ABSTRACT

The history of the Labour movement in the Clyde valley between the outbreak of the First World War and the General Election of 1922 has always attracted great interest. On at least three occasions - the "dilution crisis" of 1915-16, the Forty Hours' Strike of 1919, and the 1922 election itself - the Clyde appeared to be distinguished by the militancy of its socialism, and the tradition of "Red Clydeside" was born, to be maintained after the election by the "Clyde group" of I.L.P. left-wingers in Parliament. These events attracted a good deal of attention at the time, and have continued to do so ever since. There has, however, been surprisingly little academic writing on the subject. The work of contemporary economists or social scientists, such as Professors W.R. Scott and A.W. Kirkaldy, or G.D.H. Cole, has provided us with valuable eye-witness accounts which are somewhat more detached than those given by the main participants in events; but between their generation and the present there is an unexpected lack of serious work on "Red Clydeside". The first modern study to look at it as a whole[1] makes an interesting attempt to view the parliamentary careers of the "Clydesiders" after 1922 in the light of their earlier careers, but it is marred by a distressingly large number of factual inaccuracies. Other recent research of a more rigorous kind has opened up small areas of the subject, but no comprehensive treatment has yet been attempted. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the years 1914 to 1922 in depth, from a standpoint independent of that of any of the participants.

The thesis is divided into two parts, the first dealing with wartime unrest, and the second with the fortunes of the local Labour movement between the 1918 and 1922 general elections. The first unofficial wartime strike among Clydeside engineers was in February 1915; the background to this is analysed in terms of the paradoxical combination of socialist militancy and

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1. R.K. Middlemas, "The Clydesiders: a left-wing struggle for Parliamentary power", London 1965.

craft conservatism in the engineers' union. Conditions peculiar to engineering produced this combination, and wartime munitions production concentrated its effects most notably in a small number of engineering plants.

The February 1915 strike was followed by the protests against rent increases which occupied the latter half of 1915. The influence of labour bodies, official and unofficial, in bringing about a governmental expedient (the 1915 Rent Act) which became, by default, the basis of later policy, is assessed. The end of the rent strike coincided with the first peak of agitation against the Ministry of Munitions and wartime munitions legislation. The origins of this Ministry, and the conflicts it set up in Whitehall, are examined, as are the amendment of "leaving certificates" legislation after shipyard strikes between July and November 1915, and the beginnings of the struggle over "dilution" - the efforts by the Ministry to introduce unskilled men and women into parts of munitions production which were traditionally the preserve of craftsmen. One highlight in the process was the visit of Lloyd George to Glasgow at Christmas and the suppression of the socialist Forward for the damage it was doing to dilution - including a full report of Lloyd George's hostile reception. Another was the appointment, in January 1916, of Commissioners to effect dilution. Their efforts, which were successful, were directed primarily against craft conservatism and only secondarily against the militant socialists of the Clyde Workers' Committee, although the latter have always attracted much more attention. After March 1916 there was no more unofficial unrest on the Clyde for the rest of the war, in spite of an increase in both industrial militancy elsewhere and political radicalism locally. This accords with the contention that revolutionary socialism was inseparable from craft conservatism. Clydeside in wartime was not ripe for revolution, because the issues which drove the craftsmen to unofficial militancy actually increased the historic divisions and hostility between then and the unskilled.

The last upsurge of unrest occurred immediately after the end of the war; fear of loss of jobs united official and unofficial labour organisations in demanding a shorter working week to spread the available work. But the lack of national support severely weakened the Forty Hours' Strike, whose entire failure was only masked by the over-reaction against it of the Government and by the misconduct of the police in handling the "Bloody Friday" demonstration. This strike marked the end of the industrial influence of the revolutionary socialists; their political influence vanished into sectarianism, or into unsuccessful organisational efforts on behalf of the new Communist Party The influence of John Maclean over the working class also vanished, partly because of the growth of his paranoia. Some explanation other than the postulate of a continuous revolutionary tradition has therefore to be sought for the deviance to Labour of Glasgow and the West of Scotland in the 1922 General Election, when Labour won ten out of the fifteen seats in Glasgow. Two basic explanations may be suggested - housing and the Irish. When the local Labour movement arose from the depression of 1919, it was in the form of a crusading opposition to rent increases, which culminated in a striking House of Lords judgment in favour of a tenant on the very eve of the 1922 election. And the years 1918-1922 covered a realignment in local affairs, when those in charge of Irish ward politics transferred their allegiance to Labour in national and local politics. Statistical analysis of local election results can be used to buttress literary sources in trying to demonstrate this point.

A conclusion to the thesis tries, inter alia, to assess the legacy, industrial, political, and social, of "Red Clydeside" between 1914 and 1922. It finds that the principal points are the polarisation on class lines of local politics and the influence of "Red Clydeside", through the rent agitations of these years, on the structure of the Scottish housing market in both public and private sectors.

Efforts to use the widest possible variety of sources are nowhere more important than in labour history, where one-sidedness is a perennial danger. In a complicated conflict such as that over dilution, which involved the Ministry of Munitions, other ministries, the officials of the engineers' union, and their rebellious Clydeside members, only the last (and to a certain extent the first) published accounts of their actions and intentions. It is therefore essential to have recourse to unpublished sources in order to redress the balance. Minutes of labour organisations are of importance here, and cover the whole period from 1914 to 1922. But bodies like the Clyde Workers' Committee, which were unofficial and anti-bureaucratic, have of their very nature left few records of this kind. What has survived is of great interest, but is inevitably somewhat haphazard. Many gaps must be filled from close study of contemporary newspapers. Forward, the principal socialist journal of the West of Scotland, is of the first importance, and every weekly issue from August 1914 to December 1922 has been consulted. Other socialist journals, several of them the products of small left-wing groups, provide insights into conflicts within the labour movement. As a journal of record, the Glasgow Herald (which is indexed) has been used. I am confident that its political views do not diminish the accuracy of its news reporting, a comment which cannot be made of other contemporaries, such as the Daily Record and the Evening Times, whose evidence must be treated with more care.

At various times between February 1915 and January 1919 labour unrest on the Clyde was a cause of great concern to authority, and public archives are rich in relevant material. Cabinet minutes and supporting papers are the most important of the documents to have been released under the "30 years rule" at the Public Record Office. Both are scanty for the period up to December 1916, but very full thereafter; and by January 1919 the practice of giving very full reports of Cabinet discussions, with attribution of points of view, had still not been abandbned in favour of a mere list of Cabinet conclusions. With regard to departmental records, those of the Scottish

Office provide some new material; but they are rather thin, partly because of defective filing practices and partly because the Scottish authorities appear to take a more comprehensive view than those in London of what ought to be kept from researchers for a period longer than thirty years. The records of the Ministry of Munitions are a goldmine. They include the enormous unpublished History of the Ministry of Munitions and the surviving departmental archives which were collected in preparation for it. These are supplemented by the unique collection of policy documents which were assembled and kept by Sir William Beveridge during his time at the Ministry, and by the political correspondence of Lloyd George, the Minister. None of the other surviving ministerial archives, unfortunately, has yielded anything of importance, and the papers of Christopher Addison, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Ministry,are not available to researchers.

The records of other departments have been consulted on more technical matters such as rent control and educational legislation.

The nature of the sources used changes, perforce, after January 1919. Clyde labour was no longer a matter of concern to the Government, and the supply of information from public archives dries up. A very great proportion of the material for the last three chapters of the thesis is therefore drawn from the contemporary press - the newspapers and socialist periodicals being supplemented by reference to the Catholic press, which was generous in political advice to the Glasgow Irish. The only Clydeside labour leader to have left substantial archive material was John Maclean, and this has been drawn upon in assessing his career.

Most writing about "Red Clydeside" has come from writers overtly sympathetic to revolutionary ideals - whether the Clydesiders themselves or later academic admirers. It is hoped that a wider use of outside sources will help to provide a more detached view.

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"The Labour Movement in Clydeside Politics, 1914 - 1922"

Thesis submitted for the degree of D.Phil in the University of Oxford, November 1971.

I.S. McLean.

[... 1971]

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND CITATIONS

Addison	C. Addison, Four and a Half Years, 2 vols., London 1934.
A.E.U.	Amalgamated Engineering Union.
A.O.H.	Ancient Order of Hibernians.
A.S.E.	Amalgamated Society of Engineers.
A.S.E: M.R.	Amalgamated Engineers' Record and Monthly Journal (later Monthly Journal and Report)
B.C.M.	Beveridge Collection on Munitions, British Library of Political and Economic Science.
B.S.P.	British Socialist Party.
C.M.L.S.C.	Central Munitions Labour Supply Committee.
C.O.	Conscientious objector.
C.P.G.B.	Communist Party of Great Britain.
C.W.C.	Clyde Workers' Committee.
D.O.R.A.	Defence of the Realm Act(s).
E.T.U.	Electrical Trades Union.
Gallacher	W. Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, London 1936.
H of C Hansard, 5s.	Parliamentary Debates (Official Report) Fifth Series: House of Commons.
H.M.M.	History of the Ministry of Munitions, London, n.d. 12 vols. in parts; references to volume, then part, then page, as "H.M.M. IV, i, 1".
I.W.C.	Imperial War Cabinet.
I.W.G.B.	Industrial Workers of Great Britain.
Kirkwood	D. Kirkwood, My Life of Revolt, London 1935.
Kirkwood Report	Report by a Labour Party committee on the Kirkwood case, 1918. (For full title see Bibliography).
L.P. Conference Report	Report of the ... Annual Conference of the Labour Party
M.E.A.	Municipal Employees' Association.
Middlemas	R.K. Middlemas, The Clydesiders: a left wing struggle for parliamentary power, London, 1965.

Murphy	J.T. Murphy, New Horizons, London 1941.
N.F.D.S.S.	National Federation of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers.
P.C.	Parliamentary Committee.
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
Sc.R.O.	Scottish Record Office.
S.E.D.	Scotch Education Department.
S.L.P.	Socialist Labour Party.
T.C.M.	Minutes of the Glasgow Trades Council, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.
U.D.C.	Union of Democratic Control.
U.I.L.	United Irish League.
W.M.V.	War Munitions Volunteers.

Introduction

The study of "Red Clydeside" between the outbreak of the First World War and the 1922 General Election has been bedevilled by a myth and an unargued assumption. The myth is that industrial unrest during the war can be attributed to the revolutionary socialist views of the Clydeside workers; the assumption is that the wartime agitation was the cause of, or at least closely connected with, the triumph of Labour in 1922, when the party won ten out of the fifteen seats in Glasgow. These views will be examined in the two parts of this thesis.

Part I, "Clydeside in Wartime", deals mostly with industrial unrest, and it involves a critical examination of the explanations given by contemporary observers. When the leading militants came to write their memoirs, they not surprisingly stressed both the revolutionary nature of wartime agitation and the importance of their own role. William Gallacher has always been the most influential of these writers, and he made comments such as the following (on a strike early in 1915) :

> "Any hope the war-makers might have had of spreading the war fever throughout the Clyde was not gone for ever. The workers knew their enemies, and that they were not across the North Sea. Revolutionary agitators ... were increasing in number day by day, and were warmly cheered at mass meetings wherever they went." [1]

Modern writers have often accepted this assessment, at least in part :

> "the unrest... in 1915-16 had made some wonder whether the Western Front was not being fought in George Square".[2]

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[1] W. Gallacher, "Revolt on the Clyde", London, 1936, p.50. Hereafter cited as Gallacher.

[2] R.K. Middlemas, "The Clydesiders", London, 1965, p.83. Hereafter cited as Middlemas.

> "The shop stewards were often revolutionary socialists, particularly on Clydeside; some of them were opposed to the war. Essentially they represented a working-class interest wider than trade union conservatism".[1]

Wartime militancy in the West of Scotland labour movement has now become symbolised by the celebrated meeting in the St. Andrews Hall, Glasgow, on Christmas Day 1915, at which Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson were shouted down. But the fame of that meeting, and the events which followed it, should not lead us too easily into the assumption that Scotland was ripe for revolution throughout the First World War. Our perspective should be restricted for two reasons; first, it is not clear whether the revolutionary agitation was generally inspired by political motives, or whether it could have flourished without the industrial grievance that sparked it off; secondly, it is a mistake to suppose that agitation was general throughout Scotland, or throughout the Scottish working-class, or the West of Scotland working-class, or even the West of Scotland skilled working-class. The heart of the militancy was in a small section of the workers in one industry, to whose industrial grievance their leaders added a political gloss. The history of "Red Clydeside" in the First World War is the history of the strife in the ranks of the skilled engineers produced when the strains of wartime change were added to those caused by the already obsolete pattern of labour relations in the industry. In Chapters 1 to 9 the evidence for this point of view will be marshalled.

Under the general heading "From George Square to St. Enoch Square", the second part of the thesis examines the connection between wartime militancy, whose last fling culminated in "Bloody Friday" in George Square in 1919, and the 1922 election, when the victorious Clydesiders were seen off from St. Enoch Station by a crowd of at least 50,000

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[1] A.J.P. Taylor, "English History 1914-45", Oxford, 1965, p.39.

cheering supporters: "The singing of The Red Flag was general".[1] If there is a strong connection between wartime and post-1922 radicalism, then the 1918 election result has to be explained away: in 1918 Clydeside was not deviantly pro-Labour, but in 1922 it was. Some possible explanations for this will be traced in Chapters 13 and 14.

I do not claim that the interpretations to be offered are entirely novel. That wartime militancy was inseparably linked with craft conservatism was clear to the most percipient of the unofficial leaders, J.T. Murphy in Sheffield, and the point has been taken up by others writing more recently. Again, the notion that the 1922 election success was partly due to the Irish has been touched upon, though not developed, by modern commentators.[2] But the use of new sources, particularly the public records, has enabled the case to be made with much fuller documentation than before.

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 20 November 1922, p.12.

[2] E.g. J.G.Kellas, "Modern Scotland: The Nation Since 1870" (London, 1968), p.197; H.M. Pelling, "Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain" (London, 1968), p.119.

Chapter 1

The Industrial Environment

As pointed out in the Introduction, the industrial militancy of wartime "Red Clydeside", which centred round the Clyde Workers' Committee,originated among a small section of the industrial workers - namely those of the engineering craftsmen who were employed in the munitions industry. During the first two years of the war, these men found themselves under increasing pressure to admit unskilled men to jobs which were the prerogative of duly time-served craftsmen. In their resistance to this "dilution" they were covertly, and at times openly, supported by the executive of their union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

For twenty years before the outbreak of war, "militancy" in the A.S.E. had been a rather ambiguous mixture of conservatism and aggressive political radicalism. Speaking of the 1890's, the historians of British trade unionism point precisely to the paradox which it will be our task to examine for later decades:

> "Among the Engineers... the socialists had increased their influence by putting themselves in the forefront of an aggressive industrial movement to resist technical and organizational change. Thus socialists intent on pursuing the class war to end all privilege allied themselves with members anxious to preserve their ancient privileges against the inroads of machines, piecework and unskilled workers."[1]

This ambiguously revolutionary impulse produced a change in the Executive of the society at the quadrennial elections in 1896, when

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[1] H.A.Clegg, A.Fox and A.F.Thompson, "A History of British Trade Unions since 1889", Vol.1, Oxford, 1964, p.297.

the old apolitical leadership was succeeded by the socialist George Barnes, who stood for, inter alia, "increased militancy in trade policy".[1]

The change was regarded with extreme distaste by the liberal economist F.W.Hirst, for whom socialist agitation and craft conservatism appeared to be virtually the same thing. He wrote:

> "The masters have fought... against interference in regard to machinery and the claim of Trade Unionist officials to "boss" their workshops... The further development of a system of this sort would of course be ruinous, and one cannot wonder that the masters were alarmed at what seemed to be only the beginning of a new policy.
>
> These recent developments are due to the success of the Independent Labour Party in this particular society..."[2]

Later in the same article he described the economic "fallacies" which so pained him.

> "'Lower the productive capacity of labour in order to absorb the unemployed!' is the socialist idea... Mr. Barnes for example... is a declared socialist, and has given himself up not only to abstract aspirations for a future millennium, but also to the advocacy of the policy involved in the special economic fallacy which we have been discussing... ... there is no doubt that there has been a marked change for the worse in the spirit and conduct of the engineers since the election of Mr.Barnes as secretary."[3]

The employers were becoming more militant and better organised. During the 1890's, the Employers' Federation of Engineering Associations had been brought into being. One of its objects was:

> "to protect and defend /its/ interests against combinations of workmen seeking by strikes or other action to impose unduly restrictive conditions upon any branch of the engineering trades."[4]

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[1] Quoted by J.B. Jefferys, "The Story of the Engineers 1800-1945", London 1945 p.141.

[2] F.W. Hirst, "The Policy of the Engineers", Economic Journal, Vol.8, No.29, March 1898, p.124.

[3] ibid, pp.125-127.

[4] Quoted in Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op.cit., p.161.

For many employers, new unionism, socialist militancy and craftsmen's restrictionism were all the same (disagreeable) thing. As a large Tyneside employer said:

> "the degrading doctrines of the new unionism have so poisoned the A.S.E. as to make them as a class fully 20 per cent less valuable than they ought to be."[1]

Not surprisingly, confrontation followed, in the form of the great lock-out of 1897-8, which ended in total defeat for the Union, and which, of course, did nothing to relieve the tensions we have already spoken of. One result was conflict between the Executive and the membership, as the Executive was forced to modify its original militancy on the "machine question". (This eventually led to a dramatic fight between the two factions in 1912, when the new militants, later confirmed in office, actually besieged and forced an entry into the union's headquarters in Peckham.[2] The irony of the situation is, of course, that within three years, these ex-militants were facing exactly the same hostility from their members as they had offered to their predecessors).

After the lock-out conflict over resistance to technical change became, if anything, sharper than before. Technical change was making A.S.E. members' position much less secure by comparison with that of the unskilled and semi-skilled men in the industry. Partly as a result of the Great Depression of the 1880's and in an attempt to emulate foreign competitors, manufacturers were turning away from the production of one-off jobs depending on the skill of engineers' precision work, toward something more like mass-production methods where much more sophisticated machine tools could enable a job to be done by men with less well-trained precision skills. Allied with this was a growing

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[1] Quoted in Jefferys, op.cit., p.145.

[2] Jefferys, op.cit., p.171.

interest in the new science of work study and increased emphasis on planning of process and line production.

> "The most desultory reader of our technical journal cannot fail to be struck with the great and increasing interest which has, of late years, been taken in the internal economy of our engineering workshops" [1]

So commented the journal of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, which also spoke more specifically of the impact of the new machine tools:

> "The main object of these modern methods... was that of reducing as far as possible the number of highly skilled workmen, that is fitters" [2]

And in 1910 the president of the Institute spoke thus of them:

> "Those engineers who saw... a lathe running at a high speed with a tool with its point red hot removing a dark blue chip felt that they were witnessing the beginning of a revolution of tool steel and in machines fitted for its use... This revolution has now taken place."[3]

The machines mostly responsible for this revolution were the capstan or turret lathe, the universal milling machine, and the grinding machine,[4] all of which tended to devalue the skills of the fitter and turner, the characteristic members of the A.S.E.

As Clegg, Fox and Thompson comment on the craftsmen's reaction:

> "Their privileges might be destroyed by direct onslaught or by the introduction of new methods which relied on unskilled labour, but they could also be undermined by changes of technique which called for new or different skills. Without privileges to defend there would be no craft unions, and if privileges were to be preserved they must be defended against all comers, whether employers, unskilled workers, or other crafts." 5

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[1] Proceedings of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, September 1901, quoted in Jefferys, op.cit, p.124.

[2] Proc.Inst.Mech.Eng., January 1902, quoted by Jefferys, p.123.

[3] Proc.Inst.Mech.Eng., July 1910, quoted by Jefferys, p.123.

[4] Jefferys, Introduction to Part Three, passim; cf. also J.Hinton, "Rank and File Militancy in the British Engineering Industry 1914-18", London, Ph.D. Thesis 1969, ch.2, pp.32-40.

In accordance with this, the grass-roots reaction in the A.S.E. was militant. In 1901, for instance, the North-West Organising District Delegate reported,

> "There have been questions to be dealt with which may have far-reaching influence, the most important of which has been the introduction of unskilled labour on lathes and machines, which seems to be of far too frequent occurrence."[1]

In 1906 the Executive suspended the whole Manchester District Council for supporting an unofficial strike against the introduction of "handymen" to man a new lathe. A very full report of the District Committee's case, and the E.C.'s reply, complete with a photograph of the offending machine, was produced. Inter alia, the District claimed:

> "The time has arrived when the engineering industry shall cease to be the happy hunting grounds of the handyman"

and the E.C. retorted,

> "Council do not accept the soft impeachment (sic) that they have adopted a peace-at-any-price policy, and strongly resent same, which the progress made during the past few years fully disproves".[2]

In engineering most unskilled and semi-skilled workers who became unionised joined the Workers' Union, a "New Union" founded in 1893; in Glasgow another general union catering for these unskilled men was the National Amalgamated Union of Labour.[3] The rank and file of the A.S.E. actively resented the unskilled men and their unions. During the Black Country strike of 1913, the local A.S.E. delegate reported:

> "The workers' union[3a] is not so much directing the strikes as following them, and is making members by the thousand. Men who have resisted all inducements to join the skilled unions for which they are eligible are paying their shilling entrance fee and consider themselves Trade Unionists as soon as they can get a button in their coats"

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[1] Amalgamated Society of Engineers Monthly Record, January 1901, p.52 (From 1913 A.S.E. 'Monthly Record' was enlarged and retitled 'Monthly Journal and Report'. Hereafter cited as: "A.S.E: M.R.").

[2] A.S.E: M.R. November 1906.

[3] See Hinton, op.cit. Ch.4.

[3a] Lower case letters in original. But the workers' union was, in fact, the Workers' Union.

and went on to criticise undercutting fitters, turners and smiths who:

> "having been thrown into a struggle they did not seek expect to be hailed as valiant warriors and to purchase their place among the elect for a shilling entrance fee and 3d a week contribution".[1]

Thus rank and file reaction to missionary attempts among the semi-skilled and unskilled was hostile. The 1901 Delegate Meeting (the four-yearly supreme legislative body of the union at that time) decided to open a Machinists' Section for men who had been in the trade for at least two years and received at least 75% of the standard district rate. But resolutions from branches opposing this flooded in to the Delegate Meeting while it was still sitting, and

> "the new rule... while not withdrawn was largely inoperative. Only 4,000 had been recruited into this section by 1904"[2]

In 1912, "Section F" of the A.S.E. was formed for unskilled labourers in the industry, but it met with similar opposition, and was abolished in 1917.[3]

During the First World War, all the stresses inherent in this position were vastly increased. The pressure of war conditions increased innovation, and greatly enlarged the amount of mass production of armaments. The greatest single fear of the engineers was that it would not be possible to restore the previous ascendancy of skilled workers after the war, and many were therefore deeply suspicious of the "Treasury Agreement" negotiated between the Government and the Executives of the A.S.E. and the other engineering unions in March 1915. In this agreement the unions promised to ban all strikes for the duration

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[1] A.S.E: M.R. June 1913, p.43. Quoted in part by R.Hyman, "The Workers' Union 1898-1929", Oxford D.Phil thesis 1968, ch.3.

[2] Jefferys p.166. Cf. also Clegg, Fox and Thompson, pp.342-3.

[3] Jefferys, loc.cit.

of the war, and added

> "the workmen's representatives at the Conference are of opinion that during the war period the relaxation of the present trade practices is imperative, and that each union be recommended to take into favourable consideration such changes in working conditions or trade customs as may be necessary with a view to accelerating the output of war munitions or equipments".[1]

But this concession was to be offered on the strict understanding that the government would legislate to restore pre-war practices at the end of the war. The suspicion which this treaty aroused among rank-and-file engineers is best shown by the recollection by the foremost unofficial leader in Sheffield of an exchange between him and F.S.Button, a member of the A.S.E. Executive:

> "Did he not think that the Executive Council and the Government were regarding us as very credulous beings when they asked us to believe that all the new machinery, all the new processes of production, and all the new labour which we have trained to work at cheaper rates than ourselves, would be discarded, and the shops reorganised on the 1914 pattern?
>
> He replied most adroitly that 'it was not good to try to look too far ahead and we had better let the future look after itself. The immediate fact was that we had the pledged and written signature of the Government that the pre-war conditions of the skilled workers should be restored, and to that pledge we must hold them".[2]

Furthermore, the insecurity felt by the skilled men was supplemented through the disparity between piece and time rates. Another Sheffield veteran recalled:

> "Men came in and were put on repetition jobs. They smashed the machinery. Nothing mattered, only their huge wage at the weekend. The skilled men had to keep the machinery going and all for the weekly daywork rate. We said we were entitled to something apart from the ordinary daywork rate".[3]

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[1] The Treasury Agreement. Published as pamphlet by the A.S.E., 1915. Cole Collection, Nuffield College Library, Oxford.

[2] J.T.Murphy, "New Horizons", London 1941, p.46. Hereafter cited as Murphy.

[3] From tape recording in Dr.Hinton's possession quoted in Hinton, op.cit., p.222. This point was appreciated by Christopher Addison, who became Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Munitions (see his "Politics from Within", 2 vols., London, 1924, I, 187 and 192); but the Ministry could never do anything about it.

This showed how wartime conditions had accentuated the role of the skilled man as the man who set up jobs for others to do - one aspect of the machine-tool revolution.

It follows, therefore, that much of the industrial unrest of the war-time period concerned what were almost the private - hostile observers might say selfish - interests of the skilled engineers in competition with other sections of the labour movement, including the unskilled in the same trade. To become a revolutionary movement, it had to have grafted on a separate political ideology which far transcended these conservative aims. The evidence for the existence of such an ideology needs to be carefully scrutinised.

A number of descriptions of the course of industrial unrest on the Clyde in the First World War have appeared in print. Those offered by prominent participants[1] suffer from the authors' natural desire to stress their own part, and in Gallacher's case to stress the revolutionary potential of the movement which gave him his revolutionary credentials for his future career. Furthermore, these accounts often contradict one another on points of chronology. Reference to the contemporary Press is not always as helpful as might be supposed, for reasons of wartime censorship, or the fear of reprisals. The principal journal of the West of Scotland socialists, the Forward, was very reluctant to comment on industrial affairs at all, justifying itself by reference to the Defence of the Realm restrictions introduced in December 1914:

> "Now the net has been drawn still tighter we must cut our cloth accordingly. The alternative to that is suspension of publication and confiscation and destruction of our printers' plant, plus penal servitude for life. The living dog is of more use to the working class than the dead lion. Verb.sap."[2]

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[1] Especially W. Gallacher "Revolt on the Clyde", London 1936; W. Gallacher "Last Memoirs" London 1966; D.Kirkwood, "My Life of Revolt", London 1935; T.Bell, "Pioneering Days", London 1941. Cited respectively as: Gallacher; Gallacher, Last Memoirs; Kirkwood and Bell, Pioneering Days.

[2] Forward, 12 December 1914, p.1.

When the first major strike of the war took place, the Forward proceeded very cautiously:

> "For reasons which seemed sufficient and wise to us, we took no part whatever in urging the engineers in the West of Scotland either to strike, or when once they had struck to persist in striking... We originally took up the position that however much we disagreed with, and would criticise, the policies and practices of our capitalist governors which eventuated in this war, we would not give any excuse for the suppression of such criticism by the publishing of anything that would affect the military defence of this country. The engineers' strike clearly came into such a category of forbidden subjects..."[1]

A recent commentator has contrasted the Forward's total silence with what he over-exuberantly calls the "Blazon(ing) all over the capitalist press of the strike".[2] In fact the comment on the strike by the two principal Glasgow dailies was very modest,[3] though certainly present. The canniness of the Forward did not eventually save it from suppression, but it increases the difficulty of unravelling the industrial history of the Clyde between 1914 and 1916.

When war broke out, discussions between the engineering employers and the A.S.E. were actually in progress on renegotiation of the district time rates. On 7th December 1914 the A.S.E., together with the Allied Trades Committee representing the other unions in engineering, presented a demand to the employers for 2d an hour on the basic rate for all engineers in the North-west of England and in Scotland.[4] In February 1915 the employers and the union executive jointly offered a war bonus of $\frac{3}{4}$d an hour and $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ on piece rates. This was widely regarded as unsatisfactory in view of the abrupt rise in food prices which had already

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[1] Forward, 6 March 1915, p.5.

[2] T.Brotherstone, "The Suppression of the 'Forward'"; Scottish Labour History Society Journal, No.1, April 1969, pp.5-23.

[3] As may be seen by studying the files of the "Glasgow Herald" and "Daily Record and Mail" between 17 February and 4 March 1915.

[4] "History of the Ministry of Munitions", (London, 12 vols., n.d.). Vol.IV, part ii, pp.36-37. Hereafter cited as H.M.M.

occurred; and there was another casus belli. William Weir, the most anti-union of the large engineering employers in the area[1] introduced to his Cathcart munitions works a number of American engineers at a bonus of 6/- per week. This brought to a head resentment over Weir's introduction of work study and American speeding-up techniques.[2]

Weir was the most aggressive of the Clydeside engineering employers, and was firmly convinced that craft unionism was a fatal restriction to progress. An A.S.E. member employed at Cathcart claimed in 1915 that in the previous 12 years the following catalogue of operations had been "taken from turners":

> "pump rods, roughing piston rods, rocking levers, shafts, columns, glands, neck rings, pump lever and washers, valve chest end and bottom doors, locks for piston valves, and some chest covers".3

"Taylorism" had been resisted by local representatives of the A.S.E. in most places where it had been introduced, one delegate calling it "one of the last stages of lunacy".[4] The Weir's men had eventually swallowed Taylorism, but were not prepared to swallow the American engineers, and about 2000 of them struck in mid-February 1915. Ultimately they were joined by engineers from about 20 plants to a total of between 8000 and 10,000[5] striking the original 2d an hour wage claim. While the strike was in progress the A.S.E. members in the district voted, on a ballot conducted by the Executive, by 8926 votes

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[1] See C.Addison, "Four and a Half Years", London 1934, I, 135. Cited as Addison.

[2] Bell, Pioneering Days, p.109.

[3] From written question signed "J.Hislop" submitted to Lloyd George before his meeting with shop stewards on Christmas Day 1915 (see Chapter 5). From file marked "Questions and Answers for Meeting of A.S.E. [sic] concerning Munitions of War Act". Beveridge Collections on Munitions, British Library of Political and Economic Science, Vol.III, no.9, folio 59. Hereafter cited as B.C.M.

[4] A.S.E: M.R. January 1913, p.59.

[5] H.M.M., IV, ii, 38; Daily Record 19 February 1915, p.3.

out of 9755 to reject the ¾d an hour offer.[1] The A.S.E. both locally and nationally, refused to recognise the strike:

> "the Glasgow District Committee of the A.S.E. have expressed their entire disapproval of the course which their members have taken" [2]

and it paid no strike benefit. Nevertheless, the position was very confused, and Gallacher later claimed that the strike was official because he, an official of his union took part.[3] This sort of uncertainty was inherent in the nature of unionism in the industry at this time. Three sorts of unions were involved: first, the A.S.E., a large national organisation; secondly, a number of specialist national organisations such as the Steam Engine Makers' Society; and thirdly, some small local craft unions, such as Gallacher's West of Scotland Brassfinishers and the United Ironmoulders of Scotland. In all of these, there was tension between a militant membership and the demand from above for co-operation in the war effort, but it was resolved in different ways. The A.S.E., for which the Clyde had previously been a troublesome district whose District Committee had had to be suspended,[4] possessed at this time a very co-operative group of local officials. These naturally provoked the fury of the militants,[5] and eventually the compromising Sam Bunton was replaced by the militant Harry Hopkins as full-time District Secretary.[6] This lessened the tension between local officials and members at the cost of reopening it between local officials and Executive, and the District Committee was again suspended in 1919.[7]

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[1]Glasgow Herald, 26 February 1915, p.11.

[2]Glasgow Herald, 18 February 1915, p.15.

[3]Gallacher, p.42.

[4]See Clegg, Fox and Thompson op.cit., pp.342-3.

[5]Gallacher, pp.37 and 81-3.

[6]A.S.E: M.M. December 1917, p.4 and January 1918, p.4.

[7]See below, Chapter 10.

In the small Scottish unions, however, it was easier for militants to attain positions of real responsibility. Thus Tom Bell became President of the Scottish Iron Moulders' Union.[1] The constraint on these unions, however, was financial. They were much less well able than the A.S.E. to weather a local strike, because a higher proportion of their membership would be demanding strike pay. They had not the resilience of large unions in adversity, and most of them were swallowed up in the enlargement of the A.S.E. in 1920. It is very doubtful whether they actually had the resources to pay strike benefits to their members in the February 1915 strike.

From the beginning of March the men started to drift back to work, perhaps "inflamed by the strength of public opinion against them".[2] For the first of many times during the war, the Clydeside engineers were to find that it was very easy for opponents to damn them as unpatriotic. On this occasion Lloyd George, speaking from Bangor, himself led a two-pronged attack:

> "I say here that it is intolerable that the lives of Britons should be imperilled for a matter of ¼d an hour... Drink is doing us more damage in this war than all the German submarines put together".[3]

The allegation that production was being lost because of excessive drunkenness caused a great deal of resentment among the engineers and especially their (almost all teetotal) leaders; by the middle of 1915 it had been quietly dropped.[4]

On a later ballot, on 17th March, the men agreed by 5616 votes to 1522 to abide by the verdict given by Sir George Askwith, who had been

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[1] Bell, Pioneering Days, p.162.

[2] H.M.M. IV, ii, 40.

[3] Daily Record, 1 March 1915, p.4.

[4] H.M.M. IV, ii, 43.

appointed arbitrator. They accepted an advance of 1d an hour on time rates and 10% on piece rates, "the advances to be... recognised as due to and dependent on the existence of abnormal conditions then prevailing in consequence of the War".[1] At the same time, engineers and shipyard workers not engaged in the production of munitions were given a similar increase.

The leaders of the February 1915 strike had joined together as the Central Labour Withholding Committee - not calling themselves the strike committee for fear of prosecution under the Defence of the Realm regulations - and after the strike they decided to meet on a permanent basis to protect living standards and seek advances in wages and conditions.[2] The need for such a committee was dictated by the common interests of men working in the same industry but belonging to different craft unions and working in different plants. For all, however, the aim was the safeguarding of the position of craftsmen in engineering against the threats to it inherent in the vast new munitions industry. The scope of this militancy, it cannot be overstressed, was very limited. It concerned only munitions workers, and primarily those working in a very small number of plants with individual militants prominent in them. The shipyards were on the fringe of wartime "Red Clydeside", and one of the world's greatest concentrations of railway engineering plants, at Springburn and Govanhill, was not involved at all.

Figures have been compiled of A.S.E. membership in Glasgow which show that, although the militant-dominated plants showed an above-average rate of growth of union membership, nevertheless even after the wartime expansion they formed a smallish proportion of total membership:

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[1] H.M.L., IV, ii, 41.

[2] Gallacher, p.51.

Area	A.S.E.membership June 1919	% of total A.S.E. membership in Glasgow	% of 1914 figure.
1. East End	2069	10.4	358
2. Scotstoun	863	4.3	266
3. Springburn	2368	11.9	197
4. Dalmuir	497	2.5	176
5. Cathcart	564	2.8	159
6. Central	7072	35.5	153
7. Clydebank & Renfrew	2521	12.6	146
8. Govanhill	2526	12.8	132
9. Miscellaneous	1451	7.3	128
Total	19931	100.2	163

Source: Appendix to J.S.Hinton, "Rank and File Militancy in the British Engineering Industry, 1914-1918", London Ph.D. thesis, 1969. Compiled from A.S.E. Monthly Journal June 1914 and June 1919. Slightly adapted.

Only the areas underlined in the above table contained plants that were dominated in 1915 and 1916 by the militants, and of these four, Scotstoun contained a number of "non-militant" plants as well. Many large plants had not the vestiges of a militant organisation. Later, in 1917, the A.S.E. sent a circular to 31 large plants in the Glasgow area to find out what forms of shop-floor organisation existed. Of the 31, 17, including such giants as the Barclay Curle and Lobnitz shipyards, had not so much as a Shop Committee - and this was after the 1916 Dilution Commissioners had given official encouragement to the formation of a shop committee to supervise dilution in every works.[1] Of course, one cannot extrapolate with confidence from A.S.E. membership to membership of the craft unions as a whole, but there is no reason to suppose that the balance of their membership would have been fundamentally different from that of the A.S.E. When we speak of "Red Clydeside" in the war, we should be clear that we are speaking of Weir's of Cathcart and James Messer and Arthur McManus; the Albion Motor Works, Scotstoun, and

[1] See below, Chapters 7 and 8. The information in this paragraph is derived from a summary of the returns from the A.S.E. questionnaire made by Herbert Highton. Highton Collection. Glasgow University

William Gallacher; Barr and Strouds, instrument makers, of Anniesland, and John Muir; the works of Messrs. Beardmore at Parkhead and Dalmuir and Thomas Clark and David Kirkwood. This group of factories and men formed the core of the Clyde Workers' Committee, into which the Labour Withholding Committee transformed itself. And within this group the largest single works - Beardmore's Parkhead Forge, in the East End district - stood somewhat apart during the whole period of the C.W.C. agitation. Here the leading A.S.E. shop steward was David Kirkwood, a highly skilled instrument maker - "not just a craftsman, an engineer"[1] who had in the past acted as chief engineer in a small steelworks. He had left that job after an argument with his employer because he wanted a trade union closed shop. After many years of what he regarded as exile,[2] he returned in 1910 to Parkhead Forge, from which he had been excluded in 1898 after the engineering lock-out. His return coincided with the great growth of the forge, which was in 1910 just setting up the machinery for the production of munitions; and it is possible the expertise of Kirkwood, an engineer trained in both steam and electrical engineering[3] overrode Sir William Beardmore's ideological objections to him in a plant which adapted to technical change with great difficulty. (For a later period, this last point may be interestingly confirmed by a visit to Parkhead Forge today; an industrial dinosaur on the verge of extinction).

This may at any rate have contributed to the extraordinary relationship between Beardmore and Kirkwood[4] in which paternalism and militancy co-existed, short-circuiting both middle management and the

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[1]According to his son, the late (2nd) Lord Kirkwood.

[2]Kirkwood, pp.68, 78-80.

[3]Lord Kirkwood.

[4]Kirkwood, pp.92-100.

trade-union apparatus. In 1915 this arrangement was at the height of its success, and Kirkwood had got for the Parkhead engineers an increase of ½d an hour over the district rate, as well as improvements in conditions for the semi-skilled and unskilled men - and all this independently of the February strike and the Central Labour Withholding Committee. The rift between Parkhead and the rest, and the fall of Kirkwood, which are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, can only be fully understood in the light of these facts.

The February strike gave the Clyde its popular image as a centre of militant discontent. This image appeared to be thoroughly confirmed by the unrest which began again in June 1915 and lasted until March 1916. This unrest is the subject of Chapters 2 to 7.

Chapter 2

The Rent Strikes

This chapter, and the following five, are devoted to the unrest on the Clyde between June 1915 and March 1916. In this chapter we shall discuss housing, and in Chapters 3 to 7 industrial unrest centring on the dilution crisis. Dilution bulked much larger to contemporaries than did the rent strikes, and indeed it caused a great deal more upheaval. In the Conclusion to this thesis, however, it will be argued that, ultimately, the rent strikes had the more enduring effect, because of the way in which the Rent Restriction Act of 1915 and its successors affected the housing market. Further consideration of long-term housing questions will be delayed until the fuller discussion in Chapter 13 and the Conclusion.

Before beginning the discussion of housing, however, we might note an important point which has relevance for both housing and industrial unrest. In both, the Clyde valley was the storm centre of Britain during 1915 and 1916. But the Ministry which was nominally responsible for handling them played an extraordinarily limited part in the whole story. Throughout the war, the role of the Secretary for Scotland and the Scottish Office was extremely circumscribed. The Secretaryship for Scotland did not become a Secretaryship of State until 1926,[1] and during the war the Secretaries for Scotland (successively T.McKinnon Wood, H.J. Tennant and Robert Munro) were unimportant figures who had little to say for themselves, except when asked. This is strikingly borne out by a study of the memoranda to the Cabinet which have survived. From

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[1] See Sir David Milne, "The Scottish Office", (London 1957), pp.15-21.

the beginning of 1915 until he changed offices in July 1916, McKinnon Wood circulated only one solitary note to the Cabinet. (This was, admittedly, a document of some importance, which we shall consider at length in this chapter). His successor, Tennant, circulated, up to the Cabinet crisis at the end of 1916, no papers at all which have survived. And as for the minister, so for his department. In the same period, the Scottish Office sent only two memoranda to the Cabinet, both on routine matters.[1] The surviving records of the Scottish Office which deal with the First World War are quite remarkably thin and uninformative. This is partly due to defective filing practices, but more to the fact that when any important decisions were taken, the Scottish Office was simply bypassed. Thus no records whatsoever appear to have survived in the housing files of what is now the Scottish Development Department on the imposition of rent control.[2] An amusing illustration of the insignificance of the Scottish Office is provided in the draft of an important Commons statement on the Clyde strikes of 1916 which survives in Lloyd George's papers. At two points, references to the Scottish Office have been inserted, and then deleted again:

> "After consulting with my Right Hon.Friend who is leading the House, ~~and the Secretary for Scotland~~..." (sic)
>
> "My Right Hon.Friend, ~~after conferring with the Secretary for Scotland~~, (sic) requested the military authorities to remove... six of the ring-leaders" [3]

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[1] This information is derived from the Public Record Office's "List of Cabinet Papers, 1915 and 1916" (HMSO, 1966). Other papers may be uncovered by current investigations into political records in private hands, but inquiries with the heirs of both McKinnon Wood and Tennant have produced nothing.

[2] In connection with this paragraph, I must record my warm thanks to Mr.J.K.Bates of the Scottish Record Office staff in Edinburgh, for the many services he has performed on my behalf.

[3] Lloyd George Papers, Beaverbrook Library, London, D/11/3/9. For the incident itself, see below, Chapter 7. It should, of course, be pointed out that one reason for omitting the name of the Secretary for Scotland from these statements might be to avoid giving a gratuitous opening for parliamentary questioning through questions addressed to

Having set the scene by describing the impotence of the Scottish Office, we should now take up the description of the rents crisis of 1915. At the beginning of the war a sizeable number of houses (i.e. flats in tenement blocks) had been lying empty in the Glasgow and West of Scotland industrial area, but the war led to a great influx of men and women to work in the munitions factories, and there was soon a severe housing shortage. By Whitsun 1915, under 1% of the houses in the working-class areas of Glasgow were unlet, and in some areas the figure was only one-fifth of 1%, which included a number of uninhabitable houses.[1] And partly because of the already well-established tradition in the Scottish cities of crowded tenement living at low rents, housing in Glasgow, even quite new housing, was acquiring the reputation it has never since deserved to lose - that of being the worst in Britain. This was acknowledged at the time in official and semi-official sources. It is mentioned, for instance, in the History of the Ministry of Munitions in its explanation for the failure of the War Munition Volunteers scheme designed to put off confrontation over dilution:[2]

> "The main cause of discontent was the discomfort entailed in the transfer of men to places where the housing, food, and climate were worse than they had grown used to at home. Those suffered most who went from the South of England or the Midlands to the North-East Coast or the Clyde. The inclemency of the weather, the overcrowding, and the indifferent cooking in such lodgings as were available aggravated any weakness of health or temper that might have developed in men already worn by long hours of labour...." [3]

Another section of the same massive work reviews the effect of Lloyd George's charge[4] that production on the Clyde was being hampered by the excessive drunkenness of the workers. This, it pointed out,

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[1] Memorandum to the Cabinet by T.McKinnon Wood, 17 November 1915. P.R.O: Cab 37/137, no.29.

[2] For a discussion of the scheme itself, see below, Chapter 3, p. 41.

[3] H.M.M. IV, iv, 29.

[4] See above. Chapter 1.

only increased the men's "suspicious and irritable temper" at what they regarded as an unjust charge.

> "...the root of the trouble was the housing of the people. Nearly half the population of Glasgow in 1911 lived in houses of two rooms. More than one eighth lived in single rooms. And the housing conditions of the neighbouring towns were no better. Only sordid experience or a strong effort of imagination can realise the significance of these appalling figures.... And the evil has been aggravated during the War by the influx of munition workers and the stoppage of building. If the Clyde workman has not always done all that he might have done to bring this War to a victorious issue, if he has followed the lure of drink, if he has shown a sullen and suspicious temper and embraced too readily revolutionary ideas and the gospel of class hatred, his Country, which has failed to provide for him the first condition of making a home for his family and himself, cannot with justice or a good conscience cast the first stone."[1]

In similar, though less impassioned, tones, the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest (Cd 2669) of 1917 strayed rather outside its brief in order to comment that:

> "In Scotland there is an immediate need for about 100,000 workers' houses... The industrial unrest attributable to this cause, it is strongly represented, can only be allayed by the Government taking steps with a problem that appears to have grown too great for private enterprise now to meet".[2]

Independently of the industrial unrest that had been building up during the year, agitation over rises in the cost of living in general and against rent increases in particular had been one of the principal activities of the "official" bodies of labour opinion in the Glasgow area - the Glasgow Trades Council, the Glasgow Central Labour Party, and the Glasgow Federation of the I.L.P.

The first reaction of these bodies to the war was that of many Labour organisations at every level; they expected it to produce massive unemployment, hardship, and distress among the working class.

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[1] H.M.M. IV, ii, 43-44.

[2] Cd 2669, 1917, para.8.

Though the unemployment was, in fact, taken up very rapidly as the demand for troops and munition workers rocketed, the threat to the housing conditions of servicemen, arms workers, and their families, remained very real. As early as September 1914 the Trades Council adopted this resolution:

> "We indignantly Protest against the manner in which Agents of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association are prosecuting enquiries into the circumstances of women and children."[1]

From this the next step was to protest against cases in which house factors were threatening service wives or widows with removal to smaller houses or even with eviction. In April 1915 the Trades Council called upon the Government

> "to immediately take effective action to prevent property owners raising rents at this unprecendented time, such as passing a prohibition order or establishment of a Fair Rent Court which shall fix rents in every city, large town, or district".[2]

At the same time, housing was the principal concern of the Labour group on Glasgow Corporation. John Wheatley and his main lieutenant, Andrew McBride, had been agitating since before the war for Wheatley's "£8 cottage" scheme. On the eve of the war, Wheatley and Thomas Johnston, the editor of Forward, were conducting a vigorous propaganda campaign on its behalf.[3] Cottages were to be built on the fringe of the city for rental at £8 or £10 a year. Small cottages, Wheatley thought, were both cheaper to build and more attractive to the working-class people who would have to live in them than the tenement blocks to which they were accustomed. The construction of the cottages was to be paid for out of the city's Common Good Fund, which was in substantial

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[1]Minutes of the Glasgow Trades Council, Mitchell Library, Glasgow, 16 September 1914. Hereafter cited as T.C.M.

[2]T.C.M. 21 April 1915.

[3]Forward, 25 July, 1 August and 8 August 1914.

surplus because of the profits being made by the tramway system, which had belonged to the city since 1894. (The historian of Glasgow's trams estimates that the system was paying "possibly £30,000 or more" a year to the Common Good Fund in the years leading up to the First World War[1]). When Wheatley's scheme was debated by the Corporation, its opponents complained that since it would account for only about 150 houses it would hardly scratch the surface of the housing problem.[2] Even if these 150 became self-financing, as Wheatley argued, this seems a fair criticism. But Wheatley and McBride campaigned vigorously for it, and in February 1915 a Glasgow Labour Party Housing Committee was founded.[3] Its objects were:

> "To Establish Branches in Each Ward.
> To Organise Tenants against Increased Rents.
> To Support Municipal Housing on an Interest Free Basis by utilising the Tramway Surplus and by means of State Grants.
> To Secure the Return of Labour Candidates who will Support this Policy".[4]

Thus the "official" Labour movement in the city had housing as the main plank in its platform. The Forward, which, as we saw in Chapter 1, was very chary of even reporting industrial disputes, was in the forefront of the housing crusade. It was able to report widespread sympathy with strikers against increased rents from June 1915 onwards; in Govan, where conditions were worst, even the employers took the tenants' side. The managing director of Harland & Wolff's Govan shipyard wrote:

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[1] C.A.Oakley, "The Last Tram", (Glasgow, 1962), p.55.

[2] According to the report of the discussion in "Forward", 26 December, 1914.

[3] "Forward", 27 February 1915. Letter from McBride, p.3.

[4] Objects of Glasgow Labour Party Housing Association (1915). Pasted in to minute book of Glasgow Central Labour Party. Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

> "We are very pleased to hear that the tenants of Govan purpose refusing to pay these increased rents, and we sympathise entirely with them. We trust that the legislature will intervene to annul all the increases which have recently taken place, and to prevent any further increases".[1]

The management of Fairfield's expressed similar sympathies:

> "The manager of Fairfield told a deputation that they would allow no workman of theirs to occupy any house of any person victimised for refusing to pay a rent increase".[2]

The sympathy between management and men may seem surprising, especially in the light of the bad industrial relations at Fairfield which we consider in Chapter 4; but the management had, after all, no community of interest with the house factors. The shipyard employers did not want industrial strife on an issue over which they had no control, and they had a positive interest in seeing rents kept down, because this would tend to moderate wage demands.

The Association of House Factors and Property Agents had tried to improve its image by resolving that servicemen's dependants should not have their rents raised during the war, but not all factors held to this decision:

> "others, less considerate, had served notices of a 10% advance on their tenants, including soldiers' wives, Belgian refugees, old age pensioners and recipients of outdoor relief".[3]

George Barnes, the Labour M.P. for Blackfriars,[4] appealed to McKinnon Wood to intervene. In reply, he confessed his inability to do anything:

> "Mr.McKinnon Wood expressed to Mr.Barnes his profound sympathy with the tenants, but felt he could not get sufficient support in the House to move in any direction".[5]

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[1] Quoted in Forward, 5 June 1915, p.1.

[2] Forward, 12 June 1915, p.1.

[3] H.L.M. IV, ii, 103.

[4] I.e. Gorbals.

[5] Letter from McBride to Forward, 5 June 1915.

Eventually, in October 1915, McKinnon Wood appointed Lord Hunter, a judge, and W.R. Scott, Professor of Political Economy at Glasgow University, to enquire into changes in rent levels. They found that since May 1914, 33.9% of the rents they sampled (though it was not a random sample in a statistically-acceptable sense) had risen by up to 5%; 14.6% had risen by between 5 and 10%; and 7.7% had risen by over 10%. In Govan and Fairfield, the centre of the storm, all the houses they sampled had suffered rent increases ranging from 11.67% to 23.08%.[1]

While this was being considered, the rent strike was building up massively. 15,000 tenants were estimated as refusing to pay increased rent by the end of October, and 20,000, including five Labour councillors, by mid-November.[2] On the 17th November McKinnon Wood submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet calling for a bill to limit working-class rentals to the level obtaining on the outbreak of war. Quoting from the report submitted by Hunter and Scott, he said that "the great fear of the tenants is that, eventually, monopoly rents may be exacted from them" and quoted as an example of the many representations asking for action which he had received, a resolution from Cambuslang[3] Parish Council:

> "The population of the parish is 25,000; at May 1915 there were 17 empty houses... No houses have been built for years; none are in course of erection; none are likely to be built in the immediate future. There is thus an actual house famine, which grows more acute".[4]

It was only the "monopoly" question which justified action in defiance of market forces:

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[1] H.M.M. IV, ii, 103-4.

[2] Forward, 30 October and 13 November 1915.

[3] A mining and steelmaking area immediately to the south-east of Glasgow.

[4] McKinnon Wood's memorandum, P.R.O: CAB 37/137 No.29.

> "It seems to me that the justification for dealing with the question as a war emergency matter is that there has been in such districts a large influx of workmen... while new building has ceased, and that a condition of monopoly has thus been created, which, if nothing is done to check the rise in rents, will lead to much larger increases of rent than have yet taken place".1

As the present conditions, especially on the Clyde, were "abnormal, artificial, and temporary", the proposed legislation should be strictly confined to the duration of the war. McKinnon Wood rejected the proposal for fair rent courts (which, as we have seen, were strongly advocated by labour bodies) as unworkable, and added that such courts would be "difficult to abolish after the restoration of peace". The Bill should be confined in its operation to large burghs and other congested areas, which could be specifically designated. Rents should be restricted as from the Martinmas term 1915 (November 11th) to the level at which they stood on August 1st, 1914. As a corollary the interest rate on bonds secured on working-class houses would have to be frozen, and the bonds themselves statutorily protected against recall, until the end of the war.

These proposals show that McKinnon Wood (who himself represented the Glasgow working-class constituency of St.Rollox) was broadly sympathetic to the pleas of working-class organisations, as he had in fact shown in his letter to Barnes some months earlier. But we may presume that it was only his accompanying comments on the political scene which persuaded Conservative members of the Coalition Cabinet to entertain his views at all. After reproducing the findings of the Hunter-Scott committee, the memorandum comments:

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1 McKinnon Wood's memorandum, as before.

> "The Committee was not directed to make any proposals for legislation, but... I find that both members are impressed, as a result of their enquiry, with the necessity of action being taken to stop increases of rent. I understand that the Minister of Munitions attaches considerable importance to the agitation as contributing to the unrest which exists throughout the Clyde districts, where... labour difficulties have caused him much anxiety"

In conclusion, McKinnon Wood says,

> "The agitation is growing, and I think it is necessary that a prompt decision should be taken by the Government, otherwise there are signs that demands for interference will become more clamant and will expand in scope and character".[1]

We have already commented at some length on the unimportance of the Scottish Office. In seeking the reason why McKinnon Wood, having failed to "move the House in any direction" in June, should be able to persuade the Cabinet to take action in November, the above sections of the memorandum are clearly important. Action on the rents issue was brought about, and brought about rapidly, when the voice of Lloyd George, who mattered, was added to that of McKinnon Wood, who did not.

Lloyd George's correspondence shows that for some months he had been aware of the importance of the question of rents in munitions areas. In July, Austen Chamberlain had sent him a cutting from a Birmingham paper about rent increases, together with a petition from "The Greater Birmingham Residents", who wanted the Government "to establish a Pre-War Rent on all dwelling-houses". Chamberlain wrote to Lloyd George,

> "I do not know whether you have similar complaints from elsewhere, but it may be necessary to deal with the matter".[2]

To this Lloyd George replied,

> "The complaints I have had about rents have almost invariably come from the Glasgow area. There is a great scarcity of houses in all the munitions areas, and I have no doubt rents will be inflated as a result; I think we ought to take decisive action on the subject at an early date".[3]

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[1] Memorandum by McKinnon Wood, as above.

[2] Chamberlain to L.G. 5 July 1915. L.G.Papers, D/16/7/1.

[3] L.G. to Chamberlain, 8 July 1915. L.G.Papers, D/16/7/2.

Chamberlain in turn suggested that the Local Government Board should make inquiries

> "as to the state of affairs in the munitions areas from the local authorities. The reports so obtained would show us the extent of the evil and strengthen the hands of the Government for dealing with it."[1]

Three months later, Lord St.Davids wrote to Lloyd George proposing rent control as a specific remedy for the ruffled feelings of trade unionists.

> "You have had lately to pitch into the Trade Unionists a good deal and to point out the ways in which they and their rulers have been damaging the National Cause. They have put up with it from you in a way they would not have done from anybody else because of your championing them on so many previous occasions. It is most important, however, at the present time not only that you should be fair but that you should be ostentatiously fair and impartial. Rents have been greatly raised for cheap houses and workmen's dwellings in different parts of the country and there have been strikes of rent payers here and there. Could you make an occasion to speak against this or to write a letter against it? You understand that it is your own position and power for good that I am anxious about. Now and again you have accepted a little hint from me and I throw you out this one which is, in my judgment, well worth thinking about from the position of your highest efficiency in your present office".[2]

Though St.Davids had ended, "Don't <u>of course</u> bother to answer", Lloyd George replied,

> "You are quite right. It is an admirable suggestion. I am collecting all the material, and shall say something about it".[3]

Thus it was that when McKinnon Wood eventually took his request for rent control to the Cabinet, he had the powerful support of Lloyd George against the resentment of the Conservatives and the obstructionism of the Local Government Board. On 23rd November, Walter Long, who was

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[1]Chamberlain to L.G. 9 July 1915. L.G.Papers, D/16/7/3.

[2]Lord St.Davids to L.G. 9 October 1915. L.G.Papers, D/18/12/3.

[3]L.G. to Lord St.Davids, 11 October 1915. L.G. Papers, D/18/12/4.

President of the Local Government Board, circulated with obvious reluctance a draft bill to apply to the whole country. In the accompanying memorandum he said:

> "I still prefer my original proposals, which, I think, would have been more appropriate to the actual difficulty, particularly as it is experienced in this country (1), but, in accordance with the promise I made to the Cabinet, I have abandoned that position, and the Bill which I now circulate adopts the principle advocated by the Secretary for Scotland and makes it applicable to the United Kingdom.....
>
> It cannot be pretended that the Bill is other than an emergency measure. It is drastic in its proposals, and will, I fear, arouse a good deal of opposition in various quarters... and it is impossible to make it altogether equitable in its application. It is very difficult to make a forecast now; all I desire to do is to warn my colleagues that there may be trouble from those who consider that legislation of this kind is too drastic, and is calculated to interfere with national credit".[2]

The Bill was introduced on November 25th, and met opposition from expected and unexpected quarters. A number of backbench Tories expressed their surprise and resentment that a party colleague should be introducing such a Bill, and Sir Frederick Banbury complained, not unexpectedly, that "in my opinion, this Bill violates all the principles of political economy".[3] W.M.R. Pringle, the radical Liberal who sat for North-East Lanarkshire, somewhat quixotically styled it "an unjust and a necessary Bill".[4] Two other Glasgow M.P.'s, one Liberal and one Unionist, (MacCallum Scott and Halford Mackinder) spoke in favour of the Bill. The Bill was thereafter hurried through all its stages in less than a month and received the Royal Assent on December 23rd (5 & 6 Geo V ch 97).

It was while legislation was being discussed by the Cabinet that the agitation had reached its peak in Scotland. On 17th November, the

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[1] I.e. presumably, England.

[2] Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest: draft bill and memorandum by Walter Long. P.R.O: CAB 37/138 No.3.

[3] H of C Hansard 5s., V.76, col.433.

[4] Ibid., col.441.

same day that the Cabinet considered McKinnon Wood's memorandum, an insistent factor, having failed to evict defaulting tenants because of organised resistance, summoned 18 of them to the Sheriff Court with a request for the arrestment of their wages.[1] The response was a strike and demonstrations of munitions and shipyard workers who marched on the court, threatening an indefinite strike if the summoned men were evicted or fined. Opinions differ as to how many demonstrators, from how many plants, were present. The Forward estimated 4000,[2] while W.C. Anderson, speaking on the introduction of the Rent Restriction Bill to the Commons, put it as high as 15,000, including all the employees of Albion Motors and the Coventry Ordnance Works.[3] According to two sources, the men at Barcley Curle's, Fairfield, Harland & Wolff, D. & W. Henderson and A. Stephen were involved;[4] while Gallacher cites also Beardmores (Dalmuir), Parkhead Forge, Weir's, Hyde Park Locomotive Works, and Yarrow's and Meechan's shipyards.[5] In the court, the 18 men summoned received sympathetic treatment from Sheriff Lee. He complained that, although Parliament was at that moment considering the question, the factor before him had ignored a plea from the Secretary for Scotland to stay his hand, and "intimate(d) in open court" that insistence on the increase in rent "would produce serious national consequences".[6] The cases were withdrawn; the tone of the sheriff's remarks suggests that he would have brought pressure to have them withdrawn even without what the normally sympathetic Pringle called "apparently the exercise of mob law".[7]

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[1] H.M.M. IV, ii, 105; Gallacher, pp.53-54.

[2] Forward, 27 November 1915, p.1.

[3] H of C Hansard, 5s., V.76, col.447.

[4] H.M.M. IV, ii, 105; Bell, John Maclean, p.50.

[5] Gallacher, p.55.

[6] H.M.M. IV, ii, 105; Forward, 27 November 1915, p.1.

[7] H of C Hansard, 5s., V.76, col.442.

No prosecutions followed against the strikers because the strike had lasted only one day and the matter did not directly concern the production of munitions.

The rent strike marks the appearance in the forefront of affairs for the first time of John Maclean, a Govan primary schoolteacher who had been dismissed by the School Board the day before the eviction cases. (He was dismissed not because of his political opinions, but after an intemperate series of letters between him and the board over a row between himself and Mr. Hugh Fulton, his former headmaster).[1] On the 17th he chaired a meeting which sent to Asquith the following resolution;

> "That this meeting of Clyde munition workers requests the Government to definitely state, not later than Saturday first (2), that it forbids any increase in rent during the period of the war, and that this failing a general strike will be declared on Monday, 22nd November".[3]

We cannot be certain what influence the rent strikers in general, and John Maclean in particular, had on the action taken by the Government; we cannot now reconstruct what may have happened in the Cabinet between 17th and 23rd November, just over a year before the 1916 crisis led to the introduction of a full and rational system of keeping cabinet records - for instance, we cannot guess what might have been Long's "promise made to the Cabinet" (p.31 above).[4] But we may reasonably assume that the effect of the militants was marginal in one sense. As the History of the Ministry of Munitions comments, "The Government were slow to deal with the matter"[5] of the rents agitation. But

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[1] Maclean Papers, National Library of Scotland, File 1, passim.

[2] For the benefit of our English readers, "Saturday first" = "next Saturday".

[3] Quoted in H.M.M. IV, ii, 105.

[4] There is nothing in the series of letters to the King reporting Cabinet meetings (P,R.O: Cab 41).

[5] H.M.M. IV, ii, 103.

