

Radical liberals and liberal politics 1906 - c.1924

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ABSTRACT

The ten years after 1914 saw the departure from the Liberal party and the entry into the Labour party of a significant number of prominent Radicals. Nor was it through secessions to Labour alone that the Liberals lost Radical support during this period: a number of Radicals retired prematurely from political life. There were, of course, many other Radicals who served out their political careers as Liberals. The main aim of this study is to explain how and why it was that the early twentieth-century Liberal party was deserted by some Radicals but retained the allegiance of others. An attempt is also made to explain why it was that those Radicals who did make the transition from Liberalism to Labour did so, in most cases, after prolonged hesitation and with some misgivings. It should be made clear, however, that this is not a study of Radical politics at all levels. It focuses on those individuals who formed the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party between 1906 and 1918. Some consideration is given, though, to the attitudes and activities of those Radical intellectuals and publicists who were an important part of the environment in which Radical parliamentarians moved.

It has often been suggested that the Radicals who made the transition from Liberalism to Labour did so chiefly because they despaired of the Liberal party giving a hearing to their views on peace and foreign policy and because they became exasperated by the wartime failure of the Liberal leadership to uphold such Liberal ideals as voluntary military service. It is

argued here that this is not an altogether satisfactory explanation. It is maintained that there were numerous Radicals who remained within the Liberal fold who were as strongly committed to the ideals of peace and internationalism - and as exasperated by the wartime conduct of the Liberal leadership - as any of the defectors. It is also pointed out that there were Radicals who defected to Labour who, before doing so, had been supporters of the all-out war policies of the Lloyd George coalition.

The central contention of this study is that a full understanding of what induced some Radicals to join the Labour party and others to remain within the Liberal fold cannot be reached unless it is borne in mind that there were fundamental differences in economic outlook within the Radical camp. It is argued that a broad distinction can be drawn between 'progressive' or social reform Radicals and those who may be described as 'traditional' Radicals. It is further argued that there were two distinct types of 'traditional' Radical: Cobdenite Radicals and single-taxers. All but a handful of the Radicals who made the transition from Liberalism to Labour or who were strongly tempted to do so were, it is suggested, progressive Radicals. It is argued that the attraction of the Labour party for progressive Radicals was not only its foreign policy but also its social and economic policies. Cobdenite Radicals, it is maintained, no matter how great their wartime disenchantment with the Liberal party, exhibited no interest in the possibility of entering the Labour ranks.

A number of single-taxers did become members of the Labour party: it is suggested that they did so for reasons which differed from those of their progressive Radical counterparts.

It should be made clear that this study contains no attempt to assess the extent to which Radical secessions contributed to the downfall of the Liberal party. What is claimed, however, is that it does make some contribution to an understanding of the pre-war and wartime divisions within the parliamentary Liberal party.

RADICAL LIBERALS AND LIBERAL POLITICS,
1906 - c. 1924

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.J.E.S.	American Journal of Economics and Sociology
A.P.S.R.	American Political Science Review
B.I.H.S.	Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research
H.J.	Historical Journal
J.B.S.	Journal of British Studies
J.C.H.	Journal of Contemporary History
J.M.H.	Journal of Modern History
T.R.H.S.	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
W.H.R.	Welsh History Review
V.S.	Victorian Studies
Y.B.E.S.R.	Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research

INTRODUCTION

During the half-century before 1914, the Radicals were a vocal, energetic and frustrated component of what H.G. Wells called the 'huge, hospitable caravanserai of Liberalism'.¹ The Radicals' frustration sprang from their inability to win the initiative in Liberal politics. An overwhelming majority of Radicals nevertheless remained firm in their allegiance to the Liberal party, regarding it as the best available instrument of progress. After 1914, however, there was a parting of ways. Many Radicals remained within the Liberal fold. Others transferred their allegiance to Labour. At least twenty-five Radicals with parliamentary experience entered the Labour party between 1914 and 1924.² They were joined by several distinguished intellectuals and publicists, including the heterodox economist, J.A. Hobson; G. Lowes Dickinson, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge; the secretary of the Union of Democratic Control, E.D. Morel; and H.W. Massingham, editor of the Nation between 1907 and 1923. Nor was this Radical exodus confined to a handful of notables. A considerable number of constituency activists also made the transition from Liberalism to

¹ H.G. Wells, The New Machiavelli (1911; Penguin edn., 1966), p. 245.

² For a list of these Radicals, see below, appendix 3: it will be seen that two of them - George Nicholls and J.H. Whitehouse - re-entered the Liberal party before 1924.

Labour.³ It was not, moreover, through secessions to Labour alone that the Liberal party lost Radical support. There were several relatively young Radical politicians - Arnold Rowntree and Francis Neilson, for example - who had opted out of politics altogether by 1924.

What this study seeks to do is explain how and why it was that the Liberal party lost the support of some Radicals but retained the allegiance of others. It ought to be noted, however, that little will be said about Radicals who were not active in politics at the centre.⁴ This is primarily a study of those individuals who formed the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party between 1906 and 1918. Some consideration is given, though, to those Radical intellectuals and publicists who were an important part of the environment in which Radical parliamentarians moved.

One aspect of this subject has received some attention from historians: the movement of Radical Liberals into the Labour party. It has often been argued that the principal reason for the estrangement of these secessionist Radicals from Liberalism was the wartime betrayal by the

³ See R.E. Dowse, 'The Entry of Liberals into the Labour Party, 1910-20', Y.B.E.S.R., 13,2 (1961), p. 84; also, R.I. McKibbin, The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-24 (Oxford, 1974), p. 238. Some evidence on this matter is presented below, ch. 7.

⁴ For an explanation of the way in which the terms 'Radical', 'Radicals' and 'Radicalism' are used in this study, see below, appendix 1.

Liberal party of the causes of peace and internationalism. A.J. Mayer, for example, has claimed that the Liberal party became 'so rigidly committed to an all-out war policy that its Radical wing was forced to search for a new political home'.⁵ It has also invariably been maintained that it was the Labour party's championship of internationalism after 1917 which was primarily responsible for the influx of Radicals. When Labour embraced the foreign policy programme put forward by the Radical 'pacifists' and their socialist associates, C.A. Cline has suggested, the Radicals followed their programme into the Labour party. Similarly, the historian of the Union of Democratic Control has asserted that, by the end of the war, the views on foreign policy of those Radicals who had had the courage to dissent over the war made it possible for them to work with only one political party, Labour.⁶

⁵ A.J. Mayer, Wilson vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-18 (Meridian edn., Cleveland, Ohio, 1964), p. 12; also M. Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics during the First World War (Oxford, 1971), p. 131; McKibbin, Evolution of the Labour Party, p. 238.

⁶ C.A. Cline, Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party 1914-31 (Syracuse, 1963), pp. 21-2; Swartz, Union of Democratic Control, pp. 40-1. See also, M. Bentley, 'The Liberal Response to Socialism' in K.D. Brown (ed.), Essays in Anti-Labour History (London, 1974), p. 57; M. Cowling, The Impact of Labour, 1920-24 (Cambridge, 1971), p. 29; C.F. Brand, British Labour's Rise to Power (Stanford, 1941), p. 83; Dowse, 'Entry of Liberals into the Labour Party', pp. 81-4; K.G. Robbins, 'The Abolition of War: A Study in the Organisation and Ideology of the Peace Movement' (unpub. Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1964), pp. 463-4; H. Pelling, review of W. Wolfe, From Radicalism to Socialism, History, vol. 61 no. 202 (June 1976), p. 309.

This is not an entirely satisfactory explanation. To begin with, it is not the case that a record of strenuous opposition to the war policies of the Liberal and coalition governments after 1914 was a sufficient condition of transition from Liberalism to Labour. There were several Radical 'pacifists' whose commitment to internationalism and exasperation with official Liberalism equalled that of the defectors but who nevertheless remained within the Liberal fold. D.M. Mason, M.P. for Coventry, 1910-1918, and Arnold Lupton, who sat for a Lincolnshire constituency between 1906 and 1910, are two extreme examples. Mason was one of the most uncompromising 'peace men' in the pre-war House of Commons. He opposed Liberal naval policy with such ferocity that he was repudiated by Coventry Liberal Association in January 1914. In 1916 he underlined his independence, and his opposition to the war, by withdrawing from all the Liberal organisations of which he was a member.⁷ Lupton was if anything more outspoken. He was twice convicted under the wartime Defence of the Realm Act for circulating peace propaganda. Mason and Lupton both stood as independents in the 1918 general election.⁸ But within four years, both were once

⁷ Daily News, 11 March 1916.

⁸ Mason contested Coventry and Lupton fought Will Thorne at Plaistow, a constituency with which he had previously had no connection: Cllr. Jones, the Labour candidate at neighbouring Silvertown, declared that Lupton knew 'as much about West Ham as a Connemara pig knew about astronomy' (Stratford Express, 4 December 1918).

again official Liberal candidates.

Nor, furthermore, were the Radical converts to Labour drawn exclusively from the section of the Liberal party which opposed the all-out war policy of the Lloyd George coalition. E.G. Hemmerde, for example, described himself as a 'whole-hearted supporter of a fight to the finish' in 1918.⁹ He joined the Labour party two years later. Joseph Martin became a Labour party member before the war ended, yet continued to give public support to what he called 'Lloyd George's efforts to exterminate Prussianism'.¹⁰ Christopher Addison, Leo Chiozza Money, R.D. Denman and Alexander MacCallum Scott were Radicals who entered the Labour party after holding office in the Lloyd George coalition.¹¹

It is therefore difficult to accept the conclusions

⁹ Statement to the electors of N.W. Norfolk, reported in Daily News, 23 November 1918.

¹⁰ Speech at Islington, reported in St. Pancras Guardian, 23 August 1918. It may be that Martin was not as ardent a 'patriot' as this suggests: in May 1917 he voted for Snowden's 'pacifist' motion welcoming the declaration of the new democratic government of Russia repudiating all proposals for imperialist conquest.

¹¹ Addison was Minister of Munitions (1916-17), Minister of Reconstruction (1917-19) and President of the Local Government Board and Minister of Health (1919-21); Chiozza Money resigned as Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Shipping in November 1918; MacCallum Scott was Churchill's p.p.s. at the Ministry of Munitions, 1917-19, and subsequently a junior Coalition Liberal Whip; Denman was p.p.s. to R.E. Prothero (President of the Board of Agriculture) in 1917, and p.p.s. to H.A.L. Fisher (President of the Board of Education) in 1918.

of those historians who have attempted to explain the migration of Radicals to the Labour party mainly in terms of Radical participation in the peace movement. It will be argued here that a full understanding of what induced some Radicals to defect to Labour - and, equally, of what induced others to remain within the Liberal party - can only be gained through an examination of the nature of pre-war Radicalism. Such an examination will also help to explain why many of the Radicals who joined the Labour party only did so after much hesitation and with some misgivings.

This study rests upon the assumption that the break-up of Radicalism is of sufficient intrinsic significance to warrant extended analysis. The question of the extent to which Radical secessions contributed to the downfall of the Liberal party is, however, one which naturally presents itself. It should be said that the evidence relating to Radicalism assembled here does not of itself provide an adequate basis for an assessment to be attempted. How important the Radicals were in this context is in fact largely a matter for speculation: depending on what overall view is taken of the causes of Liberal decline, it is possible to construct widely differing estimates of their importance. If, for example, it is held that the Liberal party was displaced by Labour because it was inherently incapable of coming to terms with the emergence of working-class consciousness, then the departure of Radicals from it cannot be regarded as

a matter of great consequence.¹² Alternatively, a more elevated view of the Radicals' importance might be taken if the claims of such historians as P.F. Clarke and H.V. Emy are accepted. Clarke believes that by 1910 Liberalism had demonstrated its capacity to contain the working-class vote, but suggests that its continued viability depended on social and economic issues being kept to the fore.¹³ Emy maintains that Radical parliamentarians had a vital role to play in this connection.¹⁴ If the Radicals were indeed such a key pressure-group in Liberal politics, there is a case for arguing that the break-up of Radicalism after 1914 was more than a marginal cause of Liberal decline. The debate between those historians who consider that the Liberal party was in decay before 1914 and those who regard it as a casualty of war has thus far been inconclusive.¹⁵

¹² See, for example, McKibbin, Evolution of the Labour Party, pp. xiv-xv, 237-44; H. Pelling, 'Labour and the Downfall of Liberalism', in Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain (London, 1968), pp. 101-20; R. Gregory, The Miners and Politics 1906-14 (Oxford, 1968), pp. 178-9, 191.

¹³ P.F. Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 393-4.

¹⁴ H.V. Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, 1892-1914 (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 284-9.

¹⁵ One historian has commented: 'The debate between those who argue that the Liberal Party was doomed by 1914 and those who stress its continued vitality is necessarily inconclusive, if only because there is no way of removing the First World War from the historical context in the manner of the devotees of counter-factual history' (J.R. Hay, The Origins of the Liberal Welfare Reforms, 1906-14 (London, 1975), pp. 22-3.

That being so, any further consideration in this study of the Radicals' contribution to the realignment of the British left would be of negligible value.

A study of Radicalism can nevertheless illuminate certain features of early twentieth century Liberal politics. It can, in particular, contribute to an understanding of the nature of the pre-war and wartime divisions within the parliamentary party. Accounts of Edwardian politics often depict the Radicals as 'social reform Liberals' whose efforts to shift the party to the left were countered by such right-wing elements as the Liberal Imperialists and Liberal businessmen.¹⁶ It will be suggested here that this view is, to say the least, misleading. With regard to the divisions within the parliamentary Liberal party between 1916 and 1918, it will be argued that Lloyd George's supporters were not, as has been alleged, mostly Radicals¹⁷; and that the internal divisions among Lloyd George's opponents were so great that the term 'Asquithian' Liberals is something of a misnomer.

¹⁶ Swartz, Union of Democratic Control, pp. 1-4; see also, for example, B. Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914 (London, 1960), pp. 134-40; G.D.H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People, 1746-1946 (paperback edn., London, 1966), pp. 464-66.

¹⁷ A.J.P. Taylor, 'Politics in the First World War', in Politics in Wartime (London, 1964), pp. 32, 40-1; 'Lloyd George: Rise and Fall', in ibid., pp. 140, 144; C. Cook, A Short History of the Liberal Party, 1900-1976 (London, 1976), p. 72.

1. EDWARDIAN RADICALISM: AN ANATOMY

i CONFLICT AND COHESION IN RADICAL POLITICS

The general election of 1906 ended practically twenty years of Unionist hegemony in British politics and provided Campbell-Bannerman's ministry with the largest parliamentary majority in Liberal history. This transformation in the fortunes of Liberalism was naturally greeted with euphoria in Radical quarters. But it was not only in the context of inter-party rivalry that the 1906 election appeared to Radicals to be a watershed. Radical commentators maintained that a decisive shift in the balance of power in Liberal politics had taken place, delivering the ability to determine party strategy into Radical hands. It is certainly the case that there had been nothing resembling the optimism which existed within the Radical camp since 1885, when the Chamberlainite Radicals had been confident of success in their bid to capture the initiative in Liberal politics.

Between 1885 and 1905, Radicalism was an unimposing political force. The Home Rule crisis, far from leading to the Radicalisation of the Liberal party, as Dilke and Harcourt among others had predicted, left Radicals divided and demoralised. An overwhelming majority remained within the Gladstonian fold, thereby detaching themselves from perhaps the only leader capable of imposing some degree of order and discipline on Radical

politics, Joseph Chamberlain.¹ After 1886 these Radicals were anxious to bring non-Irish issues to the fore in Liberal politics, but their efforts proved largely abortive. Gladstone, remaining 'in situ for the Irish question only', insisted that no progress could be made with English reforms until the Irish 'obstruction' had been removed.² His stature within the Liberal party was such that the Radicals, however clamorous, were compelled to mark time. Nor did they make significant headway within the party after Gladstone's departure from the political arena. While Gladstone and Ireland dominated Liberal politics, the tension between Liberal Imperialists and Radical 'little Englanders' had to some extent remained latent. It was laid bare after 1894. One dimension of this debilitating conflict, which was not confined to the specific issue of imperialism but involved fundamental disagreement over the nature and purpose of Liberalism, was 'the struggle for the leadership of the Liberal party in the 1890s'.³ It was an inconclusive struggle, since neither of the factional leaders was able

¹ One recent study, evidently employing generous criteria of Radicalism, suggests that 131 Radicals voted for Home Rule, 32 against. See T. W. Heyck, 'Home Rule, Radicalism and the Liberal Party, 1886-1895', J.B.S., xii, no. 2 (May 1974), p. 69.

² Gladstone to Acton, 13 January 1887, quoted in Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone (London, 1903), vol. iii, p. 355.

³ See P. Stansky, Ambitions and Strategies (Oxford, 1964), passim.

to establish a position of undisputed primacy in Liberal politics. Campbell-Bannerman's principal qualification for the leadership, which he assumed in 1899, was that he divided Liberals the least.

During the South African war the Radical-Imperialist feud reached its climax, and Radical fortunes their nadir. The Radical 'pro-Boers' were in a minority within the parliamentary Liberal party. Although privately in sympathy with their outlook, Campbell-Bannerman's primary concern was Liberal unity and he therefore endeavoured to appear uncommitted to either faction. The Liberal centre followed this example of ostentatious neutrality. The party was thus split three ways, a fact which was made embarrassingly clear by the voting on Sir Wilfrid Lawson's motion of censure on Joseph Chamberlain in July 1900.⁴ With the Liberal Imperialists proclaiming ideals which Radicals considered alien to the Liberal tradition, while the Liberal centre maintained what Radicals viewed as a pusillanimous silence, it is hardly surprising that some prominent Radicals despaired of Liberalism. 'It seems to me that the Liberal Party is done ...', wrote J. D. Hope, Liberal M.P. for West Fife. L. T. Hobhouse confessed his belief that the Liberals were 'destined to futility' unless some great and unforeseen

⁴ H.C.Parl.Deb., div. no. 242 (25 July 1900).

change occurred.⁵ Some Radicals considered secession from the party. During the campaign against the Boer war the Radical 'pro-Boers' established close links with the anti-war elements within the labour movement, and there were suggestions that these might form the basis of a new political alignment. J. A. Hobson favoured the formation of a Radical-Socialist party, as did Dr. John Clifford, a pillar of Radical Nonconformity.⁶ The National Democratic League, founded in 1900 by W. M. Thompson, editor of Reynolds' Newspaper, was an attempt to construct an alliance of Radicals, socialists and trades unionists around a narrow programme of constitutional reform.⁷ Nothing came of these initiatives. Campbell-Bannerman was moving away from his neutral stance from early in 1901. In June he publicly identified himself with the anti-Imperialists by condemning the 'methods of barbarism' being employed in South Africa. The Radicals duly closed ranks behind the official leadership. One leading member of the I.L.P. had already detected 'a tendency on the part of the anti-war Liberals

⁵ J. D. Hope to C. Geake, 9 December 1902, quoted in P. Poirier, The Advent of the Labour Party (London, 1958), p. 136, fn. 26; L. T. Hobhouse to C. P. Scott, ? February 1900, quoted in J. A. Hobson and M. Ginsberg, L. T. Hobhouse: his life and work (London, 1931), p. 40.

⁶ For Hobson, see Poirier, op. cit., pp. 177-78; for Clifford, Sir J. Marchant, Dr. John Clifford CH: Life, Letters and Reminiscences (London 1924), p. 147.

⁷ On the N.D.L., see R. Price, An Imperial War and the British Working Class (London 1972), appendix ii, pp. 246-9; also, H. Clegg, A. Fox and A. F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions (Oxford 1964) vol. 1, pp. 377-8.

to forget the past eighteen months'.⁸

After 1902 the Radicals were gaining ground. Not only had the Boer war resulted in a rapprochement between Radicals and the Liberal centre - much to the dismay of Liberal Imperialists - but it also led to the entry into active politics of a number of young Radicals who had previously had little or no connection with official Liberalism. Arthur Ponsonby, who served in the Foreign Office until 1902, told Lloyd George in 1909: 'it was the attitude C. B. John Morley and yourself took up 7-8 years ago that finally made me in spite of much opposition give up official life for politics'.⁹ 'It required the Boer war to give me much contact with the Liberal Party view', wrote Noel Buxton, 'and even so it was only with the Campbell-Bannerman section of the Liberals'.¹⁰ It cannot, however, be said that the intra-party conflict had been finally resolved in the Radicals' favour. Liberal Imperialism was no doubt declining as an organised political force after 1902, but it was by no means a spent one. When the Unionists split over Chamberlain's tariff reform proposals in 1903, it was the Liberal

⁸ Ramsay MacDonald to Lady Mary Murray, 2 May 1901, Gilbert Murray MS., box 35.

⁹ Ponsonby to Lloyd George (copy), ? May 1909, Ponsonby MS.

¹⁰ Quoted in H. N. Fieldhouse, 'Noel Buxton and A. J. P. Taylor's "The Trouble Makers"' in M. Gilbert (ed.) A Century of Conflict 1850-1950 (London 1966), p. 177.

Imperialists, notably R. B. Haldane, who took the lead in pressing for an understanding between the Liberals and the Unionist Free Traders. In 1903-4 there appeared to be some possibility of such an alliance being concluded.¹¹ Since an alliance of this nature could only have led to a diminution of their influence in Liberal counsels, Radical reactions to the idea were predictably hostile. C. P. Trevelyan wrote: 'To sacrifice all efforts for progress, in order to secure an alliance with the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Goschen, and the Becketts, Churchills and Seelys in the House of Commons is impossible'.¹² Equally alarming so far as Radicals were concerned was the Relugas conspiracy of 1905, the attempt by Asquith, Haldane and Grey to force Campbell-Bannerman to retire to the House of Lords and to install Asquith as leader of the Commons and de facto premier. The conspiracy failed largely because of Asquith's lack of resolution. But enough information concerning the plot leaked out for Radicals to realise how close the Liberal Imperialist triumvirate had come to success.

In October 1904, R. B. Haldane, discussing the question of the composition of the next Liberal government

¹¹ See R. A. Rempel, Unionists Divided: Arthur Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain and the Unionist Free Traders (Newton Abbott 1972), ch. 5.

¹² C. P. Trevelyan, Land Reform versus Protection (London n.d. ? 1905), p. 7.

with Sir Almeric Fitzroy, felt unable to predict where the centre of gravity in Liberal politics would lie after the forthcoming election.¹³ Radical commentators had no doubts as to where it lay following the landslide of 1906. The Liberal majority, according to C. F. G. Masterman, consisted largely of 'pro-Boers'. H. W. Massingham claimed that Radicalism was 'the most powerful force in the party'. The Nation suggested in 1908 that 'the evolution of Radicalism within the party is fairly complete'.¹⁴ It was confidently asserted that the Radicals would exercise a controlling influence in Liberal politics. The Liberal government, insisted the Christian Commonwealth, could only exist 'so long as it can convince the Radical section of its supporters that it means business'. It was only 'with and by the Left', in the Nation's view, that the Liberals could govern.¹⁵ And since the government was headed by Campbell-Bannerman, 'the first Radical Prime Minister', there seemed little reason to suppose that it would be anything other than sympathetic towards Radical aspirations.¹⁶ Thus in 1906 Radicals believed,

¹³ Sir Almeric Fitzroy, Memoirs (London, 1927), vol.i, p.220.

¹⁴ C. F. G. Masterman, 'How the Government Stands', The Nation, 24 August 1907; The Speaker, 24 February 1906; The Nation, 11 April 1908; see also, The Star, 19 February 1906.

¹⁵ Christian Commonwealth, 3 November 1909; The Nation, 11 April 1908.

¹⁶ The Nation, 29 June 1907.

as E. N. Bennett subsequently recorded, that the political future was full of hope.¹⁷ Sir Robert Ensor summed up the mood of 1906 in similar terms: 'Radicalism and socialism alike, released from the suppressions of two decades, were radiant with sudden hopes of a new heaven and a new earth'.¹⁸

The self-confidence which Radicals exhibited in 1906 contained a strong element of wishful thinking. The Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party was greatly strengthened in 1906, and its potential influence correspondingly enhanced. What was lacking was the unity of purpose necessary to exploit the new situation. Contrary to the impression given by Radical writers in the moment of victory, it was not the case that Edwardian Radicalism was an homogenous political bloc.

One major centrifugal influence was 'faddism', a problem which had plagued Radicalism throughout its parliamentary existence. Within the Radical camp there were champions of a host of disparate causes, who, as

¹⁷ E. N. Bennett, 'The Passing of Liberalism', Socialist Review, vol. XV (Jan.-March 1918), p. 82-3. Bennett was Liberal M.P. for Woodstock, 1906-1910.

¹⁸ Sir Robert Ensor, England 1870-1914 (Oxford, 1936), p. 391; cf. The Economist, 30 March 1907: 'What the Liberals who sit below the gangway (i.e. the Radicals) want is to make things other than they are. They dream of a new heaven, and a new earth, and they have come to Westminster to bring about this blissful revolution'.

Arthur Ponsonby commented, found it hard to co-operate.¹⁹ These ranged from supporters of long-established and relatively influential pressure groups, such as the peace and temperance movements, to the small band of Indian reformers described by John Morley as 'the most perverse simpletons in the House of Commons', and the anti-vaccination fanatic, Arnold Lupton, member for the Sleaford division of Lincolnshire between 1906 and 1910.²⁰ Yet there were few of these 'faddists' who could be accused, as J. M. Robertson accused some temperance reformers, of caring for no other Liberal measures and of even disliking other Liberal tendencies.²¹ Two of the more extreme 'faddists', E. T. John and Josiah Wedgwood, are cases in point. E. T. John, M.P. for East Denbigh, 1910-18, was 'first and foremost a Welsh nationalist', but he also campaigned before 1914 for the nationalisation of land and railways, the introduction of minimum wage legislation, reductions in naval

¹⁹ Ponsonby to T. E. Harvey (copy), 13 August 1913, Ponsonby MS.

²⁰ Morley to Asquith, 14 December 1908, Asquith MS., vol. 11, f. 233.

²¹ J. M. Robertson, The Meaning of Liberalism (London, 1912), p. 10.

expenditure and Anglo-German reconciliation.²² Wedgwood described his pre-war political career as 'one long orgy of single-tax agitation', yet he was also a secretary of the Parliamentary Temperance Committee, took a close interest in foreign, military and imperial affairs, and was a zealous guardian of civil liberties.²³ As these individual cases of diverse political activity suggest, membership of the numerous backbench Radical pressure groups overlapped to a considerable extent. For example, of the fifty-three Liberal M.P.s who were members of the Public Landownership Parliamentary Council in 1912, thirty-five were also members of the eighty-strong Liberal Foreign Affairs Group, formed in 1911 to press for Anglo-German detente.²⁴ Of the thirty-two Liberals who became members of the Parliamentary Temperance Committee in 1906 and remained in parliament after 1910, fourteen were members of the Foreign Affairs Group.²⁵ Thus

22 Mrs. E.T. John to Mrs. Lewis, 4 March 1920 (copy), E.T. John MS. For John's pronouncements on the topics mentioned in this sentence, see the reports of his speeches in the Wrexham Advertiser, 24 June 1911, 9 September 1911, 24 January 1914, 10 January 1914; E.T. John to Rev. G. Davies, printed in Wrexham Advertiser, 8 July 1911; E.T. John to ed., The Nation, 21 October 1912.

23 Josiah Wedgwood, Memoirs of a Fighting Life (London, 1940), pp. 66-7.

24 Membership of the P.L.P.C. is listed in J. Hyder (secretary of the Land Nationalisation Society) to E.T. John, 20 August 1912, E.T. John MS.; membership list of the F.A.G. enclosed in Ponsonby to T.E. Harvey (copy) 13 August 1913, Ponsonby MS.

25 Membership of the P.T.C. is listed in The Alliance News and Temperance Reformer, 23 August 1906.

differing priorities as well as differing principles were responsible for limiting Radical influence in Liberal politics. Radical commentators naturally deplored this 'fatal habit of anarchy', but maintained that the problem of 'faddism' was at least partly soluble.²⁶ What was required, one Radical M.P. rather glibly pointed out, was improved organisation.²⁷ Radicals were also conscious of the absence of effective leadership, and, in spite of the failure of Cobden and Chamberlain to impose unity on previous generations of Radicals, believed that factional conflict would have been eased by its presence.

Other observers, however, detected the existence of a more profound and intractable cleavage within the Radical ranks. A socialist writer, J. W. Mackail, suggested in 1903 that the Radicals had fallen apart into two sections, one 'gravitating towards Socialism' while the other continued to flaunt its 'ancient banners'.²⁸ Writing in 1914, the Conservative ex-premier A. J. Balfour drew a distinction between the 'new semi-Socialist Radicals' and the 'old Radical

²⁶ The Nation, 20 April 1907.

²⁷ 'A Radical M.P.', 'Communication', The Nation, 10 April 1909.

²⁸ J. W. Mackail, Socialism and Politics: An Address and A Programme (Hammersmith, 1903), p. 14.

Nonconformist Party'.²⁹ These were acute observations, although the situation was much less clearly defined than they suggest. It is certainly possible to distinguish between the apostles of progressive 'Social Radicalism' and those who may be described as 'traditional' Radicals.³⁰ However, there were two distinct schools of economic thought within the 'traditional' camp. Moreover, between these groups there was a strand of opinion, embracing enlightened businessmen such as A. B. Markham, J. Allen Baker and D. A. Thomas, which was moderately sympathetic towards collectivism. Finally, the differences between progressive and traditional Radicals were partly obscured by the existence of some common interests and common enemies, and by identification with a common political tradition.

The prevailing ethos of progressive Radicalism was metropolitan, intellectual and - despite the presence of Anglican reformers such as Masterman and Noel Duxton, and the Quakers Arnold Rowntree, T. E. Harvey, Joseph King and J. H. Whitehouse - secular. Its ideological

²⁹ Balfour to Selborne, 7 January 1914, quoted in A.J. Marder, From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1961), p. 139.

³⁰ A similar split between 'progressives' and 'retrogressives' existed within the American progressive movement. See G.E. Cowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt (New York, 1958), pp. 53-8.

development owed much to a close-knit group of academics, journalists and politicians who were linked mainly by their associations with the Radical press, notably with the Nation. Founded in 1907 to succeed the Speaker, the Nation was edited by H. W. Massingham and financed by the Rowntree family. The Nation's services to the progressive Radical cause were not restricted to the dissemination of ideas. Equally important was the forum provided by its weekly lunches, held at the National Liberal Club. Besides J. A. Hobson and L. T. Hobhouse, the leading ideologues of progressive Radicalism, those frequently present included J. L. Hammond, G. Lowes Dickinson, H. N. Brailsford and Gilbert Murray, plus the Radical politicians Rowntree, Harvey, Arthur Ponsonby, Philip Morrell, C. F. G. Masterman, Percy Alden and Noel Buxton.³¹ Other Radical M.P.s who on occasion contributed articles to the Nation included C. R. Buxton, E. N. Bennett and H. B. Lees-Smith. Several of those associated with the Nation were also connected with the leading Radical dailies, the Manchester Guardian and the Daily News. Hobson and Massingham were members of the Manchester Guardian staff during the early 1900s. Lowes Dickinson was an occasional contributor. L. T. Hobhouse continued to write for the Manchester Guardian after

³¹ Information derived from the diary of H.W. Nevinson, 1907-1914, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e. 614/1-e. 618/4.

ceasing to be a full-time employee in 1902, and joined its board of directors in 1912. C. P. Scott, its editor and proprietor, often attended the Nation lunches during his regular visits to London. The Manchester Guardian was essentially a great provincial newspaper which also enjoyed considerable prestige among Liberal intellectuals. More popular in tone was the London Daily News, once described by Asquith as a 'pernicious rag'.³² It was edited by A. G. Gardiner and owned by the Cadbury family. Massingham was its lobby correspondent between 1901 and 1907. Masterman and Brailsford were among his colleagues. Also on the Daily News staff were P. W. Wilson, a contributor to Masterman's The Heart of the Empire and a Liberal M.P., 1906-10, and Leo Chiozza Money, author of Riches and Poverty (1905). The latter's views on foreign policy made him a somewhat isolated figure: Massingham labelled him a 'Jingo Socialist'.³³

This was a formidable array of propagandist talent. But it was not matched by numerical strength at Westminster. Those Liberal M.P.s who can be regarded as thoroughgoing progressive Radicals never constituted more than a fraction of the parliamentary party.³⁴ Masterman was

³² Asquith to Elibank, 22 April 1912, Elibank MS., 8803.

³³ Massingham to the editor, Daily News, 31 July 1912.

³⁴ See (ii) below.

their sole representative among the front rank of Liberal politicians, and even he lost the confidence of his 'old friends' as he rose in the Liberal hierarchy.³⁵ It would be inaccurate to categorise either Lloyd George or Churchill as progressive Radicals. Radical attitudes towards Lloyd George fluctuated between 1906 and 1914, but generally speaking progressive Radicals appear to have felt that he was with but not of them. It was recognised that Lloyd George's commitment to reform made him their most valuable ally in the Cabinet. But it was also appreciated that he was essentially a pragmatic reformer. In A. G. Gardiner's opinion, he lacked a coherent political philosophy and relied upon 'intuition and impulse'.³⁶ H. W. Massingham wrote in similar vein:

He takes freely from many sources of inspiration - Liberalism, Socialism, even Imperialism - giving back his adaptive and energetic spirit and his unequalled capacity for action.³⁷

³⁵ C.F.G. Masterman to Ponsonby, 30 May 1914, Ponsonby MS. T.E. Harvey later commented: 'I think his political faith did not consciously fade away, but he was to some extent disillusioned by his knowledge of members of the Cabinet...'. Interview with A.J. Dorey, January 1955, interview notes, T.E. Harvey MS.

³⁶ A.G. Gardiner, Pillars of Society (London, 1913), p.302.

³⁷ H.W. Massingham, 'The Position of Mr. Lloyd George', The Nation, 6 January 1912.

One historian has recently spoken of 'the strong Radical wing of the Liberal party led by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George' (Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control, p. 28). Another has described Lloyd George as 'the champion of English Radicalism' (C. Hazlehurst, Politicians at War (London, 1971), p.18). But Lloyd George clearly did not function as the leader of the Radicals in any orthodox sense. He had no devoted personal following among the Radical backbenchers. Few Radical M.P.s

Churchill's brief but intense involvement with Social Radicalism ended in 1911 with his translation from the Home Office to the Admiralty. Thereafter he was despised by Radicals because of his apostasy over the question of naval expenditure. During his Radical phase, Churchill received the plaudits of the Radical press, and the imprimatur of a preface by Massingham to his collection of speeches, Liberalism and the Social Problem (1909). But his motives for entering what he called the 'untrodden field' of social politics manifestly differed from those of progressive Radicals. Churchill was at heart a

appear to have had extensive personal dealings with him. The Scottish Radical J.M. Hogge, for example, by no means an obscure backbencher, complained in 1921 that he had never had the opportunity of an 'ordinary friendly conversation' with Lloyd George during ten years at Westminster ('Synopsis of a Meeting between Coalition Liberals and Independent Liberals held at the House of Commons on 21 June 1921', enclosed in J. Wallace to C.A. McCurdy (private), 22 June 1921, Lloyd George MS., F/34/4/14). Lloyd George did pick the brains of Radicals - those, for example, of C.P. Scott, L.T. Hobhouse and Seebohm Rowntree in connection with the land campaign. Nor did he hesitate to use Radical support as a weapon in Cabinet wrangling (see, e.g., Lloyd George to Asquith (Secret), 2 February 1909, Asquith MS., 21, f. 61-7). It is also possible to argue that Lloyd George's behaviour during 1912-14, when he launched the land campaign and renewed his demand for reductions in naval spending, was at least in part an attempt to ingratiate himself with the Radicals in order to secure a power base at a time when his career was precariously balanced. The projected 'national settlement' of 1910 had failed; he had alienated Radical opinion by the Mansion House speech; and the Marconi scandal broke in the summer of 1912. Thus it might be argued that Lloyd George exploited as much as led the Radicals before 1914.

paternalist.³⁸ Defending the principle of a compulsory scheme of unemployment insurance in 1909, for example, he argued in explicitly Bismarckian terms:

The idea is to increase the stability of our institutions by giving the mass of industrial workers a direct interest in maintaining them. With a "stake in the country" in the form of insurances against evil days, these workers will pay no attention to the vague promises of revolutionary socialism.³⁹

What Churchill wanted, in C.F.G. Masterman's view, was 'a state of things where a benign upper class dispensed benefits to an industrious, bien pensant and grateful working class'.⁴⁰ According to Arthur Ponsonby, he remained a 'Tory democrat' in spite of his secession to Liberalism.⁴¹

In contrast, progressive Radicals viewed social reform as an ethical imperative. It was a cause they espoused with all the 'virtuous passion' which the Radicals of the 1870s had exhibited during the Bulgarian agitation. Percy Alden's rhetoric was typical. 'Society is not now on an ethical basis', he told the Commons in 1908. 'No one could deny... that society is not founded

³⁸ For a discussion of Churchill's 'paternalism', see R. Hyam, 'Winston Churchill before 1914', H.J., xii, no. 1 (1969) pp. 168-9.

³⁹ Quoted in J.F. Harris, Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Policy 1886-1914 (Oxford, 1972), p. 365.

⁴⁰ Quoted in R.R. James, Churchill: A Study in Failure 1900-1939 (Pelican ed., London 1973), p. 45.

⁴¹ Notes by Ponsonby on members of the Liberal Cabinet, n.d. ? 1913 Ponsonby MS.

on righteousness, for it is admitted that the severe competition which is necessary under present conditions bears most harshly on a poor and deserving section of the community'.⁴² Yet progressive Radicals were hardly alone among Liberals in being motivated by what Arthur Ponsonby called 'the humanitarian impulse'.⁴³ What distinguished them from other Liberal social reformers was the scale and comprehensiveness of the reform programme which they put forward, and the indictment of the Edwardian market economy upon which it was based.

The most important immediate influence on progressive Radical attitudes towards the prevailing economic order was the 'under-consumptionist' economics of J.A. Hobson. In a series of publications, notably The Physiology of Industry (with A. F. Mummery, 1889), The Economics of Distribution (1900) and The Industrial System (1909), Hobson outlined a view of the free market as an intrinsically unfair mode of distribution, in that massive inequalities in bargaining power enabled the economically strong, the possessing classes, to acquire prodigious unearned gains. The consequent maldistribution of wealth, he alleged, led to the failure of society to make full use of its productive resources: the accumulation

⁴² H.C. Parl. Deb., 4 ser., vol. 183, col. 299 (30 January 1908).

⁴³ A. Ponsonby, The Camel and the Needle's Eye (London, 1912), p. 185.

by the rich of an 'unproductive surplus' gave rise to over-investment, which in turn precipitated over-production, depression and unemployment. Hobson claimed that the appropriation and redistribution of the 'unproductive surplus' would not only be socially just, but would also lead to an evening-out of the trade cycle, thereby largely eliminating cyclical unemployment. Such was Hobson's under-consumptionist 'heresy', heretical in that it challenged the validity of Say's Law, which held that general over-production was impossible. However, the appeal of Hobson's analysis lay not so much in its originality - Sismondi, Malthus and Robert Owen had propounded under-consumptionist theses in the early nineteenth century - as in the fact that it was a critique of the efficiency and equity of the market economy which was at once intellectually rigorous and non-socialist, yet 'ethical' in the tradition of Ruskin.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Ruskin was a major influence on many progressive Radicals. Hobson acknowledged his debt in John Ruskin, Social Reformer (1898). C.F.G. Masterman edited Ruskin's Political Economy of Art (1907). J.H. Whitehouse, M.P. for Mid-Lanark, 1910-1918, founded the Ruskin Society of Birmingham (see W.A.C. Stewart, Progressives and Radicals in English Education (London, 1972) pp. 232-38). C.P. Trevelyan's biographer states: 'The greatest single outside influence on his early political thinking was John Ruskin' (A.J.A. Morris, 'C.P. Trevelyan and Two Views of "Revolution"' in A.J.A. Morris (ed.) Edwardian Radicalism (London, 1974), p. 132). It is thus difficult to accept B. Barker's contention, 'Ruskin was never popular with the leading radical/Labour writers', at least so far as the Radicals were concerned (see B. Barker (ed.), Ramsay MacDonald's Political Writings (London, 1972), p. 21).

One obvious implication of Hobson's economics was that any successful assault on the 'Social Problem' would entail extensive changes in the distribution of wealth. This was anathema to Liberal champions of the prevailing economic orthodoxy, who argued that redistributive policies would undermine the virtues of thrift and enterprise upon which the functioning of the economic system depended.⁴⁵ Hobson's analysis offered a defence against this claim. What was not being proposed, he insisted, was the confiscation of those profits won by energy, skill and foresight, which he described as 'the just earnings of the rich'.⁴⁶ The 'unproductive surplus' was not acquired through the exercise of these qualities, but was instead 'socially created' in that it owed its existence to the contingent socio-economic fact of unequal bargaining power. It could therefore be appropriated 'without impairing any sort of productive individual effort'.⁴⁷ As Lowes Dickinson pointed out, those collectivist Radicals who were committed to the cause of 'Social Democracy' were nevertheless firm

45 A discussion of Edwardian economic orthodoxy is contained in H.V. Emy, 'The Impact of Financial Policy on English Party Politics before 1914', H.J., xv, no. 1 (1972) p. 105ff.

46 J.A.H.(obson), 'Is Socialism Plunder?', The Nation, 19 October 1907.

47 ibid.

believers in the virtues of individual enterprise.⁴⁸

The value of the Hobsonian concept of the 'social fund' was to suggest that these two commitments were compatible.

A further implication of Hobson's economics was that it was both possible and desirable for society to impose its 'conscious will' on the economic process, a view which ran counter to the classical economists' assumption that the free play of enlightened self-interest automatically furthered the interests of the whole community.⁴⁹ As a liberal, Hobson believed that freedom was the primary goal to which the economic process should be subordinated. However, the concept of liberty to which he and other progressive Radicals subscribed was far removed from that of Liberals of the Manchester School. It was largely derived from the doctrine of 'positive liberty' developed by T. H. Green in the 1880s.⁵⁰ According to Green, freedom was not secured merely by the absence of restraint, but involved recognition of the 'right of citizens as a body to make

⁴⁸ G. Lowes Dickinson, 'Issues with the Lords', The Nation, 28 May 1910.

⁴⁹ J.A. Hobson, The Evolution of Modern Capitalism (2nd. ed., London, 1906), p. 402.

⁵⁰ L.T. Hobhouse, whose work in political theory complemented Hobson's in economics, believed that Green's view of liberty was open to authoritarian interpretations, and endeavoured to purge it of this fault. See P. Weiler, 'The New Liberalism of L.T. Hobhouse', V.S., xvi, no. 2 (December 1972).

the most and best of themselves' - a phrase which L. T. Hobhouse quoted approvingly in his attempt to define 'The Task of Liberalism' in the first issue of The Tribune.⁵¹ What followed from this was the claim that it was the responsibility of the state to establish the material basis of freedom. The attraction of such a formula to collectivist Liberals is obvious. By defining liberty in terms of opportunity, it was possible to reconcile the growth of state activity with traditional Liberal ideals of freedom and self-determination. As L. T. Hobhouse put it, 'a "positive" conception of the state... not only involves no conflict with the true principle of personal liberty, but is necessary to its effective realisation'.⁵² This is a dubious argument. It has been suggested that to define liberty in terms of opportunity is to drain the concept of all descriptive meaning, leaving only prescriptive overtones.⁵³ Green's concept of freedom has been dismissed as an 'ingenious

⁵¹ The Tribune, 15 January 1906. The Tribune was a short-lived (15 January 1906-7 February 1908) London Liberal newspaper, of which Hobhouse was political editor. Other members of staff included Hobson, Hammond and H.N. Brailsford. See A.J. Lee, 'Franklin Thomasson and The Tribune: A Case Study in the History of the Liberal Press, 1906-1908', H.J., xvi, no. 2 (1973), pp. 341-60.

⁵² L.T. Hobhouse, Liberalism (Galaxy ed., New York, 1964), p. 71.

⁵³ S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, Social Principles and the Democratic State (London, 1959), p. 212.

verbal trick'.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Hobson and Hobhouse, together with such lesser ideologues of progressive Radicalism as Massingham, Masterman and Alden, conceived the task of Liberal statecraft as the creation of a socio-economic environment in which this positive liberty or 'liberty of self-development' could be pursued.

This, it was held, required the implementation of what progressive Radicals invariably referred to as a policy of 'social reconstruction'. By 1914 there existed a broad consensus of progressive Radical opinion regarding the necessary components of such a policy. What was envisaged in the sphere of social policy was the establishment of a 'minimum standard' of material comfort - a proposal closely akin in substance, though not in inspiration, to the Fabian doctrine of the 'national minimum'. The leading Fabians, notably the Webbs, Shaw and Wells, were essentially authoritarian reformers, closely associated during the early 1900s with the 'national efficiency' school, which included the Liberal Imperialists Rosebery, Haldane and Grey. There was a marked contrast between the emphasis placed in these

⁵⁴ J. Kemp, 'T.I. Green and the Ethics of Self-Realisation' in G.N.A. Vesey (ed.), Reason and Reality: Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures 1970-71 (London, 1972), p. 233. A similar criticism of the doctrine of 'positive liberty' is contained in Asa Briggs, Social Thought and Social Action: A Study of The Work of Seebohm Rowntree, 1871-1954 (London, 1961), pp. 56-7. See also, in general, D. Nicholls, 'Positive Liberty, 1880-1914', A.P.S.R., 56, (March 1962), pp. 114-28.

quarters on the role of social reform in developing a disciplined and vigorous imperial race, and the progressive Radical view of the 'minimum' as a means of securing 'freedom for all'.⁵⁵ The Radical concept of the 'minimum standard' embraced a whole battery of policies, including educational reform, the provision of public housing, limitation of the hours of work, and state provision against sickness, accident and unemployment. But perhaps its most controversial feature, since it involved unprecedented state intervention in the distributive process, was the projected statutory minimum wage. Progressive Radicals moved somewhat cautiously towards public advocacy of it. However, in 1912 a group of Radicals connected with the Nation, Hobson, Massingham, Hobhouse, Alden and Arnold Rowntree among them, addressed a memorandum to the Cabinet in which they recorded their 'united conviction that the time has come to have in view, as the distinct objective of Liberal policy, the general principle of a living wage for every worker'.⁵⁶ In 1912-13, two Labour motions calling for the establishment of a minimum wage won support from a total

⁵⁵ The Tribune, 15 January 1906.

⁵⁶ 'Labour Unrest and Liberal Social Policy' (Private & Confidential), 20 March 1912, Lloyd George MS. C/21/1/17.

of twenty-five Liberal M.P.s.⁵⁷

Increased social control over economic activity was a second feature of the progressive Radical conception of 'social reconstruction'. Large and potentially irresponsible concentrations of economic power were seen as a threat to individual freedom which was in some cases sufficiently great as to justify public ownership.⁵⁸ There was widespread support among progressive Radicals for the nationalisation of land, mines and railways. The two Labour motions of 1912-13 did not only call for a statutory minimum wage, but also for the nationalisation of mines, railways and other monopolies. Over twenty Liberal M.P.s joined the Railway Nationalisation Society on its foundation in 1907. And at least fifty-three Liberals in the post-1910 parliament favoured land nationalisation, although support for this measure was not confined to progressive Radicals.

Full implementation of this programme would have required redistributive taxation on a scale inconceivable

⁵⁷ H.C.Parl.Deb., div. no. 1 (15 February 1912); div. no. 4 (13 March 1913). The M.P.s in question were: P. Alden, J.A. Baker, D. Davies, Ellis Davies, J.H. Edwards, G.B. Esslemont, Baron de Forest, H.J. Glanville, J.M. Hogge, E.T. John, Haydn Jones, F. Kellaway, Joseph King, R.C. Lambert, Joseph Martin, A. Rendall, S. Robinson, J. Rowlands, A. MacCallum Scott, J. Ward, J.C. Wedgwood, J.H. Whitehouse, H. Webb, A.F. Whyte and J.H. Yoxall.

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Hobson, Modern Capitalism, ch. 17.

to most Edwardian Liberals. Yet it was in their views on financial policy that progressive Radicals were closest to mainstream Liberal thinking, in so far as this was reflected in Liberal Budgets. Their main demands in this area were for graduation of the income tax, and differentiation between earned and unearned income for taxation purposes. Both principles had been embodied in Liberal legislation by 1914. Of course, progressive Radicals visualised the imposition of higher levels of direct taxation than those laid down by Liberal Chancellors after 1905. Moreover, whatever satisfaction was felt over the development of Liberal financial policy was heavily outweighed by dissatisfaction with the pattern of government expenditure. The grievance here was the scale of military and naval spending, deemed excessive by Radicals of all shades of opinion.

The progressive Radical appeal for a Liberal commitment to an advanced social policy was not inspired by the humanitarian impulse alone. There was also a political dimension to the advocacy of social reconstruction. In common, no doubt, with all committed Liberals, progressive Radicals were deeply perturbed by the condition of late Victorian Liberalism. That the party had fared so dismally in the general elections of 1886, 1895 and 1900 was one obvious cause for alarm. But its performance in office was equally depressing. In terms of legislative achievement, the records of Gladstone's

later ministries and of Rosebery's short-lived government were indisputably mediocre when set against that of the great Liberal administration of 1868-1874. It was possible to attribute this relative failure to the distracting and divisive influence of the Irish question, to popular jingoism, or even to a succession of political 'accidents', such as the Bradlaugh case, General Gordon, the Dilke scandal and the Hawarden Kite. But progressive Radicals postulated a more fundamental cause of Liberal debility: ideological bankruptcy. Liberalism, it was suggested, had become a victim of its own success. Proceeding from the assumption that the historic mission of Liberalism was the demolition of the early nineteenth century aristocratic or 'feudal' constitution, progressive Radicals maintained that the party had virtually accomplished its original task. The Nation declared in 1913: 'With the passage of Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment, the role of the old political Liberal Liberal Party comes practically to a close. Adult suffrage is the one remaining task'.⁵⁹ C. P. Scott spoke in similar terms of the end of the era of the 'older libertarian Liberalism'.⁶⁰ Hence the progressive Radicals' claim that fin de siecle Liberalism was devoid

⁵⁹ 'The Next Business of Liberalism', The Nation, 2 August 1913.

⁶⁰ Hobson and Ginsberg (eds.), L.T. Hobhouse, p. 7-8.

of any clear sense of purpose or direction, a weakness they held to be evident in the incoherence of the Newcastle Programme and in the sterility of Liberalism in office. 'The people vote Tory mainly because they don't know what Liberalism is', concluded C.P. Trevelyan in 1895.⁶¹ Considered as an interpretation of Liberal history this analysis is unconvincing, since it ascribes to mid-Victorian Liberalism an ideological coherence which it did not possess. Its value lay in what it implied: that Liberalism stood in urgent need of a great new organising theme, electorally potent yet distinctively Liberal. In the Nation's phrase, Liberal politics had to be established on a 'new moral basis'.⁶² Progressive Radicals claimed that the ideological vacuum could be filled by a redefined, 'positive' concept of liberty, and Liberal politics revitalised through the adoption of policies designed to establish such freedom.

Furthermore, it was argued that the survival of

⁶¹ C.P. Trevelyan to G.O. Trevelyan, ? October 1895, G.O. Trevelyan MS. For other progressive Radical comment on the disorganisation of Liberal politics in the 1890s and early 1900s, see J.A. Hobson, The Crisis of Liberalism (London, 1909) p. vii; A.P. Havighurst, Radical Journalist: H.W. Massingham (London, 1974) p. 79; C.F.G. Masterman to Noel Buxton, 16 March 1901, quoted in L. Masterman, C.F.G. Masterman: A Biography (London, 1939), p. 41.

⁶² The Nation, 2 August 1913. The Nation review of Thomas Whittaker's The Liberal State: A Speculation (1907) drew attention to 'how seriously present-day Liberalism needs a philosophy, as distinguished from a programme', ibid., 3 August 1907.

Liberalism was dependent on such a commitment. Only by identifying itself with the cause of 'social reconstruction', asserted progressive Radicals, could the Liberal party retain its hold over the working-class electorate. In view of the threat posed by socialism and Chamberlainite social-imperialism, it was clear, proclaimed the Nation in 1908, that Liberalism would in future have 'to fight for working-class support, to earn it, and to pay for it'.⁶³ C.P. Trevelyan told Sheffield Liberals in 1896:

The problem for many generations to come is social reform, and if the Liberal Party wishes to hold its own as the great organ of modern progress, it is to this that it must devote itself.⁶⁴

J. A. Hobson portrayed the situation in more dramatic terms in 1909:

This is the last chance for English liberalism. Unless it is prepared for the efforts, risks and even sacrifices of expressing the older liberal principles in the new positive forms of economic liberty and equality along the lines indicated in the programme of its advanced guard, it is doomed to the same sort of impotence as has befallen liberalism in most of the colonial countries.⁶⁵

⁶³ 'A New Political Development', The Nation, 13 June 1908.

⁶⁴ Speech to Sheffield Liberal Association, January 1896, notes in C.P. Trevelyan MS. Trevelyan repeated this view in Paths of Progress: Some Discussion of the Aims of Modern Liberalism (London, 1898), p. 7.

⁶⁵ J.A. Hobson, Crisis of Liberalism, p. 133; also, H.W. Massingham, 'Persons and Politics', The Nation, 13 October 1906; A.H. Scott (M.P. for Ashton-under-Lyne, 1906-10) in The Liberal: A Weekly Organ Devoted to the Cause of Sound Social Progress, 15 January 1910.

A similar diagnosis of the Liberal malaise was often advanced in Liberal Imperialist circles. Indeed, there was sufficient common ground during the 1890s to facilitate short-lived collaboration between some Radicals and Imperialists. The membership of the Rainbow Circle, a political discussion group which aimed to formulate a programme capable of inducing the 'various progressive wings to co-operate with each other', included the Radicals J. A. Hobson and Percy Alden, and the Liberal Imperialist Herbert Samuel, whose Liberalism, published in 1902 with a preface by Asquith, was a statement of the case for the primacy of social reform in Liberal politics.⁶⁶ However, in their bid to impose a social-imperialist creed on the Liberal party, leading Liberal Imperialists such as Rosebery and Grey displayed scant respect for the Liberal tradition. Their attitude, exemplified by Rosebery's call to the party at Chesterfield in 1901 to renounce its Gladstonian heritage, was considered offensive by centre Liberals. In contrast, progressive Radicals were at pains to emphasise the essential continuity between their brand of collectivism and the older Liberalism. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in L. T. Hobhouse's works, Democracy and Reaction (1904) and Liberalism (1911). Hobhouse maintained that 'the breach of principle between the Liberalism of Cobden's

⁶⁶ 'Rainbow Circle: Session 1898-9', prospectus enclosed in Ramsay MacDonald to Gilbert Murray, 2 June 1900, Gilbert Murray MS., box 35.

time and the Liberalism of today is much smaller than appears on the surface'.⁶⁷ He suggested that Cobdenism was based on a conception of liberty that was 'too thin', but insisted that the broader interpretation of freedom which formed the basis of 'Liberal Socialism' had developed organically out of the older view.⁶⁸ C. P. Scott likewise viewed Radical collectivism as an expansion of the Liberal tradition, not a departure from it.⁶⁹ Hobson was even prepared to claim that if Cobden were alive, he would be a 'new Liberal'.⁷⁰ No doubt the name of Cobden was invoked in an attempt to legitimise the new Radicalism in the eyes of fellow-Liberals, but it would be wrong to suppose that there was anything disingenuous in the respect which progressive Radicals professed for the heroes of the Liberal tradition. A Labour sympathiser, Conrad Noel, noted in 1906 that members of the 'Liberal Collectivist' group of M.P.s spoke of Cobden and Bright with 'almost idolatrous emotion', while any criticism of Gladstone was seen by

⁶⁷ L.T. Hobhouse, Democracy and Reaction (London, 1904), p. 219.

⁶⁸ L.T. Hobhouse, Liberalism, p. 126.

⁶⁹ C.E. Montague (ed.), C.P. Scott 1846-1932: the making of the Manchester Guardian (London, 1946), p. 85.

⁷⁰ Asa Briggs, 'The Political Scene' in S. Nowell-Smith (ed.), Edwardian England 1901-1914 (London, 1964), p. 58.

them as 'an act of treachery'.⁷¹

In fact, it was not the intellectual task of reconciling collectivism with the Liberal tradition that presented progressive Radicals with their major difficulty. This, as Conrad Noel and J. A. Hobson pointed out, lay in convincing bourgeois Liberals of the need to adopt policies which threatened their class interests.⁷²

Labour leaders assumed that the progressive Radicals were bound to fail. Interviewed by Fenner Brockway in 1910, Keir Hardie stated categorically: '... it is impossible for the Radical section to make the Liberal Party into an advanced movement'. Hardie believed that the 'Whig element' would inevitably call a halt to Liberal social reform, and prophesied: 'this will sour the advanced section of the party which is then bound to come over to us'.⁷³ MacDonald and Snowden put forward similar views, maintaining that advanced Radicals would ultimately be confronted with the alternatives of being swamped by the Whigs or joining the Labour party.⁷⁴ Not unnaturally, progressive Radicals themselves expressed optimism, even confidence, regarding the prospects of transforming the

⁷¹ C. Noel, The Labour Party: What it is, and What it wants (London, 1906) p. 31.

⁷² ibid., p. 27; J.A.H.(obson), 'Socialism in Liberalism', The Nation, 19 October 1907.

⁷³ Christian Commonwealth, 16 February 1910.

⁷⁴ Ramsay MacDonald, speeches at Swindon and Islington, reported in Labour Leader, 25 October, 15 November, 1907; P. Snowden, 'Mr. Lloyd George and a New Party', Christian Commonwealth, 14 August 1912.

Liberal party into an instrument of 'social reconstruction'.⁷⁵ C. P. Trevelyan later claimed that before 1914 there appeared to be a good chance that the advanced Radicals would succeed in swaying Liberalism to the choice of progress, although there may have been an element of self-justification in this verdict, since it was delivered when Trevelyan, as a recent convert to Labour, perhaps felt the need to explain away his former allegiance.⁷⁶ But it was certainly plausible, at least in the parliamentary context, for progressive Radicals to have assumed that events were moving in their direction before 1914. Particularly after 1909, the economic conservatives within the parliamentary Liberal party were on the defensive. For example, nearly forty of the Liberal M.P.s who did not stand for re-election in 1910 apparently did so because of their hostility towards Liberal social and financial policy.⁷⁷ In 1912, forty Liberal M.P.s headed by A.C. Murray unsuccessfully

⁷⁵ The Nation, 11 September 1909, 1 January 1910, 20 July 1912, 22 March 1913; also, Arthur Ponsonby's conviction that the 1909 Budget 'lays down rails on which the Liberal engine will have to run in future' (Ponsonby to Lloyd George (copy), 2 May 1909, Ponsonby MS.).

⁷⁶ C.P. Trevelyan, From Liberalism to Labour (London, 1921) pp. 21, 59-60.

⁷⁷ N. Blewett, The Peers, the Parties and the People: The General Elections of 1910 (London, 1972), p. 215-6.

urged the government not to embark on a 'strenuous land campaign' on the grounds that it was 'likely to lead to the loss of many life-long Liberals in the House of Commons and in the country'.⁷⁸ Two years later, a cove of exasperated business Liberals and Cobdenite Radicals staged a revolt against Liberal financial policy.⁷⁹ Heartening though these developments may have been to progressive Radicals, they were somewhat deceptive. At constituency level, rank and file Liberals appear to have remained largely preoccupied with traditional themes. Although C. P. Scott had some success in propagating the progressive Radical gospel in Manchester, the new Radical thinking evidently failed to penetrate such Liberal strongholds as Wales and Scotland.⁸⁰

In the course of his adoption speech as Liberal candidate for Birkenhead, E. D. Morel summarised the progressive Radical case for a Liberal commitment to 'social reconstruction':

A more equitable distribution, gradually brought about, of socially-produced wealth, should be, and indeed must be,

⁷⁸ A.C. Murray's Diary, 21 November 1912, Elibank MS., 8814.

⁷⁹ See below, pp. 65-6.

⁸⁰ Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism, ch. 7; K. O. Morgan, 'The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour: The Welsh Experience, 1885-1929', W.H.R., vol. 6, no. 3 (June 1973) pp. 288-312; J.G. Kellas, Modern Scotland: The Nation since 1870 (London, 1968), pp. 184-5.

the ultimate, constant and perpetual aim of Liberalism, if it is to retain its virility, maintain its hold upon the masses, justify its existence, and safeguard the State from violent and perhaps fatal disturbance.⁸¹

Morel's final point reflected one of the progressive Radicals' foremost anxieties, that one consequence of the failure of Liberalism to mount a concerted assault on the 'Social Problem' would be a growth in working-class militancy. 'Unless we can ensure to our people', wrote one Radical M.P., 'that decent men who want to earn an honest living shall have the opportunity, we can only expect that wild schemes of a revolutionary character will be clutched at, with the result probably of throwing power into the hands of the reactionaries'.⁸² It would be inaccurate to equate such thinking with Churchill's Bismarckian attitudes. Progressive Radicals did not regard 'social reconstruction' as a means of shoring up the existing social order. What they feared was that any serious development of proletarian militancy would stampede even the enlightened middle classes towards reaction, thereby creating a climate of class antagonism in which orderly progress was impossible. It was argued that such a disastrous polarisation would be avoided if Liberalism could evolve into a social-democratic 'medium

⁸¹ 'E. D. Morel, Prospective Liberal Candidate for Birkenhead' (Birkenhead Liberal Association pamphlet, December 1913), copy in Ponsonby MS.

⁸² Aneurin Williams to Lord Courtney, 7 November 1907, Courtney MS., vol. x, 10.

force'.⁸³ This, according to progressive Radicals, was a role for which the Liberal party was uniquely suited, because its appeal transcended class barriers. As the Nation put it, the Liberals were a 'composite' party, whose ability to perceive and pursue the national interest could not be equalled by its rivals, since they were primarily vehicles for sectional aspirations.⁸⁴ This belief was a fundamental reason for the attachment of progressive Radicals to the Liberal party. It was however recognised that the evolution of Liberalism into a social-democratic movement could not be accomplished without some shedding of right-wing elements. One writer in the Nation contemplated this prospect with equanimity: 'It is the fate of Liberalism to lose its right-wing every generation, for such is at once the pride and penalty of progress'.⁸⁵ But J. A. Hobson realised that the adoption of a Radical social policy would not only involve the loss of the more obviously

83 'The Government and the Party', The Nation, 1 June 1907; also, ibid., 'Attractiveness in Politics', 3 August 1907; 'A Lesson from Haggerston', 8 August 1908; 'The Position of the King', 2 October 1909; 'The New Prime Minister', 11 April 1908.

84 H. W. Massingham, 'Mr. Churchill's Career', The Nation, 13 January 1912; 'From Old to New Liberalism', ibid., 20 August 1910.

85 'A Liberal Worker', 'The Parting of the Ways', The Nation, 25 June 1910.

reactionary elements within the party, but would also alienate some fellow-Radicals, the 'honest Radical individualists'.⁸⁶

Perceptively, the progressive Radicals appreciated that the future of the Liberal party pivoted on the question of whether it could adjust to the emergence of class as the primary determinant of political allegiance. Yet for all their discussion of 'the future position and meaning of Liberalism', the political strategy they recommended was by no means free from ambiguity.⁸⁷ Progressive Radicals claimed that the peculiar strength of Liberalism lay in its broad-based character, the survival of which they considered to be essential. But they also visualised the Liberals becoming, in effect, a party of labour. It is difficult not to share the scepticism of Labour leaders concerning the progressive Radicals' hope that Liberalism could embrace the task of 'social reconstruction' while retaining its 'composite' identity. That progressive Radicals believed this political circle could be squared is perhaps a measure of their remoteness from the grass-roots realities of Edwardian politics.

⁸⁶ 'Socialism in Liberalism', The Nation, 12 October 1907.

⁸⁷ H. W. Nevinson's Diary, 28 April 1908, Bod. Eng. misc. e. 614/3. Nevinson was describing the discussion which had taken place at the Nation lunch.

The Edwardian Liberal party contained representatives of two distinct strains of Radical individualism: those described by R. D. Holt as the 'survivors of the Cobden-Bright school of thought', and the diminutive but vociferous band of single-taxers, the disciples of Henry George.⁸⁸

Ideological differences apart, the most obvious contrast between progressive and Cobdenite Radical M.P.s lies in their respective occupational backgrounds. Progressive Radical M.P.s were drawn largely from the intelligensia and the professional classes, whereas among the Cobdenites there was a marked preponderance of practising businessmen. These included the shipowners, R. D. Holt and P. A. Molteno; J. E. Barlow, Thomas Lough and Harry Nuttall, merchants; Leif Jones, a Lloyds underwriter; and J. M. McCallum, Halley Stewart, J. W. Wilson, Sir George White, Maurice Levy, W. J. Crossley, William Clough, H. J. Wilson and A. G. C. Harvey, directors of a variety of manufacturing concerns. Brampton Gurdon and R. L. Everett were examples of that rara avis, the Radical farmer. But Cobdenism was not exclusively a businessman's creed. There was a leaven of intellectuals and professional men whose economic outlook was essentially Cobdenite, notably the historian

⁸⁸ R. D. Holt's Diary, 19 July 1914, R. D. Holt MS.

G. P. Gooch, M.P. for Bath, 1906-1910; F. C. Mackarness, sometime professor of law at University College, London; J. M. Robertson, disciple and biographer of Charles Bradlaugh; and the barristers, F. A. Channing and W. H. B. Hope. Outside the Commons there was F. W. Hirst, under whose editorship The Economist was the sole Cobdenite organ of national repute, and Lord Courtney of Penwith, ex-Liberal Unionist and self-avowed 'rank individualist'.⁸⁹ Also included in the Cobdenite ranks were a handful of Lib-Labs, most conspicuously Fred Maddison, Henry Vivian and W. R. Cremer, who, in the tradition of Victorian artisan Radicalism, adhered strongly to the notion of a harmony of interests between capital and labour.⁹⁰ This strong commercial bias was not the only distinctive characteristic of the Cobdenite Radical fraternity. In addition, Nonconformist affiliations were extremely common, a fact reflected in the leadership of the major Nonconformist pressure groups. For example, the Baptist shoe manufacturer Sir George White chaired the Nonconformist Parliamentary Committee; Halley Stewart and H. J. Wilson were pillars of the Liberation Society; and Leif Jones, T. R. Ferens, H. J. Wilson, J. M. McCallum and W. J. Crossley were

⁸⁹ Speech at Manchester Reform Club, reported Manchester Guardian, 13 October 1906.

⁹⁰ Maddison and Vivian were active proponents of profit-sharing: see E. Bristow, 'Profit-Sharing, Socialism and Labour Unrest', in K. Brown (ed.), Essays in Anti-Labour History, pp. 262-289.

prominent members of the United Kingdom Alliance.

