The Unionist Party

and the First World War

Submitted by Nigel Thomas Keohane for a Ph.D. in History to Queen Mary College, University of London, 2005.
Abstract

Filling the historiographical gap created by an overemphasis upon its rival Liberal and Labour parties, this study analyses the part played by the war in shaping Unionist (later Conservative) fortunes between 1914-18. The first two chapters consider the internal party dynamic between leaders, MPs and grassroots supporters, and scrutinise the effect of war upon the central tenets of the Unionist Party (most especially Ireland). The third and fourth chapters concentrate respectively upon the party’s reaction to the threat of socialism and Bolshevism, and the response to the onset of a mass electorate and of class politics in 1918. The fifth chapter investigates the party’s approach to state intervention during the war and its immediate aftermath.

The thesis shows that a primary Unionist response to the rise of the Labour Party was the construction of an appeal based on the wartime link between patriotism and anti-socialism. Bolstered by state propaganda and the press, this served to clarify the party’s approach through into the 1920s and to counter the Labour Party at a crucial juncture in its evolution. It shows how patriotism preserved the unity of Unionism and shaped its ideological development. Patriotism also dictated the primacy accorded to economic, social and national efficiency, and thus shaped responses generated towards post-war reconstruction, most notably in the emphasis upon competition along international rather than internal lines.

Moreover, because the ‘total’ war was viewed as placing exceptional but temporary demands upon the economy and society, the party was able to adapt itself to war and post-war challenges in a flexible manner distinct from that of its counterparts. This however determined that the coalition with Lloyd George and notions of reconstruction were also viewed principally as short-term necessities to ensure military victory and social stability in the immediate years of recovery. Taken together, these conclusions illustrate the Conservative Party’s organic ideological development into a group committed to the protection of property,
and its willingness to utilise the means of the state and propaganda to make its anti-socialist message a viable goal.
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List of Abbreviations Used in Text, Footnotes and Bibliography

AC    Austen Chamberlain Papers
AGM   Annual General Meeting
ASU   Anti-Socialist Union (later Reconstruction Society)
BEPO  British Empire Producers’ Organisation
BL    Bonar Law Papers
BLPES British Library of Political and Economic Science
BWNL  British Workers’ National League
CAC   Churchill Archives Centre
CAJ   Conservative Agents’ Journal
CIGS  Chief of the Imperial General Staff
EC    Executive Committee
ERDC  Empire Resource Development Committee
G&M   Gleanings and Memoranda
HLRO  House of Lords Records Office
MCAA  Metropolitan Conservative Agents’ Association
NSCA  National Society of Conservative Agents
NUA   National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations
NUEC  National Union Executive Committee
PEC   Paris Economic Conference
PPS   Parliamentary Private Secretary
PRC   Parliamentary Recruiting Committee
PRO   Public Record Office
PRONI Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RO    Record Office
SM    Steel-Maitland Papers
TRL   Tariff Reform League
UA    Unionist Association
UBC   Unionist Business Committee
UL    University Library
USRC  Unionist Social Reform Committee
UWC   Unionist War Committee
USRC  Unionist Workingmen Candidates’ Fund
WEA   Workers’ Educational Association
WUTRA Women’s Unionist and Tariff Reform Association
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Any history of twentieth century Britain interested in society, culture or politics will deal in depth with the cataclysmic events of the years 1914-18. The war that embroiled all the great European powers during these years claimed over five million lives and shaped the future of European life for more than half a century. It was a total war executed in novel ways and even for the lives it did not take, the conflict defined a generation. Though placed under vastly dissimilar strains, the civilian population – like its military counterpart – was ushered into an era of change, state control, and new definitions of citizenship. Meanwhile, the government, increasing in scope with every month, procured for itself the labour and financial resources of its population – a population that was not, of course, consulted over the nation’s involvement (there being a party truce and no general election). Despite these unique demands upon society and government, the impact of the war can be overemphasised. Unlike in Russia and many parts of continental Europe there was no revolution, constitutional developments altered radically rather than overturned the infrastructure and, notwithstanding the frequent pronouncements of hope to the contrary, Britain after 1918 was eminently recognisable as the Britain of pre-1914. Nevertheless, the demands of war clearly placed new challenges before the political parties. The war years included vital political developments ranging from the transformation of the relation between the state and the individual, electoral reform unprecedented in
its scale, industrial unrest unique in its stridency and the deliberate influencing of public opinion through state propaganda. Mobilising nearly nine million British men for military service, it demanded widespread redeployment of labour, the maintenance of civilian and military morale and repeated redefinition of the purpose behind fighting.

Because of the colossal social and cultural changes enforced by the war, a radical restructuring of the political status quo also marked the period. Most prominently, the Liberal Party – in power in 1914 and a governing party for some eighty years – exited the political stage, not to be permitted anything beyond a walk-on part for the remainder of the century. Concurrently, the role of the Labour Party was broadened so much that it was able to play a major part in the political drama of the twentieth century. Largely because the spotlights were upon these two dynamic actors, there has been an over-representation in historical literature of the Labour and Liberal Parties. However, the years 1914-18 were full of challenges and opportunities for not two but all three of the major British political parties.

For these reasons and others, any general history of the Conservative/Unionist Party will point to the First World War as a dramatic period of change and regeneration in its development. In such an historical landscape it is perhaps surprising that the Unionist Party has not been better represented. At present it has had just one article and one thesis wholly devoted to it, both very good and both by John Stubbs.¹ The emphasis in these works is firmly upon the first two years of war and (dictated largely by the discipline of political history at the time) the focus is overwhelmingly upon the internal parliamentary dynamic, the

Union with Ireland and the party's contribution to the war effort. Accordingly, Stubbs offers no consultation of local party sources and little attempt to gauge the local parties' role within the party. Moreover, and more importantly, he does not deal properly with what are considered here as being crucial party responses to the conflict and to the challenges of the period, namely the impact of wartime patriotism, the formulation of a response to socialism, approaches to the onset of class politics and efforts to shape electoral reform, and the ideological evolution in regard to state intervention.

Throughout this study the label 'Unionist' will be employed partly for reasons of expediency and consistency, but also because this was the name most often used at the time. Moreover, to accord the party its more modern label would be to neglect the fact that the party's purpose, certainly at the start of the war, was to keep the Union with Ireland. Therefore the classification 'Conservative' when applied is done so knowingly, either for the purposes of drawing longer-term comparisons or in order to mark the distinction between the two groups of which the party had been composed until their fusion in 1912, namely Conservatives and Liberal Unionists. It is not intended to provide a narrative of Unionist activities during the war, nor to describe the contributions made to the war effort, otherwise than in relation to the broader dynamics of the argument. While efforts will be made to elaborate on the specific contributions that war made to the party, there will be no continuous comparison between the effects of war and what might have happened had it not occurred. Counterfactual history may be experiencing something of a rebirth in recent years and the historian may - consciously or subconsciously - ask him/herself countless mini 'what ifs'.

Nevertheless, it is not anticipated that the following question need, or indeed can, be answered fruitfully: what would have happened to the party in the years 1914 to 1918 without the war? Despite the value of such questions for historians of the period before the war, as far as this study is concerned the primary objection is that the war did happen. In terms, therefore, of the party's ideological evolution, its ability to appeal to a mass electorate and its formulation of a response to socialism, there is more point in analysing what actually occurred.

That said, the impositions of war are central to this thesis. Most fundamental among the trials with which the party was confronted during the years 1914 to 1918 were those formulated directly by war, most noticeably the development of patriotism, the modification of the principles of Unionism, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the shop-stewards' movement in Britain, state regulation of industry and labour, and the shaping of public opinion. More specifically, the study will examine the part that these developments played in the longer-term ideological evolution of the party. Did they serve to overturn or enhance pre-war party doctrines (such as Ireland or tariff reform)? Did they actually function so as to alter party principles or were the events and demands of war so exceptional as to impact but little upon fundamental political beliefs? What was their effect upon the party's rhetoric and the nature of Unionists' appeals? Did war make their appeals more coherent and convincing? How did the war influence their response to the socialist threat?³

The role of war in the social, cultural and political development of a nation represents a controversial area of historiography, upon which no real consensus has been reached. In its broadest spheres war has been shown to account for the

³ It is so as to best answer these questions that the thematic chapter structure has been adopted (rather than according the various party components - leadership, MPs, grassroots and the press - attention individually).
development of class-consciousness, social reform and the transformation of political constitutions.\textsuperscript{4} This diversity is reflected, naturally enough, in views on the political impact of the Great War. The debate concerning Liberal decline has centred on a variance in interpretations of the movement's strength in July 1914, with historians accordingly divided as to the effect of the war. The starting point of the discussion was George Dangerfield's eulogistic The Strange Death of Liberal England. This posited that the critical years of Liberal decline came shortly before the war, a period that witnessed the clash between, on the one hand, a contradictory ideological inheritance and, on the other, the challenges of Irish disorder, direct industrial action, the suffragette movement and the constitutional dilemma.\textsuperscript{5} The reaction on its reprint in the 1960s was forceful, most famously in Trevor Wilson's 'rampant omnibus of war'. This depicted the war as knocking down flat a Liberalism that had been healthy and thriving before 1914. Encapsulated in this debate is the essence of the historiography not only of the decline of Liberalism, but also of the evolution of the twentieth century Labour and Conservative movements.\textsuperscript{6}


evidence before the war or did the war encourage it? For a long time the Unionist Party was excluded from this debate. However, as Dangerfield found for the Liberal Party, historians of the Unionist Party have discovered in the Edwardian period "the death of Tory England". In part this label was an attempt (a successful one) to wrest control of the discussion towards the Unionist Party, but it was also an appreciation of the difficulties with which the pre-war party was faced. Having suffered an almost unprecedented three consecutive general election defeats since 1906, the statistics are there to support such anxious conclusions. Further, key Unionist tenets, including the Irish union, the established Church and defence of landed property, were all destabilised in a manner not previously witnessed. More particularly, the rise of the Labour movement, and the coalition between the Liberal and Labour Parties, forced the party to attempt to formulate a response to socialism. The result has been that historians have been ready to appreciate the problems confronting both established political parties of the period.

This uneasiness and pessimism evident in the Edwardian period contrasts acutely with the inter-war situation, in which Conservatives dominated electoral politics to the extent of being excluded from government for only three of its twenty-one years. By this time it had abandoned its commitment to the Union with Ireland – the cement with which the party had initially been reconstructed – and had emerged as a party capable of appealing to an extended electorate, rather than one incapable of formulating an appeal to a smaller, more privileged one. However, just as Peter Clarke discovered a new era of hope for the Liberal Party

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(specifically the ‘New Liberalism’ of Lancashire), the unanimity amongst Conservative Party historians regarding the dilemmas of Edwardian Conservatism disappears in analysis of the years immediately preceding the war. For some historians 1911-14 has provided evidence that the party had survived its gravest challenges, that there was light at the end of the dark tunnel. For instance, for John Ramsden, the party reorganisation of 1911 is ‘taken as the beginning of the climb back to power’. This was complemented by electoral revival and the strong, pragmatic leadership of Andrew Bonar Law, which led to a ‘new style’ of politics influenced by die-hard attitudes. Thus, if war had not intervened, Ramsden alludes to a ‘probable Unionist victory’.9 Recent historians of the party and of its leadership have agreed in finding pragmatic rather than excessive qualities in Law’s attitude to Ulster and Irish civil war from 1911-14. Accordingly, the threat of civil war – seemingly fashioned at the whim of Westminster politicians and emboldened by the excesses of pseudo-Ulstermen – was a means by which to cut ruptures within the pro-Home Rule coalition and compel a general election.10 Despite the benefits of such a policy however, the party emerges as confused, divided, fragile, and often no more cognisant of Law’s motives than many subsequent historians.11 In such circumstances, the ‘vice’ that pressed the Liberals inexorably towards an electoral solution must be juxtaposed against the considerable party disunity and insecurity it generated. Indeed, Ewen Green considers that the differences over Ireland, which left the

party 'in a mess', reflected the more general characteristic of pre-war Conservatism as evinced in its responses to the Parliament Act of 1911 and tariff reform. Meanwhile, the party's electoral prospects are portrayed – somewhat unfairly – as being poor. 12

Therefore, the suggestion in the work of Ewen Green and (more explicitly) David Dutton is that developments either during the war or in its aftermath played a part in the reinvigoration of the party’s prospects. For Ramsden, the party’s recovery in the years preceding the war was consolidated for the post-war era by structural developments to the constitution, namely the removal of the Irish Nationalist Party from Westminster and the favourable redistribution of seats. Alternative explanations of the strength of 1920s Conservatism include the development of an appeal based overwhelmingly on an alliance of property-owners and, elsewhere, the party’s ability (and willingness) to monopolise a middle-class electorate through deflationary policies. 13 A complementary rather than opposing view is that the years immediately following the war represented a period in which the party re-channelled its efforts as an anti-socialist party. 14 It is the purpose of this study to incorporate wartime Unionist politics into the debate and examine the genesis of such political solutions.

In the existing party histories, there has in some cases been an oversimplification of the impact of war. Lord Blake intentionally discussed it little, because it could


be stated simply that 'on almost every issue that came up Conservative tradition and ideology was better suited than Liberal to meet the needs of the hour.' Such inattention is dangerous. It conceives all aspects of wartime government as endorsing Unionist principles and suggests, inherently, that pre-war ideologies were merely enhanced and further entrenched. The fact that, by 1918, Unionists had all but resigned their commitment to the Union with Ireland (which was after all the primary purpose for their political existence) indicates otherwise. More recent histories have displayed, moreover, the evolution of pre-war collectivist thought that placed much wartime state intervention closer to the Liberal than Conservative tradition. Consideration, therefore, is needed as to whether, and if so why, the party was suited to wartime government, and how the challenges of war affected party ideology and rhetoric.

In regard to Ireland and other chief tenets of the pre-war party (such as the Welsh Church and the House of Lords), the war is often viewed as somehow conferring a favour upon the party in ensuring that by 1918 these issues had 'been conceded if not de jure then at least de facto'. Considered as negative policies their disappearance heralded the opportunity for the party to enter the modern political world. But, of course, this development only benefited the institution of the party as long as supplements arrived to hold the diverse elements together. Moreover, there has been an overemphasis upon the attitudes of the parliamentary party and its leadership rather than the rank and file membership. It is chiefly with these themes that the first two chapters here are concerned. The redefinition of the Union does not receive independent attention in this study

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16 This is notwithstanding the fact that Matthew Fforde's portrait of a uniformly anti-interventionist Unionist Party is too one-dimensional. Contrast the interpretations of the interventionist tariff reform policy in Matthew Fforde, *Conservatism and Collectivism, 1886-1914* (Edinburgh University, Edinburgh, 1990) and Green, *Crisis of Conservatism*.
17 Stubbs, 'Impact', p.35.
partly because it has been analysed in considerable depth already, but also because this thesis is as much concerned with what replaced Irish Unionism as with the cause itself. Nevertheless, although the Irish Unionist cause will not be examined in the same depth as it has been elsewhere, it will frequently be dealt with as a constituent of the party’s broader evolution. Most especially, did the war dictate Unionist conceptions of the Union? If so, how? For what grander schemes was Ireland abandoned? In answering such questions, it is necessary also to address Unionist responses to the war and patriotism. Did the party remain concerned with fighting the old battles for Ireland and the Welsh Church, or did the prosecution of the European war and patriotism dictate its actions? What characterised their reactions on the outset of European war? To what factions within the party did the war offer the most encouragement? Did the conflict serve to undermine, maintain or enhance party unity? Was the party really as vulnerable to division as the Liberal Party (as Martin Pugh has argued)? In which case, what preserved Law’s leadership?

A development very pertinent to matters of party solidarity was the changing nature of the internal dynamic. This possessed much resonance for the wartime and post-war party. Stubbs has demonstrated the reformation that occurred in the relationship between the party leadership and its backbench supporters, which represented ‘an important milestone in the evolution of the modern party’.

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19 This (along with the fact that the period did much to dictate attitudes experienced during the rest of the war) explains the extensive treatment given to the first ten months of war (Chapter I).


Committee and the Unionist War Committee, portended the influential 1922 Committee. It is, however, necessary to add to this dynamic the grassroots membership who selected the candidates and maintained the organisations upon which they relied. The most important matter – which had implications for the party’s electoral capacity, its ideology and its unity – is the extent to which the war denied, or granted, opportunities to the various strata within the party. Did war serve to empower or disenfranchise the constituency rank and file? Were the latter willing to abandon traditional principles as effortlessly as their parliamentary representatives and leaders? These questions are of particular significance because they offer clarification as to the depth and breadth of commitment to policies adopted between 1914-18. The organisational development of the party is also crucial, most especially the extent to, and means by, which it responded to the advent of new voters and maintained its structure during the war. Was the atrophy evident in wartime provincial Liberal organisations mirrored within the Unionist Party?

The second chapter, which covers the specific period May 1915 to December 1918 continues analysis of these questions, whilst concentrating on coalition government. Involvement in the wartime coalition government has been depicted as being at once negative (in the personal ambitions it thwarted) and positive (admitting the party back into power and allowing the party to stand alongside Lloyd George on the election platform in November 1918). The most prominent themes that require consideration include the impact of coalition upon the party’s commitment to the Union with Ireland and upon other traditional ‘party’ principles. How did coalition shape notions of ‘party’, conceptions of its future role (indeed its existence), and the maintenance of unity? When Armistice was declared in November 1918, was there a real desire (and practical likelihood)

22 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, pp.130-5.
of the party remaining within the Lloyd George coalition? How did involvement in coalition government affect Unionist confidence in its ability to govern and to appeal to the electorate? How was the internal party dynamic affected? Was Law’s leadership emasculated under the coalition? If so, how did he retain control and party unity? Were the backbench pressure groups the potent forces that their leaders (Carson, Salisbury and Hewins) purported them to be?

Meanwhile, the value to the party of its role in (coalition) wartime government has been demonstrated by John Turner. This was not only in terms of the confidence it created, and of the perception in the electorate’s mind that it once again was a credible governing party, but also because ‘it was essential to be in office and to use the apparatus of state’ to control and profit from the decline of issues like nonconformity and the rise of labour. Accordingly, the Unionist Party was able to shape its ideology towards the developments wrought by war and advantageously direct the state accordingly, whilst the Liberal Party’s inflexibility exacerbated its inability to adapt its doctrine and, inter alia, an electoral appeal.23 There has been little attempt, however, to understand how the war helped the Unionists to shape a coherent appeal, or indeed what impact wartime government and policies had upon the content and formulation of this appeal. It is upon these matters that Chapter III will concentrate. Most particularly, this has relevance to the utilisation and influence of wartime patriotism. Generally, historians have been ready to acknowledge beneficial features of patriotism and the manner by which patriotism harmonised with Unionist tradition and thought.24 In several areas however, question marks have

been raised concerning the commitment of the party to the war, for instance regarding the immediate response in August 1914.25 In respect of patriotism's role in defining the Unionist response to socialism there has been an overemphasis upon the formal — and largely disappointing — dealings with patriotic Labour (the British Workers' National League, later the National Democratic Party).26 The latter movement collapsed shortly after the war and with it the patriotic benefits of the war seemingly disappeared, but the broader impact that the war had upon Unionist rhetoric and appeal did not necessarily go down with it.

Here the actual role that these direct connections with Labour played will be investigated, as will the extent to which the parliamentary party and grassroots members were willing to acquiesce in a collaboration. What did the failure of these movements represent more generally? How real were the efforts to establish a consensus with patriotic Labour? What constituted the most prominent response to the rise of socialism: efforts to work with Labour or the formulation of propaganda against it? What were the features of Unionist anti-socialist literature? There will be a concerted effort here to distinguish how the party utilised patriotism and why wartime patriotism was peculiarly beneficial. Also, of what it consisted, and how it may have shaped their electoral success and the nature of their appeals to the electorate during and after the war, most especially in the 'coupon' election of 1918. Indeed, despite appreciation of the role of Baldwinite conceptions of Englishness, there has been little effort to pursue the patriotic elements of the war through to the post-war period, or

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25 Hazelhurst, Politicians, p.41.

acknowledge their part in the construction of party appeals or ideology. What will be shown here is the extent to which such propaganda formed a major component in Unionist appeals to the working classes, shaped methods the party adopted for countering the socialist threat, and were a response to the broadening of the electoral franchise. Despite the seemingly reactionary focus of this chapter (‘anti-socialism’ and the ‘working-classes’) this thesis addresses these particular themes because it was these that characterised the priorities and fears of contemporary Unionists, namely socialism’s capacity to seduce working-class voters (or even fighters).

It is this with fixation and concept of class with which Chapter IV is primarily concerned and it is partially in such terms that the party’s response will be analysed. The Representation of the People Bill of 1918 that enfranchised all men and the majority of women offers a constructive means by which to examine Unionist attitudes towards class and gender, both in terms of the electorate to which the party wished to appeal, and also in regard to the party’s response to electoral reform. There will be no attempt to scrutinise the 1918 election through statistical means because other historians have carried this out exhaustively. A worthwhile analysis, which would have to take into consideration at least two post-war general elections as well, would warrant a thesis (perhaps several) of its own.27 Instead, more general conclusions will be sought about the timing and nature of electoral reform, the sentiments by which it was inspired and the readiness of the Unionist Party to engage with a mass electorate. Did the war, and indeed reform itself, act as catalysts for change? What does the Unionist response tell us of the electorate to which they wished to appeal, of their perspectives on class and their confidence in democracy? To what extent was the

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27 The most extensive analysis is in Turner, British Politics, Chapters X and XI.
party able to shape the character of reform? Once reform was enacted, did the party adapt itself to the new electorate with immediacy and efficiency?

Finally, partly the result of an oversimplification of the impact of the war (as mentioned above), and partly because of the traditional historiographical tendency to investigate the dramatic transformation in the fortunes of the Liberal and Labour Parties, there has been little effort to address the ideological development of the party in this period of climactic change. At times historians are reluctant to acknowledge that the majority of Unionists considered the philosophical, practical or military (the length of the war) rationales of state intervention. Some doubt whether they were even capable of considering these complexities. Other historians have depicted the party’s wartime progressiveness as upended almost overnight (certainly over a few months), when electoral and business influences dictated events in the years following the war. The chief purpose therefore of Chapter V will be to examine the party’s ideological development in relation to state intervention. Fundamentally, was the party willing to appreciate the wartime and post-war implications of policies such as military conscription and state control of industry? Was reconstruction perceived as a long-term commitment to social progression or as an immediate response to the upheaval wrought by war? Did the party move as one in its interpretations, or did the war serve to divide further the libertarian and reformist wings of the party? Subsequently, how did these ideological developments affect the unity of the party and the nature of the appeals that the party could formulate? In answering these questions, much is learnt about the nature of Unionism, the unanimity with which the party approached the inter-war period, how their

28 Pugh, Electoral Reform, Conclusion; Turner, British Politics, pp.61, 64.
developing attitudes to state intervention shaped their responses and their electoral appeals after the war. More generally, conclusions are drawn as to the development and character of Conservatism in this period, most especially whether it possessed the innate qualities of flexibility and resilience as reported by in-house party histories. 30

In approaching the questions set out above, it is appreciated that considerable methodological differences overarch the literature, with contrary emphases placed upon differing elements within politics, most particularly in respect to the prominence accorded the party leadership, parliamentary rank and file and grassroots constituency politics. 31 More recent histories have rightly taken the view that the broad base upon which political leaders have drawn support warrants analysis as a dynamic component within their parties. It did after all determine a framework within which the leadership could operate. This is no less true for the Unionist Party, than for the Labour Party. Therefore the decision has been made to consult papers pertaining both to the chiefs of the party and to the grassroots. Here, the papers of a total of ninety-two constituency associations have been consulted. 32 Together these form a representative group, including: rural (22); mixed rural/urban (12); urban middle-class (16), including suburban


31 This divergence can be seen in a comparison between the works of Maurice Cowling, John Ramsden and Stuart Ball. Cowling’s analysis of the post-war coalition lays ultimate import on the workings of cabinet politics, with backbenchers and party opinion appearing ‘off-stage as malignant or beneficent forces with unknown natures and unpredictable wills’. Cowling, Impact of Labour, pp.3-5. Ramsden and Ball, meanwhile, incorporate the party organisation and the dynamic between the leaders and party members within their scope. Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin; Stuart Ball, Baldwin and the Conservative Party: the crisis of 1929-1931 (Yale University Press, London, 1988).

32 Forty-two directly and fifty more through the notes of Professor John Ramsden.
seats such as Lewisham and Wood Green; urban mixed-class (14); urban working-class (13); mining seats (4). While matters of convenience have dictated to some small degree the constituencies consulted, other factors were of greater significance. First, in 1914 and beyond, local Unionist associations varied considerably in the spheres of their activities, in the extent to which these operations were recorded and in the degree to which they sought to preserve their heritage. The varied and incomplete picture that emerges is compounded by wartime politics that encouraged many associations to abandon political activity. Of course, this in itself presents a methodological dilemma: while not much can be garnered from blank minute books, to concentrate entirely upon associations with frequent meetings, and well-recorded and well-preserved records, would be to focus upon the extraordinary.

Some areas of Great Britain are dealt with in greater detail than others: Wales is particularly short-changed largely because there are few extant records for the period before 1918; some counties of Scotland are less well-served than much of England, for the same reason that London and the home counties receive good treatment – accessibility; Cheshire, Liverpool and Manchester are under represented through constituency papers, but all benefit from substantial area and divisional papers and, moreover, local Unionists (Archibald Salvidge, Percy Woodhouse and Charles Petrie) ensured that Lancashire issues did not go unheard. For all associations consulted, efforts have been made to establish the impact of the war by referring to the records for the years preceding and succeeding the war. Meanwhile, divisional, provincial and regional papers offer

an overview, as do the papers of party agents and affiliated bodies, by which trends and inconsistencies can be detected. Generally speaking they offer a convincing means of understanding not only the organisational impact of the war, but also the priorities of the rank and file, their role within the party and the party’s wider response to developments such as electoral reform and the rise of socialism. Constituencies have been referred to throughout with their pre-1918 titles, except in the cases either where the records only of the post-redistribution division (e.g. Lewisham West) survive, or when specific points are being made about redistribution. The other major primary resources include private papers (of which the Steel-Maitland and Law collections are the most significant), Unionist Party papers (including party literature and archives of the National Unionist Association), the records of other right-wing bodies, *Hansard*, government publications, the press, contemporary monographs, memoirs and the many useful edited versions of diaries and letters. Together with the vast secondary literature dedicated to the war and political developments, these present a wide range of sources from which to draw conclusions.
Andrew Bonar Law

Leader of the Unionist Party in the House of Commons
I

THE PATRIOTIC TRUCE

‘How’s the weather, Jeeves?’

‘Exceptionally clement, sir.’

‘Anything in the papers?’

‘Some slight friction threatening in the Balkans, sir. Otherwise, nothing.’

- P.G. Wodehouse, ‘Jeeves in the Springtime’ (1921)

In the House of Commons on 3 August 1914, the words of the Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey, were greeted with frantic enthusiasm and the mere arrival of Winston Churchill with cheers, not from Liberal but Unionist benches. The European conflict, into which they lead Britain, was to challenge to the full the patriotism of the Unionist Party a principle upon which they prided themselves. This chapter seeks to understand the impact of this upon the party. It will analyse the manner by which the party truce arrived, the Unionist response and commitment to it, the opportunities afforded the party by the war, and the manner by which the party sought to side-step its less favourable implications. The story

2 Michael MacDonagh, In London During the Great War: the diary of a journalist (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1935), p.4; Gershom Stewart, Letters of a Back Bencher to his Son, 1908-23
will be taken from late July 1914 up to May 1915, when the Unionist Party was invited into Government, and it will seek to understand the impact of war upon the Union with Ireland, upon the party's patriotism, and upon its grassroots membership, unity and leadership. What opportunities did war offer and to which interest groups? Did the first nine months of war witness an abandonment of principle to the war effort?

**Some Slight Friction in the Balkans**

In July 1914 the long-drawn out diplomatic contest with which international ambassadors, governments and pressure groups had been occupying themselves for a decade drew to a close. The assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo led to a catalogue of ultimatums from Austro-Hungary and Germany to its neighbours, first Servia, then Russia, France and finally Belgium. Across Europe, the beacons that embodied the intricate network of international alliances—which had been built up to prevent such outbursts—were lit. Between 28 July and 4 August, from one country to the next, fires blazed upon the horizon giving notice of the calls upon diplomatic honour (and national interests): Servia to Russia, Russia to France (and Britain), France to Britain, and Belgium to Britain. On 3 August, Germany invaded France; later that day Edward Grey served notice to Germany that, in the event of the violation of Belgian neutrality, Britain would declare war upon the aggressor. On 4 August, in response to the movement of German troops across the Belgian border, Britain declared war against Germany. The beacons had worked, and now it was to be war.

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3 Britain had signed the Entente with France in 1904 and the Anglo-Russian agreement in 1907, which had both initiated a habit of co-operation between the three powers. Britain had also signed a treaty guaranteeing Belgium against territorial violation.
It is unnecessary to record in great detail the frequent comings and goings, conferences and intrigues that attended the Liberal Government’s decision to intervene in Europe.\(^4\) However, in order to comprehend the impact of the war upon party unity and policies, the motives and sentiments that characterised Unionist action at the outset must be understood. Together they establish the temper of the party as it entered the war and the character of the patriotic truce that ensued. They serve also to illustrate the nature of the party’s wartime patriotism.

Fifteen years after the onset of war, the Conservative politician Lord Newton wrote of the ‘pitiable vacillation which characterised the [Liberal] Cabinet of August 1914’. Thus, only the Government’s receipt of a letter of support from the Unionist Party leaders Andrew Bonar Law and Lord Lansdowne, determined that Britain honoured its duties to France and Belgium.\(^5\) Such an interpretation was a classic case of Unionist propaganda. Even today the influence of the Unionist letter remains problematic to evaluate, a fact not helped by the numerous apologist accounts. Four years after the government had made the decision to engage Britain, the ex-Prime Minister Herbert Asquith wrote to John St Loe Strachey. He denied that the Unionist communication had had any influence on the Cabinet’s decision. This statement, however, must be distrusted, for Asquith also recorded that he had not even read out the letter in Cabinet (which he had). In any case, he cannot have been keen to add grist to the powerful mill of rumours that his patriotism had been wanting, even less so to a


newspaper editor. Equally politically motivated was the decision of the Unionist leadership in December 1914 to publish their pledge in The Times, an act for the most part demonstrative of their insecurities at that time.

Instead, evidence must be sought elsewhere. Asquith gave the letter of Law and Lansdowne mention, albeit fleeting, in his daily letter to Venetia Stanley on Saturday 2 August. Meanwhile, Walter Runciman (President of the Board of Trade) recorded that it had been brought to the attention of Cabinet on that day. Despite this, Cameron Hazlehurst largely accepts Asquith’s version of events, describing the Unionist claim of influence as ‘unfounded’. In his exhaustive and compelling account, Hazlehurst illustrates the manner in which the Liberal Party accepted intervention as unavoidable. First, within the Liberal Cabinet, the ‘anti-war’ party did not speak with one voice, nor was it as numerous as is frequently held. Second, for the ‘waverers’, the issue of protecting Belgian neutrality ‘was a central, and not at all unexpected, element within their calculations’. Therefore, support for war grew as German bellicosity became more discernible, and as moral and legal responsibilities to France and Russia became secondary to the necessity of defending Belgium. In such terms, the Cabinet emerges as moving irrevocably towards an acceptance of the need for intervention, before the Unionist letter was received. Furthermore, the content of the letter, focusing on issues of ‘honour’ and ‘security’ in relation to France and Russia, were not of principal concern to the majority of the vacillating ministers. Instead, by the time Cabinet met on 2 August, news had arrived that Germany had invaded

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8 Hazlehurst, Politicians, p.41.
9 For example, Beaverbrook, Politicians, pp.26-8.
Luxembourg, and the latter was viewed as a crucial step-stone to the decisive violation of Belgian neutrality.¹⁰

A further factor negates the significance of the letter. Namely that, prior to the communication, the Cabinet had already been alerted to the Unionist position. F.E. Smith had assured Churchill on July 31, that 'on the facts as we understand them – & more particularly on the assumption (which we [the Unionist leaders] understand to be certain) that Germany contemplates a violation of Belgian neutrality – the Government can rely upon the support of the Unionist party.' The next day, Churchill had told 'F.E.' that the Cabinet had been acquainted with the communication and that it had produced 'a profound impression'.¹¹ On 2 August, Lord Robert Cecil had also notified Churchill of Unionist support for intervention.¹² Doubtless, for many of the Liberal 'waverers', Churchill's belligerent standpoint made him a less than convincing conduit, but such intelligence must have been innately predictable to Government ministers.

Accordingly, if the pledge fell on deaf ears, it was not because of its inherent irrelevance. Rather, the Liberals had heard the Unionist Party speak with a patriotic voice both in recent days and through the passage of history. And, whilst the letter may have had little impact in swaying the Cabinet's decision, it is nonetheless very possible that Asquith placed significance on Unionist Parliamentary support. He formulated his policy, while estimating that 'a good ¾ of our own party in the H. of Commons are for absolute non-interference at any price'. It may or may not have been coincidence that the Prime Minister recorded this fact straight after alluding to the Unionist pledge.¹³ Asquith also surely made

¹⁰ Hazlehurst, Politicians, pp.54-5, 58, 92 and passim.
¹¹ It is worth noting that the basis of this pledge was the issue of Belgian neutrality.
¹³ Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 02/08/1914. Brock, Letters, p.146
good use of the letter to signal to the 'waverers' that continued hesitancy on their part risked the formation of a Conservative coalition.\textsuperscript{14}

What becomes clear is that the Liberal Government partly interpreted its position in relation to that of the Unionists and vice versa. When Grey made his famous speech on 3 August outlining Britain's commitments, Unionist reaction exposed the preconceptions held in relation to the Liberal Party. William Bridgeman estimated that, had the Unionists forced a division, the Government would have received only one hundred votes in support of war from its Liberal-Labour-Irish Nationalist coalition.\textsuperscript{15} Lord Crawford reported the probable number of Radical supporters as low as fifty.\textsuperscript{16} Such statements were, of course, not necessarily accurate. That two men with recent experience in the Whips' Office should refuse to accept that the Liberal Government could adopt an interventionist policy, revealed the dominance of fixed ideas.\textsuperscript{17} Surely, the converse was also true, namely that – pledges or no pledges – the Liberal Party recognised that the opposition would assist any move to uphold British interests and honour. Ministers could have turned their minds back to any in a long line of demonstratively patriotic and interventionist Unionist policies.

At the turn of the century the Boer War had demarcated the line between Unionists and Liberals on matters of imperial conflict. In more recent years, as Rhodri Williams has explained, the Agadir crisis had 'forced the Unionist leadership to confront the prospect of Britain's involvement in a Franco-German war'. Additionally, Unionists had emphasised the balance that Britain had to strike between land and sea. For, whilst Britain had to be prepared to fight on

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Wilson, \textit{Entente}, p.138.
\end{itemize}
land to maintain the integrity of France against a rising Germany, Unionists had wished to protect their overseas empire as well.\textsuperscript{18} Commitment to Britain's imperial and European obligations was substantiated in support for Churchill's rule at the Admiralty, most especially the 60\% standard for dreadnoughts, despite his having 'ratted'.\textsuperscript{19} The National Service League and the Navy League kept these matters at the heart of Edwardian Unionism.

In fact, it was largely such connections that galvanised the immediate response of the Unionist leadership. When the first shadow council was convened on the European situation late on Saturday 1 August at Lansdowne House, an unusual group was in attendance. Present were not only the leaders Law and Lansdowne, and the Chief Whip Lord Edmund Talbot, but also George Lloyd MP and the Director of Military Operations, Major-General Henry Wilson. Lloyd reported to Leo Amery MP that although there had been general agreement at this conference, 'none of [the leaders] showed the slightest conception of the fact that war was on or that it signified anything'.\textsuperscript{20} It was not until the Sunday morning that Austen Chamberlain drafted a letter to Asquith at Lansdowne House, an amended version of which was later signed by Law and Lansdowne and despatched, but not without further delay. Chamberlain documented his attempts to persuade the leaders to communicate their feelings to Asquith immediately. They preferred, however, to wait on a message they had despatched to Downing Street earlier in the day. This merely offered their advice if it were called upon. This inaction of the Unionist leaders was countered by a reaction full of

\textsuperscript{17} For the Liberal reaction see Hazlehurst, Politicians, pp.121-6.
\textsuperscript{18} Rhodri Williams, Defending the Empire: the Conservative Party and British Defence Policy 1899-1915 (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1991), pp.196-7
\textsuperscript{19} Alan Clark (ed.), 'A Good Innings': The Private Papers of Viscount Lee of Fareham (John Murray, London, 1974), p.127. Williams, Defending, pp.207-8, 211. Also see the routine attention devoted to the navy at Oxford Division, Central Council, 18/10/1913, 07/03/1914, (S.Oxon.Con. III/1).
\textsuperscript{20} The Duke of Devonshire may or may not have been present (depending on which account is believed). John Barnes & David Nicolson (eds.), The Leo Amery Diaries I: 1896-1929 (Hutchinson, London, 1980), p.104; Austen Chamberlain, Down the Years (Cassell & Co., London, 1935), pp.94-5.
decisiveness, excitement and even desperation on behalf of Amery, Chamberlain and such diehard company. Were the leaders ignorant of developments? If not, why were they reluctant to act? How and why was it left to a particular branch of the party to take up the issue?

As is usual on such critical occasions, it is those that did much – or at the very least considered that they did so – who drafted the most extensive reports of events. August 1914 being no exception, the mindset of the Unionist leaders towards the European crisis is not easy to discern. The only substantive published accounts come from Leo Maxse, Amery and Chamberlain. Not only did each narrator emphasise his own part, but they also appear to have shared much information. For instance, Amery and Chamberlain leaned heavily on information from Lloyd as to what happened at the meeting of Unionist leaders at Lansdowne House on 1 August.21 Much suggests that Law, Lansdowne and Arthur Balfour knew a good deal of the events in Europe. Grey recorded that, during the last week of July, Law had gone daily to the Foreign Office, 'to ask what the news of the crisis was'.22 Before the weekend, Balfour had heard from Admiral Lord Fisher that Churchill had ordered the Fleet up the Channel.23 On Friday, 'F.E.' had broached Churchill's idea of coalition government to Law, Edward Carson and Max Aitken. The Unionist leader summarily quashed this suggestion, probably in the belief that Asquith would have viewed any such arrangement as an intrigue (which it was).24 'F.E.' also informed them, however, that his friend's application was founded on divisions within Cabinet. This can have served only to force Unionist leaders to surmount the intense personal

21 For instance, neither Chamberlain nor Amery was present at the shadow meeting of Saturday evening, but acknowledged notification of events from Lloyd. Problems on the rail-lines had delayed their return to London. 'Memorandum on the Arrival of War' by Chamberlain, AC/14/2.
22 Viscount Grey of Falloden, Twenty-Five Years (Frederick A. Stokes, New York, 1925), I, p.327.
24 Law turned down an invitation to dine with Grey and Churchill on Sunday for these reasons. Chamberlain, Down the Years, p.97.
distrust of Churchill, and appreciate the mounting gravity of the European situation.\(^{25}\)

Such knowledge was insufficient to deter the mass exodus to the countryside from London that was the political weekend. Consequently, leading Unionists were scattered far and wide: Chamberlain at Westgate on Sea; Law, Carson, and ‘F.E.’ at Wargrave (‘Paddy’ Goulding’s country residence); Lansdowne at Bowood; Balfour planning not only to retreat to Hatfield, but also until very late in the day contemplating an Austrian break; Crawford only just returning on Saturday from Bayreuth – because of the Irish, not the European, crisis.\(^{26}\) So relaxed appeared they that, even on Saturday, although Lloyd discovered Balfour ‘flabbergasted’ at developments, he was apparently not sufficiently so as to cancel his withdrawal to Hatfield. Such was Law’s imperturbability that, ‘like another Drake’, he insisted on finishing a tennis set before listening to an agitated Lloyd. Even then, Lloyd was forced to set Lord Charles Beresford – purple with rage and shouting – upon his leader in order to persuade him to accompany them back to London.\(^{27}\) This apparent disregard for developments must be put, however, in the context of the rapid turn of events, which allowed even the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to plan weekends away as late as Friday 31 July.\(^{28}\)

On Saturday, both Beresford and Lloyd heard from the French Ambassador Paul Cambon, and Maxse learnt through a Foreign Office source, that ‘the Conservative Party would not support [Grey] in the policy that might lead to


\(^{27}\) George Lloyd to Ian Colvin, 18/05/1934 (copy). Lloyd Papers, 17/36/90. Barnes, Amery Diaries, p.104. ‘Notes on the European War’ n. d. [1915] by Beresford. Although not accredited to any author, it is evident that this was the testimony of Beresford. Maxse Papers, 471/487-8.

\(^{28}\) Hazlehurst, Politicians, p.63. Admittedly, Asquith continued to enjoy long weekends throughout the war.
war'. They recorded also that the government had been asserting that this was determining their action. That this story got afoot can be explained with ease. Chamberlain recorded that Balfour 'had very characteristically put the other side of the case' when discussing the situation with the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office Arthur Nicolson. Misunderstanding, Nicolson had reported Balfour's opinions to Grey 'as if they were his own'. From there, it remained in the interests of various parties to perpetuate the rumour: for Cambon, and subsequently, Chamberlain, Beresford, Lloyd and Maxse, as a method by which to encourage concerted Unionist action in favour of intervention; for some Liberals as an excuse for their own hesitancy. Indeed, although Lloyd was ready to broadcast this story to Amery and others, he admitted later that he knew it to be untrue. Balfour had, in fact, written to Nicolson on 2 August, concluding that the entente bound Britain morally and logically to intervention in support of France.

The prevailing reluctance to get involved emanated from various motives. On Sunday 2 August Law argued to Chamberlain that Churchill had held that there was nothing the opposition could do of assistance. Later the same day, he told Amery that any attempt to exert pressure on the Government would only rally the anti-war coalition. Such excuses were certainly genuine – the risk of aggravating an anti-war party was a motive later enrolled to resist the formation of a Unionist wartime administration. To force a split in the Government might have produced an approach to the Unionists by the Liberals and, as Lansdowne

29 'Notes on the European War' by Beresford; Lloyd to Colvin, 18/05/1934.
31 Lloyd to Colvin, 18/05/1934.
33 Chamberlain, Down the Years, p.98.
34 Barnes, Amery Diaries, p.105.
admitted, ‘a change of Govt. would [have been] deplorable at such a moment’. Issues of traditional procedure also determined action: both Lansdowne, who was a previous Foreign Secretary, and Law appreciated the narrow scope of the opposition in diplomatic affairs. Furthermore, the leadership may have remained disinclined to make use of information they had acquired in confidence. They acted – Balfour sending telegrams to Law and Lansdowne asking them to come to London on Saturday evening – only with caution. The converse, of course, applied to Lloyd, Amery and Chamberlain who moved largely on information from Henry Wilson, Director of Military Operations, for whom an unscrupulous nature and a heartfelt yearning for intervention compromised the official capacity of his position.

Understandable to the historian, such equivocation was less so to the crowd of doers who hustled and bustled the leadership towards concerted action. Those who undertook to exert the influence of the Unionist Party upon the Government were of similar ilk. In the accounts of Lloyd, Amery and Wilson, those of significance were themselves, Chamberlain, H.A. Gwynne, Lord Percy (later Duke of Northumberland), Beresford and Maxse. Such men made up a significant element within the right-wing movements of Edwardian Conservatism. Lloyd, Percy, Beresford and Maxse had been sympathisers of the diehard movement that emerged in the response to the 1911 Parliament Act, with Gwynne’s Morning Post and Maxse’s National Review providing press backing. Many had been strong advocates of the National Service League, most especially, Amery, Lloyd, Wilson, Beresford and Maxse. The link to Chamberlain was through Amery’s friendship, a friendship nurtured not only

36 Lansdowne to Lady Lansdowne, 02/08/1914 (copy). Lansdowne Papers, ‘Miscellaneous: Delhi Announcement, 1912’. The Lansdowne Papers are currently being catalogued at the British Library and are listed here under the headings/subheadings under which they reside presently.

37 Wilson diary, 31/07/1914, 01/08/1914, 02/08/1914. Wilson Papers, DS/MISC/80/5.
through Birmingham politics but also through the increasingly sectional tariff
reform movement. Beresford and Lloyd had commanded opposition crusades
against the Government. The former, harbouring resentment towards the First
Sea Lord Fisher, and given credibility by having served as an Admiral himself,
launched broadsides against Churchill in parliament.\textsuperscript{38} Lloyd, meanwhile, had
drafted a resolution of the 1913 party conference expressing 'deep anxiety'
regarding inadequate Government defence measures.\textsuperscript{39}

What is apparent is that together they formed a core group of right-wing
Unionists. It has been argued that the leadership was in no way affected by this
rank and file movement,\textsuperscript{40} but Lloyd would not have been invited into the
shadow council unless he had earned this status during the crisis. It is perhaps
symptomatic of the opportunities that war offered certain sections of the Unionist
Party, that these characters should have come to the fore. Williams has written of
'the relative impotence of the hard men on the Unionist backbenches, the noisy
Radical Right' in the pre-war political climate.\textsuperscript{41} However, in the discussions
surrounding the events of late July and early August 1914, they demonstrated
themselves to be a vital force.

How reflective of Unionist opinion they were is questionable. Grey later asserted
that 'about the middle of the week, as news grew more ominous, [Law] said that
it was not easy to be sure what the opinion of the whole of his party was. [Law]
doubted whether it would be unanimous or overwhelmingly in favour of war,
unless Belgian neutrality were invaded; in that event, he said, it would be
unanimous.' The appendage of a defensive footnote – in which he claimed that

\textsuperscript{38} Williams, \textit{Defending the Empire}, pp.212-3.
\textsuperscript{39} NUA Conference, November 1913. Arthur Lee, the official Unionist spokesman on naval and military
issues, moved this resolution in Lloyd's absence.
\textsuperscript{40} McDonough, 'Conservative Party', p.252.
\textsuperscript{41} Williams, \textit{Defending the Empire}, p.214
his expression of Law's views was 'well within the mark' and that he had 'referred only to the opinion of the rank and file of his party' – indicates that Grey appreciated that such a statement was controversial (though not sufficiently so as to prevent him enrolling it as part of his defence). 42 Lord Hugh Cecil certainly had grave misgivings that Britain might intervene without sufficient grounds. Subsequently, Robert Cecil, anxious that his brother might have provided a misleading portrait of Unionist opinion, assured Churchill that, whatever action was undertaken, the Government 'may count on the support of the whole Unionist Party ... Whatever [Hugh Cecil's] personal views may be I am sure that he would take no public action inconsistent with this view.' 43

Nevertheless, Hazlehurst asserts that Robert Cecil's contention that his brother spoke merely for himself, 'like so many other statements made in these tense days, was an understandable exaggeration; and many silent Tories doubtless felt as impotent and bewildered as the Radicals'. Quite who these 'many silent Tories' were is uncertain. To support the claim of wider party concern, Hazlehurst relies solely on the comments of the Liberal MP Edmund Harvey (a Quaker): "The overwhelming mass of the Tory Party seem to regard war as inevitable and some seem to be eager to take the best chance of smashing Germany. Bentinck and a few others are for peace, but I am afraid that they would be swept away by the rest of their party if they tried to protest." 44 Lord Henry Bentinck's stance in 1914 is neither contested nor corroborated elsewhere. He had, however, been the sole Unionist signatory of a Radical petition during the Agadir Crisis. It had requested that the Government ensure that the Anglo-French entente did not obstruct a rapprochement with Germany. 45 This probably

42 Grey, Twenty-Five Years, I, pp.327-8, 328n.
43 Gilbert, Challenge of War, p.22.
44 Hazlehurst, Politicians, p.42.
45 Wilson, Entente, p.31.
formed the entire evidence for Harvey's deduction, but Bentinck was certainly no pacifist. He had volunteered for the Derbyshire Yeomanry in the controversial Boer War and was to do so again during the European war. As it is, other accounts offer greater confidence in party unity. Amery recorded on 2 August that 'except Hugh Cecil, and in a milder degree Robert Cecil, there was no section in the Unionist party in favour of neutrality, though of course the Jewish influence generally, in so far as it affected the Daily Telegraph and some other circles in the party, looked with great aversion on the idea of war.' If the uncompromising Amery could find no dissentient conclave of note, it well reveals its absence. And this was further born out by Amery's erroneous consideration of Robert Cecil as pro-neutrality. The only other report of concern emerged from W.A.S. Hewins MP, who remarked two days after Grey's speech: 'If we had been in Office our experience in Opposition shows that we should have had some weak-kneed people amongst us.' This must be understood, however, both in terms of Hewins' character, which was hard-hearted, and his estrangement from the party leadership over Ireland, at whom this slight was undoubtedly partially aimed.

Opinion within local associations and the party press was similarly unequivocal in its espousal of war. Percy Woodhouse, a leader of Lancashire Unionism, forwarded a resolution passed in Lancashire to prove that not all in the area were 'followers of the Manchester Guardian [anti-war] attitude'. The Unionist MP for Cheshire Eddisbury told constituents that the party would offer 'unflinching

47 Amery diary, 01/08/1914. Barnes, Amery Diaries, pp.104-5. The Daily Telegraph had strong Jewish connections through its major shareholder Harry Levy-Lawson (later Lord Burnham). Presumably, Amery was taking the typical Unionist line in such matters, categorising those with Jewish links as driven by international (or German) financial interests. See Harry Defries, Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews, 1900-1950 (Frank Cass, London, 2001), pp.68-9.
49 Woodhouse to Derby, 04/08/1914. Derby Papers, 17/1.
support' in the government's difficulty.\textsuperscript{50} Old-fashioned issues of honour were at the heart of the \textit{Morning Post}'s championship of intervention: 'there is only one thing that can be imagined worse than a war, and it is a European war in which England did not play the game.'\textsuperscript{51} This contrasted strongly with the \textit{Manchester Courier} and \textit{Daily Telegraph}, which swung behind the war only after the contravention of Belgian neutrality was to the fore on 3 August.\textsuperscript{52}

Divergences did therefore materialise over the grounds for Britain's involvement. Just after hostilities commenced, Robert Cecil categorised British foreign policy as generally peaceful. Intervention had been determined not by a desire for a change in the European map as Britain's geographical position was 'tolerably secure'. Nor had the motive been imperial expansion. Instead the root cause had been 'a real belief in justice & liberty - due to centuries of national training. The feeling on behalf of Belgium arose from these sentiments.'\textsuperscript{53} This fell into place with the proliferating tendency of Unionist public pronouncements to toe the line as regards Belgium. Yet, for the majority of Unionists, unlike Liberals, the \textit{casus belli} rested on the security of Britain and the obligation of honouring the agreement with France. Before the issue of Belgian neutrality rose to the fore, Bridgeman and Lloyd considered that it would be ruinous for the government not to honour her commitments.\textsuperscript{54} Meanwhile, the letter of Law and Lansdowne that was despatched to Asquith on 2 August stated that '...any hesitation in now supporting France and Russia would be fatal to the honour and to the future security of the United Kingdom...'\textsuperscript{55} Indeed, Amery laid particular emphasis on the prominence within it of 'the real main issue of our honour and security, and

\textsuperscript{50} Liverpool Courier, 03/08/1914. Editorial.
\textsuperscript{51} Morning Post, 01/08/1914. Editorial.
\textsuperscript{52} Compare the editorial reports of 03/08/1914 with those of the preceding days in both papers.
\textsuperscript{54} Bridgeman to Caroline Bridgeman, 30/7/1914. Williamson, Modernisation, p.80; Lloyd to Chamberlain, 31/07/1914. AC/14/2/7.
\textsuperscript{55} Chamberlain, \textit{Down the Years}, p.99.
[that it] was in no way dependent on the invasion of Belgium'. 56 Two months after the start of war, Lord Willoughby de Broke was claiming that the Belgian question was built up by 'the Pharisees' to 'satisfy the abstract principle gentlemen', robustly stating that he was 'fighting for no abstraction, but for the authority and position of England'. 57 Five months later still, Maxse derided the Liberal Government's 'line that as altruists they were too virtuous to go to war on behalf of such vulgar British interests as self-protection, and are only concerned to establish their good faith in the eyes of pacifists and neutrals'. 58

While war was certainly less repellent to the Unionist than either Labour or Liberal parties, did they really, as Harvey contended, look upon the opportunity to 'smash Germany' with relish? It certainly remained within the interests of Liberal commentators, especially during the events of early August 1914, to portray the Unionists as warmongers. Inaction on the part of the Liberal Government only made the verdicts of the opposition appear excessive. In the years preceding the war, Unionists had undoubtedly wished to undermine German industrial dominance through tariff reform. 59 Nonetheless, although Germany was frequently cited as the greatest threat to British military and economic security, the 60% standard set specifically in regard to German Dreadnought strength was established by the Liberal Government. 60 Moreover, the radical right — though frequently loud — was neither representative nor influential before 1914. 61 On the contrary, some British imperialists discerned advantages within the Prussian system of national efficiency, military

57 Willoughby de Broke to Boutwood, 25/10/1914 (copy). Willoughby de Broke Papers, WB/11/2.
58 Maxse to Robert Cecil, 04/03/1915. Chelwood Papers, MS Add. 51161, f.206.
60 For example, NUA Conference, 13/11/1913.
preparedness and bureaucratic structure that had established the German Empire. As Lord Milner commented on the press attacks on Haldane in *The Times*, 'if it is necessary for good and effective patriotism to hate the nation to which your country happens to be opposed, I am afraid I don't possess that virtue.'

*The Worse Blackguard: Asquith or the Kaiser?*

To assist the war effort, an official truce was agreed between the Government and the opposition on 28 August 1914. Almost a month earlier, on 31 July, Law had invited Asquith to his house, Pembroke Lodge. He proposed that the Second Reading of the Amendment (to the Government of Ireland) Bill should be postponed, contending 'that to advertise our domestic dissensions at this moment wd. weaken our influence in the world for peace'. Despite his aversion to venturing south of the river to Battersea, Asquith had lent his concurrence to the sentiment if not the specifics of the agreement. Ireland, accordingly, was to provide the impetus for the political truce. Precedents for collaboration existed in actuality if not in spirit: conferences had been convened at Buckingham Palace concerning the constitutional question in 1910 and the Irish problem in 1913-14. In neither instance, however, had the Unionists cooperated enthusiastically. In 1910, the gatherings had presented much less opportunity to the opposition than to the Government, for whom they had served to 'create some semblance of

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national consensus’. The private consultations over Ireland, on the other hand, had offered scant potential for fruitful resolution and much for embarrassment.

Far from consensus in fact, politics had seldom been such a partisan business as in the years preceding the European conflict. Three themes in particular lent themselves to this hostile climate: first, and foremost, was the controversy over Irish Home Rule; second was the increasingly radical social reform, epitomised by the Land Act; third was the Parliament Act of 1911 that denied the Unionists their established resistance mechanism and, in their view, undermined the constitution. In retaliation, the Unionist Party adopted tactical manoeuvres that were progressively more scheming and conspiratorial. In May 1913, a Whips’ memorandum requested all members to be within call of the House of Commons during the summer months and for pairing to be done only through the Whips’ Office. Members were ordered also to arrive when asked, and not before, in the hope of defeating the Government in a ‘snap division’. They were largely true, therefore, to the sentiments recorded in February 1914 by Crawford, who found a determination at the Carlton Club for the treatment of ‘ministerialists as revolutionaries’. While partly a consequence of an increased emphasis on organisation both within and outside the House, this revealed an appreciation that the established asset of the House of Lords’ veto had disappeared and that the first chamber was bursting with distrust and abuse.

65 See for instance, Lansdowne to St Aldwyn, 23/09/1913. St Aldwyn Papers, D2455/PCC/18. Suspicions amongst the party rank and file suggest that Lansdowne was not merely being over-sensitive. Norwood UA, EC, 13/10/1913, (IV/166/1/3).
66 H. Pike Pease, Memorandum, 02/05/1913. BL/41/1/6.
67 Crawford diary, 07/02/1914. Vincent, Crawford, p.325.
With such a recent history of controversy, it is of little surprise that the Unionist Party carried much resentment and resolve into the truce, most evidently over Ireland in August/September 1914. Indeed, it is often forgotten that allusion to war in late July and early August referred, more often that not, to an inevitable war in Ireland not Europe. On 15 September, the Government placed upon the statute book the Home Rule Act, along with an attendant Suspensory Act. In his routinely arrogant, but evocative, appraisal of the violent Unionist response to this, Asquith remarked: '[it was] a lot of prosaic and for the most part middle-aged gentlemen trying to look like the early French revolutionaries in the Tennis Court.' Their reaction consisted only of a mass walkout from the chamber, which illustrated the impotence in opposition to which they had been reduced during the war. However, it also indicated further points. First, had such a controversy emerged with the truce beyond its infancy, and wartime cooperation no longer novel, the Unionist response would likely have been appreciably more drastic. As a direct outcome of this repressed rebellion, Unionists became even more aware of their incapacity. This appreciation was to trigger more bellicose retaliations during the ensuing nine months and, indeed, during Irish debates throughout the war. What is more, the modesty of their retort was by no means representative of party feeling generally. Therefore, if the issue of Ireland was largely to be relegated to the shelf, it was placed at an easy height for future reference, and the imprint of the controversy of August and September left an indelible mark upon the minds of Unionists throughout the patriotic truce and beyond.

Several historians, including Lords Beaverbrook and Blake, Patricia Jalland and John Stubbs, have argued that the Unionist leadership lost all sense of proportion

69 Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 15/09/1915. Brock, Letters, p.239.  
over Ireland during the war.\textsuperscript{71} In doing so they pay more attention to the words that preceded the withdrawal from the Commons, than the action itself, which was at worst melodramatic. It was, for that matter, ineffective, since not only the Unionists filed out but also everyone else, seemingly thinking it was dinnertime.\textsuperscript{72} Another fundamental criterion in such interpretations is the reliance on hindsight. Beaverbrook initially avoided retrospection, remarking that, 'looking backwards now after the lapse of years, such a violent gust of antagonism may seem hard to justify in the eyes of posterity', but that it was merely indicative of the pre-war tensions that produced it.\textsuperscript{73} However, he also noted that Law lost proportion because 'Bills on the Statute-book would be only sand castles against the sweeping tides of change.'\textsuperscript{74} The certainty that the 'rivers of blood' of Europe would fundamentally undermine such settlements was founded on post-war knowledge, rather than that of September 1914. The vastness and length of the European conflict and its repercussions were not apparent to contemporaries in autumn 1914. Nor did August 1914 create an abrupt line at which political continuities halted. It is a boundary that has been made use of frequently to mark the end of the Irish debate within the Unionist Party (if only, at times, perhaps for reasons of convenience).\textsuperscript{75} This tends to distort the continuity in perspectives that passed through to August and September 1914, and it removes from consideration much that enhances the picture of pre-war Unionism.

\textsuperscript{72} Bridgeman to Caroline Bridgeman, 15/09/1914. Williamson, \textit{Modernisation}, p.83.
\textsuperscript{73} Beaverbrook, \textit{Politicians}, p.47.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p.50.
Notwithstanding the straitjacket of the political truce, other restrictions also confined Unionist responses to Ireland after July 1914. Previously the threat of civil war had appeared imminent on the political calendar, an engagement that Law, Carson and 'F.E.' had displayed an eagerness to fulfil if Ulster were coerced.\textsuperscript{76} With the continued mobilisation of the diehard Unionists (most especially through the Ulster Covenant) and the arming of an Ulster Volunteer Force, the shadow of civil war had hung ever nearer and darker.\textsuperscript{77} However, the convergence of armies of millions in continental battle proved a diversion sufficient to deter even the most ardent Unionists from playing with the fire that was Ulster disobedience. The precedence accorded British security even over the Irish Union had been manifested already in the treatment of the 1913 annual army act. On this occasion, the party had decided against amending the act, even though this had offered a last-ditch chance to wreck Home Rule. However, a pre-war policy that had been deliberately tailored around the pursuit of Ulster defiance and exclusion was negated entirely by the war. With it went the weapon most likely to have split the Liberal-Irish Nationalist alliance, upon which the government relied. Likewise, the election for which the party had long fought, and which the Ulster threat had nearly won, was now postponed indefinitely. The only consolation -- and not one that could have been appreciated openly -- was that of relief at the abandonment of the unconstitutional campaign.\textsuperscript{78}

Understandably, given the proximity in time, Unionist attitudes and notions of compromise in August and September 1914 remained largely defined by those held previously. Hugh Cecil suggested that the Home Rule Bill and its Amending Bill should be put into operation but Ulster excluded for six years before the

\textsuperscript{76} For instance, NUA Conference, November 1913.
\textsuperscript{77} For the diehard movement see Murphy, 'Faction', pp.227-30; Smith, Tories and Ireland, pp.79-100, 135-41, passim.
\textsuperscript{78} For instance, Robert Cecil’s fears in Willoughby de Broke to Cecil, 21/09/1913; Amery to Cecil, 23/01/1914. Chelwood Papers, MS Add. 51161, ff.24-25; 51072, ff.224-5.
issues were again considered. The constitutional expert A.V. Dicey called for 'a bona fide truce' on Home Rule for at least the existence of that parliament, or, alternatively (and less acceptably), the exclusion of Ulster. In proposing these resolutions, Unionists presumed that six-county exclusion was the minimum expectation on their part. The fact that this had not even been an accepted threshold before the war seemed to escape them, whilst the shelving of the issue in this way was a solution that most of them would have leapt to accept before the war.

Diversity of opinion on Ireland, though, was still evident. F.S. Oliver, the doyen of the federalist movement, talked of an extraordinary 'opportunity' to settle Ireland in a 'grand manner'. But the federalist notion remained too abstract and the movement too fragmented to be assured of support even from sympathisers. Southern Unionists, meanwhile, continued their attempts to undermine the progress of any home rule bill, by pointing to the dangerous and uncontrolled nature of the Irish Volunteers and Nationalists. If Walter Long was less obstinate after August than before, Lord Selborne remained determined. He stated that he 'could never follow Bonar Law in accepting the present Government of Ireland Bill with the complete exclusion of the six counties as a final settlement of the Irish constitutional question'. Ulster had its regular standard-bearers in Carson and, on a more pragmatic level, Law.

Alive and well, these oft-heard voices were amplified by the issue of honour regarding the political truce. Interpretations of the arrangement appeared to differ radically. Law recorded the deal brokered with Asquith at Pembroke Lodge, that 'until we again resumed discussion of the Amending Bill no controversial legislation should be taken, and ... that by the adjournment no party to the controversy would be placed in a worse position'. 86 The agreement bore the benchmarks of Asquith's style, namely an ability to satisfy those around him with unsatisfactorily vague assurances, pledges more powerful in finding concurrence than fulfilment. Unionists felt that the arrangement established an environment in which controversial legislation would not be tackled at all. 87 When contemplating the plural voting bill in 1915, the Party Chairman Arthur Steel-Maitland made clear that the truce established on 31 August 1914 disallowed the consideration of any controversy that would disadvantage any party. 88 In such terms, the events of August and September 1914 prejudiced the Unionist position in regard to Home Rule. The Liberals, conversely, held that the truce existed to prevent the emergence of domestic disagreement, but that the Government was entitled to execute the legislative programme charted before the outbreak of war. This was a view shared – in regard hardly surprisingly to Home Rule – by the Nationalists. The Government also argued, and with some justification, that if Home Rule were not established, then the truce would disadvantage the Nationalist Party. Much of the anger that surfaced was provoked by the adulteration of this honourable truce. Having met Grey, Robert Cecil told Law, with undisguised disbelief, that the Foreign Secretary had treated the charge of deceit as 'novel'. 89 Selborne spoke of any such Bill as 'infamous

86 Brock, Letters, p135.
87 See Law to Asquith, 07/08/1914 (copy). BL/37/4/7.
89 Robert Cecil to Law, 14/09/1914. BL/34/6/43.
treachery' on the part of the Government, Chamberlain of it as an 'infamy'. As machine guns in Europe rattled on, and concern over Home Rule became increasingly particular to Ulstermen, it was this issue of dishonour that was to linger on, causing Bridgeman to claim in November that the Liberals were 'incapable of honesty or truth'.

The desperate and outraged sentiments of many Unionists were manifested in specific parliamentary manoeuvres. The most absurd suggestions emanated from Robert Cecil who, with both the Home Rule and Welsh Church Bills teetering on the edge of the statute book, felt the challenge personally. Both involved the workings of the Parliament Act. This act allowed for a bill to be forced through the House of Lords if, previously, it had been rejected thrice by that chamber in successive years of the same parliament. Cecil's first scheme – merely to refuse to reject the bill until parliament was prorogued – was invalidated by the Speaker of the Commons. The ambiguity in the wording of the Parliament Act was then manipulated to a ridiculous degree, namely through attempts to impede the Home Rule bill by confiscating the paper upon which the new bill's certificate was written.

Such conniving was justified on several grounds: that, technically, the House of Lords could withhold the Bill; that the 1911 Act was unconstitutional in any case; that, as Lansdowne alleged, the government was being 'grossly unfair'. That the gentlemanly Lansdowne could sanction this petty trick exemplified the widespread frustration.

