive the foe from the land which he has tortured and trampled on, and Liberty will be once more enthroned in Europe.<sup>11</sup>

The following day Lloyd George appeared before a large crowd in Bristol and

<sup>11</sup>The Times, June 12, 1915.

repeated his earlier assurances that under his direction the Ministry of Munitions would ask all classes to sacrifice equally. He told his Bristol audience, much as he had promised other crowds of workers, they could count on this, because it was his intention to consult each interest in the nation before taking any proposals to the cabinet.<sup>12</sup>

Although he clearly had the power to command, Lloyd George sought out and quietly met with trade union leaders and businessmen alike, in order to earn their trust and further solidify his position. Soon he was able to announce that many factory owners were volunteering to place not only their services but their factories as well under the control of the newly established ministry.<sup>13</sup> The majority of trade unions also showed a willingness to cooperate by empowering the National Labour Advisory Committee to "agree to such measures as, without detriment to the interests of the workers, will ensure an adequate supply of the necessary munitions for the prosecution of the war with the greatest vigour."<sup>14</sup> For the first time the trade unions, with the notable exceptions of the coal miners and the cotton operatives, had a single, although weak voice. Together the nation's business leaders and the advisory committee gave Lloyd George their respective opinions and approved his final plans for the Ministry of Munitions. On June 23, in the form of the Munitions of War Bill, Lloyd George laid the blueprint for the new ministry before the Commons.

The final draft of the bill had been delayed for a few days due to some last minute snags in the negotiations with the trade unions. Nonethe-

<sup>12</sup>"To Unite the Nation," The Nation, June 19, 1915, p. 375.

<sup>13</sup>The Times, June 13, 1915.

<sup>14</sup>G. D. H. Cole, Labour in the War (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1915), p. 173.

less, by the time the proposal reached the floor of the House, nearly all business as well as labor interests had been consulted and had given some degree of approval to the strong measure. The bill itself consisted of three parts.<sup>15</sup> Poorly drafted, there appears to have been little desire to organize the bill into a coherent and logical order. This lack of order within the proposal, however, did not mute its effectiveness. Making it clear that the bill was an emergency measure, Lloyd George approached the issues at hand with a shotgun approach. While introducing the bill he energetically pointed out that "Any obstacles, any mismanagement, any slackness, any indiscipline, any prejudices which prevent or delay mobilization of our resources at the earliest possible moment postpones victory."<sup>16</sup> The newly appointed minister made it clear that his measure would not allow any barricades to block efficient industrial production.

Lloyd George, trying to give the bill some sense of order, explained to the House of Commons that the nation had been divided into ten munitions areas. Each of these was to be placed under the control of local committees of management, whose members would be drawn from the district's business community. In the central town of each munitions area, an office would be staffed by engineering representatives from the ministry. The role of these people would be to give technical advice, coordinate production, and to give out munitions specifications. Furthermore, the Minister of Munitions revealed to the Members of Parliament that the War Office and the Admiralty had consented to supply military advisors, who would be assigned to serve in the central office of each area. These, Lloyd George asserted, would

<sup>15</sup>Ministry of Munitions Bill, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup>House of Commons Debates, June 23, 1915, (col. 1184).

keep the military closely tied to the production of armaments and add a non-partisan, patriotic flavor to the offices. He suggested that this would aid in further promoting the hard-won but fragile cooperation of capital and labor with the government.<sup>17</sup> Lloyd George pointed out that although the government would have the power to organize all production from London, the most efficient method would be to delegate this power to the committees of management and assume the role of a central clearing house for information. The Ministry of Munitions, he claimed, should provide "anything of expert advice, specifications, samples, inspection and material . . . . but we must rely upon the great businessmen of each locality to do the organization in those districts for themselves."<sup>18</sup>

Despite this obvious preference for local management, Lloyd George made it clear in the Munitions of War Bill that local control did not mean autonomy. The Ministry of Munitions, in order to better exercise its function as a source of information and to more fully coordinate production, required accurate and detailed reports from each locality. Written into the munitions bill, section eleven of part three, was the requirement that indepth monthly reports to the ministry should be submitted by every workshop producing munitions. The section demanded that each employer report as to

- (a) the numbers and classes of persons employed or likely to be employed in the establishment from time to time;
- (b) the numbers and classes of machines at any such establishment;
- (c) the nature of the work on which any such persons are employed, or any such machines are engaged, from time to time;

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., (col. 1191).

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., (col. 1192).

(d) any other matters with respect to which the Minister may desire information for the purposes of his powers and duties.

The bill also gave the Minister of Munitions the further power to "arrange with any other government department for the collection of any such information."<sup>19</sup> In this way the new ministry could draw freely on and utilize all the data collecting agencies of the government in order to reach its goal of sufficient shell production.<sup>20</sup>

In speaking before the Commons of the importance of information, Lloyd George concluded that accurate and wide-ranging data was essential for peak production. He stressed that by keeping a running account of inventories of raw materials, machines, and workers, the ministry would be able to ensure smooth, steady, and increased production.<sup>21</sup> The minister also added for his Liberal and Labour critics that with this vast amount of information, his staff would be able to detect manufacturers who were holding back goods in an effort to create artificial shortages and force prices higher. The practice, which Lloyd George admitted to the House had been occurring in some circles, was not only taking unfair advantage of the nation's consumers and the government, but causing immeasurable harm to the war effort. He asserted that "Those practices must, in the vital interests of the nation, be brought to an end because, if there is a shortage of materials in any one particular, the whole business of turning out the necessary output stops."<sup>22</sup> The minister's assurances helped to soothe those who agreed with

<sup>19</sup>"Munitions of War Bill," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Public Bills, Vol. 5, 1914-16, section 11, part three.

<sup>20</sup>Not only would Lloyd George be able to make better informed decisions concerning munitions production, but he clearly must have understood the political advantages of such a weapon.

<sup>21</sup>House of Commons Debates, June 23, 1915, (col. 1193).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., (col. 1193).

the necessity of the bill, but felt that the bulk of the burden was falling upon the shoulders of the working class, while businessmen were reaping huge profits.

Lloyd George's Munitions of War Bill also enabled the Minister of Munitions to completely take over some armaments firms and to closely control the rest. Section four of part two of the bill declared that

If the Minister of Munitions considers it expedient for the purpose of the successful prosecution of the war that any establishment in which munitions work is carried on should be subject to special provisions as to limitations of employers profits and control of persons employed . . . he may make an order declaring that establishment to be a controlled establishment.<sup>23</sup>

New munitions factories were beginning to spring up throughout the country and older firms in many cases had added new shops to their existing factories. Lloyd George insisted that these should be placed directly under the authority of his ministry, to be run by local managers as controlled establishments.

The six clauses listed under section four of part two outlined the specific powers that the Ministry of Munitions could exercise over the plants designated as controlled establishments. First, control and regulation of the net profits of each shop was placed in the ministry's hands. All money deemed to be in excess of a reasonable profit was placed at the disposal of the Exchequer.<sup>24</sup> Second, all disputes involving labor, such as wage rates, had to be submitted to the Minister of Munitions and the Board of

<sup>23</sup>Munitions of War Bill, op. cit., section 4, part two.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., section 5, part two. This was one of the major demands of the trade unionists at the time of the Treasury Conference, earlier in the year.

Trade for binding arbitration.<sup>25</sup> Third, any rule, practice, or custom not having the force of law, which the government considered to restrict production or suspend employment, was declared illegal. This clause had the effect of removing from the trade unions the power to strike, and any person or group failing to comply with the anti-strike provision of the third clause was automatically subject to criminal prosecution. The remaining three clauses simply echoed the threat of prosecution by the government of those violating any of the bill's provisions.

Thus Lloyd George, in section four of part two of the Munitions of War Bill, was attempting to tie together the issues of industrial profit, trade restrictions, and the right of trade unions to strike.<sup>26</sup> The first was to be tightly regulated and the second and third were simply outlawed. Good draftmanship should have dictated that the profit and labor issues be treated separately, but Lloyd George undoubtedly had a political point to make by tying the two so closely together. Apart from the poor draftmanship and the possible political message contained within section four, the proposal meant nothing less than absolute government control over a sizable portion of British industry and labor.

<sup>25</sup>This was in accordance with section 1 - 4 of part one of the bill, which established the negotiating and appeal procedures. Lloyd George clarified this before the House by explaining that only the major disputes would be submitted to the central office while, to expedite matters, most issues involving single shops or individuals would be decided by local and regional tribunals.

<sup>26</sup>The combination of interrelated political issues, as in this section, is only one example of the disorderly and surprisingly careless draftmanship of this bill.

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Lloyd George left little doubt about how he intended to utilize his ministry's vast powers. While presenting the bill to the Commons, he drew the Members' attention to idle machinery sitting in store houses, unused because of a lack of skilled workmen. He said that the first step that had to be taken in order to increase munitions output was "to secure the necessary skilled labour, in order to fill up the workshops, which have plenty of machinery at the present moment."<sup>27</sup> In outlining his ideas, the Minister asked that positions that could not be filled by experienced workers " . . . should be ecked out as much as possible by unskilled labour." He added that

There is a good deal of work which can be done by unskilled men looking after it. I was told by a firm in Bristol, which was undertaking to turn out shells, that if they were allowed to use unskilled labour, they could double their output, because they could have a night shift and could use exactly the same machinery. That happens very often. You have not enough skilled labour to utilize the machinery except during the day.<sup>28</sup>

Lloyd George assured the Commons that under the Ministry of Munitions, not one ounce of the nation's energy would be wasted in the struggle to increase production and win the war. As if to underline the intention to do whatever was needed to insure enough armaments, Lloyd George had written into the bill the specific powers over labor that the new ministry was assuming. In an amendment to the earlier Defence of the Realm Acts, the bill added that the Ministry of Munitions was empowered to

regulate or restrict the carrying on of any work in any factory, workshop, or other premises, or the engagement or employment of any workman or all or any classes of workmen therein, or to remove the plant therefrom with a view to maintaining or increasing the production of munitions in other factories, workshops, or

<sup>27</sup>House of Commons Debates, June 23, 1915, (col. 1196).

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., (cols. 1200-1201).



premises, or to regulate and control the supply of metals and material that may be required for any articles for use in war.<sup>29</sup>

Workmen in munitions factories were required to wear badges and sanctions were imposed against any individual who left a factory without the consent of the employer.<sup>30</sup>

The debate on the Munitions of War Bill was longer than it might have been, had the government been more popular in the House. The debate was used by opponents and supporters alike to vent their unhappiness with the government's conduct of the war.<sup>31</sup> Finally, on July 1, 1915, the bill received the consent of the House with only a few minor amendments. The government, or rather Lloyd George, was now in the munitions business, free to take whatever steps that were needed in order to improve the output of munitions.

There was very little in the Munitions of War Act which had not already been implemented or previously suggested. It simply consolidated the Treasury Agreements and the Defence of the Realm Acts, while accepting nearly all the recommendations of the Committee on Production. The result was to place under the control of a single authority with almost absolute

<sup>29</sup>Munitions of War Bill, op. cit., clause d, section 10, part three.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., sections 6-9, part two. Lloyd George proposed the enlistment of a mobile workers' army which could be transported from one factory to another whenever necessary.

<sup>31</sup>The passage of the bill was a foregone conclusion. The debate over it, however, caused the government some embarrassment. The tone of the debate was anything but friendly, reflecting Parliament's unhappiness that positive, forceful action (such as the bill before them) had been delayed for so long. Furthermore, some Members were extremely distraught over the way in which they believed the government had hidden the shell problem. Nonetheless, Lloyd George did use this displeasure to his advantage by insisting that "unless the new Ministry of Munitions has an absolutely free hand in the matter of giving and arranging orders, his appointment will be perfectly futile." House of Commons Debates, June 23, 1915, (cols. 1205-1266).

powers the legal authority to advise and coordinate the activities of men as well as machines. The passage of the act officially confirmed the growing conviction that in the interests of the nation, machines of flesh, blood, and bone were not so very different from those that were made of steel, fed on coal, and belched smoke. Both were home resources in the test of total war and each needed to be organized, exploited, and used to their maximum efficiency if victory were to be achieved.

By the early fall of 1915 Lloyd George's Munitions Ministry had grown to become one of the busiest departments in the government. Shell production was steadily increasing and the short fall, despite continued rising demand, was shrinking as each week passed. It had been discovered that high explosives, now almost in exclusive use at the front, were produced by a relatively simple process and most engineering firms had the machinery and skill to manufacture them. This expanded production could not be handled by skilled union men alone, so by the authority of the Munitions of War Act, more and more unskilled workers were brought into factories. Because of the shortage of men resulting from the growing demands of the military, these new legions of unskilled workers were increasingly made up of women.<sup>32</sup> Female labor flooded heavy industry on a scale never before contemplated. This was especially true in the national filling and explosive factories, which were set up in August and exclusively controlled by the Ministry of Munitions. With this expansion of the female labor force in the munitions factories, and in every corner of British industry, the Ministry of Munitions became acutely aware of the

<sup>32</sup>As early as March women had been asked to register with the government if they were willing to be called upon to work in essential war industries. Those women who had volunteered were being called upon in ever-increasing numbers. The Times, March 18-20, 1915.

seamy health and safety conditions which were present in many plants doing government contract work: inadequate ventilation and lighting, few if any sanitary facilities, faulty safety precautions, and excessive work hours which tended to compound all the other deficiencies.

Although the working conditions had certainly improved over the last hundred years, the conditions in factories were still inadequate for the protection of the workers' health. The war, with its sudden demands for increased production had put a stop to any improvements that were being made and this served to increase the health problems by taxing already strained sanitary facilities. Excessive overtime and the new inexperienced female workers further aggravated the situation. The presence of women in the heavy industries gave the reformers a sentimental issue with which they could argue for better conditions. In most establishments, Lloyd George wrote, "rough and unseemly conditions prevailed and had hitherto been put up with the men workers, but it was recognized as impossible to ask women to submit to them."<sup>33</sup> Backed by the almost unlimited power of the Ministry of Munitions, Lloyd George and his lieutenants combined the issues of female labor and national efficiency to make major improvements in the working conditions of all factory workers.

On August 12, 1915, Christopher Addison, who had gone with Lloyd George to munitions as his top assistant and political ally, scheduled a meeting of government officers interested in public health. In attendance were Sir Thomas Barlow, a physician, Mr. Bellhouse and Dr. Collins, both from the Home Office, Sir George Newman from the Board of Education, Sir Walter Fletcher from the Medical Research Council, and Professor Boycott,

<sup>33</sup>Lloyd George, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 302.

who had worked previously on various medical committees. Addison dominated the conference, suggesting to its participants that "It might be worth while in our endeavour to increase the output of munitions to see whether something could be done to sustain and improve the physical efficiency of the workers, to examine the supply of food, facilities for meals, hours, fatigue, ventilation, and kindred matters."<sup>34</sup> At the same time, on Addison's recommendation, Lloyd George appointed a female inspector to the ministry's staff. Her duties were to tour all the new national factories as quickly as possible and inform the board of management in each about the special needs of women workers and suggest improvements.<sup>35</sup> The first step, limited as it was, provided information to owners who had never employed women, and brought some immediate results in many factories. Looking beyond this beginning, Addison and his ad hoc committee had a much more comprehensive plan in mind.