Lloyd George, it appears, had been convinced of the need for action since at least July, and it was his backing of McKinnon Wood's proposal which ensured its passage through the Cabinet. No doubt the alarming down-tools of November 17th was instrumental in securing for the Bill the approval of the Conservative members of the Cabinet, including Long, whose job it was as President of the Local Government Board to pilot the Bill through. Doubtless also the strike encouraged the quick and relatively trouble-free passage of the Bill through the Commons, in spite of the controversial nature of the proposal to freeze mortgage money and the rate of interest on it. Many speakers supported the view of Pringle that it was unfair but necessary, and Barnes said on the Second Reading:

> "It is a matter for congratulation that the House has, almost with one accord, agreed to the demise of political economy".[1]

To all this the action of the strikers may have made its contribution, but in an important way it was secondary. At best it was necessary but not sufficient. The salient fact was the conversion of Lloyd George. If an important minister had not been already convinced of the need for action, then a strike, however alarming, could not on its own have precipitated a Bill so hasty and arbitrary that it perturbed not only Conservatives but also Radicals. Maclean was certainly optimistic, and perhaps doubly so, in commenting in the December 1915 issue of his paper, the Vanguard, that

> "the rent strike on the Clyde is the first step towards the Political Strike so frequently resorted to on the Continent in times past".[2]

He was certainly optimistic, as we shall see in Chapters 3 to 7, in supposing that the workers would support a political strike; and

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[1] H of C Hansard, 5s., V.76, col.749.

[2] "Vanguard", December 1915. Copy in Maclean Papers, National Library of Scotland.

perhaps also in over-emphasising the part played by events on Clydeside on November 17th, as opposed to the more general build-up of agitation over the preceding four months, in leading the government to take the action it did.

It should be stressed again that the rent strike movement was not solely the concern of the militants such as Maclean and the Clyde Workers' Committee. Undoubtedly it was an achievement of the C.W.C. leaders to bring their men out on November 17th in support of the defendants. But it was not primarily a munition workers' issue. The most congested areas were Govan and Fairfield wards, south of the river, which housed shipyard employees rather than munitions workers. And it seems to have been in a spontaneous movement that, in the early stages of the rent strike, the women of Govan, led by Mrs. Barbour,[1] formed posses to prevent sheriff's officers from evicting tenants who refused to pay increased rents. To the support of the movement came not only the C.W.C. and the militants but also the "official" section of the local Labour movement headed by Wheatley, McBride, and the Forward, who had all been primarily housing reformers in the past.

The rent strike heightened the tension and increased the mutual suspicion and bloody-mindedness that "stained the good name of the men on the Clyde in the months that followed".[2] In other words, it set the scene for the struggle over dilution which began at the same time as the rent strike and lasted till March 1916. To this we must now turn.

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[1] Gallacher, p.52.

[2] H.M.M. IV, ii, 43.

Chapter 3

The Ministry of Munitions, July to December 1915.

The heroic days of wartime "Red Clydeside" were suprisingly short. The period of the rent strikes had acted as an hors d'oeuvre; the main course lasted only from December 1915 to March 1916, and its central feature was the resistance of the militants to the imposition of dilution - the replacement of skilled men by semi-skilled, unskilled, or women, which was, as we have seen, provided for in the Treasury Agreement and which accentuated the already - extant stresses between skilled and unskilled in the engineering industry.

A number of accounts of the dilution crisis have appeared, mostly from the side of the members, or sympathisers, of the C.W.C. The justification for a recapitulation of events here is not just that one generally reliable contemporary source[1] confuses the chronology of Lloyd George's visit to Glasgow and has led some modern writers astray, but also that to present the crisis as a two-sided conflict (albeit an unequal one) between the Ministry of Munitions and the Clyde Workers' Committee is grossly to oversimplify the course of events. Even the most modern writer on the subject, and the first to tap the wealth of material in the Beveridge Papers on dilution, comments on them:

> "The Beveridge Papers document very fully the determination of the Government to smash the [Clyde Workers'] Committee".[2]

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[1] W.R.Scott and J.Cunnison, "Industries of the Clyde Valley during the War", Oxford 1924, Ch.8.

[2] J. Hinton, in Bulletin of the Soc. for the Study of Lab.Hist., Autumn 1966, p.4.

In fact, as we shall see "the Government" was by no means united. The Ministry of Munitions was fighting on many different fronts, and its allies occasionally tried to use the C.W.C. to help fight other opponents. Six protagonists can be identified. First, there was the Ministry of Munitions itself; secondly, the older Ministries on whose responsibilities it encroached, especially the Admiralty and the Board of Trade, and the War Office. Third, there were the employers, whose private attitudes often diverged widely from their public protestations. Fourth were the executive of the A.S.E. who under the formalities of agreement fought a long rearguard action aginst dilution. Fifth were the militants, whose outlook contained both revolutionary socialism and craft conservatism; sixthly were pure craft conservatives infused with what one informed observer called

> "the 'old trade union' bitterness, narrow and selfish... they are not intelligent and are selfishly opposed to any innovations into their trade".1

To elucidate this complex struggle, we will have to go back some months to examine the origins of the Ministry of Munitions.

Prior to the Cabinet crisis of May 1915, labour arbitration and conciliation problems had been handled by the Board of Trade, which was nurturing the first generation of professional conciliators such as Sir George (later Lord) Askwith and Isaac Mitchell (a former A.S.E. official who in 1916 became one of the Clyde Dilution Commissioners). It was Askwith, for instance, who had negotiated a settlement after the February 1915 strike.[2] After May 1915, Lloyd George became Minister of Munitions and by the Ministry of Munitions Act of June 1915 the Ministry was founded; its first permanent Secretary was Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith,

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[1] I.H.Mitchell to Sir H.Llewellyn Smith, 21 February 1916. Beveridge Collection on Munitions (henceforth B.C.M.). Vol.III, no.44, folio 356.

[2] See above, p.15 .

on loan from the Board of Trade. Llewellyn Smith brought over William Beveridge as under-secretary to deal with labour matters; as he explained to Lloyd George:

> "As regards Beveridge I am quite unwilling to dispense with his assistance, and in particular I must have his help and advice on labour matters as to which he is really the technical expert while Girouard and Booth[1] are amateurs. He /Beveridge/ would be the officer I should rely on for all matters relating to the Secretariat, and as in this event[2] - I should have to be responsible for labour myself I shall naturally seek his counsel on a subject which he has made his own.....
>
> I doubt if either Girouard or Booth has any idea of the pitfalls in any new labour policy, and personally I am not prepared to face any such development without having by me an experienced adviser whom I trust".[3]

As this latter might indicate the first opponents the new Ministry had to face in its "new labour policy" were the Ministries whose responsibilities it was taking over. The Munitions of War Act of July 1915 gave statutory backing to dilution, and empowered the Ministry to designate munitions factories as "controlled establishments" on which it could impose rules to regulate both management and labour: it could regulate profits, and it could control the supply of labour by the system of leaving certificates. If a man left a munitions works without a leaving certificate, he could not be re-employed within six weeks of leaving. The Act banned strikes, and made provision for the prosecution of strike leaders, but the ineffectiveness of this was very rapidly shown

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[1] G.M.Booth, of the shipping family, and Sir Percy Girouard, an ex-colonial governor and railway administrator, were at the centre of Lloyd George's move to take control of munitions out of the hands of Kitchener and the War Office, being appointed in March 1915 as the members of a committee to increase the supply of armaments, responsible not to the War Office but to the Treasury. H.M.M. I, iii, 61; cf also D.Crow, "A Man of Push and Go", London 1965, pp.90-120.

[2] Llewellyn Smith's punctuation.

[3] Llewellyn Smith to Lloyd George, 31 May 1915. Lloyd George papers, Beaverbrook Library, D/1/2/3.

up by the massive South Wales miners' strike of the same month (July 1915). The KC sent by Lloyd George to preside over the Munitions Court dealing with that strike wrote:

> "I have now carefully considered the Munitions of War Act and the regulations under it. The Act only applies to men employed who have gone on strike. It does not apply to the secretaries and others who have incited the men to strike who may not themselves be actually employed in the collieries. To prosecute only the dupes while the real offenders escape will I am afraid cause great heart burning. It is of course impossible to summon and try 200,000 men, and only a few can at first be dealt with and the length of time before there can be any real enforcement of the sentence will, I fear, only lead the men generally to regard the Act as ineffective". [1]

The behaviour of Lloyd George and his Ministry in labour matters in general and this strike in particular provoked fierce criticism from professional arbitrators, most notably Askwith, whose bitterness may be in part due to the usurpation of the arbitration powers of his Committee on Production by the Ministry of Munitions.

> "The example was set [by the South Wales miners] to strike first and apply to Mr.Lloyd George, whatever the Minister's officials, employers, or union leaders might say, with a view to the allowance of all claims as the reward of violence or pressure".[2]

> "The activity of the Ministry of Munitions probably appeared in its most unfortunate form in its dealings with Labour. Its Labour Department was very badly organised, or not organised at all in its initial stages, but that fact did not prevent it under the guise of efforts towards control and dilution, from constant interference in labour differences or quarrels. Numbers of young men, without the least knowledge or experience, were scattered over the country without defined authority or under any definite or adequate leadership."[3]

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[1] Robert Wallace, K.C., to Lloyd George, 17 July 1915. Lloyd George papers, D/11/1/6.

[2] Lord Askwith, "Industrial Problems and Disputes", London, 1920, p.395.

[3] Ibid., p.412.

As if this unfair criticism were not enough, the Ministry had failed to wrest control over shipyards from the Admiralty: though it was involved in labour questions in the yards, it had no control over questions of management or contracts, and no say whatever in the management of naval dockyards. The Ministry of Munitions bitterly resented having, in the first instance, no control over Admiralty affairs, and later, having to do the Admiralty's job for it, as this extract from the diary of the Ministry's Parliamentary Under-Secretary reveals:

> "It was astonishing to those of us behind the scenes that, whilst Balfour[1] had professed that the Admiralty were pressing dilution forward, the self-same evening he was having an interview with the Clyde Commission(er)s for the first time asking them to assist in getting dilution in the shipyards on the Clyde - the first step which has been taken by the Admiralty to do anything in the Clyde area. If the House had known this there would have been much more trouble - as there will be, if it ever comes out."[2]

It was thus against a background of suspicion and obstruction in Whitehall that the new Ministry carried out its "new labour policy". This was essentially concerned with increasing the supply of labour available for manufacturing munitions. The policies open to the Ministry, in decreasing order of acceptability to the trades unions, were <u>firstly</u>, putting all skilled men on government work, and supplementing British craftsmen with Belgian or Canadian workmen, in addition to securing the release from the Colours of engineering craftsmen; <u>secondly</u>, the dilution of labour; and <u>thirdly</u>, industrial conscription:

> "The Government consented to try the policy urged by the Trade Unions first, holding Dilution in reserve and, if that should not be accepted, Industrial Conscription." [3]

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[1] First Lord of the Admiralty.

[2] C.Addison, "Four and a Half Years", London 1934, I, 180-181. Entry for 8 March 1916. Cf also Addison, "Politics from Within",I, 191.

[3] H.M.M., IV, i, 1.

The Ministry was, at first, hopeful of the success of the volunteer and Release from the Colours schemes. As many as 100,000 men enrolled as "War Munitions Volunteers", who would be prepared to move to work in munitions areas, and Addison welcomed the scheme as it prevented discussion of industrial conscription:

> "The Volunteer Labour Army promises to be a great success... It has knocked the bottom out of labour conscription and bosh of that kind."[1]

By a month later, Release from the Colours was being shown up as a failure:

> "The return of skilled men from the Colours so far amounts to very little. Passive obstruction by the Battalion Orderly Rooms has no doubt a good deal to do with it. They don't like parting with good men. Similarly the munitions volunteer movement is not giving us as many men as we want."[2]

In August Addison estimated that 15,000 usable War Munitions Volunteers might be secured; a further month later he estimated that the total available would only be 6,000 W.M.V's and 5,000 men released from the colours.[3] These figures are confirmed by the official history of the Ministry[4] which explained that the W.M.V. scheme failed to take into account the difficulties of moving men from one part of the country to another because of

> "(f)amily ties, local connections and prejudices, differences in manners, mode of living, and dialect, the craftsman's expectations, and conservative habits"[5]

- as well as innumerable minor quarrels over wages and conditions.

With the manifest failure of schemes for the supply of labour acceptable to the unions, the Ministry had to press for those less

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[1] Addison I, 103, 6 July 1915.

[2] Addison I, 117-8, 16 August 1915.

[3] Addison I, 126, 19 September 1915. Cf also Addision, "Politics from Within", I, pp.178-180.

[4] H.M.M. IV,i, pp.2 and 16.

[5] H.M.M. IV,i, 15.

acceptable, and turn in the first instance to the dilution of labour. The Treasury Agreement had, of course, been signed three months before the foundation of the Ministry but in practice it amounted to very little. With typical asperity Askwith observed that a ballot of A.S.E. members on accepting dilution was taking place at the time, but

> "before its result was out Mr. Lloyd George had come in with the Treasury Agreement imposed without a ballot, but remaining practically a dead letter until a ballot had been taken several months after a conclusion might possibly have been reached."[1]

Subsequent events, of course, showed that resistance by A.S.E. members to dilution was far too deeply implanted to be much affected by the presence of a favourable ballot.

Llewellyn Smith urged upon Lloyd George from the beginning the necessity of giving the Treasury Agreement statutory backing:

> "My judgment is in favour of immediate legislation as I am convinced that any further attempt on merely voluntary lines unsupported by legislative enactment will only break down and lose valuable time. I am glad to find that these views are shared by Sir George Askwith and by Mr.Mitchell, of the Chief Industrial Commissioner's Department."[2]

and, as we have seen, this was done in the Munitions of War Act. But no action was taken to impose dilution for some two months after its passing, until the failure of the W.M.V. and Release from the Colours schemes was too obvious to ignore. Anxious meetings on the labour shortage were held in the Ministry in late August,[3] and in September the Committee of the Labour Supply Department, set up to administer the W.M.V. scheme, reported to Lloyd George:

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[1] Askwith, op.cit., p.371.

[2] Draft "Labour Policy-Preliminary Note" /June 1915?/ Initialled H.Ll.S. B.C.M. I no.15 folio 365.

[3] Addison, I, 120-121.

> "The Committee desires to impress upon the Minister of Munitions of War the urgency of taking immediate steps to devise a fresh scheme for securing the skilled labour necessary for the manufacture of War Munitions in view of the impracticability for this purpose of the scheme with which they were asked to deal and have been dealing."[1]

Finally it was agreed to make dilution as acceptable as possible by having it supervised by a committee mainly composed of trades unionists, including the refractory A.S.E.

> "Last week I put it up to L.G. to let us try to devise a scheme whereby we could secure the co-operation of trade unionists in bringing in unskilled labour. The National Advisory Committee on labour over which /Arthur/ Henderson presides has constantly said that they (sic) have never been asked to help and I think there is justice in their complaint...
>
> "This week, after a series of conferences with the Trade Union delegates and with the A.S.E., at first separately and then together, they agreed to join a Ministry Committee for the purpose of introducing unskilled labour and spreading skilled labour..... Ll/ewellyn/ Smith and Beveridge threw cold water on the scheme, but I am glad to say that West backed it up heartily, as did Henderson and the Labour Committee."[2]

Thus was the National Advisory Committee transmuted into the Central Munitions Labour Supply Committee. The National Advisory Committee had included Henderson, J.T.Brownlie (Chairman of the A.S.E.) and William Mosses of the Patternmakers Union, and was described as:

> "a Committee, representative of the organised workers engaged in production for Government requirements, appointed by the Government to facilitate the carrying out of the Treasury Agreement and for consultation by the Government or by the workmen concerned."[3]

It had not done anything, and the changes of September were designed to make it a more powerful body, representing the Ministry, employers, and labour - the three men listed above being joined on the labour side

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[1] A.Duckham to Lloyd George, 2 Sept., 1915, L.G.Papers D/11/3/4.

[2] Addison, I, 126-7, 19 Sept., 1915.

[3] H.M.M. IV, I, p.2 fn.1.

by W. Dawtry (Steam Engine Makers), J.Kaylor (A.S.E.), Charles Duncan (Workers' Union) and Mary Macarthur (Woman's Trade Union League).

Addison wrote to Henderson:

> "Mr. Lloyd George has given instructions that in regard to all matters within the terms of reference of the Committee its advice should be sought before any steps involving a change of policy are taken."[1]

(It is worth noting that Lloyd George ignored his own instruction, against protests from the Committee, when setting up the Clyde Dilution Commission in January 1916). The main work of the Committee was to issue the "L" series of circulars on dilution of which the most important were L2 (on the introduction of women), L3 (unskilled and semi-skilled men), and L6 (procedure for introducing dilution). L2 was to become a continual bone of contention, which we shall examine in later chapters. L6 was couched in surprisingly firm terms. Headed "Dilution of skilled labour - Notes for the Guidance of Controlled Establishments", it recommended that the workmen in each plant to which it was proposed to introduce a dilution scheme should be consulted "together with their local Trade Union representatives if they so desire". But

> "It is not intended that the introduction of the change should be delayed until the concurrence of the workpeople is obtained. The change should be introduced after a reasonable time... While this is so, the Minister is of opinion that it will be consistent with prudence that every endeavour should be made by employers to secure the co-operation of their workpeople in matters of this description.
>
> Any difficulties experienced by either employers or workpeople should be at once referred to the Ministry in order that an immediate endeavour may be made to find a satisfactory solution."[2]

We have now seen something of the genesis of the dilution campaign. Before proceeding in the next four chapters to examine the progress of

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[1]Addison to Henderson, 14 October 1915, B.C.M. IV, no.24, folio 137.

[2]Ministry of Munitions, Circular L6, as reproduced in H.M.M., IV, I, 108-9.

dilution on the Clyde from October 1915 to March 1916, we should summarise the attitudes, of which hints have been given above in this chapter, of the various parties in the campaign. More detailed examination of the position on the Clyde will follow in the succeeding chapters.

A striking feature of the dilution campaign was the absence of any unity of purpose on the "official" side. So far from being united to crush the Clyde Workers' Committee, the Ministry, the employers and the union executives were pursuing very different ends. Tension between the Ministry of Munitions and older ministries was inherent in the origins of the Ministry. By its very creation, it had given offence to the War Office by unceremoniously taking control of munitions production away from Kitchener and Von Donop, the incompetent Master-General of Ordnance. Likewise, it had offended the Board of Trade by usurping some of the latter's industrial conciliation functions: and its relations with the Admiralty were marred by continual boundary disputes, as the Admiralty refused to surrender control over yards. Later, too, the Ministry of Munitions was to come under attack from other parts of Whitehall for failing to deal sufficiently firmly with labour troubles.[1] Employers, for their part, were often privately reluctant to do what their public protestations averred was necessary to avoid national disaster. While enthusiastic in welcoming dilution and calling for stern measures to deal with troublemakers, they preferred to have the Ministry pull their chestnuts out of the fire for them rather than deal with these problems themselves. At the very outset Addison noted,

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[1] See, e.g. pp. 62-63 below.

> "We had a deputation of employers from the Clyde. They wanted all sorts of powers over workmen - a sort of martial law - which they themselves might administer, obviously an impossible demand. They gave us the impression of being a poor lot..."[1]

Having failed to achieve these "impossible demands", then, the employers took to bombarding the Ministry with advice. As Addison again noted wryly on the Clyde:

> "It was difficult to disentangle the facts from the excited comments of Weir and our representative there, or even from the less excited comments of the Labour Office. One big employer was bursting with the desire to arrest a lot of people, but he could not mention anybody who ought to be arrested except one man against whom there was no evidence."[2]

Beveridge summarised the situation in a report of the Ministry's Labour Department.

> "1)...while a considerable number of firms are making changes, a much greater number reported that they do not need to have any trade union restrictions abolished and have made no attempt to do so.
>
> 2)...a number of firms, though they might be willing to make changes, are still deterred from doing so either by actual or by anticipated difficulty with their work people.
>
> There is a good deal of conservatism, both on the part of employers and on the part of the workpeople, to be faced, and the result is that, generally speaking, while suspension of restrictions and dilution of labour is undoubtedly taking place to some extent, it is taking place too slowly for the necessities of the situation."[3]

A number of hints have already been dropped about the attitude of the A.S.E. Executive. For nearly a year it fought a skilful rearguard action against the dilution to which it was nominally pledged. In September 1915 it sent a deputation to the Ministry at which Brownlie expressed concern at Lloyd George's statement that the W.M.V. scheme had failed. "We have

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[1]Addison I, p.85, 28 May 1915.

[2]Ibid., I, p.135, 11 October 1915.

[3]Report [by Beveridge] of the Labour Department Ministry of Munitions 2 December 1915. B.C.M. II, no.8, folio 130.

understood you to imply that compulsory powers or industrial conscription will be resorted to",[1] he added, although this had not been envisaged in the Munitions of War Act. With this fear in the back of their minds the A.S.E. Executive obstructed the progress of dilution at every step. On 21 December 1915, for instance, they wired the Minister:

> "Re Tyne Conference A.S.E. resolution that we as an executive council are not prepared to take part in any Conference either local or national which has as its object dilution of skilled labour until the Minister of Munitions takes steps to render legal and mandatory rates of pay and conditions of labour to those semi-skilled and unskilled men who may take places of those of our members transferred to more highly skilled work."[2]

"The A.S.E." as Addison remarked "had a difficult Executive"[3] and the Ministry's exasperation with it was amply expressed in notes prepared by Llewellyn Smith for Asquith as a result of the situation created by the telegram:

> "The serious part of the situation is that we have reached a position in which the nation is being held up by a single Union... The negotiations with this union appear to be interminable, and no sooner is one agreement arrived at than it is broken, and new black-mailing conditions are proposed.
>
> These observations may seem strong, but I do not think that anyone who has been engaged in the Labour Department of the Ministry during the last few months will think them unjustified.
>
> The Society wish now to add a fresh term to the Treasury Agreement."[4]

When the A.S.E. Executive attended at the Ministry for yet another conference in February 1916, Beveridge endorsed his superior's opinion in notes prepared for Lloyd George. Claiming that the Ministry was "entitled and bound" to demand the A.S.E. Executive's support, he went on:

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[1] Minutes of Proceedings of a Deputation from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 17 September 1915. P.R.O. Min. of Munitions Records MUN 5/57 Hist.Rec. 320/4. Henceforth cited as: PRO: MUN 5/xx.

[2] BCM III no 8 folio 39-41.

[3] Addison I, 126-7.

[4] PRO.MUN 5/70.

> "They have continually gone back on their agreements and withdrawn their co-operation at a moment's notice, because of some difference with the Minister - that is to say, have themselves gone on strike."[1]

In a sense, the A.S.E. Executive had the worst of both worlds: condemned by the Ministry for dragging its feet over dilution, it was condemned by its militants for encompassing it at all. As a leaflet put out by the Clyde Workers' Committee claimed:

> "The support given to the Munitions Act by the Officials was an act of Treachery. Those of us who refused to be Sold have organised the above Committee... to take the first opportunity of forcing the repeal of all the pernicious legislation that has recently been imposed upon us".[2]

Militant opinion was aroused, not only by the proposals for control of labour mobility, compulsory arbitration, and dilution, which were in the Act, but by the spectre of industrial conscription, which was not. Such fears were not entirely groundless. Industrial conscription was seen as a last resort, which Addison and Lloyd George disliked, but did not shrink from admitting they might have to introduce. During the Fairfield strike of October 1915[3] Lloyd George confided to C.P. Scott:

> "He explained that 90,000 men on the Clyde were threatening to strike because out of 20 men heavily fined for absenting themselves from work 3 had elected to go to prison rather than pay and their release was demanded pending an enquiry into the original grievances which had caused them to absent themselves. 'That would mean', said Lloyd George, 'that the Munitions Act would become a dead letter. Yet is is my last resource <u>short of Conscription</u>'".[4]

What the official history refers to as "the papers read by the more thoughtful workmen"[5] were continually raising fears as to what might lie

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[1] PRO.MUN 5/73, 11 February 1916.

[2] "To All Clyde Workers", [November 1915], BCM III no 15 folio 95. Another copy in Highton Papers, Glasgow University Department of Economic History.

[3] See below, Ch.4, p.55.

[4] "The Political Diaries of C.P.Scott 1911-1928", ed. T.Wilson, London, 1970. Stress in original. From the context, it is clear that industrial conscription is meant.

[5] H.M.M. IV, ii, 48.

behind the Act. For instance, the Forward drew its readers' attention to statements in other papers stressing the advantages to employers of dilution[1] or advocating industrial conscription or the application of military discipline to strikers:

> "We must deal as harshly with strikers who throw down their tools as with soldiers who desert in the field" [2]

As we noted in the beginning of this chapter, the attitude of the militants contained elements both of revolutionary socialism and of craft conservatism. This should be distinguished from the approach of the pure fundamentalist conservatives, who were opposed to any dilution in their workplace at all.

According to Isaac Mitchell, in the memorandum from which we have already quoted,[3] strikes at the plant of Lang's in Johnstone (Renfrewshire), "while ostensibly against the Ministry's interpretation of L2, [were] really against dilution under any conditions".[4] Mitchell complained that there were three points of view on the Clyde: that of the "narrow old-time trade unionist" which was being upheld by the A.S.E. Executive; that of the Ministry, which was supported by the local officials of the A.S.E.; and that of the Clyde Workers' Committee; and that any proposal coming from one of these groups led "to the other two sections being always ready to frustrate their efforts".[5]

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[1] See below, Ch.5, p.88.

[2] Times, 31 May 1915, as quoted in Forward, 5 June 1915.

[3] Above, p.37.

[4] Although it is fair to add that the other two Dilution Commissioners did not share this viewpoint.

[5] Quotations in this paragraph are all from: I.H.Mitchell to Llewellyn Smith 21.2.16; B.C.M. III no 44 folios 356-7. Reproduced as appendix to Ch.6 below.

The purpose of this chapter has been to explain the history of the Ministry of Munitions and the background to the dilution campaign and to introduce the disputants while stressing that there were not just two but at least six. The following chapters will resume the interrupted narrative of wartime 'Red Clydeside' by detailing the progress of the dilution campaign.

Chapter 4

Leaving Certificates and Dilution, Aug-Dec. 1915.

The first strikes against dilution and against the leaving certificate provisions of the Munitions of War Act took place while the rent strike campaign was still in progress. It is important that these two should have reinforced each other in maintaining an atmosphere of militancy; it is also extremely inconvenient for the historian, as the two must be treated entirely separately, and the same ground covered twice from two different angles.

Lang's of Johnstone, Renfrewshire, were "one of the principal firms in the country making shell lathes",[1] and in August 1915 they proposed to introduce female labour on some of the simpler processes of lathe-making. The men reacted sharply against this, and with the support of a member of the A.S.E. Executive voted

> "That no woman shall be put to work a lathe, and if this was done the men would know how to protect their rights."[2]

The Executive justified its support of the men on the grounds that

> "there was strong prima facie evidence that the firm in question was anxious to introduce cheap labour to the detriment of highly skilled labour inasmuch as the skilled labour in their employ was not utilised to its fullest capacity."[3]

But the Ministry took a very dim view of this explanation. The Lang's case was cited, though not by name, by Lloyd George in his speech to the

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[1] H.M.M. IV,i, 36.

[2] A.S.E.: MR October 1915, p.13.

[3] A.S.E.: MR October 1915, p.13.

TUC in Bristol in September when he attacked the continuation of restrictive practices.[1] The official history comments

> "The Ministry has been severely criticised for not forcing an issue on this decision without delay... for the employers regarded this as a test case. When they saw the men defying the instructions of the Ministry with impunity they refused to risk any similar and probably fruitless trouble in their own works."[2]

The explanation there given for the Ministry's inaction was that the men could not be prosecuted for their strike threat because of a technical misdemeanour by Lang's in failing to post a notice. The real reason was surely the fundamental weakness of the Ministry's position. The South Wales strike had shown that threats of legal action were utterly useless against a large body of strikers, and it was to be three months more before the Ministry could draft a regulation enabling it to act against the leaders of strikes. And the A.S.E. was far too big an opponent for a newly-established and unpopular Ministry to tackle headlong. There could be no question of its trying to impose dilution against strikers backed by the executive of the largest union in the industry. The Ministry could not possibly take any action at Lang's until it had the A.S.E. Executive, however unwillingly, on its side. The case was discussed at two conferences between the Ministry and the Executive, and finally, on the 29th October, Brownlie went to Johnstone, accompanied by the same executive councilman who two months earlier had urged Lang's men to resist dilution. This time their errand was to get the men to accept women on the simpler parts of the process of lathe manufacture. On their return, Brownlie reported that he had spoken of:

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[1] H.M.M. IV, i, 37-41.

[2] H.M.M. IV, i, 37.

> "the imperative urgency of giving immediate effect to the various clauses of the (Munitions of War) Act so far as it applied to the suspension of established trade customs and practices during the period of war, urging the gravity of the national situation and emphasising the present needs of the Allies.
>
> The speeches of both speakers were listened to with wrapt (sic) attention, and were well received."[1]

He continued by saying that he and his colleague had then seen the management and reported that "the introduction of female labour on the operation desired was in order."[2]

Even the backing of the Executive, however, made no difference to the success of dilution among the men. In a long memorandum prepared for Lloyd George before his Christmas visit to Glasgow the Ministry's chief labour officer for Scotland, Paterson, explained what ensued. He stressed that the employers wanted the Ministry to take action and were not prepared to do so themselves because

> "it [the Ministry] knows the hollowness and insincerity of Trade Union Action in waiving - on paper - restrictions which in actual practice have not been waived at all, and which there is no intention of waiving - unless under pressure of a nature that has not hitherto been attempted."[3]

The employers, Paterson continued, regarded the Lang's story as an object lesson in the worthlessness of trade union promises. The meeting with Brownlie had led to agreement that women might be employed on any machine, with a few named exceptions.

> "The opinion of the firm, and of other engineering employers in the district is that that meeting did not in any way improve the position in so far as increased output was concerned....."
> [The men were permitting women to work]
> "only when a man left or when a new machine was installed.[4] ...
> [and women were being allowed to work only] "the simplest types of lathes which are at present worked by first-year apprentices."[5]

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[1] Cen.Min.Lab.Supp.Ctee Memo No.39. 3 Nov.1915. BCM IV, No.39 folio 224.

[2] ibid.

[3] Report by J.Paterson in folder marked "Material supplied to the Minister before Tyne and Clyde visits"; Dec.1915. PRO. MUN.5/73.

[4] Underlined in original.

[5] Memo by J.Paterson, as above.

Even this Pyrrhic victory for dilution did not go very far; by mid-November,Paterson continued, 15 women had been started, and the men threatened to strike if any more women dilutees were introduced, and renewed their threat in December. Lang's was a test case for the employers:

> "no engineering firm in the district was willing to take the risk of upsetting its establishment by making similar proposals to the A.S.E;; and when they saw that the Ministry allowed the A.S.E. to dictate the terms of settlement in the Johnstone case, practically all interest in the question of dilution of labour evaporated - so far as the engineering employers in this district were concerned."[1]

The long drawn out struggle at Lang's over dilution thus had produced almost complete victory for the stay-put attitude of the men by the time of Lloyd George's visit, and had induced an attitude of truculent non-co-operation with the Ministry among the employers. Although it raised the issues which were to be the key to the struggle in the new year, it did not hold the centre of the stage in Glasgow while it was in progress. To the Ministry it was, of course, crucial, and the History of the Ministry of Munitions is the only printed source which gives it much coverage. Lang's was at no time under the control of the Clyde Workers' Committee; it was not a plant at which militants could channel craft conservatism into revolutionary agitation. The struggle at Lang's is therefore not discussed in the reminiscences of the leaders of the C.W.C. and thus by those whose accounts derive substantially from them.[2] During 1915, the militants were much more involved in the unrest at Fairfields shipyard, which centred not on the dilution but on the leaving certificate clauses of the 1915 Act, and it is to this that we must now turn.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Eg. R.K.Middlemas, "The Clydesiders", London 1965, Ch.3.
W.Kendall, "The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-21", London 1969, Ch.7.

We have already noted that the Ministry of Munitions failed to wrest control of the shipyards from the Admiralty. But as "controlled establishments" they were included in the sections of the Act dealing with labour and when labour unrest broke out it was the Ministry of Munitions which had to handle it.

One Admiralty observer claimed that Fairfield Shipyard, in Govan, was badly run:

> "Bad Time-Keeping.
> The Fairfield Company on the Shipbuilding side, are by a long way the worst time-keepers in the District. I believe it is due largely to methods of management."[1]

And once the dispute was under way Addison was to comment:

> "There is no doubt that the men have genuine grievances and that the management of the Fairfield Yard is very bad."[2]

It was, at any rate, at Fairfield that two strikes, themselves originating in trivial issues, broke out. On 27 July a number of coppersmiths struck over a demarcation dispute; on 26 August, the shipwrights struck against the allegedly unfair dismissal of two of their workmates for slacking. What gave this commonplace situation urgency and importance was that the men challenged the legitimacy of the leaving certificate system. By failing to give a man a clean certificate, the firm was victimising him, using a weapon provided by the Government for another purpose to settle petty scores. The weakness of the sanctions behind the Act was again shown up when the ringleaders were summoned before a General Munitions Tribunal and 17 of them were fined £10 each.[3] Matters remained quiet for a short time, until three of the men refused to pay and were imprisoned, whereat the Govan Trades

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[1]Report on the Working of the Munitions Act. Fortnight ended 11 September 1915. Captain Superintendent's Remarks. BCM III No.1.

[2]Addison, I, 142.

[3]HMM, IV, ii, 52-3.

Council urged a sympathetic strike. (Govan, though well within the Glasgow conurbation, was not incorporated into the city until 1912, and its Trades Council remained an independent body until it was amalgamated with the Glasgow Trades Council in 1918. At this time, led by Harry Hopkins, an A.S.E. militant, it was both more activist and more concerned with the engineers than the Glasgow Trades Council).

The Government took the threat very seriously,[1] especially when it was supplemented by gloomy reports from Paterson, the labour officer in Glasgow, on 2 October, and Isaac Mitchell on 11 October. Both reported that the men were in an angry mood, and especially aggrieved with Section 7 of the Act (the part dealing with leaving certificates). Mitchell added that an eviction decree against rent strikers might be enough to provoke a strike,

> "(b)ut the position might be saved if he could receive a telegram stating that such a man as Lord Balfour of Burleigh or Mr. Macassey had been appointed to enquire into the men's grievances."[2]

The Ministry acted quickly to appoint the two men suggested to "enquire into the causes and circumstances of the apprehended differences affecting munition workers in the Clyde District."[3] Before reporting, however, Balfour and Macassey announced that they were not competent to recommend the remision of the strikers' sentences. This provoked

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[1] A copy of the Govan Trades Council circular is in PRO: MUN 5/79 in a file dealing with the negotiations to release the prisoners.

[2] Quoted in HMM, IV, ii, 55. The original letters have not survived. The History of the Ministry of Munitions was compiled at great speed, using either records which had already been collected by archivists (which survive as PRO: MUN 5) or records at the time still extant in the Ministry which were destroyed by it or its successor departments. Footnote references in the H.M.M. to documents identified in the form, Hist.Rec. /R/xxx/x indicate material that has survived; references to documents named with an original registry number (M.W.xxxxx) can no longer be traced as the documents are destroyed (or, conceivably, buried in the as-yet uncatalogued boxes of PRO:MUN 4).

[3] HMM IV, ii, 56.

another storm. The Ministry received a telegram from

> "the members of the Executive Councils or District Committees of the 23 Trades Unions connected with the engineering and shipbuilding industry, representing 97,500 workmen in the Clyde Valley."[1]

which urged the remission of the sentences and demanded an answer within three days. (The officials in the industry had been convened by David Kirkwood "for the purpose of organising the prevailing opposition to the operations of the Act",[2] after a visit to Glasgow by Brownlie which Paterson described as "a bear garden").[3] A deputation from the signatories met Lloyd George, McKinnon Wood, and some national union officials which reached no agreement until Lloyd George proposed that the unions concerned should pay the fines.[4] This they did, to the mystification and annoyance of some militants, whose vicarious sacrifice was cut short.[5] In the more relaxed atmosphere that followed, the Balfour-Macassey Commission continued to take evidence and shortly issued its Report (Cd 8136). This argued that most of the differences which led to friction were not "disputes of definite principle under the ...Act" but merely indiscretion or inconsideration on one side or the other: much of the friction was caused by ignorance of the operation of the "leaving certificate" system by the men, or (more important) its exploitation and abuse by foremen and managements. The Committee made two recommendations of a more general kind:

> " 17... We have come to the conclusion that if there was some person of experience in industrial matters appointed by you(6) in the Clyde District to act as a mediator or conciliator, with possibly final power in minor matters accessible with a minimum of delay the great majority of the disputes we have

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[1] HMM IV,ii,58.

[2] Forward, 9 October 1915, p.4. See also Forward, 18 Sept. 1915.

[3] HMM, IV,ii,55.

[4] HMM, IV,ii,60.

[5] Forward, 6 Nov. 1915, p.8; T.Bell "John Maclean", Glas. 1944, p.36.

[6] The Minister of Munitions.

> inquired into would have been prevented, and those not wholly disposed of, localised in their effects.
> 18... "Finally we recommend that imprisonment should be abolished for non-payment of fines inflicted upon a workman by a Munitions Tribunal. In the event of non-payment by the workman of a fine inflicted upon him... the Tribunal should have jurisdiction to order the employer... to deduct... the total amount thereof from the workman's wages by weekly instalments prescribed by the Tribunal."[1]

The first of these recommendations showed the way for the appointment of the Dilution Commissioners, one of whom was Macassey himself. Although the Commission was to have more serious purposes, Macassey obviously enjoyed taking upon himself the role of shop-floor trouble-shooter. Later, when the Dilution Commission was at work, he thus described his activity after dilution schemes had been brought into use:

> "... from time to time thereafter /we/ fix and adjust immediately minor inequalities that emerge in the carrying into practice of the scheme... That course has avoided numerous strikes."[2]

He added that he personally had gone out to settle points "at all hours of the day and night."[3]

The second recommendation was one of a number considered by the ministry for incorporation into the Amending Bill which was being drafted at the time, and which became law as the Munitions of War (Amendment) Act in January 1916. A number of the Balfour-Macassey committee's recommendations were covered in the Ministry's draft amending bill, especially those relating to the reform of the leaving certificate system aimed at lessening the men's resentment of it. But action on paragraph 18 was not in the Ministry of Munitions' hands:

> "The decision to retain the power of imprisonment is a Cabinet decision".[4]

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[1] Cd 8136 pars.17-18. Printed as appendix to HMI,IV,ii - pp.110-111. Another copy, with Ministry notes, in PRO:MUN 5/73.

[2] PRO:MUN 5/73 Memorandum on the Progress of the Commission to effect Dilution on the Clyde 5 Feb. 1916.

[3] ibid.

[4] PRO:MUN 5/73. Notes relating Cd 8136 to proposals in the Amending Bill, December 1915.

When the Cabinet did decide to abolish imprisonment for non-payment, it did not adopt Balfour and Macassey's proposal to introduce attachment of earnings, which would have been a possible solution to the vexed problem of sanctions against breaches of the Munitions Act. Simultaneously, however, the Ministry was taking steps to strengthen its position vis-a-vis strikers, not through the Munitions Act, but through the Defence of the Realm regulations, an action which we shall examine below.

The impression given by the Ministry's handling of the Lang's and Fairfield affairs, as by Lloyd George's intervention in the rents dispute, was one of appeasement of the workers, and the Ministry did not lack critics from employers and other Government departments for its alleged softness. The most forthright critic among the employers was William Weir, who wrote to Addison on 8th October,

> "It is useless to enunciate a policy and then fail to support the carrying out of it... I must refuse to be associated with a lack of policy which is doing the greatest possible harm." [1]

and two months later reiterated these views in notes to Lloyd George, adding that the Ministry's present policy was "worse than futile."[2] Weir's view was shared by smaller employers. Their views were passed on in the sometimes plaintive memoranda sent in by Paterson, who found himself stymied between employers who refused to introduce dilution and unionists who would refuse to accept it. One employer wrote to him, flatly refusing to dilute

> "as long as the Trade Unions are permitted to flout the Government's instructions and treat their solemn engagements with the Government as so much waste paper.
>
> We can assure you in all seriousness that the fact of Trade Unions being allowed to carry out their policy and the delay on the part of the Government in bringing them to book for their action is having a most serious effect upon the labour question in this district."[3]

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[1] Quoted in document headed: "Criticism of methods of dilution: notes for Mr.Lloyd George by Mr. Weir, December 1915" MUN 5/73. This is probably the letter referred to by Addison in his diary entry for 11 October, quoted in Ch.3, p.46.

[2] ibid.

[3] Quoted by J.Paterson in Report to Minister, 18 December 1915. PRO:MUN 5/73.

Another employer wrote to his local labour exchange, which had offered him a batch of soldiers released from the colours, that his workmen had refused to work alongside them.

> "Our acceptance, therefore, of the men you have offered to us is subject to the Minister of Munitions making satisfactory arrangements with the Trade Union officials."[1]

Paterson had pleaded at a meeting of the North-West Engineering Trades Employers' Association for its members to dilute.

> "After I had spoken, the President of the Association made some very pointed remarks as to the employers in the district having no faith in the Ministry of Munitions' securing the removal of the restrictions which were understood to have been waived by the Munitions Act: and it was evident from the applause with which the President's statement was greeted, and the remarks of subsequent speakers, that he was voicing the general sentiment of the meeting." [2]

When he asked these employers to send him schemes of the dilution which could be introduced into their works, they agreed only if they remained identified solely by numbers, to which they refused Paterson the key, because otherwise

> "the returns would be made available to the National Labour Advisory Committee, which would transmit these to the local officials of the Trade Unions, who would then proceed to make matters as uncomfortable as possible for the employers who had had the courage to show in what way dilution could be achieved." [3]

The Ministry also received unsolicited advice on how to deal with the revolutionary militants. T.J.Macnamara, Parliamentary Secretary to the First Lord of the Admiralty, passed on to Lloyd George a letter from a Glasgow estate agent, Richard Williamson:

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[1] Quoted by Paterson in ibid.

[2] Report by Paterson to Lloyd George, as above.

[3] ibid.

> "A great deal of harm is being done by men who are speaking at street corners, in halls, and in all the munition districts on the Clyde, ... [saying that] as regards Trade Unionists now is the time to be out for "blood" and demand all the wages they can get - that now is the time to bring not only the masters, but the Government, to their knees.
>
> John McLean... is doing a tremendous amount of harm. He distinctly declares whenever he speaks that any man who joins the British Army is a hired assassin and a murderer.
>
> ...These men must be dealt with at once, Ben Tillett comes down here and makes patriotic speeches and gets hissed, while these men are getting big audiences and doing a great amount of mischief.
>
> Immediate attention is necessary.
>
> Yours faithfully
>
> (sgd) Richard Williamson
>
> PS. 'Forward', which I enclose, ought to be suppressed. It is doing incalculable harm."[1]

On his own account, Macnamara wrote to Lloyd George, in a memorandum headed "Private and Unofficial", that the defects of the Munitions Act had been "skilfully magnified by the small band of eager and tireless malcontents" on the Clyde.

> "They should be taken seriously in hand... Your office, our office, the War Office, the Home Office and the Scottish Office should confidentially advise their officers on the spot to keep an eye on the firebrands."[2]

Macnamara went on to advise Lloyd George to indicate his intentions to proceed under the Defence of the Realm Act against any strike or incitement to strike, if need be amending the Munitions Act or D.O.R.A. Finally, after endorsing the need for dilution, he pointed out wryly that the Advisory Committee had far less appeal among Clyde workmen than had the revolutionaries, and concluded,

> "On the one hand you must detach the men from them [the revolutionaries] by the sincerity of your administration in the direction of promptly meeting legitimate claims for the removal of grievances; on the other you must, if necessary, lay these gentlemen by the heels."[3]

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[1] R.Williamson to T.J.Macnamara, 27 October 1915. L.G.Papers D/17/13/2.

[2] Macnamara to Lloyd George, October 1915, L.G.Papers, D/17/13/3.

[3] Macnamara to Lloyd George, October 1915, as above.

The Ministry, in fact, came near to taking one opportunity to "lay these gentlemen by the heels" during 1915, but eventually, in spite of nagging by the Admiralty, it took no action. In late November, from at least four separate sources, it received copies of the C.W.C. manifesto "To All Clyde Workers" to which reference has been made[1]. The Admiralty's Captain Superintendent on the Clyde remarked,

> "The Committee proclaims its activities as a conspiracy against the law, and at the present time is undoubtedly traitorous.
>
> To obtain a reasonably smooth working of the Munitions Act this Committee should be smashed."[2]

Paterson, forwarding another copy, commented:

> "From a perusal of this leaflet... it seems very clear that this body is preparing for a big strike... and it is doing so in such an open manner in this leaflet that I think the two men[3] who have put their names to the paper render themselves liable to action under the Defence of the Realm Act or Regulations."[4]

Beveridge thought it would be "worthwhile" to try to prosecute the authors under D.O.R.A., and suggested that the Scots Law Officers should be consulted, to which Lloyd George added that he wanted the Attorney-General consulted "as to the likelihood of a prosecution succeeding."[5] Consulting the Scots Law Officers was a long-drawn-out business, since the Solicitor-General worked in Edinburgh and the Lord Advocate in London, and meanwhile Macnamara sent Addison a querulous note:

> "We sent over some days ago a leaflet from the Clyde Workers' Committee signed by a Mr.Messer and another - I think Mr.Gallagher. I really should like to know what, if anything, your people propose respecting that leaflet."[6]

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[1] Above, Ch.3.

[2] B.C.M. III No.15, folio 94.

[3] William Gallacher and James Messer.

[4] B.C.M. III No.15, folios 98-9.

[5] B.C.M. III No.15, p.102. L.G. may have meant the Lord Advocate; at any rate there is no trace of an Attorney-General's opinion in this file, which is otherwise very full.

[6] Macnamara to Addison, 1 December 1915. B.C.M.III, No.15, folio 101.

The Solicitor-General thought a prosecution under D.O.R. Regulation 42 would succeed, but the Lord Advocate said:

> "On the question of law.. I am disposed to share the view of the Solicitor-General though I must own that I do not hold it with such confidence as he."[1]

The subsequent history of the proposal is traced by four subsequent notes all on the same piece of paper pinned to the law officers' reports:

1) Beveridge to Llewellyn Smith: "I am sorry that by an accident the paper had been mislaid for a few days over the Christmas holidays." 30.12.15.

2) Llewellyn Smith to /?/ Addison: "I think active steps ought to be taken to deal with these people" 1.1.16.

3) Addison to Lloyd George 5.1.16:
"In view of the Lord Advocate's very qualified opinion, the lapse of time, your visit and the amending Bill I cannot advise you to authorise a prosecution in this matter."

4) Addision to Llewellyn Smith 5.1.16.
"I have seen Mr. Lloyd George and he agrees with me."[2]

The response of the Ministry seems certainly to have been extremely dilatory. Perhaps the delay was simply a reaction to the nagging Addison and his civil service subordinates had been receiving from the Admiralty and employers; or possibly (though the chapter of minor accidents recorded on the final minute-sheet makes this unlikely) it was a matter of policy to ca' canny in dealing with the C.W.C. The simplest explanation for the dilatory response, however, is that the government, and in particular Lloyd George, had much more important things on hand than the C.W.C. Lloyd George must have been far too preoccupied with the conscription crisis in December 1915 and January 1916 to bother about such a minor aspect of the Clydeside affair. The leaflet had been overtaken by bigger things, even on Clydeside, before it was finally decided to take no action.

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[1] Note by Robert Munro, Lord Advocate, 16 December 1915. B.C.M. III No.15, folio 106.

[2] B.C.M. III No.15, folio 104.

The only positive steps taken by the Ministry during 1915 towards securing the imposition of dilution on Clydeside were the continued attrition by conference of the A.S.E.; the amendment of Defence of the Realm Regulation 42; and the planning of Lloyd George's visit to Glasgow. (The first of these will be discussed at the beginning of Chapter 6). As has already been stressed, the weakness of the Munitions Act most strongly felt in the Ministry was the failure of any effective sanction if a strike took place, and the failure of the Act, pinpointed in Wallace's letter to Lloyd George,[1] was the lack of provision for proceedings against those who, not being munitions workers themselves, incited munitions workers to strike. To meet this difficulty, it was at first intended to introduce the following clause on incitement to the Munitions of War (Amendment) Bill:

> "If any person commits or attempts to commit or procures or attempts to procure or aids and abets the commission of any act which is an offence under the principal Act he shall be guilty of an offence under the principal Act."[2]

It was thought, however, that this would cause such widespread opposition that the Bill as a whole would be held up for it, and therefore the desired regulation was slipped in as an amendment to Defence of the Realm Regulation 42. This procedure was contemplated by Addison without any qualms:

> "We have drafted an amendment of the Defence of the Realm Regulations to suit the occasion, if trouble really arises."[3]

The amendment expanded Regulation 42 by the addition of the words underlined:

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[1] Above, Ch.3.

[2] H.L.D. IV,ii, 81.

[3] Addison, I, p.135.

> "If any person attempts to cause mutiny, sedition, or disaffection among any of His Majesty's forces or among the civil population, or to impede, delay, or restrict the production, repair or transport of war material or any other work necessary for the successful prosecution of the war, he shall be guilty of an offence under these Regulations." [1]

This regulation was brought into force on November 30th. A Ministry memorandum, discussing it, notes:

> "A regulation has been made making incitement to strike on all work essential to the prosecution of the war an offence under the Defence of the Realm Act. Clause 5 of the Bill takes away the power to imprison for general munition tribunal offences."[2]

Thus the abolition of imprisonment was to be offered as a sop to ease the passage of the Amending Bill. However, the memorandum just quoted shows that the Ministry, like its radical opponents, linked the questions of imprisonment under the Munitions Acts and the extension of D.O.R.A. When the Munitions Bill came to be debated in the Commons on 4th January 1916, radicals complained bitterly that the Government was taking away with one hand what it was giving with the other. In the debate on Clause 5 of the Bill, a Radical, W.F.Roch, complained that the new D.O.R. Regulation gave the Minister far more comprehensive powers of arrest and imprisonment than those he was preparing to abandon in the new Bill. Lloyd George initially refused to discuss the issue, on the grounds that it was the Act and not the Regulation that was before the House, but on being pressed he explained:

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[1]Quoted in H.E., IV, ii, 81.

[2]Notes on proposed amendments to Munitions of War (Amendment) Bill n.d., unsigned and fragmentary. B.C.M. III No.5, folio 20.

> "The workman who turns up late, or breaks regulations, or commits a breach of discipline is dealt with under the Munitions Act, but the cases referred to under the Order in Council are those in which there is incitement to mutiny to prevent workmen doing their best to assist in the production of munitions..... these regulations... are intended to deal with the man who deliberately goes about with the intention and in order to interfere with the output of munitions." [1]

In spite of the fact that W.C.Anderson wrote regularly for Forward during 1915 on the progress of munitions legislation, the Scottish socialist press seems not to have noticed the extension of Regulation 42 at all. It is certainly true that the Forward was exceptionally chary of making any comment at all for fear of prosecution, but others were not so cautious, and it cannot have been an offence merely to mention the existence of the addition to Regulation 42. Ironically, the first time the new powers were mentioned was in Lloyd George's defence, only six days after the debate discussed above, of his action in the suppression of the Forward.[2] They were also a substantial aid in the move against the leadership of the C.W.C. in March 1916, and were required for the second trial of John Maclean in the same month.

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[1] H of C Hansard 5s., vol.77, col.878-881.

[2] H of C Hansard 5s., vol.77, col.1404.

Chapter 5

Lloyd George's Visit and the Suppression of the Forward

The other part of the counter-attack which was planned in 1915 was Lloyd George's visit to Glasgow. The initiative for such a visit came from the Central Munitions Labour Supply Committee. An ad hoc sub-committee on Dilution of Labour recommended:

> "that the Minister should be requested to initiate a campaign in certain districts in favour of the scheme. The districts suggested are Sheffield, Newcastle and Glasgow".[1]

The report went on to outline a day's suggested itinerary for the Minister, spending the forenoon in getting the employers interested in the scheme, visiting the works to show the men his interest in the afternoon, and meeting union officials and shop stewards in the evening. This was followed by a letter to Lloyd George from Henderson in his capacity as chairman of the Committee:

> "The Labour Supply Committee is exceedingly anxious that you should arrange to visit Sheffield and Newcastle, and if possible Glasgow at an early date for the purpose of promulgating the scheme for the dilution of skilled labour by semi-skilled and women....I am to urge the importance of your consenting to address the first conference and of fixing immediately any dates convenient to yourself so that the conference may at once be properly organised." [2]

In the event, Lloyd George did not visit Sheffield, but his real reason for visiting Glasgow was certainly concern over the worsening deadlock over dilution there, which we have detailed in the preceding two chapters. A bundle of material was prepared in the Ministry for him to use as background information for his visit;[3] It includes the

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[1]Memorandum of C.M.L.S.C. no.22, n.d. /Oct.1915?/. B.C.M. IV,no.22, folio 130.
[2]Henderson to Lloyd George, 22 October 1915: B.C.M. IV, no.32, folio 173.
[3]PRO: MUN 5/73.

long memorandum by Paterson on the impossibility of achieving dilution in Glasgow, from which we have already quoted, and also a note by Macassey which goes over some of the same ground, stressing also the grievances over leaving certificates which he and Lord Balfour had encountered in their enquiry and urging some diplomatic means of getting rid of troublemakers. In the first of several suggestions along similar lines which were to be made by various people during the subsequent three months, Macassey recommended Lloyd George

> "to appoint those two or three local Trade Union officials whom I can name if necessary to some official post remote from Clydeside where their activities, which are immense, could be controlled and diverted to the useful service of their country. It would be impossible to obtain sufficient evidence to dispose of them under the Defence of the Realm Act. Even if possible, their prosecution in the present state of mind of the workmen would be attributed unto them for righteousness sake, and would produce an industrial revolution on the Clyde".[1]

Lloyd George went to the Tyne on December 21st, and to the Clyde on the 23rd. On the Clyde, however, the expendition was badly organised. Lloyd George had arranged to meet local union committee members on December 23rd, but by changing the date to Christmas Day without consulting them he offended them, and they voted to take no part in the proceedings.[2] The Glasgow Trades Council was even more offended, and recorded in an unusually lively minute:

> "A discussion followed on the Lloyd George meeting to be held on Thursday 23rd December and the manner in which this meeting was called, the Council being ignored in the matter. It was moved by Mr. Heenan that Council take no notice of this meeting. Amendment moved by Mr. Jas Walker that we protest against the manner in which this meeting had been called. No fault should be found with the /Engineering and/ Shipbuilding Trades(;) he was quite certain that the fault lay with the Ministry of Munitions. Mr.Shinwell supported the Amendment, and said that in his opinion the only way to counteract the people who were responsible for this meeting was to use plenty of ridicule.

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[1] PRO: MUN 5/73.

[2] H.L.M. IV, iv, 103. "Forward" 1 January 1916, p.5.

> "He believed they were officials and the Government guided by their so-called experts. We were asked to welcome Lloyd George as a prophet and Arthur Henderson was coming to allay any opposition among Trade Unionists. He hoped the Trade Unions would give these people the welcome they deserved. To protest was carried by a large majority". [1]

Lloyd George and his party in fact held three meetings. On December 23rd they went to Parkhead, and spoke to a meeting of shop stewards chaired by David Kirkwood.[2] On December 24th they met a number of the leaders of the Clyde Workers' Committee, whose demands were presented by John Muir.[3] And on December 25th, the mass meeting was held in St. Andrew's Hall.

It had been planned to have the issue of tickets controlled by members of trade union executives.[4] But this plan was frustrated by the doubly chaotic outcome of events: some unions agreed officially to take part[5] but most stood by their earlier decision not to. The Clyde Workers' Committee for its part decided, in the absence of its chairman Gallacher, to reverse its previous policy and take over a batch of the tickets. Gallacher quotes the explanation given by Sam Bunton, the District Secretary of the A.S.E. and one of his colleagues on the Allied Trades Committee, to Murray of Elibank (who was a member of the Lloyd George party):

> "'My Lord'. A pause, then pointing a finger at me, 'This man has been repudiated by his own colleagues'... 'While he was at our meeting last night getting us to turn down the Lloyd George meeting, his own committee met in the Central Hall and decided to carry on with it. A group of them came round to our hall this morning and took away the tickets.'"[6]

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[1] T.C.M. 22 December 1915.

[2] Kirkwood, p.104-109. Forward, 1 January 1916, p.5; Worker, 8 January 1916.

[3] Worker, 8 January 1916; H.M.M. IV, iv, 103-5.

[4] Gallacher, pp.81-82.

[5] Forward, 1 January 1916, p.5, col.1.

[6] Gallacher, p.88.

Gallacher was thus a victim of his own dual position as Chairman of the C.W.C. and a member of the Allied Trades district committee: while he successfully forced the latter to take one decision, his own committee met and moved in the opposite direction. The confusion within the C.W.C. was thus scarcely less than in any of the other bodies involved. The C.W.C. had originally intended to boycott Lloyd George altogether. On the 23rd December his party visited Weir's at Cathcart, and Gallacher's own factory of Albion Motors, but the shop stewards refused to see him. As the Forward reported in terms of which Gallacher can scarcely have approved,

> "The men at Weir's declined to listen to him, preferring to get on with the production of munitions."[1]

But Parkhead broke ranks. Any revolutionary egalitarianism that David Kirkwood might have possessed was tempered by a large dose of snobbery, or (to put it more generously) pardonable self-esteem at the way in which he was accustomed to deal on equal terms with Sir William Beardmore.[2] He was clearly so delighted at receiving a telegraphed summons from Lloyd George addressed to

> David Kirkwood,
> Parkhead Forge,
> Glasgow.

and asking the Parkhead shop stewards to meet Lloyd George that he agreed with relish, and took the opportunity to upbraid Lloyd George because

> "the Munitions Act had bound the workers to Beardmore as completely as if it had branded 'B' on their brows".[3]

Thus at this stage Kirkwood's main concern was to express the men's resentment at the leaving certificate provisions of the Act, whose

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[1]Forward, 1 January 1916, p.5.

[2]Kirkwood, p.94.

[3]Kirkwood, p.109; Forward,1 January 1916, p.5.

abolition, as we have seen, had already been recommended by Balfour and Macassey in their report on the Fairfield dispute. The Ministry had accepted the recommendation, which was to be put before the Commons only a week later in the Amending Bill. Only as a secondary theme did Kirkwood go on to talk about dilution, to which he emphasised that the workers were not opposed in principle:

> "They as Socialists welcomed dilution of labour, which they regarded as the natural development in industrial conditions. They were not like the Luddites of another generation, who smashed the new machinery. But this scheme of dilution must be carried out under the control of the workers."[1]

Then, according to Kirkwood's account,[2] it was at his behest that Lloyd George agreed to hold the Christmas Day meeting, and compensate the men for loss of pay. (Christmas Day was not, of course, a holiday in Scotland in 1915, nor for many years afterwards). Kirkwood was asked to organise the meeting: "I went back to the shop stewards, and we agreed to have the meeting".[3] If this account is accurate, then clearly Kirkwood and Gallacher were set on opposite courses, and Kirkwood won. At this stage there can be no final judgment; but it is probable that Kirkwood's account does represent an exaggerated version of the truth, namely that he, having initially broken ranks by agreeing to see Lloyd George, was then responsible for the volte-face in C.W.C. policy in the absence of Gallacher.

(The account in the suppressed issue of Forward makes it clear that Lloyd George had already decided to hold a meeting on Christmas Day and compensate the men for loss of pay before he met Kirkwood, so that Kirkwood does more than justice to himself in suggesting in his account that he was actually responsible for the meeting being held at all).

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[1] Forward, 1 January 1916, p.5. Kirkwood's views on dilution are examined in more detail in Ch.9 below.

[2] Kirkwood, p.111.

[3] Kirkwood, p.111.

Kirkwood was the outsider in the C..C., with a principality of his own, and the only I.L.P. member in a committee of British Socialist Party and Socialist Labour Party members. On political matters, he was very strongly influenced, even manipulated, by Wheatley:

> "Wheatley exercised a strong influence over Kirkwood, a strange phenomenon of the Calvinist succumbing to the Jesuit".1

This was the view of Thomas Bell, who was particularly hostile because Wheatley had poached Kirkwood from the S.L.P. of which Bell was the leading member, and it is supplemented by the account by John McGovern of the events of December 23rd:

> "On the way home he told John Wheatley and me the full story of the Lloyd George episode. Wheatley became interested, and asked Kirkwood to write it up for publication in 'Forward'. Davie said, 'I could not write it up, as I am no penman'. Wheatley asked him to come to his house the following evening, and he would take full notes of the whole affair, and then he (Wheatley) would write an article for 'Forward'. The article duly appeared, and Davie Kirkwood became a national leader overnight. Wheatley wrote his articles, his speeches, and decided on meetings and conferences at which Davie would appear".2

The events of Christmas Day were perhaps less enduringly important, though much more dramatic, than those of the previous two days. Arthur Henderson spoke to the crowd, talking first about the violation of the neutrality of a brave and independent people ("Oh heavens, how long have we to suffer this?... That's enough")3 and then about the presence of union officials on the Ministry's dilution committee - the Chairman of the A.S.E. (Booing and hissing), Kaylor ("Away with him") and Miss Macarthur ("Miss Macarthur's the best man o' the lot"). He appealed for a hearing

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1 Bell, Pioneering Days, p.98.

2 J. McGovern, "Neither Fear nor Favour", London 1960, p.43. McGovern was a member of the Shettleston I.L.P., who succeeded Wheatley as member for the constituency in 1930.

3 All comments in brackets are reported interruptions taken from the account in the suppressed issue of 'Forward', 1 January 1916, p.5.

for Lloyd George in the name of freedom of speech ("What about the action of the Glasgow Magistrates? You've made a bloomer that time, Arthur!" Great commotion).

Lloyd George's speech was in part drowned altogether by the commotion, although Kirkwood at one point appealed for a hearing for him. Much of his speech, as released in the official text, could not be heard by those at the meeting. He stressed that the new National munitions factories were "great Socialist factories" (Violent interruption); he appealed to the men through their loyalty to "one of my greatest personal friends", Ramsay MacDonald; in his peroration on the need for dilution, he stressed that "the responsibility of a Minister of the Crown in a great war is not an enviable one" ("The money's good", and laughter) and that attempts to hold up the progress of dilution were "haggling with an earthquake". The meeting broke up in disorder after Muir had tried to make a statement on behalf of the C.W.C. John Maclean subsequently wrote that he had been largely responsible for organising the disorder at this meeting for revolutionary purposes. Given the poor relations between Maclean and the C.W.C., which we discuss in Chapter 9, this seems a somewhat unreliable claim.

