

THE COMING OF CONSCRIPTION IN BRITAIN

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The subject of this thesis is the conscription debate in Great Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, defined in a social-cultural context. The basic assumption is that a process of cultural conditioning works to determine human actions; actions therefore can be understood by examining cultural conditioning. That examination in this thesis is limited to a study of social and intellectual influences relating to conscription as they acted upon various groups in the English community prior to the Great War. The thesis also discusses the 1915-1916 crisis over actual adoption of conscription, in light of these influences.

Sources used included literary works such as poems and essays, pamphlets, tracts, and memoirs, which aided in defining a cultural context. Diaries, Cabinet Papers for 1914-1916, and Parliamentary Debates were used in delineating the wartime conscription crisis, and establishing chronology.

An early impulse toward conscription was the desire of conservatives and imperialists for national regeneration. Because of a dominant Liberal ethic which thrived on peace and business, conservative-imperialists who held cyclical theories believed England was losing sight of noble martial

values, and that this would cause the fall of the empire. They despised the inefficiency brought by traditional civilian control over military matters. Conscription, they thought, would infuse the race with new vitality. Liberal-imperialists opposed conscription but not on grounds of pure humanity. Their jingo values made them as martial as conservative-imperialists. But they found conscription bad for business and for Britain's offensive capacity as a great naval power. They felt that the superiority of English culture was in its emphasis on personal autonomy. This part of their thinking appealed to workers and intellectuals whose radical instincts were softened by this infusion of liberalism. Workers had the most practical reason to oppose conscription because it directly threatened their freedoms as laborers with its twin threat of industrial conscription. But they lacked a radical cohesiveness to fight such issues as conscription. Conscription did not come with the outbreak of war because volunteering brought many men, and because the Liberal party was not friendly to a controlled war effort. The homily "business as usual" symbolized their attitude in the first months of war. Measures of control came in 1915 with the Munitions of War Act and Defense of the Realm Act. The manpower shortage made many believe that conscription was also necessary for a successful effort. Conscription came not by a deliberate plan, but through the accident of the Derby scheme which pitted married and single men against each other, and thus created a popular demand for conscription. Conscription was completely disorganized

in its operation. It did not regenerate England, but carried on her national tradition of inefficiency in administration. Still, conservative thinkers believed in the possibility of regeneration, while liberals believed that when the war ended they could create a rational world that would not tolerate conscription and armaments.

This analysis showed several unifying features in English culture. First, all groups, whatever their outlook toward conscription, were concerned in some way with their isolationist culture. Secondly, the presence of an isolationist culture gave rise to a strong feeling of cultural superiority which was the core of all arguments against conscription in England. The conscription issue showed maintenance of previously-held values throughout a crisis. The solution of the crisis was in harmony with the pre-war propensities of most Englishmen, since it did not generate efficiency and did not become overly repressive.

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PREFACE

The aim of this thesis is to set England's conscription crisis of 1916 into its social and intellectual context. The first three chapters are attempts to show interaction between various social groups in the English community and ideas pertinent to conscription, prior to the Great War. The last four chapters define the crisis as it developed and as it was settled between 1914 and 1916.

The analyses of ideas in the first three chapters are offered to show the cultural conditioning that preceded the conscription crisis and which ultimately would define the terms of the crisis as England settled it. The term "cultural conditioning" is meant to include the combined influences of ideas and economic status in the community upon the individuals. The separate themes of these chapters are diverse, but unifying them is a belief that the logic of individual actions may be discovered through an understanding of cultural conditioning. When combined with a description of the crisis, the earlier chapters show that the conscription crisis left many pre-war values and hopes intact.

A detailed description of the political crisis over conscription can be found in William Ernest Mackie, "The Conscription Controversy and the End of Liberal Power in

England 1905-1916 " (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1966). Unfortunately this study relies chiefly upon the Bonar Law Papers and Conservative Party Scrapbooks to describe the impotence of the Liberal party. Not surprisingly, Mackie's stand is relatively pro-Conservative. Trevor Wilson, The Downfall of the Liberal Party (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966) discusses the issue in its political context also, specifically as it related to growing inadequacy of the Liberal party in the Great War. In his massive study on English Radicalism, 6 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961), Simon Maccoby includes a detailed description of the conscription issue as a political crisis and as a crisis for English laborites and radicals. Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939 (London: Sheppard Press, 1949) has collected a wide assortment of pamphlets and books written specifically on conscription and circulated between the time of the Boer war and Hitler's invasion of Poland (when conscription came into effect with England's declaration of war). This book is comprehensive and provides a fine bibliography of primary materials for the student of conscription as an intellectual and cultural crisis. Because the documents are explicitly concerned with conscription, many peripheral but pertinent materials and ideas are not included. Hayes, who looks back upon the introduction of conscription with disgust and

sadness spends much time showing the impotence of the volunteerists in challenging the onslaught of pro-conscription ideas.

The chief sources used in this thesis to develop the cultural context for the conscription crisis were literature, pamphlets and tracts, newspapers, and memoirs. In outlining the crisis of 1915-1916, the Cabinet Papers and Parliamentary Debates were also used.

This thesis, then, will show that the introduction of conscription in 1916 marked no severe break with English cultural traditions. On the contrary it emphasizes a continuity of ideas extending at least from the middle of the nineteenth century to after the Great War.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		
1.	CONSCRIPTION AND REGENERATION	1
2.	JINGOISM AND IDEALISM	30
3.	WORKERS AND INTELLIGENTSIA.	65
4.	BUSINESS AS USUAL	106
5.	COALITION AND WAR-TIME CONTROLS	130
6.	CRISIS OVER CONSCRIPTION.	160
7.	CONSCRIPTION AND REACTION	191
8.	CONCLUSION.	227
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	232

CHAPTER 1

CONSCRIPTION AND REGENERATION

An important aspect of late Victorian and early twentieth-century British thought was hope for physical and moral redemption. After 1850, many Englishmen felt that they were losing the "splendid isolation" that had given England moral aloofness from the European continent. In some minds, the discomfort over the waning of isolation became partner to a desire for a regeneration of the race. The question of empire was important to them also. They realized that England's imperial struggles brought her more into the maelstrom of European politics. They also thought that the English population, at the moment of England's nineteenth-century greatness, had become overly soft for the task of administering her greatness. As the nineteenth century advanced into the twentieth, many persons began to believe that the anticipated regeneration might be achieved through an apocalyptic crisis.

As a political, social, and cultural issue, military conscription fitted nicely into the thought patterns of those who most keenly felt the inroads upon national isolation and who hoped for a compensatory regeneration. They had begun to admire Prussian fitness and efficiency and thought that through conscription, England might emulate these traits.

Also conscription might be a key to a national revival through social reforms, over-all improvement of physical fitness, and a better defense force.

Theories of national regeneration embodied their own peculiar view of history. Liberals held to a view of history which saw man and society as redeemable, although they did not suggest an easy evolution toward a simple perfection. Their outlook, though evolutionary, was laid on the basis of moral regeneration which had to be a part of the reformed community. Conservative-imperialists held a cyclical view of history which was infected by liberal-evolutionary energy. Conservatives thought that efficiency, orderly social reforms, and conscription would save England from the downward sweep of her appointed cycle.

Cementing these two historical theories--the evolutionary and the cyclical--together was a quasi-religious idealism similar in its effect to the Puritan idea of election. The difference in conservative and liberal views of history, and therefore the difference in their views toward social issues such as conscription, lay in their different emphases upon England's national position as it related to her ultimate salvation. To the conservative, English society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had been permeated by essentially degenerative factors which had to be corrected if national doom was to be avoided. To the pristine liberal, the British race was already forging a path toward moral superiority, because Britain relied on institutions favoring

personal freedom and unfettered intercourse with other nations. But after Gladstone's second ministry and the dawning of Britain's new imperialism,¹ Liberals, as a party, were no longer pristine in their outlook. The dilemma between their old principles and the new imperialism forced them to seek their own mode of regeneration, but they scrupulously avoided making conscription a part of the regenerative plan.

An early signal of the departure of isolation and its security was a confidential letter written by the Duke of Wellington which was published in 1848. In it, the old hero speculated that the entire southern coast of England was unsafe from an invasion. England panicked and the Government hastily began to reconstruct the militia.² Popular opinion had made France the potential assailant, but the revolution she suffered that year temporarily removed her from suspicion. Prince Albert saw peril to England from Russia and took steps to strengthen British military capabilities.³ The Crimean War reinforced his anxieties, and left the English populace distrustful of continental embroilments.

¹In his classic book, Imperialism: A Study, originally 1902, reprinted by University of Michigan Press (Ann Arbor, 1965), J.A. Hobson marks the 1880s as the beginning of imperialism as a systematized effort.

²The Letters of Queen Victoria, edited by Arthur Benson and Viscount Esher, 3 vols. (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), 2:166.

³The Letters of Queen Victoria from the Archives of the House of Brandenburg-Prussia, edited by Hector Bolitho and translated by Mrs. J. Pudney and Lord Sudley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), p. 37.

The long era of peace after the Crimean War appeared to Gladstonian idealists as the fulfillment of Richard Cobden's prophecy that free trade would bring an era of peace and disarmament. But others saw peace as a deteriorating factor which, when combined with England's propensity for industrial splendor and monetary gain, would leave the British race "flaccid and drained."⁴ Gladstonian virtue seemed triumphant at the time; at least it did to Lord Tennyson, who had noticed the deterioration that peace brought in his poem Maud. "That was the poem I was cursed for writing! When it came out no word was bad enough for me," he later wrote to Margot Asquith. "I was a blackguard, a ruffian and an atheist!"⁵

Cobden's ideals had been unfettered individual action and unfettered relations among states. Imperialism was obviously forbidden, since all nations were to work out their ultimate purposes individually. In a delicately aesthetic as well as innocent theory, free trade would be the avenue to this international community. To commercial freedom, Gladstone added morality.⁶ The moral effect was long lasting. Twentieth-century liberals such as Leonard Hobhouse might

⁴Frederick Scott Oliver, Ordeal by Battle (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), p. 412; Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Maud (1855), part 1, line 20.

⁵Margot Asquith, An Autobiography, 2 vols. (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1920), 2:49.

⁶Leonard Hobhouse, Liberalism, originally 1911 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 44, 58.

doubt that morality could be legislated, but they still believed that the power of Parliament could make society susceptible to morality.⁷ Gladstone's influence left liberals feeling superior in their view of themselves and history. This feeling of superiority would have a later and logical consequence in the liberal rationale for imperial conquest.

But before the time came for such a rationalization, this morally superior view stood linked in liberal minds with the idealism of isolation. That superiority bulwarked the noble feeling felt by Englishmen who treated their isolation as freedom from the nasty political realities of the continent. As if to corroborate the ascendancy of his own ideals, Gladstone himself wrote an essay on Tennyson's work in the 1859 Quarterly Review. War, he solemnly pronounced, was not the way to a moral regeneration or to a cure of Britain's Mammon-worship: "The Scriptures are pretty strong against Mammon-worship, but they do not recommend this [Tennyson's] original and peculiar cure."⁸

Subtle forces were already at work to thwart the Gladstonian image of freedom and morality. Appearing in the same Quarterly Review was a slightly paranoid account of France's military ambitions. Its author feared for the safety of England whose defenses were perpetually left to whim. Only when the British ceased their foolish reliance on

⁷Ibid., p. 76.

⁸William E. Gladstone, "Idylls of the King," Quarterly Review 106 (1859):463-464.

a navy unsupported by a standing army could they be a secure nation. They had relied too long on traditions that were no longer applicable: "unfortunately for us, our free institutions do not provide that the wisest and best should always be at the helm, and still less do they provide for such an emergency as this [an invasion by France]." The author did not propose conscription, but many of the roots of future arguments for conscription could be found in his article.⁹

During the 1860s, fear of France mounted in English minds and a complementary respect for Germany developed. Prince Albert believed that a powerful Prussia would give order to European politics. Following the Franco-Prussian war, the Conservative party, too, favored Germany; this was concurrent with a rising spirit of reform in that party.¹⁰ While a paternalistic spirit figured in Tory reform, Disraeli also wanted to improve the health and vigor of the English populace in order to strengthen Britain's imperial grandeur.¹¹

Both physical and spiritual modes of regeneration were emphasized at the same time that the fear of France obsessed the country. John Ruskin, social reformer, artist, and critic, suggested in a lecture on war that England might well

⁹James Fergusson, "The Invasion of England," Quarterly Review 106(1859):261,271,284,258.

¹⁰Oliver, Ordeal by Battle, p. 38; Brandenburg-Prussia Letters of Queen Victoria, p. 32; David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1934-37), 1:4.

¹¹Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (London: The Bodley Head, 1965), p. 155.

develop a martial spirit in order to inculcate national virtue, idealism, and a sense of beauty; the development of such a spirit must be tempered with the desire not simply to propagate war, but also to build up the influence of truth and justice in the world. "Remember . . . the game of war is only that in which the full personal power of the human creature is brought out in the management of its weapons." War was indeed the highest fulfillment that any culture might seek, and in Ruskin's historical view, every great power had nourished its magnificence by war, and had been "wasted by peace." Although he argued that war must be a creative endeavor in order to have real worth, the implication that war had regenerative powers was clearly evident in his thinking.¹²

Simultaneous fears of foreign encroachment and hopes for regeneration combined to give rise to schemes such as the inauguration of cadet corps at Eton, Harrow, Rugby and other well known public schools. George Meredith, who professed liberal sympathies, thought national training would regenerate England.¹³ And Gladstone, while fond of France, became

¹²In Crown of Wild Olive [a series of lectures delivered during the late 1860s] (New York: H. M. Caldwell, Co., Publishers, probably 1873), pp. 133, 142, 168.

¹³Speech, 5 January 1906, Frederick Sleigh Roberts, Lord Roberts, A Nation in Arms (London: John Murray, 1907), p. 80; The Times (London), 6 January 1916, p. 11; see also among Meredith's poems, To A Friend Visiting America (1867), Aneurin's Harp (1868), A Certain People, To Colonel Charles (1887), for an expression of his feeling concerning the need for national regeneration.

caught up in the realities of newly-developing mass conscript armies throughout the continent and called on Edward Cardwell to inaugurate army reforms.¹⁴ But his old spirit was still not lost, for reforms, as Lord Esher reported, were carried out in the belief that "we are not a military though we are a warlike nation."¹⁵

Army reforms became an increasingly popular topic as the century wore on. Despite Stanhope's dictum in 1888 on the improbability of British forces being used in a European war, a mounting crisis in recruiting forced war office authorities to think that conscription might be the only way to save the Army. The shortened term of service adopted by Cardwell had not brought the expected improvements in army strength, and had drastically depleted the reserves available for home service. Industrialization, with its consequent migration to the towns, was partly responsible for weakening the army since competition for labor deprived the War Office of the countryside's "brawny illiterate rustics."¹⁶ But, after all, conscription could not be viewed as the right remedy; its

¹⁴Brian Bond, "Recruiting the Victorian Army 1870-92," Victorian Studies 5(1963): 332.

¹⁵Reginald Baliol Brett, Lord Esher, Journals and Letters, edited by Maurice V. Brett and Oliver Esher, Viscount Esher, 4 vols. (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934 and 1938), 1:31.

¹⁶Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, From Private to Field-Marshal (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1921), p. 92; Bond, "Recruiting the Victorian Army," pp. 337, 336.

adoption would stir too much popular antagonism.¹⁷ Peace had brought demoralization to the British army.

The regenerative power of efficiency also became a key idea in certain labor circles. Merrie England, Robert Blatchford's widely-read tract on the needs of the English working class, demanded that British labor must be "properly organized and wisely applied," so that all could reap the wealth of the community.¹⁸ The traditional British ideal of "every man for himself" was outworn and needed to be replaced by a new mode of efficient cooperation. A rebuttal to Merrie England agreed that something was indeed askew in England's economic arrangements and that the working class must truly be regenerated, but collectivization was not the answer.¹⁹ Instead, wealth had to develop a greater morality, while the working class should regenerate itself through self-help. English society had come now to an "Industrial and Economic Reformation" and the author hoped it would offer more justice than the Protestant Reformation had brought. Socialism would not be a worthy consequence of the Reformation, since its disrespect for religion, family bonds, and marriage would "tend to produce immediate moral degeneration."²⁰

¹⁷Bond, "Recruiting the Victorian Army," p. 338.

¹⁸Robert Blatchford, Merrie England (London: Clarion Office and Walter Scott, 1894), p. 12.

¹⁹"Nemo," Labour and Luxury: A Reply to Merrie England (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1895), pp. 135-136.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 184, 191.

In a milieu of ideas centering on invasion, efficiency, and national regeneration, the issues of conscription and national training found their place. But no crisis of sufficient scope had yet occurred to thrust them into the foreground of national life. Imperialism was gaining an increasingly tenacious foothold on British life and thought, even tempting many liberals into enthusiastic support. And though the relationship between the old Cobdenite idealism and new imperial aims might seem to be one of violent opposition, liberal-imperialists learned to harmonize them in a way that was at times pragmatic in the best English style and at other times hopeless in its ignorance of realities.

Imperialism, whether liberals recognized it or not, was deadly to free institutions. Those institutions depended on the nation's maintaining itself free from imperial embroilments. Late nineteenth-century imperialism, since it involved competition among the whole European community, militated against isolation. This mutual antagonism of liberal goals was bluntly, though not consciously, announced by Lord Wolseley when he told Queen Victoria in 1899 that 70,000 British soldiers were being sent to South Africa. This was the largest number that Britain had ever sent outside the empire to fight a war. A later observer of Britain's conscription struggles remarked that the Boer war brought

England closer to compulsory service than at any other time in the previous seventy years.²¹ In conjunction with the attention it diverted toward conscription, the war also heightened the national anxieties over the loss of what had once seemed a pristine isolation, both geographical and moral.

The clamor for regeneration became deafening and reduced the memory of nineteenth-century anxieties to a melancholy faintness. Rudyard Kipling had already tried to warn England that she was becoming dangerously forgetful of her imperial dignity in his poem, "Recessional," written in 1897. If England did not renew her faith in God, she would sink to the level of "lesser breeds" who existed "without the Law," he warned.²² The Boer war brought more didactic poems from Kipling's angry pen. Peace, he insisted, was harmful to England; only martial ardor would kill "the rottenness in the people loins."²³ He hoped the war would teach England a lesson, for she had been too careless about preserving her empire. Her laziness was reflected in the army which "we made. . . in our own image, on an island nine by seven/

²¹ Brandenburg-Prussia Letters of Queen Victoria, p. 271; Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939 (London: Sheppard Press, 1949), p. 24.

²² Rudyard Kipling, "Recessional" (1897), line 22.

²³ Rudyard Kipling, "The Old Issue" (1899), lines 31, 32.

Which faithfully mirrored its makers' ideals, equipment, and mental attitude."²⁴

An impressively-titled pamphlet, The Relation of National Service to the Welfare of the Community, suggested that the cause of the Boer war was a recognition by other powers of England's lack of strength; universal military conscription would have prevented that crisis. Not only did England not have a large army, but she also lacked a healthy population from which to form an army. Great numbers of men had been rejected for the South African war because of their unfit physical condition. Compared to men in Germany, the average male height in England was far less. The remedy for both problems was military training which would improve the national physique while imbuing the English heart with fidelity to comrades, a sense of duty, and courage.²⁵

George F. Shee made the seminal post-Boer war advocacy of military conscription.²⁶ This lengthy work combined a growing fear for the safety of the empire, a keen desire for regeneration, and a hybrid construction of a cyclical view of history. The Boer war assumed a religious guise in Shee's mind: it was a divinely-inspired message sent by God as "an object-lesson in our defenselessness--not upon these shores, not amid the green

²⁴ Rudyard Kipling, "The Lesson," lines 10,11.

²⁵ T.C. Horsfall, The Relation of National Service to the Welfare of the Community (Manchester: Sherratt & Hughes, 1904), pp. 39, 13.

²⁶ George F. Shee, The Briton's First Duty: The Case for Conscription (London: Grant Richards, 1901).

fields and lanes of this dear England, but in a remote part of the Empire, whence the thunder of war reaches us only in faint reverberations."²⁷ The war had shown the folly of building an empire without also building the requisite defense forces. Within England itself, the Gladstonian dictum of "greater freedom and less responsibility" was acting as a barrier to the benefits that society could achieve were conscription adopted. The unwillingness of an unpatriotic populace to defend itself and its empire had made England a degenerate among world powers, who now regarded her with an ill-concealed and condescending hatred. Conscription would unite social classes and collectively regenerate the physique that had deteriorated with the change from a rural to an industrial society. "Discipline, duty, obedience to authority, manliness, and self-mastery" were only a few of the benefits that conscription held in store for England if she would only imitate Germany, a noble nation obviously dedicated to peace. Part of Shee's inspiration in these matters came from his reading of Ruskin.²⁸

When Shee placed all these factors into historical context, his argument assumed real force. He was aware of a current trend toward viewing England as being on the downward sweep of an appointed cycle. After establishing a relationship

²⁷Ibid., pp. 1, xiii-xiv, 209, 211.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 112-113, 188-190, 16, 92, 181, 194-195.

between England and the ancient Roman Empire, Shee observed that

it is sometimes alleged that, in spite of a wonderful apparent prosperity, England has really attained the zenith of her greatness, and shows many signs of that decadence which has, through all ages, attacked nations that have grown wealthy too easily and at the cost of a widespread idleness, luxury, love of pleasure, and dislike of duty and responsibility.

Shee was unwilling to accept the theory that England was past the point of rescue in her decadence. By accepting conscription, he argued,

the Anglo-Saxon race. . . may well give the lie for centuries to come to the theory that there must necessarily be growth, culmination, and decay in the lives of nations. Nor can any student doubt that our retention of the hegemony of the world must be as beneficial to the cause of civilisation, justice, and liberty as it is naturally desirable to the British race.²⁹

The most immediate and obvious route to self-improvement was through army reform. Shortly after the war, the Commander-in-Chief in India, Lord Kitchener, strongly urged changes in the army system, especially the training of officers.³⁰ Two Royal Commissions were appointed to deal with the problem of a tired, inept army. The Elgin Commission demanded that the army have a greater "power of expansion outside the limit of the Regular Forces of the Crown" and the Norfolk Commission advocated military conscription through compulsory training.³¹

²⁹Ibid., p. 207.

³⁰Letter, 14 October 1902, Esher, Journals and Letters, 1:355-356.

³¹Hayes, Conscription Conflict, pp. 28-29.

Also, in 1903, Lord Esher, once a member of Queen Victoria's private circle and Secretary of the Office of Works, was invited to head a committee to reorganize the War Office in the interests of greater efficiency.³²

But many believed that England's deterioration necessitated reforms far outside the scope of any royal commission. Field Marshal Lord Roberts was one of these. The National Service League had been founded in 1901 to convince England of the need for compulsory military service. In 1904, Lord Roberts, an old hero for his work both in India and as Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in the Boer war, resigned his military duties on the Committee of Imperial Defense and became president of the League; he then began a long campaign to convince England that conscription was necessary. Roberts became the chief proponent of the "Bolt-from-the-Blue" school which argued that invasion of England was imminent and was, as Shee had been, obsessed with fear for England's future.³³ The National Service League and its adherents became tangible symbols, which darkly reminded England that once and for all, splendid isolation was gone. The long land frontiers of England's empire negated the geographers' portrayal of her as an island.³⁴

³²Robertson, From Private to Field-Marshal, p. 128.

³³See Roberts, A Nation in Arms.

³⁴Shee, Briton's First Duty, p. 33.

Through a barrage of pamphlets, lectures, and books, Lord Roberts and his colleagues sounded the call for national service. T.C. Horsfall showed that with compulsion, statistics could be kept on individual physical characteristics.³⁵ Then communities would know if their overall fitness was improving. The efficiency that would result from national service would be a boon to social reform; England, Horsfall surmised, might even become as proficient in town-planning as Germany. Furthermore, social classes would mingle through compulsory service, and the wealthy could view at first hand the ravaging effects of poverty upon their fellow countrymen. Horsfall had great faith in the practical nature of Englishmen. If national service were properly explained and the need for it adequately shown, the arguments of liberals who favored a traditional type of personal liberty might be easily thrown aside and England would welcome conscription.³⁶

Because of the emphasis on moral regeneration, Lord Roberts and many of his fellow advocates found ready-made methods of linking conscription with institutions more amenable to the tradition-oriented British consciousness. In their peculiar schema of morality, Victorian minds already favored education for its regenerative power. Lord Roberts viewed the public schools as a way to accustom the English mind to national

³⁵Horsfall, Relation of National Service, pp. 22-23.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 7-9, 54, 55.

service. The schools could establish cadet corps. He urged headmasters to shape for England the fine, patriotic youth which she now lacked. Schoolboys had to learn better how to serve their country, and drill and rifle-training as a part of the regular curriculum would accomplish that.³⁷ Arguments for blending national service into traditional cultural patterns were not limited to convincing educators to create cadet corps. Roberts also appealed to a sports-loving, competitive population to make riflery their national pastime.³⁸

A small book published in 1907 based an entire scheme of national training around the English penchant for competition. Captain C. W. W. de Beauclerk, who also based his plan on the assistance of the public schools, believed that the success of his scheme would lie in causing boys to view military excellence in the same manner that they viewed their cricket prowess. Extending the competitive spirit to military drill would provide again both physical and moral regeneration.³⁹

The churches also showed some willingness to aid in the conscription campaign. Four Anglican bishops, a Catholic

³⁷Speech, 7 December 1905, Roberts, Nation in Arms, p. 61; speech of January 5, 1906 in ibid., p. 77, 79-80.

³⁸The Times, 7 June 1905, p. 7.

³⁹C. W. W. de Beauclerk, A National Army (London: King, Sell, & Olding, 1907), pp. 59, 68.

archbishop, and several Dominion bishops and Free Church leaders contributed to a pamphlet "Religious Thought and National Service" which supported the aims of the National Service League.⁴⁰

As the conscription campaign became more intense, cyclical views of history, always linked with the regenerative benefits of conscription, became more prominent. Beauclerk's pamphlet argued that when great nations showed weakness they left themselves open to the vigor of their neighbors. He listed eleven examples to prove his point and then, as Shee had done, showed that England could be saved--but not if "the Little Englanders have their way."⁴¹ One lecturer argued that if England did fall into the cyclical decline, her place would be taken by the United States just as "Carthage had become the heir of the great Phoenician world empire." Peace was a universal demoralizer of nations, for it left them unprepared for wars which were inevitable. War was the essence of nature's law: "the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest and strongest." If a nation were to avoid the downward thrust of a coldly-repetitive historical pattern, she must possess a national army.⁴² Lord Roberts argued that any

⁴⁰Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 49.

⁴¹Those who generally opposed imperial expansions in nineteenth-century England. Beauclerk, A National Army, p. 6.

⁴²J. Ellis Barker, National and Non-National Armies, A Study in Military Policy (Westminster: The National Service League, 1907), pp. 3, 14, 2.

imperial power should logically have an essential interest in discovering the dysgenic factors which operated in the decay of fallen empires, so that these factors could be avoided. To him, racial degeneration was a very real possibility in England because a slouchy populace was being allowed to avoid military service. That deterioration would be the downfall of empire.⁴³

Kipling, too, was very aware of a declining English race. The poor condition of her national physique showed in her "sons of the sheltered city--unmade, unhandled, unmeet," who would "fight raw [in] battle as ye picked them raw from the street."⁴⁴ He had insisted that universal service was the only way to remedy these conditions: all England's manhood must be

. . . broke to the matter of war.
Soberly and by custom taken and trained for the
same,
Each man born in the Island entered at youth to
the game--
As it were almost cricket, not to be mastered
in haste,
But after trial and labour, by temperance,
living chaste.⁴⁵

He wanted England to be prepared for the threat which was coming upon her.⁴⁶

⁴³Lord Roberts' comment on the lecture in Barker, National Armies, p. 19; speech of December 7, 1905 in Roberts, Nation in Arms, p. 62.

⁴⁴Rudyard Kipling, "The Islanders" (1902), lines 21, 22.

⁴⁵Ibid., lines 44-48.

⁴⁶Ibid.

As if to show that English culture could no longer lay claim to her splendid isolation, the conscription argument began to fluctuate in reference to pressures exerted by continental diplomatic crises. The argument became intimately connected with a very real fear on the part of Englishmen that they would soon have to take part in a continental struggle. The diplomatic end of England's prized isolation came in the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902. In 1904 the Entente Cordiale united France and England. A few months after the Entente was concluded, Lord Esher began to anticipate England's having to defend the Low Countries against Germany.⁴⁷ Lord Roberts, in 1905, made a distinction between the kind of army needed to subdue savages in the Dominions and the kind of army that would be needed "in a struggle with a civilised nation."⁴⁸ France and Germany struggled over the question of influence in Morocco. Lord Esher now wrote that although Britain had an army more than adequate for small conflicts, she did not have the resources for a "great war." There would soon be a "titanic struggle between Germany and Europe for mastery and the great fear is that war may come before we are ready It will take five years yet to get our people screwed up to compulsory service. Perhaps longer."⁴⁹ Travels in Europe

⁴⁷Letter, 9 September 1904, Esher, Journals and Letters, 2:62.

⁴⁸Speech, 7 December 1905, Roberts, Nation in Arms, p. 52.

⁴⁹Esher to Knollys, 30 September 1906, Esher, Journals and Letters, 2:186; diary of 14 September 1906, ibid., 2:180.

convinced Colonel William Robertson, head of the Foreign Section of the War Office Intelligence Department, that Germany was building military works on the Belgian frontier with the intention of invading Belgium.⁵⁰

A mounting fear of Germany began to replace the admiration that efficiency-minded Englishmen had felt for Prussian institutions. Beauclerk wrote in his pamphlet on national service that there was "at this moment in England, already beyond the reach of her Navy, a German Army of trained soldiers consisting of between 250,000 and 300,000 men. These are ostensibly engaged as clerks, waiters, hairdressers, & c."⁵¹ The loss of isolation certainly affected his thinking drastically, and although Beauclerk carried the German threat to extreme proportions, it was becoming more and more a fact of national life both in official circles and among popular advocates of imperialism and national service.

In 1907, England became tied to Russia through expansion of the Entente Cordiale into the Triple Entente. The next year crisis flared in the Balkans between Russia and Austria. During 1909, Robert Blatchford thrust his own growing Germanophobia upon the public in a series of articles in the Daily Mail.⁵² Blatchford, champion of the laboring classes, now

⁵⁰Robertson, From Private to Field-Marshal, p. 144.

⁵¹Beauclerk, A National Army, pp. 25-26.

⁵²Printed in Robert Blatchford, Germany and England; the War That Was Foretold (New York: Edward J. Clode, 1914).

became a champion of patriotic fury toward Germany. All present-day issues were unimportant when compared with the question of national defense: England, screamed Blatchford in his own peculiarly vilifying syntax, must prepare herself. Blatchford cursed the English for their "conceit, self-indulgence, decadence, and greed. They want to keep the Empire without sacrifice or service. . . . Germany knows this. The world knows it. The Cabinet Ministers know it. But no Minister dares to say it." Germany would no longer tolerate England's impositions upon her own colonial desires. England's decadence would only tempt the Germans to play their hand rashly. In Blatchford's ravings there was another reminder that English institutions seemed to be failing to cope with her new imperial and worldly position. "The German nation is homogeneous, organized. . . we see only party politicians . . . we hear only party politics. The nation is broken up into purposeless factions." The salvation of course was military discipline. The London poor could certainly use military training "to infuse them with a collective spirit," to make them "healthy, active, merry; well fed, well washed, properly disciplined, and as fit as fiddles." Rising to a fever pitch of enthusiasm, Blatchford waxed evangelical: "I am convinced that the Army saved my life."⁵³

⁵³Daily Mail, 20 December 1909; 17 December 1909; 13 December 1909; 23 December 1909; 22 December 1909, *ibid.*, pp. 69-70, 50-51, 10-12, 106, 88-89.

In 1909, the National Service League had 35,000 members and felt courageous enough to introduce a bill for compulsory training in Parliament.⁵⁴ Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George bargained secretly with Conservatives in 1910 for concessions concerning Home Rule and the House of Lords, and offered conscription in return.⁵⁵ Lord Charles Beresford began in 1911 to greet his breakfast company with the cheerful homily, "Good morning all; one day nearer to the German war!"⁵⁶ Two new pastimes, Germanophobia and waiting for the "war that was foretold," now ranged themselves alongside the older desires for regeneration and efficiency.

But reformism and liberalism were combining to develop new types who pragmatically kept the morality of Cobden while discarding the negative aspects of his free-institution idealism. This left them free to clear the Gladstonian dilemma out of their own philosophies: they rejected imperialism as immoral, yet accepted the regimentation that would be needed for social reform. Still, they did not feel a need to connect conscription and social reform, for the sake of efficiency.

⁵⁴William Ernest Mackie, "The Conscription Controversy and the End of Liberal Power in England 1905-1916" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1966), p. 26; Sir Ian Hamilton, Compulsory Service: A Study of the Question in the Light of Experience (London: John Murray, 1911), p. 151.

⁵⁵Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 26 August 1912, Austen Chamberlain, Politics from Inside (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1936), p. 292.

⁵⁶Frank Percy Crozier, A Brass Hat in No Man's Land (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), p. 17.

In 1911 Leo G. Chiozza Money's widely-read Riches and Poverty revealed the terrible physical conditions of England's poor.⁵⁷ Only better organization of social facilities could remedy the situation, Money argued, but he did not follow the well-worn pattern which offered conscription as the answer. The schools were the answer; they had to be made into a "means of physical control and training." School children must be taught manners and humaneness. The national wealth should be used to bring about the necessary improvements in school facilities.⁵⁸ Money was a Liberal Member of Parliament; the political ideals expressed by his party alignment combined with his reform ideas serve to make him a significant example of the newer kind of pre-war Liberal. To Money, imperialism took funds that should have been used to support the British population and used them instead for the development of distant areas. Unlike most of the liberal-imperialists, men such as Money and Lloyd George adopted a blunt pragmatism which maintained the value of moral improvements in society without explicitly rejecting the instruments of efficiency and armaments where they might be needed. To them, conscription, when needed, would not be a matter of principle, but rather a matter of organizational need and efficiency.

⁵⁷ London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1911 .