A sequel to the August 12 meeting was held on September 19, during which a permanent committee was proposed to study all employment conditions within munitions factories. Addison wrote in his diary that

It has become manifest that new varieties of occupation in connection with explosives and dangerous materials and the introduction of women and unskilled workers into all sorts of work will soon bring up a number of questions affecting the health of workers, and I asked Lloyd George to let me appoint a number of people whose sole business it would be to make inquiries and give us advice on matters affecting the health of people employed in munitions works.<sup>36</sup>

Lloyd George readily agreed and, upon Addison's recommendation, appointed

<sup>34</sup>Christopher Addison, Politics From Within, Vol. I (London: Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 1924), p. 212.

<sup>35</sup>Lloyd George, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 302.

<sup>36</sup>Addison, Politics From Within, p. 213.

Sir George Newman to be chairman of the Health of the Munitions Workers Committee. Other members of the committee were:

Sir Thomas Barlow, M. D.  
 G. Bellhouse, Factory Department, Home Office  
 Professor A. E. Boycott, M. D.  
 J. R. Clynes, M. P.  
 E. L. Collins, Factory Department, Home Office  
 W. Morley Fletcher, M. D., Medical Research Committee  
 Professor Leonard E. Hill, Medical Research Committee  
 Samuel Osborn, J. P., Sheffield  
 Miss R. E. Squire, Factory Department, Home Office  
 Mrs. H. J. Tennant <sup>37</sup>

The committee was a strongly liberal one and Newman, encouraged to utilize his personal discretion in all matters, undertook to "advise the Ministry as to the conditions of employment that are likely to be productive of the largest output."<sup>38</sup> With this directive in hand, the committee was able to expand the area of its concern from women in factories to the much larger question of how environmental conditions within factories affected industrial output.<sup>39</sup>

The committee went to work quickly and they produced their first report in November. Memorandum number one was an examination of Sunday labor and attempted to determine the overall efficiency of increased working hours.<sup>40</sup> The committee had toured the large industrial centers of the

<sup>37</sup>Christopher Addison, Four and a Half Years, 2 vol., 3rd ed., (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1934), Vol. 1, diary entry, September 19, 1915, p. 126.

<sup>38</sup>Sir George Newman, cited in Addison, Politics From Within, p. 213. Both Addison and Lloyd George made it clear to Newman that he was free to make a broad examination of all factors affecting the health of the munitions workers.

<sup>39</sup>Philip Whitwell Wilson, "The War and Social Revolution," Fortnightly Review, September 1, 1915, pp. 757-764.

<sup>40</sup>Cmd. 8132, "Report on Sunday Labour," Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Memorandum No. 1, November 1915, Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Reports From Commissioners, Vol. 56, 1914-16.

nation and had compiled evidence presented to them by employers, workers, and other interested persons. During their tour they found that Sunday labor was of special concern to nearly all who were interviewed. The study released by the committee revealed that the war had increased not only week-day overtime, but had made Sunday labor a regular part of industrial life. Although there was no general rule, most factories appeared to ask their workers to work on Sundays and some were requiring workers to put in full twelve-hour shifts or more. Despite the long hours, there was no proof that production had significantly increased. Much to the committee's surprise, several employers even testified that production had decreased. A representative from one engineering firm told the travelling committee members that his company had even reduced the average work week from 78½ to 65½ hours by cutting down on weekend labor. He noted that it was his opinion that production per man hour had increased, more than making up for the lost time.<sup>41</sup> Several other firms gave the same report and the committee wrote in their first memorandum that

Though accurate figures of this kind are not generally available, statements that reductions in Sunday work, have not, in fact, involved any appreciable loss of output, and even the less observant of the Managers seem to be impressed with the fact that the strain is showing an evil effect . . . . It is becoming increasingly realized that there are limits to hours of labour beyond which no commensurate output is obtained.<sup>42</sup>

In this manner, the committee merged their unmistakable social concern with those of the national war effort. They concluded the report by noting that "It is of primary importance in the interests of the Nation that they should be allowed that rest which is essential to the maintenance of their health."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

Fully aware of their unique position as an advisory body to the Ministry of Munitions, the committee emphasized their conviction that

Some action must be taken in regard to continuous labour and excessive hours of work if it is desired to secure and maintain, over a long period, the maximum output. To secure any large measure of reform it may be necessary to impose certain restrictions on all controlled establishments, since competition and other causes frequently make it difficult for individual employers to act independently of one another.<sup>44</sup>

The committee insisted that direct and speedy action was needed if a general collapse of munitions production was to be avoided. They noted that, owing to the strong patriotic spirit of the times, long hours had not caused the degree of individual breakdown that might be expected under normal circumstances. Nonetheless, they found definite evidence that a general fatigue was beginning to slow even the older more experienced workers, as well as the managers and foremen.<sup>45</sup>

A report entitled "Memorandum Number Three", issued in November, dealt with the necessity of making canteen facilities available to workers inside large factories. Hot food and a clean environment in which to eat meals, the report pointed out, would provide nourishment and a restful atmosphere for workers who had heretofore had to eat cold food at their work positions.<sup>46</sup> This report was generally included in the memorandum issued by the committee in December as Memorandum Number Two.<sup>47</sup> Concerned with promoting welfare supervision in each factory, the report

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Addison, Politics From Within, p.214.

<sup>46</sup>Cmd. 8133, "Report on Industrial Canteens," Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Memorandum No. 3, Nov. 1915. Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Reports from Commissioners, Vol. 56, 1914-16.

<sup>47</sup>Cmd. 8151, "Report on Welfare Supervision," Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Memorandum No. 2, December, 1915, Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Reports From Committees, Vol. 56, 1914-16.

solidly linked adverse working and living conditions with poor individual efficiency. It argued that, "Varied and complex influences are today adversely affecting the efficiency of munitions workers, and among them, certain conditions, outside the ordinary undertakings of factory management, appear to be almost more important than the immediate or technical environment in which work is carried on and the length of hours during which workers are employed."<sup>48</sup> The report went on to list some of the outside factors that it claimed were adversely affecting production, such as a shortage of low cost housing, inefficient public transportation, a lack of canteen provisions, and the general ill health among many employees.

Through their study of industrial centers, the committee found that the sudden influx of workers in and about large munitions plants had greatly overtaxed the existing housing accommodations. Houses that were intended for a single family of ten were discovered to be sheltering several families. Moreover, it was revealed that in some areas conditions were so bad that many beds, which were intended for one person, were often occupied by several people, day and night.<sup>49</sup> The committee found that these poor housing conditions had an adverse effect on the capacity of workers to attain maximum efficiency. They further noted that the lack of proper housing had not only caused overcrowding, but had compelled many workers to find shelter long distances away from their place of employment. This meant that they were forced to travel every morning and evening to and from the factory in overcrowded and delay-ridden trains. The committee pointed out

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., section 1, p. A2.    <sup>49</sup>Ibid., clause a, section 1, p. A2.



that the failure of public transportation to meet the new demands made upon it cost both employers and employees time and efficiency. Memorandum Three reported that "Cases have come to the knowledge of the committee where workers have to leave home daily before five A.M., and do not return before ten P.M., thus leaving barely six hours for sleep."<sup>50</sup> It was suggested that if improved and more plentiful housing could not be found in and around factory areas, then improved transit facilities were needed to cut down on the workers' travel time. The committee urged all large factories to compile accurate data concerning distances traveled by their workers and to devise from this information cooperative arrangements among workers. Furthermore, it was suggested that the information be turned over to the proper local authorities and transit companies for action on a larger scale.

Although the committee's work revealed to them that the large issues of housing and public transportation were factors in the efficiency of munitions workers, they also understood that these were beyond the pale of the ministry's effective control. After looking somewhat longingly at the wider social issues and interdependencies, the second memorandum turned towards the munitions factories themselves. Incorporating much of the contents of the third memorandum on canteens, the committee, in their second report, asked that hot meals be provided for workers within the confines of the workshops. Frequently, they had found, in the course of their study, that arrangements for heating foods brought by individual workers were insufficient. Comparing the laborers to soldiers, the committee argued that

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., clause b, section 1, p. A2.

Workers who are poorly lodged may be unable to obtain appetising and nourishing food to take with them; others living long distances from the factory may have little or no time to spare for meals, and thus have to rely on what they can carry with them to sustain them during the day. Yet the munition worker, like the soldier, requires good rations to enable him to do good work.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, pointing out that many of the workers were young boys and girls, the report insisted that welfare advice and assistance was required in large plants in order to improve feeding arrangements and working conditions in general.

In order to provide this advice, the committee urged that the Ministry of Munitions ask all factory managers to employ welfare supervisors. The sole duty of these special officers, who were to be neither responsible to management or labor, was to promote individual welfare in order to increase production. The committee suggested that as an independent agent within each plant, the welfare supervisor's duties should be wide and far-ranging. Some of these responsibilities were:

To be in close touch with the engagement of new labour, or when desired, to engage the laborer;

To keep a register of available houses and lodgings; to inform management when housing accommodation is inadequate; and to render assistance to workers seeking accommodation;

To investigate records of sickness and broken time arising therefrom; and in case of sickness to visit, where desired, the houses of workers;

To investigate, and advise in case of slow and inefficient work, or incapacity, arising from conditions of health, fatigue, or physical strain.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to these duties, the committee in their report asked that welfare supervisors assist managers in areas ranging from the improvement of sanitary conditions to the organization of recreational and educational

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., clause c, section 1, p. A2.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., clause d, section 1, p. 4.

activities. Stressing the importance of having a welfare officer inside each workshop, the committee noted that it should "not be regarded as something outside the ordinary factory management or extraneous to it, but as a vital and integral part of the whole discipline and right organization of the business, to be shared in by all."<sup>53</sup> Emphasizing this, the committee provided evidence of increased production as a result of welfare supervision and sternly warned employers that "Without some such special arrangement, there cannot fail to be diminished output, discontent, and unsmooth working."<sup>54</sup>

During January 1916, a series of new reports followed in rapid succession the earlier documents released by the committee. These studies dealt in detail with Employment of Women, Hours of Work, Canteen Construction and Equipment, Industrial Fatigue and its Causes, Special Industrial Diseases, Ventilation and Lighting of Munition Factories and Workshops, and finally Sickness and Injury. In addition, an appendix to the third report on canteens was produced which provided diagrams and blueprints for canteen construction.<sup>55</sup> Each report, as did the three released in late 1915, contained within it the clear assumption that all factors affecting the physical condition of workers were tied to output and overall efficiency. The work of the committee had begun to make it clear to those reading their reports, that since the outcome of the war depended largely on the productivity of British workshops, British workers could not be

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., clause d, section 1, p. 4. <sup>54</sup>Ibid., section 5, pp. 6-7.

<sup>55</sup>Cmd. 8185, 8186, 8199, 8214, 8215, 8216, Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Memorandum Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, January 1916, Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Accounts and Papers, Vols. 5-6, 1916.

allowed to function at less than peak efficiency. Machinery could maintain its maximum output only so long as it was greased, fed fuel, and kept from rusting. The work of the Health of Munitions Workers Committee, whose final report was entitled, Industrial Health and Efficiency, had joined humanitarian and wartime concerns.<sup>56</sup> This was done in such a way that the nation had to ask itself if it could do less for its human machinery than that made of steel.

Based partly on the strength of the November and December reports and certainly a knowledge of the preliminary studies of the committee's January reports, Lloyd George introduced before the House on January 4, 1916, a bill designed to amend the original Munitions of War Act. After some minor changes in the Lords, the bill was completed and was finally approved on January 19. The amending bill served to broaden and further define the extensive powers of the Ministry of Munitions. Contained within it were some new important sections that gave the minister the power to establish and require munitions contractors to adhere to safety, sanitation, and welfare standards deemed necessary.<sup>57</sup> This broad power, among other things, allowed the Ministry of Munitions, without specific Parliamentary approval, to exercise control over all conditions of employment in all workshops which employed women, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor for the purposes of producing munitions.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the amendment contained within it an important provision which made it incumbent upon the Ministry of Munitions to inspect all

<sup>56</sup>Cmd. 9065, "Industrial Health and Efficiency," Ministry of Munitions, Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Final Report, 1918, Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Reports From Commissioners, Vol. 15, 1918.

<sup>57</sup>"Munitions of War Amendment," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Public Bills, Vol. 5, 1914-16.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., clause 1-2, section 6, p. 3.

workshops in order to ascertain whether or not the basic requirements were being met.<sup>59</sup>

With the full approval and encouragement of Lloyd George, Dr. Addison and Dr. Newman used the new powers of the ministry to impose on controlled establishments the recommendations of the Health of Munitions Workers Committee. As early as October 1915, canteens had been established in national factories, and with the backing of the Munitions Ministry new canteens were being quickly added to older factories. Lloyd George personally pushed the owners of controlled establishments to do the same and he even went so far as to convince the cabinet to allow all employers to write off construction costs as "a trade expense".<sup>60</sup> Given this tax break, the committee reports, and the personal pressure applied by Lloyd George, many employers in early 1916 began to construct canteen facilities. The results were immediate. By mid-1916 more than 500,000 workers in both national and controlled workshops were able to obtain cheap, hot, nutritious meals under decent conditions and to sit in a comfortable room without having to go beyond the factory walls in inclement weather.<sup>61</sup>

Shortly after the environmental measures suggested by the Health of Munitions Workers Committee were imposed by the ministry within most munitions workshops, a new factory bill was drafted. The bill, entitled the Police &c.(Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, was a catch-all measure that easily passed through the House in late July 1916.<sup>62</sup> Dealing with a

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., section 17, p. 9.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>60</sup>Addison, Politics From Within, p. 216.

<sup>62</sup>"Police &c.(Miscellaneous Provisions Bill)," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Public Bills, Vol. 3, 1916.

large variety of seemingly unrelated issues, part two of the act contains within it provisions designed to secure and improve factory conditions throughout Britain. The first clause of section seven states that

Where it appears to the Secretary of State that the conditions and circumstances of employment or the nature of the process carried on in any factory or workshop are such as to require special provisions to be made at the factory or workshop for securing the welfare of the workers or any class of workers employed therein in relation to the matters to which this section applies, he may by Order require the occupier to make such reasonable provision therefor as may be specified.<sup>63</sup>

In describing some of the areas of concern, the act suggested that the Secretary of State might order those responsible to make arrangements for "preparing or heating, and taking of meal; the supply of drinking water, the supply of protective clothing; ambulance and first aid arrangements; the supply and use of seats in work rooms; facilities for washing; accommodations for clothing; arrangements for supervision of workers".<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the act provided the Secretary of State with the latitude to decide whether particular regulations were to be adhered to by an entire industry or were applicable only to a single workshop.

Perhaps one of the more significant sections of the act was the provision that made each factory owner monetarily responsible for all improvements. No longer was the owner of a firm allowed to deduct the cost of bettering the working conditions within the workshop from the laborer's pay packet, such as had been allowed by the 1831 Truck Act, which was still on the books. With the growth of organized labor the

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., clause 1, section 7, part two.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., clause 2, section 7, part two.

practice had fallen into disuse, though the inability of owners to make deductions in the face of union pressure was sometimes used to justify the lack of improvements. Besides reinforcing the idea that the workers were not responsible for their working conditions, the act also required that they be consulted by their employees on all questions concerning the factory environment.<sup>65</sup> The final section of the act made it mandatory for an outside medical man to be called upon to investigate all deaths and serious injuries occurring within work hours and file a full report with the Secretary of State. These reports were to include the circumstances of the accident and suggest improvements that might be made to prevent similar injuries.