The aftermath of the meeting is well known. The Press Bureau authorised the publication of an official report, and in the course of a general instruction on the handling of the Lloyd George visit emphasised that only the official report of the meeting should be carried:

> "It is understood that a Trade Union Meeting was held in that Town /Glasgow/ today..... It is particularly requested that no account of that meeting should be published other than a general statement that the meeting was held.
>
> The reason for this request is that at that meeting many things may have been said the publication of which is not desirable in the national interest.
>
> Mr. Lloyd George will address a meeting in Glasgow tomorrow and it is particularly requested that no report other than the authorised version of his speech should be published. Should

> any disturbance occur at or in the neighbourhood of the meeting the Press are earnestly requested to refrain from publishing any reference to it".[1]

The official report of the meeting was made by a Press Association reporter, and circulated to the papers which subscribed to that association. This report stated,

> "At the outset attempts to disturb the proceedings were made and there was a good deal of interruption and some singing of 'The Red Flag' by Syndicalists present and a small section who were apparently opposed to the war. The interrupters were, however, in a distinct minority, and the meeting was on the whole good humoured".[2]

Forward was not a subscriber to the Press Association: and it did not receive Press Bureau circulars for reasons which become sufficiently obvious on reading the one just quoted. So it received neither the request nor the report, and it printed an account of the meeting taken down by its own shorthand reporter, who had been present. Introducing this report, Thomas Johnston, the editor, wrote,

> "We have no desire to touch the military or 'preparedness' side of the speech, but the purely political side must not go unrepresented. It is simply stupid to go about deluding people that only an insignificant minority, and not the vast overwhelming majority of the meeting, was angry and the journalist, whoever he was, who drew up the report and omitted the political references to Ramsay MacDonald and the efforts of the Socialists to secure a hearing for Mr.George, is really not playing a patriotic part".[3]

At a meeting at the Ministry of Munitions, held on 31st December 1915, and attended by Lloyd George, Addison, Llewellyn Smith, Rey[4] and Beveridge, it was decided "provisionally" to suppress the Forward,[5] and

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[1]Press Bureau Notice 7.25p.m., 24 December 1915, PRO: MUN 5/70.

[2]The report is carried by, e.g. Glasgow Herald, 27.12.1915.

[3]Forward, 1 January 1916, p.5.

[4]C.F.Rey, an assistant secretary in the Labour Department of the Ministry.

[5]H.M.M. IV, iv, p.111.

the procedure was worked out after a meeting in Edinburgh between Paterson, the Lord Advocate, and General Sir Spencer Ewart (the G.O.C. Scotland).[1] Answering questions in the Commons on 4th January, H.J. Tennant, the Under-Secretary for War, said that the Forward had been suppressed under Regulation 27 of the Defence of the Realm Regulations:

> "No person shall spread false reports or make false statements or reports or statements likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty".[2]

Both Tennant and Lloyd George, who spoke later after a flurry of angry supplementaries had left Tennant non-plussed, stressed that the Forward had been deliberately encouraging restriction in the production of munitions.[3]

On a request from W.H.R. Pringle, Asquith, who averred that this was the first he had heard of the matter,[4] agreed to consider granting an adjournment debate. This took place on January 10th, and Lloyd George gave a vigorous defence of his action. He escaped from the debate not entirely unscathed by his Radical and Labour critics, but no Parliamentary action followed. In due course after Johnston had given an undertaking to publish nothing which might cause

> "disaffection with the Munitions of War Acts, or with the policy of dilution of labour".[5]

he was allowed to resume publication. In the first issue after the suppression, he printed the above guarantee, and continued,

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[1] H.M.M. IV, iv, p.111.

[2] Quoted in PRO: MUN 5/70 "Notes on the Suppression of Forward", initialled W.H.B.

[3] H of C Hansard, 5s., v.77, cols.801-804.

[4] H of C Hansard loc cit., col.804.

[5] Forward, 5 February 1916, p.5.

> "It was that or nothing, and being Scots we took that. So all our readers and contributors - and especially contributors - will understand that our defence of the working class of this country must henceforth partake of the nature of rearguard action".[1]

Why was the Forward suppressed? Four sorts of explanation might be given. There was, firstly the official case - or rather, the two official cases, for there was little in common between the case against the Forward prepared at the Ministry of Munitions and that expounded by Lloyd George at the adjournment debate on 10th January. Secondly, there is the argument which has often been put forward since the incident, that the whole business ought to be attributed to Lloyd George's pique at the blow to his self-esteem caused by such an unflattering report. In the third place, the argument has recently been advanced by Terence Brotherstone in the first article to be devoted specifically to the incident[2] that it can be ascribed in part to the campaign by the Government against the revolutionary socialists of the Clyde Workers' Committee. Finally, it might be argued that the affair was less a conspiracy than a succession of minor blunders. These views will be examined in turn.

Between the 4th and 10th January, Beveridge was asked, and agreed "not very enthusiastically"[3] to prepare a brief to justify Lloyd George's decision. This was supplemented by an unsigned memorandum detailing "Points likely to be made against the Minister".[4] Beveridge's notes recommended procedure under DOR Regulation 27. But the speech made by Lloyd George in defence of his action, for which rough notes survive in

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[1] Ibid.

[2] T.Brotherstone, "The Suppression of the Forward", Scottish Labour History Society Journal, no.1, May 1969, pp.5-23.

[3] W.Beveridge, "Power and Influence" (London 1953), p.133.

[4] The principal memoranda, all in PRO: MUN 5/70, are "Notes on the Suppression", initialled WHB. "Regulations under which the Forward was suppressed", initialled W.H.B. and "Points likely to be made against the Minister", unsigned.

the Lloyd George papers,[1] relied very little on Beveridge's brief. It passed very briefly over Regulation 27, but dwelt instead upon the new Regulation 42.

It has often been stressed that the case against the Forward was weak. This was surely so under either of the two DOR Regulations. After citing the text of Regulation 27[2] Beveridge remarked,

> "It will be seen that this Regulation clearly covers not only false reports but also true reports if they are 'likely to cause disaffection etc.'" [3]

It was no doubt sensible of Lloyd George not to base his apologia on this argument, which would have caused a catastrophically bad impression on the Commons and the public. But the grounds for making any reference to Regulation 42 were even weaker. The first suggestion that it might be used had come from the Solicitor General, who thought that a case against the report of the Christmas Day speech might be made under this article. But this had been a poor case, relying, for instance, on the "tone of the Editorial on page 5" and the implications of the headline "Mr. Lloyd George does not speak on Munitions Act". The Solicitor-General concluded that Forward might be indicted by

> "maintaining that the tenor of the comments and reports of the Minister's proceedings in the Clyde were calculated to impair the authority of the Minister of Munitions and to undermine the operation of the statute in a dangerous and insidious manner, contrary to article 42 of the Defence of the Realm Regulation". [4]

But Beveridge argued,

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[1] D/27/1

[2] See above p. 75.

[3] PRO: MUN 5/70 "Notes on the Suppression".

[4] The preceding quotations in this paragraph are from PRO: MUN 5/70. Note by T.B.Morison [Solicitor General] on the suppression forwarded by Mr. Munro [Lord Advocate] 9 January 1916.

> "I think, however, it is in fact very doubtful whether any such attempt to impede or delay can fairly be proved against "Forward". There is no doubt of the thoroughly harmful effects of Forward. It is not so easy to show harmful intention".[1]

And in his brief describing the conduct of the paper in general he added:

> "it must be said at once that there is practically nothing that can be described as deliberately seditious any more, indeed, than the article in the suppressed issue can fairly be described as deliberately seditious. The 'Forward' apart from tendencies to describe all wars as capitalist conspiracies does not appear anywhere as an anti-war paper."[2]

This fact was perfectly well known to the Ministry and their local officials, and even to military intelligence, whom later evidence suggests to have been more prone to accepting revolutionaries at their own valuation than anyone else.

> "The Chief Constable and Detective Superintendent confirmed the impression that Johnston the editor of 'Forward' does not belong to the dangerous section of Glasgow socialists... this attitude has caused some of his former followers to desert him and support the "Socialist" for the purpose of expressing more advanced views".[3]

Although Lloyd George stated that he had received information about the Forward early in November, but had been loth to prosecute,[4] there is no evidence that the information consisted of anything other than the letter from Williamson passed on by Macnamara which we have quoted.[5]

Lloyd George also pointed out that the military authorities had been collecting quotation from Forward, but none of them[6] were used in his speech, for the adequate reason that they were perfectly innocuous.

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[1] PRO: MUN 5/70: "Regulations under which Forward was suppressed".

[2] PRO: MUN 5/70: Notes on the Suppression.

[3] Notes from Intelligence Officer Glasgow to Lt.Col.Levita, General Staff Scottish Command. PRO: MUN 5/70.

[4] H of C Hansard, 5s., vol.77, Col.1417.

[5] Above, p.61.

[6] From the large collection in PRO: MUN 5/70.

The Scottish Office also had had dealings with the Forward on two occasions, both the result of complaints from members of the public.

On the first occasion, in 1914, a complaint was levied against the paper's "sustained campaign against recruiting". It was handed to the Advocate Depute, who pronounced the following opinion:

> "...Scurrilous and offensive as are many of the statements made, they cannot in the opinion of the Advocate Depute be regarded as treasonable or seditious, or as constituting an offence under the Defence of the Realm Act and Regulations or under the Army Act... There is no incitement to obstruct or defeat the policy of the Government... At most there is only offensive and bitter criticism... In contrast however to the tone of most of the articles published, contributions from Mr.Barnes MP and other articles of an entirely unobjectionable character appear in certain issues in favour of the prosecution of the war to an end.
>
> In the whole circumstances the A.D. would suggest that there is no ground for the institution of criminal proceedings and that any action by criminal or other authorities would only serve to secure notoriety and advertisement for the newspaper without any corresponding public advantage."[1]

The next complaint to come in against the Forward in May 1915 was dealt with much more summarily. The Principal Secretary at the Scottish Office minuted:

> "it doesn't seem worth while sending this to the L/ord/ A/dvocate/. This isn't a bad number. Put up?"

which the Secretary for Scotland endorsed:

> "Yes, nothing v. bad here".[2]

So far from deliberately impeding munitions production - the offence dealt with by the expanded Regulation 42 - the Forward had, by refusing

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[1]Advocate Depute's opinion on 'Foward' socialist newspaper. 8 October 1914. Scottish Record Office: HH 31/5 File 25478/250.

[2]Scottish Record Office: HH 31/5 No. 25478/3791 20-21, May 1915.

even to report strikes until they were over, kept well clear of any serious risk of prosecution. This was well known to every department concerned, even if it did not occur to enraged middle-class individuals who wrote in to complain. It follows that the case for the suppression was weak. The case compiled in the Ministry was feeble enough, in all conscience, but it was discarded by Lloyd George in favour of a tissue of distortions, innuendoes and lies whose sheer enormity ought to be given due credit. Beveridge, who was called in from the pantomime to listen to it, called it:

> "a Parliamentary triumph exceeding in dexterity the trick cycling which I had just seen at Drury Lane." [1]

To prove that the Forward had committed an offence under Regulation 42 by deliberately trying to restrict the production of munitions was quite a task, even for Lloyd George, and he used several stratagems. He included, in his case against Forward, a number of quotations from John Maclean's Vanguard, advance proofs of which had been found at the office of the Forward's printers. A note in Lloyd George's handwriting among the rough notes says "same ground - same steps".[2] But as Beveridge recalled,

> "The impression he left on my memory was that of defending the suppression of one paper in the main by attacking another paper."[3]

Lloyd George went on to note a "very savage attack upon the British monarchy"[4] written in the Forward by Morrison Davidson. But the author was an elderly woollyminded apocalyptic Liberal Home Ruler whose occasional appearances in Forward represented a link with the paper's

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[1] Beveridge, op.cit., p.133.

[2] Lloyd George papers D/27/1.

[3] Beveridge op.cit., p.133.

[4] H of C Hansard 5s., v.77, Col.1404.

Home Rule origins[1] rather than its industrial readership, and in any case the article's "main point had been to suggest that the Kaiser was mad."[2] Next Lloyd George quoted "one of the most insidious and dangerous appeals to the working classes not to recruit which I have ever read".[3] This was a dialogue from the Forward of 25th December between a workman and an employer which Lloyd George totally distorted by turning the employer into a canvasser for the Derby recruiting scheme.[4] Finally, he pointed out that the Forward itself did not care for the freedom of the press, and quoted the following doctored extract to prove his point:

> "We weep no tears for the fall of the 'Globe'.
> We laugh at the fiery 'slosh' penned about the
> freedom of the Press...."[5]

This was simply to turn the truth upside down. What the Forward had actually said was:

> "We weep no tears for the fall of the 'Globe': as
> the 'Globe' We laugh at the fiery 'slosh' penned
> about the freedom of the Press."[6]

- the argument being that, however despicable the Globe might be, and however hypocritical its friends, nevertheless the freedom of the Press was something too valuable to discard. Johnston pointed this out in an angry letter to the Glasgow Herald :

> "Will it be believed that this /the quotation read out by Lloyd George/ is the first half of a sentence carefully extracted from two paragraphs protesting against the seizure of the 'Globe'?" [7]

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[1] See T.Johnston, "Memories", London 1952, pp.32-33.

[2] Brotherstone, art.cit., p.15.

[3] H of C Hansard 5s., v.77, col.1404 & 5.

[4] Brotherstone, art.cit., p.16; see also Johnston's mightily aggrieved defence of himself in 'Forward', February 5th, 1916.

[5] Quoted in H of C Hansard, 5s., v.77, col.1413.

[6] MS copy in 'Notes on the Suppression'. PRO: MUN 5/70.

[7] Glasgow Herald, 12 January 1916.

On several counts, therefore, the official case against the Forward does not carry much conviction. This is true of the Ministry's brief, but it is still more true of the defence of his conduct offered by Lloyd George. It has therefore been traditionally assumed that, in spite of Lloyd George's strenuous denials, the suppression of the Forward was due to a fit of pique at its report of his speech. Indeed, one of the stronger exponents of this view was the History of the Ministry of Munitions:

> "a more generous confidence in the good sense of the British public would have been a wiser policy and more consonant with the traditions of the British Government."[1]

- and this criticism is the more striking, given the official nature of that publication. Most modern authorities have assumed straightforwardly that the suppression was purely and simply a reaction to the speech

> "The Minister of Munitions first addressed a mass meeting in the St.Andrew's Hall on Christmas Day, but in that chill un-Christian assembly Lloyd George's Welsh wizardry for once fell completely flat - so flat, indeed, that the press was prohibited from publishing any report of the meeting save a small official hand-out. For printing a full and circumstantial account, the Glasgow socialist weekly, "Forward", was suppressed."[2]

Mr. Brotherstone does not deny the importance of this, but he adds that there was an ulterior purpose:

> "the facts which can be established do seem to point to an interpretation concerned to stress the tactical struggle between the government and the real 'troublemakers' on the Clyde - those who sought to defend the workers' interests against the imposition of the employers' version of dilution. In this struggle the 'Forward' was no more than a pawn. Whatever their initial intentions, the men at the Ministry of Munitions, by giving Johnston's paper an aura of martyrdom, helped to divert attention from the serious business in hand, the defeat of the Clyde Workers' Committee."[3]

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[1] H.M.M. IV, iv, 114.

[2] A.Marwick, "The Deluge", London 1965, p.73.

[3] T.Brotherstone, art.cit., p.18.

It may be that a judicious selection of facts that can be established point to such an interpretation. But other facts, contained both inside and outside the Ministry of Munitions papers, would appear to point more firmly in other directions.

The Ministry of Munitions had already had one chance to attack the C.W.C. - over the leaflet "To All Clyde Workers".[1] Not only did it have a chance, but it was attacked from within Whitehall for not taking it up; nevertheless, for whatever reason, it took no action. There could scarcely have been a more effective way of attacking the C.W.C. It seems perverse, therefore to suggest that the suppression of the Forward, which had no direct connection with the C.W.C., was aimed at that body. If the suppression of the Forward was part of a plot against the C.W.C. why did the Ministry suppress a paper the C.W.C. did not support,[2] and not suppress a paper the C.W.C. did support - its own journal, the Worker? The Worker of 8th January reprinted Forward's report of the Christmas Day meeting in toto, but it was not suppressed for this, although a copy is in the Ministry archives. As the official history notes, "the first three numbers did not bring the paper within the grasp of the law".[3] It is true that the authorities did suppress the Vanguard which was a militant paper. It is also true that they came upon the

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[1] See above, pp.62-63.

[2] See 'Worker' 8th January 1916; Brotherstone, art.cit., p.16.

[3] H.M.M. IV, iv, 123. Of course, no problem is involved if one accepts Lloyd George's argument that it was not for this report that 'Forward was suppressed: but some of the obstacles in the way of accepting it have been pointed out, and Mr.Brotherstone does not accept it. The great bulk of the case made out in the Ministry against Forward was against this report: it was because of this report that action was originally taken: the other offences mentioned by Lloyd George were almost all dreamed up by himself. If the authorities had really wanted to suppress the Worker, the grounds on which they suppressed the Forward would have done.

Vanguard purely by accident, as it was being printed by the Civic Press, the associate company of the Forward which printed it as well as doing commercial and trade union printing. The suppression of the Forward was decided on before it was raided;[1] that of Vanguard not until afterwards.

> "It is urged that this paper /Vanguard/ should be forthwith suppressed as its advanced proofs were found on the premises of a paper already suppressed and indicate a more advanced attack on diluted labour etc. On grounds of consistency alone, it would be undesirable to leave 'Vanguard' alone as it weakens the justification of the suppression of the 'Forward'".[2]

The date of the military warrant, suppressing the Vanguard was not until January 8th.[3]

Mr. Brotherstone would also like to see the Press Bureau incident as part of the campaign against the C.W.C.

> "/it was/ the more remarkable that the 'Forward' should not have received the Press Bureau's instructions about the St.Andrew's Hall meeting (which Johnston would presumably have obeyed) and that the incident of the suppression should have occurred at all.....it is impossible to say definitely what was improvised, what planned; to say, for example, whether the Press Bureau's oversight was deliberate or not."[4]

Whatever it was, it was certainly not an oversight. Beveridge saw that

> "the only weak point in the case /for proceeding against Forward under Regulation 27/ is that the Press Bureau Notice requesting that no account of the meeting be published other than the official report (apparently on principle) was not sent to the Forward so that they had no official warning against publication".[5]

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[1] H.M.M. IV, iv, p.111.

[2] Notes from Intelligence Officer...Particulars of Vanguard, n.d. PRO: MUN 5/70. The raid took place on 3rd January.

[3] Preserved in Maclean Papers, National Library of Scotland.

[4] Brotherstone, art.cit., pp.12 and 18.

[5] Suppression of Forward, init. W.H.B. PRO: MUN 5/70.

Of course, the Press Bureau never sent their notices to Forward:

> "the Press Bureau feel that they cannot safely send their confidential instructions to that paper" [1]

and a glance at the contents of the notice sent out on 24th December will show why they should have felt in this way. The Press Bureau could not send documents of this sort to newspapers it did not trust; so, paradoxically, it was they who received no warning against publishing unauthorised reports. This was no conspiracy, but a blunder in the system of organising news censorship - a blunder brought about by the attempt to keep censorship voluntary. The Press Bureau neither had nor sought legal powers for its directives, and was reluctant to use the powers it did have to censor publications under Section 27 of D.O.R.A., because it was framed in terms so vague as to be virtually unworkable.[2]

On this matter of the Press Bureau, we should beware of accepting as genuine, as Mr. Brotherstone appears to do, Johnston's tone of injured innocence. Many years later, he admitted that he had known of the existence of the circular:

> "...when Mr.Lloyd George's officers, upon a famous controversial occasion in which I was implicated, ordered the press to print only a bowdlerised and fictitious account of a St.Andrews Hall oration, it was from the Herald office that there was slipped out to me an original of the ukase, as evidence of deliberate misleading of the public through attempted news corruption." [3]

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[1] Suppression of Forward. PRO: MUN 5/70.

[2] See E.T.Cook, "The Press in Wartime", (London, 1920), PP.57-117, esp. p.79, 91. Cook was Press Censor for almost the whole of the war.

[3] T.Johnston, "An Appraisal from the Left", in "The Glasgow Herald 1783-1958" (a souvenir brochure, Glasgow 1958), p.20.

The surmise that Johnston would "presumably have obeyed" the Press Bureau circular had he known of its existence turns out to be wrong; he did know, unofficially, of its existence, but decided to publish regardless.

Mr. Brotherstone's final suggestion is that the unexpectedly long period of the suppression, lasting until 5th February ("It is curious that so deferential an offender should have been punished for so long")[1] had political motives behind it: the Forward was allowed to reappear when, and only when, the mechanism for smashing the C.W.C. had been perfected.[2] There is, unfortunately, a difficulty of chronology here. Without anticipating the argument of Chapter 6, we can say here that there is no evidence that, by 5th February, the Dilution Commissioners had decided on a concerted attack on the C.W.C. At that stage, they had more obdurate enemies on their hands, and the only initiative which had been taken against the C.W.C. - the suppression of the Worker, - had no immediate sequel.

If the argument that the suppression of the Forward was part of a plot against the C.W.C. fails, it might seem that we are forced back on the traditional explanation - that the suppression was an unfortunate reaction to the blow Lloyd George's pride had suffered. But this is as unsatisfactory as the opposite extreme viewpoint. Among other things, it is not easy to reconcile with the fact that the Press Bureau circular was issued on December 24th - before the St. Andrew's Hall meeting, a point made by none of the modern authorities who discuss the incident.[3]

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[1] Brotherstone, art.cit., p.17.

[2] ibid., pp.17-18.

[3] Middlemas, p.65; Marwick, op.cit., p.73; Taylor, "English History 1914-45", p.39; Kendall, op.cit., p.123. The correct sequence of events is, however, given in Anon /T.Henderson/, "The Scottish Socialists: A Gallery of Contemprary Portraits" (London 1931), p.125.

Certainly, it could be argued that Lloyd George was able to seize on the circular as an excuse for the suppression. But we have to decide why the circular should have been sent out in the first place.

In fact, the suppression was a blunder, but not an accident; the Forward case was inextricably tied up with the dilution campaign. We should remember that the suppression was specifically authorised by a meeting attended by all the political and administrative heads of the Ministry[1] - of whom Beveridge and Llewellyn Smith at least were far from being Lloyd George's yes-men, while Addison occasionally illustrates his independence from his Minister in his published diary. The suppression of the Forward was authorised because it was felt that the report of Lloyd George's meeting was very damaging to the dilution campaign - as it surely was. As Beveridge commented in his notes on the suppression:

> "....(2) The question of 'Forward' is of course, bound up with the general unrest on the Clyde.
>
> (3) That the action taken in the past by the Government in regard to the appointment of Lord Balfour's Committee of inquiry and in regard to the imprisoned shipwrights has been interpreted as concessions wrung by force from weakness, and the same interpretation will undoubtedly be placed upon many of the concessions of the Munitions of War Act" [2]

The Ministry, in other words, had so often been criticised for weakness and appeasement that it must put up a stance of resistance at some point. The only part of Lloyd George's speech on the suppression which can be justified by any reference to any bona fide quotation from the Forward is the section in which he condemned the paper for its editorial agreement with Kirkwood's stance on dilution:

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[1] H.M.M. IV, iv, p.111.

[2] Notes on the Suppression. PRO: MUN 5/70.

> "The dilution of labour without the workers controlling the workshops will speedily mean a permanent deterioration in the working class standard of life".[1]

For some months the Forward had been bringing to the attention of the Glasgow working class comments on dilution which were not intended to be read by them. For instance, it twice[2] reprinted these comments from the "Scottish Law Courts Record":

> "In regard to our workers, whatever the unions may do, and notwithstanding any paper guarantee given, employment can and will never be the same again. The inevitable operation of the law of supply and demand must bring more women and girls into the ranks of our workers. It is only by means of this freedom to hire cheaper labour that our manufacturers can hope either to capture or to keep some of the German markets in low-priced goods of large and widespread sale."

This was to raise the sort of bogey about the worthlessness of the Restoration of Pre-war Practices Act which Macassey was later to find one of the "common-form objections" always raised by the "Socialist element" against dilution.[3] That this sort of opinion should be canvassed by the "papers read by the more thoughtful workmen"[4] was, of course, very inconvenient for the dilution campaign. But, as W.C. Anderson pointed out a moment after Lloyd George's speech in the debate on the suppression,

> "That may be entirely foolish and entirely wrong, but it is not a matter for criminal proceedings or for the suppression of a newspaper".[5]

And here, of course, was the rub for the Ministry. It had suppressed the paper for statements hurtful to the dilution campaign, but the

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[1] Forward, 1 January 1916, p.5. Quoted in H of C Hansard 5s., v.77, col.1411.

[2] 24 April 1915 and 1 January 1916.

[3] See below, Ch.6.

[4] H.L.M. IV, ii, 48.

[5] H of C Hansard 5s., vol.77, col.1416.

only bona fide ground it had for doing so rested on Beveridge's interpretation of Regulation 27: that a report likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty rendered a paper liable to suppression even if true. What was left of the liberal conscience would have revolted so emphatically if this bold interpretation were laid before the Commons that some evasion would have to be made. Beveridge might regard the whole business with distaste; but he was implicated in the original decision which placed the Ministry in such an awkward dilemma. Perhaps it was ultimately to Lloyd George's credit that the smokescreen of lies and total irrelevancies about Regulation 42 which he threw up succeeded in obscuring the real issue.

Chapter 6

The Progress of Dilution, January-February 1916

The new year saw the conflict sharpening on both sides. One obvious reason, on the men's side, was the question of conscription, which arose in the Military Service Bill at exactly the same time as the leaving certificates grievance was being damped down in the Munitions of War (Amendment) Bill.

On January 5th 1916 the Glasgow Trades Council held a Special Meeting on the "Government's proposal anent conscription". It was resolved,

> "The Glasgow Trades Council enters its protest against the Government's proposals for compulsory attestation or any other form of compulsory military service, and condemns the Bill introduced to the House of Commons by the Prime Minister as uncalled for by the state of the Army, as dangerous to the stability of the nation, and totally opposed to the principles of British Freedom, and respectfully urges that the passing of such proposals will lead to serious social and industrial trouble in this district."

The report went on:

> "It was moved that we add a recommendation advocating a down tools policy, but on a show of hands this was lost by a large majority. Direct amendment was then moved, that Council do not oppose conscription....by 90 votes to 3 the Resolution was carried..." [1]

Lobbying by the Glasgow Trades Council was eventually successful in getting the Scottish Trades Union Congress to hold a special joint conference with the Labour Party (Scottish Advisory Committee) on conscription, although the S.T.U.C. had refused an earlier such

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[1] TCM, 5 January 1916.

request from the Trades Council on the grounds that they were entirely in favour of the system of recruiting then in force.[1] At the special conference, it was agreed on the motion of Robert Smillie to condemn the Military Service (No 2) Bill and "Further, that this Conference warns the Government against any attempt to bring about Industrial Compulsion in this country."[2]

Nevertheless, the conscription issue in the end added surprisingly little fuel to the fires of the dilution controversy. The Trades Council held a successful demonstration against conscription, but Emanuel Shinwell, reporting back, said

> "he felt convinced that if demonstrations were the only thing done in opposing Conscription, then the usefulness of the Joint Committee was at an end."3

Conscription was an issue which could play its part in dividing the skilled man from the rest (and we shall return to discussion of this point in Chapter 9) but there was no strike during the dilution crisis which took as its theme opposition to the first conscription bill (as opposed to the rather separate issue of industrial conscription). Possibly the reason was that the majority of the men were too "patriotic" to be led out on strike against conscription, though their patriotism was not sufficient to stop them from striking over dilution.

Meanwhile the Government's counter-attack on dilution was being prepared. As we have seen, the Ministry of Munitions had faced severe criticism for its policy of appeasement, and had built up a powerful bloc of opposition among employers. The new D.O.R.A. regulation and the changes in its new Munitions Bill (most of which was not to do

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[1]Scottish Trades Union Congress: Minutes of the Parliamentary Committee, 6 November 1915.

[2]STUC: Annual Report 1916, p.52.

[3]TCM, 9 February 1916.

with labour affairs) were its only tangible successes; Lloyd George's visit to Glasgow had backfired severely, leading to all the confusion and discredit surrounding the suppression of the Forward. At the time of the suppression the counter-attack had not been prepared; it took shape during the next three weeks. Two important communications to the Ministry - a letter from Paterson to Llewellyn Smith, and a proposed scheme of procedure submitted by Weir, who had been acting since July as full-time, but unpaid, Director of Munitions in Scotland[1] played their part in shaping the form the policy took, but the policy itself was the autonomous creation of the Ministry officials.

Paterson's letter to Llewellyn Smith, marked "Strictly Personal" and dated 17th January 1916, is a document of extreme candour which has survived in the Beveridge Papers,[2] and is of such importance for this - and other - topics, that it has been reproduced in full, along with a memorandum to Smith from Isaac Mitchell, as an Appendix to this chapter. After outlining the case for deporting some of the militants - the list, significantly, starts with David Kirkwood and ends with a misspelt John Maclean and his chief ally, Peter Petroff - Paterson then goes on to say, apparently changing his mind as he writes, that the disadvantage of this would be that it would provoke a strike on which the Government might have forfeited public sympathy. He recommends instead forcing a "very much cleaner issue", namely dilution, arguing that in this case "public opinion would be overwhelmingly against the men."[3] He therefore

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[1] W.J. Reader, "Architect of Air Power", London 1968, p.44.

[2] BCM III,No.16, folios 109-11. Evidently Ll. Smith did not treat it as strictly personal. It is, for the historian, a remarkable piece of good fortune that Beveridge should have been allowed to remove such a document into his private files. In more recent days, Paterson would probably have telephoned instead of writing, in any case.

[3] BCM III, 111-112. See Appendix, pp. 114-115.

concludes by arguing that the enforcement of dilution should be pressed before any deportations are tried - a conclusion very similar to that of Macassey in December.[1]

Unknown to Paterson, the plans for the enforcement of dilution were already at an advanced stage. Simultaneously, Weir was sending direct to Lloyd George a detailed memorandum on how dilution should be enforced, which

> "has been prepared to meet your express desire to immediately commence labour dilution on the Clyde."[2]

The scheme envisaged, first, a statement to be made by Asquith on the need for immediate dilution (of which Weir throughtfully provided a draft); secondly, a statement by Lloyd George commanding the trades unions' support. In the third place, a Commissioner would be appointed (the name suggested by Weir was C.F. Rey of the Ministry) and a very detailed procedure for his visits to selected large plants was laid down. When he saw the shop stewards, for instance, he would tell them that they

> "as Trade Union officials, are responsible for making the scheme a success....A shorthand writer will be in attendance and any expression of open resistance or obstruction on the part of any individual should be carefully noted with the name of the man concerned."[3]

If a strike started, Weir suggested a flurry of strong action: an immediate summons under the Act;[4] the arrest of any striking shop steward who attended the dilution meeting; and

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[1]See above, Ch.5, p.68.

[2]Weir to Lloyd George, 18 January 1916. BCM III, No.36, folio 228.

[3]BCM III, No.36, folio 231.

[4]He does not specify which Act; presumably D.O.R.A.

> "a careful watch by detectives on the actions of members of the Clyde Workers' Committee and the few others specified on a private list (Scotland Yard men)." [1]

If this was ineffective and the strike spread, Weir suggested, among much else, the suspension of the Trades Disputes Act, military guards at works, and the proclamation of martial law whenever any rioting broke out.

Weir's biographer observes that this scheme was responsible for the success of dilution:

> "Weir....had kept out of the public eye, but for the prime cause of the strike-breakers' success there is surely no need to look further than the advice he had given and the plans he had laid."[2]

Such a conclusion can best be attributed to the writer's ignorance of the details of the dilution campaign, and to the fact that he found the memorandum in Weir's own papers, and did not look at the Beveridge or Ministry of Munitions papers to see what reception it had from its addressees. Arguably, a programme as draconic as Weir's would have been the only thing that could have produced revolution on Clydeside in January 1916. A great deal of resistance had to be broken down before confrontation could be risked, as advisers like Macassey and Paterson pointed out. Llewellyn Smith's own plan for the campaign, although firm, did not have the elaborate detail of Weir's scheme which would certainly have provoked strikes:

> "1) Get out definite instructions as to dilution.
> 2) See that the Police and Military preparations are sufficient.
> 3) Prepare a statement to be made by the Prime Minister as soon as any stoppage is threatened.
> 4) In case of a strike, have no parleying or negotiation with the strikers, either directly or through the Labour Advisory Committee.

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[1] BCM III as above.

[2] Reader, op.cit., p.54.

5) Deport and bring to trial under the Defence of the Realm Regulations any person inciting to strike." [1]

In a minute (accompanying a memorandum which has not survived), Rey wrote to Lloyd George:

> "Since this memorandum was prepared I have had some conversation on the subject with Mr. Weir and Mr.Paterson, and they are in full agreement with the principle suggested, namely that a selection of firms should be made and dilution insisted on in these Works. When taking any such action as suggested, plans must be laid very carefully as to the whole procedure in order that the thing may be carried out on well-thought-out lines quickly and firmly so as to give no time for opposition to be engineered.
>
> That there may be trouble whenever this is done is quite likely but I think that the extent and gravity of this trouble will be diminished in proportion as the measures taken are strong and comprehensive from the very start." [2]

The final programme was based on Weir's memorandum "with modifications."[3] The modifications cut out Weir's excesses, which sprang from his undying hostility to craft unionism,[4] but by and large the Ministry used the framework provided by Weir's memorandum, which ran along lines already[5] proposed at the Ministry. The Prime Minister's statement was eventually made on January 21st, in response to a prearranged Parliamentary question: as the employers and trade unions had agreed "loyally" to support dilution,

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[1] "List of points relating to dilution policy", n.d. Llewellyn Smith's handwriting. BCM III, No.34, folio 218.

[2] "Dilution on the Tyne and Clyde" minute by Rey to Minister, 18 January 1916, BCM III, No.35, folio 222.

[3] PROP MUN 5/70.

[4] For which see Reader, op.cit., esp. pp.35-55, 117-126.

[5] Ll.Smith's undated memorandum comes before Rey's note dated 18 January in the Beveridge collection. More conclusively, Rey's note, dated the same day as Weir's memorandum, was clearly prepared before the latter reached the Ministry.

> "The Government accordingly propose to take steps to bring about this dilution of labour wherever needed in accordance with the necessities of the situation and on the conditions laid down after agreement with the representatives of the workmen in the Munitions of War Act, as amended, without further delay... (T)hey are sending special representatives to the most important districts to assist in giving effect to their policy."[1]

The Commissioners were appointed on the following day. Lloyd George had wanted Lynden Macassey appointed sole Commissioner, but after objections by Addison and Macnamara this number was changed at the last minute to three,[2] Macassey being joined by Isaac Mitchell and by Sir Thomas Munro, Clerk to the Lanarkshire County Council and later Sheriff of Lanarkshire.

An important difference between Weir's draft and the memorandum adopted was the line drawn in the Ministry between strikers and those who incited others to strike. The scheme suggested that measures under the Defence of the Realm Act should be taken against those who incited to strike, but that

> "Prosecutions of the strikers themselves under the Munitions of War Act would not be undertaken as a matter of course, but with regard to the circumstances of the case, and in particular to the size of the strike. If the strike is a general one, it may have to be left to take its own course."[3]

This shows the appreciation in the Ministry that the Commissioners would have to proceed with a mixture of firmness and tact: firmness, because of all the accusations of unwarrantable appeasement that had been thrown about; but also tact, because even the new provisions on imprisonment did not cover the case of a large strike. Furthermore, the commissioners knew, or soon found out, that they had two quite different groups to deal with - the conservatives at Lang's covertly supported by the A.S.E. Executive, and the militants at Parkhead, Weir's and elsewhere. The

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[1] H of C Hansard 5s., v.78, col.766. Cf PRO: MUN 5/70.

[2] Addison, I, p.162.

[3] PRO: MUN 5/70. The final version of the programme is printed as Appendix XVII to HMM IV, iv, on pp.173-4.

militants were, if anything, easier to beat than the conservatives, but we shall have to treat them separately.

The trouble at Lang's derived from Circular L2, which some Ministry officials had recognised as a potential troublemaker from the very beginning. It will be remembered that the L series of circulars were drafted by the Central Munitions Labour Supply Committee, and the first draft of the contentious section of L2 came from a sub-committee of that committee. It ran:

> "1) Where women are employed on time the minimum rate shall be £1 per week. ...A. Except in the case of women employed in the place of skilled men, in which case women shall be paid the same rates as skilled men."[1]

Askwith immediately wrote to Beveridge:

> "Note A is very objectionable. It goes beyond the guarantee in the Munitions of War Act. 'Skilled work' is not defined, and will give endless trouble ...I might warn you that this general demand is the work of the ASE who have worked in /"on"?/ Miss Macarthur,(2) but the ASE's object is not to get women in, but to ensure getting them easily out as soon as possible, and probably keeping them out as far as possible, and the Workers' Union view the plot with disfavour and may prove troublesome if not consulted... this letter is private." [3]

Beveridge wrote back:

> "I agree with you in being a good deal frightened of note A... I shall try and get the Committee to make some change... As regards the proposal generally I share your own apprehension lest it may be intended rather to keep women out than to bring them in. I believe that Miss Macarthur is not altogether satisfied with the proposal." [4]

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[1]Central Mun.Lab. Supply Ctee., Sub-ctee on wages, draft statement, n.d. /September 1915/. BCM III, no.10, folio 71-72.

[2]Mary Macarthur, Secretary of the Women's Trade Union League.

[3]Askwith to Beveridge, 29 September 1915. BCM III, No.10, folio 66.

[4]Beveridge to Askwith 4 October 1915, BCM III, No.10, folio 63-64.

However, the objectionable note A stayed in. The final form of the relevant section of L2 ran as follows:

> "Women of 18 years of age and over employed on time, on work customarily done by men, shall be rated at £1 per week...
>
> This, however, shall not apply in the case of women employed on work customarily done by fully-skilled tradesmen, in which case the women shall be paid the time rates of the tradesmen whose work they undertake."[1]

This need not have been too serious if one of the A.S.E's "blackmailing conditions"[2] had not been that L2 and L3 be made mandatory as a condition of their agreement to dilution. At the end of the stormy conference between the A.S.E. Executive, Asquith and Lloyd George on 31 December 1915, the Executive resolved:

> "That we, ... having heard the statements and pledges of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Munitions, decide to accept on behalf of the Conference and membership of the Society the scheme of dilution, and to co-operate actively therein, provided that the Government pledge itself to incorporate in the /Munitions of War (Amendment)/ Bill the power to enforce the rates of pay and conditions of labour as set out in document L3 as well as L2 in controlled establishments." [3]

Clause 6 of the Act empowered the Minister to give orders as to women's wages, and Clause 7 as to those of unskilled and semi-skilled men. And the men at Lang's who in 1915 had been able to fight dilution altogether and under any circumstances, retreated in 1916 to the narrower, but still effective, front of opposing it by a special interpretation of L2.

In pursuance of their policy of tackling plants one by one, starting with the important or controversial cases, the Commissioners

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[1]Circular L2, as reproduced in HMM IV, i, 103.

[2]See above, p.47.

[3]PRO: MUN 5/70. Quoted in HMM IV, i, 87-88.

invited Lang's to produce a dilution scheme. Immediately a dispute arose over the interpretation of L2, the men claiming that the words

> "on work customarily done by fully-skilled tradesmen... the women shall be paid the time-rates of the tradesmen whose work they undertake."

implied that women must be paid the full time rate whenever they undertook any part of what was previously tradesmen's work. It is perfectly clear that chivalry was not the motive power behind this interpretation; the correspondence between Beveridge and Askwith, and Mitchell's interpretation of the strike[1] both make it obvious that the point of this interpretation was to make it not worth managements' while to put women on any part of any tradesman's work. The dispute was referred to the Ministry, and Llewellyn Smith ruled that a woman was not as of right immediately entitled to a skilled man's wages,

> "inasmuch as she is not performing in its entirety the work customarily done by the skilled man."[2]

On 1st February the Organising District Delegate of the A.S.E. informed the Ministry that the Paisley District Committee of the A.S.E. refused to accept the Ministry's interpretation; whereat the Lang's men struck. When the Ministry approached the A.S.E. Executive asking them to attend an interview, they refused to do so immediately, on the grounds that they themselves did not accept the Ministry's interpretation of L2 and that they had not been consulted over the setting up of the Clyde Dilution Commission.[3]

In the event the Lang's men went back to work on February 7th, but the A.S.E. Executive's attitude produced an angry response from both the

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[1]See Appendix 2.

[2]Quoted in HMM IV, iv, 120, 29 January 1916.

[3]HMM IV, iv, 122.

Ministry and the employers. It also caused a split among the three Commissioners.

The Ministry regarded the A.S.E's action as yet another betrayal. "It is regrettable in the extreme", wrote Macassey on the 5th February, "that circumstances did not admit of holding the A.S.E. to their undoubted bargain".[1] The employers' response was similar; on the 8th they sent the following telegram to Llewellyn Smith:

> "At a largely attended meeting of the North-West Engineering Employers held today from a report submitted the meeting learned that Ministry of Munitions is discussing with ASE interpretation of L2 in face of official interpretation already furnished to Dilution Commissioners in Lang's case. Meeting protests most strongly against such negotiations and points out that to resile in any degree from interpretation already given by Ministry will render further progress with Dilution absolutely impracticable." [2]

A meeting was already pending with the A.S.E. Executive and Llewellyn Smith noted, on receipt of this telegram, that it should take place "as soon as possible".[3]

In fact, the negotiations over L2 with the A.S.E. Executive dragged on for a full two months more. A first meeting appears to have been held on, or shortly after, the 11th, when yet another issue had to be settled immediately. Macassey had wired:

> "With reference to Paterson's conversation with you last night as to Bunton, District Secretary Engineers seeing his Executive London, am just informed by Bunton that he cannot take any further part in accompanying commissioners to works on Dilution until matters are settled with his Executive in London ... Think it imperative therefore you arrange immediately that Executive adjusts matters with Bunton." 4

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[1] PRO: MUN 5/73.

[2] BCM V, No.4, folio 28.

[3] ibid.

[4] PRO: MUN 5/73. Quoted in Notes by Mr.Beveridge for Minister's meeting with A.S.E. Executive Council, 11 February 1916.

Beveridge added, reporting a supplementary telephone call from Macassey,

> "It is clear that in view of the lack of support by the EC, Mr.Bunton, who is anxious to help the Commissioners, feels a difficulty in doing so, and it is probable (though there is no direct evidence of this) that Mr.Bunton has had something in the nature of an instruction not to continue his assistance."[1]

This matter was cleared up but the interpretation of L2 had to wait till a further "long and at times stormy"[2] deputation of the A.S.E. Executive with Lloyd George on February 24th. At the outset of the proceedings Brownlie complained:

> "your interpretation strikes at the root of the whole of our existence as skilled craftsmen."[3]

But Lloyd George countered this by pointing out that the Ministry's interpretation of L2 had been favoured by one of the A.S.E's own members, David Kirkwood at Beardmores.

> "The Minister. He more or less represents the men down at Beardmores. He fought very hard.
>
> Mr. Button.[3a] It was his suggestion?
>
> The Minister. Yes. He argued it before the Commissioners and carried the Commissioners with him."[4]

Lloyd George went on to paraphrase Kirkwood's proposal:

> "'If you are going to split this operation it means that the men who are still retained there would be working harder, and do more difficult work than they had done before': which was true..... 'If the heavier part of the work falls upon the men, then the heavier part of the wages ought to come to them'".[5]

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[1] ibid.

[2] HMM IV, iv, 123.

[3] PRO: MUN 5/70. Minutes of a Conference with the Amalgamated Society of Engineers on Dilution; 24 February 1916.

[3a] F.S.Button, a member of the A.S.E. Executive. Not to be confused with Sam Bunton, the Glasgow District Secretary of the Union, whose views on dilution differed from the Executive's.

[4] ibid.

[5] ibid.

Button argued that the Parkhead dilution agreement[1] "came from..our side... /but/ we have not up to this stage endorsed it." But eventually Brownlie stated that his Society

> "could now go forward with greater confidence to fulfil the promise they have made to Mr.Lloyd George and the Prime Minister."[2]

At the same time, the Ministry had received a long memorandum from Macassey on the A.S.E's interpretation of L2 which he called "so unreasonable in its practical operation and so totally divorced from the plain spirit of L2... as to indicate it cannot possibly be the intention of the document." This is minuted "This is all dead now. H Ll.S. 26-2,"[3] but the A.S.E's last fling was not until two months later, at a conference with Addison mainly concerned with the Clyde deportees, when what Addison called "our old friend L2"[4] was finally settled in favour of the Ministry's interpretation.

The dispute at Lang's had caused a split among the Commissioners. Mitchell, who claimed that the strike was in fact aimed at any sort of dilution (although he allowed that his colleagues took it at its face value)[5] thought it an excellent opportunity for firm measures because

> "Bunton and Brodie were against the men /as were/ the Clyde Workers' Committee, and the great majority of the men themselves were ashamed of the stoppage."[6]

The grounds on which his colleagues disagreed can no longer be known for certain. As has been noted, this was a strike on which some CWC leaders,

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[1] See below, p. 104.

[2] HMM, IV, iv, p.123.

[3] BCM, V, No.15, folios 86-95.

[4] PRO: MUN 5/57. Minutes of the Proceedings at a Conference with a Deputation from the A.S.E, 27 April 1916.

[5] See Appendix 2.

[6] ibid.

including specifically Kirkwood, were on the side of the Commissioners - so it may be that their failure to act over Lang's was due to the desire to attack the militants rather than the conservatives. If so, it was the first time that the Commissioners, as opposed to outside advisers, took this view, and it is of interest that, of the three, it should have been the professional conciliator and ex-A.S.E. official who should have dissented. Alternatively, of course, the reason may be no more than that Macassey and Munro thought the time had not yet come for a trial of strength with a still-obstructive A.S.E. Executive.

The negotiations of the Commissioners with the militants were in two important regards easier than those with the conservatives: the militants were internally divided, and they had nobody as powerful as the A.S.E. Executive at their back. Mitchell noted that the CWC supported the local officials as against the Executive, but "they raise obstacles on all sorts of vague issues."[1] The militants were also sharply divided from plant to plant in their readiness to accept dilution.

Immediately on their appointment the Commissioners tackled some of the key plants, which included Parkhead and Weir's as well as Lang's. In Parkhead, the men, led by Kirkwood, were very co-operative. According to Kirkwood's own couthy account, when he heard that the Commissioners came without a plan already prepared he exclaimed, "Ye couldnae rin a menage[2] that way, let alane a war."[3] What happened next was important and revealing. We have already noted the dependence of Kirkwood on Wheatley as his literary and political manager. On this occasion he went to see Wheatley and (according to Kirkwood's son) Rosslyn Mitchell. Wheatley wrote out a draft scheme.

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[1]See Appendix.

[2]Clothing club.

[3]Kirkwood, p.116.

> "Together we thrashed out the problem, and John Wheatley began to write. In thirty minutes he had drafted the scheme. It was a perfect piece of work."[1]

Wheatley's scheme was accepted by the Commissioners without alteration on January 26th, 24 hours after their first visit to Parkhead, as the best way to "blow the Germans over the Rhine."[2] The most important clauses were numbers 1 and 2:

> "1. That the income of the new class of labour be fixed not on the sex, previous training, or experience of the worker, but upon the amount of work performed, every effort being made to secure the maximum of output.
>
> 2. That a committee appointed by the skilled workers be accepted by the employers with power to see that this arrangement is loyally carried out."[3]

One or two points arise from this agreement relating to questions raised earlier in this chapter. According to the A.S.E's evidence given to the Labour Party committee which inquired into the Kirkwood case, the scheme was accepted by the A.S.E. on 29 January 1916, with the exception of Clause 1 which "appears to have been modified or superseded later on."[4] when it was replaced by the standard terms of L2 and L3. Kirkwood's scheme made it quite clear that women were to be paid pro rata for the amount of the tradesman's job they did, and not the full tradesman's rate come what might. For this Kirkwood was to be commended (did he but know it) by Lloyd George in his interview with the A.S.E. on 24 February.[5]

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[1] ibid., pp.117-8.

[2] ibid., p.117.

[3] Labour Party "Report of a special committee appointed by the Annual Conference of the Party held at Manchester in January 1917 to inquire into and Report upon the circumstances which resulted in the Deportation in March 1916 of David Kirkwood and other workmen employed in Munition Factories in the Clyde District" /1918/, par.17. Cited as Kirkwood Report. Other versions of the agreement, with minor differences of phraseology, are in: HMM IV, iv, 129; Gallacher 103-4; Forward, 12 February 1916, p.1.

[4] Kirkwood Report, par.18. This contradicts Button's statement at the conference with Lloyd George on February 24th.

[5] See above, p.101.

Clauses 1 and 2 of the Parkhead scheme, taken together, had virtually the same meaning as Llewellyn Smith's interpretation of L2:[1] women were to be paid pro rata, and the tradesmen were to have a say in the proportion of the skilled men's rate they were to get. The A.S.E. Executive, however, still did not fully accept this interpretation, as they continued to argue that it was the thin end of a wedge aimed at ousting the craftsman from his special status altogether. Accordingly, it was in their interest to restore L2, over which it was still possible to argue, in place of the unambiguous clarity of Wheatley's Clause 1.

Although the Parkhead scheme was drawn up on 26th January (a date for which we have the authority of the Labour Party report and a memorandum by Macassey)[2] it could not be put into force immediately. As an employer, Beardmore was as conservative as Weir was aggressive and no preparations had been made for the change: as Macassey complained, nothing had happened at the time of his writing "after the most difficult negotiations with the men" because "no accommodation /is/ available at the moment for women workers."[3] The first women to come to Parkhead did not arrive until 29th February.[4]

This may help to explain a knotty problem of chronology: the delay in the public reaction to the Parkhead scheme. It was not reported in the Press until 12th February, and Gallacher quite clearly states that he and his CWC colleagues did not hear of it until after his release from prison on bail.[5] This did not happen until the 8th of February.

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[1] Llewellyn Smith's interpretation, from which an extract was given on p.99 above, appears in full in HMM, IV, iv, 120.

[2] PRO: MUN 5/73. Memo on Progress of Dilution by Lynden Macassey, 5 February, 1916.

[3] PRO: MUN 5/73, Memo by Macassey, as above.

[4] Kirkwood Report, par.61.

[5] Gallacher, p.103.

Certainly, the earliest known CWC reaction - a rival dilution scheme - is dated 15th February,[1] so we must assume, faute de mieux, that news of the Parkhead scheme did not become public till two to three weeks after the Worker incidents to which we shall refer. The militants' reaction to the scheme will accordingly be discussed at that point.

The Ministry had been expecting very rapid results from the dilution scheme. Weir's proposals had envisaged that each individual scheme would be settled within three days, and the whole Clyde district covered in a matter of a week or ten days.[2] Accordingly, the Ministry became concerned at the delay, and on 5 February Macassey wrote a long memorandum accounting for the slowness of proceedings. There were two difficulties, the employers and the men. His instructions, he wrote,

> "assumed as indeed I myself inferred that the principal employers were both ready and able forthwith to accept dilution. It now appears that it is not so." [3]

The employers' attitude included elements of obstructiveness and elements of sheer incompetence. They were not prepared to help in introducing dilution, or they thought it could not be done, or if they were ready to help, then, like Beardmore, they had made no proper preparations.

On the men's side, Macassey wrote, the Commissioners at first encountered a rigid hostility to any sort of dilution. On Macassey's recommendation, the Commission deliberately avoided confrontation. Pressing dilution with schemes which were imperfect because of the employers' failings

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[1] BCM, V, No.6, folio 37.

[2] BCM, III, No.36.

[3] PRO: MUN 5/73. Commission on Dilution of Labour in Clyde District. Memorandum on Progress of the Commission by Mr. Lynden Macassey, 5 February, 1916.

> "would have meant a more or less general strike on the Clyde against the principle of dilution, as distinct from a local strike against the details only of a particular scheme, the principle being accepted. Having regard to the very lukewarm recommendation of dilution by the ASE Executive to their local branches I have no hesitation whatever in saying that course would have wrecked dilution on the Clyde." [1]

Instead, the Commissioners visited the works one by one, listening open-mindedly to the men's point of view. Although the men's opinion on the desired details of dilution "varies amazingly", nevertheless "the Socialist element have always two common-form and popular objections."[2] The first of these was that the Government might, before the end of the war, revoke its promise to pass a Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act; the second, that by the end of the war

> "women will. . having become so proficient that the Employers will after the Munitions Act has ceased to operate employ them at a lower wage than, and to the exclusion of, the skilled men."[3]

Macassey outlined the arguments he used in combatting these propositions, such as that post-war reconstruction would give work for everyone, and added somewhat plaintively,

> "If there is any better answer than the above it would be of the greatest service that I should be furnished with it."[4]

The memorandum met with broad approval in the Ministry. Llewellyn Smith minuted to Lloyd George:

> "Mr.Lynden Macassey defends.. /the Commission/ against the charge of slowness. I am bound to say that he makes out a good case in my opinion, and though evidently dilution will be slower on the Clyde than we originally expected, the first great difficulties have been surmounted....Evidently the employers are a good deal to blame for the delay, due to their unreadiness." [5]

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[1] ibid.

[2] ibid.

[3] ibid.

[4] ibid.

[5] PRO: MUN 5/73. Minute by Llewellyn Smith, 7 February 1916, attached to Macassey's memorandum as above.

To Macassey, Llewellyn Smith wrote back in fairly strong terms:

> "I own that I am surprised that even the Clyde employers should have been so lethargic as to have made virtually no preparation for the introduction of women after the repeated warnings, exhortations and directions addressed to them. However, we must take both the workmen and the employers as they are."[1]

In the meantime, however, the Commissioners had taken the first step aimed directly at the militants. This was the suppression of the CWC's paper, The Worker for an article entitled Should the Workers Arm? in the fourth issue, on 29th January. The most cursory reading of the article shows that the answer the writer implied to his own question was 'No', but this did not for a moment deter the Commissioners.

> "It is undeniable that many of the more thoughtful among the toilers would consider their lives had not been spent in vain if they could organise their comrades to drilled and armed rebellion. Their minds turn pleasurably in the direction of rifles, bombs, and dynamite.
>
> If the internal clash of armed forces can be avoided in this country it should be avoided. There is another method which, if conducted on a thorough scale, should prove completely successful. A worker's labour-power is his only wealth..." [2]

On the 7th of February, Gallacher, Muir, and Walter Bell, the printer of the Worker, were arrested and charged with attempting to cause sedition. The Commissioners had initially wanted to have them deported, but the Lord Advocate preferred a trial by jury.[3] A few days earlier John Maclean had also been arrested on sedition charges. On the 9th Macassey sent in another memorandum to the Ministry covering these events. It differs markedly in tone from the one sent only four days earlier; agitated where the other radiates quiet confidence, it

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[1]PRO: MUN 5/73. Llewellyn Smith to Macassey. Carbon Copy (n.d.) attached to Macassey's memorandum, as above.

[2]The Worker, 29th January 1916.

[3]HMM, IV, iv, 125.

makes mention for the first time of the CWC as a serious threat to order.

> "It is ostensibly a Socialist Organisation if indeed it is not something worse." [1]

> "I have been convinced for some days (he went on) that the only effective way of handling the situation is to strike a sharp line of cleavage between the loyal workmen, who undoubtedly comprise the great majority of Munition Workers, and the disloyal Socialist minority who are pawns of the Clyde Workers Committee, and those, whoever they may be, behind the Committee. The means of effecting this was wanting until yesterday February 8th." [2]

This memorandum has been taken as evidence of the abiding determination of the Commissioners to smash the CWC,[3] which it certainly does seem to demonstrate. On the other hand, it is difficult to be certain how long Macassey's "some days" had lasted. The change of tone from his memorandum of four days earlier is impressive; and previously too, the Commissioners had had one leading light of the CWC (Kirkwood) on their side in their fight against the Lang's men and the A.S.E. Executive. If the CWC was an enemy, it was perhaps in the second rank, to be dealt with only after the craft conservatives in the front rank were scattered.

As it happened, however, the "sharp line of cleavage" was not really provided. The Glasgow Trades Council thought the Commissioners' action most provocative: in forwarding to the Government a resolution of protest about John Maclean,

> "the Secretary was instructed to draft a letter to be sent with this resolution, pointing out that discontent and dissatisfaction had been created among the workers by these arrests during the past week, and to refer to the arrest of Gallacher, Muir and Bell in connection with the 'Worker'." [4]

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[1] PRO: MUN 5/73. "The Industrial Situation on the Clyde". Memorandum by Mr. Lynden Macassey, 9 February 1916. Incomplete.

[2] ibid.

[3] Hinton, op.cit., ch.7, passim, especially p.190.

[4] TCM 9 February 1916.

Discontent and dissatisfaction, however, proved to be very easily containable. The arrest provoked strikes in a number of CWC - controlled factories: Weir's, Coventry Ordnance Works, Beardmores (Dalmuir), John Brown, Albion Motors, and Barr & Strouds - the last two being respectively Gallacher's and Muir's workplaces.[1] There was one notable absentee from this list. Parkhead did not strike:

> "those who had struck returned to work, leaving a feeling, not very pronounced, but nevertheless there - that Parkhead under Kirkwood's leadership had not played its part." [2]

However, the strike did not last long enough for the Commissioners to take action; the accused men were released on bail, and the men returned to work. Macassey gives a perverse interpretation of the circumstances:

> "During the day of February 8th, the men began to understand that they were out on strike in sympathy with men who advocated the policy of bombs and dynamite. Such a picture a quite considerable number of those on strike were not prepared to endorse." [3]

This interpretation is accepted, and reproduced almost verbatim, in the official history[4] in spite of its manifest variance with the facts. The writer in the Worker was precisely opposing the use of bombs and dynamite in the picture-book continental revolutionary fashion. Nevertheless, the incident foreshadowed the events of March 1916 insofar as it suggested difficulty in encouraging any strikes which went beyond the industrial aspects of dilution and conscription. (Gallacher, Muir and Bell were not brought to trial until 14 April, after the deluge.

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[1] HMM, IV, iv, 125.

[2] Gallacher, p.102.

[3] PRO: MUN 5/73, Memo. by Macassey, 9 February 1916, as above.

[4] HMM, IV, iv, 125.

For the record, we may note here that Gallacher and Muir were then sentenced to 12 months imprisonment each, and Bell to 3 months).

Parkhead had let the side down by not striking over the Worker arrests; but the recriminations did not really start to fly until news broke of the Parkhead dilution scheme. For the third, and most serious time, it seemed, Kirkwood had broken the CWC's solidarity and had shown quite clearly that his attitudes were based not on revolutionary industrial unionism, nor yet on socialist pacifism, but simply on getting the most favourable terms attainable for his members in the dilution scheme, and securing for them the maximum control attainable over the introduction of unskilled labour.

Gallacher complained:

> "In the course of our talk with Kirkwood he declared he was concerned with Parkhead alone and as this agreement had safeguarded the Parkhead workers he was satisfied. This statement went circulating around the Clyde and caused incalculable harm." [1]

The solidarity of the Clyde Workers' Committee having been broken, and the chance of general strike action having been lost, each militant had to look after his constituency as Kirkwood had looked after his, and ensure that the system of dilution that was adopted gave the maximum achievable degree of control by the skilled engineers over the "Diluting Units" (the phrase of the Shop Stewards' Convenor at Barr and Stroud's).

One way of making the best of a bad job was for the shop stewards to negotiate the best achievable form of dilution with the employers direct, and thus avoid having terms imposed by the Commissioners. Gallacher claims that he initiated this process in Albion Motors and then had the same agreement negotiated in Barr and Stroud's.[2] The

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[1] Gallacher, p.105.

[2] ibid.

convenor of shop stewards at that plant later explained the procedure:

> "It was in the first months of 1916 that Dilution was first spoken of. The Firm approached the Shop Stewards, with a view to negotiate Dilution with them direct and thus avoid having the Commissioners interfering in the business. Recognising that the Unions had accepted the principle of Dilution, we had perforce to accept the situation, and make the best possible terms with the firm."[1]

Eventually the CWC produced a scheme of its own for dilution,which they gave to the Commissioners. Macassey sent a copy to Beveridge, who circulated it in the Labour Department of the Ministry. Addressed to the Commissioners, it is preceded by a preamble, the conclusion of which is quoted followed by a number of the clauses:

> "...Our suspicion that under the cloak of patriotism cheap labour will slip in arises from the fact that, naturally, cheap labour is welcomed by the employers. Now, if you are desirous of protecting us by keeping up the price of our labour, we submit the following as a reasonable working basis:

Conditions of the Dilution Scheme Recommended by the Clyde Workers' Committee

1) That the income of the new class of labour be fixed, not on the sex, previous training, or experience of the workers, but on the amount of work performed, based on the rates presently obtaining for the particular operation, also that they obtain the district rate.

2) That a committee appointed by the workers be accepted by the employers with powers to see that this arrangement is loyally carried out.....

9) Everyone who enters a shop as a result of dilution MUST be organised in some Union to be decided on by the Shop Committee...

10) It will be understood that the foregoing rules are only principles that can apply to all shops. The shops themselves to decide on all detail arrangements...

12) ...
c) That every second diluted Unit should be an apprentice of three years standing and to receive the district rate." [2]

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[1] Letter from Shop Stewards' Convenor, Barr and Stroud's (name damaged) to Herbert Highton, 20 October 1917. Highton Papers preserved in Glasgow University, Department of Economic History.

[2] BCM, V, No.6, folios 37-38. Circulated by Beveridge, 15 February 1916.

This is a document of considerable interest. The reader does not pursue it very far before realising that it is based very closely on the Parkhead Dilution Agreement, which had brought such calumny down upon Kirkwood's head only a few days earlier. Clauses 1 to 4 are virtually identical in the two schemes, and Clause 1, of course, is again couched clearly in terms which support the Ministry's interpretation of L2 rather than the tortuous arguments of Lang's men and the A.S.E. Executive.

The CWC's scheme, on the other hand, does make more concessions to craft restrictions than the Parkhead scheme, of which the most important is buried down in Clause 12c. If every second dilutee was to be an apprentice of three years standing this would protect the skilled men almost as well as if dilution were not brought in at all.

Nothing, however, came of this scheme. The CWC accompanied it by a request to meet the Commissioners, which they turned down on the grounds that members of the CWC were all Trade Unionists and schemes were being duly discussed with the properly authorised officials of the Trade Unions.[1] The militants, like the conservatives, had been put in their place for the time being.

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[1] Kirkwood Report, par. 36-37; cf Appendix 2.