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp.161, 193, 198-199, 207-208.

In 1911, another important diplomatic crisis occurred, the Agadir incident, and England's freedom from continental entanglement was threatened even more menacingly. During 1912, conscription became a frenzied issue in England.⁵⁹ In October, Lord Roberts delivered a speech at Manchester which transformed him from a sometimes obscure lecturer into a prominent speaker.⁶⁰ England must try to deter Germany by building up armaments, he harangued; no nation could maintain one philosophy in conducting foreign affairs and another as far as defenses were concerned, a blunder that liberals had made ever since they embarked upon their imperial dilemma. As of 1912, argued Roberts, there was only one "salvation" for England: universal military service.⁶¹ In Parliament, the frightening image of Agadir loomed. Debates on both Army and Navy Estimates were oriented around the crisis.

In this atmosphere, Colonel Yate, Conservative Member for Melton, proposed compulsory military training. His plan called for compulsory national training of boys aged fourteen to seventeen through cadet corps; there would also be military training for men of eighteen to twenty-two. His supporters

⁵⁹Margaret Bondfield, A Life's Work (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1948), p. 36; J.R. Clynes, Memoirs 1869-1937, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 1:158.

⁶⁰Frederick Sleigh Roberts, Lord Roberts, Lord Roberts' Message to the Nation (London: John Murray, 1913), pp. 1-9, 12; Oliver, Ordeal by Battle, p. 310.

⁶¹Roberts, Message to Nation, p. 12.

showed that the voluntary system was inefficient and made a strong case by linking the measure to national regeneration, but the proposal failed.⁶²

As the time neared for the virtual end of isolation, some thinkers began to desire the cleansing effects of a real crisis. The National Service League itself had often failed to convince its critics that it only wanted the army expanded for home defense. In 1909 a member of the League aggravated such critical notions by saying that "Great Britain. . . requires an Army only for defence. But let us not forget that the best defence is the attack."⁶³ As England drew closer to the Great War, liberal-minded intellectuals too toyed with the possible redeeming effects of a crisis. To the conscription advocate who accepted a cyclical view of history, militarism was to be a means of regeneration to develop the moral strength needed by England to hold on to her empire. To a liberal, who in some cases, now had little else of philosophical value to cling to, a regenerative crisis might be seen as a means to a better world order. These were the sentiments of a small book published anonymously in 1912 and later attributed to William Archer, The Great Analysis.⁶⁴

⁶²Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 35(1912): 397, 1185, 1197, 1202, 1592-1597, 2012.

⁶³Barker, National and Non-National Armies, p. 17.

⁶⁴[William Archer], The Great Analysis, preface by Gilbert Murray (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912).

The Great Analysis argued that the world had succumbed to a useless and dangerous tangle of international rivalries. Nationality and commercial competition had laid the globe open to the devastations of war. The world must be prepared for a "Great Synthesis," as Gilbert Murray called it in his comments on the book; the synthesis would lie in the dawning of a "world-conscience," a collective intelligence which would bring about a rational world order.⁶⁵

The idea of a world order had been part of Cobden's philosophy; it now became a real possibility for liberal consciences. It might conciliate the old dilemma between the genteel morality of their Cobdenite-Gladstonian inheritance and the realities of imperialism, by giving them a further reason for scattering their own culture throughout the globe. World order became the new salvation in liberal philosophy; it encompassed the moral regeneration that would give their evolutionary view of progress a direction that it had long needed. And they would somehow solve the dilemma without resorting to the nastiness of an avowedly militaristic philosophy, or that root of all evil, conscription. This was the smug implication given by Liberal Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith, in Parliament on March 5, 1912. Since the army was not meeting specified recruiting needs, one member asked if Asquith would, as the Conservative party leader Andrew Bonar

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 88-89, viii, 96-97.

Law had already done, allow conscription to be considered as a non-party question.⁶⁶ Calmly, but tartly, Asquith answered simply "No."⁶⁷

The liberal drift into cataclysm, and the Boer war, had earlier inspired J.A. Hobson to criticize typically-Victorian and typically-liberal abstractions in his volume The Psychology of Jingoism, published in 1901.⁶⁸ To Hobson, the evolutionary liberal view of history was very dangerous because it promoted the belief that wars, like other events, were inevitable. The belief that wars were inevitable made jingoes out of its followers. Hobson did not sort out any groups among Englishmen who had fallen into the fallacy of jingoism. Not only avowed liberals held to the kind of evolutionary view that might assume inevitability; instead it was a cultural abstraction that, to Hobson, was peculiarly English.⁶⁹ The inevitability of war was a fact of life in England to 1914. The difference between conscriptionist-conservatism and old-fashioned liberalism lay chiefly in the manner in which they treated the idea of that inevitability. Conscriptionists, to whom the saving of the empire was vital, began to welcome catastrophe as a chance to regenerate that empire. Liberals chose to drift idly into the crisis on a

⁶⁶Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 35(1912): 200.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸(London: Grant Richards, 1901).

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 82.

vague hope that it would purify not only England but the whole world.

Conservative-imperialists, then, assumed a cyclical view of history and employed it as a warning to England that she was growing too decadent to maintain her superior world position. They hoped that England would discard her perennial habit of "muddling-through" and adopt measures to make herself more efficient and more unified in purpose. If she did, she could cheat the workings of history and become eternally viable. But that is not to say that many liberals did not want to save their empire. Hobson's ideas on evolutionary inevitability seem to illustrate the curious irony which marked liberal-imperialists in relation to encroachments upon isolation. War to protect the empire might be inevitable, but traditions--especially those concerning freedom and defense--had to be maintained sacrosanctly even if they were out of touch with a newer political reality. The blend was a meeting of jingoism and idealism.

CHAPTER 2

JINGOISM AND IDEALISM

Liberals, caught between freedom and imperialism, found a loose ideological framework upon which to enact tangible programs. The twentieth-century Liberal party formulated a program for army reform which, to their minds, would satisfy Britain's defense commitments at the same time that it would soothe a diseased idealism. Worked out by Secretary of State for War R.B. Haldane, the plan also reflected cultural realities in England, for the nation at large seemed unwilling to follow conservative advocates of conscription in believing that the waning of isolation called for a restructuring of basic English values.

Haldane's ideas satisfied traditions that had grown up around national defense policies. The Stuart and Cromwellian eras led to a distaste for standing armies in England.¹ But with the development of an industrial England during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this historical distaste for armies was overshadowed by complementary economic notions.

¹This is an important theme in the first volume of Lord Macaulay's History of England. Macaulay's criticism of armies is biased as is the rest of this work, but its very lack of objectivity makes it valuable in understanding the place of the army in English thought.

England was becoming the country of the middle class, a "nation of shopkeepers." At the same time, her eighteenth-century imperial interests demanded a fine navy. The height of naval development and the victories which gave England a superior world position as a colonial power occurred at a time when Parliament was developing its own tradition as a foundation of stable self-government.² The confluence of middle-class values, Parliamentary development, and naval superiority left England's military policy with two mainstays: civilian idealism which manifested itself through civilian control, and dependence upon a superior navy.

The entrenchment of civilian idealism within English culture was evident as early as Queen Anne's reign when, despite the English army's brilliant success in curbing French military power, Parliament showed itself unwilling to tolerate military control over that army. The Mutiny Acts were initiated to give Parliament control over the army. These would be in effect for only one or two years. Therefore in order to make provisions for the continuance of the army, Parliament would have to meet yearly to pass a new act.³ Army organization under civilians immediately proved inefficient. But that was quite acceptable since "anything but shilly-shallying 'make-do' and the type of unidealistic compromise

²David Hannay, "England's Tradition of Sea Power," The Edinburgh Review 221 (1915): 278.

³Sir George N. Clark, The Later Stuarts 1660-1714 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 152.

that brought about the other great constitutional stroke of the reign--the Union of the Parliaments--would have torn a fissure in the nation's constitutional covering which might never have been repaired."⁴

During the nineteenth century, especially between 1850 and 1900, the navy served Britain as her chief fighting force. The army was small, and if England needed land forces, the treasury supplied funds for buying soldiers from other countries.⁵ Europe began to raise massive conscript armies, but England did not follow suit. To an ascendant business class, any aspect of national defense that would interfere with the daily conduct of business was to be carefully avoided. The strength of the navy relative to that of other countries was certainly not up to its eighteenth-century standards. By 1884, it had been so neglected that W.T. Stead, editor of the Pall Mall Gazette, published a scourging exposé of its weaknesses in the pages of his paper under the title, "The Truth about the Navy." Within four years, sufficient pressure built up to force the Government into a serious examination of Stead's charges. A committee of admirals, recognizing the appalling weaknesses of the navy, recommended the passage of the Naval

⁴Major R.E. Scouller, The Armies of Queen Anne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. xi, 22.

⁵William Ernest Mackie, "The Conscription Controversy and the End of Liberal Power in England 1905-1916" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1966), p. 2.

Defence Act of 1889 which set the Two Power Standard. By this, the British navy was to be equal to the combined navies of any two European powers.⁶

When nineteenth-century liberals compromised free institutions with imperialism, England followed. The cementing of jingoism and idealism which began as a shy rationalization by liberals had already become an article of faith for the culture as a whole. Thus opposition to an issue such as conscription could be based upon the same pride in English institutions that made imperialism a virtue. And in other cases, opposition to both conscription and imperialism founded itself on the same pride, that is, on the belief in the superiority of an English culture that had maintained itself aloof from the inferiority of continental life.

Institutions that were only indirectly related to issues of war, empire, and politics served to implement the connection between jingoism and idealism in the English mind. The Church aided significantly, for as G.M. Young wrote, "the Evangelicals gave to the island a creed which was at once the basis of its morality and the justification of its wealth and power, and, with the creed, that sense of being an Elect People. . . ."7

⁶Sir Charles Petrie, The Victorians (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1960), pp. 243-244.

⁷G.M. Young, Victorian England; Portrait of an Age (London: Oxford University Press Paperbacks, 1969), p. 4.

The public school, enhanced by Thomas Arnold's influence, became a force among the middle classes for the cultivation of moral virtues. Morality, for Arnold, was part of a code which also emphasized hard work and faithful service to the state. Inspired by Arnold, Thomas Hughes had written in Tom Brown's Schooldays that

we listened, as all boys in their better moods will listen (ay, and men, too, for the matter of that) to a man whom we felt to be, with all his heart and soul and strength, striving against whatever was mean and unmanly and unrighteous in our little world. . . . And so. . . was brought home to the young boy, for the first time, the meaning of his life: that it was no fool's or sluggard's paradise into which he had wandered by chance but a battlefield ordained from of old where there are no spectators, but the youngest must take his side, and the stakes are life and death. The true sort of captain, too, for a boy's army, one who had no misgivings and gave no uncertain word of command, and, let who would yield or make truce, would fight. . .⁸ to the last gasp and the last drop of blood.

The schools did not serve merely as transmitters of Latin and Greek, but also as teachers of the virtues and duties of citizenship.⁹

Although Arnold himself did not propose games as a moral force, they became part of the character-building plan of public school education.¹⁰ Thus the schools inculcated a spirit of competition as well as communal morality into a

⁸Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown at Rugby, reprinted from Tom Brown's Schooldays, 1857 (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1888), p. 146.

⁹Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁰Young, Victorian England, p. 97; Cyril Norwood, The English Tradition of Education (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company Inc., 1930), pp. 15, 18.

great part of England's youth. Competition was so highly valued as a moral force that some feared the establishment of socialism explicitly because it would curb the competitive spirit that had been "the mainspring by which we English as a nation have won for ourselves the foremost position in Europe we have undoubtedly so long possessed."¹¹ Their inclinations toward duty and competition were an insistent reminder to upper-middle class Englishmen that they did not need to be conscripted for service. A later observer recalled that between 1870 and 1890, volunteering for the officer corps meant simply participating in another kind of game. During these years the lack of actual combat helped to solidify the connection between competitive games and volunteer service.¹²

The writing of James Ram reflected the conjunction of moral superiority with military zeal. He argued that England must foment wars in order to survive as a nation, but he also believed that those wars had to be fought by volunteers, for "if England cannot command voluntary soldiers enough to defend her homes and maintain her Empire, the sooner we give up the role of a powerful nation the better. A nation that cannot find voluntary soldiers of her own stock deserves to be conquered by any other who can."¹³ Ram's rabid stance

¹¹"Nemo," Labour and Luxury: A Reply to Merrie England (London: Walter Scott, Limited, 1895), p. 63.

¹²Frederick Scott Oliver, Ordeal by Battle (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), pp. 410-411.

¹³Quoted in J. Bruce Glasier, Militarism, Labour and War Pamphlets no. 2 (London: Independent Labour Party, 1915), pp. 18-19.

on war was certainly not in line with liberal prejudices, but it served to show that the same sort of national aloofness, vitality, and virtue which liberals believed in could be accepted by one whose jingoism was blatant rather than well-concealed.

If England was at the same time cocksure and moral, she was also selfish. The moral ideal of service to the community embodied only voluntary, and not coerced, service. John Stuart Mill believed that the chief reason England would never accept conscription was because it would be too great an interference with "the ordinary pursuits of life. . . ." ¹⁴ J.A. Hobson believed that the dictum for daily living in England was to

Love your friends and hate your enemies; look after your family, and get for them all you can; abstain from petty theft and all unlawful deeds; work for a living if you cannot lawfully compel someone else to work for you; help a neighbour in distress; live a peaceful, orderly life, with only occasional outbursts of animation; abhor certain sorts of meanness and cheating; be prepared at any time to fight for home and country without inquiring into the "merits of the case." ¹⁵

This cynical sampler of commandments knitted together a whole group of middle-class and moral values which gave the unity of jingoism and idealism its high place in English culture.

Hobson had gone on to write that the present period in English life was one of declining institutions. When old

¹⁴John Stuart Mill, Letters, edited by Hugh Elliot, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910), 2:303-304.

¹⁵John Atkinson Hobson, The Psychology of Jingoism (London: Grant Richards, 1901), pp. 44-45.

values collapsed suddenly, the power of suggestion would work well to stimulate ready passions and inculcate loosely-held superstitions. The cultural result of this was that individuals gave up their personal responsibility in making decisions and allowed themselves to be carried away in a maelstrom of mass passion.¹⁶ Even if they did come under the influence of jingoism, the feelings of the English masses did not turn to conscription. A cliché had grown up among them which assured them that "one volunteer is worth ten pressed men." In keeping with that axiom, Englishmen also felt that conscription would interfere with their personal liberty, that it would make their country a militaristic nation, and that these things were simply un-English. Conscription advocates such as Shee tried to construct their arguments so as to prove that free service did not indicate morality absent from a conscript military organization. Conscriptionists thought that appealing to the imperial sensibilities of the population might overcome moral scruples and reconcile it to compulsory service.¹⁷ Their miscalculation was not without some insight for Hobson and other anti-imperialists argued in their works that the very groups who benefitted

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 13-14.

¹⁷George F. Shee, The Briton's First Duty; The Case for Conscription (London: Grant Richards, 1901), pp. 209-224.

most from imperialism included not only the aristocracy but various parts of the middle classes and educated groups.¹⁸

Shee's fight for conscription made it clear that the English had successfully joined their liberal-toned moral superiority with an economically-motivated aversion to conscription. When he listed the popular antipathies to conscription, the arguments that conscription would interfere with trade and commerce while costing too much stood evenly beside the insistence that it was out of keeping with the best of English moral traditions.¹⁹ Shee observed that during the Boer war the Government had tried to secure one month's continuous training in camp for the volunteer militia. This would have been in effect only for one year, 1900. The proposal found so much opposition among both employers and employees, that the Government, even by offering "special terms," was able to get only about half of the Volunteers to train in camps for a two-week period.²⁰ It seemed to Shee that Parliament corroborated the Englishman's refusal to pay for national defense by its increasing reluctance to vote enough money for Army Estimates. He speculated that the

¹⁸John Atkinson Hobson, Imperialism: A Study-- (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), pp. 50-51; Henry Noel Brailsford, The War of Steel and Gold (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1918), pp. 86-88.

¹⁹Shee, Briton's First Duty, pp. 213, 216-217.

²⁰Ibid., p. 128.

basic problem was an overconfidence stimulated by the absence of a tragic history. England had not suffered an invasion in her modern history; thus Englishmen could not understand the realities of national defense.²¹

The defense policy that allowed England to keep her moral traditions sacrosanct while satisfying her economic demands depended upon a superior navy. The army was to be maintained in second place to the navy, and its function was to be simply that of "policing" the scattered empire.²² Very significantly, A.G. Gardiner, an eminent journalist, wrote that Admiral Sir John Fisher, Second Sea Lord of the Admiralty and an outstanding naval leader, was the worst enemy of Lord Roberts and the cause of national service. A continual theme of Lord Fisher's was that the army must be only an adjunct to England's navy.²³ Addressing the Royal Naval Academy in 1903, Fisher insisted that without the navy, England's empire was nothing. If the navy was not maintained in top condition, nothing, including a massive conscript army, would do England's defenses any good. In the same address, Fisher argued that an invasion of England should not be considered a threat. A voluntary army would

²¹Ibid., pp. 247, 172.

²²David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1935), 1:112.

²³John Arbuthnot Fisher, Lord Fisher, Memories (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), pp. 53, 167.

easily answer England's military needs.²⁴ It was an assault upon the quality of the navy, then, to believe that an invasion force could ever even gain access to English shores.

Fisher and others who believed in the navy as the ultimate weapon formed the Blue Water School. Arthur Balfour, Conservative Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905, agreed with Blue Water Schoolers that England had no need to fear invasion of her shores.²⁵ Although Balfour was not considered a big-navy advocate (as were many of the Mahan-inspired Blue Water Schoolers), he did improve England's naval preparedness arrangements. While he was Prime Minister, Fisher as Commander-in-Chief of the navy at Portsmouth, began to plan the first dreadnought.²⁶ It seemed to Lord Fisher that the ideals of Blue Water advocates were much more in keeping with the public's outlook, since England generally considered the navy to be her chief fighting force. Any changes in army structure which would raise army expenditures at the expense of naval expenditures would alienate popular opinion.²⁷

It cannot be easily assumed that because the advocates of a navy-first policy tended to suppress the invasion issue,

²⁴Speech of 1903, John Arbuthnot Fisher, Lord Fisher, Records (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), p. 82; Fisher, Memories, p. 54.

²⁵Margot Asquith, An Autobiography, 2 vols. (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1920), 1:261.

²⁶Ibid., 1:261; Fisher, Records, p. 56; Arthur J. Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 1:13.

²⁷Fisher to Esher, 17 June 1904, Fisher, Memories, p. 179.

they all wholeheartedly believed that England's strategical isolation was intact. One important anti-imperialist even argued that membership lists in the Navy League corresponded closely to those in the National Service League.²⁸ Besides, the question of whether or not England could remain an isolated nation did not simply involve her susceptibility to invasion. It also involved the great armaments capacities of the continental powers, since the mounting armaments race could explode in a war that might involve England. And it involved the realities of the empire that England had to defend. Liberals as a party clung to tradition, just as Blue Water Schoolers did. And many of the party still held onto the illusion of isolation. But their actions in the years up to the war showed first that while they might deny that encroachments had been made upon isolation, they would act in response to such continental activities as Germany's intense naval-building program. Secondly, the maintenance of tradition in national defense programs did not in itself deny that England was becoming more and more a part of continental politics.

Beginning in 1905, when a Liberal Government under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman took office, Haldane began his program of army reform to carry out the findings of the Esher Committee.²⁹ The program had both reform and economy

²⁸Brailsford, War of Steel and Gold, p. 90.

²⁹See above, Chapter 1, p. 15.

as its aims. Haldane recognized the inability of England's army to play even a subordinate role in England's defense policy. The one area of Europe that could be a danger to England's generally insular position was the Low Countries. If enemies of England could ever establish bases there, England would become easy prey for invasion. The army, as Haldane found it, was not capable of such nominal activity as aiding the French in defending ports on the North Sea coast of the European continent.³⁰ Haldane formed an Expeditionary Force for service outside England. He also restructured the old divisions of the militia, creating a Special Reserve to "provide drafts for the regular battalions at the front." The old Volunteer force became the Territorials, a force of fourteen divisions to be used for home defense. Haldane also created a general staff to supervise the army and founded an Officers' Training Corps.³¹

Haldane planned to organize the Territorials under County Associations. These would be elected by the counties and given power to "raise and administer" the local Territorial force. Lord Esher, who favored the idea himself, thought it would be a successful way to achieve a large home force, because it would stimulate a competitive spirit among counties in raising

³⁰Richard Burdon Haldane, Viscount Haldane, An Autobiography (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1929), pp. 200-201.

³¹Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, From Private to Field-Marshal (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1921), p. 140; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:73.

their respective Territorial forces.³² And it would favor England's penchant for local government. If compulsory service were ever to be accepted by England, thought Esher, it would only be through local administration. He wrote that "compulsory education would never have been agreed to in a centralised form; like all great administrative remedies, it has to be swallowed in 'local doses.'"³³ Indeed, this plan might be the last attempt to maintain a voluntary system of military service. Esher wrote to Kitchener that if the plan failed, England would be forced to have a compulsorily-maintained army for home defense.³⁴

On June 19, 1907, the House of Commons approved the plan by an overwhelming majority.³⁵ In July, the House of Lords amended the bill to allow the County Associations to use part of their funds to support school cadet corps and rifle clubs. Lord Esher feared that the Commons would view this as too much an imposition upon the taxpayer. He successfully amended the bill to allow such extra organizations to exist,

³²Esher to Haldane, 14 October 1906, Reginald Balliol Brett Esher, Lord Esher, Journals and Letters, edited by Maurice V. Brett and Oliver Esher, Viscount Esher, 4 vols. (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934, 1938), 2:195; Esher to Knollys, 30 September 1906, ibid., 2:185.

³³Esher to Knollys, 30 September 1906, ibid., 2:186.

³⁴Esher to Kitchener, 4 October 1906, ibid., 2:190.

³⁵Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, 4th ser., 176(1907): 579.

but to be paid for only through funds other than Parliamentary grants. The bill was then passed by the Lords on July 23, 1907.³⁶

To many, the creation of the Territorials did not solve the problem of British military needs. Robertson, still serving in Intelligence, did not believe that the overall army program would make England strong enough to intervene on the continent. The Special Reserve was not adequately trained; because of the terms of its service, no large portion of it would be available at any given time for "service outside the United Kingdom."³⁷

Army reforms under Haldane did not represent a significant assault upon English cultural traditions, especially in the context of civilian idealism. As Robertson later wrote, the strength of the army continued to depend upon what money Parliament was willing to grant, and in his mind Parliamentary grants did not coordinate sufficiently with the international threat to England in the years before the war.³⁸

The Territorial system suffered other problems. Recruiters faced difficulty from several quarters. The National Service League was unfriendly to Territorialism and worked to hamper

³⁶Lord Esher, Journals and Letters, 2:241; Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, 4th ser., 178(1907): 1373.

³⁷Robertson, From Private to Field-Marshal, p. 140.

³⁸Ibid., p. 141.

its success by discouraging men from joining.³⁹ G.G. Coulton, a Cambridge scholar and historian, later wrote that among the educated classes in England, "even the better artists and small tradesmen," there was great unwillingness to volunteer for the Territorials.⁴⁰

Lieutenant-General F.S. Maude, who had once favored conscription for England, published War and the World's Life in 1907. The book advocated voluntary service and showed how the middle-class ethic might successfully alienate one such as Maude from his conscription-prone feelings. When Maude became a successful businessman he also became a volunteerist. He did agree that Britain needed to be regenerated through physical training, but he insisted that actual service must be voluntary. British traditions of free service, he concluded, were superior to the forced service of continental countries. But there was a sinister aspect in Maude's volunteer idealism: if the army began to lack sufficient recruits, he argued that prices might be raised enough to keep men "swarming to the Colours to end their misery."⁴¹ This sort of argument attracted jeering contempt from conscriptionists who insisted that the voluntary system had insidious class

³⁹Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939 (London: Sheppard Press, 1949), p. 119.

⁴⁰G.G. Coulton, The Case for Compulsory Military Service (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1917), p. 234.

⁴¹Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 64; F.S. Maude, War and the World's Life, pp. 404-407 quoted, ibid., pp. 67-68.

implications which would be absent in a democratically-applied system of conscription. But an argument similar to Maude's would later appear in one of the most famous liberal-imperialist tracts opposing conscription, Compulsory Service, in close juxtaposition to the argument that English volunteerism overflowed with a morality unknown on the continent.⁴²

Conscriptionists in their own tracts tried to make common cause with England's commercial proclivities. In his advocacy of military training in board schools, Beauclerk maintained that his program would not "interfere with [one's] money-earning pursuit at all. . . [unless] it should be decided to mobilise every man once, say at eighteen years of age, as if war were declared, so that he would know how to act in the emergency." His program would not interfere with British trade either, since training would be done in the schools before men reached working age.⁴³ Lord Roberts tried to conciliate businessmen through another argument: that peace was necessary to the maintenance of good, sound business and that conscription would deter other countries, thus aiding the businessman by keeping England tranquil.

⁴²Ibid., p. 68; see Sir Ian Hamilton, Compulsory Service: A Study of the Question in the Light of Experience, introduction by R.B. Haldane (London: John Murray, 1911).

⁴³C.W.W. de Beauclerk, A National Army (London: King, Sell & Olding, 1907), pp. viii, 36-37.

Vested interests would lose not only through the dislocations brought by war but also when minor panics threatened England.⁴⁴

Conscriptionists also tried to tie their cause to the moral superiority implied by free institutions. They argued that England did not have to forsake morality for the barracks; plans for compulsory service could be devised which would not require the men to live in barracks for very long periods of time.⁴⁵ National Service Leaguers made quite an issue over the terminology in the conscription controversy. They insisted that their plans could not be called "conscription"; they were, rather, "national service." Conscripts were men who had no patriotism, cried Roberts, implying that the mere presence of national idealism would make the act of conscription equal to a voluntary contract.⁴⁶ On another occasion, Roberts had shown why his plan could not be called conscription: no one would be taken from his professional life to "garrison our fortresses, or perform any of the other services that fall to the lot of our Regular Army, or the conscript armies of Continental nations."⁴⁷

While inaugurating army reforms, Liberals also tried to maintain the navy on an economical basis, since they had

⁴⁴Speech of 1 August 1905, Frederick Sleigh Roberts, Lord Roberts, A Nation in Arms (London: John Murray, 1907), p. 23.

⁴⁵T.C. Horsfall, The Relation of National Service to the Welfare of the Community (Manchester: Sherratt & Hughes, 1904), pp. 52-53.

⁴⁶Roberts, Nation in Arms, p. xi.

⁴⁷Speech of 30 January 1906, ibid., p. 117.

staked a large part of their 1906 victory on the promise to lower armament expenses altogether. Germany's heightened shipbuilding influenced the party by forcing the attitudes of Conservatives and imperialist Liberals together on the issue of England's naval program. The Liberal promise of 1906 suffered and as a Labour M.P. observed, Liberals spent as much for national defense between 1906 and 1913 as they did for social reforms.⁴⁸ In spending an ever-increasing amount for the navy, Liberals tried bravely to maintain England's traditional defense arrangements, by keeping a superior navy.⁴⁹

Tradition by no means implied a genteel military policy either to the Liberal party or to prominent navy men such as Fisher. This was evident in the reaction of Fisher and others to the issue of invasion. In late 1907, the Admiralty withheld reports on the threat of invasion from a committee appointed to study the problem of home defense. Naval authorities demanded that the question be left to the navy alone, for that body ought to have sole jurisdiction over such an issue.⁵⁰ Fisher was aware of a German threat and believed that England must never allow her naval superiority to lapse even minutely.

⁴⁸Philip, Viscount Snowden, An Autobiography, 2 vols. (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 1:243; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:7-9; Snowden, Autobiography, 1:243.

⁴⁹Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 336.

⁵⁰Haldane to Esher, 23 August 1907, Lord Esher, Journals and Letters, 2:246-248.

Publicly, he expressed a fierce disbelief in the possibility of invasion, but privately Esher and himself appreciated the issue. As Esher confided to him, "An invasion scare is the mill of God which grinds you out a navy of Dreadnoughts and keeps the British people war-like in spirit."⁵¹ Fisher's insistence that invasion was impossible was not only a demand for traditional reliance on a superb navy; it was also a bombastic jingoism centered upon the image of Admiral Mahan. Fisher, who anticipated war himself, believed that "the last place to defend England will be the shores of England." England must follow an aggressive naval policy. To think only in terms of invasion was to think in terms of a mild defensiveness.⁵² Military intervention on the continent would not be wise and as if to agree with him, Fisher quoted the Liberal Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, who had said that the army must be "a projectile to be fired by the British Navy."⁵³

Liberals did not fail to notice Germany's intense naval building. Even David Lloyd George, a Liberal who could not yet be considered an imperialist, warned the German Ambassador Count Metternich in 1908 that his country's naval program could be the one thing that might push the British people into

⁵¹Fisher, Memories, p. 17; Esher to Fisher, 1 October 1907, Esher, Journals and Letters, 2:249.

⁵²Speech of 1907, Fisher, Records, pp. 84, 92.

⁵³Fisher, Memories, p. 18.

conscription. Lloyd George later wrote that in the pre-war years he had believed that England must maintain her navy against the threat of Germany; otherwise Germany would feel she had a free hand in Europe and might foment a war with England which would end sadly for the British.⁵⁴ In the spring of 1908, much to the delight of Lord Fisher, the Liberal First Lord of the Admiralty, Reginald McKenna, agreed to support appropriations for at least four, and perhaps six dreadnoughts. The 1908 program was opposed by Lloyd George because he thought it overestimated what England would have to spend to maintain her superiority over Germany. But he insisted that he was not opposed to reasonable efforts to keep national security through a superior navy.⁵⁵ Liberals finally allowed eight ships to be laid down that year.⁵⁶ In the next year, Lloyd George and his Cabinet colleague Winston Churchill opposed the building of as many as six dreadnoughts. But Esher wrote that Lloyd George probably had a very keen sense of the disaster that would fall on Britain if her navy were not kept in excellent condition. If it was absolutely necessary, Esher believed that Lloyd

⁵⁴Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:13, 11.

⁵⁵Letter, 5 May 1908, Fisher, Memories, p. 186; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:9.

⁵⁶Charles Prestwick Scott, The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, edited by Trevor Wilson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 37.

George would face Parliament fearlessly and demand a large navy, despite the demands that it would put upon economy. To Esher, Lloyd George was really "plucky and an Imperialist at heart, if he is anything."⁵⁷

In 1909 the Liberal party, regardless of how much it might insist upon isolation as a moral tenet, officially conceded that issue when Asquith contradicted former Prime Minister Balfour's pronouncement on the invasion question. Balfour had said in 1905 that invasion of Britain was so unlikely that it need not be considered as a serious issue. Asquith announced in the House of Commons that the War Office must insure a force capable of dealing with an invasion force of 70,000 men.⁵⁸ Anti-conscriptionists in unofficial circles did not concede the issue so easily. James Anson Farrer published a tract in 1909 on Invasion and Conscription in which he showed that Roberts had not been certain about invasion as a real possibility when he had testified to the Norfolk Commission. Farrer noted that other War Office authorities had also been skeptical of the invasion threat, and among those who thought it might hold some potential, there was a belief that the navy must have first priority in

⁵⁷Entry of 12 February 1909, Esher, Journals and Letters, 2:370.

⁵⁸Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 8(1909): 1388-1390.

considering the matter. Farrer decided that invasion was a deliberately-constructed hoax which was being used by conscriptionists to conceal a "secret dream of invading . . . others."⁵⁹

The mixture of jingoism and idealism that was a consequence of England's physical and moral isolation was an emphatic feature of Farrer's work. He also included a heavy dose of civilian-flavored idealism. Farrer feared that military opinion might begin to preempt civilian opinion, so he wrote as a civilian who favored what he considered to be the best interests of his country. Parliament, as the guardian of civilian welfare, must not allow the army to become ascendant in the formulation of military policy, he insisted. Farrer pointed to the Militia Act of 1757 which had conscripted Englishmen who were not constructively employed. Anyone who could prove that he had a legal right to vote escaped the provisions of the act even if he was unemployed. This proved to Farrer that military duty was not to be equated with the duties of citizenship. Rather, exemption from such service was a privilege of citizenship. He concluded that English history had never regarded military service as an honorable profession: it was, on the contrary, seen as a degrading chore.⁶⁰

⁵⁹James Anson Farrer, Invasion and Conscription (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), pp. 25, 30, 66-67.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 9, 92-94, 95.

To Farrer, a nation's strength did not depend upon the numbers she might muster but upon the amount of money at her disposal. "Any system of conscription which by its intrinsic costliness or by its withdrawal of men from industry reduced the wealth of the nation would weaken rather than strengthen the military resources of the State." The development of armaments was unprofitable to England because it would take too many men from "industrial pursuits" which were profitable. He also used economic reasoning to prove that conscription would be unjust. Compulsory service could never be applied democratically or equally toward all because some would have to give up more lucrative jobs than others at the time they were called up to serve.⁶¹

Farrer challenged the National Service League to admit that they wanted "conscription" for England, even though they might call it "national service." Whatever it might be called, compulsory service was antagonistic to the moral fiber and welfare of England. His pride in the Anglo-Saxon race found expression in his work when he argued that the immense progress made by the race was because of its freedom from "the corrupting and degrading influence of the barrack." His "moral point of view" led him to believe that the best way for England to defend herself was through purchasing mercenary troops. "It seems to me much the same whether

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 74, 29, 84-85.

you buy mercenary service directly from individuals or indirectly from their Governments: in either case you avail yourself of your superiority in wealth to obtain a military advantage. And why should you not?"⁶² Mercenary troops from such countries as China and Japan should be hired to fight the battles necessary to maintain England's empire. Chinese soldiers would be especially cheap and, after all, "an almost iron necessity compels states to adopt the means most conducive to their immediate ends."⁶³ Farrer maintained a racial pride based on belief in British moral superiority at the same time that he supported cheap methods of maintaining British imperial destiny. The basis of England's moral superiority certainly became more dependent upon her economic progress in his argument than it was upon the personal freedom enjoyed by Englishmen.