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91 Bridgeman diary, 29/11/1914. Williamson, Modernisation, pp.81-2. See also, Cheshire Division, AGM, 23/01/1915, (Are/3/6/2).
92 Robert Cecil to the Speaker (James Lowther), 09/08/1914, 13/09/1914 (copies) and the Speaker to Cecil, 21/08/1914 (telegram), 14/09/1914. Chelwood Papers, MS Add. 51161, ff.161-3, 183, 174-5, 185.
Lansdowne's endorsement was significant in another respect too. For, by the time the shadow cabinet convened to decide the issue, he had reneged on his earlier pledge to support the plan. The majority, consisting of Chamberlain, Long, Carson, Midleton, Robert Cecil, Selborne and Halsbury, were over-ruled by Law, Lansdowne, Balfour, Curzon and George Cave, in favour of rejecting the scheme.\(^{94}\) Loyalty to their superiors may have dictated that Selborne and company bowed to the minority, so as not to make 'the position of the leaders impossible'.\(^{95}\) But why did Lansdowne change his mind between 20 August and 16 September? It is possible that he simply had not at first thought out the implications, but it is more likely that he was swayed by faithfulness to Law, who had become increasingly resigned to the establishment of Home Rule on the statute book.

Law's actions were formed partially by the opinions with which he was surrounded and partially by his commitment to the patriotic truce. The chairman of Wirral Conservative Association wrote: 'Let us not forget entirely, in our united patriotism, the things that, only a few weeks ago, were so urgent & vital. The present war will not last for ever, & we must then go back to them.'\(^{96}\) Steel-Maitland, meanwhile, pointed to the assistance the Unionist Party had offered the Government both within parliament and on committees.\(^{97}\) This feeble emotional blackmail was complemented with higher stakes, especially threats to army recruitment. While Carson could not decide 'which [was] the worst blackguard Asquith or the Kaiser', the Ulster Volunteer Force had no such difficulty in making up its mind and threatened to stay and fight home rule rather than Berlin

\(^{94}\) Memorandum on the meeting at Lansdowne House by Chamberlain, 17/09/1914. AC/12/29.
\(^{95}\) Selborne to Salisbury, 18/09/1914. Salisbury Papers, S(4)75/186.
\(^{96}\) Egerton MacDon to Law, 15/08/1914. BL/34/3/46.
\(^{97}\) Memorandum, Anne Page to Miss Tyander, n.d. [September 1914]. BL/34/3/16. This memorandum was likely written by Steel-Maitland, to whom Anne Page served as Secretary.
rule. 98 Halford Mackinder MP asked Law if he could 'add one more shot to [his] locker?' – claiming that 'if the Government [forced] through H.R. to the front just now they [would] break down this powerful agency which is feeding the army with more than 1,000 men a day.' 99 Despite the persistence of such obstructive efforts, Law also received notice of a widespread alteration in mood: Talbot considered that the patriotic truce had brought about peace and harmony in Ireland conducive to a settlement; John Hills MP felt that the Unionist pledge to Ulster should be subservient to Britain's needs; J.P. Croal (editor of the Scotsman) advised his leader to be statesmanlike; George Younger (Chairman of the Scottish Unionist Association) recommended a 'dignified protest'. 100 Perhaps the most persuasive communication, however, advocated quiet acquiescence on war-related grounds: Gwynne alluded to the damaging effect that a Home Rule controversy would have on American relations and, consequently, on any assistance the USA might lend Britain. 101 It was perhaps the first real notification of how pre-war Unionist perspectives on Ireland would be distorted by European conflict.

Several factors are notable in the manner of Law's response. First, it was characterised by a reluctance to allow open dissent. Hence he continued to pursue compromise through a dual policy of equivocation. One part consisted of preying on the sense of honour of leading Liberals, but even the gentlemanly Grey was ready to ride these out. Another was to threaten Asquith with the menace of

98 Carson to McNeill, 02/09/1914. McNeill Papers, MIC/63/2; UVF to Carson, 08/08/1914. BL/34/3/17. The UVF did actually all join the army and were slaughtered on the Somme on 1 July 1916, an event which became etched into Ulster Unionist folklore (it even shared the date with the Battle of the Boyne).
100 Talbot to Law, 18/08/1914; Hills to Law, 06/09/1914; Croal to Law, 01/09/1914; Younger to Law, 05/09/1914. BL/34/4/53, 20; BL/34/5/3, 16.
101 Gwynne to Law, 03/09/1914. Wilson, Rasp of War, p. 28.
irrepressible backbench discontent, but Asquith was confident of Unionist loyalty to the truce.\textsuperscript{102}

There was another important transformation in the debate on Ireland. Namely that, in the first few months of war, support can be found for Richard Murphy's assertion that 'the war saved Bonar Law from his own supporters'.\textsuperscript{103} For, while the war did little to diminish the variety or strength of rhetoric employed against Home Rule, it did precipitate the resignation of some to its inevitability.\textsuperscript{104} In doing so, it offered the Unionist leader the opportunity of promoting a solution acceptable to the divergent groups within the party, an opportunity that would not have arisen in peacetime. His surrender to the inescapability of Home Rule persuaded him to propose Ulster exclusion as a basis for agreement. Lansdowne's conversion, as a southern Unionist, to the necessity of an exclusion settlement was particularly telling. It revealed that the continued diversity and intensity of Unionist opinion concealed a newfound powerlessness in which the party was forced to cut its losses as best it could.\textsuperscript{105} Accordingly, Ulster exclusion emerged as the beneficiary of the truce, the cause consolidated as an acceptable compromise.\textsuperscript{106}

Together, the crisis revealed several fundamental aspects of wartime Unionism. A request by Maryhill Unionists that the party leaders be informed of grassroots unease at the prospect of Home Rule was not even mentioned at the Western Divisional Council of Scotland to which they had appealed.\textsuperscript{107} This exposed the

\textsuperscript{103} Murphy, 'Faction, p.232.
\textsuperscript{104} See above and Milner to M. Chose, 17/09/1914 (copy). Milner Papers, 349/294-7. St Aldwyn to Eleanor Hicks-Beach, 07/09/1914. Hicks-Beach, \textit{Hicks-Beach, II}, pp.315.
\textsuperscript{105} Asquith to Law, 11/09/1914; Lansdowne to Law, 03/09/1914. BL/34/5/34, 34/5/11.
\textsuperscript{107} Maryhill UA, EC, 17/08/1914; SUA Western Divisional Council, 02/09/1914, (SUCA/Acc.84, 10424/28).
authority bestowed upon the party leaders in comparison to their supporters. This only fostered the idea that the party had not had the matter out properly in autumn 1914: the party had not overreacted in autumn 1914; for, if anything it had not reacted sufficiently. The distrust and anger was contained only under the very heavy lid of early wartime patriotism, a downward pressure to which Law had to add only little of his own. This imposed restraint certainly had the most severe consequences for the last Liberal government in May 1915. This resentment was to be heard again in summer 1916, when the heat was raised once more by the ‘Easter Rising’ in Dublin and by disingenuousness of Liberal ministers.

Immediately after the ‘infamy’ of mid-September arose, so did an intensification of the feeling of distrust towards the radical government. Chamberlain, with the backing of Law and Lansdowne, refused to join Churchill on the recruiting platform in Birmingham. 108 Henry Chaplin MP called for the suspension of all joint meetings and the continuation of recruitment by the separate parties. 109 Whilst one Unionist journal in London could be sanguine – ‘how petty our disputes seem in the face of a foreign foe!’ – there were mutterings in the provinces. 110 In September and October, it was claimed that Liberal, Labour and Roman Catholic groups in Scotland had not been dedicating themselves to recruitment, but were instead continuing their party propaganda. 111 Glasgow Unionists, who had been ignored by the leadership in August, referred a few months later to the ‘base cowardly betrayal’ of Ulster by the government. 112 Even those unready to disregard the truce candidly referred to Asquith’s untroubled

108 Memorandum by Chamberlain, September 1914. AC/12/45.
109 Chaplin to Law, 14/09/1914. BL/34/6/46.
110 Hammer and Crook, September 1914, p.1. This was the monthly journal of Hammersmith UA.
111 SUA Western Divisional Council, 02/09/1914, 07/10/1914, (Acc.10424/28).
112 Maryhill UA, EC, 17/08/1914, AGM, 29/01/1915, (Acc.10424/85).
reneging on his pledge. The Liberal MP Richard Holt reported Unionists breaking the truce in Hexham. Unionist readiness to threaten the prospects of recruitment does more than anything perhaps to illustrate their resentment at the 'infamy' of Home Rule. Throughout the remaining eight months of the patriotic truce, the Home Rule issue of August 1914 continued to rankle sufficiently to upset commitment to non-partisanship. What was more, the Home Rule crisis of the first two months of war was merely the first articulation of the party's impotence within the truce.

**Fighting the Kaiser**

By August 1914, the Unionist Party had been in opposition since December 1905, a period exceeding any other since its formation. For a party that perceived office as a birthright, any prospect of participation whether formal or informal was welcomed. Opportunities to be constructive were reinforced by patriotic fervour. Chaplin - a mere seventy years of age - was livid to be turned away at the recruiting office. For Stanley Baldwin 'young deaths aggravated his middle-aged frustration'. The atmosphere of the House, frequently busy with men in khaki, can only have exacerbated this desire for action. Such frustrations no doubt partly explain the alacrity with which Unionists immersed themselves in any work thrown their way, most especially recruitment. Potentially, this activity posed an enormous challenge to the patriotic truce, involving cooperation not

113 Cheshire Division, AGM, 23/01/1915 (Are/3/6/1); Norwood JIL, AGM, 27/01/1915 (IV/166/1/10).
only between parliamentary forces, but also between the wider political parties and machinery.

From the outset of war, the Unionists had displayed a willingness to work alongside the Government in recruitment. This went beyond the already strong links they harbour to the military and militias. On 9 September, the National Union Executive Committee (NUEC) unanimously passed a resolution in support of the formation of a joint Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC), and agreed to surrender St Stephen’s Chambers (home of Unionist Central Office) to the Speakers’ Sub-Department of the new body.\textsuperscript{116} With such new responsibilities, it was predictable that reports of the successes and difficulties of recruiting should feature large and proud in party meetings. Many constituencies adopted such duties with enthusiasm, the Hastings Conservative Association even establishing its own joint Unionist/Liberal system before being so instructed by Central Office.\textsuperscript{117}

Furthermore, though it may have gone unnoticed by contemporaries, recruitment offered a non-partisan excuse and means by which to maintain normal party activity. However, it remains difficult for the historian to evaluate in quantitative terms the effect that the truce, or indeed recruitment, had upon party organisation. What can be said, is that it was rare that an association wound up activities entirely.\textsuperscript{118} More frequent was the maintenance of a skeleton organisation, including annual reports, infrequent – and ill attended – committee meetings, and some attention to measures of finance. The emphasis upon recruitment in such gatherings suggests that this responsibility provided a fresh focus. Nevertheless it was, overwhelmingly, a focus upon cooperation between

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{116} NUEC, 09/09/1914.
\textsuperscript{117} Hastings UA, EC, 03/09/1914, (JAR).
\textsuperscript{118} See below, p.237.
\end{footnotes}
Liberals and Unionists. Such was the case in Herefordshire North, where it was reported that the Unionist and Liberal Agents 'had been doing nothing in the last few months other than organising recruiting meetings'.\textsuperscript{119} Indeed, recruitment perhaps did more than any other activity to unite the parties behind a common purpose, the PRC in particular being a major buttress for the political truce.\textsuperscript{120} As Roy Douglas has suggested, the actions of the PRC were 'indicative of the way in which party attitudes had been submerged'. When opinions diverged, Liberal and Unionist representatives could be seen swapping clothes. For example, in November 1914, a proposal by the Liberal MP Jesse Herbert to establish a system of householder returns was opposed by Steel-Maitland on the grounds that the forms might be too inquisitorial.\textsuperscript{121}

Notwithstanding this apparent concord between Unionists and Liberals, party men pined for the old partisan conflict. In November Law heard from a supporter who commented on having seen his leader's name 'sandwiched' between that of Arthur Henderson (leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party) and Asquith in a PRC circular:

"Tell me whose company you keep and I will tell you what you are" ... The less the Conservatives associate themselves with the present Government in curing a position for which the Government is a great deal to blame, the better it will be for them at the next General Election.\textsuperscript{122}

In part representing the remnants of the 'short-war fallacy' – a condescending term adopted by historians for mainstream opinion (indeed, the opinion of almost everyone except Lord Kitchener) – this also reflected the ongoing influence of

\textsuperscript{119} Herefordshire North UA, AGM, 19/03/1915, (K78/2).
\textsuperscript{120} For instance, Birmingham Handsworth UA, AGM Report, 18/05/1915, (JAR).
\textsuperscript{121} This suggestion was a cruder form of the National Register Act of 1915. Roy Douglas, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the First World War and the Work of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee', \textit{Journal of Modern History}, xli (1970), pp.571, 575-6.
\textsuperscript{122} W. Crossley to Law, 23/11/1914. BL/35/3/49.
traditional party politics. By Christmas 1914, despite the realisation by many Unionists that the war would not end in the predicted six or nine months, efforts were made to preserve electoral prospects. Minds were concentrated by the spectre of a plural voting bill, which threatened to relieve the party of one its last vestiges of privilege. At the end of January, Law informed Curzon that, should the Government attempt to pass such legislation, "I am not at all sure that we should not openly declare that the truce is at an end." In fact, Steel-Maitland had been working for some time to force the government to drop the Bill, hoping to flex the opposition's muscles over a by-election arrangement to this end. In the mean time, Talbot identified a chance to undermine the whole procedure of payment of members: "there is considerable feeling about this on our side that we ought to take this opportunity of the War to call attention in the House & move to stop it." In spite of the level of feeling on this point, it was a minor, even petty, controversy to broach in wartime. A third case arose over the method by which best to extend the tenure of parliament. At the forefront of Steel-Maitland's mind was the maintenance of Unionist electoral prospects. Accordingly, he favoured the passing of legislation abrogating Clause VII of the 1911 Parliament Act, so as to increase the duration of parliament from five to seven years. Lurking at the back of his mind, however, was the opportunity to wither the laurels of the 'much-vaunted' Parliament Act as allowing for 'Single Chamber Government in perpetuity'. Therefore, it 'might solve a real difficulty, and at the same time be a party score when the War is over, without in any way hurting the interests of the country'.

Such manifestations of traditional party politics spilling over into war came to a head in spring 1915 over the drink question. First proposed in late February, Lloyd George's scheme to state-manage the drink trade was promoted as a means to stop alcohol consumption upsetting munitions production. Initial plans for full nationalisation were watered down, as were those for a stringent taxation on strong liquor. And, when the measure was put before parliament on 29 April, all that remained was the control of liquor traffic in areas in which war material was produced or transported, along with restraints on the sale of liquor less than three years old. Nevertheless, Law was acutely embarrassed by a backbench rebellion against Lloyd George's scheme, a proposal to which Law had previously agreed.

Taken at face value the party appeared self-centred, opportunistic and more concerned with factional than national interests. Together, therefore, did the months October to May demonstrate the party retreating towards its pre-war shibboleths and sectionalism? Was the party regressive and merely eager to make the most of the opportunities of war? Had the war done nothing to rid them of the negative, defensive politics that had characterised the pre-war period?

Several reservations must be placed on these accusations at the outset. In the first place, there is much to imply that in the grander scheme of things the rank and file of the party adopted the truce without either delay or dissent. On 6 August, the NUEC held an emergency meeting to consider 'arrangements for the temporary cessation of political activity during the European War'. It resolved to agree to follow the lead of Liberal Chief Whip Illingworth in running down the political operations of the party organisation and ancillary organs. The NUEC

128 Steel-Maitland Memorandum on a General Election, 05/01/1915. SM GD193/306/4x-8x. Law later quashed this idea. Steel-Maitland Memorandum of Conversation with Law, April 1915. SM GD193/386/31-2x.
advised that within the propaganda department, the services of all casual speakers were to be discontinued. Permanent speakers, meanwhile, were to be paid in full but to be prepared ‘to do any kind of work they might think fit either for the Party or the Government’. In terms of literature, only the ‘ordinary periodicals’, namely *Gleanings and Memoranda* and *Our Flag*, were to be continued. *Our Flag* was actually discontinued in September. As one editor of a constituency gazette put it: ‘To-day there is but one party’ – shortly before pursuing his non-partisanship to its natural conclusion by discontinuing production of his journal.\(^{130}\)

The NUEC also circulated requests that their constituency organisations be kept up. Accordingly, Glasgow Unionists demanded that their association ‘must be maintained in undiminished strength’. Bristol West Unionist Association sought deliberately to sustain the routine, if not the political, character of its organisation.\(^{131}\) As is demonstrated in Chapter IV, Central Office advice was not heeded universally. Although the NUEC circular was eagerly read in Clapham South in October, the constituency decided not to reconvene for what turned out to be the next four years.\(^{132}\) Nonetheless, for local associations, perhaps the most significant point was that ‘with regard to Registration the Chairman stated that he was of opinion that the agents should be advised to go on’.\(^{133}\) Indeed, many constituency secretaries and agents recorded in 1914 their most successful canvasses for years. The secretary of Shrewsbury Unionist Association wrote of it being ‘the best registration I ever remember from our point of view’. Though contending that one never knew what the radicals might do, he thought it ‘best to

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\(^{130}\) *Hitchen Divisional Conservative and Unionist Gazette*, August, p.i.

\(^{131}\) Glasgow UA Annual Report, 25/01/1915, (Acc.10424/24); Bristol West UA EC, 06/11/1914, (JAR).

\(^{132}\) Clapham South UA, Park Branch Committee, 23/10/1914, (CCA/6).

\(^{133}\) NUEC, 06/08/1914.
get one in, when there’s a chance'. 134 The imminence of a general election due in 1915 does to some extent explain such unashamed delight in registration successes. Indeed, it is within the context of an impending election that Steel-Maitland’s manipulation of the politics of war for electoral advantage must be viewed.

A second indication that the party was not obsessed by regressive or sectional politics was that certain pre-war policies were abandoned. The Welsh Church, for instance, was permitted to die in relative peace in March 1915. The six-month delaying order placed upon the Disestablishment Bill was little more than a perfunctory display of Liberal good will. A third dynamic that has to be appreciated in evaluating Unionist reactions was that, as over Ireland in autumn 1914, they remained hamstrung within the patriotic truce. Often, His Majesty’s Opposition was reduced to polite enquiries about provisions of men and munitions. Despite invitations of attendance to ministerial meetings being accepted by party notables (including previous Unionist Chancellors Austen Chamberlain and Lord St Aldwyn), the party remained powerless. Even Balfour, who was privy to the most confidential decisions through his seat on the Committee of Imperial Defence and the Dardanelles Committee, appeared to shape the government’s actions very little. 135 The insinuation in January 1915 by the Lord Privy Seal, the Marquis of Crewe, that the Tory leaders were implicated in government decisions may have been ‘disingenuous’, as Lansdowne maintained. 136 Nonetheless, the Unionists had done little to avoid, and perhaps even had done much to encourage, the accusation. Redolent of the hesitancy and the precedence accorded protocol at the outset of war, it was also symbolic of a

134 William Price to Lloyd, 14/08/1914, 14/09/1914. Lloyd Papers, 18/6.
135 See, for instance, the equivocation in his letter to ‘Jack’ Sandars, 26/09/1914. Sandars Papers, 766/166-70.
passive acquiescence in nearly all government actions. A particularly vivid exposition of this was Law’s refusal to act on Long’s request that the Government should be informed of the desperate need for reinforcements in France. His reasoning was that he was ‘greatly afraid of taking such a decisive step as to send any written opinion to the Government’. When Law could muster the courage to draw his pen from its scabbard, he was easily placated by Asquith’s protestations that his own hands were tied, and thus that a challenge along normal parliamentary lines would be inconceivable.

Unsurprisingly given such taciturnity, Bridgeman felt that in the autumn session they had ‘carried [patriotism] to an extreme by refraining ... from criticism’. Curzon agreed, complaining in January 1915 that the opposition was expected to give a ‘mute and almost unquestioning support to everything done by the Government’. This incapacitation within the truce also concealed a considerable reduction in the strength of the opposition. Central Office expressly informed Unionist MPs that their obligation lay with military rather than political brethren. Charles Bathurst agreed, replying that he ‘felt most strongly that my duty now lies in other directions and that my soldiering [with the Monmouthshire Yeomanry] should take precedence of my Parliamentary work’. Close links with the military ensured that Unionists volunteered in large numbers and, as Central Office boasted, 139 Unionist MPs – compared to 41 Radicals, 1 Labour and 3 Irish Nationalists – served with the colours in 1915. Patently, this reduced the party’s parliamentary potential considerably. Quite whether this reduction was relevant however – in a parliamentary climate in which criticism

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138 For example over the November budget and Home Rule.
140 Memorandum by Curzon, January 1915. Long Papers, MS Add. 62419, ff.29-34.
141 Whip’s Notice, 04/11/1914. Long Papers, MS Add. 62418, f.56.
142 Bathurst to Law, 08/11/1914. BL/35/2/14.
was prohibited and, if evidenced in any magnitude, could prove potentially destructive – was questionable.

The one real opening lay in extra-parliamentary methods. As that great bastion of provincial journalism C.P. Scott recorded: 'the truce of parties certainly doesn't apply to the party press’ – an assertion amply corroborated by the historian Stephen Koss.144 Whilst the Unionist Party may not have possessed the deft hand of Lloyd George, they enjoyed sufficient contacts and friends within the industry to utilise its newfound clout. As the incapacity in parliament was felt, Law expressed himself happy for the press to attack the Government over the Antwerp disaster in mid-October.145 Central Office spurred on Maxse – who hardly needed encouragement – in his anti-alien attacks on Liberal ministers.146 Maxse, the editor of the National Review, spent the majority of the war writing overwhelmingly fictitious account of spies within the British, and most especially Liberal, establishment. German agents (effectively anyone who had any links whatsoever with the enemy country, along with a majority who had no such links at all) were unearthed in every corner – most frequently colluding with the Haldanes and befriending associates of Asquith's bridge partners.

Despite the hysteria of the press, it remained an insufficient means by which to express party feeling. As Maxse's case exemplified, newspapers were open to the personal priorities of proprietors and editors, and they were manoeuvrable only to a degree. What is more, censorship under the Press Bureau confined its military and political reportage. The country was, in the words of Milner, being

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treated 'like an infant school'. 147 Wilson could advise Long all he liked that the surest way to assist the military was 'by telling people the truth', but Unionists were in no position to do so. 148 So thwarted were they, in their efforts to utilise the press to encourage private economy and recruitment that Steel-Maitland considered that a debate upon the subject of censorship could bring down the government. 149 In any case, whatever the capabilities of the press, unsystematic newspaper criticism of the government was unlikely to assuage backbench frustrations. Constrained within the patriotic truce, the parliamentary party was no doubt more likely to resort to the old conflict than had it been able to express itself freely. Nonetheless, it is evident that the issues on which the party felt most frustrated were increasingly war-related. This was evinced in the crises of January and spring 1915 principally over recruitment, drink, and munitions.

Part of a concerted attempt to coerce Law into action, uncompromising memoranda on current events circulated by Long and Curzon in January 1915 focussed on the party's inability to advance recruitment, most especially through national service. 150 A contemporaneous consideration of coalition revealed, on the other hand, both the degree of dissatisfaction and the transformation in politics since August 1914. Though both Long and Curzon dismissed coalition out of hand, Hugh Cecil was a more convinced advocate. He wrote to his brother of the opportunity of building a 'golden bridge' over which willing Liberals could cross, suggesting that Asquith, Grey and Haldane might be glad to make the passage and take the opportunity to work with opposition leaders, and thus

150 Long to Colonel [Charles a Court Repington], 01/01/1915 (copy). Long Papers, MS Add. 62419, ff.1-3; Curzon to Lansdowne, 06/01/1915. Lansdowne Papers, Named Correspondent.
construct a post-war coalition. Cecil's willingness to welcome over to his side the perpetrators of the 'infamy' of Home Rule appears outlandish. It was all the more remarkable because the men to whom the invitation was to be extended were the architects of military unpreparedness themselves (Asquith and Haldane). Did it reflect, therefore, a burying of old party hatchets? It certainly exposed the peculiar evolution of wartime party politics, for the author was considering the formation of a Whig centre party. Consequently, the proposal visualised the subordination of the Irish issue in a manner not conceived for thirty years. In Cecil's mind, Ireland was to bow to wartime politics. More particularly, it was to become subservient to his desire to undermine not only the radicalised left (Lloyd George and Labour), but also more specifically the reactionary Tory wing (epitomised by Maxse, Gwynne and Curzon), which threatened to leave no stone unturned in its quest for a victorious formula for Britain's armies.

Cecil's scheme never received a wide enough airing to either win over or lose Unionist adherents, but it is inconceivable that it would have received much support. For, if, like many Liberals, Cecil was traumatised by the demands of war, it is manifest that the vast majority of his colleagues were not. As such, it did not reveal the genesis of a party rupture or the first cracks in the consensus on 'total' war. Rather, it betokened the predominance of war-related questions, the evolution of a specific and distinctive Unionist approach to the war and, perhaps, the yielding of Ireland to the politics of war. Disgust at Liberal indecision in July 1914 was rivalled only by continued astonishment at the failure of the government to 'prosecute the war' sufficiently. 'Prosecute the war' became a catchphrase repeated ad nauseum in Unionist communications and literature. As early as 4 August 1914, Balfour felt it necessary to urge upon Haldane at the War

151 Private Memorandum by Hugh Cecil to Robert Cecil, 10/01/1915. Chelwood Papers, MS Add. 51157,
Office the necessity of the immediate despatch of the Expeditionary Force to North East France, a deployment the Liberal Government appeared to view equivocally.\textsuperscript{152} Five days later, Long felt that the Government `[didn’t] know what to do or how to do anything'.\textsuperscript{153} Disaffection thereafter emerged on a broad variety of Government policies: the internment of aliens; the necessity of economy; the development of British industry independent of Germany; military and strategic unpreparedness; the refusal to grant the public information on the war; methods of recruitment.

If anything, the formation of the Unionist Business Committee (UBC) in January 1915 reflected a convergence of this refined appreciation of ‘total’ war and of the stultifying position of the Unionist parliamentary rank and file. The UBC was founded by W.A.S. Hewins MP, previously secretary of the Tariff Commission, as a means by which to introduce greater organisation amongst the backbenches and permit them a proper role in parliamentary debates and decisions. Its central core was an executive committee of approximately twenty-five members, but it was also to possess committed sub-committees through which much detailed work was carried out into government war policies. The considerable energies expended by Law to temper this new movement were testament to dangerous undertows.\textsuperscript{154} Law appointed the confrontational but loyal Long as chairman, accorded the group a prominent role in opposition debates, and displayed a willingness to receive deputations. The failure of these steps to mollify backbench dissent revealed the cumulative challenge to the truce, most especially from January 1915 onwards, and the inability of the party leadership to control its parliamentary forces.

\textsuperscript{152} Memorandum of a conversation between Lansdowne and Haldane, 04/08/1914. Lansdowne Papers, Misc.
\textsuperscript{153} Long to Law, 09/08/1914. BL/34/3/28.
It was essentially such forces that propelled the controversy over drink into parliamentary debate. John Stubbs and John Turner have shown that the distress in spring 1915 cannot be seen merely as the outcome of residual unhappiness over Ireland. Instead, it must be considered within the context of the drink controversy and within the framework of internal party dynamics dictated by the war. This latter framework dictated that backbench influence was diminished and complicity between the frontbenches rose. These influences converged to create mass inner-party friction when Law accepted Lloyd George's controversial proposals to nationalise the drink industry. However, as is explained below (and in depth in Chapter V), the question of drink in spring 1915 was principally a war-related matter rather than purely a question of the party's links to the 'trade'. The brewing industry undeniably enjoyed considerable sway within the party, and once mobilised was capable of applying pressure to protect its interests. Nonetheless, the idea, put forward by Stubbs, that Unionist business elements closed ranks behind this 'partisan' question so suddenly, and just so as to protect its own interests, fails to consider properly the underlying contradiction distinguished by Unionists. For, a more considerable faction was persuaded by the wider principle of voluntary regulation and enterprise, and many conceived the policy to be a poorly camouflaged temperance move. But even more pervasively, Unionists perceived hypocrisy in the Government's war policy. How could it, they questioned, pursue 'business as usual' (meaning free

154 Hewins Diary, 28/01/1915, 10/02/1915. Hewins, Apologia, II, p.12-13; Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, pp.112, 114.
158 Albert Banister (Chairman of Hop-Growers Defence League) to Law, 31/03/1915; Lord Iveagh (Chairman of Guinness) to Law, 19/04/1915. BL/36/6/42, 37/1/45.
159 Stubbs, 'Impact', pp.24-7.
160 For this particular aspect of the debate see below pp.276-278.
trade) in essential industries (such as munitions and dyes) and state interference in non-essential trades (in this case drink)? A government that was unready to rationalise the nation’s industrial resources in regard to munitions, let alone accept the necessity of conscription, could not be trusted to state-manage the drink trade. Indeed to attempt to do the latter before the former appeared perverse and irresponsible. It seemed as if the government was fiddling with the (beer) taps whilst the place was flooding – and Unionists were not even convinced that the government was lessening rather than increasing the flow. Accordingly, dissent emerged from Chamberlain on the grounds of the impracticability of executing such a financially extravagant policy during war. Elsewhere, as well, objections pertained to the prosecution of the war. Both Long and Hewins were unconvinced by the measure both in terms of its effect on the brewing trade and related industries, but also, more specifically, upon the war effort. Long felt that the measures ‘had little relevance to the disease they were proposed to remedy and none to munitions of war’. Hewins, having previously drawn attention to shortfalls in munitions and men at the front, argued that the ‘remedies [were] in no sense adequate’.161 It was, as even Law could acknowledge, a ‘bagatelle’ – an inconsequential diversion to the real matter of munitions.162

As is discussed in Chapter V, the true dimensions of this crisis possess significance in evaluating the evolution of Unionist perspectives on wartime state intervention. Attitudes to drink are also crucial in appreciating the evolution of a Unionist commitment to, and method for approaching, the prosecution of the war in 1914-15. They establish that sectional interests did not dominate the party and that the ideology of war was not subservient to party matters. At their core was the question of the best means by which to make war. Taken in conjunction with

161 Hewins Diary, 30/04/1915. Hewins, Apologia, II, p.28. Long to Law, 01/05/1915 (Copy). Long Papers, MS Add. 62404, ff.73-5.
162 Law to Wilson, 09/04/1915 (copy). BL/37/5/17.
the crisis over munitions – which they must be, for even Lloyd George established a causal link between the two – they indicated that, although Law might have been susceptible to backbench pressure, the party was not being torn apart by the European conflict.

That said, it is unthinkable that had the issue of drink emerged in September 1914 rather than spring 1915, Law would have faced such backbench willingness to upset the government. In April, collusion between the front benches was viewed with repugnance, while such actions over Home Rule and the budget the previous autumn had passed largely without criticism. Indeed, Lloyd George’s November budget, which trebled beer tax, had provoked only the rupture of Chamberlain’s already fragile association with the Exchequer, along with cursory parliamentary criticism. While the proposals of spring 1915 were a far greater threat to the brewing community than those of November 1914, the majority criticism emanated from war management. What therefore had changed? As A.J.P. Taylor and others have argued, the ‘infamy’ over Ireland remained in Unionist minds. By placing Home Rule upon the statute book in September, the Government undermined Unionist confidence both in Liberal commitment to the truce, and in the opposition’s position within it, and there was a growing refusal to accept the vulnerability that the truce imposed upon the party. Insecurities over plural voting and payment of members, consequently, surfaced to extents that would otherwise have been implausible, and even the hallowed practise of recruitment was threatened.

Nonetheless, two other developments were also to the fore by late spring 1915: first, the party’s defencelessness and impotence as exemplified in Home Rule

163 Hewins Diary, 17/11/1914. Hewins, Apologia, II, p.6
had become even further entrenched; second, the best means by which to impel a Liberal Government to prosecute the war along Unionist lines seemed unclear. The events of spring 1915 displayed the discharge of backbench frustration at their perceived powerlessness, and represented an effort to wrestle control away from the party leadership and back towards the rank and file MPs. Backbench discontent, meanwhile, was advanced by the failure of the leadership to discover a suitable vehicle by which to induce the Government to prosecute the war vigorously. In effect this made an intolerable situation an untenable one, in that without strict obedience to the leadership, parliamentary controversy was inescapable. Unionist concerns in autumn 1914, which largely centred round critiques of Government failure to apply policies regarding alien internment properly, or to establish systems for provisioning men at the front, were developed into constructive demands such as conscription and the rationalisation of munitions supplies. Ironically, therefore, it was patriotism itself that determined Unionist inability to sit comfortably within the patriotic truce. This was evidenced in the overwhelming unanimity displayed towards the diplomatic crisis of July, and afterwards in the leitmotif of 'prosecution of the war'. The question now became, whether the Liberals could be better controlled and impelled within a coalition.

II

THE PARTY AND COALITION

'Of course as no doubt you would be the first to admit, party in some shape or form is bound to return ultimately because there will always be two opinions of how things ought to be done and the men who ought to do them. [But] having got rid of party as we have there is no reason why it should haunt us during reconstruction and I look forward with strong hope to a non-party regime for the next few years.'

- John St Loe Strachey to Lord Derby, 05/10/1916.¹

'It was very difficult to sit down and work with the men we have been fighting bitterly for years but we have done it without reservation.' If the date were not known of these remarks of Lord Selborne, the historian could be forgiven for placing them after 1918 and in relation to the German foe that Britain had been fighting tortuously for four years. They were not, but were rather applied to the Liberal party in May 1915.² On 25 May, a coalition government was formed under Asquith, comprising Liberal, Unionist and Labour elements (the Irish Nationalist Party had been invited but declined). In December 1916, this coalition was succeeded by an administration, with the same parties represented, headed by David Lloyd George. This chapter seeks to understand how the Unionist Party came to be seated alongside their political enemies and the effect

¹ Strachey Papers, S/5/2/5.
this had upon the working, and the idea, of their party. While it is not the intention to demarcate narrowly the boundaries of war and coalition, nevertheless opportunities will arise to demonstrate their relative significance. The first two sections of the chapter discuss the party processes and inter-party personalities that characterised the coalition until the ‘Coupon’ election of winter 1918. While questioning whether coalition government acted against the interests of the party in the war years, it is shown to have had a destructive effect on the internal connections between different strata of the party. As is explained in the third part, this affected how far coalition could, and did, transform Unionist commitment towards their established principles and towards the idea of ‘party’. As such, the longer-term prospects of continued partnership are seen to have been less than convincing.

Sitting with the Enemy: Forming the Coalition

The catalyst for the first coalition has been much debated by historians, with some pointing at the revelation of munitions shortages on 14 May by Colonel Charles à Court Repington, the maverick military correspondent of The Times. Others emphasise the resignation of the First Sea Lord, ‘Jackie’ Fisher, which followed hard on its heels the next day. Both approaches tend however to agree on the ultimate trigger, namely the threat to the continuance of the patriotic truce posed by Unionist disillusionment. Martin Pugh, meanwhile, has distanced himself from these factors, drawing attention to the swelling of the Liberal

parliamentary majority by the absence of Unionist MPs at the front. Instead, he views ‘the inexorably approaching election’ as the catalyst, because ‘it was a foregone conclusion that Toryism would triumph’. In order to thwart an election, and this was unavoidable unless Unionist desires in both Houses were sated, coalition became the only alternative.

The issue of a general election was certainly pertinent in May 1915 as the Government was due to go the country by December. The local Unionist associations and agents had remained on a war footing in electoral terms since the outset of the real war, through continued registration work. In April, the Unionist leadership had rejected the Government’s proposal to prolong parliament by the suspension of the Parliament Act for a year, instead informing them that ‘they had better come back in two or three months’. Law was against making a bargain with the Government, because they ‘would not be able to turn the Govt. out before that date, even if it became most advisable to try and do so’.

To what extent these pronouncements reflected a deliberated eagerness to challenge the Government in an election is highly questionable. When convening a meeting of Unionist leaders, Law had told Lansdowne that, although it was ‘grossly unfair’ that the Government should continue with its plans to abolish plural voting, the Unionist Party could not readily oppose an extension of parliament. It would, he claimed, ‘be difficult to make a stand which would mean forcing an election in the middle of a war on the ground that [the Liberals were] not to get the Plural Voting Bill’. Thus, although Trevor Wilson has asserted that Law’s ‘strength ultimately lay’ in the threat of a general election, it

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6 See for instance Oxford Division, EC, 01/05/1915 (S.Oxon.Con.III/1) and Chapters I and IV.
7 ‘Memorandum of a Conversation with Bonar Law’ by Steel-Maitland, April 1915. SM GD/193/386/30-31x
8 Law to Lansdowne, 13/04/1915. Lansdowne Papers, ‘Further Correspondence’ (88/42).
lay only in exactly that - a threat. Again, however, it must be noted that if this menace was being maintained and increased intentionally (as the postponement of any electoral arrangement most assuredly did), it was not as a tool to deliver a coalition. The only notable Unionist who desired an electoral agreement in April 1915 was Steel-Maitland. But, his championship of coalition was exceptional to him. The move was actually reflective rather of Unionist resentment at the government’s domestic and war policies.

Whether constructed as such or not, in May 1915 an election was undoubtedly a potent threat. While a general election fought over the management of war, rather than the party-orientated issue of plural voting, would have been politically acceptable, Law was still uneasy, realising the divisive effect of a Unionist administration upon the country. Accordingly, as John Turner has suggested, the avoidance of a confrontation that might lead to a General Election, was the priority for both leaders. The question, therefore, was why such a confrontation was inescapable.

As Peter Fraser has argued, there were limits to the political advantage that could be accrued from the munitions and Admiralty crises. Through the Committee of Imperial Defence and the War Council, Balfour was complicit in the Balkans strategy, which had formed the predominant excuse in Fisher’s weak logic for resignation. It was a policy shrouded in confidentiality in any case. What is more, the nature of Fisher’s departure severely undermined any pious respect reserved for military commanders. His eighth resignation threat since the outset of war displayed scant regard for procedure and hence the war effort, and a skulking self-indulgence that endeared him to few: certainly not Selborne, who

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10 Turner, British Politics, p.61.
claimed that Fisher had made ‘an ass of himself’; or Bridgeman who felt it ‘a discreditable performance’. Balfour even thought him (probably correctly) ‘a little mad’. 12 Finally, although Fisher counted several leading Unionists as friends, certain right-wing newspaper editors would not have fallen into a pro-Fisher, anti-Churchill line.13

As for the munitions shortages, Fraser underemphasises its role in arguing that what ‘could [have been] expected in any parliamentary sequel to the Repington telegram was not a party attack but renewed pressure for a policy of national organisation’.14 On the contrary, much suggests that the deficiency of shells, together with the Churchill-Fisher dispute, lent themselves to an air of inefficiency considered insufferable upon the Unionist benches. Neither was Law’s readiness to avoid a general election by acquiescence matched within his party. And (as was demonstrated in the previous chapter) Unionist submission to Home Rule in September 1914 was unlikely to have happened in spring 1915. It is in the context of this, of the emergence of the sectional issues of plural voting and, most significantly, of war management policies such as drink, that the problems at the Admiralty and over munitions must be viewed. Two clear facts emerge about the party by May 1915: criticism of the Government was widely endorsed and Law’s ability to prevent any such criticism was becoming increasingly frail.

13 Fisher was friendly with men such as Goulding (Wargrave Papers, 2/47, 48). However, both Gwynne and Maxse detested the First Sea Lord. Gwynne to Maxse, 30/10/1914. Keith Wilson (ed.), The Rasp of War: The Letters of H. A. Gwynne to Lady Bathurst, 1914-1918 (Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1989), pp.46-7; Maxse to Sandars, 30/10/1914. Sandars Papers, MS 767/46.
14 Fraser, ‘War Policy’, pp.18-19. This, he argues, was due to the success of Field Marshal French’s night attack, which put the munitions shortage in context.
After the storm had settled and the patriotic truce been replaced by the coalition, Hewins remarked:

The Government became aware on Friday that they would have to face the music and they could not. A debate on munitions would have upset the Government, as Liberals more or less agree. Whether the strong letter I wrote to Asquith intimating the attitude of the organised Unionists with whom I act influenced his action I do not know at present. ... No doubt the Fisher-Winston complication made temporising more difficult. 15

Was this evidence merely of Hewins' customary self-aggrandisement or of actual events? It certainly tied in with claims in similar circles that the Unionist Business Committee (UBC) had precipitated the shells crisis. 16 Fraser, however, has dismissed the influence of Hewins' 'strong letter' to Asquith of 15 May, which informed the Prime Minister that he was to raise the question of munitions in the House of Commons, finding the polite language of Hewins' parliamentary motion demonstrative of compliance rather than merely of Edwardian civility. 17 But it surely was just the latter, and Hewins' proclaimed desire to avert embarrassment to the Ministry represented a barely-concealed warning, rather than any honest wish to see the Government perpetuate its maladministration. By May 1915, Hewins was constantly demanding the reconstruction of a government with which he had no sympathy. On 6 May Unionists joined Irish Nationalists in wrecking the liquor tax. 18 And this served notice of backbench dissatisfaction to the leader of the opposition, who had offered it tacit support in the House and had tried to organise its safe and quiet passage. 19 When specifically asked by Law to remain silent over the munitions question, Hewins

and company retorted that they were perfectly capable of deciding their own minds. Although Colonel L. Sanderson subsequently bowed to his leader’s demand that he should not raise the matter, he did second the motion of Richard Cooper calling for the matter to be debated. Such insubordination can only have emasculated Law’s leadership further.

It was amidst these violent dynamics that the revelation of munitions shortages and Fisher’s resignation were unleashed. Munitions had occupied opposition minds since as early as October 1914. Charles Hunter MP, when serving with the army in France in November, had described the dearth of rifles as the ‘root of all evil’. By spring 1915, it had become a fixation within Unionist circles. In March, Hewins was backing Lloyd George to make a move on munitions, anticipating broad Tory backing. The UBC, in the meantime, ‘eagerly’ took up the question of munitions, resulting in a Commons resolution, maintaining that the ‘resources of all firms capable of producing or of co-operating in producing munitions of war should be enlisted under a unified administration in direct touch with the producing firms’. Neville Chamberlain considered the government’s actions with regard to munitions ‘inadequate’. From the end of March, Law received from the front a volley of uncompromising communications about ammunition shortages. Munitions and recruitment, meanwhile, were the main motive lying behind Selborne’s demand in The Times for ‘national organisation’, a purpose appreciated by Lord Sydenham who agreed that the shells situation was ‘appalling’. On 10 May, Steel-Maitland sought Balfour’s advice as to

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20 Hewins Diary, 07/05/1915, 18/05/1915 21/05/1915. Hewins, Apologia, II, pp.30-3; House of Commons debates, 17/05/1915. Hansard, 5th Series, Ixxi, 2102-05.
22 Hewins Diary, 12/10/1914, 19/03/1915, 31/03/1915, 08/04/1915. Hewins, Apologia, II, pp.4, 21, 24-5.
24 See letters to Law from Wilson (BL/36/6), Hunter (BL/37/2), Baird (BL/37/2).
25 Selborne to Editor of The Times, 11/05/1915; Sydenham to Selborne, 12/05/1915. Selborne Papers, 93/84-6.
whether he might not be able to temporarily entrust his duties as Party Chairman to its previous holder Viscount Chilston, so as to assist Percy Girouard in munitions production, with which he claimed he had an 'obsession'. It is not without significance that such sentiments and letters from both Steel-Maitland (13 May), and Long (12 May) should narrowly pre-date the publication of Repington's article in The Times. This suggested that the crisis was incremental rather than sudden. The revelation merely confirmed deep-rooted Unionist suspicions of the nature of the Liberal Government's war administration, namely incapacity to conduct the war effort and a shroud of secrecy that seemed to attend every action.

Aside of coalition, what options now lay open to Law? A proposal by Robert Cecil to hold a parliamentary secret session had been dismissed as insufficient. Law's patriotism made the deteriorating situation an untenable one. When he was informed of the resignation of his friend Fisher, Law went at once to visit Lloyd George, who 'burst out passionately' in favour of coalition. A letter from Steel-Maitland drafted to Law the day before Repington's 'shells' article made the direction of Law's appeal quite understandable. In it he spoke of the advantages of coalition: action could be compelled on munitions and recruiting; news could be published. He also advised that Lloyd George rather than Asquith should be approached.

Law probably listened to this latter advice readily: the Chancellor had been behind the coalition proposals of 1910, and had spoken of the idea to

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27 Bridgeman claimed that 'everyone [knew] it [was] a lie' when Asquith continued the Government's pretence of munitions sufficiency in a speech in Newcastle. Bridgeman diary, May 1915. Williamson, Modernisation, p.84. Baird to Law, 30/04/1915. BL/37/1/72.
28 Chamberlain diary, 14/05/1915, 17/05/1915. AC/12/27.
29 Steel-Maitland to Law, 13/05/1915 (copy). SM GD/193/386/52-53x. There is no copy of this in the Law Papers, probably because Steel-Maitland, being based at St Stephen's Chambers, apprised Law of his thoughts in person.
Chamberlain and Law, three months earlier. Lloyd George had also sought assistance from the opposition both over financial matters and - with Law specifically - over his drink proposals.

The advent of coalition can have done little to bolster the position of the Unionist leader. In February Steel-Maitland had been 'like a voice in the wilderness' in his espousal of coalition. Nothing had changed by May. As late as 17 May, Chamberlain disliked any direct allusion to the need for a partnership. Others were even more indisposed: Curzon 'much dreaded coalition'; Long '[loathed] the idea of our good fellows sitting with these double-dyed traitors'; Lansdowne found the idea 'intensely disagreeable', to the point of determining to refuse office. Outside the leadership, attitudes were more difficult to gauge. On 11 May, Godfrey Locker-Lampson MP, told Steel-Maitland: 'I do hope that Bonar Law will set his face against [coalition]. Let him come into his own with his party when the time comes.' While the Party Chairman probably kept such correspondence deadly quiet, he could not silence opinions expressed directly to Law, such as those of Beresford. Forging an individual interpretation as ever, he alluded to the 'fatal effects' of any Liberal-Unionist coalition, whose failure would at best be greeted by silence within the party, and could even stimulate a revolutionary mob.

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31 Steel-Maitland 'Memorandum on the Political Situation', February 1915. SM GD193/306/78-83x; Steel-Maitland to Arthur Glazebrook, 04/05/1915 (copy). SM GD/193/165/1/609.
32 Fraser, 'War Policy', p.19.
34 Locker-Lampson to Steel-Maitland, 11/04/1915. SM GD/193/161/5/507
35 Beresford to Law, 17/05/1915. BL/37/2/36.
Law himself seems to have viewed the idea of coalition equivocally. Crawford had recorded that his leader was 'favouring the idea' in February, though his source, Balfour's secretary Jack Sandars, had probably been ill informed or intriguining.\footnote{Crawford Diary, 02/02/1915. John Vincent (ed.), *The Crawford Papers: the Journals of David Lindsay, Twenty-seventh Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, 1871-1940* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984), p347. Sandars had served as Private Secretary to Balfour, 1892-1911. His disgust at the idea of coalition extended to an irredeemable rupture with his former master. Sandars to Maxse, 31/01/1915. Maxse Papers, 470/51} Equally dubious were Law's protestations of reluctant submission after May 1915. On the other hand, it is unlikely that his motive was to pre-empt a move upon the leadership by Balfour.\footnote{Stephen Koss, 'The Destruction of Britain's Last Liberal Government', *Journal of Modern History*, xl (1968), p.267.} Balfour undoubtedly boasted a rather cosy position within the Liberal administration. He was also embroiled in intrigue alongside Field Marshal French, Northcliffe, and (seemingly as always) 'F.E.' and Churchill.\footnote{Ibid., pp.267-76. See also, Stephen Koss, *Haldane, Scapegoat for Liberalism* (Columbia University Press, London, 1969), Chapter VII, 'The May Crisis'.} However, although Balfour's suavity and philosophical inclinations have certainly hidden — more for the historian than his contemporaries — a strong ambition and political craft, there is little to indicate that his sights were set once again on the party leadership. It is hard to surmise that coalition offered more to Balfour than Law: Balfour already held influence within Government and any large-scale influx of Unionist ministers could but dilute his role and give Law responsibility.

Instead, it was rather Law's patriotism and concept of the role of 'party' that determined that he consider the task seriously.\footnote{R.J.Q. Adams, *Bonar Law* (John Murray, London, 1999), p.186.} He held the notion of 'party' in high esteem, believing it to be an essential constitutional instrument, and viewing it as providing the requirements of electoral choice and effective government. When these latter criteria were denied it by the war, his philosophical *raison d'être* was lessened greatly.\footnote{Beattie, 'Coalition Government', pp.21-2.} Along with Steel-Maitland, he was alive to the
opposition with which any purely Unionist administration would be faced. The most significant pointer to Law’s position was his acceptance of the idea of coalition despite his party’s hostility towards it. Not only did almost every Unionist speak out against the idea but, after the event, Law always attempted to make it clear that the initiative had sprung from Asquith and not himself. But, shortly after meeting Lloyd George on 17 May, it had been Law who had despatched a letter to the Prime Minister calling for a ‘change in the constitution of the Government’. No doubt bolstered by the fact that formally, at least, Asquith had to invite Law into partnership not vice versa, his protestations of acquiescence rather than initiation were accepted widely within the party. Neither was his success in telling this story insignificant – Unionist suspicions of coalition were moderated under the assumption that their party had joined from patriotic motives, to preserve the war effort. It was noteworthy in another degree also, namely that by saving Asquith the humiliation of appealing to the opposition for assistance (and considering Asquith’s condescending opinion of its leader this would have been humiliation indeed), Law weakened the Unionist position within the coalition.

41 See Steel-Maitland to Reginald Blair, 31/05/1915 (copy). SM GD/193/165/1/422, 547; Blake, Unknown, pp.280-1.
43 Chamberlain diary, May 1915. AC/12/27.
Who Sits Where?

On 20 May, with negotiations just under way, Long told Law:

As regards posts: If the Liberals are to retain the Premiership, Foreign Secretary of State, and War Office, there are very few high Offices left, if you exclude, as you must, the Lord Chancellorship, and, as I think you ought, the Boards of Agriculture, and Education; the G.P.O. [Postmaster General]; 1st Commissioner of Works & [Chancellor of the] Duchy of Lancaster. And it is evident that you may easily find yourself with more horses than you have vacant stalls.55

This articulated two key points about the first coalition: first, the simple fact that in coalition government demand for positions exceeded supply; second, the apprehension – later proved correct – that Law would prove inadequate to the task of gaining the deserved spoils. Adjudging the seven key wartime departments to include the premiership, Exchequer, Admiralty, War Office, Home Office, Foreign Office and Board of Trade, the Unionists were left demonstrably under-represented. Of these posts, the Liberals ceded only the Admiralty, and this to Balfour, a man with whom they already worked closely, and who in fact had even occupied a room within the department prior to the arrangement. The other offices surrendered were: Colonial Office (Law), Privy Seal (Curzon), Board of Agriculture (Selborne), Attorney-General (Carson), Local Government Board (Walter Long), India Office (Chamberlain); while the aged Lansdowne entered as minister without portfolio. Such an allocation was unsatisfactory on more than one ground. Now in government, the Unionists still remained far from controlling the war effort. Law’s position in the administration, meanwhile, was inferior to that of six Liberals and also to several party colleagues, including Balfour the former leader. Finally, backbench opinion
was unlikely to view kindly the continuance in office of a high percentage of Liberal ‘incompetents’.

Several historical interpretations have accounted for the modest returns on Unionist investment. Law’s biographers have emphasised their subject’s patriotism, and his insistence on the subjugation of corrosive party controversy.\(^{46}\) Pugh, conversely, has interpreted ‘the meagre spoils’ obtained as reflecting ‘the rather modest role played by the Unionists in bringing about the coalition’.\(^{47}\) More fundamental factors also actually had affect. By the time Law met Asquith to discuss appointments on Saturday 22 May, he had certainly been apprised of the necessity of receiving a fair share of posts, and of the continued significance of party.\(^{48}\) On Thursday, Londonderry had informed Law – for party not personal motives – ‘I presume we shall have half the Government places – so as to have some power – & stop this meddling’.\(^{49}\) Meanwhile Long, defying illness to write incessant letters, had warned Law of similar dangers, informing him that there should be ‘no appearance of haste in a question of such transcendental importance as the formation of a National Government’ (merely a prelude to his expressed desire ‘that you will decide nothing about the Opposition after the Govt. is formed without allowing me to have a say in the matter’). Further he had rolled out fairly traditional party arguments, with the perfunctory disclaimer ‘I don’t want to think of Party’, namely that ‘the allocation of Offices is of even more importance than the selection of men’. Two days, and two letters later, Long had warned his chief that there ‘was a very strong impression that the Radical wire pullers are at work and are deliberately trying to sow dissension in

\(^{45}\) Long to Law, 20/05/1915 (copy). Long Papers MS Add. 62404, ff.87-9
\(^{47}\) Pugh, *First Coalition*, p.830.
\(^{48}\) Asquith to Law, 21/05/1915. BL/J50/3/15.
\(^{49}\) Londonderry to Law, 20/05/1915. BL/J50/3/7.
our ranks, and with no small measure of success.\textsuperscript{50} Though such a thorough working over was conventional for Long, nevertheless, the language and arguments employed betrayed less than total confidence in the bargaining capacity of his leader.

The battle at the negotiating table was crucial. Asquith, a barrister by training and an unrivalled parliamentarian by trade, was well suited to serve as advocate for his cause, Law less so. Initiator of the partisan and uncompromising ‘new style’ of politics in the Ulster Crisis, the Unionist leader came rather unstuck when placed within alliance diplomacy. As recently as 1913, he had relied on Max Aitken to save the situation when he found himself unable to offer the slightest courtesy towards the Prime Minister at a private meeting over Ireland, and although he was less reliant on his cunning errand boy than Aitken frequently made out, Asquith and not Law was the master of the art of persuasion. The dour stubbornness that made convincing Law’s threats – were they Ulster disobedience or backbench rebellion – collapsed without such weapons at its disposal. This was never better demonstrated than in his handling of the office of Irish Lord Chancellor. Initially, he had informed Carson and James Campbell that it had been earmarked for the latter, but finding Asquith dilatory he was forced to enrol the services of Lloyd George. Not before long he capitulated to the Prime Minister’s contention that the Liberals could only allow Campbell an inferior post.\textsuperscript{51}

Law’s almost immediate acceptance of Asquith’s reasoning that the Liberals could not stomach a Unionist Irish Chancellor exposed his feebleness. Also employed to undermine Unionist entitlement to the Exchequer (rather more reasonably given the tariff issue), and the Lord Chancellorship, within a coalition

\textsuperscript{50} Long to Law, 19/05/1915, 21/05/1915 (copies). Long Papers, MS Add. 62404, ff.84-6, 90-1.
\textsuperscript{51} Law to Lloyd George, 27/05/1915, Law to Asquith, 28/05/1915 (copies). BL/53/6/8, 12.
it was a partisan Liberal argument that should have been bluntly rebuffed. Moreover, his application to Lloyd George to act as medium reflected submissiveness towards Asquith, rather than any great intimacy with the Chancellor. It was symptomatic of the overall approach of the Unionist leaders, their pliancy extending beyond compromise. While doubting Lord Finlay would be Lord Chancellor, Campbell or any Unionist Irish Secretary, Lansdowne advised Law listlessly: ‘Provided Curzon is in the Cabinet I don’t think we ought to complain – it is quite clear that there are not offices enough to go round, and for that reason I am specially anxious not to take a post which would out a good man.’\(^{52}\) It smacked of self-doubt and submission.

Inherent influences beyond such character failings limited Law’s ability to call the shots. First, readiness to stand aside for the purposes of national unity was genuine in Chamberlain and Lansdowne, if not in Long, and in most quarters patriotism dictated a moderation of the usual scramble for offices.\(^{53}\) Unionist prospects were hampered also by the long period in opposition, which determined that it was lightweight in ministerial experience. Of those who had previously taken Cabinet office and were still alive (and a considerable number were not), Chaplin, and Lords George Hamilton, Halsbury, Londonderry, St Audries, St Aldwyn, Midleton, and Lansdowne were past their best – very well past in most cases; Long had briefly been Chief Secretary for Ireland, but otherwise had held only the relative backwaters of the Board of Agriculture and the Local Government Board. This left only Chamberlain, Balfour, Selborne and Salisbury as previous holders of first-rate offices.\(^{54}\) The fact that Law’s own

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\(^{52}\) Lansdowne to Law, 23/05/1915. BL/50/3/41.

\(^{53}\) Long to Law, 12/05/1915, BL/37/2/19 and reply 19/05/1915. Long Papers, MS Add. 62404, ff.84-6; Lansdowne to Law, 23/05/1915. BL/50/3/41; Chamberlain to Law, 21/05/1915. BL/50/3/26. Long had financial as well as political motives in pursuing office. Bull diary (retrospect), July 1915. Bull CAC Papers, 4/11.

\(^{54}\) Though not actually having taken cabinet positions, Curzon (Viceroy of India) and Milner (High Commissioner in South Africa) were certainly of this rank.
experience extended only to a three-year tenure as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade revealed the rawness of talent. It was not a good hand with which to play. Further, this must be compared to one of the largest and most capable pools of Liberal ministers ever in Government. The big guns of Asquith, Lloyd George and Grey were institutions; the middle calibre ones, including Reginald McKenna, Lord Crewe and Churchill, were movable but indispensable; the small arms (either party politically or administratively), including Charles Hobhouse and 'Jack' Pease, and Lords Beauchamp, Lucas, Emmot and, seemingly, Haldane, were expendable. But, any Unionist aspirations had to take into account the young guns of Walter Runciman, John Simon, Herbert Samuel and Edwin Montagu. Kitchener's entrenchment as a non-party Secretary for War restricted available posts yet further.

Asquith held the trump card as well, for as Prime Minister he retained official hold on the reins of patronage, and what leverage Law possessed he enjoyed before the coalition had been formed. Once established, withdrawal was unthinkable. It could only have resulted in an enfeebled opposition or a general election, both reasons for joining a coalition in the first place. Moreover, the party would have been presented – not unreasonably – as self-seeking by virtue of its retreat into isolation, and this could only have hampered Unionist electoral prospects. Without an election, Law would have remained in the same position as in mid-May, namely needing to support patriotic silence, whilst being forced onto the offensive by his backbenches. Therefore if, as Lloyd George told C.P. Scott, Law had put a pistol to the head of the Government a few days earlier, it is manifest that now, with no bullets in the chamber, he could ill afford to do so again.55 This is well illustrated by the successes attained. The most

notable concession to the Unionists was Churchill’s transfer from the Admiralty, which, for all the absence of wider Liberal disapproval of this, was nonetheless a notable achievement. But, this was realised before the coalition had been formally set up.\textsuperscript{56}

The final and most significant reason was that, when baying for blood, the Unionists appeared preoccupied less that the new administration became a true hybrid, more that certain Liberal components were expelled. Understandable after the length of time in opposition in which animosities were nurtured, it nevertheless undermined their own demands. The target of the attacks proved that wartime politics was the stimulus, with the Marconi men Rufus Isaacs (now ennobled as Lord Reading) and Lloyd George escaping criticism. Conversely, the three main targets, namely Churchill, the Home Secretary McKenna, and Lord Chancellor Haldane, had been discredited by wartime politics. Churchill’s unpopularity arose from his increasing independence from military opinion that delivered the Antwerp failure and urged a Dardanelles policy, together with his lack of respect for naval officials. He was deposited in the back of the carriage in the Duchy of Lancaster, where he sat reassuringly far from the reins of war strategy and administration. As to McKenna and Haldane, the main motivation was the alien question. The Northcliffe press, flanked by the \textit{National Review} and \textit{Morning Post}, had relentlessly assailed the Lord Chancellor for his Germanic links, and the Home Secretary for his ineffective management of enemy aliens.\textsuperscript{57} Unionist politicians had shown no inclination to refute such accusations, and revealed their concurrence by their actions in May 1915. Long asserted that ‘if McKenna remains in the Govt. the great majority of our men will bitterly resent it and will be scandalised if any of our Leaders consent to serve


with him.\textsuperscript{58} William Bull (Long’s PPS) wrote to the editor of the \textit{Morning Post}, ‘it seems clear that those departments that are mainly responsible [for mistakes] should be under new control. This consideration applies with special force to the Home Office and the Board of Trade.’\textsuperscript{59} As it was, the efficient McKenna was removed from the Home Office, so as no longer to be a hindrance to the firm management of domestic disquiet, and placed at the Exchequer, where he was later to prove an even more awkward impediment, this time to conscription.\textsuperscript{60} In the meantime, Haldane was sacrificed by his Liberal friends, whilst Unionists were only too happy to stoke the pyre of a man who, in Lord Newton’s opinion, ‘would probably have been lynched in any other country’.\textsuperscript{61} By achieving the transfers of Churchill and McKenna, and, at the least receiving Haldane’s removal with enthusiasm, the Unionists expended much of the little political capital they possessed.

The one exception to the negativism of May 1915 was the endorsement of Lord Milner. A Unionist by principle but not by trade, several party men nonetheless acknowledged his administrative capacity. Both Chamberlain and Steel-Maitland pushed for his inclusion, the latter reasoning that ‘the whole raison d’être of the reconstruction’ was ‘the need for efficient men’.\textsuperscript{62} Chamberlain went so far as to offer to take a lesser post to allow for Milner’s inclusion: ‘I know that the more

\textsuperscript{58} Long to Law, 21/05/1915 (copy). See also Long to Asquith, 22/05/1915 (copy). Long Papers, MS Add. 62404, ff.90-1, 140-1

\textsuperscript{59} Cutting from \textit{Morning Post}, 24/05/1915. Bull Papers Hammersmith. Such views were especially ironic considering the courting of McKenna by the Unionist leadership in October 1922. By then serving as Chairman of Midland Bank, he was considered a steady hand at the Treasury and thus capable of inspiring confidence in the City.

\textsuperscript{60} Lloyd George reported that the Tories ‘only agreed’ to this appointment on the basis of it being temporary. But it was not to be, which merely underlined Unionist impotence once in the fold. Lloyd George to Margaret Lloyd George, 25/05/1915. Kenneth Morgan (ed.), \textit{Lloyd George’s Family Letters, 1885-1936} (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1973), p.178.

\textsuperscript{61} Chamberlain claimed that it was Asquith, rather than a Unionist, who had suggested Haldane’s removal. (Chamberlain diary, 17/05/1915. AC/12/27). Indeed, leading Unionists hardly mentioned Haldane in their communications of this period. Asquith did not rate Haldane’s talents particularly highly. Stephan Koss, \textit{Asquith} (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1985), p.191, passim. Newton to Curzon, 11/10/1914. Curzon Papers, f112, 105, ff.244-5.
extreme section of the Liberal Party dislike Milner, but I am confident that the inclusion of his name would give confidence both in the country and the army that this was a national Govt. and not merely a two party or three party Govt., and that it meant business.\textsuperscript{63} Despite these petitions, Law was unable and perhaps unwilling to surmount the profound dislike felt for Milner by Liberal politicians, itself a purely pre-war prejudice.

Generally, the impact of the appointments was profound in denying the Unionist leadership the ability to shape war strategy, and in establishing the sentiments elsewhere in the party that they had been severely short-changed and, therefore, that Unionists in Cabinet were incapable of exerting the necessary influence. Developed into a powerful department by Joseph Chamberlain, in a free trade government the Colonial Office retained little control beyond its role as the manager of imperial government. Consequently, Law was in no position to use departmental authority or expertise in Cabinet, except in the more peripheral aspects of war management. Nor was Asquith entirely unjustified in omitting him without consultation from the War Policy Committee, formed in August 1915, a decision revoked only after several rather beseeching letters.\textsuperscript{64} Any such constitutional impotence was certainly supplemented with continued personal submissiveness on the part of Law.

Equally vital was the party’s perception of the new coalition. Those that welcomed it, like Arthur Lee MP, frequently did so on the grounds that ‘a Business Government’ had been formed.\textsuperscript{65} But it was not such in any sense, and the change raised damaging expectations. F.S. Oliver, using a scriptural allegory,

\begin{itemize}
\item Law to Asquith, 12/08/1915 (copy). BL/53/6/38. The War Policy Committee was formed to settle the principal theme of manpower and, as such, was a body of the greatest import.
\item Lee to Law, 21/05/1915. BL/50/3/29.
\end{itemize}
described the new coalition merely as 'the old vat ... half-emptied of its former contents and filled up with new wine; but it was the same vat, and the predominating flavour remained the same.'\(^{66}\) The omission of Milner was correctly taken to denote a continued confidence in the unwieldy structure of pre-war Government, with a Cabinet of twenty plus meeting irregularly and the direction of war determined through departmental channels rather than a coordinating body. Meanwhile, the presence of the Liberal old guard – chiefly Grey, Asquith and Crewe – and their Unionist counterparts – Balfour and Lansdowne – allowed for Milner to speak of it as being 'essentially a Government of United Mandarins'.\(^{67}\) Partly the result of an insatiable thirst for change felt by right-wing Unionists, this disappointment was due also to the aura of front-bench collusion that had attended the formation of the coalition. It represented poor payment to the forces that had enforced coalition, namely the parliamentary party.