Appendix to Chapter 6

1) Letter from Chief Labour Officer, Ministry of Munitions, Glasgow to Secretary, Ministry of Munitions.

Ministry of Munitions of War
West of Scotland Area,
39 Elmbank Crescent,
Glasgow.
17 January 1916.

Strictly Personal

Dear Sir Hubert,

Below I give the names of the gentlemen whose removal from the Clyde district for an indefinite period would go a long way towards helping production, viz.

1) D. Kirkwood, Parkhead, a prominent member of the Clyde Workers' Committee, who, last February, brought the engineers out against the wish of the Society, and took them back on his own terms. Kirkwood has a much greater influence over the workmen in the district than any half-dozen trades union officials who could be named.

2) William Gallacher and J.M.Messer, the Chairman and Secretary, respectively, of the Clyde Workers' Committee. This is a body that is causing the greater part of the trouble in the Clyde district.

3) J.W.Muir, a prominent member of the Clyde Workers' Committee who adopted a most uncompromising syndicalistic attitude at one of the Minister's meetings here the other week.

4) A.McManus and T.Clark, two of the members of the Clyde Workers' Committee.

5) A.McLean (sic), an ex-schoolmaster recently dismissed by Govan School Board, who is spending his time holding meetings and in other ways doing his best to poison the minds of the workmen men (sic).

6) Peter Petroff, a Russian Socialist of a very dangerous type. The easiest thing to do with Petroff is to have him repatriated, when, from all that I am told, he will be shot within 24 hours of landing in Russia.

The difficulty is that one ought to include in this list at least three or four of the recognised trade union leaders on the Clyde - one of these a very well-known man who should probably be placed at the head of any list of the kind. To suggest anything of the kind is, however, so very serious that I hesitate putting names on paper unless specially instructed to do so.

I am afraid that the removal of almost any one of these men (with possibly the exception of McLean and Petroff, who are not working men or officials of societies here) would at once cause a big strike.

When a strike takes place, it is desirable that the Government should have the best case possible to present to the public. Ultimately, it will be forced to give some reasons for the removal of these men, and

it would then have to be disclosed that action had been taken on general statements, unsupported by real evidence of a convincing nature.

A verymuch cleaner issue would be a strike against the enforcement of the dilution of labour, as the Government there would be in the position of asking the skilled men of the country to allow their skill to be used to best advantage, and the public opinion would be overwhelmingly against the men.

If, therefore, definite orders for dilution of labour are to be given, I think it would be better to delay consideration of the question of removing any men out of the district.

Yours sincerely,

(signed) J.Paterson.

Appendix to Chapter 6 (2)

Extract from a memorandum sent by I.H. Mitchell, one of the Commissioners to Effect Dilution in the Clyde District, to Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, 21 February 1916.

(After speaking of the extreme local variations in opinion between plants as to what sort of dilution scheme is acceptable, and talking of the opinions of the militants of the Clyde Workers' committee, he adds that the A.S.E. Executive's views on dilution do not appeal to them at all. The extract begins here). (Original punctuation).

"On the contrary they broadly accept the Ministry's interpretation, and while in harmony with the local officials Bunton and Brodie in supporting the Ministry as against the Executive's view, they raise obstacles on all sorts of vague issues. This makes the problem very difficult; but these difficulties are increased by another section, a good example of which is to be found at Langs, Johnstone: here again the feeling against the Management is very bitter, but it is of the "old trade-union" type of bitterness, narrow and selfish. The recent strike there, while ostensibly against the Ministry's interpretation of L2 was really against "dilution" under any conditions (my fellow Commissioners do not agree with this they take the view that Lang's men struck against the Ministry's interpretation) in any case they are not intelligent and are selfishly opposed to any innovations into their trade, but this section does not by any means represent a large body of men generally, if they should be freed from the influence of the Clyde Workers' Committee the men are in the main sound both on the war and willing to make any sacrifices necessary.

It will be seen that a general lead from anyone of the three forces operating here - the Executive (supported by the narrow old-time trade unionist); the local officials (Bunton and Brodie who have given us splendid aid in urging the frank acceptance of the Ministry's interpretation of L2 and L3) or the Clyde Workers' Committee, would simply lead to opposition from the other two.

The Committee [sc. Dilution Commissioners] therefore, while working with Bunton and Brodie did not expect much help from them owing to the other two sections always being ready to frustrate their efforts. It was in fact soon evident that the Committee must fight "dilution" through largely alone. Two courses were open.

First, to thrust "dilution" through generally without much regard to the opposition.
Second, to take the shops separately and as far as possible conciliate those disposed to be favourable.

Employers' Attitude

In the consultations which took place prior to the Commissioners' being appointed, I was struck with a statement made by you that it was a mistake to suppose that the employers were enthusiastic about "dilution". It has been surprising how this has been borne out. Some are frankly of the opinion that women are unsuitable for engineering work, others are timid about the attitudes of their employees towards it and with very few exceptions they are certainly anything but enthusiastic.

It was obvious, therefore, that to have followed the first course mentioned above would have meant that not only the men but the employers would in the main have been against us.

My colleagues favoured the second course and with reservations as to the time spent on conciliation I concurred.

At the same time I early arrived at the conclusion that a fight was inevitable, and was anxious that it should be on a question which would divide the employers from the men and split the men into sections. This, I thought, was found in the first stoppage that occurred (Lang's Johnstone). As already stated the strike, ostensibly against the Ministry's interpretation of L2 was in reality against "dilution". In any case I was strongly in favour of the issue being accepted and the matter fought to the end. In the first place, Lang is the one employer enthusiastic for "dilution" - all employers are enthusiastic for the Ministry's interpretation of L2. We would therefore have had the employers actively co-operating with us; not only so but the local officials, Bunton and Brodie were against the men, the Clyde Workers' Committee, and the great majority of the men themselves were ashamed of the stoppage. It was, I thought, an excellent chance to clear the air; my colleauges, however, for reasons which have already been conveyed to you, were of a different opinion.

I am still of opinion that a strike is more than likely; intimation has reached me that this is proposed if the men now on bail are convicted. As far as I can judge my colleagues would prefer the fight on that issue rather than on "dilution". I do not concur. (I should I think not put the view of my colleagues definitely as they have not formally arrived at such a decision). In any case the point seems to have been reached when consideration should be given to the issue upon which a stoppage, which seems very imminent, should be fought.

The Clyde Workers' Committee have asked the Commission to receive a deputation. I am doubtful if it is wise to agree to the request unless the terms agreed upon at the Treasury Conference, 17-19 March 1915, are accepted by the Clyde Workers' Committee.

I am submitting this in my capacity as an officer of the Department and not as a member of the Commission.

I.H.M. 21.2.16.

Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith.

Chapter 7

The Crisis, March 1916

For three or four weeks after the events discussed at the end of the last chapter, Clydeside was peaceful. The flurry of activity over the suppression of the Worker had subsided, and no further steps were taken to extirpate the CWC as dilution proceeded steadily. The next (and as it turned out last) storm blew up in the middle of March, but the seeds of discontent were sown in Parkhead Forge at the beginning of the month.

Because of the unpreparedness of the management, the first woman dilutees did not arrive at Parkhead until February 29th. When they did, Kirkwood appeared at the department they were working in to introduce himself ("Of course, you will not know who I am,but if you do not you soon will"[1]) and the Shop Steward who was in charge of the department in which they were to work. The following day, the latter asked the girls to join the National Federation of Women Workers. The women's Welfare Superintendent complained to the works manager, who immediately banned Kirkwood from the women's section of the forge, telling him that his behaviour was an "intolerable interference"[2] with the women. Kirkwood was most hurt, as he thought he had only been doing as he always did, and immediately resigned as covenor of shop stewards (although this appears to have made no difference to his behaviour during the next fortnight - he continued, as spokesman and

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[1]Kirkwood Report, par.61.

[2]Kirkwood Report, par.65.

chief negotiator for the men, to act as if he still was chief shop steward). A still heavier blow fell when on March 14th he was invited by the manager of another department to investigate a dispute there, but was refused permission by the works manager:

> "Mr. Kirkwood was evidently very much surprised and annoyed by this, as he had never before been denied such permission under any similar circumstances." [1]

On his reporting the circumstances to the shop stewards they decided (in Kirkwood's absence) to call a strike which began on March 17th when Beardmore refused to budge on granting any of the privileges claimed for the convenor of shop stewards.

The suggestion has been made that the revocation of Kirkwood's rights was perhaps the first step in a planned campaign against the CWC:

> "Possibly Beardmore and the Commissioners had already decided that this was to be the attack on the C.W.C."[2]

Possibly; but such material as survives (supplemented by a very valuable discussion with the late (2nd) Lord Kirkwood) suggests that the origins of the Parkhead crisis were internal, and that it is unlikely that the Commissioners played any part, or even knew what was going on, up to 17th March. The part they played later is a different matter, and will be examined in due course.

Parkhead Forge, at this late stage, was adapting from a 'traditional' to a 'rational' structure of authority - from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft. The expansion of 1910 onwards, accelerated by the war, brought in its train the end of the old regime, picturesquely described by Bell in his account of the problems of moving large castings from the forge.

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[1] Kirkwood Report, par.74.

[2] Hinton, op.cit., p.205.

> "To bring the load to the main road....there was a steep incline (1) from the gate up the New Road (now Duke Street) to Parkhead Cross. When, as often happened, the horses got stuck, I have seen Isaac Beardmore come up to the Parkhead Cross, and call upon the workers who were to be found at the street corner to come and give assistance to the horses and haul at a rope. Once on the straight road the men and Beardmore would adjourn to the corner public-house, and all engage in drinks at Isaac's expense."[2]

Within that sort of structure of authority there was no room for trades unionism, and as we noted in Chapter 1, Kirkwood had been excluded from Parkhead Forge for many years after the 1897 lock-out for his trade-union activities. It was not until shortly after the beginning of the war, after a strenuous campaign in which Kirkwood had played a large part,[3] that trades-unionism was recognised at the forge. As the Labour Party's Report on the Kirkwood case put it,

> "Messrs William Beardmore & Co.Ltd. had strongly opposed the Amalgamated Society some years previously, and had only made their place a 'Union Shop' about three months after the Commencement of the war".[4]

The actual date of the agreement signed between Beardmore and the A.S.E. and Toolmakers was 29th October 1914. It ran:

> "1) that so far as the company find it possible trade-unionist men alone will be started in their machine shops in Parkhead.
>
> 2) that whenever the company is in want of workmen in the said shops, the shop stewards representing the said societies shall be offered an opportunity to assist in filling the vacancies". 5

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[1]About 1 in 25 or 30, in fact.

[2]Bell, Pioneering Days, p.29.

[3]See Kirkwood's speech to the 1917 Labour Party Conference: Report of the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Manchester, 1917, p.105. Hereafter cited as "LP Conference Report".

[4]Kirkwood Report, par.44.

[5]Kirkwood Report, par.11.

Thus at one stroke Parkhead had swung from being a non-union shop to being a closed shop - or at least an "agency shop". This may seem strange until account is taken of the continued paternalism involved in the arrangement. The attitude of Beardmore may be usefully contrasted with Glasgow's other great engineering employer, William Weir. While Beardmore, having once given in to the trades unionists, was prepared to co-operate with the craftsmen in regulating the supply of labour, Weir was opposed, root and branch, to all the traditions of craft unionism. We saw in Chapter 1 how one of the men's grievances in the February 1915 strike was the aggressive use by Weir of Taylorism: work-study, speeding-up, and bonus systems. And one of the written questions sent in to Lloyd George before the Christmas Day meeting was from a Weir's engineer alleging that Weir had been exceeding and abusing the Treasury Agreement:

> "this is no new matter as the firm of G. and J. Weir have been moving for 12 years in this matter...note work taken from turners since then: /a list of 13 operations follows/. Then do you wonder at the opposition?"[1]

The attitude of Beardmore was very much more conservative and encouraged co-operation with the craftsmen. But as the war progressed, with increasing division of labour and vast expansion in wartime conditions, it became more and more difficult to run Parkhead Forge in the paternalistic master-and-servant pattern in which Beardmore and Kirkwood had previously done so. This excluded not only the trade union officials (which gave Kirkwood the spurious appearance of being an advanced unofficial militant) but also most of management. The Works Manager, Admiral Adair (Coalition M.P. for Shettleston, 1918-1922) appears to have cordially disliked Kirkwood[2] - though Kirkwood thought

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[1] BCM, III, No.9, folio 59: file headed "Questions and Answers for meeting of A.S.E. (sic) concerning Munitions of War Act".

[2] Kirkwood, pp.96 and 123.

"A finer man never came into the works, but he knew nothing about the men"[1] and by 1916, the whole of the new middle management was actively resenting the usurpation of their functions by an artisan.

The crisis of March 1916 was sparked off, it will be remembered, by the complaint by the Women's Welfare Superintendent against Kirkwood's appearance before her girls; she regarded his manner as "very impertinent"[2] and took her complaint to one of the managers, a Mr.Chisholm. He had no reason to love Kirkwood, if Kirkwood's own account is to be believed, since Beardmore had rounded on him while making a volte face on trade union recognition:

> "'If there is any trouble /said Beardmore to Kirkwood/ you will come to me. Don't you allow manager or anybody else to come between you and me. Let me know, and we'll sort it out. None but Trade Unionists will be employed at Parkhead from this time on', and he shouted, 'Do you hear that, Chisholm?'".[3]

So when Chisholm received the complaint, he was doubtless very happy to act. Ultimately, the harmony of the works depended for Beardmore on a proper management structure, rather than relations with one individual workman, so Kirkwood had to go.

When the strike broke out on March 17th the men had two complaints; one was that

> "Soldiers, mostly Englishmen, were brought in, and these refused to join a Trade Union. An agreement existed to the effect that all men employed must be Trade Unionists".[4]

The fear of industrial conscription being used to break up trades unionism clearly sharpened the point of this complaint. But the main

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[1]Kirkwood, p.96.

[2]Kirkwood Report, para.61.

[3]Kirkwood, p.94.

[4]Manifesto from the Parkhead Forge Engineers to their Fellow Workers. Highton Papers.

casus belli was the restriction placed upon Kirkwood when he tried to investigate this grievance:

> "We feel that during the period when unskilled labour is engaged in our industry more than ordinary freedom is required by our shop-stewards to ensure that under the cloak of patriotism greedy employers are not allowed to ruin our trade".[1]

From 21st March the Parkhead men were joined by strikers at the North British Diesel Engine Works, Whiteinch, and men in gun departments at Dalmuir and Weir's. This was represented by Addison at the time and the official historians writing some six years afterwards as a CWC plan to impede production of munitions:

> "Whether or not from the outset a deliberate plot had been formed to strike at the most vital work of the ministry of Munitions, the guns and howitzers required for the great offensive of 1916, it cannot be doubted that as soon as the men at Parkhead came out the occasion was exploited to the full with that end in view...But so skilful was the organisation of the strike leaders that no clear evidence of incitement could be found against any of them.... such was their /the CWC's/ ascendancy that the men threw down their tools without asking or receiving a reason". [2]

Addison made a statement to the Commons on the 28th of March in which he said:

> "At different times strikes have been brought about, sometimes on the most trivial grounds, by a self-appointed body known as the Clyde Workers' Committee. This committee....decided about a fortnight ago to embark on a policy of holding up the production of the most important munitions of war in the Clyde district, with the object, I am informed, of compelling the Government to repeal the Military Service Act and the Munitions of War Act, and to withdraw all limitations upon increases of wages and strikes, and all forms of Government control. The present series of strikes commenced on the 17th of March.... From that time the series of strikes appears to have proceeded upon a systematic and sinister plan".[3]

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[1] ibid.

[2] HMM, IV, iv, 130.

[3] H of C Hansard, 5s., vol.81, col.564-5 quoted in Addison I, 186-7.

This was the Government's defence of its action when on March 24th it deported from the Glasgow area Kirkwood, James Haggarty, Samuel Shields, and Robert Wainwright from Parkhead, and James Messer and Arthur MacManus from Weir's; on 28th March they were joined by three more Weir's shop stewards, Bridges, Kennedy, and Glass. The Government had been considering two courses: prosecution under an appropriate D.O.R. Regulation, especially the new Regulation 42, or the deportation procedure under D.O.R. Regulation 14. Incredibly enough, Sir Edward Carson asked Addison:

> "May I ask if it has been considered that these men are not guilty of assisting the King's enemies, and thereby are guilty of high treason?"

to which Addison replied:

> "Yes. The whole matter is being considered, and I may say that the method of deporting these men was resorted to in the first instance because a criminal trial would require an interval of six weeks or two months before it could be held, and it was felt that immediate action was necessary".[1]

The deportation power was actually in the hands of the military, not the Government, under Regulation 14, which empowered the Competent Military Authority to deport

> "a person suspected of acting, or of having acted, or of being about to act, in a manner prejudicial to the public safety or the defence of the Realm."

So the Competent Military Authority duly did as it was told, and carried out the deportations.

The Cabinet discussed the deportations on 30th March, and the discussion was summarised in Lord Crewe's report to the King:

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[1] H of C Hansard 5s., v.81, col.566-7.

> "A long conversation followed on the Clyde strike and the unrest prevalent among some of the workers there. It was shown that the principal danger of the situation depends not so much on the proceedings of the small (by comparison) number of workmen holding syndicalist views and revolutionary aims, as on the fear that the vastly larger body of patriotic and loyal trade unionists may be deluded by misrepresentation of the facts into expressing sympathy with the violent minority, believing them to be unjustly treated. Mr.Henderson offered to use his best efforts to enlighten his friends as to the true state of affairs, both at an important meeting which is being held in London this afternoon, and by going to Glasgow to confer with the leaders there; and the Cabinet felt that the business could not be left in better hands, while any further necessary explanations should be given in Parliament without delay".[1]

On the same day, 30th March, the Commons debated Addison's statement of two days earlier, and Addison was introduced to two members of the CWC by Ramsay Macdonald.[2] The two members were Gallacher and Muir,[3] and they represented to Addison that the conspiracy he mentioned was non-existent. Addison's response was to make a sharp diversionary attack on W.M.R. Pringle and Ramsay Macdonald for introducing them.[4]

In 1916, as later in 1919, the Government and the revolutionaries were united in seeing far more revolutionary potential in the strike movement than actually existed. Gallacher claims that he did indeed try to broaden the Parkhead strike into a general one, as Addison alleged in his statement to the Commons. If so, he failed totally. Attempts to bring out Barr and Strouds, the majority of men at Weir's, and Fairfields foundered on the men's resentment at Kirkwood's earlier behaviour:

> "Parkhead had broken the front. Parkhead could take the consequences. Such was the situation we were facing". [5]

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[1] PRO: CAB 37/144. Reproduced from the original in the Royal Archives.

[2] H of C Hansard 5s., v.81, col. 990-2.

[3] Gallacher, p.107.

[4] H of C Hansard, loc.cit., col.992. Cf also Addison, Politics from Within, I, 193; "I am afraid I got across Pringle very badly... and he will not forgive me".

[5] Gallacher, p.107.

It is not even clear whether Gallacher's claim that he tried to start a strike is true. J.T.Murphy alleges, quoting the CWC evidence to the Labour Party enquiry on the Kirkwood case, that Gallacher ruled out of order a motion for a strike in sympathy with Parkhead "as it was against the accepted aims of the C.W.C."[1].

It was thus patently absurd to talk, as Addison had, about a "series of strikes (which) appears to have proceeded upon a systematic and sinister plan" towards the restriction of munitions production. Kirkwood, after all, had so far abandoned his earlier pacifism as to have offered his co-operation with the Dilution Commissioners in producing a plan for shell production at Parkhead:

> "You want shells to blow the Germans over the Rhine... Then we will do all in our power to meet your requirements. We will produce the guns, the shells, and all other munitions. In twenty-four hours we will submit a scheme that will satisfy both sides. We will give the production and keep the engineers safeguarded". [2]

The Cabinet, and later the authors of the History of the Ministry of Munitions, appear to have believed the official story of the CWC plot breaking out from Parkhead to disrupt the production of munitions. It is not clear whether Addison did. He said later of the deportations,

> "I do not think myself that I have been associated with anything I hated more".3

But this was said to a deputation from the A.S.E. who were using the deportations as the latest excuse for their failure to give full co-operation with the Ministry over, among other things, L2. On balance, it seems probable that Addison was weeping crocodile tears. Assessment of the point would be made easier by reference to the Ministry papers,

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[1] J.T.Murphy, "Preparing for Power", (London 1934), p.123.

[2] Kirkwood, p.117.

[3] PRO: MUN 5/57. Minutes of the Proceedings at a Conference with a Deputation from the A.S.E. 27 April 1916.

if those for March 1916 had happened to survive in such wealth as those for January and February have. But from Macassey's later, published, version of the incident and from Addison's diary notes it can be seen that the Commissioners were sending information full of alarm and foreboding, which hastened deportation.

According to Addison, on March 23rd:

> "Alarming reports have come in from Macassey... The strikes at Beardmore's gun-shop and at the North British Diesel are specially bad as affecting guns. His recommendation is that certain men ought to be arrested."[1]

Addison therefore asked Macassey to furnish full details, and the following day Lloyd George held a conference with Scottish Office and War Office representatives.

> "Frenzied telegrams from Commissioners. We decided that if satisfactory evidence was supplied to the Commissioners and to the Procurator-Fiscal, we would agree to the deportation of the leaders. We have been patient long enough".[2]

Macassey saw events in these terms:

> "Finally, the direct actionists matured their plans. It was a principle of theirs always to use the sharpest weapons. There was one immediately to hand. The army in France was in dire need of heavy howitzers to smash the system of trenches which the Germans had commenced to consolidate; Mesopotamia urgently required flat-bottomed barges....The direct actionists therefore brought out, or tried to bring out, on strike, the employees in every shop or yard where the howitzers or any part of the howitzers or the flat-bottomed barges were in course of construction with almost complete success, and with disastrous national results." 3

This version of the facts did not accord with that favoured by labour observers, including "moderate" and "patriotic" ones. The Forward,

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[1]Addison, "Politics from Within", I, 191.

[2]ibid., p.192.

[3](Sir) Lynden Macassey "Labour Policy - False and True", London 1922, p.79.

naturally making no comment until the strike was over, then said

> "The Capitalist Press, of course, has presented one side, and has cursed the C.W.C. up hill and down dale, though the C.W.C. emphatically deny having responsibility for the strike, which, they declared, was an entirely spontaneous shop movement". [1]

And Johnston's right-wing Labour pro-war correspondent, Stirling Robertson, who wrote weekly under the pen-name of "Rob Roy", put the point more explicitly:

> "According to Ministers, the strikers or strike leaders have pursued a well-conceived and relentless campaign against the production of certain big guns, hoping thereby to bring the Government to their knees. This fairy tale is assuredly the product of someone's excited imagination, and pays a compliment to the strike leaders entirely undeserved". [2]

The Parliamentary Committee of the S.T.U.C., reviewing the incident some months later, said of the deportees,

> "there was nothing in their conduct or actions to warrant the the Government in taking the action they did. In the opinion of Trade Unionists in this country, Mr.David Kirkwood and his friends were only fulfilling the duty of Shop Stewards, and if any person was to blame, we hold it was the managers of the firm of Beardmore's, who refused to allow reasonable and proper inspection, which was the duty of the Shop Steward".[3]

The most thorough investigation of the position came from the Labour Party Committee which reported on the Kirkwood case. This concurred completely with the other labour bodies quoted:

> "We do not think the Clyde Workers' Committee as a collective body was responsible for starting the strike which occurred in Parkhead Forge in March 1916. In our opinion that strike was a spontaneous outbreak of the general body of workmen employed there, and was intended as a protest against what they regarded as the unfair restriction of facilities which had previously been allowed to the Chief Shop Steward." 4

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[1] Forward, 8 April 1916, p.1.

[2] ibid., p.2.

[3] STUC Annual Report 1917, p.41.

[4] Kirkwood Report, para.47.

Commenting on Macassey's allegation that all, and only, the shops making heavy howitzers had been called out, the report continues,

> "although we made close enquiry upon the point we do not think there was any conscious or deliberate attempt to retard the delivery of any particular type of gun".[1]

If there was any plot on Clydeside between March 17th and March 24th, it emanated not from the CWC but from the Commissioners. The Labour Party Committee (which had been granted, at Arthur Henderson's instance, excellent facilities for investigation: it interviewed both the Competent Military Authority and the Commissioners, and obtained a transcript of a confidential report into the case made by the Commissioners themselves) expressed surprise at the part played by the Commissioners.[2] Instead of deporting the men, the Commissioners ought to have intervened to arbitrate in the normal way, and all the uproar would have been avoided. (This, after all, was precisely the sort of procedure Macassey had spoken of, rather complacently, in his memorandum of 5th February, as the way to keep the temperature down[3]).

Why did the Commissioners act in the way they did? In the absence of satisfactory evidence, two suggestions, both equally plausible, may be made. One is that the Commissioners decided that the CWC had been sufficiently weakened by the imposition of dilution and the split between Kirkwood and the rest and that the time had at last come to "strike a sharp line of cleavage between the loyal workmen.....and the disloyal Socialist minority".[4] Accordingly they invented the myth that the series of strikes was a systematic plan by the CWC to disrupt production (and there was plenty of local, contemporary evidence to show that it was

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[1]Kirkwood Report, para.50.

[2]Kirkwood Report, para.155.

[3]See above, p.58.

[4]Above, p.109.

a myth) in order to put up a case for the suppression and dispersion of the militants. The other interpretation is that the Commissioners, and Macassey in particular, panicked, and accepted a wholly unrealistic view of the situation. Up to February 9th Macassey had not regarded the CWC as a threat. He had discounted the value of deportation in December,[1] as had Paterson in January.[2] The important change, as already noted, appears in between his two memoranda of the 5th and the 9th February. It may be that, having dealt with the conservatives, Macassey ascribed to the militants a much greater degree of influence than they actually possessed - and it may, again, be, that this was the point on which Mitchell dissented from his two colleagues.[3] All this may have led Macassey, in March, to perceive in good faith a plot which assuredly did not exist, and persuade the Ministry to take over-drastic action.

If there was a plot by the Commissioners to which the Ministry was an accessory after the fact, it worked. The strike did not long survive the deportation of its leaders. On March 29th, 30 of the strikers were fined £5 each before Sheriff Fyfe in a General Munitions Tribunal. On March 31, on Glasgow Green, there was a large and peaceful demonstration supported by the Trades Council against the deportations and the refusal of the Committee on Production to raise wages.

But the men were drifting back to work, until by 5th April only 33 remained on strike: whereupon the Commissioners ordered Thomas Clark, who had succeeded Kirkwood as Treasurer of the CWC, to be deported at once, and threatened the same to any of the strikers who did not return the following day.[4] Fines totalling £230 were levied on the men who had stayed out until April 4th. But these Draconic measures produced no

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[1] Above, Ch.5, p.68.

[2] Above, Appendix 1 to Ch.6.

[3] Above, Ch.6, pp.102-103.

[4] HMM, IV, iv, 134.

reaction. Without their leaders, the men were not prepared to venture a political strike, or even one in protest against the treatment which had been meted out to their leaders. Workers' control over the conditions of the implementation of dilution had been achieved, even if the Kirkwood incident showed that it was not as complete as the workers had thought. To continue to agitate would bring only heavy fines, more deportations, or imprisonment. In this crisis, the men were not prepared to follow their leaders from industrial over to political issues, and belied the trust which had been put in them by Maclean to start off "the Political Strike so often resorted to on the Continent in times past" (above, Ch.2).

Chapter 8

Aftermath

The diminution of revolutionary fervour is well traced in successive meetings of the Glasgow Trades Council after March 1916. A number of delegates to the Trades Council were district officials of their unions, who tended to look askance at the unofficial and anti-bureaucratic operations of bodies like the C.W.C. James Messer, the secretary of the C.W.C., explained this in a letter to Herbert Highton:

> "The relations between the Committee and the Official Side of the Trade Unions may be taken as Nil. The officials have always been very much opposed to us, owing I believe to the open and frank manner in which we have severely criticised their action since the beginning of the War".[1]

Nevertheless the initial response of the Trades Council to the deportations was sharp.

> "This Council representing the organised workpeople in the West of Scotland, anent the action of the Government in deporting several men from this district demands the return of these men in order that a basis of industrial peace may be established, and further requests the affiliated Societies and the Trade Union movement generally to take direct action in support of this protest".[2]

The Trades Council's own part in the direct action was to take the form of a massive demonstration to be addressed by Robert Smillie.[3] But the magistrates banned the demonstration,[4] and George Shanks, chairman of the Council, said that he would not chair a banned meeting.

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[1]Messer to Highton, 15 October 1917. Highton Papers.

[2]T.C.M. 29 March 1916. Original punctuation.

[3]T.C.M. Executive Committee, 4 April 1916; full Council 5 April.

[4]See Forward, 15 April 1916, p.4.

Nevertheless the Council agreed to proceed.[1] To this the Council's Executive Committee responded angrily, saying:

> "It was for the Committee to decide what should be done in the matter. After full discussion it was agreed: That the Demonstration be postponed".[2]

That was the last that was heard from the Trades Council about direct action for the deportees. As the secretary of the Catholic Socialist Society commented ruefully:

> "Our meeting last Sunday was abandoned in favour of the Protest Demonstration, but, alas, it was a case of dropping the substance for the shadow. At any rate, we have learned something". 3

The deportees themselves had been banned from the Glasgow munitions district but were otherwise free to seek work. They went initially to Edinburgh, where the Competent Military Authority responsible for them, Colonel Levita, interceded with firms not to refuse to employ them just because they were deportees.[4] Later, Arthur MacManus went off to Manchester. David Kirkwood stayed in Edinburgh. According to his (or Wheatley's) account, he refused to take a job until he could get back to Glasgow. On June 10th, Wheatley reported that all the deportees were at work except Haggerty, who was looking for work, and Kirkwood:

> "Kirkwood refuses to work until set free. The authorities are said to have adopted a threatening attitude towards him, but Davie's mind is made up".5

It is impossible to say whether Kirkwood was really refusing to work as a matter of principle, or whether, since employers were refusing to consider taking him on, he was able to put a gloss of political principle on to a position where in reality he had no choice.

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[1] T.C.M. 12 April, 1916.

[2] T.C.M. Executive Committee, 15 April 1916.

[3] Catholic Socialist Notes, in "Forward", 22 April 1916.

[4] See Kirkwood Report, para.159.

[5] "Forward", 10 June 1916, p.2.

Arthur Henderson had offered to mediate at the Cabinet meeting of March 30th. This offer had been enthusiastically taken up by the Cabinet[1] because they were uncomfortably aware that the whole dilution crisis from its beginnings up to that point had been handled with hardly any reference to Henderson, who had nominal responsibility for labour matters.[1a] Speaking at the 1917 Labour Party Conference debate on the deportations, Henderson made perfectly clear his differences with the Government of which he was still a member:

> "He could only say that the deportation was an administrative act, for which he had no responsibility, and on which he was not consulted. He wished to make that perfectly clear. He was no more responsible for some things done by the Government than some delegates were responsible for what other delegates said in the Conference. The position was this, that if a decision was taken without his being consulted, his responsibility only began after the decision had been taken and when it became an actual part of the Government policy. Then he had two alternatives. If he disapproved of that piece of policy he had the choice of sending in his resignation or remaining in and doing everything possible to modify the operation of that policy." [2]

Later, speaking in some exasperation, he said,

> "He had been asked why he did not resign. He had already told them. If he had to resign he would be resigning every day to please some of them. He was not sure that he would not resign if he were to please himself, but he was not there either to please himself or them, he was there to see the War through".[3]

Even when all due allowances have been made for the nature and temper of the body Henderson was addressing, these statements certainly show a remarkable lack of warmth for his cabinet colleagues. It was in recognition of this feeling that his colleagues had sought to mollify

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[1] See report of the discussion, above, Ch.7.

[1a] See, e.g. Addison, I, 188.

[2] L.P. Conference Report, 1917, p.107.

[3] Ibid., p.110.

him at the Cabinet meeting on March 30th by welcoming his offer to mediate between the deportees and their union. Crewe wrote to Lloyd George on 3rd April:

> "Between ourselves, Henderson told me some time ago that he felt rather out of it with his Committee (1) at your office, and I advised him to go and talk to Asquith, as the Jupiter who rules over all Government Committees... What you said at the last Cabinet will, I think, have smoothed things down." [2]

In his role as mediator, Henderson proposed to all the deportees, through the Parliamentary Committee of the S.T.U.C., that they

> "should give an undertaking that if returned they would not advocate any 'down-tools' policy, and any grievances would be submitted through their Trade Union for redress".[3]

He had secured the agreement of the Ministry's National Labour Advisory Committee that if they signed the agreement the deportees should be allowed to return to Glasgow.[4] The S.T.U.C. interviewed them, and found them mostly prepared to give the undertaking, but Kirkwood replied to the secretary:

> 82 Bruntsfield Place
> Edinburgh
> 24 November 1916.
>
> "Dear Mr Allan,
>
> In reply to your letter of the 24th [sic] inst, I have no hesitation in saying I can sign no agreement. When I get back to Glasgow it must be as a <u>freeman</u>.
>
> I will sign nothing. Thanking you for all you have done for me.
>
> I remain, Yours faithfully,
> David Kirkwood. "[5]

Hostile observers complained that Kirkwood's part was entirely stage-managed by Wheatley, with the object of building up Kirkwood at the

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[1](The Central Munitions Labour Supply Committee).

[2]Crewe to L.G. 3 April 1916. L.G.Papers, D/16/9/8.

[3]S.T.U.C. Annual Report 1917, p.41.

[4]Kirkwood Report, para.175.

[5]Quoted thus in S.T.U.C. Annual Report, 1917, p.41.

expense of the other deportees.[1] This was not entirely fair, in so far as Kirkwood was very clearly marked out as the ringleader by the employers; and while the other deportees found work fairly easily, sometimes with Levita's help, nobody would employ Kirkwood. The Ministry of Munitions officials pointed out, in a conference with a delegation from the A.S.E., that they could not force private employers to take him on:

> "Mr Beveridge. Take the case of Kirkwood. It is extremely unlikely that a private employer would be willing to employ him again. You have to face that.
>
> Dr Addison. We should have to see whether we could not find him a job in a National Factory or something of that kind. We cannot compel Beardmores to say that they will employ him."[2]

But there can be no doubt that Kirkwood was built up by Wheatley as a hero of the Labour movement. The stage-management culminated in a debate on the deportations at the 1917 Labour Party Conference at Manchester at which Kirkwood himself appeared as an A.S.E. delegate. He read his speech "slowly and impressively...from his notes"[3] - a description which makes it more than probable that the speech was written by Wheatley. Kirkwood opened by refuting, on the grounds that he was responsible for making Parkhead Forge a Union shop, the charge that he was a rebel against trade-unionism. He went on to relate the history of the deportations, and concluded by saying that he was not prepared to sign the pledge which had been put in front of him:

> "He was no criminal....Why should he sign this humiliating and degrading pledge? There was only one reason: in order to whitewash his persecutors. He refused, and his comrades refused. But he was determined to do more. That day, for the first time, he had an opportunity of placing their case before the representatives of British Labour... Great principles of constitutional liberty were challenged. They must defend them. When he left the conference he would not return to deportation. He went home to Glasgow, or he went to prison".[4]

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[1] See, e.g. Bell, "Pioneering Days", p.118.

[2] Minutes of the Proceedings at a Conference with a Deputation from the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. 27 April 1916; PRO: MUN 5/57.

[3] "Forward", 3 February 1917, p.2.

[4] LP Conference Report 1917, p.106.

The statement caused uproar, and a reply was demanded from Henderson. "Speaking among some disorder",[1] he said that

> "he had no desire whatever to burke the issue that had been raised in the statement by Mr Kirkwood. He was not encouraged, however, to believe that the Conference was in a frame of mind to give the consideration to the case that the case deserved".[2]

The angry mood of the conference has been amply demonstrated in the extracts we have already given of the discussions and of Henderson's contributions. To meet its demands for action, he proposed the appointment of a special Commission to investigate the case.

> "And without having consulted with the Prime Minister or any of his colleagues, he would take the responsibility of saying that every paper and every witness required would be placed at the disposal of the Committee in order that the investigation might be as full and complete as possible".[3]

The proposal was accepted and the Committee reported to the 1918 Conference. (We have already examined its findings in some detail in Chapter 7; it is worth noting that Henderson's promise of full facilities for the Committee was very generously carried out - perhaps another gesture by the Cabinet towards mollifying Henderson's feelings). Kirkwood, for his part, did go to Glasgow, but stayed there for only three days before going to Crieff, where he was arrested by the military and imprisoned for a spell in Edinburgh. The deportation order against him was finally lifted in May 1917, but for some months longer he could not get a job. The Ministry of Munitions for some time took no action along the lines suggested by Addison to the A.S.E. in April 1916, namely to find Kirkwood a job at a National Projectile Factory. In August 1917, however, Kirkwood and two members of the Glasgow Trades Council visited Churchill, who was now Minister of Munitions, to complain that Kirkwood could not get a job. Churchill agreed that "it amounted to victimisation",

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp.107-108.

and promised that any unemployed ex-deportees in Glasgow

> "would be offered employment by the end of another week in one or other of the National Projectile Factories in the district". [1]

Within a fortnight, Kirkwood had been given a foreman's job, which he at first (according to the Forward report) had wished to refuse, at the Mile-End Shell Factory run by Beardmore's.[2]

> "Thus it came that in Mile-End Shell Factory, with David Kirkwood as foreman, worked David Hanton (3), William Gallacher, and wee MacManus as shop stewards.
>
> What a team! There never was anything like it in Great Britain. We organized a bonus system in which everyone benefited by high production". [4]

Between the deportations and the return of all the deportees to work, Wheatley and the "official" wing of the Labour movement took up the problem of maintaining them and their dependants - as also the dependants of Gallacher, Muir and Bell, and of John Maclean, James Maxton, and James MacDougall, who had all been imprisoned for sedition. A Financial Statement of the Clyde Workers' Defence and Maintenance Fund, of which Wheatley was treasurer, gives an interesting breakdown of income and expenditure. £1891:18:3 was raised, of which £785:13:11 was contributed by the C.W.C. The expenditure included the following:

	£	s	d	
Maintenance of Deportees & Dependants	1004	12	4	
Maintenance of Prisoners & Dependants	543	17	8	
Travelling Expenses	59	10	11	
Grants to C.W.C. for defence purposes	61	7	6	
Legal expenses	170	0	0	
Audit fee	4	4	0	(5)

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[1] Forward, 18 August 1917, p.2.

[2] Forward, 1 September 1917; cf Kirkwood, pp.164-167.

[3] Not a deportee, but the shop steward to whose department the first women at Parkhead had come on February 29, 1916, thus sparking off the crisis dealt with in Chapter 7. See Kirkwood Report, paras.61-70.

[4] Kirkwood, p.168.

[5] Clyde Workers' Defence and Maintenance Fund, Financial Statement, 1918. Preserved in Highton Papers.

Like the large sums raised for the defence in the trials after Bloody Friday in 1919, these figures show that the Clyde workers were prepared to contribute generously through what must have been an efficient and wide-ranging organisation. The militant movement itself might be restricted to a small unofficial section of the engineers, but the appeal against the treatment meted out to them drew wide sympathy.

After March 1916, however, industrial militancy on the Clyde was to be absent for three years. One contemporary observer, the Govanhill engineer Herbert Highton, saw events after March 1916 thus:

> "Crisis - Ideas stimulated by war
> Action repressed by war
> Effect of deportation and imprisonment on 1) C.W.C.
> 2) workers generally.
> .....
> Deportations (= dispersion of Jews) spread new gospel.
> 1917 May strike born on Clyde 1915-16". [1]

It is unclear, however, to what extent the diaspora of the deportees was directly responsible for the encouragement of militancy elsewhere. Some time before the deportations, Tom Bell, the leading theorist of the Socialist Labour Party on the Clyde, had gone to London and later to Liverpool, where he had been unsuccessful in getting under way a Merseyside Workers' Committee because

> "the several local union committees were fairly militant, and seemed to the workers to be all-sufficient" [2]

Arthur MacManus was more successful in Manchester in founding a national committee of shop stewards with himself as chairman - a committee which was to be of importance in the political history of the British Communist Party, but of very little importance industrially during the remainder of the war. For the militant movement continued along the same lines as

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[1] Notes for lecture on "Labour on the Clyde and the Control of Industry", October 1917. Highton Papers.

[2] Bell, "Pioneering Days", p.56.

before, with the same unsolved dilemma between revolutionary commitment and craft conservatism. This came out very clearly in the first major incident after the Clyde deportations, when a Sheffield engineer named Hargreaves was enlisted although he was protected by the Trade Card scheme as an engineer employed on war work. The strike which followed in Sheffield was backed by the District Committee of the A.S.E., although the District Committee handed over the business of running the strike to a Shop Stewards' Committee in order to free the A.S.E. from any legal commitments.[1] It was a "ridiculous and avoidable" strike, caused by the "colossal stupidity" of the Manpower Board, in Addison's view,[2] and it ended in Hargreaves' reinstatement. Murphy, whose writings show that he had by far the shrewdest ideas of any of the wartime militants of the roots of the movement, comments thus on a mass meeting held at the beginning of the Hargreaves strike:

> "I have addressed many meetings, small and large, in the course of the years, but this was the most memorable. Not because of any feat of oratory on my part, but because it was the revolt of the craftsmen and particularly the older craftsmen who saw their life's work being torn to pieces".[3]

In spite of the National Committee of Shop Stewards, revolts of the craftsmen could not be transformed into national strike movements, especially when Press censorship made it very difficult for workers in one centre even to find out what was happening in others. Thus in March 1917, when the Barrow engineers struck, Murphy was in a "most difficult position"[4] because the Sheffield engineers could not have been brought out on strike on the sympathy issue alone, and Murphy was "relieved"[5] when Barrow went back before Sheffield had to be put to the

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[1]Murphy, "New Horizons", pp.50-51.

[2]Addison, I, p.262.

[3]Murphy, p.50.

[4]Murphy, op.cit., p.54.

[5]Ibid., p.55.

test. Even the May 1917 strike, which did have its origin in a national issue, did not produce a uniform national response. The issues were the intentions of the Government to withdraw the Trade Cards scheme, which protected skilled men on war work from conscription, and to extend dilution to private work. It had been a condition of the A.S.E's initial agreement to dilution in 1915-16 that it would apply to war work only, and engineers felt understandably aggrieved when the Government, giving the manpower crisis as its reason, supported moves by employers in 1917 to have dilution extended to private work. Here if anywhere was the opportunity for a national strike, but it never developed. In spite of an increase in political revolutionary feeling, it produced no response on Clydeside. Gallacher correctly predicted:

> "I expressed the opinion that the strike would be over before we could get anything moving on the Clyde". [1]

The unofficial strike of May 1917 was the largest in the engineering industry in the entire war; with the possible exception of the South Wales miners' strike of 1915, it was the largest wartime strike of any kind. But it has never received as much attention as events on the Clyde in 1915-16. Outside the Clyde, only one militant published his reminiscences - J.T. Murphy. Murphy's book shows a far more realistic assessment of the forces behind engineers' militancy than do those of, say, Gallacher, Kirkwood, or Bell; but by the same token, he writes with fewer revolutionary aspirations (like many an author's good political works, Murphy's "New Horizons" was written a few years after he left the Communist Party) and has therefore not had the same sort of appeal to the non-specialist historian as the Clydesiders. Furthermore, since a good

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[1] Gallacher, "Revolt on the Clyde", p.147; cf also "Last Memoirs", pp.97-98.

record of industrial militancy was often an important qualification for high positions in the Communist Party, Gallacher, Bell, McManus and Thomas Clark all had a vested interest in stressing their revolutionary antecedents. And once they had reached positions of influence, they were able further to publicise their role. Thus Gallacher's "Revolt on the Clyde", published just after its author became M.P. for West Fife, became the sacred text on wartime industrial militancy. And, naturally enough, it hardly mentions the May 1917 strike while giving great prominence to the events of 1915 and 1916.

But while industrial unrest was on the wane on Clydeside during 1917, political unrest was increasing. The political climate had greatly changed since the beginning of the war, when the Forward had gloomily predicted,

> "By Friday the working class will be out on the streets waving Union Jacks, and we may just as well face the fact that it is pure stupid cant to talk about a general strike by way of protest".[1]

The prediction proved right, even on Clydeside, which was to be the industrial area in Britain least hostile to anti-war speakers. Within a week of the outbreak of war the travelling propaganda carried out by Dollan each summer had been badly disrupted:

> "The War Fever has hit the Van Propaganda, so that we are having lots of opposition, no collections (or meagre ones) and poor literature sales". [2]

But by 1916 and 1917 war fever was giving way to war weariness, and many sections of the labour movement besides the militants were delighted at the success of the first Russian Revolution. The Glasgow Trades Council agreed enthusiastically in May 1917 to affiliate to the Union of

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[1] Forward, 8 August 1914, p.1.

[2] Forward, 15 August, p.8; interview with Mr.J.H.Dollan.

Democratic Control,[1] and two weeks later it was agreed to co-operate in a large demonstration to celebrate the Revolution, against only two members who voted "not to co-operate until we were certain of the nature of the Revolution".[2] The Trades Council agreed to send delegates to the joint B.S.P. and I.L.P. Conference at Leeds in June 1917 at which Macdonald, Snowden, and W.C.Anderson spoke for the establishment of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Britain. The Trades Council delegates reported back that the Conference had been a "splendid success and a triumph"[3] which showed that the workers were at last tired of the war, and it was agreed to nominate a "conference in 13 districts... to appoint a delegate from each to act on the Central /Workers' and Soldiers'/ Committee".[4] A meeting of the Central Committee for the Glasgow area was fixed for 4th August,[5] and the Glasgow magistrates sent, through the Town Clerk, an anxious telegram to the Secretary for Scotland asking him to ban it, because,

> "there is apprehension of grave disorder arising because of disturbances at previous meetings of a similar character in other towns arising out of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils... At a meeting held in Charing Cross Halls, Glasgow, on 12th April, addressed by Mr Ramsay Macdonald, disorder actually occurred, and the presence of a large body of police was required to restore and maintain order".[6]

Munro[7] was no more venturesome as a Secretary for Scotland than his two predecessors, and he brought the Glasgow magistrates' request before the War Cabinet. He explained that he would have taken the initiative of banning the meeting under Defence of the Realm Regulation 9A, but for

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[1] T.C.M., 18 April 1917, 2 May 1917.

[2] T.C.M., 2 May 1917.

[3] T.C.M., 6 June 1917.

[4] T,C.M., 6 June 1917.

[5] T.C.M., Executive Committee 3 July 1917.

[6] Quoted by R.Munro in memorandum to the War Cabinet: "Proposed Prohibition of a Meeting at Glasgow". G.T. 1625, 6 August 1917. PRO: CAB 24/22.

[7] Robert Munro (cr. 1st Baron Alness 1934). Secretary for Scotland throughout the 1916-22 Coalition Government. Previously Lord Advocate.

his desire to ensure that any action he took was collated with what was being done in England, as

> "there are, of course, further considerations of policy involved".[1]

The War Cabinet discussed Munro's paper on 8th August, and heard that the Home Secretary proposed to ban similar conferences in England. They decided

> "a) To confirm the proposed action of the Home Secretary
> b) To authorise the Secretary for Scotland to prohibit the Glasgow meeting, announcement of such prohibition not to be made until after 4 o'clock on Friday (2) next.
> c) To call the attention of the Secretary of State for War to War Cabinet 200 Minute 1c (3) and to the desirability of an announcement being made in Parliament, but not earlier than the Secretary for Scotland's announcement, that the Cabinet regarded the objects of such meetings as illegal, and would not permit them to be held." 4

On the announcement of the ban, the meeting was transferred into a demonstration of protest on Glasgow Green against the ban.[5] Later in August permission was still being sought for a meeting of the Provincial Court of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council,[6] and a month later, Miss Hughes, Treasurer of the Trades Council, and (surprisingly) David Kirkwood, who had not previously been a delegate to the Council, were chosen as Council delegates to the Central Workers' and Soldiers' Council.[7] The rest is silence; and Kirkwood describes it in his customary fashion:

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[1] PRO: CAB 24/22, G.T. 1625, as above.

[2] 10th August.

[3] This referred to a decision of the War Cabinet, on 31st July, to forbid soldiers from joining Soldiers' and Workmen's Councils, and to announce the Government's intention to enforce civil and military law at public meetings. "In reaching these decisions the War Cabinet did not overlook the fact that they would have to enforce their policy in all circumstances". PRO: CAB 23/3. W.C. 200, 31 July 1917.

[4] War Cabinet 207, minute 6. PRO: CAB 23/3.

[5] T.C.M: E.C. 6 August 1917.

[6] T.C.M., 28 August 1917.

[7] T.C.M: E.C. 26 September 1917.

> "It died a natural death. It was choked by its own excesses. It was more Bolshevik than the Bolsheviks. The workers laughed and went on with their jobs." [1]

Of course, it would be a mistake to read too much into the outburst of support for the Soviet system at the time of the Leeds Council. The proponents of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council in normally thoroughly bureaucratic bodies like the Glasgow Trades Council would have done well to heed Johnston's warning in the Forward:

> "The idea is good. It is more; it is dramatically good. But... we wish some of the speakers had given some indication of how it is proposed to fit in the Committee with existing working-class organisations." [2]

And the Conference had critics both on the left and on the right of the Glasgow labour movement. The issue of the Forward for 16 June 1917 contained both a report of the Conference by John Wheatley and a comment from the right-wing Labour columnist "Rob Roy". Wheatley remarked that

> "while it was very inspiring to be in the midst of 1200 delegates whose hearts were throbbing with hatred of capitalism and all its crimes, the Conference lacked driving force... Everyone pointed to the Russian road, but none was ready to lead the way."[3]

And Rob Roy pinpointed the main weakness of the Leeds Convention when he said:

> "One of the speakers or commentators referred to the voting as proof of the change that has swept over the public mind since the Manchester Labour Congress. The difference resides elsewhere. A Labour Congress rests on a carefully framed constitution so worked out as to give fair and proportionate representation to all sides and shades of opinion. Leeds was a scratch Convention of enthusiasts for one particular cause." [4]

But even if the whole Workers' and Soldiers' movement be dismissed as the product of a "scratch Convention of enthusiasts", there is solid

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[1] Kirkwood, p.171. Cf also Murphy, op.cit., p.63. Kirkwood mistakenly dates the Council to 1918.

[2] Forward, 19 May 1917, p.2.

[3] "Catholic Socialist Notes", Forward, 16 June 1917, p.4.

[4] Forward, 16 June 1917, p.2.

evidence of a shift of Labour opinion all over the country, and in the Glasgow area in particular. In May 1916, the Forward had given a very critical notice of the Scottish Trades Union Congress held in Glasgow that week:

> "The S.T.U.C..... excited, unfortunately, small interest, and, more unfortunately still, the proceedings justified the general disregard....
> The /S/ T.U.C. is cutting no ice these days, but we give below a pretty full report of Mr Gilmour's (1) presidential address, as an indication of the views of a section of the workers whom Mr Gilmour may be said to represent". [2]

The address was defiantly pro-war:

> "Personally I have held the view from the beginning, in common with the great majority of my colleagues of the Parliamentary Committee, that our country has been in no way to blame for the calamity that has overtaken the world".[3]

But this is the last manifestation of jingo sentiment by genuine Labour representatives in the Glasgow area that can be traced. In 1917 the chairman of the S.T.U.C. was again pro-war, but his presidential address to the conference was introduced in a very different tone: he acknowledged that his views

> "will not command the undivided support of delegates to this Congress. The Labour Movement at present is like a river which has been divided by an island and flows in two branches".[4]

As if to underline this, the Congress voted to send a resolution of congratulations to the "free peoples of Russia", "to be sent to the Provisional Government and the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates".[5]

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[1] David Gilmour, Lanarkshire miners' agent. National Democratic Party candidate for Hamilton, 1918, when the seat was won by another miner for Labour. See Lanarkshire Miners' County Union Annual Report, Smillie pamphlet collection, Nuffield College, Oxford.

[2] Forward, 6 May 1916, p.3.

[3] S.T.U.C. Annual Report 1916, p.56.

[4] S.T.U.C. Annual Report 1917, p.50.

[5] Ibid., p.49.

In the annual May Day march through the steets of Glasgow, 1916 was rather a poor year. The Forward estimated that 10,000 had attended, and commented that "Literature sales were lighter than usual".[1] This compared with an estimated 25,000 marchers in 1915.[2] But by 1917, the May Day march had gained an enormous access of support. The Glasgow Herald estimated that 70,000 had attended the demonstration; so the Forward, applying a simple rule of thumb for the treatment of crowd figures given in the Capitalist Press, estimated that 100,000 demonstrators listened to the speeches in Glasgow Green.[3] In 1918 the same journal gave its own estimate of 110,000, or perhaps 100,000 omitting

> "police spies, agents provocateurs, munitions spotters, /and/ police (special, ordinary, and thinly disguised)".[4]

The Glasgow Herald again estimated a crowd of 70,000 which was all the more remarkable as the demonstration was for the first time held on a weekday in 1918.

The more formal bodies of Labour opinion were also changing their views on the war. In December 1916 the Conference of the Scottish Advisory Committee of the Labour Party came out in favour of peace by negotiation,[5] as had "every federated Labour and Trade Union organisation in Glasgow",[6] namely the Trades Council, the I.L.P., the Glasgow Labour Party, and the Labour Group in the Town Council. This last was the most surprising as it contained two formerly belligerent patriots - P.G.Stewart and A.R.Turner.[7] Nationally, this movement was confirmed by the Labour Party's withdrawal from the Coalition after the resignation of Henderson

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[1] Forward, 13 May 1916, p.2.
[2] Forward, 8 May 1915, p.3.
[3] Forward, 12 May 1917, p.4.
[4] Forward, 11 May 1918, p.1.
[5] Forward, 30 December 1916.
[6] Ibid.
[7] See "Forward", 12 May 1915. Turner, a union official, resigned from the Labour Group in 1919 and became a "Moderate" councillor.

from the Cabinet, and by the publication of its Memorandum on War Aims, which also called for peace by negotiation, in December 1917.

It is worth remarking that both the Liberal and the Labour Parties were split at least three ways on the war, but while the former was shattered by it the latter came out stronger than it went in. Initially, the anti-war section of the Labour Party was a small group in the I.L.P., and it was this extreme group who were joined by dissident Liberals like Trevelyan and the founders of the U.D.C. But this association did not prevent Labour from being offered positions in government, which was of great importance in making the Labour Party for the first time something more than an opposition-minded pressure group. When Labour split again, after August 1917, it was a much stronger force than it had been in 1914. When, after the "doormat incident", Henderson resigned from the Government , leaving only Barnes and a few nonentities as disowned Labour ministers, the political strength of Labour was put behind views which had previously been the preserve of a tiny, unpopular, minority. Reaction against the slaughter on the Western Front made popular opinion more receptive to these views; so the Labour Party as a whole was able to associate itself with feelings of malaise and war-weariness. The Labour Party's domestic and war policy became very strikingly a focus for comment and analysis in the Press, including the hostile Press, such as the Glasgow Herald,[1] in a way it had never been before.

In 1917 and 1918, Clydeside reflected these national trends: left-wing and anti-war politics were much more popular than in the early years of the war. But industrial militancy was in decline, and never revived during the war after the crisis of 1915 and 1916.

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[1]See, for instance, the not unsympathetic articles on "Clyde Labour" by "A Special Correspondent", on 9 to 12 October 1917.

Chapter 9

Politicians, Revolutionaries, and Engineers

It will be clear from the argument of the preceding chapters that the mainspring of wartime Red Clydeside was the revolt of the craftsmen - a revolt parallelled in some of the other munitions centres, especially Sheffield. But nowhere else was the revolutionary fervour so marked, nor did it become so celebrated. Did it, on Clydeside, have any life of its own independent of the engineers? In this chapter we shall consider four objections to the proposition that wartime Clydeside was in a "revolutionary situation". These are: that the ideology inspiring many influential militants was not Marxist, except at the most superficial level, but if anything religious; that the most consistently revolutionary party was isolated by its sectarianism from the groups to which it might otherwise have appealed; that the most thoroughly revolutionary individual was cut off from his supporters; and that demands were couched in revolutionary language by individuals whose real purpose was merely the protection of craft interests.

The history of the extreme left of British politics seems closely to resemble in pattern the history of Presbyterian schism in 17th or 19th century Scotland, and writers have commented in such terms as:

> "In De Leon's rigidly Calvinistic insistence on the need for doctrinal purity within the party, the Scottish dissidents found a call which evoked a ready echo in their hearts". [1]

But sectarianism and calvinism were not really linked in such an intimate way. It is not true that the Scots left was sectarian <u>because</u>

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[1] W.Kendall, "The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, 1900-1921", London 1969, pp.13-14. We examine the influence of the beliefs of Daniel De Leon, the American Socialist, below, p.153.

it was calvinist. None the less, there is an important point here: the influence of a cultural heritage which emphasised the struggles of Presbyterianism coloured the view of the world held by many of the Clydeside rebels. They saw themselves as the heirs of the Covenanters, the Presbyterians of the 17th century who became more extreme (and more intolerant) as they were more ruthlessly persecuted for their beliefs. The received version of Scottish history, which has been taught to many generations of non-Catholic Scottish schoolchildren, has always emphasised the Covenanters' heroism, and never their intolerance. Few of the Scottish socialists of this period were Catholics; so their language was shot through with the imagery of the Covenanters, whom church and school alike had taught them to venerate. Ramsay MacDonald said at the memorial meeting for Keir Hardie:

> "In him the spirit of the Covenanter lived again - Airds Moss tempered with the lyrics of Burns."[1]

Speaking of the "Bermondsey resolution" passed by the I.L.P. Conference in 1917, which opposed all war, MacDonald said that though he personally disagreed with it, yet

> "there is a moral magnificence in../such/ a body of political Cameronians". [2]

And when, in 1920, the Scottish Labour Housing Association urged a national campaign of resistance to the rent increases proposed in the Rent Act of that year, they adopted a "Solemn League and Covenant"[3] to

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[1] Forward, 9 October 1915.

[2] Forward, 21 April 1917. The Cameronians were the followers of Richard Cameron, who continued to fight in South-West Scotland for the Covenant in the 1680's, when it was a totally lost cause. They refused to swear allegiance to an uncovenanted state. Their name passed, incongruously enough, to the regiment of the British Army which owed its origins to them.

[3] Forward, 5 June 1920, p.1. Socialist organisations were not the only ones to use the imagery of the 1630's: the Ulster Covenant of 1912 and the nationalist Scottish Covenant of 1950 both derived their inspiration directly from the National Covenant first signed in Edinburgh in 1638.

that effect.

The axiom that "revolution is puritan" is borne out, in a precise sense, in Kirkwood's description of himself and his fellow Clydeside MP's immediately after the 1922 election. After signing a Declaration which the Principal of Aberdeen University described as "breathing the noble spirit of the Covenant",[1] they sang the 124th Psalm - "Scotland's psalm of deliverance" - in the version used by the covenanters to assure themselves and the world that the Lord was on their side:

> Now Israel
> May say, and that truly,
> If that the Lord
> Had not our cause maintain'd;
> If that the Lord
> Had not our right sustain'd,
> When cruel men
> Against us furiously
> Rose up in wrath,
> To make of us their prey,
> Then certainly
> They had devour'd us all....
>
> But bless'd be God
> Who doth us safely keep,
> And hath not giv'n
> Us for a living prey
> Unto their teeth,
> And bloody cruelty. [2]

The strength of the Scottish socialists' adherence to the principles of the Covenant was to be put to the test in 1927, when the revised Prayer Book was being discussed in the Commons. It was none of the Scots' business, and the Scottish Labour front-benchers had intended not to vote. But, according to Johnston,[3] they were swayed by the speech against the Bill by Rosslyn Mitchell, who took as his objection that the measure legitimised transubstantiation, which was a Romish doctrine:

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[1] Kirkwood, p.192.

[2] Psalm 124, Second Version, Scottish Metrical Psalter 1929. (The version was composed in the early 17th century).

[3] Johnston, "Memories", p.102.

> "Transubstantiation....is the dividing principle between the two Churches. If the Church of England wants that, then let her have it. Let her go on her journey, and God be with her; but if she does not want it then she cannot pass this Book....I myself can do nothing but vote against this Measure. I do not want to do it, but I can do no other, so help me God!" [1]

This caused William Adamson to say to Johnston, "Tom, I couldna' look my forefolks in the face, if I didna' vote the nicht."[2]

There is more to all this than picturesque anecdote. The political moral is to be drawn from the fact that men like Adamson and Kirkwood came from the last generation of working-class Scots to whom the theological argument of 19th century Presbyterianism was a living thing. Kirkwood's father had been a devout United Presbyterian.[3] But evangelical Presbyterianism was largely a middle-class affair and, while it had many working-class adherents, it stood in the way of their developing independent working-class politics. The language in which Kirkwood describes himself would seem much more familiar, and acceptable, to a Scot who was not a radical than to a radical who was not a Scotsman. It is trite enough to say that the Labour Party derives from Methodism rather than Marxism; one does not expect Methodists, or in Scotland Free Churchmen, to be revolutionaries. If Kirkwood had ever led any revolution, it would not have been as the exponent of any class-based revolutionary ideology. His views were based on attitudes shared by a sizeable proportion of the Scottish middle class.

Having dealt with the Calvinists, we should now look at the sectarians. The Socialist Labour Party, among whose members were Muir, MacManus, Bell and Kirkwood up to 1914, was the political party which had the most consistently revolutionary outlook of any of those operating on Clydeside during the war. It had split from Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation in 1903 because its adherents followed the

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[1] House of Commons Hansard, 5s., vol.211, cols.2566-7.

[2] Johnston, p.102.

[3] Kirkwood. p.20.

"impossibilist" doctrines of Daniel De Leon, who preached extreme doctrinal purity, abstention from capitalist politics altogether, and a policy of intensive education of the working class. (Another splinter from the S.D.F. took place in London, to form the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The S.P.G.B. also professed allegiance to the principles of De Leon, but the London and Scottish splinters detested each other[1]).