The Liberal party's policy became more and more antagonistic not only to conscriptionists but also to those who simply wanted to have more adequate defenses whether or not conscription might be resorted to. The nephew of Matthew Arnold, former Secretary of War, H.O. Arnold-Forster pointed out a ludicrous attempt to protect the facade of isolation that had been perpetuated while the Liberal Government was in power. The Government, to show that invasion was an absurd issue, had

⁶²Ibid., pp. 13-14, 102, 103.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 121-123

dismantled key coastal fortresses. Meanwhile, the Territorials had been haphazardly formed to defend England in case of invasion. The Liberal party had made useless attempts to economize defenses and the result of their Territorial scheme had been to destroy the power of the army to establish a reserve. They had also enacted drastic reductions in army strength without really saving any money. The Territorials might be very useful, he argued, but there was no doubt that a stronger regular army than that maintained by Liberals was needed. As Arnold-Forster showed, it was not simply the Liberal party that kept Britain from building a strong army. The worst opposition to the British army had always been in the House of Commons, "the persistent enemy of the Regular soldier, an enemy which has at all times proved more formidable than plague, pestilence and famine, and the bullets of a foreign foe combined."⁶⁴

The Liberal Government defended its military policies in a small book published in 1911, Compulsory Service. This work, unlike many other tracts written on the issue of conscription, attracted great public interest.⁶⁵ Haldane himself wrote the introduction to the book and a former Adjutant-General of the Army, who would later be active in the Great War, Sir Ian Hamilton, authored the defense.

⁶⁴H.O. Arnold-Forster, Military Needs and Military Policy (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1909), pp. 52-56, 116, 176, 112.

⁶⁵Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 106.

Hamilton's remarks showed that the Territorials were being increasingly criticized for their ineffectiveness. The public was being infected with a barrage of criticism against this force, and Hamilton feared that the public might succumb to believing the criticism. Therefore the book was an attempt to show the true value of the Territorial force as well as to justify other facets of Liberal programs.⁶⁶

The first principle of British defense, Haldane wrote, lay in a superior navy.⁶⁷ Nothing should hamper the building of that naval superiority, and increased Army Estimates could very well do so. Haldane maintained that so long as England could depend upon her navy for sea defense, she could use her great wealth to purchase adequate resources for land conflicts. England's citizenry was not even large enough to merit dependence upon it as a military force. Further, large conscript armies were not suitable for England's peculiar needs. Since they were conscripted from among the entire population, their use would cause massive social and economic dislocations which could not be prolonged. These forces would therefore be useable only in short and quickly-decided conflicts, not in the prolonged struggles of empire-building. And they were worthwhile for countries which had to defend land borders. England needed a force

⁶⁶Hamilton, Compulsory Service, pp. 117-120.

⁶⁷Haldane's introduction, ibid., pp. 18-20.

which could travel far off to keep the empire in order. A professional army might be sent on long tours of duty throughout the empire without dislocating the rest of the community. Military defense of the empire required a highly-skilled expeditionary force. To develop necessary skill, recruits would be required to make the army their profession for several years, a longer period of time than conscripts could be expected to serve.⁶⁸

The empire would not be safe if England reverted to a defensive policy. Conscript armies, unsuited for fighting distant battles, would provide England with no offensive military capacity. Indeed a compulsorily-recruited army would subordinate imperial mission to the demands of home defense. Home defense was the duty of the Territorials. They were a bigger force than any invasion force could be, if it were to be small enough to slip past the English navy. Therefore with the Territorials, England was safe from any possible invasion.⁶⁹

But the writers of Compulsory Service really doubted that invasion was a possibility at all. Even during actual warfare, England did not need to fear invasion; the real danger was that her trade might be interrupted. Compulsory Service reflected a great deal of Liberal pragmatism, and while

⁶⁸Haldane's introduction, ibid., pp. 13-14, 10-12.

⁶⁹Haldane's introduction, ibid., pp. 41-42, 50, 22-24.

slighting the chance of invasion, the authors carefully left themselves loopholes in case conscription ever became truly necessary in their eyes. Lord Haldane had already remarked in 1909 that conscription was not out of line with English history, for the common law bound all Englishmen to aid in the cause of home defense when called upon.⁷⁰ Hamilton speculated that if European politics were to lapse into chaos, then England probably would need a conscript army. He even proposed a plan for latent conscription which would exist only theoretically until the outbreak of a war. This "Third Line" would only be called if the nation was "fighting for its life," and its use would not harm the voluntary spirit, Hamilton argued.⁷¹

Cost was also an argument against compulsory service. Parliament would never accept it because it would require higher Army Estimates, due to the huge army it would entail. The type of conscription plans advocated by National Service Leaguers, despite their provisions to allow the men to live at home rather than in barracks, would require about far more annually in Army Estimates.⁷²

Moral aggressiveness provided a philosophical basis for Compulsory Service. Haldane suggested that because the goals

⁷⁰Sir Ian Hamilton, Gallipoli Diary, 2 vols. (London: Edward Arnold, 1920), 1:5; Hamilton, Compulsory Service, p. 209; Coulton, Case for Compulsory Military Service, pp. 187-188.

⁷¹Hamilton, Compulsory Service, pp. 136, 145-146.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 112, 101.

of the National Service League were defense-oriented, they did not acknowledge "the inheritance of our people from Chatham and from Nelson." Those men had taken imperial military policy in a firm and bold grasp; "not by sitting down and making preparations for the enemy's coming, but by throwing their efforts into seeking him out, and into fashioning their instruments of defence."⁷³ Hamilton believed that the voluntary ideal was the heart of Britain's racial uniqueness and "the creator of our national glory." Free service made the British a people of adventure. The Territorials were an embodiment of this wonderful spirit of love of country. Hamilton believed that moral force was the key to winning any conflict and the Territorials had all the requisite virtue that might be considered moral force. Of them he wrote, in a passage that could have been mistaken for something from Tom Brown's Schooldays,

in the Territorials there is hardly a man who has not joined for the express object of having a good fight if any fighting happens to come his way. There is hardly a Territorial, I believe, who does not, at the bottom of his heart, hope to go into one historic battle during his military existence. Otherwise why should he be there. . . attacking, defending, aiming? Defence of hearth and home? Yes, but he will be delighted, not downhearted. . . when he hears that the invaders have landed.⁷⁴

⁷³Haldane's introduction, ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 141, 83, 121-122.

Voluntary service was the heart of English confidence in her imperial destiny; through its moral dignity, Englishmen felt themselves qualified to extend their beneficent hegemony into the far corners of the world. It made England a brave nation by teaching her sons to "appreciate the romance of war."⁷⁵ As he so movingly discoursed on the benefits of free service, Hamilton effectively welded the genteel dignity of English liberalism with the realities of English imperialism.

Compulsory Service did not find conscription regenerative; it was, rather, an effective means of completely vitiating individual motivation, initiative, and daring. Its authors exemplified an observation made later by an advocate of conscription who said that proponents of volunteerism "contrasted our army, to its enormous advantage, with the conscript armies of the continent, which they regarded as consisting of vastly inferior fighting men--of men, in a sense despicable, inasmuch as their meek spirits had submitted tamely to conscription." An even later observer sadly remarked that what Haldane and Hamilton had done, by showing the moral forces of volunteerism, was to sacrifice the best argument for free service: that it favored the old liberal idealism which had thrived on peace. With the publication of Compulsory Service, it was seemingly the conscriptionist

⁷⁵
Ibid., p. 49.

who wanted peace, since he advocated conscription as a deterrent, while the volunteerist hoped for war, since he praised volunteerism for its martial qualities.⁷⁶

The fight to keep a navy that was supreme in Europe intensified among the Liberals as war drew closer. Lloyd George bravely threatened resignation over the question of high Naval Estimates in early 1911 because they interfered with funds for social reforms. He and McKenna finally compromised, with McKenna agreeing to lower Estimates. But McKenna's offer was not to come into effect until 1913. The spirit of England was probably best symbolized by Fisher rather than Lloyd George; in his plea for mechanical improvements for the navy, Fisher insisted that "to be first in the race is everything!"⁷⁷

Liberals began to snarl in their antagonism to Germany, especially during the diplomatic crisis over Agadir in 1911. The staunchly-liberal editor of the Manchester Guardian, C.P. Scott, noted wistfully that ever since the death of Campbell-Bannerman in 1908, the real reform liberalism among the Cabinet members had crumbled.⁷⁸ Lloyd George confided to Scott that all Liberals, except for one old standard-bearer

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 44; Oliver, Ordeal by Battle, p. 387; Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 101.

⁷⁷Lloyd George to Scott, 16 February 1911, Scott, Political Diaries, pp. 38-39; ibid., p. 41; Fisher, Records, p. 194.

⁷⁸Diary of 6-8 September 1911, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 53.

of the principles of "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform," Lord Chancellor Lord Loreburn, had united against Germany.⁷⁹ But their antagonism to Germany did not force the Liberal party to change its military defense program. By now even the French socialist leader, Jean Jaurès, had noticed that the Territorials were a "curious" compromise.⁸⁰ Another Frenchman thought the compromise a blend of "certain moral and social forces, which are especially active in England."⁸¹ In England criticism of the Territorials grew more severe both inside and outside of the Government. In Parliament, the Territorials were seen to be short of men and poorly-trained.⁸² Roberts had written his Fallacies and Facts for the express purpose of refuting Compulsory Service and he continued to storm the countryside showing England what a ridiculous and impotent arrangement the Territorials were.⁸³

The combination of jingoism with idealism probably

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Jean Jaurès, Democracy and Military Service, an abbreviated translation of L'Armée Nouvelle, edited by G.G. Coulton with preface by Pierre Renaudel (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., Limited, 1916), pp. 123.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 124.

⁸²For examples of these arguments, see Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 34(1912): 701, 35(1912): 116, 144, 432-433.

⁸³See Frederick Sleight Roberts, Lord Roberts Fallacies and Facts: An Answer to "Compulsory Service" (London: John Murray, 1911); speech of 27 November 1912, Frederick Sleight Roberts, Lord Roberts, Lord Roberts' Message to the Nation (London: John Murray, 1913), pp. 49-54.

transcended the class structure in England, but it was especially congenial to the needs and mores of middle-class, liberal England. These wanted to keep the empire without sacrificing any of their personal freedoms. To compromise empire with liberty they resorted to rationalizations which, as the work of James Anson Farrer showed, were sometimes blatantly and cheaply inconsistent. Any true spirit of personal liberty had taken second place to jingoistic values in the thinking of many liberals long before England faced a real crisis over conscription.

Liberals maintained fidelity to tradition in the manner of defense and claimed that Britain had earned and kept her world position only through her superior navy. They disappointed some meeker idealists by opposing conscription, not so much because it imposed restrictions on the individual, but because it would leave Britain weaker in taking the offensive in wars. It was the navy which served as Britain's chief offensive tool, and advocates of a navy-first policy wanted nothing to stand in the way of healthy and favorable Navy Estimates from Parliament.

When liberals opposed conscription on the basis of personal freedom, an economically-motivated argument could often be found lurking beneath the veneer of liberty. The traditional defense policy had supported the interests of trade and this was another point favoring it, as far as liberals were concerned.

The cultural values that gave rise to liberal and middle-class views on military service, although having roots in ideas of duty and service to the community, were also intertwined with martial values, not the least of which was a competitive spirit. The militant aspect of this kind of idealism often became its dominant trait and left its holder a little more of a jingo than anything else. And where jingoism was not so apparent, there was frequently a sense of superiority, left by the belief that the voluntary and cooperative values of England's culture were better than the values of any other culture.

To most of its opponents, conscription then represented a severe breach with the sanctity of their superior culture. They, while perhaps suspecting that England was losing her aloof, insular position, did not choose to admit it, at least publicly. England should continue to maintain the high quality of her culture and that would be the best way for her to fight outside intrusions upon that culture. To deliberately adopt conscription, which was not at all English to them, would be an abject surrender to un-English qualities.

CHAPTER 3

WORKERS AND INTELLIGENTSIA

A third aspect of English social and cultural life which played an important part in the conscription struggle lay in the attitudes of the working classes and those of the English intelligentsia. Important here is the juncture of those attitudes, which often, as in the case of the Independent Labour Party, reflected concern for values that had resulted from an isolationist culture, just as liberal thought did. The juxtaposition between the labor movement and intellectual abstractions rendered each more liberal than perhaps either would have admitted. Where they converged, the labor movement and the intelligentsia expressed a desire for world brotherhood and international order. As their later actions would show, they held the international spirit laid down by Cobden for liberals and Marx for socialists more tenaciously than any other whole group.¹

As a whole, the English working class defies generalization. Matthew Arnold, in his Culture and Anarchy, published

¹Credit must be given to such individuals as the Liberal John, Lord Morley and his colleague John Burns, who resigned Cabinet positions in opposition to England's entering the Great War.

in 1869, did not believe that it had ever developed a strong revolutionary consciousness.² Arnold's biographer, Lionel Trilling, thought that prior to the shock of the Paris Commune, the English working class was the only one of the European working classes that had fostered a belief in internationalism. To Arnold, it was the "mechanical" acceptance of personal liberty that militated against revolutionary solidarity among the working classes.³ Possibly the same sense of liberty that Arnold, perhaps correctly, defined as anarchy was also at the heart of their international spirit.

If there was any unifying spirit among the working class, it was one of ideological anarchy. By no means anarchists in the formal sense, English workingmen nevertheless breathed the same spirit of freedom and voluntary idealism that moved formal anarchists like Oscar Wilde. The laborer was an anarchist in the sense of taking that part of English culture which tended toward decentralization and fragmentation of ideological allegiances, and maintaining it as he developed his social consciousness. This left him free to be either Tory or Liberal, internationalist or jingo, or to seize any ideological

²Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, edited with an introduction by J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: University Press, 1966), p. 80.

³Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1968), pp. 253, 212, 236.

abstraction and fashion it to the peculiar taste developed in him by his cultural conditioning.

His spirit of freedom made the idea of regimentation repugnant and foreign to the English worker. Thus he was no friend of military values, and once again, Arnold's insight provides a good description of the relationship between the worker and the values represented by military conscription.

Then as to our working class. This class, pressed constantly by the hard daily compulsion of material wants, is naturally the very centre and stronghold of our national idea, that it is man's ideal right and felicity to do as he likes. . . . M. Michelet said of the people of France, that it was "a nation of barbarians civilised by the conscription." He meant that through their military service the idea of public duty and of discipline was brought to the mind of these masses, in other respects so raw and uncultivated. Our masses are quite as raw and uncultivated as the French's and so far from their having the idea of public duty and of discipline, superior to the individual's self-will, brought to their mind by a universal obligation of military service, such as that of the conscription,-- so far from their having this, the very idea of a conscription is so at variance with our English notion of the prime right and blessedness of doing as one likes, that I remember the manager of the Clay Cross works in Derbyshire told me during the Crimean war, when our want of soldiers was much felt and some people were talking of a conscription the population of that district would flee to the mines, and lead a sort of Robin Hood life under ground.⁴

Arnold's comments touched upon another aspect of working-class opinions: ideas were most often shaped in a direct relationship to practical needs. This kind of pragmatism combined with an instinctive hatred of regimentation

⁴Arnold, Culture and Anarchy. pp. 74-75.

to form the character of working-class opposition to military values.

During the early Victorian era, radical Chartist leaders had believed that the army existed to preserve the interests of the upper and landed classes. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially during the time that the ideas of syndicalism and the general strike gained some currency among English workers, workers began to fear the power of the army as a government tool to break strikes. In the years before the Great War, and during the war, when conscription became a real and serious issue, workers feared that compulsory military service would be used to effect industrial conscription, and that strikes and other labor disturbances might be easily controlled through the threat of military conscription.

Bronterre O'Brien, a radical Chartist leader, contributed his view of the moneyed classes in England to the March 23, 1833 issue of The Destructive; they were, he cried, "thieves armed with a hundred thousand muskets, having bayonets screwed at the end of them, all of which they have, at a moment's warning, ready to force down our throats if we resist their robberies."⁵ His views seemed justified by the next year's reaction to working-class riots over the erection of workhouses as called for by Poor Law reforms of 1834. The army was used to quell the outbreaks.⁶

⁵Quoted in Theodore Aronovich Rothstein, From Chartism to Labourism (New York: International Publishers, 1929), p. 108.

⁶Ibid., p. 32.

The great fear of a French invasion which arose in 1848 became a heated issue in the Northern Star, a Chartist organ. Writers argued in its pages that the issue of national defense was simply an attempt to keep the ruling classes in power. To increase the size of the army and the navy would give these classes better means than they already possessed for keeping the working classes subjected.⁷ Had the invasion scares ultimately provoked large additions in military strength, the assertions might have proven prophetic. But the scares did not end in a massive strengthening of military resources. Indeed, twenty years later, the Cardwell reforms, though intended to strengthen the army, inaugurated measures which eventually weakened the army.⁸ The increases of men that Parliament did sanction received the bitter contempt of the Northern Star which argued that such increases were quite invidious due to their gradual nature: "The poor excuse for arming monopoly against popular right can avail them no longer, and foreseeing this, they are trying to administer the dose in such gradual quantities as shall not alarm (as they think) the common sense of the people; we are not to have the 150,000 militia men raised at once, but by doses of ten thousand per annum."⁹ And that some influential politicians did desire a

⁷Northern Star, 5 February 1848, p. 4.

⁸See above, Chapter 1, p. 8.

⁹Northern Star, 5 February 1848, p. 4.

larger home force for the purpose of quelling domestic disturbance was unquestionable. Industrial magnates too would have liked greater appropriations to ward off the threat of civil strife.¹⁰

Left-wing Chartists were not without sympathy for the soldier. Ernest Jones wrote that methods used by the army to enlist men were objectionable since authorities preyed on human weakness. He pointed out that men were often got drunk and then quickly enlisted. Just as many others throughout the English class structure would have said, Jones insisted that "one volunteer is worth two reluctant slaves."¹¹ Jones did not offer his own argument explicitly in opposition to continental conscription as many of the others who used the same choice of words did. Instead he insisted that those who entered the English army must be paid more and that the Crown should reward soldiers with land upon their retirement. Speaking on behalf of "the prevailing sentiments of the British Chartists," Jones argued for a democratization of the army. Promotions, for example, should depend upon seniority.¹²

The quarrel between the army and the worker remained a topic for arguments of extreme radicals in the movement, but

¹⁰Great Britain, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3d ser., 97(1848): 1178-1179.

¹¹Northern Star, 1 April 1848, p. 8.

¹²Ibid., p. 8.

did not become an issue potent enough to drive the English working classes of the nineteenth century to a position of sustained outrage. Labor historian John Saville, while arguing that the English Government ruthlessly repressed the massive Chartist demonstration of April 10, 1848, shows also that Cabinet officials strived "at all costs to avoid a precipitate clash which might have inflamed or outraged working class opinion."¹³ Furthermore, working-class rioters did not react equally to each of the various bodies which could be utilized by the Government to keep order. The Yeomanry, a home defense force basically composed of the local rural citizenry, had gained a reputation of viciousness for their part in the Peterloo incident of 1819.¹⁴ But as Jones had shown, even radicals could sympathize with the plight of the regular soldier. And the regular army was used more than the Yeomanry in the maintenance of order during the Chartist era. The size of the army worked against fierce repression, also. Between 1831 and 1848 the military establishment was so low that official observers believed it constituted, in itself, the means of establishing only a temporary and "uncertain" civil order.¹⁵

¹³John Saville, "Chartism in the Year of Revolution, 1848," Modern Quarterly 7(1952-53):33,26.

¹⁴Frederick Clore Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1967), p. 147.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 153, 159.

Because England relied upon the navy rather than the army as her chief mode of defense, Barrington Moore, Jr., has argued that the "disciplining of the labor force" had to be carried out chiefly by the industrial classes themselves and that the maintenance of a "repressive apparatus" was thus in their hands more than in the hands of "the state or the landed aristocracy."¹⁶ Civilian control over the army preempted military authority in the case of civil disturbance. The Home Secretary ordered the Commander-in-Chief where and when to move troops. At a lower level, it was the magistrate who directed soldiers in operations against civil disturbances. If he foresaw disorder, a magistrate was authorized to ask for troops; he then had to accompany them to the disturbance and give orders to fire, if that was needed. A historian of the Chartist era reports that without explicit instructions from a Justice of the Peace, soldiers frequently were reluctant to act and that at times this worked in favor of the mob.¹⁷ It is significant to point out here a conversation which occurred in Parliament during 1912 between labor leader Keir Hardie and Reginald McKenna, the Home Secretary at that time. At this time, the South Wales coal miners were on strike and Hardie feared that troops would be sent. McKenna

¹⁶ Barrington Moore, Jr., Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. 32-33.

¹⁷ Mather, Public Order, pp. 156-157.

answered that troops would go only at the request of local magistrates. Hardie then pointed out that most of these magistrates were also officials of the mines.¹⁸

Although the army had been used against the Chartists, the Marxist historian Theodore Rothstein observed that the working classes generally remained sadly reactionary and without the vigor necessary for revolt.¹⁹ When Chartist agitation faded in the 1850s, the working class was left with the Christian Socialism of Charles Kingsley, F.D. Maurice, and J.M. Ludlow, who did not rail as sturdily against the threat of militarism as O'Brien and Jones had. Kingsley firmly believed in the Crimean war as a just cause. And those who fought in just wars fought with Christ beside them, he believed.²⁰ The war energies of several influential Christian Socialists was one reason that the cause of social reform was abandoned during the 1850s. The laboring classes themselves were caught up in the popular appeal of the war and generally supported it.²¹

The trade union movement enlisted the support of most workers who took any part in the labor crusade during the

¹⁸Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates, (Commons), 5th ser., 34(1912): 1541.

¹⁹Rothstein, Chartism to Labourism, pp. 53, 75.

²⁰Ibid., p. 87; John Atkinson Hobson, The Psychology of Jingoism (London: Grant Richards, 1901), p. 51.

²¹Charles E. Raven, Christian Socialism 1848-1854 (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), pp. 329-330; Trilling, Matthew Arnold, p. 253.

latter decades of the nineteenth century. At first this movement did not seem to produce even the few radicals that Chartism had. Workers in the 1880s declined even to support their own candidates in Parliamentary elections and instead favored either Liberal or Conservative party politicians. The Marxist Rothstein resignedly views the last quarter of the century as a time unequalled in moribundity as far as England's labor movement was concerned. This, he thought, was because of declining prices and because working-class radicalism was less the result of revolutionary fervor than of disappointment in the failure of Liberalism to get sufficient reforms.²²

That late-Victorian trade unionism did not strive to imbue workers with a revolutionary sentiment and that trade union leaders themselves were conditioned by English liberalism is evident in reading memoirs of these leaders. John Robert Clynes who became a union organizer in 1892 is an example. In the early 1880s, Clynes had already established a belief that whatever workers strove for must be couched in constructive terms. Revolution represented an ideology of destruction that Clynes could not tolerate. He insisted that the strike should never be used as a weapon until all other attempts at reconciliation with employers had failed.²³ To many in

²² Rothstein, Chartism to Labourism, p. 273.

²³ J.R. Clynes, Memoirs 1869-1937, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 1:39, 83, 45.

the labor movement, Clynes would later prove a disappointment; during the Great War, his actions moved one observer to see him as "one of the greatest jingoes in the Labour Party."²⁴

Clynes, who believed that most English workmen did not cultivate any sort of an ideology whatever, thought that the ideas of Marx appealed only to intellectual youths of the upper classes.²⁵ This was somewhat an overstatement on his part. While Marx did appeal to some intellectuals he also appealed to such workingmen as Thomas Bell, William Gallacher, and John McLean. It seems that Clynes was correct in seeing a connection between Marxism and intellectual pursuit, because Bell, Gallacher, and McLean did appear to take their ideological considerations much more seriously than Clynes and others who sympathized with his views.²⁶

²⁴Fenner Brockway, Inside the Left (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1942), p. 26; E. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Home Front (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1932), p. 109.

²⁵Clynes, Memoirs, 1:38; 57.

²⁶It can be seen that such labor leaders as Clynes, Benjamin Tillett, and George Barnes, who did not find their fidelity to the working class in contradiction with their patriotism when the war came, educated themselves and concentrated most of their time reading great English works. Clynes was especially impressed by John Stuart Mill and Thomas Carlyle. Gallacher and Bell, who eventually became Communists, admired the work of Marx more and the tone of their memoirs shows a much greater attempt to develop an intellectual sensibility toward their work in the labor movement. When the war came these men put the fate of the working class before that of England and as a result became avowed enemies of the war effort.

The Social Democratic Federation (SDF) was founded by H.M. Hyndman in 1884. Hyndman, described later as an "aristocrat among socialists" because of his wealthy background, became a follower of Marx and toyed with the idea of revolution.²⁷ Unlike the Fabians who had also organized in 1884 and rejected Marx with a typical "Victorian veneration for moderation," Hyndman did not favor gradual changes; he argued for an over-all nationalization of land, which did not get much support from workers.²⁸ He also left the impression upon many of his colleagues that he was very much a jingo in his views on British foreign policy. George Lansbury, a member of the SDF who maintained a pacifist stance, observed that Hyndman had sympathized with Disraeli's politics. Although Hyndman did not support England's part in the Boer war, he rejected pacifism. Thus the founder of the organization which another prominent laborite believed had "transformed socialist doctrine into practical politics" would not prove very useful to pacifist elements among the working class as the war neared.²⁹ In 1911, he even broke with the SDF when it became too much influenced by the anti-war doctrines of the British Socialist Party.³⁰

²⁷Dictionary of National Biography, s.v. "Hyndman," by G.D.H. Cole.

²⁸Emmanuel Shinwell, The Labour Story (London: MacDonaló, 1963), pp. 44, 36; George Lansbury, My Life (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1928), p. 80; Rothstein, Chartism to Labourism, pp. 274, 276-277.

²⁹Shinwell, Labour Story, p. 39; Lansbury, My Life, pp.39,40.

³⁰Dictionary of National Biography, s.v. "Hyndman."

Like Robert Blatchford, Hyndman very early predicted war with Germany. He desired the adoption of military conscription for the purpose of raising a "citizen army." England should also begin a preparedness program and improve the navy as well as the army, he thought. Hyndman wanted to regiment the working class through Marxism; he also wanted to mold England into a conscript army to be used as a tool against Germany. To Hyndman, there was no contradiction of purpose here. He rejected the international aspect of Marx and opposed the idea of international working-class unity.³¹

The SDF alienated G.N. Barnes, a trade unionist who was later to become a member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). After being invited to speak before this group, Barnes wrote that "I was so belaboured with words about exploitation proletariat, bourgeois and others of learned length and thundering sound just then imported from Germany. . . that . . . I retired sore all over and determined to go no more to Social Democratic Federation branches. And I never have."³²

Barnes believed that the SDF was one of many organizations that arose in the 1880s as a result of a "new awakening" to the social evils of an industrial society. "We were passing then through an era of what was called the new unionism, which

³¹Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 234.

³²George Nicoll Barnes, From Workshop to War Cabinet (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1924), pp. 38-39, 42.

meant a gingering up of the old unionism either for revolutionary or parliamentary purposes. I was for the latter. Some, muddle headedly, advocated both."³³ Barnes belied a spirit of liberalism in his thinking: organization with arbitration as its means of bargaining for concessions would "bring sides together to reason. . . and come to right conclusions." The benefits that could be gained for labor would not come through maintenance of abstract theories. Parliamentary representation and a "practical participation in the life of the nation" was the true path to success for the working-class movement.³⁴

John Burns was a member of the SDF whose actions during the 1880s seemed to make him a proponent of the revolutionary side of what Barnes had called the "new awakening." As a member of the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Burns became well-known as a violent laborite. In 1889, Burns became aligned with Ben Tillett and another SDF member Tom Mann, in inaugurating a new militant trade unionism. Tillett, who with Burns led London dock workers to strike in 1889, believed that success in the labor movement would be achieved by concentrating upon unskilled labor which had so far defied organization. Then workers must strike for their

³³Ibid., p. 38.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 47, 59-60.

rights. The third step in his program would be to seek reforms through Parliamentary legislation. Burns supported Tillet with a battery of fiery oratory delivered from Tower Hill in London.³⁵ The result of their militance was to leave trade unionism more democratic and to increase the hope among workers that better social conditions could be secured through favorable industrial legislation.

While militant trade unionism repudiated the gradual and patient maneuvering that Barnes favored, it did not inculcate workers with the spirit of doctrinaire socialism.³⁶ Militancy did not give way to a true revolutionary zeal among the working classes. In 1893, John Burns supported Home Secretary Asquith in recommending that striking miners be shot at in the interests of keeping order. He disappointed even the patient Barnes by becoming, during his career in Parliament, "a breezy optimist overflowing with illustrative figures to show that all was well in the world, or if not, his department had things in hand, and we might rest content."³⁷ And Burns had entered Parliament as a Liberal.

A new force in the labor movement appeared during the 1890s in the person of James Keir Hardie and what a later writer called Hardie's "New Holy Crusade."³⁸ Hardie was not influenced

³⁵Ibid., pp. 38, 35, 43; Philip Snowden, An Autobiography, 2 vols. (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 1:55; Benjamin Tillet, Memories and Reflections (London: John Long, Limited, 1931), pp. 8-10, 236.

³⁶Shinwell, Labour Story, pp. 41-42.

³⁷Barnes, Workshop to War Cabinet, p. 77; Rothstein, Chartism to Labourism, p. 271.

³⁸Shinwell, Labour Story, p. 44.

by Marxist doctrine; he explicitly rejected the idea of class consciousness in the labor movement. The trades union movement and a Marxist-oriented SDF had worked to stimulate a sense of class warfare on the part of workers, he thought. What was needed was not class consciousness but social consciousness, insisted Hardie.³⁹ Hardie took his inspiration from the Bible and from Robert Burns, the Scot poet who was admired by many of those in the Scottish labor movement.⁴⁰

In 1893, Hardie and others founded the Independent Labour Party. Not only did the ILP give the working class a party of its own; it also served as a key meeting ground of proletarian and intelligentsia. The ILP insisted that it would not limit itself to the support of candidates representing trade unions. Into its ranks marched not only intellectuals but also

middle class radicals. This meant that a journalist like Ramsay MacDonald, a local government expert like F.W. Jowett, and a civil servant like Philip Snowden, all found through membership of the ILP the means of standing for Parliament.⁴¹

And the general effect of the intelligentsia among the working classes was to maintain a liberal tradition within the movement. Hardie did not by any means try to alienate

³⁹Snowden, An Autobiography, 1:62.

⁴⁰John Paton, Left Turn! (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1936), p. 146; David Kirkwood, My Life of Revolt (London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1935), p. 16.

⁴¹Shinwell, Labour Story, p. 46.

trade unionism from the new movement; he worked to modify his own brand of socialism to their thinking. The Trade Union Congress of 1899 came to his support by encouraging cooperation between trade union members and the Independent Labour Party. Although a large minority opposed such cooperation, the action of the TUC was the beginning of the modern Labour party.⁴²

Before the highly-unregimented Labour party had been born in England, one of the few openly anarchistic tracts in nineteenth-century English literature had been written by Oscar Wilde: The Soul of Man under Socialism.⁴³ Wilde's work is considered by a modern scholar of anarchism to be no less than the 1890s' "most ambitious contribution to literary anarchism."⁴⁴ Wilde believed that the working classes were enslaved by the present industrial system. In an aesthetically-inclined argument he pleaded for the freedom of all men to choose their own kind of work. Wilde wanted England to have

⁴²Ibid., p. 47; John Paton, Proletarian Progress (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1936), p. 115.

⁴³First published in 1891, Complete Works, 12 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1932), 10. It seems that Englishmen who were more anarchistic in their behavior than other European cultures did not like to admit any connection with anarchism since it was linked in their minds with the inferiority and violence of continental culture. William Godwin, whose Enquiry Concerning Political Justice is thought by George Woodcock to be the seminal work of the anarchist tradition, did not consider himself an anarchist because he believed anarchy to be "the disorder that results from the breakdown of government without the general acceptance of a 'consistent and digested view of political justice.'" See Woodcock, Anarchism, A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1970), pp. 60-61. Wilde admitted his anarchist ideology, ibid., p. 305.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 448.

a "genuinely Christian" socialism; the work of Jesus Christ was to Wilde a fine culmination of an aesthetic sensitivity with a social consciousness. But Wilde emphatically maintained that socialism, if it were to serve as a social good, must not be authoritarian. "It is only in voluntary association that man is fine," and if the community were to be a manifestation of a good life for all its members, then all must be free to be individuals. It would be a step backward to exchange partial slavery for total slavery, "for while under the present system a very large number of people can lead lives of a certain amount of freedom and expression and happiness, under an industrial barrack system, or a system of economic tyranny, nobody would be able to have any such freedom at all."⁴⁵ Wilde never mentioned the army or the issue of military conscription in this work, but his metaphor very literally embodied the terminology that marked the arguments of those who explicitly feared conscription.

In Anarchism, George Woodcock writes that "democracy advocates the sovereignty of the people. Anarchism advocates the sovereignty of the person."⁴⁶ It might be added that Marxism advocated the sovereignty of the class, specifically the proletariat. To Wilde, the ideal lay in a voluntary spirit working within the community. If he was un-English

⁴⁵Wilde, Soul of Man, 10: 10, xx, 4-5, 9-10.

⁴⁶Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 33.

in admitting himself an anarchist (since anarchism somehow implied the uncouthness of continental culture), he was very English in opposing social regimentation. Regimentation fitted in nicely with a belief in Marxism; H.N. Hyndman, who accepted and even demanded the regimentation of military conscription, demonstrated that. Patriotism also fitted easily into socialist concepts. The tendency toward regimentation in Robert Blatchford's Merrie England was credited by a later observer as having opened the way for the patriotism which infected parts of the working class during the Great War.⁴⁷ Hyndman with his very pro-British outlook showed that there was more than one possibility for a Marxist. The international aspects of Marxism did not necessarily complement its organizational aspects. Hyndman, working in an organization dedicated to the dissemination of Marxist theories, remained crassly nationalistic in the view of some of his colleagues in the English working-class movement. His nationalism was held at the expense of any international feeling, showing that there could be an easy convergence between Marxism and patriotism. The break-up of the international workers' movement in 1914 seemed to show the same thing, much to the heartbreak of Keir Hardie who was not a Marxist, but indeed an internationalist.⁴⁸ On the other hand, during the war years themselves,

⁴⁷Thomas Bell, Pioneering Days (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1941), p. 81. It must be remembered, however, that Blatchford did not know anything of Marx, unlike Hyndman.