The factory provisions contained within the police bill were the earliest legislative fruit of the work done by Health of Munitions Workers Committee.<sup>66</sup> During the next two years almost nine hundred factory canteens were established in workshops employing more than one and one half million laborers. First aid and surgical dressing stations became commonplace, as did welfare supervisors. The Home Office issued leaflets giving medical and hygienic advice and significant progress was made in dealing with the treatment and prevention of special industrial diseases. Washing facilities, cloakrooms, seats, and protective clothing made their appearance in the tightly regulated munitions plants and in many unrelated industries.<sup>67</sup> The marked improvements made in the working conditions inside factories, and the resulting rise in the quality of the health of

<sup>65</sup>Sir George Newman, The Building of a Nation's Health (London: Mac-Millan and Co., Ltd., 1939), p. 375.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 375.

<sup>67</sup>Lloyd George, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 388.

working people, is reflected in the Factory Inspectors' Reports of 1917 and 1918.<sup>68</sup>

Protected by the extraordinary powers of the Ministry of Munitions, industrial welfare gathered strength and brought rapid changes to British industry. Until 1918 the Health of Munitions Workers Committee continued to gather information, issue reports, and make constructive recommendations. The majority of these were fully implemented in the national factories and the controlled establishments that became a national model of enlightened management. Other industries followed this lead in varying degrees, marking, as Lloyd George noted, "the recognition of the fact that the producer is not simply a person employed for so many hours and paid such a wage, but a fellow human being, with physical needs and weaknesses inseparable from his ability to work."<sup>69</sup> The advances made had been accepted and instituted in response to a national emergency, not out of a particular humanitarian concern. Except for a relative handful of tireless and dedicated reformers, few thought of the changes as anything more than wartime necessities. Nonetheless, the speed with which the wartime reforms were made gave many social activists a new hope. Carried by this tide of optimism, Lloyd George observed that "It is a strange irony, but no small compensation, that the making of weapons of destruction should afford the occasion to humanize industry. Yet such is the case. Old prejudices have vanished, new ideas are abroad; employers and workers, the public and the

<sup>68</sup>Cmd. 9108, "Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1917," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Accounts and Papers, Vol. 14, 1918. Cmd. 340, "Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1918," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Reports From Commissioners, Vol. 28, 1919.

<sup>69</sup>Addison, Politics From Within, p. 224.



state are favorable to new methods."<sup>70</sup>

Despite the success of the movement to improve industrial working conditions, Lloyd George clearly over-estimated the reach of its achievements. Beyond a relative handful of reformers and the industrial community, few outsiders were aware of the improvements being made in workshop conditions; it simply was not the type of issue that elicited public attention when the press was filled with war news. At the same time that the social technicians in the Ministry of Munitions were devising schemes to use their new-found engineering powers, public attention was becoming excited by a much more sensational problem. As early as mid-1915 the combined problems of a high rate of infant mortality, a steadily declining number of births, and the prospects of a lengthy, life-demanding war were thrust into the public eye.

Accompanying the casualty reports announced by Herbert Asquith on June 9, 1915, was the startling figure that fully forty percent of those listed as wounded were permanently disabled and unfit to return to work. Population comparisons, which had received considerable attention before the war, were re-examined and those who took the time to plough through old census figures were horrified. The last census had been conducted in the United Kingdom during 1911. It revealed that the rate of population increase in the nation was falling off dramatically. The census recorded that the number of people living in the country, not including the Islands in the Seas, was 45,216,665, with 21,942,883 male and 23,273,782 female residents. The off-shore islands, including the Isle of Man and

<sup>70</sup>Lloyd George, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 308.

the Channel Islands, were populated by a total of 148,934 people, divided into 69,989 males and 78,945 females.<sup>71</sup> In the ten-year period since the last census, England and Wales had shown a population increase of 10.9 percent, Scotland an advance of 6.4 percent, while Ireland showed a 1.7 percent decline in her population. This made the overall increase in the United Kingdom between 1901 and 1911 only 9.1 percent.<sup>72</sup> The rate of increase for England and Wales, the most populous areas of the nation, was less than in any period since the institution of a regular census in 1801. Similarly, the advance for Scotland was lower than any reporting period except that marked by the census of 1861, which showed an increase of only 6 percent.<sup>73</sup>

A comparison showed that while Britain's population growth was declining, that of other major powers was increasing rapidly. The German empire's population was advancing at a rate of 15.2 percent, Austria's census statistics revealed that her population was increasing by 9.3 percent, and the United States registered a 21 percent rise. France, Britain's chief war partner, was the only prominent nation which fell below the United Kingdom, with a nearly stationary advance of only 1.6 percent. Together, Britain and France had a population of about eighty-five million people in 1911, while Germany and Austria-Hungary had a total amounting to nearly ninety-five million and a higher birth rate.<sup>74</sup> These

<sup>71</sup>"Census of England and Wales," Administrative Areas, Counties, Urban and Rural Districts," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Census, Vol. 60, 1912.

<sup>72</sup>Thomas Hannan, "One of the War's Warnings: Take Care of that Child," The Nineteenth Century, July 1915, p. 141.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., pp. 142-143.

<sup>74</sup>Census of England and Wales, vol. 60, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

population statistics proved to be little comfort to those who understood that the war was one of attrition.

The unavoidable conclusion to be drawn from the census comparisons was that British human resources must be used more efficiently and waste cut to make up the disadvantage in numbers. The 1911 census that had disclosed to many people that the central powers had more "cannon fodder" than the Allies, also pointed out that many lives were being needlessly destroyed by controllable factors. It revealed that during 1911, the number of births in the United Kingdom reached 1,104,707, of which 881,138 were delivered in England and Wales. The same year there were 527,810 deaths in these two areas. Of those dying in England and Wales, it was discovered that 114,600 were children under one year of age. This represented 21.7 percent of the total death rate or a child mortality rate of 130 deaths for each 1,000 births. This rate was unusually high because the winter of 1910-1911 was extremely harsh. Nonetheless, the ten-year average was well over 100 per 1,000, with the rate for the entire United Kingdom averaging 125 deaths for every 1,000 births. These high figures were dwarfed by those that revealed that the death rate among illegitimate children reached 245.29 per 1,000 births for the entire United Kingdom in 1911. It was further shown that the bulk of all deaths were caused by disturbances of the digestive organs resulting from improper feeding and malnutrition. Among the specific causes of death among children were such diseases as bronchitis, pneumonia, lung infections, rickets, convulsions, whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria, and typhoid, either preventable or curable by a combination of a proper diet, care and sanita-

tion.<sup>75</sup>

This information, which was readily available before the war, had at the same time only raised the ire of dedicated social reformers. By mid-1915, the reaction was not so limited, since civilians as well as soldiers had become pawns in the world's first total war. The needless waste of any life became in many minds a misspent national resource. Writing in the July 1915 issue of the Nineteenth Century, a conservative commentator, the Reverend Thomas Hannan, observed:

It is accepted on all sides as the teaching of History that the continuous drain on the manhood of a nation made in long and costly war produces physical exhaustion or deterioration on a national scale . . . . It is easy to realize that the present war will have an adverse effect upon both the number and quality of our population, unless some method can be adopted to lessen the influence of the loss of large numbers of those who are physically the finest examples of the manhood of our country. It will be by the most assiduous attention to the care of child life in the next few years that the ravages of the war in that direction can be in any degree repaired.<sup>76</sup>

Hannan went on to note that because the bulk of the deaths among children were caused not by the ravages of nature but by want, squalor, and impure food, many could be prevented. The national interest would be best served, Hannan implied, by saving the lives of children, so that they might be better utilized in the factories or at the front.

The issue of child life was the kind that could draw wide public attention because it was simple, clear-cut, and emotional. The reading public was bombarded from all sides with information concerning child life and its importance to the nation. Private charities moved to establish

<sup>75</sup>Hannan, op. cit., p. 143. In response to a question concerning infant mortality and birth rates in the Commons, the Government provided Members with a chart revealing similar information. House of Commons Debates, June 15, 1915, (cols. 551-552).

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

baby saving organizations, which were designed to provide money to the poor for proper food and to distribute maternity information. They also opened clinics and served low-cost baby meals and maintained day nurseries for working mothers. Ads appeared in many popular journals appealing for funds. One typical advertisement, signed by a Dr. Barbara Tchaykovsky, appeared in the August 1, 1916, issue of the New Statesman. Making her pitch on several levels, Doctor Tchaykovsky wrote:

We need £5,000 a year to carry on our relief funds, our restaurants, day nursery, clinics, and we appeal to every patriot at home and at the front to help us in the task we have set for ourselves of maintaining, as far as in us lies, the welfare of the race in one of the poorest districts of London, where the infant mortality rate has risen from 112 in 1913 and 127 in 1914 and to 152 per 1,000 in 1915.<sup>77</sup>

In all probability the writer would have been interested in the baby-saving project in peace time, but the war made her appeal to "patriots" more practical.

The war had the effect of binding a variety of interests together. J. Cessar Ewart, a confirmed Tory imperialist, who had no previously recorded concern for child life or for east London, wrote dramatically that history indicated that "racial stocks with a redundant fertility tend to flow from the ancestral home to take possession of new territory. While, on the other hand, when, in any given race, the birth-rate falls below the death-rate, it is only a matter of time until that race is supplanted by another."<sup>78</sup> The evidence for the end of British domination was clear to Ewart, who contended that there were 100,000 fewer births, owing to the

<sup>77</sup>The New Statesman, August 5, 1916, p. 421.

<sup>78</sup>J. Cessar Ewart, "The Saving of Child Life," The Nineteenth Century, July 1917, p. 117.

great absence of men, in 1915 than in 1914. The tragedy of this situation was compounded by his assertion that in 1915 an average of 9 British soldiers perished hourly at the front. This, he argued, was disastrous enough for the future of the race, but it was exceeded by his estimate that in the United Kingdom 12 babies under the age of one year died hourly.<sup>79</sup>

Child welfare had been lifted from a contested political and economic issue to one on which nearly everyone agreed. Some action had to be taken, if not for humanitarian reasons, then in the national interest. The first week in October 1917 was declared National Baby Week during which public attention was focused on the issue of not only child life, but public health and the prevention of disease. The public attention that was gained did little but create a new topic of conversation.<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, for the first time, the usually mundane issue of public health had caught the popular imagination, so as to become part of a general call for the reconstruction of British society after the war. Reconstruction emerged mid-way through the war as a magic term, having no precise definition, but with a constituency that stretched across the entire political spectrum.

As long as plans for reconstruction remained vague, nearly everyone in Britain seemed to come to support it. Articles and speeches about what post-war plans should be, emanated from every corner of the British political world. The issue of reconstruction carried with it the combined baggage of

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>80</sup>Lord Rhondda served as Chairman of the National Baby Week Council, whose purpose was to study the conditions of infancy and maternity which led to the high rate of infant mortality. During Baby Week the council produced publicly a series of recommendations aimed at cutting the death rate among children. Despite the public attention that these captured, no official action was taken and Baby Week slipped by without any appreciable gains being made. "From Hospitals to Health," The New Statesman, October 27, 1917, p. 81.

hope, fear, and practical politics, which were welded into an unwieldy mass. The Athenaeum wrote somewhat dreamily from its leftist viewpoint that

Reconstruction is a consecration of the material, mental, and spiritual resources of the nation to the fulfillment of a great purpose. That purpose is the realization of the ideal Britain for which men have laboured and suffered, fought and died. When much of the best blood in the country went to fight for Britain it was not for a country of slums and senseless luxury, of industrial injustices and vested interests, but a country seen in a vision, a land of truth, righteousness and freedom, a place of infinite possibilities . . . . Reconstruction offers an unparalleled opportunity for overhauling our whole national life and moulding it in accordance with the purpose and ideals of a new age.<sup>81</sup>

The editors of The Athenaeum and others of like mind considered reconstruction to be a new beginning. Some of their fellow countrymen took a less expanded view of reconstruction which was formed by political pragmatism.

Labor unrest, or the threat of it, had never ceased to be a severe and worrisome problem. Even though Lloyd George and successive Ministers of Munitions effectively checked the unions by forbidding strikes and suspending trade rules, the radicals within the labor movement continued to lead small strikes and work stoppages. Many saw the continuing efforts of the government as only temporary dams, blocking the raging torrent of working-class revolution. "This war," wrote one commentator in January 1917, "is a volcano in which all the political, social, and economic elements of our life are seething and boiling under the crust for a great eruption in which the old order will disappear for good."<sup>82</sup> The same

<sup>81</sup>"The Meaning of Reconstruction," The Athenaeum, January 17, 1917, p. 9.

<sup>82</sup>Dr. C. Arthur Shadwell, "The Coming Revolution," The Nineteenth Century, July 1917, p. 40.

writer continued by saying that "The Government might stop it but only by changes which would be revolutionary in character."<sup>83</sup> In addition, future prospects of several million soldiers coming home after the war only added to the fear of social upheaval. A wounded middle class soldier wrote that

Every man is doing his bit and his best, but at the back of his head rebels against what he thinks is an arbitrary military spirit and the knowledge that the country at home has not sought out energetically the slackers earning large wages and hiding themselves as it were in munitions works, coal mines, etc., while he runs the great life risks for 1s. a day. He swears hard and long that he will have an easier time when the war is over. I do not think he knows how, but very vaguely says he is not going to be a 'bloody mug for the employer any more'; and he views with great dissatisfaction the material gap between employer and workman.<sup>84</sup>

In the mire and the blood of the trenches, class and rank had tended to disappear. The war became a great leveller of men. Many working-class soldiers received temporary officer commissions as the slaughter of sub-lieutenants created a desperate need for men of higher rank. Large numbers of Conservatives, even though they had opposed far-reaching social reforms in the past, saw the mixture of disenchanted veterans and a revolutionary working class as a dangerous combination.<sup>85</sup> Many came to realize that concessions would have to be made if some part of traditional English society was to survive the immediate post-war period.

Even the religiously anti-socialist far right in British politics had to come to grips with the issue of social concessions to the lower

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>85</sup>On September 25, The Times began a series of four articles entitled the "Ferment of Revolution", in which the paper warned that labor unrest coupled with disenchantment over the war could overthrow the entire political, social, and economic order. The Times, September 25, 1917.



orders. Motivated by his own heightened fears, Lord Sydenham of Comb wrote, in a half-hearted jump onto the reconstruction bandwagon, that

Dangerous fallacies and alluring promises have been made spread broadcast among the people who have neither the time nor the knowledge required to analyse them. That is the peril of Socialism, which claims to have found the cure of all human ills by methods that have left the darkest stains upon history. Only by the harmonious co-operation of the best brains of all classes, working unselfishly for the common good, can our problem of reconstruction be solved, and never was there such an earnest desire to seek the solution in the spirit of good-will and mutual concession.<sup>86</sup>

National opinion had grasped on to the idea of reconstruction. For reasons motivated by often contradictory concerns, the left, middle, and right of British politics each accepted the idea because the notion of a new Britain offered every one the chance to remold the country in their own image. David Lloyd George, who became Prime Minister in December 1916, shrewdly evaluated the merging of political perspectives on the vague notion of a national reconstruction. Lloyd George's political life had been consistently dominated by his tactical desire to join diverse interests on a fragment of common ground under his personal leadership. The issue of reconstruction offered him another opportunity to build a broadly-based political following.

On March 18, 1916, the cabinet had established the Committee on Reconstruction with Herbert Asquith, then still the Prime Minister, as its chairman. The committee did almost nothing, meeting only six times in their nine-month existence.<sup>87</sup> Although not dead inside government circles, reconstruction seemed to be going nowhere until, as Prime Minister, Lloyd George told a labor conference in Manchester on March 6, 1917, that the

<sup>86</sup>Lord Sydenham of Comb, "The Peril of Socialism," The Nineteenth Century, March, 1918, p. 471.