Several Cobdenite Radicals held junior office after 1906, notably Lough, Robertson, Levy and J. E. Ellis. But Cobdenism lacked effective spokesmen in the higher echelons of the government. Two senior Cabinet ministers professed Cobdenite sympathies. John Morley declared himself to be a 'resolute Cobdenite', and Lord Loreburn, Lord Chancellor until 1912, was a life-long admirer of Cobden's ideas, which in his opinion embodied the real meaning of Liberalism.⁹¹ But neither was in close touch with the Cobdenite backbenchers, and both pursued policies that were unpopular in Radical circles.⁹²

In spite of their frequently expressed regard for Cobden as the highest exponent of the Liberal creed, there were few Cobdenites who, like Sir Wilfrid Lawson, retained a commitment to the 'undiluted doctrines of the Manchester School'.⁹³ Much more widespread was a cautiously revisionist attitude, which originated in a recognition of the extent to which the British economy

⁹¹ D. A. Hamer, John Morley: Liberal Intellectual in Politics (Oxford, 1968), p. 309; Loreburn to C. P. Trevelyan, 1 January 1920, 26 March 1921 (confidential), C. P. Trevelyan MS.

⁹² Morley's Indian policies were repeatedly assailed in the House of Commons (see E. C. Moulton, 'British Radicals and India in the early twentieth century', in Morris (ed.) Edwardian Radicalism, pp. 26-46); Loreburn's offence was his failure to appoint sufficient Liberals to the magistracy.

⁹³ W. B. Luke, Sir Wilfrid Lawson (London, 1900), pp. 109-10. Lawson was M.P. for Cokermonth, 1886-1906.

had deviated from the Cobdenite ideal of a freely competitive system. In view of the development of large industrial concentrations which exercised a substantial degree of control over prices and the volume of employment, some increase in state activity was accepted as necessary and inevitable. Sir George White, for instance, speaking on the second reading of the National Insurance Bill, declared:

I am naturally a strong individualist... but I have lived long enough to realise that the economic conditions of our country have changed enormously, and that the growth and power of capital requires the State to deal in some such way with the large body of unemployed which we have amongst us.⁹⁴

A. G. C. Harvey, a Lancashire cotton manufacturer and M.P. for Rochdale, reached a similar conclusion:

The teachings of Cobden and Bright do weigh with me, although I am willing to admit that things are changing and must change, and that the State is assuming, and must assume, responsibilities which would have been impossible and intolerable in the eyes of those who preceded us.⁹⁵

A strong bias in favour of limited government nevertheless persisted. In general, this does not appear to have derived so much from doctrinaire adhesion to a philosophy of individualism as from a cluster of

⁹⁴ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 26, col. 810-11 (29 May 1911).

⁹⁵ ibid., vol. 62, col. 1371-2 (14 May 1914).

attitudes that were often rooted in commercial experience. One pronounced feature of the Cobdenites' outlook was a fear that substantial growth of the bureaucracy would constitute a serious threat to individual liberty.⁹⁶ Cobdenite Radicals also retained enormous faith in the moral virtues of self-reliance, a topic on which Maurice Levy, for example, waxed eloquent in the House of Commons in 1909.⁹⁷ Another characteristic view was that of R. D. Holt, who wished to allow individuals 'the maximum of personal freedom including the right to make a thoroughness of their own affairs'.⁹⁸ But possibly the most important source of Cobdenite hostility towards the interventionist state was adherence to the economic orthodoxy which J. A. Hobson repudiated. A belief in the fundamental beneficence of the free market economy remained. A. G. C. Harvey, for instance, despite his readiness to sanction extensions of state activity, continued to believe that 'the best for all people is got by the untrammelled efforts of a multitude of men each putting forth the power and the attributes with which Providence

⁹⁶ e.g. F. W. Hirst's affirmation of his life-long distrust of bureaucracy in Hirst to J. L. Hammond, 27 September 1923, Hammond MS., 19, f. 151.

⁹⁷ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 4 col. 659 (30 April 1909).

⁹⁸ R. D. Holt's Diary, 19 July 1914, R. D. Holt MS.

has endowed him'.⁹⁹ Moreover, while acknowledging the defects of the unregulated free market - such as involuntary unemployment - Cobdenite Radicals were convinced that there was no workable alternative to it. Firm believers in the existence of immutable economic laws,¹⁰⁰ they argued that interference with the distributive process on the scale envisaged by Hobson and the progressive Radicals would be misguided and dangerous, not least in that it would harm the very class it was intended to benefit. The Cobdenites viewed Hobsonian redistributivism as a prescription for economic stagnation. High levels of taxation, it was claimed, especially any 'relentless taxation of the rich', would restrict economic growth by removing the necessary incentives and by diminishing the funds available for investment.¹⁰¹ In consequence, the wage-earning class would suffer, since any reduction in the level of economic activity would inevitably lead to unemployment

⁹⁹ Speech to Rochdale Reform Association, October 1920, quoted in F. W. Hirst (ed.), A. G. C. Harvey; a memoir (London, 1926), pp. 143-4.

¹⁰⁰ e.g. D. M. Mason: 'We hear a great deal about the new finance, but you cannot alter economic laws because their principles are eternal', H.C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol. 25, cols. 1417-8 (11 May 1911). See also speech by Thos. Lough, ibid., vol. 36, col. 275 (26 March 1912).

¹⁰¹ The Economist, 30 May 1908.

and lower wages. An example of this line of thought is F. W. Hirst's analysis of the economic consequences of the Boer war. Over-taxation, he told Campbell-Bannerman in 1905, had resulted in 'dear money, lowered credit, less enterprise in business and manufacturers, reduced home demand and therefore reduced output to meet it, reductions in wages, increase of pauperism and unemployment'.¹⁰² Similarly, Sir Walter Runciman claimed in 1909 that the prevailing high level of unemployment was attributable to a 'lack of funds that have been exhausted by taxes'.¹⁰³

Cobdenite Radicals maintained that the single most effective remedy for social distress was economic growth. Given their assumption that the basic determinant of the rate of growth was the pace of capital accumulation, it followed that the government could best encourage growth by refraining from taking any action which might impede the accumulative process. Hence the Cobdenite demand for the rigorous control of public spending and borrowing. Quoting Gladstone, D. M. Mason put this case succinctly: 'Stimulate industry by relieving the burdens on it,

¹⁰² Hirst to Campbell-Bannerman, 29 December 1905, quoted in J. F. Harris, Unemployment and Politics: A Study in English Social Policy, 1886-1914 (Oxford, 1972), p. 232.

¹⁰³ Quoted in H. V. Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics 1892-1914 (Cambridge, 1973), p. 213. Runciman, father of the Liberal minister, was at this time chairman of the Northern Liberal Federation; he became Liberal M.P. for Hartlepool in late 1914.

thereby tending to expand industry and increase the area of employment'.¹⁰⁴ So did R. C. Lehmann, who, in reply to a question on his policy for the unemployed during the 1906 election campaign, declared: 'Reduce expenditure... In the second place maintain peace. War was the most senseless and most unproductive waste of money possible'.¹⁰⁵ P. W. Hirst believed that the restoration of credit and the lowering of taxation was the 'first great remedy for unemployment', and urged Campbell-Bannerman to adopt these goals as the first great mission of the Liberal government.¹⁰⁶ However, the Cobdenite conception of 'sound finance' did not entirely preclude expenditure on social welfare. What was insisted upon was the need to maintain taxation at a level which did not inhibit investment. It was therefore argued that Liberal social reform should be financed out of economies made in other sectors of public expenditure, not by the raising of additional revenues. Thus Fred Maddison wrote in 1907: 'The government must retrench to the utmost limits in the expenditure on armaments in order to devote the money thus saved to social ends. This is true Liberalism'.¹⁰⁷ It

¹⁰⁴ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 12, col. 91.

¹⁰⁵ Leicester Daily Post, n.d. 1906, cutting in R. C. Lenmann MS.

¹⁰⁶ Hirst to Campbell-Bannerman, 29 December 1905, quoted in Harris, Unemployment and Politics, p. 232.

¹⁰⁷ P. Maddison, 'Old Age Pensions', The Speaker, 19 January 1907; also, H. J. Wilson to Asquith, 9 February 1909 (copy), H. J. Wilson MS.

seems likely, however, that the majority Cobdenite view after 1906 was that retrenchment should take precedence over social reform. In particular, the reduction of the National Debt - which had risen by £160 million as a result of the Boer war - was regarded as imperative. The Economist, for example, urged that the introduction of old age pensions should be delayed until the return of financial stability.¹⁰⁸ But Cobdenite hopes that the Liberal government would inaugurate 'an era of sound and honest finance' were disappointed.¹⁰⁹ By 1914, as R. D. Holt despondently recorded, the Liberals had travelled a long way from the principle of retrenchment.¹¹⁰

Cobdenism was being eroded as a coherent political stance before 1914. Not that it was an internally inconsistent creed. Cobdenites customarily defined their Radicalism in the hallowed if vague terms of peace, retrenchment and reform. No substantial contradiction was involved in the advocacy of economy and reform, since the causes of constitutional, moral and land reform to

¹⁰⁸ The Economist, 20 April, 27 April 1907.

¹⁰⁹ These sentiments were expressed by A. G. C. Harvey in his re-adoption speech at Rochdale, 14 December 1905, quoted in Hirst, A. G. C. Harvey, p. 60

¹¹⁰ R. D. Holt's Diary, 19 July 1914, R. D. Holt MS.

which the Cobdenites were most strongly attached did not call for large-scale recurring expenditure. But fidelity to the 'true Liberalism' from which they felt their party to be deviating left the Cobdenite Radicals occupying an ambivalent position in Edwardian politics. On economic issues, they stood broadly on the right of the Liberal party, being among the minority which actively resisted the advance of the 'new finance'. Indeed, their strictures on Liberal financial policy differed little in essentials from those which emanated from the Unionist benches. However, the Cobdenites' thinking on, inter alia, free trade, land reform and foreign policy divided them sharply from the Conservatives. Equally, their aversion to theories of economic planning prevented them from identifying with the political left, although they did campaign alongside progressive Radicals and Labour on several issues, notably against naval expansion and Grey's diplomacy. As James Bryce suggested in 1919, a new political world was in the making before 1914, a world characterised by conflict between capital and labour and the polarisation of left and right.¹¹¹ The Cobdenites' inability to find sanctuary in either camp when Bryce's 'new world' came fully into existence during the 1920s was foreshadowed in the diverse nature

¹¹¹ Bryce to A. V. Dicey, 14 October 1919, Bryce MS.

of the political company which they kept before the war.

The pre-war parliamentary Liberal party contained a powerful lobby which favoured the taxation of land values, but only a handful of doctrinaire single-taxers. Conspicuous among the latter were the Scottish M.P.s, C. E. Price and James Dundas White; Josiah Wedgwood, M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme; R. L. Outhwaite, a Tasmanian who represented Hanley, 1912-1918; the barrister, E. G. Hemmerde; Peter Wilson Raffan, M.P. for Leigh, 1910-22; and Francis Neilson, actor, playwright and M.P. for Hyde, 1910-15. The members of this minute clique were as critical of progressive Radical economic doctrines as the orthodox Cobdenites. The social programme adumbrated by progressive Radicals was dismissed by single-taxers as a series of 'superficial ameliorative measures' which dealt with the symptoms of social distress while ignoring its fundamental cause, the power of the land monopoly.¹¹² In retrospect, Francis Neilson wrote scathingly of the 'sentimental Liberals':

There was not a man amongst them who was not perfectly sincere, but they were all utterly devoid of economic knowledge. They seemed to be guided by the notion that the woe was so deep and wide that nothing could be done but to try to ease it by

¹¹² Francis Neilson, 'The Decay of Liberalism', A.J.E.S., vol. 4, no. 3 (April 1945), p. 307; also, Wedgwood's comments on the minimum wage as a 'palliative', H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser. vol. 34, cols. 160-5 (15 February 1912).

giving doles... there seemed to be no end to the measures they could invent for alleviating - only alleviating - the distress.¹¹³

Single-taxers regarded poverty as the result of 'wage-slavery' which originated in the private ownership of land.¹¹⁴ Their case was founded on the premise that landlords were the chief beneficiaries of economic development, a view derived from the Ricardian theory of rent. The origin of land values, single-taxers maintained, was to be found in the growth of society, not in the exertions of landowners. Hence, in an expanding society, there accrued to landlords an income in the form of rent that was surplus to all costs. The existence of this 'unearned increment' necessarily limited the rewards available to capital and labour, since, in any growing economy, it would constitute an increasing burden on the costs of production. Labour was held to be the principal casualty of this process. Increased rents, it was argued, together with the withholding of land from productive use for sporting and speculative purposes, had the effect of forcing labour off the land - thus creating a permanent reservoir of urban unemployed, the

¹¹³ Neilson, 'The Decay of Liberalism', pp. 302-3.

¹¹⁴ R. L. Outhwaite, The Land or Revolution (London, 1917), p.17 ff.

existence of which depressed wage levels. In this way the urban worker was forced to sell his labour below its true value. What also followed from this analysis was the claim that monopoly returns to capital were 'artificial', as R. L. Outhwaite put it, in that they were dependent on the existence of the land monopoly.¹¹⁵ The weakness of socialist and progressive Radical doctrines, according to single-taxers, lay in their failure to distinguish between the land monopoly and those parasitic on it. Once the land monopoly was destroyed, asserted Josiah Wedgwood, capital would be deprived of the power to exploit labour.¹¹⁶ The means by which this end was to be accomplished was the appropriation of the whole value of the economic rent of land. The consequence of this, single-taxers declared, would be to restore access to the land, end the competitive urban labour market and thus remove the conditions which made 'wage-slavery' possible.

The single-taxers were not isolated among Edwardian Radicals in assuming that the economic rent of land was a 'surplus' element in distribution. Antagonism towards landlords as a parasitic class was also widespread among

¹¹⁵ ibid., p. 63.

¹¹⁶ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 34, cols. 160-5 (15 February 1912); also, Memoirs, pp. 78-9.

Cobdenites and progressives, although these Radicals tended to favour land nationalisation. Nor, moreover, did Cobdenite and progressive Radicals deny the existence of a link between landlordism and urban problems. The Nation once described the land issue as 'The Master Question', while the Cobdenite, Fred Maddison, declared the land monopoly to be one of the root causes of unemployment.¹¹⁷ What differentiated the single-taxers from other Radical land reformers was their conviction that the appropriation of rent was a panacea for all social ills. Nor did they restrict themselves to the claim that it would lead to the eradication of poverty. It was also suggested that the taxation of rent would obviate the necessity for any other form of taxation, thereby giving an enormous stimulus to industry by relieving it of the burden of taxation. Furthermore, it was claimed that the imposition of a single tax would lead to a drastic reduction in the functions of government. The tax-gathering machinery would be vastly simplified; social welfare legislation of the type favoured by progressive Radicals would be rendered unnecessary; and, on the optimistic Georgite assumption that there would be a 'growth of morality consequent

¹¹⁷ The Nation, 9 March 1907; Maddison, moving the rejection of the 1909 'Right to Work' Bill, H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 4, cols. 645-58 (30 April 1909).

upon the cessation of want', the legal role of the state would diminish.¹¹⁸ Hence the single-taxers' belief that their policy held out the prospect of a social millennium.

Contemporaries differed in their assessments of the single-taxers' political stance. To a moderate Liberal, A. C. Murray, they were a neo-socialist 'band of robbers'.¹¹⁹ Socialists such as Hardie and Snowden dismissed them as reactionary individualists.¹²⁰ The single-taxers themselves sought to identify with the Cobdenite tradition. Josiah Wedgwood declared himself to be 'of the old Cobdenite school'.¹²¹ Francis Neilson was a self-proclaimed 'old-fashioned English Constitutional Radical' who believed that Cobden had left a special mission to succeeding generations of Radicals, 'to deal with the land question as he had dealt with protective tariffs'.¹²² R. L. Outhwaite also conceived of land reform as Cobden's political legacy.¹²³ The single-taxers

¹¹⁸ Henry George, Progress and Poverty (1880, Everyman's Library ed. London, 1911), p. 321.

¹¹⁹ A.C. Murray's Diary, 11 September 1912, Elibank MS., 8814.

¹²⁰ For Hardie, see A.J. Peacock, 'Land Reform 1880-1919' (unpub. Southampton M.A. thesis, 1962), p. 116; P. Snowden, 'The Rival Land Policies', Christian Commonwealth, 7 August 1912.

¹²¹ Wedgwood to F.D. Acland, printed in The Nation, 8 November 1913; also, Wedgwood, Memoirs, p. 188.

¹²² F. Neilson, 'Our Merits and Shortcomings', A.J.E.S., vol. 11, no. 1 (October 1951), p. 1; Neilson, 'The Decay of the Liberal Party', op.cit., p. 293.

¹²³ R.L.Outhwaite, 'The Mission of the Single Taxer', Land Values, October 1912.

certainly held several assumptions and aspirations in common with the orthodox Cobdenites. Both championed the free market. As one seasoned Edwardian political commentator pointed out, at the heart of the single-taxers' denunciation of the land monopoly was the claim that it was an obstacle to the free play of 'natural' market forces - precisely the terms in which Cobden had condemned protection.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the Cobdenites and single-taxers were alike in seeing no incompatibility between antipathy towards landlordism and belief in free market capitalism, a view which divided them from the progressive Radicals, who denied the validity of any distinction between rent and profit. In addition, both equated liberty with limited government, the single-taxers equalling if not surpassing Cobdenite Radicals in their hatred of bureaucracy.¹²⁵ These shared attitudes did not, however, constitute a sufficient basis for sustained common action on economic and social issues. The differences in economic philosophy were too great. Relations were further complicated by the fanaticism and intolerance for which the leading single-taxers became

¹²⁴ Brougham Villiers (pseud., F. J. Snaw), Modern Democracy: A Study in Tendencies (London, 1912), p. 58 ff.

¹²⁵ See, e.g., F. Neilson, My Life in Two Worlds, vol. 2 (Appleton, Wisconsin, 1953), p. 209; Wedgwood, H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 37, col. 729 (19 April 1912).

notorious within the parliamentary Liberal party.¹²⁶

The potentially divisive influence of the 'social question' in Radical politics had become evident during the early 1880s, when Chamberlain and John Morley quarrelled over the former's advocacy of a 'constructive' use of state power.¹²⁷ When social and fiscal issues came to the fore after 1906, the divisions within the Radical camp were laid bare. By 1914, the Radicals had been reduced to a state of extreme disarray by the activities of Lloyd George.

Lloyd George told Riddell in 1912 that one of his purposes in launching a land campaign was to inject life into the dry bones of Radicalism.¹²⁸ What in fact occurred was an acrimonious clash between the single-taxers and progressive Radicals. When preparations for the campaign began in 1912, Lloyd George became the focus of a welter of conflicting demands. Progressive Radicals pressed the case for a policy of state-sponsored development plus

¹²⁶ See, e.g. A. C. Murray's Diary, 19 July 1912, Elibank MS., 8814; E. T. John to C. E. Breese, 7 September 1913, E. T. John MS.; Seebohm Rowntree to Lloyd George, 26 August 1913, Lloyd George MS. C/2/2/48; Harvey to Alfred Baker, 16 April 1914, quoted in Hirst (ed.) A. G. C. Harvey, p. 94.

¹²⁷ D. A. Hamer, Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery (Oxford, 1972), pp. 96-7.

¹²⁸ Lord Riddell, More Pages from My Diary (London, 1934) p. 64.

minimum wage legislation. This was accompanied by warnings against any attempt to deal with the land question along Georgite lines. One progressive Radical M.P., Joseph Martin, wrote to Lloyd George: 'Single tax is confiscation. It is the nationalization of land without compensation to present owners and would ruin any party - that took it up'.¹²⁹ Equally forthrightly, Chiozza Money declared: 'The preaching of Henry George's nonsense is a political crime'.¹³⁰ Meanwhile, the single-taxers, bouyed up by the by-election victories of Hemmerde and Outhwaite in the summer of 1912, informed Lloyd George that the price of their support was a government commitment to a national land values tax,¹³¹

¹²⁹ Joseph Martin to Lloyd George, 3 June 1912 (Private & Confidential), Lloyd George MS., C/9/3/4.

¹³⁰ Daily News, 23 May 1913.

¹³¹ 'Note to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, following conversation of June 25th (1913)' (Private), Lloyd George MS., C/9/4/62. The signatories were E. G. Hemmerde, R. L. Outhwaite, J. C. Wedgwood, Edgar Jones, C. E. Price, P. W. Raffan, Francis Neilson and C. P. Trevelyan. C. P. Trevelyan's politics require some explanation. He was closely associated with the single-taxers during 1910-14, but he was not a fully-fledged Georgite. In 1905, he denied that he was a 'one-reform' man, rejected the view that Liberalism should be wedded to one cause only, denied that the land question was the only question and that the single-tax was a 'sovereign remedy'. (C. P. Trevelyan, Land Taxation and the Use of the Land (London, 1905), p. 3 ff.). During 1912-14, he was far more moderate and compromising than the hard-core single-taxers (see Trevelyan to Walter Runciman, 10 September 1913, Runciman MS., 82). In view of the other causes he espoused, such as nationalisation of mines and railways, graduation of the income tax, and the 'progressive alliance' of Liberal and Labour, it seems fair to classify Trevelyan as a progressive. In 1918 he described himself as a 'Radical-Socialist'

and threatened 'terrible consequences' if their demands were not met.¹³² It seems likely that they received an assurance of some kind.¹³³ But when Lloyd George announced his proposals during 1913-14, he remained silent on the subject of a national land values tax, instead coming out in favour of a Ministry of Lands, a state housing programme and an agricultural minimum wage. This was welcomed by progressive Radicals, and by the land nationalists among the Cobdenites.¹³⁴ The single-taxers were highly indignant, accusing Lloyd George of betraying them in favour of 'Mr. Seebohm Rowntree and his coadjutors in the formulation of bureaucratic palliatives'.¹³⁵ Especially vehement was the reaction of R. L. Outhwaite, who told Lloyd George:

When you met representatives of the Land Values Group after the N.W. Norfolk by-election, our policy held the field and was gathering strength as the Liberal reform for the limitation of the land

(Elland Election Address 1918, C. P. Trevelyan MS.). Advocacy of the taxation of land values was compatible with a generally 'progressive' stance: other progressive-minded M.P.s who were members of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values included Philip Morrell, J. A. Baker, W. P. Byles and V. H. Rutherford.

¹³² C. R. Buxton to Lloyd George, 16 August 1912 (private), Lloyd George MS., C/2/1/8. Buxton was reporting a conversation with Hemmerde.

¹³³ This is implied in Outhwaite's letter to Lloyd George, quoted below (fn. 136).

¹³⁴ A. G. C. Harvey to Lloyd George, 23 October 1913, Lloyd George MS., C/10/1/65; Harry Nuttall to Lloyd George, 18 November 1913, Lloyd George MS., C/10/2/43.

¹³⁵ Land Values, February 1914.

monopoly, the regeneration of the countryside, and the rectification of the injustice of the rating system... Then, in deference to you, and placing implicit confidence in your undertaking that you would promote a campaign embodying our principles, we checked our propaganda work to give you a clear field... We now find that we have been swept on one side, an alternative policy to our own substituted, and our views boycotted in the Liberal press, and that for the moment we have suffered eclipse at the hands of a government that exists through our past activities. That is the result of our putting the fortunes of our movement in pledge.¹³⁶

By early 1914, the single-taxers had embarked on a public campaign to force a decision in favour of a national land values tax, threatening to split the party if necessary.¹³⁷

1914 also witnessed a Cobdenite revolt against Lloyd George's financial policy. It was provoked by the 1914 Budget, the central feature of which was the proposed introduction of a graduated income tax, rising to 1/4d in the pound on incomes over £2500. This was a measure which had long been advocated by progressive Radicals, by whom the Budget was enthusiastically received. However, the progress of the 1914 Finance Bill through the Commons was successfully obstructed by a 'cave' of Liberal businessmen and Cobdenite Radicals, led by

¹³⁶ R. L. Outhwaite to Lloyd George, 13 November 1913, Lloyd George MS. C/10/2/32.

¹³⁷ For a fuller account of the land campaign, see H. V. Emy, 'The Land Campaign: Lloyd George as a Social Reformer 1909-14' in A. J. P. Taylor (ed.), Lloyd George: Twelve Essays (London, 1971), pp. 35-68.

R. D. Holt, P. A. Molteno, Sir John Jardine, A.G.C. Harvey, and Sir Charles Nicholson. Their action, R. D. Holt noted in his diary, was inspired by hostility towards 'the ill-considered and socialistic tendencies of Government finance'.¹³⁸ The protest was accompanied by fierce public criticism of the proponents of the 'new finance' - the progressive Radicals. P. A. Molteno derided them as 'apostles of extravagance, who seem to regard taxation as being very good in itself', and singled out Chiozza Money as the 'chief apostle'.¹³⁹ Progressive Radicals naturally took a jaundiced view of the whole affair,¹⁴⁰ which indicates the extent of the gulf in economic outlook which separated Cobdenite and progressive Radicals.

In view of these divisions, it is hardly surprising that after 1906 parliamentary Radicalism lacked what A. H. Scott termed a 'constant nucleus'.¹⁴¹ There was

¹³⁸ R. D. Holt's Diary, 19 July 1914, R. D. Holt MS.

¹³⁹ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 63, cols. 2031-2 (25 June 1914).

¹⁴⁰ See, e.g., Christopher Addison's Diary, 18 June, 13 July 1914, C. Addison, Four and a Half Years: a Personal Diary from June 1914 to January 1919 (London 1934), vol. i, pp. 19, 25.

¹⁴¹ A. H. Scott to Ponsonby, 23 February 1909, Ponsonby MS.

no Edwardian Radical equivalent of the 'Keep Left' or 'Tribune' groups in the post-1945 Labour party. Amid the plethora of Radical 'cause' groups, there was only one general Radical organisation, and it was both unrepresentative and ineffective. This was Sir Charles Dilke's 'Radical Committee', re-formed in 1906 with Percy Alden, Maurice Levy and Fred Hall of the Yorkshire Miners' Association as its joint secretaries.¹⁴² Other leading members included J. S. Higham, J. M. Robertson, Chiozza Money, F. C. Mackarness and, after 1908, Arthur Ponsonby.¹⁴³ Nearly sixty M.P.s joined the Committee in 1906, but these apparently included all of the 'Lib-Labs', most of them nominees of miners' associations who took the Labour whip after the M.F.G.B. voted to affiliate with Labour in 1908.¹⁴⁴ This left approximately thirty-five to forty straightforward Radical Liberals. The Committee thus fell some way short of representing the whole of the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party. Moreover, it was hamstrung from the outset by internal divisions. Significantly, the decision was taken at its inaugural meeting to avoid discussion

¹⁴² Daily News, 16 February 1906.

¹⁴³ Dilke to Ponsonby, 10 February 1909, Ponsonby MS.

¹⁴⁴ Reynolds' News, 18 February 1906; Daily News, 16, 19 February 1906; Manchester Guardian, 15 February 1906.

of the 'economic basis' of society.¹⁴⁵ It was further recognised that no attempt could be made to act in concert across the whole range of political issues. 'We never try to bind men's votes', Dilke explained to Ponsonby, 'as it would break up the common work - in other ways useful and even necessary'.¹⁴⁶ The aims of the Committee were necessarily modest. Dilke defined them in 1906: 'It is merely our business to push forward the more Democratic reforms in the government's programme, and to co-operate among ourselves in the various departments of political machinery, such as balloting for Bills'.¹⁴⁷ Sentiment was evidently an important factor in holding the Committee together. 'We agreed on nothing', recalled Josiah Wedgwood, 'save that we loved and respected Dilke, who had been a great man before we were born'.¹⁴⁸ The Committee does not appear to have survived after Dilke's death in 1911.

Divisive though the influence of the 'social question' was in Radical politics, it was not sufficient

¹⁴⁵ H. W. Massingham, 'Pictures in Parliament', Daily News, 16 February 1906.

¹⁴⁶ Dilke to Ponsonby, 15 February 1909, Ponsonby MS.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Dilke in Reynolds' News, 18 February 1906.

¹⁴⁸ Wedgwood, Memoirs, p. 62.

to inhibit concerted action over those issues upon which Radicals were in some measure united. Thus, to a limited extent, the land issue was a source of cohesion among Radicals. Although the aims of the single-taxers, the land nationalisers and the moderate proponents of land value taxation were ultimately antagonistic, they did have a common short-term interest in securing a valuation of the land, and, more generally, in fixing attention on the land problem. The appeals made to the government between 1906 and 1909 to treat valuation as a matter of urgency were supported by virtually the entire Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party.¹⁴⁹ Thereafter, as it became clear that Lloyd George intended to take up the land question in earnest, harmony among the Radical land reformers gave way to factional strife.

Similarly short-lived, though rather more powerful, was the unifying influence of the House of Lords dispute. The sense of outrage which all Liberals no doubt felt over the Lords' obstruction was perhaps heightened in the Radicals' case by the animosity which they bore towards the landed class as a parasitic section of the community. The intensity of Radical feeling on the

¹⁴⁹ Campbell-Bannerman received two deputations of 150 M.P.s, one in December 1906, the second in June 1907, which stressed the urgency of valuation; in November 1908, Asquith was presented with a petition signed by 246 Liberal and Labour M.P.s which urged the inclusion of a tax on land values in the next Budget. See Land Values, March, July, 1907; December 1908.

issue was demonstrated in 1907, when twenty-four Radical M.P.s endorsed Arthur Henderson's call for the abolition of the House of Lords, thereby signifying their disapproval of the government's decision, embodied in Campbell-Bannerman's resolution, merely to threaten the Lords with legislation.¹⁵⁰ In the ensuing three years, Radicals became increasingly fretful over the government's reluctance to grasp the nettle and legislate in accordance with the Campbell-Bannerman resolution.¹⁵¹ It may be surmised that Masterman's irreverent comment that the Liberals had turned every cheek in their body was symptomatic of Radical opinion.¹⁵² Impatience with the invertebrate attitude of the government reached a zenith early in 1910, when it transpired that the Cabinet was considering reform of the upper House as an alternative to the curtailment of its power of veto. Radicals urged the government to confine itself to the question of the veto, their entreaties being reinforced by warnings that any substantial departure from this

¹⁵⁰ H.C.Parl.Deb., div. no. 251 (29 June 1907). Thirteen 'Lib-Labs' also supported Henderson's motion.

¹⁵¹ Asquith was implored to take action in December 1908 by 223 Liberal M.P.s, headed by Sir John Brunner: see The Nation, 12 December 1908. See also the comments in A. H. Scott to Ponsonby, 23 February 1909, Ponsonby MS., and in J. A. Hobson, 'The Crisis in Liberal Policy', The Nation, 27 February 1909.

¹⁵² H. W. Nevinson's Diary, 8 December 1908, Bod. Eng. misc. e. 615/2.

policy would endanger Liberal unity.¹⁵³ Elibank, the Chief Whip, advised his colleagues against discounting the threats of the 'extreme Radicals'.¹⁵⁴ The Cabinet's eventual decision to concentrate on the veto was presumably influenced by the Radicals' pressure.

The most enduring and important centripetal influence in Radical politics, however, was exerted by issues of foreign policy and national security. This is not to say that differences of temperament, emphasis and detail were absent: these undoubtedly contributed to the failure of the pre-war Radical campaigns for disarmament and international reconciliation.¹⁵⁵ What did command all but universal assent in Radical quarters was the

153 The Nation, 2 July 1910, noted that a memorial embodying these views had recently been approved by 'the Radicals'. There is an undated draft of the memorial in the Ponsonby MS.

The most dramatic incident during this period was Asquith's admission in February 1910 that in spite of his declaration at the Albert Hall in December 1909, he had not received a pledge from the King to create Liberal peers if this proved necessary to carry through a scheme of constitutional reform. Josiah Wedgwood recorded the verdict of 'we Radicals': 'We are praying that he will resign & let Lloyd George become Prime Minister'. Wedgwood to Helen Wedgwood, 22 February 1910, Josiah Wedgwood MS.

154 Memorandum by Elibank, 29 March 1910, Elibank MS., 8802.

155 See A. J. A. Morris, Radicalism Against War 1906-1914 (London, 1972), passim.; H. Weinroth, 'Left-Wing Opposition to Naval Armaments in Britain before 1914', J.C.H., vol. 6, no. 4 (1971), pp. 93-120.

proposition that a Liberal government should repudiate the doctrine of continuity in the conduct of foreign relations and pursue a 'Liberal' foreign policy - a course which involved the rejection of traditional interpretations of the nature of international society and of Britain's national interests. This, of course, was hardly a novel refrain in Radical politics. The Edwardian Radicals conceived of themselves as perpetuators of a Liberal tradition of dissent over foreign policy, and it was from those whom they regarded as the highest authorities on that tradition - Cobden, Bright and Gladstone - that their views were largely derived.

Radicals assumed that the exponents of what they subsequently came to refer to as the 'old diplomacy' were imbued with a cynical and irrational vision of international politics as a competitive struggle for survival. This 'menagerie theory', as W. P. Byles described it, was vigorously assailed by Radical spokesmen.¹⁵⁶ The Radical patriarch Lord Courtney, for instance, declared in 1906:

I am sick and tired of the constant presentation of the nations of the world as so many predatory hordes ready at the least sight of an opportunity to seize upon what belongs to other nations and to snatch, consume and devour what is not their own. I do not believe that is really the temper of the civilised nations of Europe.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ H.C.Parl.Deb., 4 ser., vol. 185, cols. 1612 (11 March 1908).

¹⁵⁷ Manchester Guardian, 12 March 1906.

Courtney's concluding assertion typified the Radical conviction that popular opinion in Europe was fundamentally pacific in outlook. This assumption left Radicals with the task of accounting for the prevalence of discord within the pre-war international community. A twofold explanation was offered. First, Radicals maintained that friction between states was commonly the product of unwarranted fear and suspicion. Anglo-German relations were seen as a prime case in point: before 1914 Radicals consistently refused to concede that there was any 'substantial ground of quarrel' between Britain and Germany.¹⁵⁸ Second, Radicals argued that such misunderstandings were always liable to occur while the making of foreign policy remained the prerogative of reactionary elites. In each of the great powers, it was alleged, external policy did not reflect popular sentiment, but was largely determined by a chauvinistic diplomatic-military caste that was highly susceptible to the baneful influence of avaricious commercial and industrial interests. In the case of Germany, for instance, Radicals distinguished between

¹⁵⁸ The Economist, 23 September 1911; other examples include E. T. John, speech at Chirk, Wrexham Advertiser, 24 January 1914; Reynolds' News, 18 February 1912; Daily News, 17 January 1914; speech by J. A. M. Macdonald, H.C. Parl. Deb., 4 ser., vol. 170, cols. 698-9 (5 March 1907); Lady Courtney's Diary, 7 November 1911, Courtney MS., vol. 35; undated memorandum by Ponsonby (? 1912-13), Ponsonby MS.

the bellicose Germany of the Kaiser, the Junkers and the Pan-German League, and, excluded from power, the 'lovable, peaceful' Germany represented by the S.P.D.¹⁵⁹ Thus, following a visit to Germany in 1911, the Quaker M.P. J. H. Whitehouse reported:

There is a small governing caste which is intensely irritated and suspicious... There is also a considerable military and naval class which would frankly welcome an outbreak of hostilities. But behind these adverse influences is to be found a vast public opinion rarely reaching this land, but which is more representative of the soul of Germany than the engineered agitation which chiefly reaches us.¹⁶⁰

A similar situation was held to exist in Britain.

'The upper class', wrote Noel Buxton in 1911, 'which has long lost its domination in home government, retains it in foreign affairs'.¹⁶¹ Radicals were especially critical of the role of the permanent officials at the Foreign Office, depicting them as men of 'long lineage and short vision' who virtually dictated policy.¹⁶² But

¹⁵⁹ Josiah Wedgwood, speech on Vote of Credit, H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 65, col. 2093 (6 August 1914); similar comments on the 'two Germanies' were made by W. H. Dickinson, ibid., col. 2090 (6 August); Joseph King, ibid., col. 1866 (3 August); see also, C. P. Trevelyan to Runciman, 17 January 1912, Runciman MS., box 83.

¹⁶⁰ J. H. Whitehouse, Essays on Social and Political Questions (Cambridge, 1913), p. 20.

¹⁶¹ Noel Buxton, Democracy and Diplomacy (pamphlet, London, 1912), copy in E. T. John MS.

¹⁶² Francis Neilson, How Diplomats Make War (1916), quoted in D. Collins, Aspects of British Politics 1904-19 (Oxford, 1965), p. 114; 'Liberals and Foreign Affairs', circular enclosed in Noel Buxton to Ponsonby, 17 April 1913, Ponsonby MS.

the Foreign Office was seen as only one element in a nexus of interests and institutions which exercised a malign influence over external policy. Others singled out for assault included the Committee of Imperial Defence and the 'armament trust'. There was evidence which endowed the Radicals' charges with a superficial plausibility, notably the aristocratic bias of Foreign Office recruitment and the tendency towards merger evident in the armaments industry.¹⁶³ But here, as elsewhere, Radicals succumbed to a conspiracy theory of politics.

The enormous faith which Radicals placed in the 'sane and sober influence of democratic opinion' was not seriously diminished by the not infrequent outbursts of popular chauvinism in ante bellum Europe.¹⁶⁴ All too readily, these were dismissed as manufactured expressions of opinion, unrepresentative of the 'real spirit' of the populace.¹⁶⁵ Germanophobia in Britain, for example, was seen as the product of the inflammatory propaganda purveyed by Unionist politicians, by pressure groups such

¹⁶³ See Z. S. Steiner, The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898-1914 (Cambridge, 1969), p. 218-9; C. Trebilcock, 'Radicalism and the Armament Trust' in Morris (ed.) Edwardian Radicalism, pp. 180-201.

¹⁶⁴ Undated memorandum by Ponsonby (?1912-13), Ponsonby MS.

¹⁶⁵ Whitehouse, op.cit., p. 19.

as the Tariff Reform and Navy Leagues, and, above all, by the 'scribblers of the yellow press', who came to occupy a prominent place in Radical demonology.¹⁶⁶ The belief that the arousal and exploitation of popular feeling by the right-wing press in Britain and Germany was a major cause of Anglo-German estrangement became deeply entrenched in Radical thought. Here again, a conspiracy was assumed to be at work: Radicals did not doubt that the activities of the reactionary press were 'inspired' by official sources. Hence, to the Radicals, the British 'yellow press' and its overseas counterparts were instruments of deception, the principal means through which the masses were seduced by the ruling elites of Europe into supporting assertive and belligerent policies.

Since the Radicals maintained that traditional diplomacy was based on a fallacious view of the nature of international society, they condemned, a fortiori, the strategies characteristic of it. One of the chief objects of Radical censure was the 'sinister policy of the Balance of Power'. Following John Bright, Edwardian Radicals equated belief in the doctrine of the balance of power with the worship of a 'foul idol'. The term itself was held to be misleading. According to H. N. Brailsford, it was a 'metaphor of venerable hypocrisy',

¹⁶⁶ Reynolds' News, 8 October 1911.

since the practitioners of balance of power diplomacy were not engaged in the pursuit of equilibrium, but instead sought 'power and predominance'.¹⁶⁷ The Radicals' critique of the balance of power doctrine proceeded along the lines laid down by their revered predecessors. It was argued that instability and friction were the inescapable consequences of the great powers' fixation with the possession of a margin of strength over their supposed rivals. What balance of power diplomacy offered, declared the Nation, was 'an endless vista of shifting forces and a hopeless prospect of increasing armaments'.¹⁶⁸ Radicals insisted that genuine stability could only be secured within the context of a new international order, in which democratic control over foreign policy permitted the use of rational modes of conflict resolution, such as arbitration and conciliation through the Concert of Europe. Hence the statement made in the manifesto published by the Union of Democratic Control in 1914:

The Foreign Policy of Great Britain shall not be aimed at creating alliances for the purpose of maintaining the 'Balance of Power', but shall be directed to concerted action between the Powers, and the setting up of an International Council, whose deliberations and decisions shall be public, with such

¹⁶⁷ H. N. Brailsford, The War of Steel and Gold (London, 1915), p. 28.

¹⁶⁸ The Nation, 25 May 1909.

machinery for securing international agreement as shall be the guarantee of an abiding peace.¹⁶⁹

Implicit in this demand was a condemnation of pre-war British foreign policy. Radicals did, of course, campaign against Grey's diplomacy before 1914 - most resolutely after the Agadir Crisis of 1911, when the Liberal Foreign Affairs Group and the extra-parliamentary Foreign Policy Committee were formed in order to press for a reorientation of British policy. It should be emphasised that these organisations contained representatives of the whole spectrum of Radical opinion on social and economic issues. Lord Courtney and L. T. Hobhouse were Radicals of a different stamp, but were respectively president and chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee. Among the members of the Foreign Affairs Group were the progressive Radicals, Ponsonby, Whitehouse, Noel Buxton, Alden, Rowntree, Addison, Byles and Joseph King; the single-taxers, Outhwaite, Wedgwood, Edgar Jones, Hemmerde, Price, Raffan and Neilson; and such Cobdenite stalwarts as Lough, Mason, Barlow, Levy, J. S. Higham, J. A. Bryce, A. G. C. Harvey, J. D. Hope and Leif Jones.¹⁷⁰ The two-man sub-committees set up by the Group to consider particular issues included what in domestic terms were

¹⁶⁹ 'The Union of Democratic Control' (September 1914), copy in T. E. Harvey MS.

¹⁷⁰ Membership list of F.A.G., enclosed in Ponsonby to T. E. Harvey (copy), 13 August 1913, Ponsonby MS.

strikingly incongruous pairings: J. H. Whitehouse and Josiah Wedgwood dealt with Germany, while the outspoken Cobdenite D. M. Mason and the progressive Alexander MacCallum Scott worked in harness on the Near East.¹⁷¹

There is no evidence to suggest that their deliberations were interrupted by the contemporaneous disputes over land reform and financial policy.

The principal charge laid by Radicals was that Grey's commitment to the concept of the balance of power, coupled with an obsessional fear of Germany, had led to the adoption of policies which were ruinously expensive, alien to the Liberal tradition and ultimately self-defeating in that they increased rather than diminished the possibility of war. Speaking on behalf of the leaders of the Foreign Affairs Group, Arthur Ponsonby stated: 'We believe... that the division of Europe into two armed camps, the entanglement of this country in alliances for the maintenance of the balance of power, must produce continued friction and may on occasion lead to grave risk of war'.¹⁷² Britain's interests, as conceived by Radicals, lay in securing 'cordial relations with

¹⁷¹ 'Foreign Affairs sub-committees', list enclosed in Noel Buxton to Ponsonby, 17 April 1913, Ponsonby MS. The other sub-committees were: Persia & Russia: Ponsonby and Morrell; Arbitration: J. Allen Baker and H. W. Carr-Gomm; Far East: A. G. C. Harvey and Maurice Levy; Congo: Joseph King and Sylvester Horne.

¹⁷² Undated memorandum by Ponsonby (? 1912-13), Ponsonby MS.

all states'.¹⁷³ It was for this reason that they initially welcomed the Anglo-French accord of 1904 and the entente which evolved out of it. Hostility towards the entente developed as the Radicals began to appreciate that it had been converted from a friendly bond into a de facto alliance. Their subsequent advocacy of a policy of extrication from continental entanglements was regarded by their critics within the Liberal party, such as Grey's parliamentary private secretary, A. C. Murray, as evidence of an isolationist outlook.¹⁷⁴ This, however, was a misinterpretation of the Radicals' position. Lord Courtney, for example, explicitly denied any sympathy with isolationism. 'I have never thought', he wrote, 'we could detach ourselves from our sympathies with and duties towards the rest of the world'.¹⁷⁵ Radicals did not propose that Britain should assume a posture of non-involvement in European affairs following disengagement from the Franco-Russian alliance bloc. It was instead argued that Britain should use her detached position to act as a mediator between France and Germany. 'One of the chief objects of this country's foreign policy', proclaimed the Manchester Guardian in 1913, 'and one of

¹⁷³ Hirst (ed.), A. G. C. Harvey, p. 84-5.

¹⁷⁴ A. C. Murray's Diary, 27 November 1911, 17 January 1912, Elibank MS., 8814.

¹⁷⁵ G. P. Gooch, Life of Lord Courtney (London, 1920), p. 501.

the hopes of our entente with France, should be to work for good relations between France and Germany'.¹⁷⁶

It was by means of such endeavours to ease tensions in Europe that Radicals believed one of the fundamental goals of a 'Liberal' foreign policy could be realised: the supersession of the European alliance system by its 'logical antithesis', the Concert of Europe.¹⁷⁷

Radicals also exhorted the government from 1906 onwards to seize the initiative in the field of disarmament. They rejected the conventional view, unceasingly expounded in the Tory press, that the deterrent value of military power was a stabilising factor in international relations.¹⁷⁸ In the Radicals' judgement, the traditional emphasis on the necessity of being a 'strong man armed' resulted in an atmosphere of suspicion, which in turn led to the collective insanity of armaments competition and the exacerbation of international tensions. 'The more extensive the armaments', wrote E. D. Morel,

the greater the temptation to seize an opportunity for testing their efficiency; the greater the nervousness and irritation of governments when negotiating; the greater the pressure on those governments of the powerful

¹⁷⁶ Manchester Guardian, 24 May 1913.

¹⁷⁷ ibid., 31 May 1913.

¹⁷⁸ See, e.g., Daily Telegraph, 5 September 1911 (from which the quotation in the following sentence is derived); The Times, 20 February 1912, 20 February 1913; Morning Post, 21 July 1911, 15 February 1912, 1 January 1914; The Observer, 11, 18 February 1912.

professional and other interests concerned
in armaments construction.¹⁷⁹

Radical thinking on the armaments issue did not however focus exclusively or even predominantly on the deleterious effects of armaments rivalry on the international environment. It was the domestic repercussions of increasing armaments expenditure which Radical spokesmen deplored most insistently. On this point there were significant differences of emphasis within the Radical camp. Chief among the Cobdenites' priorities was the reduction of public spending, whereas progressive Radicals, who were not alarmed by high levels of public expenditure per se, thought in terms of a direct conflict for resources between two 'deadly enemies', armaments and social reform.¹⁸⁰ What Radicals shared was a conviction that retrenchment in military and naval expenditure was a necessary condition of the fulfilment of their domestic objectives. This conception of the interrelationship between domestic and foreign policy explains a paradox in the Radicals' political activity, namely that they expended such a considerable proportion of their energies in the field of external affairs, which, for the majority, held little intrinsic attraction, and

¹⁷⁹ E. D. Morel, The Morrow of War (1914), reprinted in P. Stansky (ed.), The Left and War: The British Labour Party and World War I (New York, 1969), p. 98.

¹⁸⁰ 'New Estimates and Old Policies', The Nation, 25 October 1913.

in which only a few individuals such as Arthur Ponsonby and Noel Buxton could lay claim to real expertise. It also accounts for the consistency and breadth of Radical opposition to Liberal naval policy. The Radicals repeatedly divided the House of Commons over the issue of naval spending. In view of the heavy pressure brought by the Liberal Whips on these occasions,¹⁸¹ and the reluctance with which Radicals voted against a Liberal government, the number of persistent dissidents was not inconsiderable. Over eighty Radicals cast at least one vote against the naval estimates between 1906 and 1910; fifty-four did so between 1910 and 1914. A much larger number balked at defiance of the Liberal Whips but participated in lobbying. In 1907, one hundred and thirty six Liberal M.P.s appealed to Campbell-Bannerman for reductions in the 1908 military and naval estimates.¹⁸² Six years later, one hundred Liberal M.P.s headed by P. A. Molteno called upon Asquith to limit the expansion of naval armaments.¹⁸³ No distinction can be made

¹⁸¹ See, e.g., J. E. Ellis to Joshua Rowntree, 26 July 1909, quoted in A. T. Bassett, The Life of the Rt. Hon. John Edward Ellis, M.P. (London, 1914), p. 262-3.

¹⁸² See S. E. Koss, Sir John Brunner: Radical Plutocrat 1842-1919 (Cambridge, 1970), Appendix 1, pp. 290-2.

¹⁸³ 'List of Members who were present at the Deputation to the Prime Minister on the 17th December 1913 and who are in sympathy with the movement', enclosed in P. A. Molteno and A. G. C. Harvey to Ponsonby, 19 December 1913 (Private & Confidential), Ponsonby MS.

between traditional and progressive Radicals in respect of the vigour with which they backed the reductionist cause. Between 1910 and 1914, for example, there were ten zealots who voted against the government on four or more occasions: the Cobdenite Radicals, Thomas Lough, D. M. Mason, William Clough and Sir Wilfrid Lawson; the single-taxer, Edgar Jones; and a quintet of progressive-minded Radicals, J. A. Baker, R. C. Lambert, W. P. Byles, H. J. Glanville and E. T. John.

The fact that Radicals championed the concept of a 'Liberal' foreign policy within a largely unsympathetic political environment naturally encouraged the development of a sense of fraternity amongst them. The experience of being an embattled minority during the South African war certainly had a lasting influence. 'Nothing draws men more closely together than co-operation in an unpopular cause', wrote G. P. Gooch, 'and the "Pro-Boers" were linked together by a freemasonry which lasted up to the First World War and in some cases beyond it'.¹⁸⁴ The unifying influence of sentiment must not however be overrated. The frustration of the Radical campaign against 'Armaments, Balance & Secrecy' after 1906 led to disillusionment and recriminations.¹⁸⁵ An example of

¹⁸⁴ G. P. Gooch, Under Six Reigns (London, 1958), p. 77.

¹⁸⁵ This phrase is Ponsonby's: Ponsonby to E. D. Morel, ? August 1914 (Private), E. D. Morel MS.

how bitter the latter could be is the reaction of H. J. Wilson to the debacle of 1909, when a much-heralded Radical assault on the naval estimates petered out in humiliating fashion:

The whole business is a discreditable incident in my opinion, alike to the Government and my foolishly terror stricken colleagues... I do not know what will happen to our Comtee (the Reduction of Armaments Committee) now, or what is the good of co-operating with a lot of men with the courage of sheep, or rabbits.¹⁸⁶

More important than sentiment in fostering consciousness of a distinctive Radical identity was the presence within the Liberal party of a common enemy, the Liberal Imperialists. The disputes over foreign and defence policy revived all the Radicals' old animosities. After Campbell-Bannerman's death, the fear was voiced in the Radical camp that the Liberal Imperialists, having failed to capture Liberalism by frontal assault in the early 1900s, were succeeding by insidious means. From 1908 onwards, Radicals protested continually against the over-representation of Liberal Imperialism in the Cabinet. What had come into being, Radicals alleged, was a 'Liberal League Government' which was pursuing external policies repugnant to majority Liberal opinion in

¹⁸⁶ H. J. Wilson to Alick Wilson, 18 March 1909, H. J. Wilson MS.

parliament and in the country.¹⁸⁷ Even so well-informed a Radical as C. P. Scott subscribed to the view that Liberalism was controlled by an Imperialist oligarchy.

'What is the use', he complained to E. D. Morel,

of having great Liberal majorities in the country and the H of C if the Govmnt. in its higher and its lower ranks is simply stuffed with Imperialists and we have hardly a genuine Liberal Minister even in training.¹⁸⁸

Neither element of the Radical claim that Liberalism consisted of an Imperialist head and a Radical body can be given much credence. Liberal Imperialism had practically ceased to exist as an organised political force by 1910, when the Liberal League was formally disbanded. It has also been suggested that the Liberal Imperialist ministers did not attempt to function as a group after 1905.¹⁸⁹

Nor was there a great deal of substance to H. W. Massingham's assertion, made in 1912, that Radicalism had been virtually excluded from the Cabinet under the Asquith

¹⁸⁷ C. P. Scott's Diary, 6-8 September 1911, 20 July 1911 (recording the views of Loreburn), T. Wilson (ed.) The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott 1911-28 (London, 1970) pp. 52-3, 42; also, F. Neilson, My Life in Two Worlds, vol. 1, p. 281, 290-1; G. P. Gooch, Life of Lord Courtney, p. 560; Lady Courtney's Diary, 1 March 1912 (recording the views of F. W. Hirst), 19 June 1912, Courtney MS., vol. 35; Daily News, 17 June 1912; 'A Radical M.P.', 'Communication' The Nation, 10 April 1909; H. W. Massingham, 'The New Cabinet and the Party', ibid., 15 June 1912; H. J. Wilson to his daughter, 16 February 1908, H. J. Wilson MS; E. N. Bennett, op.cit., pp. 82-91.

¹⁸⁸ C. P. Scott to E. D. Morel, 18 August 1914, E.D. Morel MS.

¹⁸⁹ G. R. Searle, The Quest for National Efficiency: A study in British politics and British political thought 1899-1914 (Oxford, 1971), p. 165.

regime.¹⁹⁰ Lewis Harcourt, C. F. G. Masterman and J. A. Simon were three ministers who possessed Radical credentials and attained Cabinet rank under Asquith. Lloyd George, irregular Radical though he may have been, gained promotion and enormous influence. C. P. Trevelyan, Christopher Addison, and J. M. Robertson were Radicals who entered the junior ranks of the government after 1908. Even Arthur Ponsonby was offered a junior post.¹⁹¹ On the other hand, Asquith firmly squashed Haldane's designs on the Admiralty in 1911.¹⁹² This hardly adds up to a record of inexorable Imperialist advance. Moreover, the Radicals greatly overestimated the extent to which their views on naval disarmament and foreign policy were shared by Liberal opinion at large.¹⁹³ Throughout the 1906-14 period, the centre of the parliamentary Liberal party held aloof from the agitation for reductions in naval spending. Nor was Liberal opinion in the country as solidly in favour of retrenchment as the Radicals imagined. When, for example,

190 The Nation, 15 June 1912.

191 Percy Illingworth to Ponsonby, 8 September 1912 (Secret), Ponsonby MS.

192 Haldane to Grey, 2 October 1911, Haldane MS., 5909; Asquith to Haldane, 10 October 1911, Haldane MS., 5909.

193 See, e.g., the assumptions of widespread backing contained in Ponsonby to Lloyd George (draft) ? September 1912, Ponsonby MS.; C. P. Trevelyan to Lloyd George, 6 January 1914 (Private), Lloyd George MS. C/4/12/14; Manchester Guardian, 19 February 1912; Reynold's News, 3 December 1911.

Sir John Brunner attempted to mobilise local Liberal associations behind the reductionist cause, only twenty of them gave their support.¹⁹⁴

The Radicals have recently been portrayed as the social reform wing of the Edwardian Liberal party, diligently searching before 1914 for a 'new Liberalism' that would not be outflanked by socialism.¹⁹⁵ The evidence presented here suggests that such a view is untenable. Only a section of the Radicals can be plausibly identified with the 'new Liberalism'. The Cobdenites were economic conservatives, while the single-taxers are perhaps best regarded as utopian anarchists. It would therefore only be justifiable to equate Radicalism completely with the 'new Liberalism' if it could be demonstrated that the progressives alone were authentic Radicals. Any attempt to do so, however, would involve making a claim on the progressive Radicals' behalf which they never made for themselves. J. A. Hobson, for example, saw no contradiction in the concept of 'Radical individualism', and on one occasion named three

¹⁹⁴ Koss, Brunner, pp. 257-8.

¹⁹⁵ Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control, pp. 3-4, 29; M. Petter, 'The Progressive Alliance', History, vol. 58, no. 192 (February 1973), pp. 46-7; C. A. Cline, Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party, 1914-31, p. 6.

Cobdenites - Lough, Mackarness and H. J. Wilson - as being among the most active Radicals in the House of Commons.¹⁹⁶ Nor, for their part, did Cobdenite Radicals and single-taxers seek to impugn the Radical credentials of the progressives. It is quite clearly the case that attachment to a particular socio-economic creed was not seen as either a sufficient or a necessary condition of Radicalism.

¹⁹⁶ J. A. Hobson, 'The Crisis in Liberal Policy', The Nation, 27 February 1909.

ii RADICALS DIVIDED: SOME FIGURES

It cannot be said that the truth of the contention that Radical M.P.s were divided on social and economic issues has yet been established beyond dispute. Much of the evidence which has been presented so far relates to the attitudes of a limited number of prominent individuals. Any generalisations concerning parliamentary Radical opinion on socio-economic issues which were largely based on evidence of this kind would clearly be open to question. What is needed is evidence which will give direct insight into the views of the mass of Radical M.P.s on these issues. The House of Commons division lists are an important and accessible source of such evidence. What follows, therefore, is an attempt to investigate the voting behaviour of Radical M.P.s on socio-economic issues.

The first essential is to identify the members of the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party. Since the Radicals were not effectively organized on a factional basis, this is no simple matter. The attempt to differentiate between Radicals and non-Radicals made here is based on an examination of Liberal attitudes on the issue of naval expenditure.¹⁹⁷ The underlying assumption is that opposition to the expansionist naval policy of the

¹⁹⁷ It would clearly have been desirable to consider Liberal voting on more than one issue. However, neither of the other two issues which were important sources of cohesion in Radical politics can profitably be used as criteria of Radicalism. Support for some measure of land reform was not confined to the Radicals; nor were the Radicals alone among Liberals in being incensed by the behaviour of the House of Lords after 1906.

of the Liberal government after 1905 was a major defining characteristic of Edwardian Radicals.¹⁹⁸

There were two main ways in which a Liberal M.P. could demonstrate that he meant business about reductions in naval spending. One was to defy the Liberal Whips and vote against the government. The other was to take part in lobbying on the issue. It is not altogether surprising to find that some opponents of naval expansion were prepared to sign memoranda or go on deputations but failed to register their dissatisfaction with government policy in the division lobbies. In four divisions on the question of reductions in naval expenditure between 1906 and 1910, eighty-eight Liberal M.P.s - nearly one-fifth of the parliamentary party - recorded at least one anti-government vote.¹⁹⁹ In 1907, however, an appeal to Campbell-Bannerman for reductions in naval spending was signed by one hundred and twenty-six Liberal M.P.s - nearly one-third of the parliamentary party.²⁰⁰ A similar pattern can be seen in

¹⁹⁸ See above.

¹⁹⁹ The divisions concerned are: J.M. Macdonald's motion to reduce naval expenditure by £1,000, div. no. 353 (31 July 1907); J.M. Macdonald's motion calling for reductions in armaments expenditure in view of friendly relations with foreign powers, div. no. 29 (2 March 1908); Henderson's amendment to the naval estimates, div. no. 35 (17 March 1909); J.E. Ellis's motion to reduce the naval estimates by £100, div. no. 367 (26 July 1909).

²⁰⁰ Printed letter to Campbell-Bannerman, November 1907, in Koss, Brunner, pp.290-2 (hereafter referred to as the Brunner memorandum). The figure of one hundred and twenty-six excludes nominees of the miners' associations, most of whom took the Labour Whip after 1908; these M.P.s are not included in the total of those voting against naval expansion.

the years between 1910 and 1914. In six divisions on the naval spending issue, fifty-four M.P.s cast at least one vote in support of the reductionist cause.²⁰¹ In 1913, a much larger number, ninety-six in all, backed a deputation led by P.A. Molteno and A.G.C. Harvey which endeavoured to persuade the Prime Minister of 'the necessity for a limitation in Naval armaments'.²⁰²

Party loyalty, whether spontaneous or induced by the

201 The divisions concerned are: army and navy, J.M. Macdonald's motion to reduce, div. no.70 (13 March 1911); G. Roberts' amendment to the naval estimates, div. no.71 (16 March 1911); supplementary naval estimates, Churchill's motion to increase the number of men by 1500, div. no.154 (22 July 1912); D.M. Mason's amendment to the naval estimates, div. no.16 (28 March 1913); supplementary naval estimates, D.M. Mason's motion to reduce by £100, div. no.31 (2 March 1914); naval estimates, procedural motion, div. no.52 (23 March 1914).

202 P.A. Molteno, A.G.C. Harvey to Ponsonby, 19 December 1913 (Private & Confidential), enclosing 'List of Members who were present at the Deputation to the Prime Minister on the 17th December 1913 And who are in sympathy with the movement', Ponsonby MS.

S.E. Koss has written of the Radicals after 1910: 'Their ranks depleted by the elections of 1910, they were acutely conscious of their weakened position within the parliamentary Liberal party...' (S.E. Koss, Fleet Street Radical: A.G. Gardiner and the Daily News (London, 1973), p.127). These figures suggest that the position of the Radicals did not alter significantly as a result of the 1910 elections. The percentage of the party casting at least one vote in favour of naval disarmament dropped only marginally, from twenty-one per cent to eighteen per cent; the percentage casting two or more votes in favour of naval disarmament dropped from thirteen per cent to twelve per cent. It is also worth noting that the Molteno-Harvey deputation of 1913 was supported by a slightly higher proportion of the parliamentary party than Brunner's memorandum of 1907.

Liberal Whips, was probably the main reason for the inhibitions which some Radicals had about voting against the government. The Christian Commonwealth observed in 1908:

The most painful exhibition seen in the House of Commons - and it is a very common occurrence - is the spectacle of Liberal member after Liberal member, who are opposed to some government proposal, rising to appeal pathetically to the Ministers to allow their supporters to vote according to their consciences on the question under discussion. But seldom - very seldom indeed - is that appeal heeded, and the conscience-stricken Liberals decide between honesty and loyalty by meekly walking through the division lobby in support of their leaders' opinions.²⁰³

Another factor which influenced the voting records of some Radical M.P.s was enforced absence from the House of Commons. One reason for this was ill-health. Sir John Brunner's infirmity, for example, prevented him from attending parliament regularly after 1906. Illness also kept J.Allen Baker and J.A. Macdonald, two of the most prominent Radical opponents of naval expansion, away from the House of Commons while the 1909 naval estimates were being debated.²⁰⁴ Pressure of work was another cause of absence. There is evidence to suggest that those M.P.s who were actively involved in running a business were less than assiduous in their attendance at the House of Commons. A.G.C. Harvey,

²⁰³ Christian Commonwealth, 11 November 1908.

²⁰⁴ Koss, Brunner, p.203; H.J. Wilson to Alick Wilson, 18 March 1909, H.J. Wilson MS.

for example, was weighed down with work in 1906-7 and was unable to devote much time to parliamentary affairs. An embarrassing defeat for the government in 1912, caused by the unpaired absence of no less than one hundred and four Liberal M.P.s, evoked an unapologetic comment from the shipowner R.D. Holt: 'Businessmen like myself must attend to their businesses'.²⁰⁵

Enough has been said to show that evidence derived from the House of Commons division lists must be treated with caution. Even so, it would not be unreasonable to regard those M.P.s who voted against Liberal naval policy as members of the hard core of the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party. Equally, it would be foolish to maintain that those who failed to cast an anti-government vote but did participate in lobbying should not be classified as Radicals. It would not do, however, to rely on the Brunner memorandum and the records of the Molteno-Harvey deputation alone as criteria of Radicalism. This is because not all of the M.P.s who voted in support of the reductionist cause associated themselves with these attempts to influence the government's naval policy. In some cases, there is a simple explanation for this. Arthur Ponsonby, for instance, who cast one vote against naval

²⁰⁵ Hirst (ed.) A.G.C. Harvey, p.80; R.D. Holt's Diary, 15 November 1912, R.D. Holt MS (for the episode which prompted Holt's comment, see C. Hazlehurst, 'Herbert Henry Asquith' in J.P. Mackintosh (ed.) British Prime Ministers in the Twentieth Century (London, 1977), p.97).

expansion in the 1906-1910 period, was not an M.P. when the Brunner memorandum was sent to Campbell-Bannerman. In most cases, such as those of A.J. Sherwell, J.H. Edwards, A.W. Barton, Joseph Martin and Sidney Robinson, all of whom cast at least one anti-government vote in the 1910-1914 period but did not associate themselves with the Molteno-Harvey deputation, there is no obvious explanation. In view of these complications, the voting behaviour on socio-economic issues of those who voted in favour of naval disarmament and those who signified their support for this cause by participating in lobbying have been examined separately. It must be conceded that even this procedure has its limitations. There are a number of M.P.s who can be classified as Radicals on the basis of documentary evidence who fall into neither of the aforementioned categories. Radicals who became members of the government could not of course give any public demonstration of their sympathy with the reductionist cause. What is surprising is that such noted Radical backbenchers in the post-1910 parliament as Noel Buxton, J.H. Whitehouse, Joseph King and Francis Neilson neither supported the Molteno-Harvey deputation or recorded a vote in favour of naval disarmament. It cannot therefore be claimed that the criterion of Radicalism employed here - opposition to naval expansion - is a completely satisfactory one. What is claimed is that it enables the vast majority of Radical backbenchers to be identified.

An impression of the attitudes of Radical backbenchers on socio-economic issues may be gained from an examination

of their voting records in five divisions which took place in the 1906-1910 parliament and six which belong to the 1910-1914 period. All eleven divisions were forced by the Labour party. In each of them, a fundamental issue of economic principle was in some degree at stake, namely the question of whether, to use Hobson's terms, it was possible and desirable for society to impose its 'conscious will' on the economic process. The five divisions from the 1906-1910 period are those which took place on the motions put by MacDonald, Hardie and G.N. Barnes in 1908-9 condemning the government's response to the problem of unemployment as inadequate, and the two divisions on the 'Right to Work' Bill in 1908 and 1909.²⁰⁶ For the 1910-1914 period, the divisions concerned took place on O'Grady's amendment of 1911 in favour of the principle of the right to work; on the amendments put by MacDonald and Snowden in 1912 and 1913, calling for the introduction of a statutory minimum wage and the nationalisation of key monopolies; on Brace's 1912 proposal that the minimum wage in the coal mining industry should be fixed at 5s. per day for adults; on O'Grady's adjournment motion of 1912, calling for government intervention in the Port of London; and on J.H. Thomas's call in 1913 for a minimum wage in the railway industry

²⁰⁶ See, respectively, div.no.2 (30 January 1908); div. no.292 (26 October 1908); div. no.2 (17 February 1909); div. no.41 (13 March 1908); div. no.80 (30 April 1909).

of 25s. per week.²⁰⁷

It must be acknowledged that this is a relatively crude test of opinion. Three points need to be emphasised in this connection. The first is that the issues raised in these divisions varied considerably in scope. MacDonald's amendment to the Address of 1912, for instance, dealt explicitly with broad and far-reaching issues of principle. In contrast, O'Grady's call for government intervention in the Port of London, although raising the question of the state's responsibility for the regulation of industry, was prompted by a particular, localised dispute - the London dock strike of 1912 - and, as such, was of special interest to M.P.s from the London region. This was reflected in the fact that nine of the twenty-two Liberals who voted for O'Grady's motion sat for London constituencies, most of them in or near dockland. The second point is that while it would be reasonable to expect those who were sympathetic to the idea of collectivism and those who were hostile to it to vote on opposite sides in these divisions, there are some cases in which the issue was not entirely clear-cut. This is true of the motions censuring the government for its inadequate response to the problem of unemployment. It seems probable that many of the Radicals who voted for these motions wanted to see the introduction of some sort

²⁰⁷ See, respectively, div. no.5 (10 February 1911); div. no.1 (17 February 1912); div. no.4 (13 March 1913); div. no.56 (26 March 1912); div. no.157 (23 July 1912); div. no.598 (11 February 1913).

of public works programme. But it was not illogical for an anti-collectivist single-taxer who believed that the land problem was the root cause of unemployment to join these Radicals and the Labour party in condemning the government. Thirdly, it would be naive to assume that the Radicals' voting behaviour in these divisions was determined exclusively by their beliefs. There is evidence to suggest, for example, that there was an element of expediency in the support given by Radicals to the 'Right to Work' Bill. The key feature of the Bill was the proposal to impose on local authorities an obligation to provide work or maintenance for the unemployed. This was 'so grave a vice of economic principle', according to the Nation, as to render acceptance of the Bill impossible.²⁰⁸ Yet in 1908 over fifty Liberals voted for it. J. Annan Bryce, Liberal M.P. for Inverness, alleged that many of them did so 'from fear of their seats'.²⁰⁹ Rather more charitably, the Economist suggested that many Liberals wished to show 'their sympathy with the tragedy of undeserved unemployment by voting, not really for the Bill, but for the principle of finding some better remedy than the poor law and the workhouse'.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ The Nation, 14 March 1908.