Party men, some no doubt upset at missing out on promotion, were distressed that they had not been consulted.\(^{68}\) Indeed, anxiety about coalition was widespread. Hewins recorded that a Carlton Club meeting, convened to apprise Unionist MPs of developments, was, although not against the new ministry, 'certainly not in favour of it, doubtful and uneasy'.\(^{69}\) Central Office was forced to reply to MPs at the front, anxious at the shape of the new coalition. Reginald Blair expressed himself 'very uneasy' about political developments and worried as to how best explain them in his next communication to his constituents.\(^{70}\) Accordingly, Steel-Maitland reeled off reassuring responses to party followers

\(^{67}\) Milner to Amery, 23/06/1915. Barnes, \textit{Amery Diaries}, p.118.
\(^{68}\) Bridgeman Diary, June 1915. Williamson, \textit{Modernisation}, p.87.
\(^{69}\) Hewins Diary, 26/05/1915. Hewins, \textit{Apologia}, II, p.34.
\(^{70}\) Blair to Steel-Maitland, 26/05/1915. SM GD/193/165/1/424.
defending the new coalition.\textsuperscript{71} The only recompense was the confidence expressed in the 'national government' by local associations on the basis that it would prosecute the war more effectively.\textsuperscript{72}

The most considerable danger for Unionist Ministers was, as Long warned Law at the outset, responsibility without power. Indeed this was to be the prerogative of Unionist ministers throughout the Asquith coalition.\textsuperscript{73} Consequently, coalition government undermined the traditional relationships between different party strata. Throughout the period, whether the controversy was conscription or Ireland, Law remained reluctant to present himself to his rank and file unless assured that he could put forward a considered policy approved by the Government. It was largely – though not entirely – coalition government that permitted him to do so, empowering the party leadership in relation to the grassroots. Even within the earlier party truce, the leaders and party management had blankly ignored any attempts by the rank and file to assert any authority. A resolution passed by the Western Divisional Council in Scotland in March 1915, requesting party leaders to turn their minds to economic post-war reconstruction, was a case in point. It had been quashed almost single-handedly by George Younger, who inserted the ruinous rider that it should be proceeded with only 'when [the leaders] consider it most expedient to do so'.\textsuperscript{74} The leadership had been forced, nevertheless, to bow to pressure to meet constituency chairmen and agents, and to publicise in December 1914 its communication to Asquith of 2 August.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{71} SM GD/193/165/1/422-3x, 495-6x, 547-8x, 607-8x. \textsuperscript{72} For instance, Clitheroe UA, AGM, 12/06/1915, (DDX/800/1/1). \textsuperscript{73} Long to Law, 19/05/1915 (copy). Long Papers, MS Add. 62404, ff.84-6. \textsuperscript{74} Younger to Law, 26/03/1915. BLJ36/6/30; SUA Western Divisional Council, 03/03/1915; Central Council, 16/03/1915, (Acc.10424/28, 63). \textsuperscript{75} Steel-Maitland to Law, 29/10/1914. BLJ35/1/40.
Within coalition, the further increased power of the leadership was manifested in Law's delicate, but authoritative, handling of the National Union Association (NUA) Council and Conference. In September 1915, he informed Steel-Maitland that the Council meeting should be 'put off until the question of National Service had been settled by the Cabinet'. 76 Again, in October, he postponed it and, although he acquiesced the next month, the Council was told in January 1916 that 'matters were in such a state' that it would be inadvisable for Law to address it. 77 In summer, with rank and file Unionists appalled at the prospect of Irish Home Rule, the NUEC was placated only when Chamberlain offered to attend in Law's stead. 78 When Law finally made an appearance before the NUA Conference in November 1917, itself ostensibly held only because of the need for imminent party reorganisation, his performance was characterised by self-assurance. 79

The submission of the NUA and local constituencies was attributable to several influences. Noticeable was the absence from this forum of serious consideration, or criticism, of military strategy. In the light of post-war criticism of Haig's western strategy, this may seem surprising, but the silence was dictated by complete confidence in the military commanders. It also probably stemmed from a realisation that local associations were poorly placed to make informed judgements, many being denied the expertise of their parliamentary representative and relying heavily therefore on the bluster of the press. While attention was directed to the issue of manpower, this tended to concentrate on regional recruitment rather than national conscription.

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76 NUEC, 16/09/1915.
77 NUEC, 14/10/1915; 11/11/1915; 13/01/1916.
78 NUEC, 13/07/1916.
79 The party conference in August 1916 was not attended by the grassroots membership.
Such restraint was complemented by the support that Law received from traditional party elements. In 1916 a movement was afoot seeking to further democratise the party. This took the shape of repeated requests by Charles Marston, Chairman of Wolverhampton West Unionist Association, that the Council should meet more regularly and abide properly by its rules, which had been somewhat flouted due to wartime logistical difficulties. By September, Marston had produced a circular entitled ‘The Future of the Unionist Party’. It called for the need of ‘a more democratic spirit’, ‘an AWAKENING’, whilst lamenting the fact that ‘we appear to be largely under the Control of the Exclusive Men of the Party – the Business Men who constitute such an important Section have been pushed on one side.’ It culminated in a meeting organised by Marston to gather supporters. While Steel-Maitland thought ‘it better to let him have his run’ (even expressing sympathy with his objective of the greater integration of the business interest), traditional party figures sought to bolster the established powers. Alexander Leith, the Northern Area Chairman, forwarded Marston’s circular to the Party Chairman, and expressed concern that he ‘seems to be organising some sort of opposition to the Leaders of the Party’. The NUEC, meanwhile, studiously ignored Marston’s requests.

The authority bestowed upon the leadership in its interaction with the party grassroots was not mirrored in its relationship with the parliamentary rank and file. After a Carlton Club meeting to discuss the coalition, Henry Craik (a backbencher and long-serving member of the National Service League), wrote to his leader:

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80 NUEC, 12/10/1916.
82 Steel-Maitland to Leith, 12/10/1916, 14/01/1917 (copies); Leith to Steel-Maitland, 13/01/1917. SM GD/193/558/35, 274/405, 406.
I know how inexpedient it wd. be for a Unionist member to begin to urge compulsion. But as this imposes silence in the House, I wish to say how overwhelming is my conviction that this is [the] only thing that can save us from national disaster & how vital it seems to me ... that [the] Govt. should pronounce their purpose, & promptly take action to carry it out.

In his reply, Law wrote:

Our effort however must be not to seem to make any movement in this direction the result of pressure from us, as it can only be carried if we have – as I believe we shall – the support of the Liberal members of the Cabinet also. 83

This correspondence highlighted the foremost difficulty for Unionist ministers during the Asquith coalition, namely the necessity of advancing efficient war administration through negotiation and persuasion, whilst ever having to look over their shoulders at backbench militancy that would not accept such complexities. It exemplified in many ways how little had changed since the patriotic truce – ‘silence’ still ‘imposed’ upon the backbenches. The only tangible progress was that they now had a voice – through their leaders – in the decision-making body, but it was a voice that only rarely made itself heard in public. The Unionist leaders were hampered by several considerations. As seen above, they did not possess the departmental presence to insist on policies. Nor, at times, did they possess the inclination. Many recognised the need to carry Liberals in Cabinet and parliament, and Labour in the country, with Robert Cecil citing this as his objection to a possible supercession of Asquith and Grey by Lloyd George, Churchill and Curzon. 84 This was compounded by the lack of a credible alternative (at least in the eyes of the ministers themselves), which promoted an obligation toward preserving the coalition. 85 What is more, Cabinet

83 Craik to Law, 05/06/1915 (copy) and reply 07/06/1915. Craik Papers, MS, ff.14, 15.
84 Robert Cecil to Selborne, 10/12/1915. Boyce, Crisis, p.151.
85 Long to Law, 17/10/1915. BL/51/4/18.
was not a decision-making body in any real sense, frequently acting merely as a forum for protracted discussion, and an opportunity for the Prime Minister to catch up on his letter writing. Finally, once involved in the machinery of government, the intricacy of policies such as conscription became manifest.\textsuperscript{86}

Largely due to this disparity between backbench expectation and front-bench non-delivery, coalition government exacerbated the uncomfortable dynamic between the two. Inherently it tended to concentrate power in the centre and enfeeble the periphery, with frontbench collusion becoming the norm and consultation with the backbenches a luxury. It may also have made parliamentary dissidence less reprehensible, its anti-frontbench stance less specifically and explicitly disloyal as within a one-party administration. Such implications were substantiated in the cooperation between Liberal and Unionist ginger groups.\textsuperscript{87}

Surprisingly, given the limits imposed by coalition government, patronage proved only a minor basis for discontent. Although the number of posts that could be offered to Unionists was dramatically reduced compared to a purely party government, war generated a new batch of administrative offices. This allowed the tentacles of patronage to extend more widely, if not deeper, than before in all directions – Unionist, Liberal, Labour and business. More pertinently, patriotism did much to dam-up Unionist ambitions until the end of the war, when, perhaps close to overflowing anyway, discontented claimants to office flooded through. Consequently, Steel-Maitland’s indignation in December 1916 at his continued exclusion from Cabinet, and subsequent resignation, was but an exception and in more ways than one: few can have received such certain assurance of immediate Cabinet rank, only to fall at both the first and the second

\textsuperscript{86} For conscription see below, pp.262-268.
hurdle; 88 fewer still can have got on so appallingly with their departmental chief as did Steel-Maitland with Long at the Colonial Office. 89 Significantly for the war and post-war coalitions (for opposite reasons), Steel-Maitland’s resentment, manifested not in backbench militancy but in sullen silence, was poured into the reservoir, to emerge like spring torrents only after European peace had been secured. 90 Where grumbles could be heard, they were frequently not the product of coalition, but merely inner-party rivalries. Steel-Maitland, for instance, felt it ‘very awkward’ that the Unionist MP Leverton-Harris should join the Privy Council to the exclusion of Harry Samuel, a tireless servant of the NUEC. 91 Long echoed his sentiments, while giving particular prominence to the division of spoils between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives, going so far as to point the finger (customarily and erroneously) at Steel-Maitland as the villain. 92 It is worth noting, too, that those who proved the greatest and most overt threats to coalition government were not provoked by such considerations. Dissidents like Frederick Banbury and Henry Page Croft were beyond the pale of the most extensive and generous patronage. Conversely, both Chamberlain and Carson resigned from office, the latter, even, made a habit of it. 93

The traditional lines of party communication, meanwhile, were kept up through separate whips’ offices for Unionists and Liberals, but this was seemingly to little effect. The party whip Bridgeman complained, four months in, that he was ‘more out of it’ than as a newcomer to parliament, and it seems likely that both MPs

88 Steel-Maitland to Law, 19/07/1917. BL/82/2/10.
89 Steel-Maitland to Law, 10/12/1916; Younger to Law, 09/06/1917. BL/81/1/33, 82/1/10.
90 For Steel-Maitland’s grievances see ‘Memorandum of Conversation with Arthur Balfour’, 09/06/1916. SM GD/193/390/3x-4x; Steel-Maitland to Talbot, 12/12/1916, 13/12/1916. BL/81/1/54, 55. Steel-Maitland had asked to be Under-Secretary at the Treasury, then sole Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, both denied him.
91 Steel-Maitland to Law, 10/01/1916. BL/52/2/18.
92 Long to Law, 24/01/1916 (also see Memorandum enclosed). BL/52/2/26.
93 Such was the case also with Salisbury, who was offered (but refused) a post in December 1916.
and leaders dissociated themselves from official channels. Unionist ministers were not only understandably busy, but were probably reluctant to reveal contentious Cabinet developments – or more particularly non-developments. The rank and file, on the other hand, seemed suspicious that the whip’s office had evolved largely into coalition machinery. This had a damaging effect, such as that in summer 1916, when Richard Cooper MP told his leader that differences of opinion over Ireland had surfaced because they were ‘permitted to grow up through lack of proper guidance or information from such people as the Whips’.

These disruptions of the normal links and bindings between the party leadership and its parliamentary followers undoubtedly played some part in the emergence of an inordinate number of backbench factions. The formation of the Unionist Business Committee (UBC) was accompanied by that of the Beach Committee, the Empire Resources Development Committee, the Unionist War Committee (UWC), the Imperial Unionist Association (IUA), and any number of smaller groups. The two most prominent groups, the UBC and UWC, contrasted noticeably with their forerunners: unlike the famous ginger groups of the Conservative past, like Disraeli’s ‘Young England’ movement or Randolph Churchill’s ‘Fourth Party’, they were realistic and specific, not romantic and vague, and they were associations of the many, not the few. They shared personnel and style with the pre-war ‘Reveille’ movement but were less sectional. Contrary to other immediate predecessors, such as the Halsbury Club, which mobilised backwoodsmen in the clash over the Parliament Act, their basis was the House of Commons not the Lords. This in itself fashioned their impact,

95 Cooper to Law, 10/07/1916. BL/53/4/4.
for neither the Liberal Party nor Unionist leaders could characterise them as dilettantes dismissive of parliament, crushing government legislation under a stiletto shoe in Berkeley Square (as Lord Loreburn had memorably portrayed the diehard movement). They were exceptional also in that they were not mirrored in their intensity on the Liberal benches.

They were unquestionably partly reflective of personal ambition. It was little coincidence that on the two occasions on which the backbenchers were whipped into a position of real prominence, namely December 1916 and May 1918, they counted Carson in their midst. A Dubliner by residence, a diehard Irish Unionist by inclination, Carson had played the key role in the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force, and indeed perhaps in the whole notion of Ulster exclusion. In mid-October 1915 he resigned from the Government, citing the impossibility of continuing the Gallipoli expedition without disaster, and the abandonment of Servia. In the light of a conversation with his friend Ronald McNeill, these motives appear to have been sincere, although they extended to frustration over compulsion, the handling of the generals, and government vacillation. The simultaneous consideration of resignation by Steel-Maitland revealed the unsettled nature of the administration, but, significantly, it was a deliberation made in collusion with Carson. In 1915, Carson had been breaking free from the Government for some time. Though not officially involved with the UBC, as Attorney-General he had been willing to offer the group advice that shot across

96 Henry Page Croft’s Edwardian movement was specifically a tariff reform lobby. See Larry Witherell, Rebel on the Right: Henry Page Croft and the Crisis of British Imperialism, 1903-1914 (Newark, University of Delaware, 1997), pp.211-13.
99 Law to Asquith, 15/10/1915 (copy). BL/53/6/44.
101 Steel-Maitland to Milner, 15/10/1915. Milner Papers, 351/56.
the bows of Law's expressed opinions from the Colonial Office. While Carson's influence affected only the intensity and not the continuity of UWC operations, his successor, Salisbury, possessed neither the equivalent proclivity for political battle, nor the charisma. Additionally, as a peer, Salisbury was denied a voice in the Commons, and was all too easily sidetracked into Lords-centred controversy, as in 1917 with the cross-party movement to regulate the distribution of patronage.

Taken together, however, the political crises of 1916 indicate that backing for Carson was qualified. In turn, they also question whether Law's position was actually particularly vulnerable. Did he survive only by bowing to backbench pressure? Was it his very susceptibility to such forces, as Martin Pugh has argued, that ensured he retained the party crown? Many who supported Carson's motion for universal military service in April were also those who divided with him against the Government in the 'Nigeria Debate' of November. Nevertheless, these MPs were precisely those who opposed him in June and July. Because of this, a considerable overlap arose between Carson's UWC and the (anti-Carson) IUA. Salisbury, although later to head the UWC, even hosted the IUA's first meeting. This was symptomatic of a climate within which there was much intersection between the many ginger groups, most notably the UWC and UBC. For instance, of the twenty-five who sat on the UBC Executive Committee in early 1915, at least half also later became UWC members. No doubt this was due in part to their multifarious programmes and the broad remit of policies fostered under the banner of the 'prosecution of the war'. Equally crucial was the

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102 Hewins Diary, 23/07/1915. Carson informed Hewins that there was no legal barrier to the utilisation of Australian ore, a line of reasoning that ran counter to that employed by Law to a UBC deputation. Hewins, Apologia, II, p.45.


fact that, as the ever-astute Crawford remarked, 'too many of [the Government's] critics [were] themselves open to rebuke – Carson for instance or Milner being “unsound” on the Home Rule question, Hugh Cecil being rotten on tariffs and so on.'\textsuperscript{105}

In fact, the individual influence of, and challenge posed by, these groups is highly debatable. The UBC (not a direct product of coalition) continued its work after May 1915, initiating parliamentary consideration of national economy, contraband and enemy trading, and passing motions urging that the whole economic strength of the Empire be brought into cooperation with that of the Allies against the enemy.\textsuperscript{106} When Parliament was adjourned without division in July 1915, Hewins acknowledged that of the ‘100 or 150 members who attend [Parliament] regularly there is no doubt that the majority are against the Government but they would not have voted so in face of the united appeal of Liberal and Unionist leaders’. Five months later, he admitted: ‘I am really very much alone. Some of my oldest friends and colleagues get frightened and lukewarm at the idea of definite action to destroy the German economic octopus.’\textsuperscript{107} Hewins’ recurrent protestations of rampant discontent must be placed alongside these admissions of fragility within the UBC. Indeed the frequency – and inaccuracy – of his prophesies of ruin, does much to undermine his account. As John Stubbs has shown, Hewins exaggerated the membership of the UBC, claiming it included most Unionist MPs not at the front, when actually attendance at general meetings never exceeding forty.\textsuperscript{108} Average attendance, moreover, was well below this: twenty-nine at general meetings; twelve at the

\textsuperscript{105} Crawford Diary, 18/08/1916. Vincent, \textit{Crawford}, p.360.
\textsuperscript{107} Hewins Diary, 29/07/1915, 11/12/1915. Hewins, \textit{Apologia}, II, pp.46, 59.
executive committee; fourteen at sub-committees. It therefore represented a committed hardcore of activists rather than any profound shifting in loyalties or priorities amongst the backbenchers. The arrival of a second major ginger group, the Unionist War Committee, suggests that the UBC had failed to offer Unionist backbenchers a sufficiently organised, powerful, or ideologically reflective movement.

On several occasions, the UWC certainly proved itself a more serious challenge to the Government and the Unionist leadership. Though manifested in the ‘Nigeria Debate’ of November 1916, events until then cast doubt on the strength and unity of this movement as well. The UWC was born out of a rejuvenation of the National Service League (NSL), and the mobilisation of a powerful group of mainly extra-parliamentary personnel (including Geoffrey Robinson, Gwynne and Wilson, alongside MPs Amery, Carson and Waldorf Astor) in a failed move to promote Milner as an alternative war leader. Milner, probably feeling himself rather too big a man to enter by the backdoor, was nevertheless ready to push it ajar for Carson. In late 1915, with a parliamentary extension bill required to preserve Asquith’s government, a number of backbench MPs and peers threatened to compel a general election. To placate these dissidents, the government introduced a compromise compulsion bill that threatened to compel the bachelor into military service. Unsatisfied, the UWC was launched in January 1916, its particular emphasis being the implementation of full military conscription. A climax was reached in spring 1916 with Asquith vacillating as to the number of troops required, and the method by which to find them. A movement was thus afoot to replace the Prime Minister, with Lloyd George,
Northcliffe and Carson featuring large. In this instance, the UWC was restrained by its more moderate (UBC) elements – including Bull, Stanley Baldwin, Evelyn Cecil, Craik, Henry Duke, Basil Peto, and Ernest Pollock. That Cecil, Craik and Peto were amongst its ‘weak-kneed’ element – as Amery labelled it – says much of the UWC’s radicalism. This group distributed an urgent telegram convening a meeting at Baldwin’s Eaton Square residence the day before a UWC meeting planned for Tuesday 21 March. An attendance of seventy decided that to support the tabling of a resolution in parliament would wreck the Government, and that instead the case should be put privately to Law. The following day, the UWC accepted the proposal to abandon the resolution, and a deputation to their leader was arranged instead. While the Daily News was correct in its diagnosis that a whip-up of moderates had been organised, the movement seems to have sprung from conservative forces outside the leadership and unsolicited by it. Why the UBC members should have wished to moderate the UWC is debatable. Thrown in, certainly, was an ingredient of resentment between the two groups. Hewins’ resignation from the UWC in mid-February exposed the unavoidable rivalry. More significantly, Bull felt that the UWC ‘were being made fools of’. It certainly reflected a very qualified endorsement of Carson or Lloyd George as potential Prime Minister, and continued confidence in Law as party leader.

In June 1916 the UWC was again unable to impose itself, although disaffection was equally widespread, this time over Ireland. A home rule settlement – proposed by Lloyd George as an answer to the ‘Easter Rising’ in Dublin –

116 Hewins Diary, 19/02/1916. Hewins, Apologia, II, p.64.
secured the endorsement of Carson, Law, 'F.E.', Balfour, and Curzon on the basis of six-county Ulster exclusion. However, the southern Unionists Long, Lansdowne, Selborne, Robert Cecil and Chamberlain considered such a compromise insufficient. On 22 June 1916, seventy-eighty Unionists met, dispatching a deputation to Law. Such was the discontent that Law was compelled to summon a party meeting on 8 July at which two hundred MPs attended. Majority opinion at both gatherings was against the leadership's adoption of the settlement, with the fault-line lying between southern and Ulster Unionists. Both Bridgeman and Hewins recorded that although the rank and file was unhappy, it was unlikely that a majority would have voted against the leadership, though neither MP was averse to stark warnings of Unionist schisms in this period. To underline the limited backing for Carson, yet another Unionist sub-group – the Imperial Unionist Association (IUA) – emerged, its brief specifically to watch over the Government's policy towards Ireland. More specifically, it was an anti-Ulster, pro-southern Irish Unionist group, founded to ensure that Carson and the Unionist leaders did not sell Ireland short. So angry was Walter Guinness at Carson's attempt to employ the UWC as a pro-Ulster pressure group that he manoeuvred it against its leader.

The cataclysmic 'Nigeria Debate' of November 1916 cannot be understood in relation to Law's leadership except in conjunction with these prior failures. In any case, Stubbs has described the debate as 'something of a minor triumph' for

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120 Daily Telegraph, 12/07/1916, 13/07/1916.
Law, in that he at least now had the backing of a majority of Unionist MPs. Indeed, the UWC was split: thirty in favour of the Government; twenty-six abstentions; notable defectors including Ernest Pollock (chairman of the UWC 'Contraband' Committee) and Peto. Notwithstanding this, as R.J.Q. Adams has pointed out, while the division gave Law a Unionist majority of seven, only a minority of backbenchers actually voted with him, and 'this alone made Carson a rival for Bonar Law's place'. "F.E.'s retort, that the Government would 'cross off the votes of the members who are paid, if [the rebels would cross] off those who want to be paid', was witty but disingenuous, implying that all entered politics with the unfettered ambition with which he had. Significantly, Law had made clear previously that he would not remain in office if his party expressed a want of confidence in him, though judiciously he had remained unspecific about how this might be expressed. Whether it represented defeat or success, the debate was pivotal, presenting to Law a threat that could not be readily ignored, or merely providing a reason by which he could act (and act with the knowledge that he had support), or indeed both.

The issue of Nigerian palm kernels definitely fell directly under Law's departmental remit as Colonial Secretary. It also fell under that of the Party Chairman Steel-Maitland, his Under-Secretary. But, as Steel-Maitland realised, the protest actually emanated from a 'lack of go-aheadness in Government and not so much on this particular question [of Nigerian contracts] as generally'.

122 Stubbs, 'Impact', p.29.
124 Adams, Bonar Law, p.223; Blake, Unknown Prime Minister, pp.297-9.
126 Bridgeman Diary, April 1916. Williamson, Modernisation, p.97. Bridgeman rather vaguely claimed that Law had made this pledge 'in October last (I think)'. It is probable that such a hostage to fortune was not presented without good reason, which likely revolved around an attempt to maintain backbench loyalty (over conscription).
More especially, in most quarters, the protest was rather against the Government's sluggish prosecution of the war *in toto*, than a specific move to oust Law. Lord Winterton, although voting against the Government's weak case, considered his leader 'level'.\(^{128}\) It also reflected, above all, a political situation in which Unionist attitudes were shaped less by mere party concerns than by governmental ones, a fact verified by the reception given the new administration.

This is not to deny that by December 1916, there existed a long, cumulative procession of dissatisfaction at Law's leadership. His malleability, apparent to his followers in the excessively protracted adoption of conscription and in the crisis over the Irish settlement, had resulted in general cynicism. Selborne could justifiably claim that his leader had 'emasculated' Unionist influence in the Cabinet, by adhering trenchantly to the notion of Asquith's indispensability.\(^{129}\) Throughout the country, similar sentiments were present. In July 1916, the Chairman of North Leeds Conservative Association told Law that he had obviously been foolish in hoping that 'when the Coalition Government was formed, our Leaders would compel Asquith to change his methods and conduct the War as if we were really fighting for our very existence'.\(^{130}\) Basil Peto aired his grievances to his constituents, attacking the government on the broadest of grounds – Ireland, drink, conscription, the prosecution of the war and tariff reform.\(^{131}\) A resolution sent to the NUEC from Newcastle-upon-Tyne abhorred 'the dilatory indecision, and unsatisfactory methods by which the War has been hitherto carried on'. The NUEC approved of such views, and communicated its

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127 Steel-Maitland quoted in Yearwood, 'Nigeria Debate', p.398. A core of Liverpool Unionists were also pursuing their own mercantile interests in attempting to maintain the monopoly that their port enjoyed in Nigerian trade. See John Stubbs, 'The Conservative Party and the Politics of War, 1914-16', Oxford University, D.Phil. (1973), Chapter XI.
129 Selborne Memorandum, Summer 1916. Boyce, *Crisis*, p.188.
130 Tennant to Butler, (enclosed in Butler to Law), 08/07/1916. BL/53/4/2.
131 Devizes UA, AGM, 27/04/1916, (2305/1).
feelings to Law. 132 With inaction on their doorstep, such sentiments among the grassroots were accentuated within the parliamentary Unionist party.

More compelling pointers to Unionist backbench demands in winter 1916, however, were the changes in procedure and personnel implemented, and the reaction that they effected. The Cabinet system was overhauled and an executive War Cabinet of five established, with a secondary Cabinet, composed of departmental chiefs, providing information and executing decisions. Although by December 1916, Milner and his minnows were supporting a small War Cabinet composed of five or six, 133 only the more thinking, and involved, Unionists expressed this as a substantive explanation for the Government's failure. Indeed, much points to the fact that, as regards the constitution of the war policy making body even those who had experienced the Cabinet system at its worst were far from decided. Successive Presidents of the Board of Agriculture (Selborne and Crawford) complained bitterly of the inefficiency of the Cabinet system, but then the Cabinet had repeatedly scotched their schemes for increasing arable production. Others were less zealous for change or, at the very least, were uncertain of what the reform should constitute. Curzon wanted a committee larger than five (as proposed on 21 September 1915), but smaller than twelve (the Dardanelles Committee) and did not even ask for daily sittings. By December 1916, he appeared to view indifferently the Cabinet's constitution, emphasising rather the issue of personnel. 134 Balfour preferred informal consultations with Asquith to the official forum of the Cabinet (perhaps as a method of bypassing Law). 135

132 NUEC, 08/06/1916. Almost identical concerns were raised by J.C. Williams at Truro UA, AGM, 22/03/1916, (JAR).
133 Milner to Law, 02/12/1916. BL/53/4/29.
134 Curzon to Lansdowne, 03/12/1916. Lansdowne Papers, 'Named Correspondent'.
135 Fraser, 'Impact', p.131.
Accordingly, the more significant development was that of personnel. Aside from his ministerial colleagues, Asquith could boast few Unionist supporters. Law received much criticism from the front of the Prime Minister's style of non-leadership, most notably from Wilson — an entrenched anti-Asquithian — and John Baird. Selborne claimed that Asquith's 'greatest asset was his imperturbability. ... For the rest he was quite hopeless as a war P.M.' Many agreed with such denigration of Asquith. By December 1916, 'Squiff' had become anathema to most Unionists, and his incompetence had become a truism to the likes of Hewins, F.S. Oliver, Amery, Carson, Milner and Willoughby de Broke. Meanwhile, his eventual successor, Lloyd George, had advanced in Unionist hearts during the war by his dynamism, promotion of conscription and recognition of total war. As early as October 1915, the Unionist Chief Whip, Talbot, had informed his leader that 'so far as the House of Commons is concerned, Lloyd George would become leader of a majority of the Tory Party.' What is more, Talbot's only reservations had emanated from a fear that Lloyd George would be opposed by the bulk of the Liberal, Irish Nationalist and Labour Parties, and thus that a general election would have been unavoidable, with the emotional issue of conscription to the fore. Steel-Maitland had come to similar conclusions five months later, telling Law that should Asquith be replaced, it was 'only Mr. Lloyd George who need be seriously considered' from the Liberal Party, but that he was 'seriously discredited among large bodies of Labour opinion' and that the bulk of the Liberal Party would view his accession

137 Selborne Memorandum, Summer 1916. Boyce, Crisis, pp.185-6.
139 Martin Farr, 'A Compelling Case for Voluntarism: Britain's Alternative Strategy, 1915-1916', War History (2002), pp.279-304; Michael Fry, 'Political Change in Britain, August 1914 to December 1916: Lloyd George replaces Asquith: the issues underlying the drama', Historical Journal, xxxi (1988), pp.609-27. The former argues that it was the issue of 'consumption' that drew Lloyd George and the Unionists together, the latter that conscription formed the most forceful link.
140 Talbot to Law, 16/10/1915. BL/51/4/16.
as 'the successful accomplishment of an unwarranted intrigue'. Therefore, neither Chief Whip nor Party Chairman viewed Unionist opinion as an obstacle to a Lloyd George administration. When Unionist MPs were canvassed at the end of 1916, an overwhelming majority recorded their wish to see Asquith replaced with Lloyd George.

It is unnecessary here to examine the vacillations of Unionist ministers – most famously Long and the so-called "Three-C’s" (Robert Cecil, Chamberlain and Curzon) – as to the choice between Asquith and Lloyd George. What their hesitancy established was that the contest was close-run and contained certain contradictions. From a personality point of view, Balfour, Cecil, Chamberlain, Curzon, Crawford, Long and Lansdowne undoubtedly favoured the urbanity of Asquith to the ruggedness of Lloyd George. Cecil and the languid Lansdowne were enticed by his refinement and Whiggish statesmanship, Long flirtatiously courted, if not actually wooed, by Margot Asquith. A key consideration was the issue of loyalty, which extended to the issue of ministerial duty, and the prospect of an intrigue left Lansdowne with a 'nasty taste in my mouth', while Crawford feared that the nature of Lloyd George's accession would be 'embarrassing'.

Backbench opinion was certainly only too happy to have traded in an old, if slick, model for something less predictable but virile, as evinced in the declining influence of the ginger groups. Equally noteworthy, however, was the

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141 Steel-Maitland Memorandum, "The Political Situation", 31/03/1916. SM GD/193/306/84-88x.
143 Margot Asquith to Long, 17/04/1916, 18/04/1916. Long Papers, MS Add. 62404, ff.144-5, 163-5. She addressed him as 'My dearest Walter' and offered unctuous flattery.
appointment of Milner to the War Cabinet of five, which epitomised the changes in both personnel and Cabinet constitution. He came with a clean slate, being distanced from past Unionist failings in government – both during the war, when he had not previously been offered a position, and in the Balfour administration of 1902-05, when he had been but had refused. R.J. Scally certainly goes too far in equating the events of December 1916 to mid-1910 so directly and in constructing a concrete ‘Social-Imperialist’ link between Lloyd George’s coalition plans of 1910 and 1916. Nevertheless, the anti-party sentiment of the radical right and the issue of efficiency was addressed head on in the appointment of Milner.146 Significantly, he possessed the confidence of many trouble-makers, including Amery, F.S. Oliver, Steel-Maitland and Carson, and many who were in a position to pose a threat, like Chamberlain and Selborne. He also epitomised efficiency, operating – as he always seemed to – with a kindergarten of sidekicks, who served to oil the machinery of state.147

It was fundamentally on the basis of these appointments that Unionist dissentients were contained. With such men of drive and administrative ability at the helm, charges of ineffectiveness carried little weight, and under such circumstances it was largely Lloyd George’s supposed defects of character that posed the greatest danger. While his Marconi dealings had been studiously ignored in the light of his capabilities during war, he nevertheless possessed a capacious cupboard of skeletons. On the formation of Lloyd George’s Government, Crawford, Cave, Robert Cecil, Long and Finlay (to name but a few) had been afraid of his underhand style.148 Through 1917 and 1918, there is little to suggest that, as far as personality went, many hatchets were buried. Faults

perceived in Lloyd George’s character as Prime Minister were precisely those observed before December 1916. Indeed now they were accentuated, because as national leader he possessed greater license to exhibit his shortcomings. Convincing signs of Lloyd George’s personal ambition – like the routine character of his resignation threats during the Asquith coalition, and his timely transfer to the infant Department of Munitions, at a time when it could hardly crawl, and equally timely departure, at which point it was full-grown and only too likely to trip – were hard to forget.\(^{149}\)

Specific grievances aggravated such distrust. Although it has been convincingly argued that British policy-makers were not divided on a ‘Westerner’ versus ‘Easterner’ basis (nor on a simple ‘Brass-hats’ versus ‘Frock-coats’ premise), old-style Conservatives deplored Lloyd George’s treatment of the generals.\(^{150}\) Ranks closed behind Generals Haig and Robertson when Lloyd George sought to pursue an Eastern policy and marginalise the military commanders of the Western front. This quarrel re-emerged in August 1917, when Haig and Robertson believed (rightly) that Lloyd George and Milner were weakening their offensive on the Western Front, leading Robert Cecil to complain that ‘it is the old story. The soldiers believe the “little man” is intriguing with the French or the Italians or someone.’\(^{151}\) This resulted in the bizarre alliance between Asquith, the generals, the anti-Lloyd George Liberal press (Daily News, Daily Star, and the Nation) and the extreme right-wing press (the Morning Post, the Globe, and National Review), against the Prime Minister (himself supported by such diverse

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\(^{148}\) Robert Cecil to Selborne, 10/12/1915. Boyce, Crisis, pp.151-2; Long to Law, 09/12/1916; Robert Cecil to Law, 09/12/1916. BL/81/1/29, 31.

\(^{149}\) For instance, ‘Interview with Asquith’ by Austen Chamberlain, 29/06/1916. AC/12/35.


\(^{151}\) Chelwood to Lloyd George, 29/08/1917. Balfour Papers, MS Add. 49738, ff.142-3
publications as the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Chronicle*). Two months later, and also again in early 1918, Cecil and Long were alarmed at the establishment of a Supreme War Council, which threatened to undermine the authority of CIGS Robertson, with the placement of Wilson as the British representative in Paris.

But, Lloyd George had been selected as a substitute for Asquith, and minds were thus decided also by the image of the ex-Prime Minister on the sidelines keeping warm for another run at office. At a high-water mark of Unionist misgivings in February and March 1918, Balfour drew attention to this

> You must not expect perfection. You see Lloyd George's faults; and they are not difficult to see. But do you think he can be improved upon out of our existing material? Is there any one of his colleagues in the present War Cabinet you would like to see in his place? Is there any member of the late Government you would like to see in his place?–

This consideration mollified Unionist malcontents in these troubled months, when the German army was collecting its forces for a last massive offensive. Once more, the underlying trouble emanated from Lloyd George's methods of government, especially his abuse of the honours system – most horribly in the form of a peerage for Lord Beaverbrook – and his appointment to government positions of the press barons (Northcliffe, Rothermere and, again, Beaverbrook). This was supplemented – as always – with divergence from the military High Command. Bar Balfour, the whole Cecil clan (Hugh, Robert, Salisbury, Selborne) was outraged, and Chamberlain, emboldened by the encouraging words of friends and government dissidents, was prompted to launch a colossal Commons assault upon the Prime Minister. While it was a resounding success,

Chamberlain refused to take the necessary steps against Lloyd George and Law to ensure change. Partly, no doubt, this was Chamberlain 'playing the game' (and 'losing it' as 'F.E.' might have added): he abandoned intimidation at an early stage and resorted to appeals through Curzon, Milner and Carson. In any case, it is questionable whether he – like Carson, Salisbury and others – could have carried the wider party. For, although there was widespread indignation at Lloyd George's promotion of the newspaper magnates (for instance within the UWC), and whilst Chamberlain received a rapturous reception, Milner considered he was barking up the wrong tree. Amery, meanwhile, felt that Chamberlain was still living as if in the 1880s, with his obsession with 'good form'. As F.S. Oliver quipped, he must have counted someone at Madame Tussaud's among his maternal ancestors. Furthermore, Chamberlain and others were anxious as to who might be the likeliest beneficiary of any governmental upheaval.

The standoff, as already visualised by Balfour, materialised in spring 1918. The 'Maurice Debate' placed before Unionists a direct choice between Asquith and Lloyd George, in the guise of a vote of censure against the government manufactured by the Prime Minister out of a motion for a Select Committee put down in Asquith's name. The distress originated from concerns that Lloyd George was yet again maltreating the military commanders, this time by misrepresenting the strength of the British army in France. The Prime Minister managed to see off his adversaries, remarking disarmingly to his Unionist colleagues that 'this time [he had] been caught out telling the truth' (which, of

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155 Verbatim letters from Chamberlain to Curzon, Milner and Carson, 21/02/1918. Carson Papers, MiC/665/B/39/4; AC/15/7/7.
156 Amery diary, 04/03/1918. Barnes, Amery Diaries, pp.207-8. For the backbench dissent see Salisbury to Law, 22/02/1918. BL/82/9/13; Evelyn Cecil to Curzon, 22/02/1918. Curzon Papers, f.112, 121a, ff.80-1.
course, even in this case he had not). It was only partly this mischievous wit that saved him, and more the fact that, despite its sympathy with the military commanders, the UWC was unready to endorse Asquith to any degree. After all, Carson had remarked only a few months earlier that he ‘certainly [didn’t] want Asquith back’. If anything, as one Unionist remarked, the contest established the Lloyd George government ‘more firmly in the saddle than they [had] been for some time past’.

Throughout the coalition, the party’s commitment to Lloyd George faced only one explicit and prolonged threat. This was from the National Party, which broke away from the Unionist Party in August and September 1917. Without a broad base of support, it attracted few, including a small clutch of disaffected peers, their sons and nephews, and a smaller group of MPs (Henry Page Croft, Viscount Duncannon, Richard Cooper, Colonel R.H. Rawson, Major Rowland Hunt, Major Douglas Carnegie and Major Alan Burgoyne). All were parliamentary small fry, with the possible exceptions of Beresford and Cooper. Indeed, such was this the case that the Chief Unionist Whip in the House of Lords confessed he had not even heard of one of its members in his House. While the Conservative Agents’ Journal described party members as ‘well-meaning political mediocrities’, Lord Wolmer considered one member ‘semi-witted’ (he was not so generous about the others). For what reasons did the party fail to attract the mainstream?

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158 Crawford diary, 09/05/1918. Vincent, Crawford, p.389.
160 Carson to F.S. Oliver, 17/02/1918. Oliver Papers, MS 24856, f.46.
161 Dougul O'Malcolm to Onslow, 20/05/1918. Onslow Papers, 5337/8/6.
164 Conservative Agents’ Journal [CAJ], xlvi, October 1917, p.119.
At the time of the National Party’s arrival serious grievances were being aired within Unionist circles. Accordingly, the new party was not predestined to fail. In August 1917, Law was forced by his backbenchers to demand the exclusion of Arthur Henderson from the War Cabinet after the Labour leader determined to attend a socialist peace conference in Stockholm. Cabinet appointments also aroused considerable resentment amongst the Unionist Party in summer 1917: Lloyd George attempted to shoehorn Churchill, the bogey of the Unionist Party, back into war administration; the appointments of Edwin Montagu (India Office) and Christopher Addison (Ministry of Reconstruction) were scarcely more popular. Such was the concern, that Steel-Maitland claimed that he would ‘not be a bit surprised to see a “bust up” by Christmas’, especially at the NUA or local level. In the meantime, Long and Derby were pitted against Milner over the Corn Production Act (which had antagonised farmers and the landed interest), the public was dissatisfied by the response to the submarine menace, and tariff reformers cried out for the implementation of the Paris Economic Conference resolutions. Because of such dissent, Long was ‘pretty confident that the great bulk of our Party would go over’ to the National Party, if it found itself with a persuasive leader. Unionist agents thought the new faction ‘would undoubtedly detach many active spirits who were dissatisfied about home rule and other matters’. Even Talbot admitted that he was afraid the National Party would get a following ‘to a certain extent amongst our own people in the country’.

What is more, in both its programme and its organisation, the National Party carefully directed its efforts at the nation. Croft attempted to employ the Tariff Reform League (TRL) – for whose organisation committee he had previously

167 Steel-Maitland to Chamberlain, 27/07/1917. AC/12/149.
169 CA!, October 1917, pp.147-56.
served as chairman – to provide an infrastructure. Matters were arranged for the TRL and the British Empire Union to convene general meetings in the wake of the National Party manifesto. It also considered seriously the wording, style and programme of the manifesto so as to broaden its appeal. Duncannon, for instance, asked F.S. Oliver (the author of the manifesto) to ‘avoid using the word “soldiers” too often’, claiming that Croft had spoken ‘of the fear of militarism which is already abroad in the country – & and that we must not give any ground for that fear’. 171

However, by its inability to win over a credible leader, most especially Milner, the new party squandered these advantages. Milner’s non-participation was confirmed, though certainly not determined only, by his involvement in the War Cabinet. Not only did his absence deny the movement the leader it desperately required, but he also took with him many others, including William Ormsby-Gore (his PPS), who professed ‘agreement with [the National Party] programme’, but proclaimed that ‘wherever Milner leads I shall follow and whatever party he is in, I shall be in’. 172 Sentiments like these were not confined to Milner’s staff. Internal party developments also swayed opinion. Milner’s connections with patriotic Labour, which were cementing themselves into concrete cooperation with the Unionist Party, had stolen what thunder Croft might else have delivered, depriving it of the opportunity of widening its base of appeal to Unionists with radical leanings. How many, if any, more supporters might otherwise have been won over is probably slight. Unlike the British Worker’s National League (BWNL), which possessed very capable, if marginal, economic thinkers on both the Unionist and Labour wings, the National Party

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171 Duncannon to Oliver, 25/07/1917, 28/07/1917; Croft to Oliver, n.d [September, 1917]. Oliver Papers, MS 24854, ff.111-15, 117-18, 171-74.
172 Ormsby-Gore to Croft, 07/09/1917. Croft Papers, 1/17.
had few of such insight. Moreover, by its membership, as by its programme, it offered little appeal to patriotic labour and could at best attract the attention of imperialist Unionists with no particular loyalty to the Government. It is noteworthy that, although the UWC and UBC remained influential, an attempt to establish a distinct alternative party failed miserably. It was anathema to coalition politics. The far more successful BWNL cooperated openly with the Government and outwardly represented the partnership between labour and Unionist within its ranks. The National Party did neither, offering reluctant and qualified support to the Government, whilst representing merely a small minority of just one party.

Sympathisers like Edward Wood and Dougal O’Malcolm consequently favoured the reformation of existing parties rather than the establishment of an entirely new outfit. Wood hoped ‘to arrive at the same goal as the “National” Party’ by ‘a simultaneous reform of all parties’, and so produce ‘a new, less-rigid “party system” – by the cooperation of men of all parties’, this last a sentiment to be echoed in Law’s conference speech in November. Pertinent issues were being pursued in other ways. What is more, while few may have been alienated by its programme, this in itself concealed a flaw. For, as Wolmer noted, Law, Asquith or the Labour leader Stephen Walsh could equally well have issued the manifesto. Or, as the sympathiser Lloyd remarked, the rebels seemed ‘to have left the party rather like a child that goes out of Church on tip-toe because it is feeling sick rather than as one who renounces an abandoned dogma’. Such factors kept Lloyd and others within the main congregation of the coalition.

When the genesis of Croft's movement is appreciated, its oblique focus was perhaps unsurprising. It evolved out of an effort from June 1917 to ‘frighten’ Lloyd George into appreciating the need for a proper military offensive. Most particularly, this took the outrageous shape of the promotion of Wilson (until 26 June no less a man than the British Army's Chief Liaison Officer at the French headquarters) as a parliamentary candidate. Masterminded by Duncannon (Wilson’s aide de camp), dinner parties were arranged for well-wishers, including F.S. Oliver, Croft, Maxse, Gwynne, Guinness and Goulding, and a safe parliamentary seat was pursued. It came to nothing, partly because it was for Wilson and supporters like Lord Esher (British Emissary in Paris) no more than a sideshow to their official careers, partly because Carson kept failing – seemingly deliberately – to find Wilson a seat in Ulster. The purpose of the mid-summer ‘crusade’ was to impel the prosecution of the war, encourage a proactive policy towards Bulgaria, Turkey and Servia, and resolve the question of manpower. Similarities in personnel and timing prove the growth of Croft’s party out of this fundamentally military seed. Subsequently, intricate socio-economic policies were in short supply. The National Party ended up neither a civilian nor a military party, but a civilian party with military pretensions (or perhaps vice versa), which suited few, save a few hardcore Unionists returned from the front.

Despite the gloomy forebodings of party leaders, Unionist grassroots' reaction revealed both disinterest in the National Party’s politics and a marked loyalty to the coalition in spite of its problems. In mid-August, a party whip recorded that it was not ‘making much headway’ and had failed to ‘collar’ the TRL. There was some little concern locally, most notably in London, but there was a paucity of consideration offered it elsewhere. The Herefordshire North Unionist

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177 Henry Wilson diary, 28/06/1917, 29/06/1917, 04/07/1917, 05/07/1917, 10/07/1917, 22/07/1917. Wilson Papers, DS/MISC/80/7.
178 Bridgeman to Caroline Bridgeman, 16/08/1917. Williamson, Modernisation, p.121.
Association, in what were unusually political and extensive discussions, merely recorded the receipt of the National Party circular and so dismissed it out of hand without any consideration.\textsuperscript{180} Meanwhile, it was not until mid-November that the NUEC was asked by Joseph Lawrence to take steps to combat the activities and methods of the new group, and even then these were not acted upon.\textsuperscript{181} Finally, and ironically given its disruptive objectives, the National Party, through its failure, only served to bolster party unity and the leadership of Law and Lloyd George. Because, if Unionists were always wary that the choice lay between Asquith and Lloyd George, then Croft's efforts did little to dispute this concept, even did much to reinforce it. This offered great solace to those who considered that in Law as party leader with Milner and Lloyd George as war leaders, they had already unearthed the best talent.

\textbf{The Future Idea of Party}

In March 1918, Austen Chamberlain claimed that the shadow of a general election was diverting Lloyd George's attention away from the war and towards his own position, and Chamberlain was not 'disposed to give him a blank cheque'.\textsuperscript{182} In many ways this was demonstrative of Unionist perspectives on the objectives of the coalition administration, namely that its brief was the prosecution of the war and, at most, smooth demobilisation in its aftermath. This was made manifest, for example, when representatives at a party meeting in Newcastle resolved to 'strongly demand that the issues [in a general election] should be limited to the successful prosecution of the war, the Peace Terms, & any necessary legislation required'. As Younger commented upon this:

\textsuperscript{179} CAJ, xlvi, October 1917, pp.141-3. 
\textsuperscript{180} Herefordshire North UA, Finance and Advisory Committee, 21/09/1917, (K78/2). 
\textsuperscript{181} NUEC, 09/10/1917. 
\textsuperscript{182} Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 17/03/1918. Self, \textit{Austen Chamberlain}, pp.80-1.
‘obviously the idea was not to trust the P.M. beyond that, & only to support him on a limited programme. After that the Electors [are] again to be appealed to.’ A few weeks later, Younger added the ‘very strong feelings’ against an election expressed by the Yorkshire Provincial Division and in Glasgow.\textsuperscript{183} For some, even an early election fought on a “win the war” coalition cry aroused the alarm that supporters would have to be encouraged to vote for non-Unionist candidates, ‘with which, on everything but the war they may be at total variance’, an encouragement that would not necessarily be easy to retract.\textsuperscript{184}

Lloyd George unquestionably possessed many merits attractive to Unionists. As J.C.C. Davidson appreciated (though with the discerning eye of hindsight, one suspects), ‘it would have been very difficult for many Conservatives to resist Lloyd George, because he had at that time the immense prestige of a \textit{national} leader’ and a readiness to lead a ‘national’ party – ‘a repetitive speech which you will find in all Conservative leaders’ speeches’.\textsuperscript{185} Such phraseology was alluring, with its references back not only to the one-nation Conservatism of Disraeli and the Tory democracy of Randolph Churchill, but also to the national cohesion and exertion associated with the war, and the patriotism of 1914-18 that offered a unique opportunity to resolve the class issue.\textsuperscript{186} What made it a more sustainable projection was the evolution of the Lloyd George coalition into an anti-socialist force after the Russian revolutions of 1917.\textsuperscript{187} The remaining question, of course, was just how sustainable it was.

Notwithstanding specific advantages to the party, Neville Chamberlain gathered ‘that \textit{all} Unionists [did] not regard with pleasure the notion of permanently

\textsuperscript{183} Younger to Law, 06/09/1918 (BL/84/1/9), 20/09/1918, 23/09/1918 (BL/95/2).
\textsuperscript{184} Londonderry to Talbot, 28/08/1918 (copy). Londonderry Papers, D/3099/7/1.
\textsuperscript{186} For the impact of patriotism see Chapter III.
enrolling under L.G.'s standard, and among them may be reckoned "Yours trooly". Although "Yours Trooly" disliked Lloyd George for personal reasons—a distaste that can have been only supplemented by his brother's outlook in early 1918—Neville's reservations were mirrored elsewhere. Two major dangers attended the establishment of any longer-term partnership: Lloyd George and his followers had to be trusted in a personal sense; the future of the Unionist Party and its principles had to be safeguarded against the impact of continued dilution. The first requirement was uncertain. Even in July 1918, Long was informing his leader that Lloyd George seemed 'really determined to split our Party as his own is split' and, having already broken one party, there was no reason to believe that he would refrain from doing so again, should the necessity or opportunity have arisen. With little apparent alteration in mood since December 1916, Robert Cecil and Curzon were against joining with him on the ground that he was 'such a dirty little rogue'. Nonetheless, although character faults were cited frequently, party motives loomed large, Balfour advising Robert Sanders that Cecil was actually against Lloyd George because he wanted 'a small exclusive Unionist party'. This rationale appeared to extend also to Curzon, who expressed concern that Milner, 'not a Conservative or Unionist in the ordinary sense', should represent party opinion on the committee formed to draft an election programme. Consequently, Curzon informed his leader that he must 'entirely dissent' from the idea that 'our Party should merge its identity in some new party or should pledge its future allegiance after peace has returned'. By November, although he was judging the old party programmes as 'obsolete', Balfour was

187 Turner, British Politics, p.194.
188 Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 23/03/1918. Self, Neville Chamberlain, p.260. Chamberlain had served as Director of National Service under Lloyd George, but felt that he had been mistreated by the premier.
189 Long to Law, 17/07/1918. BL/83/5/17.
190 Sanders Diary, 03/03/1918. Ramsden, Tory, pp.101-2.
191 Curzon to Law, 25/02/1918. BL/82/9/16.
still warning Derby that opposition could be expected from 'men like Walter Long and ... “my own family”'.

It is evident that from spring to November 1918 the party was obsessed with its ability to retain at least its long-term independence. Law sought to ameliorate his party supporters by appointing a ‘Conservative’ policy committee upon which were to serve the Party Chairman Younger, the obscure Lord Clyde and the traditional Tory squire Long. They duly reported in predictably Conservative style advocating tariffs, protection against dumping, modification of the terms of the disendowment of the Welsh Church, and the reconstitution of the House of Lords. These were viewed as minimum gains to ensure the future of Unionist Party principles. Conversely, the Liberal proposals on nationalisation of railways, a minimum wage and no-food taxes were ditched. Together they indicated that any coalition would have to enjoy a distinctly Unionist flavour.

Curzon’s distrust of Milner was symptomatic of the divisions within the party wrought by coalition politics. While Milner never lacked support from the Birmingham, tariff reform, or imperialist groups, many traditional Tories remained suspicious of his collectivist inclinations. Increasingly the party was split between those who displayed a readiness to work (however tenuously) alongside patriotic Labour and those who sought to retreat to the comforts and dependability of Toryism after the war. The old guard was best personified in Long. Anxious that Roland Prothero (President of the Board of Agriculture) was being cornered on the land question by the socialists and Arthur Lee (a Unionist, but an adamant supporter of Lloyd George), Long considered that the party was

192 Curzon to Law, 08/11/1918. BL/95/2; Derby diary, 03/11/1918. Derby Papers, 28/1/1.
194 For a wider discussion see Chapters III and V below.
losing its landowning and farming backbone – its ‘mainstay’.\textsuperscript{195} He, however, remained in the minority, and widespread satisfaction with co-operation in government with patriotic Labour leaders (pacifists such as Ramsay MacDonald being excluded) put a heavy-duty nail in the coffin of the Whig-Unionist alliance proposed by Hugh Cecil in 1915. Instead the Unionist Party would have to go it alone, in association with Lloyd George and/or with patriotic Labour.

Such developments were also symptomatic of a wider change, namely indifference towards the idea of ‘party’. Earlier in the war, Milner had hoped that many of the younger Unionists ‘who [were] not hidebound partisans and [did] not care at all about the machine’ would be ready to work alongside patriotic Labour, and create a further parliamentary grouping.\textsuperscript{196} The irony, that those ostensibly against ‘party’ were in fact intent upon precisely that, seemed lost on its adherents. This was no mere oversight: disillusion was directed less against the notion of parliamentary organisation and electoral choice, but rather towards the two-party system, which stretched back from the Unionist-Radical divide to that of Tories and Whigs of the previous centuries.\textsuperscript{197} Antipathy towards the party system, indeed, had strong antecedents in the Edwardian period: the ‘radical right’ of the pre-war era had possessed an almost equal distaste for the mandarins of their own party as for the politics of Liberal and Labour.\textsuperscript{198} While, as Geoffrey Searle has claimed, their attitudes ‘[seemed] to foreshadow the fascism of a later generation’, they actually found much greater expression in the

\textsuperscript{195} Long to Cave, 01/06/1918. Cave Papers, MS Add. 62497, f.36.
\textsuperscript{196} Milner to Willoughby de Broke, 01/10/1915. Willoughby de Broke Papers, WB11/11.
\textsuperscript{197} For instance, see Milner’s memorandum, ‘Some Notes on the Present War Situation’, 12/03/1916. Milner Papers, 352/66-72.

dissentient voices of Unionism in 1915-18. Their hatred of flaccid leadership, of corruption, of alien influence, was made into a persuasive package by the war, a war that proved correct the pre-war programmes of the National Service League and the Navy League (at least to their advocates). Many were won over to the impulses of national efficiency, the utilisation of imperial opportunities, and the active prosecution of the war, although they still did not form a coherent or united force. The xenophobic outbursts of Maxse and the like were too strong for some, but the war had also attested to their conviction that the two-party system was incapable of dealing effectively with real administrative demands. Even the hidebound Unionist Austen Chamberlain could claim that 'tho[ugh] a party man ... I don't give a d—n for party now'.

The type of candidate attracted and selected for the 1918 general election compounded this non-party sentiment. The khaki colour of the ‘Coupon’ election determined that many of those returning from the front to forge political careers found their home in the Unionist Party. This was pertinent in the cases of Oswald Mosley and Walter Elliot, both of whom were adopted as Unionist Coalition candidates. Elliot was said to have answered a telegram requesting him to stand in the election with the enthusiastic response, ‘Certainly, which party?’ Mosley, meanwhile, wrote (admittedly in memoirs written many years later during which he had travelled some distance from the Conservative Party) that he ‘knew little of Conservative sentiment, and cared less. ... I had joined the Conservative Party because it seemed to me on its record in the war to be the party of patriotism.’ This reveals a perceptible benefit of the war and coalition for the Unionist Party, in that they both reinforced the association between the party and patriotism,

which earned them both candidates and votes. Indeed, coalition specifically did so. For during the war, as Steel-Maitland had warned Law in early 1915, public opinion cared little about the actions of the opposition, and much about those of the government. Thus, once in government, they could express their patriotism persuasively. The other sharp edge of the sword, however, was that by welcoming patriots with only faint loyalties to the party, it perhaps also lent itself to the cleavages of post-war Conservatism.

Due to the patriotic truce, ‘coalitionism’, and the demands of war, the notion of ‘party’ had been sustained artificially throughout the war. Immediately on the adoption of coalition, Law reminded his parliamentary supporters of the importance of the maintenance of the party organisation. With the abandonment of registration work, due to the advent of the Registration Act in March 1916, the National Society of Conservative Agents wondered anxiously as to the future of the party machinery. The response was a Central Office circular to local association chairmen ‘on the subject of the necessity of maintaining our Party organisation’. Yet, this constituted little more than a call for organisation for organisation’s sake. Somewhat surprisingly, this rather tame directive was expressly followed in constituencies such as South Ealing and Herefordshire North. However, even though these requests continued to receive nominal accord, as the war progressed their impact could – and did – only lessen.

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203 See below, especially, pp.171-174.
204 Steel-Maitland ‘Memorandum on the Political Situation’, February 1915. SM GD193/306/78-83x.
206 Younger to Law, 13/04/1916. BL/52/4/12.
207 National Society of Conservative Agents, Council, 16/03/1916, (485/3).
208 South Ealing UA, General Committee, 25/08/1916, (Acc.1338/1); Herefordshire North UA, Financial and Advisory Committee, 21/09/1917, (K78/2).
209 For organisational developments see below, pp.231-237.
Moreover, by 1918, it was far from clear what should be the purpose of any such organisation. Local opinion was sought periodically during the war, on the issues of compulsion in April 1916, franchise reform in autumn 1917 and Irish Home Rule in April 1918. These canvasses were undoubtedly an attempt to keep the parliamentary party aware of developments within the country and foster the idea of an attentive leadership, but the process was never likely to provide more than slight reassurance to supporters that they were not being completely ignored. Increasingly, the attention of local associations was directed towards party policy rather than organisation. As early as May 1917, the NUEC was asked that ‘steps should be taken to prepare a programme for the next General Election, and strongly urged that we should be well fortified with an aggressive attack’, and the Council approved the formation of a sub-committee for such a purpose. A few months later, Basil Peto lamented that he could not see a ‘determination on the part of the present Government to approach [the national imperial interests] with a clear-cut national policy that would afford the key to their solution’. These transparent calls for tariff reform were echoed six months later with suggestions that Law meet the NUEC prior to the conference, in order that a ‘clearly defined policy’ be made ‘by a re-affirmation of Unionist Principles, leading up to a National Ideal’. The Leicestershire Provincial Division passed a resolution asking that the Conference be private – presumably in the hope that the patriotic truce would not prohibit a good old-fashioned argument on party policy. Such demands became increasingly routine business for the NUEC. As it was, local associations had to be content with Law’s pronouncement at the NUA Conference of November 1917 that, they were ‘looking into a fog. It is absolutely futile to make plans for conditions which you cannot foresee.’ This frank advice

211 NUEC, 08/05/1917. This sub-committee did not appear to report.
212 Peto to the Chairman of Devizes UA, EC, August 1917, (2305/1).
213 NUEC, 13/11/1917. See also SUA, Central Council, EC, 07/11/1917, (Acc.10424/63).
was not always sufficient to prevent dispute.\textsuperscript{215} Indeed, by July 1918, calls for an elucidation of policy emerged also from the Yorkshire and Eastern Area Councils, and from Cheshire.\textsuperscript{216}

The party was certainly staring into a fog as the war progressed, in which only bare outlines of traditional Unionist principles could be discerned. In a revealing correspondence between Salisbury and Selborne – revealing because it exposed rather than penetrated the haze – Salisbury cast doubt on the future role of the ‘Unionist or Conservative or anti-Radical Party’. Issues of nomenclature were peripheral but not irrelevant, demonstrating the ongoing difficulties of self-perception. Selborne conceived the party as having two main functions: ‘to defend certain capital institutions and in everything else to go slow’.\textsuperscript{217} However, what could it now defend? The Union, the established Welsh Church and House of Lords had all but been abandoned. So much so, that Wolmer considered that a distinct Conservative/Unionist Party could continue but that it would ‘inspire more respect than enthusiasm’.\textsuperscript{218} The patriotism of war and the responsibilities of government moved even diehard Unionists like the youthful Ormsby-Gore towards a reconsideration of politics. Having continued to challenge the Liberal government’s policy towards Welsh Church disestablishment in March 1915, by summer 1916 he was informing Steel-Maitland that ‘I find it practically the universal opinion that the old lines of cleavage between parties will be difficult

\textsuperscript{214} For example resolutions from the Middlesex and Sussex Divisions. NUEC, 09/04/1918.
\textsuperscript{215} NUA Conference, 30/11/1917. The General Committee of the Glasgow UA was told with some force that it was pointless to discuss the future of the party, which must be left in the hands of the leaders. 27/05/1918, (Acc.10424/73).
\textsuperscript{216} Yorkshire Area, EC, 05/04/1918 (JAR); Eastern Area, AGM, 12/07/1918 (Are/7/1/6); Cheshire Division, Council, 28/06/1918, (Are/3/6/3).
\textsuperscript{218} Wolmer to Smith, 28/09/1917 (copy). Wolmer Papers, c.1010, ff.35-9.
nay disastrous to resurrect. That is to say Home Rule versus Ulster Unionism, & the Welsh Church.²¹⁹

Certainly as far as the Church was concerned, the rather swift progression, from absolute opposition to disestablishment to specific attempts to prevent disendowment, indicated that it could hardly have remained a fundamental party doctrine for long.²²⁰ The disestablishment bill had been placed on the statute book in September 1914, but with a postponing amendment, which was itself withdrawn in July 1915. Although High Churchmen such as Bridgeman sought to delay the bill’s operation until peacetime so that they ‘could attack [the scheme] the moment peace was made’, opposition was minimal.²²¹ Increasingly it could be found upon the agenda only of the Hotel Cecil. Even here, the threat of running Chamberlain for Prime Minister had more to do with other political grievances of February/March 1918 than the attendant issue of the Welsh Church.²²² At the 1917 NUA Conference, neither Law nor any of the delegates deemed it necessary even to mention the Welsh Church, and this silence was repeated at the next conference in 1920.²²³ A year later, a party meeting convened to discuss the terms of continued coalition gave no debate to the issue despite a letter of reservation from Robert Cecil being read out.²²⁴ Together with the scant attention given the Church within local associations, this denoted abandonment rather than unspoken faithfulness.

The case of Home Rule was different. Little before the war suggested that the principle of the Union would have been surrendered by 1920. The frequency and ferocity of Irish controversies during the war indicated that Unionism was alive

²¹⁹ Ormsby-Gore to Steel-Maitland, 23/05/1916. SM GD/193/170/1/429-30x.
²²⁰ Even in 1914 the debate has been described as having resembling ‘a formal and unreal pageant’. Kenneth Morgan, Wales in British Politics, 1868-1922 (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1970), p.271.
²²² See above, pp.112-113.
²²³ NUEC, 30/11/1917, 10/06/1920, 11/06/1920.
and well, and that the old temptress of the Union was still able to awaken the aged passions of the party, most notably in June 1916 and spring 1918. On the former occasion, sentiments yet again generally reflected pre-war divisions (as they had in September 1914).\textsuperscript{225} However, by the end of the war, within the Unionist leadership such alignments were near departed. For instance, by April 1918, Selborne, Long, and Midleton had all taken refuge in the vagaries of federalism, alongside Chamberlain, Londonderry and Carson. Even Salisbury was not set against it.\textsuperscript{226} Only Curzon and Balfour opposed such a scheme, and both accepted 'the inevitability of partition'.\textsuperscript{227} In such quarters, Home Rule was advanced by the demands of wartime governing which translated it into a method by which to utilise Ireland’s largely untapped manpower during Ludendorff’s final offensive and by the necessity of maintaining civil order. Irish conscription made the choice for Unionists very bare indeed between European victory and the Union. While the party had been suspicious of Lloyd George’s efforts to make Ireland subservient to relations with the USA in summer 1916,\textsuperscript{228} in spring 1918, with Russia out, there seemed little alternative. The launch of the massive German offensive in spring 1918 made Irish conscription irresistible and with it Home Rule. Accordingly, the strategic and security grounds for retaining Ireland within the Union that had been enunciated during the first three years of war paled.\textsuperscript{229} The resignation of the leadership to Home Rule in 1918 also reflected several other developments: the primacy of the Empire above Ireland;\textsuperscript{230} the impact of the Irish Convention of 1917 in deconstructing the Unionist alliance

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\item \textsuperscript{224} ‘NUA Report of Party Meeting, Connaught Rooms’, 12/11/1918. BL/95/3.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Stubbs, ‘Unionists and Ireland’, pp.876-82.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Salisbury to Carson, 21/02/1918. Carson Papers, MIC/665/A/26/48.
\item \textsuperscript{228} Lansdowne to Curzon, 11/06/1916. Curzon Papers, f112, 117, ff.23-5; Memorandum by Salisbury, 13/06/1916; Memorandum by Long, 13/06/1918. Balfour Papers, MS Add. 49758, ff.304-8; 49777, ff.163-9.
\item \textsuperscript{229} Memorandum by Arnold White, 05/06/1916. Curzon Papers, f112, 176, ff.26-60.
\end{enumerate}
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and marginalising the recalcitrant Ulstermen. Long's chairmanship of the Cabinet Committee on Ireland in 1918, like Midleton's commitment to the Irish Convention, characterised the surrender of southern Unionists to the idea of Home Rule. As did the general election manifestoes of 1918, in which Unionism was represented only by allusion to the non-coercion of Ulster.