<sup>87</sup>Lloyd George, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 197.

time had come to begin rebuilding the nation. Speaking to the labor representatives, he said:

There is no doubt at all that the present war . . . . presents an opportunity for the reconstruction of the industrial and economic conditions of this country such as has never been presented in the life of, probably, the world. The whole state of society is more or less molten and you can stamp upon that molten mass almost anything so long as you do so with firmness and determination.

He added that it was his belief that the settlement of the war would

direct the destinies of all classes for some generations to come. The country will be prepared for bigger things immediately after the war than it will be when it begins to resume the normal sort of clash of self-interests which always comes with the normal work-a-day world business affairs and concerns of the world. I believe the country will be in a more enthusiastic mood, in a more exalted mood, for the time being--in a greater mood for doing big things; and unless the opportunity is seized immediately after the war, I believe it will pass away.<sup>88</sup>

Lloyd George insisted that things must be done on a bold and daring scale, ready to cut away the past and look forward to the new world. "Audacity", he told the labor meeting, "is the thing for you. Think out new ways; think out new methods; think out even new ways of dealing with old problems. Don't always be thinking of getting back to where you were before the war; get a new world."<sup>89</sup>

In order to fulfill these vague promises for the creation of a new post-war world, Lloyd George, on July 17, 1917, appointed his most loyal lieutenant, Christopher Addison, as Minister of Reconstruction without

<sup>88</sup>The Times, March 7, 1917.

<sup>89</sup>M. B. Hammond, British Labor Conditions and Legislation During the War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1919), p. 271.

portfolio.<sup>90</sup> Although the Prime Minister's motives for moving to create a Ministry of Reconstruction at that particular time are not clear, three issues seem to have dominated his thinking. First of all, the war was not going particularly well and this reality was complicated by a deep-seated war weariness, encouraging a desire to make an inconclusive peace with Germany. Labor unions were trying to reassert their power and the number of strikes were rapidly rising. Lloyd George understood that this uneasiness would only damage the war effort further. He was forced by this situation to attempt to rekindle the lost spirit of sacrifice and the easiest way to do this was to focus public attention on the idea of a reconstructed Britain.<sup>91</sup> Equally as menacing was the growing prospect of a large-scale mutiny in the army. In May the French army had revolted, a dislocation which threatened for a short period to give the Germans the victory in the west. The mutinies were so widespread that the French Minister of War, Paul Painlevé, secretly reported that only two divisions between Soissons and Paris were reliable.<sup>92</sup>

From a personal political viewpoint, Lloyd George appears to have seen in reconstruction an issue with which he might rebuild the shattered Liberal party. The split with Herbert Asquith had divided the party into two warring factions, making the party completely ineffective in the poli-

<sup>90</sup>By creating a Minister without portfolio, Lloyd George gave the Ministry of Reconstruction something of an unknown quantity. It apparently had all the powers of a full-fledged ministry, but lacked some measure of the prestige normally attached to a ministry. "Reconstruction," The New Statesman, August 4, 1917, p. 413.

<sup>91</sup>Bentley Gilbert, British Social Policy 1914-1939 (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 7.

<sup>92</sup>Tbid.

tical arena. In reconstruction, Lloyd George had an issue that had wide appeal among Asquithian Liberals as well as his own Liberal contingent. Finally, the establishment of the Ministry of Reconstruction gave him the chance to move Christopher Addison from his position as Minister of Munitions. Addison was not a particularly good administrator and while at munitions he had allowed the ministry to drift into often bickering factions and had antagonized some of the most powerful trade unions, most notably the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.<sup>93</sup> This made him a dangerous liability to Lloyd George. The Prime Minister had wanted to replace Addison for a long time with Winston Churchill, who had been in the political wilderness since the Dardanelles Campaign in 1915, but who had far greater administrative skill than Addison. Reconstruction gave Lloyd George an easy escape from this political problem. Addison had unimpeachable radical credentials which made him the most logical and politically desirable choice to head a ministry whose task was to remold Britain.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>93</sup>Addison was more than pleased to go to the newly created Ministry of Reconstruction and did not realize that for some time Lloyd George had been politely trying to move him from munitions. Addison, Four and One Half Years, Vol. 2, diary entry, July 17, 1917, p. 412.

<sup>94</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 98.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STRUGGLE FOR THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Christopher Addison's appointment to the Ministry of Reconstruction gave him a platform from which he could personally pursue his long-standing desire to see a ministry of health established. Through his work in the Ministry of Munitions he had come to more fully realize the importance of broadly-based, powerful central authorities in implementing social improvements. The Ministry of Munitions had made great strides in the area of industrial welfare, but it only applied preventive medicine within the area of its authority. It could do nothing about poor housing, sanitation, and maternal care. Addison dreamed of a ministry of health which would have wide powers to cure disease and to prevent its ravages. With the proven success of the industrial welfare movement and the heightened public interest in solving health problems, Addison moved to the Ministry of Reconstruction expecting rapid success.

Before the war, the implementation of a ministry of health armed with broad and persuasive powers was thought by serious reformers to be essential to the improvement of the condition of the nation's poor classes. This was particularly true among the Fabian reformers who were interested in the prevention of poverty, not only because of humanitarian concerns, but because they saw the poor as a wasted resource. The Fabians argued that sickness often caused poverty and poverty gave rise to sickness;

they claimed that it was the state's duty, and in its own self-interest, to put an end to these intertwined problems. As early as 1907 when school medical inspection was established, these reformers, led by Sir Robert L. Morant, Sir George Newman, Margaret McMillian, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb, had begun to plan for the day when all national public and personal medical activities would be concentrated in a single ministry for health.<sup>1</sup> Their planning rarely drew the interest of those outside the small circle of Fabians and their friends, and when the war came the ministry of health was forgotten as the nation rushed into battle. Health ministry advocates took up other causes; Newman accepted a post on the Board of Liquor Control. Almost forgotten, Morant struggled to maintain the machinery of the National Health Insurance in working order.

The new Minister of Reconstruction, Christopher Addison, assumed the role of Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education when the war broke out. Later he was asked by his political mentor, Lloyd George, to become the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions. Accepting the offer, Addison was entrusted by Lloyd George with the responsibility of keeping intact the minister's connections with his former radical friends. When the government was reconstructed for a second time in December 1916, Addison himself became the Minister of Munitions. From this position, he was allowed by Lloyd George to oversee most of the Liberal domestic appointments in the bureaucracy of the coalition govern-

<sup>1</sup>Bentley Gilbert, British Social Policy 1914-1939 (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 101.

ment.<sup>2</sup> While exercising his powers of selection, Addison was responsible for several appointments that were significant to the struggle for the ministry of health. The most important of these was Addison's nomination of David Thomas, Baron Rhondda, who became President of the Local Government Board on December 10, 1916.

In his political work for Lloyd George, Addison had kept close ties with both Robert Morant and Sir George Newman. When the presidency of the Local Government Board became vacant, Addison saw his opportunity to eliminate one of the major stumbling blocks on the road to unified health services. He asked Morant and Newman to recommend candidates for the post who were in favor of the establishment of a health ministry. The three decided that what was needed was a "big organizer with both a respected name and proven political skill".<sup>3</sup> In Rhondda the three found a man whom they believed would be sympathetic to their plans, a business man who had no distinct political ties, ambitions, or liabilities. Addison and his friends felt that Baron Rhondda was forceful enough to overcome the tradition-bound and sometimes sedentary nature of the Local Government Board's bureaucracy.

<sup>2</sup>Britain had three large central bureaucracies, the Local Government Board, the Board of Education and the National Health Insurance, that often had no clear lines of demarcation separating their authority. As a result, they often duplicated each other's work, leading to competition and hostility between authorities. Arthur Newsholme, The Last Thirty Years in Public Health (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1936), pp. 195-203.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Addison, Four and One Half Years, vol. 2, 3rd ed., (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1934), diary entry, December 9-10, 1916, p. 278.

On January 16, 1917, Addison arranged to lunch with Rhondda and Newman, in order to introduce the two men. During the meeting at the Reform Club, Addison urged Rhondda "to go whole hog at the L.G.B. and arrange for the creation of a big Public Health Department."<sup>4</sup> Prior to the meeting, Addison had sent Rhondda a copy of a memorandum which he, Newman, and Morant had drawn up during the summer of 1914. Shelved because of the war, it argued that there was a definite need for the concentration of government health agencies into a single powerful ministry. The document showed that despite the wide variety of curative services available to the poor, few services assumed the responsibility for preventing disease and sickness. The memorandum pointed out that this was especially true in the field of child and maternity services, which was partly responsible for 50,000 needless deaths a year.<sup>5</sup> Doctors Addison and Newman put this problem before Rhondda in strong businesslike terms, and he was deeply impressed by information revealing to him that 1,000 children, whose deaths could be prevented, died each week. By the end of the meeting, Baron Rhondda had given his assurances to Addison and Newman that he would do all he could to see that the nation's health services were reorganized.

Addison and Newman were pleased and they told Morant that the birth of a ministry of health was now within easy reach. On January 23, Addison recorded in his diary that he

had a talk with Fisher on the relations of the B. of E. with the L.G.B. and on the general programme of the health supervision

<sup>4</sup>Christopher Addison, Politics From Within, vol. 2 (London: Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 1924), pp. 55-56.

<sup>5</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, January 16, 1917, p. 317.



of children. Rhondda has taken up very warmly the suggestion that there should be a big consolidation of health services. Fisher is prepared to co-operate in any way, and in the end, I hope, all health matters, excepting children attending nurseries, will be dealt with by the L.G.B. Rhondda is the sort of man to get things done.<sup>6</sup>

The following day, January 24, Rhondda wrote to Lloyd George and asked to meet with him in order to discuss the reorganization of his department. Addison fully expected that Rhondda would inform Lloyd George of his desire for a major overhaul and consolidation of the nation's health services and then easily push the changes through the cabinet. This, however, proved to be a gross miscalculation of the situation and the reformers' elation was premature. Addison's personal judgement was clouded by the quick and generally unopposed success of the health measures imposed by the Ministry of Munitions. In his optimism he overlooked the differences between the two situations. The welfare measures of the Ministry of Munitions were confined to an area in which the ministry had almost absolute powers, backed both by the law and public support. On the other hand, the proposed consolidation and expansion of the existing health services threatened to upset long-established and well-entrenched bureaucratic and private interests. Moreover, Rhondda was weakened by the very factors which were assumed to be his strengths. As a successful businessman, he had grown used to making unilateral decisions, and this made him somewhat susceptible to Addison's belief that all he needed to do was issue an order calling for major reform. Neither man understood the subtle movements of bureaucratic

<sup>6</sup>Gilbert, *op. cit.*, p. 101. This memorandum has been lost, but fortunately Dr. Gilbert has managed to piece together its contents from both Dr. Addison's published diaries and the as yet unpublished Newman diaries.

political in-fighting.

Shortly after these meetings, Rhondda asked his Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Newsholme, to prepare a special report for the Local Government Board on child mortality in England and Wales.<sup>7</sup> The report reduced England and Wales to the smallest local authorities and presented a summary of child mortality in each area. The report concluded by asserting that the local authorities, with the energetic aid of the Local Government Board, should do more to secure the improved health of working-class mothers and their babies.<sup>8</sup> Towards this end, Rhondda inserted into his budget an additional £200,000 for increased attention to maternity and child welfare.<sup>9</sup> This allotment and the report caused a sharp reaction among the representatives for the industrial insurance companies. They were fearful that the local authorities, by moving strongly into the maternal and child welfare field, would cut into the highly profitable work the private companies did under the provisions of the National Insurance Act as approved societies. By 1917 there were over 40 million industrial insurance policies in force, covering about half of all insured women. These policies were handled by no fewer than 70,000 collector salesmen whose livelihood depended on their direct contact with the working class. This personal

<sup>7</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, January 23, 1917, pp. 320-321.

<sup>8</sup>Cmd. 8496, "Supplement in Continuance of the Report of the Medical Officer of the Board for 1915-16, Containing a Report on Child Mortality at Ages 0-5 in England and Wales," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Reports from Commissioners, Vol. 30, 1917.

<sup>9</sup>Although the report may have had no particular impact on Rhondda's already deep concern for the high rate of infant mortality, it is interesting to note that in South Wales, Rhondda had the second highest mortality rate, second only to Glamorganshire. Ibid., p. 49.

contact was something that was jealously guarded by the companies and the salesmen. Competition, whether it came from public administrative units or other private companies, was bitterly resented. Lord Rhondda, through his swift action to improve maternity care through the local authorities, aroused suspicion and fear that these extremely profitable insurance businesses would be ruined. Furthermore, as the private companies became aware of the proposals for a ministry of health, they began to fear for their very existence.<sup>10</sup>

A memorandum was submitted to the cabinet on March 27, 1917, by Lord Rhondda, which pointed out the urgent need for a health ministry. His proposals, which were already known, had even before the cabinet meeting caused an uproar among the approved societies. Rhondda, in drawing attention to the inefficiency inherent in the nation's various health services, showed how the overlapping of authorities could be corrected by the creation of a single agency responsible for the nation's health. However, he had unwisely chosen to use as his primary illustration the problems which impeded effective maternal and child care, an indelicate choice only adding fuel to the fires of the already aroused insurance industries.<sup>11</sup> The memorandum did not really threaten to replace the private companies with a state medical service, but emotions were running high and apparently few of the offended interests bothered to read Rhondda's suggestions.<sup>12</sup> He

<sup>10</sup>House of Commons Debates, March 8, 1917, (cols. 645-646).

<sup>11</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>12</sup>The medical profession was caught up in a heated debate concerning the advisability of the creation of a state medical service. The approved societies, meanwhile, saw on the horizon the possibility of a ministry of health sponsored state system that would put them out of business. British Medical Journal, January 20, 1917, p. 86.

argued for a simple three-clause bill which would establish a ministry of health that would supercede all existing authorities in matters concerning public health. Second, the President of the Local Government Board asked that the medical and sanitorial benefits of the National Insurance Act be given over to the proposed ministry. As his final suggestion, Rhondda asked that more money be given over to the local authorities to broaden their activities. The cabinet, upon receiving these recommendations, referred the issue to a special cabinet committee which was to study the proposal.

Dr. Addison, who was appointed to serve on the special study committee, immediately backed Rhondda's proposal. It was his feeling that the quick establishment of the proposed health ministry would give him the administrative tool he needed to make his own Ministry of Reconstruction effective. Addison felt that the compromise between national health policy and local administration would be acceptable to all interests once tempers within the insurance industries cooled. The first meeting of the special cabinet committee, however, dashed Addison's hopes for a quieting of passions. The committee met on April 12 in Lord Milner's room in Westminster Palace and quickly degenerated into a bitter battle between Sir Edwin Cornwall, who was then Chairman of the Insurance Commission, and Rhondda. Cornwall strongly resisted every hint of encroachment upon the turf of the insurance companies, while Rhondda, taken aback by this rugged defense, only wanted efficient and improved maternity care. Addison reveals in his diary that Cornwall was "obsessed with the idea that a ministry of health would be inimical to the interests of the approved societies under

the insurance act."<sup>13</sup> Rhondda, retreating somewhat, offered a compromise which left maternal and child care out of the control of the proposed ministry. Led by Addison, the other members of the committee, Lord Milner and Arthur Henderson, strongly objected to this compromise because it threatened to cripple the proposed ministry severely. Having no patience for Cornwall's narrow view, they convinced Rhondda to withdraw his compromise suggestion and encouraged the committee to consider the issue from the wider perspective of health. Cornwall remained obstinate and the committee made little headway in that direction. Nonetheless, before adjourning, the committee decided to sponsor a sub-committee headed by Dr. Addison, which would compile a report devoted entirely to the health point of view. Accordingly, Sir Walter Fletcher, Mr. F. W. Goldstone, Mr. John W. Hills, and Mrs. Beatrice Webb were asked to explore the issues with Dr. Addison. Finally, the sub-committee prepared a report and presented it to Milner on May 14, 1917.