²⁰⁹ J. Annan Bryce to James Bryce, 25 March 1908, Bryce MS.

²¹⁰ The Economist, 21 March 1908.

The pattern of Radical voting in these divisions nevertheless leaves little doubt that the Radicals were split on socio-economic matters. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show that between 1906 and 1910, the overwhelming majority of Radicals either gave no support at all to Labour demands for increased state intervention or were fairly consistent supporters of these demands.

Table 1.1: Voting of voters for reductions in naval spending on socio-economic issues, 1906-1910.

<u>No. of votes condemning government inaction on unemployment, etc.</u>	<u>No. of M.P.s (total 88)</u>
0	55 (63%)
1	9 (10%)
2 or more	24 (27%)

Table 1.2: Voting of signatories of the Brunner memorandum (1907) on socio-economic issues, 1906-10.

<u>No. of votes condemning government inaction on unemployment, etc.</u>	<u>No. of M.P.s (total 126)</u>
0	85 (68%)
1	11 (8%)
2 or more	30 (24%)

The pattern did not differ greatly after 1910. Table 1.3 shows that three-quarters of the fifty-four M.P.s who cast at least one vote in support of naval disarmament either failed to align themselves with Labour in any of the six divisions or voted with Labour on two or more occasions. Table 1.4 shows that an even higher proportion of those who backed the Molteno-Harvey deputation fall into one of these two categories.

Table 1.3: Voting of voters for reductions in naval spending on socio-economic issues, 1910-14.

<u>No. of votes in support of minimum wage legislation, etc.</u>	<u>No. of M.P.s (total 54)</u>
0	21 (39%)
1	14 (26%)
2 or more	19 (35%)

Table 1.4: Voting of supporters of the Molteno-Harvey deputation (1913) on socio-economic issues, 1910-14.

<u>No. of votes in support of minimum wage legislation, etc.</u>	<u>No. of M.P.s (total 96)</u>
0	58 (60%)
1	16 (17%)
2 or more	22 (23%)

An examination of individual voting records reveals that the number of cases in which there is a striking incongruity between an M.P.'s voting behaviour and other evidence of his political beliefs is small. There are, however, some anomalies. T.E. Harvey is an example. Harvey cast three votes in support of the reductionist cause between 1910 and 1914 and backed the Molteno-Harvey deputation, but failed to support any of the six Labour motions. Yet Harvey was not an economic conservative. He was a director of the company which published the Nation, and regularly attended the Nation lunches; he became Charles Masterman's parliamentary private secretary in 1913; and he was severely criticised by leading Liberals in his West Leeds constituency for associating too closely with socialists.²¹¹ On the other hand, R.C. Lehmann voted for

²¹¹ Joseph Henry to T.E. Harvey, 24 August, 26 August, 30 October, 2 November, 9 November, 1911, T.E. Harvey MS.

the 'Right to Work' Bill twice, although his pronouncements on the question of unemployment were cast very much in a Cobdenite mould. D.M. Mason was a Radical of very definite Cobdenite proclivities, yet he supported the '5 and 2' in 1912 and voted for J.H. Thomas's call for a minimum wage for railwaymen of 25s. per week. These anomalies do not invalidate the claim that these statistics offer support for the contention that a distinction can be made between traditional and progressive Radicals. What they do suggest is that it would be hazardous to reach conclusions about the size of the traditional and progressive factions on the basis of voting behaviour alone. It may however be tentatively estimated that in 1914 the number of thoroughgoing progressive Radicals in the House of Commons was something in the order of thirty, and that the staunch Cobdenites, whose relative strength declined after 1906, were also approximately thirty in number.

The voting records of the single-taxers in these divisions merit special attention, since it has been argued by one authority that they were 'advanced' reformers who had much in common with the socialists of the I.L.P.²¹² Their voting behaviour does not bear out this view. Francis Neilson, C.E. Price and R.L. Outhwaite did not cast a single vote in favour of increased state intervention.²¹³

²¹² Dowse, 'Entry of Liberals into the Labour Party', p.80.

²¹³ Outhwaite entered the House of Commons in June 1912 and had the opportunity to vote in three of the six 1910-14 divisions.



E.G. Hemmerde backed the 1909 amendment on the inadequacy of the government's proposals for dealing with unemployment, but did not vote for any of the other motions. Edgar Jones and P.W. Raffan voted for the '5 and 2' in 1912. This is not altogether surprising, since Jones sat for Merthyr and Raffan represented Leigh - two of the strongest mining constituencies in the country. In addition, Raffan backed O'Grady's call for government intervention in the Port of London, and Jones supported the proposal for a minimum wage in the railway industry. The only single-taxer to vote for the 'Right to Work' Bill was J. Dundas White. It is possible that White's conduct was the product of electoral considerations rather than personal convictions. His seat, Dumbarton, was by no means a safe one, and it lay within a region which in 1908-9 was one of the centres of agitation for government action against unemployment.²¹⁴ White gave no support to Labour demands for minimum wage legislation in the post-1910 parliament, by which time he had become M.P. for the Tradeston division of Glasgow. Josiah Wedgwood was the only single-taxer who supported the calls for the introduction of a statutory minimum wage and the nationalisation of key monopolies. This was totally inconsistent with the views Wedgwood expressed elsewhere: he was a scathing critic of land nationalisation

²¹⁴ K.D. Brown, Labour and Unemployment, 1900-1914 (Newton Abbot, 1971), pp.96, 98.

and denounced the minimum wage as a palliative on more than one occasion.²¹⁵

One further group of M.P.s needs to be considered: those who cast at least one vote in favour of increased state intervention in the economy but who neither voted or lobbied against Liberal naval policy. Taking the 1906-14 period as a whole, a total of forty-six Liberals fall into this category. Eleven of these can be definitely classified as Radicals on the basis of documentary evidence. A further eight belonged to the Liberal Foreign Affairs Group, which was very much a Radical body. The remaining twenty-seven M.P.s were a mixed bag. Among them were Hilaire Belloc; Horatio Bottomley, the proprietor of John Bull and wartime super-patriot; the Canadian barrister Hamar Greenwood, who subsequently became Lloyd George's Chief Secretary for Ireland; J.H. Yoxall, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers; and a clutch of London politicians including Stuart Samuel, James Dawes, W.S. Glyn-Jones and J.W. Cleland, who sat for a Glasgow constituency but represented Lewisham on the London County Council. It would appear, therefore, that the Edwardian Liberal party did not contain a sizable bloc of advanced, but non-Radical, social reformers. It can at least be said with certainty that only a small number of non-Radical Liberal M.P.s

²¹⁵ For Wedgwood's views on the minimum wage, see fn. 112 above; for his views on land nationalisation, see H.C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol. 37, col. 729 (19 April 1912).

were strong supporters of Labour demands for greater state intervention in economic affairs.

Lastly, it has been suggested that there were significant differences in the occupational backgrounds of progressive and Cobdenite Radical M.P.s.²¹⁶ This claim may be substantiated by an examination of the occupational backgrounds of those Liberals who cast two or more votes in favour of naval disarmament between 1906 and 1914. These were men who unquestionably belonged to the hard core of the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party. Eighteen of the M.P.s in question will in fact be excluded from further consideration: two because they were single-taxers; eleven because they aligned themselves with Labour on only one occasion; and five because there is some incongruity between their voting records and other evidence of their political beliefs.²¹⁷ This leaves a total of sixty-three Radicals, thirty-three of whom never voted with Labour on socio-economic issues and thirty who did so on two or more occasions. Their occupational backgrounds are set out in table 1.5. It can be seen that nearly two-thirds of those who never voted with Labour - the Cobdenites - were businessmen. A number of them, such as A.G.C. Harvey, J.M. McCallum, Sir George White, T.G. Ashton and Halley Stewart, were connected with manufacturing

²¹⁶ see (i) above.

²¹⁷ The five are: T.E. Harvey, R.C. Lehmann, D.M. Mason, J.S. Higham, Sydney Arnold.

concerns. Others, notably Thomas Lough, J.E. Barlow and Harry Nuttall, were merchants. In contrast, less than one-fifth of those who voted with Labour on two or more occasions - the progressive Radicals - were businessmen. Only one of those who have been classified as such was connected with manufacturing industry. This was E.T. John, whose business career, spent in the iron and steel industry of north-east England, was over when he entered parliament in 1910. Of the other four progressive Radicals who have been classified as businessmen, two - H.C. Lea and W.P. Byles of the Bradford Observer - were newspaper proprietors, and two - Timothy Davies and A.H. Scott - were retailers. Davies was a London draper and Scott was a director of a grocery business.

Table 1.5: Occupational backgrounds of Cobdenite and progressive Radical M.P.s.²¹⁸

	Cobdenites (33)		Progressive Radicals(30)	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>(%)</u>
Landowners, farmers	3	(9%)	-	(-)
Business, commerce	20	(61%)	5	(17%)
Professional (lawyers, doctors, ex-civil service, etc.)	5	(15%)	17	(56%)
'Lib-Labs' (ex-manual workers)	2	(6%)	3	(10%)
Journalists, writers	3	(9%)	2	(7%)
Not known	-	(-)	3	(10%)

²¹⁸ This table is based on information given in Who was Who and The Liberal Year Books, 1907 and 1911 (Harvester edn., 1971).

2. RADICALS, SOCIALISM AND THE LABOUR
PARTY BEFORE 1914

There can be no doubt that the political behaviour of Radicals after 1914 was influenced by attitudes towards socialism and towards the Labour party which had been formed before the war. It will be seen that this was especially true of Cobdenites and progressive Radicals. Any attempt at an explanation of the reasons for the disintegration of Radicalism after 1914 must therefore include some reference to these attitudes.

It has recently been suggested that heterogeneity was the most striking characteristic of British socialist thought in the early twentieth century.¹ Few members of the Radical community, however, were anything more than dimly aware of the intellectual vitality and diversity of Edwardian socialism. The world in which socialists assailed each other in what C.F.G. Masterman condescendingly described as 'queer, violent little newspapers' was, to Radicals, largely an alien one.² Indeed, there were currents in British socialist thinking of which Radical politicians seem to have been largely ignorant. In particular, Radicals failed to appreciate that there were socialist theories, notably the guild socialism of A.S. Orage

¹ J.M. Winter, Socialism and the Challenge of War: Ideas and Politics in Britain 1912-18 (London, 1974), p.277.

² C.F.G. Masterman, The Condition of England (1909: new edn., ed. J.T. Boulton (London, 1960), p.116.

and S.G. Hobson, which embodied a deep antipathy towards highly centralised forms of social organisation. Radicals invariably and erroneously equated socialism with what Schumpeter calls 'centralist socialism'.³ It is therefore not surprising to find that Radicals differed in their attitudes to socialism in much the same way that they differed in their attitudes to state intervention in economic affairs.

The most energetic and belligerent anti-socialist propagandists in the Radical camp were the single-taxers. What inspired their efforts to discredit socialism was the belief that any growth in the influence of socialist and collectivist ideas in the country and within the Liberal party would constitute a major obstacle to the progress of their own doctrines.⁴ None held this belief more strongly than R.L. Outhwaite and Francis Neilson. In 1904, Neilson endeavoured to persuade Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal Chief Whip, of the need for the Liberal party to launch an all-out attack on socialism. Undismayed by the rebuff he received from Gladstone, Neilson embarked on a vigorous private campaign against socialism in co-operation with

³ J. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (new edn., London, 1976), p.168.

⁴ Outhwaite wrote in 1916: 'In the past the land taxers and the I.L.P. propagandists have been in opposing camps... each fearful lest the success of the other would set back his cause'. R.L. Outhwaite to ed., Daily News, 2 February 1916.

Outhwaite.⁵ The virulence of Neilson's anti-socialist views was perhaps exceptional, even by Georgite standards. He even managed to irritate Josiah Wedgwood, himself an aggressive controversialist, who noted in 1907: 'I have been having a series of meetings with F. Neilson. Great fun but he does manage to put up the backs of the socialists in a wholly unnecessary way'.⁶ The activities of Neilson and others certainly provoked some acid responses from the socialist ranks, notably from Philip Snowden, who taunted the single-taxers with the charge that they and their policies belonged to 'the bygone era of individualism'.⁷

The single-taxers' critique of socialism proceeded from the assumption that socialist indictments of the market economy were vitiated by an elementary blunder. Socialists, it was argued, erred in bracketing landlords and capitalists together as owners of the means of production and exploiters of labour. In the single-taxers' view, the distinction between landlords, capitalists and labourers made in classical theories of distribution could not be thus abandoned, since landowners occupied a distinctive position, won at the expense of both capital and labour, as the real beneficiaries of economic growth. In other

⁵ Neilson, 'Decay of Liberalism', p.300-1.

⁶ Wedgwood to C.P. Trevelyan, 31 August 1907, C.P.Trevelyan MS.

⁷ Christian Commonwealth, 7 August 1912.

words, single-taxers were convinced, as Henry George himself had put it, that the 'antagonism of interests is not between labour and capital... but is in reality between labour and capital on one side and landownership on the other'.⁸ The single-taxers went on to argue that socialist demands for the abolition of private ownership of land and capital were wrong-headed. What was required to eradicate poverty, they maintained, was the appropriation of the economic rent of land by taxation.⁹

The Georgites were also fiercely critical of socialism from a libertarian standpoint. It was made clear by Josiah Wedgwood that the single-taxers' primary concern was liberty, not social welfare: '... we do not seek to increase material prosperity; we do not aim at the greatest good of the greatest number; we regard that maxim as consistent with slavery and autocracy and state socialism. Our object is to secure freedom...'.¹⁰ A similar point was made by R.L. Outhwaite in 1912: 'Single-taxers have always suffered from the fact that the instrument and not the aim is denoted in the term; from which it appears that

⁸ H. George, Progress and Poverty, p.162.

⁹ For this line of argument, see, for example, E.G.Hemmerde, R.L. Outhwaite et al., 'Note to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, following conversation of June 25th (1913)'; Lloyd George MS., C/9/4/62; Outhwaite, The Land or Revolution, pp.5-9; J. Dundas White, Nature's Budget (London, 1936), pp.38-42.

¹⁰ J. Wedgwood, 'The Principle of Land Value Taxation', Economic Journal, vol. xxii (1912).

revenue is the object, whereas the establishment of liberty is the goal... The Single Taxer's mission is to proclaim the evangel of Liberty'.¹¹ It was taken for granted by single-taxers that individual liberty could not be preserved within a socialist society. Much was made of the prospect of bureaucratic tyranny. The Fabians' emphasis on the need for an administrative elite made them especially vulnerable to attacks of this kind, and they duly became a favourite Georgite target.¹² But it was not only to the Fabians that R.L. Outhwaite was referring when he claimed that the vision of the socialist was one of 'mankind in servile regiments overlorded by bureaucrats'.¹³ Another spectre raised by Outhwaite concerned the employees of state-run concerns. Such workers, he maintained, would either establish themselves as a privileged class and infringe on the liberties of others, or lose their own freedom after being bludgeoned into submission by the state.¹⁴ What lay behind these charges, of course, was the equation of freedom with the absence of governmental

¹¹ R.L. Outhwaite, 'The Mission of the Single Taxer', Land Values, October 1912.

¹² See, for example, Wedgwood, Memoirs, p.78-9; Neilson, My Life in Two Worlds, vol. 2, p.209; Neilson, 'Decay of Liberalism', pp.298-31; A.J. Peacock, 'Land Reform 1880-1919', pp.249-52.

¹³ R.L. Outhwaite, 'The Mission of the Single Taxer', Land Values, October 1912.

¹⁴ R.L. Outhwaite, The Land or Revolution, p.67 ff.

restraint. The dream of fanatical single-taxers like Josiah Wedgwood - who was an ardent believer in the perfectibility of man and a self-styled 'philosophic anarchist' - was to dispense with government altogether.¹⁵

The anti-socialism of Cobdenite Radicals was as implacable as that of the single-taxers. In the main, however, Cobdenites do not appear to have possessed the Georgites' relish for controversy. There were some notable exceptions. Two Cobdenite Radical M.P.s of working-class origin, Fred Maddison and Henry Vivian, became notorious for their anti-socialist activities. A typical exploit was Vivian's response to a motion of censure passed against him by the General Council of his union, the Carpenters and Joiners, after he had opposed the socialist candidate in the Jarrow by-election of 1907: he sent each member of the Council a copy of Mill's On Liberty.¹⁶ Some impression of Maddison's reputation can be gained from the fact that his victory at Burnley was seen by the treasurer of the I.L.P. as one of the 'most distressing' features of the 1906 general election.¹⁷

Cobdenites maintained that socialist theories ran counter to the basic facts of economic life. They could not believe that an industrial economy could function

¹⁵ Josiah Wedgwood, Testament to Democracy (London, 1942) p.132.

¹⁶ Manchester Guardian, 23 July 1907; see also, J. Bellamy, 'Henry Harvey Vivian' in J. Saville and J. Bellamy (eds.) Dictionary of Labour Biography, vol.1 (London, 1972), pp.334-6.

¹⁷ T.D. Benson to Ramsay MacDonald, 15 January 1906, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/78.

successfully without the stimulus to efficiency provided by competition and the pursuit of profit. What followed from this was the claim that a socialist economy could only flourish if a fundamental change in human nature took place. This view was expressed in knockabout style by Sir John Brunner in 1906. Socialism, Brunner believed, 'was impossible of attainment by the hands of men; it required angels... He had sat opposite a few gentlemen in the House of Commons who called themselves Socialists, and he had not seen any wings sprouting yet'.¹⁸ This emphasis on the impracticability of socialism can also be detected in comments made by such Cobdenites as Fred Maddison, H.J. Wilson and J. Annan Bryce.¹⁹ It should be added that there was nothing distinctively Cobdenite about this view. It was also put forward by the high priest of academic economics, Alfred Marshall, and was a part of the conventional economic wisdom of the business community.²⁰

There is a marked contrast between the blank hostility towards socialism exhibited by the Cobdenites and single taxers and the subtle and discriminating views advanced by progressive Radicals. Progressive Radicals, unlike the Cobdenites and single-taxers, were not at pains to dwell

¹⁸ Speech at Liverpool Reform Club, 17 October 1906, quoted in Koss, Brunner, p.205.

¹⁹ Speech by Maddison in the House of Commons, H.C.Parl.Dec., 5 ser. vol. 14, cols.645-8 (30 April 1908); H.J. Wilson to his daughter, 16 February 1908, H.J. Wilson MS.; J.Annan Bryce to James Bryce, 25 March 1908, Bryce MS.

²⁰ For Marshall's views, see W.J. Barber, A History of Economic Thought (London, 1967), p.193; D. Winch, Economics and Policy: A Historical Survey (Fontana edn., London, 1972), pp.36-39.

on the divisions between themselves and the socialists who were to be found within the Labour party. These divisions, it was often suggested, were differences of degree, not of kind. 'It is important to remember', Arthur Ponsonby maintained in 1908, 'that there is no distinctive line of cleavage among Progressives. The Left Wing of the Liberal Party shades off through Labor into Socialism...'.²¹

Another progressive Radical writer, F.J. Shaw, insisted that the dividing line between advanced Radical thought and what he called 'constructive' socialist theorising was 'blurred'.²² J.A. Hobson went so far as to suggest that the differences between the new Liberalism and socialism could 'tend to disappear in the light of progressive experience'.²³ Statements of this kind, together with progressive Radicals' appeals to their fellow-Liberals not to treat socialists as enemies, must be seen against the background of the 'progressive alliance' between the Liberal and Labour parties.²⁴ They were in part directed against Liberals like the Master of Elibank, who, in 1906,

²¹ Arthur Ponsonby, 'Liberalism and Labour', The Nation, 5 August 1908.

²² Brougham Villiers (pseud. F.J. Shaw), Modern Democracy, p.147-8.

²³ J.A.Hobson, 'The Vision of Liberalism', The Nation, 2 May 1908.

²⁴ For examples of such appeals, see C.P. Trevelyan, Paths of Progress, p.10-12; Ponsonby, 'Liberalism and Labour', The Nation, 5 August 1908.

spoke of the necessity for a Liberal 'crusade' against socialism.²⁵ Progressive Radicals feared that the Liberal-Labour entente would not survive such a crusade. 'To fight Socialism', wrote Ponsonby, 'which cannot be detached from Independent Labor, which, in its turn, cannot be detached from Trade Union Labor and Radicalism, will produce a rift widening in time to a chasm right through the party of progress'.²⁶ Progressive Radicals were appalled by this possibility, most obviously because they recognised that the Liberal party's electoral prospects would be bleak if a large number of three-cornered contests took place.²⁷ But it was also feared that open Liberal-Labour warfare would result in the Liberal party veering to the right. If the Liberal party did battle against Labour, warned Massingham's Nation,

its representative character, as well as its spirit and temper, will suffer, until a point is reached when it will begin to sink into a form of conservatism, or Liberal Imperialism, mainly distinguishable from the mass of Tory sentiment by its adherence to Free Trade.²⁸

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- ²⁵ Speech by Elibank at West Linton, 25 August 1906, reported in Manchester Guardian, 27 August 1906; in October 1906 the conference of the Scottish Liberal Association, after hearing speeches from Elibank and J.A. Pease, passed a motion declaring its 'belief that it is a primary duty of the Liberal party to offer strenuous opposition to all candidates who are not prepared to dissociate themselves from the Socialist party' (see Manchester Guardian, 6 October 1906).
- ²⁶ Ponsonby, 'Liberalism and Labour', The Nation, 5 August 1908.
- ²⁷ See for example, C.F.G. Masterman, 'The Prospect in Parliament', The Nation, 1 February 1908.
- ²⁸ 'The Liberal-Labour Quarrel', The Nation, 6 July 1912; see also, 'The New Liberalism at Hanley', ibid., 20 July 1912.

It should not be thought, however, that the progressive Radicals' insistence that socialism and socialists should not be condemned out of hand was simply the product of a desire to perpetuate the 'progressive alliance'. The progressive Radical view of socialist visions of a just, humane and co-operative society was one of genuine sympathy. Arthur Ponsonby, for example, had evidently recognised 'the truth of socialism as an ideal' before he entered parliament in 1908.²⁹ The Nation, in similar vein, spoke in 1907 of the 'moral appeal' of socialism.³⁰ It is not surprising that progressive Radicals, believing as they did that social injustice was an inherent and repulsive feature of the unregulated market economy, were attracted by the moral dimension of socialist thought. They recoiled, however, from what Hobson called 'full or theoretic' socialism.³¹ Their misgivings centred around the matter of individual liberty. It was suggested that socialist doctrines, because of their ultimate concern with what was desirable from the point of view of society as a whole, sanctioned the subordination of the needs and interests

29 J. Gore, 'Arthur Ponsonby', Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement 1941-50, p.683.

30 'Attractiveness in Politics', The Nation, 3 August 1907.

31 In 1910, Lowes Dickinson wrote of the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party: '... there is probably not one of them who would subscribe to the Collectivist programme of the public ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange' ('Issues with the Lords', The Nation, 28 May 1910).

of the individual to those of the community. L.T. Hobhouse was making this point when he maintained that socialists had to consider how the collective regulation of property could be accommodated to the free initiative and enterprise of the individual, and claimed that it was doubtful whether this problem was capable of solution 'upon purely socialistic principles'.³² Progressive Radicals believed that the claims of social justice had to be reconciled with the need to maintain productive efficiency - which, in their view, involved the utilisation of what J.A. Hobson called the 'energies of egoism' - and with the need to offer opportunities for individual self-development.³³ This, it was thought, called for the development of a political philosophy which grafted socialist ideals on to the stock of liberalism. Socialists who regarded liberalism as a bourgeois creed would have thought it absurd to believe in the possibility of a synthesis of this kind. To Keir Hardie, for example, socialism and liberalism were 'antagonistic forces', the former representing 'the principles taught by Christ, the reign of love and fraternity',

³² L.T. Hobhouse, 'The Historical Evolution of Property' (1914), reprinted in M. Ginsberg (ed.), Sociology and Philosophy (London, 1966), p.104; see also, Hobhouse, Liberalism, pp. 108-9; Hobson, The Crisis of Liberalism, p.92; 'Attractiveness in Politics', The Nation, 3 August 1907.

³³ J.A. Hobson, Work and Wealth (1914), quoted in M.Freeden, The New Liberalism: An ideology of social reform (Oxford, 1978), p,111.

the latter representing 'fierce, unscrupulous strife and competition, the aggrandisement of the strong, the robbery of the weak'.³⁴ Progressive Radical intellectuals, however, could not see anything illegitimate in the idea of a 'Liberal Socialism'.³⁵ Liberalism, as they saw it, was not a class ideology but an expression of fundamental human values.³⁶ Hence the claim in C.P. Scott's Manchester Guardian that liberalism was 'capable of absorbing large parts of Socialism without the least alteration of its constituent elements'.³⁷ A similar view was expressed in the Nation: 'Just as Liberalism grew out of Whiggery, Radicalism out of Liberalism... the mixed Liberal-Radical Party of today can freely assimilate what is good in socialism and freely reject what is bad in it'.³⁸

There were particular versions of socialism which progressive Radicals rejected entirely. One of them was Marxism. J.A. Hobson found it repellent.³⁹ The Nation

³⁴ Keir Hardie, 'The Master of Elibank's Confession', Labour Leader, 31 August 1906.

³⁵ Hobhouse's term: Hobhouse, Liberalism, p.87.

³⁶ This point is derived from P.F. Clarke, 'The Progressive Movement in England', T.R.H.S., 5th series, vol. 24 (1974), p.171.

³⁷ Manchester Guardian, 12 October 1906.

³⁸ The Nation, 3 August 1907.

³⁹ H.N. Brailsford, The Life Work of J.A. Hobson (L.T. Hobhouse Memorial Trust Lecture No.17, London, 1948), p.6.

dismissed it in blunt terms.⁴⁰ In progressive Radical eyes, Marxist thought was based upon what Hobhouse described as a 'false economic analysis'.⁴¹ Progressive Radicals saw no justification for the view that the exploitation of one class by another was a built-in characteristic of capitalism. Their arguments were derived from Hobson's economics. Hobson denied that the inevitable outcome of dealings between capital and labour was the appropriation of 'surplus value' by the capitalist. He claimed that what he called 'surplus value' or the 'unproductive surplus' owed its existence to inequalities in bargaining power, and was not, as Marx alleged, the product of labour's relationship to the means of production. Hobson saw no reason in principle why labour could not make 'forced gains' at the expense of capital. The reason why this did not occur in practice, he argued, was that 'in modern industry the owner of capital, land or business capacity is normally found to be the strongest bargainer'.⁴² This was seen as a conclusive argument against Marx's deterministic view of the future of capitalism: if the exploitation of the proletariat was not an inherent feature

⁴⁰ 'The Fear of Socialism', The Nation, 27 July 1907.

⁴¹ Hobhouse, Liberalism, p.88.

⁴² J.A. Hobson, The Economics of Distribution (London, 1900), p.357.

of capitalism, then there was no reason to suppose that the immiseration of the proletariat, the polarisation of classes and revolutionary upheaval were inevitable. Progressive Radical intellectuals raised another objection to Marxist thought. They refused to accept that the 'economic factor', to use Hobhouse's phrase, was the mainspring of historical change.⁴³ In Hobson's view, the doctrine of historical materialism was nothing more than 'frivolous pedantry'.⁴⁴ C.F.G. Masterman was equally dismissive: 'Karl Marx was wrong in his defiant assertion that economic causes were the sole factors in the transformations of history'.⁴⁵

Fabian or, more accurately, Webbian socialism was another object of progressive Radical scorn. This may at first sight seem somewhat surprising. There was undoubtedly a close resemblance between Webbian and progressive Radical thinking on a number of important points.⁴⁶ Moreover, several progressive Radicals were

43 Hobhouse, Liberalism, p.88.

44 Brailsford, The Life Work of J.A. Hobson, p.6.

45 Masterman, The Condition of England, p.82; see also, L. Masterman, C.F.G. Masterman, p.319.

46 In addition to the concept of the 'minimum standard' (discussed above in ch.1, pt.i), there was a close resemblance between Hobson's theory of distribution, which was one of the cornerstones of progressive Radical thought, and that advanced by Sidney Webb. It has been suggested that Hobson was influenced by Webb; see A.M. McBriar, Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918 (Cambridge, 1966), p.46.

closely linked with the Fabian Society or with the Webbs in the 1890s. H.W. Massingham, Percy Alden, C.P. Trevelyan and possibly L.T. Hobhouse were members of the Fabian Society during this period.⁴⁷ C.F.G. Masterman was on friendly terms with the Webbs. J.A. Hobson collaborated with such Fabians as Pember Reeves and Edward Pease in the Rainbow Circle. At the turn of the century, however, when the issue of imperialism became, in the words of the anti-imperialist Fabian William Clarke, 'the real crux' of politics, a wedge was driven between the Fabian leadership, headed by the Webbs, and progressive Radicals.⁴⁸ The Webbs aligned themselves unequivocally with the enemies of Radical anti-imperialism. They not only supported what Radicals thought of as 'Chamberlain's war' in South Africa, but also became deeply involved in the social-imperialist 'national efficiency' movement. It was in this connection that they endeavoured to cultivate Rosebery and other leading Liberal Imperialists. The Webbs' involvement in the 'national efficiency' movement also brought the authoritarian nature of their thought into sharp focus.⁴⁹ Their pronouncements left little doubt

⁴⁷ On the question of Hobhouse's membership, see Weiler, 'The New Liberalism of L.T. Hobhouse', fn.8.

⁴⁸ Clarke to Ramsay MacDonald, (n.d. ?1897), Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/66.

⁴⁹ On the authoritarianism of the Webbs' thought, see Winter, Socialism and the Challenge of War, pp.42-52; Searle, The Quest for National Efficiency, pp.58-101.

that they favoured movement towards a polity in which an elite of selfless experts governed from above and aimed to develop a vigorous 'imperial race' by means of eugenics as well as measures of social reform. The ruthless paternalism embodied in these views was seen by progressive Radicals as the most obnoxious feature of Webbian socialism. L.T. Hobhouse typified progressive Radical sentiment: 'Socialism so conceived has in essentials nothing to do with democracy or with liberty'.⁵⁰

The British socialist politician and theorist for whom progressive Radicals had the greatest regard was Ramsay MacDonald. There are a number of tributes to him in the correspondence and memoirs of progressive Radical M.P.s. 'I admire him', wrote C.P. Trevelyan in 1911, 'and hope more from him than from almost anyone in politics'.⁵¹ In his unpublished autobiography, Noel Buxton recorded that before 1914 he and his Radical associates were 'all sympathetic with Ramsay MacDonald'.⁵² Arthur Ponsonby noted after MacDonald's death: 'I was intensely interested in MacDonald's speeches from the time I came into the

⁵⁰ Hobhouse, Liberalism, p.90; for a fuller discussion of progressive Radical attitudes towards Fabianism, see Clarke, 'The Progressive Movement in England', pp.165-7.

⁵¹ C.P. Trevelyan to his wife, 28 July 1911, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁵² Quoted in Fieldhouse, 'Noel Buxton and A.J.P. Taylor's "The Trouble Makers"' in Gilbert (ed.) A Century of Conflict, p. 177.

House up to 1914. He always contributed something original and often striking...'.⁵³ It is not difficult to understand why progressive Radicals held MacDonald in such high esteem. There was a close affinity between his political outlook and their own. In the realm of theory, there was a wide measure of agreement between MacDonald and progressive Radical thinkers. MacDonald rejected the Marxist conception of the class struggle; he laid stress on the moral unacceptability of the free market economy; he believed that society would gradually progress towards 'higher and more humane stages of existence' through a growing acceptance of the dictates of reason and morality; and he insisted that the pace of social change should be governed by the movement of democratic opinion.⁵⁴ On

⁵³ Arthur Ponsonby, 'J.R.M.: Rough notes' (n.d.), Ponsonby MS.

⁵⁴ On MacDonald's political thought, see R. Barker, 'Socialism and Progressivism in the Political Thought of Ramsay MacDonald', in Morris (ed.) Edwardian Radicalism, pp.114-30; R. Barker, 'Political Myth: Ramsay MacDonald and the Labour Party', History, vol.6, no.21 (February 1976), pp.46-56; D. Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald, pp.87-93; and B. Barker, Ramsay MacDonald's Political Writings, pp.1-48. The quotation in the above sentence is taken from MacDonald's Socialism and Society (1905), quoted in B. Barker, Ramsay MacDonald's Political Writings, p.91.

It is relevant to add that MacDonald was much influenced by J.A. Hobson (see B. Barker, Ramsay MacDonald's Political Writings, pp.21-28, 39-42). One place at which Hobson's influence is very clear is the section on 'Socialism and State Income' in MacDonald's Socialism (1907). MacDonald also claimed to be 'very well' acquainted with L.T. Hobhouse's work (see MacDonald to Lady Mary Murray, 2 May 1901, Gilbert Murray MS., box 35).

these matters, and on numerous points of detail, nothing separated him from progressive Radical opinion. Admittedly, there were differences of view as to the desirability of socialising the instruments of production. Even so, it was with every justice that the Nation's reviewer of Socialism and Government maintained that in many respects MacDonald's ideas were in conformity with those of the 'main trend of modern Radical democracy'.⁵⁵ It was not, of course, the character of MacDonald's political thought alone which caused progressive Radicals to feel a sense of rapprochement with him. It was obvious after 1906 that MacDonald was the foremost proponent of the 'progressive alliance' in the Labour ranks. His efforts on behalf of progressive unity reinforced the progressive Radicals' view of him as a kindred spirit. Keir Hardie, in contrast, was depicted in the Radical press as incorrigibly sectarian.⁵⁶ It has to be remembered too that MacDonald, to a far greater extent than any other Labour or socialist leader, was linked with the Radical community by ties of friendship and acquaintance. He first came into contact with the world of intellectual Radicalism during his political adolescence in the 1890s. J.A. Hobson, Gilbert Murray, Percy Alden and C.F.G. Masterman were among those whom he

⁵⁵ The Nation, 23 April 1910.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., The Speaker, 11 August, 22 September, 6 October, 1 December 1906; The Tribune, 13 February 1906.

encountered through his membership of such organisations as the Rainbow Circle and the South Place Ethical Society. He continued to associate freely with Radicals after rising to prominence within the Labour party.⁵⁷ It should be said that MacDonald's affinities with progressive Radicalism did not go unobserved in I.L.P. circles. In 1912, Bruce Glasier noted in his diary: 'He has to all intents and purposes become simply a progressive Liberal'.⁵⁸ Others voiced this opinion openly. In 1907, Russell Smart, a senior member of the I.L.P., attacked MacDonald in the columns of the Labour Leader, alleging that his 'habit of mind' was Radical rather than socialist.⁵⁹ In reply to charges of this kind, MacDonald argued that what differentiated a socialist like himself from the 'Social Reform Radical' was that the latter had 'no central idea

57 These contacts were not merely social. MacDonald contributed to the work of Radical pressure groups. He was, for instance, the only Labour member of the Parliamentary Russian Committee, a body made up of Radical M.P.s and prominent outsiders like L.T. Hobhouse and Seebohm Rowntree. Its president was Lord Courtney and its chairman was Arthur Ponsonby (see Journal of the Parliamentary Russian Committee, no.1 (May 1909), Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/19). He was also alone among Labour M.P.s in being involved in the Foreign Policy Committee (see Ponsonby to MacDonald, 21 September 1912, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/22).

58 Glasier's Diary (n.d., 1912), quoted in L. Thompson, The Enthusiasts (London, 1971), p.172.

59 R. Smart, 'The Socialist Policy', Labour Leader, 17 May 1907.

to guide him in deciding when an evil can be cured by a palliative measure and when it demands some fundamental change'.⁶⁰ Since progressive Radicals were loud in their insistence on the futility of pragmatism in matters of social policy, it may be surmised that this was not a distinction they would have accepted.⁶¹

'Many Liberals and nearly all Radicals, we imagine, are glad to see a separate Labor party'. So claimed the Nation in 1907.⁶² As far as the Radicals were concerned, it was a rather misleading claim. The emergence of the Labour party as a parliamentary force was not greeted with unqualified enthusiasm in Radical circles.

Radicals disapproved in principle of political parties which sought to further the interests of one section of the community. Class parties, it was suggested, debased politics by appealing to the selfish and materialistic instincts of the electorate. It was also felt that such parties were by nature incapable of discerning what was in the interests of the nation as a whole. 'A class party', wrote C.P. Trevelyan, 'can never feel that due subservience to the general well-being that is possible in a national party including many and

⁶⁰ Labour Leader, 3 May, 1907.

⁶¹ On this point, see Freedon, The New Liberalism, pp.251-3.

⁶² 'The Plea for a New Electoral System', The Nation, 13 July 1907.

various interests'.⁶³ Trevelyan's observation was made with the Conservative party in mind. But Radicals also felt that the Edwardian Labour party bore the marks of a class party. One place where this feeling was expressed was in the columns of the Nation. The Nation was very far from being an anti-Labour journal. It claimed in 1907: 'We have always thought and spoken well of the Labor party...'.⁶⁴ It was nevertheless critical of Labour's sectionalism. H.W. Massingham, the Nation's editor, rebuked the Labour party more than once for its 'shyness of middle class brains'.⁶⁵ The Labour party was also taken to task for its failure to think seriously about foreign relations.⁶⁶ Another complaint arose out of the support which the government's defence policies received from Labour M.P.s who were spokesmen of unions with members employed in the armaments industry. The Nation regarded their behaviour as symptomatic of the narrow-mindedness which was bound to afflict a 'pure workmen's party'.⁶⁷

⁶³ C.P. Trevelyan, Letters on Free Trade (1903), p.5; see also, Trevelyan, Paths of Progress (1898), pp.9-10.

⁶⁴ 'The Advantage of Liberalism', The Nation, 30 November 1907.

⁶⁵ H.W. Massingham, 'The Labor Party', The Nation, 20 April 1912; see also Massingham's articles in The Speaker, 21 April 1906, 6 October 1906.

⁶⁶ 'The Advantage of Liberalism', The Nation, 30 November 1907.

⁶⁷ 'The Socialism of the Labor Party', The Nation, 25 January 1908.

The novelist and Daily News columnist Arnold Bennett, writing in 1917, suggested that Radicals saw sectionalism as the 'chief charge' which could be brought against the Labour party.⁶⁸ Yet Radicals do not appear to have voiced this criticism with much regularity before 1914. Even when they did air their views, they did so in tones that were something less than caustic. The Nation, for example, went to considerable lengths to avoid giving offence when it discussed the Labour party's limitations in 1911:

... if the Labor Party ... is handicapped because it is briefed for a class rather than for the whole community, at least it presents the greatest and most urgent of all the claims of class, and presents them in the form of appeal and argument rather than of menace.⁶⁹

Why were Radicals so reticent? One reason, no doubt, was that they were anxious to do nothing which might have had an adverse effect on Liberal-Labour relations. Radicals were conscious of the fragility of the 'progressive alliance'. They knew, of course, that it had its opponents within the Labour party. Nor could they have been under any illusions about its unpopularity among some Liberals in the constituencies. The Radical M.P. for West Leeds, for example, was left in no doubts as to the feelings of Joseph Henry, one of the pillars of Yorkshire Liberalism.

⁶⁸ A. Bennett, 'The Enlargement of the Labour Party', Daily News, 17 October 1917.

⁶⁹ 'The Need for a Labor Party', The Nation, 7 October 1911.

In mid-1912, when it became clear that a three-cornered contest would take place at the impending Hanley by-election, Henry told T.E. Harvey: 'With regard to the Labour split I am glad that it has come. I and many others are heartily sick of the domineering arrogance of the whole tribe and the sooner it is fought out the better'.⁷⁰ Few prominent Radicals had much sympathy with sentiments of this kind. There were Lib-Labs like Burt, Fenwick and Vivian who were 'enemies' of the Labour party.⁷¹ But the overwhelming majority of Radical parliamentarians and Radical journalists of middle-class origin insisted that an electoral pact between the Liberal and Labour parties was essential if the 'real enemy', the Conservative party, was to be kept at bay.⁷² This is not to say that Radicals saw Liberal-Labour co-operation as something of a disagreeable necessity. Their view was that the Liberal and Labour parties were 'natural' allies.⁷³ Radical voices were frequently to be heard insisting that Labour M.P.s were at one with the Liberals

⁷⁰ Joseph Henry to T.E. Harvey, 4 July 1912, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁷¹ 'At first I only watched the Labour Party from afar. The Lib-Labs were their enemies ... their attitude of hostility to the growing independence of Labour seemed to me to be based on jealousy and all wrong.' Arthur Ponsonby, 'J.R.M.: Rough notes' (n.d.), Ponsonby MS.

⁷² Ponsonby's phrase: see Ponsonby, 'Liberalism and Labour', The Nation, 15 August 1908.

⁷³ This term was used by the Nation: 'The One Thing Needful', The Nation, 12 February 1910.

on a wide range of important issues. In 1906, for instance, when the parliamentary Labour party was something of an unknown quantity, Radical newspapers hastened to bring this fact to their readers' attention. The Tribune declared: 'On many vital questions of the hour the Labour men have in the hour of trial shown themselves the staunchest of Liberals'.⁷⁴ The Speaker suggested that the new Labour M.P.s were 'set on the same objects' as Liberals. It added: 'Their speeches and addresses do not differ materially from those of Liberal candidates'.⁷⁵ The Manchester Guardian asserted that 'in immediate policy the desires of Liberals and Labour are co-extensive'.⁷⁶ Radicals did not pretend, of course, that Labour M.P.s were enthusiastic supporters of every item of Liberal policy or that they accepted Liberal priorities. This would have been absurd. What they did maintain was that the differences which did exist paled into insignificance when compared to the gulf which lay between Conservatism on the one side and Liberalism and Labour on the other. It should be emphasised that this view was put forward by Radicals who did not share the Labour party's enthusiasm for collectivist policies as well as by those who did.

⁷⁴ The Tribune, 26 January 1906.

⁷⁵ The Speaker, 20 January 1906.

⁷⁶ Manchester Guardian, 6 October 1906.

In 1906, for example, the single-taxer E.G. Hemmerde described the Liberal and Labour parties as 'the two wings of the progressive party' and declared that he could see nothing to separate them for twenty years.⁷⁷ Cobdenite Radical M.P.s like H.J. Wilson, Franklin Thomasson, G.P. Gooch and F.A. Channing also subscribed to the view that the most fundamental division in British politics was that between the Tories and the 'progressive' parties.⁷⁸ There were anti-collectivist Radicals who expressed their support for the idea of progressive unity in a practical way. Josiah Wedgwood, for example, acted as an intermediary between Lloyd George and Ramsay MacDonald when there was talk of a 'firmer alliance between the Government and the Labour party' in 1913.⁷⁹ In 1909, Sir John Brunner endeavoured to persuade the Wigan Liberals not to put up a candidate against the Labour nominee, reminding them that the Liberal party was 'no longer the sole official exponent of progressive principles'.⁸⁰ It is a measure of

⁷⁷ Speech at Chester, reported in Manchester Guardian, 17 October 1906.

⁷⁸ See, respectively, H.J. Wilson to his daughter, 31 August 1907, H.J. Wilson MS.; Lee, 'Franklin Thomasson and The Tribune', pp.341-60; Petter, 'The Progressive Alliance', p.47; F.A. Channing, Memories of Midland Politics 1885-1910 (London, 1918), pp.308-10; see also Lord Courtney's speech at Manchester Reform Club, reported in Manchester Guardian, 13 October 1906.

⁷⁹ Wedgwood to Ramsay MacDonald, 12 June 1913, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/23.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism, p.323.

the fierceness of the Edwardian controversies over free trade, the House of Lords and Home Rule that Radicals who abhorred socialism as much as the Cobdenites and single-taxers should have been so enthusiastic about co-operation with a party containing socialists.⁸¹

⁸¹ This view of Radicals as supporters of the progressive alliance is at odds with R. McKibbin's suggestion that there was 'something of a radical counter-attack' against the Labour party at by-elections in the years immediately before 1914. 'That was so', he writes, 'certainly in the mining seats where Liberal campaigns were mounted and led by radicals'. (McKibbin, Evolution of the Labour Party, p.71). The by-elections in question are the three-cornered fights which took place at Hanley (1912), Crewe (1912) and N.E. Derbyshire (1914). Radicals were certainly active in these elections. The single-taxers, notably Wedgwood, Hemmerde and Outhwaite (who was the Liberal candidate at Hanley), conducted a rousing campaign in each of them. They did the same thing in another triangular contest at Midlothian in September 1912 (for the jaundiced comments of an unsympathetic Liberal on the single-taxers' activities in the three 1912 by-elections, see A.C. Murray's Diary, 19 July, 27 July, 28 August, 2 September, 11 September 1912, Elibank MS., 8814). But it is very much open to doubt whether their object in fighting these campaigns was to put the Labour party in its place. It seems far more likely that they were intent on demonstrating to the Liberal Cabinet - and in particular to Lloyd George - the extent of support in the country for their views on land taxation. It was, of course, common knowledge from the spring of 1912 onwards that Lloyd George was planning a major programme of land reform. The single-taxers believed that there was a real chance of Georgite ideas being embodied in legislation. They therefore ran their policy for all it was worth. They got the bit between their teeth when Hemmerde won a dramatic victory in a straight fight against a Conservative in the North-West Norfolk by-election in June 1912. Hanley, Crewe, Midlothian and N.E. Derbyshire are perhaps best seen as attempts to keep up the momentum. It cannot be denied that the single-taxers showed by their actions that they attached more importance to the furtherance of their doctrines than they did to the maintenance of harmonious relations between the Liberal and Labour parties. It would

There was a second reason why Radicals wished to remain on good terms with the Labour party. They looked to it for assistance in the task of forcing the Liberal government to adopt Radical policies. In the months after the general election of 1906, exultant members of the Radical community could see no reason why such assistance

appear, however, that they did regret having to take on the Labour party in by-elections. This was certainly implied in a report by a correspondent of The Times on the Hanley by-election:

There can be no doubt that the new land taxation campaign is at the bottom of the present business. Mr. Outhwaite's attack in Hanley cannot be explained in any other way, for it must be remembered that the Liberals are raining their blows, not on the heads of the Socialist wing of the Labour Party, but on the miners' group, which has on the whole been more friendly to the Government than any other working class organisation. There is a growing impression here that a small knot of advanced Liberals took the risk of alienating the Labour leaders in the hope that Hanley might do for land taxation what High Peak did for the Budget in 1909. (The Times, 8 July, quoted in R. Douglas, History of the Liberal Party, 1895-1970 (London, 1971), p.86).

Another piece of evidence which suggests that the single-taxers regretted having to do battle with the Labour party in these by-elections is a letter sent by Wedgwood to Ramsay MacDonald a week before polling took place at Hanley. Wedgwood warned MacDonald that Labour was likely to have a 'very bad result' at Hanley and raised the possibility of some sort of Liberal-Labour deal. Admittedly, it was a move which came very late in the day. But it was hardly the action of someone intent on staging a 'counter-attack' against the Labour party. (See Wedgwood to MacDonald, 6 July 1912, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/22).

should not be forthcoming. H.W. Massingham suggested that it was as an ally of the Radicals that the Labour party could exert real influence in British politics:

What is the real objective of the situation as the advanced politician regards it? Surely it is the definite evolution of the Liberal party into a Radical organisation. This, rather than the accomplishment of a large measure of collectivism, is probably destined to be the mission of the Labour party, as it is constituted today ... (It) will keep the Radicals inside the government and out of it in good heart, and will force the party as a whole to see where lies the true line of its moral purpose, to say nothing of its material interest.⁸²

It was not only those Radicals who shared Massingham's hope that the cause of social reconstruction would be furthered by the presence of Labour representatives in parliament who looked forward to a fruitful Radical-Labour partnership. Cobdenite Radicals and single-taxers counted on Labour support in connection with such matters as the limitation of naval armaments and the taxation of land values. One Cobdenite Radical M.P. told his constituents in 1906 that 'when Radical work had to be done, the Labour members were the first to help in it, and any Radical cause had efficient champions among those who sat on the Labour benches'.⁸³ The hopes expressed by Radicals in 1906 were, however, only partly fulfilled.

⁸² The Speaker, 21 April 1906; see also, Manchester Guardian, 12 October 1906.

⁸³ See R.C. Lenmann's speech at Oadby, reported in Manchester Guardian, 1 October 1906.

There were, of course, numerous occasions between 1906 and 1914 on which the Liberal government was confronted with a chorus of Radical and Labour criticism. Many Labour M.P.s took part in the campaigns to secure reductions in defence spending and practically all of them backed attempts to induce the government to push ahead with land reform.⁸⁴ Their endeavours were naturally appreciated in Radical circles. But Radicals do not appear to have succeeded in establishing a really close working relationship with the parliamentary Labour party. The available evidence suggests that combined Radical-Labour assaults on the government in the House of Commons were characterised by hasty improvisation rather than careful planning. The attack on the government's London Electricity Bill of 1907 was a typical effort. The only attempt to orchestrate Radical and Labour criticism of the government's proposals was made by J. Allen Baker, who, while the Bill was being debated, paid 'flying visits to the Labour benches to marshal the forces of revolt'.⁸⁵ The Radical-

⁸⁴ Josiah Wedgwood claimed that every Labour M.P. signed his 1908 petition to the Prime Minister calling for a land values Budget (see Wedgwood, Memoirs, p.78-9); in 1911, thirty-nine Labour M.P.s signed a memorial to Asquith and Lloyd George urging the government to 'continue and develop' the land policy inaugurated by the 1909 Budget (see 'Land and Taxation Reform: Copy of Memorial presented to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 18 May 1911, and signed by 173 members of Parliament', Lloyd George MS., C/15/1/4).

⁸⁵ Labour Leader, 17 May 1907.

Labour challenge to the naval estimates of 1909 was also a largely unco-ordinated affair. J. Allen Baker and A.G.C. Harvey put down one amendment on behalf of the Radical Reduction of Armaments Committee, while Arthur Henderson put down another on behalf of the Labour party. There appears to have been no contact between members of the two bodies until Harvey, who, like many of his Radical associates, was taken aback by Asquith's claim that Britain's naval supremacy was in jeopardy, decided at the last moment not to move the Radical amendment. A division was subsequently forced after some hurried consultations between Labour M.P.s and those Radicals who were determined to register their dissatisfaction with the estimates.⁸⁶ No doubt the anxiety of Labour leaders not to compromise the independence of their party was one of the major obstacles in the way of whole hearted Radical-Labour collaboration on those issues where there was a similarity of view. But the Radicals themselves did not always help matters. There were times when Radicals were openly critical of the unassertiveness of the parliamentary Labour party.⁸⁷ They were sometimes

⁸⁶ There is a detailed account of this episode in H.J. Wilson to his son, 18 March 1909, H.J. Wilson MS.

⁸⁷ See, for example, H.W. Massingham, 'The Labor Party', The Nation, 20 April 1912. In private, some Radicals expressed acute disappointment with the Labour party. In 1908, C.F.G. Masterman referred to 'the Labour men now in the permanent attitude of "on the knee" - only leaving the block for occasional treats - so habituated to stretching themselves over it as to be profoundly uncomfortable in any other position' (Masterman to Ponsonby, 21 December 1908, Ponsonby MS.). See also the view expressed by L.A. Atherley-Jones in Looking Back: Reminiscences of a Political Career (London, 1925), p.118.

guilty, too, of holding forth about the Labour party in tones which were patronising in the extreme.⁸⁸

The impression is sometimes given by historians of Edwardian politics that Labour M.P.s and members of the Radical wing of the Liberal party were not divided by any fundamental difference of political outlook.⁸⁹ There was, however, a divergence of view on at least one point. The Radicals were fiercely opposed to the idea of class representation. Labour M.P.s, belonging as they did to a party whose purpose was defined by one of its leaders as 'promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour', were not. That this was so is not a matter of any great consequence as far as pre-war politics are concerned. It has been seen that the Radicals' antipathy to class parties had little effect on their behaviour towards the Labour party before 1914. It will be seen that the same thing cannot be said of the conduct of many Radicals in and after 1913.

⁸⁸ See, for example, C.F.G. Masterman, 'A New Party in England', The Nation, 3 August 1907; 'The Salt of Liberalism', ibid., 11 March 1911; H.W. Massingham, 'The Labor Party', ibid., 20 April 1912.

⁸⁹ R. Douglas, History of the Liberal Party 1895-1970, p.90; Dowse, 'The Entry of Liberals into the Labour Party', p.83.

3. NEW DIVISIONS: THE RADICALS AND
WAR, 1914

The war created divisions within the Radical camp which cut across pre-war alignments. It became apparent during the period immediately preceding the formal declaration of war on 4 August that Radicals were divided over the merits of the case for British participation. The divisions caused by the war were laid bare in the autumn of 1914 by the failure of efforts to organise an all-embracing Radical peace movement. What emerged from these efforts was the Union of Democratic Control, a pale shadow of the 'great movement' which A.G.C. Harvey had envisaged in early August.¹

There can be little doubt that when Radicals first fixed their attention on the developing European crisis in late July 1914 few - if any - saw any reason why Britain should depart from a position of neutrality.² The Radical press was solid for peace. The campaign for a British commitment to the Dual Alliance which gathered momentum in the Conservative press after 27 July was met

¹ A.G.C. Harvey to Alfred Barker, 4 August 1914, quoted in Hirst (ed.) A.G.C. Harvey, p.101. Harvey's expectations were shared by C.P. Trevelyan. In August 1914, he wrote: 'Clearly the peace movement will soon be a big thing...'. C.P. Trevelyan, 'CPT's personal record of the days that led up to the War of 1914 and to his resignation' (n.d. ? late August 1914), C.P. Trevelyan MS.

² Asquith believed as late as 1 August that the bulk of the parliamentary Liberal party was on the 'Manchester Guardian tack' of unconditional neutrality. Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 1 August 1914, quoted in R. Jenkins, Asquith (London, 1964), p.366.

with strident denunciations of a war against German 'civilization' for the sake of Russian 'barbarism'. A Russian victory, it was maintained, would pose a formidable threat to the security of the British empire. The spectre of Russian hegemony in Europe was also raised. The Radical case was perhaps expressed most forcefully by A.G. Gardiner in the Daily News:

If we crush Germany in the dust and make Russia the dictator of Europe and Asia it will be the greatest disaster that has ever befallen Western civilisation. It will be a reaction to barbarism - the triumph of blind superstition over the most enlightened intellectual life of the modern world.³

Such appeals to Liberal Russophobia were supplemented with the claim that British public opinion was definitely opposed to war.⁴ Incorporated in this combination of conjecture, Realpolitik and barely suppressed racialism were the very assumptions about international relations which Radicals had traditionally rejected. Radical newspapers simultaneously vilified the Conservative press for its obeisance to the 'foul idol' of the balance of power and justified British neutrality in terms of it. The disingenuousness of the Radical press campaign was a measure of its desperation.

³ Daily News, 1 August 1914; for similar views, see Manchester Guardian, 30 July, 3 August 1914; Reynold's News, 2 August 1914.

⁴ The Nation, 1 August 1914; Manchester Guardian, 1 August 1914; F.W. Hirst to ed., Daily News, 31 July 1914.

The parliamentary Radicals moved in an altogether more cautious and restrained fashion. From 29 July onwards the Liberal Foreign Affairs Group, with Arthur Ponsonby as its spokesman, endeavoured to put pressure on the government. Its campaign, however, was conducted in private. There are several reasons why this was so. One was that members of the Foreign Affairs Group were confident that Grey was working for peace. They were aware, during the early stages of the crisis, of his efforts to mediate between Austria and Russia, and made known their anxiety to take no action which would undermine his negotiating position.⁵ Grey exploited this accommodating attitude to the full. When he met Ponsonby on 29 July, he appealed for continued Radical silence. He also told Ponsonby that he could make no open statement of Britain's determination not to be 'drawn in' because the doubt on this point was useful to him in negotiating.⁶ The Foreign Affairs Group was thus given the impression that Grey was engaging in a game of bluff: one of its members concluded that he was aiming to 'restrain Germany by not announcing that we do not intend to fight'.⁷ 'Although

⁵ A. Ponsonby to Grey, 29 July 1914, Elibank MS., 8805.

⁶ A. Ponsonby, 'Notes of Grey's statement to me on 29 July 1914', Ponsonby MS.

⁷ T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 30 July 1914, Harvey MS. See also, Christopher Addison's Diary, 30 August 1914, Addison, op. cit. p.31.

Sir E. Grey made every effort to keep the peace in Europe', Arthur Ponsonby subsequently complained, 'we did not understand till the end that he intended us to be participants in the event of the outbreak of war'.⁸

A second reason for the Radicals' willingness to allow the Foreign Secretary room for manoeuvre was their trust in the government. Radical M.P.s appear to have found it almost impossible to believe that the Cabinet would opt for intervention. There is no reason to suppose that there was anything exceptional in the views expressed by T.E. Harvey on 30 July. 'I believe', he told his father, 'that the great majority of the Cabinet are absolutely sound on keeping England out of the war, but there is a minority of a different view & one dreads the influence of Churchill'.⁹ The Radicals' faith in the Cabinet seems to have remained intact as the crisis wore on. C.P. Trevelyan, for example, wrote of his attitude on 2 August: 'I still trusted the government'.¹⁰

It is also clear that Radical backbenchers were held

⁸ A. Ponsonby to William Donaldson, 10 August 1914 (copy), Ponsonby MS.

⁹ T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 30 July 1914, Harvey MS. See also, Lord Loreburn to C.P. Scott, 31 July 1914, quoted in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p.91; Bryce to J.A. Spender, 31 July 1914, quoted in Hazelhurst, Politicians at War, p.39.

¹⁰ C.P. Trevelyan, 'CPT's personal record...', C.P. Trevelyan MS. See also, R.D. Holt's Diary, 2 August 1914, R.D. Holt MS.

back by tactical considerations. One possibility which could not be discounted was that an open Radical demonstration in favour of neutrality would deprive Grey of diplomatic leverage and thereby contribute to the outbreak of hostilities between the continental alliance blocs. C.P. Trevelyan and others believed that once the continental powers were at war, the Cabinet would be subjected to a violent and unscrupulous right-wing campaign for British intervention.¹¹ It was thought possible that the government would break up under these circumstances.¹² The implication of this kind of speculation was that premature action was as hazardous as delay. The Radicals' difficulty in discerning the appropriate moment to speak out was compounded by the absence of any source of immediate and reliable information about the diplomatic situation. 'There was no time for reflexion,' Ponsonby wrote later, 'no time to seek advice, no precedent to follow'.¹³

The Foreign Affairs Group relied on threats. On

¹¹ C.P. Trevelyan to his wife, 1 August 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; also, A.G.C. Harvey to the President, Rochdale Reform Association, 3 August 1914, quoted in Hirst (ed.), A.G.C. Harvey, pp.101-2; Lady Courtney's Diary, 30 July 1914, Courtney MS., vol.36.

¹² See, e.g., C.P. Scott's Diary, 27 November 1914, quoted in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p.115.

¹³ A. Ponsonby, 'Mr. Ponsonby and the War', draft article, n.d. (? August) 1914, Ponsonby MS.

29 July, a 'small representative meeting' of eleven members passed a strongly-worded resolution in favour of neutrality.¹⁴ This was sent by Ponsonby to Grey, together with a letter stating that further steps, such as the calling of a general meeting of Liberal M.P.s or the publication of a resolution, were under consideration.¹⁵

On 30 July, a second meeting of the Group was held. Twenty-five members were present. Ponsonby was instructed to write to the Prime Minister and to put down a private notice question to Grey.¹⁶ In his letter to Asquith, Ponsonby repeated the threat to call a general party meeting. The Prime Minister was also informed of a 'deep and sincere' feeling within the Foreign Affairs Group that there would be no alternative to a withdrawal of support from the government if it opted for participation in a European conflict. Ponsonby alleged that this view was shared by nine-tenths of the parliamentary Liberal party. He had to admit, however, that he was speaking on behalf of only thirty M.P.s.¹⁷

¹⁴ This was Ponsonby's description. A. Ponsonby to Grey, 29 July 1914, Elibank MS., 8805.

¹⁵ ibid.

¹⁶ A. Ponsonby, 'Notes on meetings held, July-August 1914', Ponsonby MS.

¹⁷ A. Ponsonby to Asquith, 30 July 1914 (copy), Ponsonby MS.

The Foreign Affairs Group was clearly not the 'large and influential' body which W.P. Byles declared it to be in a letter to the Manchester Guardian on 3 August. Between 29 July and 3 August, the Group held five meetings. Some fifty M.P.s attended at least one of these meetings.¹⁸ The highest attendance at any one meeting appears to have been twenty-seven.¹⁹ A substantial proportion of the Foreign Affairs Group's nominal membership of eighty thus took no part at all in its deliberations. Nor, it would appear, were all of those who did take part as resolute

¹⁸ An exact figure cannot be given. The records of attendance at these meetings survive in the Ponsonby MS., but they are not complete. The records consist of lists of autograph signatures: members presumably signed a list as they entered or left the room. Some members evidently did not bother. On 30 July, for example, there are twenty-two names on the attendance list, but Ponsonby's personal notes state that twenty-five members were present. Those who definitely attended at least one meeting were: Ponsonby, W.H. Dickinson, T. Lough, C. Nicholson, P. Molteno, P. Morrell, N. Buxton, A. Rowntree, H. Nuttall, D.M. Mason, G.J. Bentham, H.B. Lees-Smith, J.A.M. Macdonald, R.L. Outhwaite, Leif Jones, R. Rea, J. Wedgwood, G.S. Robertson, M. Levy, R.D. Denman, J. King, G.P. Collins, T.E. Harvey, J. A. Bryce, P. Alden, W.P. Byles, A. Spicer, H. Dalziel, T.C. Taylor, J. Jardine, J.S. Higham, G.G. Greenwood, H.G. Chancellor, C. Addison, T. Davies, J.M. Hogge, J.A. Baker, J.H. Whitehouse and C.T. Needham. There is evidence to suggest that A.G.C. Harvey and Francis Neilson also attended (see, respectively, Hirst (ed.), A.G.C. Harvey, pp.101-2; Neilson, My Life in Two Worlds, pp.326-7). Other possible participants were Sir W. Lawson, W. Clough, J.H. Edwards, J.W. Pratt, P.W. Raffan, Aneurin Williams, Llewellyn Williams and J.E. Barlow, who attended a meeting of Radicals 'not in accord with the foreign policy which... has led to this country's intervention in the war' on 6 August. See Morning Post, 7 August 1914.

¹⁹ On 3 August. Attendance list in Ponsonby MS.

as some of Ponsonby's comments suggested. His letter to Asquith of 30 July contained an important qualification. Liberal members, he wrote, were 'very desirous of expressing in the most emphatic way possible their strongest possible conviction that Grt. Britain on no account should be drawn into a war in which neither treaty obligations, British interests, British honour or even sentiments of friendship are at present in the remotest degree involved'.²⁰ Here was an indication that the Radicals of the Foreign Affairs Group were undecided as to what line to pursue in the event of a German attack on Belgium.²¹

At this stage, Asquith's overriding concern was to hold the Cabinet together. The representations of the Foreign Affairs Group did not induce him to turn aside from this task. He sent Ponsonby a curt note acknowledging the receipt of his letter.²² Ponsonby's suggestion of a meeting was not taken up. The Foreign Affairs Group was thus left to consider whether to implement its threats. Nothing, however, had occurred to invalidate the rationale of Grey's appeal for silence: and without the assurance

²⁰ A. Ponsonby to Asquith, 30 July 1914 (copy), Ponsonby MS. (my italics).

²¹ Radicals were aware of the possibility of a German violation of Belgian neutrality. Addison wrote: 'Everyone felt certain the Germans meant to go through Belgium.' See Christopher Addison's Diary, 30 August 1914, Addison, op. cit., p.32. See also, C.P. Trevelyan to his wife, 2 August 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

²² Asquith to Ponsonby, 31 July 1914, Ponsonby MS.

of mass Liberal support, the Group was impotent. On Friday 31 July it was decided not to go ahead with the question to Grey and to take 'no definite step' until after the weekend. 'We felt', Christopher Addison recalled, 'as helpless as rats in a trap, as indeed we were'.²³

Those Radicals who did not associate themselves with the initiatives of the Foreign Affairs Group were also afflicted with irresolution. The veteran Radical Lord Courtney, who had extensive contacts among Radical M.P.s, saw 'a good many men' at Westminster on 30 July and discovered that 'so far' no action was proposed.²⁴ Little credence can be attached to the claim in Ponsonby's letter to Asquith that many Liberals outside the Foreign Affairs Group were anxious to vent their neutralist opinions at a party meeting.

On the afternoon of 3 August, Grey presented the case for intervention to the House of Commons. During the adjournment which followed his speech, a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Group resolved by nineteen votes to five that 'no sufficient reason exists in the present circumstances for Great Britain intervening in the war'.²⁵ When the House reassembled in the evening, a handful of

²³ Christopher Addison's Diary, 30 August 1914, Addison, op. cit. p.32.

²⁴ Lady Courtney's Diary, 1 August 1914, Courtney MS., vol.36.

²⁵ Manchester Guardian, 4 August 1914.

Radical M.P.s, Philip Morrell, Ponsonby, T.E. Harvey, P.A. Molteno and Llewellyn Williams among them, spoke out against the government's policy. These gestures were the sum total of Radical dissent. Those responsible for them were plainly an isolated minority. It was clear that there would be no large-scale Radical protest against a British declaration of war on Germany.

On 3 August, a gap opened up between the small band of unrepentant neutralists and the majority of Radical M.P.s who, at the eleventh hour, moved away from an anti-interventionist position. The testimony of several well-placed observers suggests that the volte-face of the majority was brought about by the Belgian issue. On 4 August, the political correspondent of the Manchester Guardian reported that the coherence of the Liberal movement in favour of absolute neutrality had been considerably affected by Grey's statement concerning the German ultimatum to Belgium. Some days after the British declaration of war, Lady Courtney reflected: 'The proposed German violation of Belgian neutrality was the rock on which all the anti-war feeling shipwrecked'.²⁶ The Radical converts themselves invariably cited the question of Belgian neutrality as the reason for their change of view. 'I had thought we might and should have kept out

²⁶ Lady Courtney's Diary, 9 August 1914, Courtney MS., vol. 36.

of the war', wrote R.D. Holt, 'but when Germany decided on an unprovoked attack on Belgium whose neutrality Germany equally with ourselves had guaranteed it seemed impossible for us to stand by'.²⁷ Among those who voiced similar opinions were A.G.C. Harvey, H.B. Lees-Smith and Sir Albert Spicer, each of whom attended several meetings of the Foreign Affairs Group during the crisis period.²⁸

It may be doubted, however, whether Radicals genuinely believed that the violation of Belgian neutrality compelled Britain to enter the war. As Arthur Ponsonby pointed out, the question of British intervention would not have arisen if France and not Germany had failed to respect Belgian neutrality.²⁹ Another Radical M.P. described the Belgian issue as a 'skilfully devised excuse' which enabled the Cabinet to avert a party split.³⁰ It is perhaps not without significance too that the editors of the leading Radical newspapers took the view that Britain was under

²⁷ R.D. Holt's Diary, 9 August 1914, R.D. Holt MS.