In the country too, there was a considerable move towards approval for a settlement, with Central Office reporting that grassroots opinion confirmed that the one area of agreement was that in the event of a Home Rule Bill, 'the safeguarding of Ulster [was] essential'. Nevertheless, attitudes were divided. Interestingly, and perhaps understandably, many constituency chairmen were unready to commit their associations to the support of federalism, believing themselves ignorant of its implications, and finding the concept too complex. This was perhaps symptomatic of the divergent speeds of the Unionist leadership and its grassroots supporters, namely that the followers found themselves several steps behind their leaders. Thus, the party's progression away from its traditional principles was by no means organic, with traditional doctrine still possessing considerable appeal to the rank and file members. The House of Lords and Ireland continued to be viewed as capital issues by representatives at NUA Conferences in 1917, 1920 and beyond. The re-emergence of the Irish question at the forefront of grassroots concerns in mid-1920, suggested that a latent Unionism was still evident within this party stratum.

Was 'coalitionism', therefore, merely a hollow commitment? Had it actually gripped the party grassroots? How should we understand the views expressed by

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230 See below, p.156.
232 For instance, Astor Election Card, December 1918. Astor Papers, 529; Joseph Nall circular to Unionists in Manchester Hulme Division, 06/11/1918. Derby Papers, 17/2.
233 Sanders to Law, 03/05/1918. BL/83/3/11.
the Chairman of Stockton Unionist Association, that sober elements of society were 'heartily sick ... at party politics run on the old lines'? The idea of fusion, spoken of within (and heard outside) the Lloyd George circle in spring 1918, received very few adherents. Certainly, the almost universal employment of anti-party rhetoric in the November 1918 campaign should not disguise the coalition's true potential. This was routine business for the campaigning Conservative/Unionist Party, traditionally employed so as to characterise the Liberals as dominated by party and sectional rather than national interests. Nonetheless, with the exception of pacifists and Asquithian Liberals (and, of course, there was a strong distinction between these camps – if one that the majority of Unionists refused to appreciate), the great mass of Unionists worked alongside Liberals in recruiting work and, increasingly, in campaigning. There was an acknowledgement of the benefits of anti-socialist pacts at the municipal level, although often this emanated from constituencies in which such methods had been endorsed prior to the war.

Despite the attention devoted to the difficulties between the two major partners of the coalition, it is evident that Unionist associations and prospective candidates generally acquiesced, albeit reluctantly, in the coalition election campaign. For instance, in the constituencies of Epsom and Reigate, joint committees for the election campaign were established with local Liberals. In Oxfordshire North, the Liberal candidate was fully supported even though he offered Liberal policies such as a just rather than vindictive peace, tempered free trade and social reform. Undoubtedly this 'coalitionism' was due in no small measure to two political factors. First, many coalition pacts were established on

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234 See BL file 83/3/11.
235 Appleby to Londonderry, 02/09/1918. Londonderry Papers, D3099/7/1.
236 James Reid (prospective Unionist candidate) to Chairman of Middlesborough UA, 29/04/1918, (JAR).
237 For instance, Sheffield Park UA, Municipal Committee, 31/08/1914, 07/10/1914, 29/09/1919, (2210).
238 Epsom UA, EC, 17/10/1918, (7085/1/1); Reigate UA, General Council, 13/11/1918, (353/3/1/1).
the basis of one parliament only, which may have encouraged Unionists to acquiesce in a temporary non-party solution but hardly inspired confidence in its long-term survival. Second, the agreement brokered by Younger as to the small number of seats the Lloyd George Liberals were to contest with coalition support can only have soothed Unionist dissentents. For, it was somewhat easier for a Unionist candidate to call for ‘old Party questions to be subordinated to [the coalition]’, when it was his rival and his rival’s supporters who were making the real sacrifice. Recognising a bargain when he saw one, Younger gleefully accepted Freddie Guest’s opening request for 150 seats only thankful that the ‘beggar hadn’t asked for more’. Guest (the Lloyd George Whip) was no mug, and, whether he appreciated that his chief could muster only this number of candidates, or merely overestimated the bargaining strength of the Unionist Party, the outcome confirmed the Unionists’ comparative strength. Against these 150 Lloyd George Liberals, only a total of eighteen Unionists candidates were run and, much as Guest might have complained, this was a small proportion. Furthermore, much anti-coalition sentiment was intensified by clumsy Central Office edicts, which displayed scant appreciation of the interests of Unionist candidates or local associations, let alone the provincial pretensions of Alderman Archibald Salvidge and company. In the majority of cases, Unionist candidates retreated. As the Chairwoman of Bosworth women’s association explained, although they might terribly regret the fact that there was no Unionist candidate, ‘on this occasion we are not voting for the man but for National Unity’.

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239 Oxfordshire North UA, EC, 16/11/1918, (O.132).
241 Mount to Chairman of Newbury UA, October 1918, (JAR).
242 Younger to Steel-Maitland, 01/01/1919. SM GD/193/274/302.
243 Blake, Unknown, Chapter XXIV.
246 Circular from Mrs Hawley, December 1918. Bosworth UA, WUA, 1918, (JAR).
Middlesborough Unionists recorded that their candidate had been withdrawn because ‘National exigencies demanded a Government of Coalition forces’.\textsuperscript{247}

It would be wrong to consider coalition at the end of 1918 as doomed to failure, for it operated – at the very least in part – as an anti-Bolshevik combination. Notwithstanding this, or the genuine, if pragmatic, wish to be associated with Lloyd George, the future boded ill for the partnership. War, and patriotism, had done much to negate the damaging features of coalition: Steel-Maitland, Selborne and Carson had been kept comparatively quiet; without the not inconsiderable diversion of the war, consensual party policies were likely to become easier not harder. When the national stakes were not so high, Unionist dissent would be more difficult to contain. What is more, a discernible breach had opened between the party leadership, the rank and file MPs and the constituencies. Having been denied any real part in the prosecution of the war (except in the very peripheral matter of electoral reform), local associations had hardly moved with enthusiasm to the new party positions on the House of Lords and Ireland. When such matters resurfaced, as they frequently did, there would be great potential for disharmony.

\textsuperscript{247} Middlesborough UA, AGM, 10/02/1919, (JAR).
III

PATRIOTISM AND ANTI-SOCIALISM

'In opposition to the ragged standards of a crazy and criminal cosmopolitanism, we will raise the banner of Nationality, Motherland and Empire. ... Those who are not with us are against us.'

- Victor Fisher in the British Citizen and Empire Worker, 26/01/1918.¹

'I must say, I think it would surprise the French people to see one of our leading Socialists with a top hat.'

- Comment of 17th Earl of Derby on meeting Victor Fisher.²

In 1917 the Bolshevik revolution in Russia made manifest to many within the British political establishment that the Labour movement represented a formidable threat. Government efforts to avert industrial action and preserve production at full capacity struggled to cope with opposition aroused amongst trade unions against measures such as conscription and, more particularly, the 'combing out' of non-essential domestic war workers. The Labour Party, meanwhile, which had won merely 42 seats in December 1910, was to win 142 seats in 1922, 191 in 1923 and become the government in 1924. While the extent

¹ Copy in Wraxall Papers, 947/551.
to which the Labour Party was actually thriving remains a matter for debate, much of this chapter is concerned with contemporary perceptions of this menace and the responses formulated. It seeks to understand how the Unionist Party tried to counter socialism and forge a realistic appeal to the working class. The first section deals with the party organisation and formal means of incorporating the working-class into the party structure. The second and third parts investigate the impact war had upon the nature of party propaganda in relation to patriotism and socialism. The final section questions whether the war encouraged a new open-mindedness amongst Unionists and what impression this had upon the appeal that they extended to the working-class voter. Although the chapter has been divided thus, a linking argument is developed, for, while the first and final parts express a certain failure of the party to adapt through its organisation and its co-operation with patriotic labour, the middle sections suggest that, propitiously, the war served to underline Unionist principles and forge an effective response to the Labour Party, if only perhaps one specific to wartime.

**Come, Join Us**

Prior to the war, two obstacles lay before enthusiasts in the field of working-class integration: a pervasive obscurantism evident at all levels within the party and an unconvincing commitment by working-class men in their involvement. Neither had been easy to rectify. Predictably, in the case of working-class aspirants, vested interests played a significant role: MPs and candidates may perhaps have been willing to support the adoption of such nominees outside, but rarely inside, their own constituencies. Meanwhile, local association chairmen and executive committees frowned (not unnaturally) on the implication that the hand of Central

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3 For Unionist approaches to an extended electorate see Chapter IV, for Unionist attitudes to collectivism Chapter V.
Office might be further strengthened, and likely feared the loss of the subscriptions of members or candidates that frequently constituted a considerable portion of their annual income.\(^4\)

The funding of working-class candidates was also problematic. The payment of MPs had aroused considerable antipathy in the party. The 1911 report of the National Union Association (NUA) Council had claimed that the expenditure of £250,000 on the salaries of MPs was 'an adroit device to placate the Labour Party', and that 'the high principle of gratuitous public service [had] been ruthlessly shattered'.\(^5\) During the war, hostility towards payment of members persisted, now under the scrutinising glare of the need for public economy. It was a topic raised persistently by Midleton to the Retrenchment Committee through much of 1915. Only when the Labour MP Jimmy Thomas agreed that salaries could be abolished but on the proviso that the 'unnecessary costs of the Royalty' would also be discontinued was Midleton silenced.\(^6\)

Some action had been taken in 1911 to make possible the candidacies of 'workingmen', with the launch of a 'general fund' consisting of donations from the parliamentary salaries of Unionist MPs. However, objections were raised even to the provision of 'facilities' for such nominees, undoubtedly due to anxieties that these might entail Central Office dictating which constituencies should run the subsidised candidates.\(^7\) A year later, when Oliver Locker-Lampson of the Unionist Workingmen Candidates' Fund (UWCF) sought nomination of such a candidate in 'a safe and suitable seat', his resolution was

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\(^4\) For instance, City of Sheffield Divisional UA received more than half of its income from Unionist MPs (£750). AGM, 01/11/1912, 15/03/1915, (LD/2107).


\(^6\) 'Memorandum on the Retrenchment Committee' by Midleton, 23/02/1916. Lansdowne Papers, Named Correspondents.

\(^7\) NUA Conference, November 1911, (resolutions 17 and 18). The word 'facilities' had to be removed before the Conference would adopt the resolution.
made subject to a crushing amendment by Arthur Clifford (representative for Yorkshire Cleveland). The amendment stipulated merely that ‘all Unionist organisations should select and support with all their power the best candidate they [could] find to represent their constituency, irrespective of his social or financial status.’ This aversion to positive discrimination, which resurfaced frequently in the twentieth century in the Conservative Party’s handling of female, gay and ethnic-minority nominations and candidates, certainly reflected a determination at the grassroots’ level not to surrender prerogatives recently acquired by the development of a quasi-democratic party structure. This oligarchic emotion was certainly relied upon by one persistent critic who remarked that to seek to impose unwanted candidates upon local associations was inherently unacceptable. Such was the apprehension that, at the 1913 conference a resolution pledging ‘the greater attention of the Party towards the problems of the working-classes’ was not even offered any time for debate.

The UWCF was not a complete failure; by 1914 it had funded the candidacies of three working-class men on four occasions – E. Ashton Bagley (Lancashire, Farnsworth), James Reid (Middlesbrough) and Ben Dent (Dewsbury and Macclesfield) – and by the end of the year it still had £300 in the coffers. But, remaining outside the party apparatus proper, like the Anti-Socialist Union and Trade Union Tariff Reform Association that both also sought the nomination of ‘workingmen’, it lacked the financial stability and political leverage to run a significant number of candidates. Beyond such narrow circles, the truth

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9 NUA Conference, November 1912. The critic was again Clifford.
remained that Unionist commitment to such candidates rarely extended beyond the rhetorical. ¹² With the Representation of the People Bill close to the statute book, a representative at the 1917 Conference spoke of the need 'to pat the working man on the back and to make him feel that he is something beyond a cog in the machinery of the party, and see if we cannot make him a crankshaft'. A second spoke of the possibility of putting suitable working-class candidates before the executive committees in suitable constituencies. ¹³ Law offered his concurrence – going so far, ironically, as to remark that the party had to give more than 'lip-service' to the issue – but the conference did not adopt any procedure to ensure that working-class men were selected. The result was that just one such Unionist working-class candidate was run in a winnable seat in the 1918 election. ¹⁴ This was A.R. Jephcott (Birmingham, Yardley), who went so far as to classify himself as the only Unionist workingman standing throughout the country. It was, as he remarked, a 'disgrace'. ¹⁵

Two other chief means remained by which working-class supporters could be attracted into the party, namely the creation of labour committees (both at the national and local level) and the fostering of Conservative clubs. In the case of clubs, considerable efforts had been expended by 1914. Of the twenty-four West Midland's constituencies listed in a Midland Conservative Union 'Constituency Book', all possessed at least one club. Their effectiveness, however, was highly questionable. On the eve of the war, J.T. Hughes, agent for St Pancras West, reported that London clubs were more difficult to make appealing than provincial ventures due to the number of other attractions offered in the metropolis. As he

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¹² NUA Conference, November 1912.
¹³ NUA Conference, 30/11/1917. Resolutions 4 and 5.
¹⁴ J.M. McEwen, 'The Coupon Election of 1918 and the Unionist Members of Parliament', Journal of Modern History, xxxiv (1962), pp.294-306. Several coupons were granted to patriotic working-class candidates, through the BWNL.
¹⁵ Birmingham Post, 29/11/1918, p.5.
went on to note, even good attendance hardly ensured a group of hardcore Unionist activists or even voters, with membership often being determined less by the attractions of political debate and more by the quality of the beer or whisky.\textsuperscript{16} Hence, obsession with the price and potency of whisky by the St Andrews Conservative Club in 1915 and 1916 is likely to have represented less a concern with wartime prices and controls, or a thoroughly dedicated commitment to non-partisanship in politics, than as an appreciation of the true priorities of its members.\textsuperscript{17} A similarly apolitical situation had prevailed elsewhere. Central Office was informed that, of the five extant clubs in the Worcestershire West Division, ‘no praise would be too high’ for the ‘Coventry’ and ‘Dowdeswell’ Lodges but, that while ‘Britten’ Lodge was strong numerically it was ‘of very little practical use politically’. Meanwhile, Worcestershire South claimed of its seven Conservative clubs that ‘to a certain extent they help to keep the Party together, but that is the most that can be said for them’.\textsuperscript{18} Only in Liverpool, where Archibald Salvidge had managed to forge a working-class Unionist identity and tradition specific to that district, was the story very different.\textsuperscript{19} The war years offered scant opportunity for the further development of such clubs. Many wound down their activities entirely, which deprived the party in some cases of committed activists, in others of hard cash.\textsuperscript{20} The Grand Lodge and many other branches of the National Conservative League were dissolved in 1914.\textsuperscript{21} By 1919, therefore, it was still necessary for the Eastern

\textsuperscript{16} Report of the MCAA, 01/05/1914, in CAJ, July 1914, p.103.
\textsuperscript{17} St Andrews Conservative Club, and AGMs, 1914, 1915, (Acc 10424/112).
\textsuperscript{18} Midland Union Notebook, n.d., [1913-1917], (Are/MU29/3).
\textsuperscript{20} For instance, the City Carlton Club had to postpone fund-raising during the war. This was not insignificant, as the Club had provided £500 to Long’s Union Defence League in 1913, as well as supporting the local Junior Imperial League. City of London UA, City Carlton Club, Political Committee, 02/06/1913, 23/06/1913, (487/31).
Area to pass a resolution reminding its members that ‘the interests of the Conservative Party would be enhanced by closer attention being given to the aspirations of working men as expressed in Conservative Clubs, Friendly Societies’ Councils and similar organisations.’22 Even in December 1920, the Agent for Cornwall T.W. Ainge was lamenting the fact that they were still ‘raising a race of billiard players and not politicians’.23

Labour committees offered a second avenue by which to incorporate the working classes into the party organisation. It was hoped in addition that such bodies could provide ideas, education and assistance in the formulation of Unionist policies towards trade unions, propaganda and social reform. Some few attempts at the local level to involve ‘workingmen’ had emerged before the war, for instance in Reigate where three had been elected to the executive committee in mid-1912.24 Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the 1918 Representation of the People Act this became a more pressing consideration. The disappointing response was perhaps presaged by the persistence of a climate in which local associations rarely went far out of their way to foster the involvement of the labouring classes. For example, six months after the Armistice, though the Eastern Area Committee floated the idea of electing working-class representatives to the NUA Council, no nominees were secured to make this possible.25 Central Office officials were compelled to stalk the nation insisting on the creation of labour committees, but to little avail, for by the mid-1920s such bodies had been established in fewer than one third of constituencies and often boasted less than twenty members.26 Somewhat ironically, a railway strike upset plans to convene the first Unionist Labour Conference in Southport, proof, if

22 Eastern Area, AGM, 16/05/1919, (Are 7/1/6).
23 Cornwall Divisional Papers, AGM, 09/12/1920, (Are/11/7/1).
24 Reigate UA, EC, 31/07/1912, (353/3/2/1).
25 Eastern Area, AGM, 16/05/1919, (Are/7/1/6).
26 MCAA, 22/01/1920. (CCA/3); McRillls, Conservative, p.110.
proof were needed, of the distance the party still had to cover. What is more, it can hardly be denied that labour committees remained a rather basic means of attracting working class support, unless they were given a voice and input considerable enough to transform party rhetoric, a status they were unlikely to achieve.

**Appealing to the Working Classes**

The failure to further involve the working-classes on labour committees, political clubs and as parliamentary candidates, perhaps underlines how significant methods and types of propaganda became to the Unionist Party. The party had long sought to portray itself as the party of patriotism. In their own ways, Disraelian imperialism, Chamberlainite tariff reform, Unionist sentiments *per se* and the conservation of the constitution were all expressions of this. Associated with this, at times rather tenuously, was the idea of one-nation Conservatism. As a party handbook had audaciously put it, while radicals and socialists set class against class, ‘Unionists stood for the union of classes in the nation for the common good.’ It had been implicit in much of this that the interests of all, most especially those of the working classes, were best represented through national means. George Franklin MP claimed that ‘the Conservative Party had always been a national party bound together, not by any one class’, to which the Factory Acts were testament. This conception of Unionism continued into the war, for example in the words of F.S. Oliver: ‘Union: union in its broadest sense and meaning; union not merely between states; … union not merely against external danger; … union not merely of peoples (in the various states) i.e. class

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27 Trade Union Sub-Committee of the Lancashire Division, 16/11/1919, (Are/3/13/1).  
29 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 15/03/1913. Cutting in City of Sheffield UA, 14/03/1913, (LD/2107).
to class. Our aim is a close knit and interwoven society. Bentinck spoke of a ‘Commonwealth’ of classes as well as of nations. Accordingly, the concept of Unionism as a promoter of national and class unity was more than merely a consequence of its post-war desire to redefine its Irish Unionism (as has recently been argued).

Before the war, however, there had been difficulties concerning the acceptance of such propaganda: in 1900, as Robert Blake showed, the electorate had not taken the road that led from patriotism to imperialism. In the ensuing years, even the party itself had not taken the road that led from imperialism to tariff reform. What, if anything, therefore made wartime patriotism more profitable for the party? First, the unity of the party did so. Significantly, the Unionists were the only party not to split over the commitment to war. The irreconcilable breach in December 1916 between Asquith and Lloyd George, and their respective followers, was the culmination rather than inception of Liberal divisions. From the very first day of war, the party leaked dissidents, including John Burns, John Morley, Charles Trevelyan, and Edmund Harvey, over the decision to join the European conflict, and Richard Holt, John Simon and others over conscription.

The Labour Party was equally fiercely divided, with parliamentary leaders such as Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden resisting the moves of the Trades Union Congress to endorse Britain’s role in the war.

The most overt test of Unionist solidarity on patriotism emerged with the publication of Lansdowne’s infamous ‘Peace Letter’ in the Daily Telegraph on

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35 For instance over conscription, Turner, British Politics, pp.78-81.
29 November 1917. The letter queried the likelihood of a total Allied victory, lamented the continued loss of life and called for a thorough re-examination of war aims. Some approval emanated privately from Lansdowne’s Unionist colleagues. St Loe Strachey observed that the *Spectator* had uttered similar words concerning ‘peace with the German people’, the only difference being that it spoke with a sterner voice than did Lansdowne; Robert Cecil judged the letter to differ from President Woodrow Wilson’s pronouncements only in degree rather than spirit; Wood ‘didn’t quarrel with the substance, but thought its moment of promulgation singularly ill-judged’; meanwhile, Craik, Frederick Banbury, Thomas Gibson-Bowles and Guinness empathised with Lansdowne’s ideas. The views of the latter group are intriguing, for while Cecil had written a Cabinet memorandum of his own some months earlier, urging the greater consideration of a negotiated peace, Banbury, Craik and Guinness were hard-line members of the Unionist War Committee (whose brief was the unrelenting prosecution of the war). Generally, however, while noting such sympathy for Lansdowne’s views, Sanders believed the overwhelming sentiment within the party to be one of ‘indignation’.

Largely, it seems, this mindset sprang from continued confidence in the capability of the Lloyd George coalition to deliver an Allied victory. The transformation of Crawford’s views represented this well: in November 1916, he and Lansdowne had agreed ‘about an armistice, that it w[oul]d be folly to impose terms so impossible of achievement that no discussion c[oul]d ensue’; twelve

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months later, Crawford distanced himself from Lansdowne’s pronouncements, describing them as reflective of a vain and Whiggish mind, and that ‘he doesn’t want to be forgotten. He now stands a good chance of being adored by our enemies and execrated by the British people.’\textsuperscript{37} For his sins, Lansdowne was virtually excommunicated from Unionist circles, with only very bare assurances of the endurance of personal friendship from Law and Chamberlain. By coincidence, the NUA Conference met the day following the publication of the letter, ‘drowned [Lansdowne] at once’ and became a virtual ritual of disavowal of his conciliatory approach.\textsuperscript{38} The assembly, though convened in the absence of press representatives, passed a resolution permitting the communication to the newspapers of the section of Law’s speech dealing with the letter. In it, the party leader described it as a ‘national misfortune’ that the letter had been published, claiming that ‘he [disagreed] absolutely not only with the arguments but with the whole tone of his letter’, and insisted on the need to secure the future security of Britain and the Empire.\textsuperscript{39} Indeed, the prevalence of this sentiment of outrage at Lansdowne’s remarks suggests that war ‘pessimism’ was less pervasive than several recent historians have suggested (if on a parliamentary rather than War Cabinet or General Staff level).\textsuperscript{40}

War rendered patriotism more convincing to both Unionist politicians and their audience. As Wolmer told Hugh Cecil, there was a distinction between ‘nationalism, patriotism and jingoism’. The first ‘was a set of ideals which have their origin in race and history... Jingoism[,] on the other hand, aims at

\textsuperscript{37} Crawford Diary, 14/11/1916, 01/12/1917. Vincent, Crawford, pp.365, 381, 401.
\textsuperscript{39} NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.
domination of other nations and is really in theory opposed to nationalism. For instance, the Hapsburgs and their statesmen could be described as jingoies but could never be described as nationalists. Patriotism I would describe as that which prompts men to make sacrifices for their state.\textsuperscript{41} Bentinck, likewise, felt that Britain was fighting for a ‘spiritual ideal’.\textsuperscript{42} These convictions were important in distancing the Unionist Party from jingoistic and expansionistic nationalism, whilst substituting in their place a sacrificial patriotism. The latter element was fundamental in ensuring party unity and was substantiated in the demands for equality of sacrifice through national service, the forfeiture of party advantage for national unity, and a readiness to surrender personal gain through the rejection of industrial action by workers and extraordinary profits by employers. A local association chairman, for instance, advised Unionists in Hampshire that, through observing the truce, they could display the ‘instincts of patriotism which were at the very root of our Conservative principles’.\textsuperscript{43} No doubt, with Britain’s shores threatened seriously for the first time in a hundred years, such ideas had appeal. It was also an area within which the party displayed its qualities of flexibility and opportunism. For, despite majority party opinion supporting Britain’s intervention in August 1914 on the grounds of national honour, Unionist public pronouncements (including the right-wing papers) soon swung into line with the stance of government and press. Specifically this meant emphasising (as many recruitment and propaganda posters did) the story of Belgium and of ‘sacrifice’ for the weak.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41} Wolmer to Hugh Cecil, 02/07/1917. Wolmer Papers, c980, ff.62-7.
\textsuperscript{43} Hampshire North UA, 27/02/1915, (NHCA/1/4).
\textsuperscript{44} For initial attitude, A.J.A. Morris, \textit{The Scaremongers: The Advocacy of War and Retrenchment 1896-1914} (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984), p.359 and above p.53. Lansdowne emphasised the Belgian issue as early as 22/09/1914 (\textit{The Times}); the \textit{Birmingham Daily Post} transformed its original
As is explained in Chapter V, for many Unionists the desire to give something back to the country for which they were unable to donate their lives was passionate. The rhetoric of sacrifice later permeated two generations of Conservatives, including Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain, Edward Wood, Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan. Notwithstanding true generosity of spirit, this sentiment of sacrifice was pushed as far as it could go. An appeal to women in Lancashire encouraged them to vote for freedom, ‘and show the world that they have no thought of betraying the gallant men and boys who have given their … very heart’s blood in this sacred cause’. 45 (Note that the cause had now even become ‘sacred’). Waldorf Astor, meanwhile, linked women’s ‘loving sense of the duty of compensating for the precious lives of the lost with their special instinct for protecting the lives to be born’. 46 Central Office literature reminded voters in 1918 that they were ‘trustees’ for those who had sacrificed their lives and that therefore they must discount their selfish motivations; the wealthy had already born the financial burden of the war. 47

The nature of wartime politics also permitted this patriotic image to be promoted, for while the truce dictated non-partisanship it inherently endorsed patriotic expressions. Political meetings and party literature were often directed to events surrounding, and justification for, war. 48 Accordingly, Unionist Lecture Societies in Hammersmith and Sheffield each took British patriotism and the origins of the war as their focus. 49 Opportunities to differentiate Unionist patriotism from Liberal unpreparedness for war were not wasted, with local associations

basis of national security into defence of vulnerable Belgium (editorials, 03/08/1914, 04/08/1914, 07/08/1914).

45 Augustine Hailwood to Members of Ardwick UA, 28/10/1918. Derby Papers, 17/2.
46 Waldorf Astor to the Electorate in Sutton, 14/12/1918. Astor Papers, 529.
47 ‘Trustees for the Silent’; ‘War, Wealth and Labour’, NUA Pamphlets and Leaflets [P&L], 1918/4, 1918/33
criticising Haldane and McKenna, while eulogising men such as Lord Roberts. At the very least, they spoke darkly of the fact that they could not presently discuss Liberal failures. In Norwich, a 'Young Unionist Brigade' was formed 'for patriotic purposes during the war'. Organisations such as the Primrose League not only maintained their organisational machinery through patriotism (canvassing for National Registration and the Derby Scheme) but also delivered lantern-slide shows and lectures on patriotic themes.

Of all the endeavours to impress on the public the party's contribution to the war, none exceeded the creation and perpetuation of the myth that the Liberal Government had relied on opposition encouragement and reinforcement in its actions of early August 1914. Indeed, Steel-Maitland claimed (admittedly as part of his crusade to abandon opposition for coalition politics) that throughout the first seven months of war the party had 'never touched the public imagination, except for a brief moment when the letter from the Leaders of the Opposition to the P.M. was published and was fresh in the public mind'. In May 1915, Baldwin told his constituents that the publication of the Law communication confirmed the commitment of the Unionist Party towards any war in which the nation was threatened. George Smith MP went one stage further, two years later, in an annual speech to Cornwall Unionists, claiming: 'It was one of the most historic hours in the whole history of England when Lord Lansdowne and Mr Bonar Law set out that afternoon in August 1914 to call on the Prime Minister and offer the wholehearted support of the Unionist Party in England in any emergency that might be necessary (hear, hear). Under the terms of the truce one ought not to speak as to what would have happened if another Party had been

50 Reigate UA, Merstham Branch, EC and AGM, 24/11/1914, (353/5/2/2).
51 Devizes UA, AGM, 13/02/1915, (2305/1).
52 Norwich South UA, EC, 26/09/1914, (SO122/1).
54 'Memorandum on Political Situation' by Steel-Maitland, February 1915. SM/GD193/306/78-83x.
in power (laughter). As this exemplifies, the story served simultaneously as positive endorsement of Unionist patriotism and as condemnation of Liberal irresolution and Labour pacifism. Even in August 1918, this tale was advanced by the *National Review* and the *Spectator*, both of which claimed that the letter had decided the mind of Cabinet and Britain’s entry into war. It was also a chronicle promulgated vociferously during the coupon election, with Lawrence Hardy telling a meeting of Ashford Unionists, that ‘the Unionist Party could claim that they had acted unswervingly and of set purpose since the beginning of the war. It was on Mr Bonar Law’s assurance on the fateful Sunday that they could rely absolutely upon the Unionist Party that the Govt could go forward...’ This fable was the most concrete and powerful message of its type, but was constantly supplemented with an emphasis on the constant nature of Unionist support for the Liberal and Coalition Governments. But, as the *Conservative Agents’ Journal* concluded, it was the letter that would ‘stand as evidence of the fact that [our] Party, as ever, puts King, Country and Empire before everything else’.

Ironically, this particular myth was bolstered by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC). Quixotically, a report of the informal meeting of Unionist chairmen and agents held on 14 December 1914 was published as a PRC pamphlet. This was the occasion on which Law broadcast the support offered to

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55 Worcestershire West UA, AGM, 16/05/1915, (956/6).
56 Cornwall Provincial Division, AGM, 01/03/1917, (Are/11/7/1). Both the latter meetings were reported in the local press.
58 Kent Messenger, 02/11/1918.
60 *Conservative Agents’ Journal* [CAJ], April 1916, pp.128-9. Interestingly, the letter’s capacity for good publicity was acknowledged when it was written, with Lloyd persuading Lansdowne to write ‘Copy’ in the corner so as to remind Asquith that they could publish it as an ultimatum if the government did not act. Lloyd to Colvin, 18/05/1934 (copy). Lloyd Papers, 17/36/90.
the Liberal Government in the letter of 2 August. Not only was the Unionist Party’s initial patriotism emphasised, but an eager audience was informed that ‘in [the letter] we gave a definite pledge, and I do not think that any will deny that we have kept that pledge, both in the letter and the spirit.’ Self-praise continued: ‘no political party has ever more sincerely and wholeheartedly tried to serve the country than we have done during this war’, while warmongering was sidelined – ‘there never has been any difference between us and our opponents in the detestation of war.’ 61 Quite why Liberal representatives on the PRC (including the Chief Whip) agreed to the publication of such a speech is debatable. As it was, it worked in favour of the Unionist Party, with the publication of the letter arousing conjecture as to its effect, for as the Irish Nationalist Tim Healy remarked, ‘I was very glad Bonar Law published his letter to Asquith, as only for it wd. never, with a split-Cabinet, have declared War.’ 62 Such speculation allowed the Unionists something of a free hand in its interpretation.

While the publication of Law’s speech to Unionist agents was the most overt sponsorship of Unionist patriotism, it is evident that the PRC served to bolster the position of the party in a more subtle way. The ambition of many of its leaflets, pamphlets and posters was to establish the legitimacy of Britain’s involvement in the war, such as one entitled ‘Belgium’: ‘The men of Belgium are fighting for the cause of LIBERTY – our cause as well as theirs. WILL YOU FIGHT FOR BRITAIN AS THEY ARE FIGHTING FOR BELGIUM?’ 63 Other pamphlets carried speeches of leading Unionists such as Law and Balfour alongside Asquith, and only less often Arthur Henderson and John Redmond. Two such speeches saw Law explaining that ‘the honour and the

61 PRC publication 27, ‘A United Nation’, [December 1914].
63 PRC publication 2, ‘Belgium’, 08/10/1914. The emphases here, as in subsequent quotes, are from the original documents.
interests of Great Britain — and, believe me, they go together — alike forbade [peace]." Obviously, as far as publicity went, the representation also of the Liberal Party (continuously), the Labour Party (frequently) and the Irish Nationalist Party (fleetingly) offered opportunities for their advancement as well, but, by validating Britain’s position in the European conflict, it necessarily promoted most successfully the party of patriotism. Several PRC posters could hardly have been more beneficially drawn by Unionist Central Office, including the famous ‘Daddy, what did you do in the Great War?’ (see PRC Poster 79 below). This was altered only slightly in successive Unionist general election campaigns with the word ‘Daddy’ merely substituted for ‘Liberal’ or ‘Labour’ candidate.

Crucially, therefore, the state offered the most fervent sponsorship to patriotic expressions. At the heart of much of the domestic mission of the Ministry of Information, the PRC, the National War Aims Committee and other propaganda vehicles was the necessity of defending Britain’s entrance into and continuance in the war — both preconditions for any beneficial exploitation of Unionist patriotism. Moreover, these propaganda apparatuses were more potent and more relied upon than any of their predecessors. A secondary realm was that of the patriotic press, which, as Brock Millman and Cate Kaste have pointed out, augmented these government-inspired steps. This press lobby was a formidable body, comprising the Gwynne, Beaverbrook, Blumenfeld, Northcliffe and Rothermere papers, and it outgunned the pre-war Anti-Socialist Union run principally by Blumenfeld. Personal links, especially strong in respect of

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64 PRC publications 5 and 6, “To a Victorious Conclusion”: The Prime Minister’s Appeal to the Nation’, [October 1914]; ‘To the Men of Great Britain’, October 1914.
66 Millman, Dissent, pp.34-54
Maxse, Gwynne and Blumenfeld, could be mobilised to ensure that no respite was given to Liberal failures or that the anti-conscriptionist movement was disrupted (often physically).\(^\text{67}\) After December 1916, Lloyd George’s links with the press – though otherwise distasteful to many Unionists – enhanced the ability of the Government to mould a patriotic press.\(^\text{68}\) These newspaper magnates and editors helped to popularise the war and create stereotypes of ‘patriots’, ‘slackers’ and aliens. Such stereotypes conformed to the pre-existing Unionist vernacular, for instance in the sphere of electoral reform where the ‘patriot’ (the active serviceman or hard-working munitions worker) deserved the vote, whilst the ‘slacker’ (the conscientious objector or striking Clydesider) did not.\(^\text{69}\) Also, through their personal roles in the Government, Unionists were able to further this objective. For example, the Attorney-General Carson by-passed the Home Office in December 1915, when ordering raids to counteract sedition on the National Labour Press and on the offices of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the *Daily Herald*. The result was the confiscation of the printing works of the ILP magazine *Forward*. Other Unionist law officers (‘F.E.’ and Cave) authorised the suppression of the pamphlet ‘Truth and the War’ by E.D. Morel of the Union of Democratic Control.\(^\text{70}\) Subsequently, the pacifist *Nation* was suppressed and serious consideration given to restraints being placed on the *Daily Herald*. As Tom Jones was moved to complain, whilst the left-wing press was repressed whenever it spoke out against the government, the Tory papers (most especially the irascible *Morning Post*) always escaped scot-free.\(^\text{71}\) The adoption of Carson’s

\(^{67}\) Lady Edward Cecil to Blumenfeld, 18/03/1915; Chaplin to Blumenfeld, 09/07/1915. Blumenfeld Papers, CEC/1, CHAP/11.

\(^{68}\) J. Lee Thompson, *Politicians, the Press and Propaganda: Lord Northcliffe and the Great War 1914-18* (Kent State University Press, Kent Ohio, 1999), pp.181-82, passim.

\(^{69}\) Herefordshire North UA, Finance and Advisory Committee, 23/03/1917, (K78/2).

\(^{70}\) Carson took advantage of the fact that, officially, the Home Office controlled only the Metropolitan Police Force, but not provincial bodies. Millman, *Dissent*, pp.64-5, 75.

proposal to send trade union members across to the Western Front was merely another instance of pro-patriotic activity through the state. By 1918 three hundred workers were despatched each week. \(^{72}\)

This development of government-endorsed patriotism reached its acme in the creation of the 'officially unofficial' National War Aims Committee (NWAC) in June 1917, established as the result of a near consensus in the Lloyd George government on the need to avert the fate of Russia and undermine pacifism. The NWAC, like the PRC, mobilised the party machineries to further its cause, working especially closely with the Unionist and Liberal Parties, and with the British Workers' National League (BWNL). \(^{73}\) It also promoted the fairly rudimentary strategy of patriotic violence to upset pacifist gatherings – most commonly through the agencies of the BWNL and the National Federation of Discharged Soldiers and Sailors. And, although Patrick Hannon of the British Commonwealth Union questioned the NWAC's effectiveness, believing it to be 'regarded by the people generally as the official protagonist of the Coalition Government', it retained a greater distance from government than agencies such as the PRC, and accordingly was likely viewed as more independent. \(^{74}\) After the war, Scottish Unionists acclaimed both its capacity and its structure in suggesting that the 'Government[,] being national and non-party in composition, might with great public advantage take action on similar lines to those followed by the War Aims Committee' in order to counteract 'active revolutionary propaganda'. \(^{75}\)

And there was much in NWAC propaganda for Unionists to acclaim. For, so as

\(^{72}\) Millman, Dissent, pp.240-41.

\(^{73}\) Epsom UA, General Council, 31/10/1918, (7085/1/1); Worcestershire West, UA, EC, 20/09/1917, (956/6).

\(^{74}\) Memorandum, 'Industrial Unrest' by Hannon, n.d., [1918]. Hannon Papers, Box 13.

\(^{75}\) SUA Western Division, EC, 04/06/1919, (Acc.10424/28).
to counteract wartime pacifism it had to condemn socialism and defend capitalism.\textsuperscript{76}

Historians concerned with the language of patriotism employed by the Unionist Party in the pre-war era have been eager to point out that the nation they referred to most frequently was 'England'.\textsuperscript{77} This served partly to enhance their depiction of the Liberal party before the war as an awkward amalgam of Irish revolutionaries, Scottish radicals and Welsh demagogues, but it also reflected the natural home of Unionism: southern England. As the Central Office and electoral expert Sidney Rosenbaum stressed, the home of Unionism lay south of the Severn and the Trent.\textsuperscript{78} Notwithstanding this, it was an inconsistency that the party that most prided itself on the Union and the Empire should use the name of merely one of their components, a contradiction that can but have exacerbated the party's dismal performances outside England. The war necessitated a change of phraseology. In relation to the Irish Union, Unionist politicians were careful to tread the thin line between provoking party confrontation over the issue and bowing to the inevitability of home rule. Meanwhile, industrial disputes within the mines of South Wales and shipyards of the Clyde emphasised the contribution that all areas of the United Kingdom could and did make to the war effort. Therefore it was no longer 'England', but 'Britain', and, increasingly as the war continued, no longer 'Britain' but the 'British Empire'. Although old habits died hard and the term 'England' was voiced frequently, resort was usually found to the word 'nation', a suitably non-specific term.

\textsuperscript{76} W.S. Sanders, 'Is the Capitalist to Blame?', NWAC Searchlights No.4 (1918).
Such developments were not inconsiderable, as they transformed Unionist self-perception, and also encouraged a wider application of their patriotism. In the first case, by their participation in government, and by the espousal of 'nation' rather than 'England' because of war, the Unionists were better positioned to appeal to the country as the party of the 'nation'. In November 1917, Law spoke of leading a 'national' party that might attract the support of all classes across the Kingdom.\(^7\)

This was likely one of the reasons behind the re-emergence of Tory Democracy in some circles.\(^8\) Flimsy though such ideals remained, they were important in persuading the party that it must be inclusive, especially within the extended franchise. Ironically, whilst enhancing this national concept of patriotism and party, the war served also to strengthen local and specifically rural identity. As Nicholas Mansfield has argued, because much recruitment in the countryside was based on local territorial forces, community identities were reinforced. One consequence of this, considering the continued authority of traditional deference into the interwar period, was to strengthen connections between the local political leaders who headed the Yeomanry and their subordinates. The Unionist Party was particularly well placed to benefit from such a development: by 1916, of the 154 Unionists who were serving or had served with the forces, 48 had been attached to their local Yeomanry, compared to only 9 Liberals and no Labour members.\(^9\) Indeed, as evinced in the debates on food production and the redistribution of seats, the imagery of war (as drawn by poetry, propaganda and popular literature) was very patriotic, very English and very rural (see PRC Poster 'Your Country's Call' below).\(^10\) This was the

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7\(^9\) NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.
8\(^0\) For instance Sanderson to Salisbury, 25/10/1917. Salisbury Papers (4) 80/156-7. Sanderson to F.S. Oliver, 02/12/1917, 13/12/1917, 17/12/1917. Oliver Papers, MS 24855, ff.147, 173, 177-78.
constituency to which Baldwin appealed so successfully in the 1920s, as a "Worcestershire man". He carried this association to the grave, being buried in Worcester Cathedral rather than Westminster Abbey or St Paul's, where his fellow Prime Ministers rested.

In terms of its wider application, war served to develop two further valuable facets, the first being the cause of Empire, which had long been a principal component of Unionist electoral strategy and tenets. When war broke out Beatrice Chamberlain rejoiced, 'The Empire has stood together! My father [Joseph] is vindicated.' Subsequently, the contribution of the self-governing dominions and India towards the war effort – both in military personnel and resources – allowed for the more persuasive propagation of the idea of Empire unity and solidarity. As the Vice-Chairman of the British Empire Producers' Organisation somewhat cynically remarked, few factors offered such 'an effective source of cohesion in any group of States ... [as] a common enemy, if it be formidable enough and satanic enough'. Moreover, with the emergence of eastern theatres of war (most especially in 1917 and 1918 in the Middle East) the war became a truly imperial conflict.

Steel-Maitland appreciated that the war was 'causing old subjects to be seen from new angles', because India and the Dominions had responded 'sparing neither blood nor treasure'. Increasingly, political and industrial groups adopted the language of the Empire, including the Empire Parliamentary Association and the

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85 John Mackenzie has shown the emphasis placed on empire (most especially the Middle East) by wartime cinema films and that such a medium was both naturally popular and peculiarly capable of being manipulative. MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960 (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988), pp.74-7.
British Commonwealth Union. Endeavours were made to promote such Empire unity on both the micro and the macro political level: A.L. Smith (friend of Steel-Maitland and Master of Balliol College, Oxford) proposed that parties of working-class students visit the Dominions, so that they could, on returning, educate their communities about how the Empire worked together; many backed the idea of imperial emigration. 87 Meanwhile, for Lionel Curtis, Philip Kerr and F.S. Oliver of the Round Table movement, the years were pregnant with the opportunity to advance their ideas of a federal parliament. 88 The Imperial War Cabinet, which welcomed the Prime Ministers of Canada, South Africa and Australia into the confidence of the British War Cabinet, reflected both the fellowship of war and possibilities for the future. 89 Indeed, this grand embodiment of a loyal unified Empire was critical in permitting – though not enforcing – a development of perceptions on the Union with Ireland. The latter, as such, became a lesser priority, certainly subordinate to wider imperial development. Not only would Unionists never again imperil the Empire for the sake of the Irish Union, but the sense of imperial responsibility displayed by the dominions suggested that the Union was a crude means by which to retain Irish loyalty and goodwill.

Party literature attempted to keep these imperial sentiments alive into the post-war world, reminding its readers of the Empire contribution: 'Brothers in Arms and Brotherhood in Peace'. 90 The principal purpose of this pamphlet, nonetheless, was to urge a second development, namely future imperial cooperation in the economic field. Law asked the Unionist conference of August 1916 for patience and a fresh outlook because, whilst party men might be

88 See for instance, Curtis to Law, 01/11/1915. BL/51/5/1; Philip Kerr, 'Commonwealth and Empire' in Smith, Empire, pp.69-89; Steel-Maitland Memorandum, 06/11/1918. Milner Papers, 129/279-86.
89 See for example PRC Poster 58 below.
frustrated at the slow process of fiscal reform, the majority of the nation had reached the conclusion that Germany should never again be allowed to abuse British markets as they had before the war.\textsuperscript{91} Attempts were made to distance the discussion from the traditional free trade versus tariff reform argument that had long shaped political-economic debate. This permitted a wider acceptance by many Liberals of the need to protect at least the vulnerable sections of British industry.\textsuperscript{92} As the Sheffield Unionist George Franklin asserted, the issue was no longer a question of free trade or tariff reform but of the need to obtain the best deal for the Empire and Britain’s Allies; Laming Worthington Evans claimed that protection ‘must be looked at, not as [a] Fiscal theory, but as [a] practical policy’.\textsuperscript{93} Meanwhile, Colonel E.W. Pickering (Coalition Unionist candidate for Dewsbury) explained that although he had been a Conservative free-trader before the war, the question now could ‘only be settled after consulting and conferring with our colonies, who have stood by us in this war...’\textsuperscript{94} Such an advance was considerable, for tariff reform had proved an obstacle to both party unity and electoral prospects before the war. A massive breach had opened between ‘whole-hoggers’ and moderate tariff reformers over the protection of British agriculture and the ‘cheap loaf’. This had distracted tariff reformers into centring their debate on merely a single aspect of the tariff programme.

Not only did the war consolidate the Unionist Party behind a scheme for tariff reform but it also greatly strengthened such an appeal to the nation. For the conflict was the ultimate proof of the pre-war Unionist claim that Germany had prospered under a system of tariffs.\textsuperscript{95} Wartime party literature linked the issue of

\textsuperscript{91} G&M, September 1916, p.19. There is no report of this conference in the CPA at the Bodleian Library.
\textsuperscript{92} See below, pp.320-322.
\textsuperscript{93} Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 30/03/1916. Cutting in City of Sheffield UA, 27/03/1916, (LD/2107); Worthington Evans Election Manifesto, December 1918. Worthington Evans Papers, c.892, f.57.
\textsuperscript{94} Dewsbury District News, 07/12/1918.
\textsuperscript{95} ‘Ourselves versus Germany: Germany’s Greater Progress’, P&L 1914/23
Germany's preparation for war with British economic interests. Before the war, 'organised German trade attack had captured the British dye industry – on which the livelihood of at least a million and a half workpeople depended. ... Would you like the Germans to repeat the trick, as they mean trying to'? The recognition of the value of anti-German arguments in the Coupon Election of 1918, most famously including 'Hang the Kaiser', suggests that the case for a protectionist policy, which was at once defensive for Britain and offensive against Germany, had electoral appeal. The store set by imperial preference and Empire solidarity, in the manifestos of Coalition Unionist candidates in 1918, illustrates the significance of this development. Accordingly, Tariff Reform League campaigns now possessed far greater potential, urging 'Britain for the British: Our Imperial Markets for our Imperial industries'. The successful Unionist candidate in Rotherham (Frederick Kelley) deliberately tailored his language, referring to the 'Economic Boycott' of Germany rather than tariff reform.

In the Edwardian period, as Robert McKenzie and Allan Silver have shown, there was a twofold appeal by Unionists to the working classes: to their self-interest and to 'traditional emotions'. Frequently, literature concentrated on just one such theme (such as factory legislation) and at times they were interrelated (a strong Navy to safeguard a cheap loaf; anti-Alien legislation to protect the British worker). However, the Unionist propaganda of the war points towards two fundamentals. First, appeals to the sentiment of patriotism were likely much more effective than previously, partly due to the agencies by which they were

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96 'How the Huns Prepared for their High Explosives', P&L, 1918/3
100 For instance, 'Labour and Dreadnoughts', P&L, 1914/4.
supported, partly as a result of the environment from which they emerged. Second, the war made popular many of the developments that forged a link between individual self-interest and the emotional appeal of patriotism. This can rarely have been done so subtly as in the pamphlet 'Should there be a Levy on Capital?' This sought to mobilise the millions who had invested in war bonds against the Labour Party, reminding readers 'Remember that those who Saved Money helped to save the Empire'. Equally notable was appreciation of the connection between on the one hand desire for vengeance against Germany (at least partly through a boycott of its industry and anti-alien legislation) and, on the other, Britain, its Empire and economic co-operation.

101 'Should there be a Levy on Capital?', NUA Pamphlet 1889, June 1919.
Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?
YOUR COUNTRY'S CALL

Isn't this worth fighting for?

ENLIST NOW

PRC Poster 87
THE EMPIRE NEEDS MEN!

THE OVERSEAS STATES

All answer the call... Helped by the YOUNG LIONS
The OLD LION defies his foes.
ENLIST NOW.

PRC Poster 58
Pacifism and Bolshevism

The benefit (or rather hindrance) of hindsight, which reminds the historian incessantly that the Liberal Party was to divide irrevocably and then be displaced speedily by a powerful Labour movement, can tend to obscure the true concerns of the time. After all, Labour won only 42 seats in December 1910, and by-election results in the period 1910-1914 offered few fresh grounds for enthusiasm. In addition, the short-term nature of much Unionist thought in the pre-war era – determined most especially by a commitment to the Union, which overshadowed other questions – renders an understanding of longer-term agendas problematic.102 Before the war, unsurprisingly, the overwhelming store of energy was reserved for the Liberal Party, which was both historical enemy and present government. However, a quick solution was sought in a divorce of the unholy marriage of the Liberal-Nationalist-Labour alliance.103 The Unionist role was to be neither suitor nor adulterer, but malevolent troublemaker, pointing out inconsistencies and breaches in faith. The Labour leader Ben Tillett, for example, was quoted in 1911 as preferring Tories to Liberals.104 Hitting the enemy with a rival’s fist rather than one’s own was deemed to inflict a heavier blow and such manoeuvres proliferated with time. By February 1914, the party magazine Gleanings and Memoranda was devoting much attention to the discrepancies between Labour and Liberal opinion: reciting Snowden’s attack on the demagogic style of Lloyd George’s land campaign; highlighting the comments of the Liberal Postmaster General, Herbert Samuel, that Labour men alone could

102 The Union was used intentionally for this purpose in regard to the controversial issue of tariff reform that threatened to wrench apart the party in 1913. For example, see Strachey’s correspondence with Hugh Cecil (November 1912) and Austen Chamberlain (November 1913). Strachey Papers, S/4/3/21, S/4/3/22; S/4/5/3.
104 National Union Gleanings, xxxvi, January 1911, p.17.
not be trusted to rule the nation and Empire; quoting the *Daily Herald*: ""It is still a common superstition in political circles that the Liberal Party is more kindly disposed towards Labour than the Tory Party"". Similarly, reservations of Radical MPs concerning nationalisation were cited not only as a check to the Liberal Government, but also to illustrate the latter's divergence from Labour. Conversely, the party was eager to display the parallels between the Radical and Labour parties, in an effort to tar them with the same socialist brush. For such purposes, Robert Cecil was asked by Gwynne to write a series of six articles for the *Morning Post* on the class warfare at the heart of Liberal policies. Snowden was reported praising Lloyd George for using the socialist methods advocated by the Labour Party to obtain funds for social reform. Consequently, both the Labour and Liberal parties were depicted as being dominated by class prejudice.

The First World War removed the necessity of persisting with such a policy, for coalition government, and the opposition of the majority of the Liberal Party to pacific Labour, rendered it a less effective weapon. What is more, the patriotic truce – and indeed Unionist desires for domestic unity – determined that only those political sections opposed intractably to Britain's part in the war could be denounced. This point is noteworthy for, in this regard, the war encouraged the Unionist Party to redirect its efforts against the Labour rather than Liberal party. Certainly, this was furthered partly by the nature of Liberal and Labour dissidence, the latter being far more organised and less individualistic or intellectual. It was also advanced by the fact that Labour dissension was more pervasive and more active politically.

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105 *G&M*, February 1914, pp.119-21, 146-47. See also, *P&L*, 1914/143.
108 *National Union Gleanings*, xxxvi, April 1911, p.326.
Throughout the war, patriotic language constituted the most conspicuous method by which to isolate pacific Labour. As early as August 1914, when establishing the basis for the political truce, the NUEC had inserted the caveat 'that no meetings should be held except where there were Socialist attacks or a "Stop the War" propaganda.'\(^9\) While only a minority of the Labour movement actually opposed the war (most notably and implacably the ILP), attempts were made to characterise as unpatriotic any part of the movement not associated specifically with patriotic labour.\(^10\) In 1918, Patrick Hannon, the Honorary Secretary of the British Commonwealth Union, spoke of the need to create 'a national scheme of propaganda to counteract the increasing activities of the poisonous missionaries of Pacifist and Bolshevist doctrines who are now energetically at work in almost every part of the United Kingdom'. Hannon lumped together the anti-national movements as being in 'close harmony' and possessing a common purpose, including the ILP, the UDC, the Herald League, the Shop-Stewards' movement, Sinn Fein and the 'Fellowship of Reconciliation'. Against this threat, was ranked the NWAC, the 'Women's Party', the Navy League, the BWNL, the Merchant Seamen's League, the Seamen and Firemen's Union, the British Empire Union, and certain Labour leaders, such as Tillett.\(^11\) The creation of such a Manichean demarcation between the national and anti-national movements was certainly symptomatic of right-wing thinking.\(^12\)

From the outset, Unionist Party literature sought to caricature as 'pro-German' any prominent Labour individuals (MacDonald, Keir Hardie, Snowden) who qualified their support for Britain's entry into the war or the war effort. They also

\(^{10}\) NUEC, 06/08/1914.

\(^{11}\) In fact, even the Union of Democratic Control and ILP declarations called for British victory, but, as Paul Ward has noted, 'the anti-war left was defined by its opponents'. Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left 1881-1924* (Woodbridge, 1998), p.129.

\(^{11}\) Memorandum, 'Industrial Unrest', [1918]. Hannon Papers, Box 13.

expounded the idea, held by Hannon, that individuals were either for or against the war, with the inescapable corollary being (for them) that individuals were either for or against the nation. As such, they tended to lump together all undesirables into an alliance of danger: syndicalists, Sinn Fein supporters, Germanic sympathisers and pacifists. The Easter Rising of 1916 became an insurrection mounted by a Sinn Fein, Germanic and syndicalist combine, and Sinn Fein was merely an Irish arm of the German menace.113 Not only should the ILP Conference of 1916 have illustrated to observers that they 'took' their inspiration from a philosophy which is divorced from national sentiments as it is remote from realities', but also that they aspired to cooperate with German socialists.114 Two pamphlets produced by Central Office in 1918 were characteristic of this. They sought to establish the relationship between the ILP and international, more specifically German, socialism: MacDonald and Snowden had been praised by German newspapers and had justified Germany's rationale for war. Indeed, they were responsible for 'Pro-German Agitation Cunningly Introduced For International Socialist Meditation.'115 Such methods had the potentiality to dismiss various Unionist opponents with a single blow, each tainted by association with the others. This also affected attitudes of the far right to post-war international solutions, with Ian Colvin arguing that the League of Nations was promoted by Bolshevik, German, Jewish and Labour agents.116

In part, at least, this was a version of the 'Hidden Hand', which was promoted by the extreme right (most notably the 'Vigilantes' Pemberton-Billing and Arnold White). They purported to believe that German influences were undermining the

113 G&M, May 1916, p.37. See also speech by Leslie Scott reported in Liverpool Courier, 05/12/1918, p.6.
115 'What is the I.L.P.?' and 'The Voice of the Pacifists', P&L, 1918/11, 1918/12.
116 Colvin to Lloyd, 13/05/1918. Lloyd Papers, 9/3.
British establishment through a variety of frequently outlandish means.\textsuperscript{117} However, private correspondence would suggest that this simplified battle between 'good' and 'evil' was not constructed consciously. In December 1916, Bridgeman informed his wife that the inspiration behind the Merseyside strikes was a German 'evil influence', and Sydenham blamed the same stimulus for the resources of pacifists, strikers and Irish dissidents a year later.\textsuperscript{118} Colvin reported to Milner that the public should be made aware of the 'desperate nature' of socialist propagandists, and that the Government must be ready to pursue activists, or else German influence would only gain an even firmer foothold.\textsuperscript{119} Strachey argued duplicitously that a gulf of difference existed between the Ulster Volunteer Force who had primed their guns in order to defend the Union, and de Valera's men who wished 'to help their German allies'.\textsuperscript{120} The Bolshevik revolution had occurred only because Lenin was mad and Trotsky was Jewish (and, therefore, incapable of turning down a German back-hander).\textsuperscript{121}

Certainly, Unionist obsession with the alien question suggests that an innate conviction was held that such agencies were pervasive and influential: powerful sub-committees reported to both the Unionist Business Committee and the Unionist War Committee on the alien influence.\textsuperscript{122} William Joynson-Hicks even took the extreme measure of obstructing a wartime Vote of Supply in an effort to insist that the alien issue was tackled forcefully.\textsuperscript{123} Typical was Long's pronouncement that it was 'better [to] intern a dozen innocent people than leave

\textsuperscript{117} James Hayward, \textit{Myths and Legends of the First World War} (Sutton, Stroud, 2002), pp.151-62.
\textsuperscript{119} Colvin to Milner, 04/06/1917 and reply. Milner Papers, 354/120-25.
\textsuperscript{120} Strachey to Salisbury, 06/09/1918 (copy). Strachey Papers, S/13/2/7. Also, see Henry Duke's War Cabinet Memorandum on de Valera and Germany, 14/07/1917. Merrivale Papers, c.715/50.
\textsuperscript{121} Strachey to Sydenham, 29/08/1918 (copy). Strachey Papers, S/13/18/5.
\textsuperscript{122} For the UBC Sub-committee on Aliens and the 'Report of the Enemy Influence Sub-Committee of the UWC', see Hewins Papers, Boxes 25-32 and 61/83-7.
\textsuperscript{123} House of Commons debates, 29/06/1916. \textit{Hansard}, 5\textsuperscript{th} Series, lxiii, 1047-66.
one active unscrupulous pro-German at large'. Typical also was its cross-the-board application, this time in relation to Sinn Fein. Indeed, on one occasion, Long even went so far as to console the Home Secretary, Cave, with the fanciful counsel that criticism of his lenient approach towards aliens was inspired by German money.

The arrival of the Russian revolution added yet another ingredient to this mixture of dissent. Initially, the revolution of February 1917 was greeted equivocally. The subsequent evolution of perspectives is well represented in the views of the Unionist MP for Sheffield Ecclesall, Samuel Roberts. He welcomed the original revolution, believing that it had removed hindrances to Russia becoming a committed and organised fighting ally. A year later, with Russia's contribution formally withdrawn, the same MP related that it was only due to the 'falsity of Russia' that peace had not yet arrived. This reflected an environment in which, whatever the political merits of soviets or tsars, the paramount consideration for all was the maintenance of an eastern front against the Central Powers. Having recently returned from a mission to Russia, Milner believed that the spring insurrection was directed against 'the muddle' of a bureaucracy incapable of assuring food supplies to its citizens, still less prosecuting an efficient war. Accordingly, he could not consider it unjustified or unnecessary. This emphasis on Russia's fighting capacity explains the reluctance to attack the Bolshevik influence openly until it was conclusively shown that their government would be even less effective than its predecessor as a military ally. Russia's increasing pacifism – completed in the negotiated peace with Germany at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 – loosened the stopper from the vitriol that could

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124 Long to Hewins, 19/05/1918. Hewins Papers, 68/248-49.
125 Long to Cave, 04/08/1918. Cave Papers, MS Add. 62497, f.96.
126 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 01/04/1917. Cutting in City of Sheffield UA, 30/03/1917, (LD/2107).
127 Ibid., 30/03/1918.
now be splashed liberally on all dissidents. Gershom Stewart MP told Cheshire Unionists that the revolution was 'one of the most deplorable events in the whole universe (hear, hear). They were devoid of common sense or common honesty'; Archibald Boyd-Carpenter assured Unionists in Bradford that the chaos in Russia was an inevitable consequence of socialism. By the time of the 1918 general election, even Lloyd George, who had urged diplomatic approaches to the Bolshevik Government and advocated their sitting at the Peace Conference, was attacking the Labour Party as being run 'by the extreme pacifist, Bolshevik group'. This was a theme played deafeningly loud by the Unionists throughout 1918 and culminated in the coupon election propaganda. B.F. McDonald (Unionist candidate, Lanark Bothwell), for instance, alleged that what Bolshevism had done for Russia, Labour hoped to do for Britain – 'make the nation an automaton nation under officials'. With election literature in mind, in August 1918 the Publications Sub-Committee of the NUEC asked specifically that pamphlets and leaflets should be prepared 'showing the result of Socialism under Bolshevik rule', and that for this purpose authentic information was required. Basic efforts were made to contradict the benefits of socialism – the Bolshevik revolution had resulted in 'No power to the Proletariat ... The Nationalisation of Wealth - Wealth has been destroyed, not nationalised.' The Russian people had been the naïve victims of a German conspiracy.

Notwithstanding Unionists' apparent confidence in the capacity of the British people to appreciate the failure of the revolution to usher in a new 'millennium',

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129 Cheshire Guardian, 15/01/1918. Cutting in Cheshire Provincial Division, AGM, 12/01/1918 (Are/3/6/3); Bradford West UA, AGM, 28/02/1918, (JAR). Boyd-Carpenter was elected for Bradford North in 1918.
131 Liverpool Courier, 29/11/1918, p.6.
133 'What Bolshevism Has Done for Russia it would like to do for you', P&L, 1918/21
concern was rife at its capacity to spread.\(^{134}\) As early as April 1917, Milner told a Canadian friend that 'I feel more sure that the end is nearing than I do what kind of end it will be. The social structure in all the old European countries shows ominous cracks – least of all perhaps in England, though even here there are some signs.'\(^{135}\) Before the October revolution, Curzon and Long also privately expressed anxieties that civil disobedience would extend towards Britain.\(^{136}\) The strength of Unionist criticism of the international socialist conference in Stockholm revealed the prevalence of fear even before the Bolshevik victory in Russia. Cave was requested by Milner to scrutinise all working-class gatherings, as they could not but 'turn into a pacifist and revolutionary meeting'.\(^{137}\) William Raeburn (prospective Unionist candidate for Dumbartonshire) chastised Law for expecting loyal support if he 'viewed with indifference & complacency a man of Cabinet rank [Henderson] being allowed to take with him traitors & cowards & attending Socialistic & Pacifist Meetings in the Capital of our closest ally'.\(^{138}\) Similarly, Duncannon, on the adjournment of the House of Commons on 1 August 1917, moved to call attention to the fact that at a crucial juncture of hostilities, the War Cabinet was permitting one of its members to proceed abroad on a pacifist mission.\(^{139}\)

These various strands of patriotism were harmonised most resoundingly in December 1918. Worthington Evans informed his prospective voters in Colchester that the Labour candidate had laid bare his want of patriotism by making no mention in his manifesto of the punishment due Germany or of reparations. He also claimed that the Labour candidate had ILP backing, and

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\(^{134}\) Bridgeman Diary, 03/08/1917. Williamson, *Modernisation*, pp.120-1.
\(^{137}\) Milner to Cave, 31/08/1917. Cave Papers, MS Add. 62496.
\(^{138}\) Raeburn to Law, 31/07/1917. BL/82/2/14.
\(^{139}\) House of Commons debates, 01/08/1917. *Hansard*, 5\(^{th}\) Series, xcvi, 2181-6.
‘indeed [that] he had to fly the Red flag over his Committee room’. Worthington Evans, conversely, pledged to have the Kaiser punished and German aliens expelled from Britain.\textsuperscript{140} As to retribution for Germany, the story was the same across the country: M.J. Wilson (Yorkshire, Richmond) felt ‘no pity or mercy’ for the Germans; George Lane-Fox (Yorkshire, Barkston Ash) insisted on reparations ‘even if it meant putting back the clock of German progress and commerce for a hundred years’. Likewise, the Conservative candidates and press attacked any moves of clemency by opponents of Coalition candidates as friends of the ‘bestial hordes’ (\textit{Sheffield Daily Telegraph}); Frederick Jowett had taken ‘every opportunity to bless the Boche’ (\textit{Bradford Argus}); there would be ‘no tenderness [shown] to Mr Ramsay MacDonald’s German friends’ (Arthur Griffith-Boscawen in Birmingham, Dudley).\textsuperscript{141} The \textit{Liverpool Courier} alluded to ‘A Straight Fight’ between the Coalition, which sought ‘to exact stern justice from the guilty Teutons’, and the Labour Party, who were for befriending ‘the unrepentant butchers of Europe’.\textsuperscript{142} Such campaigns, in fact, epitomised the link that the party was able to construct between self-interest and patriotism. As the Labour MP J.R. Clynes argued, ‘in effect, the votes were bought’, most notably through the creation of a causal link between the punishment of Germany and the economic interest of Britain.\textsuperscript{143}

It is notoriously problematic to evaluate propaganda and policy direction in terms of their impact. The risk is for the argument to become cyclic, namely that a general election success might be validated by the dissemination of certain propaganda, the impact of such programmes themselves being estimated primarily by the electoral success achieved. In addition to the usual difficulties of

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{East Anglian Daily Times}, 04/12/1918. Cutting in Worthington Evans Papers, c.892, f.30.