The sub-committee's report, which was written primarily by Addison and his young secretary, Michael Heseltine, was very favorable to a large central health authority with strong interventionist powers.<sup>14</sup> The report was fully accepted by the whole cabinet committee on May 15, over the objection of Cornwall. Apparently, the more irate Cornwall became the less the committee listened to him, thinking that he represented only a small part of the insurance industry that had not given the matter the slightest

<sup>13</sup>Addison, Politics From Within, p. 222.

<sup>14</sup>Michael Heseltine was later to become Chief Administrator of the National Insurance Commission.

positive consideration."<sup>15</sup> Despite this attitude, Lord Milner wanted Cornwall's approval of the report, so he called another meeting of the committee on May 23 in order to try and bring him around. He was sorely disappointed again, as Cornwall held fast and refused to be moved by the appeals of the other committee members. Tired of bickering with Cornwall, Milner sent the committee's report to the full cabinet, endorsing the establishment of a ministry of health. The enthusiastic recommendation reached the cabinet in early June, but any hopes of a quick approval melted away as the issue became tangled in a sticky bureaucratic and political web. Cornwall's complaints had continued unabated and the growing resistance from the entire insurance industry forced Lloyd George, in order to avoid a bloody political fight, to delay the matter so that he might find a peaceful compromise.<sup>16</sup> The reformers, especially Addison, had hoped that the Prime Minister would have been more forceful, and their spirits fell upon hearing of Lloyd George's decision. The proposed health ministry was intended to be the spawning agency for the entire reconstruction program. The decision made by Lloyd George ended all hope for the creation of a health ministry until at least early 1918, thus effectively denying the Ministry of Reconstruction the power to implement its plans for a "new world".

The health ministry did not become a reality in 1917 because it became securely lodged on a political barb. Some of the blame for this aborted attempt must be placed on the small circle of reformers inside Lloyd George's government, and especially on Rhondda and Addison. They

<sup>15</sup>Addison, Politics From Within, p. 222.

<sup>16</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 116.

both pushed hard for the ministry, but they failed to recognize and deal with the vested interests. Each of these men felt from the outset that there would be no significant opposition to their measure, which had at its base the simple purpose of improving the nation's health. Moreover, they were confident that if their powers were not strong enough they could rely on Lloyd George to give the proposal the boost it needed. This assumption proved to be a major political miscalculation. The Prime Minister was shrewd enough to see the political advantage of paying lip service to reconstruction and doing as little as possible. A kind of political fusion had occurred and in 1917 nearly every interest in the nation cried out for post-war planning for a reconstructed Britain. Lloyd George saw this glossy surface of opinion extending from left to right and he found that it would support his political ambitions. His consuming interest was to keep the nation in the war and to avoid divisive controversy. As long as reconstruction remained vague and ill-defined it would serve him well as a link between all interests. A particular issue, such as the proposed ministry of health, meant that the Prime Minister might be forced to alienate some portion of public opinion, thus threatening the delicate balance within the long cultivated fusion party. Therefore, once the question of the health ministry became embroiled in heated political controversy, Lloyd George chose to skirt the issue by refusing to make a firm decision.

Although the representatives of the approved societies had managed to have the issue of a health ministry deferred, most had continually asserted their agreement in principle with the idea. During the summer of 1917, Kingsley Wood, the most influential spokesman for the entire insurance

industry, drew up a draft of a Parliamentary bill that would establish a ministry of health. The proposal, which asked that private insurance be left as it was and that the Poor Law health service be absorbed into the new ministry, became the basis of the industry's negotiating position. While Wood was putting together his proposal, Morant had made it his business to put the reformers' case before the approved societies. By October the two sides were ready to reopen direct and meaningful discussions.<sup>17</sup> Rhondda, who had left the Local Government Board in June, had exacted from Lloyd George assurances that "he would not let the Ministry wither on the vine".<sup>18</sup> On October 3, 1917, he wrote to the Prime Minister that he felt that the time had come to try again.

. . . the difficulty which made you hesitate to accept my proposals for a Ministry of Health last spring, and postponed the fulfillment of your promise to me, when I accepted the post of Food Controller.

The insurance people, I understand, are asking you to receive a deputation before the end of the recess. Their publicly proclaimed desire for a Ministry of Health marks a forward step, and makes it easy for you to give effect to your understanding to me.<sup>19</sup>

Addison, too, felt that the time had come to renew the struggle. His Ministry of Reconstruction was busily putting together post-war plans, but he still lacked the mechanism with which he could bring them to fruition.

<sup>17</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, October 11, 1917, pp. 436-437.

<sup>18</sup>Lord Rhondda became Minister of Food; replacing him at the Local Government Board was William Hayes Fisher, a Conservative. Fisher had little actual in-government service, but he had a great deal of influence in the London County Council and within the Conservative Party. He, unlike Rhondda, was not particularly willing to help the reformers create a health ministry. Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 120-122.

<sup>19</sup>Baron Rhondda to Lloyd George, cited in Gilbert, Ibid., p. 115.



Believing that the approved societies had begun to "realize the obvious truth that anything which went to diminish sickness and to promote the good health of their members, so far from imperiling funds, would strengthen them," Addison too renewed his pressure on Lloyd George.<sup>20</sup>

The Prime Minister finally agreed to a meeting on October 11 with the representatives of the approved societies. Addison, Morant, Milner, Rhondda, Hayes Fisher, Cornwall, and Kingsley Wood, among others, were present, but the conference yielded very little in the way of real agreement. The industrial insurance forces wanted to confine the proposed ministry as much as possible. They insisted that all Poor Law activities, except those dealing directly with medical benefits, be excluded and that responsibility for housing and sanitation also be left out. Addison, who, as Minister of Reconstruction, was beginning to worry about housing problems after the war, took the lead in insisting that the health minister have wide powers to prevent those illnesses caused by inadequate shelter. Poor housing, he objected, was a major contributor to disease and a health ministry must be empowered to clear slums and build decent, sanitary homes.<sup>21</sup> At the end of this first meeting, with the two sides still widely separated, Kingsley Wood approached Addison and suggested that the two of them try privately to negotiate an acceptable bill.<sup>22</sup> Nothing could have been more welcome to Addison, but he insisted that he be assured in advance

<sup>20</sup>Addison, Politics From Within, p. 223.

<sup>21</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, October 11, 1917, p. 437.

<sup>22</sup>Addison, Politics From Within, p.223.

that Wood had the full authority of his constituency to make a deal. The approved societies agreed to this and J. H. Thomas, leader of the Railwaymen's Union, was appointed as the moderator.

The first attempt of this small negotiating committee to arrive at some sort of common ground was on November 5, 1917. Lloyd George had given his blessing to the idea, but had again warned Addison that unless the two parties could come to an absolute agreement, he would not back the establishment of the health ministry.<sup>23</sup> Addison, somewhat distraught by Lloyd George's failure to push the issue, proceeded cautiously and the first several meetings were cordial, lacking the bullheaded passion of those held earlier with Cornwall. Nonetheless, it soon became clear that the major obstacle to agreement was the Poor Law. Addison's proposal gave the ministry of health the general power to absorb all the medically related programs of the Local Government Board, including the Poor Law medical service. The representative of the insurance industry insisted that the Poor Law be separated from the scheme.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Wood

<sup>23</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, November 5, 1917, p. 442.

<sup>24</sup>The insurance industry, representing in some measure the fears of their working class customers, saw the older Poor Law as more than just a competitor. The working classes had long chosen private insurance over public aid because of what most felt was the degrading nature of Poor Law relief. Thus, the insurance industry tried to use its position to finally destroy the Poor Law, which its patrons held in such low regard by separating it from any new health scheme. They argued, not without some truth, that if the Poor Law were incorporated into the new ministry the working class might be reluctant to support its programs. Reformers pointed out that the hatred of the Poor Law was so intense among the working class that many people refused to take shelter in workhouses during the air raids on London. Frank Honigsbaum, The Struggle for the Ministry of Health, Occasional Papers on Social Administration, Number 37. (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1970), pp. 40, 46-49.

reiterated his industry's earlier demand that the new ministry, when established, be responsible for sanitation, but not housing. On this final point, Addison managed to persuade Wood that if housing were placed out of the new ministry's reach it would be severely crippled in its dealings with the nation's health. Nonetheless, the Poor Law issue remained unsettled. Dr. Addison privately agreed as a radical that the new ministry should be dissociated as much as possible from the hated Poor Law, but from a political point of view, this was an impossible proposition for the government to accept. Leaving the Poor Law out of any new health administrative agency would undoubtedly lead to the Poor Law's further decay and eventual break-up. Addison was well aware of the entrenched strength of the Poor Law Division in the Local Government Board and "of its ancient ties of sympathy and mutual interest among the thousands and thousands of borough and urban district councilors throughout England and Wales who had provided for nearly a century the grass roots support of English liberalism."<sup>25</sup> Addison realized that Lloyd George, both for reasons of sentiment and practical politics, could ill afford to enter into a deal that, if accepted, would directly challenge the power of the Poor Law interests. Some other way had to be found.

A second meeting, which took up most of the morning, was held by the negotiating team on November 8. The Poor Law dominated the conversation, with Addison arguing that it could not be disregarded in any health scheme. He pointed out that parts of the Poor Law medical service, especially its infirmaries, were very good, and their inclusion would greatly benefit any attempt to practice preventive medicine on a large scale.

<sup>25</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, November 5, 1917, p. 442. <sup>26</sup>Ibid., diary entry, November 8, 1917, p. 443.

Countering this, J. H. Thomas insisted that the public support for the large-scale programs Addison proposed was vital and this might not be forthcoming if the department concerned was making expanded use of the old and unpopular Poor Law. Four days later, on November 12, another meeting was held and this time it became clear that no agreement could be found on the issue of the Poor Law and the negotiations came to a standstill.<sup>27</sup>

In December, however, this situation changed dramatically as the possibility of a compromise was raised. On December 19, a Report on the Transfer of Functions of Poor Law Authorities in England and Wales, was signed by the Local Government Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction.<sup>28</sup> Issued publicly as the McLean report in January, the committee recommended that in order to secure better co-ordination of public assistance in England and Wales, the Poor Law Board of Guardians be abolished and that their duties and personnel be distributed among the other responsible local authorities. The report argued that the nation was faced with unnecessary

overlapping functions and areas, and by conflicting principles of administration. The resulting confusion has been aggravated by the growing popular prejudice against the Poor Law--a prejudice which does less than justice to the devoted work of the Guardians, and the continuous improvement in Poor Law administration, especially in respect of the children and the sick. For the last decade Parliament has been unwilling to entrust the Boards of Guardians with new functions, and the provision for new services has had to be

<sup>27</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>28</sup>Cmd. 8917, "Report on Transfer of Functions of Poor Law Authorities in England and Wales," Ministry of Reconstruction, Local Government Committee, 1917. Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Reports from Commissioners, Vol. 25, 1917.

made by other local authorities--in some cases new local authorities--often for the increase of the confusion and overlapping.<sup>29</sup>

This was essentially the same conclusion Beatrice Webb had arrived at in her influential minority report included in the findings of the Poor Law Commission of 1910.<sup>30</sup> Dr. Addison, who had been ideologically ill-disposed to the inclusion of the Poor Law anyway, fully accepted the conclusion of the committee.

Relinquishing his previous position that the Poor Law should be included in the proposed health ministry, Addison now called openly for its disbandment. He immediately secured the conditional acceptance of the insurance community, and devoted most of his time during the first two months of 1918 to securing the support of Lloyd George and the cabinet who finally declared that the establishment of a health ministry was a matter of the utmost urgency.<sup>31</sup> In the meantime, Addison had given Sir Francis Liddell, Mr. M. L. Gwyer, Morant and Heseltine the task of drafting a bill. Closely resembling the approved societies' proposals as drawn up by Kingsley Wood the previous summer, the major difference was that the Poor Law medical service was placed under the control of the proposed ministry rather than being set adrift. By mid-March Addison was confident that he had gained for Lloyd George the unanimous consent of the insurance industry and thus the establishment of the ministry of health.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>30</sup>Cmd. 4983, "Memoranda by Individual Commissioners on Various Subjects," Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, Memoranda by Mrs. Sidney Webb, 1919. Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Reports from Commissioners, Vol. 80, 1910, pp. 113-327.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 225-226.

<sup>32</sup>Honigsbaum, op. cit., p. 47.

The Poor Law Division of the Local Government Board and the local authorities had generally ignored the almost year-long battle between the government and the insurance people. They were rudely awakened by the realization that the new health agency, if established, would be dominated by their rivals, the insurance industry, and that they were being left out. Like a sleeping giant, they had begun to awaken to the dangers of the MacLean report. By the third month of 1918, the seriousness of the threat to the Poor Law was realized and the bureaucracy and friends of the Poor Law Division began their belated counter-attack. William Hayes Fisher, who had replaced Rhondda as President of the Local Government Board, had for months been dragging his feet on all questions concerning the proposed new ministry. He insisted that if there was to be a health ministry, it could be no more than a restructured Local Government Board, expanded to include the National Insurance Commissioners.<sup>33</sup> He insisted that it be devoid of any new interventionary powers, which of course would eliminate all hope for an active, prevention-minded ministry. Since the publication of the MacLean Report, Fisher had been working quietly behind the scenes among his Conservative constituency in order to foil Addison's negotiations. He had informed Lloyd George that should he accept the MacLean Report, and thus the proposed health ministry, the Tory M.P.'s would oppose the passage of any bill.<sup>34</sup> Addison was well aware of this warning and from January to the third week in March, while intensely negotiating with the insurance industry, he was engaged in a running battle with the Poor Law Division of the Local Government

<sup>33</sup>Honigsbaum, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>34</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 121.

Board, the local authorities, and Fisher. Despite this battle and the increasing level of hostility from the Poor Law bureaucracy, Addison felt that once he had worked out the "kinks" in the health ministry proposal with the insurance industry and Lloyd George accepted the MacLean Report, the Poor Law opposition would be overwhelmed. He wrote in his diary that once a scheme had been worked out, "it would experience no special opposition."<sup>35</sup>

Here again, Addison, with his unending optimism, had underestimated the strength of his opposition and the weight of wartime circumstances. On March 21, 1918, Lloyd George accepted the MacLean Report, now ready to see that the health ministry was created.<sup>36</sup> The Poor Law people had long feared that this might happen. Seeing in the Prime Minister's actions their own destruction, under Fisher's leadership they recoiled with strongly worded personal attacks on Addison, who was charged with "offensive actions" towards their interests and with "spreading" lurid tales about the trouble the ministry bill would cause in Parliament.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the increasing intensity of the opposition, and armed with the Prime Minister's acceptance of the MacLean Report, Addison met on March 25 with the approved societies, who wanted assurances that the health ministry would not be entangled with the Poor Law. The meeting concluded on friendly terms and Addison, later in the day, dictated a cabinet minute on the proposed bill.<sup>38</sup> Within this memorandum he noted that nearly all

<sup>35</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, March 22, 1918, p.498.