²⁸ For Harvey, see Manchester Guardian, 18 October 1915; for Lees-Smith, H.W. Nevinson's Diary, 2 May 1917, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e. 620/2; and Albert Spicer 1847-1934: A Man of his Time, by one of his family (London, 1938).

²⁹ A. Ponsonby to William Donaldson, 10 August 1914 (copy), Ponsonby MS.

³⁰ R.D. Denman to E.D. Morel, 25 October 1914, E.D. Morel MS. C.R. Buxton, the prospective Liberal candidate for Hackney, observed on 10 August: 'It is increasingly clear that Belgian neutrality was a pretext (useful for bringing Liberals in) & that if it had not offered itself the Government would have found another casus belli'. ('Memo re causes of war, Aug 10 1914. CRB', C.R. Buxton MS. 1/1/f.22).

no obligation to Belgium. The threat to Belgium did not sway the Daily News from its opinion that anything other than non-intervention would be treason to Liberal policy.³¹ The Manchester Guardian argued that it was justifiable for Germany to strike 'first and hard'. It refused to pass a harsh judgement on what a nation did for 'very life's sake'.³² H.W. Massingham of the Nation maintained publicly in a letter to The Times and privately in conversation with Sidney and Beatrice Webb that the infringement of Belgian neutrality did not constitute a casus belli.³³ It was only in retrospect that Massingham and Gardiner of the Daily News held that British intervention was justified. At the Nation lunch on 4 August, Massingham spoke vehemently against British participation in the war.³⁴ The following week's lunch found him arguing that 'on the Belgian question we could not keep out of it'.³⁵ By this time the Daily News had also adopted a pro-war stance.

³¹ Daily News, 3 August 1914.

³² Manchester Guardian, 3 August 1914.

³³ H.W. Massingham to ed., The Times, 4 August 1914; M. Cole (ed.) Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1912-24 (London, 1956), p.25.

³⁴ See B. Russell, The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, vol. 2 (London, 1968), p.16.

³⁵ H.W. Nevinson's Diary, 11 August 1914, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e. 618/3.

In a speech in the House of Commons on 3 August, the Scottish Radical W.M.R. Pringle suggested that the threat to Belgium raised the broader question of whether the policy of 'blood and iron' or the policy of enforcing international obligations was to prevail in Europe.³⁶

Pringle's speech was considered by the press to be representative of majority Radical opinion. The claim that Britain was championing the cause of international morality was certainly repeated ad nauseam by Radicals in the autumn of 1914. Yet there were perhaps elements of self-deception in the way in which Radicals embraced the idea that Britain had gone to war 'on principle and for principle'.³⁷ One M.P. who thought that Radicals had seized on this idea as a means of rationalising their acquiescence in the decision to intervene was the single-taxer Francis Neilson. 'I was convinced', he wrote of those M.P.s who deserted the neutralist cause, 'that their conversion from men of peace to men of war was occasioned by party loyalty and not by the facts of the case'.³⁸ The truth of Neilson's assertion cannot, of

³⁶ H. C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol. 65, cols. 1879-80.

³⁷ This phrase was used by R.C. Lambert in a speech on the Military Service Bill in January 1916. See H. C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol. 77, col. 1469 (11 January 1916).

³⁸ F. Neilson, My Life in Two Worlds, vol. 1, p. 346.

course, be proved. However, the fact that the conflict between personal principles and party loyalty had reduced some Radicals to paralysis during the pre-1914 disputes over naval spending suggests that it is not entirely implausible. In 1914 Radicals faced this conflict in heightened form, with patriotic instincts augmenting those of party loyalty.

There does not appear to have been anything synthetic about the outrage which the 'stupefying panorama of German arrogance' produced in Radical circles during the early weeks of the war.³⁹ Before 1914 Radicals had dismissed suggestions that Germany was a uniquely aggressive and unscrupulous power. It was argued that Germany, like other European states, was burdened with a political structure which gave an unrepresentative elite the power to determine foreign policy. Radical criticism of the dominant influences in Germany - the military, the Junkers, the great industrialists - was muted by such considerations as the fear of damaging the prospects of Anglo-German reconciliation and the desire to compensate for what was felt to be the distorted image of Germany presented in the right-wing press, but criticisms were made. Radicals fervently hoped that the 'other Germany' epitomised by the growing Social Democratic party would assert itself

³⁹ The Nation, 8 August 1914.

against the reactionary elements. It was nevertheless maintained that the truculence of German diplomacy was a matter of style rather than substance. The Manchester Guardian, for instance, suggested that 'Prussia's character among nations is in fact not very different from the character which Lancashire men give themselves as compared with other Englishmen. It is blunt, straightforward and unsentimental...'.⁴⁰ Radicals began to put forward a totally different view as the German armies swept through Belgium and rumours of atrocities started to circulate. J.L. Hammond, for example, defended the Nation's change of front about the war to Bertrand Russell by conceding that before 1914 it had not allowed enough for the warlike forces in Germany. This, he suggested, had been 'the mistake of all the Peace people'.⁴¹ The only exceptional feature of Hammond's judgement was the measured tone in which it was expressed. Others were far less temperate. A.G. Gardiner described the rape of Belgium as a crime which condemned Germany to eternal obloquy.⁴² F.S. Arnold, brother of W.T. Arnold of the Manchester Guardian and himself a Manchester Guardian

⁴⁰ Manchester Guardian, quoted (n.d.) in J. Terraine, Impacts of War, 1914 and 1918 (London, 1970), p.36.

⁴¹ J.L. Hammond to Bertrand Russell, 19 October 1914, quoted in Russell, Autobiography, vol. 2, pp. 46-7.

⁴² A.G. Gardiner, 'King Albert and The Tragedy of Belgium' in The War Lords (London, 1915), p.41.

contributor, told E.D. Morel that he had made the fullest possible discount on the stories of German atrocities, but had nevertheless come to the conclusion that there was 'enough quite beyond dispute to brand her with lasting infamy & to make one regard her with weapons in her hand as almost *hostis humani generis*'.⁴³ The depths of crudity were reached by Reynolds' News, which was owned and edited by Henry Dalziel, a Radical M.P. who attended two of the Foreign Affairs Group's meetings in July-August 1914. On 30 August it carried a report in which the Germans were described as 'a people who thrive only on blood'.

The wave of indignation against Germany led to a hardening of opinion in favour of the war amongst the mass of Radicals who did not belong to the numerically insignificant rump of anti-interventionists. This in turn had the effect of deepening the split within the Radical camp which had begun to open immediately before the British declaration of war. By the late autumn of 1914, the members of the neutralist rump were alone among Radicals in dissenting from the view that Britain was engaged in a just war against Prussian militarism.

Although the arrival of what T.E. Harvey called the 'dread calamity of overwhelming war' divided the Radical

⁴³ F.S. Arnold to E.D. Morel, 20 October 1914, E.D. Morel MS.

community, there remained a good deal of common ground between its members.⁴⁴ In early August, the prevailing mood was one of profound distress. Josiah Wedgwood's feeling that all his past efforts on behalf of international concord had been wasted must have been widely shared.⁴⁵ Equally widely shared, it would appear, was the consoling belief that the war would generate widespread disillusionment with traditional methods of conducting international affairs. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that Radicals, regardless of their views on the question of British intervention, were sustained by the conviction that there would arise a 'tremendous opportunity', as Arthur Ponsonby put it, to reconstruct the foundations of international politics.⁴⁶ It was recognised, however, that there would be little chance of exploiting this opportunity if public opinion was stampeded by jingoistic influences into demanding a vindictive peace settlement. This was a danger of which Radicals - many of whom, it should be remembered, had cut their political teeth in

44 T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 4 August 1914, Harvey MS.

45 Josiah Wedgwood to Ralph Wedgwood, 10 August 1914, Josiah Wedgwood MS.

46 A. Ponsonby to Gilbert Murray, 1 January 1915, Gilbert Murray MS., box 93. See also, for example: A.F. Havignurst, H.V. Massingham, p.231; Koss, A.G. Gardiner, pp.162-3; Alexander MacCallum Scott's Diary, 3 August 1914, quoted in Hazelhurst, Politicians at War, p.47; Norman Angell to Gilbert Murray, 22 October 1914, Gilbert Murray MS., box 1.

the 'pro-Boer' agitation - were acutely conscious.⁴⁷

It is not surprising, therefore, to find influential

Radicals insisting on the need for common action by those who had been active in the peace movement before 1914.

C.P. Scott, for example, believed that it was imperative

to 'get democratic opinion... united on the general lines of a settlement which shall not be like that of 1870 and

sow the seeds of future strife'.⁴⁸ It will be seen,

however, that although Radicals could agree over long-term

aims, fundamental differences of opinion over tactics

prevented the formation of a broad-based peace movement.

On 5 August a meeting of thirty-odd Radicals took place at the House of Commons. C.P. Trevelyan described

it as a gathering of 'those who object to the war'.⁴⁹

This was not strictly true. Admittedly, most of the

participants were of the opinion that Britain should have

remained neutral. But several M.P.s who believed that

British intervention had been justified were also present.

In spite of these differences of view, it was decided on

⁴⁷ See, for example, Gilbert Murray to Ramsay MacDonal, 27 August 1914, Ramsay MacDonal MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/98; C.P. Trevelyan to Bryce, 28 September 1914, Bryce MS.; Koss, A.G. Gardiner, p.162.

⁴⁸ C.P. Scott to E.D. Morel, 18 August 1914, E.D. Morel MS.; also, G.M. Trevelyan to C.P. Trevelyan, 13 August 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; Arnold Rowntree to E.D. Morel, 1 October 1914, E.D. Morel MS.

⁴⁹ C.P. Trevelyan to his wife, 7 August 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

6 August to form a permanent group. A committee was elected, of which C.P. Trevelyan, whose resignation as Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Education had been announced on 5 August, became chairman. Trevelyan's fellow committee members were Arthur Ponsonby (vice chairman), T.E. Harvey (secretary), Philip Morrell, Sydney Arnold, R.L. Outhwaite and Arnold Rowntree.⁵⁰ The purpose of the group, as defined by Trevelyan, was 'to watch the war and secure peace as soon as possible'.⁵¹ It was assumed that an opportunity to press for peace would arise in a matter of months. The members of the group appear to have believed that the war would be short, on the pattern of the Franco-German, Russo-Japanese and Balkan conflicts, and that it would be followed by a negotiated settlement.⁵² They were agreed that little could be done until a decisive battle had taken place. It was stressed, when the existence of the group was announced, that there was no intention of taking any action which would embarrass the government in the conduct of the war.⁵³ C.P. Trevelyan's account indicates that the only immediate aim of the group was to co-operate,

⁵⁰ See 'A New Radical Group', Morning Post, 7 August 1914.

⁵¹ C.P. Trevelyan to his wife, 7 August 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁵² T.E. Harvey to C.P. Trevelyan, 18 January 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁵³ Morning Post, 7 August 1914.

if possible, with the Labour party.⁵⁴ The possibility of connecting with extra-parliamentary bodies was also considered, but this, Trevelyan told E.D. Morel on 5 August, was a 'vague idea at the moment'.⁵⁵

Hopes of joint action with the Labour party were soon dashed. Immediately after the declaration of war, divisions began to appear in the Labour ranks. On 5 August, a majority of the parliamentary Labour party voted to support the government's request for war credits, a decision which led to the resignation of its chairman, Ramsay MacDonald. This split put paid to the first initiative of the Radical group. Ponsonby and Trevelyan, on 5 August, were instructed to raise the possibility of collaboration between the group and the parliamentary Labour party with MacDonald and Henderson. The Labour leaders' response was non-committal, as the minutes of the Radical group record:

Mr. Ponsonby reported that he and Mr. Trevelyan had met Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Arthur Henderson with reference to the proposal for joint action between this group and the Labour Party: they considered that it was not practicable at present to meet with members of the Labour Party in a large joint committee, but that it might be possible for a committee of seven or eight on either side to meet

⁵⁴ C.P. Trevelyan, 'CPT's personal record...', C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁵⁵ C.P. Trevelyan to E.D. Morel, 5 August 1914, E.D. Morel MS.

together reporting to their respective groups. They had not as yet been able to obtain any formal decision of their colleagues.⁵⁶

By 7 August, it had become clear that even limited collaboration was out of the question. Trevelyan informed a meeting of seventeen members of the Radical group that 'any further approach to the Labour members had been prevented by the division within the Labour party with regard to the war.' The meeting was left with no alternative but to resolve that 'any question of further arrangements for joint action with Labour members must be left in abeyance for the present'.⁵⁷

One result of the Labour split, however, was that MacDonald gravitated towards the Radicals. His views on the war were virtually identical with those of Radicals like Ponsonby and Trevelyan. Like them, he believed that Britain should not have intervened, but accepted that the war had to be fought through to a successful conclusion. Moreover, he shared their view that the war had been brought about by 'the present system of European diplomacy' - a belief which separated him from the anti-war socialists of the I.L.P., many of whom regarded

⁵⁶ The minute-book of the Radical group is in box 4 of the papers of R.D. Denman. It is labelled 'Liberals 1914/1915'. Denman became secretary of the group in November 1914 after the resignation of T.E. Harvey.

⁵⁷ 'Liberals 1914/1915', R.D. Denman MS., box 4. The quotation in the previous sentence is also from this source.

the war as the outcome of imperialist rivalries which were themselves the product of capitalism.⁵⁸ Lastly, MacDonald was at one with Ponsonby, Trevelyan and many other Radicals in believing that a 'rallying centre' had to be formed in preparation for the moment when the promulgation of peace terms became appropriate.⁵⁹ When it transpired that the majority of Labour M.P.s and trade union leaders had no desire to become involved in such a project, MacDonald became an isolated figure within his own party: he was alienated from Labour's pro-war majority, and was not in complete accord with its anti-war minority.

It was C.P. Trevelyan, clearly reluctant to languish in passivity after his resignation, who took the initiative in implementing the 'vague idea' of establishing links between the group of parliamentary Radicals and outside bodies. On 5 August, he tentatively offered the task of co-ordinating parliamentary and outside activity to E.D. Morel, the prospective Liberal candidate for Birkenhead and formerly the organiser of the Congo Reform Association. Morel accepted, subject to the proviso that,

⁵⁸ 'JRM - position re the war', enclosed in MacDonald to J.E.W. Duys, 30 October 1914 (copy), Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/98.

⁵⁹ Ramsay MacDonald to Arthur Henderson, 24 August 1914 (copy), Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/98. For a full discussion of MacDonald's position in 1914, see Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald, pp.167-85.

if the idea matured, he would not be considered a 'mere automaton', but would be placed on such a footing as to enable him to take part freely in discussions of policy.⁶⁰ There then took place a series of meetings at Philip Morrell's home in Bedford Square, at which the leaders of the parliamentary group were joined by MacDonald, Morel, Bertrand Russell and Norman Angell, one of the most influential figures in the pre-war peace movement.⁶¹ It was decided to form an organisation, for which Trevelyan suggested the names 'British Democratic League' or 'British League for Uniting the Democracies of Europe'.⁶² To start with, Trevelyan probably visualised the putative organisation as a supplement to the parliamentary Radical group. The latter had been meeting daily, but there was, Trevelyan noted, 'little to discuss. We are helpless at present'.⁶³ He therefore switched his attention to the task of building up the extra-parliamentary body. 'We

⁶⁰ E.D. Morel to C.P. Trevelyan, 6 August 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁶¹ Angell's fame rested on his book, The Great Illusion (1910), wherein it was argued that war was irrational. An 'Angell movement' developed, lavishly financed and equipped with its own newspaper, War and Peace. By 1914, there existed a number of 'Norman Angell clubs'. See Robbins, op. cit. p.33 ff.

⁶² Memorandum by Trevelyan, ? August 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁶³ C.P. Trevelyan, 'CPT's personal record ...', C.P. Trevelyan MS.

shall', he wrote excitedly, 'form a rallying point for the angry and miserable, and a centre for a new policy, and a force for peace when the occasion comes'.⁶⁴

Trevelyan and his associates spoke of forming a nucleus around which Radical and Labour opinion could assemble. It appears, however, that the attraction of Radical support was their main concern. Intensive efforts were made to recruit individuals who carried weight in Radical circles. C.P. Trevelyan endeavoured to interest Lord Bryce in the project.⁶⁵ E.D. Morel waged a long and ultimately unsuccessful campaign to win the backing of Lord Courtney.⁶⁶ Particular importance was attached to the enlistment of C.P. Scott. MacDonald wrote: 'We cannot afford to offend him'.⁶⁷ The founders of the nascent organisation believed that there existed in the north of England a large body of opinion sympathetic to their cause.⁶⁸ Scott was well placed to mobilise support

⁶⁴ ibid.

⁶⁵ C.P. Trevelyan to Bryce, 8 August 1914, 2 September 1914, 28 September 1914, Bryce MS.

⁶⁶ Morel to Courtney, 29 September 1914, Courtney MS., vol. 11; Morel to Courtney, 1 October, 3 October 1914 (copies), E.D. Morel MS.

⁶⁷ MacDonald to C.P. Trevelyan, 10 November 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., C.P. Trevelyan to Bryce, 28 September 1914, Bryce MS.; Ponsonby to William Donaldson, 10 August 1914 (copy), Ponsonby MS.; Westminster Gazette, 4 August 1914.

in this region, and this was perhaps the main reason why he was seen as such a crucial figure.⁶⁹ No attempt was made at first to involve Labour notables. In view of MacDonald's experience, it was presumably thought that there was little point in approaching members of the pro-war majority. In any case, MacDonald regarded the trade union M.P.s who had belatedly endorsed British intervention with contempt. He described them as 'mostly fools'.⁷⁰ It seems likely, although there is no definite evidence on this point, that no overtures were made to the I.L.P. because it was feared that potential Radical adherents would not be willing to associate themselves with an uncompromising anti-war organisation.

In mid-1914, an attempt was made to gauge the extent of support for the new organisation. A circular, drafted

⁶⁹ The historian of the U.D.C. and C.P. Trevelyan's biographer suggest that Scott was regarded as important because of his links with Lloyd George (Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control, pp. 28-9; Morris, Trevelyan, p. 122). Swartz and Morris suggest that Scott encouraged the founders of the U.D.C. to believe that Lloyd George might join them. No evidence is cited in support of this claim. For a discussion of why there is no reason to suppose that Radicals looked to Lloyd George for leadership in 1914, see Hazelhurst, Politicians at War, pp. 61-3. It should be added that Swartz and Morris are wrong in claiming that Scott believed that Lloyd George was, during August 1914, 'an unattached member of the Cabinet & sits very lightly'. The passage in Scott's diary in which this phrase is used refers to Simon, not to Lloyd George. (see Wilson (ed.) Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 103).

⁷⁰ MacDonald to Trevelyan, 10 November 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

by Trevelyan and signed by MacDonald, Morrell, Angell and the author, was sent out to likely sympathisers. It was stated in the circular that the organisation had three objects in view: to secure real parliamentary control over foreign policy; to ensure that, when peace returned, negotiations were opened with continental democratic parties so as to form an international understanding based on popular parties rather than on governments; and to ensure that the peace settlement did not, through the humiliation of the defeated nations, become a starting-point for future wars. What was needed to achieve these objects, it was declared, was a 'united and conscious and directed effort of the democracy'.⁷¹ There was nothing in this programme which any Radical could have found offensive. Arthur Ponsonby described it as 'rather mild'.⁷² Underlying the first two points was the deep-rooted Radical assumption that the instincts of popular opinion were fundamentally pacific. The third point was not only an expression of the Radical hope that the war would be followed by an equitable peace settlement, but was also a reflection of the fear that the activities of jingoistic elements would create an environment in which

⁷¹ Copy of the circular in the E.D. Morel MS.

⁷² Ponsonby to MacDonald, 17 August 1914, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/24.

an equitable settlement was impossible.

According to C.P. Trevelyan's account, the response to the circular was highly encouraging.⁷³ Those whom Morel described as the 'controlling ring' of the organisation - Trevelyan, Ponsonby, Morrell, Rowntree, Angell, MacDonald and Morel himself - were thus presented with the problem of deciding what steps were to be taken next.⁷⁴ This proved to be a matter on which they were hopelessly divided. The particular issue around which their differences crystallised was whether or not to publish a manifesto, drafted by Morel, which contained a hostile review of pre-war British foreign policy. Underlying the dispute which took place over the manifesto was the broader question of what general strategy the organisation was to adopt.

Rowntree and Morrell were opposed to the publication of the manifesto, which the latter described as 'rhetorical and verbose and too much in the nature of a personal attack on Grey'.⁷⁵ Both were convinced that Radical opinion would shy away from an organisation which launched a public attack on pre-war Liberal diplomacy. Rowntree and Morrell hoped that the organisation would stay out of the political arena until the arrival of what Rowntree

⁷³ C.P. Trevelyan, 'CPT's personal record...', C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁷⁴ Morel to Ponsonby, 31 August 1914 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.

⁷⁵ Morrell to Ponsonby, 1 September 1914, Ponsonby MS.

called 'the time for promulgating the terms of peace'.⁷⁶ The majority of the 'controlling ring', however, believed that the situation demanded something more than the formation of a private discussion group. Morel, MacDonald, Ponsonby and Trevelyan all believed that the 'Jingoes' would establish an unbreakable hold over public opinion unless a determined campaign to counteract their influence was mounted. MacDonald argued that it would be a mistake to delay public action until the time came for promulgating peace terms:

I am rather afraid that once in the war we become warlike ... and that anticipations of what is to follow victory always suffer from a failure to anticipate the temper in which victory will find us.⁷⁷

The four were also agreed that it would be impossible to wage a successful campaign without exposing the failures of pre-war diplomacy. Ponsonby insisted: 'We shall have to attack governments....'.⁷⁸ It was recognised that an aggressive public campaign might antagonise potential supporters. Morel was philosophical about this: 'My view is that this battle if it is to be won will never be won by expecting that we can rope in everybody'.⁷⁹ In

⁷⁶ Arnold Rowntree to Morel, 5 October 1914, E.D. Morel MS.

⁷⁷ MacDonald to Gilbert Murray, 2 September 1914, Gilbert Murray MS., box 35.

⁷⁸ Ponsonby to MacDonald, 17 August 1914, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/24.

⁷⁹ Morel to Ponsonby, ? August 1914 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.

contrast, the three M.P.s - MacDonald, Trevelyan and Ponsonby - were anxious to keep in touch with the main stream of Radical opinion, and were, as a result, prepared to consider delaying the start of public action.

One thing which influenced them was C.P. Scott's hostility to the idea of public agitation. On 3 September, at Philip Morrell's invitation, Scott met what he described as 'Trevelyan's Watching Committee on the War' and was perturbed to discover that it was 'fast developing into an acting committee part of whose function was to expose the diplomatic errors which had involved us in the war'.⁸⁰ Scott made a note of his contribution to the discussion:

I ... took exception to the change of policy which had converted a movement for establishing a skeleton organisation to act later when the time came for ending the war and for dealing effectively with the whole position then into one for influencing opinion now.⁸¹

Scott followed this up on 4 September with letters to E.D. Morel and C.P. Trevelyan telling them that the publication of the manifesto would be a suicidal course of action:

It wd. be a mistake and more than a mistake to send out the pamphlet or take any action of the kind at the present time. I would strongly urge delay. Wait at least for a time till you see how the war is going. It is quite on the cards that the next few weeks may bring disaster. Almost certainly

⁸⁰ C.P. Scott's Diary, 3-4 September 1914, quoted in Wilson (ed.) Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, pp.102-3.

⁸¹ ibid.

we shall soon have the Germans on the other side of the Channel and their Zeppelins dropping high explosives onto Dover and perhaps London. What sort of temper wd. our people be in for considering the merits of the war and what wd. they think of anybody who at such a time sounded a discordant note or indeed did anything except back the Govmt. ... with all his might. The movement wd. not only incur present odium - say execration rather - but its whole power for usefulness later might be destroyed. I see nothing for it but to lie low for the present & prepare for the future - That was the original policy & I am sure it is the right one.⁸²

Scott also saw MacDonald on 4 September and, to his surprise, succeeded in winning him over. Convinced by Scott that the fall of Paris was imminent, and finding that other important people who were willing to co-operate with the organisation were viewing the publication of Morel's manifesto with grave concern, MacDonald came 'very slowly and reluctantly' to the conclusion that publication should be postponed.⁸³ Angell, Ponsonby, Trevelyan and Morel agreed, the last two somewhat grudgingly.⁸⁴ It was decided to mark time until the military situation had improved.

The dispute between those who wished to 'lie low for the present & prepare for the future' and those who

⁸² C.P. Scott to Morel, 4 September 1914, E.D. Morel MS.; Scott to Trevelyan, 5 September 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁸³ MacDonald to Morel, 8 September 1914 (Very Private), E.D. Morel MS.

⁸⁴ See Morel to Ponsonby, 9 September 1914 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.

wished to enter the political arena was brought to an end by the publication of the private circular which had been sent out in mid-August in the Morning Post on 10 September. This was followed by a good deal of talk in the right-wing press of a 'secret pro-German conspiracy'.⁸⁵ Those who favoured public activity now saw no reason for delay. C.P. Trevelyan wrote: '... we had better not let it be supposed that we are afraid of coming into the open'.⁸⁶ Trevelyan thought that it was in any case an opportune moment to embark on a public campaign. He believed that a new situation had been created by the success of the Anglo-French counter-offensive on the Marne:

The tide of war has decisively turned. England is no longer in any sort of danger. Our troops are victorious. Before very long even some who (do not) oppose the war will be considering the possibility of peace.⁸⁷

In mid-September, a further private circular was distributed, announcing that a definite organisation, provisionally named 'The Union of Democratic Control', was in process of formation. Accompanying the circular

⁸⁵ See C.P. Trevelyan, 'CPT's personal record...', C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁸⁶ Trevelyan to C.P. Scott, 13 September 1914, quoted in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 105.

⁸⁷ ibid.

was a 'simple statement of objects'. These were elaborated and refined versions of the three original points, to which a fourth, at Ponsonby's insistence, had been added. Ponsonby had been critical of the first circular and of Morel's suppressed manifesto. He had maintained: '... there should be a very decided reference to the armaments competition. Not only do I feel the importance of this but the public to which we are appealing have understood the point and have been more indignant about it than about foreign policy of which they were entirely ignorant'.⁸⁸ The second circular therefore incorporated the proposal that, as part of the peace settlement, Britain should present a plan for the drastic reduction of the armaments of all belligerent powers. A summary of the circular was published as a letter, dated 17 September and signed by MacDonald, Angell, Trevelyan, Ponsonby and Morel, in the Liberal press. The signatories were at pains to stress that there was 'no question of this association embodying a 'stop-the-war' movement of any kind'.⁸⁹

It should be noted that the private circular and the published summary of it dealt exclusively with the ultimate objectives of the Union of Democratic Control.

⁸⁸ Ponsonby to Morel, 30 August 1914, E.D. Morel MS. (italics in original).

⁸⁹ Ramsay MacDonald et al., 'Conditions of a Stable Peace', The Nation, 19 September 1914. There is a copy of the private circular in the T.E. Harvey MS. and in the E.D. Morel MS.

Neither contained any explicit criticism of pre-war British diplomacy. To some extent, therefore, the views of Rowntree, Morrell and Scott had been heeded. The founders of the Union of Democratic Control evidently believed that this non-provocative approach would enable them to gain the support of many of the leaders of Radical opinion. Arthur Ponsonby, for example, spoke confidently of raking in those whom he described as 'the stalwarts'.⁹⁰ Among the people he had in mind were Lord Courtney, C.P. Scott, J.A. Hobson, Lowes Dickinson, T.E. Harvey, Josiah Wedgwood, J.H. Whitehouse and W.H. Dickinson.⁹¹ Ponsonby's hopes were not fulfilled. The response of the Radical community to the Union of Democratic Control was overwhelmingly negative. Almost immediately after the announcement of the Union's existence, C.P. Scott broke off relations with its founders: 'I agree with your objects but I shd. be apt to part company with you as to methods. So I'm better out of it'.⁹² Bryce and Courtney followed suit.⁹³ Nor did Ponsonby and Trevelyan have

⁹⁰ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 11 November 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁹¹ These names appeared on a list of possible members of a General Committee of the U.D.C. drawn up by Ponsonby, Angell and Morel just before the Union's existence was announced. See Morel to Trevelyan, 17 September 1914 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.

⁹² Scott to Morel, 24 September 1914, E.D. Morel MS.

⁹³ Courtney to Morel, 1 October 1914 (private), E.D. Morel MS.; for Bryce, see C.P. Trevelyan to Bryce, 28 September 1914, Bryce MS.

much success when they tried to enlist the support of their colleagues in the thirty-two strong Radical group which had been formed on 5 August. Only two of them - R.D. Denman and H.B. Lees-Smith - were prepared to join the U.D.C.⁹⁴ Approaches to other Radical M.P.s. including J.A. Murray Macdonald and E.T. John, also met with failure.⁹⁵ Equally unsuccessful were attempts to recruit such

94 For examples of refusals of members of this group to join the U.D.C., see: W.P. Byles to Trevelyan, 21 October 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; H.G. Chancellor to Trevelyan, 2 October 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; T.E. Harvey to Trevelyan, 8 October 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; Arnold Rowntree to Morel, 5 October 1914, E.D. Morel MS.

The Radical group of M.P.s effectively disintegrated after the formation of the Union of Democratic Control. In the six months between 10 September 1914, when the Union's private circular was published in the Morning Post, and 17 February 1915, the date of the last meeting recorded in the group's minute-book, the group met only six times - once in late September 1914, twice in October 1914, once in November 1914 and twice in February 1915. It had met nine times in the six weeks between the British declaration of war on 4 August and 10 September. Attendance at the group's meetings declined sharply after mid-September 1914. The average attendance at the meetings in August - early September 1914 was something in the order of twenty; only two of the six meetings after mid-September 1914 were attended by more than eight M.P.s. Discussion at these later meetings was confined to such worthy but uncontroversial matters as inoculation and allowances for the dependants of servicemen. The extent of the group's inactivity after mid-September 1914 is perhaps best indicated by the minutes of its meeting of 16 October 1914, attended by only four M.P.s: 'there being no business to discuss the meeting was adjourned' (see 'Liberals 1914/1915', R.D. Denman MS.).

95 E.T. John to Trevelyan, ? December 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; J.A.M. MacDonald to Ponsonby, 6 December 1914, Ponsonby MS.

prominent Radical intellectuals as J.L. Hammond and Gilbert Murray.⁹⁶ A few extra-parliamentary figures of note did become members of the U.D.C., among them J.A. Hobson, Lowes Dickinson, Bertrand Russell and C.R. Buxton. But this can hardly have been of much consolation to the Union's founders, who had thought in terms of placing themselves at the head of a great movement. 'I hope', MacDonald had written of the U.D.C. in late August, 'that when it is launched it will be one of the biggest things that we have ever seen in our time'.⁹⁷

There appear to have been three main reasons why so many Radicals refused to associate themselves with the U.D.C. One was the belief that the time was not ripe for public activity. Several of those who were sounded out about joining the Union made this point, among them W.P. Byles, who asserted: 'It wd. do both us and our cause harm to press it prematurely'.⁹⁸ Comments of this kind were often accompanied by an expression of sympathy with the principles for which the U.D.C. was fighting. Arnold

⁹⁶ J.L. Hammond to Ponsonby, 20 September 1914, Ponsonby MS.; several overtures were made to Murray (Angell to Murray, 22 October 1914, Gilbert Murray MS., box 1; MacDonald to Murray, 26 August, 2 September 1914, Gilbert Murray MS., box 35; Ponsonby to Murray, 1 January 1915, Gilbert Murray MS., box 98), but he did not join the U.D.C.

⁹⁷ Ramsay MacDonald to Gilbert Murray, 26 August 1914, Gilbert Murray MS., box 35.

⁹⁸ W.P. Byles to C.P. Trevelyan, 21 October 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

Rowntree, for example, told E.D. Morel:

There is no difference in policy between us. Your four points for future action bear coming back to again and again... My only difference with your committee is as to the way of bringing your policy to fruition...⁹⁹

The suspicion also seems to have existed that, despite assurances to the contrary, the U.D.C. was a 'stop-the-war' movement. How intense this suspicion was in 1914 is difficult to say. By 1915, Josiah Wedgwood for one was convinced that the Union favoured an immediate negotiated settlement:

The U.D.C. is surely not a Peace Society. But that is just what I gather from your letter marked personal and asking for funds. I at least am not going to help you discuss terms of peace until the Junkers are beaten to a frazzle... You have travelled a long way since last year, & become a "hands upper". If that is your Union, it is not for me any longer.¹⁰⁰

It is clear, too, that misgivings about the U.D.C.'s leadership played an important part in the thinking of many Radicals. In some cases, such as that of Lord Loreburn, who told Bryce that he was doubtful about 'forming any group that consists of people we don't know',

⁹⁹ Arnold Rowntree to E.D. Morel, 5 October 1914, E.D. Morel MS.; see also, J.H. Whitehouse to Morel, 26 August 1914, E.D. Morel MS.; H.G. Chancellor to Trevelyan, 2 November 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; P.W. Raffan to Trevelyan, 21 October 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

¹⁰⁰ Josiah Wedgwood to E.D. Morel, 18 September 1915, E.D. Morel MS. For a comment by the Secretary of the Cambridge branch of the U.D.C. on the growth of the suspicion that the U.D.C. stood for something (a 'drawn war and a compromise peace') that did not appear in its statements of policy, see G.H. Hardy, Bertrand Russell and Trinity: A college controversy of the last war (Cambridge, 1970; originally printed 1941), pp. 12-14.

these reservations were largely based on a lack of familiarity with the Union's leaders.¹⁰¹ It has to be remembered that, of the five founders of the U.D.C., only Arthur Ponsonby had been closely involved in the pre-war Radical campaigns for disarmament and Anglo-German detente. The other four, as Philip Morrell pointed out to Ponsonby, were not 'men to whom our lot so to speak have been accustomed to look'.¹⁰² A more important reason for the distrust with which the Union's leaders were viewed was the fact that some of them had been openly critical of Grey and the Liberal government during the early days of the war and had thereby raised doubts about their belief in the justice of Britain's cause. The main offender on this score was Ramsay MacDonald. On 13 August he had published an article in the Labour Leader under the title 'Why We are at War: A Reply to Sir Edward Grey', in which the Foreign Secretary was accused of striving to embroil Britain in the conflict after his efforts to avert a continental war had failed. He had also made this charge in a public speech at Leicester on 7 August.¹⁰³ One

¹⁰¹ Loreburn to Bryce, 12 October 1914, Bryce MS.

¹⁰² Morrell to Ponsonby, 1 September 1914, Ponsonby MS.

¹⁰³ Reported in Labour Leader, 13 August 1914. The other offender was Ponsonby. In the debate on the vote of credit on 6 August, he accused the government of deceiving the House of Commons before 1914 about the nature of Britain's ties with France. The novelist Arnold Bennett was one of those who objected to Ponsonby's behaviour: see Bennett to Trevelyan, 20 January 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS. Ponsonby was also criticised by the executive committee of his constituency association,

influential Radical who took strong exception to MacDonald's behaviour was Lord Courtney. Telling E.D. Morel in October of his decision not to join the U.D.C., Courtney argued that the accusations MacDonald had made against Grey were 'likely of themselves to hinder if not destroy the efficiency of any actions of any committee in which his name appears foremost'.¹⁰⁴ Courtney subsequently maintained that the prominence of MacDonald's name had 'caused many to keep away from the Union who might otherwise have joined it'.¹⁰⁵

In July-August 1914, the Radicals failed to wage a united campaign against British intervention in the European conflict. They then failed, during the next three months, to construct an effective movement on the basis of their shared assumptions about the post-war settlement. The end of 1914 found Radicalism in a severely fragmented condition. The most important visible division was that between the minority of Radicals associated with the U.D.C.,

which informed him that it and the Liberal party generally in the constituency were entirely out of sympathy with his views: see minute of the executive committee, Stirling Burghs Liberal Association, 22 October 1914, Ponsonby MS.

¹⁰⁴ Lord Courtney to Morel, 1 October 1914 (private), E.D. Morel MS.

¹⁰⁵ Lord Courtney to H. Bourassa, 23 June 1915 (private: copy), Courtney MS., vol. 11; also, Lady Courtney's Diary, 30 October 1914, Courtney MS., vol. 36.

who were convinced of the need for a vigorous campaign in favour of the 'fundamental principles which must mark the final terms of peace', and the majority who spoke of campaigning in support of these principles at some time in the future.¹⁰⁶ It should not be thought, however, that the Radicals were only divided over the question of how best to promote their ideas about the eventual peace settlement. There undoubtedly existed a more profound underlying cleavage between those who resented the fact that Britain was at war and those who regarded the war as an evil which had to be endured for the sake of destroying Prussian militarism. Regrettably, evidence relating to the private attitudes of Radicals in late 1914 is scarce: a comprehensive account of this underlying cleavage cannot therefore be given. What can be said, though, is that there were a number of Radicals whose bitterness about Britain's involvement in the war equalled that of Ponsonby, Morel or Trevelyan but who did not become members of the Union of Democratic Control. Among them were Lords Loreburn and Courtney, F.W. Hirst, R.L. Outhwaite, Francis Neilson, Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Harry

¹⁰⁶ This phrase appears in R. MacDonald et al., 'Conditions of A Stable Peace', The Nation, 19 September 1914.

Nuttall and Philip Morrell.¹⁰⁷ It should also be emphasised that the divisions which opened in 1914 cut across the pre-war split between traditional and progressive Radicals.¹⁰⁸

The Radicals who belonged to the anti-war minority were naturally disgusted with the Liberal leadership. Arthur Ponsonby, for example, referred in private to 'the criminal stupidity of the people who have led us into this'.¹⁰⁹ A similar view was held by Lord Loreburn, who

¹⁰⁷ See, respectively, Loreburn to Bryce, 12 October 1914, 17 January 1915, Bryce MS.; R.D. Holt's Diary, 12 August 1914, R.D. Holt MS. (for the views of Lord Courtney); Lady Courtney's Diary, 3 September 1914, Courtney MS., vol. 36 (for F.W. Hirst); R.L. Outhwaite to C.P. Trevelyan, 29 October 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS., and Labour Leader, 29 April 1915; Neilson, My Life in Two Worlds, vol. 1 pp. 338, 347; Daily News, 17 February 1916, and R.D. Denman to Trevelyan, 28 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS. (for Lawson); A. Nuttall to the President, Stretford Liberal Association, Manchester Guardian, 21 January 1916; and Morrell to the President, Burnley Liberal Association, Manchester Guardian, 30 October 1916. Courtney, Morrell and Outhwaite later became members of the U.D.C.

¹⁰⁸ One thing which illustrates this is the fact that the resentful minority contained progressive Radicals, such as Ponsonby, Trevelyan and Morrell; the single-taxers, Outhwaite and Neilson; and Cobdenites such as Courtney and Hirst. The prolonged and acrimonious wrangle at the Nation lunches in 1914-15 over the origins and merits of the war, which culminated in L.T. Hobhouse ceasing to attend the lunches, is a good illustration of the division of opinion among progressive Radicals. For this, see H.W. Nevinson's Diary, 29 September 1914-23 March 1915, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e. 618/3-4; Hobson and Ginsberg, L.T. Hobhouse, p. 62.

¹⁰⁹ Ponsonby to Russell, 15 October 1914, photocopy in Ponsonby MS. (original in Bertrand Russell MS., McMaster University).

told Bryce that he could not trust himself to say what he thought about 'the senseless folly of our Govt.'.¹¹⁰ F... Hirst was equally outspoken.¹¹¹ In only a few cases, however, was this disgust so great as to lead to a formal break with Liberalism. Only three Radicals of any prominence left the party as a direct result of the decision to enter the war. E.D. Morel ceased to be a Liberal to all intents and purposes when he resigned as prospective candidate for Birkenhead in 1914, though he did not join the Labour party until 1918. Bertrand Russell, who contested the Chelsea by-election in 1907 as a woman suffrage and Liberal candidate, did not renew his subscription to the Cambridge Liberal Association in 1915. And Hugh Fownes Luttrell, Liberal M.P. for Tavistock, 1892-1900 and 1906-1910, broke with the Liberal party in October 1914 and joined the I.L.P., declaring the latter to be the only party which represented the views he held on the war.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Loreburn to Bryce, 12 October 1914, Bryce MS.; see also, Loreburn to Ponsonby, 31 May 1915, Ponsonby MS.

¹¹¹ See Lady Courtney's Diary, 3 September 1914, Courtney MS., vol. 36.

¹¹² H.F. Luttrell to Keir Hardie, printed in Labour Leader, 1 October 1914.

4. TOWARDS A RAPPROCHEMENT: RADICALS
AND THE COALITION, 1915

The Union of Democratic Control has received a good deal of attention from historians. Perhaps the most important claim which has been made for it is that it facilitated the transition of many Radicals from Liberalism to Labour, and, by doing so, made a significant contribution to the realignment of the left in British politics. It is argued that this process of transition began in 1914 when a link was established between the U.D.C. Radicals and the socialists of the I.L.P., both of whom were isolated within their own parties and between whom there was a substantial measure of agreement on questions of peace and foreign policy. This entente, so the argument runs, was consolidated during the period between 1914 and 1917 by the shared experience of a hostile public opinion. Thereafter, it is claimed, the U.D.C. Radicals despaired of the Liberal party giving a hearing to their ideas on foreign policy, and, attracted by Labour's espousal of a policy of constructive internationalism, entered the Labour party via the I.L.P.¹

Implicit in this explanation of the movement of Radicals from Liberalism to Labour is the assumption that the rift which opened in 1914 between the small band of Radicals who joined the U.D.C. and the mass of Radicals

¹ See, for example, M. Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control, chs. 5,7,8,10; Robbins, 'The Abolition of War', p.463-4; Dowse, 'The Entry of Liberals into the Labour Party', p.82 ff.; Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, pp.44-50; K.E. Miller, Socialism and Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice to 1931 (The Hague, 1967), p.83; Hanak, 'The Union of Democratic Control during the First World War', B.I.H.S., 36 (1963), p.177 ff.; L.W. Martin, Peace Without Victory (New Haven, 1958), p.54 ff.

who did not was a permanent one. A different view will ^{179.}
be offered here. It will be argued that a Radical
rapprochement had taken place by 1918. This rapprochement,
it will be suggested, was largely brought about by the
spread of disillusionment with the war and with Liberal
leaders among the Radical majority. The formation of the
coalition government in May 1915 is significant in this
connection because it led to a shift in majority Radical
attitudes towards the war and the Liberal leadership.

It is a well-attested fact that the reaction of the
bulk of the parliamentary Liberal party to the advent of
a coalition government was one of anger and dismay.² There
is a substantial body of evidence which suggests that
Radical M.P.s, with a few exceptions, were especially
indignant. Philip Snowden, for example, writing in the
Labour Leader on 17 June, alleged that the Radicals were
'up in arms' about the coalition. Three weeks later, he
claimed that the coalition ministry was viewed with profound
distrust by the 'earnest Radicals' in the House of Commons.³
The views expressed in private by Radical M.P.s suggest

² See Daily News, 20 May 1915; Manchester Guardian, 19, 20
May 1915; Eric Drummond to Charles Lyell, 25 June 1915,
Elibank MS., 8805; Haldane to Elizabeth Haldane, 13 June
1915, Haldane MS., 6012; Violet Bonham Carter, Winston
Churchill As I Knew Him (paperback edn., London, 1967),
p.427.

³ Labour Leader, 8 July 1915.

that Snowden's observations were accurate. The replacement of the Liberal government by a coalition left R.D. Holt feeling 'vexed and suspicious'. T.E. Harvey confessed that he felt 'uneasy'. Arthur Ponsonby thought that the whole business was 'sordid and disgraceful'.⁴ Nor did Radical M.P.s confine their bitterness to private letters and diaries. Following Asquith's announcement on May 19 that the government was in process of reconstruction, approximately one hundred Liberal M.P.s attended an impromptu party meeting in a committee room at the House of Commons. The report of the Manchester Guardian's political correspondent leaves little doubt that the Radical wing of the party was strongly represented at this gathering.⁵ The feeling of the meeting was, by all accounts, fiercely hostile towards the coalition. The idea of forcing a debate on the reasons for the formation of the new government was only abandoned after Asquith had delivered an emotional twenty-minute appeal for loyalty.⁶ Further evidence of Radical disquiet came in early June, when the coalition ministry faced the House of Commons for the first time. A number of Radical M.P.s,

⁴ R.D. Holt's Diary, 30 May 1915, R.D. Holt MS.; T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 19 May 1915, T.E. Harvey MS.; Ponsonby to John Ponsonby, 21 May 1915 (copy), Ponsonby MS.

⁵ Manchester Guardian, 20 May 1915.

⁶ For accounts of this meeting, see Manchester Guardian, 20 May 1915; Daily News, 20 May 1915; Ponsonby to John Ponsonby, 21 May 1915 (copy), Ponsonby MS.; Alexander MacCallum Scott's Diary 19 May 1915, quoted in Hazlehurst, Politicians at War, pp.275-6.

including W.P. Byles, Joseph King, E.T. John, P.A. Molteno, Aneurin Williams and R.L. Outhwaite, left their usual places on the government backbenches and sat on the opposition side of the House. These Radicals presumably crossed the floor in order to express their lack of confidence in the coalition - there had been talk among Liberal M.P.s in May of making such a gesture.⁷ The only further action they took, however, was to ask for an opportunity to discuss why a coalition government had been formed. Most of them returned to their normal places when it became clear that no such debate would take place.⁸

In view of the emphasis placed on the need for national unity in Radical quarters in the autumn of 1914, it may at first sight seem surprising that Radicals objected so strenuously to the establishment of a national government. It should be remembered, however, that most Radicals had only reconciled themselves to the war by conceiving of it as a 'Liberal war' against militarism.⁹ What should also be borne in mind is that in 1914 Radicals anticipated that their concept of the war would come under challenge from the Jingoists and reactionaries, who, it was

⁷ Manchester Guardian, 20 May 1915.

⁸ For this episode, see the Manchester Guardian, 4, 8 June 1915.

⁹ This phrase was used by R.C. Lambert in a speech on the National Register Bill. See H.C. Parl. Deb., 5th ser., vol. 78, cols.153-55 (5 July 1915).

assumed, were mainly intent on reducing Germany to the status of a second-rate power.¹⁰ At the heart of the Radicals' dismay over the arrival of the coalition was the belief that they had suffered a defeat in what Graham Wallas called 'the fight between the idea of a world-peace and that of a Northcliffe-Lady Glenesk & Rudyard Kipling peace'.¹¹

Most Radical backbenchers and journalists appear to have assumed that the coalition was the result of an intrigue conducted by their enemies. This assumption was not based on hard fact. In common with the rest of the Liberal rank and file, Radicals knew very little about the inner history of the political crisis of May 1915. Even as well-informed an observer as A.G. Gardiner was forced to acknowledge his ignorance. 'The fall of the Liberal Government', he wrote, 'is as obscure in its causes as it was sudden'.¹² Radicals nevertheless had few doubts about the identity of the main saboteurs. It was taken for granted that Lord Northcliffe had been working to oust the government. During the first nine months of the war, the Northcliffe press had persistently questioned the capacity

¹⁰ On this, see, for example, C.R. Buxton to Bryce, 11 June 1915, Bryce MS.; C.P. Trevelyan to Bryce, 28 September 1914, Bryce MS.; Gilbert Murray to Ramsay MacDonald, 27 August 1914, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/98.

¹¹ Graham Wallas to Gilbert Murray, 22 June 1915, Gilbert Murray MS., box 53. Lady Glenesk was the wife of the proprietor of the Morning Post.

¹² A.G. Gardiner, The War Lords (London, 1915), p.79.

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of Liberal ministers to act with the vigour and ruthlessness necessary for victory. It therefore seemed highly improbable to Radicals that the allegations of a munitions shortage made by Colonel Repington in The Times on 14 May had been published with anything other than disruptive intent.¹³ A number of prominent Radicals were convinced that the activities of what Gilbert Murray, with uncharacteristic vehemence, called 'the very scum of journalism' had contributed substantially to the downfall of the Liberal government.¹⁴ The Opposition leadership was also considered to have played an important and discreditable part in the proceedings. It was believed that the Tories had taken advantage of the situation created by the 'shell scandal' and by the breakdown of relations between Fisher and Churchill at the Admiralty to blackmail their way into office.¹⁵ But it was against neither the Tory leadership or Lord Northcliffe that Radical feelings ran highest. The individuals towards whom Radicals felt the most intense bitterness were Churchill and Lloyd George. It was assumed that both had connived at the overthrow of the government. Even before the arrival of

¹³ Repington's article was followed by a series of attacks on the government in the editorial columns of the Daily Mail. See R. Pound and G. Harmsworth, Northcliffe (London, 1959) pp.476-77.

¹⁴ Gilbert Murray to J.L. Hammond, 20 May 1915, Hammond MS., 30, f. 63-4; see also Koss, A.G. Gardiner, p.164; Ponsonby to John Ponsonby, 21 May 1915 (copy), Ponsonby MS.

¹⁵ Daily News, 20 May 1915.

the coalition, Churchill's reputation among Radicals had sunk to a low ebb. To Radicals, it appeared that Churchill was self-seeking, that he possessed a dictatorial cast of mind, and that he revelled in war.¹⁶ It had also been rumoured for some months before May 1915 that he favoured the creation of a national government.¹⁷ When Radicals heard that the Liberal government was to give way to a coalition, they did not doubt that Churchill had helped to engineer the crisis which had brought about the change. W.M.R. Pringle was presumably speaking on behalf of his fellow-Radicals when he attacked Churchill in a letter to the Prime Minister:

I think it is right to inform you that a number of your supporters have been driven to the conclusion that the present crisis has been brought about by the actions of Mr. Churchill. I do not only refer to his differences with Lord Fisher but we believe that he was privy to the intrigue which resulted in the Repington disclosures.

In these circumstances we regard his presence in the government as a public danger. It is only fair therefore that you should know before any arrangement is concluded that the attitude of a considerable number of your supporters¹⁸ will be determined by this conviction.

¹⁶ See, e.g., A.G. Gardiner, 'Mr. Churchill' in Pillars of Society (London, 1916), pp.151-8. For a discussion of Liberal attitudes towards Churchill in 1914-15, see M. Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, vol. 3 (London, 1971), pp.477-8.

¹⁷ See Cecil Beck to Churchill, 26 May 1915, printed in M. Gilbert (ed.) Winston S. Churchill, Companion Volume 3, Part 2 (London, 1972), p. 954-5. One of the rumours was floated by H.W. Massingham of the Nation (see Havighurst, H.W. Massingham, p.236; Hazlehurst, Politicians at War, p.227).

¹⁸ W.M.R. Pringle to Asquith, 20 May 1915, Asquith MS., 27, f. 178-9. In Arthur Ponsonby's account of the crisis, Churchill was described as the 'chief culprit' (Ponsonby to John Ponsonby, 21 May 1915 (copy), Ponsonby MS).

Lloyd George was also suspected of having behaved treacherously. J.A. Pease, Liberal Chief Whip between 1908 and 1910 and subsequently President of the Board of Education, noted in June 1915: 'Politically things are settling down a bit but the rank and file of our party resent the way the Coalition came about & suspect Lloyd George had meetings with the opposition & Fisher before the P.M. adopted the new policy behind the backs of his colleagues and party.'¹⁹ To say that there was suspicion of Lloyd George hardly did justice to the views of some Radicals. The feeling at the Nation lunch on 1 June was one of 'violent distrust of Lloyd George & of his Coalition'.²⁰ A.G. Gardiner reached the conclusion that Lloyd George was the 'chief architect' of the coalition.²¹ In 1921, W.M.R. Pringle told Gilbert Murray that he had been certain in May 1915 that 'Ll. G. meditated the betrayal which he has since consummated'.²² F.W. Hirst of The Economist believed that Lloyd George had been engaged in a bid for the premiership.²³ It was obviously well-nigh impossible

¹⁹ Pease to A.C. Murray, 19 June 1915, Elibank MS., 8805.

²⁰ H.W. Nevinson's Diary, 1 June 1915, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e 619/1.

²¹ A.G.G.(ardiner), 'A Letter to Mr. Lloyd George', Daily News, 22 April 1916.

²² W.M.R. Pringle to Gilbert Murray, 11 March 1921, Gilbert Murray MS., box 59.

²³ F.W. Hirst to Lady Courtney, 17 June 1915, Courtney MS., vol. 11.

for those who believed that Lloyd George had conspired with proponents of what Radicals had come to refer to as the 'crush Germany' policy to retain much faith or confidence in him. At this stage, however, Radicals do not appear to have concluded that Lloyd George had departed from his stated belief that Britain was involved in a 'holy war' against militarism.²⁴ To this extent, he had not been written off as an upholder of Liberal causes.

The membership of the coalition Cabinet was announced on 26 May. It contained eight Tories, of whom only Balfour, Churchill's replacement at the Admiralty, received a post which involved direct responsibility for the conduct of the war. Asquith, however, was not given much credit by Radicals for his adroitness in restricting the Tories' influence. What was considered important within the Radical camp was the extent to which the new Cabinet was dominated by opponents of the concept of a 'Liberal war'. It may be surmised that Arthur Ponsonby was not alone in believing that the 'worst and most reactionary influences' had got the upper hand.²⁵ Radicals undoubtedly blamed Asquith for allowing this to happen. It was felt that the Prime Minister

²⁴ Lloyd George used this phrase in a speech at Bangor on 28 February 1915.

The question of whether there was in fact a conspiracy in May 1915 has been the subject of some debate. See S.E. Koss, 'The Destruction of Britain's Last Liberal Government', J.M.H., xl, no. 2 (June 1968), for the suggestion that a high level intrigue did take place; Hazlehurst's critique of this view in Politicians at War, pp.235-60; and Koss's partial defence of his original thesis in Asquith (London, 1976), pp.193-4.

²⁵ Ponsonby to C.P. Trevelyan, 28 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

could have beaten off the demands for a coalition if he had thrown the full weight of his authority against them.²⁶ Asquith was also heavily criticised for his failure to consult the parliamentary Liberal party before agreeing to a coalition. One Radical M.P. who gave vent to his feelings on this point was A.J. Sherwell. In a letter to the Liberal Chief Whip, Sherwell declared:

The plain truth of the matter is that our leaders have become accustomed to trade upon the unquestioning loyalty of the party and do not show the smallest appreciation of the fact that loyalty in a political party is a reciprocal obligation which is incumbent on the leaders no less than on the rank and file.²⁷

There were two other aspects of Asquith's conduct in May 1915 which gave offence to Radicals. One was the appointment of Sir Edward Carson as Attorney-General. Radicals were incensed by the fact that a man who had been so deeply involved in seditious activity during the pre-war Ulster crisis had been made a senior law officer. It was felt that Asquith had shown insufficient regard for Liberal sensibilities. W.P. Byles was moved to declare that his personal loyalty to the Prime Minister had been

²⁶ Manchester Guardian, 20 May 1915.

²⁷ Daily News, 5 June 1915. For further evidence of anger about the lack of consultation, see Daily News, 27 May 1915; Ponsonby to John Ponsonby, 21 May 1915 (copy), Ponsonby MS.

'sorely strained' by Carson's inclusion in the Cabinet.²⁸ Even more nauseating so far as Radicals were concerned was the treatment meted out to Haldane. Having been unremittingly abused as a 'pro-German' in the right-wing press during the first nine months of the war, Haldane was excluded from the coalition ministry. Asquith, it appeared, had flung his oldest political associate to the wolves. 'The personal ingratitude and indecency of sacrificing Haldane to vulgar clamour', commented C.P. Trevelyan, 'is the dirtiest thing I remember in politics...'.²⁹ The extent to which Trevelyan's views were shared by other Radicals was perhaps reflected in a tribute paid to Haldane seven weeks after his dismissal. Over two hundred M.P.s, a large number of Radicals among them, presented Haldane with an address in which 'high appreciation' was expressed for the service which he had given as Secretary for War and Lord Chancellor.³⁰ The Radical signatories of this document must surely have been inspired by a sense of disgust with Asquith and the right-wing press rather than by genuine admiration for their old Liberal Imperialist adversary.

²⁸ W.P. Byles to ed., Daily News, 2 June 1915; also, Manchester Guardian, 26 May 1915; Daily News, 27 May 1915.

²⁹ Trevelyan to Ponsonby, 27 May 1915, Ponsonby MS.

³⁰ This document may be found in the Haldane MS., 5926. The Radicals who signed it included Philip Morrell, Joseph King, H.G. Chancellor, E.T. John, R.D. Holt, Arthur Ponsonby, P.A. Molteno, Arthur Sherwell, J.M. Robertson, Percy Alden, Leif Jones and W.M.R. Pringle.

The arrival of a coalition ministry filled Liberals with apprehension as well as dismay. What was feared above all was that coalition was the forerunner of conscription. Writing in The Nation only three days after the decision to coalesce had been announced, H.W. Massingham stated that this was the 'all-dominating anxiety' within the Liberal ranks.³¹ Nowhere was the anxiety greater than within the Radical community. This became apparent during the controversy which took place in July 1915 over the government's proposal to compile a register of the nation's manpower resources. In spite of the scorn which Walter Long, the new President of the Local Government Board, heaped upon the notion that the National Register Bill contained 'in some mysterious and concealed fashion the policy of conscription for the Army', Radicals were intensely suspicious of it.³² A rejecting amendment was put down by the Cobdenite Radicals R.D. Holt, J.W. Wilson, J.A. Murray Macdonald and Russell Rea.³³ In the debates on the Bill, a number of Radicals, including J.M. Robertson, R.D. Denman, Llewellyn Williams and William Clough, voiced the opinion that the compilation

³¹ The Nation, 22 May 1915.

³² H.C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol.73, col. 59 ff. (5 July 1915).

³³ Manchester Guardian, 2 July 1915.

of a national register was a futile exercise unless conscription was in contemplation.³⁴ The view that the National Register Bill was the thin end of the conscriptionist wedge was also expressed in the Radical press. The Nation was particularly scathing about what it described as the 'No-Organisation Bill':

It is useless, it is foolish and it is insincere. It is useless, because it does not effect a single object to which there is not an easier, a cheaper, and a quicker way than that which it provides. It is insincere, because, while it professes one purpose - that of organising the "war resources" of the nation (it does not and cannot organise a single man or woman) - it represents the more or less conscious effort of the anti-conscriptionists in the Cabinet to buy off the conscriptionists by offering them something... which will be quite ineffective to that end. And it is silly, because it is impossible either to disguise such a proceeding or to defend it.³⁵

The suspicions of Radical M.P.s were to some extent allayed by what R.D. Holt called the 'definitely anti-conscriptionist declarations' made by Asquith and McKenna before the division on the second reading of the Bill took place.³⁶ Even so, twenty-four Liberals voted against the Bill, of

³⁴ H.C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol.73, cols. 78-87 (J.M. Robertson); 93-99 (Denman); 117-22 (Williams). For Clough's views, see R.C. Lambert (ed.) The Parliamentary History of Conscription in Great Britain (London, 1917), p.18.

³⁵ The Nation, 22 May 1915.

³⁶ R.D. Holt's Diary, 11 July 1915, R.D. Holt MS.

whom all but three possessed sound Radical credentials.³⁷ This was the first time since the outbreak of war that Radicals had entered the division lobbies in opposition to government policy. It should also be noted that the opponents of the National Register Bill included such Radicals as R.C. Lambert, E.T. John, Pringle and R.D. Holt, who felt that Britain had been compelled to enter the war in 1914, as well as anti-interventionists like Ponsonby, Trevelyan and R.L. Outhwaite.

The political developments of mid-1915 dealt a considerable blow to the self-assurance of those Radicals who had become whole-hearted supporters of the war in 1914. In 1914 they had been confident that there was a substantial measure of sympathy in government circles for their view of the war as a struggle for international righteousness and were therefore convinced that it was realistic to think in terms of a post-war reconstruction of the international system. This optimism was undermined when the Conservatives gained a share of power. It was further eroded by the fear that the coalition government would opt for conscription. It was widely assumed within the Radical camp that compulsory military service was incompatible with the ideals for which Britain was fighting. Hence,

³⁷ The exceptions were R.W. Essex, Charles Hobhouse and Sir Thomas Whittaker. Fourteen out of the twenty-four had cast at least one vote against the naval estimates before 1914. Of the remainder, five had been members of the Foreign Affairs Group; one (C.P. Trevelyan) had been a member of the government; and one (Sir Walter Runciman) had not sat in parliament before 1914.

in the Radicals' view, a government which introduced conscription could not be one which was committed to the idea that Britain was engaged in a crusade against militarism.³⁸

There seems little reason to doubt that the change of government and the prospect of conscription had the effect of dampening Radical enthusiasm for the war. Gilbert Murray is a good example of the way in which Radical attitudes were changing. Murray was in many ways a representative figure. In August 1914 he had been a member of the British Neutrality Committee, along with such Radical luminaries as Lord Courtney, A.G. Gardiner, L.T. Hobhouse, J.A. Hobson and F.W. Hirst. He had departed from an anti-interventionist position just before the British declaration of war - a departure he subsequently justified in a published defence of Grey's foreign policy.³⁹ Later in 1914, he had shied away from the U.D.C., in spite of appeals to join it from MacDonald and Ponsonby. In May 1915, soon after the news of the downfall of the Liberal government had broken, Murray outlined his feelings about the war in a plaintive letter to J.L. Hammond.⁴⁰ He began by explaining why he had found it possible in 1914 to hope

³⁸ This point is dealt with more fully in ch. 5.

³⁹ Gilbert Murray, The Foreign Policy of Sir Edward Grey, 1906-15 (Oxford, 1915).

⁴⁰ Gilbert Murray to J.L. Hammond, 20 May 1915, Hammond MS., 30, fol. 63-4.

that the sacrifices of war would be worthwhile:

When the war started it happened, by luck, that the better mind in England was on the whole in power. Only just the better mind; because the Govt., and notably the Foreign department, was only just Liberal and only just reasonable and pacific. But the fact made an enormous difference. England did stand for law and freedom. The Maxses and Northcliffes and Bottomleys seemed for the time to be impotent, and to have come to heel.

Murray went on to deplore the way in which reactionary and illiberal forces had gained influence - by means of 'one scurrilous intrigue after another' - as the months had passed. He suggested that what would happen if these forces continued to have their way was that:

... we shall be a nation, not devoted to law or any of the causes which we thought we were supporting, but a nation very like Germany without its discipline - a nation which scarcely deserves to win, or deserves it about as much as Russia because she was originally innocent.

He concluded:

I hoped against hope that, for once, War would not necessarily bring oppression and reaction. But I fear it will be the Pitt business over again... Of course I shall support any Govt. not positively criminal till the war is over. The thing that I mind is the realisation that it is not the higher England, the England of freedom and moderation, that is fighting now; it is just England the mass of brute force and passion and cunning. And so, I suppose, it was bound to be.

Not all Radicals were as downhearted as Murray. There were some Radical M.P.s who had come to believe that victory had to be won at any cost. These individuals wept no tears over the demise of the Liberal government and were as eager as any Conservative backbencher to see the introduction of conscription. Josiah Wedgwood, for example, was not only

an ardent conscriptionist but also spoke with approval of the idea of a wartime dictatorship.⁴¹ Another outspoken advocate of compulsory military service was Arthur Markham, who, up to 1914, had been 'very nearly a pacifist'.⁴² In June 1915 Markham publicly denounced the Radical and Labour M.P.s who had spoken out against compulsion as 'friends of Germany'.⁴³ Other Radical M.P.s who were strongly in favour of conscription included Christopher Addison, Leo Chiozza Money and Sir Henry Dalziel. Outside parliament, C.P. Scott was attracted by the idea of a nation 'marshalled and regimented for service'.⁴⁴ These martial Radicals were, however, very much in a minority. The prevailing mood in the Radical camp in mid-1915 was unquestionably one of depression.⁴⁵

The threat of conscription also had the effect of undermining Radical faith in the Liberal party. What the majority of Radicals hoped for from their party was a

⁴¹ Speech in the House of Commons, 28 July 1915, quoted in R.C. Lambert (ed.), Parliamentary History of Conscription, pp. 21-2.

⁴² Violet Markham, Return Passage: The Autobiography of Violet R. Markham C.H. (London, 1953), p.86.

⁴³ Speech in the House of Commons, reported in Manchester Guardian, 9 June 1915.

⁴⁴ C.P. Scott to L.T. Hobhouse, ? May 1915, quoted in T. Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p.121.

⁴⁵ See for example, R.D. Denman to C.P. Trevelyan, 28 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS. (describing the views of Sir Wilfrid Lawson); Loreburn to Ponsonby, 31 May 1915, Ponsonby MS.; R.D. Holt's Diary, 20 June 1915, R.D. Holt MS.; Manchester Guardian, 20 May 1915; David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol. 2 (London, 1933), p.739.

resolute and united defence of the voluntary principle: but it was recognised that this would not be forthcoming. At the time of the formation of the coalition, it was assumed by Radicals that Churchill and Lloyd George favoured conscription, and it was clear that they had a small but not insignificant following among Liberal backbenchers. Lloyd George's movement towards the open advocacy of compulsion during the summer of 1915 was, from a Radical point of view, perhaps the most depressing feature of the situation. Speaking in Manchester in early June, Lloyd George disclosed that he had no objection in principle to military conscription and hinted strongly at the need for some element of compulsion in the industrial sphere.⁴⁶ Three months later, he released to the press the preface of a forthcoming collection of his speeches, in which, in the words of one Radical M.P., 'he made it clear that he was in favour of compulsory national service'.⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, relations between Lloyd George and the Radicals deteriorated sharply as a result of the former's stance on the conscription issue. A number of observers commented in mid-1915 on the existence of Liberal hostility towards Lloyd George. In June, for instance, J.A. Spender, editor of the Westminster Gazette, observed that Liberals

⁴⁶ Manchester Guardian, 4 June 1915.

⁴⁷ Llewellyn Williams, 'The Real Authors of Dissension', Manchester Guardian, 20 September 1915.

were 'very disgruntled' with Lloyd George because they believed he was going the way of Joseph Chamberlain.⁴⁸ Lloyd George's reputation was also damaged by persistent rumours that he was in league with Northcliffe, whose newspapers were in the van of the agitation for conscription. The Master of Elibank, a former Liberal Chief Whip, noted in mid-June that there was much gossip in Liberal circles to the effect that Lloyd George and the Northcliffe press were working together for 'disintegration'.⁴⁹ The gossips were evidently still at work a month later. On 10 July, Rufus Isaacs, the Lord Chief Justice, told Lord Riddell that the Liberals were angry with Lloyd George because they thought he was conspiring with Northcliffe against Asquith.⁵⁰ Asquith himself was convinced at this time that Lloyd George and Churchill were the 'two most unpopular & distrusted men in the (Liberal) party'.⁵¹ The majority of Radicals undoubtedly held views of the kind which Spender, Elibank and Isaacs described. This was at any

⁴⁸ Riddell's Diary, 11 June 1915, Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914-1918 (London, 1933), p.104.