\textsuperscript{141} Keith Dugdale, ‘Conservatives, Liberals and Labour in Yorkshire, 1918-29’, Sheffield University, M. Phil. thesis (1976), pp.50-1; \textit{Birmingham Daily Post}, 28/11/1918, p.5.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Liverpool Courier}, 30/11/1918. p.4.

assessment, the massive extension of the franchise with the Representation of the People Act 1918 made traditional methods of estimation less effective. Despite this, in the short-term, there can be no doubt that patriotism was a root of Unionist success. Both historians and contemporaries have acknowledged the significance of war propaganda, which reinforced the patriotic message of the Unionist Party. For the contemporary, ‘total’ war propaganda proved the significance of such methods, an impression felt into the immediate post-war years and beyond. In some sense this was driven by aspirations for its potential success, more it was driven by apprehension at its capacity to ‘appeal to the animal in man, wrapped up in a mantle of democratic phrases’.

Either way, its impression was felt. Historians have acknowledged, meanwhile, that in simple terms of patriotism, and in comparison to the domestic audience of the German government, Allied propagandists preached to a very receptive audience. Paul Ward is only the most recent in a long line of historians to point towards the impact of patriotism on the result of the coupon election result – in this case relating to ‘the success of appeals based on both women’s domesticity and their patriotic activism’. The doyens of Liverpool and Manchester Unionism recorded that women voted overwhelmingly in favour of their party along with a significant majority of returning soldiers. Most significantly, by December 1918 victory had been achieved, and, as the diplomat Cecil Spring-Rice had commented – somewhat unhelpfully in the difficult early stages of the war – ‘the real propaganda [was] facts and events’. In the post-war years, the party

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144 McCrillis, Conservative, pp.146-47.
147 Salvidge to Derby, 31/12/1918; Woodhouse to Derby, 01/01/1919. Derby Papers, 8/3, 20/1. The Liberal candidate Richard Holt thought the same, Holt diary, 15/12/1918. David Dutton (ed.), Odyssey of an Edwardian Liberal: the Political Diary of Richard Durning Holt (Alan Sutton, Gloucester, 1989), p.60.
148 Sanders, British Propaganda, p.253. Spring-Rice was British Ambassador to the USA.
campaigned against the Labour Party’s pacifist, pro-German and anti-conscription stance of 1914-18.\textsuperscript{149}

Wartime by-elections also indicate the electoral capacity of patriotism. Curiously, given Unionist fears, the most significant threat was posed not by Labour candidates but by independent ‘ultra-patriots’. The only seat contested and lost by a Unionist during the war was not forfeited to Labour but to the independent ‘Vigilante’ Pemberton-Billing (Hertfordshire East). The mining candidate James Winstone, backed by MacDonald and following in the esteemed path of Hardie, lost the solid Labour seat of Merthyr Tydfil to the patriotic BWNL candidate Charles Stanton. The success of such ‘ultra-patriots’, combined with the fact that commitment to the political truce determined that the Liberal and Unionist parties contested many fewer seats than Labour, would suggest that patriotism was a sure vote winner during the war. The proximity of the 1918 general election to the conclusion of hostilities related it to the wartime atmosphere. Indeed, Samuel Samuel – fighting in the East End of London and alert to the potential of the nationalist card – feared that the National Party might out-maneuver Unionists on the right by committing itself to post-war conscription and radical anti-alien legislation.\textsuperscript{150}

What however were the longer-term implications of these patriotic sentiments and propaganda for the Unionist Party? The war certainly made more convincing the idea of the Unionist Party as ‘national’ both in the sense of patriotic and non-class, if perhaps only to a Unionist audience. The emergence of Baldwin’s specifically rural ‘Englishness’ as an image of Conservatism in the 1920s has little particular antecedence in the war years. However, Baldwin did point

\textsuperscript{149} ‘Labour Leaders on the PEACE TREATY’, NUA Pamphlet 1907, (August 1919); ‘What the “Labour” Party has done’, (December 1919).
expressly to Dominion contribution to the war as assuring and defining the future of the Empire and the Commonwealth and, if Austen Chamberlain was not listening, he could also have mentioned the industrial protection of the 1920s as another offshoot. 151 Perhaps, most prominently, in conjunction with the anti-socialist response outlined above, patriotic language served to clarify the national manner by which sectional appeals could be constructed through into the 1920s. Because of the rapid rise of the Labour movement in the years immediately preceding, and during, the war, the Unionist Party was fortunate (almost unquestionably so) in the timing of the war in providing for such a fruitful counter to the Labour Party.

The Third Way: Working With the Labour Movement

The emergence of a strong patriotic labour wing during the war certainly could only bolster efforts to marginalise the Labour Party and it was in the alliance formed with the BWNL that the positive and negative aspects of patriotism versus pacifism were pulled together most overtly. 152 However, several key questions must be answered about the nature of this wartime cooperation between Unionists and labour. What precedent, if any, existed before the coalition and war? Did it represent moderation more of Unionist or of Labour actors? To what extent was it spurred on by the Bolshevik revolution and the desire to create alliances that could be perpetuated beyond the conclusion of war?

How widely supported was the movement amongst Unionist MPs and the rank and file? Most importantly, what impact did it have on the ability of the Unionist Party to appeal realistically to the working classes?

Precedent existed only in the margins of the Unionist Party. For Milner and Steel-Maitland, gravitation towards labour was propelled not only by the war but also by their 'social-imperialist' thought, nurtured by friendships with left intellectuals and connections formed in the 'collectivist' milieu of All Souls College Oxford. 153 Beyond this, there was scant basis for suspecting any convergence of thought or sympathy before the war. A recent historical tendency to emphasise the organic movement of certain Labour figures to patriotic positions adopted during the war is relevant more to their personal views than to Unionist pre-war perceptions. 154 Many of those who later received endorsement from the wartime coalition, and sometimes specifically from Unionist elements, had been attacked before the war as revolution mongers. Charles Stanton, to be backed in a by-election by the funds of the BWNL, the National Service League, the Unionist Party and Tory newspapers, had been quoted only three years previous as remarking 'What we need up here is more violence'. In 1912 Gleanings and Memoranda had garnished Tillett's socialist language with the extravagant menus from luxurious restaurants that rendered him a hypocrite. 155

Despite such weak antecedence, the BWNL won considerable sympathy from Unionist: Milner, Steel-Maitland, Astor, Amery, James F. Hope and Worthington Evans were involved most intimately with the movement; Central Office was substantially engaged, with Younger attending the policy committee, John

154 For instance see Martin Pugh, 'The Rise of Labour and the Political Culture of Conservatism, 1890-1945', History, xcvi (2002), pp.514-537. It is supported, somewhat tenuously, in certain autobiographies such as Clynes, Memoirs.
Boraston and Sanders giving consideration to the electoral bargain, and Richardson (previously editor of the Unionist journal *Our Flag*) composing the committee’s brief;\(^{156}\) the Whips Office was engaged through the auspices of Bridgeman; Law, Long, Talbot, Wolmer and Austen Chamberlain all favoured the cooperation.\(^{157}\) An interesting meeting in October 1917 discussed to which Unionist MPs an appeal to serve on a joint (Unionist and BWNL) general council might most propitiously be made. As a preliminary, a clutch of old guard and diehard Unionists were excluded from consideration (Bull, Cooper, Ernest Jardine, Joynson-Hicks, Ronald McNeill, A.H. Stanley and Lords Thynne, Robert and Hugh Cecil). Those deemed suitable and approachable numbered forty-six, and the list was made up of several cliques, including the pre-war Unionist Social Reform Committee (Baldwin, Charles Bathurst, Griffith-Boscawen, John Hills, Samuel Hoare, J.A. Hope, Wood) and the wartime Unionist Business Committee (Hume-Williams, Leslie Scott, de Pennefather, Gershom Stewart).\(^{158}\) Steel-Maitland recorded of the dinner held on 26 October 1917 that:

We met, talked about the programme, and general approval was given to it and to the idea that they were the kind of people with whom we could work. We let [Unionist Council members] know that we had talked over these political questions with [Victor] Fisher in a friendly way, but did not mention that there was any definite alliance. As a result, everyone, with I think one exception, was friendly and willing to see them go ahead, and at the same time quite convinced that it was as unwise to try and form any public alliance.\(^{159}\)

\(^{156}\) Miss Page to James Hope, 30/08/1917 (Copy). SM GD193/99/2/91.

\(^{157}\) Talbot to Sanders, 26/03/1918, enclosed in Sanders to Law, 26/03/1918. BL/83/1/25.


\(^{159}\) Steel-Maitland to Neville Chamberlain, 15/11/1917 (Copy); James F. Hope to Miss Page, 13/11/1917. SM GD193/99/2/113, 103.
Some few weeks later, at the NUA Conference of 30 November 1917, Law offered his endorsement to the co-operation. What explained this eagerness to foster wider Unionist participation? No doubt, the Bolshevik revolution encouraged action against the socialist threat wherever possible, and insecurities concerning military victory may also have played their part. However, the early and continued consideration given to electoral arrangements indicates that, at least in some degree, aspirations existed for cooperation in peace as well as war. What therefore brought the BWNL and the Unionist Party together?

Through the war effort, certain elements of the Labour movement were welcomed into coalition government and into the hearts of many on the right. Within the coalition, Henderson, George Barnes, John Hodge, and George Roberts all reached Cabinet rank, while George Wardle, William Brace, Stephen Walsh, J.R. Clynes and James Parker all performed ministerial roles. Simply through this medium of shared responsibility, Unionist leaders warmed to their colleagues. In August 1917, Bridgeman thought that, with the exceptions of Henderson (who had just returned from Russia and was to remove himself from the government shortly afterwards) and Clynes, all the Labour men in government were 'sound'.

Even Clynes impressed Crawford with his 'strong and mollifying effect upon the trades unions'; Crawford lamented his administrative incapacity only after Clynes had succeeded him as Food Controller. The aptitude for, and moderation in, governing displayed by such Labour leaders also moderated fear of a Labour administration, Selborne going so far as to exclaim that it might well be preferable to the Radical version.

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160 Bridgeman to Caroline Bridgeman, 01/08/1917. Williamson, Modernisation, p.120. Bridgeman served as undersecretary to John Hodge and then George Roberts at the Ministry of Labour, December 1916 to January 1919.

161 Crawford Diary, 30/08/1918, 02/01/1919. Vincent, Crawford, pp.392, 399.

Several factors served to shape the timing of such opinions. Unionists undoubtedly were pleasantly surprised to discover the patriotic, moderate and competent character of the Labour leadership in the first few years of coalition. Such grounding, meanwhile, was provided in the Asquith coalition, when the mandarin features of their Liberal colleagues caused fiercer ire amongst Unionist ministers than did any political tendencies on the part of the Labour men. For instance concerning the adoption of conscription, criticism was frequently levelled at Asquith for not pursuing the issue more eagerly and for failing to bypass obstacles, whilst little was directed at Henderson who, in the form of warnings of labour distress at the notion of industrial conscription, was at the least the spokesman for these obstacles. Although such developments were evident, the views of Arthur Griffith-Boscawen MP reflected Unionist conceptions of this political convergence. Having served as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Pensions from December 1916, he paid tribute to his two Labour chiefs: Barnes, because, 'though called a Labour Member, there was nothing of the modern Socialist-Labourite about him. I should describe him as being really an old-fashioned and very cautious Scottish Whig'; Hodge, who 'was really a rampaging and most patriotic Tory workingman'. Such politicians were acceptable, it would seem, only if they were not Labour men.

To some extent, as depicted in the *Punch* cartoon 'The Real Voice of Labour', the war fostered the notion that at heart the workingman was patriotic and honest. This had long been a party ideal. Before the war, Lord Roberts, Milner and the intellectual Arthur Boutwood had all been convinced that a 'latent' patriotism and morality resided in the workingman, choked only by hardship and poverty. The huge number of voluntary recruits to the front, especially in the first six

months of war, served to renew such a confidence in the homogenous nature of the British population. More especially, experience on the front allowed Croft to talk passionately of the bond of respect and understanding forged between the various social classes fighting in France, which he held to be a microcosm of society. War had an 'ennobling influence', and he thus distinguished soldiering from politics, for in the army 'one speaks straight and straight men listen to you'. Wood spoke of the 'confidence between Officers and men' fashioned at the front and enthused concerning 'what might be done in the industrial world, if the same spirit of mutual trust and confidence which exists in the trenches could reign in our workshops at home'. Even those who had no personal familiarity with such developments wished the idea sustainable: Milner told an audience in Leeds that 'the fellowship of the trenches would be a bond between Englishmen of the most various classes in the future'; the equally inexperienced Selborne and Steel-Maitland supported such a heart-warming thesis. Colonel John Gretton MP, instead, considered that 'the real jarring note [came] from the suburban middle-class, the West Kensington type', who chattered rather than partook of their share of the national effort.

The war, meanwhile, encouraged an ideological convergence around state intervention in industry. This was inspired by the wartime necessities of the maintenance of production and the avoidance of domestic civil unrest. Certain sections of the Unionist Party moved towards a more interventionist attitude to

167 Leeds Weekly Citizen, 28/01/1916, cited in Martin Pugh, 'The Rise of the Labour Party', p.532; Steel-Maitland to Law, 13/06/1916. BLi64/G/8. In fact, as Gerard DeGroot has shown, trench warfare did little to harmonise British society, instead consolidating the paternalistic nature of officers and the upper classes, and relying on the army's traditional bedrock of volunteers for its successes in recruitment (the young, unskilled, unemployed and desperate). With a strong paternalist tradition it was not hard to see why such ideas might have appealed readily to Unionists. Gerard DeGroot, Blighty: British Society in the era of the Great War (Longman, London, 1996), pp.47, 291-95, passim.
industrial relations, which, whether through the state or through other means, stressed the importance of sacrifices by both employers and employed. Collective bargaining became a catchword, with Astor, Neville Chamberlain (as Mayor of Birmingham) and Steel-Maitland expending much energy on the adoption of such methods. Steel-Maitland also worked alongside the Worker’s Education Association (WEA) and manufacturers such as Dudley Docker in attempts to urge compromise between employers and workers. Bridgeman sought to create a ‘Church Labour Programme’ and worked through the Church of England Men’s Society to bring managers and employees together. Even the landed Tory Salisbury co-operated with the left-wing economist Alfred Zimmern in efforts to promote co-partnership schemes with the backing of the WEA.

An analysis of BWNL propaganda reveals much about the real character of this particular entente. At its heart was patriotism, and in this respect BWNL literature differed little from that of the Unionist Party. Speaking of class conflict and international war, Victor Fisher, the President of the BWNL, told an audience that ‘you cannot profitably quarrel over the arrangement of the furniture while your homesteads are burning.’ He denounced the Labour Leader, Snowden, MacDonald, and Charles Trevelyan. The BWNL Chairman J.A. Seddon explained that the pacifism of Labour’s pre-war politics had crumbled when they ‘learned that Prussian militarism must be destroyed root and branch, and the only way to destroy it is to fight it’.

169 See Chapter V.
170 Steel-Maitland to A.L. Smith, 20/03/1916, 30/03/1916 (copies); Prof. Kirkcaldy to Steel-Maitland, 16/05/1916, 08/06/1916, and reply 25/05/1916 (copy). SM GD193/170/1/399, 400; GD193/558/33, 27, 29.
171 Williamson, Modernisation, pp.118-19.
deemed conscientious objectors to be 'national blacklegs' and that blacklegs were disposed of by trade unionists, a radical suggestion for a man who had been Chairman of the Trades Union Congress in 1914. Significantly for the wartime alliance, the BWNL also embraced the Empire. Fisher argued that the war had proved the commitment and solidarity of the Empire, and that 'from this time forth we will seal such a pact with our brethren in every sense of the term that this free Empire of Britons the world over shall remain dissoluble and indestructible.' Indeed, were it not for the flexibility of the term 'British' during the war, the League's title might have been more confessedly prefaced with that of 'Empire'. This brought them into line both with wartime enthusiasm for Empire and with long-held Unionist principles.

Crucially, BWNL leaders leaned heavily on the Unionist Party in other areas. The strikes that occurred on the Clyde and in South Wales 'were comparatively small, and were the work of a few well-known mischief-makers', and, accordingly, the British working classes had exhibited their devotion to the nation, and 'all classes have commingled in the trenches, and have perhaps learned to understand one another better.' The pacifist workingman was the exception, and himself often the victim of the deceitful schemes of disloyal trade union leaders. Such a characterisation of Labour leaders as subverting and defiling an otherwise loyal working-class through Machiavellian and demagogic means differed little from pre-war or wartime Unionism. It had been a persistent pre-war theme that, as Lord Hindlip (chairman of Worcestershire Unionist Association) claimed, Hardie and the like purposely promoted strife. Rather tenuous efforts had been made to emphasise the failure of strike action to achieve

175 Fisher, Before and After, p.6.
176 Seddon, Why British Labour Supports the War, pp.10-11.
178 Worcestershire West UA, AGM, 18/05/1912, (956/6).
its desired goals, including the fact that during 1913 the outcome in many cases had been an increase rather than decrease in hours (actually only in seven percent of instances).\textsuperscript{179} Despite protestations to the contrary, such an interpretation continued to hold sway throughout the war, with union leaders who were ready to mobilise their members in industrial action still characterized as revolutionary. Given added piquancy and credibility due to the Bolshevik revolution, complementary accusations of pacifism and pro-Prussianism were levelled.

In other respects too, the war failed conspicuously to usher in a more coherent appreciation of the issues at stake. While the realisation continued from before 1914 that unions had a role to play within the labour world,\textsuperscript{180} their political character was still questioned and feared. Between 1911 and 1914, Wolmer and others had campaigned vigorously to divorce the trades unions from the Labour Party, arguing that the principles of the latter in no way represented the interests of trade union members, and that members should be allowed choice as to whether they wished to contribute to the political fund.\textsuperscript{181} More candidly, Lloyd had sought to establish a trade union movement that would reflect Unionist economic policy without being officially affiliated to the party.\textsuperscript{182} After the war, the Midland Union passed a resolution questioning whether Section Three of the Trades Unions Act of 1913 `has not failed to carry out its object of relieving Members of Trade Unions, in political disagreement with the Labour Party, from contributing to political funds, it being found in practice that few men will face the odium thrown upon them by Labour politicians, as a result of applying for an

\textsuperscript{179} G&M, February 1914, pp.106-8.
\textsuperscript{180} Steel-Maitland to Whittaker (Chairman of Lancashire Provincial Division), 17/10/1914. Derby Papers, D/31/1.
\textsuperscript{181} `Have Trade Unionists The Right To Think? ' [1913]; S. Aspinall (Secretary of Bryn Conservative Workingmen's Mutual Protection Association) to Wolmer, 27/12/1913. Wolmer Papers, c.982, ff.68, 185-86.
\textsuperscript{182} Lloyd to Buck (Agent for Staffordshire West UA), 25/06/1912; 01/07/1912. Lloyd Papers, 18/3.
exemption form'.  

183 Attitudes to trade unions, therefore, matured little during the war. Unionists were ready to praise union leaders when they tried, most especially when they succeeded, to steer their workforces away from confrontation over pay or conditions. It was hardly surprising that much applause should have been showered upon J.H. Thomas on the occasions of his refusal to use industrial clout to oppose the Military Service Bill and on his firm containment of the railway workers in September 1918. Nor when James Sexton and Havelock Wilson were commended for dissociating their dockers' and seamen's unions from the Bolshevik-friendly Liverpool and Derby branches of the Trades Union Congress.  

184 Hodge was quoted with approval in party literature in urging that 'old customs and prejudices must be dropped by both sides if victory in the industrial field is to be attained. On the workmen's side, old customs of a restrictive character must be cast aside; on the other the employer must realise that the workmen or workwomen must receive an adequate share of the resulting gain.'  

185 This was hardly revolutionary talk. Such vague assurances of fairness could have been gleaned effortlessly from many a Unionist speech before or during the war, and, given the propensity of BWNL members to feast heartily on Milner's vocabulary, it is not impossible that they were.

Perhaps most noteworthy for the effect the partnership had upon the development of Unionism, the basis of the social policy of the BWNL in many spheres was the findings of the pre-war Unionist Social Reform Committee (USRC). The USRC's housing plan was adopted wholesale, as were – in spirit rather than letter – its restrictions in application of a minimum wage. Where the BWNL went beyond such solutions, as in the establishment of a minimum price for wheat and

183 Midland Union Conservative Association, AGM, 05/12/1919. (Are/MU/2/5)
185 G&M, September 1916, p.34.
meat, and the municipalisation of canals, it really reflected little beyond a moderation of wartime procedure and an adoption of Milnerite ‘gas and water’ socialism. New initiatives adopted by the joint BWNL/Unionist General Council, such as local authority provision of milk for schoolchildren and government grants to fund the school uniforms of the poor, were piecemeal. Substantive reforms, including anti-alien legislation, tended to be but an extension of Unionist policies. On the other hand, the Unionists successfully opposed more radical policies, including state farms (the emphasis instead to be on the perennial solution, the ‘cooperative’ scheme), public works to counteract seasonal unemployment (the answer rather to lie in imperial cooperation and emigration) and the tripartite division – between state, capital and labour – of a company’s profits exceeding a datum line (no alternative proposed).186 While not turning their backs entirely on socialist principles, BWNL members qualified the expediency of free trade: it was appropriate only between mutually trusting and respecting nations, and thus the ‘League stands for Economic Defence’. Betraying the unease concerning food supply, Fisher made the strange claim for a trade union leader that the first priority must be agriculture (an overwhelmingly un-unionised industry), the labourer receiving an adequate wage and the farmer proper security.187 Therefore, the BWNL toed the Unionist line on all major issues and, as such, was of very little assistance in providing the party with distinctive policies to appeal to the working classes.

Finally, increasingly, and unsurprisingly considering the policies illustrated above, the BWNL divorced itself from the majority Labour Party. The League campaigned vigorously against the proposal to send delegates from the Labour Party to the International Socialist Conference at Stockholm in August 1917, and

187 Fisher, Before and After, p.11.
Havelock Wilson (later a Vice-President of the League) refused even to permit his union members to transport Henderson to the Conference. But what, on the surface, was perfect propaganda material (see Punch cartoon) actually also brought severe concomitant limitations. For, there was the sense that the Unionist Party wanted it both ways. Despite the repugnance felt for 'pacific Labour' and the desire that the BWNL should display its revulsion for this, Neville Chamberlain rightly appreciated that by divorcing itself totally from the larger Labour movement, Fisher's League 'destroyed its usefulness' to the party. What Unionists really wanted, of course, was a working-class Tory who looked like a Labour man, a wolf in sheep's clothing, eager to devour its youthful socialist prey, yet sufficiently camouflaged to get near enough to do so.

In fact, ignoring historical and titular differences, there was little that really separated the Unionist Party and the BWNL beyond a determination that they should not be perceived as one. The very basis of cooperation indicates that while the war ushered in a greater open-mindedness amongst Unionists, it did little to develop a specific moderate counter to socialism. It is not apparent either that it won over many voters to the Unionist cause for, as Central Office advised Law, those who voted for a BWNL candidate were overwhelmingly likely to have voted for an official Unionist candidate if one were in the field. Indeed, suspicions were expressed in Stourbridge that, by the end of the war, the BWNL, instead of offering a sane alternative to the Labour Party, was actually outflanking the Unionist Party on the right. The Midland Union heard in summer 1918 that 'local Unionists were very much upset by the fact that they had not been consulted [over the adoption of a BWNL candidate], and especially as they disapproved of the policy of the League and, moreover, they thought that they

189 Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 16/02/1918. Self, Neville Chamberlain, p255.
190 This is backed up by the findings in Douglas, 'National Democratic Party', pp.541-42.
had a candidate locally whom they were keenly anxious to run.\textsuperscript{191} The difficulty was wrought partly by internal politics, with the Midland Union unhappy at dictatorial Central Office methods and attempting to forge for itself a more prominent provincial role.\textsuperscript{192} However, Birmingham Unionists were concerned at the very nature of the alliance. Neville Chamberlain, who had fashioned his own cooperation with local Labour leaders earlier in war, argued that he had 'been much concerned about the tactics of the B.W.L. who publicly displayed the most bitter hostility to the Labour Party, and [that] last February he had represented to the Central Office that this attitude might bring about the alienation from the B.W.L. (and therefore from any allies of theirs) of a large section of patriotic Labour men who would not be prepared to break with their official Party. He had therefore urged further investigation and if necessary reconsideration of the whole question.'\textsuperscript{193} As it was, Fisher got the coalition coupon despite having only equivocal Unionist support, before (and perhaps as a result) failing anyway to win in Stourbridge.

The one area in which the BWNL possessed the capacity to be of real value to the Unionist Party beyond the war years was through its provision of 'workingmen' candidates. Nonetheless, as Sanders noted 'in one division after another our party shies at them'.\textsuperscript{194} In Rotherham, although no Unionist candidate had been accepted until the run-up to the election, a 'Business' candidate was selected rather than a BWNL contender.\textsuperscript{195} A month later, Sanders recorded that the relationship with the League was getting 'more and more

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{191} Midland Union, General Purposes Committee, 19/06/1918, (Are/MU/2/5).
\item \textsuperscript{192} Neville Chamberlain to Steel-Maitland, 08/11/1915. SM GD193/165/2/46-7x; Midland Union, General Purposes Committee, 28/06/1918, 25/10/1918, 02/04/1919.
\item \textsuperscript{193} Midland Union, General Purposes Committee, 28/06/1918. See also Austen Chamberlain Papers, correspondence from Steel-Maitland and Victor Fisher, July and August 1917, AC12.
\item \textsuperscript{194} Sanders Diary, 09/06/1918, 23/07/1918. Ramsden, Tory, pp.105-07
\item \textsuperscript{195} Rotherham UA, EGM, 04/10/1918, 18/10/1918, (JAR).
\end{itemize}
difficult. Our people won’t have them in any places.196 Partly in anticipation of such difficulties, and certainly due to an increased confidence in the Lloyd George coalition and its electoral sustainability, there was a dramatic reduction in the number of constituencies categorised as suitable for BWNL candidates. In February 1917, it had been suggested that BWNL candidates contest – with Unionist backing – as many as forty-nine seats (including many in two-member divisions). When the election actually arrived in December 1918, the coupon was granted to only twenty BWNL candidates.197

As in the party’s refusal to adopt working-class nominees, there was a continued tendency amongst Unionists to offer only ‘lip-service’ to the integration of labour. On the other hand, the importance of the Unionist dalliance with the BWNL during the war materialised in the stall set by anti-socialist rhetoric in the 1920s. The League represented the swansong of the (Joseph) Chamberlainite and Milnerite endeavour to win the working classes over to a complete Unionist platform, through positive policies of national applicability. The alternative was the appeal to self-interest along sectional lines and the marginalisation of the Labour Party through propaganda directed at its anti-patriotic stance. It was variations on these latter policies that were to be pursued most effectively in the 1920s and as the BWNL floundered – both within itself and in its relationship with the Unionist Party – so it bolstered this approach.

196 Sanders Diary, 13/07/1918. Ramsden, Tory, p.106.
Tommy: "SO YOU'RE GOING TO STOCKHOLM TO TALK TO FRITZ, ARE YOU? WELL, I'M GOING BACK TO FRANCE TO FIGHT HIM."

'The Real Voice of Labour'

*Punch* Cartoon, 15 August 1917
HOIST WITH HIS OWN PETARD.

Mr Ramsay MacDonald (Champion of Labour): "OF COURSE I'M ALL FOR PEACEFUL PICKETING – ON PRINCIPLE. BUT IT MUST BE APPLIED TO THE PROPER PARTIES."

‘Hoist With His Own Petard’

*Punch* Cartoon, 20 June 1917
IV

ELECTORAL REFORM

'The National Union has always supported the right of women to vote [interruption and correction] ... on every occasion at least in recent years by a majority. Therefore there is no unwillingness in this particular Association to admit them.'

- George Younger at the NUA Conference, 30 November 1917.

The Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform was appointed by Asquith in August 1916 to enquire into methods of registration. It reported in January 1917 and recommended many radical alterations to the electoral system. Most notable among these was a special register for servicemen, universal male suffrage based on a simple residency qualification, redistribution of parliamentary seats to establish uniform constituencies of 50,000 to 70,000 population in Britain (but not Ireland), and the enfranchisement of women over the age of thirty, if they or their husbands already possessed the local government vote. Three months later, the Representation of the People Bill, which adhered in the main to the Conference's proposals but provided also for second votes under a business or university franchise, was introduced into parliament. This chapter will seek to understand Unionist attitudes to reform, in particular the emphases that were placed upon the various electoral questions. In the light of the findings, an analysis of party approaches toward the mass electorate may better be discovered. Having done this it will seek to evaluate how successful the party was in accomplishing its goals and evaluate the effects of its achievements. This chapter does not attempt to chart in detail the process of the reform, but seeks to concentrate on the implications of the actions of rank and file Unionists, as it is
through such means that the party's priorities and attitudes towards issues of class and voter behaviour may best be evaluated.¹

The Vote for 'Tommy'

The first point that must be made is that the pot of electoral reform had been simmering away in Unionist minds throughout the war. The decision of the Asquith Government to revive controversies over plural voting in autumn 1915 had stirred Central Office to request agents to distribute out-voter cards in the constituencies in which their plural voters resided in order to provide a proper understanding of their numbers and politics.² As the year progressed, the Party Chairman and the National Union Executive Committee (NUEC) had continued to devote attention to the implications of any such reform. The out of date electoral register had also acted as a stimulus: a system incapable of recording the votes of servicemen was anathema to Unionists in terms both of principle and of politics. Most especially in the tempestuous climate of 1916, a credible register became required as a means by which to keep open the option of a general election and, in turn, an alternative war government. This undoubtedly constituted at least part of the motivation behind the Unionist War Committee's demand that the government revise the register as a precondition for the prolongation of parliament.³

Summing up the conclusions of the National Union's (NUA) Sub-Committee on Electoral Reform in February 1917, the Party Chairman Younger recorded that

1 For details of the reform process see Martin Pugh, Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906-1918 (Routledge, London, 1978). The various extensions to the life of parliament, that in the strict sense constituted reform, are dealt with in Chapters I and II.
2 Chelmsford UA, EC, 07/05/1915, (D/Z/96/1).
the party did ‘not take up an antagonistic position to a reasonable extension of
the franchise’. Did this represent a new confidence in the working classes and an
extended electorate? Reactions before the war to the changing nature of
constituencies, most especially the advent of large numbers of lodger voters,
would suggest otherwise. This particular franchise was held by those who paid
rent of more than £10 per annum on a room, and as such was the chief means by
which the poorest sector of the electorate was enfranchised. Partly due to Liberal
electoral reform proposals, partly in response to the changing nature of
constituencies, Unionists had increasingly appreciated the necessity of an appeal
to the lodger. However, such recognition had frequently been mitigated by
palpable apprehension at the emergence of a larger working-class electorate in
the constituency, which had ramifications both for the organisation (the cost of
registration) and electoral fortunes. Especially affected had been constituencies
in and around London, leading one association to complain that the division’s
social and electoral complexion had become ‘very obscure’.

Hardly surprisingly, therefore, Central Office regarded the possible advent of
universal male suffrage with trepidation. In 1912 it had estimated this as likely to
produce a loss to the party of 106 seats in England and Wales, a pessimism
continued into 1917: the effect of the new male franchise would add 30% to the
urban electorate and 20% in rural areas; three-quarters of these new voters would
be aged twenty-one to twenty-six – ‘young men of no fixed political opinion and
over one million of these would belong to the labouring classes’. The reference
to this new youthful electorate was no accident, for, unrestrained by family or

4 Electoral Reform Sub-Committee of the NUA, 24/02/1917.
5 Herefordshire South UA, August 1911 Circular, (B19/1).
6 Norwood UA, EC, 23/11/1911, (IV/166/1/3).
7 Chelmsford UA, EC, 07/05/1915, (D/Z/96/1).
8 Neal McCrillis, The British Conservative Party in the Age of Universal Suffrage: Popular
financial responsibilities young men were believed to be easy prey for socialist hawks.¹⁰ Probably with such fears in mind, influential Unionists considered that there were ‘strong arguments’ for a higher general qualification age of twenty-five.¹¹ Within parliament too, as the *Daily Telegraph* recorded, initial attitudes to the prospect of electoral reform were sceptical, with the majority of a divided party feeling that the circumstances were not fit for such reform.¹² Steel-Maitland, free of the shackles of the party chairmanship, claimed that the interests of the party had, ‘wittingly or unwittingly, been gravely jeopardized [by its leaders]’ and predicted a loss to the party of sixty-three seats.¹³

Opinion outside the confines of Central Office and parliament was also firmly against the Speaker’s proposals. Derby told Law that it was ‘quite evident that the feeling [in Lancashire was] very much opposed to the Speaker’s proposals’ and pointed to a meeting of the provincial branch of the NUA as proof.¹⁴ Meanwhile, when canvassed by the NUA, only four associations, five chairmen and twenty-three agents wrote in support of the Speaker’s Report, while, eighty-one associations, nine chairmen and one hundred and sixty-nine agents expressed their disapproval.¹⁵

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¹¹ NUA Sub-Committee on Electoral Reform, 20/02/1917. Memorandum by Gretton, enclosed in Gretton to Long, 17/02/1917; Long to Mount-Edgcumbe, 12/06/1917. Wraxall Papers, 947/675, 947/676. Indeed, Duncan Tanner has argued the importance of the new youth vote, for a new younger electorate was created whose electoral consciousness was forged in a period of Labour growth, both industrially and politically. Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900-1918* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990), pp. 385-92.

¹² Daily Telegraph, 02/03/1917.

¹³ McCrillis, *Conservative*, p.224; Steel-Maitland to Long, 03/02/1917. Wraxall Papers, 947/675.

¹⁴ Derby to Law, 15/05/1917. BL 81/6/13.

¹⁵ NUEC, 08/05/1917.
The assistance these statistics can provide to the historian is marginal: there is no proper breakdown of standpoints towards the various main themes of the Speaker's Report, such as universal male suffrage, women's suffrage, the abolition of the second vote, proportional representation (PR) or redistribution.16 Other interrelated issues further complicate a full understanding of Unionist opinions. The first was the nature of the Speaker's Conference, because, as Lord Claude Hamilton remarked (with some grounds), the conference was 'unconstitutional and unrepresentative'. Hugh Cecil, who rarely missed an opportunity to raise the debate onto an intellectual level too elevated for the majority of his colleagues in parliament, dwelt forthrightly on the 'grossly unconstitutional' function of the conference.17 More generally, dissatisfaction centred on the issue of Unionist representation. The Conservative Agents Journal reported that 'although sorely tempted we do not intend to indulge in useless criticism of the capacity of the Unionist representatives on the Speaker's Conference', before doing precisely that: John Simon and his fellow Liberal delegates had 'completely hoodwinked the unfortunate representatives of the Unionist Party'.18 A 'Wales Agent' believed that the Unionist delegates were 'very much in the hands of the Radical and Labour Members'.19 Tempers were raised to the extent that the Chairman of the NUA, Harry Samuel, was attacked in the NUEC and in parliament for abandoning the positions for which he had been selected to defend in the Speaker's Conference.20 Certainly, the resignation of three diehard Unionists (Salisbury, Fredrick Banbury and James Craig), and the arrival, on their departure, of a 'more conciliatory disposition' (in the words

16 Regarding women's suffrage, a small majority held sway in favour, and of those who dealt with proportional representation, opinion was entirely in the negative.
17 House of Commons debates, 15/05/1917, 22/05/1917. Hansard, 5th Series, xciii, 1497-1500, 2187-98.
18 Conservative Agents' Journal [CAJ], April 1917, xliv, p.54.
19 CAJ, April 1917, xliv, p.65.
20 House of Commons debates, 22/05/1917, xciii, 2178-87. NUA Sub-Committee on Electoral Reform, 24/05/1917; NUEC, 07/06/1917.
of the conference’s chairman), suggests that Tory views were not presented uncompromisingly.  

Such rancorous abuse of Unionist representatives was no doubt provoked also by the patent similarity of the Conference’s proposals to the radical programmes of the pre-war era, and this served only to foster the sense of injustice. Agents in the midlands and London considered that those who had sat on the Conference should even treat the Fabian Society to dinner. Nevertheless, just as a retailer is unwise to be impolite to prospective clients, even if they are as yet only window-shopping, with universal male suffrage likely, Unionists were wary of publicising any disapproval they harboured. Indeed the NUA Council was careful to ensure that the press was informed that ‘the Unionist Party is not in any way hostile to an extension of the franchise or the general principles of the Bill, but are going to suggest some practical amendments.’

Analysis of resolutions passed within local associations is more revealing. None of the constituencies studied recorded specific hostility towards universal male suffrage. Various reservations did however temper their enthusiasm, and it is apparent by the timing and nature of Unionist demands for electoral change that confidence in mass male enfranchisement was severely qualified. The first was the store put by the soldiers’ franchise, which emerged on an agenda that included only limited electoral reform. As early as December 1914, the NUEC had requested the government to ensure that the serviceman was properly registered. Moreover, a difference in intention existed between the desire to

23 NUA Sub-Committee on the Representation of the People Bill, 24/05/1917. See also, Maidstone UA, AGM, 27/03/1917, (U1634/A/2).
24 NUEC, 10/12/1914.
ensure that soldiers were not disenfranchised by the act of fighting, and an inclination toward the enfranchisement of soldiers and sailors per se. For instance, the Cornwall provincial division recommended that 'to ensure [the votes of servicemen] it would be well for the party to prepare lists of all who were away on duty, irrespective of party, so that if a register had to be compiled hurriedly none of these valiant men would be deprived of their electoral rights'.

Consequently, here the service franchise was interpreted largely as a matter of principle and of non-party priority. Also, the register needed to be updated so as to allow for the possibility of a credible general election threat, which itself was necessary to urge on military conscription. In autumn 1916, Salisbury became a focus for such basic plans, receiving proposals from Unionist agents across the country. Such schemes were inherently conservative and practical in nature, seeking only to adapt the process of registration to provide for absent voters. Inherent was the understanding that tinkering with the edges rather than revolution of the fundamentals was required in the electoral system. Indeed no link was acknowledged between such an amendment and wider franchise reform, and many such resolutions were undoubtedly efforts to pre-empt any fuller discussion of the matter.

On the other hand, lay the consideration by the Metropolitan Conservative Agents' Association of spring 1916. Various proposals, including one to ensure the enrolment on the electoral register of all servicemen who had gained the vote previous to, or during, the war, were surmounted by a resolution urging that 'the fact of enlistment shall constitute a War Service Franchise, irrespective of any statutory period or condition of Franchise applicable to Civilians.' In accordance

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25 Cornwall Provincial Division, AGM, 02/03/1916, (Are/11/7/1).
26 E. Murch (agent for Widnes) to Salisbury, 23/08/1916; W. Pile (agent for Camborne) to Salisbury, 27/09/1916; C. G. Briggs (agent for Plymouth) to Salisbury, 12/10/1916. Salisbury Papers, (4)78/52a-c, 108-13, 133-4. See also Somerset Division, AGM, 02/02/1917, (Are/11/6/1).
with this, it was recommended that a ‘Roll of Honour’ should be prepared on which were to be placed the names of all men who had served in the war.27 A note at the bottom of the resolution drew attention to ‘consideration as to whether “fall age” [the discounting of age qualifications for war workers] is advisable as to the effect on other classes, say Munitions workers’. The question of expediency in this regard suggests that soldiers and sailors were believed to possess greater electoral reliability than other classes of war workers. Elsewhere, equally radical proposals were put forward: the Chairman of the Cornish Division, J.C. Williams, informed the NUEC that all soldiers should receive the vote including those previously excluded by age (sixteen to twenty-one year olds).28 This combined, somewhat awkwardly, with the desire to raise the general age of qualification for civilians to twenty-five, to promote a franchise heavily weighted towards the military vote.

Two additional questions emerge: was the enfranchisement of servicemen merely an attempt to thwart the Liberal and Labour parties? Was the link between the soldiers’ vote and mass enfranchisement acknowledged, and, if so, how was universal suffrage perceived? The explicit suggestion that all fighting men, whether Unionist or not, deserved the vote was one that earned common assent through conscientious purpose. The element of political pragmatism was reflected elsewhere. Astor informed Salisbury that a meeting of discharged soldiers was unanimously in favour of universal manhood suffrage at twenty-one, and that members were mainly middle-class (lawyers, shopkeepers, tradesman) and not socialists.29 The exuberant confidence in the morals and improvements evident in the trenches, led to the championing of soldiers’ views above and

27 MCAA, Special Registration Committee, 10/03/1916, Association, 07/04/1916.
28 NUEC, 09/03/1916. Bristol West UA asked the NUEC to persuade the Government to enfranchise servicemen before the end of the year. NUEC, 12/10/1916.
beyond their comrades at home. As in the realm of social reform and reconstruction, where the government appealed overtly to the transformed character of the fighting warrior, electoral reform was pushed as a palliative for the returning soldier. 'Tommy might be simple, but he was not a fool', warned one Unionist agent, and 'Tommy' wanted the vote.  

Electoral calculations also played their part. Selborne spoke of a general desire among the parliamentary party to see the service franchise as 'a deliverance from the domination of the Trades Union influence', a belief founded on an expectation that experience in the trenches had relieved many of the class hatred that permeated trades unions. And 'deliverance' was needed indeed from this spectre, for, as one Central Office official informed Steel-Maitland in 1917, trade union membership had swelled by two million since 1913 whilst the National Insurance Act was driving men into such combinations. Central Office, itself, pointedly referred to the good that the soldiers' vote would do in the boroughs, no doubt in appreciation of the fact that 'the views held by men at the Front were likely to undergo a very material change as a consequence of the War. 

Similar motives lay behind the moves to disenfranchise the conscientious objector, as the Morning Post roared: 'While nothing but relentless pressure has sufficed to induce the Government to enfranchise the fighting men effectively, no pressure or persuasion prevails with them to disenfranchise the shirkers.' The deprivation of the vote would be 'a small price to pay' for cowardice and safety.  

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30 Unionist agents in the north of England and the home counties appealed for a Special Register on the same lines. CAJ, October 1916, pp.228-35. See also, Truro and Helston UA, 22/03/1916, (JAR).
32 Gales to Steel-Maitland, 26/02/1917. SM GD 193/202/31-2x; Speaker's Registration Conference Report regarded from the point of view of the future, 21/02/1917. SM GD 193/202/90-1x; Electoral Reform Sub-Committee of the NUA, 24/02/1917.
33 Morning Post, 28/06/1917. Editorial.
received the vote: if you could fight, you could vote. Rowland Hunt held the
same view with perhaps reverse psychology: if you could not vote, you would
fight, a rather feeble threat of mutiny if soldiers were denied the vote.\textsuperscript{34} It was
powerful enough to incite an uncompromising resolution at the NUA Council
and mobilise not only local associations but also the Unionist War Committee
(though the UWC, in general, was uncharacteristically subdued on issues of
electoral reform).\textsuperscript{35} As was the drive to disenfranchise naturalised enemy
residents in Britain, who had not even been given the opportunity to serve for
their adopted country.\textsuperscript{36}

To what extent confidence in the service vote was based on fact rather than
fiction is debatable. Unionist minds seemed to concentrate on the volunteer army
produced in the first year of war. Little concern was expressed that ‘Kitchener’s
Army’ might have differed very radically in its views concerning a war that they
had joined eagerly, and a sitting government they had served voluntarily, from
those who were conscripted into battle later. Perhaps, Unionists had read and
taken to heart Ian Hay’s bestselling \textit{The First Hundred Thousand} (1915) and its
sequels, which celebrated the alacrity with which volunteer recruits adapted to
the military situation and so placed the war firmly in the world of schoolboy
adventure and morality.\textsuperscript{37} Certainly, confidence did not continue unabated. As
early as June 1917, Salvidge was alluding to the basis of the propaganda of the
Discharged Soldiers and Sailors Federation (DSSF) as a ‘revolutionary
movement’, whilst pointing to its capacity for danger.\textsuperscript{38} The same month,

\textsuperscript{33} Pugh, \textit{Electoral Reform}, pp.112-13.
\textsuperscript{34} NUA Council, 10/07/1917. For the UWC see report in \textit{CAJ}, July 1917, p.100. Resolutions were passed
advocating the disenfranchisement of conscientious objectors in Chelmsford, Monmouthshire,
Harborough and Newark.
\textsuperscript{35} Chelmsford UA, EC, 06/06/1917, (D/Z96/1).
\textsuperscript{36} Paul Fussell, \textit{The Great War and Modern Memory} (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977), p28. The
real name of the author (who later became a Conservative MP) was Ian Hay Beith.
\textsuperscript{37} Salvidge to Derby, 19/06/1917. Derby Papers, 8/3.
Sanders recorded with concern that a strike on Clydeside had been organised by a returned soldier.39 After the passage of the reform bill, Younger warned Law (as part, admittedly, of a campaign of pessimism aimed to postpone an early election) that he had heard from the front that the soldiers would vote for peace owing to disgruntlement at the high wages on the home front. Such convictions were not bolstered either by the increasing radicalism of the DSSF. In the wake of sizeable meetings in Scotland, Younger feared it would 'prove another disturbing factor'.40 W.A. Gales, Central Office agent for the Home Counties, claimed the DSSF were 'a source of trouble in many places and [that] if their organisation [was] fairly good they might influence many Absent Voters [servicemen] against the Government'.41

Despite these misgivings, the party's primary motives in moving towards franchise reform can be perceived. While John Turner has argued that reform was propelled largely by the political struggle between the front and backbenches of autumn 1916, Neal McCrillis has suggested that it was rather the concern for the vote of the servicemen that was at the root.42 Certainly, in the main, it was this latter sentiment that held sway most compellingly throughout the war, and most certainly in the earlier stages when the issue of universal manhood suffrage had not yet been settled. Indeed, serious attention was devoted to the service vote far earlier at the local than the parliamentary level. These grassroots' steps in 1915 and 1916 showed the motivations behind the service vote to be electoral politics and wartime conscience, rather than merely the means by which to ensure the possibility of a general election threat in late 1916. More generally,
Unionist preoccupation with the service vote became linked irrevocably (and largely to their chagrin) with male suffrage, which itself was later coupled to female suffrage. In fact, most other electoral developments resulted directly from consideration given to the service franchise. Male suffrage had become a certainty and, while opinions differed as to the best means by which to accomplish the ends, nevertheless the remaining goals were the same – the containment, for as long as possible, of the effect of the universal male vote. What is more, confidence in (and reliance on) the military vote, which propelled the discussion on reform, revealed the party’s short-term electoral priorities. For, as Unionists must only have realised, the soldiers’ vote was only a temporary phenomenon, which would rarely – and hopefully never – be repeated in such magnitude or intensity. Taken together with Unionists’ stance on the coalition, and with their attitudes to PR and House of Lords reform, this suggested that the main concern of the parliamentary party was victory at the next election.

Safety Valves for the Boiler

It was essentially on the lines of containment that the Central Office worked its campaign of amendments to the Representation of the People Bill. The starting point of dealing with the Speaker’s Conference was the appointment by the NUA of two sub-committees to investigate electoral reform, one briefed to look specifically at the findings of the Conference. Importantly, its terms of reference did not extend beyond consideration of the Speaker’s Report. The sub-committee was directed to contemplate the ‘probable effect on the party and should not be motivated [sic] by any preconceived opinions either in favour of the proposals or against them’. Where hardships existed they were to be redressed.

43 NUEC, 08/02/1917. Serving upon this were Harry Forster, Gretton, Steel-Maitland, Imbert-Terry, Joseph Lawrence, Charles Marston, Percy Woodhouse, Younger, Boraston and W. Jenkins.
Perhaps unsurprisingly, they were informed that 'the only firm basis of fact on which to build is the last [December 1910] General Election'.

As Martin Pugh has noted, virtually all amendments tabled by Unionists can be traced directly to the report of this sub-committee. Initial actions were spurred on by a complaint to the NUEC that less than half of the Unionist members actually voted on the Speaker's Report on 28 March. Even these were split almost down the middle, for (79) and against (64) the proposals. Partly no doubt because of this apathy, within a month a group of Unionist MPs had been brought together who were pledged to the amendments approved by the NUA.

Although it is not evident who served upon this committee, it was organised by Younger, John Gretton and Sanders, and whips were issued through Central Office. In June the NUA Council was informed that Central Office had successfully arranged 160 amendments. There was much back-slapping for the crucial issues of proportional representation, the business vote, redistribution of agricultural areas and the disenfranchisement of lunatics and prisoners.

But, what did these achievements actually represent? In the first place it must be noted that Central Office work was hampered by the efforts of the Cabinet 'to keep one step ahead of the party all the way', emanating from several political and personal motives. While confident of its passage, Long informed Talbot that care was needed, for, 'after all, this Bill involves what is practically revolution'. He feared that Asquith's men 'would take advantage of any opportunity to cause trouble ... [But] apart from this it is not of them that we

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44 NUA Sub-Committee on Electoral Reform, 20/02/1917.
45 Pugh, Electoral Reform, pp.105-6.
46 NUEC, 17/04/1917. These figures included those away on military service.
47 NUA Sub-Committee on the Representation of the People Bill, 24/05/1917.
48 Ibid., 01/06/1917; NUEC, 07/06/1917. For an example of an extant whip's notice, see whip of George Younger concerning efforts to re-commit the Representation of the People Bill to the Alternative Vote, 04/12/1917. Boyle Papers, MC 477/2, 753x.
49 Pugh, Electoral Reform, p.105.
have to think, it is of the opponents on our own side and I beg of you not to suggest a course which will give them a very effective weapon with which to attack us.  

Necessarily, the spectre of fully mobilised party machineries was unwelcome from whichever side these might arise. But, the lack of goodwill between the principal proponent of the bill in the Cabinet (Long) and Central Office personnel (most particularly Steel-Maitland) tended to cool further the already frosty relationship. Steel-Maitland, no longer allied to Central Office officially, was nevertheless the fulcrum of much of its activities and his critical attitudes were advertised widely. The rupture reached a perilous point when Long threatened to expose him to the Cabinet for breaking government secrecy if he revealed an official memorandum on reform to Central Office, and Long subsequently denied him an interview to establish a rapprochement.

Complications in Central Office were exacerbated by conceptions of its role, with Long reminding Law:

[Central Office] are approaching the matter from an altogether wrong point of view. The Reform Bill is a Bill of the Government – you are a Member of the Government, and the Central Office officials are your servants, paid and appointed by you to carry out your policy – not to dictate to you and your colleagues what your policy should be. ... I feel that the Central Office ought to work with all their strength in support of the Government Bill while making amendments of a reasonable character if they please.

Differences between Central Office and Unionist ministers reached their zenith in the debate on conscientious objectors. Initially Government whips were put out against their disenfranchisement, but the NUA manufactured 'a strenuous

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50 Long to Talbot, 09/05/1917 (Copy). Enclosed in Long to Law, 09/05/1917. BL/81/6/12. For other fears of Unionist ministers see, Godfrey Locker-Lampson to Cave, 18/04/1917. Cave Papers, MS Add. 62496, ff.93-4

51 McCrillis, Conservative, p.224. See above for the press, and below for the store set by Steel-Maitland's comments in Finlay's thoughts. What proportion of Steel-Maitland's pique was merely unhappiness under Long is questionable.

52 Pugh, Electoral Reform, p.92.
fight', after which the measure was ultimately carried.\textsuperscript{54} Faced with such obstacles, in straight political terms it was, therefore, some achievement.

Notwithstanding this, the party needed little encouragement to temper democracy. Finlay, the usually reticent Lord Chancellor, put forward the most basic reservation to universal suffrage. He deprecated `one man one vote' in exchange for PR and redistribution, as Unionists would `be garnering no adequate equivalent for the abolition of the plural vote', and redistribution `must come in any event [and] Steel-Maitland says the Unionists wd. not gain by it'.\textsuperscript{55} The key here was the issue of one man, one vote. At its most basic level this was a call to retain plural voting, as PR would, by abolishing small constituencies, negate the claims of businessmen to have two votes (one in the constituency of their residence and one in that of their business). It had resonance however for the woman's vote as well. Pugh's research has expounded the general inconsequentiality of war in determining perspectives on female suffrage. Even Asquith, one man famous for an apparent u-turn during the war, was as uncertain in his championing of women after 1918 as he was equivocal in his opposition prior to the war.\textsuperscript{56} It is difficult to decipher the extent to which war had a specific influence within Unionist circles. At the NUA Conference in November 1917, Younger was interrupted and forced to retract a claim that the National Union had `always supported' the case for female suffrage. In fact, resolutions in favour of the female vote had been approved only when the suffrage had been confined to women who appeared already on the electoral registers for County and Municipal Councils. In any case, women's suffrage tended to be low down upon the list of priorities, and support was often personally based.\textsuperscript{57} For instance,

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\textsuperscript{53} Long to Law, 26/05/1917. BL/81/6/18.
\textsuperscript{54} NUEC Report, 09/04/1918.
\textsuperscript{55} Finlay to Salisbury, 10/11/1916. Salisbury Papers (4) 78/136.
\textsuperscript{56} Pugh, \textit{Electoral Reform}, pp.134-53.
\textsuperscript{57} NUA Conference, November 1911.
\end{flushleft}
Robert Cecil, perhaps aided by his awkward lanky gait, was at once able to keep one step in front of his party colleagues over female suffrage, whilst, in relation to the Welsh Church, remaining a couple of steps behind. His requests that the 'spiritual interests' of women be incorporated into the electorate had been received coolly and riders had been attached to his resolutions in 1911 and 1913 advising that no such constitutional change should be enacted without 'the express sanction of the electors'. 58

What, therefore, explains the failure (55 against 385) of Banbury’s Commons’ amendment to keep women off the franchise? 59 Why did the Lords allow women’s suffrage through their House? Unquestionably, the condition of the anti-suffrage movement had been transformed by the war. This was amply demonstrated by the enclosure that the anti-suffragist Arnold Ward despatched to Austen Chamberlain. It was a letter signed by six leading Unionists, including Chamberlain, Long and ‘F.E.’, that expressed their readiness for the issue of women’s suffrage to be put to a referendum. Nevertheless, it was dated not 1917, but 1911. 60 In the meantime, Long, Chamberlain and ‘F.E.’ had subsequently recanted their opposition to the women’s vote. What is more, although a referendum had been one of many options open to the anti-suffrage movement before the war, it now represented the last resort. The European conflict had weakened this male-dominated movement, whilst wartime coalition government had blurred a division on party lines, all the time allowing sympathisers of the women’s cause (Balfour, Robert Cecil, Selborne and Law) nearer the centre of power. 61 As the tide turned towards female enfranchisement, some sought to swim with, rather than against, the flow. But, whilst some wished, wisely as it

59 House of Commons debates, 19/06/1917. Hansard, 5th Series, xciv, 1751-4.
60 Ward to Chamberlain, 08/05/1917. AC 15/1/35b.
61 Brian Harrison, Separate Spheres: the opposition to women's suffrage in Britain (Croom Helm, London, 1978), pp.204-8.
turned out, not to excite the opprobrium of the future electorate, an equal number believed that to break their anti-suffrage pledges could only discredit them in their constituencies.  

Then again, on an ideological level, there can be no doubt that the war had some part to play in the consolidation of Unionist opinion behind the female vote. Unionist suffragettes were encouraged by the fact that women had filled in the ranks in factories during the war and that the State had been obliged to rely on the ‘brute force’ of women to maintain its supplies. This principle was acknowledged in the Conservative Agents’ Journal: ‘public opinion will demand that every man who has taken on service shall have a voice in the settlement of the issues at the conclusion of peace. ... Nor is it unlikely that the women’s agitation will not be revived. It will not be easy to deny the claims, logically, of the woman who helped her country in nursing, munitions, or doing unpleasant work with the sole object of releasing men to go to the front.’ This redefinition of citizenship, which championed ‘militarily useful service’ and accordingly blurred the traditional gender-based arguments, undoubtedly swayed some Conservatives.

Despite such developments and sentiments, pragmatism played a more considerable part in the transformation of viewpoints. As Crawford commented with his usual combination of cynicism and lucidity:

> We are assured that [women’s] war work has been so wonderful that they are entitled to the vote. In point of fact the war has demonstrated the inability of women to perform the essential tasks. They cannot dig ironstone or win coal, or make steel, build ships, erect

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62 For the latter, see Blair to Law, 28/03/1917. BL/81/4/32.
64 CAJ, April 1916, p.127.
machinery, navigate the oceans — still less can they fight by land, water or air. They perform the subordinate functions fairly well — no more can be said.

In doing so, he mocked the conversion of so many peers on the 'abstract merits of the case'. This included Derby, who, as Douglas Haig memorably remarked, felt the impression, like a cushion, of the last person who sat upon him. Instead, Crawford viewed the extended franchise as a 'bulwark' against revolution.66 This practical argument was also at the forefront elsewhere. Selborne viewed female suffrage as a 'steadying influence' upon an electorate augmented with the service vote.67 He prophesised, moreover, that it would be 'the most stable and conservative element in the constitution'. The NUA Council delegate Sidney Turner claimed at the 1917 party conference that women were 'conservative by nature'.68 In reminding delegates that he made this assertion speaking as a doctor, Turner revealed one justification (in this case, pseudo-biological) for conceiving women to be inherently moderate. An equal franchise for men and women was viewed in West Derbyshire 'as the only safe means of securing future general good Government throughout the country'.69

Prior to 1914, many within the party had been unready to acknowledge the possible benefits of the female vote. Arguments along class lines were at the forefront of some concerns, including one raised by a representative from Holborn that, under mass women's enfranchisement, 30,000 of the 300,000 enfranchised in London would be charwomen: 'Could there be a more fruitful field for Radical lies than here? If emotional women were once admitted to the

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66 Crawford diary, 10/01/1918; 11/12/1917. John Vincent (ed.), The Crawford Papers: the Journals of David Lindsay, Twenty-seventh Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, 1871-1940 (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984), pp.385, 382
67 Selborne to Salisbury, 25/08/1916. Boyce, Crisis, p.195. It must be noted that Selborne had long been a supporter of women's suffrage.
68 NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.
69 Derbyshire West, Quarterly Meeting, 10/01/1918, (JAR).
parliamentary franchise, the country would, he believed, go to destruction.\textsuperscript{70} In April 1917, the NUEC was still seeking to make certain that any women's suffrage was based upon property qualifications (either through their husbands or personally).\textsuperscript{71} These reservations revealed a continued scepticism as to the ability of the woman voter to counteract the vote of the radical working classes. Lord Chaplin considered that the Australian experience suggested that the result would be, in fact, the converse of what Selborne hoped: on the Labour side, women voted with their husbands wholesale; on Conservative/Liberal wings 'the women's vote was nothing like its full strength'.\textsuperscript{72} With similar motives, Midleton expressed 'considerable suspicion' concerning Selborne's franchise proposals, which would mean that 'every working man is to have two votes in his house'. Such were his misgivings that he concluded that the author of the scheme was probably unwell.\textsuperscript{73} The political susceptibility of women was therefore a powerful counterweight to their supposed conservative nature. However, it is evident that, after the fears excited by the Russian revolutions and increased industrial agitation, Unionists were ready to adopt almost any method in order to temper a mass male electorate.

In other, more traditional spheres, this was also the case, most particularly in regard to plural voting and PR. A resolution passed in Chelmsford illustrated the weight that Unionists placed upon plural voting. It noted 'grave concern [at] the threatened surrender of the ownership vote by the Leaders of the Party', and requested their Member (Ernest Pretyman) to do all within his power to safeguard the privilege. It concluded that the franchise was worth 1,500 votes in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{70} NUA Conference, November 1911. Resolution 22.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Lawrence Tipper at the NUEC, 17/04/1917.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Chaplin to Curzon, 04/01/1918. Curzon Papers, f112, 121a, ff112-4. See also the fear by one NUA Council member (Nochie) that women were likely to follow the example set in Australia and form an 'unholy alliance' with certain political parties. NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Midleton to Salisbury, 09/09/1916. Salisbury Papers (4)78/81-2.
\end{itemize}
the constituency, ‘whose disenfranchisement would seriously affect our majority’. Some estimates of plural voting’s net influence placed it at 500,000 votes in favour of the Unionist Party, and many local associations recorded the devastating effect of its abolition. Amendment after amendment was moved by Unionist MPs seeking both to obstruct and destroy any moves to abolish the second vote, to attempt to make it applicable to land as well as business interests, and to reduce the qualification to £5.

Only the predominance accorded plural voting can explain the evolution of the controversy over PR. Panic was spread by the Report of the NUA subcommittee, which clarified the danger to the second vote inherent within PR. Therefore in July, 137 Unionists turned out against the scheme, and only 42 in favour; 60 who previously had not voted on the issue entered the Noe-lobby. Ominously, the debate over PR reflected differing interpretations of the safeguards most required under a mass electorate tainted with a socialist threat. Essentially the battle lines were drawn between the two houses of parliament. The Commons party appeared ready to place its confidence in the returning soldier, and with safeguards within a first-past-the-post system. It is apparent, accordingly, that for MPs the fear of revolution existed not so much in the long-term, but rather as an immediate consequence of demobilisation, syndicalism and challenging reconstruction work due after the war. The priority therefore was victory at the next election rather than the dilution of the Labour (and, of course more pertinently, Unionist) capacity in subsequent contests. Conversely, Unionist peers kept one eye much more firmly on the long-term political future than did their Commons colleagues. It was in some degree the ‘Peers versus the People’

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74 Chelmsford UA, EC, 26/01/1917, (D/Z/96/1).
75 Maidstone UA, AGM, 27/03/1917, (U/1634/A/2).
76 National Society of Conservative Agents, 23/05/1917, (485/4); Worcestershire West UA, AGM, 20/09/1917, (956/6); Midland Union Notebook, (Are/MU/29/3).
77 Pugh, Electoral Reform, pp.110-11.
mark two. The House of Lords, robbed of its veto in 1911, was determined to emasculate the predominance of the Commons by the establishment of a robust second chamber and/or the enfeeblement of the first House. The former goal, being reliant on legislative impulse from the executive and lower house, was uncertain, the latter more achievable and realistic. Among the arguments employed for PR, the peers alluded to the representation of minorities, and the promotion of civic pride and responsibility. More avowedly though, Salisbury made specific reference to 'the reduction of huge House of Commons majorities' as an incentive.79

A fierce discussion also raged between two parts of the Unionist Party organisation. On one side was a clutch of Unionist MPs, including Mark Sykes and Leslie Scott, and a united Tory national press infected with the spirit of wartime coalitionism, to whom PR presented a means by which to marginalise the party organisations and so perpetuate the new ideal of consensus politics.80 Pitted against them were the party organisers, such as Percy Woodhouse, Charles Petrie and Salvidge. As usual, none was more forward in asserting the role of the party's foot-soldiers than Salvidge, who felt PR to be an effort 'to destroy the influence of our Party organisation' from which, if necessary, Lloyd George could get his 'revitalising power'.81 Hostility displayed at a local level was more honest, pointing to the deplorable effects it would have upon the Unionist cause.82 However, the feature that most marked the cleavage between supporters

78 Ibid., pp.115-16.
79 House of Lords, 17/12/1917. Hansard, xxvii, Burnham, 201-09, Salisbury 163-76.
80 Observer, 13/01/1918, Editorial; Daily Telegraph, 16/05/1917, Editorial; Roger Adelson, Mark Sykes (Jonathan Cape, London, 1975), pp.259-60.
81 Salvidge to Derby, 02/06/1917; Woodhouse to Derby, 07/05/1917. Derby Papers, 8/3, 16/11; Petrie to Law, 13/10/1917. BL/82/5/7.
82 Glasgow UA, General Council, 27/05/1918, (10424/73); Reigate UA, EC, 03/04/1918, (353/3/2/1); SUA Western Divisional Council, 13/04/1918, (Acc.10424/28); Cheshire Provincial Division AGM, 12/01/1918, (Are/3/6/3). See also Hayes Fisher to Harnd (Chairman of MCAA), 17/11/1917, (MCAA Papers, CCA/2). One exception was in Yorkshire, where PR was promoted as a means to end Liberal rule in the area, Yorkshire Post, 16/05/1917. Editorial.
and resisters of PR was in fact the issue of security. In the main, the party
caucuses, organisations and MPs were unready to forfeit a system from which
they had profited significantly in the past, and which they hoped to be capable of
mastering, even under a radically different franchise. Its advocates anticipated
that PR might further wreck the party system, while denying a radical or
revolutionary government the chance to win a majority.

The internal party discourse concerning class and gender was qualified, almost
universally, with the condition that any such reforms had to be tempered by the
reconstruction of the second chamber. 83 A resolution approving modest female
enfranchisement was passed by the NUEC, for example, only when a rider was
appended accepting the accompaniment of House of Lords reform. 84 Indeed, in
spite of the store set by the retention of the plural vote, beneficial redistribution
of seats and the destruction of PR schemes, the emphasis on House of Lords
reform severely qualified the professed confidence in the enfranchisement of
men or women. Demands for second chamber reform did not emerge in a
vacuum. Ever since the Parliament Act had denied the upper house the right of
veto, the need to temper single-chamber government had been seen as paramount
by Unionists, most especially in the intense debates about the Irish Union. The
irresolvable dilemma had been quite how to construct the second chamber so as
to permit it genuine clout. The party had long since forsaken the notion that it
represented constitutional conservatism, advocating referenda as early as 1910
under the assumption, it would seem, that the electorate could not fail to come to
its senses, if forced to reconsider controversial legislation.