<sup>36</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 122

<sup>37</sup>Honigsbaum, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>38</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, March 25, 1918, pp. 498-499.

parties had come to agree on the major principles of his proposal for a ministry of health. He added, however, that Fisher was still an obstacle, pointing out that the President of the Local Government Board retained three main objections. First, he insisted that the name of the new ministry be "The Ministry of Health and Local Government". Next, he disapproved of the dominant influence in the ministry being that of the national insurance interests. Finally, Addison noted that Fisher opposed any break-up of the Poor Law administration and insisted that all local health activities of the Poor Law remain as they were, untouched by the new ministry. This of course was unacceptable to Addison, and he urged the cabinet to move on the issue "as soon as possible".<sup>39</sup>

Addison had spent nearly a year negotiating with the insurance industry, and the opposition of Fisher and the Poor Law interests threatened to wreck his plans. Neither interest really cared to see any change unless some advantages could be gained over the other. Addison had spent too much time working out a deal with the insurance people to see it now go by the board because of the sudden intervention of the Poor Law establishment. After months of delicate negotiations, Addison considered that his dreams of a powerful health ministry had already been compromised by the seemingly endless delay. He now found himself entangled in a hopeless struggle with two vested interests, one private and one official. The slightest movement to please one inevitably caused an uproar among the supporters of the other.<sup>40</sup> Addison felt that the time had come to force the issue, and with

<sup>39</sup>Addison mentions this memorandum only in passing in his March 25, 1918, diary entry. For a more detailed account, see Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 128.



the Prime Minister's acceptance of the MacLean Report on hand, he prepared to bring the issue to a head, despite Poor Law opposition. The Doctor's plan was simple: he decided to place the issue before the cabinet and allow their favorable opinion, led by that of Lloyd George, to overwhelm Fisher and the Poor Law bureaucracy.<sup>41</sup>

Addison's plan to force the issue through was interrupted by a new serious German offensive on the Western front. On March 21, 1918, the German army launched its last great attack of the war in the hope of gaining a breakthrough. Although an attack had been expected for months, the British lines were caught unprepared for such a large-scale effort. Within hours, the attackers had broken a section of the southern part of the line and a wedge was driven between the front lines of the 5th and 3rd British armies. Lloyd George decided the situation was so critical that an extra 300,000 men would be requested from the Americans to supplement the sagging British positions.<sup>42</sup> War news from the front dominated the cabinet to the exclusion of all else. Even Addison found it difficult to concentrate on his work dealing with reconstruction, and it was clear that the health ministry would have to wait for a more opportune and less anxious moment.<sup>43</sup>

At first thrust the German offensive made significant gains, but it ended on March 28, with the British still holding; renewed attacks on

<sup>41</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, March 25, 1918, pp. 498-499.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., diary entries, March 25-April 6, 1918, pp. 498-503.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., diary entry, April 1, 1918, p. 501.

April 9 and until April 25 continued to pound the British lines, but they had significantly less success with these latter assaults. While the second phase of the offensive was raging in France, the cabinet became embroiled in the delicate question of Irish conscription, again absorbing time needed to deal with matters of domestic social policy.<sup>44</sup> Christopher Addison understood the urgency of the war and the Irish question, but by mid-April he felt that the delays imposed upon him by the cabinet's unwillingness to pay attention to domestic issues were jeopardizing the success of the proposed health ministry, and he told the Prime Minister as much during a "short" but "frank" discussion.<sup>45</sup> After it was clear that no one else in the government was going to take the initiative, Addison moved to rekindle the issue on April 24. He wrote that

After having ploughed through a maze of negotiations with departments, Local Authorities, Approved Societies, and Medical Men, I completed the draft of a Bill setting up a Ministry of Health and the Memo. to the Cabinet recommending it. In the long run, I daresay, time may have been saved, but it has made unlooked for calls on my patience and pertinacity.<sup>46</sup>

The Doctor sensed, as did most people, that after the failure of the German offensive, the war would soon be ending. If this happened and there was no ministry of health, he worried that it might then be too late for reconstruction. Addison's memorandum, therefore, reminded the cabinet of Rhondda's call for a health ministry on March 27, 1917, and the promises

<sup>44</sup>A. J. P. Taylor, English History, 1914-45, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 100-102.

<sup>45</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, April 11, 1918, p. 309.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., diary entry, April 24, 1918, p. 515.

that were made to him in response to his appeal.<sup>47</sup>

In recommending his draft proposal to the cabinet he forcefully claimed that there

is a wide spread recognition of the urgent need for a measure to be framed on these lines, which will concentrate in a single central Department the responsibility for the main health services of the country and will enable further services to be transferred to the Department in due course.

He added to this that

Without such a Ministry we are fighting with divided forces against evils which menace the nation's health, some of them already upon us, others certain to arise as a result of the war. We have to repair the ravages of battle, and the diminished resistance to disease caused by excessive work and strain among non-combatants; we are faced already by a grave shortage of hospital accommodation even for men discharged from His Majesty's forces; we ought to provide for the harmonious development of extended health services for mothers and infants; we ought to be forearmed against the spread of dysentery and malaria and other diseases which may follow the return on demobilization of the millions who have been exposed to such infections.<sup>48</sup>

With regard to the Poor Law services, the political barb on which the health ministry was caught, Addison urged that the MacLean Report be fully adopted. This meant, he pointed out to the cabinet, that all functions of the Poor Law relating to the care and treatment of the sick and infirm "should be made a part of the general health services of the community."<sup>49</sup> These proposals, Addison insisted, were matters of utmost urgency and should be dealt with as soon as possible. This of course was an open challenge to Fisher and his position that the Poor Law remain intact and unchanged.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., diary entry, April 24, 1918, pp. 515-516.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., diary entry, April 24, 1918, p. 516.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

The President of the Local Government Board, whose support even among Conservatives had been eroding since January, was not long in responding.<sup>50</sup> On May 13, Fisher sent his own memorandum to the cabinet, outlining his objections to Addison's plans for the consolidation of all health service under a single banner.<sup>51</sup> Fisher charged that the agreement of the insurance industry had been purchased at too high a price and he threatened to rally his Tory friends against the measure unless major changes, more to the advantage of the Poor Law, were made. This memorandum brought in turn an angry retort from Addison, who claimed that his negotiations had not, as Fisher insisted, "put the Minister in shackles." Furthermore, Addison pointed out that Fisher was picking on side issues of no real consequence in order to obstruct the whole measure.<sup>52</sup> This angry exchange of memoranda between the two men did not elicit any response from the cabinet, preoccupied as it was with the war. As June approached, Addison felt that he was losing the initiative and seems to have doubted whether or not he would ever achieve success.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Fisher and the defenders of the Poor Law were stunned on January 10, and then on January 14, 1918, when a letter, signed by a group of ten leading back-bench Tories, appeared in The Times attacking Fisher for holding up the Ministry of Health. The group, led by Waldorf Astor, called for a ministry very similar to the one that was being pushed by Rhondda and Addison. This of course was met by Fisher and his friends with bitter accusations of treason to the Conservative cause. The Times, January 10 and 14, 1918. Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

<sup>51</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>52</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, May 28, 1918, p. 534.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., diary entry, May 29, 1918, pp. 534-535.

At last, Addison persuaded Lloyd George to place the question of the health ministry on the cabinet's May 28 agenda. The cabinet, because of what it felt to be more pressing issues, delayed its discussion until the following day. By June 3, the matter had been postponed four times and Addison was nearly beside himself. Furious at what he considered to be Fisher's intolerable attitude, the cabinet's failure to make any decisions on home affairs, and the Prime Minister's failure to come to his aid, on June 3 Addison wrote in his diary that domestic issues were drifting without any guidance. He noted that

Their minds are so engrossed--and rightly so--with war issues that they are not able to give effective consideration to Home Affairs. For all that, this and many other matters of home importance are the business of Government and must be dealt with. The worst of it is that L. G. seems to play up to the obstructionists at the expense of his friends. I am probably his best friend in the Government, and ought to be able to rely upon him for support, especially as he is continually urging me to get on with the very matters of policy that he holds up, for want, not only of decision, but of consideration . . . . I must know where I am.<sup>54</sup>

Addison, as the caretaker of radical liberalism inside the coalition government, and also the nation's chief organizer for post-war planning, felt that he had to try and salvage the fading dream of a new Britain. Moreover, as Lloyd George's close personal friend he was compelled to try and save the Prime Minister from himself.<sup>55</sup> For these reasons he decided to resign.

On June 5, Addison wrote Lloyd George a long and angry letter, in which he bluntly told the Prime Minister:

Things are now heaping up in such a way and so many matters are nearly ripe for decision that, with what, I am afraid, I must

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., diary entry, June 3, 1918, pp. 535-536.

<sup>55</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 124.

characterise as the brusque treatment which I received from you on Thursday last, I am compelled to enquire what hope there is of my being able to deal with them. With a substantial measure of support from yourself, this can be done--without it and without the possibility of obtaining the consequential decisions, there is only muddle and disappointment before us, and the loyal support which I have always endeavoured to afford you will become of no avail.<sup>56</sup>

Reminding the Prime Minister of the promises he had given to Rhondda the year before, Addison suggested that a harder line should be taken with Fisher and his Tory friends. "The departmental obstruction to the Health Ministry," Addison told his old friend and political ally, "comes only from a Department which in my view, is perhaps the least helpful of all our Departments--either to you personally as Prime Minister, or the Government as a whole."<sup>57</sup>

Dr. Addison was afraid that Lloyd George might be offended by the letter, but he had come to believe that the issues involved had to be dealt with before the end of the war. The risk of a negative reaction seemed to be worth taking. To the Minister of Reconstruction's relief, Lloyd George was not the least bit upset and replied immediately to the letter, asking Addison to see him the following day. The two men met in the early evening and the Prime Minister renewed his pledge to see that a health ministry was created and promised Addison his full support. During the meeting Addison suggested that since the cabinet found it difficult to deal with domestic issues on a regular basis that some other method should be devised.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, June 5, 1918, pp. 538-539.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., diary entry, June 5, 1918, pp. 538-539.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., diary entry, June 6, 1918, pp. 539-540.

Several days later, probably as a result of Addison's letter and the subsequent meeting, Lloyd George established a Home Affairs Committee in order to care for domestic policy. Among its members were Addison, Stanley Baldwin, H. A. L. Fisher, and Hayes Fisher; George Cave, Home Secretary, served as Chairman. On June 9 the committee met for the first time and of the first five meetings, held between June 9 and July 29, three were devoted exclusively to discussions about the proposed ministry of health. Baldwin and H. A. L. Fisher were solidly behind Addison, while Hayes Fisher continued his sniping attacks for the Poor Law interests. George Cave showed some initial opposition to the ministry, but soon Addison and the others managed to convince him of the ministry's importance, and he moderated his position.

The overwhelming support of the committee for a health ministry did not crush the now almost singular opposition of the Local Government Board. The issue became bottled up in the committee and despite repeated pleas for help from Addison, Lloyd George showed little or no willingness to come to the health ministry's aid. Addison wrote on July 23 that

L. G. gives no help, and there is no denying that during the last two or three months, he has lost a great deal of support, or at all events of driving enthusiasm amongst some of his best friends in the Administration, including myself. He appears to have no real conception of the strength of his own position in the country and is timid to the last degree in his dealings with the Tory Party.<sup>59</sup>

Addison, frustrated and feeling deserted by his old friend, was finally coming to understand the texture of politics within the Lloyd George government at the time of the armistice. The promises of peace were promises of social reform and this was impossible in a delicately balanced fusion party.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., diary entry, July 23, 1918, p. 552.

Lloyd George had become a prisoner in a glass house of his own making. Within it he could do no more than carefully pace the floor, always aware that if he walked too far in one direction, the glass would break and the entire structure would collapse. Any dilution of post-war planning would meet with the resistance from the left and thus would weaken Lloyd George's claim to the leadership of radical liberalism. On the other hand, if no concessions were made to the Conservatives, even mild reform measures might never be approved by the House of Commons.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the peace, which most knew was nearing, would bring with it Parliamentary elections, and the Prime Minister, faced by the increasing opposition of the Asquithian Liberals, needed unity among the interests of his coalition ministry above all else. Therefore, the Prime Minister found it easier to do nothing. No matter how much he might personally have favored a health ministry, it was just not practical politics.<sup>61</sup>

The lack of aid from Lloyd George and the stormy arguments with Hayes Fisher gave Addison little choice but to try and renegotiate a new ministry of health bill. The Poor Law remained at the heart of the problem and Hayes Fisher refused to be moved from his position that it must be kept intact, one way or the other. Addison spent the remainder of the summer trying to work out a new compromise settlement. The pivotal idea in Addison's proposal was that the administration of all health services in the nation should be brought under one roof. In order to please Fisher he proposed to the insurance people that all statutory declarations about the break-up of the Poor Law be dropped and that it be left alone but incorporated into the

<sup>60</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>61</sup>Honigsbaum, op. cit., p. 50.



ministry. The representatives of the industrial insurance companies, led by Kingsley Wood, readily accepted this proposal. Their primary concern all along had not been for the destruction of the Poor Law or even its reform, but with the competition that might arise from improvements made in its services. Addison's new proposal promised that this would not happen.

By making this concession to Fisher, Addison knew that the friendly societies and the labor unions would rise to oppose the "Poor Law taint" of the ministry. Both of these interests had, by and large, allowed the industrial insurance representatives to represent their cause, believing that their concerns were similar. Feeling somewhat betrayed, they launched their own offensive against any health ministry which left the Poor Law intact. Even though the committee had approved of his new proposal and had voted to pass it on to the cabinet, Addison found himself caught again between two irreconcilable forces, both of which could destroy the effectiveness of the health ministry.<sup>62</sup> The Doctor was frantic. He realized that no amount of negotiation was going to find enough common ground on which the warring interests could stand. By early October, fearful that with the war grinding to a halt the health ministry would be left high and dry, Addison decided that one side would have to be discredited.<sup>63</sup> Fisher and the Poor Law bureaucracy were his natural choices. He wrote a letter

<sup>62</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, August 9, 1918, p. 559.

<sup>63</sup>The German Government delivered a note asking for Armistice terms on October 4, and on November 7, 1918, a German delegation passed through the Allied lines. Addison, sensing the end to the war, wrote in his diary, "I am not going to see the war end, and our being unable, at least, to tell these splendid men what we are going to do to help them over their immediate difficulties." Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, October 10, 1918, p.584.

to Lloyd George on October 29 and asked Bonar Law to deliver it to the Prime Minister in France. "I am bound," Addison said,

to tell you that the more successful you are in France, the more perilous is the state of affairs here.

Unless, with regard to these vital and most urgent matters which I have placed before the War Cabinet and some of which are long outstanding, I am placed in a position within the next few days to obtain decisions and act upon them, nothing can save this country from chaos and disaster.<sup>64</sup>

The implications of Addison's letter were clear to all those who were apprised of the situation. The Doctor was asking the Prime Minister to choose between himself and Fisher, between a health ministry, or none at all.

Lloyd George, who was in France to plan for the Armistice and peace negotiations, beat Addison to the punch. On October 29, the same day as Addison wrote his letter, the Prime Minister decided, for reasons that are not all together clear, that Fisher had to go.<sup>65</sup> From Paris he had written a letter of dismissal to Fisher, but while being carried to London the note was intercepted and read by Bonar Law. He returned the letter to Paris, where he told Lloyd George that it was too harsh and must be

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 584-585, diary entry, October 29, 1918.