⁴⁹ Elibank to 'P' (? Weetman Pearson, Lord Cowdray), 19 June 1915, Elibank MS., 8803.

⁵⁰ Riddell's Diary, 10 July 1915, War Diary, p.113.

⁵¹ Asquith to Balfour, 18 Septemoer 1915 ('most secret': copy), Asquith MS., 28, fol. 162-66.

rate the opinion of the London correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, who, in September 1915, examined some of the effects of the controversy over conscription:

What is very curious to observe is the breaking down of old political loyalties under these new conditions. Mr. Lloyd George is understood to be strongly for compulsion - that is the assumption made in talk among members. But he does not carry with him those who would usually be classed as his political followers even among Welsh members... A considerable section of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons are now leaderless men. Their action cannot be forecasted from the line taken by this or that member of the Government formerly regarded as generally representing their views. Many old allegiances will perhaps never be knit up again.⁵²

Radical anti-conscriptionists appear to have believed that, themselves apart, the strongest resistance to conscription would be offered by the Irish Nationalist party and the Labour movement.⁵³ This was indicative of their lack of confidence in their own party. They did not doubt that an overwhelming majority of the parliamentary Liberal party was opposed to conscription.⁵⁴ It was recognised, however, that much depended on what sort of a lead was given by Asquith. Radicals of course hoped that he would stand firm

⁵² Manchester Guardian, 15 September 1915.

⁵³ See, for example, R.D. Holt's Diary, 19 September 1915, R.D. Holt MS.; Lady Courtney's Diary, 19 September 1915, Courtney MS., vol.37; Manchester Guardian, 20 November 1915, 17 December 1915.

⁵⁴ See, for example, The Nation, 29 May 1915.

against compulsion, but his conduct in the political crisis of May 1915 had left them with doubts about his courage and determination.⁵⁵ It thus appeared to Radicals that the question of conscription placed Liberalism in serious jeopardy. There seemed to be a distinct possibility that the party would fail to make a stand on a vital matter of principle. H.W. Massingham claimed that the Liberal party would be 'broken for ever' if this happened.⁵⁶ Some Radicals were evidently in a state of despair even before the agitation for conscription began in earnest. 'Among Liberal intellectuals', reported the Manchester Guardian soon after the decision for coalition had been announced, 'there is a melancholy feeling, very frankly expressed, that this is probably the end of the Liberal Party for years to come.....'.⁵⁷

Apart from the handful of pro-war zealots, the only Radicals who derived any comfort from the events of mid-1915 were those associated with the U.D.C.. The U.D.C. Radicals were obviously aware of the extent to which the main stream of Radical opinion in parliament was perturbed by the advent of a coalition government and by the threat

⁵⁵ See Lady Courtney's comments on the lack of 'belief' in Asquith among Liberal anti-conscriptionists: Lady Courtney's Diary, 19 September 1915, Courtney MS., vol.37.

⁵⁶ The Nation, 22 May 1915; see also, W.M.R. Pringle to Gilbert Murray, 11 March 1921, Gilbert Murray MS., box 59.

⁵⁷ Manchester Guardian, 20 May 1915.

of conscription. They were also convinced that the mass of Radicals would not feel the same degree of loyalty towards the coalition which they had felt towards an exclusively Liberal government. This conviction led them to assume that Radicals would no longer feel compelled to refrain from voicing their disquiet over the way things were going. It thus appeared to the Radical leaders of the U.D.C. that the arrival of the coalition had presented them with an opportunity to extend the Union's influence. Ponsonby, Trevelyan and R.D. Denman were agreed that the U.D.C. could best exploit this opportunity by pursuing a far more aggressive policy than it had done during the first nine months of the war.⁵⁸ 'Bear in mind', Ponsonby told Trevelyan, 'that attack on this new Coalition will not be resented but welcomed by many liberals... bewildered members released completely for the first time from party allegiance will welcome a lead.'⁵⁹

One task which Ponsonby and Trevelyan set themselves was to extract from the coalition a statement of the 'general principles' on which it would be prepared to make peace.⁶⁰ Exactly what they hoped to achieve by this is not altogether clear. It seems probable that they believed

⁵⁸ The foregoing is based on Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 22 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; Trevelyan to Ponsonby, 25, 27 May 1915, Ponsonby MS.; R.D. Denman to C.P. Trevelyan, 28 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁵⁹ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 22 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁶⁰ This phrase is taken from Trevelyan to Ponsonby, 27 May 1915, Ponsonby MS.

that they could get the government to concede that its intention was to wage war until Germany surrendered unconditionally. It was presumably felt that the result of this would be that Radical and Labour M.P.s, having been made aware of the gulf between their concept of the war and that of the government, would recognise that the coalition would have to be opposed.⁶¹ In the event, Ponsonby and Trevelyan did not go ahead with their scheme. One reason for this was MacDonald's opposition to it. MacDonald did not believe that the government would make a frank statement of its war aims. The new government, he predicted, would simply 'repeat the moral phrases of the old'.⁶² MacDonald saw no need to force the pace. He thought that opposition to the coalition would arise without any prompting. He said of the new government: 'Let them do something. Their acts will be far worse than their professions'.⁶³ The second reason why Ponsonby and Trevelyan failed to act was that no opportune moment arose. Their intention was to speak in the debate on the vote of confidence in the coalition - but the coalition did not ask for a vote of confidence.⁶⁴

61 This interpretation is suggested by the observations made in Trevelyan to Ponsonby, 27 May 1915, Ponsonby MS.; Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 22 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; Ramsay MacDonald to Trevelyan, 28 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

62 MacDonald to Trevelyan, 28 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

63 ibid.

64 '... I see in today's Dly News that there is to be no vote of confidence so it is difficult to see how we can get an innings.' Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 28 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

The leaders of the U.D.C. were also divided over the question of what attitude to adopt with regard to conscription. Ponsonby, Trevelyan and MacDonald took the view that the U.D.C. should enter the struggle against compulsion with all its resources. They appreciated that little could be done to stop the government if it was determined to introduce compulsory service. What the U.D.C. could do, wrote C.P. Trevelyan, was 'fill with disgust and indignation numbers of Liberals and Labour men who will never again look to their leaders who force it (conscription) on them as people fit to lead'.⁶⁵ In June 1915, in the absence of E.D. Morel, the Executive Committee of the U.D.C. agreed to submit to its General Council a resolution pledging the Union 'to oppose to the utmost any attempt to impose compulsory service either for military or industrial purposes'.⁶⁶ Morel objected strongly to this proposal. He argued that it would commit the U.D.C. to a policy by which it would have to 'stand or fall, irrespective of its main programme'. He acknowledged that if the Union led a successful campaign against conscription it could 'at one bound, place itself at the head of the democratic movement'. But, he asked, what would happen if Liberal and

⁶⁵ Trevelyan to Ponsonby, 27 May 1915, Ponsonby MS.

⁶⁶ Copy in E.D. Morel MS.

Labour opposition to conscription collapsed? The U.D.C., he suggested, would be left 'beating the air'.⁶⁷ Morel won the day. The Executive Committee's proposal did not go forward to the General Council of the Union. The U.D.C. did not as a body play an active part in the resistance to conscription.

The leaders of the U.D.C. thus did not even attempt to offer a lead to the main stream of Radical opinion in mid-1915. The only product of a good deal of discussion was an attempt by Ponsonby and Trevelyan to reactivate and enlarge the group of Radical M.P.s which had been formed in August 1914 to 'watch the war and secure peace as soon as possible'.⁶⁸ There is no evidence to suggest that they met with any success. It may be surmised that the mass of Radicals had no desire at this stage to associate themselves with the leaders of an organisation which was widely believed to be in favour of a 'drawn war and a compromise peace'.⁶⁹ There are, however, some indications that Radicals were moving towards the U.D.C. view that the ideas of the opponents of jingoism would only prevail if a combative attitude was adopted. One such indication was the vote on the National Register Bill. Another was

⁶⁷ This and the preceding two quotations are taken from E.D. Morel to C.P. Trevelyan, 9 June 1915 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.

⁶⁸ For this group, see ch. 3.

⁶⁹ G.H. Hardy, Bertrand Russell & Trinity: A college controversy of the last war, p.14.

the formation of small, informal pressure groups by Radical backbenchers who were prepared to criticise the coalition government. In June 1915, W.M.R. Pringle, J.M. Hogge, Arthur Sherwell, MacCallum Scott, H.A. Watt, C.T. Needham, J.W. Pratt, Sir Arthur Marshall and Sydney Arnold agreed to act in concert against the government whenever they thought that its actions were not calculated to lead to the 'speedy end' of the war'.⁷⁰ A group with similar intentions was that formed by Sir Charles Nicholson, R.D. Holt, J.W. Wilson, Russell Rea, Sir Thomas Whittaker, Leif Jones, J.A. Murray Macdonald, James Falconer, Sir Frederick Cawley and Sir William Middlebrook. Their object was to give the government 'a Liberal pull wherever possible'.⁷¹ Radicals also became more assertive in their extra-parliamentary activities. The League of Nations Society, formed in May 1915, began in the winter of 1915-16 to issue propaganda in support of its view that the eventual peace settlement should contain 'provisions to ensure the judicial settlement of all international disputes'.⁷² Its members included the Radical M.P.s W.H. Dickinson, Aneurin Williams, A.G.C. Harvey and

⁷⁰ MacCallum Scott's Diary, 25 May, 2 June 1915, quoted in Hazlehurst, Politicians at War, p.288.

⁷¹ R.D. Holt's Diary, 20 June 1915, R.D. Holt MS.

⁷² This phrase was used in a motion discussed at one of the early meetings of the Society: see A.W. Claremont to W.H. Dickinson, 26 Jan 1926, Bodleian Eng. Hist. MS. c. 404, fol.7 (W.H. Dickinson MS.).

Noel Buxton, and the Radical intellectuals J.A. Hobson, Lowes Dickinson and Gilbert Murray.⁷³ For their part, the leaders of the U.D.C. believed that they would in time attract Radical support. When E.D. Morel told C.P. Trevelyan in July 1915 that he had been invited to join the I.L.P., he received a brusque reply: 'I am clear that it would be fatal to any progress with Liberals for anyone to take a definite step towards political change of allegiance who is in a prominent position among us'.⁷⁴

⁷³ 'Notes on the League of Nations movement', enclosed in Daniels to Lord (W.H.) Dickinson, 25 May 1938, Bodleian Eng. Hist. MS. c. 406, fols.99-148 (W.H. Dickinson MS.).

⁷⁴ Note by Trevelyan on E.D. Morel to C.P. Trevelyan, 9 July 1915, E.D. Morel MS.

5. TOWARDS A RAPPROCHEMENT: THE RADICALS
AND CONSCRIPTION, 1915-1916

On 12 December 1916, Lloyd George's newly-formed coalition ministry faced the House of Commons for the first time. Sitting on the opposition benches below the gangway were some thirty-five M.P.s, five I.L.P.-ers and approximately thirty Radicals, who constituted what the press called the 'Civil Liberties Group'.¹ This body, originally known as the 'Simon group', had come into existence immediately before the first Military Service Bill became law in January 1916. Its aim was to defend 'public liberties'.² It had little success. Its influence on government policy in 1916 was negligible. Yet, in the context of Radical politics, the Civil Liberties Group was an organisation of considerable significance. It was the most conspicuous product of the Radical rapprochement which took place in the eighteen months between the formation of the Asquith coalition in May 1915 and Asquith's downfall in December 1916. The conscription issue was undoubtedly the most powerful centripetal influence in Radical politics during this period. It is therefore necessary to examine in detail the attitudes and reactions of Radicals to the introduction of compulsory military service.

It is not altogether easy to see why the overwhelming

¹ Daily News, 13 December 1916.

² Daily News, 5 October 1916.

majority of Radicals attached so much importance to the maintenance of the voluntary system of recruiting. Admittedly, there were Radicals whose objection to conscription was founded on the belief that it involved a violation of the basic rights of the individual. R.L. Outhwaite, for example, argued that conscription was a denial of the inherent right of a man to the 'possession of his own body'.³ In similar vein, R.D. Holt maintained that conscription made 'inroads on the individual which are entirely unjustified'.⁴ It is difficult to say whether dogmatism of this kind was widespread within the Radical camp. There were certainly strong feelings on the question of freedom of conscience, notably among Quaker M.P.s like T.E. Harvey and Arnold Rowntree - but this was a different matter, since the preservation of this freedom was not in theory incompatible with conscription.⁵ It may be tentatively suggested that Radicals, for the most part, accepted that there were circumstances in which the introduction of compulsory military service could be justified. This at least was the contention of A.G. Gardiner's Daily News, which, referring to the first

³ Outhwaite, The Land or Revolution, p. 111.

⁴ Holt expressed this view when moving the rejection of the second Military Service Bill in May 1916: see H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 87, cols. 143-54 (4 May 1916).

⁵ For a discussion of Quaker attitudes to conscription, see Robbins, 'The Abolition of War', ch. 4.

Military Service Bill, asserted: 'Had it emerged indisputably out of the necessities of war there would have been few who would not have accepted it as an evil condition of these evil times'.⁶

In late 1915 powerful voices were to be heard insisting that conscription was indisputably necessary. The case put forward by the most sophisticated conscriptionists - who were mainly to be found within the Cabinet - was a formidable one. It was argued that Britain, having failed in its bid to open up the Central Powers' southeastern flank by defeating Turkey, had no alternative but to concentrate its efforts on the war of attrition in northern France. The advocates of conscription insisted that there could be no question of leaving France to bear the main burden of the fighting on the Western Front. They did so not only because they doubted whether France had the capacity to withstand the German armies, but also because they feared that the French could make a separate peace with Germany if they became convinced that Britain was unwilling to bear its share of the human cost of the

⁶ Daily News, 4 January 1916. For examples of prominent Radical opponents of compulsory military service stating or implying that they had no a priori objection to conscription, see E.D. Morel to C.P. Trevelyan, 9 June 1915 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.; Philip Morrell to the President, Burnley Liberal Association, printed in Manchester Guardian, 30 October 1916; C.P. Scott's Diary, 10-11 January 1916, printed in T. Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 171.

war.⁷ The conscriptionists therefore asserted that it was necessary for Britain to transform itself into a military power of continental proportions. Lloyd George, for example, poured scorn on Kitchener's estimate that Britain's military obligations could be met with a field army of seventy divisions: he told C.P. Scott that a 'much larger force' was needed.⁸ One claim made by Lloyd George and his fellow-conscriptionists was that a voluntary system of recruiting was incapable of providing men in the numbers required.⁹ In the late summer of 1915 they were able to point to the fact that there had been a marked drop in the rate of recruiting. It was also claimed that voluntarism had failed to bring about a proper distribution of the nation's manpower resources. The voluntary system, the conscriptionists argued, had given rise to an absurd situation in which vital manufacturing and export industries had been deprived of skilled labour by indiscriminate recruiting while there remained a substantial reservoir of men in non-essential

⁷ Northcliffe in particular was haunted by the spectre of a separate peace: see The History of the Times, vol. 4, pt. 1, (London, 1952), pp. 273, 276-7. See also, P. Guinn, British Strategy and Politics 1914-1918 (Oxford, 1965), pp. 95-6.

⁸ C.P. Scott's Diary, 5 September 1915, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 135.

⁹ See, for example, Asquith to the King, 12 October 1915 (copy), Asquith MS., vol. 8, f. 103-4.

occupations who had failed to volunteer.¹⁰ The conscriptionists insisted that it was only by means of compulsory military service that the necessary balance could be struck between the demands of the armed forces and those of the economy. Conscription was thus seen by its advocates as a precondition of success in the war. In October 1915, Lloyd George told a Cabinet committee investigating the manpower situation: 'You will not get through without some measure of military compulsion or compulsion for military service'.¹¹

There were individuals within the Radical camp whose hostility to the case put forward by the conscriptionists was based partly or even largely on the view that it was a recipe for economic disaster. This view was upheld most strongly within the House of Commons by a handful of Radical businessmen, prominent amongst whom were R.D. Holt, A.G.C. Harvey, P.A. Molteno, Leif Jones and E.T. John. Its most active propagator outside parliament was

¹⁰ See, for example, Christopher Addison, Politics from Within, vol. 1 (London, 1924), p. 170; D. Ll. George, War Memoirs, vol. 2, pp. 711-12. For a discussion of the economic difficulties caused by indiscriminate recruiting in 1914-15, see D. French, 'Some Aspects of Economic and Social Planning for War in Great Britain, c. 1905-15' (London Ph. D. thesis, in progress), ch. 4.

¹¹ Quoted in P. Lowe, 'The Rise to the Premiership, 1914-16' in Taylor (ed.), Lloyd George: Twelve Essays, p. 112.

F.W. Hirst, editor of The Economist.¹² The claim made by Hirst and these Radical businessmen was that any attempt to add a continental military commitment of the size envisaged by the conscriptionists to Britain's existing responsibilities would lead to economic collapse.¹³ What they favoured was the adoption of the kind of strategy which Britain had pursued in the Napoleonic wars, as E.T. John made clear:

The proper contribution of Great Britain to the combined effort of the Allies rests in the first place in the effective exercise of seapower, in the second place in a material but strictly limited contribution of military strength in men and munitions, in the third place in financing not alone its own stupendous commitments, but also those of Russia, Italy, the Overseas Dominions and the smaller states acting in conjunction with the Allies.¹⁴

This was not an opinion which was held only within the Radical camp. The 'financial argument against compulsion', as C.P. Scott described it, appears to have won quite

¹² Hirst began to warn his fellow-Radicals that conscription carried with it the danger of 'financial and economic exhaustion' in 1914: see F.W. Hirst to C.P. Trevelyan, 3 November 1914 (Private), R.D. Denman MS., box 4; also, Hirst to C.P. Scott, 28 May 1915, printed in T. Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 126.

¹³ See, for example, R.D. Holt's Diary, 24 October 1915, 20 February 1916, 7 May 1916, R.D. Holt MS.; speeches by Holt in the House of Commons, 6 January 1916 (H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 77, col. 1229) and 4 May 1916 (ibid., vol. 87, cols. 143-54); speech by Leif Jones in the House of Commons, 6 January 1916 (ibid., vol. 78, cols. 1158-1168); E.T. John to John Simon, 15 January 1916 (copy), E.T. John MS.; see also R.D. Lambert (ed.), Parliamentary History of Conscription, p. iv.

¹⁴ E.T. John to A.G. Bradley, 12 June 1915 (copy), E.T. John MS.

widespread acceptance among Liberal businessmen and was advanced in the Cabinet's debates on conscription by Runciman, the President of the Board of Trade, and McKenna, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.¹⁵ It was, in fact, not so much an argument against conscription as such as an argument against the conscriptionists' assumption that Britain had to opt for a continental strategy. The leading Radical proponents of the 'financial argument against compulsion' also objected to the raising of excessively large armies by voluntary means. In December 1915, for example, some weeks before the introduction of the first Military Service Bill, R.D. Holt and A.G.C. Harvey called upon the House of Commons to reject a proposal to increase the size of the army from three to four million men, giving as their reason the 'financial and commercial disaster likely to ensue from the further abstraction of labour from industry'.¹⁶ To conscriptionists, it seemed naive to suppose, as men like Holt and Harvey did, that Britain's war effort could be largely confined

¹⁵ Scott used this phrase in his diary, 14-15 October 1915 (see T. Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 144); for the fears of 'Northern industrialist members' about the 'depletion of industry', see Manchester Guardian, 22 December 1915; on the attitudes of Runciman and McKenna towards conscription, see E. Montagu to Asquith, 6 January 1916, Asquith MS., vol. 16, f. 3-6, and R. Jenkins, Asquith (Fontana edn., London, 1967), pp. 435-6.

¹⁶ R.D. Holt's Diary, 26 December 1915, R.D. Holt MS.; see also, Manchester Guardian, 22 December 1915.

to the retention of control of the sea and the provision of material and financial aid to her allies. Lloyd George, for example, suggested that this view was based on an underestimate of the strength of the British economy, an overestimate of the military capacity of France and Russia, and an unwarranted optimism with regard to the willingness of those two countries to suffer heavy casualties while Britain stood aside.¹⁷ 'Sacrifices', he told C.P. Scott, 'must be equal'.¹⁸

The number of Radicals who felt that the question of strategy was the main point at issue in the debate over conscription was undoubtedly very small indeed. A matter of far greater concern to the majority of Radical anti-conscriptionists was what A.G. Gardiner spoke of as the 'war of ideals' which was being waged behind the war of the trenches.¹⁹ It was widely believed in Radical quarters that those responsible for the conscription agitation were intent not on furthering the national interest but their own political ends. An explanation of the reasons why this was believed to be so was contained in a letter

¹⁷ See C.P. Scott's Diary, 3 September, 5 September, 17 October, 26 October 1915, printed in T. Wilson (ed.) Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, pp. 131-3, 135-6, 146, 148-9.

¹⁸ C.P. Scott's Diary, 17 October 1915, printed in ibid., p. 146.

¹⁹ Daily News, 24 October 1914, quoted in Koss, Gardiner, p. 171.

to the Nation written by the Radical M.P. Percy Alden:

... the National Service Campaign is something more than a campaign to enable the Allies to win this war. The conclusion is forced upon us that conscription is being justified and supported as an end in itself, not as a means to an end. The Conscriptors want a party victory at home rather than a victory for our armies abroad; or, if they do not, what sense is there in attempting to force on the Government a policy which it has declared to be unnecessary, a policy, moreover, which is certain to meet with the strenuous opposition of all workers in this country?²⁰

The claim that conscription was not a military necessity and would in fact undermine the war effort by dividing the nation was made repeatedly by Radical participants in the debates on the first Military Service Bill.²¹ What, then, did Radicals assume the political aims of the conscriptionists to be? It was certainly believed that they hoped to make conscription 'a permanent condition of

²⁰ The Nation, 28 August 1915. It was, perhaps, assertions of this kind which prompted Bonar Law to assure Asquith that members of the Conservative party were demanding conscription for patriotic motives: 'Many of them are no doubt influenced by the desire to secure compulsion for its own sake, because they believe in it; but I think I am not exaggerating when I say that there is hardly a single Unionist member who does not believe that the needs of the war now demand general compulsion'. (Bonar Law to Asquith, 17 April 1916 (Private), Asquith MS., vol. 16, f. 147-53).

²¹ See, for example, the speeches of W.P. Byles, H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 77, col. 986 (5 January 1916); A.J. Sherwell, ibid., col. 1023 (5 January 1916); P. Alden, ibid., col. 1183 (5 January 1916); J.H. Whitehouse, ibid., col. 1071 (5 January 1916); Leif Jones, ibid., col. 1158 (5 January 1916).

English life'.²² It was also suggested that the conscription agitation was part of a wider attempt to discredit Liberal ideals. 'Those who want a false kind of settlement', declared C.R. Buxton in October 1915,

are preparing for it now. The Tory Press is doing all it can to lay the foundations of a Tory Prussianized England in the future. They are not solely engaged in the prosecution of the war. They are making careful political preparations for winning over the country to their views... They want an England in which there will be permanent conscription, permanent Protection, suppression of free speech, autocratic government which will keep the Labour movement under strict control and practically take away the right to strike in ordinary times.²³

Buxton, prospective Liberal candidate for Hackney between 1912 and 1915, was a member of the U.D.C. and an early advocate of a negotiated peace. In some respects, therefore, his attitudes were not typical of those held by the majority of Radicals. This cannot be said of his belief that the Tories were bent on exploiting the opportunities offered by the war to promote authoritarian and militaristic doctrines. This belief was shared by

²² Daily News, 4 January 1916. See also Arthur Ponsonby's comment on the first Military Service Bill ('We (that is to say those of us who were opposing the Bill)... see very clearly the determined intention of the conscriptionists that this Bill is to be the first step in the establishment of a universal system of conscription both for this war and after the war.'), Ponsonby to Edward Smith, 29 January 1916, (copy) Ponsonby MS.

²³ 'Notes for speech to Central Hackney Liberal Association Executive Committee', ? October 1915, C.R. Buxton MS., 1/2/50-59.

such representatives of mainstream Radicalism as A.G. Gardiner and Llewellyn Williams.²⁴ It was shared, too, by Massingham's Nation, which spoke in January 1916 of 'the game of a Coalition in which one view of life and policy is deliberately staked over a table against another, and the Liberal and Democratic Card is always the loser'.²⁵

It was also strongly argued by Radicals that the question of conscription could not be divorced from the question of the objects for which the war was being fought. The claim made most frequently by Radical spokesmen in the debates on the National Register Bill and the first Military Service Bill was that conscription was incompatible with the principles that Britain had entered the war to uphold. 'Are we today', asked Philip Morrell, 'in order to crush Prussian militarism, to turn aside and introduce into this country an imitation of Prussian militarism...?'²⁶ W.P. Byles argued: 'We are fighting, as I understand it, just to prevent the horrors of conscription from being fastened on our country, just to destroy German militarism, not to set it up'.²⁷ R.C. Lambert went so far as to suggest, somewhat ludicrously, that any resort to Prussian methods

²⁴ Daily News, 4 January 1916, 3 May 1916; speech by Williams in the House of Commons, H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol.77, cols. 1034-35 (5 January 1916).

²⁵ The Nation, 22 January 1916.

²⁶ Speech by Morrell in the House of Commons, 28 July 1915, quoted in Lambert (ed.), Parliamentary History of Conscription, p.22.

²⁷ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol.77, col.983 (5 January 1916).

would imperil Britain's chances of victory: 'We shall never defeat Prussianism and militarism in this great war by adopting Prussianism ourselves'.²⁸ There is no reason to suppose, however, that Radicals who put forward claims of this kind were merely attempting to score debating points. Most Radical anti-conscriptionists, as R.C. Lambert pointed out, had given their support to the war on the understanding that it was 'a fight ... for British ideals and for Liberalism in its widest sense against Prussian Militarism and Tyranny'.²⁹ This concept of the war was genuinely felt by its adherents to be under challenge in the struggle over conscription. It was recognised that very different ideas about the war would hold sway if the Tory conscriptionists became the predominant force in politics. The Conservatives, Radicals felt, had their sights fixed on the establishment of a balance of power favourable to Britain and aimed to 'crush Germany' in order to bring this about.³⁰ To Radicals, the prospect of Prussian methods being employed to fight for this objective was a dismal one. Radical disillusionment with the war certainly deepened after the Military Service Acts had

²⁸ ibid., vol. 73, cols. 153-55 (5 July 1915).

²⁹ Lambert (ed.), Parliamentary History of Conscription, p. iii.

³⁰ For an example of a Radical expressing his feelings on this matter, see speech by D.M. Mason in the House of Commons, 15 September 1915, quoted in Lambert (ed.), Parliamentary History of Conscription, p. 28-9.

been passed. In January 1916, Lady Courtney, whose contacts within the Radical community were extensive, noted that there was 'a good deal of Liberal opinion which has been supporting the war with increasing doubtfulness'.³¹ Some Radical M.P.s who had supported British intervention in 1914 gave notice of their doubts in the debates on conscription. W.P. Byles wondered whether the war would be worth winning if liberties were surrendered and institutions were Germanised.³² Llewellyn Williams declared:

Are we, in order to bring this war to a successful conclusion, to lose all that England stands for? I say that it would be a tragedy worse than war if, in order to win the war, England ceased to be the beacon of freedom and liberty which she has been in the past.³³

There were Radical opponents of conscription whose attitude to the war was little affected by the conscription issue. These were Radicals like Ponsonby, Trevelyan and Outhwaite who believed that Britain should never have entered the war. Members of this school of thought felt that their fellow-Radicals had been foolish to defend the war as a struggle for liberal ideals against militarism and

³¹ Lady Courtney's Diary, 8 January 1916, Courtney MS., vol. 37. This point is discussed in more detail below.

³² H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 77, col. 983 (5 January 1916).

³³ ibid., vol. 73, col. 122 (15 July 1915).

and authoritarianism. 'The wrong forces are ranged against one another for such a war as that', maintained Arthur Ponsonby.³⁴ Ponsonby and his associates, however, did not dissent from the view that the conscription agitation was part of a wider political offensive. The organ of the Union of Democratic Control stated: 'The attempt to stampede the country into conscription is part and parcel of a general policy and ought to be viewed as such'.³⁵

Hostility to conscription was not only to be found within the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party. 'No one doubts', claimed the Nation in May 1915, 'that nine-tenths of the Liberal and Labour parties are anti-Conscriptionist...'.³⁶ The Nation was passionately opposed to conscription and therefore had every reason to exaggerate. There can be little doubt, however, that in the autumn of 1915 there was considerable opposition to the idea of conscription within the Liberal ranks. Soon after the publication of the Derby Scheme, which was heralded as the last chance for the voluntary system, the Liberal and Labour opponents of conscription formed

³⁴ Ponsonby to ed., Daily News, 20 June 1916.

³⁵ The U.D.C., vol. 1, no. 3 (January 1916).

³⁶ The Nation, 29 May 1915.

themselves into a definite group.³⁷ Its membership was apparently something in the order of one hundred and fifty.³⁸ It can be assumed that a fair proportion of the group's members were Radicals. It was certainly led by Radicals. Its secretary was J.H. Whitehouse, who was Lloyd George's parliamentary private secretary until October 1915, and its acting chairman was Percy Alden.³⁹ The Liberal anti-conscriptionists appear to have believed in late 1915 that their prospects of defeating the threat to voluntaryism were good. Their confidence was based to a large extent on the expectation that a compulsory military service Bill would be resolutely opposed by the trade union movement in the country as well as by the Irish Nationalist party - which had resolved in June to resist any attempt to introduce conscription with every means in its power - and the Labour party in parliament.⁴⁰

³⁷ Under the Derby Scheme, men of military age (18-40) were invited to 'attest' to their willingness to serve in the armed forces if and when needed. See J. Rae, Conscience and Politics: The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service, 1916-1919 (London, 1970), pp. 15-21.

³⁸ The Nation, 23 October 1915; The Times, 11 January 1916 (which stated that the group had 180 members 'on paper').

³⁹ The nominal chairman of the group was Charles Hobhouse, a member of the Liberal Cabinet between October 1911 and May 1915. Hobhouse was seriously ill in the autumn of 1915. He returned to the House of Commons in January 1916 and incurred the wrath of the Radical press by voting for the Military Service Bill (see Daily News, 5 January 1916, The Nation, 15 January 1916).

⁴⁰ The Irish Nationalists reaffirmed this resolution in December 1915: see Manchester Guardian, 22 December 1915 (in which the Irish Nationalists were described as 'by far the most formidable obstacle to any measure of compulsion').

This confidence even remained intact after Asquith's speech of 2 November, in which he pledged that the government would, if necessary, resort to compulsion to ensure that no married man who had attested to his willingness to serve under the Derby Scheme would be called upon to do so until all available single men had come forward. The heartening feature of Asquith's speech, from the point of view of Liberal anti-conscriptionists, was that it contained a statement to the effect that compulsion could only be introduced if there was 'something in the nature of ... general consent'.⁴¹ Members of the anti-conscription group were also heartened by the observations made by Asquith when he received a fifty-strong deputation from it on 16 December.⁴² Asquith told the deputation that he regarded conscription as a 'repulsive and worse than repulsive alternative'.⁴³ T.E. Harvey, who was present at this meeting, came away from it 'very pleased' and

⁴¹ See the comments attributed to a 'leading member' of the anti-conscription group in Manchester Guardian, 4 November 1915. E.T. John went to a meeting of the anti-conscription group soon after 2 November and found that the mood was one of 'great confidence' (E.T. John to Beriah Evans, 14 November 1915 (copy), E.T. John MS.).

⁴² The size of the deputation was restricted at Asquith's request. The Nation claimed that if this request had not been made there would have been two hundred Liberal and Labour M.P.s present (The Nation, 24 December 1915; see also, Manchester Guardian, 17 December 1915).

⁴³ T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 16 December 1915, T.E. Harvey MS.

convinced that legislation was unlikely to be introduced in the near future.⁴⁴ Other members of the deputation evidently formed the same impression.⁴⁵ Their optimism was of course misplaced. Asquith had virtually surrendered to the conscriptionists in the Cabinet before the 16 December meeting. It had been agreed on 15 December that a Cabinet committee should be set up to 'consider in consultation with the draftsmen what form any amendment in the law in the direction of compulsion might take'.⁴⁶ The decision to introduce a Bill providing for the conscription of unmarried men who had not 'attested' under the Derby Scheme was taken by the Cabinet on 28 December.⁴⁷ The debate on the Military Service (No.2) Bill began in the House of Commons on 5 January.

The organisers of the anti-conscription group were convinced that there would be a large-scale Liberal revolt against the government's proposals. Assurances were given to the Irish Nationalist party that one hundred Liberal M.P.s would vote against the Bill in the division

⁴⁴ T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 16 December 1915, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁴⁵ Manchester Guardian, 17 December 1915; The Nation, 24 December 1915.

⁴⁶ Asquith to the King, 15 December 1915 (copy), Asquith MS., vol. 8, f. 122-3.

⁴⁷ Asquith to the King, 28 December 1915 (copy), Asquith MS., vol. 8, f. 125.

on its first reading.⁴⁸ J.H. Whitehouse derided the suggestion of John Dillon, Redmond's chief lieutenant, that the number of Liberal dissidents would not exceed forty.⁴⁹ But Dillon's guess proved to be correct. There were only thirty-four Liberals among the one hundred and five M.P.s who registered a vote against the Bill in the division on the first reading.⁵⁰ J.H. Whitehouse, searching for some

48 The Times, 12 January 1916.

49 C.P. Scott's Diary, 10-11 January 1916, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 169.

50 Military Service (No.2) Bill, div. no. 24 (6 January 1916). Sixty of the one hundred and five M.P.s who voted against the Bill in this division were Irish Nationalists. The Nationalists, according to the Times, were 'bitterly annoyed' to find that their contribution to the minority was larger than that of the British Liberal and Labour M.P.s combined (The Times, 12 January 1916). Ireland was exempt from the provisions of the Military Service Bill: the Nationalists had therefore been left open to the accusation that they had interfered in a purely British affair. This, however, was not the main reason for their anger. What they feared, according to T.E. Harvey, was that their conduct might be used as a 'lever against Home Rule' (T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 11 January 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.). The Government of Ireland Act (1914), which had been put into cold storage for the duration of the war, included provision for continued Irish representation at Westminster. The Nationalists were alarmed by the possibility that anti-Home Rulers would argue that their behaviour over the exclusively British conscription Bill was a foretaste of what could be expected after Home Rule had come into force. Hence, on 11 January, a Nationalist party meeting took the decision not to vote against the Military Service Bill in the division on the second reading. When this division was taken, the number of M.P.s voting against the Bill dropped to thirty-nine, of whom twenty-seven were Liberals. Two Radicals - E.H. Lamb and Sir Wilfrid Lawson - who did not vote in the first reading division voted against the Bill in one of the two subsequent divisions (Lamb on the third reading, Lawson on the second). In all, thirty-eight Liberals (including tellers) voted against the Bill at some stage in its progress through the House of Commons.

crumb of comfort, alleged that the Prime Minister had failed to win the support of the majority of his usual followers. He maintained that most of the Liberal, Labour and Irish Nationalist M.P.s who had sustained the Liberal government in office before May 1915 had either voted against the Bill or had abstained.⁵¹ This was a disingenuous claim. It was true that approximately eighty Liberals failed to cast a vote in the division on 6 January. But, as the lobby correspondent of the Daily News pointed out, Whitehouse's assumption that a failure to vote implied hostility to the Bill was entirely unwarranted.⁵² The eighty Liberal non-voters included M.P.s who were paired, M.P.s who were ill and M.P.s who were on active service overseas. In fact, rather less than half of those who failed to cast a vote did so because of their hostility to the Bill. John Gulland, the Liberal Chief Whip, told Asquith: 'On the first reading, 30 Liberals definitely abstained, while several more were absent without very good reason'.⁵³

The thirty-four Liberals who voted against the

⁵¹ Daily News, 26 January 1916. The same claim was made by Arthur Ponsonby (Ponsonby to Edward Smith, 29 January 1916, (copy), Ponsonby MS).

⁵² Daily News, 26 January 1916.

⁵³ J.W.G.(ulland), 'Against a General Election from a Liberal point of view' (Private & Confidential) ? January 1916, Asquith MS., vol. 82, f. 130-34.

government on the first reading of the Military Service Bill were drawn almost exclusively from the Radical wing of the parliamentary party. Twenty-four of them had cast at least one vote in favour of the limitation of naval spending in the 1906-1914 period. Twenty-one of these twenty-four had voted in support of the reductionist cause on two or more occasions. Among them were such stalwarts of the pre-war campaign for naval disarmament as J. Allen Baker, W.P. Byles, William Clough, A.G.C. Harvey, Thomas Lough, D.M. Mason, Leif Jones, T.E. Harvey and Arthur Ponsonby. Three M.P.s who voted against the Military Service Bill on 6 January had cast only one vote against naval expansion before 1914: W.M.R. Pringle; P.A. Molteno, who had led the 1913 deputation to Asquith on the naval spending issue; and Sir John Simon, who had resigned the Home Secretaryship on 29 December and who now found himself in unfamiliar and, as it proved, uncongenial company. A number of the ten remaining M.P.s who voted against the government on 6 January but had not voted in support of the reductionist cause before 1914 nevertheless possessed some Radical credentials. Joseph King had been on the Executive Committee of the Foreign Affairs Group. R.D. Denman and R.L. Outhwaite had been members of the Foreign Affairs Group. C.P. Trevelyan had been a member of the government between 1908 and 1914 but had endeavoured to further Radical causes behind the scenes. Sir Walter Runciman was a staunch Cobdenite Radical who had entered parliament in late 1914. H.B. Lees-Smith thought of himself as a Radical, although he did not have

a striking record of pre-war dissidence.⁵⁴ Lees-Smith had, however, voted for a neutralist resolution at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Group on 3 August 1914. He subsequently came to believe in the justice of the Allied cause, but nevertheless joined the General Council of the U.D.C. in November 1914. It should be added that the two Liberal M.P.s who acted as tellers for the opposition in the division on 6 January - R.D. Holt and J.H. Whitehouse - were seasoned Radical campaigners.

The first reference to Sir John Simon in Asquith's speech on the Military Service Bill on 5 January was greeted by a 'long cheer from the Radicals'.⁵⁵ That the Prime Minister was interrupted by such an outburst is in no way surprising. What does need explaining is the fact that so many of those responsible for it failed to join Simon in the opposition lobby on 6 January. There were, of course, some Radicals who expressed their disapproval of the Bill by abstaining. There is some evidence to suggest that a number of Radical opponents of the Bill only decided on this course at the last moment.⁵⁶ It is not possible to say how large this number was. Nor,

⁵⁴ For Lees-Smith identifying himself with Radicalism, see Daily News, 10 February 1919.

⁵⁵ T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 5 January 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁵⁶ R.D. Holt's Diary, 9 January 1916, R.D. Holt MS.; Manchester Guardian, 11 January 1916.

indeed, is it possible to say how many Radical abstainers there were. The kind of evidence which is needed for an exact figure to be given is not available.⁵⁷ J.W. Wilson certainly abstained.⁵⁸ It is almost certain that among those who accompanied him were John Hinds and Aneurin Williams, members of the small band of Radicals who had temporarily crossed the floor in June 1915; J.M. McCallum, who had voted against the National Register Bill in July 1915; and Harry Nuttall, who let it be known in January 1916 that he favoured an early peace.⁵⁹ Other likely Radical abstainers included P.W. Raffan, Ellis Davies, John Jardine, G.H. Pollard, T.C. Taylor, G.H. Radford and T.R. Ferens. These M.P.s, along with Nuttall, Williams, Wilson and Hinds, were among the hundred-odd Liberals who took part in an attempt to strengthen Asquith's hand against the advocates of general conscription during the Cabinet crisis of April 1916.⁶⁰ It is possible to speak

⁵⁷ No direct evidence on the identity of the abstainers is available. The difficulty which therefore arises is that of distinguishing between those who abstained and those who may have been absent for some other reason.

⁵⁸ R.D. Holt's Diary, 9 January 1916, R.D. Holt MS.

⁵⁹ For Nuttall, see Manchester Guardian, 21 January 1916; for evidence of John Hinds' hostility to conscription, see Hinds to E.T. John, 1 June 1915, E.T. John MS.

⁶⁰ This took the form of a resolution - passed unanimously at a meeting on 19 April - stating that Asquith's continuance as head of the government was a national necessity. There is a copy of the resolution, including a list of signatories, in the Asquith MS., vol. 30, f. 31-4. The intentions of the Liberals who backed the resolution are described in T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 20 April 1916, T.E. Harvey MS. This episode is discussed more fully below.

with rather more precision about the number of M.P.s with a record of pre-war Radical activity who actually voted for the Military Service Bill on 6 January. Fifteen of the Liberals who entered the government lobby had registered two or more votes in favour of the limitation of naval spending before 1914; a further fourteen had voted against naval expansion on one occasion. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that all of these M.P.s were persuaded of the need for conscription. No less an authority than the Liberal Chief Whip acknowledged that many of the Liberals who voted for the Bill had done so with 'great reluctance'.⁶¹ Gulland's testimony is corroborated by that of T.E. Harvey, who told his wife that 'some who voted aye admitted that they disliked and disapproved of the Bill'.⁶² It may be surmised that one Radical who fell into this category was J.M. Robertson, who attended a meeting of the anti-conscription group only hours before voting for the Bill.⁶³ It is worth noting, too, that sixteen out of the twenty-nine pre-war opponents of naval expansion who voted with the government on 6 January were

⁶¹ J.W.G.(ulland), 'Against a General Election from a Liberal point of view' (Private & Confidential), ? January 1916, Asquith MS., vol. 82, f. 130-34.

⁶² T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 13 February 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.; see also, Daily News, 13 January 1916.

⁶³ C.P. Scott's Diary, 10-11 January 1916, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 169.

involved in the attempt to provide Asquith with leverage against the conscriptionists in April.

Why did the Radical front against conscription disintegrate? Contemporaries offered a variety of explanations. Philip Snowden peddled an implausible tale about some Liberal M.P.s being won over by promises of 'knighthoods, baronetcies and other honours'.⁶⁴ John Gulland thought that many Liberal opponents of conscription had been swayed by 'loyalty to the Prime Minister and the Party'.⁶⁵ R.D. Holt also believed that 'sentimentality', as he called it, had played a part in reducing the size of the vote against the Bill.⁶⁶ Yet there is no reason to doubt the truth of John Dillon's contention that it was the fear of a general election which was mainly responsible for keeping Radicals out of the opposition lobby on 6 January.⁶⁷ The air at Westminster on 5-6 January was certainly thick with talk of an election. There appear to have been two rumours in circulation. One was that a number of the conscriptionists in the Cabinet favoured an

⁶⁴ Labour Leader, 27 January 1916.

⁶⁵ J.W.G.(ulland), 'Against a General Election from a Liberal point of view' (Private & Confidential), ? January 1916, Asquith MS., vol. 82, f. 130-34.

⁶⁶ R.D. Holt's Diary, 9 January 1916, R.D. Holt MS.

⁶⁷ Dillon to C.P. Scott, 7 January 1916, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 168.

election in which only the seats of those who opposed the Military Service Bill would be contested.⁶⁸ The other was that Asquith would dissolve parliament in the event of a sizable Liberal revolt in the division on the Bill's first reading.⁶⁹ The latter story may well have been put about by the Liberal Whips. The Manchester Guardian and the Nation carried reports which alleged that this was so.⁷⁰ The Manchester Guardian's report, though, was challenged by the Liberal Chief Whip in a conversation with C.P. Scott on 11 January. Scott noted: 'He absolutely denied that pressure had been used by him'.⁷¹ It is not possible to say whether Gulland was being less than honest. This, however, is not a matter of any great consequence. What is important is the fact that a substantial number of Radical M.P.s were intimidated by the election rumours. It was assumed in Radical circles

⁶⁸ Daily News, 5 January 1916, 6 January 1916. The lobby correspondent of the Daily News stated that Lloyd George and Curzon were among those who wanted an election along these lines to take place. The threat was presumably dropped after the collapse of parliamentary and trade union opposition to the Bill. There were rumours throughout the autumn of 1915 that the conscriptionists in the Cabinet were prepared to force an election if they balked: see Manchester Guardian, 18 September, 14 October, 30 December 1915.

⁶⁹ See, for example, T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 11 January 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁷⁰ Manchester Guardian, 11 January 1916; Nation, 15 January 1916.

⁷¹ C.P. Scott's Diary, 10-11 January, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 174.

that an election was a very real possibility.⁷² It was further assumed that the outcome of an election would be a Tory or Tory-Lloyd George ministry.⁷³ The Radical anti-conscriptionists who failed to oppose the government on 6 January appear to have taken the view that it was foolish to run the risk of bringing a ministry of either sort into existence. Not surprisingly, they found themselves accused of political cowardice. H.W. Massingham wrote bitterly in the Nation: '... at least in the most tremulous hours of the old party system I never enjoyed such a diverting view of flying backs as greeted the casual observer of this week's tergiversation'.⁷⁴ One anti-conscriptionist who had voted with the government on 6 January retorted:

You admit that, in itself, it is not desirable that Mr. Lloyd George should be substituted for Mr. Asquith, and that to embroil the nation in a fierce political-economic-social conflict in the midst of a tremendous war is "equally undesirable". But you do not suggest that these undesirable things could have been avoided except by the support of the Conscription Bill now before Parliament...⁷⁵

⁷² See, for example, T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 4 January, 11 January 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁷³ See, for example, Daily News, 6 January 1916.

⁷⁴ The Nation, 15 January 1916.

⁷⁵ 'One of the 200' to ed., The Nation, 22 January 1916.

Few, if any, Radicals can have been so optimistic as to suppose that the conscriptionists would rest content with the half-measure which became law on 27 January. There was certainly no such optimism among those who had voted against the Military Service Bill. On 26 January these M.P.s took the decision to form themselves into a permanent group. Its immediate purpose was to watch the administration of the Military Service Act and to guard against its extension.⁷⁶ Simon became chairman of the group. The other members of its committee were J.H. Whitehouse (secretary), Leif Jones, R.D. Holt and J.H. Thomas, the railwaymen's leader.⁷⁷ Two things need to be noted about the so-called 'Simon group'. The first is that Simon, from the outset, felt decidedly uncomfortable in the company of earnest Radicals. His resignation had won him the admiration of the most determined Radical opponents of conscription. 'Simon is very brave', wrote T.E. Harvey, 'both about the present and the future although he must feel acutely that so few who really agree with him have had the courage to stand by his side'.⁷⁸ This admiration was not reciprocated. Simon told C.P. Scott in late January that it was unfortunate that

⁷⁶ The Times, 26 January 1916.

⁷⁷ R.D. Holt's Diary, 4 February 1916, R.D. Holt MS.

⁷⁸ T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 13 February 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.

so many of his supporters were 'cranks'.⁷⁹ Secondly, the 'Simon group' brought the U.D.C. Radicals back into close contact with many of their former associates. It should not be thought, however, that the 'Simon group' was an homogenous body. There were important differences of outlook among its members, notably on the question of peace by negotiation. Its formation nevertheless marked an important stage in the healing of the breach which had opened in the Radical camp in the autumn of 1914.

The 'Simon group' found itself without allies when the universal conscription Bill was introduced in May. Members of the Irish Nationalist party had no wish to be involved in a repeat of the January debacle and were in any case preoccupied with events at home. The T.U.C. remained silent. The bulk of the parliamentary Labour party voted with the government. The prediction made by the Manchester Guardian in March that any future conscription Bill would encounter the resistance of a 'much larger number of Liberal members' than the January measure turned out to be well wide of the mark.⁸⁰ Only thirty-two Liberals voted against the second conscription Bill, all but one of whom had voted against the Military

⁷⁹ C.P. Scott's Diary, 10-11 January 1916, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 173.

⁸⁰ Manchester Guardian, 10 March 1916.

Service Bill in January.⁸¹ The 'Liberal wobblers', as R.D. Holt described them, were again kept out of the opposition lobby by the fear of bringing down the government and precipitating a general election.⁸² At one point in the crisis of April-May, however, the 'wobblers' did show some signs of fight. On 19 April, Asquith revealed to the House of Commons that the divisions in the Cabinet over conscription were so acute that the break-up of the government was imminent. Immediately after the Prime Minister's statement, one hundred Liberal M.P.s attended an 'informal and hastily summoned' party meeting.⁸³ It was a predominantly Radical gathering. Well over one-third of those present had voted in favour of the reduction of naval spending on at least one occasion before 1914; nearly two-thirds had either backed the Molteno-Harvey deputation of 1913 or had signed the Brunner memorandum of 1907.⁸⁴ The majority of the Radicals at the meeting had failed to vote against the

⁸¹ This is an aggregate figure. Twenty-eight Liberals voted against the Bill on the second reading and twenty-seven on the third: see, respectively, H.C.Parl.Deb., div. no. 4 (4 May 1916) and div. no. 23 (16 May 1916). The new recruit was J.W. Wilson, M.P. for N. Worcestershire.

⁸² R.D. Holt's Diary, 7 May 1916, R.D. Holt MS.

⁸³ T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 20 April 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁸⁴ Copy of the resolution and list of signatories, Asquith MS., vol. 30, f. 31-4.

first Military Service Bill in January. There were no more than twenty members of the 'Simon group' in attendance. What emerged out of the meeting was a resolution stating that Asquith's continuance as head of the government was a national necessity. The resolution was deliberately framed in such a way as to avoid giving the impression that its signatories were prepared to endorse any line that Asquith might take with regard to conscription. The intention, wrote T.E. Harvey, was 'not to give a complete blank cheque but rather to express the importance of his premiership to the nation & the allies'.⁸⁵ The M.P.s who backed this declaration of qualified support for the embattled Prime Minister appear to have had two motives. One was to provide Asquith with some ammunition to use against the conscriptionist section of the Cabinet.⁸⁶ The other was to snub Lloyd George.⁸⁷ The message was not lost on Lloyd George's Liberal supporters. One of them wrote of the 19 April meeting: 'It was nominally in support of the P.M., but really directed against L.G.'.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 20 April 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁸⁶ T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 20 April 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁸⁷ Manchester Guardian, 20 April 1916.

⁸⁸ Christopher Addison's Diary, 28 April 1916, Addison, Four and A Half Years, vol. 1, p. 198.

The meeting of 19 April was one striking indication of how intense Radical feeling against Lloyd George had become by the time that the protracted struggle over conscription entered its last phase. Also symptomatic of the mood within the Radical camp were the public attacks made on Lloyd George by prominent individuals whose attitude to the war in 1914 had been much the same as his. Llewellyn Williams, speaking in the House of Commons on 5 May, claimed that Lloyd George - 'the greatest democratic leader this country has ever seen' - had become 'a Militarist'.⁸⁹ In the Nation, H.W. Massingham asserted that the individual who bore most responsibility for the 'great betrayal' of the Liberal ideal of free military service was 'the Radical leader to whom democracy was accustomed to look as its representative man'.⁹⁰ Most vitriolic of all were the remarkable exercises in character assassination produced by A.G. Gardiner in the Daily News.⁹¹ Outbursts such as these were the end-product of a process of disenchantment which had begun in the spring of 1915. The original charge levelled against Lloyd George was that he had conspired to bring about

⁸⁹ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 87, cols. 166-75 (4 May 1916).

⁹⁰ The Nation, 6 May 1916.

⁹¹ 'A.G.G.', 'A Letter to Mr. Lloyd George', Daily News, 22 April 1916; 'A.G.G.', 'A Reply to Mr. Lloyd George', Daily News, 8 May 1916. See also, Koss, Gardiner, pp. 189-94.

the reconstruction of the government. Radicals were further dismayed by his conduct during the autumn of 1915. In September he gave aid and comfort to those agitating for conscription by the premature publication of the preface to Through Terror to Triumph. In October he provided what one journalist called 'open evidence of his eagerness for conscription' by appointing Chiozza Money, an ardent conscriptionist and a regular contributor to the Northcliffe press, as his parliamentary private secretary.⁹² In December he openly and scathingly criticised the government of which he was a member.⁹³ It was rumoured throughout this period that he was in close touch with Lord Northcliffe.⁹⁴ There were members of the Radical community who suspected that he had his sights fixed on the break-up of the government as well as on the introduction of conscription.⁹⁵ The last months of 1915 found informed observers of the political scene acknowledging that Lloyd George and the Radicals had parted company. Lord Riddell noted in November: 'It is

⁹² J.M. Tuohy to 'World', New York, 23 October 1915 (copy of telegram), Asquith MS., vol. 15, f. 110.

⁹³ This was Lloyd George's speech in the House of Commons on 20 December 1915 in which he spoke of the 'mocking spectre of "Too Late"'.

⁹⁴ Riddell's Diary, 5 September 1915, Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 141.

⁹⁵ See Koss, Gardiner, p. 181-2.

evident that L.G. is gradually shedding the Radical Party... It looks as if he is going the same road as Chamberlain'.⁹⁶ 'The Labour men, the Irish and the Radicals all now against him', observed J.L. Garvin in the same month.⁹⁷ The Radicals' indignation against Lloyd George was at this stage expressed mainly in private. In January, after the passage of the first Military Service Bill, Lloyd George's mistress was able to sneer: '... a certain section of the Liberal party look askance at D., and call him a traitor (behind his back, of course)'.⁹⁸ This was not a jibe which could have been made five months later. There was nothing surreptitious about the Radical movement against Lloyd George in mid-1916. It should be added that it was not the conscription issue as such which was responsible for bringing this movement into being. What appears to have inspired those who took part in it was the belief that Lloyd George was engaged in a bid to break the Asquith coalition and to install a predominantly Tory ministry, headed by himself, in its place. The prospect of a Lloyd George

⁹⁶ Riddell's Diary, 9 November 1915, Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 136.

⁹⁷ C.P. Scott's Diary, 13-15 November 1915, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 157.

⁹⁸ Frances Stevenson's Diary, 31 January 1916, printed in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), Lloyd George: a Diary by Frances Stevenson (London, 1971), pp. 88-90.

premiership was one which, by mid-1916, the majority of Radical M.P.s had come to dread.⁹⁹

Lloyd George's political activities in 1915-16 were viewed by Radicals with sorrow as well as anger. The sentiment most frequently aroused by Asquith's conduct during the same period was contempt. Asquith's contortions in the face of conscriptionist pressure gave rise to the feeling that he was prepared to fight hard only for his own political survival. This feeling had begun to take root in Radical quarters long before the premier's final surrender to the conscriptionists in May 1916. C.P. Scott had reached the conclusion that Asquith was chiefly concerned with the retention of office even before the introduction of the first Military Service Bill. 'It's a duel I believe between him and Lloyd George', wrote Scott in December 1915, 'and he means to dish Lloyd George by accepting compulsion and to prevent secessions by making the dose as homeopathic as possible. But there is no sincerity about the whole proceeding and no serious consideration of the country's needs'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ See T.E. Harvey to I. Harvey, 20 April 1916, T.E. Harvey MS. (describing the feeling of the 19 April meeting); see also, Lady Courtney's Diary, 3 December 1916, Courtney MS., vol. 37; R.D. Holt's Diary, 7 November 1915, R.D. Holt MS.; H.W. Nevinson's Diary, 27 April 1916, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e. 619/4.

¹⁰⁰ C.P. Scott to L.T. Hobhouse, 30 December 1915, quoted in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 166.

The Prime Minister's integrity was openly questioned by Radicals when the first Military Service Bill was making its way through parliament. One of the most pointed comments was that made on 5 January by Llewellyn Williams, one of the Liberal anti-conscriptionists who had heard Asquith describe compulsion as a 'worse than repulsive alternative' on 16 December:

I say this deliberately, Radical as I am, I would sooner see a Tory Government in power than the one we have here - I would sooner accept, if accept one must, a Bill of this sort from a Tory Government that believes in compulsory service than I would accept it at the hands of gentlemen who profess unbounded devotion to the voluntary principle while cutting its throat.¹⁰¹

A.G.C. Harvey was even more direct than Williams:

Those who profess attachment to the voluntary system and who have been saying of late that with them compulsion is not a matter of principle have gone far to sell the pass. It is clear that the Prime Minister has failed us and embarrassed himself almost to the point of humiliation...'.¹⁰²

Asquith left himself open to further accusations of bad

¹⁰¹ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 77, col. 1035 (5 January 1916). Williams told the House of Commons that he had been a member of the deputation which had met Asquith on 16 December in a speech in which he also referred to the Prime Minister as 'a convinced voluntaryist': see H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 77, col. 357 (21 December 1915). For Williams' private view of Asquith at this time, see Williams to A.G. Gardiner, 29 December 1915, quoted in Koss, Gardiner, p. 186 ('That poor weakling of a P.M.! It is too pitiful. How can you make an invertebrate stand up?').

¹⁰² Manchester Guardian, 6 January 1916.

faith when he accepted general conscription in May. In January he had insisted that the Military Service Bill was not to be seen as the thin end of the wedge. He told the House of Commons that he would be 'no party' to general conscription.¹⁰³ He offered a similar assurance to a deputation of trade unionists and Labour M.P.s: '... I see no vestige of evidence which would induce me to extend by a hair's breadth the provisions of this Bill in the direction of compulsion. Upon the contrary, it appears to me that we can rely, and ought to rely, on our voluntary system to provide us with the necessary sinews for the further prosecution of this war'.¹⁰⁴ Yet Asquith's volte-face in May was not greeted by a chorus of Radical protest. R.D. Holt did complain that the Prime Minister's handling of the compulsion issue had not been marked by 'fair, straightforward dealing' when he moved the rejection of the general conscription Bill on 4 May, but this, in the circumstances, was the mildest of rebukes.¹⁰⁵ Radical M.P.s and editors presumably felt that it was no time to add to the difficulties of

¹⁰³ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 77, col. 951 (5 January 1916).

¹⁰⁴ 'D.D.', 'Compilation of Asquith's statements on compulsion', 24/4 (1916), Asquith MS.

¹⁰⁵ H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 37, cols. 143-54 (4 May 1916).

Asquith and his troubled administration. It would appear, however, that in private Asquith was regarded as a discredited figure. 'In his own party', wrote H.W. Massingham, 'all is chilled and changed'.¹⁰⁶

In August 1916, some time after the conscription issue had been finally settled, R.D. Holt reflected on the politics of the preceding twelve months. 'All the old principles of the Liberal party', he wrote, 'have been virtually abandoned by its leaders...'. Apart from the principle of voluntary military service, Holt had in mind the principle of free trade, which had been dented by the McKenna duties of September 1915 and threatened by the resolutions of the inter-allied economic conference of June 1916.¹⁰⁷ He also had in mind the Liberal leadership's failure to push through the Irish Home Rule settlement negotiated by Lloyd George in the summer of 1916. Holt's faith in the Liberal party was badly shaken by the conduct of the Liberal front bench. 'It has', he lamented,

¹⁰⁶ The Nation, 6 May 1916.

¹⁰⁷ Nothing very specific was in fact agreed at the Paris economic conference. It was resolved that the governments of the Entente powers should encourage trade amongst themselves; that 'most favoured nation' treatment should be denied to enemy states for an unspecified period after the war; and that 'special rules' of a discriminatory nature should be applied to enemy states after the war, again for an unspecified period. See V.H. Rothwell, British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914-1918 (Oxford, 1971), p. 267-9.

'been a cruel betrayal. War seems to arouse so many bad passions that Liberalism cannot live in its atmosphere'.¹⁰⁸ There is evidence to suggest that Holt's feelings about the Liberal party were widely shared within the Radical community. A.J. Sherwell was certainly as despondent as Holt. 'Liberalism', he told the president of his constituency association in February 1916, 'is heading rapidly for the rocks, and there will be a rude awakening presently'.¹⁰⁹ E.N. Bennett, Liberal M.P. for Woodstock between 1906 and 1910, also held strong feelings: he claimed in 1918 that he had become 'more and more disgusted with official Liberalism' in 1915-16.¹¹⁰ D.M. Mason became so disgusted that he resigned from all the Liberal clubs and associations of which he was a member.¹¹¹ Sir Wilfrid Lawson removed himself from the political scene altogether. Lawson had felt 'dispirited about the whole business' when the coalition ministry came into existence in May 1915; in February 1916 he

108 This quotation and the preceding one in this paragraph are taken from R.D. Holt's Diary, 6 August 1916, R.D. Holt MS.

109 A.J. Sherwell to Harry Dawson, (President, Huddersfield Liberal Association) 7 February 1916, printed in Manchester Guardian, 17 February 1916.

110 E.N. Bennett to the editor, Wiltshire Times, 7 December 1918.

111 Daily News, 11 March 1916.

resigned as M.P. for Cockermonth, making it clear that he was unable to support the government's war policies.¹¹² Another Radical M.P. for whom politics ceased to hold any attraction was Francis Neilson, a self-avowed 'peace man' who applied for the Chiltern Hundreds in January 1916.¹¹³ Other Radicals gave notice of their dissatisfaction with the state of Liberal politics by making it clear that they deeply resented being called upon to sacrifice their principles. A number of Radical M.P.s expressed such resentment in the debates on conscription. The debates on the McKenna duties were also punctuated by expressions of Radical anger at the way in which Liberal principles were being surrendered.¹¹⁴ Radical M.P.s who paraded their reluctance to see Liberal principles violated left themselves open, of course, to the accusation that they were failing to exhibit the spirit of self-sacrifice which was necessary for success in the war. 'You should relax your principles, the same as we do the trade union rules', said the Labour M.P.

112 For Lawson's feelings in May 1915, see R.D. Denman to C.P. Trevelyan, 28 May 1915, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; for his resignation, see Daily News, 17 February 1916.

113 Daily News, 20 January 1916.

114 See the speeches of Outhwaite, Leif Jones, Llewellyn Williams, W.M. Pringle and P.A. Molteno, H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 74, cols. 852-978 (29 September 1915).

Will Thorne to one such Radical.¹¹⁵ In similar vein, Christopher Addison appealed to his former Radical associates - 'those members with whom I worked for so many years' - to come to terms with the fact that Britain was engaged in a struggle for 'self-preservation' and went on to call upon them to approach such issues as conscription with an open mind.¹¹⁶ Some historians have taken the view that there were Liberals who were congenitally incapable of coming to terms with the demands of total war. 'On almost every issue that came up', Lord Blake has written, 'Conservative tradition and ideology was better suited than Liberal to meet the needs of the hour. Conscription, "defence of the realm", Ireland, indeed all the necessities of a prolonged war, tended to create doubts and divisions in the Liberals'.¹¹⁷ The idea that the Radicals who protested about the violation of Liberal principles were simply unwilling to face up to the necessities of war must, however, be treated with caution. Firstly, it has to be remembered that those who made such protests were convinced, rightly or wrongly, that

115 H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 74, col. 908 (29 September 1915). Thorne's comment was directed at Leif Jones.

116 Speech in the House of Commons, 28 July 1915, printed in Lambert (ed.), Parliamentary History of Conscription, p. 21.

117 R. Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill (Fontana edn., London, 1972), pp. 195-6; see also, M.R.D. Foot, British Foreign Policy since 1898 (London, 1956), p. 58.

the Conservatives were cynically using the plea of military necessity to justify the introduction of measures which were wanted for their own sake.¹¹⁸ It has been seen that Radical anti-conscriptionists argued that the real aim of their opponents was to establish conscription as a 'permanent condition of English life'. Arguments of a similar kind were put forward when the break with free trade took place in September 1915. The Manchester Guardian, for example, declared that it was a 'pretence' to claim that the purpose of the McKenna duties was to discourage luxury imports. It maintained: 'Only one inference can be drawn. The Protectionist members of the Coalition Government wanted an instalment of Tariff "Reform". They have got in the thin end of the wedge...'.¹¹⁹

The second point which needs to be made is that particular issues like free trade and conscription were viewed by

118 It is interesting to note that this view was shared by the ardent Radical conscriptionist Josiah Wedgwood, who told his daughter: 'My friends the autocrats do seem to be making hay while the sun shines: never mind they will reap the harvest before long' (Wedgwood to Helen Wedgwood, 20 April 1916, Josiah Wedgwood MS.). Wedgwood was, however, moving back at this time towards the main stream of Radicalism: he was to emerge as an advocate of peace by negotiation in 1917-18.

119 Manchester Guardian, 22 September 1915. The Manchester Guardian claimed that the 'general Liberal opinion' in the House of Commons was that the duties had been put into the Budget merely to please the protectionist members of the Cabinet (see Manchester Guardian, 22 September 1915; also 23 September 1915).

Radicals against the background of the larger issue of the ends for which the war was being fought. By the end of 1916, a substantial proportion of the Radical community had arrived at the conclusion that the war for which they were being asked to sacrifice their principles was no longer an nonourable affair, a 'Liberal war', but a war which had degenerated, as one Radical M.P. put it, into a 'simple conflict to be top dog'.¹²⁰ The abandonment of Liberal principles for the sake of victory in such a war must have appeared to most Radicals to be a painful absurdity.

The period of the struggle over conscription and the six months which followed it saw the idea of peace by negotiation making considerable headway within the Radical camp. There was nothing coincidental about this. This at any rate was the feeling of Artnur Ponsonby of the pro-negotiation U.D.C., who told R.D. Denman in May 1916 that 'the effect of the compulsion act has been to bring a lot more opinion round our way'.¹²¹ It is not hard to see why the conscription struggle affected Radical attitudes to the war. It was obvious by mid-1916 that the balance of power in British politics had shifted in favour of the Conservatives, who had been suspected by

¹²⁰ R.D. Denman to (?) Campbell, 28 July 1915 (copy), R.D. Denman MS., box 1.

¹²¹ Ponsonby to R.D. Denman, 27 May 1916, R.D. Denman MS., box 9.

Radicals since 1914 of harbouring a desire to impose a punitive settlement on Germany after forcing her to surrender unconditionally. 'The old coalition', wrote H.W. Massingham on 2 May, 'was Liberal-Tory with Liberalism uppermost. The new coalition is Tory, with Liberalism beaten to its corner'.¹²² The one Liberal whose star was in the ascendant in mid-late 1916 was Lloyd George. In September, however, Lloyd George made it known, through an interview with an American journalist, Roy Howard, that he wanted to see the war fought 'to a finish - to a knock-out'.¹²³ This interview caused immense consternation in Radical circles. Even C.P. Scott, perhaps Lloyd George's most consistent Radical apologist, was deeply perturbed.¹²⁴ Painful memories were aroused in the mind of one Radical M.P.: 'It is Milner's old policy of unconditional surrender which failed with 50,000 Boers and we with 450,000 men!'¹²⁵ J.A. Hobson thought that Lloyd George had committed himself to 'the crushing of Germany' - in other words, to the Tory conception of the war.¹²⁶ There is little doubt that Hobson's opinion

122 The Nation, 6 May 1916.

123 Manchester Guardian, 29 September 1916.

124 C.P. Scott to L.T. Hobhouse, 22 October 1916, quoted in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p.231.

125 P.A. Molteno to Walter Runciman, 28 January 1917, Runciman MS., 161 (1); see also, Molteno to C.R. Buxton, 7 October 1916, C.R. Buxton MS., 1/4/137.