83 SUA Western Divisional Council, 10/10/1917, (Acc.10424/28). The Metropolitan Division of the NUA
offered its approval of the extension of the male franchise only on the basis that it be accompanied by
second chamber reform, NUEC, 08/05/1917. 84 NUEC, 17/04/1917.
Revealingly, the 1917 party conference witnessed a contentious debate over the exacting of a pledge from the government to initiate second chamber reconstruction before the passage of the Representation of the People Bill. The starting point was a resolution moved by the chairman (Harry Samuel), on behalf of the NUEC, pressing the party leaders to realise that, in view of the probable early passage of the reform bill, 'it [was] essential that the Government should give effect to the preamble of the Parliament Act by establishing a reformed Second Chamber possessed of adequate powers immediately on the Report of the present House of Lords Conference being received.' Chaplin felt that the resolution did not 'go far enough', and that the Second Chamber should be reformed in advance of the passage of the reform bill. His reasoning was the estimated strength of the Labour Party after the passage of the franchise bill, which would have the support of a majority of voters throughout the whole country, and the ease with which the honest working classes would be misled by 'the extreme sections' of the Labour Party. In seconding the amendment, Selborne pointed to the present case of 'concealed single chamber government' and to the failure of the Commons over the franchise bill, which threatened to swamp agriculture.

Opinion at the conference was split, a majority demanding a pledge to enforce second chamber reconstruction, with one representative emphasising that it was necessary for the security of the Empire 'that a safety valve [was] put on to the boiler before the temperature goes up'. Halford Mackinder MP felt that nothing could be lost by exacting a pledge, as it would merely grant Law more leverage. Harry Foster MP reassured Selborne and Chaplin that the Lords would 'have the

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85 NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.
86 Selborne’s contribution was unsurprising considering that he devoted much of his political attention to the House of Lords ever since his promising Commons career was brought to close by his inheritance of the family earldom.
support of this Conference in the action they [hoped] to take. The most decisive intervention, nonetheless, was that of the Party Chairman Younger who professed to disagree with Selborne 'almost entirely', in that the reform bill was so advanced as to make such a pledge an absurdity. Significantly, the conference was persuaded against demanding a pledge in the face of Younger’s intervention and support from the government minister Worthington Evans, who pointed out that the Lords would 'be represented to the country as refusing to allow soldiers and sailors to have a vote, until something else happens. That something else ... is not within our power.'

Why was reconstruction of the second chamber abandoned so timidly? The most plausible explanation is that there was a widespread appreciation of the pervasive intransigence within the Unionist leadership over this issue. As Godfrey Locker-Lampson (Under Secretary at the Home Office) claimed, it 'was a sanguine man' who demanded a pledge from Law concerning second chamber reform. 87 In July 1917, both former and sitting party chairmen (Steel-Maitland and Younger) colluded to steer the NUA Council away from a party conference on House of Lords reform, in the knowledge that their leader would refuse to attend. 88 This factor was compounded by a more tangible disinclination against repeating the clash between the two houses of parliament. For, in the House of Lords, the spirit of the pre-war era lived on. Selborne demanded specifically that the second chamber's authority should be extended beyond powers of revision 'in respect of social, political and economic changes which are introduced under the disguise of finance'. The overt reference here was to the 1909 budget that had fired up scepticism regarding the integrity of the House of Lords, as in the language of the 1911 diehards. Lord Northumberland, in a letter to Lord Halsbury, asked whether
franchise reform was to be accepted as inevitable ‘or are we to make one last fight for what is left of the British Constitution?’89 Suspicions were rife (and rightly so) that the House of Commons was being as protective of its own position now as the peers had been jealous of theirs in 1911.90

A third contributing factor to the defeat of second chamber reform was the disparate notions of how best to effect its reform. In January 1914, Robert Cecil had acknowledged that ‘beyond a unanimous conviction that the present House will not do there is no agreement in the Party on the subject’. Some, he claimed, were for a purely elective chamber, others for secondary election, a few for nomination, and adherents of the hereditary principle numerable. The issue, however, could not be left over if the Unionist Party got into power.91 Such diversity – even confusion – continued to reign within the party. On taking up a position on the conference considering the reform, Austen Chamberlain reported that while he was ‘afraid of being too Radical for my party or friends’, Talbot had assured him that this was “‘impossible – they all seem to have given up the hereditary principle”’.92 For Selborne, the danger of revolutionary change being initiated by temporary majorities encouraged him to recommend a directly elected chamber and one endowed with the prerogative of referendum, commenting ‘I do not believe that a nominated Chamber of Max Aitkens (experience shows that they are always composed of party hacks) could be more trusted to do its job than the present House of Lords.’93 Hugh Cecil, too, requested that the House of Lords become non-partisan, be appointed equally by leaders of the majority and minority in the Commons, and that its basis not be

89 Northumberland to Halsbury, 30/03/1917. Halsbury Papers, MS. Add. 56375, f.181.
90 Strachey to Lansdowne, 16/10/1917. Lansdowne Papers, Alphabetical Correspondence.
93 Selborne to Salisbury, 12/04/1917. Salisbury Papers (4)79/111-17
'party'. The only common ground Wolmer could find with Selborne and Cecil was the non-partisan nature of the chamber, but he suggested nominees selected by parishes and voted in by PR. That a group of like-minded peers (trustees of the great Hotel Cecil, no less) could come to no agreed solution spoke volumes for the party’s dissonant voices in this area. In fact, it represented a climate in which requests for second chamber 'reform' were – if only because the alternatives were so palpably deficient – in substance demands for 'reconstruction' of its powers.

One considerable upshot of the treatment meted out to second chamber reform was its impact on post-war politics. Even in 1924, the Unionist MP and historian J.A.R. Marriott was lamenting that ‘no student of political institutions [could] regard the present condition of the Legislative Body in England without grave concern.’ Perhaps more than in any other area, second chamber reform reflected the command of the Unionist leaders over the party rank and file and the dominance of Lloyd George over his Unionist Cabinet colleagues. Accordingly, the post-war party discord fostered by Selborne emanated at least partly from the refusal of the Unionist leadership to press the topic on the Prime Minister properly during the war. Meanwhile, by refusing to countenance such reform, Lloyd George was perceived as distracting the Unionist Party from its central constitutional principles, the more so in the light of increased syndicalism and coalition by-election defeats. As one resolution remarked (of many passed in...
local associations), any delay in the implementation of second chamber reform would result in ‘unjustifiable risk’. 97

Some broader conclusions can also be made. First, that it was likely far easier for the Unionist Party to approach the controversial issue of franchise reform in war than peace. The sheer diversity of opinion, as described above, left the party open to the most intense disputes, of benefit neither to the internal dynamic nor to the public image of the party. Yet in the years 1917-18, patriotism and the war effort tempered infighting. Second, as in the emergence of a Unionist commitment to the service franchise, the rejection of PR revealed a party confident in its long-term electoral capacity and ready to ignore opportunities to hedge. Third, and most fundamental for understandings of the party approach to class and democracy, was the concentration upon safeguards within the democratic electoral system (plural voting, women’s enfranchisement, redistribution) rather than outside it (House of Lords reform). This was in sharp contrast to the resorts to traditional conservatism in 1911. As illustrated below, this confidence displayed in the democratic system had considerable gains. Thus, when any Unionist rewards in the interwar period are attributed to the reforms of 1917-18, this belief must be remembered. This reflected, moreover, a Unionist commitment to coping with democracy through restraints placed inside the structure and, therefore, also a commitment to dealing with the mass electorate as best they could.

97 A resolution proposed by Ernest Pretyman to Unionist in Essex, Chelmsford UA, EC, 25/02/1919, (D/Z/96/1). Attention was paid to constitutional reform in many constituencies, including Oxfordshire South (19/06/1920), Oxford Conservative Club (05/03/1921), Norwood (01/10/1920, 18/03/1921), Chelmsford (25/02/1921), Bradford (16/03/1921), Oxfordshire North (22/06/1920), Monmouthshire (15/04/1921).
Redistribution

It is perhaps unsurprising that the redistribution of seats has not been accorded the same historical attention as has been devoted to the male and female franchise. The latter both play a significant part, among other things, in understanding the development of long-term electoral patterns, democracy per se and the evolution of class-based politics. Moreover, the intricate detail of discussions prior to petitions, the petitions themselves, and the considerations of the Boundary Commissioners, left the vast majority of contemporaries – as it leaves many historians – overwhelmed (and probably underwhelmed too). In some degree, the approach here reveals the complications in approaching the subject. It is impossible to catalogue every campaign, or indeed every subtle nuance of a single one. In several instances individual case studies will have to illustrate general trends, where possible a broader brush can be employed. This section will seek to understand how and why Unionists became interested in the scheme, how their views were promoted, what this suggested about their attitudes to class and electoral politics. Finally, it will investigate the effect of redistribution upon the party’s fortunes.

So often for the Conservative Party the sugar drink taken with the sour pill of franchise reform, redistribution has been acknowledged as providing the party with a lifeline to the future. Michael Kinnear’s analysis, that placed the number of seats gained by the Conservative Party by redistribution at thirty-four, has received backing from both John Ramsden and Chris Cook.98 The party possessed a long history of successful manipulation of the reform process, dating back to Disraeli in 1867-8 and Salisbury in 1884-5. In more recent times, too,

redistribution had received considerable attention. Irish over-representation had become a common gripe amongst Unionist politicians by the Edwardian period, with *Gleanings and Memoranda* pointing to the electoral anomalies that maintained the Radical party in power.\(^9\) In 1913, Clive Morrison-Bell MP, the Unionist in-house expert on redistribution, argued that England should be properly represented: ‘had anybody ever considered where the Conservatives got their strength from? It was not from Ireland, Wales or Scotland. England was the only place that kept the Union alive and was going to beat Home Rule.’\(^1\) It should not be hard, he informed a colleague, to earn the support of an audience, ‘if you say you are only asking that 10% of the population should have 10% of the members’.\(^2\) Interestingly, Morrison-Bell’s pamphlet *Irish Electoral Model* was considered powerful enough as a propaganda tool to be disseminated to Unionists in Cheshire by the provincial division.\(^3\) The December 1910 results demonstrates why this was hardly unexpected, for, when southern Ireland was excluded from the calculations, the Unionist Party won 47.3% of the vote and 48.2% of the seats. In the same election, the Irish Nationalists (against whom the campaign was directed) received 2.5% of the vote and a staggering 12.5% of the parliamentary seats, which held the balance of power in the Commons.\(^4\) As was mooted by one cartoon in a party journal, it was the Irish voter who was ‘the REAL plural voter’.\(^5\)

As in the reform of franchise and electoral systems, sectional interests played their part, in this case geographic. Political activists, of whatever shade, were ill-disposed to the forfeiture of their parliamentary representation. The gathering of

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\(^9\) *National Union Gleanings*, February 1911, pp.162-3

\(^1\) NUA Conference, November 1913. Resolution 23.

\(^2\) Clive Morrison-Bell to Ernest Pollock, 1912. Hanworth Papers, c942, ff.18-19.

\(^3\) Cheshire Provincial Division, Agents meeting, 10/02/1914, 04/04/1914.

\(^4\) Figures taken from Kinnear, *The British Voter*, p.70.

\(^5\) See cartoon below.
Unionist chairmen, agents, candidates and MPs to discuss the issue sought to thwart this particularly individual preoccupation. This endeavour was in most cases the offspring of a Central Office campaign to garner the opinions of Unionist agents around the country with the purpose of ensuring agreement within the party, though it is evident that rank and file organisers required little encouragement. In part because expert local knowledge was required to provide for a credible proposal, but also probably because the vast majority of the party hierarchy felt there were bigger fish to fry, the rank and file were capable of sponsoring their own programmes and cajoling their parliamentary representatives into action. As such redistribution was the child of the party organiser and therefore signified one area in which the weakness of the Unionist rank and file in regard to their parliamentary representatives, and their party leaders, was to some extent inverted. In certain cases local associations were sufficiently independent to reject Central Office plans for redistribution.\footnote{Darwen UA, EC, 09/05/1917, (PLC/2/2/1).}

It is evident that local Unionists were on their toes with regard to redistribution for across the country they launched themselves into the fray with alacrity. In Lancashire, agents from Accrington, Burnley and Clitheroe assembled to formulate redistribution proposals before meeting representatives of the local Liberal and Labour parties.\footnote{Clitheroe UA, EC, 31/05/1917, (DDX/800/1/1)} Similar meetings were convened in Berkshire, Cheshire, central London, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, which allowed for agreement to be reached before other interested bodies were approached.\footnote{J.E. Smith (Honorary Secretary of Westminster UA) to Boraston, 06/06/1917, (487/17). Herefordshire North UA, Finance and Advisory Committee, 15/06/1917, (K78/2); Newbury UA, EC, 07/06/1917, (JAR).} It was, therefore, only in Yorkshire that fears were expressed concerning the prior organisation of rival parties in regard to redistribution, when in Unionist circles
The movement had been very slow in places.\textsuperscript{108} The effect of such organisation is debatable. In Barkston Ash, members had been urged to watch developments regarding the Boundary Commissioners closely even before parliament had considered the Representation of the People Bill, let alone given consideration to redistribution specifically. Such was their local expertise and confidence that they scotched the scheme proposed by Central Office in favour of their own. Their efforts to modify the Commissioners' scheme so as to keep the division agricultural in character nevertheless failed.\textsuperscript{109} This seems to have been an isolated incident, as it is evident elsewhere that such exertions reaped rewards. In Cheshire for instance, Alan Sykes MP told a meeting of agents and chairmen that it was mandatory for success that they worked as a team. The result was that, although a severe divergence of opinion emerged in their private assembly, Unionists here were capable of tendering a petition with one accord to the Boundary Commissioners.\textsuperscript{110}

The outcome of the Boundary Commissioners' work exemplifies the extent to which agriculture emerged as a beneficiary. While the number of English county seats rose by just one, the average population figures display the comparative over-representation that rural areas received under the new system. In county seats, the average population was slashed from 77,708 to 68,287 (England), 75,608 to 71,604 (Scotland) and 68,807 to 67,015 (Wales). Meanwhile, the average population of borough seats rose from 69,780 to 73,456 for England (including London), 63,013 to 73,177 for Scotland and 62,925 to 71,394 for.

\textsuperscript{108} Yorkshire Area, EC, 05/04/1918, (JAR).
\textsuperscript{109} Barkston Ash UA, EC, 06/02/1917, 04/06/1917, 05/02/1918, (JAR)
\textsuperscript{110} Cheshire Provincial Division, EC, 11/06/1917. No representative had been present from Hyde Division.
Wales.$^{111}$ For English county seats, this represented a percentage decrease in population of almost 9%.

It is important to note that other factors beyond Unionist rank and file organisation played their part. First, while from the nature of the initial moves it is evident that the parliamentary party was not united in its intentions towards redistribution, Unionists did combine behind the schemes for agricultural representation. The arrival of the bill dealing with the instructions to be given to the boundary commissioners suggested that Unionist ministers were unconcerned with their terms of reference. It was left in the capable hands of Long to mastermind a mini-coup in order to ensure that the commissioners considered area as well as population. While an amendment by Sanders to this end was overturned, Cave accepted another, in even more vague terms, proposed by John Mason.$^{112}$ The basis of this move was again the NUA, which felt that a standard unit of 70,000 population for each member would 'seriously affect agricultural areas'. This committee also placed on record Lloyd George's statement of 23 February 1917, which admitted that the nation 'showed a lamentable indifference to the importance of the agricultural industry and to the very life of the nation, and that is a mistake which must never be repeated'.$^{113}$ A resolution passed by Unionist agents was thus consistent in recounting agriculture 'as the main artery of our National life', and subsequently demanding that the reform bill be amended accordingly.$^{114}$

No doubt in government and parliament the party was favoured by having friends in high places, namely Cave and Long who both were sympathetic to the

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$^{111}$ Figures developed from Report of the Boundary Commissioners [1917, Cd.8756].
$^{112}$ Sanders diary, 10/06/1917, 15/06/1917. Sanders introduced the idea of a population differential between agricultural and borough seats (60,000 for the former, 80,000 for the latter). Ramsden, Tory pp.86-7. House of Commons Debates, 22/05/1917. Hansard, 5th Series, xciii, 2144-55.
$^{113}$ NUA Sub-Committee on Electoral Reform, 24/02/1917.
agricultural (and Unionist) cause. Convincing others was a different tale. Nonetheless, the utilisation of the words of Lloyd George by the NUA in its argument, and the Punch cartoon ‘Self-Protection’, reflected well the convergence of Unionist policy, national opinion and government attitudes towards agriculture. This was something employed to the full in public discussion. The Somerset MP and Central Office official, Sanders, also drew on Lloyd George’s expressions: ‘agriculture is really the Cinderella of our industries. It is quite true at the present you are down on your knees to agriculture’, and yet it did not have its rightful influence. Similar to the arguments put forward in standing against the Corn Production Bill, agriculture was represented in neither the Cabinet nor parliamentary committees. Its treatment ‘as a poor sister’ meant it would lose twenty to forty seats. And this would be especially mistaken as the expansion of ploughed land would result in emigration to the countryside. The element of sentiment should not be ignored either: the fluidity of wartime politics and the universal desire to build a better Britain on sounder foundations made such an appeal persuasive.

As such the Unionist Party was greatly favoured by the timing of redistribution. The submarine menace that had forced Britain to depend increasingly upon its own food resources had, by 1917, ushered in a new respect for the nation’s agricultural industry (as indeed it had done also for women). This was substantiated legislatively in the corn bill of 1917 that offered farmers a guaranteed price for their wheat in return for the ploughing up of land previously lying fallow. It was also evinced in the comparative protection of the agricultural industry from conscription, with guarantees being sought and gained that labour

114 National Society of Conservative Agents, Council, 23/05/1917.
115 House of Commons Debates, 22/05/1917. Hansard, 5th Series, xciii, 2144-55. For the Corn Production Bill, see Chapter V.
would not be appropriated for military purposes. Generally, this transformation of sentiment allowed for Unionists to argue with much greater legitimacy of the necessity for proper parliamentary representation of agriculture. It also permitted Unionists to forecast the enlargement of rural populations under schemes to increase harvests and resettle ex-soldiers on the land, an urban diaspora that would never actually materialise.

It is manifest as well that this prevailing sensitiveness towards the agricultural industry led to various other interest groups advocating its position. Such was the case in Cheshire where local municipal bodies sponsored the scheme enunciated by Sykes on behalf of the Unionist Party. In language redolent of Unionist petitioners, Colonel Dixon, delegate for Cheshire County Council, argued that 'agriculture was now more to the front than ever and it was necessary for agriculture to be properly represented by people who understood agriculture'. In fact, the Unionist scheme — whose 'chief object was to segregate the rural and industrial areas', as the representative of Eddisbury Conservative Association claimed — was supported by the county council root and branch. Meanwhile, the Chairman of Knutsford District Council supported the scheme not 'from a political point of view, but as citizens of the Empire'. The significance of such backing was a near unanimity that practically compelled the Boundary Commissioners to support Sykes' scheme.

The links between the party and rural constituencies continued to run deep, for instance Lawrence Tipper served both as Chairman of Worcestershire

116 Herefordshire North UA, Finance and Advisory Committee, 22/09/1917 (K78/2); Chelmsford UA, EC, 16/03/1917, (D/Z/96/1).
117 Chaplin to Matthews, 01/01/1918 (copy). Chaplin Papers, D/3099/1/1/39.
118 Stockport Advertiser, 03/08/1917.
119 Ibid., 03/08/1917. See also the resemblance between the boundaries in the map drawn up by Sykes (Cheshire Provincial Division, Report of Meeting of Unionist Chairmen and Agents, July 1917) and that of the Boundary Commissioners in their report (cited above).
Agricultural Society and as a leading local Unionist. The Conservative elder Chaplin, for long the Chairman of the (national) Chamber of Agriculture, worked alongside its secretary Matthews in petitioning MPs in favour of agricultural seats. Crucially, the NUA believed that while 30% would be added to the male electorate in urban areas, in the counties this would be only 20%. As, in their minds, the number of new voters hostile to the party would be six against four, the party would therefore be less adversely affected in rural than in urban areas.

The strengthening of the representation of agriculture fitted into a wider appreciation of the electorate at which Unionists wanted to aim. Central Office policy was ‘that areas which were mostly Tory were not [to be] included with areas that were overwhelmingly Radical, so that the Tories would be swamped’. As a result Unionists sought to shoehorn industrial areas into Radical/Labour strongholds. Cornish Unionists, for example, requested that the districts dominated by the clay and mining industries be amalgamated into one division. The reasons for this were enunciated after the Boundary Commissioners had reported, with the agent lamenting that ‘the true representative character of the constituencies would be weakened by the unnatural merging of agriculture and mining industries in the same constituencies, and Labour was robbed of its undoubted right to have one constituency area which would have included the whole of the tin mining and clay industry of the county.’ More pertinently of course, Unionists had been robbed of their indefeasible right to a rural division untainted by mining and clay industry interests. No doubt, the overwhelming reflection was that it would be better to create one stronghold of socialism than have several divisions vulnerable to its influence.

120 Norris Foster to Steel-Maitland, 08/08/1917. SM GD/193/175/2/1/105.
121 Matthews to Chaplin, 09/06/1917. Chaplin Papers, D/3099/1/1/37.
122 NUA Sub-Committee on Electoral Reform, 20/02/1917.
A similar sentiment held sway in Cheshire, where the basis was that they should 'find out the Tory strongholds, and the parts which they would not mind parting with, so as to get the Radicals into one fold and keep them there'. The agent for Eddisbury, in seeking to extend his division to the required size, professed that 'they could not go Northwich way, as they must keep the Radicals in one dump'. Sykes, the architect of the Cheshire scheme, thought likewise, contending that 'the salt towns were all Radical and they must be kept together, and that it was obvious they would have to sacrifice the Northwich Division, and possibly Crewe would not come out too good.' Meanwhile, the increasingly industrial area of Sandbach was to be consigned to the manufacturing town of Macclesfield, which in any case would 'be no worse off' than previously.\textsuperscript{123} In Kent, strong opposition was put forward against the Liberal scheme of an industrial division to include Maidstone and the Medway towns, because it was feared that this would hand a seat directly to the opponents.\textsuperscript{124}

Notwithstanding the successes set out above, some areas felt short-changed. The Glasgow Herald claimed that, although 'the importance of home food production to the life of the nation' had been displayed by the war, the opportunity to represent agriculture adequately had 'been allowed to slip'. The situation was especially grave in Ayrshire, where the Boundary Commissioners had 'allowed the great industrial community of Kilmarnock to dominate and control the county division of which it is to form a part, although hitherto it has been the leading member of a group of burghs separate from the county'. Likewise, the inclusion of Port Glasgow and Renfrew into the Renfrewshire County division was

\textsuperscript{123} Cheshire Provincial Council, 05/05/1917, 24/10/1917; Memorandum of Meeting of Cheshire Unionist Chairmen and Agents, June 1917.
\textsuperscript{124} Maidstone UA, Special EC, 13/07/1917, (A1/1/3).
lamented, because the area had thus 'been transformed to a great extent into a workshop'. But these Scottish areas were the exception.

A second area of gain, in addition to agricultural seats, was in the proliferation of suburban seats. The most extreme example was in Wandsworth. This area of south London had witnessed a considerable increase in population in the late Victorian and Edwardian years. Previously having one seat, it was granted five under the redistribution: all were middle-class seats, and in the interwar period all five returned Conservative members at general elections, except on only one occasion in Wandsworth Central. Moreover, the populations of the five seats were considerably less than the average for English Borough seats. Most especially in suburban London and the Home Counties, this trend was extended: Lewisham, Hammersmith and Fulham received 6 rather than 3 MPs; Kent, Surrey, Essex and Middlesex 40 rather than 15. Notwithstanding research that has demonstrated that suburban seats were not necessarily Unionist/Conservative by nature, they remained bastions of Conservatism in this period and in the 1920s and 1930s.

There were parallel gains in class-based seats for the Labour Party (a 'substantial increase' in mining-dominated seats – up from forty-four to sixty-six), but not for the Liberal Party. Equally, it is easy to ignore the spheres in which the Unionist Party fell short of making any gains. They failed singularly to achieve a proper rearrangement of seats in Ireland, on which so much store had been set.

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125 Glasgow Herald, 06/10/1917. Editorial.
127 This is going by the classification of Turner, British Politics, p.472, explained pp.452-4.
129 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, p.123.
Indeed the overwhelming response within the party to the Conference's proposals had been that Ireland must be included in any legislation. For instance, objections to a resolution of support for the Speaker's Report had been palliated in the Western Divisional Council of Scotland only by a promise by the chairman that a day of debate would be devoted to the question of its applicability to Ireland. In both the immediate post-war years and, more appreciably, in the longer term this was to be of little consequence however: Sinn Fein's overwhelming success at the ballot box was not matched by a powerful phalanx in Westminster because their representatives refused to endorse the United Kingdom parliament through their attendance. What was more, the constitutional resolution of the Irish problem (through the Government of Ireland Act 1920) permanently removed Irish representatives at Westminster from outside six counties of Northern Ireland. Therefore, as Ramsden has noted, the balance of power at Westminster enjoyed by the Irish Nationalist Party before the war was removed and with it went seventy to eighty anti-Unionist seats. In fact, of the twelve seats left in Ireland, at least ten were always Unionist, whilst the Irish Nationalists who won the other two only rarely actually took up their seats.

Redistribution, the most unsung of the political developments during the war, consequently had a substantial impact upon interwar electoral results. The most noteworthy reason for giving the matter only fleeting attention – that it represented no wider trends but merely the arbitrary decisions of local bodies and

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132 SUA Western Divisional Council, 28/02/1917, (Acc.10424/28). For rank and file opinion see also Somerset Division of NUA, AGM, 02/02/1917, (Are/11/6/1); Berkshire South UA, EC, 22/02/1917, (JAR); Cornwall Provincial Division, AGM 01/03/1917, (Are/11/7/1); Sheffield Central, Special Meeting, 20/02/1917, (LD/2103).


135 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, pp.122-3.

nameless commissioners – has been refuted here. For the representation that agriculture was to receive was a direct result of wartime politics, of the nation 'bowing' to this ancient industry. Rarely before or after can it have been so feted. Redistribution may have possessed another less quantifiable significance, namely that by shaping the character of constituencies to which Unionists had to (and, in many cases, wished to) appeal, it also determined, in some degree at least, the nature of the interwar party and its appeal. Accordingly, the agricultural and middle-class integrity of a core of seats partly shaped the parameters within which Unionism would have to advance.
'The REAL Plural Voter'

*Our Flag*, August 1914
SELF-PROTECTION.

John Bull: "I'VE INVESTED A MINT OF MONEY IN OTHER LANDS. IT'S TIME I PUT SOMETHING INTO MY OWN."

'Self-Protection'

Punch, 2 May 1917
The Party Machinery

As has been seen in Chapters I and II, the war did much to stifle political debate within the party organisation and in so doing it also constrained the capability of the machinery upon which the party relied, most especially with regard to finance, grassroots activism, and official constituency appointments. The most palpable goal of the party generals was to inspire their foot-soldiers to prevent total organisational atrophy; the next purpose – and frequently it was merely a means by which to reach the first – was to encourage it to be primed for a general election. On both of these counts the Liberal Party failed miserably, the ruptures of provincial Liberal organisations wrought by inner-party divisions certainly being made less manageable by wartime lethargy.\textsuperscript{137}

The most obvious injury inflicted by war on local party organisations was that of finance. As such, the Guildford Unionist Association was told in mid-1917 that ‘subscriptions were not at all on the same scale as previously’, and an extraordinary circular was sent out in an attempt to rectify the problem.\textsuperscript{138} In North-West Wiltshire, meanwhile, income was reduced by a third during the war.\textsuperscript{139} One major contributing factor was the reluctance of party subscribers to continue their payments through a cataclysmic war and a political truce.\textsuperscript{140} When individuals wished to make donations they were, not unnaturally, more inclined to bolster the coffers of the Exchequer through war savings than their local political organisations. This tendency was exacerbated by the inability of the


\textsuperscript{138} Guildford UA, Finance Committee, 19/05/1917, (1213/2/2).

\textsuperscript{139} Wiltshire North West UA, AGM, 30/04/1920, (2436/1).

\textsuperscript{140} South Ealing UA, General Council, 25/08/1916, (Acc.1338/1)
reduced wartime organisation to pursue smaller subscriptions as actively as previously.\textsuperscript{141}

Nonetheless, local organisations were able to remain solvent for several diverse reasons. Crucially, the political truce and coalition sanctioned reduced expenditure. Aside of salaries the most considerable outlay for local associations before the war had been on printing literature and convening meetings. During the war, whilst recruiting methods demanded that expenditure on the latter continued unabated (at least until the advent of conscription), little was spent on publications.\textsuperscript{142} Moreover, in many cases, money was conserved through diminished payments to salaried staff – as many as 149 constituency agents were on active service at some stage during the war.\textsuperscript{143} So great, indeed, were the savings through reduced wartime expenditure that, even in divisions in which subscriptions decreased, possibilities arose to increase the association’s balance.\textsuperscript{144} Conversely, financial determinants also dictated that in more parlous cases drastic measures had to be executed: in Palmers Green no annual general meeting was held in 1918 due to its likely expense; after the resignation of its secretary, North Norfolk resolved not to replace him, ‘owing to the large number of subscriptions which had been withdrawn since the commencement of the war’; Reigate Unionist Association dispensed wholesale with the services of its agent.\textsuperscript{145} The financial stability of the constituencies was decided also by the

\textsuperscript{141} Herefordshire North UA, Finance and Advisory Committee, 16/06/1916, (K78/2); Devizes UA, Finance Committee, 31/12/1914, (2305/1).

\textsuperscript{142} See accounts for Worcestershire West UA, 16/05/1914, 16/05/1915 and 26/08/1916, which demonstrate that once recruiting for volunteers had subsided, expenditure on meetings did the same. (956/6).


\textsuperscript{144} Oxfordshire North UA, Finance and Executive Committee, 23/05/1917. In Lincoln, a pre-war deficit of £280 (increased to £353 in mid-1915) was reduced to £16 by 1919, UA, Finance Committee, 02/06/1915, AGM, 14/03/1919, (JAR).

\textsuperscript{145} Palmers Green UA, EC, 18/04/1918, (Acc.1158/2); Norfolk North UA, Finance Committee, 24/11/1917, (UPC/243/643/x3); Reigate UA, Finance Sub-Committee, 19/10/1915, (333/3/2/1).
generosity of contributions made by candidates and MPs, who provided £200 to £250 per annum in most cases. In Burton-on-Trent, Captain Ratcliff MP was understood to contribute almost the entire income of the local association. It was rare, though not unheard of, for the war to witness reductions in these contributions. What is more, when contributions of MPs or candidates did decline (for instance Captain Jackson reduced his subscription to Herefordshire North by half, from £100 to £50, in March 1917) they remained the easiest components to increase after the war.146

As Ramsden has noted, however, an outwardly attractive financial standing often actually ‘concealed a real weakness’ in that, while expenditure could be reduced with ease during the war, income could only be revived by years of patient activity.147 Neither was the problem in this regard one merely of economics. The dispositions of subscribers, along with reduced financial and administrative capacity, tended to result in the neglect of smaller subscribers, in favour of more certain and more substantial sources. The St Paul’s Ward of Blackburn Unionist Association provided a good case in point. While its finances showed a noticeable improvement in stability in the years 1911-1913, the first two years of war witnessed a marked decline in income, and importantly, an even more striking reduction in the number of donors. Income dropped from £13-1-6 (1913), to £9-14-6 (1914) and then £4-2-3 (1915). More especially, from 1913 to 1915, the number contributing more than one shilling fell from 51 to 32, whilst the number contributing less than one shilling plummeted from 329 to 67.148 Thus, much hard work in building up connections with the electorate – in this case mainly small shopkeepers and skilled artisans – wasted away. This was the

146 Midland Union Constituency Notebook, 1908-1918, (Are/MU/29/3).
147 Ramsden, Balfour and Baldwin, p.124.
148 Figures developed from Register of Members and Subscriptions, Blackburn UA, St Paul’s Ward, 1906-1915, (DDX/1371/1).
situation elsewhere as well. In Hampstead, membership declined from 794 (1914) to 659 (1916) and 569 (1918), whilst the subscription list fell off from 459 (1914), to 287 (1916) and 224 (1918). With this went a decline in activism as, once strayed, many returned only with lethargy, if at all. In Nottingham Rushcliffe the subscription list fell off from a high-water mark of 121 in 1912-13, to a low of 66 (1918-19) and two years of peace only returned it to 78. Subscriptions in York were, in 1918, a third of their pre-war level and were not to recover until 1924.

This diminished activism and capacity was offset, to a degree, by war work. Various recruiting agencies (both for soldiers and money) proved hard taskmasters for local associations, to the extent that one agent felt the pressure to be 'ten times as bad as an Election campaign'. A leading provincial Unionist, meanwhile, went as far as to remark that the demands of recruiting and war savings' committees made him feel as if 'the past three years [had] been rather like a continuous election'. It seems that Derby had been taken at his word in stipulating to the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee that recruiting canvasses were to be 'instituted and worked with the intensity of a General Election'. Notwithstanding these pronouncements, it is evident that both the war and the political truce diminished rank and file activism. Even hardcore activists such as Colonel Berrington (later Chairman of Bewdley Unionist Association) felt that whilst he would support his Member Baldwin he could not accept the chairmanship of a polling ward: 'I do not propose to take any part in politics till after we have won the War as I consider every united and individual interest

149 Hampstead UA, Annual Reports, (JAR).
152 J. Buck to Lloyd, 22/11/1915. Lloyd Papers, 18/3.
153 Woodhouse to Derby, 14/12/1916. Derby Papers 16/11.
154 PRC minutes, 11/10/1915. MS Add. 54192B.
should be concentrated on this the all important object.\textsuperscript{155} The Primrose League limited its activities to patriotic assistance, the Junior Imperial League wound down entirely.\textsuperscript{156} Elsewhere, the political truce was cited as provoking a general lack of interest in party politics and, thus, a retardant effect upon activities.\textsuperscript{157} In addition to a peculiarly apathetic and extended electorate, this must account for the failure of Unionists in many districts to perform full canvasses in the general election of 1918. Eleven days before polling started, Yorkshire Unionists had made 'no great progress' in this regard and difficulties were also experienced in the east midlands, Home Counties and north London.\textsuperscript{158}

It is important not to overemphasise the war's impact upon Unionist organisation. A constituency notebook kept current from 1911 to 1918 by the Midland Union provides details of activity persisting during the war in its thirty-three constituencies. The most remarkable detail relates to the personal contact between Central Office and the constituencies through personal visits of area agents. In this area, four hundred and fifty-seven visits were made between August 1914 and December 1917 (which averages out at just less than fourteen per constituency). While less than the pre-war average, this suggests that systems of organisation and regional control were maintained to a considerable degree. In some cases these visits related to the death of MPs, candidates or party grandees (such as the eleven visits afforded Worcestershire East in the last five months of 1914 after the almost simultaneous death of Joseph Chamberlain and the contest of a local by-election). Replacements had to be found for those candidates

\textsuperscript{155} Colonel Berrington to Dixey (Honorary Treasurer Worcestershire West UA), 15/02/1918. Berrington Papers, 705/24/746.
\textsuperscript{157} Philip Ashworth (prospective Unionist candidate for West Staffordshire) to Lloyd, 27/02/1916. Lloyd Papers, 9/2.
\textsuperscript{158} 'Synopsis of Confidential Reports by Unionist Central Office Agents on the Progress of the Coalition Campaign', 03/12/1918. BL 95/2. Together, these constituted half of the responses received.
serving at the front. Having joined the local yeomanry, John Lyttleton, for example, was indisposed to contest a by-election at Droitwich, and a total of thirty-four visits, 1915 to 1917, were required. Pre-war systems were also kept up to a moderate extent in Yorkshire, where forty-six of the fifty member associations continued to pay subscriptions to the Area Council, as did twenty-one of thirty-one affiliated clubs.\textsuperscript{159}

In the main, it is evident that the Representation of the People Bill played a prominent part in preparing the party organisation for the 1918 election and the post-war political struggle.\textsuperscript{160} Until the Registration Act of March 1916, updating the electoral register remained the only political activity that dared to operate unadorned by a veil of patriotism. It was a perfect exercise for the organisational machine – ensuring the retention of agents beyond the period when they would otherwise have become superfluous, offering a flavour at least of routine politics for the party faithful, and providing a dry run for Unionist canvassers. With the loss of registration, the party started to fall into disrepair (as illustrated in Figure 2 below). It was left to the reform bill to act as a crank on the party machinery and a means by which to reinvigorate the local associations and to bring the rank and file members back into active politics. The political truce, and more especially uncertainties regarding the timing of a general election, coalesced to licence political apathy until the end of 1916. However, the spectre of universal suffrage dictated an awakening in the vast majority of local associations. In August 1916, the National Society of Conservative Agents, which had spent the vast majority of the war seeking desperately to justify its existence, eagerly carried a resolution asking for all areas to consider electoral reform.\textsuperscript{161} In such circles, the relief was palpable – they were after all a body of men for whom

\begin{flushright}
159 Yorkshire Area, Council, 02/02/1917, (JAR).
160 The results here bolster research as in Ramsden, \textit{Balfour and Baldwin}, pp. 123-4.
161 National Society of Conservative Agents, Council, 09/08/1916.
\end{flushright}
canvassing and registering was not only a way of life but also a career. Several constituencies nevertheless refused to allow electoral reform to disturb their wartime slumbers.\textsuperscript{162} Within the machine as a whole, the cogs creaked and turned slowly. In two London divisions – Strand and St Georges (Hanover Square) – only one meeting was convened after August 1914, until consideration of the reform bill shook members into shape, after which four meetings were convened in 1917 and thirteen in 1918. Before 1917, the number of meetings was similar elsewhere: Monmouthshire (none), East Grinstead (none).

The effect of war upon the local associations can be observed through the simple medium of the number of days on which meetings were held. In those constituencies where records survive in a sufficient manner to make proper analysis possible, the details are revealing.\textsuperscript{163}

\textbf{Figure 1}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jan 1912 to July 1914</th>
<th>Aug 1914 to Dec 1918</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Meetings</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Average</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The role of the Registration Act (1916) in furthering, and the Representation of the People Bill in arresting, wartime political apathy can be seen below.

\textsuperscript{162} Of those associations analysed, East Grinstead, Gipsy Hill UA, Hatfield, Woolwich West, Kincardine and Deeside, and Southgate held no meetings at all during the war. Clapham South held its last meeting of the war in spring 1915, Bristol West in spring 1915.

\textsuperscript{163} The calculations were made from forty-nine constituencies.
Redistribution had a profound influence, as Unionist bodies were forced to consider not only the most advantageous way to redraw constituency boundaries but also, in the aftermath, the formation of new divisions and associations. The official line was that a reformation should be commenced within constituency associations in order to realign them with the new boundaries.\(^{164}\) Accordingly, area and provincial bodies had to consider the alteration of rules. The Midland Union, in abeyance since July 1914, received a letter from Younger requesting its assistance in the alteration of rules and the election of representatives to the NUA Council so as to reflect the new franchise.\(^{165}\)

What was the significance of this organisational resurgence? Evidence suggests that even in those associations that wound up almost entirely during the war, such as Accrington and Ashford, the machineries were re-established sufficiently by 1918 to allow the integration of women.\(^{166}\) Equally, wider organisational efficiency was brought into question in late 1918. Nonetheless, although fears arose that the party systems were ‘worse – not for wear, but for inactivity’,\(^{167}\) such reproaches can be distracting for several reasons. By the time of the 1918 general election, agents and activists tended to expect business as usual in their organisations, and, in any case, many of these appeals for activism were at heart

\(^{164}\) NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.

\(^{165}\) Midland Union of Conservative Associations, General Purposes Committee, 19/08/1918. (MU2/5)

\(^{166}\) Accrington UA, 18/02/1918, (JAR). The decision had been made in November 1914 to continue only with social gatherings during the war. Ashford UA, 12/04/1918, (JAR).

\(^{167}\) Yorkshire Area, Council, 24/02/1921 (Report), (JAR). See also Bradford City, EC, 18/02/1918, (JAR).
merely encouragement for betterment. This denigration in the immediate post-war years, moreover, was often actually the very bare expression of uneasiness with the coalition.\textsuperscript{168} Finally, party apathy was contrasted unfavourably with the great strides made by the Labour party in a manner that in reality more reflected Unionist fears and the rising vitality of the Labour movement, than any particular disintegration of Unionist organisation during the war.\textsuperscript{169}

It can be categorically stated that the revival of Unionist organisations allowed the party to react successfully to the redistribution of seats in 1917. Furthermore, the party was assured of a stable, united structure to be taken into the general election of 1918, which must account at least in part for the paucity of local infighting (and perhaps, in some instances, for the capacity of local associations to disobey Central Office diktats in putting up their own candidates against the coupon). This can be contrasted with the dismemberment of the already fragile machinery of the Liberal Party by the time of redistribution. Finally, it provided a response, however insufficient, to the growth in trade union membership during the war, which ensured that the Labour movement also enhanced its organisational capacity and membership during the war.

\textit{New Wine in Old Skins?}

In response to electoral changes, the Somerset Division of the NUA was typical in its pragmatism in recording that although opposed to reform during war ‘our duty now is to make the best of them’.\textsuperscript{170} Events at the NUA Conference of 1917 sustain this image of expediency, with the delegate Liddell Armitage speaking at

\textsuperscript{168} Oxfordshire South UA, AGM 19/06/1920, 31/05/1919, EC, 15/10/1919, (S.Oxon.Con.I/3). See Chapter II.
\textsuperscript{169} Reigate UA, South East Division Women’s Committee, 07/05/1920, (353/5/1/1).
\textsuperscript{170} Somerset Division, AGM, 15/02/1918, (Are/11/6/1).
once of the 'horrible nemesis' of having to advocate the inclusion of women (as he had been 'guilty of the most strenuous opposition to Women's Franchise') and also of the fact that this policy, once adopted by the party, should be accomplished within the organisation. Another representative Herbert Williams seconded the resolution with equal disdain, but predicted the necessity of attaching the women's influence to that of the Unionist Party. Such pragmatism sits comfortably with the Burkean image of conservatism as a practice in the art of postponement rather than of ideological inflexibility. And few can have carried this image of conservatism and pragmatism as far as the Duchess of Atholl, who transformed herself from a prominent anti-suffragette into one of the first woman MPs.

There can be no doubt that the electoral reforms put an increased burden on party organisation, but they were also significant in dictating a greater professionalism. The enlarged electorate made the registration of voters a considerably tougher challenge, and one result of this was the appointment of professional agents in those few areas in which they were previously lacking. Polling district agents were appointed for example in Oxfordshire South, to manage the two annual registrations now required and to assist in the increased workload of the division. However, the natural outcome of escalating expenditure caused urgent subscription appeals in several areas, with the extra cost of registration of voters under the widened franchise cited. As a consequence both of this and of an intensification of the fear of socialist methods (especially in relation to the extended electorate), propaganda grew in significance in comparison to the

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171 NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.
174 Oxfordshire South UA, EC, 03/08/1918, (S.Oxon.Con.I/3).
175 E.W. Willis (Chairman of Rochester UA) to Salisbury, 17/09/1917. Salisbury Papers, (4)80/99; Circular Letter from Chairman of St Georges UA, 30/01/1919, (487/8).
traditionally elaborate organisational activity of registration. The evolution of a coherent and compelling Unionist anti-socialist rhetoric, as analysed in Chapter III, was therefore opportune.

How the party specifically responded to the new female electorate was more problematic. A considerable number of constituencies already had, prior to the war, some representation of women, frequently through Women’s Unionist Associations (WUA) or Women’s Unionist and Tariff Reform Associations (WUTRA). In the Midlands, twenty of the thirty-three constituencies had pre-war women’s associations. However, their political contributions had varied radically: in Worcestershire East, the WUA had been self-supporting, had had its own paid secretary, branches in all polling districts and 3,500 members; in Shropshire North, the WUTRA had been ‘very active and works splendidly during Registration time’. Meanwhile, it had been recorded that the women’s organisation in Birmingham Handsworth ‘would be useful if it were not almost entirely stultified by its respectability, and if it would take some interest in local matters’. Similarly, the roles of women had been diverse locally. They had been utilised as a prop upon which the central association could rely for assistance in the distribution of literature, which in Worcestershire West had been carried out ‘largely through the agency of the Women’s Association’. In another Midland division however, although there had existed a WUA organisation with some 5,000 members, ‘only 200 or 300 are worth anything in the way of assisting the Unionist Association and, even then, care has to be exercised as to what kind of work they are given to do. Their canvassing is unreliable.’ In fact, it had been said, that the only benefit of involving them (with

176 Darwen UA, Consultative Committee, 10/01/1918, (PLC/2/2/1).
177 Midland Union Notebook, 1908-1918, (Are/MU/29/3).
178 Worcestershire West UA, Women’s AGM, 20/04/1912, AGM, 16/05/1914, (956/6).
the irresistible allure of a badge and a certificate) was so that the other side could not get hold of them.\textsuperscript{179}

It was in such a climate of diversity that the Unionist organisation sought to update itself for the new electorate. Protracted discussion, much of it heated, was necessary at the NUA Conference of 1917 to agree upon a means by which women might be brought into Unionist politics. The final resolution, agreed unanimously, claimed 'that it [was] of the greatest importance to establish without delay in each constituency, the means of bringing women voters into the closest association with the Unionist organisation for essential purposes.'\textsuperscript{180} Two interrelated matters require consideration here: first, the timing, level and nature of the integration; second, the extent to which such moves determined an appreciation of the best manner by which to appeal to women electors.

Within this study, of the 49 constituencies in which it can be divined, 36 had adopted a means to integrate women into their associations by the end of the war. In twenty-two of these cases, women were welcomed into a joint association with men, whilst the remainder maintained (or constructed) separate organisations for the different sexes. Of those associations that failed to provide for women by 1918, the majority were to give women a role by the end of 1919. It might be noted, however, that these associations were far less likely (by 3 to 11) to form joint organisations, suggesting that in some quarters there persisted a reluctance to work alongside women. Where associations maintained separate organisations, joint councils and executive committees were established usually with one third women representatives. Frequently, however, such representations continued to be dominated by the wives of leading pre-war Unionists. Of the twelve women members on the executive committee in Chelmsford, no less than nine were

\textsuperscript{179} Midland Union Notebook.

\textsuperscript{180} NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.
wives, sisters or daughters of sitting male members. A similar reliance was in evidence in Wood Green and in the Midland Union; in Epsom the dependence was specifically upon the wives of members of leading local members. As in the lack of enthusiasm for working-class inclusion, this implies that the party failed at this stage to attract a new breed of members.

Notwithstanding these reservations, the speed with which women were adopted into the organisation was symptomatic of Unionist pragmatism. It reflected concerns also at the political susceptibility of women. Norris Foster (a Birmingham Chairman) insisted on the immediate integration of women since if it were delayed, then the women would be incorporated into other parties, or perhaps more disturbingly might ‘run [an] Organisation of their own & [be] able to turn any election’. The focus of his concern was that the Labour Party was already seeking to entice Co-operative Party women into their system. In turn, such anxieties evolved into a debate over whether women inhabited ‘separate spheres’. It was appreciated that ‘the method of organising must differ from those which have proved successful with men. The introduction of such a large feminine element in the political arena must of necessity bring domestic legislation to the front to the exclusion of Imperial affairs.’ Sidney Turner alluded to the fact that women’s branches would be ‘capable of taking into consideration questions like housing and all those things and advising the general committee of the Association.’ Herbert Williams felt that as women were ‘less experienced in the arts of politics, [they would] be in grave danger of

181 Chelmsford UA, AGM, 27/08/1918.
182 Epsom UA, General Council 31/10/1918, (7085/1/1); Wood Green UA, Women’s Conservative Association, Committee, 11/06/1919, (Acc.1158/5); Midland Union, General Purposes Committee, 02/04/1919, (Are/MU/2/5).
184 Norris Foster to Steel-Maitland, 17/12/1917. SM GD193/175/2/1/70.
185 CAJ, January 1918, p.7.
186 NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.
exploitation, particularly by the sentimental Socialist'. The prevailing sentiment was that women should be enticed from the ivory towers into which they had been ushered and be acquainted with the true nature of politics. A year or so after peace had returned, Lady Baxter urged Scottish Unionists 'that the women should be fully informed of the horrors of Bolshevism, and said that it was neither wise nor kind to protect them from such knowledge however unpleasant.' Meanwhile, a resolution was passed by the Midland Union emphasising 'the urgent importance of the Political Education of Women and the desirability of organising them to take their share in combating the insidious work of the revolutionary force now so active in this Country.'

The method by which best to appeal to women also excited a keen internal debate. One Welsh agent prophesied that politics 'appear as a sort of religion to most women', namely that it might be difficult to convert them, but once involved there would be no lapsing. Certainly, it was an immeasurably different challenge from that of before the war, when women were viewed as, at best, a conduit through which to attract the male vote. One response was decided by pragmatism. For, as Steel-Maitland's association chairman advised him, to establish two sets of offices, officers and staff was wasteful. Steel-Maitland approved, although he believed that 'experience alone, however, will show whether canvassing can be done indiscriminately in any given polling district, or whether for these purposes, arrangements should be made so that the women should be canvassed by the women, and the men by the men. I am inclined to think this will not be necessary, but the possibility ought to be borne

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188 SUA Eastern Division Council, 21/01/1920, (Acc.10424/43).
189 Midland Union, AGM, 05/12/1919, (Are/MU/1/5).
190 CAJ, April 1918, p.55.
in mind.' As it was, experience in London suggested that 'no special point is seen in the canvassing of women by women; on the contrary a large amount of time and power would be wasted by adopting such a course.' Instead, a few special meetings for women had been held to 'good effect'. Such considerations were not insignificant, for they played a part in the capacity of the party to appeal to women voters. At a higher level as well, consideration was given to the women's vote: the Central Office agent for the Home Counties argued that if polling day was a Saturday, the lower middle classes and middle classes would fail to poll as it was their most busy day, whilst all the working-class areas would poll. The store set on the women's vote can be witnessed in the demand for 'a very strong appeal' to be issued to women to record their votes. In Yorkshire, special meetings were initiated in 1918 in efforts to interest women.

This research bolsters, in some ways, the work of David Jarvis, which asserts that 1918 was a watershed in requiring the Unionist Party to confront its demons concerning class and gender. While he is quite right to question the Conservative response to female enfranchisement as being 'a straightforward success - another feather in the cap of popular Toryism', it is nevertheless too easy to overlook the foundations of their integration. The response catalogued here was overwhelmingly that of acceptance of the necessity of bringing women into Unionist machinery without delay. For a party previously opposed to the enfranchisement of women, the Unionist response of pragmatism came like an

192 Norris Foster to Steel-Maitland, 17/12/1917 and reply. SM GD193/175/2/1/70-1.
194 'Synopsis of Confidential Reports by the Unionist Central Office Agents on the Progress of the Coalition Campaign', 03/12/1918. BL/95/2.
195 Ibid.
196 'Synopsis of Confidential Reports', 06/12/1918. BL/95/2.
epiphany. Moreover, the adoption of women into the internal party debate and machinery took place concurrently with a panic regarding the socialistic revolutionary threat, and therefore shaped the nature of appeals to this new electoral element.

**Electoral Reform and the Coupon Election**

A fierce argument, flavoured with pedantry, has gathered around the effect of electoral reform. The employment of multifarious techniques, including sociological, qualitative, quantitative, local and ahistorical, makes a complex if rich tapestry. The greatest difficulty to be surmounted in the debate rests on the fact that there was no general election between 1910 and 1918. This is worsened by the fact that the 1918 election is regarded commonly as being extraordinary both in terms of its proximity to the war and of the distribution of coalition 'coupons'. Viewed as such, there was no typical election between 1910 and 1922. In fact, it would be possible to go further down this route and argue that the single-issue elections of January and December 1910 (fought on the budget and the House of Lords respectively) were also exceptional, if in lesser degrees. If, perhaps, the discounting of so many election results appears unhelpful and even destructive, this does at least at once explain the difficulties encountered by historians in this realm, as well as displaying the basis on which the majority of them have approached the issue.

Intriguingly, it is a debate in which the Unionist Party plays little part. In almost all the studies, the assumption is made that the doors to the party were kept firmly shut, with prospective and actual voters allowed neither in nor out, whilst

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198 Such an interpretation would have bearing on the Liberal successes of 1910 in that as traditional Liberal issues were deployed (House of Lords reform), New Liberalism was not tested as a force with which to resist the rise of Labour.
the Liberal and Labour parties scrapped outside between themselves for the
popular vote. Behind this lies a belief that the emergence of class politics was the
crucial factor in the fortunes of the Liberal and Labour parties. In one corner
stand historians like Ross McKibbin who hold that the ascendancy of the Labour
Party was based in the pre-war period upon trade union membership and
organisation, and upon the failure of the Liberal Party to attune itself to a class-
based electorate. Such views are epitomised in the work of Matthew et al.
While relying on an analysis of post-war elections, they imply that there existed
before the war a vast core of the working classes (40-50%) who, while as yet
disenfranchised, had their ballot cards already marked with a cross next to the
Labour Party. Some of this persuasion have steered clear of anti-chronological
statistical critiques. They have at times, nonetheless, had to rely heavily on the
unproven assumption that the majority of the disenfranchised pre-war electorate
were working-class and inter alia prospective Labour voters, a conjecture that, if
accepted, seems to render rather pointless the entire debate. Against this is set
a strong phalanx of historians, such as Peter Clarke, who see the fortunes of the
two parties resting either on longer-term phenomena or in particular on wartime

George Bernstein, Liberalism and Liberal Politics in Edwardian England (Allen & Unwin, London,
1986).
English Historical Review, xci, (1976), pp.732-33, 734-35, 741-47. There have been fairly convincing
arguments put forward against this regarding the pre-war franchise: if the wider franchise was so
important then those areas with the lowest franchise before 1918 should have shown a marked turn
towards the Liberals, they did not. Meanwhile, wartime inertia in the Liberal grassroots can be held
responsible for defection to both the Labour and Conservative camps (Michael Hart, 'The Liberals, the
War and the Franchise', English Historical Review, viiic (1982), pp.820-32). Moreover, those disqualified
previously under the old registration system were frequently single middle-class men, rather than
working-class groups. Therefore, no new sub-class of voters was added in 1918 and the Unionist Party
only possessed a small advantage as the party of property (Duncan Tanner, 'The Parliamentary Electoral
System, the Fourth Reform Act and the Rise of Labour', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research,
lvi (1983), pp.206-19; Duncan Tanner, Political Change and the Labour Party 1900-1918 (Cambridge
University Press, Cambridge, 1990), p.128). Finally, the Labour was the party of trade unionists before
the war, and this sector of the working-class 'were overwhelmingly likely to be enfranchised already'
Liberal divisions. In fact, such is the strength of the latter argument that many who have sought to counter it have been ready to acknowledge the role of the war and, to a lesser degree, the rise of the Labour Party as spasmodic and regional.

Two key questions emerge in respect of this study: first, the condition of the Unionist Party before the war; second, the significance of the coupon in the 1918 election. Without seeking to ask the unanswerable question, namely what would have happened if the war had not occurred, it is possible to enquire what would have occurred in a general election in 1915. By-elections certainly provide a key and while they are notoriously problematic material from which to draw wider electoral conclusions, nevertheless the sixteen Unionist successes in the period 1910 to 1914, in both their number and nature, offer a picture of stable recovery if no certain future electoral landslide. Ramsden and Kinnear have viewed them as redolent of a Unionist revival based on increasing party unity behind Law's leadership and strong organisation, which was the prelude to a "probable Unionist victory" in 1915 if war had not intervened. Both David Dutton and Ewen Green reach entirely different conclusions. The latter views their prospects of success as at the best precarious. In a contention that runs completely against that of Ramsden, the by-election gains are viewed as only

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204 They certainly offered much more cause for encouragement than the by-election successes of 1908, which papered over Unionist difficulties concerning tariffs and the Government's pensions policy.

205 Ramsden, *Balfour and Baldwin*, p.86.

superficial. The sixteen wins are whittled down to only five of consequence. Of the other eleven, two victories remained marginal (a factor which in itself does not consider the swing to the Conservatives - the crucial factor in general election predictions), meanwhile the other nine victories were in three-cornered contests, and in seven of these the opposition vote was split between Labour and the Liberals. However, as three-cornered contests (between the Unionist, Labour and Liberal parties) were becoming more, not less, common, victory under such circumstances did not pale automatically. A *Punch* cartoon of July 1912 lucidly sketched the possibilities, depicting the Unionist candidate milking a cow (the electorate), whiles the Liberal and Labour candidates tugged fruitlessly at its horns and tail. If, by 1914, Labour still did not contest a huge number of seats, the number was nonetheless rising. Thus it would be quite possible to reach the opposite conclusion from that of Green, namely that success in three-cornered contests signalled good portents for Conservative survival under the threat of Labour, rather than illusory victories in what must indefinitely...

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208 In fact, Michael Kinnear's research, which considers the swing in these by-elections, proffers wider significance of the results and as such dates Unionist recovery before the war. Kinnear, *The British Voter*, p.72.
209 The short-term and long-term prospects for the 'Progressive Alliance' were questionable. For, whilst the alliance may have been 'still intact in 1914' (Tanner, *Change*, pp.344-8), the portents were less salubrious in areas such as Norfolk, Leicestershire and Sheffield. Tony Adams, 'Labour Vanguard, Tory Bastion or the Triumph of New Liberalism? Manchester Politics 1900 to 1914 in Comparative Perspective', *Manchester Region History Review*, xiv (2000), pp.28-9; Bernstein, *Liberalism*, pp.4, 66-82; Helen Mathers, 'The City of Sheffield, 1893-1926' in Clyde Binfield et al (eds.), *The History of the City of Sheffield 1843-1993, Volume 1: Politics* (Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield), pp.63-7. Bernstein argues that the commitment of rank and file Liberals to the pact was weak due to the preponderance of middle-class nonconformity within the party and because of suspicions concerning Labour's attitude to the role of trade unions and unemployment. Mathers' research demonstrates that the 'Progressive Alliance' was being supplemented by anti-socialist pacts formed at the municipal level in Sheffield, which were operating regularly in elections by 1913. Even in Lancashire, at the local level these were in operation, for instance Blackpool UA, EC, 10/10/1912, 10/03/1913, (PLC/5/1/1). Duncan Tanner has argued that, in the longer-term, the alliance was likely to continue to fail to satisfy 'statist' Labour supporters. Tanner, *Political Change*, pp.424-26.

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have remained a two-party system. This was, after all, a constituent in Conservative success of the 1920s.

The other evidence offered by Green in relation to the position of the party on the eve of war is equally open to debate. Steel-Maitland’s pre-war prediction of Unionist difficulties (whilst beneficial in being made to a Canadian uninvolved in British politics) reflected the frustration of a party manager several steps ahead of his colleagues on the social questions of which he was writing. Moreover, they fly in the face of other declarations to the contrary. Meanwhile, reservations made later by Steel-Maitland concerning the effect of the abolition of plural voting upon the party were made retrospectively and constituted more part of a campaign to defend plural voting rights in the climate of 1917 than anything else. Indeed, many of these predictions, enunciated in the expectancy of the abolition of plural voting, tend to underline the importance to the party of this part of the electorate. As such, the preservation of this elite class of voters, admittedly in reduced numbers and diluted by the extended electorate, claims recognition as a force in inter-war politics.

If the Unionist Party was stronger in 1914 than is frequently held, the significance often placed upon the coupon in the 1918 general election can serve to play down the position of the party at the end of the war. The role of the coupon is a thorny historical question. This is due in part, no doubt, to the strength of historical views on the role of the Coalition Government in the period after the war, including the Treaty of Versailles and the Black and Tans in

211 Steel-Maitland to Arthur Glazebrook, 24/12/1913 (copy). SM GD193/159/6/9-11x.
212 For instance Eastern Area, AGM, 06/03/1914 (Are/Eastern/7/1/6); Hampshire North UA, AGM, 28/02/1914, (NHCA/1/4); Truro UA, Annual Report, 22/10/1913, (JAR). Although all these reports were public statements, they displayed much greater confidence than had previous reports.
214 Ramsden views plural voting as a considerable basis for the inter-war party in Balfour and Baldwin, pp.119-25.
Ireland, along with lamentation at the collapse of the Liberal Party (it was, after all, Asquith who coined the term ‘coupon’). It is important however to distinguish between the effect of the coupon upon the various elements of the coalition. For, while the work of John Turner and Roy Douglas certainly proves that the letter of endorsement greatly assisted those in receipt of it, its significance to a Labour or Liberal candidate was obviously of a different degree to that of a Unionist. Therefore, it would be perfectly consistent to argue, as below, that the coupon was beneficial to its recipients and that it did not play a particularly substantial role in the Unionist gains of 1918.

As has been shown elsewhere, in Manchester the coupon had very little part in Unionist victories, since in one case a Liberal with the coupon was defeated. Indeed, in Britain as a whole (the coupon did not operate in Ireland): of the eighty-three Unionist candidates that stood without the coupon, fifty were elected. What is more, an overemphasis on the coupon can obscure other developments such as can be witnessed in Gloucestershire. Here, James Agg-Gardner, standing as Coalition Unionist candidate with coupon for Cheltenham, was able to toy with his Liberal rivals, preserving a silence concerning the agreement made by the prospective Liberal candidates Jameson and Williams to withdraw from the contest, ‘so as to keep off other Liberals’. It was not, though, the coupon that empowered him to act so successfully. Rather, the Liberals were peculiarly susceptible to such exploitation, because a united party

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217 Trevor Wilson, ‘The Coupon and the British General Election of 1918’, Journal of Modern History, xxxvi (1964), pp.40-1. The coupon was given to only three of the eight Unionist candidates. However, all eight were elected.
218 Kinnear, British Voter, pp.70-2. Of the 362 Unionist candidates granted a coupon, 332 were elected.
or local association would not have discovered itself in such a position. Moreover, it was coalition government (and the confusions and non-party sentiments it inspired), rather than the coupon, that exacerbated Liberal divisions. The proximity of the election to the war can only have confused Liberal voters and activists who, in Clapham, supported the Coalition Unionist Harry Green in a June by-election before opposing his successor Arthur du Cros six months later. Unionists in Harborough were sufficiently strong to reject out of hand an effort to construct a local pact by which Unionist backing for the sitting Liberal candidate P.J. Harris in Harborough would ensure Liberal support for C.E. Yate in Melton. Yate was returned unopposed by the Liberals; Harris was defeated convincingly by the Unionist candidate Keith Fraser. Where local Unionists forced Coalition Liberal candidates to provide promises regarding their future conduct, this was because they were in a powerful enough position to do so. In fact, the longer-term impressions of the coupon may have been of greater significance to the Unionist Party than its impact in 1918. For instance, Unionists were favoured by being over-represented in middle-class and mixed-class constituencies and as such were able to establish themselves better within these areas, whilst Coalition Liberals were over-represented in working-class, rural and mining constituencies.

This leads to the most notable point regarding the coupon, namely that the coalition provided such a powerful platform. After all, there was little gain to be had in distributing coupons that bore questionable patronage (indeed they might have proved the kiss of death), and no coalition has seen fit to issue them in a

220 Clapham UA, AGM, Annual Report, 05/06/1919, (CCA/11).
221 Harborough UA, Management Committee, 23/11/1918, (JAR).
222 This was the case in Pudsey and Otley, where the Liberal candidate Barrand was forced to pledge to consult the 'majority of the electors' if he was to deviate from Coalition policy. Keith Dugdale, 'Conservatives, Liberals and Labour in Yorkshire, 1918-29', Sheffield University, M.Phil. (1976), p.48.
223 Turner, British Politics, pp.409-10.
similar manner since. The strength of the coalition record and programme can be seen in the desperate clutches of wild-eyed Liberals for coalition status.\textsuperscript{224} While the general election of November 1918 was not a wartime contest, it was however certainly khaki in colour, and the vast weight of contemporary opinion indicates that issues relating to the war were of the greatest importance. Of 144 constituencies canvassed by Central Office, as to the issues in which the electors were most interested, the top four topics were all war-related: indemnities from Germany (132), the punishment of the Kaiser (107), the repatriation and exclusion of enemy aliens (102) and adequate pensions for soldiers and their dependents (69). Below this languished housing reform (45), agriculture (29) and industrial protection (25).\textsuperscript{225} In Scotland, the traditionally powerful issue of drink lay fifth in the queue behind three war-related issues and housing.\textsuperscript{226} Even taking into account the natural bias that the compilers may have incorporated into their reports, war matters stood clearly at the very centre.\textsuperscript{227} In the issues at its core as in its timing, the election was wartime design etched onto a peacetime electorate. Consequently, the trends concerning patriotism, for instance in wartime by-elections, continued to hold sway.\textsuperscript{228} The reaction of defeated Liberal and Labour candidates bore out the same view,\textsuperscript{229} as did the performance of independent patriotic candidates. To provide one instance: Henry Hamilton Beamish (independent Conservative and NFDSS) campaigned in Clapham on a xenophobic nationalist platform and polled 19% of the vote even whilst up

\textsuperscript{224} See efforts by the Liberal candidate Cohen in Fairfield. \textit{Liverpool Courier}, 20/11/1918.
\textsuperscript{225} 'Summary of Reports from Unionist Agents', 04/12/1918. BL/95/2.
\textsuperscript{226} 'Extracts from Confidential Reports by Unionist Central Office Agents', 06/12/1918. BL/95/2.
\textsuperscript{227} Also, for instance, see the concerns expressed in Oxfordshire North, where a candidate was selected having assured association members that he prioritised 'Germany having fought in a brutal manner must now suffer for it'. Oxfordshire North UA, Council, 28/08/1918.
\textsuperscript{228} See above, pp.173-173.
\textsuperscript{229} Wilson, 'The Coupon', pp.39-42.
against both Unionist and Asquithian candidates.\textsuperscript{230} As has been detailed in Chapter III, this mood of patriotism favoured the Unionist Party in many ways.