So far, so sectarian; and in addition the position of the S.L.P. before the war was paradoxical. It was strenuously opposed to political action: Neil Maclean, its secretary and later M.P. for Govan, was temporarily expelled in 1909 for leading a deputation on unemployment to Edinburgh Town Council. Instead, it preached industrial unionism - and this was the point at which it might break out of sectarianism into political importance. Industrial Unionism might, in principle, be attractive to two different groups of workers. It might seem attractive to unskilled workers whose only strength lay in solidarity, among whom traditional unionism would fail in a strike but "industrial unionism" in which they were supported by their craftsmen colleagues, might succeed. For different reasons, "industrial unionism" might secure the support of skilled men who were angered at the futility of having several small craft unions in an industry such as engineering. At different times, the S.L.P. in Scotland had some success with each of these groups of workers, but it never brought them together, and never ran a successful strike on industrial unionist lines.

In the heyday of revolutionary unionism between 1911 and 1914 the S.L.P. in Scotland ran one, and only one, large strike: this was at the Singer works in Clydebank in 1911, and was led by Neil Maclean, who was

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[1] See the S.L.P. - S.P.G.B. debate reported at enormous length in "The Socialist", December 1911.

a maintenance engineer. Singers was a plant which under largely American management had already extensively developed a process work production line. The strike arose in one department against a management attempt to cut piecework rates by speeding-up. This was the unskilled piece-workers' grievance, and it was the unskilled piece-workers who struck.

> "...every man in the Department but 20 came with us (about 400). Of these 20, 8 were under-foremen, and 10 were fitters". [1]

The strike spread from department to department, and membership of the Singer's group of the Industrial Workers of Great Britain rose sharply. By April 1911, 37 of the 41 departments were out, and a total of 11,000 men and women were on strike. However, the management sent postcards to all their "former employees" asking them to resume work. 6527 voted to resume by sending their cards back to the management, and only 4025 refused, sending the cards to the strike committee, which had to abandon the strike.

> "This was not a collapse, as the capitalist Press had it, but an orderly return on a compromise." [2]

The strike had been undermined by the skilled men, especially the engineers. The journal of the S.L.P. wrote:

> "Next we come to the Engineers, the blue blood of the working-class, the aristocracy of labour, who added still further to their reputation which stinks in the nostrils of all honest men. After being virtually shamed out, they lived up to A.S.E. ethics, deciding at a meeting of A.S.E. members by a large majority to kow-tow to the firm by sending back their cards. Requiescat in pace". [3]

Two months later, the journal was still analysing the strike, which was, after all, by far the most important event in which the tiny S.L.P.

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[1] The Socialist, April 1911, p.60.

[2] ibid., May 1911, p.65.

[3] ibid.

had been involved since its foundation. The strike committee had avoided the errors both of being craft-bound and of being an amorphous mass like the Gas Workers' Union ("the big ditch into which 'pure and simple' unions relegate all sections of Labour which do not fit into any recognised trades"[1]), although the drawback in the latter stages of the strike had been that I.W.G.B. members had become a minority on their own strike Committee. However, the blame for the ending of the strike was again put fairly and squarely on the skilled men:

> "In strong contrast with the fine spirit of loyalty displayed by the unorganised and 'unskilled' strikers is the pitiful part played by those aristocrats of labour, the 'skilled' trade unionists...The great majority of them stayed in altogether or only came out either because there was no work for them to do...or because they were shamed into it by the well merited stigma of 'scab' which was hurled at them by the indignant strikers. It was under these circumstances that the members of the A.S.E. came out...cursing the strikers as a mob, ignored the strike committee, and tearfully apologised to their officials for their actions, explaining that they did not come out on account of sympathy with the strikers but because their sentiment of self-respect was hurt by the odious monosyllable which greeted them as they entered the works gate". [2]

Many of the leaders of the strike were dismissed by the firm. One of them wrote,

> "Socialism thrives best in adversity, and perchance this will be one of the best fillips it ever received". [3]

It has been claimed that the dispersal of the leaders of the Singers strike aided the setting up of the Clyde Workers' Committee in "factory after factory".[4] But this is implausible because of the great gulf

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[1]The Socialist, July 1911.

[2]ibid., quoted in part in Hinton thesis.

[3]W.J.Douglas in 'Socialist', June 1911.

[4]Bell, Pioneering Days, p.75.

fixed between the Singers' strike and the wartime strikes: the only strike of the unskilled as against the numerous strikes of the skilled men. The failure of the strike ended the first, and only, breakthrough of the Industrial Workers of Great Britain. When trades unionism revived at the Singer plant after the war, it became a stronghold of the most successful of the "new unions", the Workers' Union:

> "In Glasgow itself, efforts at the major munitions firms yielded disappointing results, but Government and private works in the Clyde area were the source of many large branches, after 1916 composed of female 'dilutees' and giving a membership of 5,000. At the single firm of Singers at Clydebank, employing 12,000 workers, several thousand more members were obtained by the end of the war". [1]

The S.L.P. was unable to gain a foothold among the unskilled because their strike could not succeed without the craftsmen's support. Given the craftsmen's active hostility the revolt of the unskilled men and women collapsed, and it was impossible to keep up any sort of trade unionism among them, let alone revolutionary industrial unionism. When the war came, the militant left was politically much less strong than the industrial upheavals of 1911 to 1914 might lead one to suppose. The S.L.P. had failed to organise the unskilled because of their sheer industrial powerlessness; during the war it had less power over the skilled men than it might because of its sectarianism.

On somewhat esoteric grounds, the S.L.P. was bitterly opposed to the best-known leader of unofficial unrest (and the only one to have a foot in both the skilled and the unskilled camps) Tom Mann; his crime was to preach 'industrial syndicalism' instead of 'industrial unionism'.[2] By opposing any collaboration with trade union and Labour Party leaders, the S.L.P. was guilty of

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[1] Workers' Union, "Record", February 1919. Quoted in Hyman thesis, p.115.
[2] Socialist, January 1911, p.1.

> "isolation from the mainstream of the organised working-class movement....the cardinal sin of leaving the workers at the mercy of the liberal-labour opportunists." [1]

Industrially, the S.L.P. was open to the charge that, though it condemned the 'liberal-labour opportunists' at the head of trades unions, yet because of its uncompromising refusal to involve itself in capitalist, including trade-union, politics, it provided no means whereby the workers could choose a revolutionary leadership instead. At the same time it was hampered by its rigid intellectualism. No candidate could be admitted to membership without passing an entrance examination on the principles of Marxism, and Bell found out that in spite of constant heckling at labour meetings,

> "the workers wouldn't join. They thought we were terribly intellectual....Over 3 years we gained 350 members and lost 350." [2]

This pessimistic estimate seems to be confirmed by the reports of membership which appeared from time to time in The Socialist .[3] One survivor has related how he was admitted to the S.L.P. by one vote, opponents of his entry claiming that "one so young as me wouldn't know enough to justify them letting me in the S.L.P." He compounded his offence by being a shop steward, though "I shouldnae have been", according to the S.L.P. rules.[4]

The S.L.P. was the only one of the three left-wing parties operating in the Clyde during the war which had a theory of revolution - industrial unionism. But its sectarianism prevented it from putting the theory into effect. (As we shall see later in this chapter, it was only as it

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[1] Bell, Pioneering Days, p.45.

[2] ibid., p.69.

[3] E.g. April and June 1911.

[4] Taperecorded reminiscences of Mr.Archie Henry, in possession of Mr.J.Foster, Department of Politics, University of Strathclyde.

became heretical in its own terms that it gained any wider appeal). Before passing on to the third of the four points outlined at the beginning of this chapter, we should say something about the two other parties.

Of the Clydesiders other than S.L.P. members, Kirkwood (after 1914) and James Messer were I.L.P. members, as was John Wheatley; Gallacher and John Maclean were members of the British Socialist Party, which was the name taken by the Social Democratic Federation after 1912. Neither the I.L.P. nor the B.S.P. was a revolutionary party in the sense that it saw its members as the vanguard of the proletariat, who would lead the revolution. The I.L.P. was by far the larger, and the views of its Glasgow members ranged from Kirkwood's superficial Marxism to the Christian pacifism of William Regan, secretary of the Catholic Socialist Society.[1] Unlike the other two parties, it did not suffer severe internal dissension on the issue of support for the war. It had no jingoes, although the pacifism of some of its members was more determined than that of others. In 1914, when Kirkwood was still in the S.L.P., he moved that the Glasgow Branch should declare its opposition to the war. The motion was opposed by Muir, who, on its being carried, resigned his position as editor of The Socialist.[2] In Gallacher's version of the incident,

> "Johnny Muir, who was editor of the Socialist, the S.L.P. organ, was trying to argue a case for a Socialist defending 'his own' country at a special meeting in their hall in Renfrew Street. In the midst of the discussion, and while Johnny was arguing a certain point, Davy /Kirkwood/ jumped up and shouted, 'Naw, naw, Joanie, that 'll no dae, the workers have nae country. Ah'm feenished wi' ye'. He shook the dust of Renfrew Street from his feet and found a new haven and ultimately an empire in the I.L.P." 3

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[1] Walton Newbold thought that it was a "brilliant" speech by Regan which caused the I.L.P. to adopt the 'Bermondsey resolution', opposing all war, in 1917. (Newbold wrongly gives this date as 1915). Newbold Papers, Manchester University Library.

[2] Kirkwood, p.86.

[3] Gallacher, p.27.

Kirkwood's real attitudes, however, seem only to have been covered by a patina of vulgar Marxism, which was polished off after he left the S.L.P. In any case, his prime concern was industrial, not political. We have seen how anti-war themes were muted in his attitude to the dilution crisis, and at the end of the war, when Beardmore made him manager of the National Projectile Factory, Mile End, he won "the best hat in Glasgow"[1] from Beardmore for breaking production records there. As Murphy observed about Sheffield:

> "They [the wartime strikes] were frequently led by men such as myself who wanted to stop the war, but that was not the actual motive. Had the question of stopping the war been put before any strikers' meeting, it would have been overwhelmingly defeated". [2]

Conflict over the war did not play a very prominent part in the I.L.P; what stopped it from being a revolutionary party was its total lack of any revolutionary ideology, and the diffuseness of its members' views. The B.S.P. might have had more claims to be regarded as a revolutionary party, but it was gravely weakened by the jingo patriotism of Hyndman, who controlled the party's organisation, its money, and its journal. In face of this, the powers of the anti-war majority of the party membership were severely circumscribed. On Clydeside, the worst internal row occurred when Hyndman issued what the C.W.C. militants regarded as a blatant invitation to the authorities to deport John Maclean's friend Peter Petroff:

> "Who and what is Peter Petroff? Peter Petroff...has now been for some weeks on the Clyde. What he is doing there and what may be his object is best known to himself. It is for the representatives of the Glasgow workers to determine what is his status on the Clyde Workers' Committee, and to make whatever enquiries concerning him as (sic) they may deem necessary." [3]

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[1] Kirkwood, p.168.

[2] Murphy, p.44.

[3] 'Justice', December 1915, quoted in Kendall, op.cit., p.348.

Gallacher strongly disliked Petroff ("I had seen his type in many a popular melodrama - always as the suave and cunning villain")[1] and ascribed Maclean's wartime disagreements with himself to the sinister influence of Petroff. This is part of Gallacher's "Party Line" on the history of Red Clydeside which recent writers,often rightly, have refused to swallow. But over-reaction has led them to put an excessive stress on the role of Maclean. On one point, they are right to point to his importance. His most famous activity was his economics class in which he instructed thousands of Clydeside workers in the principles of Marxist economics. In the 1917 season, for instance, "a class of two or three thousand" was anticipated.[2] Maclean's printed "Notes for lectures on Economics",[3] used later in his Scottish Labour College, are a lucid explanation of the theory of surplus value and the immiseration of the proletariat. Yet there is no evidence that, even here, his influence was particularly profound. His most distinguished pupil, in terms of later achievements, was William Gallacher; but Gallacher's knowledge of Marxist economics was superficial. On one occasion, in argument with Kirkwood, Gallacher cited Marx as his authority. "Which book?" asked Kirkwood, and Gallacher, surprised, said "Oh, is there more than one?".[4]

But in any case, most of the ideologues of the C.W.C. other than Gallacher were members of the S.L.P., which took a severe view of Maclean and his economics classes. The S.L.P. held classes of its own, whose alumni included Muir, MacManus, and Thomas Clark.[5] Bell, the tutor, commented thus on his rival:

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[1]Gallacher, Last Memoirs, p.73.

[2]Forward, 25 August 1917.

[3]Preserved in Maclean Papers; another copy in Highton Papers.

[4]This anecdote was related by the late Lord Kirkwood.

[5]Bell, Pioneering Days, p.55.

> "Maclean's method had the merit of popularising economic study amongst large numbers of the workers, but had the defect of becoming a propaganda lecture. The S.L.P. method was more intensive and produced a crop of competent class tutors, who led classes inside the factories. No such tutors came from Maclean's classes in this period or during the period of the war." [1]

This is not the only feature of Maclean's activity that appeared less important to his contemporaries than it has to many subsequent writers. One recent commentator writes with approval of

> "the long-awaited deflation of the roles of Gallacher, Kirkwood, Shinwell, etc. (John Maclean once again comes out head and shoulders above the rest)". [2]

It did not appear like this to contemporaries, whether or not sympathetic to Maclean. To Paterson, the Ministry of Munitions' Labour Officer on the Clyde, it was Kirkwood, not any of the others named, who "has a much greater influence over the workmen in the district than any half dozen trades union officials who could be named"; and, in Paterson's view the outsiders Maclean and Peter Petroff were less dangerous than the working-class C.W.C. leaders:

> "I am afraid that the removal of almost any one of these men (with possible the exception of Mclean and Petroff who are not working men or officials of societies here) would at once cause a big strike". [3]

And Walton Newbold, the ex-Quaker who became Communist MP for Motherwell between 1922 and 1923, wrote:

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[1] Bell, Pioneering Days, p.56. Bell was here speaking about the pre-war period.

[2] G.Monies, reviewing Kendall's "Revolutionary Movement in Britain..." in Scottish Labour History Society Journal, no.1, May 1969,p.26.

[3] J. Paterson to Sir H. Llewellyn Smith, 17 January 1916. B.C.M. III, no.16. Quoted in full as appendix I to Chapter 6 above.

> "...the fact that he (Maclean) was external to the life of the working-class by reason of his professional work as a school-teacher of considerable academic distinction made him of less account in the day-to-day struggle than the Paisley engineer Willie Gallacher." 1

The disjunction between the intellectual and the engineer was reflected in the parallel disjunction between political and industrial ends which led to the row between Maclean and Gallacher which occurred in 1915. It took place at a meeting of the C.W.C. which had been addressed by Muir - who, although a leading industrial militant was, as we noted above, not opposed to the war. James MacDougall and Petroff, later joined by Maclean, protested that political issues should be discussed: they wanted a general strike against the war. The response of Gallacher was to ban them from attending C.W.C. meetings.[2]

The middle-class revolutionaries were far more concerned than the working-class ones about militant action against the war. Seven Clydesiders were imprisoned for sedition during 1916. Of these, Muir, Gallacher, and Walter Bell were charged in respect of the article "Should the Workers Arm?" which in fact said they shouldn't.[3] Of the other four, three were middle-class: Maclean, a teacher, Macdougall, a bank clerk, and Maxton, another teacher. Only one industrial worker was imprisoned for urging strike action against the war.

Maclean was prosecuted under D.O.R.A. in November 1915 and again in April 1916. On the first occasion he was fined £5, and served five days in prison for refusing to pay. The second time, he was imprisoned for

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[1] From one of the hundreds of unsorted, unnumbered TS sheets of autobiographical material in the Walton Newbold Papers, Manchester University Library. Newbold's assessment of Maclean's academic distinction may be compared with that of the 2nd Lord Kirkwood, who thought Maclean a "very indifferent" schoolteacher. Newbold was presumably thinking of his extra-curricular work rather than his primary teaching.

[2] Gallacher, pp.58-62. Cf. Kendall, pp.119 and 356.

[3] See above, Chapter 6. The article is reputed to have been written by William Regan, who was not a revolutionary agitator but a Catholic pacifist.

three years with penal servitude, of which he served rather over one year. A study of the indictments and witnesses' statements at his trials shows how far out of touch with the C.W.C. he was, and how little there was in common between middle-class and working-class views of revolution.

The 1915 trial arose from an alleged reply to a heckler at one of Maclean's open-air meetings who said, "Away and 'list!". Maclean replied, in his version of the words,

> "I have been enlisted for 15 years in the Socialist army. It is the only army worth fighting for. God damn all other armies".[1]

No Clydeside engineer ever put his feelings into such an extreme form during the course of the war.

In his 1916 trial, Maclean was charged with advocating strike action, with seditiously saying that industrial conscription would be introduced, and on a number of other counts relating to six public meetings in January 1916. His defence statement refers thus to a meeting at Parkhead on January 19th:

> "I merely spoke to the men telling them of the meeting /viz. a demonstration to be held the following day/ only until such time as a man named Thomas Clark intervened and told the workers that they were not to listen to that man's blethers".[2]

One of the defence witnesses, Helen Crawfurd (a suffragist, at this time in the I.L.P., later in the C.P.G.B.) thus described Maclean's intervention in a demonstration on 20th January, at which he had not been invited by the C.W.C. to speak:

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[1]Statement of John Maclean at his trial 10 November 1915. Typescript in Maclean Papers, File 2.

[2]Trial of John Maclean April 1916. Defence Statement, Maclean Papers, File 2.

> "/Maclean/ dealt principally with the differences between himself and the C.W.C. He laboured this so much that a part of the audience seemed to think that he should stop this line of argument and go on with the business of the meeting which was to protest against conscription. I personally had very little sympathy with Mr. Maclean at the meeting in question....I was a member of this committee, and I did not think his criticism was justified". [1]

Maclean's criticism was that the C.W.C. was not calling for a general strike against the war; there is no evidence that there was any response to this call from the workers themselves.

How should we summarise Maclean's influence during the war years? His classes certainly helped, in a diffuse way, to create a vaguely revolutionary atmosphere on the Clyde. Undoubtedly also he became a martyr to the Scottish prison system which ultimately went far towards unhinging his mind,[2] and his imprisonment brought waves of protest from the whole labour movement.[3] Further claims which are made to his influence, on (for instance) the February 1915 strike at Weir's[4] or disorder at the Lloyd George meeting on Christmas Day 1915[5] seem to rely too much on a post hoc, ergo propter hoc form of argument: "Maclean wished X to happen; X happened; therefore Maclean caused X to happen". Maclean was doubly or trebly isolated. He was not an industrial worker; he differed idealogically from the S.L.P; and his row with Gallacher had cut him off from working-class members of his own party, the B.S.P.

During the dilution crisis, neither of the C.W.C. spokesmen, Muir or Kirkwood, was prepared to go as far as Maclean, whose paper was

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[1] Trial of John Maclean, April 1916, Defence Statement. Maclean Papers.
[2] This is discussed in Chapter 12 below.
[3] See e.g. TCM, 4 and 5 April 1916.
[4] Kendall, op.cit., p.114.
[5] ibid., p.122.

suppressed for making "a more advanced attack on diluted labour"[1] than any other. The claim of the S.L.P., incorporating the engineers' demand for revolutionary unionism, was that put by Muir to Lloyd George on December 24th, 1915. After announcing that dilution had come about under pressure from the inexorable forces of capitalism, he went on:

> "We have no objection to that /viz. dilution/ provided its application conforms to certain clearly defined conditions".

namely that

> "all industries and industrial resources must be taken over by the Government and organised labour should be vested with the right to take part directly and equally with the present managers in the management and administration of every department of industry". [2]

Kirkwood's perspectives were more limited. In his speech to Lloyd George the previous day he had said,

> "But this scheme of dilution must be carried under the control of the workers. We recognise that if we have not the control cheap labour will be introduced, and unless our demand is granted we will fight the scheme to the death".[3]

Some time later, he wrote an article in Forward outlining his notions of workers' control.

> "The worker at present occupies a subjected position in the workshop - a position that is degrading to his manhood and makes him a poorer-spirited citizen than if he occupied in the workshop some degree of independence. The worker has no voice in fixing his starting hour, his meal hour, or his stopping time.../the/ value of the product of his labour or the manner of its disposal, or with the sanitary conditions of his workshop, or anything associated with or arising from his labour. The worker must have a new status... I don't think the workers in any particular industry should absolutely own and control that industry as this might enable them to exploit the remainder of the community".4

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[1] "Particulars of Vanguard" "Notes from Intelligence Officer Glasgow to Lieut.Colonel Levita, General Staff, Scottish Command". In file on the suppression of the "Forward". PRO: MUN 5/70. The same file includes quotations from the suppressed issue of 'Vanguard' indicating total opposition to dilution.

[2] "Worker", 8 January 1916.

[3] ibid.

[4] Forward, 29 December 1917, p.3.

Muir focuses on the national aspects of the demand for workers' control; Kirkwood's gaze is fixed firmly on the workplace. In 1916 he had only one end in view: the protection of the rights of the craftsmen. When, as he thought, he had secured that, he broke the C.W.C. front by his part in securing the Parkhead dilution scheme. The S.L.P.'s aims were much more ambitious. But their only appeal to the unskilled workers at Singer's in 1911, had been a failure, and their sectarianism kept them at arm's length from the skilled men. It was only by breaking their own rules that they could appear at the head of the 1915-16 agitation - which surely counted as taking part in capitalist politics. As the historian of the S.L.P. has pointed out, it was most successful when most heretical.[1] In 1915-1916 S.L.P. leaders were relying on the powerful forces of craft conservatism to promote a revolutionary programme. The dualism of this position was clear to Murphy in Sheffield:

> "We who were developing the organisation of the shop stewards won the whole-hearted support of craftsmen and the most conservative of the trade unionists, along with the advocates of industrial unionism, for a campaign to control the dilution process". [2]

This was a paradox which had been at the heart of engineering trade unionism since at least 1896, as was pointed out in Chapter 1. But while revolutionary agitation could not thrive without craft conservatism, the reverse is not true. A large part of Chapters 3 to 6 was devoted to showing that the revolutionaries were by no means the only opponents of the dilution campaign, nor were they the most formidable. The Ministry of Munitions had to spend far more energy fighting the pure craft

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[1] D.M.Chewter, "History of the Socialist Labour Party of Great Britain from 1902 to 1921 with special reference to the development of its ideas", Oxford B.Litt.thesis 1965, see especially p.90.

[2] Murphy, op.cit., p.47.

conservatism represented by the A.S.E. Executive and the men at Lang's, Johnstone than it ever devoted to the Clyde Workers' Committee. The first action it took against this body was the suppression of the Worker, which did not take place until February 7th, 1916. It would obviously be wrong to attach to the revolutionaries most of the credit for the obstructions which held up the progress of dilution between the Treasury Agreement and the Clyde deportations.

On the other hand, it is reasonable to try to assess how well the S.L.P. militants acted as a revolutionary vanguard. After all, the success of the October Revolution in 1917 did not depend on the majority of the Russian population being converted to Leninism. It depended on the Leninists' ability to channel popular grievances into bringing about a revolutionary seizure of power. In Britain, December 1915 on Clydeside was one of the few occasions in which men with professedly revolutionary aims had an important section of the industrial working class under their control. But there remained two gaps - between the political and the industrial, and between the skilled and the unskilled. Once conditions of dilution safeguarding the position of the skilled men had begun to be obtained the Government removed by imprisonment or deportation all the militants; and protest vanished. Because the men were not prepared to follow their leaders from industrial to political action there was no effective protest from the engineers. A fortiori, none could be expected from other groups of workers, as, viewed from outside, the dilution problem was one which set the skilled men apart from the rest. It could be that conscription helped to maintain this separateness. For conscription drove another wedge between skilled and unskilled in engineering. Skilled men were protected from being drafted into the Forces if they were working on munitions. The official and unofficial engineers' agitations between 1916 and 1918 were almost all

centred round disputes over the operation of this system, and this was not a fight in which the unskilled men could be expected to have any sympathy with the skilled. This is most picturesquely illustrated in a newspaper account of the engineers' strike of May 1917 in Sheffield. Headed "Sheffield Strike/Numbers of Men Already Resuming Work/An Unpopular Cause", the report continues:

> "A New Soldiers' Chorus.
>
> The amateur poets and parodists are very busy spending 'ammunition' on the strike. Several of their efforts have caught on. One of the most popular, which is attributed to a soldier, parodies a music-hall song and goes to a catchy air, although /sic/ its title is "A Prayer to Lloyd George'. One verse, which a party of 'civvies' and soldiers joyously chorused, runs thus:
>
> Don't send me in the Army, George - I am in the A.S.E.
> Take all the .....labourers, but for God's sake don't take me.
> You want me for a soldier? Well, that can never be:
> A man of my ability, and in the A.S.E!
>
> Other parodies, a number of which were chalked yesterday on doors and pavements, deal with heroes, shirkers, and badges - and nearly always the A.S.E." [1]

We noted at the beginning of Chapter 6 above how surprisingly little conscription had figured as an additional casus belli during the dilution crisis. Perhaps its role on the Clyde was to help keep skilled and unskilled apart after March 1916 and prevent any chance of revolutionary agitation. The revolutionary unionism of the S.L.P., let alone the more thoroughgoing revolutionism of John Maclean, had been unable to spark off a revolution.

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[1] Sheffield Daily Independent, 18 May 1917. The poem is quoted in Hyman thesis, p.235. Dr.Hyman reasonably supposes the missing word in the second line to be "bloody". I am grateful to Nuffield College Library and the Sheffield City Libraries for obtaining a photocopy of the page containing this story for me.

PART II : From George Square to St. Enoch Square

Chapter 10

The Origins of the Forty Hours' Strike

We saw in Part I how Clydeside lost the initiative in industrial militancy after March 1916, and how the national unofficial strike movements in engineering of 1917 and 1918 found no response on Clydeside at all. The strike movement of January 1919 represented the second (and, as it turned out, the last) in which the Clyde Workers' Committee played an important part. In this chapter we shall examine the origins of the strike, while in Chapter 11 we describe its somewhat unhappy progress, concluding with a more extended discussion of some of the problems of interpretation to which it gives rise.

After the defeat of 1916, revolutionary militancy on Clydeside lapsed for a spell into ineffective sectarian squabbling. When Gallacher returned in 1917 from his prison term, he found the C.W.C. in the hands of the Workers' International Industrial Union, who told him,

> "You're finished, you and your policy of perpetual strikes. Now we'll leave you" [1]

By 1917, also, Muir had defected to the I.L.P., like Kirkwood before him, and "never moved apart from Wheatley",[2] so that Gallacher was the only one of the 1916 strike leaders still actively trying to promote militant strike action. He succeeded in refounding the C.W.C. in September 1917, with himself and Messer again as chairman and secretary. By 1918 it had

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[1] Gallacher, p.140.

[2] ibid., p.141.

regained some of its old standing among the engineers, thanks largely to its role in organising opposition to Auckland Geddes, (in a similar manner to the barracking received by Lloyd George at the more celebrated 1915 meeting) at a meeting of shop stewards called to discuss the Manpower Bill early in 1918.[1]

Besides the revived C.W.C., however, several other organisations were becoming involved in resolutions and actions which would commit them to strike action after the war. Most prominent among these were the Glasgow Trades Council and the Parliamentary Committee[2] of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, though political bodies such as the I.L.P. were involved as well. At the end of the war, as at the beginning, one of the principal worries of labour organisations was the dislocation and unemployment which they expected would occur; and the grounds for anticipating widespread unemployment after 1918 were, because of demobilisation and the ending of munitions production, much better than in August 1914. This was one of the sources of the widespread demand for a shortening of the working week. A representative example of the demand comes in this motion submitted by the Glasgow Trades Council to the S.T.U.C. in December 1918:

> "That this Conference, for the purpose of reabsorbing Sailors and Soldiers into civil life, and giving greater leisure to the working classes, demands the reduction of hours by legislative enactment to a maximum of 40 hours per week, preferably 5 days a week of 8 hours each" [3]

Such a demand had been building up since before the end of the war in several sections of the labour movement. At the 1918 S.T.U.C. Congress, held in Ayr over Easter, the President (Hugh Lyon of the Scottish Horse

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[1] Gallacher, p.179

[2] I.e., Executive.

[3] T.C.L. 17 December 1918.

and Motormen's Union) said in his opening address that

> "as Trade Unionists we have a right to demand that no man or woman should be allowed to work more than 8 hours per day and 5 days per week". [1]

But he was outflanked by his own Congress. A resolution submitted by the Parliamentary Committee (henceforth P.C.) and by the Scottish Advisory Council of the Labour Party called for a 40 hours week, but it was defeated by 77 votes to 51 in favour of a resolution demanding a 30 hour week which had been moved by the Glasgow Trades Council:

> "This Congress declares that the first act of reconstruction after the War should be the reduction of hours of labour to 6 per day". [2]

The views of the P.C. and Congress were thus "to some extent in conflict".[3] To resolve the conflict, the P.C. summoned an ad hoc conference for 20th June 1918, which supported 40 hours against 30 by the narrow majority of 40 votes to 37. No further action was taken at the time.[4] After the Armistice the question obviously became an active one again, and the Committee summoned a special Conference on Demobilisation Problems for 27th and 28th December.[5] When this Conference met, it passed the motion from the Glasgow Trades Council already cited on page 170 above, with the rider:

> "Failing Government action in this direction the Parliamentary Committee be empowered to devise such methods of industrial action as will enforce this demand". [6]

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[1] S.T.U.C. Report, 1918, pp.44-45.

[2] T.C.M. 13 March 1918; S.T.U.C. Report, 1918, p.53. The resolution was moved on behalf of the Council by Emanuel Shinwell, although it is reasonable to infer from what happened afterwards that his own support was lukewarm.

[3] S.T.U.C. Report, 1919; Report of the P.C., p.41.

[4] ibid., p.42.

[5] S.T.U.C. Minutes of the Parliamentary Committee (henceforth cited as "S.T.U.C: Minutes"), 16 November 1918.

[6] S.T.U.C. Report, 1919, p.42.

These events explain the involvement of the official side of the Scottish labour movement in a commitment to industrial action as 1919 dawned. But a quite different set of events was simultaneously forcing others to the same commitment. Immediately after the Armistice, the A.S.E. and the federated engineering and shipbuilding craft unions (the "Allied Trades") had negotiated for an immediate reduction of hours in the basic working week from 54 to 47:

> "Having regard to the sudden cessation of hostilities, the representatives of the Trade Unions agree to recommend their constituents that the working week should be reduced to 47 hours, on the 'one break' system, to come into effect on 1st January 1919".[1]

The A.S.E. Executive, naturally, recommended acceptance of the 47-hour week to their members, and ballot-papers to vote on it were distributed to the branches. In recommending its members to vote for the agreement, the Executive said proudly,

> "The concession of a 47-hour week without reduction of wages will rank as one of the greatest triumphs of British Trade Unionism".[2]

But the proposal was regarded unfavourably in the Glasgow district for both long-term and immediate reasons. Since the dilution crisis, the local leadership of the A.S.E. had changed. At that time the local officials had been wholeheartedly on the side of the Dilution Commissioners and thus were caught in the crossfire between their own Executive and craft conservatism on one hand, and the militancy of the C.W.C. on the other.[3] However, Sam Bunton, the fulltime District Secretary of the

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[1] A.S.E: MR December 1918, p.17.

[2] ibid., p.18.

[3] See Chapter 6, passim, especially pp.101 and 103.

union, had resigned in July 1917,[1] to be succeeded by Harry Hopkins of Govan,[2] who had already built up a reputation as a militant by the prominent part he had played in the Govan rent strikes in 1915.[3] Since Hopkins had become fulltime secretary, the District Committee had publicly emerged as being in favour of the 40-hour week. In 1919 a Sub-Committee on Reconstruction which it had set up had "reported, inter alia, in favour of a 5-day week of 40 hours".[4] Later, a Joint Sub-Committee on Post-War Reconstruction Policy had been formed by the six District Committees of the union in the West of Scotland. This had reported in favour of a 40-hour week, whereupon

> "the Executive Council disapproved of the sub-committee meeting further. Prior to this the Glasgow District Committee had changed its policy to one of a 5-day week of 30 hours".[5]

When the A.S.E. issued the ballot papers to its members, the revived C.W.C. took a hand.

> "Immediately following the issue of the ballot papers on the 47-hours proposal, the 'unofficial element' convened a Scottish Conference of Shop Stewards and Workshop delegates from all industries as a result of which a 'Ways and Means Committee' was appointed to agitate for a 30-hours week as a solution to the unemployment problem, which the demobilisation of the Army and Navy was certain to create".[6]

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[1] A.S.E., MR August 1917, p.4. In January 1919 Bunton gave an interview to the Glasgow Herald from which his view of his successor may be inferred: "Personally he was in sympathy with the movement for a 40-hours week... What he objected to was the everlasting attempts to kick over the traces, thereby fostering revolutionary methods". Glasgow Herald, 23 January 1919, p. 5.

[2] A.S.E: MR, January 1918, p.4.

[3] Above, Chapter 2. In the view of one veteran of the 1919 strike, Hopkins was a man of limited abilities: "Harry Hopkins was a very popular figure. But when you've said that, you've said the lot". Taperecorded reminiscences of Tom Scollan, in possession of J.Foster, University of Strathclyde.

[4] A.S.E: statement prepared on behalf of the suspended District Committee, sent to the Executive with a request for their reinstatement. Probably February 1919. 8 pages, mimeographed; copy in Highton Papers. Hereafter referred to as "D.C.Statement". The quotation given here is from page 2.

[5] ibid.

[6] ibid., pp.2-3.

In a broadsheet, the 'Ways and Means Committee' put the argument as follows:

> "A 47-hour week means increased productivity, increased productivity means increased unemployment, increased unemployment means lower wages".[1]

The now-militant Glasgow District Committee shared the attitude of the 'Ways and Means Committee'. It

> "recommended the rejection of the 47-hours proposal, and the A.S.E. vote in the area was heavily against acceptance - roughly 2 - 1". [2]

Nationally, the voting on the 47-hours proposal of all unions involved was 329,793 for acceptance of the offer and 157,375 against; the voting of the A.S.E. itself was 36,397 for and 27,684 against.[3] The West of Scotland area delegate explained that the 47-hour offer had been badly received in the area

> "owing largely to the fact that it has been gained by constitutional methods. A certain section of our members, who are always affected by outside influences, have put up a strong opposition to the acceptance of the concession". [4]

The new militancy of the Glasgow District Committee would not on its own have been enough to provoke a strike, however. Unrest did not really begin to spread until after the adoption of the new working week on January 1st. Resentment was centred on the "one break" question. Previously the men had worked for 54 hours, starting at 6 a.m., and breaking at 9.15 for breakfast and again at 1 p.m. for lunch. Finding

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[1] "The Shorter (?) Working Week". Quoted in D.S.Morton, "The 40 Hours Strike: An Historic Survey of the First General Strike in Scotland", Clydebank Branch S.L.P., (1919), p.3. Morton was one of the secretaries of the strike committee, and later became a Labour councillor in Stockport. I am most grateful to Mr.Walter Kendall for lending me a copy of this rare pamphlet.

[2] D.C.Statement, p.3.

[3] Figures given in A.S.E: MR, January 1919, p.9.

[4] A.S.E: MR, January 1919, p.20.

under the new system that they were expected to work continuously from 7.30 until 12, the men protested vigorously:

> "It is certain the men in the Clyde Area resented the manner in which the question was put... Very many contended that the longer spell of work between meals due to /only/ one stop was most unsatisfactory".[1]

Accordingly, the men rallied round the 40-hour week demand as a means of restoring their 3¼ hour work periods. This very practical grievance was clearly more powerful in gaining massive support from the engineers for the 40 hour demand than any of the theoretical arguments which had moved the I.L.P. or the S.T.U.C. to endorse it.[2]

The industrial position in the first few days of January 1919 was thus complex, but it can be roughly summarised as follows. In the first place, the Labour Party (Scottish Advisory Council),[3] the Scottish Division of the I.L.P.,[4] the S.T.U.C., and the Glasgow Trades Council all officially supported the 40-hour week demand. Secondly, the District Committee of the A.S.E., and the local membership of the skilled engineering unions, were in favour of (at least) a reduction to 40 hours, and hostile to their Executive's request to accept the 47 hours offer. Thirdly, the C.W.C. had been reactivated, and in the guise of the "Ways and Means Committee" was calling stridently for a 30-hour week.

From about 9th January these bodies wrestled to take the initiative from one another. On that date the P.C. of the S.T.U.C. met the

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[1] Glasgow Trades Council, Annual Report 1919, p.8.

[2] The principal written sources for this paragraph (namely the very useful "D.C.Statement" and the 1919 Trades Council and S.T.U.C. reports) are valuably supplemented by the taperecorded reminiscences of Finlay Hart in Mr.Foster's collection. Mr.Hart was an engineer in Beardmore's, Dalmuir, at the time of the 1919 strike, became a founding member of the Communist Party in Clydebank, and at the time of writing is still an active member of that party. In his view it was unquestionably the "one break" question which gave the strike its mass support.

[3] See the statements of Ben Shaw, secretary of the Council, at the 1919 S.T.U.C: S.T.U.C. Report 1919, p.110.

[4] See Forward, 11 January 1919, p.1.

Executive Committee of the Scottish Labour Party. They resolved jointly

> "to use every means to unify the forces of Labour to bring about a reduction of the working hours to a maximum of 40 hours per week of 8 hours each day".[1]

and to this end to co-operate with the local Trade Unions, the Glasgow Trades Council, "and other sections of the Labour Movement".[2] To carry out its part, the S.T.U.C. summoned for 1st February a Conference of Trades Unions "affiliated or unaffiliated to Congress".[3]

But at this point the official organisations were out-flanked by the unofficial. The Ways and Means Committee had already summoned a meeting for 14th January, to which both the Trades Council and the S.T.U.C. sent representatives, with exactly the same end in view:

> "He /Shinwell/ had stated the position of the Trades Council who insisted /on/ and had supported the 40 hour per week movement, chiefly for the purpose of uniting the Labour movement in an effort to obtain a 40 hour week". [4]

> "A meeting of the Shop Stewards' Unofficial Committee had been held on Tuesday 14th, at which the P.C. was represented. This Committee was working for a 30 hour week, but had summoned a conference... which was to meet on Saturday 18th January in Glasgow and to decide the number of hours to be worked and the date when a strike would be called to enforce same. We were invited to be present. Resolved to accept such invitation and to endeavour to get 40 hours accepted by such conference".[5]

The meeting on 18th January, at which "delegates of unofficial Shop Stewards from all over Scotland"[6] were expected to appear, was in fact attended mostly by Clydeside engineering and shipbuilding workers.[7] It

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[1] S.T.U.C. Report 1919, p.43. Cf S.T.U.C. Minutes, 11 January 1919.

[2] S.T.U.C. Report, 1919, p.43.

[3] ibid.

[4] T.C.M. 15 January 1919.

[5] S.T.U.C: Minutes, 18 January 1919.

[6] ibid.

[7] ibid., 22 January 1919. The minutes of this meeting give an estimate that 400 or 500 delegates attended; Morton (op.cit., p.4) gives the number as 800.

elected a Joint Committee to run the strike, to consist of

> "representatives of the Shop Stewards movement known as the Ways and Means Committee with representatives from the Parliamentary Committee /of the S.T.U.C./, the Glasgow Trades Council, the Allied Trades Committee, and other individual unions".[1]

This committee met the same evening to consider the votes cast by the delegates at the conference. In Glasgow 104 workshops or branches had voted for 30 hours, 83 for 40, 13 for 47 and one neutral,[2] while "reports from other parts of Scotland favoured 40 hours".[3] The subsequent decisions of the committee posed acute problems for two of the bodies represented: the S.T.U.C. and the A.S.E.

> "The Joint Committee by 27 votes to 18 adopted the 40 hours. This was considered eminently satisfactory from the point of view of the P.C., but the Joint Committee proceeded to put in force the afternoon's resolution anent the date of the General Strike, which to us seemed premature and in opposition to our own dates for action... Thus far - and not as a deliberate action on the part of the P.C. - we seemed to be committed to a General Strike on 27th January 1919...
>
> Prolonged discussion ensued. The opinion was freely expressed that we had been rushed into precipitate action but on the whole members of the Committee felt it was difficult to avoid such a result, as undoubtedly if a movement for 30 Hours had once been launched, it would seriously have jeopardised the function of the 40 Hours Movement and caused no end of dissension. On the other hand the co-operation of the P.C. with a non-official movement was seriously questioned by other members". [4]

The P.C. had been dragged by its desire to prevent a disastrous 30-hour strike into far hastier action than it wanted, and already members of it were trying to get out of the morass they had plunged themselves into. It was only by the casting vote of the chairman, William Shaw - who occupied a crucial position since he was also secretary of the Glasgow Trades Council - that the P.C. decided to keep its delegate, Hugh Lyon, on

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[1] S.T.U.C: Minutes 22 January 1919.

[2] Glasgow Trades Council: Report 1919, p.9.

[3] S.T.U.C: Minutes 22 January 1919.

[4] ibid.

the Joint Committee. It summoned a conference of union officials for 25th January, and then presented them with a resolution which explained

> "That while the P.C. considered the action of calling a General Strike on Monday, 27th January hasty and unwise, because of the lack of time for proper preparations, /it/ recommend/s/ the officials present who can do so to render all the support they can, and that those not yet ready to strike... speed up their preparations to fall into line at the earliest possible moment".[1]

Curiously enough, the officials adopted instead a somewhat stronger motion which deleted any reference to the strike being "hasty and unwise" and endorsed the P.C's action, urging all affiliated organisations to support it.[2] But those who represented national unions faced a very acute dilemma, and for none was it worse than for the A.S.E. The statement later prepared on behalf of the District Committee of that union explains quite clearly the situation facing it when the decision to strike from 27th January had been taken:

> "The District Committee had then to decide what to do. It had taken a leading part in the agitation for a shorter working week, attended all the conferences on the matter and taken part in the discussions and the decisions arrived at.... The decision to recommend our members to link up with our fellow-workers in the matter was a violation of the Rules of the Society; on the other hand to remain loyal to the constitution meant deserting our fellow-workers in the District and also meant leaving our members to fight under the direction of others".[3]

This account should be sufficient to demonstrate the fatal underlying weakness of the strike position from 27th January. In spite of the involvement of bodies which were pillars of respectability in the labour world - especially the S.T.U.C. and the Trades Council - the strike had hardly any support from the unions. Very few unions gave the strike official sanction; those which did were mostly the local craft unions in

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[1] S.T.U.C: Minutes, 24 January 1919.

[2] S.T.U.C. Report 1919, p.44.

[3] D.C. Statement, pp.4-5.

engineering. Thomas Bell was, at the time, the President of the Scottish Iron Moulders' Union, which held a shop ballot on whether to strike.

> "There was a majority in favour of strike action, but only a majority of sixty: not sufficient to warrant the calling of a strike, according to pure and simple union standards. But our little group on the Executive Council, which was in close touch with the Clyde Workers' Committee, knew the feeling of the moulders in important factories, and understood they would strike. We therefore decided to go forward and the strike orders were issued". [1]

If even a local craft union could get a strike decision only by proceeding unconstitutionally, it will be readily understood that the national unions were unsympathetic. Only the Electricians gave the strike official backing,[2] possibly because a similar strike was about to start in London involving electricity supplies for the Underground. The A.S.E's reaction, on the other hand, was decisive: it issued a Press statement which is worth quoting to illustrate the change brought about by the Armistice:

> "The Executive Council strongly deprecate the continuance of unofficial action by their members, and whilst fully realising that during the deplorable period of the war, for a variety of reasons, it was necessary to deal leniently with those responsible for such unofficial action, they are conscious that, in the interests of the Trade Union movement, a firm stand has got to be taken". [3]

After issuing this statement, the Executive ordered all branches that no strike pay must be given, suspended the entire Glasgow District Committee for its support of the strike, and ordered Hopkins to quit his union-owned house.[4]

The unions involved in the Joint Strike Committee seem to have been those whose local officials happened to be prominent in the S.T.U.C. or

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[1] Bell, Pioneering Days, p.163.

[2] D.C.Statement, p.6.

[3] A.S.E: MR, February 1919, p.21.

[4] Copies of the letters sent out by the Executive are reproduced in A.S.E: MR, February 1919, pp.22-23.

Trades Council. Apart from the Engineers and the Allied Trades, the Strike Committee's manifesto named the following as being involved:

> "Scottish Union of Dock Labourers, Scottish Horse and Motormen's Association, Railwaymen, Municipal Employees' Association, the Building Trades, and Electricians". [1]

But, like the wartime strikes, it was mainly an engineers' affair. Admittedly, the 40-hour week appeal might attract workers from any industry, and the commitment of "official" labour bodies to a 40-hour week was based on quite general arguments. But the fear of post-war unemployment obviously lay most heavily upon the engineers, with the abrupt run-down of munitions production. And the immediate casus belli - "the cumulative effect of the difficulties caused by the practical working of the 47-hour agreement"[2] - was exclusively a question irritating the engineers. It was annoyance over the working of the "one break" system which gave the strike such mass support as it had, and this grievance was, of course, strictly confined to the engineering industries, to which the 47-hour week had been introduced. Of the unions listed in the Committee's manifesto as supporting the strike, only the Electricians eventually did so wholeheartedly. The Dockers initially supported the strike, but withdrew to negotiate separately for a 44-hour week. The carters (the Horse and Motormen) were brought in more or less by accident as their president, Hugh Lyon, happened to be the S.T.U.C. delegate to the Joint Strike Committee.

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[1] Quoted in "Forward", 25 January 1919, p.2. The following officials or leading members were prominent in the S.T.U.C. or the Glasgow Trades Council:

Dockers: Joseph Houghton.
Scottish Horse: Hugh Lyon.
Railwaymen: (?) James Kiddie.
M.E.A. : George Kerr.

[2] D.C.Statement, p.2.

They succumbed to a separate offer,

> "faced with the fact that no other trade in the public service had stopped work". [1]

The Municipal Employees failed to strike at all, although Kerr, their local organiser, was a Trades Council delegate to the strike committee. There were angry recriminations within the Trades Council at this, George Buchanan moving successfully to eject Kerr from the chair at a meeting because

> "Councillor Kerr, who was a member of the Joint Strike Committee in the 40 Hours movement had taken no part in the strike when it actually took place, and had given no lead to the members of the Union he represented". [2]

In his defence Kerr explained why the M.E.A. had not struck: they were in the midst of unity negotiations with the Workers' Union and the National Amalgamated Union of Labour, and when at a joint meeting he had proposed participation in the strike he had been overwhelmingly defeated, and had thereafter tried unsuccessfully to resign from the strike committe.[3] The hostility of these unions, the three largest "unskilled" unions in the West of Scotland, was surely connected with the vendettas between skilled and unskilled in engineering which were examined in Chapter 9. The Forty Hours' Strike was regarded as another craftsmen's strike; its aims were largely restrictionist and designed to protect craftsmen from unemployment; why then should the unskilled men support it?

The "Ways and Means Committee" had put forward its 30-hour demand by drawing a parallel with the miners - it had decided

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[1] Morton, op.cit., pp.6-7.
[2] T.C.M., 12 February 1919.
[3] ibid.

> "to go forward with the same demand as the Miners' Federation, viz. six hours per day, five days per week, £1 per day minimum for all adult workers in the Shipbuilding and Engineering industry". 1

This was not enough to secure for the strike movement the sympathy of the miners' leaders. Although they were participating in their own 30-hour week negotiation, the executive of the National Union of Scottish Mine Workers stated that they "entirely disassociate/d/ themselves from the present erratic strike movement".[2] On 1st February, the Forward reported that

> "...In Fifeshire there are large numbers of miners out on the surfacemen question but the Union Executive is doing its utmost to get them back again".

With support from workers outside engineering and shipbuilding so uncertain, the strike might have collapsed in ignominious failure distinguished only by the ridicule heaped on bodies like the S.T.U.C. for their involvement. That it has, instead, earned its place in the heroic annals of the labour movement can be attributed jointly to police misconduct on January 31st and to the Government's exaggerated and panicky reaction to the strike as it developed. In Chapter 11 we examine more closely the history of the strike itself and of the incident which immediately[3] became known as "Bloody Friday".

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[1] "The Shorter (?) Working Week". Manifesto quoted by Morton, op.cit., p.3.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 28 January 1919, p.6.

[3] The leading article in the daily Strike Bulletin for 1st February, headlined "Glasgow's Bloody Friday", continues, "Henceforth January 31st, 1919, will be known in Glasgow as Bloody Friday".

Chapter 11

"Squalid Terrorism": the Forty Hours' Strike and Bloody Friday

When it became clear that most of the union executives were not going to support the proposed strike, the local Press became more confident that no very serious unrest would ensue. The Glasgow Herald, reporting the drastic action taken by the Executive of the A.S.E., added that their stand

> "makes the chance of a general stoppage of work more remote than it seemed a day or two ago". [1]

The principal Glasgow popular paper, the Northcliffe-owned Daily Record and Mail, was more exuberant. It assured its readers before the strike started that there would be no strike, and while it was in progress that it was on the point of collapse.

> "It may be taken for granted that so far as the big Unions are concerned... the recommendations of their authorised representatives will be loyally accepted, and that there will be no stoppage of work". [2]

> "today the clang of hammers and the whir of machinery... are expected to swell into robust chorus". [3]

In fact, the stoppage of work on Monday, 27th January, was reasonably satisfactory to the strike organisers. The Joint Committee estimated that 40,000 Glasgow shipbuilding and engineering workers were idle on the Monday and 70,000 on the Tuesday, although "other estimates", whose

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 25 January 1919, p.5.

[2] Daily Record and Mail, 24 January 1919, p.1; cf also, e.g. 25 January, p.9.

[3] Daily Record, 3 February 1919, p.1. Cf also, e.g. 27 January, p.1. Admittedly, on the 4th, the paper had to report that "Yesterday the start was, to be frank, ...an indifferent one". p.1.

source was not specified, gave the latter figure as only 30 or 35,000.[1] For the strike leaders, however, the strike would stand or fall by whether they could involve non-engineers, and particularly public service workers. Here the first major rebuff was the failure of the Municipal Employees' Association to strike. This union organised the Glasgow tramwaymen, and also - a point of some importance - the power station workers at Pinkston, the station generating current for the tramways. In Belfast, all public utilities had been shut down a few days earlier in a general, unofficial, 44-hour strike. In Glasgow many feared, and the strike leaders hoped, that the same would happen. But it did not. The Electricians struck, and cut down industrial and domestic power supplies. But the M.E.A. did not.

> "In the city of Glasgow the decision of the electricity workers to join in the strike movement seemed at first to make uncertain the extent to which the tramway and other Corporation undertakings might be affected, but an official assurance was given late last night that the decision of the meeting would not affect the Corporation power stations". [2]

Thus for the first two days of the strike, the various private electricity companies had to close down, and this in turn affected some industrial plants such as Parkhead.[3] But neither of the Corporation power stations - Port Dundas, supplying current for street lighting, and Pinkston for the tramways - was at first affected.

"Mass picketing" was a novel feature of the strike. The technique was later described by one of the secretaries of the Strike Committee:

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 28 January, p.5 and 29 January, p.7.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 27 January 1919, p.8. The "official assurance", from James Dalrymple, the manager of the Corporation Tramways Department, appears in an adjoining column.

[3] Glasgow Herald, 28 January 1919, p.5.

> "Pickets of five to ten thousand workers would march to a particular shop, then line up on either side of the roadway, and the workers still at work had to run the gauntlet. It was a most successful method, and entirely legal." [1]

On the second day of the strike, the Glasgow Herald noted that it had become "more pronounced" in some shops, which had stopped work after lunch

> "in many cases because of the 'massed picketing' methods of the strikers". [2]

The terms in which the leaders of the strike, especially Shinwell, encouraged the mass pickets led opponents to argue that they were trying to intimidate non-strikers. On the 27th, Shinwell was reported at a strike meeting as saying:

> "He asked them to place their confidence in the committee and carry out their instructions. One instruction was to preserve order (cheers), to indulge in no unseemly disturbance, to act in a perfectly legal and constitutional manner (laughter)... to indulge in picketing, but to adopt merely moral suasion (laughter), and to adopt these methods till the Joint Committee instructed them to act otherwise (loud cheers)" [3].

Two days later he replied to the attacks over "intimidation" in terms which seemed to leave the matter open to some doubt:

> "We have advocated constitutional action all along the line. The newspapers have now charged us with the crime of intimidation. Whether they charge us with that crime or any other, we are going to see to it that every class of worker in the city is out. (Applause). When we leave this hall we are going to take a walk - an orderly walk - (Laughter) with bands heading the procession, to the power stations (Applause) for the purpose of holding a meeting... If as a result of our meeting today there is no change in the situation other events will rapidly follow".[4]

This was the prelude to stepping up the strike. The power workers at Port Dundas were called out[5] and the strikers then marched on Pinkston

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[1] Morton, op.cit., p.6.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 29 January 1919, p.7.

[3] ibid., 28 January 1919, p.5.

[4] ibid., 30 January 1919, p.6.

[5] ibid.

to try to bring out the workers there. Here they met their match in the pugnacious Dalrymple, who

> "gave assurances that he had made all arrangements for manning the power station - no matter what picketing may be attempted by the strikers".1

The arrangements consisted of giving the workers board and lodging inside the power station, which was "besieged" by the strikers for at least five days.[2] The workers did not strike, and outside the gates of the power station Shinwell attacked the "miserable attitude of the Municipal Employees' Association", while Kirkwood added,

> "he did not ask the strikers to rush the gates. The time had not yet arrived for that".[3]

It was thus in a context of angry escalation of the strike that the leaders sent a deputation to the Lord Provost the same day, Wednesday January 29th, to ask him to seek Government intervention. What happened at the meeting can be pieced together from the contents of the telegram sent by the Provost to Bonar Law,[4] and from the statements of the strike leaders, as later confirmed by themselves and others at the riot trial in April.

> "The Lord Provost was reminded that unconstitutional tactics might develop if the workers' demands were ignored... Drastic action would have to be resorted to if the reply to the Lord Provost's message was unsatisfactory... The Deputation had given the Lord Provost till Friday to furnish an answer".[5]

So spoke Shinwell to the strikers after the meeting; while the deputation was inside Gallacher told those waiting outside:

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[1]Glasgow Herald, 30 January 1919, p.6.

[2]See Glasgow Herald, 3 February 1919, p.8. Cf also Strike Bulletin, 1 February 1919, p.2.

[3]Glasgow Herald, 30 January 1919, p.6. Middlemas (op.cit., p.93) wrongly attributes Shinwell's phrase to Kirkwood.

[4]Acting Prime Minister, as Lloyd George was at Versailles.

[5]Glasgow Herald, 30 January 1919, p.6.

> "If the strike was not settled by the end of this week they would not hesitate to stop every tramcar, shut off every light, and generally paralyse the business of the city".[1]

These two speeches seem to have been conflated by a police witness who gave evidence at the riot trial. Shinwell, he said, told the crowd that the deputation had

> "informed the Lord Provost that if they could not get what they wanted by constitutional methods, drastic action would be taken. Further, he said that they had told the Lord Provost that if he did not take the necessary steps to stop the tramcars interfering with the procession that (sic) the strikers would. Shinwell then advised them to assemble in their thousands on Friday 31st." [2]

The following day, the Town Clerk added that the strike leaders had spoken in the same terms inside the City Chambers as outside.[3] The Lord Provost himself gave evidence next, to say that, at Neil Maclean's request, no mention of stopping the tramcars was put in the telegram, but that otherwise,

> "Mr Maclean told him in a general way what they wanted to say, and he put it down". [4]

The strikers' requests formed the central passage of the telegram, to which the Lord Provost added some information of his own. The telegram, as read out by Bonar Law to the War Cabinet, opened by explaining the demand for a 40-hour week

> "so as to provide for those who are demobilised and are without employment. It was further stated that they had hitherto adopted constitutional methods in urging their demand, but that failing consideration being given to their request by the Government, they would adopt any other methods which they might consider would be likely to advance their cause. They have, however, agreed to delay taking any such action until Friday in order that I may be able to communicate your reply. I have just learnt from the manager of the electricity department that all men in generating stations have been compelled today to join the strike..." [5]

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 30 January 1919, p.6.

[2] Evidence of Lieutenant Gray, Central District, Glasgow City Police. Glasgow Herald, 8 April 1919, p.7.

[3] Glasgow Herald, 9 April 1919.

[4] Glasgow Herald, 10 April, 1919, p.8.

[5] War Cabinet no.522, 30 January 1919, P.R.O: Cab 23/9.

The War Cabinet had already rejected the idea of intervening in the strike:

> "the Government could not actively interfere in the settlement of these strikes over the heads of the Union Executives" [1]

So Law and Horne (the Minister of Labour) drafted a reply reiterating this decision. The Cabinet then turned to discussing how to deal with the unrest. Law first reported a telephone conversation from Lloyd George, and then went on to put forward his own views:

> "the Prime Minister said that if it were necessary he would come to London, but he was of opinion that his coming would have the appearance of interfering with Sir Robert Horne's authority". [2]

> "Mr Bonar Law said he thought it vital for the War Cabinet to be satisfied that there was a sufficient force in Glasgow to prevent disorder and to protect those volunteers or others who could be made available to take over the operation of the generating stations and municipal services. It was certain that if the movement in Glasgow grew, it would spread all over the country". [3]

The Secretary for Scotland argued that 2000 special constables should be brought in to protect the public utilities, as they were "more reliable" than soldiers. However, Sir William Robertson, who was in attendance, advised the Cabinet on the troop dispositions in Scotland. The troops available were all reserve units,

> "and consisted of all sorts of men, old, young, convalescents, and men with wounds. As regards the officers, they were not very efficient. There were certain disadvantages in employing Scottish troops, but on the whole he thought it would be safer to use them than to import English battalions". [4]

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[1] Report by the Minister of Labour. War Cabinet no.521, 28 January 1919. P.R.O: Cab 23/9.

[2] War Cabinet, no.522, as above.

[3] War Cabinet, no.522, as above.

[4] ibid.

The Cabinet eventually decided to take four steps besides replying to the Lord Provost's telegram. The military would be "in readiness" to help keep up the public lighting; Mr.John Lamb of the Scottish Office would go to Glasgow

> "in order to acquaint the Lord Provost and the Sheriff (1) of the Government's policy, and to keep the Government informed of any development in the situation". 2

Next, an ad hoc committee should be formed "for the purposes of consultation during the continuance of disorder",[3] and finally,

> "the Lord Advocate should examine the legal grounds for the arrest of the ringleaders of the strike, should it be found desirable to do so". 4

As promised two days earlier, a mass meeting of strikers assembled in George Square on Friday morning, the 31st, to hear Bonar Law's reply. While the leaders' deputation was in the City Chambers,

> "An altercation occurred with the police through the stoppage of the tramcar service on the South side of the square. As a result the police drew their batons and made several charges. About 40 people were injured in the melee, including several who had been drawn to the scene, and who had no connection with the strike". 5

The police made a second charge up the east side of the square, past the City Chambers, and a third one up North Frederick Street, a steep street leading up from the north-east corner of the square, where they were met

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[1] Of Lanarkshire.

[2] War Cabinet no.522, as before.

[3] It was to consist of the Secretary for Scotland as chairman, the Lord Advocate, the Minister of Labour, and the Director of Personal Services (War Office). No record of its meetings seems to have survived; not being a regularly-constituted Cabinet committee but an emergency affair, its minutes are not in the series P.R.O: Cab 27.

[4] War Cabinet no.522, as above.

[5] Glasgow Herald, 1 February 1919, p.5.

by demonstrators who threw lemonade bottles taken from a passing lorry.[1,2] During the melee, the Sheriff of Lanarkshire, who was at the time in consultation with the Lord Provost and Lamb of the Scottish Office[3] (who had presumably just arrived with the Cabinet's instructions), read the Riot Act, though of course it was not heard by most of the demonstrators. Gallacher, Kirkwood, and a number of others were arrested. The same evening Shinwell was also arrested, having in the meantime destroyed all the documents relating to the strike in the Trades Council offices, which were being used by the Strike Committee.[4]

The War Cabinet met again on the afternoon of Bloody Friday. After Horne had reported that he

> "understood that foot and mounted police had charged the crowd in order to quell a riot, and casualties had resulted"[5],

the Cabinet fell to discussing the nature of the outbreak.

> "The Secretary for Scotland said that, in his opinion, it was more clear than ever that it was a misnomer to call the situation in Glasgow a strike - it was a Bolshevist rising. It was, he thought, of limited dimensions in numbers, if not in effect." [6]

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[1] Many descriptions of Bloody Friday have appeared in print. The principal contemporary ones, from which this account is drawn, are in Glasgow Herald and Daily Record, 1 February 1919; Daily News, 3 February 1919; Strike Bulletin, 1 February 1919; Forward and Glasgow Observer, 8 February 1919; Morton, op.cit., pp.8-9.

[2] A sketch-map of the Square, illustrating the places involved in the riot, is provided as an Appendix to this chapter.

[3] Glasgow Herald, 1 February 1919, p.5.

[4] E.Shinwell, "Conflict Without Malice", (London 1955), p.63.

[5] War Cabinet no.523, 31 January 1919. P.R.O: Cab 23/9.

[6] ibid.

However, the Cabinet was not called upon to take any new decisions, since the moves to send troops to Scotland had already been put into effect. It heard that six tanks and 100 motor lorries were being sent north by rail that night, and after listening to the Lord Advocate describe various actions which might be taken against the leaders under D.O.R.A.,[1] decided to take no further action in the meantime. The following morning, the army was in occupation, and the six tanks were stationed in the Cattle Market.

The events of Wednesday to Friday had given rise to an acrimonious conflict between the Lord Provost and the leader-writers of the Glasgow Herald. The Herald thought the telegram was "not pleasant reading for loyal citizens"[2] because it appeared to show that the Provost had some sympathy with the strikers' demands. He should, said the Old Lady of Buchanan Street, have ignored them altogether. When, on February 6th, the Provost defended himself in the Town Council (he received a unanimous vote of confidence for his handling of the incidents) he made his motives in sending the telegram quite clear. Wheatley, after hearing him, expressed a view which was shared by other labour representatives:

> "He believed until that day that the Lord Provost had acted out of a high sense of fair play" [3]

Instead, by the Provost's own admission, his purpose in passing on the strikers' demands had been to convince the Government of

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[1] He recommended deportation under Regulations 14 and 42. It may be that the Cabinet thought that to do this would only create martyrs and revive memories of 1916, when the same regulations had been invoked against Kirkwood and his colleagues - memories which were better left dormant.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 31 January 1919. Leader, p.6.

[3] Quoted in Glasgow Herald, 7 February 1919, p.7.