126 C.P. Scott to L.T. Hobhouse, 22 October 1916, quoted in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 231.

was widely shared within the Radical community. The importance of the Lloyd George interview in the context of Radical politics was that it provided evidence for the view that there was no real prospect of an outright British victory being followed by an equitable settlement. The corollary of this view was, of course, that the best hope of securing an equitable settlement lay in a negotiated peace. These were views which had begun to gain ground in Radical circles long before Lloyd George issued forth in the autumn of 1916. The question of what was to be gained by continuing the war was first raised in parliament in November 1915 by the U.D.C. Radicals Ponsonby and Trevelyan. This was the beginning of the U.D.C.'s long campaign for a negotiated peace, the story of which has been examined in detail elsewhere.¹²⁷ What needs to be noted here is that the U.D.C. had gained a number of new Radical recruits by early 1917. By July 1917, the Radical M.P.s Philip Morrell, J.H. Whitehouse, R.L. Outhwaite and Joseph King had either addressed or chaired U.D.C. meetings, while R.C. Lambert had published an article in The U.D.C.¹²⁸ There were other prominent Radicals who became sympathetic

¹²⁷ Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control, chs. 4, 7, 8, 9, 10.

¹²⁸ See The U.D.C., December 1916, July 1917, February 1917, January 1917, June 1917.

to the idea of a negotiated peace in 1916 but who fought shy of the U.D.C.. R.D. Holt, for example, thought that the U.D.C. leaders - who were arguing by mid-1916 that the war was 'perfectly capable of honourable settlement if only the Government would try to negotiate' - were somewhat unrealistic in assuming that Germany was ready to take part in genuine peace talks.¹²⁹ Holt told C.R. Buxton that he and his friends feared that 'Germany only wants peace now to get breathing time for a fresh start'.¹³⁰ Holt and his political associates were nevertheless prepared to confer with the U.D.C. leaders in private. In June 1916, Arthur Ponsonby reported to C.P. Trevelyan:

I have set the new group going - Molteno, Holt, Gordon Harvey, Arnold & John. They have drafted quite a good brief memorial on negotiations and they hope to get a few peers (Brassey Beauchamp etc.) and through Hirst some outside people. I told them I should not sign anything as my position was well known and the chief object was to get new people at work in this direction. They are very shy of Labour and as you know Molteno is not an easy man to work with. However they are perfectly sound about the futility and danger of continuing the war.¹³¹

¹²⁹ The quotation in this sentence is taken from C.P. Trevelyan to Walter Runciman, 6 September 1916, Runciman MS., 149(2): see also Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control, pp. 70-81.

¹³⁰ Holt to C.R. Buxton, 23 October 1916, C.R. Buxton MS., 1/4/146.

¹³¹ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 2 June 1916, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

This 'new group' soon came out into the open. In October 1916 it launched Common Sense, a political weekly edited by F.W. Hirst, to propagate its view that it would be foolish to fight on to 'the last man and the last farthing' if a reasonable compromise settlement could be reached.¹³² Arthur Ponsonby, meanwhile, had been busily looking out for other 'new men'.¹³³ In July 1916 he tried to organise a small conference of parliamentarians who were in sympathy with the idea of a negotiated peace. He discussed possible participants with C.P. Trevelyan:

Loreburn, Beauchamp, Farrer, Holt, Gordon Harvey, Ramsay MacDonald, yourself and myself. I thought of adding Bliss who is very sympathetic and has good judgement. J.W. Wilson occurred to me but Gordon Harvey thought him too timid. Holt suggested Leif Jones but I very much doubt his being willing to come as far.¹³⁴

Nothing in fact came of Ponsonby's proposal. There was, however, an alternative forum in which the question of peace by negotiation could be discussed: the 'Simon group'. The 'Simon group' lost its original raison d'etre

¹³² Hirst (ed.), A.G.C. Harvey, p. 114-5. The main backer of Common Sense, apart from the M.P.s mentioned above (P.A. Molteno, R.D. Holt, A.G.C. Harvey, Sydney Arnold and E.T. John), was the Middlesborough ironmaster Sir Hugh Bell, C.P. Trevelyan's father-in-law. On the Common Sense group, see Robbins, 'The Abolition of War', ch. 5.

¹³³ Ponsonby's phrase: Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 13 July 1916, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

¹³⁴ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 13 July 1916, C.P. Trevelyan MS. Joseph Bliss was Sir Wilfrid Lawson's successor as M.P. for Cockermouth.

when the second Military Service Bill became law in May 1916. In early June, though, at a meeting at which H.W. Massingham, A.G. Gardiner and F.W. Hirst were present, it was agreed that the group should remain in existence for 'other purposes'.¹³⁵ According to Arthur Ponsonby's account of this meeting, Sir John Simon specifically included 'peace developments' among these 'other purposes' when he moved the proposal that the group should be kept together, although he also observed that 'at present there might be some difference of opinion among us on this'.¹³⁶ The issue of peace by negotiation was certainly discussed within the 'Simon group' during the next six months. In October 1916, for instance, there was talk of making a protest against Lloyd George's 'knock-out blow' interview by moving a 'reasoned amendment' to the next Vote of Credit.¹³⁷ It should be pointed out, too, that there is a piece of evidence which suggests that a majority of the 'Simon group' were in sympathy with the idea of a negotiated

¹³⁵ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 2 June 1916, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

¹³⁶ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 2 June 1916, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

¹³⁷ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 6 October 1916, C.P. Trevelyan MS. No amendment was in fact moved. The group did, however, decide to register its 'indignation against Mr. Lloyd George' in parliament (see Manchester Guardian, 11 October 1916). The group's spokesman was R.D. Holt: see Holt's speech in the House of Commons, H.C.Parl.Deb., 5 ser., vol. 87, col. 131 (11 October 1916).

settlement. In July 1916, a new committee was elected 'to watch the business of the House and direct the Group's activity'.¹³⁸ The successful candidates were R.C. Lambert, Arthur Ponsonby, R.D. Holt, Leif Jones, J.H. Whitehouse and the Labour M.P. and U.D.C. member W.C. Anderson, all of whom were in some degree sympathetic towards the idea of a negotiated peace. Finally, there were several Radical M.P.s who came to favour a compromise settlement in 1916 but who were not prominent members of the 'Simon group', the U.D.C. or the Common Sense clique. One of them was Noel Buxton, who, from mid-1916 onwards, wanted a negotiated settlement in which the avowed aims of the Allies would be secured.¹³⁹ Others included T.E. Harvey, who in March 1917 spoke in support of the peace by negotiation candidate at the Stockton by-election, and W.P. Byles, whose views were summed up in May 1916 by H.W. Nevinson: 'sees no hope of peace

¹³⁸ R.C. Lambert to Ponsonby, 26 July 1916, Ponsonby MS.

¹³⁹ T.P. Conwell-Evans, Foreign Policy from a Back Bench, 1904-18: a study based on the papers of Lord Noel Buxton (London, 1932), pp. 118-20. Buxton, together with C.R. Buxton and J.H. Whitehouse, campaigned privately for American mediation in the latter half of 1916. In December 1916 he organised a private memorial to the government urging serious consideration of the German peace offer.

but thinks discussions shd. begin'.¹⁴⁰

It would be too much to say that a complete Radical rapprochement had taken place by the end of 1916. There was, after all, a small minority of Radicals who were ardent supporters of the 'vigorous' war policies advocated by the Conservatives and by Lloyd George.¹⁴¹ But at the end of 1916, it was these Radicals, and not those of the U.D.C., who were isolated from the main stream of Radicalism. In 1916 there came into existence a number of organisations, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, in which U.D.C. Radicals worked alongside Radicals who had shown enthusiasm for the idea of a 'Liberal war' in 1914 - notably the 'Simon group', the Peace Negotiations Committee and the National Council

¹⁴⁰ H.W. Nevinson's Diary, 22 May 1916, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e 619/4: see also Byles' obituary notice in the Manchester Guardian, 19 October 1917 ('During the war, he did not act in visible concert with any of the peace groups, but seemed to prefer to pursue a line of his own... taking occasion when opportunity offered to warn Ministers against neglecting any opening for a settlement by negotiation'). T.E. Harvey came under fire from his constituency association in 1916 because of his associations with the leaders of the U.D.C. - although he was not a member of the U.D.C. (see Joseph Henry to T.E. Harvey, 7 February 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.). Harvey's brother-in-law, Arnold Rowntree, was another Radical M.P. who came to favour a negotiated peace in 1916. In October he took part in an attempt to get Radical newspapermen and intellectuals to hold a conference 'to discuss peace terms and take action' (see C.P. Scott's Diary, 2-3 October 1916, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 227). John Burns also wanted to 'stop the war': see H.W. Nevinson's Diary, 18 October 1915, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e 619/2.

¹⁴¹ See ch. 6 below.

against Conscription (later the National Council for Civil Liberties).¹⁴² The formation of other organisations was being contemplated. In September 1916, Ponsonby wrote to C.P. Trevelyan: 'I had a talk with Hobson the other day when I was passing through London. He has a very good idea... It is to found a new Democratic club (with premises for meals etc.) comprising in its membership all shades of decent opinion from Simon upwards'.¹⁴³ There were, of course, differences of outlook within the realm of what Ponsonby called 'decent opinion'. But, leaving aside the handful of martial Radicals, the divisions within the Radical camp in 1916 were nothing like as wide as they had been in 1914-15: they were to become narrower still in 1917-18.

¹⁴² On the P.N.C. and N.C.A.C., see Robbins, 'The Abolition of War', chs. 4 and 5.

¹⁴³ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 12 September 1916, C.P. Trevelyan MS. The outcome of Hobson's idea was the 1917 Club.

6. THE RADICALS, LLOYD GEORGE AND
ASQUITH, 1917-1918

Studies of the parliamentary Liberal party between 1916 and 1918 not infrequently proceed from the assumption that it was split into two warring factions. One historian of the Liberal party has suggested that there were 'two quite separate Liberal bodies in Parliament' after the formation of the Lloyd George coalition in December 1916.¹ Another has maintained that the Maurice debate of May 1918 marked 'a significant stage in the growing separation and hostility of the two Liberal sections'.² A recent analyst of the early twentieth century 'Liberal mind' has put forward a similar view. He writes of the period between 1916 and 1929: 'Two fairly distinct camps present themselves to the historian - the Asquithian and the Lloyd Georgian - and the Liberal history of these years centres on their dialogue'.³ A study of Radical politics between 1916 and 1918 suggests that the view that the parliamentary Liberal party was divided into 'two fairly distinct camps' is somewhat misleading. An attempt will be made here to establish the truth of three propositions. First, it will be argued that only a small minority of Radicals became

¹ Douglas, History of the Liberal Party, 1895-1970, p. 109.

² Cook, Short History of the Liberal Party, 1900-1976, p. 73.

³ Bentley, The Liberal Mind, p. 47.

ardent supporters of the Lloyd George coalition. Second, it will be contended that in 1917-18 there existed a semi-autonomous Radical opposition to the coalition. Third, it will be argued that the feelings of the majority of Radical M.P.s towards Asquith during this period were such that it would be unrealistic - if not absurd - to categorise them as 'Asquithian' Liberals. It will also be suggested that the attitude towards organised Liberalism which was most prevalent within the Radical camp by late 1918 was one of profound disenchantment.

The suggestion that there were few Radicals among Lloyd George's staunchest Liberal followers is at odds with the impression given by A.J.P. Taylor in his various writings on wartime politics. Mr. Taylor appears to take the view that Lloyd George's Liberal supporters were drawn largely from the Radical wing of the parliamentary party. He states that the Liberal M.P.s who backed the Lloyd George coalition were 'mostly Radical nonconformists'.⁴ He speaks of Christopher Addison mobilising 'the backbench Radicals' on Lloyd George's behalf during the political crisis of December 1916.⁵ And he refers to the 'Radical and Nonconformist origins'

⁴ A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-45 (Oxford, 1965), p. 67.

⁵ A.J.P. Taylor, 'Lloyd George: Rise and Fall' in Politics in Wartime, p. 140.

of the Lloyd George Liberals.⁶ It should be said that Mr. Taylor offers little evidence in support of his view. He restricts himself to a single statement of fact about the political antecedents of the Lloyd George Liberals: 'Many of them had been keen Land Taxers before the war'.⁷

It has to be conceded that the Lloyd Georgian Liberal ranks were not entirely bereft of Radicals. Some of Lloyd George's Liberal adherents had been zealous proponents of Radical causes before 1914. Christopher Addison, who became Lloyd George's Minister of Munitions in 1916, had been a member of the Foreign Affairs Group and the Land Nationalisation Society, and had twice defied the Liberal Whips on the naval spending issue in 1911-12. The pre-war record of Alexander MacCallum Scott, who became Churchill's parliamentary private secretary in 1917, was rather more striking: he rebelled twice on the naval spending issue in 1911-12, sat on the executive committee of the Foreign Affairs Group after 1912, voted for the nationalisation of railways, mines and other monopolies in 1913, and was secretary of the 'pro-Boer' League of Liberals against Aggression and Militarism between 1900 and 1903. Edgar Jones and Sir Maurice Levy - who had been elected one of the joint secretaries of Dilke's

⁶ A.J.P. Taylor, 'Politics in the First World War' in ibid., p. 40.

⁷ A.J.P. Taylor, 'Politics in the First World War' in ibid., p. 32.

Radical Committee in 1906 - were other resolute pre-war opponents of excessive naval spending who became supporters of Lloyd George after 1916. R.D. Denman, a member of the Union of Democratic Control who had voted against the first Military Service Bill on each of its three readings, was perhaps the most remarkable office-holder in the Lloyd George coalition.⁸ Outside parliament, Lloyd

⁸ Denman pursued a quite extraordinary course in 1917-18. He returned to Westminster in 1917 after serving in the army for two years. In July 1917, he accompanied twenty Radical and socialist 'pacifists' into the division lobby in support of Ramsay MacDonald's appeal to the government to restate its peace terms in the light of the Reichstag peace resolution. This did not prevent him from becoming parliamentary private secretary to R.E. Prothero, the Conservative President of the Board of Agriculture. Denman subsequently stated that he became a coalitionist in 1917 because he believed that the coalition possessed 'extraordinary powers of progressive legislation' (Denman to F.E. Guest, 19 August 1919, R.D. Denman MS., box 4). Yet in November 1917 he was still a member of the General Council of the U.D.C.. By the end of 1917, however, he was no longer Prothero's p.p.s.. He was dismissed because he played an important part in a parliamentary defeat suffered by the government in late 1917: he successfully moved an amendment to the royalties clause of the government's Petroleum Bill, under which payments would have been made to the owners of oil-bearing land. He nevertheless became p.p.s. to H.A.L. Fisher, President of the Board of Education, in 1918. He was listed by F.E. Guest in July 1918 as one of the 'reliable supporters' of the coalition who were to be left unopposed by the Conservatives at the next election (see below, fn. 12). In the event, Denman did not stand in the 1918 election. The Conservatives in his constituency - Carlisle - were not prepared to leave him unopposed as the official coalition candidate, and they received the tacit support of the Conservative Central Office (see D.D. Cuthbert, 'Lloyd George and the Conservative Central Office, 1918-22' in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.) Lloyd George: Twelve Essays, p. 173).

George enjoyed the qualified support of the imposing figure of C.P. Scott.⁹ There is, however, evidence which

⁹ The development of Scott's attitude towards the war and towards Lloyd George deserves to be examined in some detail. In 1915, it will be recalled, Scott had been attracted by the idea of 'a nation marshalled and regimented for service'. This enthusiasm for organisation on the Prussian model did not extend, however, to conscription. Scott loathed conscription on what he called 'general grounds', but claimed that he was prepared to accept it and even advocate it if it was shown to be a military necessity (see Scott's Diary, 9 September 1915, printed in Wilson (ed.) Political Diaries of C. P. Scott, p. 136). Scott did not believe in 1915-16 that a military case for conscription had been made out. He believed, like many other prominent Radicals, that the conscription agitation was part of a wider political offensive (see editorial, Manchester Guardian, 1 June 1915). From early 1916 onwards, Scott was oppressed by the fear that reactionary elements who were likely to make a bad peace - one which led to 'permanent division and hostility' in Europe - would gain complete dominance in British politics (see Scott to L.T. Hobhouse, 25 January 1916, quoted in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 176). In 1917-18, he was willing and even anxious to see a negotiated peace, provided that 'tolerable' terms could be obtained (see Scott to Hobhouse, 25 March 1918, quoted in ibid., p. 341). On the other hand, he did not believe that the British government should agree to a patched-up compromise settlement merely in order to bring the war to an end. Scott was also very much alive in 1917-18 to the possibility of an Allied defeat. He backed Lloyd George because he believed that Lloyd George alone could lead Britain into a position where she could negotiate from strength. But he had grave doubts as to whether the Lloyd George coalition could be relied upon to negotiate a non-vindictive settlement. Scott thought that Lloyd George himself possessed liberal instincts but felt that he was too easily swayed by the reactionaries in his government. Scott explained his feelings about Lloyd George in the course of a letter to Lord Courtney about the Maurice debate: 'The Maurice affair is something of a mystery... The result is to strengthen George - I don't mind that as far as the conduct of the war goes, because whatever his faults George is at least an incomparably better war minister than Asquith... But as to the much more difficult matter of making peace... Asquith is discredited: George in spite of some good intentions is hamstrung by his associates...' (C.P. Scott to Courtney, 10 May 1918, Courtney MS., vol. 12).

suggests that M.P.s like Addison, MacCallum Scott and Jones were in no way representative of the main stream of Radical opinion.

One useful guide to the identity of Lloyd George's staunchest Liberal supporters is provided by the division which took place after the Maurice debate of 9 May 1918.¹⁰ The division arose out of Asquith's call for an inquiry into General Maurice's allegation that the government had misled the House of Commons about the strength of the British army in France. Lloyd George treated Asquith's demand as an issue of confidence. A three-line Whip was sent out to government supporters. There can be no doubt that Lloyd George succeeded in attracting into the government lobby a substantial majority of what the Coalition Liberal Chief Whip on another occasion called 'our old Guard'.¹¹ It should be made clear, however, that the Maurice division is not a completely reliable guide to the identity of the Lloyd Georgian 'old Guard'. Firstly, there were over eighty Liberal M.P.s who did not vote in the Maurice division. A considerable number of those absent were certainly hard-core Lloyd Georgians. There is in the Lloyd George papers a draft Tory-Coalition Liberal

¹⁰ H.C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol. 105, div. no. 40 (9 May 1918).

¹¹ Guest to Lloyd George, 29 October 1918 (secret), Lloyd George MS. F/2112/46.

electoral pact drawn up in July 1918 by the Coalition Liberal Chief Whip, F.E. Guest, which contains the names of ninety-eight Liberal M.P.s - twenty-five members of the government and seventy-three backbenchers described as 'reliable supporters' of the government - who were to be left unopposed by the Conservatives: thirty-four of these M.P.s did not vote in the Maurice division.¹² Secondly, the Maurice division was marked by what the Manchester Guardian called 'a little... cross-voting'.¹³ One Conservative M.P., for example, voted against the government. More important for the purposes of this study is the fact that a handful of the Liberal M.P.s who voted with the government were definitely not members of the Lloyd Georgian 'old Guard'. The three M.P.s who fell most obviously into this category were D.M. Mason, J.D. Kiley and E.G. Hemmerde. Mason was an outspoken advocate of a negotiated peace. Kiley, who entered parliament in 1916, was also involved in the movement for a negotiated settlement.¹⁴ Hemmerde was described in the Daily News's analysis of the Maurice division as

¹² Guest to Lloyd George, 20 July 1918, enclosing 'Draft of agreement to be signed by the Prime Minister and Mr. Bonar Law', Lloyd George MS. F/21/2/28.

¹³ Manchester Guardian, 10 May 1918.

¹⁴ See Common Sense, 9 March 1918.

an 'independent Liberal critic' of the government.¹⁵ None of these three M.P.s were among those listed by Guest as 'reliable supporters' of the government in July 1918, and none of them received the 'coupon' in the general election of December 1918.

Leaving aside Mason, Kiley and Hemmerde, sixty-nine Liberals voted with the government in the Maurice division. Of these, six had not been members of the House of Commons before 1914. It is possible to examine the pre-war parliamentary records of the remaining sixty-three. How Radical a group were these sixty-three Liberals? Only four of them - J.S. Higham, J.D. Hope, Edgar Jones and Alexander MacCallum Scott - cast two or more votes against naval expansion before 1914. Another five - J.H. Bethell, C.S. Henry, Sir Maurice Levy, John Hinds and Richard Winfrey - voted against the government on the naval spending issue on one occasion.¹⁶ A further ten never entered the division lobby in

¹⁵ Daily News, 10 May 1918.

¹⁶ The presence of John Hinds in this group draws attention to the fact that there was movement across the lines of division within the parliamentary Liberal party between 1916 and 1918. Hinds was one of the M.P.s who at the party meeting of 19 April 1916 voted for the resolution that Asquith's 'continuance as head of the government is a national necessity'. There were eighteen other M.P.s who voted for this resolution but voted with the government in the Maurice division (MacCallum Scott, D. Davies, G.C. Rees, Towyn Jones, Sir R. Balfour, Sir M. Levy, G.M. Palmer, T. Jacobsen, A. Shaw, Sir E. Beauchamp, A. Illingworth, J.W. Greig, Sir C. Warner, S.L. Hughes, J.D. Hope, W. Priestley, A.C. Morton and Sir A. Williamson).

opposition to Liberal naval policy but were among the hundred-odd Liberal M.P.s who supported the Molteno-Harvey deputation of 1913. The majority of the Liberals who sided with the government in the Maurice division did not take any part in the pre-war campaigns for the reduction of naval expenditure. Nor, it would appear, did the Lloyd Georgian ranks contain many pre-war land reform enthusiasts. On 18 May 1911, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were presented with a memorial on 'Land and Taxation Reform' which had been signed by one hundred and seventy-two Liberal and Labour M.P.s. The signatories urged the government to continue and develop the policy inaugurated by the 1909 Budget by hastening the completion of the process of land valuation begun in 1910; by empowering local authorities to levy rates on the basis of the completed valuation; and by imposing a 'Budget Tax on all Land Values'.¹⁷ One hundred and twenty-eight of the M.P.s who put their names to this document were Liberals - nearly one-half of the parliamentary party. All shades of Liberal opinion on the issue of land reform were represented. It can safely be assumed that there were few Liberal proponents of land reform who failed to sign the memorial. Only

¹⁷ 'Land and Taxation Reform: Copy of Memorial presented to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 18 May 1911...', Lloyd George MS. C/15/1/4.

seventeen of the sixty-three M.P.s under investigation did so.¹⁸ There would therefore appear to be little substance in Mr. Taylor's claim that many of Lloyd George's adherents had been 'keen Land Taxers' before 1914.

The Maurice division is not the only available source which casts light on the extent of Lloyd George's support within the parliamentary Liberal party. Another important piece of evidence is the list of ninety-eight M.P.s contained in F.E. Guest's draft Tory-Coalition Liberal electoral pact of July 1918. Like the Maurice division, however, Guest's list has its shortcomings as a guide to the identity of Lloyd George's Liberal adherents. Guest was not the most astute of Chief Whips. One of his colleagues described him as 'the half-wit'.¹⁹ There certainly appear to have been gaps in his knowledge of the political outlook of Liberal M.P.s in 1918. It will be recalled that the ninety-eight Liberal M.P.s listed by Guest in 1918 were divided into two categories: government ministers, of whom there were twenty-five,

¹⁸ These included several of the nineteen M.P.s who protested in some way against Liberal naval policy. Of these nineteen M.P.s, eight signed the 'Land and Taxation' memorial and nine did not. Two of those in the latter category - Towyn Jones and J.W. Pratt - were not in fact members of parliament in May 1911. There were nine M.P.s who signed the 'Land and Taxation' memorial but who did not protest in any way against Liberal naval policy. It should be emphasised that the 'Land and Taxation' memorial was supported by a considerable number of centre Liberals as well as by Radicals.

¹⁹ The colleague in question was E. Montagu: see K.O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George's Stage Army: The Coalition Liberals, 1918-22' in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), Lloyd George: Twelve Essays, p. 233.

and backbenchers who had 'proved themselves reliable supporters of the government', of whom there were seventy-three. The twenty-five office holders were indisputably members of Lloyd George's 'old Guard'. The same cannot be said of all the backbenchers described by Guest as 'reliable supporters' of the government. A number of those listed in this category were certainly not committed Lloyd Georgians. Two of them - W.A. Chapple, M.P. for Stirlingshire, and William Young, M.P. for East Perthshire - voted against the government in the Maurice division. It is difficult to see how an M.P. who fails to stand by a government on an issue of confidence can be regarded as a reliable supporter of it. Josian Wedgwood was also listed as a reliable supporter of the government, yet two months before Guest's list was compiled he had declared that he had 'very little confidence indeed in the present Government'.²⁰ Another Liberal backbencher who appeared on Guest's list was David Davies, M.P. for Montgomery. Davies had been Lloyd George's parliamentary private secretary in 1916 and had served in the 'Garden Suburb' in 1917, yet by mid-1918 he had become distinctly unsympathetic towards the coalition.²¹ There may very well be other peculiarities on Guest's list. Even so,

²⁰ H.C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol. 105, cols. 2400-2 (9 May 1918).

²¹ See E. David, 'The Liberal Party Divided, 1916-1918', H.J., XIII, 3 (1970), pp. 524-5.

only a small proportion of those whose names appeared on it had been active in the promotion of Radical causes before 1914. Excluding Chapple, Young, Wedgwood and Davies, there were eighty-one M.P.s on Guest's list who had sat in parliament before 1914. Eight of these had voted for the limitation of naval spending on two or more occasions. Seven had voted in support of the reductionist cause on one occasion. There were a further nine M.P.s who never entered the division lobby in support of the reductionist cause but who backed the Molteno-Harvey deputation of 1913. Twenty-four of the M.P.s on Guest's list were signatories of the 1911 'Land and Taxation Reform' memorial.²²

The evidence discussed so far suggests that little credence can be attached to the claim that Lloyd George's 'old Guard' was drawn largely from the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party. It also suggests that the majority of Radical M.P.s were not ardent coalitionists. What, then, was the political stance of the mass of Radical M.P.s in 1917-18? It will be argued here that the Lloyd George coalition was viewed with deep suspicion and hostility by the main stream of parliamentary Radical opinion. It will also be suggested that Asquith's

²² Of these M.P.s, fourteen were among the twenty-four M.P.s on Guest's list who protested in some way against Liberal naval policy. There were, therefore, ten M.P.s on Guest's list who protested against Liberal naval policy in some way but who did not sign the 'Land and Taxation' memorial. Three of these ten were not M.P.s when the memorial was drawn up in May 1911.

attitude of 'magnanimous restraint' towards the coalition in 1917-18 aroused intense dissatisfaction in Radical quarters.²³

On 11 May 1918, Lloyd George discussed the Maurice debate - which had taken place two days earlier - with Lord Riddell. Lloyd George observed that Asquith's performance had been tactically inept. Riddell replied that the ex-premier had ended up by going into the opposition lobby with all the 'cranks'.²⁴ This was a term which was not infrequently used in certain circles to refer to the Radicals.²⁵ Riddell's remark was not without substance. Asquith's companions in the opposition lobby on 9 May included a considerable number of M.P.s who had been thorns in his government's flesh before 1914. Twenty-six of the ninety-eight Liberals who voted

²³ This was W.M.R. Pringle's phrase: see the report of his speech at the National Liberal Club in the Daily News, 14 March 1918.

²⁴ Riddell's Diary, 11 May 1918, Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 328.

²⁵ In January 1916, J.A. Simon was unwise enough to complain to C.P. Scott that many of his allies in the fight against conscription were 'cranks': Scott retorted that a crank was 'a robust person with convictions' (Scott's Diary, 10-11 January 1916, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 173). For other examples of this usage of the term 'crank', see J. Henry to T.E. Harvey, 10 August 1914, T.E. Harvey MS., and Sir W. Sutherland to Lloyd George, 2 January 1922, Lloyd George MS. F/35/1/1 ('Our old isms matter less at present as so many of our old friends in the Liberal Party, who might be described (not unkindly) as cranks have gone Asquithian and in the case of men of the type of Jos. Wedgwood, Ponsonby, Trevelyan etc. have gone Labour').

against the government in the Maurice division had voted for the limitation of naval spending on two or more occasions before 1914.²⁶ Ten of the ninety-eight had voted against naval expansion on one occasion.²⁷ There were in addition twelve M.P.s who had never voted in support of the reductionist cause but who backed the Molteno-Harvey deputation of 1913.²⁸ Also in the opposition lobby on 9 May were four Liberals - Noel Buxton, Joseph King, J.H. Whitehouse and H.W. Carr-Gomm - who had neither voted for the limitation of naval spending nor supported the 1913 deputation but who had been members of the executive committee of the Foreign Affairs Group. It is quite clear that in the Maurice division Asquith enjoyed the support of the main body of parliamentary Radical opinion.

When Asquith spoke in the Maurice debate on 9 July he was at pains to stress that he was not moving a motion of censure on the government. His speech, a

26 S. Arnold, J. Allen Baker, J.E. Barlow, J.F.L. Brunner, H.G. Chancellor, W. Clough, W.H. Dickinson, H.J. Glanville, T.E. Harvey, J.M. Hogge, E.T. John, R.D. Holt, Leif Jones, Thos. Lough, J.A.M. Macdonald, R.C. Lambert, P. Morrrell, G.H. Pollard, Arthur Ponsonby, J.M. Robertson, Arnold Rowntree, A.J. Sherwell, H.A. Watt, Llewellyn Williams, J.W. Wilson and T. Wing.

27 W.A. Chapple, D.F. Goddard, J.M. Henderson, P.A. Molteno, C.E. Price, W.M.R. Pringle, W.R. Rea, A. Rendall, A. Richardson and S. Robinson.

28 J.N. Barran, G.J. Bentham, A.W. Black, J.H. Duncan, H. Elverston, T.R. Ferens, D.T. Holmes, A. Marshall, H. Morrison, C.T. Needham, Sir A. Spicer and W. Young.

low-key affair, amounted to little more than a discussion of the reasons why it was desirable that Maurice's allegations should be investigated by a select committee of the House of Commons and not by a judicial committee. It is most unlikely that the Radical M.P.s who followed Asquith into the opposition lobby were much concerned with this narrow procedural issue. It is altogether more plausible to suppose that these M.P.s, or at any rate the vast majority of them, were motivated by a desire to strike a blow at the government. Many of the most prominent and representative Radicals who sided with Asquith on 9 July made little attempt in 1917-18 to conceal their hostility to the Lloyd George regime. R.D. Holt, one of the principal backers of Common Sense and a member of the committee of the Civil Liberties Group, is a prime case in point. Holt's diary for 1917-18 is dotted with bitter references to Lloyd George. Soon after Lloyd George became prime minister, Holt spoke of 'the L.G. villainy'.²⁹ In early 1918, he described Lloyd George as 'a liar and a treacherous fellow' and as 'a public danger'.³⁰ When Lloyd George announced in November 1918 that he intended to go to the country in alliance with the Conservatives, Holt could hardly contain himself: 'I believe our present P.M. and his

²⁹ R.D. Holt's Diary, 18 February 1917, R.D. Holt MS.

³⁰ R.D. Holt's Diary, 21 February and 5 May 1918, R.D. Holt MS.

entourage to be thoroughly corrupt and self-seeking, utterly devoid of knowledge and very anxious for popularity'.³¹ Lloyd George aroused similarly intense feelings of animosity in R.C. Lambert, the secretary of the Civil Liberties Group and a member of the U.D.C.. When the journalist H.W. Nevinson met Lambert in December 1917, the latter 'railed at Ll. G.... as the incarnation of the devil'.³² Lloyd George was assailed with equal virulence by other U.D.C. Radicals. In September 1917, C.P. Trevelyan denounced him as 'the wily catspaw of reactionary militarism'.³³ Arthur Ponsonby put his views on record in May 1918: 'Lloyd George cannot wage war, he cannot make peace, therefore he must be turned out... We have not yet reached that degree of degradation when Lloyd George is the only man who can govern us'.³⁴ Radicals who were not members of the U.D.C. could be just as vehement. Llewellyn Williams came to refer to Lloyd George in private as 'the Dictator'.³⁵ J.M. Hogge

³¹ R.D. Holt's Diary, 17 November 1918, R.D. Holt MS.

³² H.W. Nevinson's Diary, 15 December 1917, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e 620/3.

³³ C.P. Trevelyan, 'Militarism and The Future of Democracy', The U.D.C., September 1917.

³⁴ A. Ponsonby, 'What Next?', The U.D.C., May 1918.

³⁵ Williams to Arthur Ponsonby, 12 October 1920, Ponsonby MS.

paraded his contempt for the Lloyd George coalition in the House of Commons: he declared in October 1917 that he longed for an opportunity to get rid of the government.³⁶ In March 1918, Hogge's political partner, W.M.R. Pringle, publicly urged Asquith to launch a wide-ranging attack on the coalition.³⁷ The views of Pringle and Hogge could hardly have come as a surprise to Lloyd George: they had been among his most vocal and persistent critics since 1915. Noel Buxton, in contrast, was a high-minded Radical M.P. who had kept a low profile during the war. Yet, in the spring of 1918, Buxton declared that a change of leadership was urgently required for the sake of 'national welfare', and maintained the military reverses which Britain had recently suffered on the Western front showed that those who believed that Lloyd George was 'the only possible Premier because he is a man "who does something"' were suffering from a delusion.³⁸ Two months before firing off this broadside, Buxton had attended an important 'Lansdowne-Labour' conference at the Essex Hall.³⁹ A number of Buxton's parliamentary colleagues

³⁶ See Daily News, 26 October 1917.

³⁷ Speech at the National Liberal Club, reported in Daily News, 14 March 1918.

³⁸ Noel Buxton to ed., Daily News, 25 April 1918.

³⁹ See below for a discussion of the Lansdowne movement, pp. 281-5.

were in the audience, notably Holt, Ponsonby, P.A. Molteno, H.G. Chancellor and J.E. Barlow, as were such Radical luminaries as F.W. Hirst, J.A. Hobson and Lowes Dickinson.⁴⁰ Also present was H.W. Nevinson, who recorded his impressions of the conference in his diary. 'Ll. G.', he noted, 'met with general detestation'.⁴¹

The commitment of the Lloyd George coalition to the idea of the 'knock-out blow' goes a long way towards explaining why Radical feelings ran so high.⁴² In 1917 there was a distinct hardening of Radical opinion in favour of the idea of a negotiated peace. After three years of military stalemate, it appeared to be far from inconceivable that the search for outright victory would end in failure, and that a compromise peace would ultimately be made after 'infinite suffering and misery' had taken place unnecessarily.⁴³ But Radicals were perhaps equally perturbed by the possibility that the 'knock-out blow' would be successfully inflicted. It came to be felt in Radical quarters that it was unrealistic to hope

⁴⁰ Information derived from Common Sense, 2 March 1918.

⁴¹ H.W. Nevinson's Diary, 25 February 1918, Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e 620/3.

⁴² The remainder of this chapter is concerned with Radicals who were anti-coalitionists. General statements about Radical opinion from this point onwards refer to the views of these Radicals alone, and not to those of the minority of Radicals who were coalitionists. It would be unnecessarily cumbersome to make this clear on every occasion that a generalisation is made.

⁴³ P.A. Molteno to Walter Runciman, 28 January 1917, Runciman MS.; see also Molteno to C.R. Buxton, 7 October 1916, C.R. Buxton MS. 1/4/137; Arthur Ponsonby, Notes of interview with Lloyd George, 27 June 1918, Ponsonby MS.

that the Lloyd George coalition would approach the task of making peace with a defeated Germany in what one Radical M.P. called 'a broad and liberal spirit'.⁴⁴

C.P. Scott's hope that Lloyd George would in the end prove to be a force for moderation does not appear to have been widely shared.⁴⁵ Moreover, it was generally believed that the Conservatives would do everything in their power to ensure that the settlement was a punitive one. Nowhere was this belief expressed more clearly than in the draft of a proposed letter to Asquith written in late 1917 by Noel Buxton and Josiah Wedgwood, two Radical M.P.s who until 1916 had been advocates of a vigorous war policy:

It is felt by a large number of those who have been most loyal to the Liberal party and its traditions, that the Liberal attitude towards the problems of the settlement at which the war is aimed differs of necessity from that of Conservatism, and there is a keen desire that the distinction should be voiced in the utterances of the Liberal leadership... The rival theories are:-

- 1) That the more Germany is humiliated, the less will the Junkers succeed in future
- 2) That if we obtain a settlement which leaves Germany with no gains and vast losses, and yet avoid giving the militarists material for rousing revenge, the best conditions will be produced for securing⁴⁶ that they shall fail to obtain support.

⁴⁴ R.D. Holt to Lady Courtney, 3 April 1918, Courtney MS., vol. 7.

⁴⁵ See, for example, C.P. Scott to Lord Courtney, 21 August 1917, Courtney MS., vol. 7.

⁴⁶ Noel Buxton and Josiah Wedgwood, untitled circular (confidential), 1 December 1917, enclosing proposed letter to Asquith, R.D. Denman MS., box 1. The circular was sent to all Liberal M.P.s: there is no record of whether the letter was eventually sent to Asquith. For a discussion of the reaction to the proposed letter, see H.N. Fieldhouse, 'Noel Buxton and A.J.P. Taylor's "The Trouble Makers"' in Gilbert (ed.), A Century of Conflict, pp. 190-1.

The Radicals' objection to the idea of humiliating Germany was, of course, that it was liable to provoke a war of revenge. To Radicals like J. Allen Baker, who regarded the 'permanence' of the post-war settlement as a matter of paramount importance, it appeared that negotiation offered the best chance of bringing about a lasting settlement.⁴⁷ The belief that the Lloyd George coalition would, if given the opportunity, impose disastrous terms on Germany was not, however, the only reason why it was viewed with intense distrust by the bulk of the Radical community. There also existed a belief that Lloyd George and his Conservative allies had formulated - and were determined to implement - plans for large-scale territorial annexations. In 1917, Radical spokesmen repeatedly made the suggestion that new and unacceptable aims had been put in the place of those for which Britain had originally entered the war. This line of attack had been foreshadowed in October 1916 by R.D. Holt, who, speaking on behalf of the Civil Liberties Group, had declared:

We desire peace as soon as we can get it consistently with attaining our objects. I hope for a definite assurance that no-one wants to go any further... Let us be very careful that in the prosecution of this war we do not allow our objects to degenerate.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ J. Allen Baker to W.H. Dickinson, 5 September 1917, Bodleian Eng. Hist. MS. c. 403, fol. 98 (W.H. Dickinson MS.).

⁴⁸ H.C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol. 86, col. 131 (11 October 1916).

By late 1917, the Civil Liberties Group was expressing itself in accusatory tones. Its spokesman was

R.C. Lambert:

We believe that the objects of the war, the original objects, ought and must be obtained before we accept peace. But what we are afraid of is that these objects are being exceeded... We are fighting for things which I can only describe as Imperialism.⁴⁹

It should be emphasised that it was not only the Radical zealots who had voted against conscription who subscribed to the view that the Lloyd George coalition was capable of prolonging the war in order to fulfil annexationist ambitions. In December 1917, Sir William Collins, speaking on behalf of a group of some fifteen M.P.s - several of whom had not opposed conscription - which R.D. Holt labelled the 'Runciman coterie', expressed fears about the coalition's war aims which differed little from those voiced by R.C. Lambert.⁵⁰ Collins's views were endorsed by Josiah Wedgwood, formerly an ardent conscriptionist.⁵¹

⁴⁹ ibid., vol. 93, cols. 2016-7 (6 November 1917).

⁵⁰ ibid., vol. 100, cols. 1993-4 (19 December 1917). For the 'Runciman coterie', see below, fn. 55.

⁵¹ ibid., vol. 100, cols. 2019-24 (19 December 1917). For other Radicals expressing their fears that the government had embarked on a war of conquest, see, for example: A. Ponsonby to Lloyd George, 14 December 1916, Lloyd George MS. F/94/1/36; A.G.G.(ardiner), 'Towards Niagara', Daily News, 2 February 1918; letter by J. Allen Baker, J.E. Barlow, N. Buxton et al. to Russian 'Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' delegates', printed in Manchester Guardian, 2 May 1917 (see below, fn. 54).

In 1917 and early 1918, most, though not perhaps all, of the Radicals who were opposed to the concept of a fight to the finish were prepared to stand up and be counted. This had not been the case, of course, in 1916. There were several reasons why Radicals who had previously remained silent reached the conclusion that the time had come to speak out. One, no doubt, was the change of government. The bleak military outlook was another. There is no doubt, too, that Radicals were influenced by the fact that other voices were being raised in favour of peace negotiations or in support of the kind of post-war settlement they desired. In January 1917, Woodrow Wilson called for 'peace without victory'.⁵² Three months later, in April, the new provisional government of Russia declared itself to be in favour of a peace without annexations or indemnities.⁵³

⁵² Wilson was an inspiration to Radicals at a time when British Liberal leaders had ceased to inspire: P.F. Clarke describes him as 'the surrogate leader of British Liberalism' (Clarke, Liberals and Social Democrats (Cambridge, 1978), p. 199). On the relationship between Wilson and the British Radicals, see L.W. Martin, Peace without Victory, passim.; Koss, Gardiner, ch. 9; Swartz, Union of Democratic Control, pp. 131-40.

⁵³ Radicals were ecstatic on hearing of the March revolution. This was in part because it appeared that a liberal Russia would, to use C.P. Scott's words, 'immensely facilitate the conclusion of a reasonable and stable peace' (Scott to Lord Courtney, 21 August 1917, Courtney MS., vol. 7). The revolution also removed a regime towards which Radicals had long been bitterly hostile, and, more generally, it helped to rekindle Radical hopes that the overall effect of the war would be to further the cause of progress and not reaction. For individual responses, see, for example, T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 18 March 1917, T.E. Harvey MS. ('I heard news of the Russian revolution at Southampton and literally jumped for joy. It may mean not only a new Russia but a new hope for all Europe'); R.D. Holt's Diary, 1 April 1917, R.D. Holt MS.; Lady Courtney's Diary, 13 April 1917, Courtney MS., vol. 8. See also fn. 54 below.

On 29 November, Lord Lansdowne published in the Daily Telegraph a letter in which it was argued that the Allies should explore the possibility of a negotiated peace. Hard on the heels of the Lansdowne letter came the Labour party's Memorandum on War Aims, which, in C.P. Trevelyan's opinion, coincided in nine points out of ten with the policy of the U.D.C. and the I.L.P.⁵⁴ These pronouncements were in part responsible for creating a feeling that discussion of peace by negotiation no longer lay beyond the bounds of respectability. This feeling was reflected, for example, in the welcome which A.G. Gardiner extended to the Lansdowne letter. 'Lord Lansdowne', he wrote, 'has changed the atmosphere... He has made it legitimate to ask where we are going and what we are fighting for'.⁵⁵

In the twelve months between February 1917 and February 1918, there were six full-scale debates in the House of Commons on the issue of war aims and peace negotiations. Four of them - those on 20 February, 16 May, 26 July and 6 November - were organised by

⁵⁴ C.P. Trevelyan, 'The Two Tyrannies', The U.D.C., December 1917.

⁵⁵ A.G.G. (ardiner), 'The Lansdowne Lead', Daily News, 1 December 1917.

the Civil Liberties Group.⁵⁶ The fifth debate, which took place on 19 December, was instigated by the

⁵⁶ Unfortunately, a full membership list of the Civil Liberties Group has not been traced. There are, however, two useful pieces of evidence which cast light on its membership in 1917. The first is a report which appeared in the Daily News on 20 February 1917, in which it was stated that the Civil Liberties Group had decided to move a reasoned amendment to the government's Bill proposing the establishment of a Ministry of National Service. It listed three Labour M.P.s - MacDonald, Snowden and W.C. Anderson - and fourteen Radical M.P.s who had put their names to this amendment. The Radicals were: E.T. John, R.C. Lambert, R.D. Holt, S. Arnold, C.P. Trevelyan, H.B. Lees-Smith, W.M.R. Pringle, J.M. Hogge, A. Ponsonby, R.L. Outhwaite, H.G. Chancellor, J. King, P.A. Molteno and D.M. Mason. The Manchester Guardian of 20 February 1917 states that T.E. Harvey had also put his name to this amendment. The second piece of evidence is two letters which were printed in the Manchester Guardian on 2 May 1917. One, signed by twenty-five Radical and six Labour M.P.s, was to the new provisional government of Russia expressing 'joy and admiration at the mighty revolution which is the dawn of a new world' and expressing agreement with the provisional government's 'statement of objects with which the New Russia is fighting the war'; the other, signed by twenty Radical and five Labour M.P.s, was to the 'Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' delegates' expressing agreement with the Council's view that 'the greatest obstacle to peace today is the survival of ... Imperialist designs among the ruling classes in most of the belligerent nations'. All fifteen of the Radicals mentioned above signed one or other of these letters, and twelve signed both of them. It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that (i) these letters were the work of the Civil Liberties Group, and, therefore, that (ii) M.P.s other than those mentioned above who signed one or other of these letters were members of the Group. The Radical M.P.s other than those mentioned above who did sign one or both of these letters were: P. Alden, J.A. Baker, J.E. Barlow, J. Bliss, Noel Buxton, W. Clough, Leif Jones, P. Morrell, P.W. Raffan, A. Rowntree and Josiah Wedgwood. It can also be said with certainty that J.H. Whitehouse was a member of the Group; he was elected to its committee in July 1916 and acted as a teller in the Group's 'peace' motion of 6 November 1917. It is almost certain that A.G.C. Harvey was a member of the Group, but illness kept him away from Westminster for much of 1917-18. Other possible members of the Group include Sir Walter Runciman, E.H. Lamb, J.W. Wilson and Thomas Lough, each of whom had voted against conscription in 1916 and voted for at least one of the 'peace' motions in 1917-18.

'Runciman coterie'.⁵⁷ There is no clear evidence on who was responsible for the sixth debate - which was held on 13 February 1918 - but it seems likely that it was the 'Runciman coterie' rather than the Civil Liberties Group.⁵⁸ Four of these debates were followed by a

57 The 'Runciman coterie' was in fact formed by R.D. Holt in early December 1917. Its aim was 'intelligent, patriotic & active opposition' (R.D. Holt's Diary, 3 December 1917, R.D. Holt MS.). Its membership, some fifteen Liberal M.P.s in all, can be divided into two categories: firstly, those like Holt, Leif Jones, S. Arnold, P.A. Molteno and Pringle who had voted against conscription and were also associated with the Civil Liberties Group; secondly, those like Sir William Collins, J.F.L. Brunner, C.E. Price, A. Rendall, Sir C. Seely, Haydn Jones and George Lambert who had not previously engaged in criticism of the war policies of the Asquith and Lloyd George coalitions. Runciman appears to have been the patron of the group rather than a fully-fledged member of it - though it should be added that Holt noted in June 1918 that he and other leading members of the group had met weekly at Runciman's house since January (R.D. Holt's Diary, 2 June 1918, R.D. Holt MS.). The reasons why Holt and his associates chose at this time to act separately from the Civil Liberties Group can only be guessed at. Holt himself certainly felt that some members of the Civil Liberties Group, notable Ponsonby and Trevelyan, were wild men, and it may be that his associates felt the same way. In his diary on 24 December, Holt, referring to Ponsonby's speech in the war aims debate of 19 December, noted that 'Ponsonby spoke second - as usual expressing extreme ideas...'. Two months later, on 21 February 1918, Holt recorded that the division on his 'peace' motion of 13 February had been 'spoilt by folly of Charles Trevelyan who eulogised rantingly on Trotsky & the Bolsheviks'. For information on the 'Runciman coterie', see R.D. Holt's Diary, 3 December 1917, 17 December 1917, 24 December 1917 and 2 June 1918, R.D. Holt MS.

58 The debate was initiated by Holt, and he and Pringle acted as tellers in the division: the tellers in the divisions on the Civil Liberties Group's motions on 16 May, 26 July and 6 November were Lees-Smith, Whitehouse, Trevelyan and F. Jowett.

division.⁵⁹ A total of thirty-six Liberal M.P.s voted for one or more of the motions concerned.⁶⁰ Virtually all of them had been Radical activists before 1914. There were two notable exceptions, both of whom were former Cabinet ministers: John Burns, who voted for all four of the motions in question, and Augustine Birrell, who voted for R.D. Holt's amendment to the Address of February 1918.

The Radical and Labour advocates of peace by negotiation were, of course, heavily defeated on each of the occasions that they forced a division in the House of Commons. They did not, however, consider themselves

59 Snowden's motion welcoming the declaration of the new democratic government of Russia repudiating all proposals for imperialist conquest, H.C. Parl. Deb., div. no. 39 (16 May 1917); MacDonald's motion declaring that the Reichstag peace resolution expressed the principles for which Britain had stood throughout, ibid., div. no. 79 (26 July 1917); Lees-Smith's motion asking that no obstacle should be placed in the way of preliminaries towards negotiations for a peace settlement, ibid., div. no. 104 (6 November 1917); R.D. Holt's motion regretting that the prosecution of the war was to be the only immediate task of H.M. government, ibid., div. no. 1 (13 February 1918). There was no division after the debates on 20 February and 19 December.

60 The M.P.s in question, together with (in brackets) the number of the four motions they voted for, were: John Burns (4), H.G. Chancellor (4), R.C. Lambert (4), D.M. Mason (4), P. Morrell (4), R.L. Outhwaite (4), C.P. Trevelyan (4), J.H. Whitehouse (4), H.B. Lees-Smith (4), T.E. Harvey (3), A. Ponsonby (3), J. King (3), S. Arnold (2), J.A. Baker (2), J.E. Barlow (2), Noel Buxton (2), J.M. Hogge (2), R.D. Holt (2), J. Martin (1), R.D. Denman (1), H. Nuttall (1), A. Rowntree (1), J.A. Bryce (1), W.P. Beale (1), C.E. Price (1), W. Pringle (1), Sir Walter Runciman (1), H. Watt (1), J.W. Wilson (1), A. Birrell (1), J. Bliss (1), G. Collins (1), E.T. John (1), E.H. Lamb (1), T. Lough (1), W. Roch (1).

to be fighting a hopeless cause. There came a time, indeed, during which anti-coalition Radicals believed that there was a real prospect of turning out the Lloyd George ministry and installing what Lady Courtney called a 'peace Govt.' in its place.⁶¹ This was immediately after the appearance of the Lansdowne letter. It was hoped in Radical circles that Lansdowne would consent to act as a standard-bearer behind whom moderate opinion could be mobilised. Arthur Ponsonby was quick to get in touch with him, promising not to embarrass him with 'enthusiastic expressions of "pacifist" support' but expressing the hope that action would be taken to promote the policy he had outlined.⁶² So, too, was F.W. Hirst of Common Sense, who became the principal organiser of what came to be known as the 'Lansdowne movement'. Hirst's first move was to get prominent Radical and socialist 'authors and publicists' to sign an address expressing their gratitude to Lansdowne.⁶³ The Radical signatories of this address, which was presented to Lansdowne on 29 January 1918, included A.G. Gardiner, H.W. Massingham, J.A. Hobson, Gilbert Murray, Lord Courtney, Lord Loreburn, Noel Buxton, P.A. Molteno and

⁶¹ Lady Courtney's Diary, 28 February 1918, Courtney MS., vol. 38.

⁶² Ponsonby to Lansdowne, ?29 November 1917 (draft), Ponsonby MS.

⁶³ See Common Sense, 22 December 1917.

D.M. Mason.⁶⁴ Hirst then arranged a 'Lansdowne-Labour' conference, which took place on 25 February. The main speakers included Loreburn, Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden, R.D. Holt and Arthur Ponsonby.⁶⁵ A second conference, addressed by Hirst, H.B. Lees-Smith, Noel Buxton, D.M. Mason, J.A. Hobson and P.A. Moltano among others, was held ten days later.⁶⁶ No attempt was made to disguise the fact that these gatherings were part of an effort to bring into being a government of 'men... who reject in principle the policy of the knock-out blow'.⁶⁷ The 'Lansdowne-Labour' conferences were accompanied by an uninhibited press campaign in Hirst's Common Sense, Massingham's Nation and Gardiner's Daily News. Gardiner was perhaps the most uninhibited. In February-March 1918, he attacked the Lloyd George coalition with extraordinary ferocity, proclaiming that it was trembling to its fall, 'burdened with such a mountain of odium, of failure, of corruption, as no Ministry since the Eighteenth Century could rival'. Gardiner went on to call for 'a Government of honest men, a Clean Government committed to a Clean

⁶⁴ Common Sense, 12 January, 19 January, 26 January, 2 February 1918.

⁶⁵ See Common Sense, 2 March 1918.

⁶⁶ See Common Sense, 9 March 1918.

⁶⁷ R.D. Holt to ed., Common Sense, 9 February 1918.

Peace'.⁶⁸ He explained precisely what he had in mind in a private letter to Gilbert Murray: 'The backbone of the Govt. must be Labour. Lansdowne might be accepted as nominal head & Asquith as Foreign minister'.⁶⁹ Other activists in the 'Lansdowne movement' appear to have envisaged a similar combination. Noel Buxton, for example, thought in terms of a ministry headed by Lansdowne, Asquith and Arthur Henderson.⁷⁰ So, too, did H.W. Massingham.⁷¹

The schemes of Gardiner, Buxton, Massingham and other promoters of the 'Lansdowne movement' turned out to be nothing more than wishful thinking. None of the political leaders to whom they looked exhibited any interest in the idea of a 'peace Govt.'. Asquith made it clear in a speech at Birmingham soon after the publication of the Lansdowne letter that he did not favour a compromise peace.⁷² Arthur Henderson's preoccupation

⁶⁸ A.G. Gardiner, 'On the Eve of Change', Daily News, 9 March 1918 (the quotation in the previous sentence is also from this article). See also Gardiner's 'Towards Niagara' (Daily News, 2 February 1918) and 'A Letter to the Liberal Whip' (Daily News, 9 February 1918).

⁶⁹ A.G. Gardiner to Gilbert Murray, n.d., Gilbert Murray MS., box 98.

⁷⁰ Noel Buxton to ed., Daily News, 25 April 1918.

⁷¹ See Havighurst, Massingham, p. 265. See also, F.W. Hirst to Lady Courtney, 28 January 1918, Courtney MS., vol. 7; R.D. Holt to Lady Courtney, 3 April 1918, Courtney MS., vol. 7.

⁷² See report of Asquith's Birmingham speech in Daily News, 12 December 1917.

in early 1918 was the transformation of the Labour party into a genuinely national party. Nor did Lansdowne show any disposition to assume the role which had been earmarked for him. He told Ponsonby soon after the appearance of his letter in the Daily Telegraph: 'I am not at present disposed to take any further action'.⁷³ Lansdowne did not depart from this position in the ensuing months. By mid-1918, Ponsonby had given up all hope. Following a conversation with Lansdowne, he wrote to C.P. Trevelyan: 'The idea of his heading a movement & coming out against the govmt. is out of the question'.⁷⁴ The 'Lansdowne movement' had in fact begun to lose momentum some time before Ponsonby arrived at this conclusion. It expired quietly in the autumn of 1918, having achieved nothing.⁷⁵

The 'Lansdowne movement' was an organised, though ineffective, assault on the Lloyd George coalition. It was not an exclusively Radical movement. A substantial proportion of the Radical community, however, was involved in it. Those present at the 'Lansdowne-Labour'

⁷³ Lansdowne to Ponsonby, 8 December 1917, Ponsonby MS.

⁷⁴ Ponsonby to C.P. Trevelyan, 24 July 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁷⁵ There were three further 'Lansdowne' conferences - on 31 July, 7 August and 16 October. There was, however, no talk of a Lansdowne government at these gatherings. For a full discussion of the 'Lansdowne movement', see Robbins, 'Abolition of War', chs. 7 and 8.

conferences included the Radical editors Hirst, Massingham and Gardiner; Radical intellectuals and journalists like Hobson, Nevinson, G.P. Gooch, Lowes Dickinson and Gilbert Murray; former Radical M.P.s like E.N. Bennett, V.H. Rutherford, Frederick Mackarness and Lord Ashton of Hyde; and virtually all of the members of the parliamentary Civil Liberties Group.⁷⁶ The 'Lansdowne movement', therefore, gives some indication of just how widespread and how intense Radical hostility to the Lloyd George coalition and its war policy had become by early 1918.

The domestic as well as the international policies of the Lloyd George coalition came under Radical fire in 1917-18. Radicals were, from the outset, deeply suspicious of the coalition's intentions in the domestic field. The belief that the Tories were bent on exploiting the opportunities offered by the war to make political headway had become deeply rooted in Radical circles during the struggle over conscription in 1915-16. Hence, when the new government - 'essentially Tory', R.D. Holt noted in his diary - took office in December 1916, it was expected that Liberal ideals would come under attack.⁷⁷ L.T. Hobhouse gloomily foresaw a policy of 'thorough'.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ See Common Sense, 2 March, 9 March, 3 August, 10 August, 19 October 1918.

⁷⁷ R.D. Holt's Diary, 10 December 1916, R.D. Holt MS.

⁷⁸ L.T. Hobhouse to C.P. Scott, 2 December 1916, quoted in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 241-2.

T.E. Harvey felt that the political outlook was 'very grave'.⁷⁹ Lady Courtney detected a sense of 'dread' in the circles in which she moved.⁸⁰ Nothing occurred over the next two years to put Radicals in a less troubled frame of mind. Spirited Radical resistance was offered, however, when Liberal ideals were threatened by the coalition's policies. The Daily News, Common Sense and the Nation invariably let fly on these occasions, and there were times when they were joined by the Manchester Guardian. In parliament, the Civil Liberties Group waged a dogged and not wholly ineffective campaign in defence of civil rights, freedom of expression, free trade and the last vestiges of voluntary military service. In February 1917, the Group protested vigorously against the government's Bill to establish a Ministry of National Service, fearing that it could be used to introduce industrial conscription by the back door. The protest was successful: the government agreed to amend the Bill.⁸¹ Three weeks later, on 14 March, there was a division in the House of Commons on the government's plan to introduce a form of protection for the Indian cotton industry: twenty-odd members of the Civil Liberties

⁷⁹ T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 8 December 1916, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁸⁰ Lady Courtney's Diary, 3 December 1916, Courtney MS., vol. 37.

⁸¹ See Daily News, 23 February 1917: the basis of the Group's fears is explained in Daily News, 20 February 1917.

Group were among the forty-eight Liberals who went into the opposition lobby.⁸² Members of the Civil Liberties Group were also well to the fore when, in April, Lloyd George was given something of a mauling in parliament over the government's decision to prohibit the overseas circulation of the Nation. The issue of freedom of expression arose again in November 1917, when a regulation was issued under the Defence of the Realm Act which made it unlawful to print, publish or distribute any leaflet relating to the war or to the making of peace unless its contents had been passed by the Directors of the Press Bureau. Thirty-eight Liberal and six Labour M.P.s put down a motion demanding the withdrawal of the regulation: more than half of the Liberals concerned were members of the Civil Liberties Group.⁸³ As it happened, the Lansdowne letter was published a few days after this regulation was issued: Ponsonby, Pringle and R.L. Outhwaite duly goaded Cave, the Home Secretary, by asking whether the censors' permission would be required before the

82 A strong contingent of Lancashire M.P.s voted against the government on this occasion, including some - like Sir William Barton, J.S. Higham (a Lancastrian, although he represented a Yorkshire constituency) and Sir Henry Norman - who were Lloyd Georgian Liberals. See E. David, 'The Liberal Party Divided, 1916-1918', p. 515.

83 The M.P.s concerned are listed in Daily News, 27 November 1917. One or two Liberals who normally supported the government put their names to this motion.

letter could be circulated in leaflet form.⁸⁴ The regulation was in fact watered down in December 1917. 1918 saw the return of the conscription issue. In April, a Bill was introduced which raised the age-limit for liability to conscription to fifty and which extended conscription to Ireland. On 10 April, thirty Liberals went into the division lobby in support of a wrecking motion proposed by Charles Hobhouse.⁸⁵ On the same day, twenty-six Liberals voted against the Bill in the division on its second reading.⁸⁶ Two days later, thirty-two Liberals voted for an Irish amendment which proposed that the Bill should not come into operation until an Irish parliament had been set up under the provisions of the 1914 Government of Ireland Act.⁸⁷ Most of the Liberals who voted against the government in these divisions were Civil Liberties Group veterans. The Liberal opponents of the Bill did, though, include several Radicals - Ellis Davies, J.M. McCallum, Noel Buxton, Timothy Davies, C.E. Price and P.W. Raffan - who

⁸⁴ See Daily News, 4 December 1917.

⁸⁵ H.C. Parl. Deb., 5 ser., vol. 104, div. no. 7 (10 April 1918).

⁸⁶ ibid., div. no. 8 (10 April 1918).

⁸⁷ ibid., div. no. 18 (12 April 1918).

had voted against conscription in 1916.

On 8 December 1916, just after he had been deposed as Prime Minister, Asquith addressed a gathering of Liberal M.P.s at the Reform Club. One Liberal M.P., an admirer of Lloyd George, noted afterwards:

There was, indeed, no hint of active opposition. Those who had fostered the idea that Liberal Ministers, driven out of office, would, in an hour of supreme crisis, lie in wait, so to speak, for the new Ministry, received not the remotest sign of encouragement... he made it perfectly clear that his intention and theirs (his old colleagues who had not joined L. G.'s administration) was to give every assistance that lay in their power to Mr. Lloyd George in the effort to win the war.⁸⁸

Asquith was as good as his word. In 1917-18, apart from initiating the Maurice debate, he made no serious move against the government. His strategy was not one, however, which commended itself to the Radicals of the Civil Liberties Group and their associates outside parliament. What they wanted to see was the Lloyd George coalition confronted with what Leif Jones called 'vigilant, critical & active opposition'.⁸⁹ Numerous attempts were made to get Asquith to take a stronger line. In early December 1917, Noel Buxton and Josiah Wedgwood tried to get Liberal backbenchers to support an appeal to Asquith to speak out on the question of war

⁸⁸ A.C. Murray's Diary, 8 December 1916, Elibank MS., 8815.

⁸⁹ Leif Jones to Lord Courtney, 22 December 1917, Courtney MS., vol. 8.

aims.⁹⁰ Later in the same month, R.D. Holt, Leif Jones and others saw Asquith in the hope of persuading him to make a positive response to the Lansdowne letter.⁹¹ In February 1918, A.G. Gardiner weighed in with a full-blooded attack on what he called 'the policy of masterly inactivity, of magnanimous acquiescence'.⁹² Asquith encountered a number of Liberal M.P.s who shared Gardiner's frustration when, in March 1918, he attended a dinner at the House of Commons organised by Sir Walter Runciman. 'Mr. Asquith received the warmest assurances of confidence and affection from the members present', reported the Westminster Gazette, 'but the sense of the gathering was that magnanimity had been pushed to excess by the Liberal front bench, and strong hopes were expressed that a more militant line would be taken in future'.⁹³ In June, the indefatigable Holt was at work again. Accompanied by Leif Jones, Pringle, Hogge and others, he saw Asquith and 'urged him to greater efforts'.⁹⁴ What

⁹⁰ Noel Buxton and Josiah Wedgwood, untitled circular (confidential), 1 December 1917, R.D. Denman MS., box 1.

⁹¹ R.D. Holt's Diary, 17 December 1917, R.D. Holt MS.

⁹² A.G.G.(ardiner), 'A Letter to the Liberal Whip', Daily News, 9 February 1918.

⁹³ Westminster Gazette, 14 March 1918. See also, R.D. Holt's Diary, 17 March 1918, R.D. Holt MS.

⁹⁴ R.D. Holt's Diary, 16 June 1918, R.D. Holt MS.

Holt had in mind was 'an organised attack on the Government by the whole Liberal party'.⁹⁵ Holt soon realised that he had made no impression. A few days after his interview with Asquith, he noted despondently: 'A disappointing week - neither on Monday nor on Tuesday did Asquith play up as he should have done'.⁹⁶

Asquith's conduct in 1917-18 was viewed with mounting indignation in Radical quarters. Time after time, he failed to take action in defence of Liberal principles - even when to have done so could not have had an adverse effect on the war effort. In March 1917, he failed to oppose the government's Indian cotton duties proposals, intervening only to suggest that the whole question should be reviewed after the war. The only effect of this intervention, claimed the Manchester Guardian, was 'to deprive the Liberal Opposition of the credit of standing by Free Trade principles'.⁹⁷ When Lord Beauchamp spoke out against the Indian cotton duties in the House of Lords, Common Sense commented: 'His uncompromising adhesion to principle is in refreshing contrast to that of his old colleagues, who with a few

⁹⁵ R.D. Holt to Walter Runciman, 2 April 1918, Runciman MS., 169.

⁹⁶ R.D. Holt's Diary, 27 June 1918, R.D. Holt MS.

⁹⁷ Manchester Guardian, 15 March 1917.

exceptions, have thrown all their political cargo overboard'.⁹⁸ In April, Asquith failed to speak out against the ban on the Nation's overseas distribution - even though some Lloyd Georgian Liberals, notably Dalziel, did. When the D.O.R.A. regulation on the censorship of leaflets was issued in November 1917, the Asquithian front bench did make representations to the government, but there was no suggestion of a debate, far less a division, being forced on the matter. 'It seems too much to expect', commented the Manchester Guardian's lobby correspondent, 'the general body of Liberals in the House of Commons or the Liberal front Opposition bench to venture into the division lobby on behalf of any Liberal cause, however vital and however universal'.⁹⁹ In December 1917, the Representation of the People Bill was under consideration in the House of Commons. Asquith failed to vote against its plural voting clause, or to oppose an amendment on the disfranchisement of conscientious objectors. 'Asquith failed to turn up', noted R.D. Holt after the debate on the disfranchisement of conscientious objectors, '& our front bench did nothing, causing scandal & offence to many earnest Liberals.'¹⁰⁰ The

⁹⁸ Common Sense, 17 March 1917.

⁹⁹ Manchester Guardian, 27 November 1917.

¹⁰⁰ R.D. Holt's Diary, 3 December 1917, R.D. Holt MS.

Liberal leaders, C.P Trevelyan observed savagely, had left it to 'a Tory Churchman to move the House of Commons with his glorious Liberal appeal'.¹⁰¹ Finally, in the spring of 1918, Asquith made no effort to defeat the government's Irish conscription Bill. He did, admittedly, lead a mass Liberal abstention in the division on the Bill's second reading. This, however, left Radicals unimpressed: they believed that a chance to destroy the Lloyd George coalition had gone begging. Common Sense was bitterly critical of Asquith: 'If the Front Bench Liberals feel themselves to be incompetent and unable to assume responsibilities, why sit on the Front Opposition Bench?'¹⁰² In similar vein, T.E. Harvey declared himself to be disappointed by the failure of the 'opposition Front Bench' to take the responsibility of turning out the government.¹⁰³ R.D. Holt shared Harvey's disappointment. On 2 June, a few weeks after the enactment of Irish conscription, he noted in his diary: 'Asquith as leader is most unsatisfactory. Heard that he was not in intimate communication with Grey - no

¹⁰¹ C.P. Trevelyan, 'The Two Tyrannies', The U.D.C., December 1917. The 'Tory Churchman' to whom Trevelyan referred was Lord Hugh Cecil.