In relation to the franchise reforms this had a special significance. It has been shown that the relationship between women and patriotism was intimate during the general election of 1918,\textsuperscript{231} and that its effect was exacerbated by the comparative over-representation of women in the electorate of 1918 (due to the simple fact that relatively more women than men were at home and thus able to vote). Moreover, as Turner has noted, the enfranchisement of women was the major contribution of the 1918 reforms, and, while they did not necessarily vote against Labour as a gender, the sharp class-bias of the female franchise worked against the interests of the Labour party in the short term (as Unionists hoped it would).\textsuperscript{232} Contemporary opinion certainly testified to the number of women who polled for the Conservative cause.\textsuperscript{233} Indeed, the ability of the Conservative Party to appeal to a female sector of the electorate has been demonstrated as having had a longer-term impact upon inter-war electoral politics.\textsuperscript{234} It is in relation to this that the significance, as shown above, of the party's pragmatism and concentration upon securities within the electoral system must be viewed. It was largely these that won them the profitable redistribution of seats and the continuation of plural voting. Such factors, when combined with a perceptible increase in confidence and unity among Unionists, go far to explain the consolidation of the party's electoral fortunes in the inter-war period.

Socio-economic structural developments during the First World War also played a part in shaping the longer-term electoral pattern. By reducing the internal points

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{230} McCrillis, \textit{Conservative}, p.38.
  \item \textsuperscript{231} Paul Ward, "Women of Britain say go": Women's Patriotism in the First World War', \textit{Twentieth Century History}, xii (2001), pp.23-45.
  \item \textsuperscript{232} Turner, \textit{British Politics}, p.434, Chapter XI passim.
  \item \textsuperscript{233} See above p.147.
  \item \textsuperscript{234} Jarvis, 'Politics of Gender', pp.180-87; idem., 'Electoral Hegemony', pp.137-39.
\end{itemize}
of difference (based on skills and remuneration) within the working class, they restructured its life and political culture. The narrowing of middle-class salary differentials and increased middle-class consciousness offset this, however, to some degree.\(^{235}\) During the period 1914-18, along with the decline of the upper classes, there was an intensifying self-consciousness of the middle classes alongside white-collar workers, who together rose from 12% to 22% of the population.\(^{236}\) The very fact that after the war the 'Middle-Class Union' assumed such a title displayed an overt, aggressive confidence in the economic, social and cultural objects it sought to defend. It was certainly in the light of these developments that the construction of a Conservative appeal to 'the man on £500 a year' was made and prospered.\(^{237}\) Allied further to this were the huge increases in direct taxation wrought by war, which vastly enlarged the number of voters interested economically in the cost of government.\(^{238}\)

Such developments, the emergence of a greater number of middle-class seats and the re-clarification of Unionist appeals to this sector of society were mutually supporting. This research does not – indeed cannot – deny that the franchise reform of 1918 was the defining transformation in the fortunes of the Liberal and Labour parties. Nevertheless, it does reveal the significance of wartime events upon reform and the ability of political groups to define the constituents to which they wished to make their appeal. Unionist success in 1918 was not based on the


\(^{237}\) McKibbin, 'Class and Conventional Wisdom', pp.267-9. McKibbin argues that part of the basis of the deflationary policy of the Conservative Party in the 1920s was the homogeneity of its middle-class membership.

\(^{238}\) Post-war national politics therefore came to mirror much more closely pre-war municipal politics in regard to the emergence of parties (or combinations) representing socialism and anti-socialism. Due to the significance on municipal registers of rate-payers, appeals to the self-interest of voters were manifest in the pre-war era. Jarvis, 'British Conservatism', passim.
political machinations of November and December 1918. For the Liberal Party, the ‘coupon’ was merely the piece of paper that broke the camel’s back.
The Triangular Test

Punch Cartoon, 10 July 1912
V

COLLECTIVISM

As a general principle it is safe to say that the State will secure better results by encouraging men to better themselves ... than by superimposing reforms. ... [But] remember that war conditions will not come to an end with the conclusion of hostilities, and that in several directions it will certainly be necessary to invoke the organisation of State action to meet them. There is little difference of opinion as to such necessity in the case of housing.


In spite of its pre-war divisions, the Unionist Party was the only major British political party to remain overwhelmingly united over the war. Most noticeably, this was on the issue of the causes of war and the necessity of pursuing it through to victory, but, more pertinently, on all the major questions regarding state intervention, the party’s solidarity was retained: national service, press censorship, increased war taxation, the Defence of the Realm Acts. Although opinions differed as to the helpfulness of certain issues, the ethical entitlement of the state to pursue such policies was challenged only rarely. Where divisions did emerge, such as over the failure of the party leadership to insist upon the adoption of the protectionist resolutions of the Paris Economic Conference, the reasons were political not ideological. For this reason, and the unifying impact that a national dynamic impressed upon the party’s economic and social image of the post-war world (most dramatically through unanimity over tariff reform), the Unionist Party was not disposed towards internal division as was the Liberal or
Labour Parties. Furthermore, this unity on wartime collectivism should not be underestimated; it permitted the party to play its patriotism to the fore, to appeal to a new electorate with one voice and through its role in government, as John Turner has shown, the party was able to employ the state to its advantage.¹ At the very worst, the emergence of divisions within the party were delayed until the post-war coalition.

**War: the Bringer of Change**

Despite his astute and unprejudiced conclusions, Paul B. Johnson wrote of the 'dismal science' of laissez-faire, seemingly without irony, and vilified Austen Chamberlain for his post-war economy drives.² He is not alone among historians in becoming somewhat agitated in regard to the issue of state intervention. In part, at least, this is due to its profound impact: wartime collectivism has been viewed as the knock out blow to a Liberal Party that may or may not have been tottering on its feet already. The failure of reconstruction after the First World War, meanwhile, is viewed as exceptionally disappointing in comparison with the products of the Second World War (the National Health Service et al), with the promises made by politicians, and in the light of the sacrifices made in its name. Of course, the sacrifices were made not principally in the name of a better Britain, but rather British military victory, and the fact that many historians have accepted almost verbatim the political and motivational pronouncements of war leaders has shaped the debate.

Other contemporary and more general prejudices have also determined the nature of the debate. The dominance of the macroeconomics of John Maynard Keynes in the post-1945 period (perhaps more in retrospect than actuality) has served to bolster the notion of state intervention in the economic and social life of the nation. It is, moreover, an issue vulnerable to being hijacked for current political purposes. The success of Thatcherism in installing and maintaining itself in government, and its influence upon the Labour government of Tony Blair and the post-1997 Conservative opposition, has created a fault-line along which many historians divide. As such, many interpretations of the party's development in the last hundred years have emphasised either a latent individualism eager to rid itself of the shackles of liberal wets and sentimental aristocrats, or of a party sharing in a consensus based around moderate state collectivism.³

As Kathleen Burk has written, the First World War 'caused striking changes in the organisation and procedures of British government'.⁴ Most considerably, these were wrought by wartime necessities such as the recruitment and enlistment of soldiers, the production of munitions and the provision of supplies for home and military consumers. Naturally, these developments challenged the principles previously maintained by political parties both as to the prosecution of the war and as to the mark they might leave on post-war legislation. At the centre of the debate over state intervention rests the influence of total war upon society. Famously promoted by Richard Titmuss, as part of a more general thesis, was the argument that society was transformed through the range and extent of its


involvement in the war.\textsuperscript{5} Meanwhile for R.H. Tawney, and in a different sense Martin Pugh, war measures were adopted \textit{ad hoc} and later abandoned with as much ease and lack of consideration as at their conception during the war.\textsuperscript{6} Here, the emphasis will be upon several features of the debate. First, did the war affect a transformation in Unionist conceptions of state intervention? Second, in what degrees were perceptions actually reconceived or were wartime expediencies an absolute master? Third, what, if any, impact did this have upon the party’s fortunes, methods and capacity to appeal to a mass electorate?

When considering Unionist attitudes towards state intervention in the Edwardian era the fanaticism evident between free traders and tariff reformers can mask the fact that more subtle and nuanced motives, expectations and intentions were in evidence than these bare economic doctrines. A second complexity acknowledged, at least implicitly, in any analysis of divisions over tariff reform, is that the Unionist Party – like any party that embraces a variety of interests and sectors of society – was not one-dimensional. For instance, the pre-war party was an amalgam containing members of the anti-collectivist Anti-Socialist Union (ASU) and Liberty and Property Defence League, and the interventionist Unionist Social Reform Committee (USRC), along with a majority who were allied to none.

While the determination of what should be included in a discussion of collectivism is problematic, it is necessary to appreciate that the Edwardian


Unionist Party viewed social reform and national defence as two sides of the same coin. Accordingly, Unionists argued that when the toss went up from the Liberal Party, social reform always came out on top, to the detriment of national defence. Inherent in this interpretation was the concept that the primary duty of the state was the defence of its citizens. Partly because of this, and partly because the issue was at the core of divisions within the Liberal Party, conscription sits at the centre of this aspect of state intervention during the First World War. As Turner has noted, outside parliament 'conscription was treated by those whose opinions have become historical sources as predominantly an ethical question'. Indeed, as will be demonstrated below, the legacy of anti-conscriptionists reflected not all, but merely some, of the ethical concerns pertaining to it. Turner has dismissed 'determined conscriptionists' on the Unionist benches as treating rational objections to its implementation 'as obstacles to be outflanked rather than serious intellectual problems to be tackled'. Beatrice Webb felt the likes of Curzon and Milner '[lacked] imagination' on the issue. These commentators imply that Unionists were unwilling, or lacked the capacity, to confront the ethical and socio-economic impact of state intervention in this area. To refuse to appreciate the thought and consideration given to the moral and practical implications of conscription is, however, to suggest one of two things: either a party rigid ideologically, dominated by the personnel and ideas of the pre-war National Service League; or a party swayed so singularly by the war that it was ready to bow to any measure to bring about victory, without considering its impact upon the present or future balance between the individual and the state.

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7 Frederick Scott Oliver, *Ordeal by Battle* (Macmillan, London, 1915), p.209; and, for instance, see the extolling of Churchill as opposed to Lloyd George in Chapter I and III.

8 Turner, *British Politics*, p.64.


10 Turner, *British Politics*, p.64.

Various factors foster suspicions that the party's commitment to conscription overshadowed any qualifications they felt. The first was the apparent unanimity of the party, to which Chapter II testifies. While discrepancies of opinion emerged over the means by which the measure should be adopted and the priority it was given, there was little divergence on its necessity. The only notable dissident was the serial rebel Hugh Cecil who made clear his reluctance to approve of a general scheme of compulsion even during war and his utter abhorrence of peacetime national service: 'to submit to the burden of universal military service for a hundred years in order at the end to finish a great war in one year rather than two seems to me positively silly.'\(^{12}\) A second feature that frustrated proper consideration of wider implications was the moral benefit to the serviceman, for whom fighting for one's country was deemed by many Unionists to be a source of inspiration and social cohesion. Of course, in this regard there was an apparent confusion between the moral dividends due those who had enlisted voluntarily in 1914 and 1915 and those who were conscripted later.\(^{13}\) Nevertheless, compulsion became both a means by which to utilise the nation's manpower and a method by which to redefine the relationship between the individual and the state. Indeed, it was partly for such purposes of national unity that compulsory training was promoted by the party before the war, as it 'would be a democratic system, as there would be no class exemptions whatsoever. The duke's son and the cook's son would equally be obliged to serve.'\(^{14}\) This belief in the ability of comradeship in the trenches to transcend class differences was also witnessed after the war in heated debates on the Imperial War Graves Commission. Despite disagreements over whether the soldiers' headstones should be uniform, overwhelmingly the party encouraged the notion that there

\(^{12}\) Hugh Cecil to Law, 09/11/1914. BL/35/2/18.

\(^{13}\) See above, pp.178-179, 195-201.

should be strict limits set as to the cost of any private memorials so as to 'perpetuate the idea of community of sacrifice'. The candour with which these social and moral benefits of national service were acknowledged was compounded by the fact that the press – most notably the Northcliffe papers – hijacked the question, impressing an over-simplified design upon a detailed policy. As Chapter III has shown, the Unionists may have been ready to utilise the press and the caricatures it sketched (of ‘slackers and ‘patriots’), but to accept the latter as their full comprehension would be misleading.

This does not deny that in certain circles the matter was treated naively. For example, Robert Cecil – as excessively matter-of-fact as his brother was abstract – felt that ‘once you know your requirement [of men] you have merely to see what result the present system is bringing in and if it is insufficient the case [for conscription] is complete’. As the general staff demanded between fifty and seventy divisions and this figure could not be met through the voluntary method, compulsion thus became inevitable. However, for a majority of Unionists the situation was not so black and white, and instead, at the forefront was the sense of even-handedness. Anxious as to the methods of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, Steel-Maitland and Talbot worked hard to ensure that unfair pressure was not exerted upon individuals under the voluntary system. Similarly, Selborne lamented that anti-conscriptionists did ‘not mind what pressure [was] put, or in what revolting form the pressure [was] put, on men to enlist as long as the pressure [was] not legal’. Therefore, from the outset, Unionists were eager

\[\text{Birmingham Daily Post, 27/11/1918, Editorial; House of Commons debates, 17/12/1919, 22/03/1920, 04/05/1920. Hansard 5th Series, cxxiii, 485-509; cxxvii, 80-1; cxxviii, 1929-65.}\]

\[\text{In fact, Milner, foreseeing this particular danger, tried but failed to guard against it.}\]


\[\text{Selborne to Robert Palmer, 27/10/1915. Boyce, Crisis, p.154.}\]
to ensure that the state did not assume unlawful or immoral claims upon its people. On the other hand, a matter sufficiently powerful to mobilise Unionist members of the Cabinet was the ethical inconsistency in re-engaging the time-expired soldier before the enrolment of men who had not yet served their country. The conscription of married men before the pool of single men was exhausted was again viewed as prejudicial on the grounds of morals (that the single man had less to lose, having no wife and family) and efficiency (releasing yet more dependents upon the state). It is evident, therefore, that the Unionists— with their historical, parliamentary, and grassroots links to the military—tended to discover inequalities at variance with those alleged by Liberal and Labour objectors. This partly explains why Unionists humoured the Derby Scheme. For, although it was moral blackmail of the first water, it was at least universal and was perceived as a concise preface to conscription.

Many of these convictions, moreover, involved impracticalities, one being the conscription of Ireland. In addition to considering Ireland as an untapped manpower resource, Unionists held that special treatment for this part of the United Kingdom undermined the Union, especially so in relation to compulsion—the acid test of citizenship and patriotism. However, it posed the colossal challenge of civil disorder, a threat many felt to be overwhelming even without enforced enlistment. Indeed, it created the absurd prospect of wasting as many soldiers upon, as would be gained through, its enforcement. Equally problematic was the inclination against the re-call of time-expired soldiers that denied the army a body of men already trained in (and, for that matter, morally committed

22 For the archetypal Tory view see John Gretton to the Editor, Morning Post, 10/11/1916.
to) military service. Nonetheless, such efforts do highlight the significance of the moral component of ‘equality of sacrifice' inherent in their perspective and it is evident in fact that the party almost in its entirety insisted that all men should do their duty, including ‘slackers’. 23

In other instances, practical considerations were considered. Sydenham professed sympathy with Runciman and McKenna over conscription, as the needs of the economy must limit the number of men that could be put into the field. 24 The eminent Conservative and protectionist economist William James Ashley imagined dangers in a universal scheme, arguing that due to the significance of the export trade to Britain’s economy, and the necessity of manufacturing munitions, men should be conscripted from industries that were currently slack, such as the building trade. 25 Inherent failures in the system spurred on Milner, for, although through the voluntary method approximately one and a half million men had been enlisted, this represented only two fifths of the number that national service could have yielded, and moreover they were ‘not the right two-fifths’ (not the fittest) 26 Social order was another motivation, Austen Chamberlain sensing that the country was ‘eager for drastic action ... [as] it would be far more acceptable to the people immediately concerned, if the action were universal in this sense, [and] that we asserted the right of the state to claim the services of any citizen’. 27

Additionally, despite the notion that the state possessed the right to introduce universal compulsory military service, few suggested the all-out conscription of labour. Most particularly this was because of an appreciation of industrial

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24 Sydenham to Strachey, 31/12/1915. Strachey Papers, S/13/18/2.
26 Milner to Oliver, 24/09/1915. Milner Papers, 351/30-1.
difficulties involved even in military conscription. Lord Cromer, although an
avowed compulsionist, acknowledged the necessity of working towards it slowly
and quietly so as not to excite 'acute class controversy'.

Meanwhile, Gwynne forwarded to Law a memorandum drawn up by one of his Morning Post
correspondents regarding a resolution against conscription passed unanimously
by a meeting of Bristol trade unionists. Gwynne contended nonetheless that the
resolution should not be understood as an indication that the trade unions would
never accept conscription, but rather as showing their confidence in the voluntary
system, along with fear that labour might be 'bounced' into it. In spite of this
over-optimism as to the labour movement (largely due to faith in the patriotism
of the people), Unionists did realise the need to carry labour, and demands to
conscript the whole labour force were few and far between. An extreme example
came from Amery who deemed that 'the really equitable way, of course, would
be to enlist everybody and run the essential industries under military law, paying
the ordinary workmen as privates and the directing staff as officers.'

Even he felt this 'Prussian' scheme was impracticable politically.

It has been established, therefore, that it was not a straightforward dispute
between on the one hand those opposed on moral, religious and pacific grounds
or in terms of citizens' relationship to the state, and, on the other, those who
sought to enlist all. Rather it was a matter of walking along different sides of the
same street. The party accepted Law's argument that conscientious objection was
a matter not of religious denominations, but 'of man's heart and conscience'.

By disregarding Joynson-Hicks' limitation of conscientious objection to

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29 Memorandum by J.D. Irvine, enclosed in Gwynne to Law, 17/09/1915. BL/51/3/16. Similarly, Talbot believed that labour would support compulsion if, and when, the Derby Scheme failed. Talbot to Law, 16/10/1915. BL/51/4/16.
30 Amery to Selborne, 13/01/1915. Selborne Papers, 93/18-21.

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members of a religious body, ‘one of whose fundamental tenets is an objection to all war’, the party acknowledged secular conscience, if not political objection, to the European conflict as sufficient grounds for exemption. For the renowned legal historian A.V. Dicey, the deepest problem was rectifying the paradox that, while many objectors were ‘men of most respectable character’, ‘the evil which their conduct produces, and is meant to produce, is to create opposition to a war in the righteousness whereof the vast majority of British subjects heart and soul believe.’ The conclusion he reached was that the supreme moral authority of the state must be recognised, whilst the state must avoid interfering in an individual’s conscience unless such interference was essential for the defence of the realm. The state, he reckoned, had got it about right.

This presumption in the right of the state to enlist the individual in its quest for military victory was mirrored in an easy acceptance of press censorship and the Defence of the Realm Acts (DoRA), which introduced what was in effect a revolution in statecraft. DoRA was allowed merely a few moments debate before being propelled into law by the swiftness of wartime events. In the subsequent years of conflict, many smaller measures (and almost all wartime legislation was smaller in scope) were to receive vastly more consideration. For Unionists however, the longer-term reaction to DoRA revealed a party persuaded of its necessity. Even the firebrand editor Maxse could manage something approaching moderation in concluding that ‘the drastic domination of “Dora”, which threatens every writer who has a soul above licking our Prime Minister’s boots, is nothing to the present reign of terror in Bolshevika.’ Only Hugh Cecil, and he some few years after the Armistice, feared that Britain might ‘drift in the direction of

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Socialism' through regulations like DoRA, which was itself a 'Socialistic measure'.

Meanwhile, the inclination of many Unionists towards the right of the state to control freedom of speech borrowed much from Dicey's interpretation of the latter privilege as 'little else than the right to write or say anything which a jury, consisting of twelve shopkeepers, think it expedient should be said or written'. Such philosophies lent themselves well to the firm containment of domestic dissent through press censorship and the marginalisation of pacifists. A substantial second factor was that on the majority of issues Unionist publicists were on the right side of the subjective practice of censorship. When describing war blunders in July 1915, Steel-Maitland considered that 'the real blame lies with the man who commits, not with the man who exposes, [them]', but naturally on this occasion he was referring to the failure of Liberals to prosecute the war. The latter rationale acted as a stimulus for backbench Unionist criticism, which was averse to strict control of the press. Distress was articulated on a practical and political level, namely that the general public were denied access to the true dimensions and challenges of the war and, as such, were not cognisant of its demands (nor indeed of Liberal incompetents). These were questions of degree however and not related to the ethical question of the deliberate formulation of public opinion and the curtailment of free speech. When the boot was on the other foot, the Unionists felt no qualms about ruthlessly stamping out dissent. Similarly, draconian anti-alien legislation was pursued and greeted with a cavalier disregard for the ancient principle of habeas corpus.

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34 Lord Hugh Cecil, Conservative Ideals (NUA, Westminster, [1923]), p.12.
36 Memorandum regarding the machinery of war by Steel-Maitland, July 1915. SM GD193/164/3/1/31-36x.
37 See above, pp.167-168.
Of course, such regulations were explicitly wartime expedients and as a result carried of necessity few repercussions for peacetime. Even so, Unionists were not beyond perceiving the punishing slipper of the nanny state concealed up the sleeve of ‘Dora’. Its potentially all-embracing remit provoked suspicions. It was for such reasons that the Summer Time Bill (1916), a seemingly rudimentary and unthreatening wartime measure, excited opposition. J.W. Spear MP complained that farming would be impaired, and Samuel Samuel MP believed that ‘individuals [would] suffer’ on the days on which the clocks were changed. More volubly, the libertarian wing was mobilised. Frederick Banbury MP repeated some outdated agricultural arguments, and asked the Home Secretary what should happen if he were to arrive for a train without adjusting his watch; he would likely miss it, Cave replied. But Banbury’s conclusion was more avowedly individualist:

Parliament can do all sorts of things, but why should Parliament interfere with the private life of the people? If in the past they had given less time to all these grandmotherly ideas and grandmotherly legislation, and had taken a little more trouble to see what was going on abroad ... we should be in a very much better position to-day.

Here again was that Tory shibboleth re-emerging, that the state could and should concentrate on national security rather than fussing over the lives of its people. It was one of many occasions on which the libertarian wing was forced to examine the inherent contradiction of advocating national defence, whilst being reluctant to permit the state to manage the nation even for this purpose. Banbury found an ally in Hugh Cecil, whose specific target was wartime state control: if the measure was brought in under DoRA, ‘it would be a most flagrant abuse of authority. The Defence of the Realm Act certainly was not intended to force upon the country all the little devices that philanthropic crotcheteers may invent from time to time.’ He concluded like Banbury with a scare: if the state was to
interfere on this point, at what stage was it to be restrained from intervening in the life of the individual? What, he asked – hoping to stretch the bounds of credulity – about the rates of wages? 38

Several key issues emerge from what was a minor debate on a minor topic. First, it demonstrated the libertarian wing to be still vocal, but to a misleading extent. With the possible exception of the maverick Liberal W.M. Pringle, who seemingly aspired to obstruct all parliamentary legislation and could filibuster with the best of the Irish Nationalists, Banbury was the most raucous and troublesome backbencher; hardly a measure was passed without his – overwhelmingly destructive – contribution. His trusty steed, Hugh Cecil, with stooping shoulders and scholarly traits, approached the war in a singularly academic fashion. Yet, despite such eloquence and scaremongering, the debate revealed the primacy accorded the prosecution of the war above any other consideration. On this occasion, it was due to the prospect of wartime economies in fuel, assistance to the munitions industry and greater efficiency in the management of harbours, that the measure won the vocal support of the Unionist MPs James Craig, R.J. Neville, Owen Philipps and C.E. Yate. The second important feature was the incentive for state control provided by the war effort, which was an argument employed frequently with regard to almost all wartime legislation. Its fundamental component was efficiency and it impacted not only upon transport, the production of munitions and the management of industry, but also upon education and liquor.

Overwhelmingly the areas in which Unionists were enthusiastic for state intervention were industries that were either too intricate or too backward to function satisfactorily in wartime conditions without assistance, and in certain cases state control of industry was universally acknowledged as necessary. Most

38 House of Commons debates, 08/05/1916, Hansard 5th Series, lxxii, 343-6.
prominent were the efforts of the Unionist Business Committee (UBC) to force the government to take control of the production of munitions. When considering Lloyd George's bill for government involvement in the mobilisation of the engineering industry, William Bull argued that 'legislation of [this] drastic nature will require very careful consideration', but his main concern was that adequate compensation should be provided. It was little surprise to discover the likes of Milner approving government control of wartime industry, but the appearance of the traditional Tory squire on a similar platform was more unexpected. The main drive behind such Unionist demands was industrial capacity. As early as February 1915 the UBC was demanding that the government protect the aniline dye, optical glass and other industries. Dyes, used in the production of explosives and thus a critical wartime commodity, later became the central focus of the Industrial Sub-Committee of the UBC. There were calls also – from Shirley Benn MP who wrote to the Prime Minister on behalf of the UBC – for the government to take control of shipping, while members urged the regulation of railway rolling stock.

Unsurprisingly, in some business quarters there was concern. The manufacturer Dudley Docker attacked Lloyd George's interference in the munitions business as 'appalling' and blamed a South Wales strike squarely on Lloyd George's 'disgraceful preachings during the past ten years'. Unionist representatives (most especially the UWC and the UBC) were co-opted to protect the interests of commerce and business: Carson promised to fight the government 'to a finish' over plans to tax the insurance premiums of extant policies. In addition, a

39 See Chapter II.
41 General Purposes Sub-Committee of the UBC, 01/02/1915; UBC EC, 22/04/1915. Hewins Papers, 26.
42 UBC EC, 07/12/1915, 02/02/1916. Hewins Papers, 26.
proposal by Lloyd George to nationalise the shipping industry across-the-board was met with concern from another UWC member that private companies would react by cancelling all orders for new ships. More generally, however, British business reacted to such developments with ‘reluctant acquiescence’. This abandonment of ‘business as usual’ in 1915, a nostrum coined by Churchill but always looked upon with the utmost suspicion in Unionist circles, resulted in one of the better-known outcomes of war administration, namely the advent of businessmen into government. Notwithstanding some (continued) disquiet by the Cecils and Bentinck as to Lloyd George’s employment of plutocrats in high places, the vast majority of the party supported the integration of businessmen — provided of course they did not run newspaper concerns. Law was unusually forward in this regard, promoting his fellow Scotsman Ian Maclay for the management of shipping.

What motives lay behind the enthusiasm? Certainly, it was encouraged by disillusionment with ‘mandarin’ politicians who had failed to prepare appropriately for war and seemed incapable of redeeming themselves since the onset of hostilities. What was more, as the state assumed greater responsibilities in industry so did the heads of business become more suitable candidates. Finally, a genuine friendship had been developing between the Unionist Party and the businessman prior to the war, a relationship advanced further by this trend. So much so that in Nottingham Rushcliffe Unionist Association, the candidate selection committee were told that ‘they were not looking for a

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45 Walter Guinness to Carson, 07/12/1916. Carson Papers, MIC/665/B/13/9. The suggestion was made to a Labour deputation, the support of whom Lloyd George wished to attain for his new premiership.
48 See Chapter II above.
politician, but for an educated business man, with a business training. As John Stubbs has shown, the business core of the UBC was significant in exposing the party's progress away from its agriculture-centred nucleus towards a more business orientated one.

This ready acceptance of the right - and indeed duty - of the state to provide security for its population and the extension of this to necessary industries differentiated the party most noticeably from the Liberals. As has been convincingly argued, the challenge to the Liberal Party in these years came less from straightforward collectivism - which it had pursued in the pre-war era - but rather in the contest between 'consumptionist' and 'economist' approaches. The 'limited liability' rationale of the latter strategy was to ensure that Britain could avoid economic exhaustion and ensure the nation's economic strength after the war, but it was augmented by a failure within some circles to appreciate the demands, and indeed existence, of 'total' war. Consequently, the Liberal Party divided on the grounds not only of whether radical measures should be adopted to resolve the dilemma, but also, in some numbers, on the dilemma's very existence.

The degree to which Unionists appreciated the reality of total warfare and its uncompromising claims, and the premium they put upon industrial capacity and efficiency, was evident in the role they accorded the state in industrial disputes. The notion of arbitration drew on several wartime themes, including the idea of harmony between the classes. Most importantly of course, it was motivated by the necessity of maintaining output in key industries such as munitions,

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50 Nottingham Rushcliffe UA, Emergency General Meeting, 09/11/1918, (JAR).
51 Stubbs, 'Impact', pp.23-5, passim.
coalmining and shipbuilding. As Law appreciated, ‘the trade union organisation was the only thing between us and anarchy, and if the trade union organisation was against us the position would be hopeless.’\(^{54}\) When asked by a delegate at the 1917 NUA Conference whether the government would take measures to prevent labour unrest, he replied that ‘he might as well ask us if we are alive...’\(^{55}\)

The policy was to co-opt the agencies of employers and the employed into a government-sponsored system of arbitration, and, to further this end, wage regulation boards were extended from the 1909 Trades Board Act, by the Ministry of Munitions Act 1916 and the Corn Production Act 1917. So catholic did its embrace become that even the Liberal Party adopted arbitration with some eagerness.\(^{56}\) Regarding the action of miners in South Wales in summer 1915, Steel-Maitland, although critical of the Liberals for their half-hearted application of the Munitions Act to the district, felt that the government was right to intervene. In fact, he implicitly held that the government’s role should be that of arbitrator, offering a compromise so that both the trade union leaders and employer representatives could return to their members with modest gains.\(^{57}\) This represented a transformation in Unionist attitudes in many respects. In 1913, even the open-minded USRC Committee on Industrial Unrest had concluded that compulsory arbitration was ‘no real and practical way of dealing [with] industrial disputes’. The failure of European statesmen to avert war in August 1914 could only have put an even blacker contrast to their pessimistic conclusion that ‘bargaining [could not] abolish strikes and lock-outs any more than diplomacy

\(^{54}\) Johnson, *Land Fit for Heroes*, p.403.

\(^{55}\) NUA Conference, 30/11/1917.

\(^{56}\) Indeed perhaps with too much conviction, for the backing they continued to offer it after 1918 may have left the Liberals without an interest in the battle that waged between capital and industry. For the Liberal response to the socialist threat see Michael Bentley, ‘The Liberal Response to Socialism, 1918-29’ in Kenneth Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (Macmillan, London, 1974), pp.42-74.

\(^{57}\) ‘Memorandum on the South Wales Coal Strike’ by Steel-Maitland, July 1915. SM GD193/73/6/1-22x. Philip Kerr felt likewise, hoping that the Munitions Act would be implemented to its fullest extent, most
[could] abolish war'. According to the argument developed by Keith Middlemas, during the war, there emerged a commitment to solve industrial disputes through the agencies of government. Accordingly, there is much truth in the argument.

Several further debates revealed the extent to which the party would go in the direction of government control for the sake of efficiency. The first was over state control of liquor, where even by the end of the war much of the party was not reconciled to government interference. This was despite the fact that only in Carlisle did the state run the whole trade, whilst elsewhere the Central Liquor Control Board possessed only very limited powers and only within crucial wartime bases, such as ports. On the surface the discontent reflected merely the continued political role of 'the trade', but more general attitudes to individual liberty and the right of the state were also to the fore. Notwithstanding the continued political strength of the drink trade within the party, the licensed trade bowed to wartime efforts for state control, by pursuing its financial interests in accepting wholesale compensation through nationalisation rather than partial ownership (admittedly under the expectation that total nationalisation was unlikely). However, an equally powerful consideration for Unionists was the belief that, as before the war, the radicals were endeavouring to 'pursue their course of punishing the licensed trade ... to extremities'. Old guard Unionists, such as the Duke of Rutland and Lord Lansdowne, believed wartime state management to be little more than a camouflage behind which the temperance movement was manoeuvring for the long-term goals of liquor restriction and particularly regarding strikes. Memorandum 'The Industrial Outlook' by Philip Kerr, August 1915. Cave Papers, MS Add. 62495, ff.159-68.


Middlemas, Politics, pp.18-20, passim.


Younger to Law, 04/01/1917. BL/81/2/8.

Campaign Guide 1914, p.105.
even prohibition. This itself was founded on an assumption that formed the basis for the most pervasive views, namely that Unionists simply did not consider it necessary for the state to regulate alcohol.

To some extent this reflected a continued confidence within the trade that the voluntary principle could provide shorter opening hours and the less alcoholic drink. Moreover, as illustrated in Chapter I, many Unionists considered that there were more prominent problems to be confronted (munitions and conscription) before the government sought to dictate what people drank. For the most pervasive sentiment was that the workingman was inherently trustworthy and that to deny him his beer was wilfully to incite him. From the late nineteenth century, the temperance movement was criticised as exemplifying the supremacy of liberty-denying nonconformity within the Liberal Party, and as illustrating middle-class attempts to impress its moral superiority upon the working classes. Accordingly, the party endeavoured to associate itself with the working-class culture of pubs, gambling and sports in urban areas, and sought (largely successfully) to form an alliance between the party and the workingman’s pint. For instance, in the 1922 Newport by-election, drink was ‘the only issue worthy of the name’ and, indeed, it was the most intoxicating appeal that the party had been able to make in this region for many years.

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65 For instance, in Sheffield Brightside the controls on licensed premises were attacked as early as December 1914, see UA, EC, 18/12/1914. (LD/2101).


In terms also of war management, this permissive strategy was considered judicious: the workingman was not likely to bite the hand that filled his glass. It therefore reflected a link between traditional libertarianism and war management, in that the state could better keep the working classes on side by allowing them their drink. With genuine concern, Unionist MPs such as F. De Penefather (Kirkdale) and James Fortescue Flannery (Maldon) sought to ensure that supplies and taxes did not deny the farm labourer his beer or cider. Shortly after the armistice, Rowland Burdon wrote to Law expressing the dangers in County Durham of liquor restrictions: workers were leaving work early to make sure they could get their beer, a mass walk-out was likely. The Chairman of Bradford and Shipley Unionist Association informed John Boraston at Central Office that ‘the revolution in Russia if not altogether due to, was considerably fostered, owing to prohibition of liquor’, which gave ‘thought for grave reflection’ about the attitude of the returning soldiers who would find that whilst fighting for their country, the ‘Government [had] filched their liberties away’.

The elements of industrial efficiency and state control were encapsulated in the debate on agriculture. The Corn Production Bill, introduced in summer 1917, proposed that a fixed price be accorded wheat, whilst a minimum wage of twenty-five shillings per week would be established for agricultural labourers. The incentive was falling grain imports from Canada and the United States, caused by German submarines. By December 1916 the situation had reached crisis point: in the previous three months, the Empire had lost 524,574 gross tons of shipping while the harvests in Canada and the USA were anyway much

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69 Rowland Burdon to Law, 03/06/1919. BL/J7/4/5.
70 J.E. Fawcett to Boraston, 18/06/1917 (copy). Lloyd George Papers, F/6/2/34.
reduced. So concerned was Gwynne that he felt that on the matter of submarines rested the nature of the peace that Britain would be able to achieve. The problem was to worsen further as Germany removed what few restrictions she had placed on her submarines, and during the spring and summer of 1917 the destruction of ocean-going tonnage trebled.

In 1915, it was specifically with such fears in mind that Selborne had proposed that a minimum price for wheat should be introduced by the government for the following three to five years, in order to encourage farmers to grow grain. While going short of recommending compulsory ploughing, a generous guaranteed price was viewed as the only way to encourage farmers to cultivate in a manner which, 'from the point of view of pure business, they are indisposed to do'. The authors of the scheme, Milner and Selborne, were disappointed to discover that their Unionist colleagues were unsupportive. After one particular Cabinet, Selborne noted that, with the exception of Chamberlain, 'my own political friends dislike the scheme quite as much as the hidebound Cobdenites, tho' for different reasons.' One motivation for Balfour was a defensiveness about the Admiralty's record, and he asserted that such measures were unnecessary because the submarine menace of June and July 1915 was under control. Law apparently agreed in principle with the measure but 'was not prepared to make a capital question of it', and thus imperil Asquith's coalition government by forcing such a measure upon McKenna or Runciman. Underlying such immediate political and practical considerations lay more acute

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73 Selborne to Balfour, 15/07/1915, 09/08/1915, 20/08/1915. Balfour Papers, MS Add. 49708, ff.256-7
75 Ernle, Whippingham, pp.273-81.
political differences which, in his pique, Selborne considered to represent 'the dislike of any interference with landlords and farmers'.

When Roland Prothero (President of the Board of Agriculture) introduced the Corn Production Bill in summer 1917, it met with fierce criticism from the parliamentary party. This is not to suggest that the party was opposed root and branch, for a considerable section was fully in favour. As early as July and August 1914, Charles Bathurst and Richard Cooper had each proposed the necessity of government management of food production, Bathurst advocating inducements to farmers to encourage the area under tillage, Cooper urging the government to take control of production and distribution. Other agricultural experts, including Jesse Collings and Christopher Tumor, supported state intervention at least to the point of a guaranteed price. However, such was the unease within some agricultural circles that the Asquithians Lewis Harcourt and Lord Crewe were able to exploit Chaplin as a weapon against the Lloyd George Government. Why was this?

Undoubtedly there were various attendant evils at the time: controversial Cabinet appointments, new departments, and impediments placed by the government in the way of the Paris Economic Conference (PEC) resolutions. Nonetheless, the continued level of concern, first sensed at Cabinet level in 1915, and then felt through much of 1917 and 1918, revealed that this was not a protest limited to the political wrangles of summer 1917. Reluctance to encroach upon the farmers' independence certainly reflected a strange dichotomy of standards, by

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77 Selborne to Robert Palmer, 06/08/1915. Boyce, Crisis, p.142.
78 For Bathurst see House of Commons debates, 27/08/1914, Hansard, 5th Series, Ixvi, 152. For Cooper, see Cooper Papers, 74798/1.
81 See Chapter II and below.
which Unionists considered it acceptable to compel the citizen to fight – and quite possibly die – for his country, but not to oblige the ploughing up of grassland. When the matter came before the Cabinet in 1917, Long continued to oppose state intervention and had to play his best hand in order to amend the bill. Never reticent in conveying his views to his colleagues, Long’s endeavours at this hour – including almost identical longhand appeals to Carson, Hewins, Balfour, Cave and Bull – exceeded all previous enterprises. For him the matter was not a straight one of economics, but rather that the government was compelling experts to act against their better judgement. Six months after the bill had passed he recorded that in his village, ‘plough after plough [are] smashed in fruitless efforts to break up land wh[ich] will not be broken up.’ Meanwhile, he contended, the farmer (and landed interests more generally), possessing few representatives, required him to act as a self-appointed rural affairs’ ‘expert’. He himself complained of being poorly represented in the press and set out to establish a means by which he could get better coverage for his concerns and to gain the attention of the right-wing press so that ‘they could see striking illustration of [the] folly of ploughing certain grass land’. Why could the government not allow decisions to be made at a local level, Long lamented, instead of this ‘half-baked, bastard socialism’?

These concerns were mirrored on the Unionist backbenches. Colonel W.E. Weigall (Horncastle), whilst supporting a resolution to provide the government with the capacity to supervise the agricultural industry, reminded the minister that ‘the grass farm and the arable farm are as different as iron and brick works.’ The contrast drawn by Weigall was no accident: the Unionists had always represented themselves as the defenders of, and experts regarding,

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agricultural interests. What did the government know of operating a farm? Precisely the same arguments had been used before the war against Lloyd George’s Land Taxes, when the Chancellor had been asked why he knew nothing of mangel-wurzel – an obscure beet used as cattle food, of which of course very few Unionists had any knowledge either. Even more prominent was the wider issue of a bureaucratic state. This had particular bearing on the question of farming, as rural Unionists held that agriculture was terribly under-represented in government and the civil service. It had relevance, however, in all economic and social spheres. At a later stage, Weigall laid bare his distrust of central government in a request that local committees rather than central government decide the level of production required from a particular farm.

This scepticism continued well after the bill had become law, becoming a common gripe of the Spectator. Strachey and his journal had a long free trade heritage and the challenge of war tempered this but slightly. For, although ready to acknowledge the need for the taxation of ‘excess profits’, the Spectator disliked government interference on any larger basis. Therefore, the root cause of food shortages in January 1918 was the Food Controller and his department, and most especially the artificial prices instituted. It was, moreover, ‘a result which every student of political economy could have predicted months or years ago, and many economists did predict’. Aside of the bureaucratic and agricultural factors, a further reason posited by the Spectator was the economic. When parliament was voting the scheme money, Banbury moved an amendment limiting expenditure to £500,000: ‘if we pass this resolution without any limiting words the whole of Great Britain and Ireland may be taken over by the

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85 For instance, see views on redistribution of seats, Chapter IV.
86 House of Commons debates, 31/07/1917. Hansard, 5th Series, xcvi, 1052.
87 Spectator, 12/01/1918, pp.31-2.
Government and farmed by the State. Experience showed, he concluded, that governments did not manage business efficiently and that bureaucracy was expensive.

On this occasion Banbury spoke for a very considerable section of the party. Especially, many Unionists still balked at the idea of a minimum wage and most notably its socio-economic rather than its wartime foundations. A report by a UWC sub-committee (including Bathurst, Mark Sykes, Banbury, Gretton and Joynson-Hicks) briefed to look at the question of food supply proposed a guaranteed minimum wheat price, but offered only piecemeal suggestions — including the employment of women and German prisoners on the land — as to how to fund it. They might as well have plucked off the shelves a dusty copy of the USRC report of 1913. ‘F.E.’ and Leslie Scott even made much of their involvement in the pre-war conclusions of the USRC on the minimum wage and the fact that they were ‘no recent converts’. They still remained close to the USRC line that despite the duty of the state to work towards a proper minimum (or subsistence) wage, the individual had no right to expect to receive this at the expense of other individuals or the community. The implementation of a national minimum wage that would impinge upon these interests therefore could not be countenanced. Accordingly, many Unionists preferred the prospect of Agricultural Wages Boards rather than a national minimum wage. James Agg-Gardner (Cheltenham) appealed for Prothero to ‘consider once again before he inflicts upon agriculture the burden, friction, turmoil, jealousy and the cost of a system of wages boards and the minimum wage’. His proposition was for a decentralised and voluntary scheme whereby farmers would have to tender their

88 House of Commons debates, 13/06/1917. Hansard, 5th Series, xciv, 1083-90.
91 Hills, Industrial Unrest, pp.3-5.
wage-bills to the government only in the event of their wishing to receive a state bonus. Agg-Gardner reflected wider agricultural opinion in underlining the 'almost impossibility' of establishing a minimum wage level for a group of workers that 'vary in degrees from the highest skilled ploughman or herdsman down through various grades of agricultural labourer'. Lawrence Hardy, Scott and Basil Peto were concerned that the local boards would view the datum line of 25 shillings per week as the minimum that could be awarded to the workers and that wages would soar.\footnote{House of Commons debates, 18/07/1917. Hansard, 5th Series, xciv, 414-9, 672-3.}

On the other hand, other members were not reluctant to roll out the old Tory guns: Gretton (Rutland) described the minimum wage clause as 'an absolute dead letter' because the efficient labourer had no problem earning 25s per week; J.W. Spear (Tavistock) drew attention to the elderly who would be denied work. This was complemented by concern that as the tenant could profit from the legislation, why should not the landowners be allowed to raise rents for five years without the permission of the Agricultural Boards.\footnote{Howard Frank to Salisbury, 18/04/1917. Salisbury Papers S (4) 79/121-2.} Even the open-minded Wood objected to the bill, fearing that it was being hijacked by social reformers; he considered the 'main object' of the bill was to increase production and that the regional diversity of wages made a national minimum wage the 'height of un-wisdom'. Hence, the overriding sentiment was that if a minimum wage was necessary it should not be passed for social reasons, namely to provide for the improvident or the exceptionally large family. Such was the dissatisfaction that Unionist dissidents were won over to the corn bill only by the spectre of a 30 shillings wage.\footnote{House of Commons debates, 23/07/1917. Hansard, 5th Series, xciv, 928-31. The only Unionists to divide against the government were Rowland Hunt (shortly to be a member of the National Party) and Ernest Jardine.} So upset was the party journal \textit{Gleanings and Memoranda} at the efforts of G.J. Wardle and his Labour colleagues to extend the wage that they...
made a point of listing (presumably for the scurrilous purposes of Unionist campaigners) all the Labour Members who had voted against the 25s minimum — without mentioning of course that they had voted for a 30s minimum.95 On a more general level, concern over wages was probably centred on an appreciation that the workers were doing well out of the war and that wage increases would be difficult, if not impossible, to reverse after the war.96

One final debate worth recording for its illustrative qualities was over excess profits taxes. Several key motivations lay behind what was a highly controversial and anti-capitalist policy. As Peto argued, 'Labour may very rightly ask that their patriotic work should not be used to inflate the profits of directors and shareholders of the various great industrial and armament firms.'97 Equally prominent, as in the sphere of industrial arbitration, was the recognition of the need to temper excessive war profits so as to assuage industrial unrest.98 Notwithstanding these ethical and pragmatic rationales, Chamberlain was against extending the scheme, reminding Long that 'it was the counterpart of great concessions on the part of Labour and was really adopted as an instrument of policy rather than of taxation'. Indeed, he believed the 'cry of profiteering [to be] much exaggerated'.99 Peto and the UBC demanded that generous consideration be given to capital depreciation in any calculation of tax due, just as they had fought for implementation of the tax.100 Majority Unionist opinion viewed excess-profits tax as an expedient to ensure full production and a measure exceptional to a wartime manufacturing climate within which firms, such as

96 Charles Marston drew the attention of the NUEC to the 'dissatisfaction felt by employers' at the raising of wages by a further 12.5% by the Ministry of Munitions. NUEC, 16/01/1918.
97 Peto to Robert Cecil, 16/03/1915. Chelwood Papers, MS Add. 51161, ff.210-11.
98 Milner to Herbert Samuel, 06/11/1916 (copy); Milner to Colvin, 05/06/1917 (copy). Milner Papers, 353/102-7, 354/124-5.
munitions, could benefit unfairly. Accordingly, there was no projection that the duty would be continued beyond the period when trade and industry had been normalised post-war. It was another case of the promotion of efficiency, with any other claims, like the right of labour to an increased share of profits, suppressed.

Together these debates demonstrate the realms in which attitudes had changed during the war. Despite a continued reluctance to see the state intervening in matters of personal choice (such as drink) or of the redistribution of wealth, the war encouraged a readiness in the overwhelming majority of the party to mobilise in favour of the prosecution of the war, including state control. In so doing, it shifted the minimum level of state intervention up a gear, by establishing a consensus within the party that moderate action in this area was acceptable, at least on occasion. More particularly in this regard, war consolidated opinion around the conclusions of the pre-war USRC. The sentiment persisted however – partly encouraged by the resilience of a parliament seven years old, whose brief was the war – that when state intervention was proposed or accepted it was for purposes of economic and military efficiency rather than social reasons. This can be witnessed in the Corn Production Bill, which sought to increase yields and enlarge arable farming, and which adopted the minimum wage only as a necessary corollary to state assistance to the consumer. It can also be seen in excess profits legislation, which was enacted to achieve the specific goal of wartime industrial production. Where these measures caused controversy was when they were perceived as ‘social’, and here Unionists sought to ensure that only the minimum was conceded. These debates proved that the party was not walking blindly into state control, its eyes blinkered by the demands of war, but gave careful consideration as to what was absolutely essential to the war and what was not.
Looking to the Future

I do implore my Tory friends [not] to shy off reforms on the grounds that they are socialistic: why, the whole of the war is socialistic; every controlled establishment making munitions is socialistic; every railway is socialistic....

So did Joynson-Hicks (a most uncompromising Home Secretary a decade later) call for state assistance for the rural housing problem, when considering methods of reconstruction in 1917. Notwithstanding such brave revolutionary talk, the Unionist Party has been accused of thwarting, among others, housing plans, the Transport Bill and the Acquisition of Land Bill after the war. This apparent regression of the Unionist Party from progressive converts to propertied backwoodsmen has demanded explanation. Historians of all shades are ready to acknowledge the impact of several institutional and macroeconomic determinants. The initial post-war boom was succeeded by a dispiriting economic slump and rampant inflation, and then once again by economic buoyancy, all of which shaped approaches to labour and helped foster the anti-waste movements. On an institutional level reconstruction was fragile as, for instance, the Ministry of Labour suffered at the hands of the Treasury whose traditionalist personnel and systems disliked the fresh administrative expenditure involved. Equally disruptive were the jealousies between the old departments and the new: the Board of Trade distrusted the Ministry of Transport; the Ministry of Health could barely breathe under the suffocating influence of the Local Government Board. The proliferation of new departments, also, undermined central planning, as the broader economic implications of their programmes were frequently

disregarded.103 Last, but not least, was the huge number of other substantive issues under consideration at Cabinet level after the conclusion of the war, including the Versailles conference, the League of Nations, violent inflation and demobilisation.104

Notwithstanding such dynamics, the traditional argument explaining the Unionist retreat from reconstruction, first posited by the economist Maynard Keynes, was that a general election fought on perverted lines had ensured the return to Parliament of 'a lot of hard-faced men who look as if they had done very well out of the war'.105 These cynical men, who on being passed the national plate during the war had filled rather than emptied their pockets, were now only too eager to keep their ill-gotten gains. This line of reasoning (a phrase that originated from Baldwin) was bolstered by interpretations of the likes of Hugh Cecil who suggested that the real power in Baldwin's Cabinet lay with the 'middle-class monsters'; Winterton, who observed during a debate on the transport bill a 'rather reactionary opposition among some of the fat, prosperous-looking Coalition supporters'; and Marriott who recorded that in 1918 the Unionist 'victory proved to be too complete; the new House rather smelt of money'.106

Needless to say, many of these were later accounts, tainted somewhat by the raised hand of the apologist or the pointed finger of the accuser. More recent historians have credited these arguments, most notably Bentley Gilbert, who, leaning heavily upon the argument if not the evidence of Keynes, perceives the

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104 Johnson, Land Fit for Heroes, p.464.
non-socialist social reformist Lloyd George as being captured by the heartless and reactionary Tories in the post-war coalition.107

Such arguments are supported by the fruition in 1918 of a policy adopted under Law's pre-war leadership to promote business interests within the party.108 But, inherently, this argument maintains one of two things: that during the war the Unionist conversion to state intervention was thorough and genuine and the retreat from it was due to the grip of business, property, and voting influences becoming tight upon the party. The alternative is that the party had not really considered the implications of its wartime actions and merely reverted to its anti-collectivist type after the war. However, as has been seen above, proper consideration was given to the many facets of wartime state intervention and, where the interests of the party were threatened unnecessarily, these interests were defended. On the other hand, was the transformation from ingenuous reformer to arch reactionary really that overwhelming?

The first point that must be made is that even if it was a retreat, it was hardly a full-scale one: the party accepted the Acquisition of Land Bill (admittedly not without fighting its more radical clauses) and an extension of the Corn Production Act (the 1920 Agriculture Act). Even C.L. Mowat, never profligate in conferring compliments upon interwar governments, considered the Housing and Town Planning Act (1919) and the Unemployment Insurance Act (1920) as substantial welfare measures.109 Nevertheless, the retreat to economy after 1920,

107 Bentley Gilbert, British Social Policy, 1914-1939 (Batsford, London, 1970), pp.13-25, 306. It was an argument accepted also by Samuel J. Hurwitz, State Intervention in Great Britain. A Study of Economic Control and Social Response, 1914-1919 (Frank Cass & Co., London, 1968), pp.293-5. One objection at the very least to this argument concerning the new members, was that the New Members Coalition Group, which accounted for more than half of the 168 new Unionist members, was urging fusion upon Law and sponsoring Lloyd George's ambitious social plans. David Close, 'Conservatives and Coalition after the First World War', Journal of Modern History (1973), p.244-5.
most famously through the 'Geddes Axe', which slashed expenditure almost across the board, represented a departure from that programme. However, it will be shown here that attitudes to reconstruction during and after the war displayed a consistency not frequently appreciated.

The most significant point to be realised is the interpretation that Unionists put on reconstruction, for therein lies the answer to how far the war affected attitudes to state intervention and social reform. It is evident that the divergent enthusiasm displayed during the war for government intervention for industrial and national efficiency but not for social reform was mirrored in attitudes to reconstruction. In spite of the emphases that have come down to the historian, reconstruction was for Unionists more a question of economic than social reform.¹¹⁰ This is not to deny that an undertaking for social reform existed. There is no doubt that in manifestos, and more particularly in the programme extolled by the Prime Minister whom they were supporting, there lay an obligation of social and economic reconstruction. One MP later admitted for instance that, although Addison's Housing Bill and a bill for the settlement of ex-servicemen on the land were very controversial, 'the fact is that we were all committed to a great programme of social reform.'¹¹¹ But how full was their commitment?

At the 1918 general election it was very rare for Unionists to lead on a policy of social reconstruction. Of those studied, only Astor and Robert Cecil gave anything approaching prominence to this theme, the former leading with a call for housing, land, labour and health 'to be dealt with on radical lines'.¹¹² Other

¹¹⁰ For instance, the accounts of Christopher Addison, which take as their centre the state housing scheme and attempt to illustrate the wartime party as committed root and branch to the schemes. Christopher Addison, Politics From Within 1911-1918. Including some records of a great national effort, (Herbert Jenkins, London, 1924).


¹¹² Astor general election card, December 1918. Astor Papers, 529. Through actual election manifestos, extended campaigning speeches and letters to local associations expressing their intentions, twenty-eight representative candidates have been studied.
socially-minded Unionists, such as Wolmer, laid greater emphasis upon indemnities from, and punishment of, Germany.\textsuperscript{113} Certainly there was mention – in all addresses – of reform and no doubt it was sincerely intentioned, nevertheless it was cursory and the emphasis was placed instead on reparations, Empire development and tariff reform. So preoccupied with the international situation and German criminals was the Devon candidate E.W. Pickering that, when forced to respond to a question regarding the level of state intervention in housing, he admitted that he had ‘not given this particular question minute attention’. He joked that the solution might lie in commissioning a few bombers to destroy the slums, before concluding, ‘I hardly think, however, this is the time to discuss this question.’\textsuperscript{114} In Colchester, even an appeal to women voters by the candidate’s wife was obsessed with the punishment of the Kaiser and the full payment of indemnities, with only a general call for ‘Good Homes, Good and Regular Wages’.\textsuperscript{115} When social reform was addressed, it tended to be war-related. In Torquay, the Unionist candidate asserted that ‘no efforts will be spared by me’ to ensure that the ‘millions of our gallant men’ will return to jobs and homes and that the government would provide ‘any assistance from the state which is necessary to secure them’.\textsuperscript{116} Some candidates dealt so thoroughly with the conditions of peace and welfare for the returning soldier and the soldier’s widow that the issue of wider social reform was entirely neglected.\textsuperscript{117} Even this vision of state pensions for the widowed and disabled was too much for the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{113} Wolmer general election manifesto, 25/11/1918. Wolmer Papers, c1010, ff.124-5.
\bibitem{114} \textit{Dewsbury District News}, 07/12/1918. This paper was produced by the local Unionist association, but seemingly was circulated as a normal weekly.
\bibitem{115} Gertrude Worthington Evans circular to women voters, 02/12/1918. Worthington Evans Papers, c.892, ff.21-2.
\bibitem{116} \textit{Dartmouth and South Hams Chronicle}, 29/11/1918.
\bibitem{117} Bull General Election Poster, November 1918. Bull Papers, Hammersmith.
\end{thebibliography}
Spectator, which alluded to the ‘crude appeal to selfishness disguised under the plausible cloak of patriotic generosity’.\(^{118}\)

With the introduction of the electoral element into the equation after four years of war administration, Unionists were forced to confront the problematic question of whether and, if so how, to advocate social reform. The introduction of women into the electorate spurred on a fresh debate and part of this internal discourse is worth recording:

> The introduction of such a large feminine element in the political arena must of necessity bring domestic legislation to the front to the exclusion of Imperial affairs. Prohibition campaigns, home welfare, equal opportunities for women in the labour market, sex equality, free meals for all children, permanent communal kitchens, free maternity nursing homes for mothers, will all make their appearance in election addresses. Whilst there has been a great deal of talk in the Commons about purity of elections, nothing has been said or done to check the scandalous growing evil of offering collective bribes out of the public funds to corrupt electors.\(^{119}\)

In writing this, the Central Office Agent G.W.D. Daw displayed a remarkable contradiction between an awareness of what a female electorate might desire and a closing warning against collective bribes funded by the state. It mattered less that many Unionists appreciated that women would demand welfare reform, than that they should consider these but as backhanders. This seems especially remarkable in that they had a tendency to consider that the sphere of women’s action was moral rather than material.\(^{120}\) No doubt the real fear was that, while they might be willing – and able – to grease the palm of the new electorate with the odd coin here and there, their political opponents threatened to open wide the vaults of the bank.

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\(^{118}\) 'The Bottomless Purse', Spectator, 07/12/1918, pp.648-9.

\(^{119}\) CAJ, January 1918, p.7.

Neither do false impressions of the bases of wartime collectivism and policies of reconstruction assist in understanding Unionist attitudes towards reconstruction. According to Kenneth Morgan, after December 1916 laissez-faire 'lay in the dust'. If proof were needed, Salisbury's heading of a commission that pressed for a subsidised public housing scheme provided it. Morgan perceives a marked retreat from these Unionist pledges made in the latter half of the war, in relation to both social reform and matters like industrial arbitration. One problem with Morgan's interpretation of the Lloyd George government as the advent of a messianic force is that it tacitly suggests that Unionist MPs and ministers were waiting at the starting blocks eager to push off on the collectivist track. However, as has been shown in Chapter II, the Lloyd George coalition was never a smooth journey for many Unionists. Moreover, Unionist conceptions of reconstruction have never been examined in any detail. It will be demonstrated here that their priorities were based around wartime themes, such as industrial capacity and efficiency, or the Empire, and principally economic rather than social reform.

Undeniably there were deep-rooted and real desires to see the social betterment of the population after the war. The war spurred on the idealist philosophies that reduced emphasis on materialism whilst accentuating notions of citizenship and ethical duty. One inspiration was the wartime notion of reconstruction inspired by the sacrifices made by soldiers, most famously expressed in Lloyd George's appeal for 'homes for heroes'. This was reflected well in the Anti-Socialist Union (ASU), for whom the idea of social regeneration was powerful enough to act as an encouragement for it to re-badge itself as the Reconstruction Society in 1918. The prevalence of the sentiment of hope and rejuvenation after the war

was epitomised in the words of its founder, R.D. Blumenfeld, who urged that a 'new building' (rather than a renovated one) was required on foundations not of pre-war assumptions but civilized industrial relations along the lines of Whitley Councils. Allied to this was an almost universal desire for the government 'to secure the future welfare and comfort' of disabled and discharged sailors and soldiers.\(^{124}\) So intense was this feeling that Crawford believed that 'the moral feeling of obligation towards ex-soldiers is such that we mean to embark on what will in all probability prove to be an economic failure.'\(^ {125}\) Meanwhile, as Bentinck argued, housing represented an area in which those at home could seek to pay off some of their 'debt of gratitude to our gallant soldiers'.\(^{126}\) For the *Daily Telegraph*, the dreadfulness of war contrasted with the opportunities for peace, in which there was 'the promise of a new England'.\(^ {127}\)

This sentiment challenged Unionist conceptions of state intervention in a more profound manner than wartime collectivism. As in their championing of pensions and allowances for the dependents of soldiers and sailors, it inherently acknowledged that the serviceman deserved a specific standard of living and that he could call upon the state to provide this. As Dicey told Strachey, although they both had in the past looked upon old age pensions with 'very little favour', if the latter were linked to national service – and therefore civic duty – they would be acceptable.\(^ {128}\) Consequently, welfare was divorced from social efficiency. Its wider implications were that if a person executed his/her duties of citizenship, he/she could expect *inter alia* a basic level of state assistance. For several reasons, however, not least the continued emphasis placed upon social

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\(^{124}\) SUA Eastern Division, 21/11/1918, (Acc.10424/43).


\(^{126}\) House of Commons Debates, 02/05/1918. *Hansard*, 5\(^{th}\) Series, cv, 1804-9.

\(^{127}\) *Daily Telegraph*, 25/11/1918, Editorial.

imperialism and social efficiency, it can be demonstrated that the vast majority of
the party never moved to anything beyond a cursory acceptance of this.

As always within the party there existed a small hardcore of social reformists,
including Milner, Neville Chamberlain, Bentinck and Astor. Astor urged the
adoption of Whitley Councils and a Ministry of Health, berating William Hayes
Fisher (the Unionist President of the Local Government Board) for refusing to
advocate one central authority for health as an economic and efficient
reorganisation. 129 Chamberlain continued his father’s municipal reform in
Birmingham, establishing consultations between workers and employers, paid
holidays and even the Civic Recreation League (a functional title for what was an
avant-garde move to establish the City of Birmingham Orchestra). 130 Although
he could not fully escape his paternalist forefathers, Bentinck advocated a ‘bold,
comprehensive [housing] plan [to] bring the people out into the air and
sunshine’. 131 In the main, there is no doubt that the war increased the appeal of
state sponsorship of social reform. The Advisory Housing Panel, which included
the Unionists Salisbury (as chairman), John Hills and Scott, recorded that ‘it
would not be justifiable’ to assume that private enterprise could provide all the
houses needed. 132 Salisbury advocated a system whereby the state would
undertake the entire cost of building and would not, when selling the properties
on to local authorities after five years, expect to receive full reimbursement of the
costs. 133 Scott concurred and merely emphasised the necessity for a larger
number of houses and urged that ‘where the owner is not willing to sell at once,

129 Astor to the Editor, The Times, 14/01/1918.
130 Self, Neville Chamberlain, pp.77-8, 167-8.
131 Bentinck, Tory Democracy, pp.119-21.
132 Housing in England and Wales: Memorandum by Advisory Panel on the Emergency Problem [1918,
Cd.9087].
133 ‘Notes on the Principal questions which arise from the consideration of Mr Rowntree’s Memoandum’
by Salisbury, 16/05/1917. Lloyd George Papers, F178/1/6.
drastic, simple and expeditious machinery for compulsory purchase must be invented and put in operation.\textsuperscript{134}

Manifest in the assumptions of the panel, however, was that 'it should be clearly understood that no attempt is made to deal with the permanent housing question' but only the problems attendant on the war and its immediate aftermath.\textsuperscript{135} In truth, the group addressed only one long-term matter, namely rural emigration (which Scott argued was spurred on by housing shortages), and this represented a long-held Unionist obsession with the depopulation of the countryside, possessing both national and political rationales. More generally, whilst state-ownership was 'not impracticable', it was 'undesirable', except as a purely temporary expedient. Instead it was to be worked through local authorities, whilst the state was to take the burden of uneconomic rents for the period until economic rents could be introduced. Therefore, only for the distinct period of upheaval was the state to be trusted bureaucratically and burdened financially, while, in the longer-term, municipal government was to take the onus. As such, their proposals differed radically from that of the Addison Housing Act of 1919, which represented a 'crucial departure point' as envisaging a long-term extension of government action in the housing sphere as a kind of social service in its own right.\textsuperscript{136} Although different in scale and sphere of activity to the slum-clearance policies instigated by Salisbury's father (the Prime Minister), they also possessed the similarity of being temporary and one-off solutions to issues of state intervention.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{134} 'Considerations on Mr. Rowntree's and Lord Salisbury's Memoranda' by Leslie Scott, 19/06/1917. Lloyd George Papers, F178/1/7.
\textsuperscript{135} Housing in England and Wales.
\textsuperscript{137} For a good account of the politics of the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, in the context of the party's developing attitudes, see Ewen Green, 'The Conservative Party, the State and Social Policy, 1880-1914' in Francis, \textit{Conservatives}, pp.226-39.
Several further points must be understood regarding this enthusiasm for state collectivism. First, it certainly did not represent a complete ideological shift in Salisbury's thoughts. As a rule he held that 'the solid ground of Unionist policy is cracking in all directions. We have no gospel to preach. ... Shall we accept heartily the wide development of the Education Bill upon which all that is most Conservative in the working-class has set its heart or shall we emphasise the necessity of economy?' The second feature was that in nearly all cases the social aspects of reconstruction were subordinate to the economic and that where they were not subordinate, they were overwhelmingly short-term emergency measures directed most frequently at the period of demobilisation. Moreover, the collision between the economic and social elements, and hence the need to choose between them, did not occur until after 1919-20 when inflation and the Anti-Waste League made a choice all too necessary.