⁴⁸Dictionary of National Biography, s.v. "Hardie," by G.D.H. Cole.

some very serious and very revolutionary English Marxists never lost faith in international pacifism and never accepted conscription as an ethical practice.

Many of the intellectuals who favored the labor movement were adamantly opposed to England's imperial position. In the years before the war and during the war such men as J. Bruce Glasier and H.N. Brailsford, who wrote on behalf of the ILP, took anti-imperialist stands. Their writing reflected the seminal influence of J.A. Hobson, who published his Imperialism: A Study in 1902. Hobson himself did not have an intimate connection with the labor movement. His father had been proprietor of a liberal newspaper. The Hobson family was middle-class both in its economic position and in its outlook; Hobson was raised during England's great era of peace and was committed to a strong belief in progress.⁴⁹

Hobson believed that imperialism had ruined the character of the Liberal party. By selling out to a "confederacy of stock gamblers and jingo sentimentalists," Liberalism had made itself incompatible with the pure virtues of "Free Trade, Free Press, Free Schools, Free Speech." The Boer war had shown that it was not possible, argued Hobson, to mitigate these old Cobden-inspired principles with the interests of the "possessing and speculative classes." Unfortunately

⁴⁹In Philip Sigelman's introduction to John Atkinson Hobson, Imperialism: A Study (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), p. vi.

the Liberal party had allowed its leadership to be controlled by these classes.⁵⁰ Therefore the institutional framework which Cobden had advocated could no longer survive. Cobden himself, wrote Hobson, had realized that imperial conquests were a potential threat to Britain because they would demoralize her free institutions, and when that had been done it would follow that the race as a whole would be demoralized.⁵¹ Even if other nations had carved up the whole world in colonies, England could have eventually extracted trade benefits, if only indirectly, had she remained true to the doctrines of free trade. Imperialism was not to be confused with either the term "laissez-faire" or "popular government." Any government based on a sound, coherent body of principles, whether it be socialist or laissez-faire in economic policy, would severely eschew the temptation to follow an imperial policy. Popular government was that based upon the sort of freedoms Cobden had defined. Imperialism revived all the evils the age of progress had been on the verge of extinguishing: "our despotically ruled dependencies have ever served to damage the character of our people by feeding the habits of snobbish subservience, the admiration of wealth and rank, [and] the corrupt survivals of the inequalities of

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 143.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 150.

of feudalism. . . ."52 Indeed the very essence of progress was being vitiated by the corrupting effects of imperialism upon England's national life. "Its adoption as a policy implies a deliberate renunciation of that cultivation of the higher inner qualities which for a nation as for an individual constitutes the ascendancy of reason over brute impulse."53

Perhaps the worst thing engendered into a national culture by imperialism, thought Hobson, was a shifting of values toward militarism. He agreed that when other European states allocated all of the world's undeveloped markets for themselves and became rivals in an "aggressive commercialism," England would certainly have to be watchful over her national safety. But no one could have argued successfully that "Great Britain's expenditure on armaments need have increased had she adopted firmly and consistently the full practice of Cobdenism, a purely defensive attitude regarding her existing Empire and a total abstinence from acquisition of new territory."54 In short, England should have had the good sense to keep up her pristine and unique liberal tradition.

The fruits of imperialism could only be acidly bitter for England because all the effects of militarism would work

52 Ibid., pp. 68, 47, 150.

53 Ibid., p. 150.

54 Ibid., p. 64.

to debase her culture. Hobson realized that being a nation of town dwellers was not conducive to the physical fiber of the British populace. But he did not think military conscription would revive the race physically. Not only would it fail as a physical regenerator, it would sap all that was best from the culture by destroying the whole value structure of that culture. The volunteer army, though small in size, had at least been composed of men who were disposed toward military service and who embodied the requisite fitness. But if England had a conscript army,

we could not fail to suffer in average fighting calibre. Such selection of physique and morale as prevailed under the voluntary system would now disappear, and the radical unfitness of a nation of town-dwellers for arduous military service would be disclosed. The fatuous attempt to convert ineffective slum-workers and weedy city clerks into tough military material, fit for prolonged foreign service, or even for efficient home defence, would be detected, it may be hoped, before the trial by combat with a military Power drawing its soldiers from the soil.⁵⁵

Hobson realized that the United States and England both prided themselves upon their "escape" from militarism. Now both countries were falling under the influence of military ideals. Civil virtue would consequently be destroyed. The good citizen could not be a soldier because the soldier's ethic revolved around his mission of killing. The type of morality bred by the instinct to kill did not operate only on the battlefield. It molded the soldier's consciousness

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 130-132.

through his whole daily routine: "his drill, parades, and whole military exercises." Regimentation on or off the battlefield would turn England into a nation of soldier-killers. And even in a state of peace, conscription, because it encouraged regimentation by its nature, would erode the fine foundations of England's culture.⁵⁶ Progress, as Victorian England had formulated the concept, could not be maintained with the onslaught of militarism.

At a time when the call for free, bold initiative and individual enterprise and ingenuity in the assimilation of the latest scientific and technical knowledge. . . becomes most urgent to enable us to hold our own in the new competition of the world--at such a time to subject the youth of our nation to the barrack system, or to any form of effective military training, would be veritable suicide.

The skilled laborers of England, more than any other group, would suffer if conscription were allowed to stamp out their individual initiative.⁵⁷

Although Hobson sympathized with the working class and believed that the solution for excess capital lay in feeding it to the cause of social reform, he was one of the first liberal-minded intellectuals in England to return wholeheartedly to the spirit of Cobdenism.⁵⁸ He desired international comity as well as domestic freedoms. Nationalism to Hobson was not a stumbling block to international friendship, rather, a

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 128, 133-134.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 132.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 81-85.

viable internationalism would depend upon "the existence of powerful self-respecting nationalities which seek union on the basis of common national needs and interests." The only element that marred the rise of an international spirit was imperialism. When a labor leader such as Hardie argued that workers throughout the world shared a common identity, he sounded vaguely like Hobson had in his anti-imperialist writing. "Capitalism," maintained Hardie, "knows no country, has no patriotism." Of course Hobson would have maintained that capitalism itself was salvageable, if its excesses could be correctly applied. But Hardie went on to insist that "militarism strengthens capitalism by perpetuating the fiction that there must be animosity between nations."⁵⁹

Thus the spirit of international working class solidarity as expressed by English labor leaders argued against armaments and imperialism in terms that were similar to those in the writings of intellectuals like Hobson who could be described as more liberal than laborite in their total outlook. The spirit of free trade, based upon the sanctity of freedom and the duty of voluntary action, although born of liberalism, was not alien to the way in which English labor leaders interpreted the international obligations of their proletarian followers

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 10; Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939 (London: Sheppard Press, 1949), p. 234.

In 1903, the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) was formed to promote a strict Marxist ideology in England. The dominant instinct in the party was one of militancy; its members promised that they would not become trade union officials since they believed that such positions would tempt them away from their militancy through the promise of mercenary gains. Tom Bell, a prominent member of the SLP, had quit the Independent Labour Party, and wrote later that the SLP was created to fight the ILP's insistence that "the ballot box and the return of a Labour Party majority to the House of Commons" were the only ways in which "the social emancipation of the working class [could] be achieved." But the party was not anti-Parliamentarian, Bell observed; it was simply opposed to "bourgeois parliamentarianism" and "capitalist state power." Those "who denounced all parliamentary action" were not welcome in the SLP.⁶⁰

Bell, who was from the Clyde area of Scotland thought that the workers there exhibited a great deal of class consciousness and rebellious spirit because of their "herded conditions of life. The tenement system, combined with the factory life, drew the workers close to each other."⁶¹

⁶⁰Kirkwood, Life of Revolt, pp. 82-83; Bell, Pioneering Days, pp. 33-35, 43, 18.

⁶¹Bell, Pioneering Days, p. 18.

Despite this high degree of class consciousness, workers did not always support socialist propaganda and sometimes reacted violently against it. Some of the outspoken socialists were viewed by the workers as exploiters of themselves.

The SLP did not attract a wide following; Bell thought that workers considered the party to be overly-intellectualized and therefore avoided it. Another reason for worker abstention from membership, in Bell's opinion, lay in the relative comfort of their life styles. Capitalists in England had beneficently bestowed a moderately good standard of living upon the working classes. For this reason it was hard for workers to develop a consciousness of antagonism to the wealth-producing and owning classes. A further result was the prevalence of "liberal bourgeois ideas. . . in the workers' movement, especially among the highly skilled and better-paid workers, with the exception of a small core of militants."⁶²

Bell considered himself one of this small core of militants and rightly so. He saw with regret that England's peculiar class structure and the fluidity inherent in that structure would retard, perhaps permanently, the development of a revolutionary consciousness. Bell had been a keen follower of Marx since his youth, but he feared that perhaps the Marxists of the SLP had made a mistake in their aloofness from the rest of the labor movement. All of those interested in the

⁶²Ibid., pp. 28, 69-70.

English working class had not worked together from the beginning of the movement. Some groups like the SLP had attempted to stick too closely to purist principles. Thus the movement became fragmented into separate ideological groups. Even Engels had advised against "purifying" the movement before it had achieved great strength and a coherent consciousness, said Bell.⁶³ Because the British movement had not applied his advice, it had greatly weakened itself. Yet Bell saw organization as an enemy of militancy. He recalled that in 1897 during a railway strike, the railway workers had been extremely militant, but organization into trade unions had decreased their militancy. He was caught in a dilemma between the virtues of a sectarian movement which might retain a pure Marxism, such as the SLP, and the strength of a massive and unified labor struggle. By 1904, when Keir Hardie was lauding the benefits of a gradual struggle through class cooperation, Bell was certain only that he himself could not accept the tenets of the ILP.⁶⁴

An important continental protagonist in the issue of military service was the French socialist Jean Jaurès, who had become notorious among socialists in France for his opposition to long-service military conscription. Jaurès did not eschew national military compulsion; he only disliked

⁶³Ibid., pp. 69-70, 10, Ch. 4 passim.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 26, 80, 100.

the long term of service that military authorities were demanding. In 1910, he published his ideas on French national defense; his book was an argument for cementing the ideals of the army and the nation together.⁶⁵ Without assuming any connection between Jaurès' book and England's conscription issue prior to the war, one might observe, since Jaurès claimed to be a pacifist, essential differences between the quality of much of English pacifism and that of Europe. Many of those who claimed to be pacifists in England turned fully toward the spirit of internationalism. Jaurès was much less an internationalist. He did not have the intense faith in international law that many English pacifists had, and he thought disarmament to be out of the scope of practical politics. Thus a national army of some kind was a necessity, but it should exhibit a "close union with the people. . . representing productive labour and . . . inspired by the energy of its ideals." The army would be valuable as a tool to teach the principles and benefits of collective action, and could provide a first step in organizing the whole society on a socialist basis.⁶⁶

Jaurès believed that it would do socialists no good to demand sweeping social reforms if they provoked the entire

⁶⁵Jean Jaurès, Democracy and Military Service, an abbreviated translation of L'Armée Nouvelle (1910), edited by G.G. Coulton with a preface by Pierre Renaudel (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., Limited, 1916), pp. 145, xi.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 5, 112, 1.

community to believe that "its very existence is menaced by our doctrines."⁶⁷ Thus, a sound policy of national defense had to be an integral part of a socialist program. The reasoning here became obvious when he wrote that

To have revolted against despotic kings and against the tyranny of capitalism, and then to suffer quietly the yoke of conquest and the lordship of foreign militarism, would be a contradiction in itself so childish and miserable that, at the first pinch, all instinct and reason would rise up and sweep it away. . . . To say that workmen, being already mere serfs of capitalism, could suffer no worse servitude through invasion or conquest, is simply childish.⁶⁸

The worker, Jaurès argued, was not without country, and he must keep that country free from foreign domination. He could either accept a democratic army drawn from universal service to defend his country, or suffer the potential tyranny of a professional army.⁶⁹ Jaurès thought that in most countries socialists accepted the idea of a citizen army; England was the exception.⁷⁰ And despite such English Marxists as Hyndman who stressed the need for a national army in England and a socialist M.P., Will Thorne, who argued, like Jaurès, that compulsory training would be beneficial to the propagation of democratic principles, many

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 82-83.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 89, 82.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 77-78.

of the English working-class leadership, though they were not necessarily pacifist, did oppose the adoption of conscription.⁷¹ And many who were avowedly pacifist, such as Hardie, also opposed conscription. While opposing conscription, men such as Hardie maintained the international quality of the class structure, an element which receded with the decidedly nationalistic flavor of Jaurès' socialism. Jaurès had cultivated the very trait that Shee had mournfully found lacking in the English culture: a tragic sense of history. The benefits of an isolationist culture had had their effect upon the English working classes as well as upon those who proclaimed themselves liberals.

H.N. Brailsford published an anti-imperialist tract, The War of Steel and Gold, in 1910.⁷² Like Hobson, whose biases were reflected in Brailsford's work, Brailsford had been conditioned to believe in modes of progress which were essentially Victorian; he believed intensely in the virtues of public education and thought the ballot was the only "direct and effective means of expression" of public opinion. But one product of the Victorian era that repelled him was imperialism. Like Hobson, Brailsford thought that the Liberal party had tragically compromised itself in the imperial

⁷¹ Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 227.

⁷²(London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1918).

question.⁷³ Also, like Hobson, Brailsford admired the early Victorian liberalism of Cobden.

Brailsford had great faith in the ability of international law to structure a better world. In the case of the armaments race, Brailsford proposed that judicious application of international law could lower naval estimates by making captures at sea illegal. He did not eschew nationalism, nor did he believe that total disarmament would cure the world of all its problems, yet he agreed with socialists that the working classes must cultivate a spirit of international unity. In some ways, Brailsford unconsciously agreed with Jaurès. He also thought that citizen armies were far preferable to professional armies which provided "an offence against democracy and against human dignity." Unlike Hobson, Brailsford thought that a citizen army could stimulate the qualities of pacifism in a culture by avoiding long terms of service and harsh military discipline.⁷⁴ It must be observed, however, that Brailsford wrote on behalf of the ILP during the war and the policy of the ILP was adamantly opposed to conscription.

Brailsford was not concerned with foreign tyranny over the homeland as Jaurès was, and a freer, more pristine pacifism became the essential feature of his work. His book was most strongly dedicated to the cause of lowering international

⁷³Brailsford, War of Steel and Gold, pp. 126-128.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 271, 185-187, 272.

armaments. The only way that nations would avoid wars was by feeling unprepared for them. The European arrangement of alliances and the corresponding armaments race betrayed the insecurity of the European community. Instead of simply disarming completely, European countries first had to re-evaluate their national aims in a way that would vitiate the imperialist ethic. The old diplomacy which had based itself on a balance of power must also be repudiated for that had been nothing more than a "struggle to map out. . . exclusive areas of financial penetration. To this end are the working classes in all countries taxed and regimented in conscript armies; for armies and fleets are the material arguments behind this financial diplomacy."⁷⁵ Brailsford was somewhat optimistic in believing that all had not yet been lost by the European community. After all it had been the "conscience of Europe" which maintained the freedom of small nations such as Switzerland.⁷⁶

When the English labor movement assumed its final pre-war burst of militancy, the problem of the army once again became a serious issue for labor leaders. The working class had, by 1910, still not developed a unified consciousness

⁷⁵Emmanuel Shinwell, Conflict without Malice (London: Oldhams Press Ltd., 1955), p. 43; Brailsford, War of Steel and Gold, pp. 17, 22, 169, 63.

⁷⁶Brailsford, War of Steel and Gold, p. 171.

and most of them supported either Liberal or Conservative candidates for Parliament. Only among self-educated workers did socialism develop any forcefulness. On the whole, the working class was not overly susceptible to theories or ideas and many of its members were blatantly reactionary. Although most maintained their faith in the ability of Parliament to meliorate social evils, there was a confused mixture within the movement of those who suspected the workings of democracy and those who believed in them. In England around 1910, prices began to rise steadily with no corresponding increase in wages.⁷⁷ And, out of a seemingly complacent atmosphere, came the rumblings of a new and militant movement which became known as industrial unionism.

Denounced by such notable Labour M.P.s as Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, the movement was an attempt to consolidate the unions so that employers would not follow their well-used policy of pitting them against one another. In 1910, the movement began to generate a series of strikes which provided serious dislocations for the English economy. The threat of calling out the army as either strikebreakers or keepers of order was ever present. A strike of transport workers brought a Government threat to call out 25,000 troops as strikebreakers. J.H. Thomas, at that time assistant

⁷⁷George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), p. 233; John Thomas Murphy, New Horizons (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1941), p. 32; Dangerfield, Strange Death, pp. 232, 215, 233, 234, 217-218.

secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, wrote in his memoirs that, as Prime Minister, Asquith seemed slightly sympathetic to the strikers but all too willing to call out the necessary forces for strike breaking, when railway workers threatened a national strike.⁷⁸ In November, a massive coal strike occurred in the Rhondda Valley and in accordance with the demands of local magistrates, the Government sent two companies of infantry and 200 cavalry soldiers to maintain order; in this case the mine officials found their own strikebreakers.⁷⁹

Syndicalism, the belief in "direct action" through a general strike, found its way into the new strike movement when Tom Mann founded the Syndicalist Education League in 1910. Mann's advocacy of a militant trade unionism that would bypass reliance on Parliament by using "direct action," fitted into the goals of industrial unionism and he was joined in his efforts by the leader of the transport workers, Ben Tillet.⁸⁰

During 1911, a "Don't Shoot Campaign" began when a leaflet authored by a Christian Anarchist was circulated among the soldiers at Aldershot training camp. The leaflet pleaded

⁷⁸Bell, Pioneering Days, pp. 75, 71-72; Rothstein, Chartism to Labourism, p. 310; Tomm, Memoirs (London: Macgibbon & Kee Ltd., 1967), p. 230; J.H. Thomas, My Story (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1937), pp. 33-34.

⁷⁹Dangerfield, Strange Death, pp. 241-243.

⁸⁰Mann, Memoirs, p. 230; Murphy, New Horizons, p. 31.

with the soldiers, asking them not to shoot at their fellow laborers during labor disputes. Tom Mann printed this circular in the January 1912 Syndicalist.⁸¹ One month later, the coal miners began a massive strike. Troops were called up to mining areas where barracks were hastily built to accommodate them. Mann was moved to read the "Open Letter," as it was now called, at a public meeting during the strike, with the result that he and others thought responsible for the publication of the letter were sentenced to six months' imprisonment. It was only through extra-Parliamentary agitation that Lansbury, Hardie, and several Liberal M.P.s were able to get Mann and other prisoners freed before their sentences were to end.⁸²

In 1912, when Parliament was debating the possibilities of military conscription, labor fears of the army's being used to curb their striking power became evident. It was noted that the Trades Dispute Act of 1906 had provided the use of both army and police for maintaining order in labor disputes. J.R. Clynes, in his comments, illustrated the connection between the laboring classes' hatred of militarism and their fear that the freedom to challenge employers might be regimented in a military fashion. England, feared Clynes, would be lined with barracks if she adopted conscription, and

⁸¹Mann, Memoirs, pp. 247-248.

⁸²Lansbury, My Life, pp. 117-118; Bell, Pioneering Days, pp. 77-78; Mann, Memoirs, pp. 247-248.

these would serve to remind workers of the state's power to discipline them. Also in the debates of 1912, Labour protested the intensive armaments competition which had pitted Great Britain against Germany.⁸³

Pacifist intellectuals continued to deride the evils of imperialism while the Independent Labour Party conducted a nation-wide campaign opposing the arms race during 1913 and 1914. Norman Angell, who was becoming very popular among American pacifists, contributed several articles to the Advocate of Peace, an American peace magazine, in which he argued that nations must forsake their useless commercial rivalries.⁸⁴ It was foolhardy to believe, he argued, that territorial increases necessarily improved the national wealth of any country. World trade was organic by nature and the benefits that one country achieved through commerce were interdependent upon the successes and failures of other countries. Somewhat like the Parliamentary Labourites, Angell feared that falsely-based commercial rivalries might cause England and Germany to drift quite accidentally into war with each other.⁸⁵ One Labour M.P., Philip Snowden thought that the movement against militarism was very successful with its massive outpouring of leaflets and its raising of funds to fight the evils of

⁸³Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 35(1912): 28, 1206-1207, 1587-1589.

⁸⁴Advocate of Peace, October 1913, 75: 212-214.

⁸⁵Ibid.

militarism and conscription.⁸⁶ But as a prominent laborite later wrote

the pacifism of the Labour Party was not so much a policy as a deliberate disregard of facts. Rather naively, many of the Parliamentary Labour Party believed that if an international conflict occurred, workers in all countries would unite. The pacifism of the labor movement had been spawned by a nebulous loathing of war and militarism. No real ideological cohesion in case of an actual conflict had been planned.⁸⁷

Besides, many of those who most strongly advocated pacifism were intellectuals who were strongly sympathetic to labor and even members of the Labour party, but who were not working-class men in their outlooks. The espousal of theory was much more in keeping with their intellectual pursuits than it was in the daily struggles of the majority of the working class. While the working class often despised militarism, it was more because of the real threat that an army might pose to their striking ability, and because of their instinctive hatred of regimentation, rather than because of any broad theories of pacifism.

Where the ideas of anti-imperialist intellectuals touched the labor movement, there was an expression of general opposition to conscription and other armaments as being contrary to the interests of internationalism. That these intellectuals harkened to the spirit of Cobden was shown by the post-war

⁸⁶ Snowden, Autobiography, 1:224.

⁸⁷ Shinwell, Labour Story, p. 85.

publication of a biography of Cobden: The International Man by Hobson himself.⁸⁸ Cobden had, wrote Hobson, hated balance-of-power diplomacy which was controlled by aristocrats who were out of touch with public interests. He had worked for a reduction of armaments and a lessening of international competition in that area. He had revered the power of international law for bringing world peace and argued that certain revisions, such as abolition of rights of captures at sea and blockade, could make international law a perfect basis for successful arbitration of any international conflict. In 1849, he had attended a peace conference at Paris which proposed universal disarmament as the duty of national governments. In 1854, he and John Bright had been burned in effigy for their resistance to the highly popular Crimean war. Cobden, who hated imperialism, had believed that it could only be cured by Free Trade "which will gradually and imperceptibly loose the bonds which unite our Colonies to us by a mistaken notion of self-interest."⁸⁹

Hobson realized that Cobden had had little or no sense of economic and social democracy, and that his belief in internationalism simply through non-intervention was naively based on an assumption that governments could never act

⁸⁸ (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1918).

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 10, 11, Charles Sumner quoted on pp. 56-57; p. 106; Cobden to Ashworth, 12 April 1842, John Morley, Lord Morley, The Life of Cobden, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1908), 1:248.

as powers for good. But his spirit was nonetheless to be lauded, argued Hobson, with its emphasis upon "free human co-operation, transcending the limits of nationality and race."⁹⁰ That spirit, maintained by Cobden as well as by members of the Independent Labour Party and anti-imperialists was certainly a manifestation of England's isolationist culture. The lack of a tragic history and sense of impending doom from invasion gave rise to a profound sense of freedom and optimism concerning the possibility of an international community of nations. The belief in internationalism founded itself upon the same spirit of voluntary action that marked the social consciousness of the English working classes. Without going to the ultimate extent of what Lionel Trilling called "Karl Marx's ultimate anarchy when the state shall have withered away,"⁹¹ many of the spokesmen for the laboring classes in England nevertheless steadfastly maintained the sanctity of the world over that of the nation in the years prior to and during the war.

Marxism and socialism had two distinct aims: the development of a highly-regimented and solid working-class consciousness and the development of an international order. Some English and continental socialist thinkers showed that the belief in a working-class consciousness did not necessarily favor international solidarity. Their feelings toward the development of national defenses showed that a belief in socialism was not

⁹⁰Hobson, Cobden, pp. 396, 21.

⁹¹Trilling, Matthew Arnold, p. 257.

incompatible with extremely nationalistic values. A tragic cultural conditioning aided in the compromise between socialism and nationalism where continental thinkers were concerned. With English socialists, such as Hyndman, the desire to regiment the working class into a homogeneous unit encompassed not only developing class consciousness, but developing patriotism also. Furthermore, Hyndman, like many conservative-imperialist thinkers, feared Germany and he wanted England to develop a massive weapon to use against her; that weapon would be a conscript army. A few English Marxists like Tom Bell and William Gallacher held both aspects of Marxist socialism at once: they wanted a working class with a unified consciousness at the same time that they hoped for international unity of all workingmen. In their internationalism and their extreme distrust of all armaments, they resembled their non-Marxist fellows in the English labor movement.

The porous nature of the English workers' movement invited a great deal of participation from intellectuals. The combination of worker and intelligentsia in a group such as the Independent Labour Party generally strengthened the international spirit at the expense of the class spirit. But worker and intellectual were not always in complete unity. The army's power over striking workers was a far more serious issue to the worker because it directly threatened his autonomy as a laborer. Yet the power of the army was not sufficiently threatening to force workers into a prolonged feeling of revolutionary solidarity or outrage. The same spirit of

individuality which invited the intelligentsia into the worker movement operated against the development of a solid revolutionary consciousness. The loose federation of workers and intelligentsia was never tightly organized, and it did not promise a completely unified and steady opposition to such issues as conscription during the course of the war.

CHAPTER 4

BUSINESS AS USUAL

The German invasion of Belgium on August 4, 1914 set in motion all the forces of moral duty and jingo idealism that had matured in Victorian England. Joyously accepting the role of England as a crusader to readjust the balance of international justice, Britons crowded in London streets to celebrate the declaration of war against Germany. On August 5, the Government called for mobilization of the Regular Army, the Special Reserves, and the Territorial force. It was decided to send one Cavalry division and four "divisions of all arms" immediately. This would comprise about 100,000 men. Two divisions for home defense would stay in England. Excited youths, vexed by the treatment of Belgium, mobbed recruiting stands in London in their anxiety to enlist. Duty and honor left them no choice. Those who wanted to remain at home agonized over the dilemma between desire and duty, and one of those tormented was heard to make an early wish for conscription, so that "they'll fetch us, and then it won't be me as has to choose, and I'll be thankful."¹

¹Quoted in Mrs. C.S. Peel, How We Lived Then 1914-1918 (London: John Lane the Bodley Head Ltd., 1929), p. 166;

But the popular will was generally in a mood of benevolent cheer; the loss of independent judgment that Hobson had earlier described seemed sadly prevalent to at least one confirmed pacifist, C.H. Norman. The war appeared as a great adventure. William Gallacher, a Glasgow radical, charted its effects on his laboring colleagues:

The wild excitement, the illusion of wonderful adventure and the actual break in the deadly monotony of working-class life! Thousands went flocking to the colours in the first days, not because of any 'love of country,' not because of any high feeling of 'patriotism,' but because of the new,² strange and thrilling life that lay before them.

The Principal of Manchester College at Oxford, Lawrence P. Jacks, later lauded these effects of war, because they had renewed the spirit of fellowship in the English community by imbuing it with a unified purpose. With the sense of mission had come peace of mind, a quality that the turbulent opening years of the century had nearly stolen for good. At long last the regeneration had come; reminiscent of Lord Tennyson's Maud,³ Jacks wrote that "England spending her money,

Michael MacDonagh, In London during the Great War (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1935), p. 8; John Denton Pinkstone French, First Earl of Ypres, 1914 (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1919), pp. 3,4; David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1934-1937), 1:61, 64, 66.

²William Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, An Autobiography (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1949), p. 18; Coningsby Dawson, The Glory of the Trenches (John Lane the Bodley Head, 1918), pp. 67-68; C.H. Norman, A Searchlight on the European War (London: The Labour Publishing Company Limited, 1924), p. 71.

³See above, Chapter 1, p.4.

and knowing for what she spends it, has more peace of mind than England making her money."⁴ One month after the beginning of war the Chancellor of Exchequer Lloyd George noticed that for the first time England had shed her materialism, to see "the fundamental things that matter in life."⁵

Her sons marched into battle clothed in a moral pride brought by the act of volunteering themselves to aid beleaguered Belgium. A later writer argued that while one might consider the war as the work of a just God punishing Europe for its imperialistic crimes, England could claim for herself a "disproportion between her offence and her punishment" since so many of her population voluntarily accepted the horrors of the battlefield.⁶ Vera Brittain, soon to become an active pacifist, lost her fiancé to the war effort; on departing, he wrote to her of the "obvious duty" that could on no account be avoided.⁷ A grandson of William E. Gladstone who had thrown himself into recruiting decided he could not ask others to go if he did not. His hatred of military

⁴Lawrence Pearsall Jacks, "The Peacefulness of Being at War," The New Republic 4(1915): 152-154, reprinted in Randolph Bourne et al, The World of Randolph Bourne, edited by Lillian Schlissel (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965), pp. 106, 103, 104, 105.

⁵Speech, 19 September 1914, Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (London: The Bodley Head, 1965), p. 49.

⁶Stephen McKenna, While I Remember (New York: George H. Doran, 1921), pp. 151-152.

⁷Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), pp. 103-104.

service had bred in him an ineptitude for army duties, he believed, and so he asked to be enlisted simply as a private in a group that would be certain to be shipped to the front.⁸ The public school tradition, which Miss Brittain saw as an embodiment of militaristic virtues, had done its work well. In the first years of the war, almost all of the officers of England's armies had formerly been public school men. The highest degree of recruitment among any single group came from men who had been public school and university students. Some of them, in the spirit of Rupert Brooke, proudly refused commissions. A youthful Fabian, F.H. Keeling, joined the ranks declaring that he was embarking upon "the greatest game and the finest school for men in the world."⁹ To these men and to others, the horrors of war seemed slight compared to the need of showing Germany the strength of their moral indignation. Matthew Arnold might have thought conscription to be socially redemptive, but his niece thrilled with an arrogant pride at seeing England raise over half of her potential manpower through voluntary service.¹⁰

⁸Herbert Gladstone, Viscount Gladstone, William G.C. Gladstone, A Memoir (London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1918), p. 108; W.G.C. Gladstone to General Mackinnon, August 1914, ibid., p. 107.

⁹F.H. Keeling, Keeling Letters and Recollections, edited by E. Townshend (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), p. 183; letter, 15 November 1914, ibid., p. 199; Brittain, Testament of Youth, pp. 99-100; McKenna, While I Remember, p. 164; Margaret Cole, Growing Up into Revolution (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949), p. 49. Brooke did accept a commission but when Sir Ian Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief in the Dardanelles, asked Brooke to join his personal staff, Brooke refused in favor of staying with his platoon.

¹⁰Cole, Growing Up, p. 50; Mrs. Humphrey Ward, England's Effort (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), pp. 11, 205.

England's hero was Lord Kitchener who, at the age of sixty-four, had been invited by Prime Minister Asquith to be Secretary of State for War. As a military hero of the Sudan and the Boer war, Kitchener's very name was magic in the recruiting campaign, drawing a half million men in the first month of war. One observer wrote that

though his pose offered the . . . suggestion of immense strength and even of latent fury . . . every trait of his appearance, his blue eyes and the cut of his features. . . proclaimed him to be English . . . Within a few months' time, when from every hoarding vast posters showed Lord Kitchener pointing into perspectives in space, so steadily perceived, if focused with uncertainty, and, below, the caption "He wants YOU!", I often thought of that square figure glowering. . . .¹¹

The Times's military correspondent, Charles à Court Repington, believed that if Kitchener and the Cabinet ever disagreed, England would vote to keep Kitchener and discard the Cabinet.¹² But it was evident very early that Kitchener's presence in the Cabinet would not be an easy one, either for personal relationships or for war administration. Although the Territorials had been quickly mobilized for service, with some of their numbers going to the front, Kitchener despised them as a force and believed they would be of no use in

¹¹Osbert Sitwell, quoted, Philip Magnus, Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1959), p. 276; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:113.

¹²Lieutenant-Colonel C. à Court Repington, The First World War 1914-1918, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 1:21.

the war effort. Therefore the armies raised in 1914 were a new force: Kitchener's Armies.¹³ Lloyd George later remarked that Kitchener had probably hampered his strategy by not using the Territorials more at the beginning of the war. Furthermore, Kitchener, who had been in Egypt in 1914, shouldered the duties of the General Staff almost single-handedly when by reputation he knew practically nothing of army administration within England itself.¹⁴

Recruiting was not an essential issue in the first few months of war, since the number of volunteers was so great. The large numbers stimulated hopefulness within the Cabinet of a hearty war effort and each time the ministers raised the official expectation of numbers, the population more than fulfilled it. Asquith wrote to the King on September 8 that "the recruits are coming in in embarrassing numbers: at present the average is about 30,000 a day."¹⁵ The most serious problem was not manpower, but manufacturing enough arms and supplies to equip all of the volunteers adequately. The large number of enlistments dampened any serious desires for conscription, as did the firm belief, held in contradiction to Kitchener's prediction of a long war, that it would

¹³Diary of August 1914, Repington, The First World War, 2:123; Walter Long, Viscount of Wraxall, Memories (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1923), p. 216.

¹⁴Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:340; diary of August 1914, Repington, The First World War, 1:22.

¹⁵Asquith to His Majesty, 8 September 1914, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/36, Public Record Office, Great Britain; this depository will be hereafter cited as PRO; Repington, The First World War, 1:43; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:116.

all be "over by Christmas" and that then England could resume "business as usual."¹⁶ In the first wild moments of war the response to duty had made the question of conscription seem somewhat absurd to the most idealistic;¹⁷ after grimness settled in, cheery slogans became the sources of uneasy hopes that old institutions might be maintained, despite the war. An American press observer noticed almost with resentment that the English public tried desperately to maintain an aloofness from the war by keeping up their games and entertainments, above all by remaining tremendously calm. Among the young male population, football players early attracted popular animosity for their general refusal to enlist. Arnold Bennett wrote to the Daily News on their behalf, urging that they be left alone to pursue football.¹⁸

As far as recruiting was concerned, the genuineness of the voluntary spirit quickly corroded. It had taken greater courage to refuse service when the voluntary spirit was lofty and one was likely to be scoffed at for pacifism, wrote Philip Snowden in his autobiography;¹⁹ the white feather tartly

¹⁶Repington, The First World War, 1:43; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:158.