> "their necessity for immediately providing a sufficient force to aid the civilian force in any emergency which might arise".[1]

His action, in fact, had been designed to an end of which the Herald thoroughly approved; from its own political standpoint, its criticism was quite misconceived. The strikers, so far from getting the Government to intervene on their behalf to end the strike, had simply put their heads into the noose by dictating to the Provost the intransigent terms of the central part of the telegram. The threats it contained spurred the government to vigorous intervention - exactly what the Provost wanted.

As the strike progressed, and it became increasingly clear that it was not going to spread to other industrial centres, there was a slow drift back to work, starting with those trades other than the engineers who had joined the strike. The Blantyre district president of the Lanarkshire Miners' Union said on the 2nd February:

> "the Blantyre miners had now been out for a week and were being led nowhere, and he advised the men to return to work at once". [2]

The mass pickets did not continue beyond the 3rd,[3] and some engineering shops, including Weirs, reported that they had restarted on the 4th.[4] By the 5th, power supplies were reported as being back to normal;[5] although the E.T.U. was on official strike, the Corporation's Port Dundas station and the works of the Clyde Valley Electric Power Company were being adequately manned by "volunteers".[6] Some plants, especially the

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[1] Lord Provost's statement, as quoted in ibid. See also Daily Record and Mail, 7 February 1919, p.2.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 3 February 1919, p.8.

[3] ibid., 4 February 1919, p.5; Daily Record, 4 February 1919, p.1.

[4] Glasgow Herald, 5 February 1919, p.8.

[5] ibid., 6 February 1919, p.5.

[6] ibid., 3 February 1919, p.8.

shipyards, remained solidly on strike, however, for a further five or six days. Eventually, on 10th February, the Strike Committee issued a statement in which it recommended

> "a full resumption of work by all strikers on Wednesday, 12th February, until such time as we can perfect the organisation of our forces with a view to making our claim for 40 hours on a national basis and to enforce it by a national strike of all workers in the near future".[1]

Both the Strike Bulletin and the Forward insisted that the reason for the resumption was a bogus statement purporting to call off the strike printed in the Evening Times the previous day, which had led to a drift back to work.[2] But clearly the strike could not have lasted much longer, in any case.

The sequel to the strike was a long-drawn out anticlimax of retreat from militancy, punctuated by the trial of twelve persons for riot or incitement to riot in the High Court in Edinburgh in April. The S.T.U.C., in particular, came to nothing but harm as a result of its involvement. While the strike was still under way it tried desperately, but unavailingly, to get the Government or the T.U.C. to intervene in any way at all. A deputation from the P.C. to London, sent on February 3rd, returned with its tail between its legs.

> "The impression... conveyed to the deputation was that the General Secretaries in London were strongly opposed to any Government action, had used all their influence to prevent such intervention, and that the parties named (3) followed along that line. They persisted in regarding the Scottish movement as an unofficial strike, and apparently nothing could move them from this position.

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[1] Strike Bulletin no.13, 11 February 1919.

[2] Strike Bulletin no.14, 12 February 1919; Forward, 15 February 1919.

[3] I.e. those the deputation had interviewed, namely William Adamson, then leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party; C.W.Bowerman, Secretary of the T.U.C: and Sir David Shackleton, the ex-Labour M.P. who was then Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Labour.

> Prolonged consideration was given to the whole strike position, which was felt to be very unsatisfactory". [1]

After the end of the strike, the P.C. met again, and unanimously resolved to withdraw from the Joint Committee,[2] which then faced the task of raising money for the strike trial defence. In this task co-operation between official and unofficial sections was strained to the limit in wrangles over responsibility for looking after the money.

> "The first meeting of the Joint Committee had been of very little use owing to the attitude of the Clyde Defence Committee who insisted that all monies should be paid to their Treasurer". [3]

- as Shaw reported to the Glasgow Trades Council. An enormous sum of money had to be raised for the defence. Although no papers have survived relating to the conduct of the strike - doubtless much was destroyed by Shinwell and Shaw on the afternoon of Bloody Friday - a file does survive on the defence fund. It consists mostly of letters from lawyers to Shaw, alternately pleading and threatening in their requests for immediate payment. In the final audited account, dated May 1920, £2562:19:11 had been collected, and almost all of it paid through a Glasgow solicitor to five solicitors' firms and three K.C's; and it was reported that £1400 was still due to Glasgow solicitors.[4] In the months after the strike, and indeed for a full year after the trial, the raising of money on a scale far outside any previously required occupied the principal energies of many of the prominent local leaders.

On April 7th, the trial started, before Lord Scott Dickson and a jury, of Shinwell, Gallacher, Kirkwood, Hopkins, George Ebury,[5] and

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[1] S.T.U.C: Minutes, 8 February 1919.

[2] ibid., 15 February 1919.

[3] T.C.M. 12 March, 1919.

[4] Clyde Workers' Defence Committee: miscellaneous papers in Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

[5] A.B.S.P. propagandist.

James Brennan on charges of incitement to riot and riot; and of six others,[1] who held no official position in labour organisations, on charges of rioting. The Crown case, which was led by Clyde, the Lord Advocate, was that from the 27th to the 30th January Shinwell and his colleagues had been inciting strikers to form a riotous assembly in George Square on the 31st, in order to stop the tramcars. On that day, he dramatically concluded,

> "Every act of revolution was in progress, and could be traced to the previous incitement". [2]

The effect of this was somewhat marred by his withdrawal of the incitement charge against Kirkwood. After the chief defence counsel had argued that the Crown had quite failed to prove any "preconceived arrangement and intention to do mischief"[3] on the part of the crowd on Bloody Friday, the Lord Advocate again restricted the number of incitement charges. The judge further ruled out all incitement charges relating to dates earlier than the 29th, on the grounds that he accepted the defence contention that

> "there was then no idea of holding a meeting on the 31st, and consequently there could be no incitement". [4]

He pointed out that the evidence of the Town Clerk and of Neil Maclean conflicted as to whether the strikers' promise to "stop the cars" was a threat of violence, or merely a promise that the tramwaymen would be brought out on strike. He further pointed out that it was a question of fact for the jury whether the stoppage of cars on the south side of

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[1] James Murray, J. MacArtney, N.Oliver, Robert Loudon, David Mackenzie and Neil Alexander.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 18 April 1919, p.8.

[3] ibid.

[4] ibid., 19 April 1919, p.4.

the square was deliberate or merely the result of the pressure of the crowd. He concluded by dismissing all the charges against two of the accused.

The jury returned a 14-1 majority verdict that Gallacher and Shinwell were guilty of incitement to riot, and Gallacher, Murray and MacArtney were guilty of rioting. This verdict appears to have caused some confusion.

> "Considerable delay took place in an endeavour to adjust the terms on which the verdict should be recorded, and eventually the Lord Justice-Clerk (1), the Clerk of Justiciary, and his Depute returned for the purpose".[2]

The Forward's version of the same incident was that

> "Eye-witnesses in Court declare that they never saw a man so obviously nonplussed as was the Lord Justice Clerk at the jury's verdict". [3]

A later article purported to describe the jury's thought-processes:

> "Brennan got off, not guilty, because in the opinion of some of the jurymen he had a 'nice open face' and because he had saved a policeman from being thrown into the Clyde. As a matter of fact, it was Kirkwood who had saved the policeman, but Davie was getting off anyhow and his surplus Kharma fell upon Brennan".[4]

The chief defence counsel immediately gave notice of appeal.

> "The verdict was not only contrary to the evidence but was inconsistent with the Judge's charge. Particularly this is said to refer to Shinwell and Gallacher, who were convicted on charges of incitement which those accused maintained had not been legally proved". [5]

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[1] Scott Dickson.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 19 April 1919, p.4.

[3] Forward, 26 April 1919. Cf also the Presidential Address of Neil Beaton to the 1919 S.T.U.C: S.T.U.C. Report 1919, p.63.

[4] Forward, 3 May 1919. In "Last Memoirs" (p.124) Gallacher relates that one juryman, named Kerr, kept a diary of the case "in which he tells how he argued and argued to get an acquittal for Manny and me". Doubtless this man formed the minority of one in the final verdict, and he may have been the source of the "Forward" story.

[5] Glasgow Herald, 19 April 1919, p.4. The appeal was dismissed.

Eventually Shinwell was sentenced to five months' imprisonment and Gallacher to three. Even if the argument that the jury's verdict was inconsistent with the judge's charge be rejected, it is clear from the limited nature of the sentences that neither judge nor jury was in much sympathy with the Crown submission that Bloody Friday was the culmination of a violent and illegal conspiracy.

After the trial was over, labour organisations in the area settled down to money-raising and recrimination. The money-raising has been briefly discussed. The recriminations reached their peak at the 1919 congress of the S.T.U.C., held in early May, for which the P.C. produced a long statement justifying their action. (This statement, together with the similar apologia produced on behalf of the Glasgow District Committee of the A.S.E., forms a useful and comprehensive account of the origins of the strike). At the congress, criticism centred on the P.C's role in backing a strike disowned by the union executives. Bailie Whitehead of the Brassfinishers pointed out that the majority of A.S.E. members had accepted the 47-hour offer, and "Agreements were agreements, whether they liked them or not".[1] In defence of the P.C. spoke not only the pugnacious men of the left ("Mr Hugh Mulholland (Sheet Iron Workers) asked if a Revolution took place was it to be turned down because it was unconstitutional?")[2] but the right-wing members of the committee itself. Robert Allan of Edinburgh put the committee's view:

> "He agreed the strike was the outcome of hasty and unwise action, but the P.C. could not ignore it. If they could not control the forces behind the strike, they at least attempted to guide them along proper lines".[3]

No resolution was put, so the P.C. was saved the embarrassment of a vote of censure. But outside Glasgow, their involvement seems to have widely

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[1] S.T.U.C. Report, 1919, p.72.

[2] ibid., p.68.

[3] ibid.

disturbed Scottish trade unionists. The Edinburgh Trades Council, for instance, had throughout looked at the whole affair with a jaundiced eye. During the strike itself the chairman of that council had said:

> "in the present strike all semblance of democracy had been thrown to the winds. The movement for a shorter week was sound, but the way in which the strike had been started was a disgrace to Trade Unionism". [1]

And in their report for 1919, the executive of the council returned vigorously to the theme:

> "Many trades were, at this time [January 1919] negotiating for shorter hours, and they did not feel inclined to immediately drop bargaining and go out on strike without giving an opportunity for an amicable settlement... The lesson to be learned from the strike is that democracy must fully operate in Trades Unionism, that all workers who are to be called on to take action have a right to be consulted, and their opinions considered, that King Stork of the unofficial movement may be an even worse leader than King Log of the official movement, that the workers are not to be stampeded into a course of action that has been determined on without their express approval. The shortening of hours is of such importance to the working class that any bungling in efforts to secure it should be deprecated and condemned". [2]

Both the S.T.U.C. and the Glasgow Trades Council emerged from the 40-hours strike "once bitten twice shy". In August 1919, when a special conference of the S.T.U.C. was considering a suggestion that unions should be asked to ballot on a strike on housing conditions, Allan warned:

> "It was not in the power of the Executive of Congress to call for a stoppage of work, and therefore they were bound to ask for an expression of opinion". [3]

But this was most disingenuous, considering that the Executive had done precisely what was "not in their power" seven months earlier. During

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[1] Quoted in Glasgow Herald, 29 January 1919, p.7.

[2] Edinburgh Trades Council: Annual Report 1919, p.9. I am most grateful to Mr.John Henry, secretary of the council, for giving me access to its archives in its office.

[3] Press report pasted in to S.T.U.C. Minutes for 23 August 1919.

the national railway strike of September 1919, the P.C. proceeded in a manner clearly designed to prevent any repetition of the 40-Hour Strike imbroglio:

> "After full consideration it was resolved to convene a Conference of Trade Union officials in Glasgow..... Secretary to send invitation to officials representing head offices of unions. Agreed not to invite branch representatives or trades councils".[1]

A year later, the P.C. showed that it was still mindful of the lessons of January 1919 when it resolved that

> "while in complete sympathy with the Scottish Labour Housing Association in their propaganda against incresed rent, /it/ urges the Association to depart from the suggestion as to calling for a stoppage of work". [2]

A similar reaction of feeling set in on the Glasgow Trades Council. Shortly after the riot trial, it heard with less than ecstasy a call from Jack Leckie of the C.W.C. for drastic action to secure the release of the prisoners.

> "Mr Leckie was asked by Mr Shanks to explain what he meant by drastic action ? and if he meant a down tools policy had he any hope of success ? He answered that he had nothing of a concrete proposal to make... Mr Kiddie seconded by Mr Marchbanks moved that we do not send representatives /to a proposed joint meeting to decide on action to be taken/.. and do not countenance the proposal to stop work. Mr Marchbanks /said/ such action would be sure to end in a farce". [3]

After several votes, it was agreed

> "that Council be represented but delegates to have only a watching brief". 4

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[1] S.T.U.C: Minutes, 3 October 1919.

[2] S.T.U.C: Minutes, 14 September 1920.

[3] T.C.M: Industrial Committee, 14 May 1919. Cf also full Council, 7 May: "Mr Marchbanks N.U.R. moved that this /Council/ give no countenance to any letter that proposed drastic action... he did not believe the workers would stop work... He did not want to see any fiasco now".

[4] T.C.M: Industrial Committee, 14 May 1919.

Thus the retreat of "official" bodies from precipitate industrial action was decisive. Their fingers had been too badly burnt in the 40 Hours' Strike for them to countenance anything resembling political action. At the same time, the unofficial movement rapidly faded away. The end of wartime conditions marked the end of its opportunity. One aspect of "official" intervention in the 1919 strike was undoubtedly the desire of local officials to regain that control over their shop stewards and members which had been lost to them in wartime conditions. But they were caught out in a most embarrassing position, because exactly the same desire caused national organisations to set their face against the strike in the most determined way - as witness the reaction of the A.S.E. Executive[1] or the Labour Party and T.U.C. officials to whom the S.T.U.C. deputation had spoken.[2] With the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act imminent,[3] the bargain struck in the Treasury Agreement was being fulfilled on the Government side, and militants no longer had the opportunity of attacking their executives because of the latter's apparent tolerance of dilution and of the ban on strikes. But in the 40 Hours' Strike, the S.T.U.C. and the local A.S.E. found themselves caught between executives determined to clamp down and militants who could still draw blood:

> ".... as it was, the District Committee was left to act as a buffer between the rank and file on the one hand and the central authority on the other, the members being right up against it, and the Executive Council remaining almost inactive, 400 miles away. The possibility of a local disruption in the Society was another consideration which was present to the minds of the Committee". 4

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[1] Above, p.179.

[2] Above, p.193.

[3] (9 and 10 Geo 5, ch.42). It received the Royal Assent on 15 August 1919.

[4] D.C. Statement, pp.5-6.

Wartime militancy had a sting in its tail - or rather, like a bee, it left its sting and then died. The result of the 40 Hours' Strike was a fatal blow to the unofficial movement and a damaging one to the official labour organisations. By discrediting militant industrial action, it helped swing the pendulum towards political and electoral action of a reformist rather than a professedly revolutionary kind. This will be examined in the next three chapters. But before passing on, we shall consider two problems which were omitted from the earlier part of this chapter because they would have disrupted the continuity of the narrative. Firstly, what sort of riot occurred on Bloody Friday?. And secondly (partly arising out of the answer to this) was there any sense in which the strike was revolutionary in intention, and in which the Government response was therefore justified?

The Glasgow Herald and the Lord Advocate were in no doubt that the trial showed up the revolutionary intentions of the strike leaders. On the day of the verdicts, the first leader in the Herald more than compensated for the disappointingly meagre sentences:

> "The tiresome and confused nature of much of the evidence was in significant contrast to the sinister simplicity of the main purpose which the whole case revealed... For the lightness of their /Shinwell's and Gallacher's/ sentences they have to thank, in the first place, the phlegm or hesitancy of the mass of those they led, and in the second place, and more especially, the admirable self-restraint displayed by the civic and legal authorities and by the police force.
>
> ....The formation of the Joint Strike Committee was... the first step towards that squalid terrorism which the world now describes as Bolshevism".[1]

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 19 April 1919. A garbled version is quoted in Middlemas, op.cit., p.96.

As we have already noted, the Lord Advocate had painted a most lurid picture of Bloody Friday as a revolutionary upheaval.

> "The incidents on January 31 in George Square.... constituted the greatest imaginable menace to public order and security. There were not, thank Heaven, many incidents like them recorded in our time, and as incidents of that sort were not only in the highest degree criminal in themselves, but involved a menace to the foundation of public peace and security, he asked the jury by their verdict to express the guilt of those who instigated them". [1]

But, in fact, the Crown almost entirely failed to convince the judge and jury that any conspiracy, Bolshevist or otherwise, existed. The news columns of the Glasgow Herald, both after Bloody Friday and during the trial, carry conclusive evidence that the editorial opinions in adjacent columns were based on fantasy. Bloody Friday was a police riot; or, to speak less dramatically, was caused by the inexperience and incompetence of the police in handling a large crowd with no revolutionary ambitions. Not one of the accounts which will be drawn upon to justify this contention comes from a source friendly to the strike; most come from the news columns of its arch-enemy, the Glasgow Herald.

The personal feelings of shock and disapproval on the part of the Herald reporter who witnessed the riot emerge from his account. After the arrest of Gallacher and Kirkwood, he wrote, the police proceeded to clear the Square

> "with a vigour and determination that was a prelude to the extraordinary scenes the Square was afterwards to witness, and to which the city, with all its acquaintance with labour troubles, can happily offer no parallel. A strong body of police... swept the crowd in front of them, raining a hurricane of blows which fell indiscriminately on those actually participating in the strike and on those who had been drawn to the scene merely through curiosity". [2]

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[1] Quoted in Glasgow Herald, 18 April 1919.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 1 February 1919, p.5.

The principal national Liberal dailies had both sent special correspondents to cover the strike. Both reported that the rioting was set off by the behaviour of the police in clearing a path for the tramcars:

> "Even if one takes the least favourable view of the intentions of the strikers, it cannot be said that the authorities managed their business very happily on Friday. In the first place, if it was intended to maintain a service of tramcars through George Square during the demonstration, it was inexcusable to leave the square virtually unguarded by police until the whole of the roadway was blocked by a dense crowd, and then endeavour to force the tramcars through it....
>
> I was within a few yards of the tramcars during the forcing through process, and I have no hesitation in saying that the baton charge, made with the object of clearing a way for the second tramcar, was the beginning of the trouble in the Square. The temper of some hundreds of the strikers was immediately fired". [1]

The official injury list was given as 19 police hurt and 34 civilians, which suggests that the police gave at least as good as they got.

During the trial, several defence witnesses, including Rosslyn Mitchell, testified that the police had initiated the violence by their baton charges, and had batoned innocent bystanders. One of them added,

> "It was the usual Glasgow crowd, always up against the police when there was any row on". [2]

An essential part of the Crown case was to prove that the holding up of the cars was a deliberate and violent act on the part of the strikers, in pursuance of threats made by Shinwell and Gallacher on the Wednesday. This case hardly survived the cross-examination by the principal defence counsel of Chief Constable Stevenson:

> "He admitted, however, that there was no sign during the week on the part of the processionists of any intention to make a violent attack on the tramways". [3]

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[1] Daily News, 3 February 1919; cf also Manchester Guardian, same date.

[2] Evidence of Alexander McKendrick, Officer of the Juvenile Delinquency Board. Glasgow Herald, 12 April 1919.

[3] Glasgow Herald, 11 April 1919, p.9.

The Lord Advocate gave the following as his reasons for dismissing the defence argument:

> "Broadly the defence was that the riot that day was made not by the mob but by the police, who, it was said, either had a plan for a disturbance or simply went berserk that day. That defence was absurd when they remembered that there were 140 police and 25,000 persons in the Square, that the former were under the eye of the Chief Constable, and that there had been consultations among the authorities going on all week". [1]

Nevertheless, not all the police were directly "under the eye of the Chief Constable", who specifically denied sole responsibility for the directions given to the police:

> "witness said he did not give orders for any particular charge. He left that to his officers". [2]

It was a subordinate officer, then, who presumably ordered the charges in front of the City Chambers and up North Frederick Street. This brings us to a curious point, which was surprisingly not raised by the defence at the trial. The purpose of the baton charges was supposedly to clear a way for the tramcars. But no tramlines ran along the east side of the square, in front of the City Chambers, in 1919.[3] Nor were there any in North Frederick Street, which was, and is, a steep minor road leading nowhere in particular. These charges can therefore only be regarded as unprovoked attacks by the police designed to intimidate or scatter the crowd - a fact which gives the lie to the

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 18 April 1919, p.5.

[2] Cross-examination of the Chief Constable, reported in Forward, 19 April 1919.

[3] This point was checked for me by the staff of the Mitchell Library, to whom I am most grateful. It was subsequently corroborated by the discovery, among miscellaneous papers relating to the trial in the same library, of a tracing of George Square headed "The Lord Advocate v. Shinwell and Others" and signed by Robert C.Boyce, C.E., 144 Vincent Street, Glasgow. This map shows the location of the tramlines, which are shown in the sketchmap reproduced in the Appendix to this chapter.

Lord Advocate's curious argument that, since there were more strikers than police, the latter cannot have caused the rioting. There was no evidence, even in the incitement charges, that any leader was encouraging any striker to assail the City Chambers, and this was at no time adduced as a reason for the behaviour of the police. It was surely the conduct of the police, not the revolutionary intentions of any of the crowd, which brought about Bloody Friday.

This conclusion does not, however, entitle us to dismiss out of hand the idea that the strike involved a serious revolutionary threat. The problem here is to decide what to make of the role played by Shinwell. Before the strike began, he spoke in the Trades Council about its limited aims:

> "The movement was not revolutionary in character, neither was it inspired by the legitimate desire of the workers for more leisure. It was attributable solely to the fear of unemployment in the near future, and the desire to make room for the man from the Army and Navy." [1]

Many years later, in his memoirs, Shinwell explained that this statement was made expressly to counter alarums and excursions about revolution issuing from the Press:

> "Still positive that the mass of workers had no aims beyond remedying the labour situation, I took the opportunity of reiterating my views..., knowing that with the current anxieties of the country, my words would obtain national Press coverage and might bring a note of sanity into the hysteria being shown in London". [2]

The picture of Shinwell as a moderate presented by these statements accords with what we saw in Chapter 10 of his activities in trying to concentrate the strike demand on 40 hours rather than an impossible 30 hours. It accords much less well with the reports of his behaviour during the strike itself. We have already quoted his sometimes

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 23 January 1919, p.5.

[2] Shinwell, op.cit., p.61.

threatening-sounding speeches encouraging mass pickets. To give but one more example, he was reported as saying outside Pinkston power station:

> "When the workers in the power station knew that the strikers insisted on their participation, he believed they would not be at work in the morning. At the same time he recommended the police to take a holiday (Laughter)". [1]

Kirkwood and Shinwell more than once threatened that "other means" or "drastic action" would have to be taken if the strikers' demands were not met, and both sides agreed that Shinwell and Neil Maclean had told the Lord Provost that they would stop the trams if Bonar Law did not send a satisfactory reply to the telegram. Further evidence comes from a most unexpected source: William Gallacher. On the 30th, he later wrote,

> "I'd been reporting to the committee at the Trades Council offices in Bath Street, and Manny had made a suggestion of a pretty desperate nature. I had told him I would do whatever the committee agreed, but if his project was carried out I would insist on all the members of the committee being right at the head of the demonstration. The subject had been dropped. But later, as I was walking down Bath Street with Messer and Davie/Kirkwood/, Messer had said, 'You've got to watch that fellow Shinwell. He'll make trouble and leave you to face it.' " [2]

The conspiratorial tone of Gallacher's accounts makes it impossible to guess what Shinwell's suggestion was - an assault on the City Chambers, or as Bell asserts, a proposal

> "to lead the workers along the well-to-do streets and let them loose" [3] ?

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[1] Daily Record & Mail, 30 January 1919, p.1.

[2] Gallacher, Last Memoirs, pp.123-124. The account in "Revolt on the Clyde", pp.223-224, which does not mention Shinwell's name but makes it quite clear who is referred to, accuses him of offering "romantic and dangerous suggestions... which would have ended everything in a medley of confusion and disorder". Cf also Bell, Pioneering Days, p.166, where he says "the law of libel forbids" him from naming names.

[3] Bell, Pionnering Days, p.166.

We cannot tell; but the evidence, taken together, suggests that Shinwell's speeches and actions during the strike were by no means as "moderate" and "constitutional" as those he had made earlier. Did he really expect to promote a revolution ? It seems scarcely credible. In the negotiations leading up to the strike he must have been uncomfortably aware of the difficulties which would flow from its lack of official backing. But no serious attempt was made to turn the 40 Hours Strike into a national stoppage of work. Shinwell must have been well aware that without strike pay his supporters could not stay out indefinitely. Perhaps the key to his real feelings lies buried in the report of one of his many speeches during the strike.

> "It was not the intention of the Joint Committee to have a long strike. If payment or non-payment of strike aliment was to stand between them and their objective then their objective would never be secured... He asked them to place their confidence in the committee and carry out their instructions". [1]

Perhaps this implies that Shinwell hoped to provoke some dramatic incident or other which would lead rapidly to intervention in the strikers' favour, in spite of their underlying financial and organisational weakness. If so, he got his incident, but not the sort of intervention he would have hoped for. In 1915, the rent strikes had apparently led straight to the Rent Restriction Act. In 1919, the war was over; Bloody Friday apparently led straight to the military occupation of Glasgow.[2]

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 28 January 1919, p.5.

[2] So it seemed to contemporaries - cf, e.g. Glasgow Herald, 3 February 1919, p.7: "In consequence of the conflict with authority that occurred on Friday, troops... have been drafted into the city". In fact, of course, the troops were already on their way when the riot started, in consequence of the decisions taken in the Cabinet on the 30th.

Writing with the benefit of both hindsight and orthodoxy, Gallacher later claimed that the trouble was that

> "We were carrying on a strike, when we ought to have been making a revolution". [1]

If, instead of marching to George Square on Bloody Friday, the strikers had gone to Maryhill barracks to call on the soldiers there to support them, "Glasgow would have been in our hands".[2] It must be said, however, that Gallacher's reaction when he came out of the Town Hall on Bloody Friday and saw the melee before him was scarcely that of a dedicated revolutionary. He shouted frantically to the crowd to leave the square and go to Glasgow Green:

> "Now, keep order. Understand it has been a very unfortunate occurrence". [3]

> "'March, for God's sake. Are you going to do that much for us?' (Cries of "Yes"). " [4]

Neither Gallacher nor any of the other strike leaders (Kirkwood was reported as "obvious/ly/... completely unstrung by the experience"[5] of Bloody Friday at the time of his arrest) saw the riot as any sort of revolutionary opportunity. Beyond the occasional skirmish at a meeting, none of them had experienced physical violence before [6] and they quite clearly did not like what they saw. As pacific men, their instincts were to get the crowd out of harm's way as soon as possible.

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[1] Gallacher, p.221.

[2] ibid., pp.233-4.

[3] Daily Record, 1 February 1919.

[4] Glasgow Herald, 1 February 1919.

[5] ibid.

[6] With the exception of Shinwell, in prewar waterfront battles between his British Seafarers' Union and Havelock Wilson's National Sailors' and Firemens' Union. Shinwell, op.cit., ch.5.

In the light of all this, the government's reaction was unquestionably excessive. After the troops had arrived, the Daily News's correspondent commented,

> "In the course of a long experience of strikes and outbreaks of disorder in industrial disputes I have never seen such extensive preparations for repression". [1]

The Labour press was generally united in seeing the arrival of the tanks and motor lorries as an "Absurd Parade of Military Forces",[2] and their view is echoed by a modern commentator:

> "Had the government but known its Glasgow it could have saved public money, for the day after the riot the strike leaders had no forces to command: their rank and file were all venting their fervour, revolutionary or otherwise, at football matches". [3]

It is certainly difficult to see what the tanks could have done if the rioting had become more serious, unless shell the City Chambers as if they were the Dublin G.P.O. The truth is that, however unrealistic the threats from Shinwell and Neil Maclean passed on by the Lord Provost, there was never a time when the government would be more disposed to take them seriously than January 1919. A natural suspicion of Bolshevism had for some months been fanned by the so-called "Fortnightly Reports on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, and Morale in Foreign Countries" which were prepared for the War Cabinet by Basil Thomson, head of the Special Branch. These reports presented a great deal of miscellaneous alarmist information about the activities of "pacifists" and other undesirables. Their tone is captured by the following four excerpts from the report for December 2, 1918:

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[1] Daily News, 3 February 1919.

[2] Headline in Glasgow Observer, 8 February 1919.

[3] W.Ferguson, "Scotland, 1689 to the Present", Edinburgh 1968, p.361.

> "It is to be feared that, in the event of serious disturbances, the police in large cities cannot be depended upon...
>
> The wirepullers behind /George Lansbury/ have not yet been disclosed, but the plan is by holding a series of revolutionary meetings in what is regarded as a stronghold of the capitalist class, the Royal (1) Albert Hall, to test the strength of the revolutionary movement and fan the temper of the London workers with a view of preparing for action of a much more serious character...
>
> A private letter from Sylvia Pankhurst to a friend in Glasgow which has come into my hands concludes with the words, 'I expect the Revolution soon, don't you?'
>
> Mr Will Thorne in conversation said a few days ago that Bolshevism or rather the state of dissatisfaction that might foster it, has never been so high in England as at the present moment. The industrial workers of Scotland are of a deeper red than the usual red-flaggers". [2]

Into the febrile atmosphere caused by these reports came the news of the German Spartacist revolt and the Hungarian and Bavarian Communist coups at the end of the war. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that members of the Government should be prepared to see the strike as a "Bolshevist rising" - and send enough troops to quell a Bolshevik rebellion, or at the very least another Easter Rising. Thomson himself thought that

> "During the first three months of 1919 unrest touched its high-water mark. I do not think that at any time in history since the Bristol Riots we have been so near revolution... On the 27th of January there were extensive strikes on the Clyde of a revolutionary rather than an economic character". [3]

Furthermore, the War Cabinet was almost certainly misinformed on one point, which made the strike seem more serious than it actually was. The Lord

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[1] Stress in original.

[2] "Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale in Foreign Countries", 2 December 1918. Cabinet paper GT 6425: P.R.O: Cab 24/71. The quality of Thomson's information and sophistication of his political judgment may be assessed from this sentence of his Fortnightly Report for 21 October 1918: 'An exact translation of the word Bolshevik is, I am told, out-and-outer'. GT 6079. P.R.O: Cab 24/67.

[3] B.H.Thomson, "Queer People", (London, 1922), p.276.

Provost's telegram, it will be recalled, had said that "all men in generating stations have been compelled today to join the strike". But this was not true. Pinkston was never affected, in spite of the strikers' most strenuous efforts. The power station supplying the tramways was organised by the tramwaymen's union, an "unskilled" union, whereas other power workers were members of the "skilled" E.T.U. The strike originated in a craftsmen's grievance, and relations between the skilled and unskilled were no better than they had been at any time since 1911 and the Singers strike. So Pinkston never came out, and the disruption to public utilities was far less than had been caused the previous week in Belfast - even though Port Dundas was on strike, the street lighting seems never to have suffered worse than a voltage reduction.[1] Once arrived in Glasgow, the troops were never used for their ostensible purpose - to protect the "volunteers" manning municipal services - although their presence may have been enough of a threat to make the strikers discontinue mass picketing.

An interesting comparison may be made between the Government reaction in 1919 to the Lord Provost's telegram and its reaction in 1916 to the Parkhead strike. On both occasions the government was supplied with inaccurate and misleadingly alarmist information,[2] and it reacted more severely than necessary. On both occasions the men's revolutionary intentions have been applauded in later writings by participants and academic admirers, but were scarcely evident at the time - though admittedly Shinwell was making more revolutionary noises in January 1919 than any engineer in March 1916. In fact, the core of both strikes had been the sectional interest of the engineers, an ultimately conservative movement which could not be satisfactorily diverted into revolutionary

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 21 January 1919, p.7; 3 February 1919, p.8.

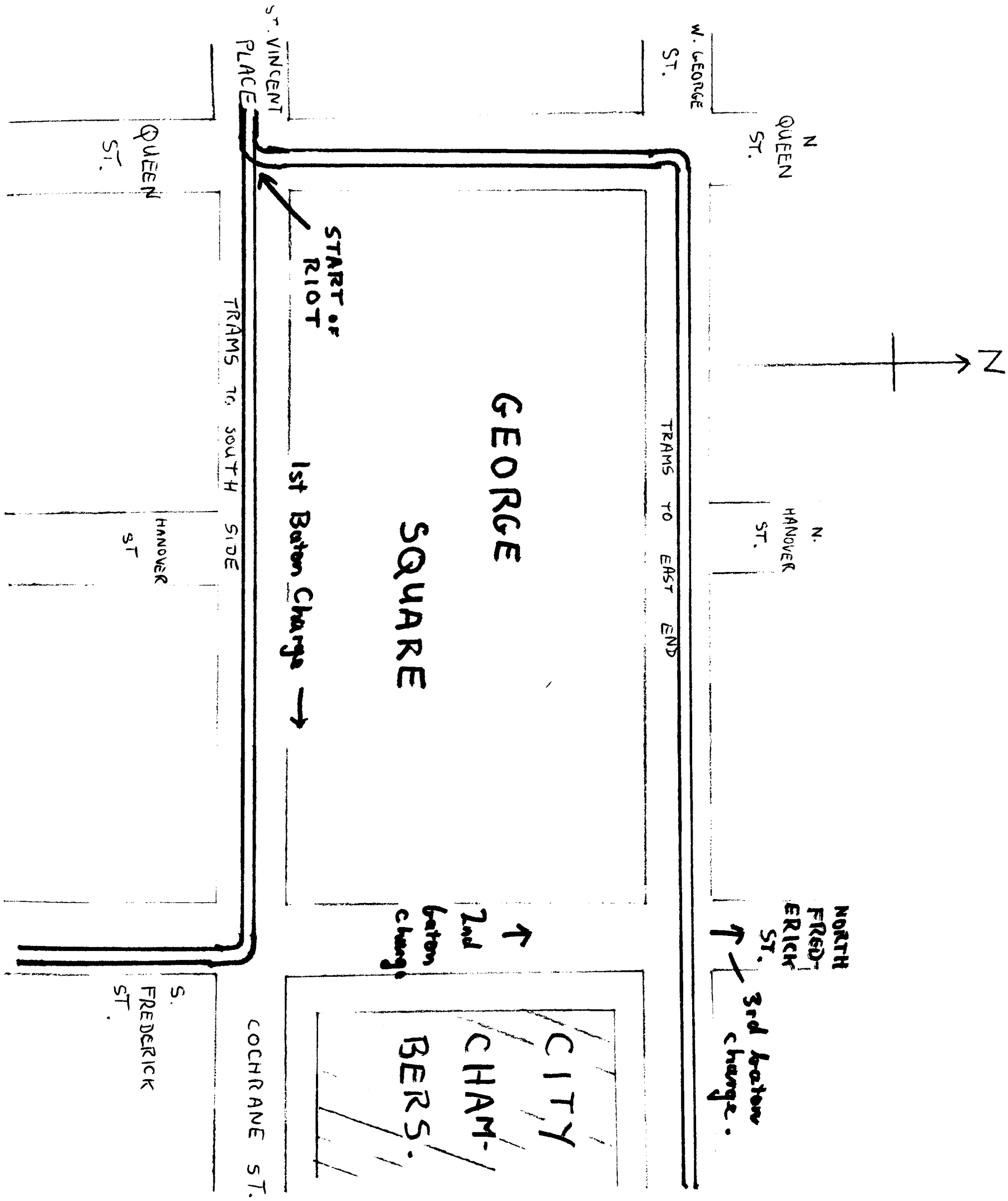
[2] See Chapter 7 for the events of 1916.

purposes. And in 1919, as during the war, the unskilled workers supported the engineers half-heartedly, if at all. It may be argued that the government's firm stand in 1919 prevented any resurgence of revolutionary, anti-official militancy. But one of the principal themes of this and the preceding chapter has been the structural weakness of the strike. It would certainly have collapsed, and discredited unofficial action, without any help from the Government. Indeed, the net effect of the tanks in the Cattle Market was probably the same as that of the police misbehaviour in George Square: it gave the strike a romantic history which successfully concealed an otherwise ignominious failure.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

GEORGE SQUARE IN 1919.

(NOT TO SCALE.)



Chapter 12

The Lines Laid Down: the ILP, the Communists, and John Maclean.

The debacle of 1919 broke the industrial power of the extreme left, but it remained for some time an open question how its political strength would develop. This chapter deals with the changing fortunes of the various sects and parties of the far left. The rise and decline of enthusiasm for international Communism in the ILP and the local trade union movement are traced, and the fortunes of the SLP and the united Communist Party are then examined. The bulk of the chapter is given over to a discussion of the role and personality of John Maclean; this is an important and controversial point on which new evidence has recently become available with the opening of Cabinet records for the period and the deposit of a collection of Maclean's papers in the National Library of Scotland.

The Scottish Division of the ILP had the reputation of being one of the most militant, as well as the largest,[1] of the divisions in which the party was organised; and here, initially, the omens seemed favourable for the Communists. The Scottish Division's 1920 Conference carried by 158 votes to 28 a resolution calling upon the ILP to affiliate to the Third International.[2] The national ILP conference, held in Glasgow in 1920, was less enthusiastic, and listened to a condemnation of the Scottish

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[1] A.Marwick "The ILP 1918-32". B.Litt thesis Oxford, 1960. See especially pp.35, 118. I am grateful to Professor Marwick for giving me permission to consult this work. Cf also R.E.Dowse, "Left in the Centre", London 1966, pp.38-39.

[2] Forward, 10 January 1920, pp.6-7.

ILP's decision by MacDonald. By a clear majority it voted to sever its links with the Second International, but by 472 votes to 206 it decided to try to form a new international rather than apply for membership of the Third.[1] (The confused story of the ILP and the "Two-and-a-Half International", which arose out of this decision, falls outside the scope of this work).

The pressure in favour of Communism on industrial organisations in the Glasgow area seems to have come somewhat later, at a time when reaction to the left wing was already setting in within the ILP. In December 1920 the Glasgow Trades Council agreed to ask the Labour Party Executive to change the Party constitution in order to allow the Communist Party to become affiliated.[2] Three months later the Council overturned its Parliamentary Bills Committee's[3] recommendation of 'no action', and voted by 71 to 38 to propose the following motion for debate at the S.T.U.C.

> "That this Congress, recognising the need for an International Industrial Organisation... receiving, in a more direct manner than exists at present, its mandates from the rank and file, instructs the Parliamentary Committee to sever any connections it may have with the Amsterdam Federation of Trades Unions, and immediately apply for representation on the British Bureau of the Provisional International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions. And further recommends the affiliated bodies to take similar action, thereby allowing their members to participate directly in framing the industrial policy of the workers of the world." 4

When this resolution was put before the S.T.U.C. meeting at Aberdeen in 1921, an opponent claimed that "they would become automata controlled

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[1] Forward, 10 April 1920.

[2] TCM, 1 December 1920.

[3] This antiquated title (cf. the Parliamentary Committees of the T.U.C. and the S.T.U.C.), presumably recalling the 'non-political' days of Trades Councils as labour pressure groups, denoted the committee dealing with such matters of public policy as were referred to it.

[4] TCM, 23 February 1921.

by an international bureaucracy centred in Moscow"[1] and it was declared defeated by 48 votes to 45; but on a recount the motion was then declared carried by 55 to 50.

The Forward reporter mentioned allegations that visitors had voted, and added:

> "The proposal came on late in a thin house, or else it would have been lost. The narrow victory was pleasing to the young men of the Glasgow Trades Council, and was applauded loudly by many visitors who left after the result was announced". [2]

But the tide was already ebbing for the left. The ILP reacted away from its early enthusiasm for the Third International when the terms of its acceptance were announced from Moscow. After the 1920 Conference, a group of members in the centre of the ILP

> "had been responsible for the Party decision to send a delegation of enquiry to Russia... we were now studying with dismay the answers they'd brought back". [3]

The most dismaying requirements were the full adherence of the ILP to the Twenty-One Conditions, including a simultaneous legal and illegal struggle for the revolution, and the demand that two-thirds of the members of the ILP Executive should, after affiliation to the International, be drawn from the members of the already-extant "ILP Left Wing". This body had acted within the party as a pressure-group for joining the Third International.[4] But the group, whose leading members were C.H.Norman, J.T. Walton Newbold, and Mrs. Helen Crawfurd, was becoming decreasingly

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[1] S.T.U.C. Report, 1921, p.100.
[2] Forward, 30 April 1921, p.4.
[3] J.Paton, "Left Turn", (London, 1936), p.78.
[4] ibid., pp.80-83.

popular in the West of Scotland. Both Norman and Newbold had previously been frequent and voluminous contributors to Forward, but their constributions dwindled after 1919, and the journal gave space to a virulent correspondence between Newbold and Shinwell (who remained a contributor up to 1922) which lasted for several months in 1920. The point of view of the anti-revolutionary left was put by writers such as Paton, who said:

> "We cannot base our policy on a mere belief in the probability of revolutionary outbreaks in this country" [1]

and more vehemently by Shinwell, who said that the Scots word 'gallus'[2] was the only way to describe those who thought the Army and Navy could be converted to help start a revolution:

> "There was nothing to prevent anyone who thought in this way... from proceeding to Maryhill Barracks with a view to the conversion of the inmates there... I entirely refuse to admit... that social progress can be secured by such methods". [3]

As industrial orientations were giving way to political, the ILP ranks were closing against the Communists. The Forward became in 1920 and 1921 much more of an ILP house journal than it had ever been before, and as it was a valuable and widely-read propaganda journal[4] the loss to the left of a propaganda outlet was a serious matter. There were, of course, several papers of the far left: the SLP's The Socialist, Maclean's Vanguard, and the C.W.C's revived Worker of 1918. But they had only a tiny circulation, relying on enthusiasts rather than newsagents

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[1] Forward, 25 September 1920, p.2.

[2] The nearest to a satisfactory definition, of those given in O.E.D., is "especially of children, impish, wild, mischievous". But Shinwell obviously meant a much stronger sense, which is how the word is understood in Scotland.

[3] Forward, 4 December 1920, p.4.

[4] Cf. e.g. tape recorded reminiscences of Mr.Tom Scollan, in possession of J.Foster, University of Strathclyde.

for distribution, and without any advertising necessarily operated at a loss and could not look forward to regular publication.

Within the ILP, pressures were mounting towards a definite commitment against the Third International. The 1921 Conference of the Scottish Division of the ILP reversed its previous decision of support for the Third International by 93 votes to 57,[1] and irritation with the whole subject was expressed by Johnston:

> "one hopes that, by another year, the current spasm of excitement about how many Soviet angels will sit comfortably on a Parliamentary needle, about the number of theses (good word) and conditions we must necessarily recite before a population that cares not one tinker's curse about any of them, will have spent itself" [2]

The national ILP Conference at Southport in April 1921 decisively defeated the resolution to join the 3rd International, the issue being no doubt influenced by a speech from Paton which he himself described as a "devastating attack on the proposals".[3]

He added,

> "It was evident that the 'twenty-one points' were then generally unknown and merely to quote them caused a sensation". [4]

By this time the 3rd International debate had become a tale full of sound and fury, signifying very little, and there is no evidence of the defection of any large body of ILP members to the CPGB after the Southport conference was to

> "smother the proposal for affiliation by a vote of more than five to one and remove it as a serious issue". [5]

A writer in the Forward[6] claimed that there had been only two resignations from the Glasgow ILP because of the Southport decision, and though this

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[1] Forward, 8 January 1921, p.5.

[2] ibid.

[3] Paton, op.cit., p.86.

[4] ibid.

[5] ibid., p.87.

would seem too low a number, the statement was not challenged. The only important change was the movement of Mrs. Crawfurd to the CPGB. She became a member of the British Communist Party's Executive from 1923 to 1925[1] and faded from the political scene in the West of Scotland.

The reaction against the Communists in the "industrial" organisations was tardier and less complete. As we have seen, the S.T.U.C. voted in 1921 to enquire about joining the Red International of Labour Unions. Left to itself, however, the Parliamentary Committee of the S.T.U.C. obviously shared the Forward's view that the vote was a freak result upon which no serious action was to be expected; it decided, when it considered the matter, to take no action meantime,

> "especially in view of the information given to the Committee that the proposed organisation was not to be confined to purely industrial organisations, but also to include political parties."[2]

Later, the committee sent a circular to member unions to see whether they were in favour of the proposal. This drew an angry protest from the Glasgow Trades Council, on the grounds that the Committee was trying to reopen a question which the Congress had already decided in favour of the Third International.[3] But the manoeuvre had the desired effect. The Parliamentary Committee reported that "the tendency of the replies was against affiliation to the Red Trades Union International",[4] and subsequent desultory correspondence with George Peet, secretary of the Provisional British Bureau, was interrupted by Peet's imprisonment.[5] There is no record of protest at the 1922 Congress against the P.C's behaviour in virtually ignoring the instruction it had received from the

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[1] Kendall, op.cit., p.422.
[2] S.T.U.C. Minutes, 10 May 1921.
[3] TCM, 6 July 1921.
[4] S.T.U.C. Annual Report 1922, p.29.
[5] ibid.

previous congress, so one has to assume that enthusiasm for the R.I.L.U. had run its very brief course. The original proposers of affiliation, the Glasgow Trades Council, had also changed their minds, voting on 29th March 1922 to accept their Industrial Committee's recommendation that since "affiliation to the Red International of Trades Unions would require an alteration in the Rules and Constitution of the Council" it be not proceeded with. Nonetheless, the Council, which since 1918 had combined the functions of Trades Council and city Labour Party, protested against the Labour Party's new rule (viz. that all delegates to a city Labour Party must accept the constitution and principles of the Party and must not be members of bodies running candidates in opposition to duly endorsed Labour candidates)[1] on the grounds that it excluded Communists. The question remained unresolved for the time being,[2] but was to cause trouble again in later years.

In Scotland in the early 1920's, "Communists" meant revolutionaries recruited from the S.L.P. even more than those from the B.S.P. However, the S.L.P. itself had not sufficient resilience to adapt to post-war conditions. As we noted in Chapter 9, its rigorous intellectualism and insistence on doctrinal purity kept its membership tiny, and only the near-coincidence of its industrial demands and the engineers' agitation, together with the temporary abandonment of its refusal to participate in capitalist politics, had given it prominence during the war. In 1919 a group of S.L.P. members headed by Arthur MacManus tried to enter the current Communist Unity negotiations. In due course they were expelled from the S.L.P. and joined the Communist Party. What was left of the

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[1] TCM, 23 August 1922.

[2] TCM, 6 September 1922; 27 September 1922.

S.L.P. returned to its pre-1914 position as a tiny sect. An attempt by John Maclean to use the S.L.P. as the basis for a new Communist Party to rival the C.P.G.B. failed,[1] and by 1924, it has been suggested, "it is not likely that S.L.P. membership exceeded 100".[2] In the same year its journal, The Socialist, had to be closed down.[3]

So by 1922 the S.L.P. was dead, and the ILP had become more exclusive; the only party which might act as any sort of revolutionary force in Scotland was the Communist Party of Great Britain. The disproportionately large number of Scots in the early leadership of the Communist Party has often been pointed out.[4] The recruits from the S.L.P's Communist Unity Group, numerically much smaller than the BSP, provided "the dominant figures in the Communist Party during its first few years".[5] These were Bell, MacManus, Murphy, and William Paul, of whom Bell and MacManus were Clydesiders. Thomas Clark also became a party functionary for the first two years of the party's existence.[6] Gallacher, the ex-BSP member who was converted from heresy to orthodoxy after visiting Lenin in 1920,[7] was somewhat apart from this group. He first came to real prominence in the party after the adoption of the Organisation Report of 1922, which recommended a drastic pruning of the party apparatus. From this time on, the ex-SLPers were somewhat eclipsed by the new leadership of Pollitt, Dutt, and Gallacher. The

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[1] See below, p.234.

[2] Kendall, op.cit., p.314; cf. also Chewter thesis, op.cit., pp.205-261.

[3] L.J.MacFarlane, "The British Communist Party: its Origin and Development until 1929", London 1966, p.69.

[4] E.g. by H.Pelling, "The British Communist Party", London 1958, esp.pp.15-17.

[5] MacFarlane, op.cit., p.28.

[6] Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, pp.262-3. The savagery of Gallacher's attack on Clark here no doubt reflects the hostility between the ex-SLP leadership and the ex-BSP one which replaced it after the reorganisation and "Bolshevisation" of 1922-23.

[7] See below, p.232.

change was accentuated when the entire British party executive was summoned to Moscow and reprimanded by the Executive Committee of the Comintern. In the changes in leadership "insisted on by the Presidium of the Comintern"[1] the SLPers lost more ground still, although it is fair to add that the balance of power swung slightly back towards them in 1924.[2]

However, the net effect of all these changes was to remove many prominent militants from the Scottish scene without increasing their political effectiveness. Because of the failure of the CPGB to grow in its early years, the abilities of Bell, MacManus and Murphy were dissipated in organisation and agitation with no visible results, and they would all have vanished from the political scene without trace but for the combined efforts of White Russians in Berlin and Conservative Central Office in the Zinoviev letter scare of 1924.[3] Gallacher was to be more important both within and outside the Party, but his work as a national official prevented him from having much importance in Scottish politics until his election as MP for West Fife in 1935.

The local leadership of the Communist Party in Glasgow failed to make any notable impression up to 1922, except in organising the unemployed. John Maclean had been the first to do this, in 1921, and after initial hostility the future local leaders of the Communist Party co-operated with him. But attempts to bring in the Glasgow Trades Council, which had an Unemployment Committee of its own, were very coldly received.

> "Motion by Mr. Kerrigan that Council's Unemployment Committee should confer with the Unemployed Committee.[4]
> This found no seconder....

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[1] Quoted in MacFarlane, op.cit., p.83. Cf. also R.Martin "Communism and the British Trade Unions" 1924-33", Oxford 1969, p.29.

[2] MacFarlane, op.cit., p.89

[3] See Chester, Fay and Young, "The Zinoviev Letter", London 1967.

[4] "The 'Unemployed Committee' was Maclean's Committee, of which the Communist Peter Kerrigan was by now a member.

> Amendment moved by Mr.Kerrigan that Council's Unemployment Committee co-operate with the Communist Party. This did not find a seconder." [1]

The overt reason for this hostility was the behaviour of the Unemployed Committee and its supporters at public meetings.

> "On Sunday they broke up another Trades Council demonstration for the unemployed on Glasgow Green - the first time a Labour meeting has ever been broken up there... the language used by some interrupters was obscene and filthy". [2]

Underlying this was the tension between employed and unemployed workers, which was to remain a prominent feature of inter-war labour politics. Those who were in work had a natural interest in preserving their own jobs. The careers of leading Communists of the inter-war period - Kerrigan or Aitken Ferguson at the local level or Wal Hannington on the national stage - show that they had considerable success in controlling organisation of the unemployed, compared to their failure in almost every union activity of employed men, other than miners.[3] Tension between the Communists, representing the unemployed, and non-Communist representatives of employed trade unionists contributed to the violent dissension in the Glasgow Trades Council, when for a spell every meeting was broken up by the Communists as soon as it assembled.[4]

The Communist Party in Glasgow, then, developed into nothing more than a rather noisy pressure group for the unemployed, whose main energies were spent attacking other labour organisations. Might it have become something more significant with John Maclean at its head? Undoubtedly the Party on Clydeside in its first few years was severely hampered by Maclean's failure to join it. But Maclean's attitude had, and has,

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[1] TCM, 5 October 1921.

[2] Forward, 15 October 1921. Cf. also TCM, 12 October 1921.

[3] See Martin, op.cit., esp. Conclusion, Ch.8.

[4] Tape recorded reminiscences of Mr.Tom Scollan, as above.

more than local importance. Why did the sometime Bolshevik Consul in Glasgow, after whom one of the docks in Leningrad was named,[1] never join the Communist Party of Great Britain? A body of controversial literature has sprung up around this point, and the rest of this chapter will be devoted to setting out the views of Gallacher and of his later left-wing or nationalist opponents, and then to an attempt at an independent assessment of the role and influence of Maclean.

Gallacher claimed, at the time of writing "Revolt on the Clyde" and later, that "Maclean was.../in/ a very sick condition... he was suffering from hallucinations." [2] after his release from prison in 1918; that his election speeches were "marred by the sickness that had become firmly embedded in his mind"[3] because of his persecution mania and obsession with drugs and spies; that he was driven to political isolation by "a bunch of toadies",[4] and that egged on by them he fought a hopeless fight until on November 30, 1923, he died of pneumonia.

This view of Maclean's last years has been sharply criticised by a number of modern writers, most notably Walter Kendall. Speaking of Maclean's political and private writings of these periods, he says

> "None of these documents present any evidence to suggest that the balance of Maclean's mind was disturbed, or that he was a sick, ageing old man, ruthlessly exploited by a band of sinister, but, significantly, unnamed socialist parasites. All on the other hand show clearly a defined political outlook at variance with that of the CPGB on a number of important issues." 5

Other recent writers, while endorsing this view, have added that Maclean's real claim to fame should be as a Scottish Nationalist. Hugh Macdiarmid

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[1] Gallacher, Last Memoirs, p.163.

[2] Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, pp.214-5.

[3] Gallacher, Last Memoirs, p.118.

[4] Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, p.216.

[5] Kendall, op.cit., pp.284-5.

has recently written,

> "/Maclean's/ doctrine is... profoundly related to our hidden Gaelic traditions, and in coming to it Maclean was not the victim of a mental disequilibrium nor (as Harry Macshane suggested) merely imitative of the Irish Movement, but realising the deepest impulses of his whole nature in their final and highest form, and... so far from indicating any mental breakdown this development is in logical accord with the entire evolution of his political thought, and did not betray but crowned his career...." [1]

The sources available for the study of Maclean's life have recently been augmented by the collection of personal material presented by his younger daughter to the National Library of Scotland. With the aid of this material, we may attempt to come to an independent conclusion about Maclean's last four years - a conclusion which gives some support to both of the first two views just outlined and none whatsoever to the third.

There can be no doubt that Maclean's views and behaviour in his last years were distorted by a thoroughly-developed persecution mania which "coloured all his later years and rendered him gey ill to thole".[2,3] Maclean seems to have been a naturally suspicious person whose intemperance of language in personal disputes was, at least overtly, responsible for his dismissal as a teacher in 1915: he refused to withdraw a letter he had written to the Govan School Board attacking his former headmaster for the master's alleged affair with the infant mistress, and as a result was dismissed by the Board.[4]

An account has been given in Chapter 9 of the details of Maclean's wartime terms of imprisonment: here we may review the story for evidence

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[1] P.Berresford Ellis and Seumas Mac A'Ghobhainn. /i.e. James Smith/, "The Scottish Insurrection of 1820", London 1970, Introduction pp.15-16.

[2] "Gey ill to thole": "very hard to put up with".

[3] Obituary in Forward, 8 December 1923.

[4] Maclean Papers, File 1, passim.

of the growing paranoia which was to afflict him. A letter to his wife written during his first term of imprisonment betrays the first sign of the obsession that was to haunt the rest of his life:

> "I again ask you to remember the detective incident the night I was arrested, and if you do you will think and act rightly just now. Not otherwise". [1]

Within a few months of his release on a ticket-of-leave in August 1917 the Government legal advisers claimed that he was again committing breaches of D.O.R.A. The matter was thought sufficiently important or delicate to take up at the level of the War Cabinet (partly because of the complications caused by Maclean's appointment as Bolshevik Consul in Glasgow).[2] The Secretary for Scotland attended the War Cabinet to explain the case:

> "Mr. Munro explained that John Maclean was a ticket-of-leave man who had been sentenced in 1916 to three years' penal servitude. He had been liberated because of the state of his health, on condition that he should report himself to the police from time to time by letter. For a time he had kept quiet, but now he had made a number of speeches in Glasgow and Fife which contravened the Defence of the Realm Act... He (Mr. Munro) and the Lord Advocate had considerable hesitation in prosecuting him. He was more or less a lunatic; imprisonment would lead to his ill health and to demands for his release..." [2]

Nevertheless, the War Cabinet authorised "proceedings to be taken in any case where the Lord Advocate was of opinion that a conviction would be probable."[3] A study of Maclean's speech from the dock in 1918 shows that Munro's assessment of him as "more or less a lunatic", while grossly exaggerated, was nevertheless not merely a petulant reference to his political views. Maclean's first spell of imprisonment had given him

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[1] John Maclean to Jean Maclean, from Peterhead Prison, 22 May 1917. Maclean Papers.

[2] War Cabinet no.364, 12 March 1918, item 14. PRO: Cab 23/5.

[3] ibid.

a paranoid suspicion of prison doctors and prison food:

> (In December 1916) "I protested that my food was being drugged. I said there was alcohol in the food lowering my temperature... From January to March [1917]... the doctor is busy getting the people into the hospital, there breaking up their organs and their systems...
>
> I call that period the eye-squinting period because the treatment then given puts the eyes out of view [sic]. Through numerous expedients I was able to hold my own." [1]

In the light of this, not only Maclean's friends but also the Government watched over his 1918 term of imprisonment with some anxiety. Trouble over his food began soon after he had been imprisoned, again in Peterhead. On 15 May 1918 he wrote to his wife to explain that he had been allowed to have food sent in instead of prison food, and asked her to contact William Stewart, Secretary of the Scottish ILP, William Shaw of the Glasgow Trades Council or William Gallacher of the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society[2] to make arrangements.[3] But when this food arrived, he refused that as well, and from July 1918 was forcibly fed.[4] This unquestionably further worsened his condition, as shown by his "aged and haggard appearance"[5] which his wife discovered when she visited him. Rumours of his treatment excited great concern, and Ramsay MacDonald both protested to Munro that Maclean was being worse treated than the Sinn Feiners[6] and wrote to Mrs.Maclean, after talking of a meeting with Barnes, "I have private information that a strong labour protest is to be made shortly to the Cabinet".[7] J.M.Hogge, the Edinburgh

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[1] Trial of John Maclean 1918. TS of proceedings in Maclean papers. The speech from the dock has been more than once reprinted, e.g. in Bell, John Maclean, pp.157-170.

[2] Not William Gallacher, the revolutionary.

[3] Maclean to his wife, 15 May, 1918. Maclean Papers. Cf. also Press Cutting, undated, in Maclean Papers.

[4] Circular letter of protest by Mrs.Maclean, 9-11-1918. Maclean Papers.

[5] ibid.

[6] MacDonald to Munro, 5 July 1918. In Maclean Papers.

[7] MacDonald to Mrs.Maclean, n.d. In Maclean Papers.

Independent Liberal, also wrote:

> "I think.../his treatment/ is abominable and I shall be quite glad to do anything in the House of Commons in conjunction with others to try and secure his release." [1]

The Scottish Office, meantime, was keeping a close watch on Maclean's condition and kept elaborate records, including daily medical reports on the state of his health. Munro wrote after these investigations, in reply to Mrs.Maclean's complaint over her husband's treatment:

> "Her first remark, before she knew he had been artificially fed, was to compliment him on his appearance. Food of good quality has always been placed before him at meal times, so that he might have an opportunity, in the first instance, of taking it in the ordinary way. The suggestion that his food was drugged is, of course, absurd, and is without a shadow of foundation". [2]

The labour protest of which Munro had warned and which Macdonald had promised culminated in a paper circulated by Barnes to the War Cabinet.

> "Mr.Munro has been averse to releasing him, and I think has been very badly treated by those who have spread false reports about prison treatment. Mr.Munro, however, has said that he would be quite willing to release Maclean if it was a matter of a general amnesty." [3]

But, Barnes went on, there were only two political prisoners in Scotland - Maclean and a tramwayman called Milne - and so a 'general amnesty' implied only the release of these two, which he urged on the grounds that "the continued agitation about John Maclean constitutes a serious danger for the Government".[4] This paper was presented to the Imperial War Cabinet, where Cave, the Home Secretary, was the only objector to Maclean's release, on the grounds that

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[1] Hogge to Mrs.Maclean,n.d. In Maclean Papers.

[2] Munro to J.S.Middleton, 13 November 1918. Maclean Papers.

[3] The case of John Maclean. Memorandum by G.N.Barnes to the War Cabinet, 26 November 1918. PRO: Cab 24/70 GT. 6379.

[4] ibid.

> "should he be released, the... revolutionaries [in South Wales and London] would certainly regard it as a triumph, and would probably send Maclean to make revolutionary speeches in London and elsewhere".[1]

The following day, it was ratified by the War Cabinet,[2] and the order for Maclean's release was signed the same day, 29 November.[3] He had served six months of the five years' penal servitude to which he had been sentenced.

After Maclean's release, his obsessions helped to create the final rift between him and Gallacher which contributed to his failure to join the Communist Party. For this we have the evidence both of Gallacher and of those against whom no accusations of special pleading can be made. In his old age, Gallacher wrote an account which is much more specific than his allegations in Revolt on the Clyde.

> "After he had been speaking for ¾ of an hour about doped food the comrades coming from other meetings said he must be stopped as they were waiting for him at his next meeting. I passed him a note but he paid no attention. He showed no sign of stopping so, reluctantly, I interrupted him: I said, 'I'm sorry to interrupt you, John, but you must go to your other meetings'. He turned on me, with an angry scowl as he shouted, 'For Christ's sake, Gallacher, leave me alone. I know what I'm doing, my bowels are in perfect order [sic]. I never felt better', and on he went." [4]

Thomas Bell described thus Maclean's campaign in Gorbals in the last days of the 1918 General Election campaign:

> "Persecution obsessions and questions irrelevant to the Election made up the subject-matters of his speeches. The wild enthusiasm with which he was received at each of his meetings evaporated in murmurs of sympathetic concern, many people leaving the meeting while he was speaking, obviously disturbed by the state of their friend and comrade's mind." [5]

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[1] Imperial War Cabinet no.39. 28 November 1918. PRO: Cab 23/42.

[2] War Cabinet 508, item 9, 29 November 1918. PRO: Cab 23/8.

[3] Order in Maclean Papers. Cf. also memo by Munro to the I.W.C. PRO: Cab 24/71. GT 6499 of 17 December 1918.

[4] Gallacher to "Mr.Brown", 14 June 1962. Maclean Papers.

[5] Bell, John Maclean, p.79.