Although featuring prominently in manifestos throughout the country, gratitude to the serviceman and social reform concealed other more pragmatic considerations, namely the satisfaction of the wishes of the ex-servicemen in order to forestall mutiny and revolution. As one Yorkshire Unionist had warned Boraston, it was not wise to inflame the passions of the returning soldier except in favour of the state. The overt radicalism of the Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors Federation only spurred this on further. Many demands for social reform were couched in patently pragmatic language. Indeed, reform was certainly to some degree a counter-revolution and a means (as Mark Swenarton has argued) to control civil disobedience. Hayes Fisher implored Lloyd George that there should be no hedging in regard to the

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140 See above p.278.
government's pledge of 'substantial financial assistance' because serious industrial unrest would otherwise result. On the other hand, the necessity of maintaining production — so evident during the war — was matched after November 1918 by the desire to forestall revolution. By February 1919, Long had no doubt that the government was 'up against a Bolshevik movement in London, Glasgow, and elsewhere'. In March 1919, Austen Chamberlain felt housing to be the first priority and that it should be pursued 'at whatever cost to the State'; a year's experience as Chancellor of the Exchequer (and of inflation) led him though to propose that the government should abandon the scheme.

As in housing, other social reform schemes were partially directed specifically at the immediate post-war challenges of demobilisation and normalisation of trade and industry. With this in mind, Henry Terrell MP sought to amend the New Ministries (Reconstruction) Bill of August 1917 by limiting its brief to the 'problem of demobilisation', instead of simply 'after-war problems'. Likewise, Lord Sanderson bemoaned the participation in the Reconstruction Committee of Beatrice Webb, whose object was 'that this intervention of state and municipal action should take a permanent form [beyond the period of demobilisation] — not excessive in appearance, but superseding and paralysing individual action'. His only consolation was that, once wartime patriotism had ceased to check the flood of complaints, bureaucratic officials would not be allowed to continue as they wished. Meanwhile, for the extended years of demobilisation, Wolmer was prepared to see the government undertake national enterprises such as afforestation and the provision of power supplies and transport, but he did not

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141 For Unionist fears see pp.199-200.
143 Ibid., pp.81,130.
144 House of Commons, 02/08/1917. *Hansard*, 5th Series, xciv, 2354-6.
look beyond this.\textsuperscript{146} It is evident therefore that, as in attitudes to electoral reform, many MPs were here swayed principally by the need to establish order in the immediate post-war environment.

Despite the rhetoric promising ‘a land fit for heroes’, the favoured route for bringing this about was through a robust economy. As early as spring 1915, Unionists in Scotland had proposed that a government committee consider the likely effect of the war upon trade and industry; and, ‘in view of the probable conditions of the labour market on the termination of the war[,] to advise what steps should be taken in order to prevent as far as possible serious unemployment’. One proposal had been for afforestation schemes in Scotland.\textsuperscript{147} In April 1916, William Bull was remarking that it would be wise to decide how best to deal with the returning soldiers so as ‘to prevent the dislocation that will occur’. While shying away from the use of terms such as ‘public work schemes’, he did nonetheless propose that the national canal system be resuscitated, new waterways dug, and that tunnels be excavated to France and the Isle of Wight. His final solution was a ‘well considered scheme of emigration to Ireland and the Dominions’.\textsuperscript{148} While the channel tunnel to the continent had long been a pet project of Bull, his plans seemed progressive for a Unionist. To propose public works did not accept implicitly the Keynesian notion of such schemes as a recurrent solution to cyclical depression, but it did display a pessimism regarding the capability of the old economic system of providing for the immediate post-war upheaval.

Taken together, Bull’s ideas borrowed from several powerful wartime impressions: first the idea of national economic efficiency and co-operation. As

\textsuperscript{146} Wolmer manifesto, 25/11/1918. Wolmer Papers, c1010, ff.124-5.
\textsuperscript{147} SUA Western Division, 02/03/1915, 03/03/1915; SUA Central Council, 16/03/1915, (Acc.10424/28, 43).
has been shown above, this was felt most forcefully in the development of the Ministry of Munitions, but also through departments for shipping and transport. The second wartime impression was that of imperial co-operation and interdependence. Beyond these, there emerged in Bull’s land settlement scheme a negativity: the tenets of the national efficiency movement somehow inverted with encouragements to the returning soldier – described by Scott as ‘the cream’ of their generation – to emigrate from his homeland. While this borrowed much from the idea of ‘Greater Britain’ (a concept that placed land settlement near its heart as a response to perceived external and internal dangers), it also acknowledged the likelihood of – at the very least temporary – unemployment and economic disruption, and its debilitating consequences. 149 Some years later this became the basis for ‘Foggartism’, the political creed of the fictional MP Michael Mont in John Galsworthy’s novel The Silver Spoon. Mont, returning from the front, proposes mass child emigration to the white dominions and the repopulation of the countryside as solutions to unemployment. 150 Caricatured though Mont was, he put forward a highly credible strategy for a 1920s Unionist.

Ideas of ‘reconstruction’ developed much from when Bull had collected these thoughts in 1916: it earned its own government department; as a word, it entered the political and journalistic dictionaries alongside ‘Huns’ and ‘slackers’. But it is evident that a disparity existed between the priorities of the vast bulk of Unionists and the popular image of reconstruction that has been handed down. Even by autumn 1916, Lansdowne was remarking to Curzon that

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149 Keith Williams, “‘A way out of our troubles’: the politics of Empire settlement, 1900-1922’ in Stephen Constantine (ed.), Emigrants and Empire: Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1990), pp.26-32. Calls for Empire settlement were most strong during periods of pauperism, unemployment and social agitation (such as mid-1880s, 1903-05, 1908-09 and 1920s) and were seen as offering a means to calm domestic waters by channelling dangerous currents into distant seas. Imperialists such as H. Rider Haggard saw the settlement of ex-servicemen as a solution to the problems of demobilisation and demanded state support.

150 The Silver Spoon was first published 1929. Here, read as part of John Galsworthy, A Modern Comedy (Heinemann, London, 1968), pp.319-25.
"Reconstruction" is "round in the mouth" as the wine merchants say, but I wonder what it comprehends.  

Certainly, after only a few sips many Unionists found it too full-bodied. The two watchwords quickly became efficiency and Empire. This was illustrated well in the words of Amery who, assigned to the committee to draft the coalition manifesto, informed Worthington Evans:

I don't think we can insist enough that we are the party of greater prosperity through increased production. I am sure this is a sounder line to take than to warn us of the heaviness of the future income tax and the need for drastic economy. The one thing we must, above all, avoid being committed to in the future is being a party of vested interests and strict economy — the anti-Socialist party if you like. If we take that line we unite all the Labour forces against us and are done for. The essential thing is that we should stand as the party of Imperial and national reconstruction. In so far as expenditure or state control, or even measures which in the past have been regarded as Socialist, conduce to that end, we must be prepared to take them up.

Amery's motives for including this letter in his memoirs (published some thirty-five years after the war) undoubtedly incorporated a wish to give credence to the existence of the Milnerian notion of social imperialism as a powerful element in the programme for post-war reconstruction. More importantly, it revealed the desire to be — and perhaps more significantly appear to be — a party open towards state intervention in the economic and social life of the nation, whilst remaining committed to the ready defence of fiscal orthodoxy and the rights of property. This dichotomy continued to characterise the internal party discourse. In actual fact, although Amery was unready to admit it, his solution of increased

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151 Lansdowne to Curzon, 02/09/1916. Lansdowne maintained this somewhat cynical approach into the post-war era, quoting Isaac D'Israeli's maxim "the sting of taxation is extravagance". Interview with Francis Hirst, n. d. [1919]. Lansdowne Papers, Misc. Hirst was Honorary Secretary for the League for Public Money, editor of the Economist and an anti-war Liberal.

production as a precursor to social reform was little different from the interpretations held by late nineteenth century Conservatives.\textsuperscript{153}

Amery's line was inherently one of national efficiency: increased production was the purpose, and only collectivist measures that '[conduced] to that end' were to be pursued. Many concurred with the priorities he established, namely that economic stability and prosperity were the prerequisite for social reform. As Neville Chamberlain informed voters, increased production was 'the master key to all the problems [ahead].\textsuperscript{154} Indeed they borrowed much from the Bismarckian ideas espoused by Joseph Chamberlain, who had advocated tariffs as a means by which to finance old age pensions. It will be seen that this policy of 'increased production' was at the heart of many interpretations regarding the post-war economy but that, because it was usually denied its tariff mainspring, it remained a vacuous programme, too broad to ensure that advocates were kept in favour of state intervention. Indeed, in many respects, the party had not found a united or well-rounded voice regarding state control of industry, and even at its most adventurous its policies did not exceed social imperialism. To become or remain the party of 'increased production', a reversion to pre-war shibboleths emerged. The first was a retreat to stricter interpretations of political economy than had been pursued during the war. Closely allied to this was national efficiency. This latter standard, once raised, also influenced views on wider issues such as health and education, and indeed became resonant in the debate on national reconstruction.

Given the impact of the Boer War in redefining attitudes to social efficiency, the First World War acted as a predictable stimulus upon attitudes to education and

\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Birmingham Daily Post}, 22/11/1918, p.8.
health. As Assheton Pownall acknowledged in his election address to Lewisham voters in October 1918, the ‘recruiting boards have opened our eyes as to the amount of physical unfitness throughout our manhood’, and that a healthier nation must be nurtured. Similarly, Auckland Geddes – who as the head of the National Service Department knew more than most about the problem – lambasted the level of unfitness as a ‘disgrace’ and laid the blame on bad housing. Most obviously this boosted the movement in favour of a Ministry of Health and the provision of new housing. Efficiency formed the *raison d’être* of other advocates of a new ministry such as Willoughby de Broke who spoke of the need for ‘racial reconstruction’. Such notions of efficiency also shaped attitudes to education, because the struggle – as tariff reformers had long argued – was one of economics on a national scale, and, accordingly, an educated, strong workforce was required. In January 1916, Philip Magnus MP put a question to the Prime Minister, recommending ‘a closer connection between our commercial and industrial requirements and the teaching provided in our several education institutions’. In similar vein, Mackinder felt that the future lay rather in practical training than esoteric knowledge, as the war had taught society that education was intimately linked with national life. While he had no wish ‘to Germanize our institutions’, nevertheless Britain was too individualistic and needed to harmonise its characteristics of initiative and enterprise with co-operation and efficiency.

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155 Greenleaf notes the advent of development in education in the years 1902, 1918 and 1944. Greenleaf, *Political Tradition*, pp. 68-70. For the encouragement that the Boer War gave to the movement for technical education, see Searle, *National Efficiency*, pp. 72-4.


From all sides, including that of business, came powerful demands for the provision of technical education and government assistance for scientific research. Largely this was the determining factor behind Unionist support for the more controversial clauses of the Education Bill of 1917. It was left to the maverick individualist (and ex-Liberal candidate) J.D. Rees to maintain that the continuation system introduced ‘something like a revolution into the homes of the poor’, and that the workingman and the manufacturer ought to be consulted before part-time work was abolished. Perhaps this level of support was unsurprising in that the most radical clauses of the bill, which dealt with continuation schools until the age of eighteen and laid a greater stress on technical education, borrowed heavily from pre-war USRC policy. This emphasis upon technical education, the state sponsorship of scientific research and innovation was one of the less challenging influences of war. Milner could have been certain he was alienating nobody in viewing the solution to Britain's retarded economy in industrial modernisation, scientific innovation and co-operation between big business and organised labour.

Correspondingly, the concept that the state had the right and duty to manage essential services and industries received considerable backing within the party, most especially, but not only, from social imperialist elements. As early as 1914, Ashley noted the importance of ‘continuity’ in government policy beyond the war years in order to encourage investment in new wartime industries. Samuel Roberts MP claimed that it ‘[was] impossible for the railways to go back to the

old system. There must be a continuance of control.\textsuperscript{166} The pursuit of national prosperity and economic efficiency through state management was mirrored in much of the Unionist press: the \textit{Liverpool Courier} considered that even if the railways could not be made to pay, it would be worthwhile to put 'them on the taxes' for the benefit of British and Empire industries;\textsuperscript{167} the \textit{Daily Telegraph} warned voters away from Asquith by alluding to what he might do to the resuscitated dye or optical glass industries, which had been left forsaken before the war;\textsuperscript{168} the \textit{Observer} congratulated the coalition on taking the 'immense step' of committing itself to the maintenance of nationalised railways.\textsuperscript{169}

For Carson in October 1918, just as for Amery, the chief priority – and difficulty – was how to bring about 'a greatly increased production', which would in turn offer a means of providing higher wages as due reward for sacrifices that the working classes had been called upon to make. The solution lay in the bolstering of essential industries, with government assistance if necessary, and the utilisation of Empire resources for raw materials. In the meantime, a renewal of Germany's pre-war penetration of British markets was to be prevented, dumping prohibited (with a wider system of tariffs to encourage capital investment in industry), and scientific research subsidised. However, he concluded with a warning to Law:

\begin{quote}
No one is likely to object to such control as I have indicated in my previous observations but there is a grave apprehension that the Government has some intention of itself usurping either functions of the manufacturer or of the merchant in the carrying on of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{166} Sheffield Ecclesall UA, AGM, 27/03/1919, (LD/2113).
\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Liverpool Courier}, 06/12/1918. Editorial.
\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 11/12/1918. Editorial.
\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Observer}, 08/12/1918. Editorial.
their businesses and I think a clear declaration and explanation of the intentions of the
Government upon this point are vital.¹⁷⁰

Law responded in almost apologetic tone: there would be 'so great a demand for
raw materials of all kinds and probably for some time at least such a limitation of
the shipping available for transport that some measure of government control
[would] be inevitable.'¹⁷¹ Not only were his suggestions limited to the immediate
reconstruction period, but Law's attitude also revealed continued insecurities
within the party.

No sooner had the ink dried on the armistice agreement than many Unionists
were expressing in public their distaste for wartime restrictions. In doing so,
unsurprisingly, they were referring to limitations placed on trade and industry
rather than those on naturalised aliens. Commander C.W. Bellairs (Unionist
candidate for Maidstone) argued that 'Government control over business, in a
small measure, [had been] a necessity of war, but it [was] a necessity of peace
that it should go' and that businessmen should be able to expect that business
was now run 'on business lines and not on war lines'.¹⁷² As such, conditions of
peace and war were viewed as largely antithetical. A candidate in Manchester
Clayton urged 'the removal of all restraints on individual liberty at the earliest
possible moment ... [believing] that the industries of the country will recover and
production increase the more rapidly as restrictions and control are removed, and
individual initiative and co-operation encouraged'.¹⁷³ Conversely, Unionists
sympathetic to a real social reconstruction of the nation were vulnerable to
testing enquiries from business interests large and small regarding unnecessary

¹⁷⁰ Memorandum 'Economic Policy' by Carson, enclosed in Carson to Lloyd George, 21/10/1918. Lloyd
George Papers, F/6/3/18.
¹⁷¹ Memorandum on economic policy by Law, enclosed in Law to Carson, 25/10/1918 (copy).
BL/84/7/96.
¹⁷² Kent Messenger, 30/11/1918.
¹⁷³ Edward Hopkinson to Churchman, 15/11/1918. Derby Papers, 17/2. See also campaign of J.S. Rankin

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interference.\textsuperscript{174} No doubt this was partly the impetus behind such explicit declarations in favour of the reduction of red tape.\textsuperscript{175} In some degree this may have been inevitable, with the Federation of British Industries having been founded in 1916 on the back of business discontent with state intervention.\textsuperscript{176}

These overt displays of ambiguity illustrated areas in which the war had not vitally affected the party, for although it had bolstered the social imperialist movement it had not done so sufficiently to overcome traditional interests of business and property. Politicians representing these interests, such as Long, had never acknowledged the right of the state to interfere with the landowner or the manufacturer. The second point was that until the months immediately preceding the armistice, Unionists considered electoral considerations but little. This uncertainty regarding post-war state control of industry stretched as far as the social imperialists themselves. A case in point was the assurance offered by Henry Wilson-Fox to members of the Empire Resource Development Committee (ERDC):

\begin{quote}
I want to emphasize that the committee does not advocate a general State interference with and control of industry, which is a far wider question. All the committee is concerned with is to press on financial grounds only for State participation in carefully selected branches of industry.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

This carefully worded statement, sensitive to the charges both of 'state interference' and of unfettered individualism, toed a narrow line. It sought to

\textsuperscript{174} Steel-Maitland received specific questions about deregulation from the Agricultural Chamber of Commerce, the British Federation of Iron, Steel, Tinplate and Metal Merchants, the Birmingham Pharmaceutical Association, and the National Federation of "Off" Licence Holders Association. SM GD/193/179/2/13, 15, 16, 23. See also J.S. Symons to Astor, 28/11/1918. Astor Papers, 528.

\textsuperscript{175} Manifesto by E.F. Coates to Parliamentary Electors of West Lewisham, 25/11/1918. Coates Papers, COA/4.


\textsuperscript{177} \textit{The Times Trade Supplement}, November 1917. Cutting in Bull Papers Hammersmith.
manage industry in an unfussy, non-bureaucratic fashion, in a manner that would ensure the success of key industries. Another ERDC publication expressed the movement's total objection to confiscation without complete compensation and argued that any industry run by government must be done so on business lines – the ERDC 'would regard management by Civil Service Departments as now organised as fatal to success'.\textsuperscript{178}

Therefore as ERDC members were aware, despite the strengthening of the social imperialist faction of the party, there was little unanimity on state intervention. But neither did the role of government represent a real threat to wartime party unity. Interpretations of Henry Page Croft's National Party as being a national socialist movement and somehow a precursor of inter-war fascism is rather unhelpful in determining the dynamics of the Unionist Party.\textsuperscript{179} A cursory analysis of the programmes of the National Party and Lloyd George Government establishes that on major policy issues there was little divergence. The common cry of fair wages (predictably provided by tariff reform), of employer-trade union cooperation, of class conciliation, and of respect for women, could be heard from all directions. On social and socio-economic questions Croft's motley crew offered no substantive alternatives: the continuation of the Corn Production Act; the nationalisation of the canal network (but not the railways upon which industry actually depended); and other piecemeal proposals, including an extension of the system of allotment holders and a standardisation of weights and measures. Its most drastic suggestion was in afforestation, for which they planned to grant the state powers of compulsory purchase, but this was a priority industry more in war than peace.\textsuperscript{180} What was more, after the war, the National

\textsuperscript{178} \textit{Empire Resource Development Association Publication}, July 1918. Bull Papers Hammersmith


\textsuperscript{180} \textit{National Opinion}, January 1918, p.6; April 1918, p.44; September 1918, pp.10-11.
Party, no less than the Unionist Party, was undermined by the tension between statist and anti-waste elements. The unifying factor for the Unionist Party on reconstruction was the national perspective within which it should be shaped. This was well illustrated in the debate regarding how best to re-establish a stable and productive economy. In fact, both the purpose – simply increased production as a prerequisite for better wages – and the means – based around national/international foundations – indicates that they had developed little during the war.

Paying off the Debt: through Efficiency and Empire

In April 1916, the party journal *Gleanings and Memoranda* recorded that McKenna had 'no need to apologise for raising the revenue from £198,000,000 in 1913-14 to £509,000,000 in 1916-17', indeed people would be happy to pay taxes and war loans. Surprisingly, for a party traditionally opposed to substantial income tax, the vast extension of the budget under the Liberal Chancellors McKenna and Lloyd George was greeted less with equanimity than with enthusiasm. During the war the national debt rose from £650 million to £7,800 million and the standard rate of income tax from 1s 2d to 6s in the pound. In principle the wartime income tax increases may not necessarily have challenged Unionist viewpoints. After all, Joseph Chamberlain had advocated the raising of income tax during the South African conflict on the basis that it was an emergency measure. The scale of the rise in 1914-18 was, however, phenomenal. Meanwhile, and crucially for the post-war period, the increase did not question attitudes towards redistributive taxation. As Hugh Cecil noted, reasonable

182 *G&M*, April 1916, p.293.
taxation – such as that on national defence – benefited everyone and not merely one class or section of society. Therefore, there was little threat to Cecil’s interpretation that as the state should not punish an innocent man even if it might benefit others, ‘neither may it inflict upon such a man what is in reality a punishment by disguising it under another name.’ The other name of which he spoke was of course taxation.\textsuperscript{184}

The problem arose rather in respect to the debt. The most controversial solution to the war debt, recommended by among others Law, was for the conscription of wealth. The reaction to this proposal both during the war and in the immediate post-war years illustrated the paucity of ideas and the power of traditionalism within the party. Law, with the candidness that won admirers at the NUA Conference in November 1917, mentioned (somewhat tactlessly) to a gathering of trade union officials the possibility of imposing a tax on capital after the war. That a Unionist Chancellor of the Exchequer could propose such a measure was testament to the upheaval of the age, the great burden of taxation and the fluidity of ideas as how best to respond to the financial millstone of the war (cynics might have said it was testament also to the fact that Law had little inherited wealth of his own to be conscripted). However, Younger (who did stand to lose much by the scheme) described the idea as ‘suicidal’, and Central Office reported that there had been ‘a good deal of trouble’ in the party over the matter.\textsuperscript{185} The cleavage between earners and owners differed little in 1918 from the divisions in 1965, the latter an occasion on which a wealth tax was rejected with similar speed.\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{184} Lord Hugh Cecil, Conservatism (Williams and Norgate, London, 1912), p.166.
Despite Law’s judgement that ‘any method of dealing with [the financial situation was] bound to involve a number of grave disadvantages’,\textsuperscript{187} the party was united in its outright opposition to the proposal.\textsuperscript{188} The free market economist Harold Cox warned his colleagues that the levy was a threat to the capitalist system, either by threatening the financial markets that relied on private investment or ‘Socialism by a tricky device’.\textsuperscript{189} In quick time, the conservative London Municipal Society prepared a number of pamphlets urging prudence, which were promptly distributed to members of both houses of parliament and local authorities.\textsuperscript{190} The *Spectator* reflected Unionist feelings well in concluding that ‘frankly, we are unable to unravel his [Law’s] exact meaning’. It countered the conscription of wealth through emotional arguments (the cost already born by the wealthy, the military conscription of the rich as well as the poor), the practical (capital would have to be valued), and the abstract (questioning what capital was).\textsuperscript{191} This was mirrored in the appraisal of Marriott, who considered it ‘not merely inadvisable but impracticable’.\textsuperscript{192} In their reasoning these borrowed heavily from the line taken by the party against Lloyd George’s land taxes in 1913-14, when several lines of defence – sentimental and theoretical – had given way merely to arguments of a practical nature. George Lloyd and Edward Wood, meanwhile, offered one final line of defence: by appropriating from the holders of capital, the burden would fall upon the conscientious family who had saved a portion of their income and not upon the profligate. What about the small shareholder, they asked?\textsuperscript{193} In response, they intended to mobilise the small


\textsuperscript{188} Younger to Law, 03/01/1918. BL 82/8/2; Gretton to Hewins, 16/01/1918. Hewins Papers, 67/45-6.

\textsuperscript{189} Dauntcn, ‘How to pay’, p.893.

\textsuperscript{190} London Municipal Society, EC, 06/03/1918. MS 19528/2.

\textsuperscript{191} ‘The Conscription of Wealth’, *Spectator*, 03/01/1918, pp.4-5.


taxpayer and minor saver. Both of these groups had swelled in number due to the war, the first through income tax, the second through War Savings. The party campaigned to win the support of this new breed of investors in literature released after the war. A Labour government, it was argued, would rob those who had saved in war loans of the interest due them, indeed the state would even confiscate the capital investment as well: 'If you have only five or ten War Savings Certificates, you are a capitalist.' Most especially, the expansion of direct taxation implicated a vast number of middle earners in the actions of the state. Several developments were key from 1913 to 1919: first, the exemption level was cut from £160 to £130 per annum (also, note, whilst wages were increasing); second, the tax rate for those on the lowest band in 1919 (£130 to £160 per annum) was almost double that of the highest band in 1913 (over £3,000). Accordingly, the number of income tax payers grew from 1,130,000 (1913) to 3,900,000 (1919).

Constructive responses to the challenge of the financial situation were at best vague and often bordered on regressive. Willoughby de Broke and F.S. Oliver were petitioned in favour of a Tory movement that sought to link religion, private property and responsibility in much the manner that Young England had sought to, some eighty years earlier. In some degree, this anticipated the 'property-owning democracy' first voiced by Noel Skelton in the mid-1920s and promoted by Anthony Eden after 1945, and had its genesis in the convergence of the goals of hard-line Unionists (such as the Duke of Northumberland) and of the middle-

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194 'Nothing for 15/6: Your Savings Under Socialism', NUA Pamphlet 1890, (June 1919).
195 What is more, a further 3,900,000 escaped paying income tax only by being relieved by the operation of abatements and allowances. Although the number of taxpayers decreased after the war, it still remained approximately two and a half times that of the pre-war figure into the mid-1920s. Figures developed from Bernard Mallet & C. Oswald George, British Budgets, Second Series, 1913-14 to 1920-21 (Macmillan, London, 1929), pp.395-8.
196 Sanderson to Oliver, 13/12/1917, 17/12/1917. Oliver Papers, MS 24955, ff.173, 177-8.
class socially-minded (such as Neville Chamberlain). For the coal-owner Northumberland, the destruction of both the constitution and central party principles determined that the only object for which they could now fight were 'the dirty dollars we possess [and, as such,] it becomes simply a fight for our own interests & our own wealth.' With rather more sentimentality, Lloyd and Wood professed their confidence in the return of an appreciation by the owners of property and wealth of the 'duties inseparable from ownership', which had declined in the immediate pre-war years. This paternalistic approach was, of course, meant to undermine the attraction of the redistribution of wealth and was little more than a return to the notion of noblesse oblige in a romanticised feudalism. Indeed, Lloyd wanted to retreat to a 'merry old England': 'you can get the Elizabethan system back if you try, and with it Elizabethan good cheer and reasoned piety of nationhood.' Short of donning finely coloured tunics and attending medieval pageants on horseback, this was a most vacuous charade that reflected the confusing concoction of numbness and desperate optimism mixed by the war. Perhaps heeding the advice of Lloyd and Wood, Sydenham and Salisbury were behind a more practical scheme for the great landowners in the House of Lords to co-operate to provide for the settlement of soldiers on the land after the war. While it is easy to be cynical of proposals rooted so firmly in the paternalistic tradition of mid-nineteenth century conservatism as redolent of an ideology unyielding to the force of time, it must be acknowledged that the generosity of the wealthy towards war veterans, dependents, and the memories of

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199 Lloyd, Great Opportunity, p.13. They went so far down this line as to blame the retardation of the agricultural industry upon the 1846 repeal of the corn laws.

the dead came more from the heart than the head. For instance, Baldwin famously donated a considerable portion of his industrial fortune to the Exchequer (though the failure of his efforts to retain his anonymity resulted in the misfortune of being branded modest as well as generous). That said, Sydenham was not oblivious to the political impression that might be made, namely that it might serve to portray the peers, and – more significantly – landowners in general, as responsive and magnanimous in regard to the plight of the nation.\textsuperscript{201} As such, it might obviate the need for redistributive taxes. In similar vein, Blumenfeld (with one eye on Port Sunlight) looked towards the establishment of canteens and concert venues by employers.\textsuperscript{202} Conservatism reigned even within the progressive faction of the party involved with the British Workers' National League and ensured that policies developed along fairly traditional lines. Unionists refused to budge an inch on the desire of patriotic labour for the nationalisation of the railways.\textsuperscript{203}

Even when suggestions appeared to be touched with modernity their basis was often thin. Shortly before the armistice, Salisbury wrote to the editor of the \textit{Liverpool Courier}, alluding to the necessity of confronting the 'profound upheaval of ideas' wrought by war. The working classes, he said, must be assisted and made 'partners in industry' not merely 'hands'. The rhetoric was laudable, the means by which to realise it more problematic. A necessity during the war, industrial arbitration was held up as a means by which to stabilise the economy and society more generally. Lady Acland (the Primrose League activist) held out the hope that 'the experience of discipline and the mixing up of the social classes in our great citizen army' offered the possibility that labour

\textsuperscript{201} Sydenham to Salisbury, 09/08/1917. Salisbury Papers, S (4) 80/56.
\textsuperscript{202} Reconstruction, (1919).
\textsuperscript{203} Steel-Maitland to Neville Chamberlain, 06/11/1917 (copy); Younger to Steel-Maitland, 07/11/1917. SM GD/193/99/2/124, 126.
might look more reasonably upon industrial relations. This obviously tied in well with the concept of the party as a classless and national party, and allowed it to contrast this model of industrial relations as antithetical to that of the Labour Party. The support for Whitley Councils as the arbiters in industrial disputes did serve to detach the party from employer groups, but, born out of the necessity of wartime production and flavoured with the optimism wrought by war, it was a policy adhered to when the challenges were exceptional. Meanwhile, industrial co-partnership – hardly a progressive policy in any case – did not receive any particular boost from the war, although its long-term position as a solution adhered to by a minority was preserved.

More generally, the most preferred manner of economic interference was on an international rather than national level, through imperial preference and Empire co-operation. Most famously this was through the appropriation of enemy resources. It is too easy to accept Keynes' dismissal of the coalition line on German criminals, indemnities and reparations as a cynical ploy to win an election, for many Unionists sincerely believed in these responses on both moral and economic grounds. In Gateshead, a Unionist speaker argued that if Germany had little ready money by which to pay for the damage it had caused, it still had its rich coalfields. G.B. Hurst, appealing to be selected as Unionist candidate for Manchester Moss Side, emphasised the appropriation of German colonies, shipping and reparations, and subsequently became the candidate. Major P.G. Smith advised voters in Penistone Yorkshire that the Labour candidate's

204 Lady Acland, 'Democracy and the Primrose League', Primrose League Gazette, xcix, January 1918, pp.6-7.
205 See Chapter III above.
207 Yorkshire Post, 16/12/1918.
208 G.B. Hurst to Professor Boyd Dawkins (Chairman of Moss Side UA), 23/10/1918. Derby Papers, 17/2.
scheme for a capital levy was grossly unfair – 'it was a far sounder policy to make Germany pay for the war, and also for the peace programme.'

Some months after peace, Claude Lowther MP proposed 'a concrete scheme by which Germany could (over a number of years) be compelled to discharge the whole cost of the Allies' War Debt'. This included a liberal estimate of Germany's financial capacity, an appreciation of the savings she would make through being an unarmed and peaceful nation, the confiscation of her mineral resources and the gain through territorial acquisitions. It mattered less that Keynes was able to dismiss this scheme in the 'airy' fashion that Law requested, than that Lowther should have sought recourse to such an idea. Bentinck may have been dismayed by the continuance of economic hostilities once the military war had ended, but it is evident that, even in June 1920, much of the Unionist Party sought to use German reparations as a means to at least restabilise, and perhaps even reinvigorate, the economy. A typically violent attack by Maxse upon the coalition's 'singular and depressing absence of zeal to search the capacious pockets of Germany' was greeted with an ovation lasting nearly a minute at the NUA Conference, and the resolution was passed with cheers. However, as means by which to re-establish the pre-war financial and economic status quo in Allied countries, such responses were inherently ephemeral. Accordingly, they made no provision – either ideologically or practically – for steady and continued social reform.

This policy was to be augmented by national efficiency, imperial co-operation and tariff reform. At the Paris Economic Conference (PEC) of 1916 the Allied heads of government agreed that there should be post-war co-operation in the economic sphere. These were conclusions that were linked by tariff reformers

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210 Memorandum by Claude Lowther, enclosed in Lowther to Law, 22/03/1919. BL/97/1/9.
(most notably the UWC and UBC) to the idea of customs and imperial preference. These movements were bolstered also by the shortage of food and raw materials in Britain and by the weakness of Britain's key industries.\textsuperscript{212} Alfred Bigland MP was roped in by Ernest Pretyman to assist the Board of Trade in securing additional supplies of glycerine from oil seeds, nuts and vegetable oil. Accordingly, he suggested that the government sponsor a system to ensure that all such resources were kept within the Empire. While he proposed that the government establish a fixed price, nonetheless it would be a system based largely on co-operation, Empire and efficiency rather than state collectivism within Britain.\textsuperscript{213} Such guarantees were intended to safeguard scarce resources and simultaneously stimulate investment in essential industries.

It was these exact concepts that were behind the formation of the Empire Resource Development Committee (ERDC) in October 1916. On its inception, the idea of establishing 'an Empire Farm' in Canada was peddled by Milner as 'the development of the State by the State for the State - the development of our national and Imperial property'. Initially launched by Morton Frewen, it attracted a powerful group of imperialists, including Milner (until he retired on accepting government office in December 1916), Bigland, Earl Grey, Wilson-Fox, H.E. Brittain, Bull, Croft, Worthington Evans, Mackinder and Selborne. Its candidly imperial disposition was illustrated by the election to its chairmanship of the controversial figure of Starr Jameson, of South African fame (or rather infamy). Renamed the British Empire Parliamentary Development Committee it boasted two hundred MPs as members.\textsuperscript{214} On 8 November 1916, it made its most forceful contribution during the Nigeria debate, which combined general dissent

\textsuperscript{211} Bentinck, \textit{Tory Democracy}, pp.60-3; NUA Conference, June 1920.
\textsuperscript{212} See above, pp.68-69, 72-79, 272-285.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., pp.93-6.
with coalition policy with efforts to construct an Empire-based economy.\textsuperscript{215} It is interesting to note several factors about this movement. The first is that it was founded in appreciation of the predicaments envisaged in the post-war world. As such it was an effort to formulate an alternative to high income tax and/or the capital levy. Its goals were long-term, namely Empire efficiency and cooperation, conservation of all resources for imperial (of course, actually principally for British) industry and capital investment in Empire resources. Thus, store was put on such ventures as the Suez Canal, the Assouan dam and West African property. Other organisations such as the British Empire Producers Organisation (BEPO) and the British Commonwealth Union (an off-shoot of the Federation of British Industries) likewise sought to promote inter-imperial trade, such as that set out in the resolutions of the Imperial Conference of 1918. So powerful was this emotion that Gwynne wanted Londonderry to chair a joint council of the BEPO and manufacturing groups, holding that it ‘might be the foundation for a real revival of national politics and policy on the only true basis – the interest of the country’.\textsuperscript{216}

Most especially, the national basis of this policy was tariff reform. The party was so firmly behind tariffs that Younger informed Freddie Guest (Lloyd George’s Chief Whip) that unless his chief came out squarely in favour of the scheme that ‘it would be no good to ask Conservatives to back his candidates’.\textsuperscript{217} Moreover, almost the entire debate regarding the joint political appeal to be launched by Lloyd George and Law was centred on the tariff controversy.\textsuperscript{218} Tariffs had been

\textsuperscript{215} See above pp.104-106.
\textsuperscript{217} Sanders Diary, 09/08/1918. Ramsden, Tory, pp.107-8.
\textsuperscript{218} For example see the Report of the Party Meeting at the Connaught Rooms, 12/11/1918. BL/95/3. Younger’s reservations were in regard to the reconstruction not of the nation, but of the second chamber. Younger to Law, n. d. [October 1918]. BL/95/5.
linked inherently with British economic interests during the war most forcefully through the work of Hewins, Carson, the UBC and the UWC. Shortly before the general election of 1918, the UWC passed a resolution demanding the adoption of a national economic policy to include imperial preference, development of Empire resources, allied/imperial co-operation and the elimination of undue foreign influence and dumping likely to hinder the reconstruction of our industries on a firm basis.\textsuperscript{219} Carson also chaired the appositely named Economic Offensive Committee, which sought to prosecute the war on an economic basis (through many of the schemes suggested by the UWC and UBC) and also, more significantly, establish a post-war economic system based around nationalism. Its central purpose was to redress the pre-war situation in which Britain had, as Mackinder remarked, 'stood naked before the world' by clothing her in impervious attire.\textsuperscript{220}

Owing to both the strength of traditional party feeling behind tariffs and the close connection between the war and tariffs, this was the one economic issue that achieved anything like regular attention from the constituencies, the NUA, backbench MPs and Unionist ministers. The frequent mobilisation of the UBC and the UWC behind the Paris resolutions, and most particularly the pleas promoted by Hewins, Carson and Long, posed a significant threat to the coalition. In referring in a letter to his party leader to the 'more vigorous application in public policy of [Conservative Party] principles', Hewins was predictably alluding to tariffs. One particular canard he was eager to despatch was that 'the German people were unwillingly driven into the War through the domination of the Kaiser and the Prussian militarist party'. In doing so, he hoped that a remorseless economic war could be commenced against the German

\textsuperscript{219} Salisbury to Law, 02/11/1918. BL/84/3/5.
nation. Hewins concluded with the warning that the labour problem, and consequently the threat of civil unrest, could only be contained by the fostering of British industry, and that this could be effected only through tariff reform.\textsuperscript{221} Law's refusal to act immediately upon Hewins suggestions inspired the UBC to divide against the government in the House of Commons.\textsuperscript{222} It resulted, in fact, in the most serious Unionist vote (in proportional terms) against the government during the entire war: forty-two Unionists supported Hewins' amendment (which sought to exclude the province of industry and commerce from the remit of the new Ministry of Reconstruction, on the understanding that this underlined the acceptance of the decisions of the Paris Conference); only twenty-six Unionists voted for the government, including more than ten who were on the payroll of the government.\textsuperscript{223}

Although the failure of the government to enact or articulate an economic policy undoubtedly played some part in the creation of the National Party in August 1917, the threat to party unity that the issue of tariffs represented can be overemphasised by examining such overt divisions. While tariffs remained a disruptive policy, they served overwhelmingly as a unifying force and the question arose only of the priority they should be granted (most importantly in relation to the maintenance of the coalition). The strength of this nationalist economic policy meant that to some extent the issue of tariffs became, through the war, cross party. Indeed, the initiative in government was taken by the Liberal free-trader McKenna, a conversion on which Lloyd George commented to Long – with characteristic disinterest towards an old core doctrine – "so the old fiscal system goes, destroyed by its own advocates."\textsuperscript{224} Indeed, Willoughby

\begin{itemize}
\item Hewins to Law, 19/07/1917. Hewins Papers, 65/110-14.
\item House of Commons debates, 02/08/1917. Hansard, 5\textsuperscript{th} Series, xciv, 2367-77.
\end{itemize}
de Broke found that 'the only amusing thing in this country [was] to watch the Manchester School trying to save its face in the presence of the complete bankruptcy of Cobdenism and Pacifism.'\(^ {225}\) Partially because of the limitations placed on imports and exports, the war provided an inherent precedent for tariff reform and, as Richard Herzog has noted, the war 'de-structured' the issue through the prohibition of vital goods in DoRA.\(^ {226}\) Many previously unconvinced of its merits came to appreciate its benefits, including even Lord Balfour of Burleigh who, having departed the party over tariffs in 1903, chaired the powerful eponymous committee on economic policy in 1916. The similarly minded Cromer experienced what turned out to be a deathbed conversion. The sensibilities of these men had always lain close to that of the party, but their free trade principles had been enough to divorce them from Unionist circles before the war. Cromer, in light of the insufficiency of direct taxation to pay off the huge burden of debt, considered Imperial Preference 'now inevitable'. The sentiment of Empire brotherhood, he felt, should supersede any economic objections to protection.\(^ {227}\) Hugh Cecil, too, advocated an Imperial tariff barrier as a means of revenue to reduce war debts (although, note, it was still not to exist 'for any industrial or commercial purpose').\(^ {228}\) Eager to demonstrate the new wartime appeal of tariff reform to free traders, *Gleanings and Memoranda* listed some notable conversions, including the *Spectator*, Harold Cox, Chiozza Money, 

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\(^ {224}\) Hewins to Mrs Hewins, 16/09/1915. Hewins Papers, 58/116-9. A minority of Liberals abandoned this principle, even so far as to form part of a delegation to the Prime Minister in favour of the adoption of the Paris Economic resolutions. Despite this, the Liberal Party remained largely a free-trade party. See for instance, J.M. Robertson, *The New Tariffism* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1918). 'Paddy' Goulding to Law, 16/02/1917. BLJ81/3/10. The partial consensus was certainly spurred on by the coalition government, in forming friendly relations between Liberals and out-and-out tariff reformers such as Chamberlain. Oliver to Milner, 10/03/1918 (Copy). Chelwood Papers, MS Add. 51090, ff.30-9. More generally see Chapters II and III. 

\(^ {225}\) Willoughby de Broke to Lloyd, 28/02/1916. Lloyd Papers, 9/2. 


\(^ {227}\) The Earl of Cromer, 'Imperial Federation' in Harbutt Dawson (ed.), *After-War Problems*, pp.23-6. 

\(^ {228}\) Memorandum, 'Suggestions for Fiscal Policy After the War', by Hugh Cecil, 03/04/1918. AC/15/6/8.
George Reid and Lords Sydenham, Joicey and Cromer. Months later, the leaders of the British Workers' National League and John Hodge were added.229

These developments had profound structural influences upon the party. As Ewen Green has said of the pre-war libertarian wing of the Unionist Party, such as Dicey, Strachey and Lord Wemyss: they may not have loved the Unionist Party, but they hated the Liberals.230 The conversion of many towards tariff reform, and therefore to an acceptance that unadulterated individualism had become impracticable (or, at the very least, improbable), brought them more firmly within the embrace of the wider party. In doing so, the war served to reinforce the bond between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives, and between the libertarian and collectivist wings of the party. This was wrought by necessity, as it was provoked by the coalescing of ideologies. For the waning of the Irish issue demanded that other bonding agents were applied. Similarly placed were the zealous manufacturing tariff reformers (such as the Empire Industries Association) who, though frustrated by the refusal of Conservative governments to adopt major protectionist policies, remained loyal to the party through fear of the alternative (now Labour).231 For post-war as well as pre-war social imperialists, tariff reform was to be used as an alternative to redistributive internal taxation. In the main, the party viewed tariff reform as the solution to its most grievous dilemmas: the power of Germany (and other external threats), the maintenance of a national industrial spirit, and the means by which to yield greater production and thus higher wages.

In conclusion, it is important to appreciate that the party fully contemplated wartime and post-war collectivism, because, it is only through acknowledging

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this that the party’s robustness can be understood. Unionists therefore remained (or rather became) overwhelmingly united on the issue of state intervention. Where divisions emerged, such as over the failure of the party leadership to insist on the adoption of the protectionist resolutions of the Paris Economic Conference, the reasons were political not ideological. Meanwhile, it is questionable whether the war radically altered attitudes towards state collectivism, although it certainly served to raise the datum line of expectation. More specifically, it opened the minds of Unionists to state supervision of essential industries and undoubtedly influenced attitudes to the founding of the Central Electricity Board and the British Broadcasting Corporation (both in 1926) and British Overseas Airways Corporation (in 1939), all strategic industries. Warfare did, however, also illustrate the party’s limits, namely a continued suspicion of bureaucracy, the primacy of the protection of property interests and distaste for the direct redistribution of wealth. Moreover, there were a great deal more votes to be had in being anti-tax when there were so many (income) taxpayers. The war averted the necessity for the usual discourse between political expediency and political conscience, and therefore electoral considerations were not at the fore until autumn 1918. This undoubtedly played a part in the speed of deregulation in the post-war climate. In spite of the exclusion of this dynamic from the debate about the role of the state, Unionist actions did leave impressions on the inter-war period. Most powerfully, the war represented the first instance in which the Unionist Party sought to manage the population in any widespread sense through the auspices of the state. Therefore, although the 1920s housing policy of Neville Chamberlain undoubtedly owed much to the pre-war and post-war desire to create a property-owning democracy, state intervention during the war provided a precedent for this type of social regulation.

232 Cronin, Politics of State Expansion, p.85.
John Stubbs has argued that ‘the war raised the role of the state in society and the economy in such a way that Conservatives could no longer afford to ignore it’. Undoubtedly this is true, but it is evident that the party had discovered few fresh long-term answers. If the party’s response exemplified anything it was the continuity between the pre-war and wartime solutions: conscription, tariff reform, the intensity of the social efficiency and social imperialist movements. But, of course, these latter movements were riding the crest of a wartime wave — they had been raised by it and as it fell so would they. Meanwhile, the inherent nationalism of many of the party’s solutions was relevant more to the period of warfare and immediate recovery than to periods of peace. Ironically, the most profound impact of the war was on a challenge to which they rose most apprehensively, namely its legacy in the form of high taxation and a colossal war debt. This established a system of taxation that was (although it may not have appeared so at the time) inescapable. For all the economies forced by the ‘Geddes axe’ of 1922, substantial income tax was there to stay in both financial and political terms. Moreover, as has been illustrated above, the party continued to campaign — perhaps even more successfully — along the lines of reducing taxation. This, when combined with the consideration they had given wartime collectivism and the conservative nature of their response in several regards, compensated for their lack of fresh ideas.

In part, this ideological development says much of Conservatism: that its responses, although seemingly determined largely by electoral considerations, also possessed social goals. As such, the interwar emphasis on a property-owning democracy, constructed hopefully through the private sector, was more than merely an effort to ‘accommodate and partially defuse the pressures for

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Like tariff reform, it offered a means by which to defeat the Labour Party, a means for social solidarity, and a method by which to promote economic and social efficiency.

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CONCLUSIONS

In a study focussed on a turbulent war, there has been little mention of battles lost or won but this is not to deny that military action engaged the minds of those politically minded or involved. As the returning soldiers sought to convert their military records into service to a peaceful nation, the war served to shape the careers and priorities of such men as Edward Wood, Harold Macmillan, Oswald Mosley and Anthony Eden. Much broader impressions of the war can be felt for, unsurprisingly, if anything determined Unionist actions and attitudes between 1914 and 1918, it was the prosecution of the war. It was the primacy accorded this, rather than party political ideas such as Ireland or tariff reform, that compelled Bonar Law to upset the patriotic truce in spring 1915 and usher in the first coalition, and again it was this that permitted the wider party to approve of the coup enacted by their pre-war nemesis Lloyd George in December 1916. Its faithful bedfellow was patriotism and it is that theme that binds this thesis.

Overwhelmingly, it was patriotism that ensured the unity of the party. As Chapter I demonstrated, despite apparent indifference amongst the party leadership in July and August 1914, the reticence displayed was actually fashioned by interpretations of their political role and by the speed of events that overtook them. However, this diffidence contrasted sharply with the alacrity with which George Lloyd, Henry Wilson and company approached the European situation. Therefore, although the final action taken (the letter to Asquith) presented the party acting as one, as so often throughout the war, those upon the party fringes felt themselves moving with greater speed towards radical solutions. It was not a one-off, but rather the first occasion upon which the radical right staked its claim to a greater role in the prosecution of the war. Neither before the war nor since would the radical right and social imperialist wings of the party possess such relevance or power. R.J. Scally's assertion that this movement evolved organically from 1910 onwards may be overstated, but the social imperialist faction possessed immense influence and was not content.
until it was permitted to pace the corridors of power. Meanwhile, the reticent reaction of Law, Lansdowne and Balfour was maintained into 1915 and beyond, beyond even the point when Milner was finally welcomed into the War Cabinet. The latter's participation in government certainly served to shore-up the diverse wings of the party: he represented action, forwardness and integrity, and — perhaps most significantly throughout — he was not associated with previous hedging or with overt party interests.

On the other hand, it was not Law's particular sensitivity to backbench criticism and openness to compromise that safeguarded his position. For (as Chapters I and II demonstrate) apart from May 1915, he actually displayed a marked obduracy in favour of his own personal view on party fundamentals. Throughout 1915 and until May 1916, he was unready to imperil the Asquith government to enforce conscription, despite the vast weight of Unionist opinion behind it. Throughout the Lloyd George coalition he escaped whilst offering only the most bare assurances concerning tariff reform, although faced with unrelenting pressure from parliamentary and grassroots Unionists for a clear definition of the government's economic policy. Accordingly, Hewins' Unionist Business Committee and Carson's Unionist War Committee possessed (and deployed) less influence that many at the time, and subsequently, believed. Rather Law's position was ensured by the paucity of acceptable alternatives and the dominance of patriotism. Both the contenders in the leadership contest of 1911 could be discounted: Chamberlain remained too stiff, Long too attentive to minor intrigue, and both were on the whole too implicated in the government applecart to seek to upset it. Meanwhile, of those Unionist contenders sufficiently self-confident to deride the necessity of national consensus, all possessed shortcomings. Even though neither Carson nor Milner nor Salisbury were ready to go it alone, none possessed the total confidence of the party in any event: Carson was too much an Irishman, Milner too little a party man, Salisbury too much lesser a man than his father. That the most overt challenge came from Page Croft — whose deficiencies were discernible even to his sympathisers, and who was able to dissipate with
ease the considerable dissatisfaction that he sought to exploit – revealed the
deficiency. Therefore, even if Law had not been blessed with considerable
political talents, he would likely have remained leader by default. He was also
blessed with good fortune – for instance the timing of the Lansdowne letter that
was published the day before Law addressed the NUA for the first (and last) time
during the war. More important still, Law was safeguarded by a party patriotism
that allowed Ireland to force its way back into the political mainstream only
infrequently and that negated the divisive matter of limited patronage wrought by
coalition government. Although wartime coalition did frustrate personal
ambitions, the latter were subordinated to the war effort. This did, of course, have
implications for the post-war as well as the wartime Unionist Party, marking a
watershed and unleashing the dissent of Steel-Maitland and Selborne.

Simply through preserving – indeed enhancing – the unity of the party, patriotism
executed a considerable service to the party (a service it did not provide to either
the Liberal or Labour parties). But advantages were evident elsewhere as well.
Most significant was its utilisation as a means by which to undermine the other
parties. Due to Labour’s advancement during the war – through trade union
membership and the narrowing of the differentials between skilled and unskilled
workers – the timing of the emergence of this powerful anti-socialist tool was
propitious, indeed critical. As Chapter III has shown, it was fortunate too in that
the link between anti-socialism and pacifism drawn by the Unionist Party was
supported not only by the powerful wartime press but also through the auspices
of Unionist ministers and the state more generally. It was more however than
luck: the party acclimatised itself to the peculiar patriotism of the years 1914-18,
as for instance in the adoption (in line with press and general opinion) of
Belgium – rather than the ‘honour’ of Britain – as the basis for war. Indeed, this
faculty of flexibility and readiness to adapt in order to construct a viable appeal
to a mass electorate and a forceful response to socialism (first manifested as early
as August 1914) contrasted sharply with the inability of the Liberal Party to
transform itself. This connection between anti-socialism and patriotism was at
the forefront of the appeals constructed during the 1920s. Moreover, and most crucially, by establishing more firmly the link between an appeal to self-interest and a sentimental appeal to patriotism and imperialism, wartime propaganda shaped the interwar response to Labour as a dual appeal to anti-socialism and the economic interests of the voters. With the vast increase in the number of income-tax payers produced by the war, this link was further intensified.¹

In other respects too, this particular response was crucial, as it offset other unimpressive approaches to the challenge of Labour. Despite the initial enthusiasm within the party leadership towards the connection with patriotic Labour, there was little zest for real cooperation. The few seats offered the British Workers' National League at the 'coupon' election ensured that in electoral terms it was stillborn. However, this under-representation was less the outcome of the manifold confusions of November 1918, as of the articulation of widespread Unionist reservations. By the end of the war, the response of grassroots Unionists towards formal cooperation had become at best lukewarm, partly because many thought that the BWNL would be a somewhat unruly and loud-mouthed child, more considerably because the wider support had rarely extended beyond the rhetorical. It is not evident that the failure to maintain a union with the BWNL had any lasting detrimental affect upon the party. For, it would hardly have moderated the Unionists' anti-socialist stance, because there was never any real ideological convergence except on what were already Unionist principles. Neither did the failure of the alliance deny the party a pool of talent any more than the coalition with Lloyd George was to provide one (except of course for the brilliant premier himself). Nevertheless, it may have transformed in some degree the manner in which Unionists attempted to work with labour. The approach to working-class organisations still seemed redolent of

¹ See Chapter V.
self-doubt: there was a continued inclination for entering these political movements clandestinely, through the back door, rather than proudly bearing the Unionist colours from the front. Accordingly, these movements were neither easily impregnated nor the crude caricatures of them (as dominated by scheming syndicalists and revolutionaries) redrawn. This did much to determine the future approach of the party: it represented as much the abandonment of the Chamberlainite obsession with winning the working classes over to a complete Unionist manifesto, as the arrival of a sophisticated anti-socialist rhetoric. In doing so, it clarified the Unionist response to the Labour Party as one based on propaganda, anti-socialism and – though they would have been loathe to admit it – sectionalism.

Moreover, despite the significance of the coupon, patriotism as a factor in the overwhelming success of the Unionist Party in 1918 must not be discounted. The most considerable electoral threat during the war emanated not from the left but the right.\(^2\) This had considerable implications for post-war Conservatism. For the party’s ideological development, in a political climate in which patriotism would never again be such a compelling force, it offered transient solutions to electoral and ideological challenges. Accordingly it shaped the commitment to the Lloyd George coalition, because, whilst stopping well short of an intransigent return to the conditions of 1914, Unionist interpretations of reconstruction (social, economic and political) were centred specifically on the issue of demobilisation and immediate stabilisation.\(^3\) Mirrored in attitudes to electoral reform (most especially PR), Unionist MPs demonstrated a desire to maintain the broad status quo. As such they showed an implicit confidence in the democratic pretensions of their party and a Disraelian willingness to “Trust the People”. This displayed

\(^2\) See Chapter III 'Pacifism and Bolshevism' and Chapter IV 'Electoral Reform and the Coupon Election'.
\(^3\) See Chapter V.
real self-assurance, considerable independence and a remarkable lack of hedging (hedging had, after all, been the central tactic of the pro-PR peers). Consequently, although - as John Turner has argued - the Lloyd George coalition after mid-1917 served the dual purpose of prosecuting the war and acting as a bulwark against socialism, this was not a long-term commitment. As far as the coalition was concerned therefore, the Unionists wanted to have their drink and quaff it: see off the immediate threat of revolution and social disintegration, and imbibe the sentiments of national appeal and success as in the coalition cocktail, before spitting out the Lloyd George olive. This did not bode well for the long-term participation of the Unionist Party in a coalition government, and its precedence for the National Governments of the 1930s existed only in so far as many at the head of the party appreciated the advantages of coalition government in times of crisis. As Chapter II testifies, this is not to deny that real implications sprang from their involvement in the coalition. First, it served to undermine the notion of party and determined the persistence of a real desire to perpetuate a national, non-controversial and non-party political system. Bolstered also by the concern over the future of the Unionist cause and party, this sentiment was challenged most forcibly in the post-war period when the party further defined its response to socialism. Second, Unionists benefited by establishing themselves - in the eyes of the nation and, perhaps equally importantly, in their own eyes - as the party of patriotism, and hence the national party. Therefore, a new veneer was applied in place of the negativism and sectionalism that characterised their pre-war politics.

Indirectly, as Chapter IV has demonstrated, patriotism also decided that the Unionists were set off down the route to electoral reform in which there were remarkable gains for the party. The conclusions here tend to bolster the arguments of John Ramsden, namely that the bedrock of inter-war electoral success was the maintenance of plural voting, the redistribution of seats and the removal of the Irish representatives from Westminster. However, it has been shown that redistribution could hardly have been undertaken at a more suitable
time for the Unionist Party, when wartime sentiment was almost tailor-made to suit the party's agricultural figure. The sentimental and practical espousal the party received at a national and local level meant that agriculture, and subsequently Unionism, received disproportionate representation. Indeed, the interests and classes to which the party has been shown as wishing to appeal – a middle-class, non-industrial, agricultural, suburban category – was the actual outcome. Further rewards were evident: the maintenance of a strong agricultural wing within the party (certainly evident in the 1920s but also beyond); a proliferation of middle-class seats, peculiarly suited to Unionist pretensions. Indeed, the nature of redistribution can only have served to reinforce the party's affinity with middle-class, suburban and agriculture elements. For, by consolidating Unionist strength within such spheres, these interests gained greater influence within the party.

Perhaps equally prominent was the transformation in Unionist perspectives towards mass enfranchisement and class, whose genesis lay during rather than after the war. Paramount in this regard was submission to an almost fully democratic system. This was demonstrated, especially, by an eagerness to search for safeguards within the established democratic system (redistribution and plural voting) rather than outside it (second chamber reform and, to a lesser degree, PR). This had implications, of course, for the cause of House of Lords "reform", which was damaged irreparably, constituting as it did a retreat from this commitment to democracy. This was only compounded by the fact that Unionists in any case did not want "reform" but rather restoration of the second chamber's powers. Second, it reflected the party's willingness to get its hands dirty with democracy: forging appeals to specific groups and on a national level, and confronting the issue of class. This resolve was manifested in the pragmatism of the Unionist response. It was this pragmatism – a celebrated characteristic of Conservatism – that ensured that the initially hesitant acceptance of women onto the electoral roll was substituted by a no-nonsense appreciation of the role they must play. While David Jarvis has certainly illustrated the teething problems
evident in the party's response to gender after 1918, it is imperative to acknowledge that the general basis of successful inclusion was the pragmatism of 1917 and 1918, and that the outcome was far better than could have been expected (and, indeed, than Unionists themselves expected).

Was the period 1914-18, therefore, an unmitigated success for the party, ensuring its rejuvenation? Several qualifications must be made. First, the atrophy in organisation induced by war (most especially after the suspension of electoral registration) was only partly assuaged by the recruitment campaigns and the demands of constituency redistribution. Thus much of the good work executed in the years immediately preceding the war was wasted. In comparison to a swelling trade union and Labour organisation this boded ill, though Unionists were markedly more successful at retaining the foundations of organisation than was the Liberal Party. The surrender of Ireland, meanwhile, left a hole at the heart of Unionism. By November 1918, reference to Ireland in election manifestos was minor, and limited – in all cases – to Ulster and its non-coercion. Ireland was not, however, surrendered submissively: the desperate reactions of summer 1916 and Edward Carson's ongoing distaste for the government's handling of the matter served to illustrate that the variety of opinion evident before the war was still alive. Moreover, the importance to the party of the disappearance from the political agenda of Ireland can perhaps be overestimated. It was a combination of the united response to the war, to the onset of class politics and of the perceived socialist menace that compensated for – indeed demanded – the deprivation of the Irish issue. Different priorities, most especially the war, fear of socialism and Bolshevism, and confidence in the wider Empire, persuaded the party to take a step back and consider their policies from the widest possible perspective. Furthermore, as Chapters II and III illustrated, Ireland was transmogrified into a matter of Empire, of the right of self-determination, which, combined with the efforts to inspire a real imperial unity, could ensure that the Empire did not disband. Therefore, in Unionist minds at least, the Irish Union had been surrendered to grander causes – the war, the prevention of revolution, the
continuation of an imperial brotherhood – despite, of course, the fact that had it had been lost in August 1914. Indeed, the Unionist Party was fortunate to have had a central plank – a plank that in any case would have been removed at some stage – removed from them when they could and did focus upon new challenges. It is almost inconceivable that the party’s evolution from being an anti-home rule organisation into essentially an anti-socialist party could have transpired so organically without the diversion of the war.

Nonetheless, one significant outcome of the Unionist policy towards Ireland – for the immediate post-war period – was the breach in attitudes that opened up between the grassroots and parliamentary party. Evident also in the debate over electoral reform, the local associations often moved with leaden feet along the path trodden by their parliamentary representatives. This was partly the consequence of the fact that, deprived of influence because of the primacy of the war effort, and a deficiency of useful military information, the party grassroots were shrivelled during the war. Often their views were subordinated to the wishes of the leadership and their MPs. This in part explains the success of Selborne, Steel-Maitland and company in their rebellious activities in the post-war coalition: there was a well of dissent on which they could draw. Long after the parliamentary party, even more the leadership, had dispensed with but cursory mention of Ireland, and indeed second chamber reform, the NUA and constituency committees were according it something approaching primacy. The disenfranchisement of the party rank and file served to bolster the increased authority of the party backbenchers, famously preserved in the 1922 Committee. Despite the link between the war and backbench power drawn by John Stubbs and John Turner, the strengthened role of the backbench MP can be overemphasised. For, it was not solely in relation to the party leadership that he

\[4\] See Chapter II.
rose in significance but also in relation to the party rank and file, who were largely – though not entirely – disenfranchised by the war. When they discovered a voice, most powerfully during the war over electoral reform but after 1918 most ominously on traditional Unionist issues and on economic waste (the onset of middle-class pressure groups), they were capable of dictating the actions of their representatives.

More generally the war did not revolutionise the party. If anything, the politics of the war display its organic development. It certainly made relevant many pre-war shibboleths, such as patriotism, imperialism, tariff reform, the primacy of agriculture and social efficiency, and cemented their place within the Unionist canon. In some cases it established them to a greater degree than was helpful – tariff reform was pursued as a radical solution into the 1920s and may have served to alienate working-class voters. The ideological convergence went further than this however, for, as Chapter V proves, an increasing consensus was established on the level and nature of the state’s role in society and industry. Significantly, the party did not close its eyes or ears to wartime developments but deliberated upon them. More especially, despite the sincere petitions for reconstruction, the realisation of the majority of Unionists that the war was transient permitted them to formulate responses pertinent to the war. The necessity of increased production of food, munitions, shipping and the demands put upon the railways and the harbours encouraged the Unionists to acknowledge the possibility of state management of such industries. This was later evinced in the interwar legislation for the airways, the BBC and electricity. The appreciation, however, that the war had redefined the notion of citizenship and duty in relation to welfare was secondary to the traditional link between social and economic progress. Therefore, although the war did encourage the party to consider the social management of the nation and strengthen pro-welfare sentiments, the core of Conservatism remained economic, social and national efficiency as a precursor to social reform. Importantly they did not sidestep these issues or consider them irrelevant to the post-war climate, but adopted them in
part and sought to ensure that they were tempered. Indeed, this clarification of the party’s position did much to presage the adoption of a deflationary economic policy in the 1920s, and the electoral appeals that were based upon it.

It is evident, therefore, that the Unionist Party (unlike the Liberal Party) came to an appreciation of the European conflict as a ‘total war’ and was ready, subsequently, to surrender certain principles in its name. The obsession with ‘prosecution of the war’, conscription, the willingness to co-opt business and labour, and the eagerness towards radical solutions, all display this. But, ironically, it was by recognising that the ‘total war’ was only a temporary challenge that the party was able to retain its cohesion and coherence. It was an appreciation of this that determined their attitudes to wartime and post-war state intervention, and their (well-placed) confidence that the social upheaval would be specific to the period of demobilisation and reconstruction, and, accordingly the trust they placed in the democratic system. This ensured they were far more adaptable to the challenges of war than their Liberal counterparts, who were reluctant to adapt to its ‘total’ nature, a concept that some did not even recognise. Indirectly, it was this appreciation that allowed the Unionist Party to re-train its heavy guns upon the socialist threat, which they rightly conceived to be their long-term rival for power.

This thesis does not suggest that the war saved the party, nor that it destroyed one party and allowed another to prosper. Rather, it concludes that the war’s timing was crucial for the party: it served to offer in the war an (admittedly transitory) alternative objective to the cause of the Irish Union and establish a new basis within which Ireland and the Empire could be perceived. Indirectly, the war also offered a means by which to forge a response to the threat of Labour at a juncture critical in the latter’s evolution, based on patriotic and anti-socialist rhetoric, an approach that was sponsored by the wartime state and supported by the vast majority of the press. More generally, this response and the ideological developments in the period in regard to state intervention, taxation and the
economy, acted so as to facilitate the nature of Conservative appeals in the 1920s and contributed to their success. Accordingly the party did much to shape its electoral future and was more than merely a jovial onlooker at the drawn-out deathbed of the Liberal Party. Despite the decline of the role of patriotism after 1918, it had served to preserve and even enhance party unity. And party unity had rarely possessed such rewards: permitting the party to exploit the benefits of wartime government and allowing it a role in the state when the state was able to shape economic, social and political life; ensuring comparative unity as the party approached the post-war era of political realignment; at least survival from the war – which was more than could be said for the Liberal Party or the 'Progressive Alliance'. Having fought so long and hard to make the world safe for democracy, by the end of the war the party was also closer, certainly in its own mind, to its second objective of making democracy safe for the world.
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Abingdon; Accrington; Ashford; Banbury; Barkston Ash; Birmingham’s Handsworth, West; Bolton; Bosworth; Bradford’s Central, North, South, East, West; Breconshire; Bristol West; Cirencester; Derbyshire West; East Grinstead; Flintshire; Hampstead; Harborough; Hastings; Hertford Ware; Kensington South; Kincardine; Knutsford;
Lancashire Waterloo; Lancaster; Lewisham; Lincoln; Middlesborough; Monmouth; Newark; Newbury; Nottingham; Nottingham Rushcliffe; Oswestry; Penryn and Falmouth; Rotherham; Rye; St Albans; Skipton; Stockton; Tewkesbury; Truro and Helston; Wakefield; Westhoughton; Wolverhampton West; York.

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