¹⁷Caroline E. Playne, Society at War (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1931), p. 81.

¹⁸Will Irwin, Men, Women and War (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1915), pp. 157-158; Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Great Britain between 1901 and 1939 (London: Sheppard Press, 1949), p. 167.

¹⁹Philip Snowden, Viscount Snowden, An Autobiography, 2 vols. (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 1:404.

illustrated his point. Whenever men appeared in public without khaki they were subjected to a barrage of young girls who presented the feathers as symbols of cowardice. Little or no regard was had for men who might have been rejected as medically unfit or who had obligations which forbade them from volunteering. Recruiting songs were quite to the point, mincing no words in telling young men where they ought to be:

Oh, we don't want to lose you,
But we think you ought to go;
For your King and your country
Both need you so.

We shall want and miss you,
But with all our might and main
We will thank you, cheer you, kiss you,
When you come back again.²⁰

Recruiting sergeants began to tap young men on the shoulder at music-halls and ask politely but curtly, "Going to enlist, sonny?"²¹

In an eloquent argument for conscription published in 1917, Frederick Scott Oliver maintained that there had never been a pure spirit of voluntary idealism operating during the war. Many had been compelled to enlist by the threats of starvation and poverty. Employers had always been able to

²⁰Peel, How We Lived Then, p. 166; quoted, ibid., p. 46.

²¹Dawson, Glory of the Trenches, p. 74.

effect their own brand of compulsion. Labor writers had already discovered that in September 1914 when they noted that workers were being either discharged so that they would enlist, or underpaid so that they would seek a better place in the army.²² W.A. Appleton, a Labour M.P., later wrote that the working classes, who by 1917 made up eighty-five per cent of the British forces, had joined the army to save Belgium.²³ But more radical observers saw that thousands of workmen had poured into the army simply because the recruiting sergeant offered relief from unemployment. Unemployment was not always a purposeful scheme for stimulating recruitment either. At the very beginning of war, dislocations in industry caused many employers to shut their businesses down; thus the cry "Enlist or go!" became not only a cheap type of conscription by employers, but in some cases a desperate appeal.²⁴ Whether from patriotism or hunger, the working classes enlisted in hordes. In the first six months of war, the number of coal miners in England dropped from

²²Frederick Scott Oliver, Ordeal by Battle (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), p. 365.

²³William Archibald Appleton, The Workers' Resolve (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 1917), p. 3.

²⁴Connolly to Irish Worker, 31 October 1914, James Connolly, Socialism and Nationalism (Dublin: Sign of the Three Candles, 1948), p. 173; John Thomas Murphy, New Horizons (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1941), p. 43; E. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Home Front (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1932), pp. 18, 23.

999,424 to 191,170. During this time the output of coal declined by about eleven per cent.²⁵ It was evident very early that voluntary enlistment was costing England her skilled labor. Lloyd George sadly observed that it was difficult to convince a patriotic worker that he might be needed on the home front as dearly as the recruiting sergeant needed him.²⁶

From the beginning of war, the progress of recruiting in Ireland became intertwined with a growing revolutionary consciousness. John Redmond who headed the Irish Nationalist Party in Parliament compromised the goals of the Nationalists by allowing the Home Rule Act to be placed on the statute books without demanding that it be enacted. The Volunteer army in Ireland immediately split between those who remained loyal to the Nationalist party in Parliament and those who wanted immediate and practical Home Rule. The Home Rulers managed to force Nationalists from positions of leadership in the Volunteers.²⁷ Redmond himself worked diligently to encourage Irish recruitment, but Kitchener's reputation as an Ulster sympathizer was not helpful. Furthermore, recruiting officers throughout the British Isles were generally old and

²⁵Robert Smillie, My Life for Labour (London: Mills & Boon, Limited, 1924), p. 242; Sir Leo G. Chiozza Money, The Triumph of Nationalization (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1920), p. 46.

²⁶Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:159, 1:254-255.

²⁷Darrell Figgis, Recollections of the Irish War (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1927), p. 65.

crusty and flaunted a rude British-oriented jingoism. In Ireland, their propaganda was often not well-received; it dealt the Irish recruiting program an irreparable blow.²⁸ Irish radicals were quick to realize that Redmond's hasty promises of military aid to England by Irish Volunteers would mean an indiscriminate grouping of Nationalist Volunteers with Ulster Volunteers and, worse than that, expectations of cooperation between these two groups. These radicals, suspicious from the first months of war that England would foist conscription on the Irish, determined to erect a solid barrier of resistance to any such attempts. In the first weeks of the war, the Irish Volunteers did contribute several thousand men to England's war effort, but in the view of radical James Connolly they had regained their reason by September 1914. By September 5, a strong movement had developed to keep Volunteers from being "handed over to the War Office."²⁹

While radical leadership developed a strong cohesion in Ireland, it was shattered in England by the initial assault of the war. The Independent Labour Party in the first of its Labour and War Pamphlets published in 1915 argued that Belgium had only been a good excuse for the Foreign Office to drag

²⁸ Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:146.

²⁹ Connolly to Forward, 5 September 1914, Connolly, Socialism and Nationalism, p. 145; Connolly to Irish Worker, 24 October 1914, ibid., p. 169; Connolly to Forward, 5 September 1914, ibid., p. 146.

England into war, and that it had then handily caused the break-up of the peace party in England.³⁰ On August 5, James Ramsay MacDonald resigned his leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party because it was not unified against the war. On the same day the National Executive of the Labour Party met and, to compromise differences within itself, resolved against direct opposition to the war while nebulously urging party members to work for early peace negotiations to reunite the international working class movement.³¹ Ramsay MacDonald as a renegade did not become an effective leader. True radicals among the working classes did not trust the genuineness of his anti-war stance. Pacifism quickly became intellectualized by such groups as the Union of Democratic Control, founded in December 1914, which was controlled by Liberal rather than radical leadership.³²

Nor did working-class radicals cement a unified opposition to the war. "Poor little Belgium" appealed to many Marxists who hated the images of both the Kaiser and the Czar. Hyndman fumed over the pacifism in his own party and eventually formed

³⁰Independent Labour Party, How the War Came, Labour and War Pamphlets no. 1 (London: Independent Labour Party, 1915), pp. 12, 14.

³¹Henry Pelling, A Short History of the Labour Party (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 35-37; Labour Party Annual Report quoted, ibid., pp. 36-38.

³²Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, p. 69; Lord Frederick William Pethick-Lawrence, Fate Has Been Kind (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1942), p. 113.

the National Socialist Party to support the war.³³ In the Socialist Labour Party opinions were split three ways: Tom Bell advocated pure and wholehearted opposition to war, J.W. Muir advocated preparation for national defense in case of invasion, and a third segment in the party saw the war "as an event of world importance that would hasten the inevitable collapse of capitalism," favoring an academic treatment of it as such. Muir's stance led to a split in that party.³⁴

The break-up of the Parliamentary Labour Party over war issues left the Independent Labour Party vaguely on the side of pacifism and the trade unions in favor of a hearty execution of the war effort. By the autumn, ILPers had begun to suffer "boycott, animosity, and sometimes physical assault from their neighbours and workmates," while trade union leaders were manning recruiting platforms.³⁵ J.H. Thomas maintained faith in the war as a fight for the "sacred cause of Liberty," in his recruiting fervor.³⁶ J.R. Clynes, who was himself a member of the ILP, became a fierce supporter of the war. Support

³³John Paton, Proletarian Pilgrimage (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1935), p. 248; Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, pp. 27-28.

³⁴Thomas Bell, Pioneering Days (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1941), p. 102; Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, p. 27.

³⁵Paton, Proletarian Pilgrimage, p. 249; Fenner Brockway, Inside the Left (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1942), p. 48.

³⁶J.H. Thomas, My Story (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1937), pp. 36-37.

for the war by no means indicated support for conscription, he insisted, and the reason that so many labor leaders addressed recruiting meetings was to stave off the potential onslaught of conscription.³⁷ Despite the confusion over aims, most of the labor leadership maintained at least a vague opposition to conscription. The confident optimism that had been generated by historical isolation infected laborites, and in September 1914, it seemed that perhaps conscription would be avoidable. Keir Hardie commented almost languidly in the *Daily Citizen* that "by and by we shall learn what our comrades on the continent are doing; meanwhile let us remember that Germany, France, and Belgium are all threatened with invasion, of which we run no risk."³⁸

With the large numbers of volunteers flowing in, the Government, because of disorganization within the recruiting campaign, was not able to absorb all the willing manpower. After the initial rushes, recruits still flowed in at an average rate of 300,000 per month for the first three months of war. The recruiting authorities raised physical standards as a prohibitive measure.³⁹ In the pages of Punch, there appeared a caricature

³⁷J.R. Clynes, Memoirs 1869-1937, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 1:190.

³⁸Quoted, G.G. Coulton, Workers and War (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1914), p. 5.

³⁹Marwick, The Deluge, p. 35; Lloyd George, War Memoirs,

of an anguished young man missing several teeth and moaning to a recruiting sergeant, "Man, ye're making a gran' mistake. I'm no wanting to bite the Germans, I'm wanting to shoot 'em."⁴⁰ Because of the crusty old sergeants who had been revived as recruiting officers, Christopher Addison, Undersecretary of Education, believed the voluntary idealism of England's youth might be in for a quick dampening. The administrative inabilities of these old sergeants caused many men to have to stand in line for several days waiting to go through the enlistment process.⁴¹ The lack of organization in the British military effort had been seen by the Morning Post in the late days of August as a potential obstacle to the adoption and successful administration of a conscription policy.⁴²

During the early months of war, the guidelines for the wartime press were laid down. One of Lord Kitchener's first acts was his appointment on August 6 of a Press Censor, whose function was to keep all "dangerous" material from the newspapers, while making England aware of the grimness of the war.⁴³ The arrangements eventually made for press reporting

⁴⁰Charles Larcom Graves, Mr. Punch's History of the Great War (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1919), p. 4.

⁴¹Diary of 21 October 1914, Christopher Addison, Four and a Half Years, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1934), 1:37-38.

⁴²Scott to Hobhouse, 27 August 1914, Charles Prestwick Scott, The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, edited by Trevor Wilson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 101.

⁴³George Allardice Riddell, Lord Riddell, Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914-1918 (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1933), pp. 9-10, 16-17.

of war news were very unsatisfactory to newsmen; civilian correspondents could not go to the front; all news was reported to them by a military "Eye Witness." The manner in which news was doled to pressmen ultimately led to an unwarranted and euphoric optimism on the conduct of war being circulated by British newspapers.⁴⁴ At least one part of the press had already decided to see that the war was prosecuted effectively. The Times and the Daily Mail, papers owned by the vituperative Lord Northcliffe, gained a reputation for crass jingoism among youthful idealists as early as the third day of the war.⁴⁵

That the Liberal Government of Asquith was inefficient in its war-time administration was shown by its slowness in arranging "separation allowances" (allowances paid to dependents) and pensions to be paid to the dependents of men at the front or to the widows of men who had already been killed. Recruiting posters did not fully explain the economic niceties of enlistment and many dependents of soldiers were left in a state of abject misery. Several women working in the East End of London under the leadership of Sylvia Pankhurst formed the League of Rights for Soldiers' and Sailors' Wives and Relatives. The goals of the League were to obtain

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 17-18. A few correspondents were allowed to go to the front during March 1915.

⁴⁵Letter, 7 August 1914, Keeling, Letters and Recollections, pp. 113-114.

standardized and adequate separation allowances for all wives of soldiers at the front, to obtain allowances for other dependents, and to obtain pensions for widows. As Sylvia Pankhurst reported, the Government operated very slyly in the case of new recruits. If the enlisted soldier earmarked part of his pay to be sent to a dependent other than wife, such as mother, brother, or sister, the Government withdrew that person's right to a legal charity dole.⁴⁶ This left some with incomes far below subsistence level.

In November 1914, the Government launched its first attempt to systematize recruiting in the "Householders' Return." Forms bearing the signatures of the three party leaders, Asquith, Conservative Andrew Bonar Law, and Labourite Arthur Henderson, were mailed to every head of household in England, inquiring his willingness to serve in the army. Those of military age who wanted to serve were to return the forms freely, under no compulsory sanctions.⁴⁷

At the same time that the Government worked to expedite recruiting, a burgeoning movement to oppose conscription began to consolidate itself. The No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) was organized in November 1914 under the chairmanship of

⁴⁶"Early Days," reprinted from the New Statesman, 26 September 1914, Keeling, Letters and Recollections, pp. 207-208; George Lansbury, My Life (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1928), p. 208; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 81.

⁴⁷Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:162.

Clifford Allen, "for common counsel and action of men of enlistment age who will refuse from conscientious motives to bear arms because they consider human life sacred."⁴⁸ The leaders of the NCF were Fenner Brockway, Clifford Allen, and C.H. Norman. The membership of the group included those who were pacifists on religious grounds, those who were simply pacifists, and a collection of Anarchists and socialists. They were united by their youthfulness; Brockway noted that in the earlier part of the war almost all the resistance to conscription was organized by men under twenty-five.⁴⁹ The organization grew rapidly in the last weeks of 1914 and by the beginning of 1915, a national headquarters was opened in London. The movement did not attract sympathy from the really radical working-class leadership which during the war was located in Glasgow and in the Welsh coal mines. In its denunciation of war and conscription, the NCF was too aloof from the class struggle. Brockway realized, too, that while a front had now been erected against conscription, there was still confusion within that front itself. At one anti-conscription meeting an ILP leader stood up and shrieked that it was not more men that were needed; it was instead more and better guns.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Brockway, Inside the Left, p. 66; Norman, Searchlight on the European War, p. 90.

⁴⁹Brockway, Inside the Left, p. 69.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 66-68, 52.

Religious opposition to military values became increasingly evident in the last weeks of 1914. Lloyd George noticed that most of the Nonconformists in England had held aloof from enlistment. Free Churchmen, especially Baptist ministers, became increasingly loud in their pacifist arguments during December. In that month the Fellowship of Reconciliation was founded to organize Christian pacifism as the NCF had begun to coordinate humanitarian pacifism.⁵¹

The Cabinet did not administer the war effectively during 1914. Conflicts developed between the Cabinet and Kitchener, who wanted to keep civilians out of war administration as much as possible.⁵² Kitchener also became estranged from Sir John French, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in France. The deterioration of their relationship became intertwined with a growing crisis over munitions. Unknown to the Cabinet, French had begun in the fall of 1914 to send desperate messages to the War Office, requesting artillery shells. The War Office failed to meet these requests, and as the war progressed French became more insistent in his demands.⁵³

In addition to the still embryonic problem with munitions, difficulties began to appear with recruiting. At least one

⁵¹Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:315-316; diary of 1 December 1914, Riddell, War Diary, p. 44; diary of 5 December 1914, ibid., p. 44; Hayes, Conscription Conflict, pp. 276-277.

⁵²Magnus, Kitchener, pp. 284-285; French, 1914, p. 99.

⁵³French, 1914, pp. 177, 292; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:127-130; Repington, The First World War, 1:29.

Cabinet member believed that Kitchener's lack of imagination was beginning to cancel the benefits of his charismatic influence over recruiting. Christopher Addison, working in October 1914 to improve the Standing Camps in which new recruits were trained, met only cold resistance from Kitchener and the War Office, on the grounds that there could not be any civilian interference with these military functions. Addison wanted to arrange recreational facilities in the camps, but Kitchener insisted that the recruits would be busy throughout the day with training and military duties. When those were done, they could go home to bed. To Addison, Kitchener's intransigence had already begun to hamper recruitment. Kitchener was too concerned with his training program that appeared to Addison as a "physical impossibility." The Standing Camps, groaned Addison, did not even provide shelter on a rainy day.⁵⁴

War Office insistence that civilians keep out of military administration led to a worsening during October 1914 of the problem of separation allowances to soldiers' dependents. These allowances had been administered by the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association (SSFA). This represented a civilian assault, as far as the War Office was concerned, upon the sanctity of military administration.⁵⁵ Once again,

⁵⁴Diary of 22 October 1914, Addison, Four and a Half Years, 1:38-39.

⁵⁵Diary of 23 October 1914, ibid., 1:40.

to assert itself against England's propensity for civilian control over matters of national interest, the War Office insisted it would tolerate no interference and took administration away from the SSFA with results, as Sylvia Pankhurst's memoirs testify, that left hundreds of poor women bereft of financial resources.⁵⁶ In November, the War Office objected to extending the benefits of national insurance to soldiers, thus maintaining their total incomprehension of social realities. The Cabinet did all that it could to counteract the tenacious intransigence of the War Office, but with little success.⁵⁷ The War Office, in its own way, did "business as usual."

The successes of army recruiters had lessened by the end of 1914. Although Lloyd George could report that by the end of 1914 over one million men had enrolled in either Kitchener's Armies or the Territorials, monthly totals had decreased considerably. By the New Year, approximately 120,000 men were coming in per month.⁵⁸ Recruiters combined the commercial instinct in England with a religious idealism in their campaign to lure England's youth to the front. A French observer commented that the campaign betrayed England's

⁵⁶Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 97.

⁵⁷Diary of 24 November 1914, Addison, Four and a Half Years, 1:47; diary of 26 October 1914, ibid., 1:41.

⁵⁸Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:315; 2:159.

character as "a nation not of State servants, not of soldiers, but of free businessmen. For the essence of business is liberty--liberty of prices, of supply and demand, of competition in all its forms."⁵⁹ The increasing intensity of the recruiting campaign showed itself in an ever-increasing number of recruiting posters and meetings. It began to occur to some at this time that the voluntary system might be flagging. But the "official" temper at the closing of 1914, wrote Lloyd George, was to keep the Germans contained, leisurely accept the war, and "take our time to enroll and equip."⁶⁰

In the first months of war, several diverse sources had provided England with a large group of raw recruits. The tradition of voluntary idealism, especially as it was inculcated into public school and university men, and a sense of duty toward Belgium, pushed many thousands to the colors. The appeal of Kitchener also drew men into the army. A third impetus toward volunteering was the effect of poverty and unemployment upon thousands of workmen. Because the Cabinet handled war-time administration sloppily and because no smooth coordination existed between the Cabinet and the War Office, the Government never adequately tapped what England would have given voluntarily. The recruiting campaign was

⁵⁹André Chevillon, England and the War, quoted, William Ernest Mackie, "The Conscription Controversy and the End of Liberal Power in England 1905-1916," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1966), p. 115.

⁶⁰Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:310; Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 150.

not conducted efficiently, and few attempts were made to make enlistment amenable to the needs of potential recruits and their dependents. The Government's "business as usual" methods militated against a significant effort to provide benefits for volunteers and the recruiting campaign began to show signs of a waning enthusiasm as early as the end of 1914.

CHAPTER 5

COALITION AND WAR-TIME CONTROLS

The beginning of 1915 saw the beginning of a new consciousness in Britain. Though the war effort was still conducted good-naturedly, the cheerfulness of 1914 was settling into resignation. The munitions problem, now trickling slowly into the realization of Cabinet members was soon to grow to mammoth proportions, giving the signal to Englishmen that it was time for a unified, controlled, and efficient strategy at home as well as at the front.

Early in 1915 the central figure in the demand for a directed war effort became Lloyd George. By the end of the year, he had come to symbolize all that an efficient war policy might stand for. On the first day of 1915, Lloyd George wrote that England was no longer deluded by falsely optimistic reports on the war.¹ His claim was supported by a growing desire on the part of the press for the Government to reveal exactly what was needed of the population for success in the war.

Taking a very pragmatic approach, the Manchester Guardian, a bulwark of liberal opinion, suggested that the Government

¹Lloyd George to War Council, 1 January 1915, David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1934-1937, 1:324.

should set the country straight on the manpower situation, so that conscriptionists would know whether their arguments were valid or not.² The Guardian believed that there was probably no need of conscription, because if the Government would honestly state its manpower needs to the country, recruiting would increase in response. The first of the year had been marked by a drop in recruiting and the Guardian believed the reasons for the drop were that no one knew "exactly what the Government wants or thinks," and no one knew exactly how bad the situation was. This pragmatic approach was maintained by the Guardian throughout the crisis over conscription. Never believing that the Government had been completely honest in its public assessment of the situation, the Guardian resisted the passage of conscription and criticized its eventual adoption. Thus the press censorship enacted in 1914 became an instrument for pragmatic anti-conscription arguments. If the Government could prove the necessity of conscription, argued the Guardian, the country would accept it cheerfully.

The high physical standards set by recruiting offices in 1914 were still in effect at the opening of 1915, despite the drop in recruitment. Along with the intensity of recruiting speeches, the decline of the physical standard became a barometer measuring the declining successes of recruiters.

²Manchester Guardian, 13 January 1915, p. 3.

Into many recruiting addresses, the topic of conscription crept through a back door. Lord Derby, a dashing aristocrat who chaired the West Lancashire Territorial Association and presided over the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, had become very active in the recruitment drive; he warned his hearers that "business as usual" was no longer a viable approach to the war. Britain must meet Germany on her own terms; possibly conscription was one of the terms.³ "Shirkers" also became a popular butt of recruiting addresses, as they had always been to white-feather girls. Volunteer Training Corps had begun to organize themselves to meet a possible invasion, and Lord Derby insisted that these must not become havens for shirkers.⁴ Speaking to a recruiting rally, Lord Rosebery, a former Liberal Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary reasoned that England would welcome conscription in order to force the shirkers to do their duty.⁵

Problems which would become increasingly severe were already noticeable in the recruitment drive. In the first week of January it was found that the Householders' Return was not successful. Many had returned their notices and signed themselves "willing," but never appeared at a

³Manchester Guardian, 7 January 1915, p. 6.

⁴Ibid., 5 January 1915, p. 12; 9 January 1915, p. 7.

⁵Ibid., 11 January 1915, p. 6.

recruiting station to prove it.⁶ Class patterns in recruiting began to appear. G.G. Coulton later observed that volunteer armies followed a general scheme in which officers were mostly of the upper classes and upper-middle classes, while the ranks were filled by those of the poorest classes; the middle and lower-middle classes generally did not choose to serve.⁷ This observation seemed to be true in 1915 when the Manchester Guardian remarked that the wealthy classes and the working classes contributed far more to the success of recruiting than the middle classes did.⁸ The dislocations in industry and business had eased; now employers held onto their men. The most notorious for holding men back were small employers who feared that they would not find qualified new employees. Clerks and shop assistants increasingly fell into the category of "slackers." One recruiting official believed they were all holding back on some vague hope of receiving a commission.⁹ An advertisement appeared in the Guardian pleading with shopkeepers to entreat their employees to enlist. "Have you not realized that we cannot have 'business as usual' whilst the War continues?" it asked.¹⁰ On the

⁶Ibid., 6 January 1915, p. 3.

⁷G.G. Coulton, The Case for Compulsory Military Service (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1917), p. 17.

⁸Manchester Guardian, 2 January 1915, p. 6.

⁹Ibid., 8 February 1915, p. 10.

¹⁰Ibid., 17 February 1915, p. 6.

other hand, certain parts of the labor force were becoming so badly depleted, that their shortage of numbers began to constitute a national hazard. Robert Smillie, president of the Scottish Miners' Federation, argued that there seemed to be no coordination among Government departments in the allocation of men. The War Office became notorious for having no regard for the manpower needs of any department besides itself. Military authorities demanded more and more recruitment from among coal miners with no consideration of the serious diminution of the work force.¹¹ The army also was heedless of warnings from farmers that there would not be a large enough labor force to bring in the 1915 crop; the army blithely argued that food could be got from abroad.¹² A few feeble attempts were made to keep skilled workers essential to the war effort from enlisting.¹³ These and other mistakes became increasingly recognizable. Arthur Henderson, who had taken Ramsay MacDonald's place as head of the Parliamentary Labour Party, commented to the Manchester Guardian that the high physical standards set in the recruiting campaign were beginning to operate adversely, by discouraging too many potential recruits. Housing for the

¹¹Robert Smillie, My Life for Labour (London: Mills & Boon, Limited, 1924), pp. 245, 230.

¹²Manchester Guardian, 25 January 1915, p. 6; 21 January 1915, p. 12.

¹³Ibid., 6 January 1915, p. 3.

new armies was so bad that it hurt recruiting by encouraging gloomy reports from enlistees to their friends. Also, he noted that the poor separation allowances and the paucity of disability provisions hurt the recruiting campaign.¹⁴

Conscription was not yet a serious issue. On one day that recruiting surged upward, the Manchester Guardian cheerfully said that "if the response continues as good as it was yesterday the last lingering echoes of the calls for conscription will soon die away."¹⁵ And recruiting posters were almost senselessly optimistic, several of them urging young men to "Book at Once--Free Tickets to Berlin."¹⁶ In the House of Lords, Lord Crewe gave the Government's official position on conscription: it was not seen as a real possibility. Lord Haldane added a pragmatic note by saying that conscription, if it became necessary, was not incompatible with the British constitution, but that he saw "no reason to anticipate the breakdown of the voluntary system."¹⁷ Lloyd George circulated a Cabinet memorandum in late February which urged a serious effort to get more men in the field. Methods of training and equipping must be improved, he argued, so that while a military status quo was being maintained, huge units could

¹⁴Ibid., 13 January 1915, p. 3.

¹⁵Ibid., 5 January 1915, p. 3.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Lords), 5th ser., 18(1914-1915): 378; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:162-163.

be prepared to strengthen the Allies' position. But conscription was unnecessary. The Government needed only to appeal to Britain's spirit of patriotism to get men, thought Lloyd George. He suggested placing levies on counties and then allowing local pride to do the work of getting them filled.¹⁸

Idealism had certainly not faded in England. The Lord Mayor of Manchester, who reputedly favored compulsory methods of recruitment, took an opportunity to address the audience of Shakespeare's Henry V on the glories of volunteerism, saying "I think we should much prefer to finish this war on the voluntary principle, so that we should not give the gratification to our enemies of letting them see that we had to adopt their methods to attain our own ends."¹⁹ A letter in the Guardian pleaded with military-aged men to volunteer, because to ignore England's present needs constituted the greatest disloyalty. To show how much superior England's voluntary tradition was over conscript systems, its author cited the remarks of a youthful Englishman who had once attended the University of Berlin:

Official Germany is intolerable to an Englishman. . . . I have missed any enthusiasm, any idealism, any sense of a 'cause' or a 'call.' In England things are always stirring us up: one's own people, for one thing, but more the sense of a great public spirit, fine traditions,

¹⁸Lloyd George to Cabinet, 22 February 1915, Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:369.

¹⁹Manchester Guardian, 12 January 1915, p. 6.

noble indignations and ardours. [In Germany] there is no such thing as a public spirit.²⁰

Many scholars and clerics worked tirelessly during the year to defend the righteousness of the cause, bringing it to the proportions of a holy crusade. The Incorporated Association of Headmasters resolved in their annual conference to make the schools into instruments for disseminating the moral issues involved in the war.²¹

The Illustrated London News, convinced that pacifism was no more than a crude accoutrement of capitalist lust, celebrated the bracing effects of war. It would provide physical regeneration; besides teaching the "youth of the proletariat," who "necessarily" formed the bulk of the army, "that there are things in this world worth striving for besides a sufficiency of food and drink."²² Besides, the war would solve the problem of an enlarged population. The "Britishness" of volunteerism impressed Labour leaders such as Henderson who argued in a recruiting speech that anyone who embraced conscription and derided volunteerism was unpatriotic in the extreme.²³

The Independent Labour Party, while denouncing the support that Parliamentary Labourites gave to the recruiting movement,

²⁰Ibid., 14 January 1915, p. 10.

²¹Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), p. 126; Manchester Guardian, 6 January 1915, p. 10.

²²Illustrated London News, 13 February 1915, p. 214.

²³Manchester Guardian, 12 January 1915, p. 4.

employed a very similar idealism in their arguments.²⁴ In the series of Labour and War Pamphlets published in 1915, J. Bruce Glasier contributed pamphlets on Militarism and The Peril of Conscription. Glasier recounted England's struggle with the Stuart kings, Charles II and James II, to maintain freedom from military tyranny in a description which resembled the Whiggish historical theories of Lord Macaulay. England had become great, argued Glasier, because of her freedom from militarism. It had not been

mere soldiering [that] gave us the Magna Carta, Trial by Jury, the Habeas Corpus, the Bill of Rights, our Reformation, our Mother of Parliaments, our freedom of the press, or that boyish spirit of freedom and adventure which has spread the English race and speech across every sea.

The war had already begun to show visible effects of severely damaging all that was fine in British culture. With all the soldiers now milling in English streets, it seemed to Glasier "as though some foreign rule had suddenly fallen on us--as though the nation were become continentalised, in fact."²⁵

The initial assault upon the sanctity of English culture and traditions had been the pursuit of empire. Commerce, which in its early stages had cultivated international peace in its own interests, had now become capitalist and imperialist,

²⁴Ibid., 4 January 1915, p. 9a.

²⁵J. Bruce Glasier, Militarism, Labour and War Pamphlets no. 2 (London: Independent Labour Party, 1915), pp. 9,4,1.

thereby demanding the development of militarism to aid it in its newer, aggressive forms. It was commerce, then, that had ultimately brought imperialism and in turn, a "New Militarism," of which conscription was to be "the teeth and claws." Glasier emphasized its potential use against the working classes by the moneyed interests. Militarism itself was partly a result of capitalist determination to continue its manipulation of labor, and conscription was the obvious tool for such manipulation. In a Victorian tone of voice, Glasier deprecated the effects that conscription would have in disrupting the home and family life of those in the working classes.²⁶ The answer to Britain's problems with militarism and conscription, Glasier finally concluded, was a change in diplomacy, so that after the war British foreign policy would be able to stimulate some sort of "confederation for peace and disarmament." In the meantime, the British should resist all attempts to establish conscription, unless the war became a life-and-death struggle for England, at which time conscription would possibly be acceptable. But, wrote Glasier, the struggle was "happily" not so dire, and was not likely to be.²⁷

During February 1915, labor disputes which involved work stoppages began to mushroom. The Board of Trade reported

²⁶Ibid., pp. 10, 15; J. Bruce Glasier, The Peril of Conscription, Labour and War Pamphlets no. 3 (London: Independent Labour Party, 1915), pp. 4,9,7; Glasier, Militarism, p. 14; Glasier, Conscription, p. 10.

²⁷Glasier, Conscription, pp. 8, 21.

that strikes known to it had risen from ten in the month of January to forty-seven in February and seventy-four during March.²⁸ Lloyd George revealed his growing conviction that it was the munitions supply which was now crucial for the success of the war effort.²⁹ A successful munitions policy depended on good labor relations. During March, labor and munitions became his twin targets in his effort to move war policy toward control. The struggle became a duel between Lloyd George and Kitchener, the only two men according to The Times foreign correspondent who had acquired influence over the public.³⁰

In the first week of March, Lloyd George secured governmental control of munitions under the provisions of the Defense of the Realm Act (DORA). Now the Government could take over any factory and control its output in the interests of war production. The War Office, believing that only traditional armaments factories should supply war material, declined to use these powers. Furthermore, Kitchener argued that the committee organized to facilitate these new provisions

²⁸Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:264; Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (London: The Bodley Head, 1965), p. 72; Emmanuel Shinwell, Conflict without Malice (London: Oldhams Press Ltd., 1955), p. 54; John Thomas Murphy, New Horizons (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1941) p. 44.

²⁹Manchester Guardian, 3 January 1915, p. 10.

³⁰Diary of 2 May 1915, Frances Leveson Bertie, Viscount Bertie, The Diary of Lord Bertie of Thames, edited by Lady Algernon Gordon Lennox, with a forward by Viscount Grey of Fallodon, 2 vols. (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1924), 1:156.

of DORA must not interfere with either regular armaments firms, firms contracted for work by the War Office, or firms that were likely to be contracted by the War Office. Kitchener's motives were not senseless, for, as he later wrote, he feared that volunteer soldiers who lacked long periods of training, would desert or flee, if they were supplied with defective artillery and shells.³¹ But these instructions threatened to render Lloyd George's work futile, since they effectively negated the munitions committee's purpose. Kitchener was not alone in his disgust over the new laws. The trade unions, fearing an undermining of their privileges by a Governmental policy of diluting the labor force with women and unskilled workers, opposed Lloyd George's measures.³²

Between March 10 and 13, the British troops on the Western Front suffered a serious setback at Neuve Chapelle and the failure was blamed on inability to procure enough munitions.³³ This incident shook England both inside and outside the Government and with it, the idea of "business as usual" lost its effect. On March 15, Kitchener addressed the House of

³¹Kitchener to Du Cane, 22 October 1915, Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:88; ibid., 1:161-162; E. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Home Front (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1932), p. 158.

³²Shinwell, Conflict without Malice, p. 54.

³³Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:152-153, 168; Marwick, The Deluge, p. 52; A.J.P. Taylor, A History of the First World War (New York: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1966), pp. 49-50.

Lords and emphasized England's grave deficiencies in munitions. The admission was an uncomfortable one to the popular mind and Lloyd George believed that its impact helped him to come to terms with labor in the same month. The Treasury Agreement which he concluded with trade union leaders arranged for systematic dilution of labor, provided arbitration in lieu of strikes, and limited personal profits from munitions manufactures. The Agreement did not do the work of curbing profits, however, and the rank and file of the trade unions looked upon it derisively. Nevertheless, Lloyd George had eased fears among union leadership that the benefits earned thus far by labor would not be lost.³⁴ And in succeeding months, the number of strikes was slightly less than the peak that had been reached in March. He thus took a long step toward controlling the machinery for a successful war effort. It was the union leadership itself that lost out, for the rank and file began to band together under the leadership of shop stewards, those who were lowest in the ranks of union officialdom, and closest to the workers in status and sentiment.³⁵

At the same time that the munitions problem loomed, Lloyd George became increasingly concerned about manpower. He confided to C. P. Scott that he wished Britain had 1,000,000 men

³⁴Manchester Guardian, 16 March 1915; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:162, 126, 263, 264.