¹⁰² Common Sense, 20 April 1918.

¹⁰³ T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 21 April 1918, T.E. Harvey MS.

ill will but no common interest. Pitiable.¹⁰⁴ Other comments passed on Asquith by Radicals in mid-1918 were no less disparaging.¹⁰⁵

In 1916, there had been hopes within the Radical camp that Liberal leaders, freed from what R.D. Holt called 'the coalition & its degrading compromises', would act in such a way as to bring about a revival of Liberalism.¹⁰⁶ These hopes faded in 1917-18, and were replaced by a mood of despair. One M.P. wrote in August 1918: '... a disintegration has set in which augurs ill for the success of the Party at a General Election... A Party without policy and without leadership is doomed.'¹⁰⁷ Noel Buxton expressed a similar view in a letter to Walter Runciman in June.¹⁰⁸ Common Sense placed the blame

¹⁰⁴ R.D. Holt's Diary, 2 June 1918 (see also 5 May 1918), R.D. Holt MS.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 12 May 1918, T.E. Harvey MS.; A. Ponsonby, Notes of 'Interview with Lloyd George', 27 June 1918, Ponsonby MS.; C.P. Scott to Lord Courtney, 10 May 1918, Courtney MS., vol. 7; Leif Jones to Simon, 1 May 1918, quoted in Bentley, The Liberal Mind, p. 64.

¹⁰⁶ R.D. Holt's Diary, 10 December 1916, R.D. Holt MS.

¹⁰⁷ 'A Liberal M.P.' to ed., Common Sense, 17 August 1918.

¹⁰⁸ Noel Buxton to Walter Runciman, 19 June 1918, quoted in Fieldhouse, 'Noel Buxton and A.J.P. Taylor's "The Trouble Makers"' in Gilbert (ed.), A Century of Conflict, p. 192.

squarely on Asquith's shoulders: 'A leader who, after more than three and a half years of unprecedented carnage, has no war policy, and is afraid of pressing his criticisms of the Government to a division, cannot wonder if his party is melting away.'¹⁰⁹ T.E. Harvey, in contrast, maintained towards the end of 1918 that 'Ll. G. has broken up the party'. Harvey, though, was also saddened by the fact that 'the other leaders have given out no great positive programme'.¹¹⁰ E.N. Bennett saw no need to distinguish between Asquith and Lloyd George. 'I have', he wrote in October 1917, 'seen one ideal of Liberalism after another surrendered by our professed "leaders"... I cannot see myself standing as a "Liberal" again.'¹¹¹ Bennett's feelings were shared by C.P. Trevelyan. By January 1918, Trevelyan had arrived at the conclusion that 'the Liberal leaders cannot lead democracy in the next stage'.¹¹² Another Radical who became utterly disenchanted was A.G.C. Harvey. He told Arthur Ponsonby in December 1917: 'I feel I should hate to go back to Westminster - I abominate the whole business - my

¹⁰⁹ Common Sense, 30 March 1918.

¹¹⁰ T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 1 December 1918, T.E. Harvey MS.

¹¹¹ E.N. Bennett to T.E. Harvey, 3 October 1917, T.E. Harvey MS.

¹¹² C.P. Trevelyan to H.W. Massingham, 23 January 1918 (copy: private), C.P. Trevelyan MS.

recollections are full of disappointments & the toppling over of idols. The only pleasant thing is - may I say it - a friendship with you and a score of others.¹¹³

Radicals had, of course, expressed despair about Liberalism before. This time, however, there was action as well as words. In February 1918, a new Radical organisation, the Radical Committee, came into existence. It was not an exclusively parliamentary body. It was made up of 'Radical candidates and workers' as well as Radical M.P.s.¹¹⁴ Exactly how many Radical M.P.s belonged to the Committee is not clear. It was suggested in the press that those involved included H.B. Lees-Smith, H.G. Chancellor, Joseph King, P.W. Raffan, D.M. Mason, J.D. Kiley, Sydney Arnold, Athelstan Rendall, C.P. Trevelyan, Arthur Ponsonby, Philip Morrell, Josiah Wedgwood, W.M.R. Pringle and J.M. Hogge.¹¹⁵ It is worth adding that the Daily News reported on 26 February that the Committee's membership included 'a good proportion of the Civil Liberties Group'. The Committee held its first formal meeting on 5 March. W.C. Anderson, the Labour M.P., gave an address on 'The Future of Democratic

¹¹³ A.G.C. Harvey to Arthur Ponsonby, 29 December 1917, Ponsonby MS.

¹¹⁴ Manchester Guardian, 26 July 1918.

¹¹⁵ Information derived from Manchester Guardian, 22 March, 17 May 1918; Daily News, 26 February, 26 July 1918; Westminster Gazette, 26 July 1918; The Times, 26 July 1918.

Politics'. Anderson's address was followed by a discussion. The feeling of the meeting, according to the Daily News was that 'the practical question which had to be considered by Radicals... was whether they should remain within the Liberal Party as an educative influence or join the Labour Party.'¹¹⁶ On 21 March, the Committee held its second meeting, H.B. Lees-Smith presiding. He opened a discussion on 'The best course to be adopted by advanced Radicals in view of the new Labour movement'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Daily News, 6 March 1918.

¹¹⁷ Manchester Guardian, 15 March 1918.

7. A PARTING OF WAYS, 1918-1924

In mid-1918, Arthur Henderson, Minister without Portfolio in Lloyd George's War Cabinet and the most influential figure within the wartime Labour party, spent six weeks in Russia as an emissary of the British government. It has been persuasively argued that his experiences in Russia left him with a conviction that it was necessary to rebuild the Labour party as a moderate and democratic socialist bulwark against revolutionary socialism.¹ Henderson was at liberty to translate his feelings into action soon after his return from Russia. He resigned from the War Cabinet on 11 August because it had refused to permit Labour representatives to attend the proposed international socialist conference at Stockholm.² Six weeks later, on 26 September, Henderson submitted a lengthy memorandum to Labour's National Executive Committee proposing a wide extension of party membership, the strengthening of local parties in the constituencies, the promotion of a larger number of parliamentary

¹ See J.M. Winter, 'Arthur Henderson, the Russian Revolution and the reconstruction of the Labour party', H.J., xv (1972), pp. 753-73; J.M. Winter, Socialism and the Challenge of War, pp. 240-63.

² Henderson's first reaction to the Stockholm conference idea was to oppose it. He changed his mind, Winter maintains, because he came to believe that support for Stockholm was probably the only way to keep a moderate government in power in Russia and to keep Russia in the war (see Winter, Socialism and the Challenge of War, pp. 244-57). In November 1918, Henderson told an election audience: 'I left the Government because I wanted to save Russia' (see East Ham Echo, 29 November 1918).

candidatures and the adoption of a party programme. The purpose of this sweeping reorganisation, he explained in the Manchester Guardian in December, was to convert the Labour party from 'a sectional organisation' into 'a national movement'.³ Henderson saw the attraction of middle-class elements into the party as an important part of this process of conversion. 'His policy', noted C.P. Scott after a conversation with Henderson at the end of 1917, 'was to broaden the bounds of the Labour party and bring in the intellectuals as candidates. The Labour Party had been too short of brains.'⁴ There can be little doubt that Henderson's plans for the enlargement of the Labour party included the recruitment of Radical Liberals. His speeches and writings on Labour's aims in 1917-18 could certainly have been calculated to appeal to Radicals. He emphasised that it was Labour's intention to 'substitute real internationalism for the present international system'.⁵ He stressed that the Labour party's adoption of a 'Socialist formula' did not mean that it was committed to the 'state socialism of earlier propagandists'.

³ Arthur Henderson, 'The New Labour Party and its Programme', Manchester Guardian, 18 December 1917.

⁴ C.P. Scott's Diary, 11-12 December 1917, printed in T. Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, pp. 316-7.

⁵ Speech at national conference of Postal and Telegraph Clerks Association, reported in Manchester Guardian, 11 May 1918.

Labour's ultimate aim, he maintained, was 'industrial democracy rather than the State organisation of industry'.⁶ He even hinted that there was nothing sacrosanct about the Labour party's name: he was reported in October 1917 as saying that he 'would be prepared, if needs be, that the Labour Party as known should cease to exist, if by doing so they could combine the whole of democracy in a great people's party'.⁷

Another Labour leader who was convinced of the need for what he called 'broadening the party out' was W.C. Anderson.⁸ Anderson, like Henderson, was strongly of the opinion that the Labour party had to endeavour to draw into its ranks 'men and women of good will of all classes'.⁹ It seems likely, therefore, that the possibility of making converts was not far from his mind when he addressed the Radical Committee on the aims of the Labour party on 5 March 1918. It should be said that Anderson did not make a direct appeal to his audience to change parties. His address

⁶ Arthur Henderson, 'The New Labour Party and its Programme', Manchester Guardian, 18 December 1917.

⁷ Speech at national emergency conference of the Co-operative movement, reported in Manchester Guardian, 19 October 1917.

⁸ See W.C. Anderson, 'The New Democracy', Daily News, 28 December 1917.

⁹ ibid.

was nevertheless a fairly open piece of salesmanship. He spoke at length on the Labour party's hopes for a 'people's peace', its commitment to the League of Nations idea, its belief in internationalism, its distrust of the House of Lords and its determination to restore those liberties which had been lost during the war. These, of course, were matters on which Radicals were unlikely to take exception to the Labour view. No reference was made, though, to such potentially contentious topics as socialism and class conflict. Anderson even contrived to avoid mentioning class when he identified Labour's enemies. The Labour party, he maintained, sought to uphold the cause of 'all who rendered social service' against the 'anti-social interests'.¹⁰ He could hardly have been more judicious. Anderson was in fact so judicious that his audience - which, it should be noted, included D.M. Mason, a staunch Cobdenite - was unanimous in thinking that 'nearly the whole of the aims and objects of the

¹⁰ There is a full report of Anderson's speech in Daily News, 6 March 1918. It is interesting to compare the speech which Anderson made before the Radical Committee with the one he delivered to a predominantly socialist audience at the Leeds Convention in June 1917. In the course of moving a resolution which proposed that 'Councils of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates' should be set up across Britain for the purpose of 'initiating and co-ordinating working-class activity', he declared: 'If a revolution be the conquest of political power by an hitherto disinherited class ... then the sooner we have revolution in this country the better.' See What Happened at Leeds: A report of the Leeds Convention of June 3rd 1917 (Institute for Workers' Control, Nottingham, n.d.: originally published by the Pelican Press, 1917), pp. 11-12.

Labour Party as expounded by him could be accepted by the advanced wing of the Liberal Party'.¹¹ It soon became clear, however, that Anderson had failed to convince members of the Radical Committee that their future lay with Labour. The Daily News reported after the Committee's next meeting, which was held on 21 March: '... the general view expressed was, with a few exceptions, that the present time called for a Radical rally within the Liberal Party. In other words, that advanced Radicals, on consideration, do not wish at this juncture to join forces with the Labour Party'.¹² The Manchester Guardian gave a slightly different account of the proceedings. It maintained: 'There was a general feeling that it would be premature at present to decide anything about their relations to the Labour Party...'.¹³ The Manchester Guardian was perhaps the more accurate of the two. Arthur Ponsonby told C.P. Trevelyan that press reports which suggested that the Committee's membership had made a definite decision to stay within the Liberal fold were misleading. 'It is too much to say', he wrote, 'that the Radical group in the House have decided to remain with the

¹¹ Daily News, 6 March 1918.

¹² Daily News, 22 March 1918.

¹³ Manchester Guardian, 22 March 1918.

official Liberals'.¹⁴ Exactly what was said or decided at the meeting on 21 March can only be guessed at. What is clear, though, is that in the spring of 1918 the Labour party was viewed by members of the Radical Committee with some misgivings.

There can be little doubt that the feelings of the Radical Committee's membership were typical of those of the Radical community at large. It is unlikely, to put it mildly, that there were any prominent Radicals who felt in early 1918 that the Labour party was entirely devoid of objectionable features. Yet a number of Radicals - several of whom belonged to the Radical Committee at some point - eventually joined it. It should be noted, however, that they only did so after considerable hesitation. The first sitting Radical M.P.s to secede from the Liberal party were Joseph Martin and E.T. John, who entered the Labour party in June and July 1918 respectively.¹⁵ Most of the Radicals

¹⁴ Ponsonby to C.P. Trevelyan, 4 April 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS. Ponsonby was commenting on a letter from C.H. Wilson to Trevelyan - which Trevelyan had shown him - in which Wilson recorded that disappointment had been expressed at a conference of Yorkshire Radicals over 'the report that the majority of the Radical group in the House of Commons had decided to continue acting with the Liberal party' (see C.H. Wilson to Trevelyan, 25 March 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS.).

¹⁵ The behaviour of both men in 1918 was somewhat bizarre. Martin, a Canadian, was Liberal M.P. for East St. Pancras between 1910 and 1918. He spent much of the war in Canada, but made occasional flying visits to Westminster (see St. Pancras Guardian, 5 April 1918). In July 1918, soon after joining the Labour party, he became prospective Labour candidate for South Islington. He campaigned energetically in Islington in the autumn of 1918, then went abroad (see ibid., 23 August, 6 September 1918). When the 1918 general

with parliamentary experience who made the transition to Labour did so in the twelve months after November 1918.¹⁶ Yet, as has been seen, the question of whether to join the Labour party was discussed within the

election campaign was a few days old, he sent a telegram to the South Islington Labour party: 'Must retire: cannot get back in time to fight for Labour in Islington' (ibid., 28 November 1918). E.T. John's transition to Labour was a confused and messy affair. It was reported in July 1918 that John had undertaken to sign the constitution of the Labour party and was severing his connection with Liberalism (see Daily News, 2 July 1918: see also J. Williams (a Labour official) to E.T. John, 26 June 1918, E.T. John MS., in which John was advised 'to see Mr. Henderson yourself and finish the necessary business'). In November 1918, however, John sought, but failed to win, nomination as Liberal candidate for Wrexham (see Wrexham Advertiser, 16 November 1918). Following his defeat at the hands of Sir R.J. Thomas in the Wrexham Liberal Association ballot, John announced his intention to fight Wrexham as an independent 'Welsh Nationalist with Labour leanings' (North Wales Observer and Express, 22 November 1918). At this point, the Wrexham divisional Labour party appears to have received a suggestion from the Labour party's Head Office that John should be run as Labour candidate (see North Wales Pioneer, 28 November 1918). This suggestion was rejected, and Hugh Hughes, an official of the North Wales Miners' Association, was nominated as Labour candidate. John then announced that he would not contest Wrexham at all: he subsequently claimed that he had stepped aside in order 'to give a miner boy the chance of representing Labour in parliament' (North Wales Times, 14 December 1918). Soon after his withdrawal from Wrexham, John received an invitation to stand in the neighbouring rural and residential constituency of Denbigh. The offer was made in the least flattering of circumstances - the Denbigh Labour party had been let down by its first-choice candidate, a local Nonconformist minister (North Wales Pioneer, 5 December 1918). The invitation was nevertheless accepted. John duly fought the seat, but was heavily defeated by a couponed Liberal.

¹⁶ See appendix 3 below.

Radical Committee in early 1918, and it may have been discussed among Radical M.P.s before 1918. When C.P. Trevelyan joined the I.L.P. in November 1918, he told his mother: '... at least half of my Liberal friends are either joining the Labour party now or are on the verge of joining it. At least thirty Liberal members have been discussing the pros and cons of it for the last eighteen months'.¹⁷ Trevelyan's remarks are of significance in another connection. They suggest that there were a number of Radicals who decided against joining the Labour party after giving the matter very serious consideration.¹⁸ There is other evidence which confirms that this was indeed the case. It should not be thought, however, that all prominent Radicals contemplated entry into the Labour party during or after 1918. There were certainly some members of the Radical community who were profoundly disenchanted with the Liberal party but who never thought in terms of changing their political allegiance. How can the differing reactions of Radicals to the Labour party in and after 1918 be explained? It will be maintained that there

¹⁷ C.P. Trevelyan to his mother, 30 November 1918, G.O. Trevelyan MS.

¹⁸ Trevelyan claimed that there were at least thirty Liberal M.P.s who considered joining the Labour party in 1917-18. Yet only seventeen of the Radicals who had entered the Labour party by 1924 were M.P.s in 1917-18. It is worth adding that some of these M.P.s were unlikely to have discussed anything much with Trevelyan in 1917-18 - Addison, Denman, MacCallum Scott and Money held office in the Lloyd George coalition, and Joseph Martin was out of the country.

is no justification for the view that those Radicals who made the transition to Labour were more strongly committed to the ideals of peace and internationalism than those who did not.¹⁹ What will be argued here is that the old division between traditional and progressive Radicals began to reassert itself as the war drew to a close. It will be suggested that it was progressive Radicals who were most strongly attracted to the Labour party. It is certainly the case that all but a handful of those prominent Radicals whose misgivings about the Labour party were not so great as to prevent them from joining it belonged to the progressive camp.²⁰ The exceptions were all single-taxers.

The later stages of the war saw a number of leading Cobdenite Radicals in close touch with senior members of the I.L.P. It may be that the Cobdenites in question were initially a little wary of collaborating with socialists. P.A. Molteno, R.D. Holt and A.G.C. Harvey were certainly 'very shy of Labour' when Arthur Ponsonby

¹⁹ See above, pp. 2-6, for an outline of this argument and a brief discussion of some of the objections to it.

²⁰ For a discussion of the progressive Radicals' misgivings about the Labour party in and after 1918 - and of the reasons why those who entered it hesitated before doing so - see below, pp. 327-333.

conferred with them in mid-1916.²¹ In 1917-18, however, Holt and Molteno worked without visible discomfort alongside MacDonald, Snowden, Anderson, F.W. Jowett and Tom Richardson in the Civil Liberties Group. So, too, did D.M. Mason, J.E. Barlow, William Clough and Leif Jones. There was also trouble-free co-operation between Cobdenite Radicals and leading I.L.P. socialists when the attempt was made in early 1918 to bring a 'Lansdowne peace-by-negotiation Government' into existence.²² The Cobdenites who were active in the Lansdowne movement made it abundantly clear that they were anxious to see the Labour party as a whole throw its weight behind the campaign for a negotiated peace. There is no doubt that they would have been prepared to support a peace government which contained Labour ministers. F.W. Hirst, for example, looked forward to Loreburn, Holt and Molteno sitting in the same Cabinet as MacDonald, Snowden and Anderson.²³ Yet it is also clear that Hirst and his associates were only prepared to join forces with the Labour movement

²¹ Ponsonby to C.P. Trevelyan, 2 June 1916, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

²² This was MacDonald's phrase: see his speech at the first 'Lansdowne-Labour' conference, reported in Common Sense, 2 March 1918.

²³ F.W. Hirst to Lady Courtney, 28 January 1918, Courtney MS., vol. 7.

for the specific purpose of ending the war. There is no evidence to suggest that they thought in terms of long-term collaboration with the Labour party. Nor is there any evidence which suggests that they were ever seriously tempted to join the Labour party.

Cobdenite Radicals had no serious quarrel with the foreign policy programme which the Labour party adopted when the Memorandum on War Aims was approved at a special conference in December 1917. It was maintained in the Memorandum that what was required if war was to be prevented in future was the establishment of a League of Nations, the suppression of secret diplomacy, disarmament and the removal of barriers to international trade.²⁴ Cobdenite thinking moved along the same lines. There was unqualified enthusiasm in Cobdenite circles for the League of Nations idea. A.G.C. Harvey, R.D. Holt and J.M. Robertson became members of the General Council of the League of Nations Union when it was formed in October 1918.²⁵ Leif Jones declared in December 1918 that one of his 'most earnest

²⁴ The Memorandum on War Aims is printed in full in P. Stansky (ed.), The Left and War, pp. 318-326.

²⁵ See the pamphlet League of Nations Union (November 1918), Bodleian Eng. Hist. MS., c. 407, fol. 76 (W.H. Dickinson MS.). The League of Nations Union, an all-party body, was the product of a merger between the League of Nations Society (founded in 1915) and the League of Free Nations Association (founded in 1918). On this topic, see Robbins, 'The Abolition of War', ch. 8.

desires' was to see the formation of a League of Nations.²⁶ D.M. Mason and J.W. Wilson made similar pronouncements during the 1918 election campaign.²⁷ P.A. Molteno, Fred Maddison and Henry Vivian defended the League of Nations during the general election campaigns of the early 1920s as forcefully as any Labour candidate.²⁸ Cobdenite Radicals were also as insistent as any Labour spokesman on the need for the foreign policy-making process to be brought under democratic control.²⁹ This is not in any way surprising. The Cobdenite ranks were filled with long-standing critics of secret diplomacy. Prominent amongst them were A.G.C. Harvey, D.M. Mason, P.A. Molteno and Leif Jones, all veterans of the pre-war Liberal Foreign Affairs Group's campaign to secure greater parliamentary

²⁶ Speech at West Bridgford, reported in Nottingham Evening News, 9 December 1918.

²⁷ See interview with D.M. Mason, Coventry Herald, 6 December 1918, and J.W. Wilson's election address, printed in County Advertiser for Staffordshire and Worcestershire, 23 November 1918.

²⁸ P.A. Molteno, speech at Kinross, reported in The Kinross-shire Advertiser, 1 December 1923; Maddison, speech at Weymouth, reported in Dorset Daily Echo, 4 November 1922; Vivian, speech at Northampton, reported in Northampton Daily Chronicle, 11 November 1922.

²⁹ For Cobdenite Radicals supporting the idea of democratic control over foreign policy, see, for example, Arnold Lupton to C.P. Trevelyan, 7 October 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS.; P.A. Molteno, 'Liberalism at the Cross Roads', Common Sense, 3 January 1920; J.W. Wilson's election address, printed in County Advertiser for Staffordshire and Worcestershire, 23 November 1918; A.G.C. Harvey to Arthur Ponsonby, 29 December 1917, Ponsonby MS.

control over foreign policy. Disarmament was another cause which Cobdenite Radicals had championed in parliament before 1914. They continued to agitate for disarmament from outside parliament after 1918. The reduction of spending on armaments was one of the principal aims of the League to Enforce Public Economy, an organisation formed in mid-1920 by a group of Cobdenite stalwarts headed by A.G.C. Harvey, F.W. Hirst and R.D. Holt.³⁰ Finally, Cobdenite Radicals were at one with the authors of Labour's Memorandum on War Aims in attaching great importance to the principle of the 'open door'. It was, of course, an article of faith among Cobdenites that peace and free trade went hand in hand. P.A. Molteno, for example, regarded free trade as 'vital and fundamental' to world peace.³¹ So, too, did R.D. Holt, who described freedom of commerce in 1920 as 'the best antidote to international ill-will'.³² In sum, it would appear that few Cobdenites would have disagreed with Lord Loreburn's view, expressed to C.P. Trevelyan in 1921, that the Labour

³⁰ See Common Sense, 1 May 1920. The League's membership also included P.A. Molteno, D.M. Mason, Fred Maddison, Henry Vivian, J.E. Barlow and G.P. Gooch (see ibid., 19 June 1920, 24 July 1920, 14 May 1921).

³¹ P.A. Molteno to ed., Common Sense, 12 March 1921.

³² Speech at Liverpool Reform Club, reported in Common Sense, 25 September 1920.

party was 'in the main sound on foreign policy'.³³

The plans for social reconstruction promulgated by the Labour party in and after 1918 won no compliments from Cobdenite Radicals. Loreburn told Trevelyan: 'their domestic policy is idiotic - merely a copy of the old nihilist and Bolshevik creed, which would mean civil war on top of our other misfortunes'.³⁴ The views of Loreburn's fellow-Cobdenites were no less jaundiced. It was felt in Cobdenite quarters that the Labour party's policy-makers were woefully ignorant of the realities of economic life. Fred Maddison, for example, maintained during the 1922 election campaign that Labour's policies were based on 'the ill-digested theories of impracticable doctrinaires'.³⁵ Leif Jones held forth in similar terms during the same campaign.³⁶ The arguments which Cobdenites used to justify such taunts were identical with those which were used against socialists and progressive Radicals before 1914. One of the assertions made was that the working classes

³³ Loreburn to C.P. Trevelyan, 26 March 1921 (Confidential). C.P. Trevelyan MS.

³⁴ Loreburn to C.P. Trevelyan, 26 March 1921 (Confidential), C.P. Trevelyan MS.

³⁵ Interview with Maddison, Dorset Daily Echo, 14 November 1922.

³⁶ See Jones's speech at St. Agnes, reported in West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser, 9 November 1922.

would derive no benefit from the implementation of Labour's social programme. Cobdenite Radicals, it will be recalled, were convinced that economic recession was an inescapable consequence of large-scale redistributivist policies. What was being suggested, therefore, was that the gains made by the working classes out of Labour's social welfare schemes would be more than offset by the unemployment and low wages brought about by their introduction. An example of this line of thought was contained in an article on 'Unemployment and High Prices' written by R.D. Holt in 1921.³⁷ Holt maintained that the payment of non-contributory unemployment benefits - a policy advocated by the Labour party - would 'increase rather than diminish' unemployment. This was so, he alleged, because the increases in taxation required to pay for such benefits would cripple industry by taking purchasing power out of the economy and by limiting the funds available for investment.³⁸ It need hardly be added

³⁷ Common Sense, 8 January 1921.

³⁸ It is worth noting in this connection that Cobdenite Radicals believed that the burden of taxation imposed by the Lloyd George coalition (comparatively modest when set against the proposals in Labour and the New Social Order for steep graduation of the income tax, an inheritance tax and a capital levy) was the principal cause of the post-war slump. See, for example, speech by R.D. Holt at a meeting of the League to Enforce Public Economy, reported in Common Sense, 24 July 1920; Fred Maddison, speech at Weymouth, reported in Dorset Daily Echo, 11 November 1922; Henry Vivian, speech at Kettering, reported in Northampton Daily Chronicle, 4 November 1922; Sir Walter Runciman to ed., Common Sense, 19 July 1919.

that Holt and other Cobdenites continued to propound the view that the proper remedy for unemployment was 'the most drastic economy, verging on parsimony' in public spending.³⁹ Nor was there anything novel about the arguments which Cobdenites deployed against Labour's plans for nationalisation and for 'the control of capitalist industry'.⁴⁰ It was claimed that Labour's industrial policy was a prescription for economic decline. This view, of course, was based on the assumption that no industrial economy could function successfully without the stimulus to enterprise provided by the profit motive. Henry Vivian, for example, implied that this was so when he asked an audience of Northampton Liberals during the 1922 election campaign whether they thought that the boot and shoe trade could be run successfully if it was 'put into the hands of Government officials at Whitehall'.⁴¹ F.W. Hirst made

³⁹ This was R.D. Holt's phrase: see R.D. Holt, 'Unemployment and High Prices', Common Sense, 8 January 1921; see also, J.W. Wilson's election address, printed in County Advertiser for Staffordshire and Worcestershire, 30 November 1918; interview with D.M. Mason, Coventry Herald, 6 December 1918.

⁴⁰ This phrase was used to describe a resolution passed at the Labour conference of June 1918: for the content of the resolution, see McKibbin, Evolution of the Labour Party, p. 104.

⁴¹ Speech at Northampton, reported in Northampton Daily Chronicle, 7 November 1922.

the point more explicitly in the course of an attack on the Labour party's 'socialistic philosophy' in 1921: 'To suppose that human nature has suddenly changed its needs and instincts, or that private property and profits are no longer necessary to economic progress is... an illusion'.⁴² Another claim made by Cobdenites was that Labour's industrial policies could not be put into effect without the imposition of unacceptable restrictions on individual freedom. No-one expressed this view more trenchantly than A.G.C. Harvey. Harvey maintained in a speech at Rochdale in 1920 that the full implementation of Labour's socialist programme would place society under 'the control and direction of a narrow body of despots and officials, called by courtesy the State'.⁴³

Cobdenite Radicals did not look askance at the Labour party simply because they regarded its domestic policies as ill-conceived and odious. They also looked upon it with a cold eye because they considered it to be a class party. It is clear that the activities of Henderson and others in 1917-18 did nothing to shake the Cobdenites' belief that the Labour party was

⁴² Common Sense, 25 June 1921.

⁴³ A.G.C. Harvey, 'The Re-establishment of Liberalism' (address at Rochdale), printed in Common Sense, 16 October 1920; see also, A.G.C. Harvey, 'Nationalisatio and Liberalism', ibid., 17 April 1920.

dedicated to the furtherance of working class interests and not to the promotion of the welfare of the whole community. R.D. Holt, for example, had no doubts about Labour's fundamental purpose. He told Walter Runciman after the general election of 1918 that the reorganisation of the Liberal party as a going concern was imperative because liberal ideals could not be properly championed by 'a class party like the Labour party is'.⁴⁴ Other Cobdenites were more caustic. Lord Loreburn told C.P. Trevelyan in 1921 that members of the Labour party were 'as devoted to their imaginary class interests as are the propertied classes to theirs'.⁴⁵ 'The Labour Party', F.W. Hirst declared roundly in 1920, 'is hampered and embarrassed by the class spirit'.⁴⁶ A.G.C. Harvey asserted in 1920 that the Labour party was 'devoted to the object of getting special and exclusive privileges for labouring and wage-earning people'.⁴⁷ Harvey also believed that

⁴⁴ R.D. Holt to Runciman, 22 December 1918, Runciman MS., 171.

⁴⁵ Loreburn to C.P. Trevelyan, 26 March 1921 (Confidential), C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁴⁶ Common Sense, 4 December 1920.

⁴⁷ A.G.C. Harvey, 'The Re-establishment of Liberalism', printed in Common Sense, 16 October 1920.

Labour's sectionalism put a barrier in the way of Liberal-Labour co-operation. He told a gathering of Rochdale Liberals: '... it is impossible for us to support at the polls any class, however numerous and powerful, against the commonwealth at large'.⁴⁸

Apart from soldiering on in the Liberal party, the only real option open to Cobdenite Radicals after 1918 was retirement from political life. There was never the slightest possibility, of course, that any of them would follow the Churchills and Guests into the Conservative party.⁴⁹ A number of prominent Cobdenites did leave politics in or soon after 1918. It should be said, though, that there is no evidence to suggest that any of them did so solely because of their disenchantment with the Liberal party and its leadership.⁵⁰ Those Cobdenite Radicals who remained active in Liberal politics after 1918 received little reward for their

48 ibid.

49 What put the Conservative party out of court was its support for what F.W. Hirst called 'jingoism and imperialism' (Common Sense, 20 September 1919) and, perhaps above all, its advocacy of protection. For evidence of the Cobdenites' passionate belief in free trade, see, for example, D.M. Mason's election address, printed in Coventry Graphic, 29 November 1918; Leif Jones, speech at West Bridgford, reported in Nottingham Evening News, 6 December 1918; statement by Sir Walter Runciman, printed in Northern Echo, 27 November 1918; and A.G.C. Harvey, Harry Nuttall, Sir Wilfrid Lawson et al., 'An Appeal to Free Traders', Common Sense, 11 June 1921.

50 Those who did not seek re-election in 1918 included A.G.C. Harvey, Sir Walter Runciman, Sir John Jardine, Harry Nuttall and William Clough.

labours. All but a handful of them went down to defeat in election after election.⁵¹ R.D. Holt wrote dejectedly after his defeat at Rossendale in the general election of 1922: 'Nothing can be clearer than the urgency of Proportional Representation & without it I fear the Liberal Party is doomed & men with views like my own are absolutely excluded from public life'.⁵² Holt appears to have been rather more despondent than his fellow-Cobdenites. Most Cobdenite Radicals lived in hope of a Liberal revival. Nor, of course, were they in any doubt as to how a Liberal revival could be brought about. The Liberal party, P.A. Molteno declared in 1919, could not hope to prosper unless there was 'a restoration of the principles by which it was guided in the days of Gladstone, Cobden and Bright'.⁵³ Lord Loreburn maintained a year later that Liberals had to 'come back ... to Cobden's ideas, modified only by present necessity'.⁵⁴ 'At the moment', wrote F.W. Hirst in 1919, 'there is no Bright or Cobden to preach the

⁵¹ The exceptions were Henry Vivian (M.P. for Totnes, 1923-4), Leif Jones (M.P. for Camborne, 1923-4) and J.F.L. Brunner (M.P. for Southport, 1923-4).

⁵² R.D. Holt's Diary, 26 November 1922, R.D. Holt MS.

⁵³ P.A. Molteno to ed., Common Sense, 6 September 1919.

⁵⁴ Loreburn to C.P. Trevelyan, 1 January 1920, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

gospel. But before very long their doctrines will be re-born.⁵⁵

In September 1917, the London correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, reporting the formation of the 1917 Club, observed that one effect of the war had been to persuade many on the political left of the need for social change of a more fundamental kind than they had previously envisaged. 'Industrial and social developments of the war period', he wrote, 'have

⁵⁵ Common Sense, 19 July 1919. It can be seen that Hirst's opinion of the Asquithian front bench was as low after the return of peace as it had been during the closing stages of the war (see also Common Sense, 17 January 1920). The same appears to have been true of other Cobdenite Radicals: see, for example, R.D. Holt's Diary, 9 February 1919, R.D. Holt MS.; Loreburn to C.P. Trevelyan, 26 March 1921 (Confidential), C.P. Trevelyan MS.; P.A. Molteno to ed., Common Sense, 3 January 1920. Nor do Cobdenite Radicals appear to have been any happier with the Liberal leadership after Liberal reunion had taken place. The mere prospect of a Lloyd George-Asquith rapprochement was enough to reduce R.D. Holt to near-apoplexy: 'There is a lot of talk about Liberal reunion mostly from the Lloyd George gang who are at present in the air. I don't want to see that lot back in the counsels of Liberalism for the evils of which they complain both at home & abroad are almost entirely due to LG's personal policy. His has been a bad influence on public life - no real knowledge of history or political principle - vain spiteful treacherous untruthful & dishonest the man is evil' (R.D. Holt's Diary, 18 March 1923, R.D. Holt MS.). The experience of Liberal reunion did not alter Holt's views. When the anti-Lloyd George 'Liberal Council' was formed in late 1926, soon after Asquith's retirement from politics, Holt, along with other Cobdenites like Leif Jones and J.M. Robertson, became a member of it (see Wilson, Downfall of the Liberal Party, pp. 337-41).

expanded aims and filled in perspectives of reformers...'.⁵⁶ One individual of whom this was certainly true was C.P. Trevelyan. Trevelyan's views in fact changed in two respects. Not only did he become convinced of the inadequacy of his pre-war thinking on social reform, but he also came to believe that 'legislation had got to go very much faster... than it had ever done before'.⁵⁷ Trevelyan expanded on the latter theme in a speech at Brighouse in early November 1918:

As to my own politics, for twenty years I have had the honour of representing this division in parliament, and during that time I have, because I believed it to be right, wise, expedient and most effective, thought it the best way to get progress in Britain to move slowly and with a good deal of compromise. I may have been correct in my assumption or not, but my feelings have altogether changed during the war. To me a policy of opportunism or compromise seems no longer either justifiable or useful. For the future I shall not agree to compromise... I shall have no compromise with the forces of secrecy or with the autocrats and aristocrats of our Government.⁵⁸

There is a good deal of evidence which suggests that the thinking of other progressive Radicals evolved along similar lines. E.D. Morel, for example, told Arthur

⁵⁶ Manchester Guardian, 13 December 1917.

⁵⁷ Speech at Elland, reported in Brighouse Echo, 6 December 1918.

⁵⁸ Speech at Brighouse, reported in Brighouse Echo, 8 November 1918.

Ponsonby in mid-1917 that he had become 'more and more convinced ... that the existing foundations of society are utterly rotten, and that only profound and revolutionary changes ... can alter things and give the bulk of humanity the opportunities to which it is entitled; and apply caustic to our suppurating wounds'.⁵⁹ Ponsonby himself had arrived at the conclusion by 1918 that there was a need for a 'drastic and basic constitutional revolution'.⁶⁰ H.B. Lees-Smith was another progressive Radical who came to believe in the need for a non-violent 'social revolution'.⁶¹ Arnold Rowntree contented himself with the claim, made in late 1918, that he was 'all out for drastic, radical reform'.⁶² Some indication of precisely what Rowntree and others had in mind can be gained from a manifesto produced by the Radical Committee in July 1918. By this time, the Committee had shed its Cobdenite element and was very much a progressive Radical body. The dominant figures within it appear

⁵⁹ Morel to Ponsonby, n.d. July 1917 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.

⁶⁰ A. Ponsonby, 'The Conversion of a Liberal', Labour Leader, 7 April 1921.

⁶¹ H.B. Lees-Smith, 'Why I Have Joined the I.L.P.', Labour Leader, 3 July 1919.

⁶² Speech at York, reported in Northern Echo, 14 December 1918.

to have been Joseph King, Lees-Smith, H.G. Chancellor and Sydney Arnold.⁶³ The Committee's manifesto proceeded from the assumption that the war had to be followed not merely by reconstruction but by the 'fundamental reorganisation of society'.⁶⁴ Thirty-two concrete proposals were made. Some of them, notably the abolition of the House of Lords and 'Home Rule all round', were time-honoured Radical demands. The bulk of the manifesto, however, was concerned with social policy. Among other things, the Committee called for free education 'from the nursery school to the university'; increases in old age pensions, together with a reduction in the qualifying age; a 'minimum wage for all'; and the abolition of the workhouse. On the industrial front, the manifesto came out in favour of state ownership of mines, railways and munitions factories, and 'industrial self-government by the creation of industrial parliaments'.⁶⁵ Apart from advocating a capital levy and the retention of the wartime excess

⁶³ See Manchester Guardian, 17 May 1918; Westminster Gazette, 26 July 1918. The meeting at which the Committee's manifesto was presented was chaired by Chancellor; the presenter was Lees-Smith. It was also decided at this meeting to adopt the name 'Radical Council' instead of 'Radical Committee' (see Manchester Guardian, 26 July 1918).

⁶⁴ See the report in The Times, 26 July 1918.

⁶⁵ The quotations in this and the two preceding sentences are taken from the report in The Times, 26 July 1918.

profits duty, the Committee appears to have had little to say about financial policy. It was nevertheless insisted that 'the test of all schemes of social reconstruction was the willingness to finance them'.⁶⁶

In March 1918, five months before the publication of its manifesto, the Radical Committee had made it known through the press that it was anxious to see 'an authoritative pronouncement by the Liberal leaders as to their future intentions with regard to reconstruction and democratic reform'.⁶⁷ Its appeal went unheeded. At no stage in the final year of the war did the Asquithian front bench attempt to outline a strategy for post-war reconstruction.⁶⁸ Not surprisingly, the membership of the Radical Committee was appalled by the inertia of Asquith and his colleagues. Something of the exasperation which was felt can be detected in a statement issued by the Committee when its manifesto was published. The statement drew attention to the fact that the Committee had adopted the manifesto

⁶⁶ Daily News, 26 July 1918.

⁶⁷ Manchester Guardian, 15 March 1918.

⁶⁸ Asquith did commit himself to the doctrine of the 'national minimum' in September 1918: see, however, the comments in T. Wilson, Downfall of the Liberal Party, p. 131.

because 'great numbers of Radicals throughout the country feel that their opinions are not being voiced by the leaders to whom they have hitherto been accustomed to look'.⁶⁹ Also indicative of the mood which prevailed within the Committee in mid-1918 were the views expressed some months later by Joseph King and H.B. Lees-Smith, two of its leaders. King wrote: 'The Liberal Party has, like the Kaiser, abdicated or run away'.⁷⁰ Lees-Smith arrived at the conclusion that the Liberal leaders had 'no message for the new epoch into which mankind has moved'.⁷¹ Nor, of course, were such feelings held only by those progressive Radicals who headed the Radical Committee. To R.C. Lambert, it appeared that the Liberal leadership was 'quite incapable of putting forward any real system of Reconstruction'.⁷² T.E. Harvey voiced a similar opinion in a letter to his father in

⁶⁹ The Times, 26 July 1918.

⁷⁰ Statement by King, printed in Labour Leader, 21 November 1918.

⁷¹ H.B. Lees-Smith, 'Why I Have Joined the I.L.P.', Labour Leader, 3 July 1919.

⁷² Statement by Lambert, printed in Labour Leader, 21 November 1918.

early December 1918. 'I don't feel', he added, 'that the country will be satisfied by general advocacy of ... obviously necessary reforms, plus a demand for freedom'.⁷³ C.P. Trevelyan aired his views in public. 'The Liberal Party today', he declared in a letter published in the Nation in February 1918, 'has no voice except through its leaders. But in this tremendous crisis they have been conspicuously unable to prevent the world conflagration, to conduct the war successfully, or prepare the way for an honourable settlement. In fact they have failed to lead in action or thought. What likelihood is there that they will lead effectively when the world has to be rebuilt on the ruins caused by the war?'⁷⁴

The purpose of the letter in which Trevelyan posed this question was to suggest that the leadership of 'democracy' had passed to the Labour party to such an extent that Radicals should 'in some way either ...

⁷³ T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 1 December 1918, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁷⁴ C.P. Trevelyan, 'Can Socialism and Radicalism Unite?', The Nation, 2 February 1918. For comment on Asquith's lassitude from a non-Radical viewpoint, see, for example, Haldane to his mother, 25 April 1917 ('The ex-P.M. is not now an enthusiast for reform...') and 27 April 1917 ('I think time has changed the outlook on life of the ex-P.M. & that he is no longer keenly interested'), Haldane MS., 5997; also, Gulland to Runciman, 4 January 1919 (secret) ('Asquith was up here yesterday and met one or two men who were in town. He takes things very philosophically - rather too philosophically I think'), Runciman MS., 177.

co-operate with it as comrades or associate with it as open allies'.⁷⁵ At the time Trevelyan wrote, the Labour party had, of course, already begun to address itself to the problems of post-war reconstruction, and in doing so had exhibited the kind of boldness and vigour which progressive Radicals were unable to detect among Asquithian front benchers. Labour and the New Social Order, unveiled in early 1918, was warmly received by progressive Radicals. T.E. Harvey, for instance, described it as 'the splendid Labour manifesto'.⁷⁶ A former Radical M.P., A.E. Dunn, was reported as saying that it was 'the finest and most complete exposition of Progressive principles he had ever read'.⁷⁷ Statements of this kind give some indication of why it was that progressive Radicals were attracted to the Labour party in early 1918. Yet, as has been pointed out, the number of prominent progressive Radicals who actually joined the Labour party before the end of 1918 was very small indeed. C.P. Trevelyan, it should be noted, was just as

⁷⁵ Trevelyan to H.W. Massingham, 23 January 1918 (copy: private), C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁷⁶ T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 1 December 1918, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁷⁷ Speech at Penzance, reported in The Cornishman, 27 November 1918 (Dunn made it clear that he had formed this opinion of Labour's programme 'when it was issued last March').

hesitant as most of the other progressive Radicals who made the transition to Labour. When he announced his intention of becoming a member of the I.L.P. in November 1918, he frankly admitted that he had been 'slow in coming to (a) decision'.⁷⁸ Trevelyan was not, however, as frank as he might have been. What he could have made known was that his feelings about the Labour party in early 1918 had been sufficiently ambivalent for him to have taken part in discussions about the possibility of forming a separate Radical party.⁷⁹ Also involved in these discussions were Joseph King, R.C. Lambert and Arthur Ponsonby, all of whom, like Trevelyan, joined the Labour party at the end of 1918.⁸⁰ It appears to have been agreed that a Radical party, however desirable in principle, was not a practical proposition. Ponsonby told Trevelyan in March 1918: 'I am rather inclined to think that although the opinion we are appealing to is widespread it is diffused & not concentrated anywhere in any force & therefore it cannot be utilised electorally. Are we justified

⁷⁸ Notes for a speech, n.d. (? November 1918), C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁷⁹ It should perhaps be said that Trevelyan's interest in the idea of a separate Radical party was not in any way incompatible with the suggestion made in his Nation letter that Radicals should co-operate with, or become allies of, the Labour party.

⁸⁰ See Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 30 March 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

therefore in raising hopes of the formation of a new party?' Ponsonby added: 'It is in fact extremely difficult to know what to do'.⁸¹

Why was it that progressive Radicals viewed the Labour party with misgivings in - and, in many cases, after - early 1918? There was, it appears, a variety of reasons. One thing which may have influenced the conduct of some progressive Radicals in 1918 was the Labour party's connection with the Lloyd George coalition, which

⁸¹ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 30 March 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS. Unfortunately, only a small amount of evidence has been traced which casts light on the discussions which took place about the formation of a Radical party. In late 1917, Ponsonby corresponded with R. Lang, a Radical businessman, about the idea of forming 'a purely radical party'. Lang told Ponsonby that he had 'good reason' to believe that John Morley would accept the titular leadership of such a party (see R. Lang to Ponsonby, 5 December 1917, Ponsonby MS.). Three months later, on 29 March 1918, Ponsonby talked over 'the future development of the radical movement' with R.C. Lambert - who, like Ponsonby, had been in touch with Lang - and Joseph King. Lang and R.C. Lambert, it seems, had agreed before this meeting that an attempt should be made to gauge the extent of opinion in favour of the idea of a Radical party by issuing, through the press, a statement signed by 'about 12 M.P.s, 12 of the Harrison Barrow (a Birmingham councillor) type & 6 women'. King and Ponsonby fell in with this suggestion, and a statement was drafted at the 29 March meeting (see Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 30 March 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS.). It would appear that the statement was never published. It should be added that Ponsonby made it clear to Trevelyan on more than one occasion that he had little time for the idea of a Radical party (see Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 30 March, 4 April 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS.). The tone of Ponsonby's letters to Trevelyan suggests that the latter may have been more enthusiastic.

was not brought to an end until November.⁸²

C.P. Trevelyan told an audience in his Yorkshire constituency during the 1918 election campaign that it was only after the Labour party had become 'free to go forward with a real democratic policy' that he had felt able to enter it.⁸³ In similar vein, Arthur Ponsonby insisted when he joined the I.L.P. in December 1918 that he would have done so earlier had it not been for the fact that 'the Labour party was till recently part of the Coalition Government'.⁸⁴ It should be added that Ponsonby seems to have found the Labour party at constituency level distinctly unattractive. In March 1918, after clashing with Labour activists in his Scottish constituency, he confided to C.P. Trevelyan: 'The hopeless complexity of Labour organisation & the prevalent suspicion and jealousy which I see more and more as I get to close quarters with it have had the effect of putting me off a good deal'.⁸⁵ It is

⁸² The Labour party conference of November 1918 voted 2,117,000-810,000 to withdraw its representatives from the coalition (see Manchester Guardian, 15 November 1918). An earlier conference, held in June 1918, had passed a resolution declaring that the Labour party no longer recognised the existence of the party truce (see ibid., 27 June 1918).

⁸³ Speech at Elland, reported in Brighouse Echo, 6 December 1918.

⁸⁴ Labour Leader, 19 December 1918; see also Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 29 November 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

⁸⁵ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 30 March 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS. For an account of the episode which provoked this outburst, see Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald, pp. 231-3.

impossible to say whether feelings of this kind were common. One belief which does seem to have been widely held, however, was that discipline within the Labour party - and especially within the I.L.P. - was rather too rigid. E.D. Morel said of the I.L.P. in mid-1917: 'Internally it has the reputation ... of being narrow and autocratic towards its supporters...'.⁸⁶ T.E. Harvey maintained in December 1918 that one advantage the Liberal party had over Labour was that it offered 'greater freedom' to its adherents.⁸⁷ Nine months before Harvey voiced this opinion, thirty-three Yorkshire Radicals had met at Leeds to discuss their political future. One of those present, C.H. Wilson, subsequently Labour M.P. for Attercliffe, reported to C.P. Trevelyan: 'With I think one exception no one desired to remain associated with the Liberal Party ... It was perfectly clear that there was no desire to form a new party... But perhaps the strongest feeling was expressed in regard to individual liberty and the fear that joining the I.L.P., or the Labour Party, would very much tie those who did so and cause a curtailment of that individual liberty which we have all valued so fully'.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Morel to William Leach, n.d. July 1917 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.

⁸⁷ T.E. Harvey to W. Harvey, 1 December 1918, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁸⁸ C.H. Wilson to Trevelyan, 25 March 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

Other progressive Radicals seem to have been disturbed by the presence of militant socialists within the Labour ranks. J.A. Hobson, for instance, who was one of those who made the transition from Liberalism to Labour, confessed in his autobiography that he had never felt quite at home 'in a body ... intellectually led by full-blooded Socialists'.⁸⁹ Hobson's dislike of Labour's doctrinaire socialists was shared by L.T. Hobhouse, who never joined the Labour party but whose attitude to it in the 1920s was one of 'watchful favour'.⁹⁰ It would appear, however, that Hobhouse did not remain outside the Labour party simply because it contained what he called 'extremists'.⁹¹ He explained another objection he had to it in a letter to C.P. Scott in 1924: 'The constitution of the Labour party binds it tight to the Trade Unions & their sectional selfishness, a most serious defect'.⁹² There can be no doubt that there were many prominent progressive Radicals who, like Hobhouse, were not satisfied that the efforts of

⁸⁹ J.A. Hobson, Confessions of an Economic Heretic (London, 1938), p. 126.

⁹⁰ See Hobson and Ginsberg (eds.), L.T. Hobhouse, p. 59.

⁹¹ Hobhouse to C.P. Scott, 7 November 1924, quoted in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, p. 468.

⁹² Hobhouse to C.P. Scott, 15 November 1924, quoted in Clarke, Liberals and Social Democrats, p. 237.

Henderson and others in 1917-18 had succeeded in transforming the Labour party into a genuinely national party. J.M. Hogge, for example, was a fiercer critic of the Labour party than Hobhouse. 'Toryism', he declared in 1919, 'is class: Labour is other class. One evidence of the latter fact is the existence in Parliament today not so much of a Labour as a Trade Union party'.⁹³ Other progressive Radicals, it seems, felt that the position was not as clear-cut as Hogge suggested. C.P. Trevelyan claimed in 1918 that there was uncertainty in Radical circles about Labour's fundamental purpose:

Many Radicals are already openly joining the Labor Party. Others are hesitating, uncertain whether the reconstruction of the Labor Party means only a finer electioneering machine for registering discontent and class irritation in Parliament, or a much bigger thing - i.e. the force, which, utilising the best intellect of the country, will rally men of all classes to a broad policy of internationalism and economic revolution through law...⁹⁴

There were, it should be noted, progressive Radicals who entered the Labour party even though they were not fully convinced that it was dedicated to the welfare of the community as a whole. H.W. Massingham and

⁹³ J.M. Hogge, 'The Future of Liberalism', Edinburgh Evening News, 18 January 1919 (cutting enclosed in F.E. Guest to Lloyd George, 30 January 1919, Lloyd George MS., F/21/3/1).

⁹⁴ C.P. Trevelyan, 'Can Radicalism and Socialism Unite?', The Nation, 2 February 1918.

H.B. Lees-Smith are cases in point. In early December 1923, soon after entering the Labour ranks, Massingham told S.K. Ratcliffe that he feared that the Labour party was 'beginning again to settle down to a class organisation i.e. to a mere wages and hours party, with an irreconcilable Communist wing'.⁹⁵ A few weeks earlier, Massingham had urged MacDonald not to put the capital levy in the forefront of Labour's election platform, arguing that it was liable to lose the middle class votes which were essential if Labour was to be converted 'from a purely working class party into a great national force'.⁹⁶ Lees-Smith stated when he joined the I.L.P. in mid-1919 that it remained to be seen whether the Labour party was open to what he called 'the impulse of the ideal'.⁹⁷ He rejected the notion that the Labour party's commitment to social reconstruction furnished proof that it was guided by ideals, maintaining that it was 'easy' for Labour to advocate policies from which working class voters would benefit. 'The ultimate test

⁹⁵ Massingham to S.K. Ratcliffe, 4 December 1923, quoted in Clarke, Liberals and Social Democrats, p. 238; see also Havighurst, Massingham, pp. 308-9.

⁹⁶ Massingham to MacDonald, 10 November 1923 (private), Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/33.

⁹⁷ This quotation and those in the next two sentences are taken from H.B. Lees-Smith, 'Why I Have Joined the I.L.P.', Labour Leader, 3 July 1919.

of Labour', he declared, 'will be found in its attitude to those moral questions from which it has no clear material advantages for itself to gain'.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that there was a feeling in progressive Radical circles in 1918-19 that the arguments for and against joining the Labour party were finely balanced. One thing which suggests that this was so is the fact that, generally speaking, those progressive Radicals who decided to make the transition from Liberalism to Labour during this period did not find the decision an easy one. It is also the case that there were progressive Radicals who seriously considered joining the Labour party at this time but ultimately decided against doing so. T.E. Harvey was one of them. Harvey decided in late 1917 not to seek re-election as a Liberal. 'With the regrouping of political parties', he wrote to a friend, 'it will be rather a help to stand aside for a time'.⁹⁸ By the end of 1918, Harvey was on the point of leaving the Liberal party. He told his father in December: 'I have been feeling increasingly drawn towards the Labour party during the last ten days: I don't want to act precipitately but it may in the end be right to join it'.⁹⁹ Harvey subsequently changed his mind. The

⁹⁸ Harvey to D. Blallock, 10 October 1917, T.E. Harvey MS.

⁹⁹ Harvey to W. Harvey, 1 December 1918, T.E. Harvey MS.

early 1920s saw him back within the Liberal fold. 'I really am a Liberal', he wrote in early 1923, '& believe in Liberalism, which is a different and better thing than Liberal leaders...'.¹⁰⁰ Harvey's self-imposed exile from political life came to an end in late 1923, when he fought and won Dewsbury as a Liberal.¹⁰¹ It is possible that Arnold Rowntree, T.E. Harvey's brother-in-law, also considered becoming a member of the Labour party in 1918-19. He certainly made it clear when he contested York as a Liberal in 1918 that he was in broad sympathy with Labour's aspirations.¹⁰² Rowntree, it should be added, drifted out of politics altogether in the early 1920s. H.G. Chancellor almost certainly contemplated entry into the Labour party in 1918. He fought Shoreditch as a self-styled 'Liberal-Labour' candidate in the 1918 general election, putting forward a programme which, according to the Daily News, differed 'very little in its essentials from that of the Labour Party'.¹⁰³ Nine months before the election,

¹⁰⁰ Harvey to D. Blallock, 3 January 1923, T.E. Harvey MS.

¹⁰¹ Harvey ended his political career as 'Independent Progressive' M.P. for the Combined English Universities (1937-45).

¹⁰² See speech at York, reported in Northern Echo, 12 December 1918.

¹⁰³ Daily News, 27 November 1918. In 1918 Chancellor sought nomination as Liberal candidate for the new constituency of Shoreditch, formed out of Chancellor's seat, Haggerston, and Hoxton, where the sitting Liberal M.P. was Christopher Addison. A joint meeting of Hoxton and Haggerston Liberals in mid-1918 selected Addison as Liberal candidate for Shoreditch. Chancellor however, disputed the result of the vote which had taken place, and decided to stand as an unofficial candidate (see Daily News, 4 May, 28 May 1918).

on 5 March, Chancellor had presided over the Radical Committee's debate on the question of whether the best course for Radicals was to join the Labour party or to attempt to stage a rally within the Liberal party.¹⁰⁴ Like Rowntree, Chancellor dropped out of politics after 1918.¹⁰⁵ Another progressive Radical who was attracted by the Labour party was Llewellyn Williams. 'I know you have joined Labour', he wrote to Arthur Ponsonby in 1920, '& I nearly did so two years ago. But I can't follow the Labour leaders these days. So I am bewildered: for I am only an old-fashioned Gladstonian Liberal without leader or party'.¹⁰⁶ Mention should also be made here of R.D. Denman. In mid-1919, Denman, according to his own account, 'nearly' joined the Labour party, having become totally disillusioned with Coalition Liberalism.¹⁰⁷ He stood as a Liberal in the general

¹⁰⁴ Daily News, 6 March 1918.

¹⁰⁵ Chancellor was fifty-five when he fought his last election in 1918: Rowntree was forty-six. Chancellor died in 1945, Rowntree in 1951.

¹⁰⁶ Williams to Ponsonby, 12 October 1920, Ponsonby MS. Williams was hardly an 'old-fashioned Gladstonian Liberal'. He voted for Labour's 'Right to Work' Bill in 1908 and in 1909, and he voted for the introduction of a minimum wage in the coal mining and railway industries in 1912-13.

¹⁰⁷ See pencilled note by Denman on H.A. Atkinson to Denman, 8 December 1924, R.D. Denman MS., box 5. For Denman's break with Coalition Liberalism in 1919, see Denman to F.E. Guest, n.d. August 1919 (copy), R.D. Denman MS., box 4 (Denman told Guest that he had decided to leave the Coalition ranks because of the 'continued inertia and inaction' of the government).

elections of 1922 and 1923 before entering the Labour party in December 1924. It cannot be claimed, of course, that Denman was a representative figure.¹⁰⁸ But it does seem likely that T.E. Harvey and Llewellyn Williams were only two among many progressive Radicals who came close to joining the Labour party in 1918-19 before deciding not to sever their links with Liberalism. H.B. Lees-Smith had no doubt that the number involved was considerable. He claimed in mid-1919:

The country is waiting for a lead from the left. If this had been given in the last six months by Labour in Parliament I am convinced from my knowledge of Radical opinion that there would have been a schism in the Liberal Party, and that its most vital and courageous elements would have thrown themselves into the Labour party.¹⁰⁹

There were two points after 1918-19 at which the question of whether to join the Labour party became the subject of discussion among at least some of the progressive Radicals who remained within the Liberal ranks. The first was in late 1923, when there took place what H.W. Massingham called the 'fatal and hasty re-marriage' between Asquithian and Lloyd Georgian Liberals.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ See above, ch. 6, fn. 8.

¹⁰⁹ H.B. Lees-Smith, 'Why I Have Joined the I.L.P.', Labour Leader, 26 June 1919.

¹¹⁰ H.W. Massingham, 'An Unwanted Party', The New Leader, 30 November 1923.

Massingham himself entered the Labour party at this time, as did Lloyd George's former associate Christopher Addison.¹¹¹ A.G. Gardiner and C.F.G. Masterman - two of Lloyd George's fiercest Liberal critics - evidently considered following suit.¹¹² The second came after the election campaign of 1924, during which Asquith had shocked proponents of Liberal-Labour co-operation like R.D. Denman and Alexander MacCallum Scott by declaring that the Liberal and Conservative parties were faced with a 'common danger' in the shape of Labour. Denman claimed that Asquith's declaration left him with a conviction that 'Liberalism could no longer be entrusted to the Liberal Party'.¹¹³ MacCallum Scott reached a similar conclusion.¹¹⁴ Like Denman, he became a member of the Labour party in December 1924. MacCallum Scott hoped that other progressive Radicals would follow his example. 'There are', he told Ramsay MacDonald, 'many

111 Addison's hostility to Lloyd George clearly played a part in his decision to leave the Liberal party; see Christopher Addison, 'Why I Left the Liberals', The New Leader, 30 November 1923.

112 See Clarke, Liberals and Social Democrats, pp. 235-6; E. David, 'The New Liberalism of C.F.G. Masterman' in Brown (ed.), Essays in Anti-Labour History, pp. 34-5.

113 R.D. Denman to ed., Carlisle Journal, 20 February 1925 (cutting in R.D. Denman MS., box 4).

114 See MacCallum Scott's letter to Asquith, printed in Glasgow Evening News, 6 December 1924.

Liberals who, like myself ... have been reluctant to sever old ties and relationships, and many of them still waver on the brink of a decision'.¹¹⁵

There can be no doubt that the thinking of many of the progressive Radicals who made the transition from Liberalism to Labour was strongly influenced by the fact that the reconstructed Labour party was loud in its insistence on the need for a new order in international affairs. Progressive Radical defectors to Labour who had been wartime 'pacifists' invariably made it clear that their decision to change parties owed much to the belief that the Labour party was alone in British politics in being wholeheartedly committed to the reconstruction of the international system. 'The Labour Party', wrote E.T. John in 1923, 'is in my judgement the one real effective Peace Party, and this has been a very considerable factor in securing for it my enthusiastic adhesion and support'.¹¹⁶ E.D. Morel made a similar statement in 1920: 'I gradually came to the conclusion ... that the Labour movement was the only force capable of evolving that constructive internationalism without which mankind is doomed to stagger from one international massacre to another...'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ MacCallum Scott to MacDonald, 5 December 1924, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/35.

¹¹⁶ John to Rev. Owen Thomas, 29 March 1923 (copy), E.T. John MS.

¹¹⁷ Morel to J. Ogilvie (Secretary, Dundee Labour Party), 30 September 1920 (copy), E.D. Morel MS. Morel joined the I.L.P. in April 1918 (see The U.D.C., May 1918).

V.H. Rutherford declared when he joined the I.L.P. in 1919 that he was 'convinced that the Labour Party best represents Democracy, Internationalism and Liberty...'.¹¹⁸ When Arthur Ponsonby told C.P. Trevelyan in early 1918 of how he had been 'put off' the Labour party after seeing its constituency activists in Dunfermline at close quarters, he added: 'But of course I always remember Internationalism'.¹¹⁹ Trevelyan himself described the Labour party during the 1918 election campaign as the only party which had 'the courage to give a resolute lead towards a new world based on internationalism'.¹²⁰ Trevelyan's views were shared by Joseph King. When he stood as Labour candidate in the Ilford by-election of 1920, King explained that he had changed parties partly because he had become convinced that the Labour party, to a far greater extent than its rivals, wanted 'an end to warfare and militarism in every form'.¹²¹ C.R. Buxton made an almost identical claim during the 1918 election campaign.¹²² The Labour party's stance

¹¹⁸ V.H. Rutherford to P. Snowden, printed in Labour Leader, 17 April 1919.

¹¹⁹ Ponsonby to Trevelyan, 30 March 1918, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

¹²⁰ C.P. Trevelyan's election address, Elland, 1918 (copy in C.P. Trevelyan MS.).

¹²¹ Speech at Ilford, reported in Ilford Guardian, 17 September 1920.

¹²² Speech at Clayton-le-Moors, reported in Accrington Gazette, 9 November 1918.

on foreign affairs also had a great deal to do with Noel Buxton's decision to join it. Buxton gave an account of his frame of mind at the end of the war in his autobiography: 'I was convinced that the Labour party represented a far greater interest in the question of peace and war than did the Liberal Party. The question was so little spoken of by Liberal politicians that one could be attacked as I was for talking of foreign politics and denounced to the electors as the friend of every country but one's own. It was the Labour Party which changed that, and it is essentially committed to international order because it is an international movement and organisation'.¹²³ Buxton's faith in Labour's internationalism was matched by that of R.C. Lambert and Percy Alden.¹²⁴ It was H.W. Massingham, however, who made perhaps the largest claims for the Labour party. Massingham declared in November 1923: 'One party alone can find room for the best and freshest thought that stirs in Britain today, and when sufficiently broadened and deepened, promises to unite it with the world's thought for the

¹²³ Quoted in Fieldhouse, 'Noel Buxton and A.J.P. Taylor's "The Trouble Makers"' in Gilbert (ed.), A Century of Conflict, p. 178.

¹²⁴ See statement by Lambert, printed in Labour Leader, 21 November 1918, and speech by Alden at Edmonton, reported in Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald, 19 March 1920.

world's salvation'.¹²⁵

Those progressive Radical defectors to Labour who had not been active in the wartime campaign for a negotiated peace did not, in the main, say much about foreign affairs in the explanations they offered for their change of allegiance. A.E. Dunn never got beyond generalities: 'The old Liberal Party is dead, killed by internecine strife; Free Liberalism has no driving force, but Liberalism lives and breathes in the Labour movement'.¹²⁶ Joseph Martin was reported as saying in August 1918 that he had joined the Labour party because he was 'out for a full and free life for all who worked by brain and hand as a right, not as a favour'.¹²⁷ Martin appears to have made no mention of Labour's internationalism in the speeches he made during the brief period in which he was Labour candidate for South Islington. The handful of progressive Radicals who entered the Labour party via the Coalition Liberal ranks also remained largely silent on the subject of foreign affairs. Leo Chiozza Money - who resigned as Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Shipping on

¹²⁵ H.W. Massingham, 'An Unwanted Party', The New Leader, 30 November 1923.

¹²⁶ West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser, 9 November 1922; see also Dunn's speech at Penzance, reported in The Cornishman, 27 November 1918.

¹²⁷ St. Pancras Guardian, 23 August 1918.

14 November 1918 and was adopted as Labour candidate for South Tottenham ten days later - made no reference at all to foreign policy in the article he wrote for the Labour Leader explaining his decision to join the Labour party.¹²⁸ Chiozza Money made it clear that the main cause of his departure from the Liberal camp was his enthusiasm for collectivist policies. 'The war', he wrote, 'has extinguished the last hope that might have been entertained that the Liberal Party would ever become an instrument of collective action aiming at the substitution of Industrial Democracy for the capitalist system'.¹²⁹ Christopher Addison's motives for making the transition from Liberalism to Labour seem to have been much the same as Chiozza Money's. In an article entitled 'Why I Left the Liberals', published in the New Leader on 30 November 1923, Addison wrote: 'For those of us ... who attach capital importance to social betterment the question is: Which party can we rely upon most? I believe the Labour Party is more intently zealous in these matters. We cannot rely upon the Liberal Party to give effect to their pledges on these matters when the testing time comes'. There was nothing

128 L. Chiozza Money, 'A Word of Thanks to Labour', Labour Leader, 12 December 1918; see also Money to Lloyd George, 14 November 1918, Lloyd George MS., F/35/2/86.

129 L. Chiozza Money, 'A Word of Thanks to Labour', Labour Leader, 12 December 1918.

in Addison's New Leader article to suggest that he had been attracted by Labour's internationalism. Elsewhere, however, he did maintain that Labour stood 'more unitedly than any other party for a real peace-making policy abroad'.¹³⁰ Alexander MacCallum Scott told Asquith when he decided to join the I.L.P. at the end of 1924 that he had come to believe that 'the work of reform of which the Liberal Party has been the chief instrument in past generations has passed definitely to the Labour Party'. He went on to make it clear that it was domestic reform that he had in mind: 'No attempt has been made to apply Liberal principles to the solution of new and menacing problems, social, economic and industrial, which are springing up on every side. The Liberal Party has lost the initiative in policy'.¹³¹ MacCallum Scott's letter contained no specific references to international affairs. The same can be said of the statements which R.D. Denman made on his decision to change parties.¹³²

¹³⁰ Daily Herald, 22 November 1923.

¹³¹ MacCallum Scott to Asquith, printed in Glasgow Evening News, 5 December 1924.

¹³² R.D. Denman to ed., Carlisle Journal, 20 February 1925 (cutting in R.D. Denman MS., box 4); Denman to ed., Carlisle Journal, n.d. December 1924 (cutting in R.D. Denman MS., box 5). The foregoing should not, of course, be taken to imply that Chiozza Money, Denman, Addison and MacCallum Scott were in any sense opposed to Labour's foreign policy. Nor should it be thought that they had no interest in foreign policy: all four of them had been members of the Liberal Foreign Affairs Group before 1914.