On the other side, Basil Thomson twice alluded to Maclean in the "Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations..." which the Special Branch sent to the War Cabinet. On 13 January 1919 he wrote,

> "Supporters of John Maclean are beginning to realise that he is mentally unsound". [1]

He enlarged on this theme at greater length in his next report:

> "Though Maclean is mentally unstable, there is sufficient method in his speeches to attract large audiences. He begins by telling them that he has been extraordinarily successful among soldiers and sailors. He then relates his sufferings in prison, and states that his food was drugged and poisoned, and that he would have died if he had eaten it; that CO's, Sinn Feiners and even convicts undergo such treatment; that many die, others become insane or commit suicide, and that the strongest have their constitution undermined; that those of the CO's who died of pneumonia had a particular bacillus injected into them by the prison staff." [2]

Maclean himself described one of his speeches at this time. He wrote to the Forward to complain that disturbances at a meeting he was about to address at Perth had been caused by the police, who

> "rightly anticipated that I would dwell on my treatment by the doctor at Perth prison... When I was recently speaking in the great Albert Hall, London, I had perfect order until I began to attack the Government on the drugging of prisoners' food, and then the hirelings of Scotland Yard began to create a disturbance..." [3]

The political effects of Maclean's paranoia were threefold. It hastened the rift with Gallacher; it blunted the edge of his propaganda speeches; and it increased the instability of his political associations. We shall consider the first two of these now, leaving the third until later in this chapter.

In 1920 Gallacher passed on an invitation from Lenin, whom he had met at the Second Congress of the Comintern, for Maclean to visit Moscow.

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[1] "Fortnightly Report" unnumbered. 13 January 1919. PRO: Cab 24/73. GT 6654.
[2] "Fortnightly Report" no.31, 28 January 1919. PRO: Cab 24/74. GT 6713.
[3] Forward, 22 March 1919, p.2.

Gallacher wrote to the SLP Executive telling them to let him go to Russia, because he was suffering from "hallucinations" and needed a "rest and proper treatment".[1] This letter was instead sent to Maclean, who used it in public, saying "Gallacher wants to get rid of me, so he is circulating the story that I am mad".[2] No rapprochement was possible after this, and the row between Maclean and Gallacher reached its climax in what Kendall describes as a "near brawl between Scotland's two best known revolutionary leaders"[3] at a meeting on Christmas Day, 1920, which the Daily Record headlined "Socialist Hatred/Leaders Kill Fusion/Angry Scenes/Maclean and Gallacher Duel".[4]

The way in which Maclean's private obsessions, in his last five years, spilled over into his political convictions is aptly illustrated in this 1922 election leaflet:

> "In 1919 I started a campaign for a united effort to overthrow British capitalism by a General Strike, and at my meetings I made public that I had been drugged in prison through my food like other convicts. The Government's reply was the break-up of my family, the blocking my every move through traitors inside the Socialist movement, the attempted ruin of my reputation and loss of my tutorship at the Scottish Labour College through the dirty work of the communist clown, William Gallacher". 5

Writing in the Socialist in 1921, Maclean claimed that the Government had poisoned some soup in Cowdenbeath "to check the tendency towards Communism implied in communal kitchens, laundries, etc."[6]

When Maclean died, the sympathetic obituaries had one theme in common:

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[1] Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, p.215.

[2] ibid., p.216

[3] Kendall, op.cit., p.429.

[4] Daily Record and Mail, 27 December 1920, quoted in ibid.

[5] "John Maclean's Electioneer", 1922. Maclean Papers.

[6] Socialist, 21 May 1921. Copy of article preserved in Maclean Papers.

> "There is no doubt that John's mind became unhinged during the past few stormy years. Many of his old co-operative friends felt that it was so from his speech and his behaviour, after his liberation from prison on the first occasion, and some of those who regretted the change in him were those whom he latterly reviled most".[1]

> "/In his early years/ the wrongs of the people, real and imaginary, did not then rouse him to the fits of frenzy which were later so marked a characteristic of his platform appearances... It is difficult to say what the cause of his later development was. It is probable that it was as much mental overwork as anything else." [2]

> "De mortuis nil nisi bonum... none ever doubted his sincerity. His conviction that machiavellian attempts were made to poison him and that he was surrounded by cabals seeking his destruction coloured all his later years and rendered him gey ill to thole". [3]

There is thus a powerful body of evidence in favour of Gallacher's original allegations. But what has gone so far does not impugn the positive part of Kendall's case, namely that Maclean had quite rational reasons for differing from the policy of the Communist Party. Quite apart from personal animosity, Maclean was thoroughly suspicious of Gallacher for having gone to Russia an anti-Parliamentary anarchical socialist, and come back a devout Leninist bearing the message that a single Communist Party of Great Britain must be founded. In Left-Wing Communism , Lenin devoted a special section to the heresy of anti-parliamentarism professed by Gallacher and Sylvia Pankhurst:

> "Comrade Gallacher's letter undoubtedly betrays the embryos of all the mistakes committed by the German 'left' Communists and by the 'Left' Bolshevites in 1908 and 1918.
>
> /Gallacher/.. is imbued with noble, proletarian... hatred for the bourgeois 'class politicians'... But /he/ apparently fails to take into account the fact that politics is a science and an art that does not drop from the skies, is not acquired for nothing, and that if it wants to conquer the bourgeoisie the proletariat must train its own proletarian 'class politicians', who will be as skilled as the bourgeois politicians." [4]

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[1] Co-operative News 8 December 1923.

[2] Scottish Co-operator December 1923.

[3] Forward, 8 December 1923.

[4] V.I.Lenin, "Left-Wing Communism - An Infantile Disorder". Popular Edition London /1920/ p.61.

Both in Left Wing Communism and in his interview with Gallacher, Lenin stressed that the united Communist Party must engage in a parliamentary struggle. Before Gallacher returned home, he had to answer this catechism:

> "'Do you admit that you were wrong on the question of Parliament and the affiliations to the Labour Party? Will you join the Communist Party of Great Britain when you return?... Will you do your best to persuade your Scottish comrades to join it?'
> To each of these questions I answered 'yes'." [1]

Maclean had good reason to be suspicious of the abruptness of Gallacher's conversion. He objected both to being forced to join with the London leaders of the BSP and to being told by Lenin what was best for the revolution in Scotland. He wrote:

> "Gallacher and the 'Worker' have sneered openly at the idea of a Scottish Communist Party, as its object is the very same as that of the CPGB... I have no objections to the programme of the London gang, but to their honesty and to Col.Malone, who was on the E.C. of the Reconstruction Society... We refuse to be bluffed by Gallacher that Lenin says we must only have one Communist Party in Great Britain. Why does Gallacher help to start another Communist Party, if he is so anxious about Lenin? I for one will not follow a policy dictated by Lenin until Lenin knows the situation more clearly than he can possibly know it from an enemy to Marxian Economic Classes as Gallacher privately declared himself to me to be." [2]

Maclean had a special reason for wishing to see a separate Scottish Communist Party, and it was a strategic one. He was convinced that the inexorable forces of capitalism would dictate that the next war would be with the U.S.A. He not only wrote a pamphlet, "The Coming War with America", to this effect, but even mentioned it in letters to

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[1] Gallacher, p.253.

[2] Vanguard, November 1920, p.5. Quoted in part by Kendall, op.cit., pp.286 and 287.

his little daughters who were staying with their mother near Hawick;[1]

> "Britain may soon be in a great war with the U.S.A. and it will be worse than the last. Your father is working day and night warning people so as to avert it. That is why the police are told to watch him day and night and put him in prison." [2]

Accordingly, Maclean thought Scotland needed a separate Communist Party to subvert the future imperialist war, in which Scotland, being closer to the U.S.A. than England, would be the jumping-off point for any offensive:

> "The preparations to use the Scottish coast and Scottish lads in John Bull's fight with Uncle Sam forces on us the policy of complete political separation from England. Hence a Scottish Communist Party". [3]

It was this article in Maclean's paper, the Vanguard, which announced his intention of building a separate Scottish Communist Party based on the S.L.P. But the meeting to effect this degenerated into the unedifying brawl with Gallacher to which we have referred. Before long Maclean had resigned from the S.L.P., and he spent the rest of his life in increasing sectarian isolation. The "Scottish Workers' Republican Party", which he founded, was not a success; it fought no elections, and did not long outlive him.[4] As a tireless propagandist, he did have some success as an organiser of demonstrations of the unemployed in 1921, and Kendall suggests, no doubt rightly,[5] that one reason for Gallacher's denigration was Maclean's success in this at the expense of the official Communist Party. But the violent conduct of

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[1] From about 1919 to 1923, Maclean was separated from his wife and daughters. They were on the very point of a reunion when he died in November 1923.

[2] John Maclean to Jean and Nan Maclean, 23 December 1922. Maclean Papers.

[3] Vanguard, December 1920, p.7.

[4] The minute book of the Townhead Branch, S.W.R.P., in the Maclean Papers, peters out inconclusively in 1926.

[5] Kendall, p.288.

Maclean's supporters towards the rest of the Labour movement soured relations between them.[1] During his imprisonment in 1921, Maclean's remaining supporters, notably James McDougall and Sandy Ross, deserted him,[2] and leadership of the unemployed slipped to the Communists - but the bad relations between employed and unemployed persisted to widen the rift between Communists and the rest.

Kendall and other modern writers are right in saying that Maclean had bona fide reasons for dissenting from Gallacher and the C.P.G.B. His obsessions about prisons and drugs did not prevent him from stating these views lucidly and forcibly, and it is at best disingenuous of Gallacher to attribute Maclean's failure to join the Party purely to "hallucinations". We should not, however, waste any undue amount of time on the Scottish Nationalist version of the John Maclean myth. The quotations from his writings show that he was a Marxist first, last, and always. Nowhere in his writings is there a shred of evidence that he was sympathetic to nationalism of the conventional sort. On being invited by the Scottish Home Rule Association and the Hon. Ruaraidh Erskine of Mar[3] to sign a petition to President Wilson in favour of Home Rule, Maclean replied:

> "Where I to thank anyone for actual services rendered to the cause of Home Rule, I would certainly thank my glorious comrades, Lenin, etc. The only thanks they would appreciate would be the successful revolutionising of Scotland by its wage-slave class..." 4

Maclean arrived at his "Scottish Nationalist" position for purely pragmatic reasons, which we have examined. Though the political success of the

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[1] See above, p. 223.

[2] Bell, John Maclean, p.113.

[3] A prominent upper-class Nationalist. For a eulogic study of his career, see H.J.Hanham "Scottish Nationalism", London 1969, ch.6.

[4] Quoted in Bell, John Maclean, p.82.

Scottish National Party and the foundation of the 'John Maclean Society' in 1968 did much to revive his memory, it is a distortion of that memory to suppose that nationalism was prominent among Maclean's views.

Thus far, we have argued that there is some truth in the views of both Gallacher and Kendall: Maclean was suffering from a mental illness which weakened his political appeal, but none the less he did have substantial reasons of policy for differing from the Communist Party. In concluding this chapter, I intend to return to the themes developed in Chapter 9 and to suggest that if Maclean's influence is ultimately to be discounted, then it should be not because of his paranoia, but because of his lack of influence over the working class when any fundamental issue arose.

When Maclean was imprisoned in 1918, Johnston wrote the following assessment of him in Forward:

> "He is paying the price. He advocated a Social Revolution by Bolshevist methods, and, alas, the bulk of the workers do not want a Social Revolution by any method, but go on rivet-hammering competitions, and scrambling for overtime, and regard the John Macleans as 'decent enough, but a bit off'. The blood of the martyrs is said to have been the seed of the church, and John Maclean's dramatic sacrifice may do more to shake up the brains of the working class than did all John Maclean's years of educative propaganda for Socialism, but it is only upon such a presumption that the sacrifice can, in Socialist terms, be justified". [1]

Here lay the fundamental weakness of Maclean's position, more important even than his paranoia. As Johnston rightly pointed out, the working class might have a mild sympathy for Maclean, but this never led them to do anything that was not in their own immediate interest. Admittedly, one of the reasons which swayed the Cabinet in favour of releasing Maclean in 1918 was the fear of militant action being taken to secure his release.[2] But there is no reason to suppose that such

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[1] Forward, 18 May 1918. "Socialist War Points", p.1.

[2] See comments of, especially, Barnes and Edwin Montagu in I.W.C. no.39 of 28 November 1918. PRO: Cab 23/42.

a threat would ever have been carried out. If the engineers were not prepared to stay out on strike for the return of their workmates, the deportees, in 1916, it seems hardly plausible that they would have taken militant action to release Maclean in 1918.

Even when Maclean was arguing about matters which were central to the concerns of industrial militancy, he was unable, as we saw in Chapters 7 and 9, to proceed from there to spark off a revolution. He was still more cut off after the war, when his political programmes appeared to be either hopelessly unrealistic or totally remote from the everyday world of working-class life. We shall look at three examples: the "Fighting Programme", the visit to Lewis, and the "Burn Bradbury" campaign.

The "Fighting Programme" occupied a large part of Maclean's energies in 1920. It demanded:

> "1) A six-hour working day.
> 2) Rationing of work to absorb the unemployed, or payment of full wages to the unemployed.
> 3) A minimum wage of £1 a day.
> 4) Reduction of prices to half the present level".[1]

Maclean's biographer alludes to this in terms which require no further comment. The Fighting Programme was

> "a good socialist argument, supported by the unofficial movements among the workers. But what about the mass of the trade union workers? In 1919 they struck for a 40 hour week and were beaten. The call for a six hour day would hardly be likely to bring about immediate united action. Here it would appear, Maclean's idealism outstripped his sense of reality." [2]

Two of Maclean's most off-beat campaigns were the visit to Lewis and the "Burn Bradbury" pamphlet. We have already noted that Maclean

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[1] Set out in Forward, 5 June 1920.

[2] Bell, John Maclean, p.103.

thought the pressures of capitalism would imminently bring about a war between Britain and America. So, when the Lewis agitation of 1920 arose, Maclean immediately saw what he thought was the underlying cause. To a more superficial observer, the conflict would appear to be between Lord Leverhulme, who was just starting his immense programme of totally unprofitable investment in the Western Isles, and crofters in the Stornoway area, who subbornly refused to vacate their crofts to allow Leverhulme to create a dairy farm to serve Stornoway.[1] But Maclean visited Stornoway to speak on behalf of the crofters because

> "/he/ was of the opinion that this clearing of the Islands had the more sinister and far-reaching motive - that of preparing harbours and docks for war with the United States, which he was convinced was to be the next clash of arms, arising from the conflict between these two imperialist powers, and now rendered inevitable after the defeat of Germany". [2]

Still more remarkable was Maclean's agitation to "burn Bradbury", a bizarre campaign with echoes of the opponents of paper money of the 1830's and 1840's:

> "To lower prices the obvious course is to withdraw the Bradbury's from circulation, and return to a gold money system... Therefore... the slogan of Labour should be 'Burn Bradbury', that is to say the Bradbury Treasury One Pound and Ten Shilling Notes... let that be the cry, at all public meetings... 'Burn Bradbury'." [3]

As Bell sadly notes,

> "the slogan, 'Burn Bradbury', found no response among serious and practical-minded trade unionists. This appears to have been a case in which Maclean's usually clear and sound judgment on economic questions was clouded by the impetuous zeal of an ardent agitator". [4]

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[1] An excellent acoount of Leverhulme in the Western Isles was written by Nigel Nicolson: "Lord of the Isles" (London, 1958).

[2] Bell, John Maclean, p.115.

[3] Quoted in Bell, John Maclean, p.94.

[4] ibid., p.95.

It is not easy to draw a hard-and-fast line separating mere crankiness from paranoia, but it would probably be fair to say that the above quotations are different from the allegation that the Government was poisoning soup in Cowdenbeath - they indicate not mental imbalance so much as simply remoteness from the real world inhabited by the working class to whom Maclean was appealing. This was Maclean's basic failure, which his paranoia merely aggravated. After the war, his political appeal was slight, and his obsessions with drugs and poisons only added to the difficulties of attracting a massive working-class following. One working-class view of Maclean's career, which has strong affinities with the assessment of Maclean made by Johnston in 1918, is given by the author of 'No Mean City', the bleak novel about Gorbals life in the 1930's:

> "'Although Ah'm gonny do a lot o' readin', Ah don't want to be a John Maclean or anything like that!'
>
> 'I should think no'! John Maclean was a fool - neither more nor less - to throw away everything for people that werny worth it!'
>
> Peter did not agree with her, but he thought it wiser not to argue. He thought that Maclean was a saint and a martyr, but too unpractical for everyday life." [1]

Even at the height of his influence, during the war, Maclean attracted no more than a diffuse sympathy for his revolutionary programmes, and even that dwindled away during the last five years of his life.

Maclean died less than eight years after the great moment of revolutionary syndicalism on Christmas Day, 1915, less than five years after the revolution manquée - as some saw it - of Bloody Friday. Yet these incidents appeared already, by 1923, to belong to the remote past.

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[1] A.McArthur and H.Kingsley Long, "No Mean City", Corgi ed. 1969, p.181. McArthur was a Gorbals baker who committed suicide a few years after writing "No Mean City".

Certainly, "Red Clydeside" had made a new reputation, but it was a parliamentary reputation based on the non-revolutionary ILP. It had very little in common with the industrial militancy of earlier years. In this chapter we have examined the fading away of revolutionary hopes: the SLP vanished, the ILP set in paths of reformism, the CPGB "Bolshevized" and pursuing an unrealizable revolution by means acceptable to the Third International, but not to the employed workers, John Maclean drifting off into inevitable isolation once his concerns had parted company with those of the industrial working class. The last two chapers of this thesis will be devoted to tracing the path from George Square to St.Enoch Square - that is, to examining what <u>did</u> bring about the great growth of the Labour vote by 1922.

Chapter 13

The Growth of the Labour Vote. I : Unemployment and Housing.

By December 1918, "Red Clydeside" was an established journalistic cliche. Many, both socialists and others, imagined that Labour would make great advances in the General Election. The Forward, for instance, remarked,

> "The Glasgow Bailie hints that in Glasgow alone 5 Labour men will be returned; and the Daily Chronicle (London) states that the results will depend on whether the women's vote can be polled in large numbers by the Georgian candidate. If it cannot, the Coalition is beaten by the men's vote".[1]

An optimistic survey of the Scottish seats in the same periodical the following week prophesied "at any rate... double figures".

> "Bailie Wheatley's return /in Shettleston/ is admitted even by the Glasgow Herald. In Govan, Neil Maclean's return is also generally admitted. In Clydebank and Dumbarton, there is hardly any dubiety about in the election of David Kirkwood".[2]

The Catholic weekly, the Glasgow Observer, endorsed these views.

> "In Glasgow, the consensus of opinion inclines to the view that the Coalition will not carry more than 9 out of the 15 seats.
>
> By common consent, Shettleston and Govan have definitely gone Labour." [3]

- and it went on to list as probable or possible Labour gains Springburn, St. Rollox, Bridgeton, Partick and perhaps even Cathcart.

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[1] Forward, 14 December 1918. The "hints" from the Bailie, it must be admitted, are not obvious to the uninitiated reader of the file of that weekly in the Mitchell Library.

[2] Forward, 21 December 1918.

[3] Glasgow Observer, 21 December 1918, p.3.

The expectations of Labour supporters were in part shared by their opponents. The Liberal Bulletin predicted Govan and Shettleston gains,[1] while the Glasgow Herald thought that Labour, "whose prospects were dimmed in the last few days of the campaign",[2] might none the less win about 12 seats in Scotland. Its tips for Labour gains in Glasgow were Govan, Shettleston, and Bridgeton, and it expected Labour to run the Coalition candidates close in Springburn and Partick. Outside Glasgow, it expected Labour to gain Hamilton and Linlithgow, while in Dumbarton Burghs the Coalition candidate "will do well if he defeats Mr David Kirkwood".[3]

The result was of course a severe disappointment for Labour. The Glasgow Herald remarked that

> "Expectations of winning at least 3 seats were generally entertained by the /Labour/ party, and the claim was not regarded as extravagant by many of those who worked actively against Labour".[4]

Nevertheless, it could now conclude with relief that the city's "honour is untarnished".[5] Of all the Glasgow Labour candidates, only Neil Maclean in Govan was elected, with a majority of 815 (4%) over the Coalition candidate, while Wheatley lost by 74 (0.4%) to Admiral Adair, the works manager at Parkhead, who stood as a Coalition Conservative. In all, Labour took six Scottish seats (Govan, Hamilton, Edinburgh Central, South Ayrshire, West Fife, and one seat in Dundee); and in addition Barnes retained his seat in the Gorbals, where John Maclean was at the last moment disowned by the Labour Party N.E.C.

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[1] Quoted in Glasgow Observer, loc.cit.
[2] Glasgow Herald, 16 December 1918, p.7.
[3] ibid.
[4] Glasgow Herald, 30 December 1918.
[5] ibid.

Two of the reasons for Labour's failure in Glasgow are local reflections of national situations, both foreseen by local observers: the failure of many servicemen (and others) to vote, and the effect of Labour's "pacifist" appeal. Before the election, the only warning note amid the Labour euphoria had come from an organiser of the National Federation of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, who

> "puts it that not more than about 20% of absent voters will vote, and that not more than 20% of those who do will poll Labour". [1]

The first part, at least, of this prediction was borne out. According to the Forward, only a quarter of the soldiers on the register voted, except in safe Conservative Hillhead, where the proportion was much higher. Overall, the turnout in the city was only 57.3%. Since the previous election, the electorate had changed immensely; at Cowling's estimate,

> "three potential electors out of four would not have voted at the general elections of 1910" [2].

However, the effects of the 1918 Reform Bill were muffled in two ways: first, because of the failure of Hayes Fisher, President of the Local Government Board, to complete the electoral register efficiently, it was highly defective, and many servicemen and non-householders were disfranchised; and in the second place, the arrangements for those servicemen who were on the register to cast their votes were not adequately carried out.

Local observers also thought that Labour would suffer from its views on the war.

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[1] Forward, 21 December 1918, p.1.

[2] M.Cowling, "The Impact of Labour", Cambridge, 1971, p.21.

> "The Glasgow electorate generally displayed a grip on the essentials. Domestic problems, especially housing, interested /them/, but these assumed secondary importance to the question of peace terms and especially the question of indemnity. A Labour candidate frankly admitted on Saturday that his views on these subjects must have alienated support... Pacifism in its after the war, as in its prewar phase, was not in popular favour. The appeal of Labour rather waned in effect as the electoral battle developed". [1]

It has been pointed out that Clydeside, for all its wartime reputation, had a "patriotic" majority like the rest of Britain. Taylor has remarked that

> "South Wales and Clydeside, the two centres of industrial discontent, also provided the highest proportion in the country of recruits for the army". [2]

Nevertheless, however "patriotic" the majority of workers may have been, the West of Scotland was the only industrial area in which the anti-war case could, throughout the war, be guaranteed a respectful hearing - a fact which, it has been suggested, gave MacDonald an emotional dependence on the Clydesiders which was partly reciprocated, for instance when they helped to secure his election as leader of the party in 1922.[3] The effect of Labour's views on its wartime popularity was mixed. As we saw in Chapter 8, the resignation of Henderson and the publication of the "Memorandum on War Aims" had helped Labour to profit from a widespread and growing war-weariness. But it was a precarious position, because it was open to challenge when the stalemate on the Western Front was broken in either direction. In March 1918, for instance, Johnston had written in the Forward,

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 16 December 1918, p.7.

[2] Taylor, op.cit., p.39. The situation is not necessarily paradoxical: perhaps, once the recruits had gone, there were fewer pro-war workers left in the factories in Glasgow than elsewhere.

[3] Middlemas, op.cit., especially p.83.

> "What is happening on the Western Front makes a peace propaganda impossible... One cannot indulge even in the customary amenities of criticism at a time like this". [1]

But the German collapse and the swing of military fortunes abruptly in the other direction, did not, of course, restore the popularity of pacifist sentiment. In the shadow of Lloyd George, the Labour Party wilted under the burden of its "pacifism". Conducting a post-mortem on his election campaign, James Stewart, the defeated Labour candidate at St. Rollox, freely admitted that his opposition to indemnities and to a policy of expelling Germans from Britain had lost him votes to the Coalition "in the present state of public opinion".[2] When the election came, the whole Labour Party was tarred with the pacifist brush.

This, together with the later Parliamentary reputation of the Clydesiders, has possibly obscured the real stance of local socialists on the war. By no means all Labour organisations had been pacifist, especially early in the war; a number of Labour town councillors in Glasgow had taken part in recruiting, and one Labour bailie "said he would enlist himself if they would take him".[3] The only out-and-out pacifists on the Town Council at the beginning of the war had been Wheatley and J.S.Taylor,[4] though other socialists who were identifiably pacifist included Maxton, who on refusing to enlist after the end of his prison term was set to "work of national importance", and spent two years as a plater's helper;[5] Dollan, who was imprisoned in 1917 for failing to remove more than 50 miles from Glasgow or cease encouraging C.O's;[6] and William Regan, who was dismissed by the Post Office from

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[1] Forward, 30 March 1918, p.1.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 30 December 1918.

[3] Forward, 12 May 1915, p.2.

[4] ibid., 19 September 1914, p.2. Taylor died in 1916.

[5] See his preface to J.Scanlon, "Decline and Fall of the Labour Party", London (1932), p.9. Scanlon had been the plater to whom Maxton was attached.

[6] Interview with Mr.J.H.Dollan.

his employment as a telegraphist because he was a C.O.

This list is notable not so much for those it contains as for those it omits. Shinwell, for all the vigour of his expression, and appearance of greater militancy than Wheatley, never declared himself opposed to the war. Kirkwood, as we observed in Part I, began the war with superficially-held Marxist convictions which vanished in favour of a patriotic determination to blow the Germans over the Rhine with guns made at Parkhead. Campbell Stephen and George Buchanan, the other later stalwarts of the Glasgow I.L.P. group, make no appearance in wartime politics at all. Only Maxton and Wheatley (and more dubiously, McGovern, who succeeded to Wheatley's seat in 1930) could legimimately claim that the pacifism they professed between the wars had been put into practice during the First World War.

This is but one instance of a spurious continuity which has often been implied or stated between wartime militancy and post-1922 Parliamentary radicalism. Some (not all) of the personnel were the same, but the policies were different, as were the political situations which brought the actors to prominence. The 1918 election result is the greatest obstacle in the way of those who, deliberately or inadvertently, would over-emphasise the continuity between wartime and postwar radicalism. And the fundamental reason why the industrial upheaval in 1918 is implicit in much of the material discussed in Chapters 1 to 9: the revolts of industrial Red Clydeside had been the work of a small section of the workers, namely those of the skilled engineers who worked in the munitions and shipbuilding industries. This was not a revolutionary mass movement: it was hardly even electorally significant. In its last fling in 1919 it was exposed wide open to the retort offered by Shackleton at the Ministry of Labour to the S.T.U.C. deputation:

> "Why, for instance, if Glasgow wants the 40-hours' week, have they not sent to Parliament members to vote for it? You ask for legislation, and then it is supported by the argument of strike". 1

At no subsequent general election would such a remark have been appropriate, since the number of Labour M.P's returned by the city has never been less than the five mustered by the Labour Party and the I.L.P. between them even in the debacle of 1931. With the 1922 election Labour became the customary majority party in Glasgow, a position it has subsequently relinquished only for the election of 1931. We have to decide how this came about.

A large part of the answer depends on developments which were not peculiar to Glasgow. Labour was hampered in the 1918 election by the defective register, the low turn-out, and the jingo appeal of Lloyd George. But these were temporary factors, the disappearance of which added greatly to Labour strength even before the Coalition began patently to fail on the home front. The most recent writer on the subject is one who sees the whole of internal party politics between 1920 and 1924 in terms of the steps taken by politicians of the established parties to defend their positions against the Labour threat. He summarises these temporary factors as follows:

> "It was believed [in the Labour Party] that the circumstances of 1918 were particularly unfavourable and that, when favourable circumstances returned, Labour's strength would be revealed. Just over half the electorate had voted. Lloyd George had gained an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons with less than 25% of the possible electors voting for him. The temporary advantage gained by the timing of the election was expected to disappear as voting became a habit among new electors and the country turned its attention to its peacetime prospects.
>
> These predictions were accurate. The Labour party made extensive advances between 1918 and 1921, succeeding in the process in consolidating its position as the chief opposition party in the country". 2

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[1] S.T.U.C. Report, 1919, p.30.

[2] Cowling, op.cit., p.25.

But not only did Lloyd George and the Coalition speedily lose the temporary advantages of the 1918 election; the failure of Reconstruction and the slump of 1920-21 clearly drove voters to Labour all over the country. In 1918 the Parliamentary Labour Party might be a feeble group of 60, ineffectually led, with its most prominent figures out of parliament; but after the 1922 election it was a large, though scarcely yet government-oriented, opposition; and after the next election it was, of course, the government.

These events were enacted on the national scale, and while we shall be looking at their manifestations in the West of Scotland, our chief interest is in Glasgow as a special case. For Glasgow undoubtedly did swing further to Labour in these years than other British cities, and retained its high degree of Labour loyalty through the inter-war years. An attempt to demonstrate this is made in Tables I and II. Voting statistics in these years are notoriously difficult to handle; in particular, "swing", as an analytical tool, is next to useless when movements between so many different, diffuse, and shifting political groups are involved. In Table I on page 249 voting change in Glasgow is compared with that in the largest English provincial cities; the figures of those voting Labour in the General Elections of 1918, 1922, and 1935 are shown as a percentage of the registered electorate. In each city, only those constituencies which had a Labour candidate at all three of these general elections are included, in order for the figures to have some comparative value.

The table shows that Glasgow, from a middling position in 1918, leapt up in 1922 to a lonely eminence shared only with Sheffield. For 1935, the position is less clear: Bristol has come up to equal Glasgow in votes (though not in seats), and Sheffield, Bristol, Manchester and Glasgow form a group of cities noticeably more pro-Labour than the other

TABLE I

Proportion of the registered electorate voting Labour at the General Elections of 1918, 1922 and 1935: Glasgow compared with English provincial cities returning five or more M.P's.

	% of electors voting Labour		
	1918	1922	1935
Glasgow	18.9	41.6	37.7
Sheffield	14.7	42.5	41.0
Manchester	22.1	34.8	34.1
Bristol	19.1	32.3	37.6
Leeds	12.2	26.5	25.8
Birmingham	13.2	26.0	24.3
Liverpool	17.7	24.6	29.2

The figures are based on a comparison only of seats fought by Labour candidates at all three General Elections. For a more detailed note, see Appendix I.

TABLE II

Labour and I.L.P. M.P's returned in Glasgow, compared with other cities outside London returning five or more M.P's, at the General Elections of 1918, 1922 and 1935.

	No.of seats	Number of Labour M.P's returned 1918	1922	1935
Glasgow	15	1	10	9
Sheffield	7	0	3	4
Manchester	10	2	3	4
Leeds	6	1	2	2
Edinburgh	5	1	1	1
Bristol	5	0	0	2
Liverpool	11	0	0	3
Birmingham	12	0	0	0

provincial British conurbations. A table such as Table I, which actually puts Sheffield ahead of Glasgow, is possibly slightly misleading in that Sheffield had two unopposed Conservatives in the 1918 and the 1922 general elections, whereas Glasgow, with twice as many M.P's had only one unopposed Conservative in 1918 and none in 1922; the Labour effort was therefore, presumably, spread into less winnable seats than in Sheffield, and the Sheffield Labour vote is therefore unduly high relative to the Glasgow figure. To redress, in part, this balance Table II on page 249 shows the number of Labour M.P's returned in each large city outside London. On this crude index, Glasgow comes out ahead of Sheffield, but both again emerge as deviant in a pro-Labour direction.

Surprisingly little work has, to date, been done on the history of British city politics since 1918; Liverpool is, perhaps, the city which has received most attention. No work at all exists, however, on Sheffield which might explain why that city had so high a Labour vote from 1922 onwards.[1] Some of the explanations we shall tentatively advance for Glasgow may apply to Sheffield also; some, such as the role of the Irish, seem unlikely to.[2] For the rest of this chapter, and the next, we shall examine Glasgow politics between 1918 and 1922 as a case-study in the growth of the Labour vote. As already suggested, it was a growth with both national and local components, and to study it we must spend some time surveying local politics and municipal elections. In this chapter we shall look at the effects of unemployment and housing,

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[1] Neither S.Pollard, "A History of Labour in Sheffield", (Liverpool 1959) nor H.K.Hawson, "Sheffield: Growth of a City 1893-1926" (Sheffield 1968) covers this point, though both have something on municipal politics at this period.

[2] I return to a comparison between Glasgow and Sheffield in the Conclusion.

while a number of topics centring on the Irish vote will be gathered into a separate discussion in Chapter 14.

The Glasgow Labour movement took some time to pick up the pieces from the political and industrial debacles of December 1918 and January 1919. Thus, for instance, Regan (at the time Glasgow organiser for the I.L.P), attributed municipal by-election defeats in June 1919 to lack of helpers:

> "the Glasgow Labour and Socialist movement was under a cloud of depression as a result of the General Election, and also the failure of the 40Hours' Strike". 1

Considerable encouragement, however, came from the Bothwell by-election in late July 1919. In 1918 the Coalition candidate had won by only 300 over Labour. In mid-July local Labour supporters hoped that they would win by between 800 and 1500 votes, though Duncan Graham, the Labour M.P. for neighbouring Hamilton, expected Labour to win by as much as 3000.[2] In the event, it was a startling 7168, a majority of 37.6% over the Coalition candidate, and a swing of no less than 19.7% since 1918.[3]

The result of the Bothwell by-election was in fact a far better one for Labour than that of the Spen Valley election in December which prompts Cowling to say:

> "'Resistance to Socialism' first became a possible programme when Labour won the Spen Vally by-election in January 1920. In this story Spen Valley was crucial. From Spen Valley onwards, the Labour Party was the crucial problem". 4

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[1] Forward, 14 June 1919, p.7.

[2] ibid., 12 July 1919, p.5; 19 July 1919, p.5.

[3] Results:

	1918	%		1919	%
Co.C	9359	50.9	Lab	13,135	68.8
Lab	9027	49.8	Co.L	5,967	31.2
	332	1.8		7,168	37.6
Turnout:	69.2%			71.9%	

[4] Cowling, op.cit., p.1. Polling took place on December 20th, but the result was not announced until January 3rd.

Three reasons for the Bothwell success may be suggested. We have already referred to two - the reversal of the temporary effects of 1918 and the disillusionment with the Coalition; the third was obviously the effect of the proceedings of the Sankey Commission in politicising and mobilising miners. This last scarcely affected Clydeside (as opposed to industrial Lanarkshire); it is, in fact, remarkable how little contact there was between socialists in the mining and the manufacturing areas in the West of Scotland, considering that both simultaneously at this time were showing an above-average swing to Labour. On the other hand, the result acted, at the time, as a tonic to Labour activists in Glasgow, and it shows that disillusionment with the Coalition was well under way at a date earlier than Cowling allows it.

Between the 1918 and 1922 elections, however, there was no by-election in Glasgow or Clydeside proper.[1] The only criterion for the growth of the Labour vote in these years, therefore, is the party's progress in the annual municipal elections held in November. Much of the evidence on the progress of Labour which is available comes from these contests. This has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, there is a wealth of material from minutes and local newspapers on these elections; on the other, we cannot be sure how good an indicator of Labour fortunes in national politics they form. Some factors which did not operate in national politics were at work in municipal elections; on balance, they probably worked against Labour. We shall deal with them as they arise.

The local elections held in November 1919 brought wide Labour gains throughout Scotland:

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[1]The Paisley by-election (12 February 1920), showed a 10% swing from Free Liberal to Labour, although the Liberal candidate in the by-election was Asquith.

> "Here and there you strike a barren patch like Edinburgh, and there are inexplicable disasters as at Barrhead, but... as a whole... you find an amazing record of success". [1]

There were no Labour gains at all in Edinburgh (though there were two in Leith), and there was one loss in Barrhead. But in a number of burghs Labour swept the board, all its candidates heading the polls at Cowdenbeath, Irvine, Lerwick, and Kilsyth. In Aberdeen, Labour made five gains, in Dundee no less than eight, and in Clydebank five. 119 gains were claimed in all.[2] In Glasgow, the situation was complicated by the fact that ward redistribution and a municipal general election were known to be pending for 1920, so that the 1919 election excited comparatively little interest, and there were a number of unopposed returns. Labour held four wards unopposed, held a further three in contests, and gained five.

Assessment of these results is hampered by the fact that the 1919 municipal elections were the first since 1914; the Labour gains, therefore, represented changes not over one year, but over at least five. Nevertheless, they seem to show that a good deal of disillusion with the Coalition was making itself felt in local swings to Labour. The number of councillors in the burghs and cities of Scotland has not changed substantially since 1919, and even in the previously unprecedented swings of the late 1960's and early 1970's very few parties have gained (or lost) as many as 119 seats.[3]

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[1] Forward, 15 November 1919, p.1.

[2] ibid., pp.1,2,6.

[3] The two heaviest swings in Scottish local government elections of recent years have been the irruption of the Scottish National Party in 1968 and the swing back to Labour in 1971. Both were of previously unprecedented size; the net total of seats gained was 103 for the S.N.P. in 1968 and 120 for Labour in 1971. The Scotsman, 8 May 1968 and 6 May 1971.

The 1920 local elections were dominated by the results of Glasgow's municipal general election. The spur of Labour organisation and the fact that all the seats were being fought encouraged the old "non-political" councillors to organise a Good Government Committee to oppose Labour, and this sharpened the political contest. The I.L.P., under Regan and Dollan, was responsible for organising the Labour vote, Dollan criticising the tendency of some Labour supporters to assume that victory was a foregone conclusion:

> "This tendency is most notable in places where comrades pretend that blowing theoretical trumpets is the most effective way of destroying the justifications of Capitalism". [1]

The result, claimed Regan, was "Almost a Red City", which "stagger/ed/ the Capitalist Press".[2] Labour won 44 seats, sweeping the board in 11 wards, and making gains in others. The only inexplicable loss was in the Kinning Park ward, where the three Labour incumbents were defeated. It was pointed out that the municipal votes aggregated into Parliamentary constituencies would give Labour a majority in the Parliamentary divisions of Shettleston, Bridgeton, Springburn, Gorbals, Govan, St.Rollox, Maryhill, Tradeston, and Camlachie.[3]

In Scotland as a whole, 1920 seems to have more or less reproduced 1919. In Edinburgh, Labour suffered four losses when Leith councillors

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[1] Forward, 25 September 1920.

[2] Headline in Forward, 13 November 1920, p.1.

[3] Forward, 13 November 1920. The calculation is not necessarily trustworthy, because of the difficulties caused when a party put up fewer than three candidates in a ward. On the other hand, these nine constituencies, plus Cathcart (a freak result depending on an even split between a Coalition Liberal and a Conservative) were in fact those gained by Labour in 1922.

had to face re-election on their burgh being incorporated into the city. In Dundee, Labour made two net gains. Overall, gains and losses more or less balanced out.[1] Dollan later reckoned that

> "only Glasgow and a few towns in Fife won an improvement on the position of 1919". [2]

1921 represented if anything a slight setback. In Glasgow Labour suffered five losses, and in addition one councillor who had resigned from the Labour group and party retained his seat against Labour opposition. These results, however, are artificially depressed from Labour's point of view because in each ward the candidate with the fewest votes of the previous year's three successful candidates stood for re-election, so that in wards where Labour scraped in in third place in 1920 it would have had to improve its position to keep the seat. Elsewhere than Glasgow, Labour's position marginally worsened; there were two losses each in Edinburgh and Dundee, and such gains as were made were mostly in small burghs.[3]

The 1922 local elections were held only ten days before the general election, and showed an improvement over 1921. Labour gained one seat each in Aberdeen, Dundee, and Edinburgh (where, however, the setbacks of 1920 and 1921 had been so severe that the gain gave Labour only three councillors out of 71). Labour made a number of net gains up and down the country, and in Glasgow had two losses and three gains. But the Labour vote showed a considerably higher rise over 1921 than these figures might seem to imply. For the 24 seats in the city fought by Labour in both 1921 and 1922, the Glasgow Herald compiled statistics which proved

> "evidence of Labour's rally at the polls when the percentages are compared with those of a year ago".[4]

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[1] Forward, 13 November 1920, pp.6-7.

[2] ibid., 22 October 1921, p.3.

[3] ibid., 21 November 1921, p.2.

[4] Glasgow Herald, 9 November 1922, p.6.

Between 1921 and 1922 the anti-Labour share of the electorate[1] had dropped from 31.06% to 30.04%, and the Labour share had risen from 31.49% to 38.46%.[2]

In summary, this series of annual figures seems to show that Labour made a large advance in 1919, stayed relatively stable (except in Glasgow) in 1920, fell back slightly in 1921, and revived substantially in 1922. Table III compares the municipal and general election results of 1922 by grouping the wards together into the constituencies they made up.

Table III

Glasgow: Municipal and General Election Results, 1922.

Constituency	Municipal Election: Lab.% of votes cast.	No.of wards in constituency	No.of wards returning Moderates without Lab.opposition.	General Election: Lab.% of Votes cast.
1. Govan	63.3	2	0	62.3
2. Gorbals	62.6	2	0	54.5
3. Shettleston	61.8	2	0	59.1
4. Bridgeton	58.6	2	0	63.7
5. Springburn	57.4	3	0	60.5
6. St.Rollox	53.8	2	0	56.6
7. Tradeston	48.8	2	0	55.7
8. Camlachie	(60.8)	3	1	53.2
9. Maryhill	(48.2)	3	1	47.3
10. Kelvingrove	(61.9)	3	2	0
11. Central	(49.7)	3	2	41.9
12. Hillhead	(45.2)	2	1	0
13. Partick	(45.1)	2	1	0
14. Cathcart	0	3	3	34.0
15. Pollok	0	3	3	24.7

Sources: Municipal Results, Forward 18 November 1922.
General Results, F.W.S.Craig, "British Parliamentary Election Results 1918-1949", Glasgow, 1969.
Boundaries: Contemporary maps in Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

The figures in the second column are in brackets where they represent a percentage Labour vote in fewer than the total number of wards in the constituency.

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[1] viz. of the total electorate in these 24 wards, not of the votes cast.

[2] These figures are the averages of the individual ward percentages printed in the Glasgow Herald, loc.cit. The Herald's lumping together of Labour and Communist votes does not seriously distort the figures' value, as the only Communist to poll substantially was John Maclean in Kinning Park, where in 1922 he was not opposed by Labour.

These figures are quite striking, especially when one bears in mind that the municipal franchise was more restricted than the national, and presumably less favourable to Labour. They suggest that all the Labour gains at the General Election except Maryhill and Cathcart (and possibly Camlachie) could have been predicted from a projection of the local election results - although no commentator seems to have done so at the time, perhaps simply because the General Election followed the municipal so closely that there was no time for detailed analysis of the results. Table III shows that in the working-class districts of Glasgow the Labour Party had by 1922 constructed a machine which could get out Labour majorities for local elections in almost all the wards falling into working-class constituencies. In Gorbals, Govan, and Shettleston, Labour actually - and surprisingly - got a higher proportion of the vote in the municipal election than in the general election which followed. Only one of Labour's ten successes in the general election came out of the blue - namely Cathcart; and that, as we have seen, was a freak result depending on a split anti-Labour vote.[1] We must now look at the role of unemployment, housing, and party organisation in laying the basis for the 1922 success.

The influence of unemployment on the Labour vote was two-edged. When massive unemployment began in late 1920 or 1921, one notable effect was to hinder the organisation of political parties, especially the I.L.P. Paton, at this time a roving propagandist and Scottish Organiser

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[1] The result was:

Lab	9137	34.0%
NL	9104	33.8%
Con	8661	32.2%

Cathcart went Conservative in 1923. Since then, it has never returned to Labour allegiance, although it now contains one of the largest municipal housing estates in Europe, at Castlemilk.

of the I.L.P., commented that 1921 saw a deterioration of I.L.P. finances and a loss of activists: this was especially true in the mining areas, where the lock-out of that year left many activists unemployed and all poverty-stricken.[1] In Scotland, as nationally, membership of the I.L.P. slumped during 1921.[2] In October, William Stewart appealed to middle-class supporters of the I.L.P. to help it out financially as so many unemployed members could not pay their subscriptions.[3] In November Dollan blamed the weakness of Labour organisation in the local elections partly on "poverty and economic depression";[4] he returned to the theme after the 1922 General Election to help explain why the party had not fought even more seats:

> "The industrial slump of the past ten (sic) years had an adverse effect on the income for election purposes, and the money available had to be husbanded with unusual care. Considering the economic depression, the I.L.P. branches have exceeded all expectations in raising funds for 22 Municipal and 10 Parliamentary elections within three weeks".[5]

The conjunction of the two 1922 elections obviously put a heavy strain on the I.L.P's resources, especially since with the failure of trade unions to come forward sufficiently generously and the virtual non-existence of local Labour Parties the I.L.P. had to pay for almost every candidature. This doubtless accounts for the party's failure to fight seats such as Partick, where they might have had a reasonable chance of success, in the General Election, and likewise for the small number of Labour candidates in the 1922 municipal election, even though it was Labour's best year electorally up till then.

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[1] J.Paton, "Left Turn!", pp.98-99.

[2] A.Marwick thesis, p.40.

[3] Forward, 15 October 1921, p.5.

[4] ibid., 5 November 1921, p.4.

[5] ibid., 25 November 1922, p.5.

On the other hand, the conditions which hampered organisation tended in themselves to encourage Labour support. Paton remarked that the failure of the miners in 1921 led to a renewed belief in political action:

> "...belief in the effectiveness of 'industrial action' having been shattered for the time, all hopes were now centred on 'political action'". 1

Not only the miners' failure encouraged this view; so did the failure of the Triple Alliance to strike on Black Friday, whose effect, as Cowling says, was "to kill whatever life was left in Direct Action";[2] so, locally, had the failure of the January 1919 strike. In the West of Scotland, massive unemployment in the shipbuilding industry in 1921 led to pungent Labour criticism of the Coalition. The 1918 election, so the argument ran, had been won on the slogan "Make Germany Pay", and what payment Germany had been able to make converted the thriving shipbuilding industry of 1919 into the desolation of 1921. As Dollan pointed out,

> "Two years ago... the orders indicated steady employment until the end of 1923. Then came indemnity ships; the cancellation of orders followed". 3

While unemployment may have cut both ways, there can be no doubt that the Labour campaign on housing was instrumental in boosting the Labour vote in both local and general elections throughout this period. We saw in Chapter 2 how housing campaigners, led by Wheatley and McBride, had fought vigorously on various housing issues, scoring a famous victory with their part in bringing about the 1915 Rent Restriction Act. Before discussing its sequels, and the politics of housing after the war, we

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[1] Paton, op.cit., p.105.

[2] Cowling, op.cit., p.35.

[3] Forward, 8 October 1921, p.3.

should look briefly at the background to the Scottish housing problem as it stood around 1918. The Report of the Ballantyne Commission on Scottish working-class housing[1] provides facts of fundamental importance which have perhaps not been given the attention they deserve. The Royal Commission was appointed in 1912 at the instance of the Scottish Mineworkers; its working was suspended in February 1916, but restarted in January 1917, and its report was signed in September of that year.[2] The commission expressed its amazement at the extent of overcrowding and insanitation in Scotland:

> "In brief, merely to relieve existing overcrowding, and replace houses that should be demolished, some 121,000 houses are required and, if an improved standard is adopted, as we recommend, the total number of new houses required would approach 236,000. For such gigantic figures our Report submits full justification. On this point the Commission is unanimous.
>
> If it be asked how this enormous accumulation has occurred, one answer is: that the conditions of Scottish housing have never been adequately investigated". [3]

Another reason for the magnitude of the problem was clearly shown by the Commission to be the chaos into which the financing of housebuilding had fallen. The Commission reproduced the "careful account and classification of different sorts of tenement housing given them by an Edinburgh witness, together with the average weekly rental for each class:

> "a) The lower class of subdivided house, viz. better houses that have come upon evil days... rented at from 1s to 3s 6d per week... and tenanted for the most part by the unskilled labouring class...
>
> b) The better-class subdivided house... The rents here run from, say, £9 to £10 per annum... and the class of tenant is better.
>
> c) The deliberately erected tenement - having four houses per floor, and 16 to 20 per common stair... Rents, £11 to £12... Tenants of good artisan class.

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[1] Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Industrial Population of Scotland, Rural and Urban. Cd 8731, 1918.

[2] Cd 8731, pars. 12-16.

[3] Cd 8731, pars. 2233-4.

d) The tenement having three houses per floor, and nine to twelve per common stair... Rents, say, £18... Tenants superior artisan class.

e) The best class of tenement, having two houses per floor... rents varying from £27 to £29... to as much as £37. These houses may hardly, however, be correctly described as working-class houses." [1]

The fundamental problem was that these levels of rentals were incapable of giving private enterprise an adequate return for investment in housing.

> "That it was impossible at these figures, as a commercial undertaking, to put up a house of three rooms and all ordinary accessories for the working classes for some years prior to the war cannot be gainsaid". [2]

According to the Commission's calculations, it seemed that although a builder had to sell the house he had built to finance further operations, nevertheless no rational buyer would pay him more than two-thirds of the cost in order to get a return to capital marginally higher than the current rate of interest. On this argument, no rational builder would have built any houses for many years before the war. Four members of the Commission produced a long Minority Report[3] in which they included a short section headed "Difficulty of Securing Adequate Rents". An agricultural witness told them that nobody

> "would regard it as an ordinary commercial proposition to build a £300 cottage unless there were to be a rent of something like £12... (but) a £12 rent is quite out of proportion to the earning and paying capacity of the farm-servant". 4

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[1] Cd 8731, par.402.

[2] ibid., par. 1944A.

[3] It should be stressed that the Majority and the Minority did not differ in their analysis of the situation, but only in the Minority's refusal to consider state provision of housing as a remedy.

[4] Cd 8731, Minority Report, par.50.

The position was the same in the cities. In Glasgow, the average weekly rent per room had risen from 1/8¼d in 1871 to 2/1¾d in 1911, "decidedly less than the rise in building costs in the same period".[1]

> "It seems probable that, owing to the rising cost of other necessaries of life, which tend to be given preference over house rent in a working-class budget, the expenditure on house rent has not risen as rapidly as that on many other articles; and it is certain that it had not risen sufficiently to recoup the house owner for additional expenditure forced on him even in the period before the war". [2]

In short, one might paraphrase, a sort of accidental Speenhamland system had already arisen in Scotland before the war: housebuilders and owners were providing, willy-nilly, below-cost housing for the working class, who were receiving wages inadequate to pay the economic cost of their housing. It was into this already unbalanced situation[3] that the rent agitation of 1915 and subsequent years was pitched. The 1915 Rent Act had been accepted reluctantly by Long and the Tory members of the Government only on the strict understanding that, unfair as it was, it would expire six months after the end of the war. But in 1919 the same pressures as in 1915 were at work; the Increase of Rent and Mortgage Interest (Restriction) Act[4] of that year prolonged the freeze on rent increases until 1921, because of the fear of labour agitation. The problem was put before the Home Affairs Committee of the Cabinet by a committee headed by Lord Hunter, the same judge who had been involved in the inquiry into the rent agitation in 1915. The report pointed out that because of the housing shortage,

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[1] Cd 8731, Minority Report, par.51.

[2] ibid., par.53.

[3] It should be stressed that, although the Commission reported in 1917, all the evidence drawn on in the preceding pages antedates the outbreak of war.

[4] 9 and 10 Geo V, ch.7.

> "the opportunity to exact scarcity rents will be present. Further, this increase of rents will take place at a time of extreme dislocation, when demobilisation is proceeding, when a certain amount of unemployment may be present, and when (if only because of the reduction in overtime) the incomes of wage earners may be lower...
>
> The problem upon which our advice is sought is an exceedingly difficult one. The policy adopted may determine whether housing is to continue on an economic basis, or whether it is to be permanently subsidised, and thus, in effect, to become a State enterprise.
>
> ...the aim should be to return to economic conditions as soon as possible... during the abnormal conditions of the next few years subsidies will be required, but we would urge that so soon as possible housing should be again established on an economic footing. This cannot take place until restrictions on rent are finally removed. " [1]

The contradictory pressures on the government are both embodied in this memorandum: on the one hand, to remove rent restrictions was politically intolerable, but on the other hand, the longer they remained in existence, the less chance there was of returning to the free market in housing devoutly desired by the government. It returned to the problem a year later, and passed another Rent Act in 1920.[2] It permitted an increase of 15% of the net rent (to be imposed in 5% steps in some cases) and an additional 25% "where the landlord is responsible for the whole of the repairs"[3] (a clause which covered almost every Glasgow working-class tenement).

It is clear that the Acts of 1915, 1919 and 1920 between them reduced the proportion of real income which Scottish working-class tenants were spending on rent. It is very difficult to quantify this, and such statistics as exist should be treated with great caution. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made in Tables IV and V to show the

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[1] Report by Lord Hunter, paras.9,24,30,32. Included in memo by Addison for the Home Affairs Committee of the Cabinet: P.R.O: Cab 24/75. GT 6836. The Home Affairs Committee approved the memo on 21 February 1919. PRO: Cab 26/1. Home Affairs Committee No.20.

[2] 10 and 11 Geo V, ch.17.

[3] ibid., Section 2(1) d.

reduction of rents in real terms. The first is based on such national indices as are available, the second on income statistics collected by the Glasgow Trades Council in 1923.

TABLE IV

Wages, Retail Prices, and Scottish Rents, 1914-23.
(July 1914 = 100)

Year	1 Industrial wage rates (Bowley 1921)	2 Industrial wage rates (Bowley 1937)	3 Retail prices (Min.of Labour)	4 House rents (houses subject to s.2 (1) d. of 1920 Act)
1914	100	100	100	100
1915	107.5	-	123	100
1916	117.5	-	146	100
1917	137.5	-	176	100
1918	177.5	-	203	100
1919	212.5	229	215	100
1920	260	276	249	140
1921	-	271	226	140
1922	-	212	183	140
1923	-	188	174	140

Sources and notes: see Appendix 2.

TABLE V

Wages in selected occupations, and House Rents, Glasgow 1914-23. (1914 = 100)

Occupation	1914		Maximum between 1914 and 1923		1923	
	Wages	Rents	Wages	Rents	Wages	Rents
Engineers	100	100	227 (1)	100	170	140
Masons	100	100	267 (2)	100/140	190	140
Builders' Labourers	100	100	343 (2)	100/140	214	140

(1) May 1920. (2) Date not given. For further notes, see Appendix 2.

These tables show, in so far as we can trust them, that wages (both money and real) leapt far ahead of rents during the war; that the gap was at its greatest during the short post-war boom; and that, though

the gap narrowed, rents were still relatively below wages, for those in employment, in 1923. But the political argument about rents from 1915 to 1923 was not couched in terms of real wages. Both the socialists and those in government such as Lloyd George who were sympathetic to rent restriction argued about the money level of rentals; and the socialists would scarcely have cared if it had been pointed out to them that, according to the rules of the capitalist system, they were getting a very good bargain out of house rental. In the view of Wheatley, who was the socialists' mentor, capitalism had failed, and was bound to fail, in the provision of working-class houses. This emerges clearly from the analysis of the Royal Commission's findings which he made in a speech in Glasgow Corporation in 1919:

> "Every increase of 1% [in the rate of interest]... meant an increase of 10% on the economic rental of each house. £65 would be the economic rental of these houses, but the rents charged would be something like £30, which meant a loss of £35 a year on each house. The whole capitalist system of finance would collapse, and until they had a new financial system they could make no progress". [1]

Though Wheatley drew a much more radical conclusion than that taken by the members of the Ballantyne Commission or by Lord Hunter, they all started from the same observation: the traditional system of financing housing had broken down, probably irrevocably. Under Wheatley's leadership, the Scottish Labour movement enthusiastically supported the recommendation of the Ballantyne Commission Majority that

> "the State, in assuming full responsibility for housing, should operate through the Local Authorities and should place upon them the responsibility of seeing to the provision of housing." [2]

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[1] Speech in Glasgow Town Council, reported in Forward, 9 August, 1919, p.4.

[2] Cd 8731, par.2242.

But, like many other reports proposing radical reform, the Ballantyne Commission had led to absolutely no action. Addison's housing policy of 1919[1] had failed completely, victim to the Geddes Axe before it ever got under way.[2] Effective local authority housing lay in the future, much of it to be built under Wheatley's own Act of 1924. In the meantime, nothing changed. Because of the structural factors analysed by the Ballantyne Commission, aggravated by a rise since 1914 of 240% in building costs (though wages, according to Wheatley, had gone up by only 120%)[3], no working-class houses were built in Scotland, in contrast to the short post-war boom south of the border.

Thus the appalling and unchanging quality of housing formed the basis of a very popular Labour appeal, and when the 1920 Act was on its way through the Commons, the militancy of 1915 revived in its full fervour. In April Andrew McBride, who had been Wheatley's second-in-command in 1915, called for a 24-hours strike "to be followed by a universal Rent Strike"[4] against any rent increases. In May, Wheatley urged the Scottish Labour Housing Association to wage a No Rent Campaign if rents were raised. Owners, he said, were no more entitled to a higher

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[1] "In Bermondsey did Addison
An Artisan's Abode Foresee
While Alf, the sacred Harmsworth, wrote,
In reams too numerous to quote,
Against the E.P.D."
- G.D.H.Cole (ed) "The Bolo Book", London 1921, p.24. See also, P.Abrams, "The Failure of Social Reform, 1918-20", Past & Present, 1963; S.Armitage, "The Politics of Decontrol of Industry", London, 1970.

[2] The following exchange, during the Home Affairs Committee's discussion on the 1919 Rent Act, should not be lost to posterity:
"Sir A.C.Geddes asked why there was a shortage of houses.
Dr Addison replied that the chief reason was that none had been built for five years".
P.R.O: Cab 26/1

[3] Speech reported in Forward, 10 January 1920, p.1.

[4] Forward, 1 May 1920, p.7.

rent for pre-war houses than were the tradesmen who built them to come back for further payment.[1] According to Neil Maclean, speaking in the Commons on the Second Reading of the Bill, delegates to this conference

> "are now signing 50,000 requisitions that no rent will be paid if this Act passes, and in the West of Scotland there is going to be a rent war if the Bill goes through".[2]

In July, the Bill became law, and initially McBride wanted a militant campaign to refuse rent altogether:

> "No defence in Court will protect a tenant who refuses to pay rent in terms of the Rent Restriction Act, and the proper place to defend the tenant is the home". [3]

After this, opinion fluctuated between not paying the increase in rent and paying no rent at all. A special congress of the S.T.U.C. on 11th July did not commit itself to either line, but called

> "on the E.C's of Trades Unions affiliated to take whatever steps are necessary to render the fullest possible support in the Rent agitation to a No-Rent Campaign until the threatened impositions are withdrawn". [4]

A meeting of the Scottish Labour Housing Association on 31 July agreed unanimously to a 24-hours strike on August 23rd against the increases - this being proposed by the chairman of the S.T.U.C., James Walker of the Steelworkers.[5] A motion to pay no rent at all until the increases were withdrawn was carried against an amendment from Dundee which wished the conference merely to refuse to pay the increases.[6] The rent strike, as in 1915, was most strongly supported in the "skilled" districts. This

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[1] Forward, 29 May 1920, p.4.

[2] H of C Hansard, 5s, vol.129, col.2285.

[3] Forward, 3 July 1920, p.7.

[4] S.T.U.C. Report 1921, p.22.

[5] Later M.P. for Newport (1929-31) and Motherwell (1935-45) and a leading right-winger on the Labour Party N.E.C. on defence issues in the 1930's.

[6] Forward, 7 August 1920, pp.4 and 8.

may be deduced from the proportions in each district of the addresses of Authorised District Officials of the rent strike whose job it was to look after the rent money paid to them instead of to the factors. The largest discrepancy is that there are only two addresses from Hutchesontown and none from Gorbals, as against seven from the predominantly skilled districts of Kingston and Govan west of the Caledonian railway. Confirmation of this point comes from McBride's assessment of the strength of the movement after a fortnight: under the heading "Has the Rent Strike Collapsed?", he wrote:

> "In South Govan, we have been putting in some real fighting, and Central Govan is all right. But the battle - the great fight - will be in the poorer localities: Bridgeton, Dalmarnock, and the Eastern districts generally; Garngad, Cowcaddens, Hutchesontown, and Kinning Park". [1]

In Chapter 14 I shall try to show that in 1920 the Labour organisation was very unequally spread throughout the city, that the party was primarily an artisan party with little hold over the unskilled workers. This may go towards explaining the unequal distribution of support for the rent strike.

The campaign faded away after the middle of September and tenants gradually accepted the higher rents. The rent strike had no significant Parliamentary support, and absolutely none in government. The local militants again found themselves out of alignment with the national Labour Party, as they had in 1919 (though without such serious consequences) The Forward alleged that the Parliamentary Labour Party, Neil Maclean and Duncan Graham dissenting, had agreed to support the 15% increase without strings proposed in the Bill.[2] This was denied by the Secretary of the parliamentary party.[3] But the strikers reserved most of their

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[1] Forward, 11 September 1920, p.4.

[2] ibid., 3 July 1920, p.1.

[3] ibid., 10 July 1920, p.8.

fire for the ultra-orthodox William Graham, who was the Labour front-bench spokesman on the bill. McBride alleged that Graham had said in the Second Reading debate that he would sooner see an increase by 10% steps than that by 5% steps proposed in the bill.[1] None of the numerous speeches made by Graham during the progress of the bill can, in fact, be construed in this way. But there is ample evidence of the coolness of his attitude. In his first speech he said,

> "I think it is not merely fair to the movement which I represent, but also fair to myself, to say that this is a subject upon which there is a widespread division in the Labour ranks". [2]

Graham sat for Edinburgh Central, a seat in which the problem was not so acute, nor the agitation so militant, as in Glasgow; in any case, the extreme moderation of his views was well known. As the editor of his local evening paper wrote to him,

> "...Indeed in Central Edinburgh the rumour strongly prevails that you will be Liberal candidate for Central Edinburgh at the next election. N.B. this is not a joke". [3]

So it is no surprise that in the debate on the 1920 Rent Act Graham showed himself to have economic views which would make him an apt colleague for Philip Snowden:

> "Many of us indicated that we believed that in the long run houses would require to come to an economic rental and that, unless that was achieved, there could only be some form of subsidy or other economic disease to which we were opposed, but we also made it clear that in our view the cumulative burden which is imposed on tenants under this Bill is altogether too severe".[4]

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[1] Forward, 31 July 1920, p.8.