³⁵Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:264; Manchester Guardian, 18 April 1915, p. 5.

in the field instead of only 400,000. The Allies were not meeting Germany's strength, and France seemed to Lloyd George to be the only one of them who was pulling any real weight.³⁶ Recruitment for this period did not coincide with Lloyd George's wishes. The Manchester Guardian reported that in Manchester recruiting had dropped sharply with the beginning of March and that requirements for chest measurement had gone down to thirty-three inches. In some regiments, weight requirements were reduced. On the whole, the month of March saw drastic reductions of physical requirements in the hope that more men would now be eligible for recruitment.³⁷ Upper-middle class businessmen had made their disdain for enlistment well known by now and recruiters tended to ignore them and concentrate their efforts on the "artisan, porter, and warehouse classes," and the areas of movie-houses and railway stations.³⁸ During the second quarter of 1915 it became obvious to observers inside and outside of the Government that the number of men recruited through volunteering was not supplying "the regular flow necessary for maintaining our strength in the field, and the creation of new divisions

³⁶Diary of 17 March 1915, Charles Prestwick Scott, The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott, edited by Trevor Wilson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 119.

³⁷Manchester Guardian, 8 March 1915, p. 3; 19 March 1915, p. 10; diary of 15 March 1915, Michael MacDonagh, In London during the Great War (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1935), p. 100.

³⁸Manchester Guardian, 20 March 1915, p. 3.

had to cease."³⁹ Conscription was becoming more of a necessity, insisted Lord Derby at a recruiting rally, for the simple reason that the British could not repair the wastage in their units with the present rate of recruiting. Lord Derby was still concerned with the slackers; by May he was convinced that they were generally single men. Married men, he said, had responded very gallantly to the call to the colors. Derby thought it was time to put all men under the age of fifty-five at the "disposal of the State," to be used in whatever way they might be needed. This could be done by an Order-in-Council and Parliament would not have to pass a conscription bill; therefore there would not be compulsion, he sophistically argued, only what he called "national service."⁴⁰

Even Liberals felt the need for organization. C.P. Scott remained adamant in his opposition to conscription, but he did not find national discipline at all incompatible with British traditions. During May he wrote to Hobhouse on the "whole vast question of national organization and of the rousing and disciplining of the working class. The Government have no time and also not too much courage or statesmanship and most of the thinking has to be done for them." Scott even

³⁹Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:162; George Allardice Riddell, Lord Riddell, Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914-1918 (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1933), p. 100; Lieutenant-Colonel C. A. Court Repington, The First World War 1914-1918, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 1:43.

⁴⁰Manchester Guardian, 4 May 1915, p. 8.

argued that England would have to submit to "something not unlike a Prussian organization" until the war was over. But conscription was out of the question.⁴¹ Thus, although conscription was forbidden, organization was not out of keeping with the tenets of liberalism, and the repeated demands of the Manchester Guardian during 1915 for the Government to state openly the needs of the war symbolized the compatibility of organization and freedom in Scott's mind.

Shortly after Scott's letter, forces began to work inside the Government to hurry the coming of serious measures of control. The Conservative party's Business Committee and Repington became aware in the early days of May that French's army had only a small fraction of the shells needed for the planned Anglo-French spring offensive scheduled for May 9.⁴² After the beginning of the offensive, French stopped his communications with the War Office and began writing directly to Lloyd George. On May 12, Repington revealed the shell shortages in The Times and French, who was completely estranged from Kitchener, also turned to the press in order to justify his part in the crisis.⁴³

⁴¹Scott to Hobhouse, 7 May 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 123, ibid., 129.

⁴²Walter Long, Viscount of Wraxall, Memories (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1923), pp. 219-220; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:176; Repington, The First World War, 1:35.

⁴³Diary of 18 May 1915, Bertie, Diary, p. 169; John Denton Pinkstone French, First Earl of Ypres, 1914 (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1919), p. 347; diary of 16 May 1915, Riddell, War Diary, p. 87.

By May 17, the War Office broke its silence on munitions and the Cabinet was able to have a clearer understanding of the munitions problem. But the crisis was really out of the hands of the Cabinet itself. Because of the "shells scandal" as it became called, and because of rifts between First Sea Lord Sir John Fisher and Churchill in the Admiralty, the Liberal Government of Asquith fell, and Asquith became Prime Minister of a Coalition of Liberals, Tories, and one Labourite on May 19, 1915.⁴⁴ Outside of Government circles, Lord Northcliffe, who had filled the pages of The Times of 1915 with demands for conscription, pushed the issue to broad proportions. Convinced that Kitchener was a bungler and entirely responsible for the mismanagement of munitions, Northcliffe printed an article in his Daily Mail entitled "The Shells Scandal: Lord Kitchener's Tragic Blunder." For this, copies of the Daily Mail were burned by a group of indignant businessmen at the London Stock Exchange.⁴⁵ The conscription-oriented agitation for organization which The Times had carried on during 1915 reached a high point in intensity at the end of May.

On the 25th, The Times printed a letter by an officer on active service who claimed to speak on behalf of most of his

⁴⁴Diary of 17 May 1915, Christopher Addison, Four and a Half Years (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1934), p. 79; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:187.

⁴⁵Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:181-182; The Times (London: 22 May 1915, p. 7.

profession.⁴⁶ There were two problems in English life at the present time, he argued. One was disorganization; the other was drink. He proposed a plan that would cure both ills. All males over fourteen years of age would become "servants of the Crown" and daily work quotas would be enacted on them. Industrial "shirkers" could be forcefully enlisted. For those not needed for civilian work, there would be conscription. All Sunday work was to be stopped, and chronic drinkers would be sent to the front, at which time "the drink problem would settle itself." The plan would revitalize England's morality, wrote its author gleefully; military discipline would wash away her sins. It was perhaps with a keen insight that the author compared the machinery of his scheme to that of the Committee of Public Safety during the French Revolution.⁴⁷

The high point of the May agitation was the printing, also on the 25th, of a letter by the Bishop of Pretoria, Michael Furse, who had just returned from the front.⁴⁸ In tones of violent and righteous indignation, Furse deplored the munitions shortage. But the munitions scandal was only part of a larger evil: the disorganization of England's civilian forces. Every Englishman, cried Furse, must be brought "under the direct orders of the State for one purpose

⁴⁶The Times, 25 May 1915, p. 4.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., 25 May 1915, p. 7.

and one purpose only," that of winning the war. Military regimentation had to be inflicted on the culture as a whole: workers who dared to strike during the national emergency should be handled as deserters and shot. "The nation," argued Furse, "will welcome national service because the temper of the nation is different from what it was." And it seemed that some of the people really might be prepared to listen.⁴⁹ Only two days after the publication of Furse's letter, The Times announced it was so popular that it would go on sale as a penny pamphlet.⁵⁰

It was Lloyd George who answered the cry for organization. In the Coalition Government he became head of the newly-created Munitions department. He was not to be free of the War Office, however. Orders-in-Council which defined the functions of the Ministry urged that it be guided by the needs and demands of the Army Council. The Army Council took the provision literally and attempted to minimize the functions of the Ministry to the point of meaninglessness.⁵¹ But Lloyd George arranged an explicitly worded Order-in-Council which would give him the initiative over matters of supply and was thus able to control essential aspects of the munitions program. As Minister of Munitions, he worked to bring skilled workers back to essential industries. Many of these had enlisted in the Territorials or in Kitchener's Armies and were already

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., 27 May 1915, p. 9.

⁵¹Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:230-231, 209.

overseas. He was not completely effective in this because by May 1915, many were already casualties.⁵²

Lloyd George had already begun to doubt the efficacy of the voluntary system, since it did not make the most efficient use of manpower, either for war industries or for the army. During June he toured engineering centers in England to explain his goals as Minister of Munitions. He hoped that the labor force could be made more mobile, so that it might be deployed into areas where production was suffering. Also he argued that it was his function in the Munitions department "to secure greater subordination in labour to the direction and control of the State."⁵³ Addison, who had become Undersecretary in the Munitions Ministry, mourned Lloyd George's loss of moderation in many of these addresses. It seemed to Addison that he was forcing labor into opposition by his expressed willingness to marshal them under what seemed to them to be a kind of industrial compulsion.⁵⁴ During this tour, Lloyd George dropped a poignant hint as to coming events when he insisted that conscription was "the greatest weapon in the hands of democracy many a time for the winning and preservation of freedom. . . ."⁵⁵

⁵²Diary of 22 May 1915, MacDonagh, In London; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:138.

⁵³Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:164, 1:227, 276.

⁵⁴Diary of 13 June 1915, Addison, Four and a Half Years, p. 91.

⁵⁵Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:227, 2:163.

During the first week of June the forces of voluntary idealism steeled themselves against the cries for conscription. The Manchester Guardian's editorial page became regularly dedicated to fighting the issue. Those who were now "stampeding" the public in the direction of conscription had wanted it before the war, argued an editorial on June 1.⁵⁶ Thus, it seemed that the matter of expediency was only a sham argument for hiding long-held schemes of subduing the nation under a system of conscription. Conscription was a tool for keeping the working classes "in their places" and the writer feared it was to be used now for stopping strikes. The Guardian as it had done several times since the first of January, demanded proof that compulsion was needed, and urged that a national register be created in order to give statistical evidence of the extent and location of England's unused manpower potential. The author pointed out the Guardian's belief that conscription would be entirely out of keeping with the maintenance of national unity. Compared to the small additional number of men that conscription would bring in, its possibilities for disruption made it a worthless proposal. The Guardian wished that "a certain section of the press" would therefore quiet its boisterous demand for a proposal that would ultimately be disastrous.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Manchester Guardian, 1 June 1915, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Many openly rebelled against the demands of conscriptionists. The headmaster of St. Cuthbert's School wrote to the Morning Post to say that "I have placed the Daily Mail on our School Index and removed it from our reading room as an unwholesome influence."⁵⁸ The Daily Citizen argued that the "voluntary system is the capital distinction between the British peoples and all other European peoples. . ." and therefore it should be maintained in the interests of the culture.⁵⁹ The Labour Leader which served as the organ of the Independent Labour Party believed that speeches of Winston Churchill and Lloyd George showed that conscriptionists had finally "won the day." Unfortunately, moaned the Labour Leader, conscription was to be forced on England not on the basis of principles, but rather to conform simply to the demands of expediency. The only thing holding conscriptionists back, it argued, was that there were not yet enough munitions to supply all the men that a conscript system would bring in all at once. When the munitions problem was settled, then conscription would be adopted, for "it is not a question of conviction but of convenience."⁶⁰ A member of the No-Conscription Fellowship, writing in the Labour Leader, attributed this new conscription

⁵⁸ Morning Post, 29 May 1915, quoted, William Ernest Mackie, "The Conscription Controversy and the End of Liberal Power in England 1905-1916" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1966), p. 137.

⁵⁹ Daily Citizen, 24 May 1915, quoted, ibid., p. 136.

⁶⁰ Labour Leader, 10 June 1915, p. 1.

menace to the evils of pre-war diplomacy. The policy of secret treaties and sly bargaining "in defiance of the principle of nationality to which our statesmen do lipworship," had brought its inherent evils upon the British culture.⁶¹ The Labour Leader insisted that what was necessary was a conscription of wealth. When all parts of the community gave as fully as the working classes, who had, in the Leader's estimation, given over 2,000,000 of their numbers to the war effort, then national service would be acceptable.⁶² The New Statesman agreed that national service would be acceptable only if it ennobled the British community, "exalting everyday labour to the dignity of national service," and allowing the working classes to "live for their nation as well as to die for it."⁶³

The old-fashioned Radicalism of the Illustrated London News, which had only a few months earlier celebrated the tonic effects of the war, now spoke in the person of its chief editorial writer, G. K. Chesterton: "At this moment a patriot will not wish to get conscription or to get Teetotalism or to get anything else, except the better of the Germans."⁶⁴ It was best, thought Chesterton, to rely on the

⁶¹Ibid., 3 June 1915, p. 3.

⁶²Ibid., 3 June 1915, p. 1.

⁶³New Statesman, 5 June 1915, 5:200.

⁶⁴Illustrated London News, 12 June 1915, p. 749.

comforts of habit during difficult times. In his argument, Chesterton emphasized a significant social point when he wrote that the "average English workman" would understand his own son volunteering, but he would not understand his being compelled: "he does not care about the State, though he cares a great deal about the country."⁶⁵

The workingman had truly begun to worry about his freedom. Lloyd George had connected the repressive appearances of his munitions program with the distinct possibility of conscription, during his early June program of speeches. In response, W.A. Appleton published a pamphlet in June on Labour and Compulsory Service. Appleton was convinced that conscription was meant to apply to the British working classes. He cited an address of Lloyd George in which the Minister of Munitions had said that what was needed in England was not so much conscription for the battlefield, but for the workshop.⁶⁶ Workers began to feel the pinch of control and, despite their patriotism, they resented it sharply.

During the summer of 1915, the ostensible elements of control were centered in two important pieces of legislation: the Munitions of War Act and the National Registration Act. In the formulation of both these measures, the attitudes of

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Quoted in Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939 (London:Sheppard Press, 1949), pp. 228-229.

labor figured very highly. Early in June, when the National Registration bill was still in committee, it was reported to the Prime Minister that the committee had decided that before introducing the bill the Cabinet must prepare to announce a "definite policy in regard to what is called industrial conscription."⁶⁷

The threat of industrial and military conscription as a consequence of national registration had begun to bother laboring men. The radical Clydeside newspaper Forward addressed itself to the problem on June 10.⁶⁸ The purpose of the national register was being kept a careful secret and the newspaper speculated that the main purpose of the move was to quiet the insinuations of Northcliffe. To the writer in Forward, registration in itself was not evil. In fact, it could serve as a necessary prelude to socialist state organization. But the invidious thing was that there had not been stated any explicit objectives for the registration. He concluded philosophically that the bill might be worthwhile, "if by any chance [it] should keep Northcliffe quiet for three months."⁶⁹

While the bill was under discussion, the question of conscription also came up in the Cabinet. The Cabinet disagreed

⁶⁷Asquith to His Majesty, 9 June 1915, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/36, Public Record Office, Great Britain; this depository will be hereafter cited as PRO.

⁶⁸Forward, 10 June 1915, p. 1.

⁶⁹Ibid.

as to whether or not they would ultimately have to resort to conscription. But they agreed that the question of compulsory service was in no way involved in the bill whose object was, as Arthur Balfour, now first Lord of the Admiralty, described it, the "guiding of voluntary enlistment, military and industrial, into the channels least hurtful to national production and efficiency."⁷⁰ The President of the Local Government Board, Walter Long, though already a believer in conscription, claimed that the National Registration bill should not be considered as a preparation for military conscription; it was intended, rather, to discover what England's labor force was capable of.⁷¹ He emphasized this interpretation when he introduced the bill in Parliament on June 29, 1915.⁷² The Manchester Guardian was gleeful. Accepting Long's claims, it welcomed the bill.⁷³ It was, it seemed, order without conscription.

The Munitions of War Act, which received the Royal Assent on July 2, 1915, seemed to many of the rank and file working class to be extremely coercive. Once again trade union leaders

⁷⁰Asquith to His Majesty, 24 June 1915, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/36, PRO.

⁷¹Long, Memories, p. 221.

⁷²Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 72(1915):1655.

⁷³Manchester Guardian, 30 June 1915, p. 6.

surrendered to Lloyd George at the expense of their followers. In mid-June, the Minister of Munitions coaxed a committee of trade union leaders to agree to a curtailment of freedoms of industrial workers who were involved in munitions work. Workers, according to the agreement, might be placed under military discipline; if munitions were not turned out fast enough and if enough workers did not volunteer for munitions work, then they could be conscripted for home service--in munitions factories. Lloyd George instituted the agreement into a bill which enacted compulsory arbitration and disallowed any strikes in industries involved in war work. The term "war work" was open to interpretation. The bill created the "leaving certificate," a device which insured that no munitions worker could change jobs without the written consent of his employer. Local Munitions Tribunals were to be established to hear grievances of labor against the workings of the Munitions of War Act and to punish workers who went on strike.⁷⁴

On the Clydeside, radical workers formed the Clyde Workers' Committee to oppose the Munitions Act. William Gallacher became its president and David Kirkwood served for a time as treasurer. A Catholic socialist leader, John Wheatley, was charged with obtaining "background intelligence." The committee

⁷⁴Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:265-267; diary of 16 June 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, pp. 127-128; Beatrice Webb, Diaries 1912-1924, edited by Margaret I. Cole (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), p. 41.

demanded that the Government take over all industry and then allow workers to have equal share in the management. The tactics of the Clyde Workers' Committee were to revolve around "solidarity and the sympathetic strike" but as Tom Bell regretfully observed, it was almost impossible to keep the workers in a fever-pitch of militancy. Once any complaint had been answered, even if unsatisfactorily, they generally lapsed into complacency.⁷⁵

Labor was not conscripted under the Munitions Act. Instead, measures more in keeping with the fabric of tradition were taken. The Munitions Ministry established a Volunteer Labour Force. During June, many skilled workers who promised to travel anywhere to take munitions work enlisted. Trade union leaders, always congenial, promised Lloyd George to support his plan.⁷⁶

The National Registration Act passed Parliament on July 15, 1915.⁷⁷ The Act made all men and women in England between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five liable to fill out registration forms, listing age, manner of employment, and whether or not willing to volunteer for essential work, if not already so employed.⁷⁸ Refusal to sign was punishable by a five-pound

⁷⁵Marwick, The Deluge, p. 72; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 280; Bell, Pioneering Days, pp. 139-140. A resolution to the effect of demanding Government control of munitions was passed by the Scottish Trades Union Congress and reported in Forward, 10 July 1915.

⁷⁶Diary of 6 July 1915, Addison, Four and a Half Years, 1:103.

⁷⁷Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 73(1915): 971.

⁷⁸Ibid., 72(1915): 1654.

fine which increased by one pound each succeeding day. Although the politicians and the Manchester Guardian claimed it was not a step to conscription, they did not convince radicals and pacifists. Sylvia Pankhurst believed it aimed to take "the best of our youth, the most humane and intelligent, who would never give themselves willingly to the war."⁷⁹ C. H. Norman argued that the Act was "obviously" a preface to conscription.⁸⁰ Kitchener did not ease their fears; in speaking on national registration he noted that when the results were tabulated the Government would know how many men between nineteen and forty would not be required for munitions work. These would be considered available for the front, and the Government would accordingly contact them "with a view to enlistment. . . ."⁸¹

The measures that the Government laid down in the first half of 1915 in the interests of efficient war administration ended the ascendancy of "business as usual" tactics and prepared the population for the greatest sacrifice they could make, of which the conscription issue was symbolical. The work of Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions in the Coalition Government served to marshal a great part of the working class,

⁷⁹Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:164; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 186; Manchester Guardian, 6 July 1915, p. 6; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 186.

⁸⁰C. H. Norman, A Searchlight on the European War (London: The Labour Publishing Company Limited, 1924), p. 88.

⁸¹Manchester Guardian, 4 August 1915, p. 10; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 206.

those who had been left in essential industry. Although he did not press his new advantages to their full potential by actually conscripting workers, he nonetheless held the power to ruthlessly curtail their freedoms and privileges. And he had done it all with the cheerful if unwitting approval of trade union leadership. The National Registration Act, despite the disclaimers of its advocates, laid down a first installment of organizational groundwork for conscription. As the manpower problem began to reach crucial proportions in the latter part of the year, the politicians, even if they were not unanimous in desiring conscription, would at least know that they had begun the occasionally unpleasant task of enacting serious measures of war-time control over the British population.

CHAPTER 6

CRISIS OVER CONSCRIPTION

The recruiting campaign in Britain was growing moribund in the last part of July, 1915. The Guardian noticed that it had to be continually propped up by fresh programs and approaches.¹ Recruiters dropped all medical standards. Those who had been rejected for bad eyes and teeth were invited by the War Office to try again. The ones with defects too serious for life in the trenches would be placed in the home defense forces. The effects of this new policy were frequently tragic. Men who were physically unfit enlisted in the service and many suffered physical breakdowns. Then the army discharged them with no pensions on grounds that the disability was sustained prior to entry in the service.² While the recruiting movement slowly corroded, the trenches remained perilously undermanned. Ian Hamilton commented in his diary on August 3 that the strenuousness of trench warfare required divisions to be kept up to strength at all times. The commander at Gallipoli speculated that perhaps Kitchener

¹Manchester Guardian, 15 July 1915, p. 3.

²Ibid., 16 July 1915, p. 6; E. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Home Front (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1932), p. 291.

was unaware of this, since divisions were not kept up.³ A crisis over manpower had become more than the anxious day-dream of a hopeful conscriptionist; it was a serious reality and it spurred conscriptionists to prime England for the coming of a compulsory system of recruiting.

Liberals who believed that conscription should be adopted became very open in expressing their views. Chiozza Money and a Liberal colleague, Ellis Griffith, wrote to the Manchester Guardian that conscription was an absolute necessity. The numbers required for the field could not be raised quickly enough by voluntary methods.⁴ Lloyd George began to muse over the possibility of conscription as a method of filling the ranks of munitions workers without depleting the army. He had been hopeful of bringing 120,000 more skilled laborers back from the army, and conscription would enable him to raise 120,000 to put in their places.⁵

Money and Griffith argued also that true volunteerism had been abandoned some time ago. Shady recruiting practices were carried out by the War Office which "cajoled, taunted, insulted, and threatened," and these practices were worse than a fairly-applied system of conscription would be. They were correct in doubting the purity of volunteerism at this point. One of the steps taken in late summer and fall

³Diary of 3 August 1915, Sir Ian Hamilton, Gallipoli Diary, 2 vols. (London: Edward Arnold, 1920), 2:48-49.

⁴Manchester Guardian, 11 August 1915, p. 6.

⁵Diary of 12-14 August 1915, George Allardice Riddell, Lord Riddell, Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914-1918 (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1933), p. 117.

was to refuse passports to all men of military age. Shipping companies complied by refusing to carry these youths away from England. These acts of coercion were enacted without any Parliamentary approval.⁶

The passage of the National Registration Act sparked a series of almost prophetic incidents in Ireland. In the fall of 1914 when rumors had spread that conscription would be applied in England, many Irishmen had quickly emigrated to America.⁷ During the flurry over national registration, a great number of them removed themselves from England to Ireland. During the summer of 1915 when the National Registration Act made conscription seem a real possibility to many, an exodus of Irishmen to the United States began. At this time, the Irish began to view the heightened possibility of conscription as a final threat to their freedom to leave the British Isles and seek better fortunes in America. Many families accordingly decided how many sons had to stay at home and how many could be spared to America. During the rush to leave, mobs of angry Englishmen gathered at Liverpool to stop those whom they considered to be "flying cowards." Crews of ships which were to carry passengers from Liverpool began to cooperate with mob spirit and refused to take the Irish passengers.⁸ The effect of this, as one participant

⁶Manchester Guardian, 11 August 1915, p. 6; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 258.

⁷Manchester Guardian, 13 August 1915, p. 6.

⁸Darrell Figgis, Recollections of the Irish War (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1927), pp. 100-105.

in the Irish revolution wrote, was that the "old outlet was stopped and the old habit broken. Ireland, without a developed industrial life to sustain her population, had henceforth to maintain that population on her land."⁹

The Republican Volunteers in Ireland began to arm themselves and drill during 1915; the fruit of their efforts would be the Easter Uprising of 1916. The 1915 Coalition antagonized even moderates who would have been satisfied with Home Rule because it admitted their Ulster antagonist, Sir Edward Carson, to a position of importance as Attorney-General.¹⁰ The hatred of the Ulster Volunteers, the disappointment over Home Rule, and determination not to have conscription in Ireland spurred the Volunteer movement during 1915 and 1916.¹¹

In England, August 15 was "Registration Sunday." The names of military-aged men who signed the register were copied onto forms, which quickly became notorious as "pink forms." If the subject was employed in war-essential work, his form was starred. The Society of Friends urged their members to

⁹Ibid., pp. 105-106.

¹⁰Thomas Bell, Pioneering Days (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1941), pp. 49-50; Figgis, Recollections of Irish War, pp. 99-100.

¹¹Bell, Pioneering Days, pp. 49-50.

comply with the register and fill out the requisite forms, but to state a conscientious objection to service either on the front or in a munitions plant.¹² The returns showed that there were about 5,000,000 men of military age in England who were not committed to the army. Some of these were not acceptable because of medical unfitness and their places in essential occupations. The estimate of a reservoir left for recruiting was finally set between 1,700,000 and 1,800,000 men.¹³ The Manchester Guardian noted ruefully on the 17th that the register had not enlivened the recruiting. But the newspaper took heart, believing that the beneficial results to recruiting would come later.¹⁴

Labor leaders began to sense that conscriptionists were using a policy of divide-and-conquer against them in the mounting conscription crisis. J.H. Thomas wrote a sober letter to Asquith on August 20 in which he predicted severe repercussions within the labor movement, if conscription were adopted.¹⁵ Workers had already suffered from increased costs of living which had left many of them impoverished. Conscription could be the final assault which would bring a return of massive strikes. He noted in his letter that a suggestion

¹²Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 214; Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (London: The Bodley Head, 1965), p. 62; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 186.

¹³David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1934-1937), 2:164.

¹⁴Manchester Guardian, 17 August 1915, p. 12.

¹⁵J.H. Thomas, My Story (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1937), pp. 40-42.

had been made to exempt Railwaymen and Miners from military service. Such a policy of buying off part of the movement in order to trick the whole movement into accepting conscription would be useless, warned Thomas.¹⁶ Smillie declared that he had been invited by the National Service League to give his services to the conscription movement. Leaguers promised him confidentially that it could be arranged to exempt trade unionists and workers in certain industries from the operation of conscription in order to get their support for it. His contempt for the League prompted Smillie to say publicly that their approaches would have turned him against their arguments "even were I favorable to conscription."¹⁷

Late in August, 1915, conscriptionists in the Government prepared for the fight. Bonar Law, Lord Curzon, Austen Chamberlain, and Walter Long, all Conservative members of the Coalition Cabinet, declared their willingness to resign over the Government's unwillingness to initiate conscription.¹⁸ Lloyd George, who had made his conscriptionist sympathies quite clear by now, was heartened by their support, because he too had toyed with the idea of resigning. He believed that the greatest impediment now to acceptance of conscription was Kitchener's attitude.¹⁹ Kitchener had never made himself clear on the conscription issue, but in private conversations during 1915,

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Manchester Guardian, 26 August 1915.

¹⁸Diary of 26 August 1915, Riddell, War Diary, p. 119.

¹⁹Diary of 29 August 1915, ibid., p. 120.

he generally left the impression that he did not favor it.²⁰ Walter Long speculated that Kitchener's experiences with continental conscription had taught him that the great number of exemptions which ultimately had to be part of it would make it as unfair as the voluntary system was.²¹ Kitchener's belief in a long war made him hesitant to embrace conscription early in the war because he wanted to have a great outpouring of men for the final assault. "What we should aim at," he wrote to Robertson, "is to have the largest army in Europe when the terms of the peace are being discussed, and that will not be in 1916, but in 1917."²² Both Walter Long and Lloyd George believed that conscription would be almost impossible if Kitchener did not approve. Kitchener remained silent during August, preferring to await final results of the National Register before divulging his feelings.²³

Asquith, described by Lloyd George as the least "contentious" of all politicians, one who "shrank from combat until duty forced him into it,"²⁴ now began to take the conscription issue into his own hands, hopeful, close observers thought,

²⁰Diary of 20 August 1915, ibid., p. 117.

²¹Walter Long, Viscount of Wraxall, Memories (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1932), pp. 223-224.

²²Sir William Robertson, From Private to Field-Marshal (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1921), p. 264.

²³Long, Memories, p. 222; diary of 20 August 1915, Riddell, War Diary, pp. 117-118.

²⁴Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:84.

of working out a compromise.²⁵ In mid-August he appointed a Cabinet committee to consider the necessity of military conscription, composed of Lords Crewe and Curzon, Churchill, and Henderson.²⁶ On September 2 the committee wrote its report.²⁷ Kitchener had confided in his testimony to the committee that he believed he would ask for some sort of compulsion by the end of the year. But he also noted his regret at bringing up the compulsion issue at a time when it seemed to be a strictly party question. He would rather wait and do it when it was clearly a question only of military expediency. In their report, the committee showed that Kitchener believed a seventy-division army was necessary and must be put in the field by late 1916. A more effective army, considering the German strength, would have been an army of 100 divisions. But even seventy could not be gotten, said the report, under the present system of recruitment.²⁸ The possibility of Kitchener's fighting conscription within the Cabinet now seemed to be waning. At the same time, his popularity was becoming a tool of recruiting speakers who urged their listeners to trust the Government, especially Lord Kitchener. If Kitchener said there must be conscription, then, they insisted, conscription must come.²⁹

²⁵Diary of 29 August 1915, Riddell, War Diary, p. 120.

²⁶Diary of 20 August 1915, ibid., p. 118; Manchester Guardian, 9 September 1915, p. 6.

²⁷Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:167.

²⁸Ibid., 2:165.

²⁹Manchester Guardian, 4 September 1915, p. 6.

Lloyd George had still not figured out a plan for conscription. He considered using ballots, as England had done under eighteenth-century conscription laws, to determine monthly quotas of recruits in individual localities.³⁰

C. P. Scott, although not agreeing on the principle of conscription, suggested calling men up by classes beginning with unmarried men of a certain age and graduating to married men, who would also be taken by age group. Lloyd George thought this a better plan than the old ballot.³¹

By now Lloyd George was thoroughly convinced that conscription was a matter of military necessity. He confided to Scott on September 3 that Russia was "done for." Germany, he feared, would soon take Petrograd and Moscow, and the resistance to her armies would be very small. In the Balkans, it appeared to him that Germany was about to break through Bulgaria, which would allow her to mobilize Turkey; that would possibly provide the Central Powers with an additional three million men. All of the Allies were short of munitions and England produced weekly only about a tenth of what Germany was producing. As far as recruitment was concerned, Kitchener was calling for 30,000 men a week, but voluntary service was

³⁰Diary of 3 September 1915, Charles Prestwick Scott, The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott, edited by Trevor Wilson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 132-133.

³¹Ibid.

bringing in only about 25,000. To Lloyd George, the situation made conscription an immediate necessity.³²

The Cabinet was now becoming clearly divided over the conscription issue. There was a group of die-hards on either side and in the middle were those who, like C. P. Scott and the Manchester Guardian, took a pragmatic approach. They would accept conscription if it could be shown that the nation would accept it and remain unified and it could be shown that conscription was necessary. Asquith opposed conscription, but he would accept it if the Cabinet would.³³ Conservative Balfour did not like conscription, but his position was similar to Asquith's.³⁴ Arthur Henderson, as leader of the Labour Party and president of the Board of Education, also took a middle stand. In September, Henderson began to argue that organized labor was probably not irreconcilably opposed to conscription and that the working classes would accept it if Kitchener asked for it. Lloyd George began to move toward the die-hard conscriptionist side where he was joined by Lord Curzon, the most ardent supporter of conscription on the Tory side.³⁵ On the other extreme were the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Reginald McKenna, and Sir Walter Runciman,

³²Ibid., pp. 132-133, 131.

³³Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:168.

³⁴Diary of 3 September 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p.132

³⁵Diary of 5 September 1915, ibid., p. 135

President of the Board of Trade, who maintained their opposition to conscription on the grounds that it would destroy the national economy.³⁶

McKenna insisted that Britain did not need to fear national disunity as much as destruction of her entire economic system. Britain was now using about two-thirds of her national income for the war effort. The Continental Allies together had plenty of men, but few supplies. England was already being heavily depleted on that account. She could not afford to give all of her men too. Everytime that a great number of men were taken from industry, large dislocations occurred. The withdrawals of men therefore had to be piecemeal so as to lessen the burden upon industry. Furthermore, too many men would be withdrawn from the productive economy if conscription were adopted, and that would irremediably lower Britain's productivity, lessen her export capability, and thus flatly leave her with an adverse balance of payments. England could carry on a ten-year war, he thought, if her manpower was just left alone!³⁷

McKenna had, in his earlier career, committed sins against Free Trade.³⁸ But his arguments against conscription

³⁶Diary of 20 August 1915, Riddell, War Diary, p. 117.

³⁷Hobhouse to Scott, 24 September 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 137

³⁸In his first budget he arranged tariff schedules on certain imports, diary of 13-15 November 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 158.

were those of the Free Traders. The bastion of Free Trade ideology, F. W. Hirst's Economist, had foreshadowed McKenna's argument in the spring of 1915. The Economist even offered the argument that proportionally to population Britain had done as much in the way of manpower as most of the Allies; she had given as much of herself as either Russia or Italy did.³⁹

Kitchener did not, after all, prove amenable to the arguments. He continued to demand only seventy divisions, a number which Lloyd George believed too low. When the Cabinet Committee on Recruiting finally made a recommendation to the Cabinet that conscription be adopted, Kitchener opposed it on the grounds that military expediency did not yet demand it. His opposition came despite the fact that he himself reported to the Cabinet that the progress of recruitment was suffering and that in the first part of September only about 16,000 men per week of the needed 30,000 were being inducted.⁴⁰ On the whole, Cabinet opposition to conscription was now based on practical grounds, rather than being based on principles. Many of those who did not want its adoption believed now that if the need for it were clearly shown, they would support it.⁴¹

³⁹Economist, 5 June 1915, p. 1156.

⁴⁰Diary of 5 September 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 135; Manchester Guardian, 9 September 1915, p. 6; Asquith to His Majesty, 10 September 1915, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/36, PRO.

⁴¹Diary of 9 September 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p.136

While the Cabinet fought over the report of the Crewe Committee on Recruiting, the annual Trades Union Congress met at Bristol. The Congress was under the control of pro-war union leaders such as Benjamin Tillett who had already thrown himself into the munitions effort. In addressing the Congress, Tillett argued that a visit to the front had convinced him that the need in Britain's war effort was for munitions and not more men. Therefore, he believed conscription unnecessary, but he added that his feelings on the issue were not based on principle, but upon expediency: when the need was shown, he would not oppose conscription.⁴²

The Congress voted overwhelmingly to support the war effort. On the subject of conscription, it resolved an "emphatic protest against the sinister efforts of a section of the reactionary Press. . . to foist on this country conscription, which always proves a burden to the workers. . . ."⁴³ At the same time, the Congress agreed emphatically to help maintain the spirit and letter of voluntary service by working harder in the recruiting campaign. Sylvia Pankhurst observed that even while the trade union leadership resolved conscription, they would have accepted it meekly if the

⁴²Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 256; Benjamin Tillett, Memories and Reflections (London: John Long, Limited, 1931), p. 267.