<sup>65</sup>An epidemic of influenza hit the southern part of the country very hard in June and contrary to the usual pattern of the summer flu, it spread, with a second, more severe wave striking the country in the fall. Not until the third week of October did Fisher and his Chief Medical Officer, Arthur Newsholme, issue advice to the local authorities. The death toll was very high and the Local Government Board received a great deal of criticism from the medical community. This made it easier and less politically risky for Lloyd George, who had fought a bout with the flue himself, to dispose of the troublesome Fisher. Honigsbaum, op. cit., p. 51. Addison, on the other hand, suggests Lloyd George finally just got tired of Fisher's failure to complete the new Parliamentary Register and of his obstructionist attitude. Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, November 4, 1918, p. 586.

modified. Fisher, he warned, had too many Conservative friends who might cause a political row and threaten the upcoming peace negotiations. The Prime Minister, accepting Bonar Law's arguments, allowed him to soften the tone of the letter.<sup>66</sup> The new letter made Fisher a Peer, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Minister of Information, in order to sweeten the request for his resignation from the Local Government Board. Fisher, of course, could do nothing else but resign, and while there was some grumbling in the back benches, the way now seemed clear for Addison to proceed.<sup>67</sup>

Addison wanted to be appointed to replace Fisher, but Lloyd George, in order to keep him free for election duties, made Sir Auckland Geddes the temporary President of the Local Government Board.<sup>68</sup> Addison was pleased with the turn of events, and with renewed confidence he moved quickly to finalize his ministry of health bill. Contacting the friendly societies and the trade unions, he announced that he had no intention of maintaining the Poor Law as it was and that the health ministry would not have a Poor Law taint, even though the bulk of the Poor Law's medical services would be incorporated into the new department. Still suspicious, the unions and friendly societies gave their partial approval of the scheme.<sup>69</sup> The industrial insurance companies presented no problem, because

<sup>66</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>68</sup>Honigsbaum, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>67</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, November 4, 1918, pp. 586-587.

<sup>69</sup>The friendly societies and the labor unions would have preferred the complete dissolution of the Poor Law. Because of this, despite their basic approval of the plan, they threatened to make a political issue of the Poor Law taint on the proposed ministry. Gilbert, op. cit., pp.131-132. Honigsbaum, op. cit., p. 50.

their fears of competition had been quelled nearly six months before. All seemed to be in order and on November 7, Addison finally introduced his bill before the Commons. The measure proposed little more than a change in the name of the Local Government Board to the Ministry of Health and the transfer of the National Insurance Administration to the ministry.<sup>70</sup> The proposal was well received, but because of the coming election (due on December 14), it was withdrawn in order to wait for a new Parliament. Nonetheless, the coalition cabinet was firmly committed to the establishment of a ministry of health.<sup>71</sup>

During the election campaign each interest, having a stake in the establishment of a ministry of health, tried to influence candidates, but it was too late and there was little gained or lost by any side. The coalition won a convincing victory in the "coupon election" and the Ministry of Health Bill was assured of an easy passage through Parliament. The new coalition government moved Addison from the Ministry of Reconstruction to the Presidency of the Local Government Board on January 10, 1919; for the first time he held an administrative position from which he could speak with authority.<sup>72</sup> Beginning in February, Addison undertook to clear the last obstacles before the Ministry of Health Bill and manage it through the

<sup>70</sup>House of Commons Debates, November 7, 1918, (cols. 2340-2343).

<sup>71</sup>Addison, Four and One Half Years, diary entry, November 7, 1918, p. 589.

<sup>72</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 132.

House of Commons, this time with the full support of Lloyd George.<sup>73</sup> The battle was over, and after more than two years of internal struggle, the bill received Royal assent on June 3, 1919. Three weeks later, Addison was appointed as the first Minister of Health.

<sup>73</sup>Addison was determined to tie up all the loose ends. For this reason, he surprised many of his supporters by leaving medical research beyond the authority of the Health Ministry. Dr. Addison realized that he could hardly afford to incur the wrath of the anti-vivisectionists who had, as far back as 1876, and as recently as 1914, managed to cripple research. Shortly after the passage of the bill, however, Addison moved to bring medical research under the guidance of the Ministry of Health.

## CHAPTER V

### THE FAILURE OF SOCIAL PLANNING

Christopher Addison had hoped to get the reconstruction program under way by late 1917 so that the victorious soldiers, upon their return home, would be able to see some immediate fruits of their sacrifices. Under his direction, hundreds of reconstruction committees dealt with a wide variety of post-war plans; but because of the failure to establish a health ministry, most of the schemes withered while awaiting an implementing agency.<sup>1</sup> Only the plans for housing and slum clearance survived until 1919, and it became clear that housing would be the issue upon which Addison as the Minister of Health would test the nation's commitment to comprehensive social planning.

Reformers had long been concerned with the connection between inadequate housing and sanitation, and disease.<sup>2</sup> The pre-war Liberal government had experimented with several small-scale, publicly financed housing schemes and during the war the Ministry of Munitions had attempted to exert pressure on local authorities to deal with sub-standard housing near munitions plants. As the tide of war turned in favor of the allies, many in Britain

<sup>1</sup>Philip Abrams, "The Failure of Social Reform 1918-1920," Past and Present, No. 24, April 1963, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Beginning with Edwin Chadwick's sanitary report of 1842, social reformers produced endless studies on this subject. In this tradition the most notable contribution in the early twentieth century was Charles Booth's examination of living conditions in London's east end.

found it unthinkable to bring the victorious army home to slums and disease after it had fought a great and sacrificial war in defense of liberty. This argument was continually thrust into the arena of public debate and politicians of every stripe seemed to subscribe to some sort of housing scheme as a means of repaying the millions of soldiers and workers who had shouldered the burdens of the war.<sup>3</sup> The trade unions had, during their 1917 conference, called for a million new housing units to be built following the war and throughout 1917 and 1918 both the Liberal and Conservative press kept public attention focused on the issue.<sup>4</sup> In the general election of 1919 the housing question became a dominant theme in all party platforms and most candidates agreed with Lloyd George when he announced that the task of the grateful nation was "to make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in."<sup>5</sup> This met with the hearty approval of the electorate who, as The Times pointed out, recognized that

health and housing are merely aspects of the same question, the prevention of disease rather than its cure are showing the aim of modern medicine. The women voters especially are showing an interest in this subject. Thanks to the efforts of the promoters of 'Baby Week' and the National Health Society, mothers have become alive to the fact that the prevention of epidemics concerns them vitally . . . . The great surprise of many meetings has been the intelligent, even enthusiastic, interest shown in regard to these topics and the clearly expressed determination of large numbers of electors to be put off no longer.<sup>6</sup>

For the first time in Britain's history social planning on a massive scale

<sup>3</sup>Bentley Gilbert, British Social Policy 1914-1939 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 142.

<sup>4</sup>"Labour and Its Voice," The New Statesman, January 27, 1917, pp. 389-390.

<sup>5</sup>The Times, November 24, 1918.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, December 9, 1918.

became a much-talked-about election issue.<sup>7</sup> The war had served to clarify in the public mind the notion that ill health reduced human efficiency, just as poor maintenance impaired the production capacity of machinery. By the election of December 14, 1918, the majority of national opinion in Britain seemed committed to large-scale social planning that would ensure that the nation's human resources were well housed and healthy.

Led by Lloyd George, the coalition candidates were swept into the House in overwhelming numbers. Only three days later the new government underscored its commitment to build homes fit for heroes by announcing the availability of home construction loans to all local authorities. This first step, however, was little more than an indication from the government that it intended to make good on its promise for a comprehensive housing scheme. Despite this early start the shape of the government's program remained largely unformed. As the new President of the Local Government Board, Christopher Addison was made responsible for drawing up a bill which would add flesh to the coalition's campaign pledge.

By February, confident of the passage of the Ministry of Health Bill, Addison began to apply his energies to the problem of building homes fit for heroes. He quickly drew up a legislative proposal entitled the "Housing and Town Planning Bill", which was popularly known as the Addison Bill, and laid it before the cabinet. Much to Addison's personal disappointment, no immediate action was taken and despite the government's pledge the conservative elements inside the coalition cabinet repeatedly delayed consideration

<sup>7</sup>Frank Honigsbaum, The Struggle for the Ministry of Health, Occasional Papers on Social Administration, No. 37 (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1970), p. 52.



of the proposal.<sup>8</sup> Frustrated, Addison appealed to Lloyd George for help while the Prime Minister was in England during a break in the peace negotiations in Paris. Lloyd George was shocked by the cabinet's inaction and on March 3 he met with it and forcefully insisted that a full-scale housing scheme be launched immediately. Citing the political confusion on the continent and the dangers posed by Bolshevism and anarchy, Lloyd George demanded that the cabinet fulfill its reform promises. He noted that during the war when the nation needed munitions, the government got them, but he pointed out that "when it came to the question of providing houses, the government was still talking and meanwhile people were without homes."<sup>9</sup> Action, the Prime Minister asserted, must be taken immediately if the public confidence in the new government was to be maintained. "The people," he told the cabinet, "are bent on social reform--I am sure of that."<sup>10</sup>

Faced with Lloyd George's unwillingness to consider anything less than an all-out assault on the housing problem, the cabinet lent its complete support to Addison's housing proposal. With this unanimous backing, Addison introduced the Housing and Town Planning Bill into the House on April 7, 1919.<sup>11</sup> During his address to Parliament, Dr. Addison pointed out that there was "no dispute in any quarter that the matter is of the utmost importance, from the point of view of not only the physical well-

<sup>8</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 142.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>10</sup>Lord Riddell, Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After (London: Victor Gollanex, 1933), diary entry, April 11, 1919, p. 50.

<sup>11</sup>House of Commons Debates, April 7, 1919, (cols. 1713-40).

being of our people, but of our social stability and industrial content."<sup>12</sup> The Members of the House, Addison suggested, could vote for the bill on the basis of humanitarian concern or out of self-interest, but either way the result would be the same--new homes. This double-edged argument in favor of the housing scheme and the acknowledged support of the cabinet cleared the way for the housing bill in the House. The lack of significant resistance to the measure increased the nation's hopes that the slums would soon be cleared and new homes raised in unprecedented numbers.<sup>13</sup>

The Addison Housing Act, which received final approval on July 31, 1919, had two major sections. The first of these made it the duty of each local authority to provide housing wherever needed within their jurisdiction.<sup>14</sup> To accomplish this, the act required each responsible local authority to make periodic detailed housing surveys of their areas and to formulate plans for solving any deficiencies. These reports were then required to be forwarded to the Minister of Health who was responsible for overseeing the individual housing schemes. Having shouldered the nation's local authorities with solving the nation's housing problems, the second part of the act promised Treasury funds to retire all debts incurred by the local authorities above the revenue provided by the penny rate.<sup>15</sup> In this manner the government gave up the advantages of central

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., (col. 1713).

<sup>13</sup>The government was to provide money for at least 500,000 new homes, all of which were to be built within three years. The New Statesman, April 12, 1919, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup>"Housing and Town Planning Act," sections 1-4, part one, Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Public Bills, vol. 4, 1919.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., sections 5-6, part one.

borrowing in favor of local control. It promised to back all loans regardless of their cost and, in its eagerness to get the program underway, the government indicated that it would approve on sight nearly all proposed home building schemes. In the early summer of 1919, the cost estimates for the housing project ran to only £71 million.<sup>16</sup> Its most avid backers argued that surely this was not too much for a victorious and grateful nation to pay for homes fit for heroes.

By the time Christopher Addison assumed the reigns of the Ministry of Health it appeared that all the pieces were in place and the road had been cleared for the ministry to flex its administrative muscle. Parliament was on the verge of giving its final approval to the Housing and Town Planning Bill and Addison had persuaded Morant and Newman to come into the new ministry as his chief advisors. Most importantly, popular sentiment was thirsting for action on the housing scheme. The Times reported that since the government's announcement about the availability of money for housing the previous December, less than six new houses had been built. "One may travel from one end of the country to the other," the paper noted, "without finding any visible sign that the task has ever been done." The London paper complained that

Slums, the festering sores which increasingly poison the nation that neglects them remain untouched. For lack of houses young men who have come back from the war are unable to 'settle down' and to acquire that special consciousness of citizenship which belongs to householders. New houses are wanted and they are wanted now.<sup>17</sup>

Late in June, Addison, in an effort to exploit this strong sentiment, set

<sup>16</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 143. The estimate was made by Lloyd George.

<sup>17</sup>The Times, June 19, 1919.

out on a national tour to encourage local authorities to submit their plans to the Ministry of Health. The newly appointed minister claimed during his appearances that with some hard work, 100,000 houses could be erected by the following June and this annual total could be increased to 200,000 units during the second and third years of the program. Addison's optimism was matched by that of The Times, which, in a series of lengthy articles dealing with the housing scheme, declared that a "strong sense of public duty would see the proposition through."<sup>18</sup>

Despite the fanfare with which the post-war housing program was launched, its progress from the beginning was impeded by serious obstacles. Shortly after his nation-wide tour, Addison began to receive reports from local authorities that they were unable to hire enough union tradesmen to work on the approved schemes. Addison was surprised by these reports because he and his fellow planners in the Ministry of Health had assumed that labor was in plentiful supply. The collapse of the gradual military discharge plan thrust several million men onto the job market and by the fall of 1919 the unemployment rate was climbing rapidly.<sup>19</sup> Addison could not understand why, under these conditions, the local authorities were unable to locate enough men to work on their housing schemes. After an investigation the Minister of Health discovered that the shortage was not one of manpower but a lack of journeymen and apprentices in the building trade unions. Prior to the war the building trades had been severely de-

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., June 21, 1919.

<sup>19</sup>Plans for a gradual demobilization had been drawn up by the Ministry of Reconstruction, but these failed in the face of demonstrations by active troops asking for their discharge tickets. Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 22-23.

pressed and many workers had deserted the construction industry in order to find steady work in other skilled or semi-skilled trades. Because of this situation, few new apprentices were accepted into the building trades unions in an effort to reserve the sagging market for the established tradesmen.<sup>20</sup> During the war, nearly all civilian building came to a standstill, and being members of an unprotected trade, construction workers enlisted and later were conscripted in large numbers. In 1917, the Ministry of Reconstruction recommended that the building trades be exempt from military service and that men serving at the front be released from the colors. The request was denied and the depletion of the nation's pool of skilled building tradesmen continued unabated.<sup>21</sup> The 1901 census recorded a total of 73,012 masons and 256,000 joiners practicing their trades in England and Wales. This picture had changed dramatically by 1920 when the Board of Trade estimated that the total number of masons and joiners practicing their trades in England and Wales had been reduced to 128,509.<sup>22</sup> Even though on the surface it appeared that Britain had a plentiful supply of labor which could be used to build houses, the number of these men with construction experience and the all-important union card was too small to meet the needs of the housing scheme.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Addison realized that the only way to ease the shortage of skilled

<sup>20</sup>Christopher Addison, Politics From Within, Vol. 2 (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1924), p. 216.

<sup>21</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>22</sup>Cited in Gilbert, p. 145.