It should not be thought, however, that the progressive Radicals who joined the Labour party can be divided into two distinct categories, one consisting of wartime 'pacifists' who changed parties mainly for reasons of foreign policy and the other made up of non-'pacifists' who were attracted chiefly by Labour's commitment to social change. The wartime 'pacifists' were, of course, convinced of the need for domestic as well as international reconstruction, and there can be no doubt that this conviction influenced their choice of party. C.P. Trevelyan, for instance, said a good deal about internationalism when he explained his decision to enter the Labour party to an election audience at Brighouse in 1918, but he also insisted: '... in that party I can myself see the only hope on the horizon of the growth of a great, strong, highly-intentioned, determined and resolute party to lead us on to a new kind of England which many of us, rich and poor alike, are looking for'.¹³³ R.C. Lambert and H.B. Lees-Smith

¹³³ Speech at Brighouse, reported in Brighouse Echo, 6 December 1918. See also, Trevelyan's election address, Elland, 1918 (copy in C.P. Trevelyan MS.); Trevelyan, From Liberalism to Labour, pp. 19-21; and Trevelyan's preface to H. Langshaw, Socialism: and the Historic Function of Liberalism (London, 1925). In his preface to Langshaw's book, Trevelyan asserted: 'The Labour Party exists to reorganise economic society. The Liberal Party does it against the grain. That is why social reformers are all bound to gravitate as I have done to Labour' (p. vii). It is difficult to accept A.J.P. Taylor's contention that 'foreign affairs alone' carried Trevelyan into the Labour party (Taylor, The Trouble Makers, p. 150).

also had more than one reason for gravitating to Labour. 'For myself', wrote Lambert in November 1918, 'believing as I do in the International, and looking forward to the establishment of a real League of Nations; believing also that at home the interests of the whole community ought to be paramount ... and desiring to work for the betterment and freedom of my fellow-citizens from the wage slavery under which so many of them are oppressed, I feel there is more scope for me ... in the ranks of the I.L.P., than if I continued to call myself a Liberal, while not believing in the policy, or lack of policy, for which the Liberal Party now appears to stand'.¹³⁴ Lees-Smith declared when he joined the I.L.P. in mid-1919 that he had moved into the Labour camp because he wanted to see 'the victory of social justice at home ... accompanied by the victory of Internationalism abroad'.¹³⁵ In similar vein, E.T. John told a journalist friend in 1920 that he had entered the Labour party not only because he regarded its members as 'much the most sincere supporters of ... enlightened internationalism' but also because he was 'completely in sympathy with their social aspirations and all that is immediately

¹³⁴ Statement by Lambert, printed in Labour Leader, 21 November 1918.

¹³⁵ H.B. Lees-Smith, 'Why I Have Joined the I.L.P.', ibid., 3 July 1919; see also Keighley News, 28 October 1922.

practicable in their industrial and economic policy'.¹³⁶ It is clear, too, that Arthur Ponsonby's decision to become a member of the Labour party owed as much to his belief in what he called 'the urgent need for the establishment of a new social order' as it did to his internationalist principles.¹³⁷ There is, moreover, evidence which suggests that Joseph King, V.H. Rutherford, Percy Alden, E.D. Morel and E.N. Bennett were drawn towards the Labour party by its stance on domestic issues as well as by its internationalism.¹³⁸ Bennett, for example, was reported as saying that he had joined the Labour party because it was 'more likely to carry out sound democratic reforms than either of the other parties, because the older parties were inextricably wrapped up with and dependent upon the

136 E.T. John to Beriah Evans, 14 April 1920 (copy), E.T. John MS. It should be added that John thought that some features of Labour's economic policy were 'obviously crude and ill-considered' (John to Beriah Evans, 14 March 1920 (copy), E.T. John MS.). It should also be said that John made it clear in his letter to Evans on 14 April that one of his reasons for joining the Labour party was his belief that it was more sympathetic to the cause of Welsh nationalism than the Liberals ('As Wales does not seem to be able to evolve a Nationalist party proper I have ... felt constrained to act with Labour').

137 Ponsonby, 'The Conversion of a Liberal', Labour Leader, 7 April 1921.

138 Statement by King, Labour Leader, 21 November 1918; V.H. Rutherford to P. Snowden, printed in ibid., 17 April 1919; speeches by Alden reported in Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald, 19 March 1920, and Luton News and Bedfordshire Advertiser, 9 November 1920; Morel to J. Ogilvie, 30 September 1920 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.; Bennett to ed., Wiltshire Times, 16 November 1918.

support of the wealthy and capitalist classes, and based on the vested interests not of the many but of the few'.¹³⁹ Nor, finally, can it be said that it was considerations of foreign policy alone which led the Buxton brothers to make the transition from Liberalism to Labour. C.R. Buxton stated in late 1918 that one of his reasons for joining the Labour party was his belief that it was 'the youngest and most living party, the party which has the most definite, far-reaching and comprehensive policy for transforming the country into something better'.¹⁴⁰ 'You will agree with me', wrote Noel Buxton in late 1919, informing the North Norfolk Liberal Association of his intention to apply for membership of the Labour party, 'that those who belonged to the school of Campbell-Bannerman are indebted to the Labour Party for urging views, both about the Peace Settlement and about Social Reform, which he would have expressed but which the Liberal leaders of today have left to the Radical section of the Liberal Party'.¹⁴¹

One final point about the progressive Radicals who

¹³⁹ Speech at Bradford-on-Avon, reported in Wiltshire Times, 2 November 1918.

¹⁴⁰ Speech at Accrington, reported in Accrington Gazette, 9 November 1918.

¹⁴¹ The letter from which this quotation is taken was printed in Eastern Daily Press, 12 November 1919.

entered the Labour party needs to be considered: was their change of party the outcome of a fundamental change in their political outlook? This is a matter on which some historians have expressed very definite views. 'What is striking about these converts', P.F. Clarke has suggested, 'is the absence of any conversion experience'.¹⁴² R.E. Dowse writes of the U.D.C. Radicals who entered the Labour camp: 'In becoming members of the I.L.P., through that party's close association with the U.D.C., the ex-Liberals did not change their opinions in any significant manner'.¹⁴³ These statements must be treated with a certain amount of caution. It needs to be remembered that there is a good deal of evidence which suggests that progressive Radicals moved leftwards on domestic issues during the war.¹⁴⁴ It is also the case that some of the progressive Radicals who moved into the Labour ranks claimed that they had done so because they had become socialists. 'I have become a socialist from sheer conviction', E.D. Morel told Mrs. Snowden in 1917.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Clarke, 'The Progressive Movement in England', p. 177.

¹⁴³ Dowse, 'Entry of Liberals into the Labour Party', p. 83.

¹⁴⁴ See above, pp. 318-22.

¹⁴⁵ Morel to Mrs. Snowden, n.d. 1917 (private: copy), E.D. Morel MS.

'I have joined the I.L.P.', wrote Joseph King in 1918, 'because the war, its sufferings for the proletariat and its gains for profiteers, together with the financial outlook of the whole world, have made me a socialist'.¹⁴⁶ C.P. Trevelyan, too, suggested at the end of the war that he had become a socialist.¹⁴⁷ The London correspondent of the Labour Leader said of Trevelyan after a chance encounter with him in 1920: 'I was delighted to find how fully he had become a socialist'.¹⁴⁸ It is legitimate to ask, however, how real these conversions were. C.P. Trevelyan, for example, undoubtedly occupied an altogether more left-wing position at the end of the war than he had at the start of it, but there must be some doubt as to whether a change took place in his most fundamental beliefs. The conception of socialism which Trevelyan outlined during the 1918 election campaign was one to which he - and, indeed, any progressive Radical - could have quite easily subscribed before the war. 'Some people', he said, 'interpret Socialism as a restriction on liberty. I do not interpret it that way. You can have

146 Statement by King, printed in Labour Leader, 21 November 1918.

147 Speech at Brighouse, reported in Brighouse Echo, 8 November 1918.

148 Labour Leader, 29 April 1920.

Socialism ... appearing to the world ... as a rather narrow, ill-controlled bureaucracy which jeers at popular control ... But the social democracy that I am thinking of is different. It has the view that liberty is always the greatest good'.¹⁴⁹ It should also be noted that E.D. Morel claimed in 1917 that there was a sense in which he had always been a socialist: 'When I look back on my public efforts through the years, it seems to me that I have been a Socialist all my life, and in everything except the internal economic side which I had not had the leisure of studying before the war'.¹⁵⁰ Finally, it ought to be acknowledged that most of the progressive Radicals who entered the Labour party do not appear to have undergone a 'conversion experience' of any sort. Some, like E.T. John and V.H. Rutherford, chose to emphasise that in entering the Labour party they had not abandoned their Liberal principles.¹⁵¹ Others maintained that they had been socialists throughout their political careers. Percy Alden told a Labour meeting at Edmonton in 1920 that

149 Speech at Brighouse, reported in Brighouse Echo, 13 December 1918.

150 Morel to William Cadbury, 7 April 1918 (copy), E.D. Morel MS.

151 See John's speech at Colwyn Bay, reported in North Wales Pioneer, 12 December 1918, and Rutherford's speech at Sunderland, reported in Sunderland Daily Echo, 23 April 1920.

he had been a socialist 'for more than thirty years'.¹⁵² 'I have been a socialist for a long time', stated E.N. Bennett in a private letter in 1917.¹⁵³ R.D. Denman claimed in a public statement in 1925 that he was not alone in having been a socialist of a certain kind long before joining the Labour party:

What, perhaps, may be of service is to correct the delusion that ... Liberals like myself who have joined the Labour Party in recent years have done so because of any change of political faith. We have changed parties because experience has shown us that the Liberal Party has become a barrier to the fulfilment of the objects for which we have striven, and the Labour Party the best instrument for their achievement. We find that the Labour Party has developed its earlier rigid ideas of State Socialism into a far broader policy, and that policy is closely akin to the Socialism which was so prominent a feature of the Liberalism of the '90s and the earlier years of this century. Anyone who has forgotten how richly Liberal theory was coloured by Socialism even so late as 1910 should refresh his memory by reading L.T. Hobhouse's "Liberalism".¹⁵⁴

Lastly, some attempt must be made to explain the entry into the Labour party after 1918 of a handful of Radicals who had been notably unsympathetic to what

¹⁵² Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald, 19 March 1920.

¹⁵³ E.N. Bennett to T.E. Harvey, 30 October 1917, T.E. Harvey MS.

¹⁵⁴ R.D. Denman to ed., Carlisle Journal, 20 February 1925 (cutting in R.D. Denman MS., box 4).

R.D. Denman called the 'Socialism' of the pre-war Liberal party. These were the single-taxers Outhwaite, Wedgwood, Dundas White and Hemmerde. Outhwaite and Wedgwood - who won Newcastle-under-Lyme as an Independent Radical in the 1918 election - joined the I.L.P. in January and April 1919 respectively. Dundas White followed them in September 1919. E.G. Hemmerde became a member of the Labour party in February 1920.¹⁵⁵

The first thing which should be said about these four is that they entered the Labour party without making any attempt to conceal the fact that they remained passionate believers in the primacy of the land question over all other political issues. E.G. Hemmerde, for example, nailed his colours firmly to the mast when, a month after becoming a member of the Labour party, he sought nomination as Labour candidate for Crewe. He was reported as telling the selection conference that 'in changing his coat from Liberalism to Labour ... he was not conscious of any great change of views'. Hemmerde

¹⁵⁵ There were other, less well-known, single-taxers who joined the Labour party after 1914, among them Robert Dunstan, sometime prospective Liberal candidate for Totnes, who became a member of the I.L.P. in September 1917, and Dr. S.V. Pearson, sometime vice-president of the North Norfolk Liberal Association, who entered the I.L.P. in August 1915 (see, respectively, Common Sense, 15 September 1917, and Labour Leader, 12 August 1915). Not all single-taxers, of course, became members of the Labour party. P.W. Raffan remained a Liberal, as did Edgar Jones. Francis Neilson left British politics altogether in January 1916 (see above, p. 243).

went on to say that he regarded the land issue as 'the greatest of all possible questions'.¹⁵⁶

R.L. Outhwaite was more belligerent: he told a Labour selection conference at Hyde in 1919 that 'he should not be adopted unless the delegates were prepared to support him in the demand for the assertion forthwith of the common right to land as the first essential step towards the establishment of the Co-operative Commonwealth'.¹⁵⁷ It should be added that Outhwaite claimed in a letter to the Labour Leader in late 1919 that his views had changed in one respect during the war. He wrote: 'My colleagues and I have abandoned the advocacy of taxation as the method of appropriating the communal value of land. We stand for ... the payment of economic rent by every holder to the common fund'.¹⁵⁸ The difference between these two strategies was not, it would appear, one of substance. What is clear, however, is that Outhwaite continued to regard the appropriation of the economic rent of land as a panacea for all social ills. He claimed in 1921: 'The assertion of the common right to the land is the greatest economic and social

¹⁵⁶ Crewe and Nantwich Observer, 6 March 1920.

¹⁵⁷ See Land and Liberty, October 1919.

¹⁵⁸ Labour Leader, 6 November 1919.

revolution that could be achieved. All privilege, monarchy, aristocracy, plutocracy originated in and is based on the usurpation of the soil. Modern capitalism, with wage slavery, is rooted in this fundamental wrong...'.¹⁵⁹ Dundas White made a similar claim just before becoming a member of the I.L.P.: '... the master problem of economics is to determine the true relation of the people to the land ... This problem is at the root of the production of wealth, because all wealth is ultimately obtained from the land. It is at the root of the distribution of wealth... It is at the root of all social and political questions'.¹⁶⁰ Nor was Josiah Wedgwood any less convinced after his entry into the Labour party than he had been before it that the land issue was what Dundas White called 'the master problem'. 'Private property in land', declared Wedgwood in 1922, 'is the foundation of the master class, because it deprives men of a chance to work and freedom, except on the terms allowed by the master class'.¹⁶¹

The second thing about these four single-taxers which needs to be noted is that after moving into the

159 R.L. Outhwaite, 'The Land or Slavery?', Labour Leader, 7 April 1921; see also, Outhwaite, 'Land Socialisation', The New Leader, 16 March 1923.

160 J. Dundas White, 'The Master Problem', Land Values, April 1919.

161 J. Wedgwood, 'A Land Programme for the I.L.P.', Labour Leader, 11 May 1922.

Labour party they seem to have remained unrepentantly hostile to anything which smacked of state or 'centralist' socialism. 'I am strongly opposed to any policy that would narrow personal freedom or increase the power of a bureaucracy, from whatever quarter it may come', wrote Dundas White when he informed Ramsay MacDonald of his intention to become a member of the I.L.P.¹⁶² Hemmerde, admittedly, told the Daily Herald when he joined the Labour party that he was in favour of the nationalisation of the mines and the railways. He added that he was 'prepared to consider the extension of the principle of nationalisation'.¹⁶³ Wedgwood, however, continued to be an uncompromising opponent of state control of any kind. In 1922, for example, in an article on land and agricultural policy, he wrote: 'Some Socialists imagine food production on the grand scale - the league-long furrow with State ploughs and State servants... But that is bureaucracy ... real Socialism puts freedom above ease and utility'.¹⁶⁴ Outhwaite, like Wedgwood, remained a convinced libertarian. He defined his aims in 1919 in much the same way as he

¹⁶² Dundas White to MacDonald, printed in Land and Liberty, October 1919.

¹⁶³ Daily Herald, 23 February 1920.

¹⁶⁴ J. Wedgwood, 'A Land Programme for the I.L.P.', Labour Leader, 11 May 1922.

had done in 1912: '... the establishment of Liberty by the overthrow of monopoly and privilege, the emancipation of working people from wage slavery by the restoration of their heritage - the land'.¹⁶⁵

It does not seem unreasonable to assume that Wedgwood, Outhwaite, Hemmerde and Dundas White entered the Labour party chiefly because they came to feel that it was more likely than the Liberal party to carry into effect land reform of the kind they desired. This at any rate is the impression they gave in their pronouncements on the subject. E.G. Hemmerde stated on a number of occasions between 1920 and 1922 that he had joined the Labour party because he had arrived at the conclusion that no other party could be relied upon to fight for the goals for which he had fought throughout his political career. He left his audiences in no doubt that the taxation of land values was foremost among these goals.¹⁶⁶ There is, however, some evidence which suggests that Hemmerde was not quite as obsessed with the land issue as Wedgwood, Dundas White or Outhwaite.¹⁶⁷ The latter told Philip Snowden in

¹⁶⁵ Outhwaite to ed., Labour Leader, 6 November 1919. Outhwaite defined his aims in 1912 in 'The Mission of the Single Taxer' (Land Values, October 1912). For his definition, see above, p. 110.

¹⁶⁶ See Crewe and Nantwich Observer, 17 April 1920, 14 October 1922, 4 November 1922, 11 November 1922.

¹⁶⁷ Hemmerde said a fair amount about domestic issues other than land reform during the 1922 election campaign. See, for example, the reports of his speeches in Crewe and Nantwich Observer, 4 November, 11 November 1922.

1919:

If we are to be spared the misery of futile civil strife it can only be by the forestalling of it by economic revolution and the destruction of sham democracy constituted of master class and slave class, of the privileged and the dispossessed. During the war I.L.P. branches have given me cordial welcome on their platforms and support for this view. I see nothing worth doing in these days but this. Such experience has shown me that were the leaders of the I.L.P. given the parliamentary opportunity to strike a blow at land monopoly that the leaders of the Liberal Party were given they would not bamboozle and betray as the latter did.¹⁶⁸

Dundas White also left the Liberal party feeling betrayed. Telling Ramsay MacDonald in 1919 of his decision to join the I.L.P., he wrote: 'The taxation of Land Values was a Liberal watchword long before I entered politics; but official Liberals have gone back on it'.¹⁶⁹ Wedgwood gave a succinct explanation of his transition from Liberalism to Labour in his memoirs. 'Mr. Asquith', he wrote, 'made a speech throwing over the taxation of land values; and in despair of furthering the cause where I was, I threw over the Liberal

¹⁶⁸ Outhwaite to Snowden, printed in Staffordshire Sentinel, 20 January 1919.

¹⁶⁹ Dundas White to MacDonald, printed in Land and Liberty, October 1919.

Party'.¹⁷⁰

It seems to be the case that, with the possible exception of Hemmerde, the single-taxers who joined the Labour party were not as warmly received as their progressive Radical counterparts.¹⁷¹ This is not altogether surprising. Outhwaite, Wedgwood and Dundas White were manifestly not in sympathy with the thinking upon which much of Labour's domestic programme was based. The difficulties encountered by these three were of various kinds. Outhwaite had perhaps the easiest passage into the Labour ranks. The I.L.P. accepted him without fuss in January 1919, and he was adopted as prospective Labour candidate for Hyde less than nine months later. Before very long, however, Outhwaite's utterances on the subject of land reform began to attract unfavourable attention in I.L.P. circles.¹⁷² Josiah

¹⁷⁰ Wedgwood, Memoirs, p. 144; see also Wedgwood to Mr. Francis (secretary, Hanley I.L.P.), printed in Staffordshire Sentinel, 16 April 1919 (Wedgwood made it clear in this letter that Asquith's lack of enthusiasm for land reform was not the only reason for his disenchantment with Liberalism: he also referred to Asquith's failure to offer 'vigorous support for the Liberalism of President Wilson against French reaction'). There is a detailed account of Wedgwood's movement into the Labour party in J. Blondel, F. Bealey and W.P. McCann, Constituency Politics (London, 1965), pp. 70-74.

¹⁷¹ No evidence has been traced which suggests that Hemmerde encountered hostility within the Labour party. He may well have escaped criticism: he advocated land taxation with rather less stridency than Wedgwood, Outhwaite and Dundas White.

¹⁷² See, for example, the criticism of Outhwaite's views in Labour Leader, 6 November 1919, 1 June 1922, 8 June 1922. Outhwaite, of course, had been an outspoken 'pacifist' throughout the war, and no doubt this - to begin with - eased his path in I.L.P. circles.

Wedgwood had no more difficulty than Outhwaite in being accepted as a member of the I.L.P.¹⁷³ Wedgwood, though, was a sitting M.P. when he decided to make the transition from Liberalism to Labour - and, as such, he had to apply for admission to the parliamentary Labour party. It was here that problems arose. The Labour party's Joint Parliamentary Sub-Committee recommended the rejection of Wedgwood's application. There was, it seems, a feeling that he was too much of an individualist. Some months later, the Sub-Committee's decision was reversed by Labour's National Executive Committee, and Wedgwood became a fully-fledged Labour M.P.¹⁷⁴ In the meantime, he had waited, as he put it, 'on the door-mat ... poised like Mahomet's coffin between heaven and hell'.¹⁷⁵ Wedgwood, it should be added, did a great deal to bring these difficulties on himself. In April 1919, when he first asked to be enrolled as a member of the Hanley I.L.P., he made it quite clear that he had no intention of sacrificing his

173 Wedgwood joined the Hanley branch of the I.L.P. - which was largely composed of admirers of Outhwaite (see Outhwaite to Snowden, printed in Staffordshire Sentinel, 20 January 1919).

174 This account of Wedgwood's difficulties is based on Blondel et al., Constituency Politics, pp. 74-83; Douglas, Land, People and Politics, p. 175; Wedgwood, Memoirs, p. 144.

175 Wedgwood, Memoirs, p. 144.

independence.¹⁷⁶ Dundas White, like Wedgwood, was given something of an uncomfortable time when he entered the Labour ranks. The two leading I.L.P. journals - Forward and the Labour Leader - singled him out for attack. Forward declared: '... great disillusionment will be his if he imagines the I.L.P. is only a haven of rest for Liberals who seek preservation of Peace and Free Trade and who favour taxation of land values'.¹⁷⁷ The Labour Leader poured scorn on Dundas White's claim - made in the letter in which he announced that he intended to join the I.L.P. - that he was 'in general agreement' with the I.L.P.'s attitude on both home and foreign affairs.¹⁷⁸ It went on to assert: '... the letter gives no indication that Mr. White

¹⁷⁶ See Wedgwood to Mr. Francis (secretary, Hanley I.L.P.), printed in Staffordshire Sentinel, 16 April 1919. Wedgwood was as good as his word. In the 1922 general election campaign, for example, he sent a public message of support to P.W. Raffan, the Liberal candidate at Ayr. It ran: 'Dear Raffan: You are above all the one Liberal that every Labour man should vote for at this election. Indeed, on the great questions of land and unemployment I regard you as sounder than many of my own colleagues. If I lived in Ayr Burghs I should vote and work for you' (see Staffordshire Sentinel, 9 November 1922). Six months after the 1922 election, Wedgwood temporarily refused to address Labour meetings in protest against Snowden's refusal to 'talk land': '... I cannot talk for the party if they do not take any responsibility for my views on the land question' (Wedgwood to MacDonald, 14 May 1923, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/33).

¹⁷⁷ Forward (Glasgow), 20 September 1919, quoted in Dowse, 'Entry of Liberals into the Labour Party', p.85.

¹⁷⁸ See Labour Leader, 18 September 1919. The quotations in the next two sentences are taken from this source.

accepts the Socialist attitude towards politics or life'. These jibes were preceded by a general observation: 'It is time it was frankly stated that there is great uneasiness in I.L.P. circles about the manner in which Liberal politicians are being received into our ranks without any public acknowledgement of their conversion to Socialism ... opposition to the Coalition Government and dissatisfaction with official Liberalism ought not to be considered sufficient ground for joining the I.L.P.'¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ In addition to the Radical 'politicians' discussed in this chapter, a considerable number of local notables and constituency activists made the transition from Liberalism to Labour. R.E. Dowse ('Entry of Liberals into the Labour Party 1910-20', p. 84) writes: 'It is impossible to give exact figures of Liberal entrants to the I.L.P. during this period, but I suspect that the number amounted to about 2,000 in all, most of whom were prominent either in national or in local politics'. R. McKibbin (Evolution of the Labour Party, p. 238) suggests that Radicals did not enter the Labour party 'in such numbers as is usually maintained'. No evidence is given in support of either of these claims. All that can be said here is that there is a good deal of evidence of an impressionistic kind, relating to various parts of the country, which suggests that Liberal losses were heavy and damaging. Common Sense reported in mid-1918: 'A correspondent who has been speaking in the West and Midlands declares positively that in several towns he has visited the Liberal Party organisation is practically dead, and that active Liberals are identifying themselves with Labour or with the Independent Labour Party' (Common Sense, 8 June 1918). Arnold Rowntree wrote after campaigning in the 1918 election: '... in York, as elsewhere, it was noticeable how many old Liberal workers associated themselves with the Labour Party' (Rowntree to Ponsonby, 3 January 1919, Ponsonby MS.). 'Even in sleepy Haslemere', R.D. Denman told F.E. Guest in mid-1919, 'I find Liberal old stagers going over to Labour in despair' (Denman to Guest, 15 August 1919 (copy), R.D. Denman MS., box 4). Josiah Wedgwood maintained in early 1919: 'The men

who used to vote - and canvass - "Liberal" have given up hope and "gone Labour". They have left to us the older Liberals of the clubs and the more prosperous of the chapel goers, leaders without followers; they have left behind the semblance of a "party" but they have taken with them the fire of faith' (Wedgwood to ed., Daily News, 8 February 1919). Sir George Croydon Marks, a Coalition Liberal M.P., reported to his Chief Whip in early 1920: 'I have lost many prominent old-time supporters who openly gave their adherence and countenance to the Labour Party that is organising against me in my division'. Marks added: 'I think mine is a typical West of England constituency' (Marks to F.E. Guest, 21 January 1920 (copy), Lloyd George MS., F/22/1/8). 'The result of 1918', wrote Herbert Gladstone in a review of the state of Liberal organisation in 1924, 'broke the party not only in the House of Commons but in the country. Local Associations perished or maintained a nominal existence. Masses of our best men passed away to Labour...' (Gladstone's memorandum, 18 November 1924, quoted in Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism, p. 396).

CONCLUSION

Political factions have been defined as 'self-consciously organised groups persisting as time passes, and collectively advancing a programme for government and a leader to govern'.¹ The Radicals of the early twentieth-century parliamentary Liberal party clearly did not constitute a faction in this sense. The differences in economic outlook within the Radical camp were such that agreement could never have been reached on a programme covering the whole range of political issues. Since this was so, it is not altogether surprising that authoritative leadership was largely absent from Radical politics or that Radicals were unable to organise themselves effectively into anything more than 'cause' groups. That being said, it needs to be emphasised that the years between 1906 and 1918 were ones in which the Radicals' differences on socio-economic issues were not always strikingly evident. Indeed, this period is notable for the extent to which these differences remained beneath the surface. Before 1914, the divisive influence of the 'social question' in Radical politics was partly - perhaps largely - concealed by a number of centripetal influences, the most important of which was the naval spending issue. Between 1914 and 1916, the war gave rise to divisions within the Radical camp which cut across the various schools of economic thought that it contained. The most noticeable feature of Radical politics during the last

¹ Richard Rose, Politics in England Today (London, 1974), p. 292.

two years of the war was the development of a wide measure of agreement on the need to resist the threats of a vindictive peace settlement and a 'Prussianized' Britain. After 1918, however, it becomes impossible to understand the behaviour of Radicals unless the divisions which existed on socio-economic issues are borne in mind. Those members of the Radical community who made the transition from Liberalism to Labour or who were strongly tempted to do so were, almost without exception, progressive Radicals. Cobdenite Radicals, on the other hand, no matter how great their disenchantment with the Liberal leadership, exhibited no interest in the possibility of entering the Labour ranks. What should be noted about the single-taxers who joined the Labour party is that they were a special case. Their motives for making the transition from Liberalism to Labour differed from those of their progressive Radical counterparts. There was, of course, something incongruous about the entry of these avowed anti-collectivists into what was a collectivist party. It was not an incongruity which went unnoticed in Labour circles.

It is not, of course, the contention of this study that those progressive Radicals who made the transition from Liberalism to Labour did so solely because they became convinced that the Liberal party was incapable of addressing itself to the task of social reconstruction. The faith of most of these Radicals in the Liberal party had been undermined during the war by what they saw as the failure of the Liberal leadership to uphold such Liberal ideals as free trade and voluntary military service. It

is, however, somewhat misleading to suggest that 'Liberal radicals left their own party and entered the Labour movement ... because official Liberalism seemed all too ready to prosecute the war with vigour'.² Three things should be said here. The first is that included among those Radicals who defected to Labour were individuals like Chiozza Money and Christopher Addison who, before doing so, had supported the all-out war policies of the Lloyd George coalition. Secondly, there were many Radicals who remained within the Liberal fold after 1918 who had opposed the kind of measures advocated by proponents of the 'knock-out blow' as strenuously as any of those who left it. Lastly, there is evidence which suggests that in 1917-18 hopes of a Liberal revival were entertained among even the most disaffected Radicals.³ Had the Asquithian front bench shown any signs in 1918 of approaching the problems of post-war reconstruction with vigour and imagination, it is possible that, even at the eleventh hour, the movement of progressive Radicals out of the Liberal party could have been arrested. In this connection, it should be remembered that those progressive Radicals who made the transition from Liberalism to Labour looked

² McKibbin, Evolution of the Labour Party, p. 238.

³ See the Daily News's report on the outlook of the Radical Committee in March 1918 cited above, p. 302. See also, Noel Buxton to Lady Courtney, 28 November 1917, Courtney MS., vol. 12; Leif Jones to Lord Courtney, 22 December 1917, Courtney MS., vol. 12.

upon the Labour party with some misgivings and only joined it, in most cases, after considerable hesitation.

It has been suggested above that one important influence on the behaviour of many of the Radicals who entered the Labour party was the belief that it alone in British politics was wholeheartedly committed to the creation of a new international order.⁴ A number of historians, however, have made a stronger claim - namely that those Radicals who joined the Labour party did so chiefly, or almost exclusively, because it gave a hearing to their ideas on foreign policy.⁵ All that can be said here is that the weight of evidence suggests that this was not so. There can surely be no doubt that the progressive Radicals who gravitated towards the Labour party were strongly influenced by its commitment to what one Radical convert called 'bold schemes of fundamental social change'.⁶

It has often been maintained that the Union of Democratic Control was an organisation of considerable

⁴ See above, pp. 338-41.

⁵ See, for example, A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-45, p. 91; A.J.P. Taylor, The Trouble Makers, p. 150; H. Pelling, review of W. Wolfe, From Radicalism to Socialism, History, vol. 61 no. 202 (June 1976), p. 309; H.R. Winkler, 'The Emergence of a Labor Foreign Policy in Great Britain, 1918-29', J.M.H., vol. 28 no. 3 (1956), p. 249; M. Cowling, The Impact of Labour, p. 29.

⁶ H.B. Lees-Smith, 'Why I Have Joined the I.L.P.', Labour Leader, 3 July 1919.

importance in early twentieth century British politics because it acted as a 'bridge' which facilitated the transition of Radicals from Liberalism to Labour.⁷ One historian has gone so far as to suggest that the significance of the U.D.C. in this regard 'cannot be over-estimated'.⁸ Such assessments of the U.D.C.'s importance are, however, open to question. It ought to be noted that more than half of the Radicals with parliamentary experience who entered the Labour party between 1914 and 1924 do not seem to have been associated with the U.D.C. in any way.⁹ Nor should it be overlooked that the U.D.C. was not the only organisation which brought Radicals into close contact with sections of the Labour movement during the war. The parliamentary Civil Liberties Group performed the same function. So did the 'Lansdowne movement' and the 1917 Club. Finally, there must be some doubt as to whether it is true to say that the anti-war Radicals and socialists of the U.D.C. were 'fused together by the

⁷ See, for example, K.E. Miller, Socialism and Foreign Policy, p. 83; C.F. Brand, British Labour's Rise to Power, p. 83; Swartz, Union of Democratic Control, passim.

⁸ Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, p. 49. For an outline of the kind of argument upon which this view is based, see above, p. 178.

⁹ Of those listed in appendix 3 below, ten had connections with the U.D.C. at some stage during the war: C.R. Buxton, E.N. Bennett, J. King, R.C. Lambert, C.P. Trevelyan, Arthur Ponsonby, R.L. Outhwaite, J.H. Whitehouse, H.B. Lees-Smith and R.D. Denman.

heat of wartime passions'.¹⁰ The U.D.C. Radicals who joined the Labour party via the I.L.P. only did so after giving the matter prolonged consideration. It would appear, therefore, that they regarded wartime collaboration with elements of the Labour movement as one thing and actually entering the Labour ranks as quite another.

¹⁰ Swartz, Union of Democratic Control, p. 87.

Appendix 1'Radicals' and 'Radicalism': a semantic note

A difficulty which confronts any student of Radicals and Radicalism is that these terms are somewhat ambiguous. This is a matter upon which a number of historians have commented. One reviewer, for example, has recently taken to task the authors of a collection of essays on Edwardian Radicalism for employing the word Radical 'as though its meaning were obviously clear and indisputable'.¹ Some explanation must therefore be given of the ways in which the words 'Radical', 'Radicals' and 'Radicalism' are used in this study.

An obvious point, but one which should be made, is that the term 'Radical' is not one which is more familiar to historians than it was to contemporaries. It was part of the everyday language of early twentieth century British politics. Contemporaries, however, did not attach a single, precise meaning to it. The historian is thus left with the difficulty of using the term in an unambiguous fashion while respecting contemporary usage. In this study, the term 'Radical' is used in some - but not all - of the senses in which it was used by contemporaries.

The word 'Radical' and its variants were sometimes used by contemporaries in what might be called a rhetorical

¹ P. F. Clarke, review of Morris (ed.), Edwardian Radicalism, History, vol. 61, no. 202 (June 1976) pp.312-4.

370.

sense. Conservatives, whether politicians or journalists, commonly referred to their principal opponents as 'Radicals' or the 'Radical party'. When Max Aitken told a Canadian friend in 1911 that the Unionists could make no progress 'until the Irishmen and Radicals disagree', and when the Earl of Malmesbury bemoaned the fact that the 'Radicals (confound them!) are always much more ready with a policy than we are', they were clearly using the term 'Radicals' as a synonym for 'Liberals'.² Similarly, when the Conservative Central Office published The Case against Radicalism in 1909, it was employing the term 'Radicalism' to describe nothing more than Liberal policy. It was also possible for Liberals to use the word 'Radical' in a rhetorical sense. In 1911, the Master of Elibank, whose political career was not marked by an excess of reforming zeal, told a gathering of Edinburgh Liberals: 'In the opinion of we Radicals reaction and revolution are each the enemies of progress. Each breeds disaster in the body politic'.³ It would doubtless be possible to find examples of Gaitskellites endeavouring to identify with audiences of the Labour party faithful in the 1950s by using the word 'socialist' in an equally tendentious way. In general, historians have avoided using the terms 'Radical' and

² A.J.P. Taylor, Beaverbrook (Penguin edn., London, 1974) p. 88; Malmesbury to Bonar Law, 5 July 1912, quoted in Douglas, Land, People and Politics, p. 165.

³ Daily News & Record, 20 November 1911 (cutting in Elibank MS.).

'Radicalism' as synonyms for 'Liberal' and 'Liberalism'.⁴
 At no point in this study are they used in this sense.

The term 'Radicals' was also used by contemporaries to refer to a faction within the parliamentary Liberal party. H.J. Wilson was using the term in this sense when, in 1906, he noted that Haldane's response to a proposal to reduce the army by 10,000 men was considered by 'the Radicals' to be totally unsatisfactory.⁵ So was Philip Snowden when he informed readers of the Labour Leader that 'the Radicals' were up in arms over the formation of a coalition government.⁶ Another example of this usage is contained in Ramsay MacDonald's complaint that the Liberal government was under the impression in 1906-7 that the Labour party was merely 'an extreme wing of its own Radical section'.⁷

A third use to which the term 'Radical' was put was to refer to any individual or group, inside or outside parliament, holding certain political attitudes. There is no need to re-examine here what, in the context of early twentieth century politics, the most important of these attitudes were.⁸ What should be noted is that it is by no

⁴ For an exception, see E. Halevy, The Rule of Democracy, 1905-14 (revised edn., London, 1961) p. 73.

⁵ Memorandum by Wilson, 16 March 1906, H.J. Wilson MS.

⁶ Labour Leader, 17 June 1915.

⁷ Ramsay MacDonald, '2pp. account of Lab-Liberal relations', n.d. (? winter 1906-7), Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/5/81.

⁸ On this, see ch. 1.

means unusual to encounter the term 'Radical' and its variants being used with reference to individuals whose party affiliation was Labour, not Liberal. In 1907, a contributor to the Labour Leader alleged that Ramsay MacDonald's 'habit of mind' was Radical rather than socialist.⁹ In 1911, MacDonald was told by a former Liberal M.P. that there was more 'sound Radicalism' in the Labour party on questions of foreign policy than there was in the Liberal Cabinet.¹⁰ In 1917, R.L. Outhwaite asserted that the rank and file of the I.L.P. was largely made up of 'Radicals who have severed connection with the Liberal party through lack of faith in the protestations of its leaders'.¹¹ Numerous other examples could be given. This study, however, is not concerned with those outside the Liberal ranks who, rightly or wrongly, were regarded in some quarters as Radical in their political outlook.

This is primarily a study of the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party. Since the parliamentarians can hardly be treated in isolation from the environment in which they moved, consideration is also given to the attitudes and activities of leading journalists and intellectuals. It is this assortment of individuals which is being referred to when the term 'Radicals' appears in the text without any qualifying adjective. An alternative

⁹ H. Russell Smart, 'The Socialist Policy', Labour Leader, 17 May 1907.

¹⁰ E.N. Bennett to MacDonald, 13 July 1911, Ramsay MacDonald MS., P.R.O. 30/69/6/14.

¹¹ R.L. Outhwaite, The Land or Revolution, p.80.

description which is used at some points is 'the Radical community', a phrase originally coined by A.G. Gardiner.¹² It should be emphasised that when such phrases as 'Radical opinion' or 'Radical attitudes' are used, no reference is being made to the views of anyone outside this elite of politicians, journalists and intellectuals.

Comparatively little is said in this study about those members of the Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith Cabinets - such as Morley, Burns, Loreburn, Harcourt, Masterman, Simon and Lloyd George - who have often been described by historians as Radicals. This is not because it is denied that the political sympathies of these individuals were in some measure Radical. The reason for their exclusion is that their membership of the Cabinet isolated them from the remainder of the Radical community to such an extent that it is difficult to regard them as fully part of it.

There were several reasons for this isolation. One was that Cabinet ministers, bound by the doctrine of collective responsibility, could not publicly associate themselves with Radical criticism of the government. They could not involve themselves in the deputations, ad hoc committees, conferences and dissident votes in the House of Commons which were the stuff of Radical politics. Nor, in consequence, could they experience the sense of fraternity which these activities no doubt engendered amongst those who took part in them.

¹² Koss, Gardiner, p. 151.

It was, moreover, all too easy for a Cabinet minister of Radical inclinations to become suspect in the eyes of Radical backbenchers and journalists. In some quarters, such attributes as dexterity in the exercise of power, a willingness to compromise and a readiness to soldier on in office after a defeat or setback were seen as virtues in a Cabinet minister.¹³ In Radical circles, where belief in the corrupting effect of power was widespread, a minister of Radical sympathies who possessed these attributes was quite likely to be regarded as an opportunist, a backslider and a place-seeker.¹⁴ The case of Sir John Simon is an instructive one in this connection. In 1906, his entry into parliament was welcomed by the Radical journals.¹⁵ He subsequently gave evidence of his Radical sympathies by signing the Brunner memorandum of 1907 and by voting in support of a call for reductions in armaments

¹³ The last two attributes were regarded by Edward Grey as two of the main qualities needed by a Cabinet minister. See J.P. Mackintosh, The British Cabinet (second edn., London, 1968), pp. 303-4.

¹⁴ For an example of Radical suspicions of power, see 'The Salt of Liberalism', The Nation, 11 March 1911, which begins: 'The standing danger of Liberalism is that it has to govern the country.' J. Allen Baker is a good example of the kind of man who commanded respect and admiration in Radical circles. It was said of him: 'He was not an orator, he had no ambition for office or title, he detested the intrigue of party'. Obituary in The Friend, July 1918 (cutting in W.H. Dickinson MS., G.L.R.O.).

¹⁵ See, e.g., The Speaker, 27 January 1906.

expenditure in 1908. In 1912, after becoming a member of the government, he was described by Lady Courtney as one of the main hopes of those who desired Anglo-German detente and reductions in naval spending.¹⁶ When the Cabinet opted for war in 1914, Radicals expected Simon to resign in protest and were shocked when he failed to do so.¹⁷ Their disillusionment with him deepened when he accepted office in the coalition government in May 1915. C.P. Trevelyan wrote: 'That Simon should not have resigned makes him lost to anything but ambition'.¹⁸ A similar process of disenchantment took place in the cases of Masterman, who had been 'deserted by his friends' by 1914, and John Burns.¹⁹

Another reason for the isolation of these Cabinet ministers is that they themselves made little attempt to keep in close contact with members of the Radical community after gaining office. John Morley, ageing, thin-skinned, pessimistic and vain, made no effort after 1906 to come to

¹⁶ Lady Courtney's Diary, 29 January 1912, Courtney MS., vol. 35.

¹⁷ Lady Courtney's Diary, 9 August 1914, Courtney MS., vol. 36 ('Why did Sir J. Simon not go too? I can't understand it').

¹⁸ Trevelyan to Ponsonby, 27 May 1915, Ponsonby MS.

¹⁹ This remark about Masterman appears in Runciman to Chalmers, 24 June 1914, Runciman MS. A member of the staff of The Nation wrote of Masterman: '...his early philanthropic and religious enthusiasms were gradually tempered by the cynicism of experience... I was at times...surprised at his readiness to compromise with evil.' H.W. Nevinson, Fire of Life (London, 1935), p. 217. For disenchantment with Burns, see K.D. Brown, John Burns (London, 1977), ch. 6; Koss, Gardiner, pp. 95-100.

terms with his Radical critics. Nor was Loreburn an appeaser by nature. He comes across in C.P. Scott's diaries as splenetic, petulant and defeatist.²⁰ Somewhat charitably, Lady Courtney described him as 'difficult'.²¹ C.P. Trevelyan dismissed him in 1911 as a conceited and sanctimonious humbug.²² Vanity was also John Burn's weakness. His unconcealed contempt for his critics, whom he regarded as either fools or knaves, together with his conservatism in office, alienated Radicals.²³ Simon appears to have found his old backbench associates something of an embarrassment after he took office in 1910.²⁴ One observer described Masterman's handling of his old Radical friends as 'tactless'.²⁵ Lloyd George's relationship with

²⁰ C.P. Scott's Diary, 20 July 1911; 6-8 September 1911; 1 December 1911; 7 January 1912; 23 October 1914, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, pp. 42-3, 52-3, 55-7, 60-2, 62-3.

²¹ Lady Courtney's Diary, 29 January 1912, Courtney MS., vol. 35.

²² C.P. Trevelyan to his mother, 18 December 1911, G.O. Trevelyan MS.

²³ See, e.g., Brown, John Burns, p.110 (for the views of Christopher Addison and G.P. Gooch); Koss, Gardiner, pp.95-6; A.J.A. Morris, C.P. Trevelyan 1870-1958: Portrait of a Radical (Belfast, 1977), p.75.

²⁴ Koss, Brunner, p.256.

²⁵ Riddell's Diary, 11 October 1914, Lord Riddell's War Diary, p.34.

the Radicals was a complex one and is dealt with in detail elsewhere.²⁶ It should be added that some senior Liberals, notably Loreburn, Bryce and, to a lesser extent, Simon and Burns, did become significant figures in the Radical community after leaving office. Consideration is given to their activities in this phase of their careers.

²⁶ See appendix 2.

Appendix 2Radical attitudes to Lloyd George, 1908-14

It is not at all uncommon, as has been seen, to find Radicals describing Lloyd George in the years after 1914 as a lost leader. H. W. Massingham did so in 1916, as did Llewellyn Williams.¹ V.H. Rutherford was reported in 1920 as saying: 'Mr. Lloyd George ... was once a democrat that, some years ago, they looked upon as the man who would lead the democratic forces in this country in the path of progress. Now he was a reactionary, he was in the grip of capital, he was bound hand and foot by his Tory colleagues, and there was no hope for him'.² A good deal has been said in this study about why it was that Radicals - or, at least, the main body of Radical opinion - turned against Lloyd George after 1914. But what truth is there in suggestions that Lloyd George was an object of Radical hero-worship before 1914?

To begin with, it ought to be emphasised that before 1914 Radical backbenchers had to look upon Lloyd George from afar. It has already been noted that J.M. Hogge complained in 1921 that he had never had the opportunity of an 'ordinary friendly conversation' with

¹ See above, p. 235.

² Sunderland Daily Echo, 14 April 1920.

Lloyd George during ten years as an M.P..³ This is not the only piece of evidence which suggests that Lloyd George kept his distance from Radical backbenchers. In late 1912, for example, when the land campaign was getting under way, a member of the unofficial Land Enquiry Committee, C.R. Buxton, told Lloyd George of his feeling that 'the Liberal M.P.s' were not being sufficiently consulted.⁴ It is significant, too, that when the names of a number of Liberal backbenchers were put forward in 1913 as possible honorary secretaries of the Land Campaign Committee, Lloyd George had to be told of their personal qualities by Seebohm Rowntree.⁵ There were Radicals, however, upon whom Lloyd George lavished attention. These were the editors and proprietors of Radical newspapers. C.P. Scott received flattery as well as attention.⁶ So, perhaps to a lesser extent, did A.G. Gardiner.⁷ Lloyd George also kept in touch with

³ See above, p. 24.

⁴ C.R. Buxton to Lloyd George, 20 August 1912, Lloyd George MS., C/2/1/11.

⁵ Seebohm Rowntree to Lloyd George, 14 November 1913, Lloyd George MS., C/2/3/43. The M.P.s in question were R.C. Lambert, Sir Parry Verney, F. Kellaway, Cecil Harmsworth and H.W. Carr-Gomm.

⁶ See, for example, Lloyd George to C.P. Scott, 4 September 1913, (copy), Lloyd George MS., C/8/1/9, and C.P. Scott's Diary, 22 July 1911, printed in Wilson (ed.), Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, n. 46.

⁷ See Koss, Gardiner, pp. 129-34.

the chairman of the directors of the Nation, Richard Cross, and was not above protesting to him in the most vigorous terms when he felt that Massingham had treated him unfairly.⁸

Lloyd George's popularity with Radicals was perhaps at its peak in 1909-10. In the three years prior to the introduction of the 'People's Budget' in April 1909, the morale of the Radical wing of the parliamentary Liberal party - and, indeed, of the parliamentary Liberal party as a whole - had been seriously undermined by the government's failure to take a tough line against the House of Lords. The Budget altered things dramatically. Arthur Ponsonby told Lloyd George in May 1909: 'I frankly confess I have had misgivings lately as to the attitude of the Govt. and the direction towards which it seemed inclined to steer. I have only been a year in the House but I have been much struck by the growing indifference and listlessness of members of the party. Your Budget will if it has not already, completely changed this atmosphere. I talked to a large number of members on Thursday night both Labour and Liberal there was real enthusiasm and the intensity of it I could measure in each case by the genuineness of their radical views.'⁹

⁸ See, for example, Cross to Lloyd George, 7 April 1916 (Confidential), Lloyd George MS., D/20/2/82; Cross to Lloyd George, 31 January 1914, Lloyd George MS., C/2/4/5.

⁹ Ponsonby to Lloyd George, n.d. May 1909 (copy), Ponsonby MS. (grammar and punctuation as in original); see also, for example, Joseph Martin to Lloyd George, 3 June 1912 (Private & Confidential), Lloyd George MS., C/9/3/4; 'A Radical Member', 'Communication', The Nation, 5 June 1909.

It was ten months after the introduction of the 'People's Budget', when Asquith informed the House of Commons that he had not asked the King for a pledge to create large numbers of Liberal peers if this proved to be the only way of ensuring the abolition of the Lords' veto, that Josiah Wedgwood said of the feelings of the parliamentary Radicals: 'We are praying that he will resign & let Lloyd George become Prime Minister'.¹⁰ Even in 1909-10, however, dissentient voices were raised. There were Cobdenite Radicals, among them Thomas Lough and Sir Walter Runciman, who felt that the 1909 Budget had raised direct taxes to a dangerously high level.¹¹

1911-12 saw Lloyd George coming under a certain amount of fire from Radical quarters. Some of it was occasioned by the National Insurance Bill, which received its first reading in May 1911. The single-taxers, it appears, disliked the Bill's compulsory aspects.¹² So did at least some Cobdenite Radicals, among them R.D. Holt and Arnold Lupton. Holt wrote of the Bill in July 1911: 'I must say I don't like it: there is too much interference'.¹³ Holt did, however, pay Lloyd

¹⁰ See above, p. 71.

¹¹ See Thomas Lough to ed., The Nation, 26 June 1909; for Runciman, see above, p. 52.

¹² See Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, p. 284; Wedgwood, Memoirs, p. 82; Neilson, My Life in Two Worlds, vol. 2, p. 209; Outhwaite, 'The Insurance Bill: Who Pays?', Land Values, October 1911.

¹³ R.D. Holt's Diary, 23 July 1911, R.D. Holt MS. (the quotation in the following sentence is also from this source). For Lupton, see Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, p. 284.

George a grudging compliment: 'No other minister could have made any show with it'. Progressive Radicals were generally more enthusiastic, though there were suggestions that the Bill was a monument to Lloyd George's pragmatism. H.W. Massingham maintained: 'The National Insurance Bill comes of no school; it is pure empiricism; vaguely Socialistic in conception, individualist as to nine-tenths of its machinery and method'.¹⁴ Three months after the introduction of the National Insurance Bill came the Mansion House speech, in which Lloyd George issued what has been described as a 'threat of war' against Germany.¹⁵ The consensus of Radical opinion seems to have been that the Mansion House speech was needlessly provocative. Two of the more extreme reactions were those of Lord Courtney and Reynolds' News. Lord Courtney was so incensed by the Mansion House speech that he cut Lloyd George dead at a Downing Street reception.¹⁶ Reynolds' News accused Lloyd George of trying to 'robe himself in the cast-off mantle of the

¹⁴ H.W. Massingham, 'The Position of Mr. Lloyd George', The Nation, 6 January 1912.

¹⁵ F.W. Wiemann, 'Lloyd George and the Struggle for the Navy Estimates of 1914' in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), Lloyd George: Twelve Essays, p. 72. There has been some dispute over the purpose of the Mansion House speech: see M.L. Dockrill, 'David Lloyd George and Foreign Policy before 1914' in ibid., pp. 15-18.

¹⁶ See Lady Courtney's Diary, 28 July 1911 (inserted addition), Courtney MS., vol. 35.

Jingo of Birmingham'.¹⁷ A more sober verdict on Lloyd George's 'dive into foreign policy' was offered by H.W. Massingham in early 1912: 'For the moment ... the Chancellor stands on foreign policy apart from both Radical and Gladstonian Liberalism'.¹⁸ Lastly, some mention should be made of the Marconi affair, which began to break in mid-1912. Outwardly, the ministers whose conduct came under investigation received almost solid support from the parliamentary Liberal party and the Liberal press. In private, though, Lloyd George's behaviour did not go uncriticised. Strong feelings were expressed, for example, at the Courtneys' dinner-table in mid-1913:

Dick (R.D. Holt) ... went so far as to suggest that the two ministers who had been dabbling in the shares shld. resign voluntarily & return to the backbenches, or he thought - compelled to do so by Liberal malcontents. L.T. Hobhouse while feeling it had been a serious blunder stood up for Lloyd George - deprecated exaggeration & said Ll. G. felt it himself greatly & in fact was quite crushed - Dick doubted & there was a heated argument. I think L.(Lord Courtney) feels with L.T. & perhaps is less severe on Lloyd George because he has never had a high opinion of his judgement.¹⁹

¹⁷ Reynolds' News, 3 December 1911.

¹⁸ H.W. Massingham, 'The Position of Mr. Lloyd George', The Nation, 6 January 1912 (the quotation in the first part of this sentence is also from this source). For a full discussion of Radical reactions to the Mansion House speech, see Morris, Radicalism against War, pp. 239-51.

¹⁹ Lady Courtney's Diary, 8 June 1913, Courtney MS., vol. 36.

There is no way of knowing whether the 'Liberal malcontents' who shared Holt's views were Radicals or whether their number was large. There were certainly Radicals, though, who shared Courtney's belief that Lloyd George lacked judgement.²⁰

There is evidence which suggests that Lloyd George made a conscious effort during the two years prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 to win back the esteem of Radicals. Walter Runciman claimed in January 1914 that it had been apparent for some time to those who had the opportunity of watching Lloyd George's 'tendencies' from within that he was 'drawing closer to his old Liberal associates ... leaning more and more heavily on the main body of Radical opinion'.²¹ A not dissimilar observation was made - also in January 1914 - by A.J. Balfour. What Balfour suggested was that Lloyd George was seeking to 'rally' Radicals and the Labour party in readiness for the next general election.²²

²⁰ See, for example, notes by Ponsonby on members of the Liberal Cabinet, n.d. ?1913, Ponsonby MS. ('He (Lloyd George) lacks judgement, reserve and discretion'): A.G.C. Harvey to a friend, n.d. May 1914, quoted in Hirst (ed.), A.G.C. Harvey, p. 96 ('... it is a pity George is so impetuous and hasty').

²¹ Runciman to Trevelyan, 4 January 1914, C.P. Trevelyan MS.

²² Balfour to Selbourne, 7 January 1914, quoted in Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, vol. 1, p. 319. It should be added that it is clear that Balfour was referring to the Radicals of the Liberal party and not to the Liberal party as a whole.

It is not possible to say whether Balfour's supposition was correct. The calculations which lay behind Lloyd George's 'tendencies' in 1912-14 can only be guessed at. What can be said, however, is that Lloyd George's activities during this period must have left him with few illusions about how difficult it was to unite Radical opinion. It is true that his renewed interest in the reduction of naval spending won him plaudits from all sections of the Radical camp. But his economic and social policies left Radicals hopelessly divided. By August 1914, as has been pointed out above, the single-taxers were openly accusing him of bad faith, and a 'cave' of Cobdenite Radicals had staged a revolt against the 1914 Budget.²³

In summary, there are three things that ought to be said about Radical attitudes to Lloyd George before 1914. The first is that it was recognised within the Radical camp, particularly after the Mansion House speech, that Lloyd George was not a proponent of orthodox Radical views on foreign affairs. Secondly, it should be noted that the policies which Lloyd George pursued as Chancellor of the Exchequer appealed far more strongly to progressive Radicals than they did to Cobdenites or single-taxers. It is not surprising to learn that one prominent Cobdenite Radical felt that Lloyd George's

²³ See above, pp. 64-6.

economics were 'hopelessly bad'.²⁴ Nor is it surprising to find Lloyd George being described in a single-taxer's memoirs as 'an out-and-out opportunist'.²⁵ Finally, it may be surmised that few, if any, Radicals would have challenged the Nation's claim, made in early 1911, that Lloyd George possessed 'political genius'.²⁶

²⁴ R.D. Holt's Diary, 16 November 1913, R.D. Holt MS. (Holt expressed this opinion after hearing one of Lloyd George's land campaign speeches).

²⁵ Neilson, My Life in Two Worlds, vol. 1, p. 282.

²⁶ The Nation, 18 February 1911.

Appendix 3Radicals with parliamentary experience who entered the Labour party, 1914-24¹

H. C. F. LUTTRELL (1857-1918). Liberal M.P. for West Devonshire, 1906-1910. Joined the I.L.P. in October 1914 (see Luttrell to Keir Hardie, printed in Labour Leader, 1 October 1914).

C. R. BUXTON (1857-1942). Liberal M.P. for Mid-Devon, January-December 1910. Prospective Liberal candidate for Central Hackney, 1912-15. Expelled by Central Hackney Liberal Association in 1915 'on account of his attitude towards the Government's war policy' (V. de Bunsen, Charles Roden Buxton: a Memoir (London, 1947), p. 51). Joined the I.L.P. in late 1917 (see Manchester Guardian, 12 December 1917). Labour candidate at Accrington in the 1918 election. Labour M.P. for Accrington, 1922-3, and Elland, 1929-31.

E. N. BENNETT (?-1947). Liberal M.P. for Woodstock, 1906-10. Subsequently became prospective Liberal candidate for Grantham, but resigned in 1915 (see Wiltshire Times, 7 December 1918). Became a member of the I.L.P. in December 1917 (see Labour Leader, 13 December 1917). Adopted as Labour candidate for West Wiltshire, July 1918

¹ Listed in chronological order of entry.

(see Wiltshire Times, 20 July 1918). Contested West Wiltshire (1918), Banbury (1922) and S.W. St. Pancras (1924). Labour M.P. for Central Cardiff, 1929-31, and National Labour M.P. for the same constituency, 1931-45. Assistant Postmaster-General, 1932-5.

GEORGE NICHOLLS (1864-1943). Liberal M.P. for North Northamptonshire, 1906-10 (described himself in 1918 as a former 'Liberal-Labour' M.P.: see West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser, 5 December 1918). Joined the Labour party in March 1918 (see Westminster Gazette, 9 March 1918). Labour candidate at Camborne in the 1918 general election. Subsequently returned to the Liberal party and, as a Liberal candidate, contested Peterborough (1922), Warwick and Leamington (1924) and Harborough (1929).

A. E. DUNN (1864-1937). Liberal M.P. for Camborne, 1906-10. Appears to have joined the Labour party in early 1918, and was invited to become Labour candidate for St. Ives in November 1918 (see The Cornishman, 27 November 1918). Labour candidate at St. Ives in the general elections of 1918 and 1923.

JOSEPH MARTIN (1852-1923). Liberal M.P. for East St. Pancras, 1910-18. Joined the Labour party in June 1918, and was selected as Labour candidate for South Islington in July 1918 - but did not contest this seat in the 1918 general election (see above, ch. 7, fn. 15).

E. T. JOHN (1857-1931). Liberal M.P. for East Denbigh, 1910-1918. Joined the Labour party in July 1918, and was selected as Labour candidate for Denbigh in November 1918 (but see above, ch. 7, fn. 15). Labour candidate at Brecon (1922), Angelsey (1923) and Brecon (1924). Described by the Nation on 16 July 1924 as 'one of the leaders of the Labour party in the Principality'.

JOSEPH KING (1860-1943). Liberal M.P. for North Somerset, 1910-18. Joined the I.L.P. in November 1918 (see Labour Leader, 21 November 1918). Labour candidate in the Ilford by-election, September 1920. Labour candidate at York in the 1923 general election. Offered to go to the House of Lords when the Labour government was formed in 1924 - 'I should be ready, if called upon, to serve Labour in this way' (King to Ramsay MacDonald, 3 January 1924, MacDonald MS., 30/69/5/34).

R. C. LAMBERT (?-1939). Liberal M.P. for North Wiltshire, 1910-18. Joined the I.L.P. in November 1918 (see Labour Leader, 21 November 1918). Subsequently became prospective Labour candidate for Peckham (ibid., 12 February 1920) but did not contest this seat in the 1922 general election. Seems to have played no part in Labour politics during the last two decades of his life. Librarian of the Athenaeum, 1922-35.

C. P. TREVELYAN (1870-1958). Liberal M.P. for Elland, 1899-1918. Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Education, 1908-14. Became a member of the I.L.P. in

November 1918 (see Labour Leader, 28 November 1918), but stood as an Independent at Elland in the 1918 general election - in order, he claimed, 'to allow his constituents to judge his actions' (see Brighouse Echo, 6 December 1918). He did, however, approach the Elland constituency Labour party in the hope of getting it to withdraw the Labour candidate (ibid., 29 November 1918). According to his own account, he fought the 1918 election 'magnificently against quite hopeless odds' (Trevelyan to Ponsonby, 'Election Day', 1918, Ponsonby MS.). Adopted as Labour candidate for Newcastle Central, June 1919. Labour M.P. for Newcastle Central, 1922-31. President of the Board of Education, 1924 and 1929-31 (resigned in February 1931). Drifted out of Labour politics after 1933.

LEO CHIOZZA MONEY (1870-1944). Liberal M.P. for North Paddington, 1906-10, and East Northamptonshire, 1910-18. Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Shipping, 1916-18. Joined the I.L.P. in November 1918 (see Labour Leader, 28 November 1918). Labour candidate for South Tottenham in the 1918 general election; Labour candidate in the Stockport by-election, March 1920.

ARTHUR PONSONBY (1871-1946). Liberal M.P. for Stirling Burghs, 1908-18. Joined the I.L.P. in December 1918 (see Labour Leader, 19 December 1918), but fought Dunfermline as an Independent in the 1918 general election. He stated that he did not want to stand as an official Labour candidate because he was anxious to fight 'solely

on his policy' and did not want Labour voters to support him out of loyalty to the Labour party (see ibid.). Whether he would have been adopted if he had attempted to become Labour's nominee is, of course, another matter. Labour M.P. for Sheffield Brightside, 1922-30. Under-secretary at the Foreign Office, 1924. Held various junior posts in the 1929-31 Labour government. Created Baron Ponsonby of Shulbrede, 1930. Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords, 1931-5. His pacifist convictions led him to resign from the Labour party in 1940.

R. L. OUTHWAITE (1868-1930). Liberal M.P. for Hanley, 1912-18. Joined the I.L.P. in January 1919 (see Staffordshire Sentinel, 20 January 1919), having unsuccessfully contested Hanley as an Independent in the 1918 general election. Became prospective Labour candidate for Hyde in September 1919 (see Land and Liberty, October 1919), but did not fight this seat in the 1922 general election. Left the Labour party in the mid-1920s.

J. H. WHITEHOUSE (1873-1955). Liberal M.P. for Mid-Lanark, 1910-18. Fought Lanark as an Independent in the 1918 general election. Joined the I.L.P. in January 1919 (see Labour Leader, 29 January 1919). Soon returned to the Liberal party, and, as a Liberal, contested Hanley (1922), Hereford (1923), Southampton (1929), Thornbury (1931) and Stoke Newington (1935).

JOSIAH WEDGWOOD (1872-1943). Liberal M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme, 1906-18. Won the same seat as an Independent Radical in the 1918 general election. Joined the I.L.P. in April 1919 (see Staffordshire Sentinel, 16 April 1919) and was admitted to the parliamentary Labour party in June 1919. Remained Labour M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme until 1942, when he was created Baron Wedgwood of Barlaston. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the first Labour government.

V. H. RUTHERFORD (1860-1934). Liberal M.P. for Brentford, 1906-10. Liberal candidate at Bishop Auckland in the 1918 general election. Joined the I.L.P. in April 1919 (see Labour Leader, 17 April 1919). Labour candidate in the Sunderland by-election, September 1920.

H. B. LEES-SMITH (1878-1941). Liberal M.P. for Northampton, 1910-18. Contested Don Valley in the 1918 general election: F. W. S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results 1918-45, lists him as a Liberal candidate, but he described himself in Who's Who as an Independent Radical. Joined the I.L.P. in June 1919 (see Labour Leader, 26 June 1919). Labour M.P. for Keighley, 1922-3, 1924-31, 1935-41. Postmaster-General, 1929-31; President of the Board of Education, 1931.

J. DUNDAS WHITE (1866-1951). Liberal M.P. for Dumbarton, 1906-10, and Glasgow Tradeston, 1911-18. Fought Tradeston as a Liberal in 1918. Joined the I.L.P.

in September 1919 (see Labour Leader, 25 September 1919). Fought West Middlesborough (1923) and Glasgow Central (1924) as a Labour candidate. Subsequently left the Labour party and became 'non-party'.

NOEL BUXTON (1869-1948). Liberal M.P. for Whitby, 1905-6, and Northern Norfolk, 1910-18. Fought N. Norfolk as a Liberal in the 1918 general election. Joined the Labour party in November 1919 (see Eastern Daily Press, 12 November 1919). Labour M.P. for N. Norfolk, 1922-30. Created Baron Noel-Buxton of Aylsham in 1930. Minister of Agriculture, 1924 and 1929-30.

E. G. HEMMERDE (1871-1948). Liberal M.P. for East Denbigh, 1906-10, and N.W. Norfolk, 1912-18. Did not stand in the 1918 general election, but did call upon voters in Denbigh to support E. T. John, the Labour candidate (see Daily News, 10 December 1918). Joined the Labour party in February 1920 (see Daily Herald, 23 February 1920) and was selected as Labour candidate for Crewe in March 1920 (see Crewe and Nantwich Observer, 6 March 1920). Labour M.P. for Crewe, 1922-4.

PERCY ALDEN (1865-1944). Liberal M.P. for Tottenham, 1906-18. Contested N. Tottenham as a Liberal in 1918. Appears to have joined the Labour party in early 1920: sought, but failed, to become Labour candidate for Crewe in March 1920 (see Crewe and Nantwich Observer, 6 March 1920). Adopted as Labour candidate at Luton, October 1921 (see Luton News and Bedfordshire Advertiser, 2 November

1922). Defeated at Luton in 1922, but was Labour M.P. for South Tottenham, 1923-4.

SYDNEY ARNOLD (1878-1945). Liberal M.P. for Holmfirth, 1912-18, and Penistone, 1918-21. Resigned due to ill-health in February 1921. Joined the Labour party in 1922 (see The Times (obituary), 4 August 1945). Created Baron Arnold of Hale, 1924. Under-secretary for Colonies, 1924; Paymaster-General, 1929-31. Resigned from the Labour party in 1938 - the reason for his resignation was disagreement with Labour's foreign policy.

CHRISTOPHER ADDISON (1869-1951). Liberal M.P. for Hoxton, 1910-22. Minister of Munitions, 1916-17; Minister of Reconstruction, 1917-19; President of the Local Government Board and Minister of Health, 1919-21. Joined the Labour party in November 1923 (see Daily Herald, 22 November 1923). Labour candidate at South Hammersmith, 1924. Labour M.P. for Swindon, 1929-31, 1934-5. Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, 1929-30; Minister of Agriculture, 1930-31. Created Baron Addison of Stallingborough, 1937; elevated to Viscount, 1945. Commonwealth Secretary (1945-7) and Lord Privy Seal (1947-51) in third Labour government.

ALEXANDER MacCALLUM SCOTT (1874-1928). Liberal M.P. for Glasgow Bridgeton, 1910-22. Joined the I.L.P. in December 1924 (see Scott to Ramsay MacDonald, 5 December 1924, MacDonald MS. 30/69/5/35, and Daily Herald, 18 December 1924). Adopted as a Labour candidate, but was killed

in an air crash in Canada before the 1929 general election.

R. D. DENMAN (1876-1957). Liberal M.P. for Carlisle, 1910-18. Liberal candidate at West Newcastle, 1922, and Carlisle, 1923. Prospective Liberal candidate for Mid-Cumberland during Labour's period of office in 1924. Joined the Labour party in December 1924 (see Carlisle Journal, n.d. December 1924, cutting in R. D. Denman MS., box 5). Became prospective Labour candidate for Central Leeds in July 1925 (see W. Withey, Secretary, Central Leeds Labour Party, to Denman, 20 July 1925, R. D. Denman MS., box 5). Labour M.P. for Central Leeds, 1929-31; National Labour M.P. for the same constituency 1931-45.

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