⁴³Manchester Guardian, 8 September 1915, p. 6; resolution quoted, Simon Maccoby, English Radicalism, 6 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961), 6:154.

Government had insisted upon it.⁴⁴ A violent outburst of anti-conscription feeling provoked the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress to hastily invite Lloyd George to address the Congress on the benefits of his munitions program. They hoped his appearance would divert attention from the conscription issue.⁴⁵ Considering his recent behavior in the Cabinet, Lloyd George was very accommodating in his speech to the TUC. Production of equipment must increase drastically before there would be any need to change the recruiting system, he insisted. Britain's foremost need was for workmen to do their utmost in their jobs. He also took the opportunity to urge them to continue to accept dilution.⁴⁶

The close relationship between Lloyd George and union leadership that had begun with the Treasury Agreement of March 1915 lasted through the fall of 1915. Late in September union leaders collaborated with the Government in conducting a new recruiting drive. But Lloyd George secretly had little faith in the new campaign because no more recruits could be drawn from the working classes.⁴⁷ Those classes who could still

⁴⁴Philip Snowden, Viscount Snowden, An Autobiography (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 1:389; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 256.

⁴⁵Diary of 9 September 1915, Beatrice Webb, Diaries 1912-1924, edited by Margaret I. Cole (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), p. 43.

⁴⁶Manchester Guardian, 10 September 1915; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 1:271.

⁴⁷Manchester Guardian, 18 September 1915, p. 9; Marwick, The Deluge, p. 62; Snowden, Autobiography, 1:389.

spare their manhood were not within the trade unions and would not be appealed to by the campaign, he believed.⁴⁸

The Government did not present a unified front on the conscription issue. Kitchener told labor leaders that he had begun to doubt the efficiency of the voluntary system. He was now thinking in terms of applying the Militia Ballot to England, under which any given district would be required to supply certain quotas of men. At the same meeting, Asquith stood up for the voluntary system.⁴⁹ Lloyd George had begun a dual policy of soothing the public at the same time that he beat the Government about the head and shoulders. On September 13 he circulated his plan for forcing the Cabinet to accept conscription. Parliament was to expire on January 31, 1916. In order for its life to be extended, an Act prescribing such had to be approved by the House of Lords. Lloyd George planned to use the Lords' power over the life of Parliament to get conscription, by persuading the Lords to throw out the bill to prolong Parliament if the Cabinet proved recalcitrant on the conscription issue.⁵⁰ On September 20, a reassuring letter from Lloyd George to one of his

⁴⁸Diary of 2 October 1915, Riddell, War Diary, p. 123.

⁴⁹Manchester Guardian, 30 September 1915, p. 6.

⁵⁰Trevor Wilson, The Downfall of the Liberal Party (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 74; Manchester Guardian, 18 September 1915, p. 9.

constituents was published in the Manchester Guardian.⁵¹ In the letter, he said that although conscription was a possibility, it had to be debated sensibly and calmly, on a basis of facts and figures, not emotion. Therefore he urged him to ignore the violent press agitation for conscription. Addison thought the letter was beneficial to the nation at large for its gentle, encouraging effects.⁵²

By early October, Kitchener was no longer in doubt. On the 8th he presented to the Cabinet a memorandum on "Recruiting for the Army."⁵³ In this, he proposed a plan which would employ the returns of the National Register within Parliamentary districts. This could be carried out by placing recruiting entirely in the hands of municipal authorities, and by having the War Office fix quotas for districts, eliminating trades which could not spare any more men. When quotas were not met voluntarily, the ballot would be revived as the method for choosing who would be conscripted.⁵⁴ Kitchener's plan honored England's tendencies toward decentralization in governmental processes, and because it relied on old methods,

⁵¹Manchester Guardian, 20 September 1915, p. 7.

⁵²Ibid.; diary of 20 September 1915, Christopher Addison, Four and a Half Years, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1934), 1:129.

⁵³Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939 (London: Sheppard Press, 1949), p. 162; diary of 9 October 1915, Riddell, War Diary, p. 125.

⁵⁴Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:168.

it was not a distinct breach with traditions.⁵⁵ It was not a plan for conscription as conscription had become known in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe. But the Cabinet believed that if voluntary service was to be forsaken because of its inefficacy, then there would be little use in compromising the alternatives, and a system of real conscription would be the only reasonable choice.⁵⁶

Two days after Kitchener's report the Cabinet gave serious attention to the results of the National Register. Kitchener placed before them his estimation of military needs from that time until December 31, 1916.⁵⁷ These included a field army of 1,400,000, a home defense force of 350,000, and a draft and wastage reservoir of 1,200,000. In order to get his requirements, Kitchener declared that 35,000 men per week had to be recruited. The National Register had shown a "recruitable reservoir" that had been variously estimated, but was generally supposed to be less than 2,000,000 men, as Asquith noted in his report to the King.⁵⁸ This obvious

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:169.

⁵⁷Asquith to His Majesty, 12 October 1915, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/36, PRO.

⁵⁸Ibid.

dilemma led to two conclusions held by different groups in the Cabinet. Lloyd George, Long, Churchill, and Lords Lansdowne and Curzon simply argued that Kitchener's figures could not possibly be attained by voluntary recruiting. Asquith, Balfour, and Grey argued that since the National Register had shown that the reservoir was smaller than Kitchener's estimates, compulsory service would not prove any more efficient in fulfilling the estimates than voluntary recruitment would. Furthermore, they insisted, the opposition from labor and from Ireland could possibly make conscription even less effective in getting men than the voluntary system already was. McKenna and Runciman were heedless of the figures and argued that it was financially impossible for England to put an army of 1,400,000 in the field. To recruit at the rate of 35,000 per week seemed to them an absurd possibility.⁵⁹

To revive a flagging voluntary effort, the Government appointed Lord Derby Director-General of Recruiting on October 5.⁶⁰ Kitchener had recommended this gesture and to the disheartened forces of Liberalism, it seemed that perhaps this was the man who could bring organization to the recruiting effort without tainting it with conscription. To the Manchester Guardian, it had seemed that the War Office might bungle the project that had once seemed to be the panacea to the recruitment

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:170.

problem, the National Register. The paper predicted that Derby would use it effectively.⁶¹

Within a few days of his appointment, Derby, in consultation with Long, began to organize a massive new recruiting program.⁶² Lloyd George hailed this program as a final brave effort to save volunteerism.⁶³ The Cabinet realized that if Derby's expectations were not fulfilled, conscription would come.⁶⁴ But the Derby plan as it was eventually drawn and executed, did not embody the spirit of voluntary service. It was a measure which would employ the natural energies, antagonisms, and psychology of the culture as a whole in favor of conscription. In this way it employed a brilliant strategy.

Derby had laid the rudiments of his plan by mid-October. By it, a personal summons was to be sent to all men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, married or single. All men receiving the summons would be asked to "attest," which amounted to promising to serve when called. Anyone who was unwilling to serve was to record his reasons on the form. The local branches of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee were to tabulate the results of the drive. The canvass would take

⁶¹Manchester Guardian, 6 October 1915, p. 3; 7 October 1915, p. 1.

⁶²Long, Memories, p. 228.

⁶³Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:170.

⁶⁴Ibid.

place during October and the first half of November. Final tabulation was to be made by November 30. If the plan failed, the voluntary system would come to an end.⁶⁵ But, as Scott noted in his diary, Derby had no idea of exactly what would constitute a failure.⁶⁶ He also wrote that Derby had made a passing comment to the effect that the War Office now had facilities to train any number of men, so it did not matter if England adopted conscription. Scott thought that the Derby scheme was being pushed through with little planning, so that the conscription issue could eventually be pushed to successful conclusion by its advocates, without too much of a political row.⁶⁷

The Manchester Guardian was disillusioned when the plan was announced publicly.⁶⁸ It believed that Lord Derby had not after all made wise use of the National Register. Derby had proposed to use the pink forms which had been filled out by men of military age for the National Register. The Guardian suggested that it would be unwise to call all the men who had filled out pink forms at one time. They could not all be trained at the same time and by the time all the

⁶⁵Diary of 14-15 October 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 145; Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:171.

⁶⁶Diary of 14-15 October, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 145.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Manchester Guardian, 16 October 1915, p. 8.

men were called, there would have been a complete stop to voluntary recruitment. The paper unwittingly offered two improvements. Derby should call the men up by classes and should wait to call up the married men only when they were absolutely needed.⁶⁹

Derby, after announcing that he would consider his plan a failure if it did not get at least 600,000 recruits by the end of November, adopted the Guardian's suggestions.⁷⁰ He promised that single men would be called out first. Then Derby produced an elaborate scheme for dividing the men into groups. There would be forty-six classes of men--twenty-three classes of single men and twenty-three of married men--based upon age. All men who were between eighteen and forty-one would "be approached and, if willing, enlisted after [being] passed by the doctor."⁷¹ The youngest classes would be called out first. Therefore one could enlist, realizing that he would not be called unless and until he was needed. The Guardian was ecstatic over the changes, believing that now a plan had been arranged to quiet the conscriptionists forever.⁷²

From the moment that England was fully aware of the implications of Derby's plan, conscription was taken out of

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Diary of 18 October 1915, Francis Leveson Bertie, Viscount Bertie, The Diary of Lord Bertie of Thames, edited by Lady Algernon Gordon Lennox, with a forward by Viscount Grey of Fallodon, 2 vols. (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1924), 1:263.

⁷¹Manchester Guardian, 19 October 1915, p. 6.

⁷²Ibid., 20 October 1915, p. 6.

the hands of her Parliamentarians, as they quickly recognized. Through 1915, it had been pragmatic Liberalism, speaking through the Manchester Guardian, which had argued that before conscription could come there had to be, first, a popular will that had been informed of the dimensions of Britain's military necessity and second, a popular will that would be united in accepting conscription. Through a policy of alienating various groups of the public from one another, the Derby plan succeeded in creating a demand for conscription from the public. But the real irony of the plan lies in the attitudes of its sponsors. Derby's and Long's sympathies had long lain with conscriptionists. Asquith and other volunteerists supported the plan out of desperation; Lord Kitchener thought the plan was a fine tactical move on Asquith's part which would keep the Cabinet calm at a time when the cracks in the voluntary system were becoming too serious for repair.⁷³ The Derby campaign did not signify a deliberate surrender on Asquith's part; he still maintained that conscription was not possible, even after he had implicitly admitted in Parliament that the voluntary system was done with.⁷⁴ But even if some of those who supported the plan were volunteerists, either by conviction or by practical choice, the plan worked out in a manner that militated against the spirit and letter

⁷³Diary of 9 November 1915, Bertie, Diary, 1:263.

⁷⁴Scott, Political Diaries, p. 145.

of the voluntary ideal. It was the Derby plan that set up the machinery by which England institutionalized conscription.

The Derby campaign brought out the white-feather girls in masses. The degrading symbol was handed out with a contemptuous vengeance and girls were heard to make such remarks as "Why don't you fellows enlist? Your King and Country want you. We don't." The attested wore khaki armllets which were issued to them, so those who held back could be easily spotted.⁷⁵ The No-Conscription Fellowship held its first national convention during November 1915 amid a storm of abuse and white feathers.⁷⁶

The process of attestation created a violent and excited confusion. Those who had loved ones at the front mistreated the so-called "shirkers" who did not attest. Bonar Law feared that these petty dissensions might cause so much turmoil that the country would demand an end to the war. The Government ordered all of its employees to attest or be dismissed. Other employers were invited to dismiss employees who refused to attest, and urged not to hire anyone of military age.⁷⁷ The voluntary system stood on a less than shaky foundation. Through it all, the crusaders stood forth. A youthful Christian

⁷⁵Diary of 6 October 1915, MacDonagh, In London, pp. 79-80.

⁷⁶Fenner Brockway, Inside the Left (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1942), p. 67.

⁷⁷Pankhurst, The Home Front, pp. 259, 258.

reader wrote to the Clarion in favor of the massive drive: "God being on our side does not mean that we are not to do our part in the salvation of right."⁷⁸

For a short time, the Derby scheme gave renewed faith in the recruiting campaign to the now harrowed volunteerists. In late October, recruiting jumped. Part of the rise was due to an appeal from the King.⁷⁹ The Manchester Guardian thought that the coordinated efforts of labor and Lord Derby had also helped.⁸⁰ Lord Derby had even had a magical effect on businessmen; businesses which had previously refused to part with their men, now seemed to be surrendering somewhat, possibly because Derby assured them that the group system would allow them plenty of time for finding substitutes.⁸¹ Derby was angered by cheery press reports. He insisted that youthful, unmarried men must sign in greater numbers if he were to keep faith with the married men; he did not wish to call them until he had already got a reasonable proportion of the unmarried.⁸² But Liberals soon lost confidence in Derby. Scott concluded that he was a blustering incompetent and Asquith agreed with him that Derby was

⁷⁸Clarion, 5 November 1915, p. 4.

⁷⁹Manchester Guardian, 8 November 1915, p. 6.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., 26 October 1915.

⁸²Diary of 29 October 1915, Riddell, War Diary, p. 132.

probably "short of brains" for his task.⁸³ The Manchester Guardian thought the recruiting program was not being executed expeditiously enough.⁸⁴ And by November 3, recruiting had settled back into its old sad proportions.⁸⁵

The high point of the Derby experiment was a speech made by Asquith in the House of Commons on November 2, 1915.⁸⁶ This speech was indicative of several major aspects of Asquith's resistance to conscription, perhaps the major one being that that resistance was no longer very solid. Principle, insisted Asquith, had no part in his opposition to conscription: "I have no abstract or a priori objections of any sort or kind to compulsion--in time of war. . . [Conscription] is a pure question of practical expediency--how are we going to bring the war to a successful conclusion?" He then admitted that the voluntary system possibly harbored inequities. In a grand burst of metaphor he compared it to a "net with very irregular meshes. It lets through some things which ought not to be allowed to escape, and it holds and keeps some things which had better be let through."⁸⁷

⁸³Diary of 5 November 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 154.

⁸⁴Manchester Guardian, 30 October 1915, p. 8.

⁸⁵Diary of 3-5 November 1915, Lieutenant Colonel C. à Court Repington, The First World War 1914-1918 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 1:61.

⁸⁶Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 75(1915): 519-524.

⁸⁷Ibid., 75 (1915): 524.

Asquith stated that his chief objection to conscription was that it would destroy national unity. If it were to ever be applied effectively, there would have to first be general consent favoring it. The Prime Minister maintained his wholehearted belief in Derby's plan and hoped that his hearers would be willing to give it a fair try before pressing conscription seriously. Then he added that if

a substantial number of men of military age not required for other purposes. . . without excuse, hold back from the service of their country, I believe that the very same conditions which make compulsion impossible now--namely the absence of general consent, would force the country to the view that they must consent to supplement by some form of legal obligation the failure of the voluntary system.⁸⁸

Finally, in what was to become the most controversial part of his speech, Asquith laid the voluntary system upon its sacrificial altar and cut straight through. He had been told, he said, that married men hesitated to enlist or attest because they feared that they would be called "while younger and unmarried men were holding back, and not doing their duty."⁸⁹ And then he pledged the Government to the married man:

So far as I am concerned I should certainly say the obligation of the married man to serve ought not be enforced or held to be binding upon him unless and until--I hope by voluntary effort, if it be needed in the last resort, as I have explained, by other means--the unmarried men are dealt with.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Ibid., 75(1915): 523-524.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

When Asquith concluded his remarks, a slight chill ran through the volunteerist members in the House. G.N. Barnes cried that to believe that the voluntary system would no longer work was to believe in the "moral bankruptcy of the nation."⁹¹ The conscriptionists happily closed their ranks for the big fight.

Derby and Long now took it upon themselves to expedite Asquith's pledge. On November 11, Derby issued a communication through the Press Bureau, saying that any fit man of military age not exempted through essential work who failed to attest by November 30 would be compulsorily enlisted, before any married men would be taken.⁹² Lloyd George wrote in his memoirs that Asquith did not refute this action on Derby's part.⁹³ The Manchester Guardian suddenly realized on November 12 that conscription was no longer a theoretical argument in England--it was on the verge of becoming a fact of British life.⁹⁴ Smillie gave an infuriated statement to the Guardian, insisting that Parliament had had no part in the whole affair.⁹⁵ On November 13, Long speaking at Bristol warned that those single men who shirked their duty would be compelled. "These young men will be sent to the trenches

⁹¹Ibid., 75(1915): 527.

⁹²Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 260; Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 75(1915): 1480.

⁹³Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 3:171.

⁹⁴Manchester Guardian, 12 November 1915, p. 6.

⁹⁵Ibid.

and if they survive the trenches they will have something to think about for the rest of their lives."⁹⁶ Married men began to attest in large numbers, confident that they were safe, at least for a while.⁹⁷

Derby had already begun to erect the machinery for determining exemptions under the new recruiting scheme. Under the prodding of Long, he arranged a system by which the local government authority in all municipal areas regardless of size would be charged with appointing committees who would exercise "large discretionary powers" over the attested men. Scott appealed to Derby to modify this scheme.⁹⁸ The editor of the Guardian had good reason to fear these arrangements, for within private circles, Derby was scheming to find a way to make an easy shift from voluntary recruiting to compulsory service. The local tribunals were part of his plan. He also showed a keen awareness of the more invidious aspects implicit in his over-all recruiting drive. He predicted that older, married men would become his best recruiters, to avoid going to the front themselves.⁹⁹

Derby decided that he could not release a full report of his results outside the Government until January 1916. He began to decide what proportion of single men he ought

⁹⁶Quoted, Parliamentary History of Conscription, edited by Richard C. Lambert (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1917), p. 53.

⁹⁷Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 198.

⁹⁸Diary of 5 November 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 154.

⁹⁹Repington, The First World War, 1:65.

to view as adequate. Meanwhile, the recruiting campaign picked up and reached mammoth proportions.¹⁰⁰ December 12 was now set as the final day for attestation. On the 9th the Guardian offered a fervent prayer that the last three days of recruiting would save the voluntary system.¹⁰¹ In the final rush of recruits, recruiting officials were not able to administer medical examinations to all the men. Military authorities promised that this could be done at the time of actual call-up. The Guardian was critical of this scheme because it would leave the final figures open to question. "We ought to reduce the margin of uncertainty by all the means in our power."¹⁰² The Guardian could already spot another potential source of difficulty. Some men who were "starred" for essential war work had attested, believing that a tribunal would later approve their right to be exempted. These, feared the Guardian, might have been misled, since Lord Selbourne, President of the Board of Agriculture, had warned farmers not to allow their laborers to attest if they wanted to keep them.¹⁰³

The Cabinet reviewed Derby's report on recruiting on December 14. These figures were not complete because they include the final rush of recruiting. But, as Asquith wrote

¹⁰⁰Diary of 11 November 1915, Repington, The First World War; diary of 13-15 November 1915, Scott, Political Diaries, p. 158.

¹⁰¹Manchester Guardian, 9 December 1915, p. 6.

¹⁰²Ibid., 16 December 1915, p. 6.

¹⁰³Ibid., 14 December 1915, p. 6.

to the King, the Cabinet agreed to appoint a small committee to "consult with the draftsmen," concerning the form in which "any amendment in the law in the direction of compulsion should take."¹⁰⁴ On December 18 the first four classes of Derby recruits, single men of ages nineteen through twenty-two, were called up. The Guardian scornfully remarked that some of the conscriptionist press were openly gleeful for the occasion, saying that "our citizens are being called out in classes, just as if they were continentals in a conscript army."¹⁰⁵ In the Cabinet, the conscriptionists could claim the same sort of victory, for on December 28, Asquith wrote to the King that at the end of that day's meeting, the Cabinet had agreed to a proposal for conscription of single men.¹⁰⁶ Since Long was President of the Local Government Board, he took charge of preparing the conscription bill.¹⁰⁷ Now he could take care of all the "shirkers" who had failed in their duty.

The forces of anti-conscription idealism uttered a last feeble whisper for 1915. The Manchester Guardian stoutly insisted that "Englishmen have no intention of being militarized."

¹⁰⁴Asquith to His Majesty, 15 December, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/36, PRO.

¹⁰⁵Manchester Guardian, 20 December 1915, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶Asquith to His Majesty, 28 December 1915, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/36, PRO.

¹⁰⁷Long, Memories, pp. 221, 222.

It still maintained that England had not been told the facts. How could conscription be adopted when no one even knew how many would pass their physicals, it asked.¹⁰⁸

Fenner Brockway wrote in the Labour Leader that the decision for conscription "degrades our civilization to the level of the conscript system of the Continent. . . . no longer can we claim to lead the nations in the path of freedom."¹⁰⁹

The latter part of 1915 had deceived anti-conscriptionists in England. In searching for a way to quiet the complaints of conscriptionists, at the same time maintaining voluntary recruitment, Liberals unintentionally threw themselves into a scheme which invited compulsory service. The tribunals which Derby organized in each locality began the task of examining claims for exemption from among those men who had attested under the scheme. From there, they could move easily into the function of examining claims for exemption from conscripts. Besides arranging machinery for conscription, Derby's scheme prepared the popular mind for conscription by making it an issue which set the married man against the single rather than an issue based on principles. Parliament had yet to decide the issue, but conscriptionists had little to fear with British husbands on their side. Despite the maintenance of anti-conscription idealism, it became clear at the end of the year that anti-conscriptionists were hopelessly trapped.

¹⁰⁸Manchester Guardian, 30 December 1915, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹Labour Leader, 30 December 1915, p. 1.

CHAPTER 7

CONSCRIPTION AND REACTION

England settled her conscription crisis for a brief moment in January 1916 by accepting a measure which seemed to embody the voluntary system at the same time that it employed compulsory measures to secure men. In that month, Parliament passed a measure to conscript single men of military age. The arguments for and against conscription continued throughout the time that Parliament debated the bill, and long after. The Military Service Acts of 1916 did not bring a uniform system of conscription, such as existed in Continental nations; thus, while disappointing many liberal thinkers, they did not satisfy those who had sought conscription during pre-war years either. The continuation of the conscription debate during and after the actual passage of conscription showed that ideals cultivated by Victorian and Edwardian thinkers had not been completely shattered by the shock of war. Conservatives still wrote of regeneration and the mistakes of the Roman Empire, and liberals maintained their belief in the superiority of England's idealism.

The machinery of Derby's scheme operated as a prognostication of the way that England would apply conscription once she had it. The tribunals functioned in a confused and inefficient manner. Derby addressed a letter to The Times in an attempt to clarify the operation of the tribunals to those who were already sitting on those tribunals. He had discovered that the process of judging claims for exemption was not clear.¹ The group system (calling single men out by age groups) that Derby had organized continued to operate mechanically and by January 5, 1916, almost half of the single Derby recruits had been called up in their respective groups. Derby was already disappointed in the results of his great campaign; not enough recruits were actually coming in. He and The Times urged that all those youths--especially single ones--who were "hiding" behind reserved or starred occupations be got into the army, with older, married men filling their places. The tribunals should be strict with their exemptions, they argued, but The Times found sympathy for at least one group, the "many professional and commercial

¹The Times (London), 1 January 1916, p. 10. Men who had reason for exemption attested under the Derby scheme and then went to a tribunal to claim their exemption. In the confusion over attestation, many mistakenly believed that they had to attest before they could claim exemption from military service. Many times the tribunals set up under the scheme did not then honor their claims, and they went into the service under false assumptions on their part. Because many attested with the sole intention of getting an exemption, and because no one really knew what sort of a policy any given tribunal would take in individual cases of exemption, the Government never really knew how many or how few men they actually had under the Derby plan.

men of military age, whose income is dependent upon their own exertions. They have incurred obligations, and their dependents are accustomed to a standard of living for which the Government allowances are, in Lord Derby's opinion, 'quite inadequate.'" Such cases "required careful consideration," and the solution would indeed be complicated, mused The Times.²

The tribunals did seem to be overly congenial to pleas for exemption. In one London tribunal, half those who had attested claimed exemptions as munitions workers and received them. Many claimed exemptions on grounds of being the sole support of a family or being necessary for the conduct of a business. Their claims were, in many cases, deferred, so that they would still be called, but later. Thus the army sometimes got only about a third of those who attested in a single locality.³ Because of the small number of eligible recruits, the army began to go through the single men's groups very quickly. Unexempted, attested married men began to clamor for their rights against single slackers who were getting exempted too easily. They formed a Union of Lord Derby's Recruits to make certain that the Government would carry out its pledge to them. They also began to agitate for financial measures to protect their dependents in case they were called to the colors.⁴

²The Times, 5 January 1916, p. 9; Manchester Guardian, 5 January 1916, p. 3.

³Manchester Guardian, 1 January 1916, p. 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 5.

Asquith introduced the Military Service bill in Parliament on January 5, 1916.⁵ The bill was a result of the figures attained from the Derby recruiting drive, he claimed. According to the figures, England had about 5,000,000 men of military age. Of these, about 3,000,000 had attested. Of the single men in England, Derby had figured that there were about 651,160 who were "unaccounted for": these had not attested and they were not starred for essential occupations. To Derby and the Prime Minister, this seemed to be too many men to leave behind while calling on the married. To redeem the pledge these 651,000 had to be conscripted.⁶ Asquith admitted in his speech that the figures would not all be correct because of inexactness in determining exemptions and because of poor medical examinations. But the exactness of the figures was not the issue, he rationalized: the pledge was. He asked Parliament to agree that all single men of military age who had no case for exemption would be "deemed to have done what everyone agrees it is their duty to the State in times like these to do, and be treated as though they had attested or enlisted."⁷ As a final gesture to idealism, he announced that attestation under Derby's group system would be reopened. He hoped that through it, volunteering might

⁵Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 77(1915-1916): 949-962.

⁶Ibid., 77(1915-1916): 950-956; Manchester Guardian, 5 January 1916, p. 8.

⁷Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 77(1915-1916): 954.

be resumed to an extent that would negate the necessity of the Military Service bill. By a masterful stroke of self-delusion, Asquith insisted that no case had been made for general conscription in England and that therefore this bill was not a conscription bill, but only the fulfillment of a pledge.⁸

The most impressive of the anti-conscription arguments was that of Sir John Simon, who had resigned his Cabinet position as Home Secretary over the conscription issue. Simon argued that conscription was an affront to the sanctity of English culture.⁹ Sir William Byles echoed this argument, crying that conscription would "Germanize" English institutions. Simon also insisted that general consent had not been achieved. The protests of several Labourite members supported that claim. Conscription reminded the working class of continental repression, claimed one Labourite, and it would therefore be difficult for them to accept it. J.H. Thomas vehemently denounced it as the Government's surrender to the demands of the conscriptionist press. Finally, Simon argued that since the Derby figures were inaccurate, they could not be used to prove that volunteering had failed. In his remarks on the Derby figures, Simon stated his opposition in terms very

⁸Ibid., 77(1915-1916): 961.

⁹Ibid., 77(1915-1916): 963.

similar to those that the Manchester Guardian had presented during 1915: the Government had not figured out exactly what was needed and what was in hand, and therefore had made no case for compulsion.¹⁰ No one really knew what was taking place in the recruiting campaign, and national traditions were about to be wrecked by nothing greater than a callous rumor. The idealists maintained that the roots of the war lay in European military conscription and that the "cause of Great Britain. . . was so clear and just" that there was "not the slightest risk of not getting enough soldiers to carry it to a triumphant victory."¹¹

On the 6th, the House of Commons was charged with an atmosphere of excitement and military spirit. The Times commented that there had not been so many uniforms among that austere body since the time of Cromwell's purges. But it hastened to add that since all of the uniforms were worn by M.P.s, "their presence was in strict harmony with the letter and spirit of the Constitution."¹² In this atmosphere, the voting on the first reading took place; 403 voted for the bill and 105 against.¹³ Seven Labourites supported the measure, including G.N. Barnes. Henderson, with three of his colleagues, abstained, and eleven of the party opposed the bill. MacDonald,

¹⁰Ibid., 77(1915-1916): 987, 993, 966.

¹¹Ibid., 77(1915-1916): 970.

¹²The Times, 6 January 1916, p. 9.

¹³Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 77(1915-1916): 1251-1255.

Snowden, Clynes, and J.H. Thomas were among those who opposed. Sixty Irish Nationalists opposed the bill and thirty-four Liberals stood out against their colleague Asquith, while 151 of their number supported the bill.¹⁴

Outside of Parliament on the day of the voting, the labor movement drew itself together in a special conference composed of representatives of both trade union and Labour party membership. The executive bodies of these groups had met on January 5 and stated their confidence in voluntary recruiting and also their willingness to allow the Parliamentary Labourites freedom to vote on the bill according to their personal prejudice. At the conference, a trade union delegate seconded the resolution in the belief that if Germany won the war England would suffer a far worse sort of conscription. Another trade unionist recognized that it was not workers but middle-class single men who had shirked their duty. He supported conscription as a means of getting them into khaki, and claimed that almost all local branches of his union based support on the same grounds.¹⁵ A serious issue at the conference was the threat of a general election over conscription. In a pragmatic vein, many delegates concluded that if the choice were between conscription and a general election, they should choose conscription, for a general election

¹⁴The Times, 7 January 1916, p. 9; 8 January 1916, p. 7.

¹⁵The Times, 6 January 1916, p. 8; 7 January 1916, p. 6; Manchester Guardian, 7 January 1916, p. 3.

could mean serious setbacks for labor in Parliament. Hodge insisted that a general election would be the worst possible occurrence for the Labour party because they would be faced openly with the conscription question; he feared that public opinion would favor conscription and deride Labourites for their general stand on the issue. In a stirring address, Thomas courageously argued that opposition to conscription must be maintained, even if the consequence might be an election. Guided by him and others of the railway union, the conference amended the resolution to recommend that the Parliamentary Labourites oppose the bill in all stages. This passed by a vote of 1,998,000 to 783,000. An amendment to make opposition to conscription binding on all Parliamentary members of the party was defeated.¹⁶ Henderson opposed the amended resolution as being in itself destructive of national unity. If he had to leave the Cabinet over it, he argued, it would possibly mean the break-up of the Coalition, which, he felt, was what the conference was asking him to do. He and two Labourite under-secretaries handed their resignations to Asquith following the conference's vote on the resolution, and the Manchester Guardian reported with regret what it saw as the first signal of the loss of national unity over conscription.¹⁷ The Miners' Federation stayed aloof from the

¹⁶See footnote 15 above.

¹⁷Diary of 6 January 1916, Beatrice Webb, Diaries 1912-1924, edited by Margaret I. Cole (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), p. 53; Philip Snowden, An Autobiography, 2 vols. (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 1:390; Manchester Guardian, 7 January 1916, p. 6.

conference in order to work the problem out by themselves, in more radical terms.¹⁸

The Clyde Workers' Committee quickly prepared its own resolution against conscription and circulated it among the Clyde workers. They argued that conscription was not meant to meet military necessities, but to buy soldiers at cheaper prices. Conscription was also meant to control workers, as union leadership was already controlled by the Government. Finally, the committee agreed in its resolution "to take such action as is necessary to prevent conscription." John McLean became the core of Clydeside opposition to conscription; Gallacher complained that even the fiery leadership of McLean failed to carry the agitation very far away from the workshop and into the political sphere. Thus the agitation was never very successful.¹⁹ On the whole the Clyde movement seemed to Gallacher to be fairly insignificant. Two of its leaders flaunted their disregard for law openly so that they would land in prison where they would be sure to avoid the workings of the conscription law. This occurrence, maintained Gallacher, essentially showed the failure of Clydeside leadership to come to terms with the conscription measures in a true sense of revolutionary politics.²⁰

Nevertheless Asquith felt he must do something to make labor more amenable to the conscription bill. In the

¹⁸The Times, 8 January 1916, p. 7.

¹⁹William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde, An Autobiography* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1949), pp. 115-116; Thomas Bell, *Pioneering Days* (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1941), p. 114.

²⁰Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 117.

Cabinet meeting of January 11, the Prime Minister announced that he would meet with them on the next day.²¹ In the meeting of January 12, Asquith soothed labor by promising that conscription would not be extended to married men, that he would amend the bill to make industrial conscription impossible under it, that tribunals would be in the control of civilians rather than military authorities, and that conscientious objectors would be treated favorably.²² All of these promises were ultimately broken, but for the time being Asquith's smooth persuasion succeeded in destroying the already meager effect of labor-oriented opposition.²³ Henderson and his two colleagues withdrew their resignations on condition that the upcoming Bristol Trades Conference not condemn them for staying in the Government. The Bristol meeting, occurring in late January, declared its opposition to conscription, but declined to agitate formally against it. By a large majority, the conference allowed the three ministers to stay in the Cabinet.²⁴

Debate on the second reading of the bill ended on January 12 with a vote of 431 to 39, in favor of the bill. The

²¹Asquith to His Majesty, 11 January 1916, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/37, Public Record Office, Great Britain; this depository will be hereafter cited as PRO.

²²Snowden, Autobiography, 1:393-394.

²³E. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Home Front (London: Hutchinson & Co., Ltd., 1932), p. 288; Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939 (London: Shoppard Press, 1949), p. 234.

²⁴Manchester Guardian, 13 January 1916, p. 6; Snowden, Autobiography, 1:394.

opposition was truly wearing thin. Labour was completely divided on the question. Clynes joined the group of Labourites who abstained rather than opposing the bill. Nine Liberals who had opposed on the first reading became abstainers also, including Runciman. The opposition consisted of twenty-seven lonely Liberals, ten Labourites, and two Irish Nationalists. Since Asquith had assured the Irish that conscription was only an extension of the Derby plan as it had operated in England, the majority of the Nationalists dropped their opposition to the bill and abstained.²⁵

The labor opposition outside of Parliament was chiefly in the hands of railwaymen and coal miners after the second reading. A special meeting of the executive committee of the National Union of Railwaymen resolved for conscription of wealth and against conscription of men. The Times greeted this and similar other demands with its usual intimidating attitude. Perhaps, it argued, conscription of wealth would be acceptable and the easiest wealth to conscript would be funds and money assets which included

funds belonging to trade unions, cooperative societies, and insurance societies, savings banks deposits, and the like. These are all capital or wealth, and as there is no distinction of classes under the Military Service bill there could, of course, be no such distinction under the conscription of wealth bill. Perhaps its advocates will think this over. . . ."26

²⁵Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 77(1915-1916): 1735-1739.

²⁶The Times, 15 January 1916, p. 6; 18 January 1916, p. 9.