<sup>23</sup>E. D. Simon, The Anti-Slum Campaign (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1933), p. 12.

labor was to persuade the trade unions to accept a large number of new apprentices. In a series of meetings throughout the fall months of 1919, Addison met with union leaders, but he quickly learned that they were not as pliable as he had hoped. The unions flatly refused to relax their trade restrictions and accept a large number of apprentices, who might in the future depress the trades job market once the housing scheme was completed. This unwillingness by the trade unions to increase their membership kept Addison in a constant rage. He insisted that the building trades were too concerned with short-term gain and not considering the needs of the nation, of which they were a part. This argument, however, did little to sway the unions who, against the backdrop of a slumping economy, became more adamant in their refusal. In December 1919 Addison asked Lloyd George to come to his aid, but even the presence of the Prime Minister at a meeting failed to break the resistance of the unions.<sup>24</sup>

The negotiations deteriorated as did Addison's patience, and by early 1920 forced dilution on the war-time model seemed to Addison to be the only solution to the labor shortage which was preventing houses from being built. The Minister of Health, however, lacked the authority to act alone, so he appealed to the cabinet for the power to force the unions to relax their trade rules. Hesitant to increase industrial tensions, the cabinet refused and Addison had no choice but to again try and negotiate a compromise with the building trades.<sup>25</sup> In a running series of conferences

<sup>24</sup>The Nation, December 20, 1919, p. 411.

<sup>25</sup>Dr. Addison unfortunately made it his habit to lecture the Conservative-dominated coalition cabinet on Liberal principles and the proper way of doing things. This, Lord Curzon once said, made him a "notorious bore". Lord Beaverbrook, The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1963), p. 41.

throughout 1920, Addison failed to budge the unions from their protectionist stance. In September 1920, he was forced to report to the cabinet that his efforts to arrive at a compromise had been a complete failure and that many local schemes were stalled for a lack of labor. Addison revealed to the cabinet that in the previous March there had been only 3,645 bricklayers at work on government sponsored housing projects in the entire nation.<sup>26</sup> Union rules allowed each journeyman to lay only 400 bricks per day and at that rate, Addison told the cabinet, it would take ten years to complete 40,000 new homes.<sup>27</sup> Despite this information the cabinet who had been totally committed only a year before to see that homes fit for heroes were built, refused to come to Addison's aid. It insisted that the Minister of Health had not only failed to arrive at a compromise with the trade unions, but that he had completely alienated the local authorities and financially mismanaged the entire housing scheme.

From January 1919 onward, Addison had been continually entangled in a struggle with the local authorities who were at the same time "tradition bound and financially carefree".<sup>28</sup> The local authorities were totally inexperienced in matters of construction, yet the duty of carrying out the most ambitious housing scheme in British history was laid on their reluctant shoulders.<sup>29</sup> Christopher Addison was the man appointed to oversee the program and in the eyes of most local authorities, he represented Liberal radicalism which they uniformly mistrusted. As if this wasn't enough, Addison was viewed as solely responsible for the damage done to

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Christopher Addison, Four and One Half Years, vol. 2, 3rd ed., (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1934), diary entry, Dec. 2, 1918, p. 597.

the Poor Law by the creation of the Ministry of Health. Addison understood the resentment the local authorities felt towards him, but not its depth and intensity. He had hoped that once he assumed the leadership of the Ministry of Health, the conservative local authorities would accept their defeat and lend their support to his housing scheme. This did not happen and they remained hostile to anything connected with the Doctor's name. As Addison applied more and more pressure, many local authorities simply refused to cooperate with the housing program.<sup>30</sup>

Addison had the full and complete backing of the cabinet, at least until the end of 1919. With this support the Minister of Health felt it safe to combine his pleas for cooperation with threats against the resisting local authorities, but his prodding only served to complicate the housing scheme's mounting problems. Construction materials were in short supply and Addison had not bothered to establish a centralized procurement committee which could evenly distribute them. As a result, local authorities were placed in competition with each other and under these circumstances prices rose sharply. Manufacturers, hoping to make up war-time losses, sometimes turned to profiteering by forming rings and held necessary materials such as bricks and mortar from the market place.<sup>31</sup> By early 1920 the competition among the local authorities had become very intense and prices were pushed still higher. The government was hesitant to reapply price controls and enforce anti-profiteering laws which had been part of the Defence of the Realm Acts. As a result, many local authorities

<sup>30</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>31</sup>Simon, op. cit., p. 112.



reported that even if enough tradesmen were available, they simply could not buy the necessary materials.<sup>32</sup>

The government's refusal to control prices of construction materials was to its own disadvantage. As Addison applied pressure to the local authorities to get their schemes under way at all costs, they bought up all the materials the manufacturers were willing to sell at inflated and stilted prices. Each local authority was left to its own devices and because they were not expected to pay for anything above the penny rate, some were less responsible than others. For example, the Liverpool Housing Committee let a contract for £2,000,000 to a firm with a paid-up capital of only £3,000. No inquiries of any kind were made by the housing committee into the financial condition of the firm. When the contractor went bankrupt, despite a £350,000 over-payment, the central government had to pick up the loss and got only a handful of houses in exchange.<sup>33</sup> Costs, too, varied widely from area to area. Luton, for instance, proposed a scheme that calculated that the cost of each house built would be £350. On the other hand, because of the higher price of building materials and land, the local authority responsible for housing in Brighton submitted a similar plan for houses to be constructed at a cost of £900 each. Moreover, the Brighton proposal added

<sup>32</sup>Simon claims that everything was "done under the worst possible conditions", p. 11-14. It was later calculated that the money paid to build 176,000 houses under the Addison Act were applied in 1933; 1,000,000 houses could be built and change half the rent. Cmd. 3937, "Twelfth Annual Report of the Ministry of Health," Sessional Papers of the House of Commons, Reports from Commissioners, Vol. 14, 1930-31.

<sup>33</sup>The Manchester Guardian, October 18, 1919.

an extra £100 per dwelling for roads and sewers, thus making each small two-bedroom working-class a very expensive proposition.<sup>34</sup> The result of the corruption, mismanagement, and inertia associated with the housing scheme was one delay after another and skyrocketing costs which were unacceptable to the coalition government.

Britain, in late 1919, was already entering into its post-war slump which followed the initial industrial boom at the time of the armistice. In the growing conservatism of English political life, government expenditures and the management of the public purse took on an air of restraint. Contemporary economic wisdom viewed the public budget in the same light as an individual's. Expenditures could not surpass incoming revenue and, as available capital decreased, belts had to be tightened. Reflecting this concern, The Spectator published, on January 17, 1920, the findings of the Denison House Public Assistance Committee. The group had investigated the cost of public social services to the nation and came up with a total of £128,000,000 for 1918. The Spectator noted that "Few people realize what social reform means, when represented in rates and taxes or how much the state is doing in this way for the masses of the population. It is of the first importance that the facts should be made known."<sup>35</sup> At the bottom of the same page the journal noted in a single line, "Bank rate, 6 percent, changed from 5 percent, Nov. 6, 1919."<sup>36</sup> This increase meant that the cost of building "homes fit for heroes" was going to get even more expensive and the government would have to pick up most of the bill.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., October 19, 1919.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>The Spectator, January 17, 1920, p. 67.

The Housing Finance Committee, in its report dated November 27, 1919, estimated that the capital required to build 500,000 houses by 1922 would amount to £429,750,000 for England and Scotland. Each house would cost £800 in England and £850 in Scotland. The houses could not possibly be rented at anything near their economic value and the penny rate would not even come close to making up the difference. Therefore, the bulk of the funds needed both to build the houses and to provide rent subsidies would have to come from the public treasury.<sup>37</sup> The prospects of adding on this additional debt responsibility to the rapidly increasing cost of the other state-supported services made the cabinet reconsider its commitment to the housing scheme and large-scale social planning.

The rise in the bank rate was the result of discussions between Sir Brian Cokayne, Governor of the Bank of England, and Austin Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, which took place before the end of the war. Their concern was centered on the £1,000 million floating debt which caused the government to periodically invade the money markets, thus upsetting normal financial business. They argued that this was acceptable in war-time, but that once peace came the practice would make it impossible to preserve England's financial dominance; they pointed out that a tight money policy was a necessity.<sup>38</sup> The increase of the bank rate from 5 to 6 percent in November was the first action taken by the two men to implement their financial policy. Addison was infuriated by the bank rate advance, seeing it as a threat to the housing scheme. During the last week

<sup>37</sup>Cmd. 444, "Treasury Committee on Housing and Finance," Sessional Papers of the House of Lords, Reports from Commissioners, Vol. 28, 1919.

<sup>38</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 149.

of November he participated in a series of stormy cabinet meetings in which he and Chamberlain came into sharp conflict.<sup>39</sup> The Doctor admitted that by early November only 43,299 housing units had been approved by his department, even though 500,000 were needed. Moreover, of those schemes receiving the Ministry of Health's approval, few had been built.<sup>40</sup> Dr. Addison insisted that the local authorities were not getting the job done because of a lack of initiative and experience, insufficient numbers of workmen and materials, and a growing inability to raise money. All except the latter could be overcome with some hard work, but the money situation could only be eased if the government gave added credit support to the project. Addison warned that if this were not done, houses would not be built in many of the poorest areas of the nation where they were most desperately needed. Chamberlain immediately objected to Addison's protests by pointing out that the best opinion in the city had urged the government not to accept any more indebtedness and suggested that maybe the entire scheme should be scrapped.<sup>41</sup>

The cabinet accepted Chamberlain's opinion and agreed that it should encourage the local authorities to make more prudent use of their money. Addison was again, as he had been so many times before, wedged between strong forces which he was powerless to move by himself. The building trades refused to allow the entrance of new apprentices in an

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Cmd. 1446, "Second Annual Report of the Ministry of Health," Sessional Papers of the House of Commons, Reports from Commissioners, Vol. 13-14, 1921. In March 1920 plans for 161,837 houses and tenders for 79,536 houses had been submitted. Of these 13,355 had been begun and only 715 homes had been completed.

<sup>41</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., p. 149.

effort to preserve their economic position within a slumping economy. Inflation spurred by shortages and profiteering forced the price of each housing unit up almost daily. Tradition-bound local authorities often simply refused to lend their full cooperation to the liberal housing scheme and when they did the result was often inept management. Finally, the government, surrendering to traditional wisdom, supported tight money policies which not only served to increase the cost of each house, but made it impossible for many authorities to get their schemes under way. Addison was effectively boxed in and, no matter which way he turned, he was met by inflexible resistance. The only way to save the scheme from complete chaos and a certain collapse was to improve its financial footing, but Addison had attempted to do this earlier in the year and had failed.

Seeing his program in deep financial trouble, Addison began early in 1920 to encourage local authorities to issue their own bonds to private investors as a way of raising capital, but they could not keep pace with the bank rate, which again rose to 7 percent on April 14, 1920. Near the end of April, 80 percent of the London County Council issue of £7,000,000 was still in the hands of its underwriters.<sup>42</sup> Others who had tried to raise additional capital in this manner found themselves in a similar predicament. The whole project was paralyzed and even the liberal press began to complain about the "prolonged story of ineptitude". The Nation wrote on May 8, 1920

The municipalities asked for loans to fulfill their obligations--without which indeed fulfillment was impossible. They were refused, and told that they must raise the money for themselves. They could not do it. Against the competition of perpetual government borrow-

<sup>42</sup>The Times, April 15, 1920.

ing at something like 6 percent, the offer of various past government loans in the open market at over 7 percent, and with a 7 percent bank rate the proposition became grotesque. Birmingham and London tried on a large scale and failed.<sup>43</sup>

The complete and swift failure of the bonding scheme left Addison and his department in complete turmoil. The only recourse left was to try and reduce the construction costs per unit in hopes of building more houses with the shrinking real capital still available. Throughout the summer and fall of 1920, Addison tried to force costs down by putting pressure on the local authorities. These desperate and hurried efforts were met by complaints that he was playing the part of the bully; as a result, many local authorities simply ignored him.<sup>44</sup>

While Addison was fruitlessly trying to salvage some portion of the housing scheme, the decision which would bring it to an end was being made. In late November 1920, Chamberlain, still intent on reducing the government's debt, announced that he hoped to cut the floating debt by £250 to £300 million. This was to be accomplished by slashing all departmental budgets across the board by 20 percent and also by fixing an absolute ceiling on the number of houses the government would back.<sup>45</sup> Addison bitterly objected, insisting that this would be impossible and that the taxpayer would be fortunate if the Ministry of Health did not ask for more funds than it had been previously given. Considering the economic situation and the condition of the housing program, no one was surprised when

<sup>43</sup>"The House Famine and Some Causes," The Nation, May 8, 1920, p. 163.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Finance Committee Meeting Minutes, January 30, 1921, cited in Gilbert, op. cit., p. 152.

the differences between the two men were resolved sharply and without much delay. During a Finance Committee meeting on January 30, 1921, it was decided that "There was no alternative open to the government but to decide the housing question not on merit, but on financial considerations only."<sup>46</sup> Government spending had to come down and housing, which was proving to be much too expensive and wasteful, became the first victim of the post-war economy campaign. On March 31, 1921, Christopher Addison resigned as the minister of the department he had fought so long to create, marking the failure of the large-scale social planning stemming from the war-time desire for national efficiency.<sup>47</sup> While there would be some important and even imaginative reforms during the twenties and thirties, most were aimed at particular problems. None of these would have the social ideal, ambition, flavor, or desire to engage in comprehensive social planning that was evident in the reform sentiment that grew out of the First World War.

The rout of the housing scheme brought to an end the effort to win a political victory for social planning in Britain between 1914 and 1921. The attempt to massively build houses with state support was more the victim than the cause of the failure of those forces favoring social planning. The decisive defeat of reform occurred long before the war ended and the economy campaign began. While it is clear that the war did generate an authentic desire for sweeping reform, few outside of the circle of Addison,

<sup>46</sup>Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 144. While the Addison Act was a dismal political failure, it did manage to produce more houses than any other program except the Wheatly Act of 1928 during the inter-war period. A total of 170,000 new dwellings were built under the act with 80,000 of these being completed in 1922.

Newman, Morant, and Rhondda proposed concrete measures to enable reforms to be carried out efficiently and effectively. It became comfortable for politicians of all political shades to identify themselves with reform and it offended no one as long as positive action was not taken to make good on their promises. The reality of this situation is most clearly reflected in the creation of the Ministry of Reconstruction. Christopher Addison was never allowed to become more than a second-class minister. His department, which was charged with preparing plans for post-war reform, was incapable of making even the most basic administrative decisions. Action was dependent on the good will of Addison's ministerial colleagues who often viewed plans for reform as attacks on their personal administrative empires. Addison also had to deal with vested interests outside of the government, who demanded that reform be routed around their strongholds. Misunderstandings, rivalries, and distrust among supposedly cooperating agencies and private interests served to delay reform, until its success was no longer possible.

The relegation of the Ministry of Reconstruction to the position of a second-class ministry and the constant delays in creating the administrative power to back the reconstruction plans did a great deal to end the prospects of comprehensive social planning. Nonetheless, these are perhaps considerations secondary to the larger failure of social reform after the war. In a very real sense Christopher Addison, Newman, Morant, and Rhondda were guilty of misunderstanding the impact of the war on English society. They, and especially Addison, saw it as a massive wave, which in one great movement had replaced the social tension of the pre-war days with a new sense of social harmony. War spirit represented to them



the dawning of a new age in which all parts of society would cooperate towards a common goal and for the betterment of each citizen. The Ministry of Munitions had been able to break all the rules in the interests of national efficiency and the final victory it would bring. The reformers were convinced that the same kind of action would be possible when dealing with complex and politically explosive social issues. Despite these hopes the war-time interest in national efficiency was not strong enough to support their optimism or their sweeping plans. Old political and social differences proved to be a much more potent force than what remained of war-time harmony and common sacrifice. While the nation was willing to tolerate economic and social control in the name of victory over the Kaiser, no matter how much reform was desired, it would not accept rigid centralized control and be swayed by appeals for national sacrifice in peace time. Without the impetus provided by total warfare, massive social planning, rooted in a desire to use all the nation's resources efficiently, collapsed, drained of its political vitality.

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