The Miners' Federation, under the leadership of Smillie, decided to oppose conscription and to threaten a strike over it.²⁷ Lloyd George found the threats innocuous and argued to his friends that labor opposition would be easy to quash.²⁸ His feelings were not mere false optimism. At the January 27 meeting of the Bristol conference, the miners voted solidly to support the war effort and The Times noted that in various coalfields, miners were gathering to protest the Federation's vote against the Military Service bill, which they felt had been carried out without sufficient consultation of local branches. The Times predicted that the miners would not strike over the bill.²⁹ Joseph Burgess, an old founder of the Independent Labour Party, wrote to The Times supporting its observation. Many miners, he argued, had failed to attend local union meetings called to decide how to vote on the conscription question. Since many of these favored conscription, the miners' vote against conscription was really not representative.³⁰

The inadequacies of the Military Service bill became evident before the third reading even came to pass. Repington thought the bill contained too many exemptions. There was a

²⁷Ibid., 15 January 1916, p. 6.

²⁸Diary of 15 January 1916, George Allardice Riddell, Lord Riddell, Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914-1918 (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1933), pp. 148, 149.

²⁹The Times, 27 January 1916, p. 9; 22 January 1916, p. 5.

³⁰Ibid., 28 January 1916, p. 7.

continually growing list of reserved trades; with that, the requisite numbers for the army would never be achieved under the bill.³¹ Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, noticed this too. He was especially disgruntled that conscientious objectors might possibly slip through the machinery of the conscription law.³² Derby began to fear the Government departments who were hurriedly starring men to meet their own needs. By late January, Lloyd George alone had starred about 800,000 workers for munitions.³³

Another serious problem that would plague England for the remainder of the war was the large number of medically-unfit men who somehow enlisted or were conscripted in the army. As a major problem, this too had its beginning in the months of the Derby scheme. In January, The Times itself took up the case for these men, arguing that more care should be taken in examining recruits. The Government had begun a policy of paying doctors by the head for the numbers of recruits examined. In the last days of 1915, reported The Times, some doctors had examined hundreds of recruits per day. The Times feared that an evil which had been begun under the Derby scheme would be continued under the conscription law.³⁴ A surgeon wrote in, giving a description of the typical

³¹Diary of 22 January 1916, Lieutenant-Colonel C. à Court Repington, The First World War 1914-1918, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 1:109.

³²Sir William Robertson, From Private to Field-Marshal (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1921), p. 263.

³³Diary of 26 January 1916, Repington, The First World War, 1:113

³⁴The Times, 17 January 1916, p. 5.

method through which enlistment or attestation took place. Recruiting sergeants first swore the men in and issued them armlets, a day's rations, and a day's pay. Then the recruiting officer decided whether or not the man would have a medical examination. The army thus paid some men who ultimately failed their physicals. Others, since they had already been sworn in, were too hurriedly passed over by doctors. He believed that these men stayed in the army where they were sources of ridicule to their army mates and pity to their friends.³⁵ After the passage of conscription, the Government tried to correct the errors of the Derby drive by re-examining many men who were already exempt for medical reasons. Because of the growing cry by military authorities for numbers, the Governmental recruiting machinery committed new errors by conscripting men who had justly managed to secure medical exemption from Derby's recruiters.³⁶

The debate on the third reading of the Military Service bill began and ended very unceremoniously on January 24, 1916. The voting passed the bill by a majority 383 to 36. The Military Service Act conscripted all unmarried men who had turned eighteen by August 15, 1915, and who had not reached the age of forty-one. Those who had married or who were widowers with dependent children before November 2, 1915,

³⁵Ibid., 18 January 1916, p. 9.

³⁶Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 78(1916): 1442; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 290.

were exempted. All those who came under the provisions of the Act were "deemed. . . to have been duly enlisted in His Majesty's regular forces for general service with the Colours or in the Reserve for the period of the war. . . ." ³⁷ Thus all of these men automatically became members of the army and could be treated as such. Exemptions were to be for education, if the subject was resident in England only for that purpose; for men serving in the navy or Royal Marines; for priests and ministers; for disablement or ill-health and for those discharged for fulfillment of their term of service; for those in reserved occupations; for conscientious objection to combatant service only; for serious financial hardships "owing to . . . exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position." ³⁸ The Act also outlined the scheme of tribunals and a system of appeals from the local tribunal to appeal tribunals to a central tribunal in London. ³⁹ The men who came under the Act were to be called up on March 2, 1916. All appeals for exemption had to be taken before local tribunals before March 10. The Manchester Guardian noted that there would be no individual notification sent to those who would come under the provisions of the Act. Instead

³⁷Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 78(1916): 1038-1042; text of bill, quoted, Parliamentary History of Conscription, edited by Richard C. Lambert (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1917), p. 356.

³⁸Text of bill, quoted, Parliamentary History of Conscription, pp. 360, 357.

³⁹Text of bill, quoted, ibid., p. 361.

the announcement would be made through posters located in public places and advertisements in newspapers. This would hurt the poor and ignorant, complained the Guardian, because first, they might not be aware of their liability for service and second, might not be aware of a possible right to exemption or how to claim exemption.⁴⁰

That conscription would not regenerate England by making her a nation of efficient administrators became clearly evident in the workings of the tribunals. The tribunals were staffed with "aged" men who had been active in the recruiting campaign. Many of the tribunal members exhibited the most flagrant bigotry in their dealings with claimants for exemption. This was occasionally offset by the presence of a county court judge or a local magistrate as chairman of the tribunal.⁴¹ In a circular published on the first of February, Long instructed localities to form their tribunals with reference to different interest groups in the community. A "fair proportion" of those on the tribunals had to be labor representatives. At least one member should have had some experience with legal procedure. Tribunals were to contain members of the local Chamber of Commerce also. Those of military age who were unattested were not to be placed on tribunals. Long recommended that members

⁴⁰Manchester Guardian, 4 February 1916, p. 4; diary of 4 February 1916, Repington, The First World War, 1:120.

⁴¹Snowden, Autobiography, 1:403.

of local government boards consult with representative persons throughout the county, in choosing tribunal membership. Each tribunal was to have from five to twenty-five members; at least five members had to hear each case. He also urged that the tribunals of the Derby system be left in operation as the machinery of the Military Service Act. The tribunals were to deal with younger men first, since the men would be called up by classes based upon age. They were to be very careful with conscientious objectors, treating them with consideration but allowing no more of an exemption than would allow objectors to be faithful to their principles; no absolute exemption was to be allowed a conscientious objector. He must be placed into non-combatant service. No slackers should be granted exemptions as COs. Military representatives on the tribunals could question decisions in cases of "indispensable employment," but Long carefully added that this did not indicate any semblance of industrial conscription.⁴² The tribunals which were the result of the Derby scheme, the Military Service Act, and Long's instructions managed to please no one in their operations.⁴³ If they were not overly stingy with exemptions, tribunals often went to the extreme of giving too many. Being too generous was

⁴²The Times, 1 February 1916, p. 7; 4 February 1916, p. 5.

⁴³John Thomas Murphy, New Horizons (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1941), p. 49; Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 301.

not always the fault of the tribunal itself. It often resulted from the tribunal's attempt to follow a haphazard Governmental policy. Within the Government a committee completely unaffiliated with the War Office maintained an ever-expanding list of reserved occupations, especially in agriculture and munitions. The Board of Trade, which supervised the committee, did not allow military men to have any say in the allowance of "reserved" status to occupations. Many tribunals tried to check the Board of Trade policy by granting not exemptions but only postponements of call-up. This would move a man back by as many as ten groups and thereby give him a few weeks' or months' grace.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Government blamed the tribunals for all the mistakes of recruiting. Kitchener cursed them in the House of Lords because they granted too many exemptions. Employers who wanted to keep their men back were far too successful in handling the tribunals, he believed.⁴⁵

The great numbers of single men who slipped by the tribunals aroused the ire of married men, who had not lessened their vigilance over the keeping of the pledge made in 1915. In The Times, a married man complained that single men were being needlessly starred as necessary agricultural laborers. As long as this occurred, married men would be called to take

⁴⁴The Times, 31 January 1916, p. 10; 22 February 1916, p. 7.

⁴⁵Diary of 15 February 1916, Michael MacDonagh, In London during the Great War (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1935), p. 95.

places in the trenches which should have been filled by single slackers. Therefore the Prime Minister's pledge was being insidiously violated.⁴⁶ As the supply of attested single men ran out during the early weeks of 1916, rumors of an imminent call-up of married men began to circulate. On February 25, the Manchester Guardian speculated that all the attested married men would be called up before the autumn came.⁴⁷ Now the conscription issue became not simply a struggle between married and single, but a complex quarrel between the attested married and his unattested colleagues, with the single man hanging in the now precarious balance between partial conscription and general conscription.

To many, the tribunals were far from being lax. The Manchester Guardian, huffy with indignation, cited a War Office authority who had noted that the tribunals were gaining quite a reputation for their harshness. The Guardian believed that the tribunals generally misused their powers and destroyed too many validly-acquired exemptions for health and other reasons.⁴⁸ Even The Times admitted at the end of February that the tribunals were getting more rigid in granting exemptions.⁴⁹ The real problem with the tribunals, as The Times later pointed out, was that they were not at all uniform.

⁴⁶The Times, 14 February 1916, p. 9.

⁴⁷Manchester Guardian, 25 February 1916, p. 4.

⁴⁸Ibid., 29 February 1916, p. 8; 23 February 1916, p. 8.

⁴⁹The Times, 22 February 1916, p. 5.

In different localities, the tribunals worked in completely different ways without an explicit system of rules drawn for them by the Government; thus no standardized principles or procedure existed under the Military Service Act.⁵⁰

By March, three elements in the conscription struggle had grown very restless: The Times, the married men, and Lloyd George. Rumors of a call-up of attested married men flew about on March 1, the day before conscription for single men was to come into effect.⁵¹ The married men's anger reached fervid proportions. Believing that the Government had now utterly forsaken its pledge, one wrote that "for the sake of our wives and families we are not going to be exploited further by the Government's confidence trick, whilst mole-catchers and peach-pruners, not to mention the shirkers in munition factories, are to be accorded exemption, and married men taken to fill the places which they should occupy."⁵² On March 3, the first call went out to married men. Those in groups 25 through 32, ages 19 through 26, were to appear by April 7 for service.⁵³ After only a month of troubled and confused peace over the issue, England found that conscription was a thornier problem than ever. Lloyd George began to dabble with one of his favorite pastimes: threatening to resign over conscription. The Times began

⁵⁰Ibid., 1 March 1916, p. 9.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., 3 March 1916, p. 5.

a campaign to get tribunal activities more standardized and efficient.⁵⁴ And while the Fight for Right movement was being founded by London clergymen to convince England of her mission to crush Germany and avoid a negotiated peace, The Times stretched forth its own righteous arms and drew the attested married men into a bosom of sympathy.⁵⁵ It was only fair that a new conscription law should be enacted to give them justice.

The married man was not only disturbed that he was being called up; to further antagonize him, the Government seemed overly slow in adopting measures to lessen the financial burden of recruitment upon his dependents. The Manchester Guardian had observed in February that the Government would not grant a moratorium on debts and related obligations to those who were already in the army, or to those about to be taken. Extreme conscriptionists demanded that this must be done, showing that it was part of continental conscription schemes. But the Government placidly but insistently refused to do anything.⁵⁶ The issue of a moratorium combined with demands for comb-outs of single men from reserved occupations

⁵⁴Ibid., 2 March 1916, p. 9; Riddell, War Diary, p. 166.

⁵⁵The Times, 2 March 1916, p. 5.

⁵⁶Manchester Guardian, 25 February 1916, p. 4.

and arguments for general conscription to form the married man's case against the Government during the spring of 1916.

The Cabinet began to consider the prospects of searching out single men who might be "escaping service. . . [in] mines and munition factories" at the beginning of March.⁵⁷ They decided to prepare lists of single men of military age who were considered indispensable by various Government departments.⁵⁸ By the end of the month they had formulated a plan for securing a greater number of single men for military service.⁵⁹ The tribunals would be directed to deny exemptions for those in reserved occupations who were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-one. Secondly, the Government would conduct a massive "comb-out" to remove all "non-indispensable" men from industry. Third, those who got into reserved occupations after August 14, 1916, would be denied exemptions in all cases.⁶⁰

March was indeed the month of the married men. They conducted massive protests, even calling on Lord Derby to resign as Director-General of Recruiting if he could not protect them.⁶¹ The Manchester Guardian criticized the wild activities of British husbands who by now had "half a dozen specially formed 'associations' to take care of them." One

⁵⁷Asquith to His Majesty, 3 March 1916, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/37, PRO.

⁵⁸Lord Crew to His Majesty, 16 March 1916, ibid.

⁵⁹Asquith to His Majesty, 23 March 1916, ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Pall Mall Gazette, 13 March 1916, p. 2; 15 March 1916, p. 1.

of the men ran for Parliament on the campaign slogan of "single men first."⁶² On Tower Hill and in Hyde Park, they staged vehement demonstrations against the Government, demanding general conscription, redemption of Asquith's pledge, and consideration of family responsibilities."⁶³

Short of general conscription, the Government became more amenable to the married man. At the end of March, it announced measures to aid the married recruits financially.⁶⁴ The budget would provide an allotment to the Statutory Pensions Committee to be used to aid recruits in severe need. Also recruits could bring cases for termination of long-term leases before county courts. Married men were critical of the machinery for carrying out these provisions, as was the Guardian. To them, the Pensions Committee had too long had a tradition of handling charity cases to be of valid use in this situation.⁶⁵ The Statutory Committee found that it was unable to carry out the task laid before it and the Government organized a special committee to handle relief.⁶⁶ By April 25, the committee had systematized a program of financial aid.⁶⁷ The Government would assist individuals who had joined

⁶²Manchester Guardian, 15 March 1916, p. 4.

⁶³Pall Mall Gazette, 16 March 1916, p. 1; 18 March 1916, p. 1.

⁶⁴Manchester Guardian, 30 March 1916, p. 4.

⁶⁵Ibid., 31 March 1916, p. 6.

⁶⁶Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 81(1916): 2465-2466.

⁶⁷Ibid.

the army since the beginning of war with rents, mortgage interest, taxes, payment of local rates, insurance premiums, educational fees, and payments pertinent to the fulfillment of contracts, with sums up to 104 pounds per year.⁶⁸ These arrangements pleased the Guardian which noted that they would for British soldiers better than any conscript nation provided for its men. The Guardian also mused wistfully that if such provisions had been made earlier for recruits, conscription would perhaps have never been necessary.⁶⁹

British military needs were as acute as ever in the spring of 1916, despite the Military Service Act. General Robertson claimed that altogether British forces abroad were 78,000 men short. In the West, England lacked 55,000 of the men she had promised France she would put in the field. Robertson openly insisted that the only way to cure the problem was to resort to general conscription.⁷⁰ Asquith indignantly refused to even discuss this topic with the married men who came in deputations to see him. But Lloyd George, Robertson, and the married men had already decided upon general conscription, whether Asquith wanted it or not; the result was a mounting Cabinet crisis during April. During the week beginning with Sunday, April 15, the crisis built up into

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Manchester Guardian, 25 April 1916, p. 6.

⁷⁰Diary of 1 April 1916, Repington, The First World War, 1:167; diary of 9 April 1916, ibid., 1:180-181.

great proportions.⁷¹ The Prime Minister had promised a statement on recruiting to be given on the 18th.⁷² Because of Cabinet disunity over the question of how to solve the recruiting problem, Asquith postponed the statement for one day.⁷³ On the next day, he still could not announce a unified policy and he added that if the disagreement was not soon cleared up, "the result must be the break-up of the Government." He then announced that Parliament would recess until April 25 for Easter. At that time Parliament would take up the question of recruiting in a secret session.⁷⁴

During the secret session, the Government tried to conciliate conscriptionists by proposing a compromise which extended conscription to men as soon as they turned eighteen and to men whose terms of service had already expired. The compromise was then announced in a public session of the House of Commons. The House was so indignant at the short-sightedness of the proposal that Asquith quickly withdrew it.⁷⁵ This left only one avenue open: general conscription. The Cabinet which met on April 29 faced two of its most somber experiences of the whole year: the Easter Sunday rebellion in Ireland and the construction of a general conscription bill.⁷⁶

⁷¹Manchester Guardian, 13 April 1916, p. 4; diary of 15 April 1916, Repington, The First World War, 1:187.

⁷²Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 81(1916): 2241.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., 81(1916): 2351.

⁷⁵Ibid., 81(1916): 2463-2464, 2527.

⁷⁶Asquith to His Majesty, 29 April 1916, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/37, PRO.

On May 3, Asquith introduced a bill for general conscription in Parliament.⁷⁷ The bill passed Parliament on May 16, by a vote of 250 to 35, and, as Beatrice Webb wrote in her diary, England had "compulsion, sans phrase."⁷⁸ The new act conscripted all males between eighteen and forty-one, except those exempted by the first act. Those whose terms of service had expired were conscripted for the duration of the war.⁷⁹ No one seemed very excited about the new act, except the married men, who now organized a National Married Man's Protection Society to protect their "business, financial, and domestic interests" after they had been conscripted.⁸⁰ Robertson was pleased with the new law and hoped that a list of essential trades would not block its success.⁸¹ On May 7, 1916, the group system of attestation under Derby's plan closed and for the most part voluntary recruitment ended for the period of the war.⁸²

In the opening days of 1916 Beatrice Webb had written a sad note in her diary predicting an eventual adoption of

⁷⁷Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., 82(1916): 1491.

⁷⁸Diary of 1 May 1916, Webb, Diaries, p. 52.

⁷⁹Text of bill, quoted, Parliamentary History of Conscription, pp. 353-355.

⁸⁰Manchester Guardian, 29 April 1916, p. 6; 8 May 1916, p. 10.

⁸¹Repington, First World War, 1:196.

⁸²Manchester Guardian, 7 June 1916, p. 10.

industrial conscription in England. In a trend which had begun with the Munitions Act and expansion of the Defense of the Realm Act, Mrs. Webb feared that British culture was moving toward the establishment of "the Servile State." The end of that trend would be a denial of working-class freedoms, she thought.⁸³ Shortly after the passage of the May act, her prediction materialized. Parliament amended the act to say that anyone who left munitions work could be conscripted after two weeks. Already, by the terms of the Munitions Act, war-essential workers could not be re-hired for six weeks unless they had a "leaving certificate", issued to them by their employers.⁸⁴ Now, with the creation of general conscription, employers had pervasive control over a very large section of the working class.

The May act did not solve England's manpower problem. In September, military authorities began round-ups at resort areas and on streets in small localities to find any men who could not show proof of exemption. By September 16, almost all the men available under the act had been got; thus a new recruiting crisis existed.⁸⁵ Labor had given only conditional assent to conscription, although they failed to conduct effective agitation against it. The Trades Union Congress of September 1916 resolved that conscription could not last after the end

⁸³Diary of 2 January 1916, Webb, Diaries, p. 52.

⁸⁴Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 329; text of bill, quoted, Parliamentary History of Conscription, pp. 364-365.

⁸⁵Manchester Guardian, 1 September 1916, p. 4.

of the war.⁸⁶ The Manchester Guardian thought this resolution might renew the faith of those who believed that trade union leadership had completely sold out.⁸⁷ And the long-dreamed-of organization had still not materialized. The Bystander noted the predominance of bureaucratic bungling under the system: "there came upon us the military representatives of the Local Tribunal; the Medical Board; the Pensions Committee . . . the round-up. . . ." ⁸⁸ The conscriptionists' pre-war dreams began to shatter.⁸⁹ The battle of the Somme dented the pre-war idealism that had become the bulwark of England's voluntary ardor. Among the 400,000 killed were the volunteers from 1914 and 1915, the men who had held aloft the banner of England's public school spirit. A.J.P. Taylor remarked that

the enthusiastic volunteers were enthusiastic no longer. They had lost faith in their cause, in their leaders, in everything except loyalty to their fighting comrades. . . . Rupert Brooke had symbolized the British soldier at the beginning of the war. Now his place was taken by Old Bill, a veteran of 1915, who crouched in a shell crater for want of "a better 'ole to go to." ⁹⁰

Still, the idealists held out for a better world in post-war days. In October 1916, Norman Angell published a

⁸⁶ Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 298.

⁸⁷ Manchester Guardian, 8 September 1916, p. 5.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 343.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 343.

⁹⁰ Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2:10; A.J.P. Taylor, A History of the First World War (New York: Berkley Publishing Company, 1966), p. 86.

slim pamphlet which later led to his arrest, entitled The New Holy Office or, Why I Oppose Conscription.⁹¹ Angell deprecated conscription because its necessary curtailments of civil liberties had Germanized English institutions. But the answer now was to look ahead and see what the war would ultimately bring. Angell believed the post-war world would demand a greater faith in the power of rational thinking and compromise than had ever before existed. These embodied a "certain moral and intellectual evolution," and if allowed to flourish, that evolution would negate conscription in the future, for conscription had no place in rational thinking.⁹²

Several tracts maintained the pre-war conscriptionist ideal, including Frederick Scott Oliver's Ordeal by Battle, published in several editions between late 1915 and 1917, and G. G. Coulton's Case for Compulsory Military Service.⁹³

Oliver insisted that prior to the war, England had been a "decadent and cowardly nation."⁹⁴ Her degeneracy had come about because she had sacrificed the old country-gentleman politician for the new lawyer-politician embodied by such crafty, glib orators as Asquith. When remuneration for Parliamentarians became a law, the House of Commons sank to a low state because the salaries drew less enlightened,

⁹¹Norman Angell, The New Holy Office or, Why I Oppose Conscription, reprinted from the Evening Post, October 7, 1916 (Massachusetts Branch of Women's Peace Party).

⁹²Ibid., pp. 1-2

⁹³Frederick Scott Oliver, Ordeal By Battle (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917); G. G. Coulton, The Case for Compulsory Military Service (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1917).

⁹⁴Oliver, Ordeal by Battle, p. 55.

more small-minded men into politics. These men exemplified the middle-class and the civilian ideal. Their idea of freedom lay in a lack of personal compulsion of any sort. Thus "the whole duty of the virtuous citizen with regard to the defence of his country began and ended with paying a policeman."⁹⁵ He cursed England for her materialism which was embodied by middle-class values and which made her pursue selfish rather than noble ends. Oliver yearned for national discipline. Like Furse, he demanded that all England be marshalled under a program of national service.⁹⁶ Coulton picked up the cyclical theory of history in his book and used it in his case for conscription. Greece and Rome had fallen when they gave up their citizen armies in favor of professional armies. Lack of conscription had wrought a terrible degeneracy upon Roman life, he argued, not only physically but also in the arts, sciences, and literature.⁹⁷ Coulton admired the Prussian spirit of "order, economy, and obedience." England did not have these traits and like the Roman Empire, she was becoming dangerously soft.⁹⁸ A democratic system of compulsory service would aid her, for "military responsibilities, if truly national, are not degrading but, on the whole, ennobling--and therefore. . . immediate

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 217, 408.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 184.

⁹⁷Coulton, Case for Compulsory Service, pp. 11-13, 23.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 307.

relief from military burdens, if bought at the price of ignoring higher rights and duties, must in the long run work towards national decay."⁹⁹

Ireland escaped conscription in 1916 despite urging from many, including Lloyd George, that it was necessary to conscript all possible men in order to ease the repeated crises over manpower. The military authorities argued that since England had put down the Easter Sunday rebellion in Ireland, the Government could now safely and quietly enact conscription there.¹⁰⁰ A Manchester Guardian correspondent argued prophetically that Sinn Fein was perhaps the only element that stood between Ireland and conscription.¹⁰¹ Recruiting had by this time almost stopped in Ireland. The Cabinet decided that conscription could not be applied there, however, and this time, even Lloyd George assented.¹⁰² Still, there was a practical problem of keeping Irish divisions up to strength. The Cabinet of Asquith left the problem unsolved and when Lloyd George became Prime Minister in December, 1916, it passed to him.¹⁰³

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 30-31.

¹⁰⁰Diary of 8 August 1916, Repington, The First World War, 1:301; diary of 3 October 1916, ibid., 1:354.

¹⁰¹Manchester Guardian, 4 September 1916, p. 4.

¹⁰²Asquith to His Majesty, 6 October 1916, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/37, PRO; diary of 8 October 1915, Riddell, War Diary, p. 215.

¹⁰³Asquith to His Majesty, 11 October 1916, Letters of the Prime Minister to the King, CAB 41/37, PRO.

The threat of conscription continued its work of enhancing and solidifying revolutionary consciousness in Ireland. One English pacifist believed that that threat had stirred Sinn Feiners toward the Easter Sunday assault against the English Government.¹⁰⁴ Unlike England, the Irish prepared themselves for a serious and unified resistance to conscription. An example of the widespread and deep feeling against England on the issue of conscription was a story told about an English officer who went to the Dublin Bread Company for tea. When he asked what D.B.C. stood for, the waitress defiantly remarked, "Death Before Conscription."¹⁰⁵

During 1917, no action was taken in relation to Ireland where conscription was concerned. But in April 1918, Lloyd George's War Cabinet began to prepare a new conscription bill which would supposedly release 1,500,000 more men for the trenches. To do this, the Military Service Acts were to be amended to extend the age limit to fifty-six. Religious ministers would be conscripted for non-combatant services. Many exemptions were to be abolished. Finally, Irishmen were to be conscripted.¹⁰⁶ A young revolutionary, Eamon de Valera,

¹⁰⁴C.H. Norman, Searchlight on the European War (London: The Labour Publishing Company, Limited, 1924), pp. 139, 140.

¹⁰⁵Darrell Figgis, Recollections of the Irish War (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1927), p. 196.

¹⁰⁶Diary of 6 April 1918, Repington, The First World War, 2:265; Robertson, From Private to Field Marshal, p. 304; diary of 12 April 1918, Repington, The First World War, 2:272; Figgis, Recollections, p. 207.

now urged Sinn Feiners to resist through transport strikes and shooting policemen and soldiers. Lloyd George was furious; he informed his associates that "we must make it clear to every dock labourer that if he isn't working at the docks, he will be in the army."¹⁰⁷ The Cabinet decided to move forcefully against the Irish threat and Derby organized a scheme of gradually removing all Irish Reserve Battalions from Ireland and replacing them with English ones.¹⁰⁸ But Sinn Fein seemed to thrive on these new acts of repression. The party organized most of the resistance to conscription, while the Volunteers regrouped themselves and re-armed. Sinn Fein fell into the position of leadership so thoroughly that one of its members was now elected to Parliament by a huge majority.¹⁰⁹ On the day that the new conscription act came into effect, no Irishmen, except for a few Ulsterites, did any work. A 24-hour general strike closed all of Ireland except Belfast. Taylor later wrote that this was the "decisive moment at which Ireland seceded from the Union."¹¹⁰ It took astute Englishmen only a few days after Lloyd George's initial

¹⁰⁷Diary of 10 April 1918, Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary, edited by Keith Middlemas, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1:56.

¹⁰⁸Diary of 12 April 1918, ibid., 1:58.

¹⁰⁹Figgis, Recollections, pp. 198, 218.

¹¹⁰Fenner Brockway, Inside the Left (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1942), p. 76; Taylor, quoted by Middlemas, Jones, Whitehall Diary, p. 56.

announcement to realize that conscription in Ireland without a Home Rule Parliament there also was an entirely unworkable proposition.¹¹¹

In coming to the British Isles, conscription did not solve the ills it was supposed to cure. As the tribunals showed, the Government did not enact conscription as a uniform measure in England. Therefore it left many of its war-time advocates dissatisfied and when victory came to the Allies, they rallied around Lloyd George in demanding its abolition.¹¹² Nevertheless, even after seeing the conscription debacle some writers did not lose their faith that England might someday be regenerated through efficient administration.

As a party issue conscription may have hastened the destruction of the Liberals as a political force in England.¹¹³ Whether it did or not, conscription did destroy the idealism that that party and its allies had cultivated. The efforts of Liberals to enact wartime administration never completely lost the flavor of "business as usual," despite the promptings of Lloyd George.

¹¹¹Diary of 19 April 1918, Repington, The First World War, 2:277.

¹¹²Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 344.

¹¹³See Trevor Wilson, The Downfall of the Liberal Party (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966).

Therefore, even though many of them would not have admitted it, they enacted conscription without committing serious breaches with many of England's cultural values. Because conscription did not come to England as a uniformly repressive agent, the English generally did not accept it as such. The working classes had the most serious reason to oppose it because it was truly a potential assault upon their freedom, being intricately entwined with industrial compulsion. Just as their past confrontations with the army had never aroused the working class to become a serious revolutionary threat in England, neither did the conscription acts of 1916 do so. Conscription did not fulfill its possibilities as a repressive system because it was enacted in an inefficient manner. It was an extension, rather than a cure, of the spirit of haphazardness that the conscriptionists of pre-war years saw as England's degeneracy. But even British conscription could enhance a revolutionary consciousness. That was shown in the case of Ireland, where a certain amount of cohesion among radical elements had already been established as a tradition, and was further solidified by the coming of conscription.

On May 20, 1920, Churchill declared that it was unnecessary to repeal the conscription acts since orders had been issued for the release of all conscripts. Thus the acts were left on the statute book. In 1939 when Hitler invaded Poland

and England declared war on Germany, the 1916 acts came into operation.¹¹⁴ The most harrowing effects of conscription as a crisis inflicted upon the British culture had been contained through the surrender in 1915 and 1916 to conscriptionist demands.

¹¹⁴Hayes, Conscription Conflict, p. 344; Margaret Bondfield, A Life's Work (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1948), p. 153; J.R. Clynes, Memoirs 1869-1939, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 1:200; Hayes, Conscription Conflict, pp. 322-323.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The conscription issue in England significantly reflected deeper and more pervasive values held by various parts of the culture. These values were almost always cast in reference to England's position as an isolationist power. They reflected peculiarly English feelings as to the worth of the great empire that England began to build up in the latter part of the nineteenth century. As the English moved toward the Great War, these qualities continued to assert themselves in conscription arguments, whether pro or con. The war was a partial answer to some long-held hopes, especially in the case of those who most fervently desired some sort of a regeneration. It also provided the conscriptionists with an opportunity, which possibly would never have come to them in any other way, of putting England under a system of conscription. They were rudely exasperated when conscription failed, at least in the time of the Great War, to kindle a rebirth in the English soul.

In the nineteenth century, conservatives who favored policies of imperial aggrandizement tended to believe in a

cyclical view of history. Their theories of history, though serving as dire warnings as to what might happen to England, were not without optimism, for the conservative-imperialist believed that England could be saved from the otherwise ruthless operation of the cycle, if she would free herself of moral, spiritual, and physical laxness. This condition was also the only one that would save her empire. She could do these things by truly becoming a single-minded, militaristic nation through the adoption of conscription. What baffled these conservatives was that England, at the zenith of her greatness, seemed to become less and less willing to exercise that greatness in reference to the rest of the world.

The puzzlement of the conservatives resulted from a dilemma that liberalism had begun to suffer about the time that Gladstone sent troops to protect British interests in Egypt. An ideological cult, of which the Liberal party was a tangible symbol, had become intertwined with its worst possible enemy; the individualistic morality of early Liberals such as Cobden was now mixed up with a political policy whose ultimate consequences were control, efficiency, and a marshalling of the population into an effective fighting force. The values of liberalism had an intense effect upon the culture as a whole and England, while generally proud of her empire, refused to accept the conscription that conservatives believed to be the ultimate protector of imperial dignity and qualities.

The part of British society which had the most practical reason for objecting to conscription was the working class. For them, its adoption could mean a very definite curtailment of all the concessions they had gained in their struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For one thing, it would give the Government a vast army of potential strike-breakers. Secondly, with a conscription system, it would become too easy to punish recalcitrant workers by shoving them into the army at the employer's and the Government's will.

Workers also opposed conscription on more ideological grounds. This opposition was a result of their collusion with the liberalizing effect of the intelligentsia. When workers opposed conscription on the basis of ideals rather than practical labor politics, their opposition reflected the same concern for the sanctity of their isolationist culture that liberal thought did.

On the whole, the working-class movement in England did not gain any real solidarity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For a brief moment before the Great War it flirted with syndicalism and the general strike. But, as always, workers were moved by practical forces--this time, low wages that combined with high prices to make their economic situation untenable. The war completely destroyed the possibility of solidarity through the general strike. In their stand on conscription, workers were as disunified

as ever. Many could see the need for it on a practical basis, that of military necessity, and their resistance faded. Those who held out against it did not coordinate their efforts into a strong movement, but feebly protested its damaging effects upon the culture. The fate of conscription in Ireland showed that the issue could nourish an already-functioning revolutionary consciousness, even if it failed to encourage revolutionary solidarity in England.

Conscription came to England in a manner that was consistent with her liberal propensities. Parliament did not gather purposefully and decide that it was time for redemption by conscription. Instead, the Government initiated a plan that was supposed to be a last effort to save voluntary recruiting, but which--perhaps unknown to at least some of its authors--contained all the prerequisites for getting and maintaining a system of conscription. The most ironic result of the Derby scheme was the Prime Minister's pledge to the married men. Because the pledge could not possibly have been fulfilled in any attested married man's eyes without conscription, Asquith was able to bring in conscription without calling it that at all. Instead he pressed it as fulfillment of a pledge which it had been his duty to give.

Conscription in England operated through localities. This, too, was in accordance with older aspects of British culture. Thus it never became efficient and it never became uniformly despotic, although under it there most certainly

existed the rawest cases of injustice. Although liberals had surrendered, it was the conservatives who were really duped. Conscription during the Great War was such an unwieldy system that many of them began to anxiously await its end.

Yet there were some conservatives who never lost hope in a national regeneration through conscription. They continued both during and after the war to state the case for a unified, efficient continental system of conscription. But such a thing as that really was out of keeping with a culture that was administered by local government boards and whose idealism rested upon the freedom of the individual.

Conscription, then, came during the Great War and ended shortly after the war. It had been less disruptive of the ideas Englishmen had held in their pre-war days than had been anticipated. The spirit of Cobden had not been killed. The sentiments of Norman Angell, who pleaded for a rational world when the war was over, showed that liberal thinkers, though they were faced with conscription, thought they could eventually rid themselves of it, and more than that, keep it from coming back again.

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