[2] H of C Hansard, 5s, vol.129, col.2238.

[3] Letter from Editor, "Edinburgh Evening News", quoted in T.N.Graham, "Willie Graham", (London, n.d., c.1948), p.93.

[4] H of C Hansard, 5s, vol.130, col.1797.

The chilliness of Graham's approach made an embarrassing contrast to the fundamentalist oratory of Neil Maclean from which we have briefly quoted. It is no surprise that McBride should have complained of the unhelpfulness of the Parliamentary Labour Party:

> "The action of the Party in the present Rent Restriction Act is certainly calculated to embarrass us in our present struggle." [1]

It may be queried whether an ephemeral and unsuccessful rent strike had any real or lasting effect on the growth of the Labour vote. To this there are two answers. First, the 1920 Rents agitation was the first sign that the local labour movement had recovered from the demoralisation of February 1919 and could organise a campaign which, while it lasted, had widespread success in the skilled working-class districts of Glasgow. Second, and more important, the rents issue produced an uncovenanted bonus for the Socialists on the very eve of the 1922 elections, a bonus from which they could not have profited but for the agitation of two years earlier. For much of 1922, the Clydebank branch of the Labour Housing Association, with the active help of Kirkwood and the solicitor W.G.Leechman, had been representing the tenants in the test case of Kerr v. Bryde as it made its way through the courts. The tenants' contention was that the drafting of the Act required that a factor must give a tenant notice of removal before any increase could be legally imposed. The judgment in an English case, Newell v. Crayford Cottage Society Ltd., had supported a similar view:

> "notice to quit is necessary before a landlord can enforce a claim to the increase in rental permitted by the act". [2]

Eventually, this view was sustained as applicable, mutatis mutandis, in Scots Law when the tenant's case was upheld in the Court of Session.

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[1] Forward, 31 July 1920, p.8.

[2] Quoted by Sheriff MacPhail, Dumbarton Sheriff Court. Scottish Law Reporter, vol.LIX, p.462.

The judgment of the Lord President (Clyde) was a reluctant one.

> "I confess to have struggled... to avoid a result so technical and so liable to misunderstanding. But both the words and the general plan of the statute seem to me to leave no alternative open". [1]

The owner appealed to the House of Lords, who by a 3-2 majority upheld the view that increases in rent under the 1920 Act were invalid unless they had been preceded by a notice of removal.[2] The two Law Lords in the minority both expressed concern at the bizarre results entailed in the judgment. Lord Wrenbury, for instance, pointed out that to get an increase he was entitled to under the act, a landlord had first to give a notice of removal which he knew would be ineffective: "This is reducing the Act to an absurdity".[3]

The judgment of the Law Lords was given on 3rd November 1922 and immediately created a considerable stir. The Glasgow Herald stated that the decision had "created a remarkable situation in Glasgow", and condemned it editorially as "bizarre.../and/ preposterous".[4] The Forward concluded exultantly,

> "By this decision every tenant of a working-class house in Scotland is entitled to have returned to him a sum equal to about 12 months' rent and rates combined. The tenant can deduct this sum from future rent". [5]

The decision was seen, rightly, as a triumph for the Labour Housing Association, which had taken up (and financed) the case of Bryde, the

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[1] Lord President, quoted in loc.cit., p.464.

[2] "Notice of removal": the Scots Law equivalent of "notice to quit".

[3] Scottish Law Reporter, vol.LIX, p.580. The difficulties created by the judgment in Kerr v. Bryde were resolved by the Rent Restrictions (Notice of Increase) Act 1923, which laid down that "...notice of intention to increase rent will have effect as if it were a notice to terminate the tenancy".

[4] Glasgow Herald, 4 November 1922, pp.3,8.

[5] Forward, 11 November 1922. There is no evidence in the judgment in Kerr v. Bryde to justify the last sentence of the Forward's contention.

tenant. But Labour stood to gain votes not simply through gratitude for services rendered, but from the threat of an immediate reversal of the effects of Kerr v. Bryde by the other parties. The Labour Housing Association issued a manifesto which, after saying that it would advise tenants later on how to reclaim rents illegally collected, went on,

> "Meanwhile, we desire to warn them /viz. tenants/ against a great danger. The owners have already asked the Government to pass legislation authorising them to retain money illegally collected. The Moderate Party on the Town Council supported the owners by a deputation from the Corporation" [1]

- and so, the manifesto concluded, tenants must vote Labour to protect the gains they had just made. The Herald reported that

> "the Rent Act decision... is being made an issue /by Labour/ in both the municipal and the Parliamentary elections". [2]

This view was confirmed by reporters in constituencies who said that Labour was sure to gain votes from the decision for instance in Tradeston[3] and Dumbarton, where

> "Mr Kirkwood is a stronger man than he was at the last election... he comes forward with all the kudos from having won the case for the tenants in the Rents Act decision". 4

In the Forward for 18th November, Johnston wrote in his "Socialist War Points" that the decision was "a gift from the gods". Only Dollan, of all the commentators, seemed to think that

> "the Rent Act was a helpful agency, but not a decisive one" 5

- but he was concerned to ensure that the Labour machine did not get overlooked in the general euphoria.

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[1] Quoted in Glasgow Herald, 6 November 1922, p.6.

[2] ibid., 7 November 1922, p.3.

[3] ibid., 10 November 1922, p.11. Labour gains on this account were rather hard on Henderson, the Coalition M.P. for this constituency, who was a housing reformer and co-sponsor with William Graham of some of the amendments to the 1920 Act.

[4] ibid., 11 November 1922, p.12.

[5] Forward, 25 November 1922, p.5.

In summary, the housing question had both a long-run and a short-run effect on the Labour vote. On the one hand, the very real misery of working-class housing and the militancy of official Labour organisations in the area kept the issue in the public eye, and proved a vote-getter for Labour; on the other hand, the immediate circumstances of the 1922 elections gave Labour an added bonus. It could, indeed, be maintained that because of the long-term success of the local Labour Party as a housing crusade, the decision in Kerr v. Bryde would have benefited Labour whichever way it had gone. If it had gone against the tenant, then this would have mobilised a wave of protest at the poll, and Labour would again have benefited. Clearly, the timing of the decision was at least as important a bonus for Labour as its content; but, because of the appeal of the Labour Housing Association's call for organisation to consolidate the gains and to prevent them from being reversed, a positive decision was probably more beneficial than a negative one would have been.

We have now said something of the effect of both unemployment and housing on the growth of the Labour vote. In Chapter 14, we turn to a number of factors more closely concerned with party organisation, which centre around the Irish vote.

APPENDIX I - NOTE ON THE COMPILATION OF TABLE I.

The figures in the table are derived from the following constituencies:

Glasgow	Birmingham	Bristol
Bridgeton	Aston	Central
Camlachie	Kings Norton	East
Cathcart	Ladywood	North
Central	Sparkbrook	South
Govan	Yardley	
Maryhill		(4 out of 5)
St Rollox	(5 out of 12)	
Shettleston		
Springburn		
Tradeston		
(10 out of 15)		

Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Sheffield
Central	Edge Hill	Ardwick	Attercliffe
North	Everton	Blackley	Brightside
North-East	Fairfield	Clayton	Hillsborough
South	Wavertree	Gorton	Park
South-East	West Derby	Platting	
West	West Toxteth	Rusholme	(4 out of 7)
(6 out of 6)	(6 out of 11)	(6 out of 10)	

Compiling any such table for inter-war elections is always problematical, as it is often difficult to decide how to allocate candidates. For the purposes of this comparison, Independent Labour and (in Liverpool, Everton only) N.F.D.S.S. candidates have been counted as Labour, as have the three I.L.P. victors in Glasgow in 1935; Coalition Labour and N.D.P. in 1918, and National Labour and other I.L.P. in 1935 have been excluded, as have the Nationalists in Liverpool, although it is clear that in the Exchange and Scotland divisions the Nationalist vote of the 1920's closely parallels the Labour vote in the 1930's.

The nature of the 1918 fight in the Gorbals division of Glasgow has made it impossible to include that constituency in the table.

Unopposed Labour returns in 1918 (Manchester Platting and Leeds South-East) have been allocated a notional proportion of the vote according to the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{City-wide Labour \%, 1918}}{\text{City-wide Labour \%, 1922}} \times \text{Constituency Labour \%, 1922.}$$

(Appendix I, continued..)

Because of the way in which it has been compiled, the table over-emphasises Labour strength in cities in which the party did not fight many seats (especially Birmingham) relative to cities in which it fought safe opposition seats (especially Bristol and Leeds). The city in which Labour was weakest of all, namely Edinburgh, is not represented in the table at all, because only one constituency (Central) is comparable. In 1918 Labour fought only Central and East; in 1922 only Central. This makes a sharper contrast to "Red Clydeside" than does any other large city. Table 2, showing the number of Labour M.P's (defined in the same way as in Table I) elected for each city in the three elections, shows more explicitly the weakness of Labour in such cities - for instance, the party's failure to gain any seats in Birmingham at any election prior to 1945.

All the voting figures and percentages are taken from F.W.S. Craig, "British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-49", Glasgow, 1969.

APPENDIX 2

Sources for Tables IV and V

Table IV

Column 1. A.L.Bowley, "Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom, 1914-1920" (Oxford 1921), p.106.

Column 2. A.L.Bowley, "Wages and Incomes in the United Kingdom since 1860" (Cambridge 1937) as cited in "The British Economy: Key Statistics 1900-1966" (London, c.1969), Table E.

Column 3. Official figures from Board of Trade Labour Gazette, reproduced in "British Labour Statistics: Historical Abstract 1886-1968", H.M.S.O. 1971, Table 89.

Table V.

Source: Report of the Glasgow Trades Council 1923, pp.20-21. Engineers' rate in column 3 calculated by adding cumulatively "Advances granted between 1914-20" on p.20 assuming a 54-hour week to December 1918 inclusive and a 47-hour week thereafter. Rate per hour in 1923 (from which the top figure in column 5 is derived) calculated by dividing in bonus to weekly rate given, assuming 47-hour week. Masons' and Labourers' rates from table on p.21.

It is to be noted that the wage columns show wage rates, not earnings. The apparent drop in real wages during the war years suggested by a comparison of columns 1 and 3 of Tabke IV may or may not, therefore, be borne out when account is taken of the heavy overtime worked.

Chapter 14

The Growth of the Labour Vote II: The Irish and the Origins of a Labour Machine

In the Glasgow of 1918, Socialism was not the creed of the unskilled workers. The issues which had secured mass support for militant socialists during the war had been issues affecting skilled men: the dilution crisis and the rows over breaches of the craftsmen's exemption from conscription. Not only were they questions which were confined to the skilled men, they widened the breach between them and the unskilled, who, for example, stood to profit by dilution, and were not exempt from conscription at all. These distinctions were superimposed on a pattern of political allegiance which in any case was general throughout British cities in the early 20th century. This point has been the centre of a minor historical controversy. Marxist observers, from Engels through Lenin to Dr.E.J. Hobsbawm, have maintained that the class-consciousness of the British proletariat was perverted by the petty-bourgeois and/or imperialist predilections of a conservative labour aristocracy. A number of recent writers, especially Pelling, have challenged this view, on the whole convincingly: the Marxist picture is arguably true for the 1830's and the 1840's, where it helps distinguish between artisan "moral-force" and unskilled "physical-force" Chartists, but it is demonstrably untrue for the period from 1890-1914. Pelling quotes from Booth and a "rather impatient Socialist" writing in 1895 to substantiate his view that

> "the Marxist historians have completely got the wrong end of the stick: militancy was much more likely to be found among the better-off than among the poorer workers". [1]

For a slightly later period we can produce evidence couched in very similar language to show that the artisans were far readier to embrace the Labour Party than were less articulate or organised sections of the working class. Harry McShane, for instance, recalls how this operated in Glasgow:

> "You take my branch of the I.L.P. when I first joined it. I don't think there was a labourer in it: /they were/ mostly engineers. The engineers were the most active people in the movement - and the moulders - they were pretty strong". [2]

According to McShane, the city was at the time rigidly stratified into "skilled" and "unskilled" working-class areas. "Gorbals was almost entirely unskilled", but one had only to cross Eglinton Street into Tradeston, where McShane lived, to enter an area where the majority were skilled. In general, the unskilled areas corresponded with those which had no large-scale employment on the spot, but only small-scale domestic or sweated trades, while the more prosperous areas, at this time, were those close to heavy industry. Thus all the south bank wards west of Eglinton Street and the Caledonian railway (Kingston, Kinning Park, Govan, and Fairfield) depended on shipbuilding and marine engineering. Govanhill, Cowlairs, and Springburn had railway engineering, and the latter two wards had large settlements of railway fitters and footplatemen.[3] Townhead had general engineering; life in Parkhead and Shettleston

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[1] H.M.Pelling, "Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain", ch.3. The quotation is from p.61.

[2] Taperecorded reminiscences of H.McShane, in possession of Mr.Foster. Mr.McShane went on to make the revealing aside, "This was something John Saville couldnae understand".

[3] There is an excellent portrayal of railway life in Springburn before the First World War in J.Thomas, "The Springburn Story", Dawlish 1964.

revolved round Parkhead Forge, with a few miners on the fringe of the city, towards Baillieston. These were the artisan wards. Very different were Gorbals, Hutchesontown, Anderston, or Cowcaddens, with no industry employing skilled men. These were the unskilled wards; other working-class wards, such as Provan or Mile End, were more mixed.

The Forward from time to time voiced the scorn felt by socialist artisans for their inferiors, and the social stratification of the city by district adds political importance to suggestions such as this:

> "The classes that read the Forward are not ignorant people,(1) but intelligent people, the well-red, thinking reflecting, and clean-living decent people... Neither the bar-tender's pest nor the Sauchiehall Street dude ever spend a penny on the Forward... In the slum areas few socialist periodicals are purchased, but many copies of Red Welcome, Daily Record, Sporting Tit-bits, Weekly Mail, and John Bull... Look at your slum wards - not a Socialist representative in the Town Council from Calton or the Cowcaddens or Gorbals or Broomielaw. Capitalism represents these wards. On the other hand, the better paid, and more comfortably circumstanced, and better read Govan, and Shettleston, and Cowlairs, and Townhead, look to them! Socialism represents these wards. And the reason is obvious. A man requires to reach a certain level of culture before he can understand Socialism, have a certain independence of position and character before he can break away from old traditions and mental prejudice and face the obloquy and criticism meted out always and everywhere to the pioneer".[2]

That passage was almost certainly written by Johnston, who returned to the attack at least twice in the following six years. In 1917, in answer to a correspondent (whose letter had not been printed), he wrote,

> "What you really hold is a variant of the old theory of increasing misery... We do not believe the theory to be true. We see no revolutionary ardour in the Cowcaddens slums, but we do see it among the better fed and more leisured working districts".[3]

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[1] The article was written as a rebuttal of an attack in the Glasgow Herald, which had spoken of "journals addressed... to a class which can read and write... /but not/ think or reason".

[2] Forward, 28 August 1915, p.1.

[3] ibid., 10 November 1917, p.2.

In 1921 he attacked the same viewpoint, whose devotees had been condemning attempts by Kirkwood to alleviate distress in eviction cases in the Summary Ejectment Court:

> "the crazy notion that the further the poor are impoverished, harassed, and starved, the more 'revolutionary' and 'class-conscious' they become, is scouted by all the facts of history. It is not in Anderston or Broomielaw or Cowcaddens that Socialist propaganda flourishes. The slum areas are represented by Capitalists on public bodies". [1]

But the charge was less true and more snobbish in 1921 than in 1915. Johnston was confusing receptivity to propaganda with propensity to vote Labour, a fallacy criticised by Maxton some weeks earlier in reviewing the local election results:

> "There was no better propaganda district this summer than Maryhill, where we lost, and no worse than Gorbals, Hutchesontown, Cowlairs, and Springburn, where we won handsomely". [2]

The series of municipal election results from 1919 to 1922 shows how the Labour vote spread from "labour - aristocratic" districts to "unskilled" districts to produce to recognisable forerunner of today's voting patterns - a shift which surely goes some way towards explaining the differences between the 1918 and 1922 General Elections. An attempt to give these generalisations some numerical force, by relating the Labour vote to housing density, is made in Table I on page 281. It may be assumed that housing density ought to be a good prima facie indicator of propensity to vote Labour: the more persons per hundred rooms are found in a ward, the poorer its inhabitants are likely to be. If poverty were the sole criterion of propensity to vote Labour, there would be something approaching a correlation of 1 between housing density and the Labour vote in the 1920 and 1922 local elections. The correlation is,

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[1] Forward, 31 December 1921, p.1.

[2] ibid., 12 November 1921, p.2.

Table I

Glasgow Municipal Wards 1920 and 1922: Residuals Analysis.
Wards arranged in ascending order of deviance to Labour.

	1920 Ward	Deviance,% (1)		1922 Ward	Deviance,%
1	Cowcaddens	-22.99	1	Kinning Park	-10.40
2	Provan	-15.51	2	Maryhill	-9.60
3	Calton	-13.81	3	Cowcaddens	-8.28
4	Whitevale	-10.30	4	Provan	-7.35
5	Anderston	-8.28	5	Whitevale	-6.44
6	Dalmarnock	-7.59	6	Ruchill	-5.69
7	Camphill	-5.44	7	Calton	-4.50
8	Pollokshaws	-4.49	8	Partick West	-2.66
9	Whiteinch	-3.64	9	Dalmarnock	-2.64
10	Cathcart	-2.85	10	Townhead	-0.01
11	Govanhill	-2.76	11	Hutchesontown	1.23
12	Dennistoun	-2.16	12	Shettleston	1.78
13	Townhead	-1.79	13	Springburn	1.87
14	Kinning Park	-1.26	14	Partick East	2.32
15	Partick West	-0.36	15	Kingston	2.33
16	Maryhill	0.23	16	Parkhead	2.66
17	Partick East	0.83	17	Cowlairs	3.28
18	Shettleston	1.17	18	Woodside	5.57
19	Ruchill	1.97	19	Govan	5.70
20	Cowlairs	4.10	20	Anderston	6.85
21	Parkhead	5.47	21	Gorbals	7.03
22	Kingston	5.60	22	Mile-End	7.57
23	Fairfield	6.53	23	Fairfield	9.40
24	Woodside	6.68			
25	Gorbals	7.70			
26	Sandyford	7.73			
27	Govan	9.43			
28	Hutchesontown	9.66			
29	Mile-End	10.29			
30	Springburn	12.73			
31	North Kelvin	13.16			

(1) The figures are percentages of the vote cast. In Cowcaddens in 1920, for example, Labour "ought" to have had 53.49% of the votes cast; it actually had 30.5%, so the deviance is 22.99%.

in fact, quite high: 0.813 in 1920 and 0.852 in 1922.[1] Table I examines the results ward by ward in each year, and it depends on what is known as "residuals analysis". This is a method suitable for use when, as in our example, there is a strong linear correlation between the independent variable (housing density) and the dependent variable (Labour vote). It measures the deviance of any one ward from the established relationship between the two variables obtained from all the other wards in the observation. In other words, it puts the wards in a rank order depending on the extent to which their Labour vote was more or less than "expected", given the city-wide relationship between housing density and Labour vote.[2]

Several observations may be made about the figures in Table I. In the first place, it will be noted that the deviances are smaller in 1922 than in 1920: seven wards in 1920 have a higher deviance than the most deviant in 1922. This is good evidence of an integration, or polarisation, of city politics: the wards were becoming more like one another, with fewer mavericks showing an outstandingly low (or high) Labour vote. Secondly, the smaller number of wards appearing in the table for 1922 than for 1920 has a simple explanation: the poverty of the local Labour party, with two elections in quick succession to fight at a time when unemployment had seriously damaged the I.L.P's finances.[3] A glance at the figures will show that Labour might have done still better than it did in 1922 if it had had enough money to fight more wards: pro-Labour deviants like Sandyford and North Kelvin were not fought at all in 1922.

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[1] Though the correlation rises between the two years, this cannot be statistically significant because of the way the calculation is made. There is, however, other evidence that the 1922 results give a better "fit" than the 1920 ones.

[2] For more about residuals analysis, and for an interesting application of it to the 1970 General Election, see Appendix III by I.Crewe and C.Payne in Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky, "The British General Election of 1970", London 1971, pp.416-436.

[3] See Chapter 13.

In the third place, it is worth noting that the deviance of Kinning Park in 1922 is probably because there was no Labour candidate, and John Maclean, standing as a Communist, has been counted as Labour for the purposes of this calculation. As one might expect, John Maclean's extreme platform seems to have been less effective than a Labour one would have been.

The principal value of Table I, however, is in the information it can give us about a number of groups of wards. Not every ward can be easily categorised, and the classification has to be based on literary rather than statistical evidence. However, the groups of wards most worthy of comment are probably:

A. Seven "artisan" wards	B. Four "unskilled" wards.	C. Two "unskilled" and one mixed ward.
Shettleston	Anderston	Gorbals
Cowlairs	Cowcaddens	Hutchesontown
Parkhead	Provan	Mile-End (mixed)
Kingston	Calton	
Fairfield		
Govan		
Springburn		

Group A. These wards cover three areas of the city: the further East End (Shettleston and Parkhead), the railway areas in the North-East (Springburn and Cowlairs) and the shipbuilding area south of the river west of Eglinton Street (the other three). They correspond quite closely to those named at one time or another by Johnston as containing the core of the Labour vote; Table I shows that Johnston was largely right. All seven wards, in both years sampled, showed a higher tendency to vote Labour than would have been inferred from their housing density. Townhead should perhaps be discussed along with this group: though Labour were very distressed at losing it in 1922, and though the Glasgow Herald pointed out with some pride that "Townhead has been a Labour stronghold for about a score of years",[1] yet the statistics show that it was not a

[1] Glasgow Herald, 8 November 1922, p.5.

particularly badly-housed ward. Its failure to deviate in the same direction as the other seven studied may be attributable to the local influence of Councillor Turner, the Labour councillor who defected to the Moderate group in 1921.

Group B. This is a crucial group of wards which "came into line" at some point in the early 1920's. Though Cowcaddens, Provan, and Calton were still deviantly anti-Labour in 1922, they were far less so than in 1920, when they stand out clearly at the head of the list. And the Anderston ward is the only one to show a heavy swing from deviantly anti-Labour to pro-Labour between the two years. Serving the Anderston district was the largest Catholic Church in Glasgow - St.Patrick's, North Street, with 737 baptisms in 1920[1] - and it will be one of the main contentions of the latter part of this chapter that Labour benefited perceptibly from the accession to it of the Irish Catholic machine in parts of the city.

Group C. This might be cited as a useful group with which to contrast the four wards in Group B. Gorbals and Hutchesontown were wholly unskilled, and Mile-End was a mixture, housing on its eastern side workers from Parkhead Forge and on its western side unskilled East-Enders. The three wards had at least as high a proportion of Catholics as those in Group B - Mile-End had two churches with a total of 876 baptisms in 1920[2] - but they were deviant, not in an anti-, but in a pro-Labour direction. Later in this chapter, we shall try to say why. However, it is the exceptions which require an explanation rather than the rule, and we must start by examining the deviance shown by wards like those in our group B.

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[1] Figures from "The Catholic Directory for the Clergy and Laity in Scotland", 94th Annual Volume, 1922.

[2] As above.

We have now produced some statistical backing for the Forward's view that some of the "unskilled" wards were out of line: they produced a deviantly small Labour vote in 1920, but the association between Labour vote and housing density in 1922 was more regular. Three reasons for this coming into line may be suggested: the recruitment of the unskilled to Labour as the divisive issues of wartime socialist politics faded into the background; the ending of the electorally damaging association between Labour and prohibition; and, far the most important, the swing of the Irish machine from Liberal to Labour in national elections, and its increasingly loyal commitment to Labour in local elections. We are, of course, dealing were with three circles which have a great deal of overlap. Not all the unskilled were Irish, but most of the Irish were unskilled. In many large plants, notably the Govan shipyards and the engineering shops where Harry McShane spent his apprenticeship, it was next to impossible for anyone of Irish descent to secure an apprenticeship, which alone opened the gate to craftsman status, because apprenticeships were in the gift of foremen, who were invariably Protestants and often Freemasons.[1] Again, much of Glasgow Irish community life revolved around the public house (though there were bitter disputes between the public-house mafiosi and their opponents); the Irish had none of the ideological convictions which drove socialists to advocate prohibition.

Not much need be said about the first of our three explanations. In Chapter 11 we saw that, after the 1919 fiasco, traditional wartime militancy was dead: it was bound to die anyhow, when the ending of wartime pressures for productivity and the passing of the Restoration of Prewar Practices Act removed the basis of the engineers' agitation.

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[1] Reminiscences of Harry McShane.

Since it had been an unofficial agitation, it had disdained to secure a foothold by way of places in union or Labour Party hierarchies: so it vanished like snow off a dyke. With militancy died the divisiveness which had accompanied it, and one (though not the only) obstacle to co-operation between skilled and unskilled in the same party was removed.

By 1920, Prohibition had become something of an albatross round the neck of the Labour leaders on Clydeside. There were several overlapping reasons why socialists should have been prohibitionist. Prohibition appealed to the Samuel Smiles in them; if only the working class would cease drinking, it would have not just more money but more opportunity to study political principles with a view to embracing socialism. Objection was also taken to subsidising the brewers, who since at least 1872 were a clearly identifiable group of generous contributors to Tory funds. To this should be added the Puritanism which a predominantly orthodox Church of Scotland or Free Church background had bequeathed to the socialists, for instance Kirkwood, who said of himself and his fellow-I.P's in 1922,

> "We were all Puritans. We were all abstainers. Most of us did not smoke. We were the stuff of which reform is made". [1]

So there was a strong tide of prohibitionist feeling in socialist circles on Clydeside around the end of the war, with Johnston in the van.[2] The organs of the Labour Party in Scotland voted for Prohibition as against State Purchase in 1920 and 1921: thus the Scottish Labour Party Conference voted 47 to 15 for Prohibition in September 1920,[3] while the S.T.U.C.

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[1] Kirkwood, p.192.

[2] See his leaders in Forward on e.g. 29 November 1919 and 9 October 1920. Kirkintilloch, where Johnston was a councillor, went dry in 1920 and stayed dry until 1969.

[3] Forward, 2 October 1920, p.7.

carried Prohibition in 1920 by 110 votes to 74 "amid cheers and counter-cheers"[1] - the successful motion being an amendment from the Glasgow Trades Council.[2] The tide in favour of prohibition began to ebb in 1921, when the S.T.U.C. reversed its approval, in a thinly attended session, by 79 votes to 64[3] - the Forward thought that "given a full attendance, Prohibition would have been carried".[4] The I.L.P. carried prohibition as against municipalisation annually at its Scottish Conference.[5]

The conflict of ideals and realism on this issue was shown up at the confused debate on it at the 1921 Scottish Labour Party Conference, at which delegates successfully carried the "previous question" against a prohibition resolution. The mover of the latter, a Glasgow Trades Council delegate, appears to have spent most of his time attacking what he was supposed to be supporting, describing Prohibition as

> "inspired by all the claptrap of Puritanical repression.. /aimed at/... attaching the Labour movement to the tail of the Liberal Party". [6]

Another delegate spoke more bluntly about the political consequences of the Labour attitude:

> "Laurie Anderson A.E.U. ... explained that the working class had not enough to drink... When he went to Dalmuir to address a workers' meeting... he had to wait until his audience came from the public house... the municipal elections of 1920 showed that Labour was out of touch with public opinion in advocating Prohibition". [7]

In the 1920 local elections a veto poll under the Temperance (Scotland) Act, 1913, had been held simultaneously with the election of

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[1] S.T.U.C. Report 1920, p.90.

[2] See T.C.M. 8 October 1919.

[3] S.T.U.C. Report, 1921, pp.93 sqq.

[4] Forward, 30 April, 1921, p.4.

[5] See, e.g. Forward, 10 January 1920, pp.6-7; 7 January 1922, p.7.

[6] Forward, 1 October 1921, p.4.

[7] ibid.

councillors in Glasgow (and some other burghs): that is to say, voters were asked to choose between "No Change" in the number of licences in each ward, "Restriction of Licences", or "No Licence". The ultimate vote was 4 wards for Dry, 9 for Limitation, and 24 for No Change.[1] But during the election it became obvious to local Labour leaders that their commitment to prohibition was an electoral hindrance rather than a help. The dual poll

> "obscured the issue. Labour had succeeded in the early stages of the campaign in making Housing the issue...." [2]

but this became overlaid by the drink issue, which helped to produce the unprecedented poll of 78%.

> "Every public-house became virtually a hostile committee-room, and in a Ward like Calton with 82 such centres it meant a lot".[3]

All Labour candidates were pledged to support "No Licence". This brought them no support in middle-class areas of the city, where prohibitionists voted for middle-class prohibition candidates running in opposition to Labour. But it did hamper Labour in working-class areas, unless candidates and their helpers were prepared to bend closer to the view of their constituents:

> "A letter... indicts some canvassers at Parkhead for shouting 'Vote Labour and No Change'. Regrettable, but in all the circumstances hardly surprising". [4]

Several working-class Catholic anti-prohibitionist candidates advertised their views in the principal local Catholic paper, the Glasgow Observer. One wrote,

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[1] Forward, 20 November 1920, p.5.

[2] Forward, 13 November 1920, p.1.

[3] ibid.

[4] Forward, 20 November 1920, p.5.

> "My policy and programme is Labour. I am opposed to Prohibition because Prohibition means Higher Taxes on your Tea, Sugar, Bread, and general Household Commodities, and because Prohibition is class legislation and undemocratic".[1]

Another, who was to be elected as what the Forward later described as the "Irish-Wet"[2] councillor for Cowcaddens, exhorted his supporters,

> "Electors Awake! Remember that Every Prohibitionist will poll on 2nd November next, and that they are relying on your apathy not to Record your Vote. Make a Point of Recording your Vote, and support William T.Doherty, the only candidate who is opposed to Prohibition". [3]

Besides Doherty, the 1920 municipal general election saw returned to George Square two other councillors described by Forward as "Irish and Publican":[4] one each in Provan and Calton. But in 1921 the profile of Labour candidatures had changed somewhat. Councillor Doherty was now described by the Forward as "Unofficial Labour",[5] and the Glasgow Herald's potted biography drew its readers' attention to his undesirable characteristics:

> "W.T.Doherty (Unofficial Labour). Wine and Spirit Merchant. A member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians". [6]

Altogether the Herald named six candidates - five Labour plus Doherty - as being members of the A.O.H.; one of the others was also a publican, and others were shopkeepers. The Labour candidate for Provan was "a member of the A.O.H. and late president of the Townhead branch of the United Irish League".[7]

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 30 October 1920, p.7.
[2] Forward, 8 October 1921.
[3] Glasgow Observer, loc.cit.
[4] Forward, 13 November 1920, pp.6-7.
[5] Forward, 12 November 1921, p.2.
[6] Glasgow Herald, 27 October 1921, p.8.
[7] ibid.

It is fortunate for the historian that the Glasgow Herald should, for its own purposes, have taken so much trouble to specify which of the Labour candidates were identified with Irish organisations. As the Glasgow Observer commented,

> "Notwithstanding the Glasgow Herald's assiduous care in rubbing it into the minds of its readers that a number of candidates standing at the recent Municipal Election in Glasgow were members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the electors in the greater number of cases seemed willing to take the risk, and ignored the Herald's bugaboo warning. The turnip lantern failed to frighten and five out of six A.O.H. men were elected. Of course, the printing of such a statement on the part of the Herald was the sheerest malice attempting to rouse race prejudice". [1]

The following year, the Herald repeated its potted biographies of candidates, doubtless with the same ulterior motive:

> "Calton. J.Cruden (Lab.) Ex-publican. Member of I.L.P. and A.O.H. Was formerly connected with the Home Government Branch of the U.I.L., now defunct...
>
> Provan. T.A.O'Hare (Lab.). Solicitor. Was a leading member of the now defunct Home Government Branch of the U.I.L. A member of the A.O.H... Previously a member of the Glasgow School Board and the Glasgow Education Authority". [2]

Again, the Observer opined,

> "The Glasgow Herald has tried to pump up some prejudice against Mr Cruden by describing him as 'a member of the I.L.P. and the A.O.H.'. This bogey will frighten nobody". [3]

Cruden won:

> "Mr John Cruden, who won Calton, is a well-known Irish Nationalist, and his victory is the greatest achieved by Labour in the West of Scotland Town Council contests. He has a son who is a member of the Passionist Order." [4]

Thus an ex-publican, who had formerly run the Irish political organisations in his part of the city through the powerful Home Government

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 5 November 1921, p.3.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 2 November 1922, p.3.

[3] Glasgow Observer, 4 November 1922, p.3.

[4] Irish Weekly (Belfast), 11 November 1922, p.7.

Branch of the U.I.L., had become a Labour councillor. This is a very different career-pattern from that of those councillors who have featured hitherto in this account, such as Kirkwood, Shinwell, Wheatley, or James Stewart. How had it come about, and what were its implications? We must now look more closely at the Irish machine and Irish opinion leaders: necessarily sacrificing chronology to clarity, we shall separate the interwoven strands of local and national politics, dealing with local politics first.

The leaders of the Irish Catholic community had far better propaganda tools at their disposal than had the socialists. The socialists had open-air meetings, sometimes workplace contacts, and one, initially struggling, paper - the Forward - whose circulation before the war was probably less than 10,000, although it benefited greatly from the row over its suppression and from Johnston's "History of the Working Classes in Scotland", which it published in 1920.[1] By contrast the Catholics had all the advantages of a tightly-knit community bound together by the bar, the pulpit, and an "ethnic" press. The socialists were uncomfortably aware of the power of the public house as a hostile committee-room in 1920, and it was a power which could be turned to advantage only by having Irish community leaders, who were publicans or shopkeepers, as Labour candidates. The importance of the pulpit in political matters is witnessed to by the unending debates before the war between Wheatley and various clerical opponents on the compatibility of socialism and Catholicism

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[1] See Johnston, op.cit., ch.5 and Brotherstone, art.cit. Mr.Brotherstone (pp.7-8) has put forward various tentative estimates of the circulation of the Forward. He thinks the prewar circulation may have been only 5000 (where Johnston, without specifying a date, says "our circulation reached 30,000"), and cites the unpublished T.S.Memoirs of P.J.Dollan as evidence. Unfortunately, the version of these memoirs I have seen (by kind courtesy of Mr.J.H.Dollan) does not appear to coincide in pagination with that used by Mr.Brotherstone.

which were reprinted and discussed *in extenso* by the chain of 30 or so Catholic papers to which the *Glasgow Observer* and *Glasgow Star* belonged,[1] and have been made much of by modern commentators, often at the expense of a consideration of the real reasons for the accession of the Catholic vote to Labour.[2] At least, however, these commentators are right to stress the propaganda value of the Catholic press.

Up to 1908 there were two rival Catholic weeklies in Glasgow: the *Observer* and the *Star*, whose often violent differences boiled down to the fact that the *Observer* and its editor and proprietor (respectively D.J.Mitchel Quin and Charles Diamond), who were temperance supporters, frequently quarrelled with the publicans who dominated many branches of the U.I.L., and whose organ was the *Star*. In 1908, however, Diamond bought the *Star* and added it to his chain, so that thereafter its views were identical with the *Observer*'s (and sometimes expressed in the same words). The Catholic press was religiously orthodox and politically heterodox. But, unlike the *Forward*, the *Observer* and *Star* did not depend for their circulation on the intellectual appeal of their political views. The *Observer* called itself in the trade directory a "Popular football medium",[3] not without justice. It profited by its close links with the Celtic Football Club (which had been founded in 1887 by the local St Vincent de Paul Society[4]) and carried a weekly column "In Celtic Inner Circles". This was written in collaboration with the Celtic management, and as the best-informed football commentary in Glasgow it had a wide

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[1] See letter by Charles Diamond to *Pall Mall Gazette*, quoted by Glasgow Star, 7 January 1910, p.12.

[2] E.g. Middlemas, pp.37-40; P.Kane, "Catholic Socialist: A Brief Account of the Life and Times of the Rt.Hon.John Wheatley" (87 pp Ts; copy in Mitchell Library, Glasgow).

[3] "Newspaper Press Directory", 73rd Annual Issue, London, 1918. The *Forward* had no sports (and no advertisements for alcoholic drink).

[4] J.E.Handley, "The Irish in Modern Scotland" (Cork 1947), p.227, quoting W.Maley, "The Story of the Celtic", Glasgow 1939.

following.[1] No circulation figures exist, unfortunately, but it is entirely reasonable to suppose from these facts both that the Catholic press had a much higher circulation than the Forward, and that, since it was preaching much less exclusively to the converted, its political views circulated to a larger number of uncommitted, marginal, and even hostile electors. A study of the changes over the years in the political advice it tendered may therefore be of some value.

Labour representation on Glasgow Town Council can be traced back to the 1890's, when a number of Lib-Labs, some of them union officials, banded together into the "Stalwart Party" under the leadership of John Ferguson. This group "could not be regarded as a party subject to very rigid discipline",[2] but was an amalgam of labour and Irish interests[3] which "reached its high-water mark" around 1900 when it claimed about 12 of the 77 councillors. Its fate was disappointing:

> "the old Stalwart party... elected on a democratic ticket, proceeded to scramble as quickly as possible to the Bailies' Bench, and there dissolve into gilded impotence". 4

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[1] For information about the history of the Glasgow Observer, I am much indebted to the staff of the Scottish Catholic Herald, especially Mr John Cooney.

[2] Quotations in this paragraph are from article by A.McBride, "Can the Labour Party Capture the Glasgow Town Council?", Forward, 17 March 1917. I can find no authority for Mr Middlemas's claim (op.cit., p.24), that the I.L.P. won ten out of 75 seats in 1898.

[3] The Irish side was represented by Ferguson, a Protestant who was none the less for many years a patron of the U.I.L. in Glasgow (see Handley, op.cit., pp.269-290 passim) and by Bailie P. O'Hare, who tried unsuccessfully to return to the council in 1913, with Labour help. Glasgow Observer, 1 November 1913, p.3; 8 November 1913, p.8.

[4] Glasgow Observer, 31 October 1908.

The policy of the Glasgow Observer before the war was broadly, though rather lukewarmly, pro-Labour:

> "Generally speaking, where a Labour candidate of suitable calibre can be found, our readers ought to vote Labour, at least those of them who are themselves wage-earners".[1]

In 1910, Diamond described his papers' political stance by saying, "They favour the Budget and the Progressist cause generally".[2] (Up to 1908, the Star was less pro-Labour than the Observer, because it objected to prohibitionists like Joseph Burgess who became Labour candidates,[3] but after the amalgamation of the papers this difference vanished, of course).

Diamond's use of the word "Progressist" rather than "Labour" gives a clue to the difficulties laying in the way of an Irish-Labour reconciliation. Up to 1906 there had been a Progressive coalition on Glasgow Corporation headed by the Irish and labour members. It broke up in that year because of the death of Ferguson and the new militancy of the I.L.P., which broke with the tradition of the Stalwart Group and insisted that all Labour candidates must be members of the party. This infuriated the Irish, who thought that as part of the Progressive coalition, they were entitled to a clear run for their candidates in wards containing a high proportion of Irish electors. The Labour Party was breaking the rules of the political game as the Irish ward bosses understood it: the Irish were being offered nothing in return for the marketable commodity, namely votes, which they were prepared to deliver. A good example of

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 2 November 1907, p.5.

[2] Glasgow Star, 7 January 1910, p.12.

[3] His mistake was to have "made himself the catspaw of the Temperance caucus on the Corporation". Glasgow Star, 27 January 1906.

the feelings aroused is this piece of advice from the Star in the 1909 local elections:

> "In Mile-End, whatever the Irish electors do, they should not vote for the Labour candidate, Mr.Gardner. Mile-End is a Ward where, in all fairness, a Progressive from the Nationalist wing might have been asked to bear the Stalwart colours. The action of the Labour people in ignoring the Irish electorate calls for emphatic resentment". [1]

The Catholic press was therefore quite happy to see every Labour candidate except James Stewart in Townhead defeated:

> "The result of the municipal elections is effective proof of the strength and solidarity of the Irish vote. Those who are responsible for the leadership of Labour politics in Glasgow have been... so contemptuous as to the necessity of any alliance with other wings of the Progressive force in Glasgow that they indulged in an overweening and unwarranted certainty that Labour could carry its own men to triumph at the polls in wards where Labour candidates came forward. Well, now it knows different". [2]

In 1910, the Observer, in presenting its annual ticket,[3] said

> "Where the Progressive forces have given the Irish electorate of Glasgow a fair opportunity of supporting the Progressive ticket, they will willingly do it... Where this has not been done, they will decline to be roped in, however plausible the pretext". 4

Accordingly, it recommended the Irish to oppose some Labour incumbents, such as Hugh Lyon in Townhead and George Carson in Maryhill. After the election, when Lyon and Carson had both won, it returned to its favourite theme:

> "If our friends, the Labour people, care to discuss a sound reciprocal scheme whereby the Irish electorate in Glasgow would be now and again the climber, and not always the ladder, they will find every disposition to reasonable discussion awaiting them. But it is neither fair nor reasonable to expect that we shall always turn the wheel and they always grind their axe". 5

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[1] Glasgow Star, 29 October 1909, p.8.

[2] Glasgow Observer, 6 November 1909, p.3.

[3] The annual municipal election article was usually headed "Glasgow Municipal Elections / The Observer Ticket".

[4] Glasgow Observer, 29 October 1910.

[5] ibid., 5 November 1910, p.3.

In 1911 relations improved because two prominent Irishmen had been nominated, one of them a director of Celtic F.C., and

> "The leaders of the Labour Party unhesitatingly accord their support to these two nominees, and have taken the platform in their favour. This fact must serve to dispose the Irish vote in favour of Labour candidates unless where prior and greater obligation prevents that course". [1]

1912, however, marked the nadir. Instead of the annual headline "The Observer Ticket", the paper ran a banner which read:

> "Labour Candidates and Municipal Elections.
> Catholics, Be Gulled No Longer!
> Read This, Then Act Like Men!"
>
> "Hitherto /the story began/ our counsel to Irish electors has almost invariably been to support the candidates of the Labour Party in every constituency.(2) That counsel we are no longer able to extend... /because/ the Labour Party, while making the most profuse professions of sympathy with the Irish movement and with Irish sentiment, will not give the least help to any candidate standing who is an Irish Nationalist... Not even the absurd little Catholic Socialist Society can qualify its members for Socialist support. Mr Wheatley is supported, not because he is the founder of the Socialist Society, but because he is a member of the Shettleston I.L.P.... Unless a Catholic is prepared to swallow the Socialist shibboleth, he may give his vote to a Labour man, but he must not expect to get one in return". [3]

When four out of the 13 Labour nominees were returned, the paper claimed that "with the Irish vote Labour could have won at least 10 seats", and went on,

> "The sensible men of the /Labour/ Party... will recognise further that in municipal elections the Irish vote in Glasgow is still a disciplined and united vote... With the Irish vote in its favour, the Labour ticket should be the winning ticket. With the Irish vote against it, Labour is able to win less than 1/6th of what it seeks". [4]

The following year, the paper claimed to have detected a rift between the accommodating Labour leadership and their dogmatic followers:

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 4 November 1911, p.3.

[2] This was not true, of course.

[3] Glasgow Observer, 2 November 1912, p.3. Cf. also Glasgow Star, 1 November 1912, p.9.

[4] Glasgow Observer, 9 November 1912, p.3.

> "If Labour candidates are to expect or receive Irish support hereafter, some provision had better be made to admit Nationalists by the front door... /Labour leaders are/ universally in favour of such a course... Since the Labour Party has been wise enough not to advance any such aggressive secularists as, say, Mr Shinwell... there is no new Labour candidate... whom... any Catholic or any Irish elector need have any scruple in supporting". [1]

In 1914 the usual message was repeated, after the paper had refused to endorse four Labour candidates, including Lyon.[2]

After the war, when municipal politics revived, relations were noticeably warmer. In October 1919, Arthur Murphy, a leading U.I.L. politician, gave an address on "25 Years of Irish and Labour Municipal Politics in Glasgow". Advertising this, the Observer said,

> "In view of the forthcoming municipal elections and of the /municipal/ General Election next year the new relations between the Labour Party and the Irishmen in the city are a matter of supreme moment. The question of adequate representation of Irish Labour opinion on the City Council is an urgent matter that can no longer be delayed". [3]

The "new relations" do not seem to have amounted to anything as definite as a pact, but certainly there was greater warmth in the Observer's reception:

> "/T/hough some who have received the Labour label are not quite the class of men with whom it would be safe to go tiger hunting, there is little doubt that the Irish vote in the main will go solid for the Labour candidates". [4]

The Irish were advised to vote Labour in every ward save two (Calton and Govan Central).

In 1920, relations were a little more strained again, almost certainly because of Labour's adherence to Prohibition. Dalmarnock

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 1 November 1913, p.3. On the 8th, the paper recorded that the "Labour Party had furnished a contingent of willing workers" for the Irish ex-Stalwart ex-Bailie O'Hare.

[2] See Glasgow Observer, 31 October 1914, p.3, and 7 November 1914, pp.7 and 8.

[3] Glasgow Observer, 25 October 1919, p.3.

[4] Glasgow Observer, 1 November 1919, p.3.

and Cowcaddens were among wards in which the Observer ticket counselled voting for an Irish independent rather than one of the Labour candidates. The paper tendered the following advice to its readers in Calton:

> "A 'Good Government' trio are opposed by a Labour trio. There is no name in either list that makes much appeal to Irish electors. Electors in Calton having voted for Mr John Maguire(1) should reserve their second and third votes". [2]

By 1921, the tone has changed again. If the prewar advice was "Support Labour if...", and the immediate postwar "Support Labour unless...", by now it was "Support Labour notwithstanding...".

> "...we unhesitatingly declare for principle before personality, and hope that the Irish vote in Townhead will go to the official Labour candidate.
>
> The foregoing remark applies equally to other contests, in some of which the Labour nominees are individuals having but small claim (on personal grounds) either to the votes of Irish electors or to our support.
>
> In politics, however, principle should be a paramount consideration, and on that ground we counsel our readers all round to cast their vote for the official Labour candidate". [3]

In 1922 this advice was repeated: "Our counsel to our readers all over is to 'Vote Labour'". [4]

The immediate reason for this change of mood is not far to seek. In the years after the war, the Labour Party was at last returning to the notion of an Irish-Labour coalition, by letting the Irish have a say in the nomination of Labour candidates in Irish areas. No written record of a decision, or a pact, survives. This is partly because the archives

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[1] Maguire was an Irish independent anti-prohibitionist. He topped the poll in the election.

[2] Glasgow Observer, 30 October 1920, p.3. Inter alia, the earlier objections to Shinwell had vanished:
"Shinwell is... particularly sound on Irish matters and should have every Irish vote".

[3] Glasgow Observer, 29 October, 1921.

[4] Glasgow Observer, 4 November, 1922.

become thinner after 1918 than they are for the war years, but more because this was either a pact made in private, or else a decision never formally taken but arrived at by the passive connivance of the local Labour leadership. The evidence cited earlier as to the appearance of Irish ex-ward bosses as Labour councillors is too clear to admit of any other interpretation. A more substantial question is <u>why</u>? Why did Labour feel more strongly that it needed Irish support, and why were the Irish readier to be embraced by the Labour organisation? A study of the political consequences of the 1918 Education Act may help answer both questions.

The education settlement of 1918 in Scotland differed from that in England, among other things in the provision made for voluntary schools - which in Scotland meant, almost entirely, Catholic schools. The Secretary for Scotland, in preparing a draft memorandum for the War Cabinet in 1917 on the first version of the Education Bill, explained why voluntary schools were a problem:

> "There is no question that, because of the inadequate resources of the Managers, Roman Catholic children, who constitute upwards of ⅛ of the school population of Scotland, are being deprived of the opportunities of education which are afforded by the public schools. There are only two possible remedies for this state of matters.
>
> 1) that state-aid to denominational schools should be provided in much fuller measure than to public schools - to an extent in fact which would compensate them for what they lose in rate aid. This solution, having regard to the state of public opinion in Scotland, is clearly out of the question.
>
> 2) There remains the other solution, namely, that denominational schools providing elementary education should be compulsorily transferred to the local education authority and should be managed by them in all respects as public schools, but provision however being made for religious education according to the views of the former Managers, given by teachers who are acceptable to the representatives of these Managers, both as regards faith and character. This is the solution which I propose". [1]

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[1] "The Education (Scotland) Bill 1917: Memorandum to the Cabinet" (signed) R.Munro. November 24, 1917. Scottish Record Office: ED 14/120. The paper was circulated to the Cabinet, in a revised form, as GT 2818.

This solution was accepted by the War Cabinet,[1] and it was embodied in successive versions of the bill. The Catholic hierarchy provisionally accepted the bill, subject to the judgment of the Vatican,[2] and after a minor flurry caused by allegations that the bill would not allow any new Catholic schools to be built,[3] word of the bill's acceptance by the Vatican arrived in October 1918.

> "It will be seen that acceptance of its compromise has been advised by the Vatican, so that those of us who have had misgivings as to the safety of Catholic Education in Scotland for the future under the operation of the Bill may now shed our fears since the onus of acceptance lies on the responsible shoulders of the Vatican authorities...
>
> It would be uncandid to say that the Bill as now finally framed furnishes all the safeguards which all of us would desire. However, since the Catholics of the country will find their feet presently as a powerful political factor, we shall be able in future to demand and require any rectification which experience in working the measure may prove to be necessary".[4]

The important parts of the controversial Section 18 of the Act, as finally passed in November 1918, provided that at any time the owners of a voluntary school might

> "transfer the school... to the education authority, who shall be bound to accept such transfer, upon such terms as to price, rent, or other consideration as may be agreed.
> ...
> Any school so transferred shall be held, maintained, and managed as a public school by the education authority who shall be entitled to receive grants therefor as a public school, and shall have in respect thereto the sole power of regulating the curriculum and of appointing teachers..." [5]

In Glasgow, the Roman Catholic schools were leased to the Education Authority from May 1919, and sold outright, at the request of the Catholic

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[1] 14 December 1917, War Cabinet 298/1. Copy of minute in S.E.D. papers: Sc.R.O: ED 14/120.

[2] Presscuttings from "Glasgow Observer", 6 April 1918, in S.E.D. file. Sc.R.O: ED 14/100.

[3] Presscuttings from Glasgow Observer, 18 May and 8 June 1918, in S.E.D.file. Sc.R.O: ED 14/100. Endorsed, "Seen by the Secretary".

[4] Glasgow Observer, 2 November 1918, p.6.

[5] 8 & 9 Geo V, ch.48, Sect.18, subsects.(1) and (3).

trustees, in 1928.[1] This gave Catholics an immediate vested interest in the Education Authority and the Corporation much closer than that of their co-religionists in England - a point taken by the writer of the Observer leader just quoted where he mentions that Catholics will "find their feet presently as a powerful political factor". The Catholics had organised their representation on the old School Board much more successfully than the socialists, whose only representative was the middle-class electrical contractor Martin Haddow,[2] and this pattern was continued in the first Education Authority elections, which in accordance with the provisions of s.23 of the Act were held under proportional representation.

> "The Catholics polled splendidly, and exhibited a magnificent organisation. In no Glasgow division did a Labour candidate get in on a first count, and James Maxton is the only candidate who is in without Catholic assistance. In the other cases where we have been successful, the success is due to the fact of Catholics giving Labour their 3rd, 4th, or 5th votes". [3]

Labour was not formally committed to supporting State provision of denominational education, but it was not against it either. But Labour's municipal opponents, banded together in the Good Government League, were very suspicious of Catholic organisations:

> "/Glasgow/ had ceased to be purely a douce Scottish city. To a large extent it had become an Irish city. It had also a very large semi-alien population... they found working in their midst organisations which were alien in conception, alien, at any rate, in operation to our Scottish ways of working, and it was intolerable that the administration of a Scottish city should be held up at the bidding of any class or party". [4]

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[1] W.M.Haddow, "My Seventy Years", Glasgow 1943, pp.86-87.

[2] Haddow, op.cit., chapters 9 to 11.

[3] Forward, 12 April 1919, p.5.

[4] Report of a meeting of the Good Government League, in Glasgow Herald, 22 October 1921, p.10.

The alleged iniquity of the 1918 Act was a hardy annual for discussion at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and in 1922 an educational correspondent of the Glasgow Herald wrote a propos of one such discussion:

> "'The menace of Romanism' is not strictly an educational issue... But the question is very pertinent to education whether the Roman Catholic or other voluntary sect enjoys a privileged position in the schools. Many Presbyterian churchmen believe that this is the case, and, if they are right, the 1918 Act must be amended in the sense for which they contend". [1]

Because of the 1918 Act, the Catholic schools issue was politicised, and Catholics could no longer be content with returning representatives of Catholicism, per se, to education authorities and political bodies. They had to seek the support of one of the political parties. By elimination, that party had to be Labour, which was in any case the party to which the Catholics were closest. On its side, Labour welcomed the Catholics because the socialists came to realise how much they suffered from the lack of an efficient political machine. These realisations were perhaps reinforced when Patrick Dollan began his long reign as city boss and I.L.P. organiser.[2] Dollan was a lapsed Catholic, although still claimed by the Observer and Star, in their annual lists of Catholic councillors, as one of the faithful;[3] and he may well have lain behind the movement in the early 1920's towards the closer integration of Labour and Catholic forces. The movement was undoubtedly self-reinforcing:

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[1] Glasgow Herald, 2 June 1922, quoted in Handley, op.cit., p.304. Cf. also the passionate and polemical defence of the Catholic position prepared in the light of attacks on the Act in the 1935 General Assembly, in J.Grant Robertson, "The Education (Scotland) Act 1918", /1937/, Catholic Truth Society of Scotland.

[2] Since Dollan held, at this time, no formal position, the beginnings of his ascendancy is difficult to date. However, the article he wrote for Forward, 25 November 1922, on the organisation of General Election victory, shows that by then at least he was regarded, and regarded himself, as head of the machine.

[3] See Glasgow Observer of, e.g. 6 November 1920, 11 November 1922; Glasgow Star, 11 November 1922.

the mobilisation of a Labour municipal bloc led to the counter-mobilisation of an economy-minded and latently anti-Irish opposition party, which started as the Good Government League and became the Moderate (later the Progressive) Party, developing into a fully-fledged political party whose main tenet was opposition to party politics in local government. This in turn forced the Catholics all the more firmly into the Labour fold.

We must now turn from local to national politics. Though writers are beginning to appreciate the importance of the United Irish League in delivering and directing the Irish vote in Britain from about 1885 to 1918, little detailed research on the political behaviour of the Irish has yet been done.[1] The next few pages will be devoted to tracing the changes in the advice given to the Glasgow Irish through the local Catholic press.

For the 1906 election, the U.I.L. Executive issued a manifesto reasonably friendly to Labour:

> "...we recommend our people in all cases where a Labour candidate, who is sound on Home Rule, is in the field to give their votes to that candidate, except in cases where he is standing against an old and tried friend of the Irish cause, or where the support of the Labour candidate would ensure the return of the Unionist candidate". [2]

In the Clydeside area, "Mr John Redmond has directed the disposition of the Irish vote"[3] to three Labour candidates: Joseph Burgess in Camlachie,

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[1] Dr.Handley's pioneering work, written as long ago as 1947, is an exception, though it has not really received the attention from non-Catholics it deserves. But politics are only a very small part of his concern.

[2] Glasgow Observer, 6 January 1906, p.5.

[3] ibid.

George Barnes in Hutchesontown, and Joseph Sullivan in North-West Lanark. In Hutchesontown in 1900, the U.I.L. mandate had actually gone to the Unionist, Bonar Law, because the Liberal was regarded as a renegade on Home Rule. In 1906 this problem ought to have solved itself with the appearance of Barnes, but one or two local U.I.L. stalwarts wanted to continue supporting Law. They were later expelled from the U.I.L.[1]

In the 1910 elections, however, the U.I.L. mandate was withdrawn from Labour candidates other than Barnes. This was because Labour candidates were accused of vote-splitting and thus letting in the Conservatives - something which occurred in Scotland, because of the failure of the MacDonald-Gladstone Pact to cover that country. The Observer endorsed the U.I.L. Executive's advice to vote Liberal in Camlachie:

> "At the last election, the Irish vote went Labour and the Labour candidate came in at the foot of the poll. Nationalists are always ready to vote Labour when there is a chance of winning but in a fight like this, and [with] the experience of the last election before them, the Executive could not possibly afford to waste the Irish vote".[2]

There was no doubting the Observer's loyalty to the U.I.L. at this time. It exhorted its readers:

> "We call upon the Irish electorate in every constituency in Scotland to obey the mandate of Mr Redmond and the Irish Party by taking their stand in the van of the onward forces which are irresistibly making for progress and liberty". [3]

After the result, it heralded the Executive's refusal to renew the mandate to Sullivan, who was fighting this time in North-East Lanark, under the heading "T.P's Prescience":

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[1]Handley, op.cit., p.290.

[2]Glasgow Observer, 15 January 1910, p.5.

[3]ibid., leader p.9.

> "The North-East Lanark election shows anew the power of the Irish vote in the division, and amply vindicates the wisdom of its disposition by Mr T.P.O'Connor and the Irish leaders in the recent contest". [1]

In the December 1910 election the same position was maintained. The mandate supported no Labour candidate in the area except Barnes, and in St.Rolox, the paper noted,

> "the Irish vote is going with a solid swing for Mr McKinnon Wood. Dr O'Hare was a prominent speaker at some big Liberal meetings through the week". [2]

The writer of that would have had a rude shock if he could have foreseen the 1918 result in St.Rollox.

The first note of serious dissension at the mandates[3] came in the January 1910 election, with a revolt of the Home Government Branch of the U.I.L., which according to Handley

> "dominated for years Irish political life in the west of Scotland. It was easily the wealthiest and largest of the branches, with a membership at one time of nearly 1500. It was the parliament of the Irish people in Glasgow". [4]

It was out of favour with the Observer at this time because it was "more a beer trade caucus than a National League centre",[5] and also, more unexpectedly, because its leaders were "up to the neck in sympathy with the socialists".[6] So the paper reported its revolt decidedly coolly:

> "At the meeting of the Home Government Branch of the U.I.L. (Glasgow) on Sunday last, it was intimated that the office-bearers intended resigning consequent upon the decision of the League Executive to direct the Irish vote in Camlachie in favour of the Liberal candidate rather than of the Labour candidate there, in whose direction the predilections of the Home Government Branch seem to lie". [7]

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 5 February 1910, p.9.

[2] Glasgow Observer, 3 December 1910, p.3.

[3] Disregarding the 1906 Hutchesontown affair, which seems to have been mostly a matter of personalities.

[4] Handley, op.cit., p.276.

[5] ibid., p.285, quoting Glasgow Observer, date not given.

[6] ibid., quoting Glasgow Observer.

[7] Glasgow Observer, 22 January 1910, p.6. Cf. Evening Times (Glasgow) 14 January 1910, p.5.

In answer to a correspondent who complained that the "Archbishop Walsh" branch had been revived purely in order to support the mandate, it retorted,

> "Better be spasmodically active than never active at all. A branch which revives itself to accept and sustain the Nationalist mandate had surely better do that than lie for ever dormant". [1]

A great deal happened between 1910 and 1918, in both Irish and British politics, to change this state of affairs. The Irish Party collapsed; so did the Liberal Party; and the Glasgow Observer changed its views. The Easter Rising of 1916 was a severe blow to the Irish Party, and the excesses of the British military regime which followed in executing its leaders did the party much more damage. As Dillon said in his passionate and despairing speech after the Rising:

> "You are letting loose a river of blood... between two races who, after 300 years of hatred and of strife, we had nearly succeeded in bringing together...
>
> /In/ this rebellion, for the first time in the history of Ireland, at least nine out of every ten of the population were on the side of the Government. Is this nothing? ...It is the fruit of our life's work. We have risked our lives a hundred times to bring this about... and now you are washing out our whole life work in a sea of blood". [2]

The doom of the Irish Party was sealed when Redmond and Dillon accepted temporary exclusion of the six counties of Northern Ireland in the negotiations with Lloyd George in 1916, only to find Lloyd George selling the scheme to the Unionists as one for permanent exclusion.[3] The constitutional nationalists appeared totally outflanked, and seemed to be ceding ground they had already won. The threat to impose conscription

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 22 January 1910, p.9. The same comment is printed in Glasgow Star, 21 January 1910, p.3.

[2] H of C Hansard, 5s, vol.82, col.940.

[3] See, e.g. F.S.L.Lyons, "John Dillon", London 1968, ch.13. This book is now by far the best source for the collapse of the Irish Party.

in Ireland in 1918 was the last straw, and the swing to Sinn Fein led to the annihilation of the Irish Party in the 1918 election, where they were reduced to seven seats: five in Ulster, one in Waterford,[1] and T.P.O'Connor's bastion in Liverpool Scotland, where he stayed unopposed up to his death in 1929.

The independent Liberal Party was also routed, though not as totally as the Irish Party, at the 1918 election. In some parts of the country the Independent Liberals held on to their strongholds in opposition to couponed Coalition Liberals or Conservatives, but not in Glasgow. There the Asquithian Liberals did not merely disappear: they were annihilated. Among the retiring M.P's who actually lost their deposits were W.M.R. Pringle, the consistent opponent of wartime restrictions who, inter alia, had secured the adjournment debate on the suppression of the Forward, and McKinnon Wood, the ex-Secretary for Scotland whom the Observer had so warmly supported in 1910. The Free Liberals were never again to have any success in Glasgow (or Lanarkshire); their strongholds in Paisley and Greenock became completely isolated in the industrial west of Scotland.

During the war, the papers controlled by Charles Diamond had moved away from the implicit trust they had placed in the U.I.L. and the Irish Party in 1910. As the war progressed, Diamond became increasingly sympathetic both to Labour and to Sinn Fein, the former sympathy being reinforced by the views of Mitchel Quin, who was the Labour candidate in Glasgow Central in 1918. Diamond wrote a number of articles in his papers urging their readers to vote Labour, of which the longest and most forthright was headed, "The Irish in Great Britain/ Their Political Future".

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[1] Redmond's seat, which was held by a relative of his.

"...the policy of the Irish in Great Britain... has been confessedly modelled upon the policy of the Irish Party in Parliament. The Irish electors and non-electors of the country stood aloof from all political parties. They were friends of or foes of one or the other, as seemed best at the moment, in Ireland's interests...

We advocate... the ending of the period of isolation and detachment of the Irish in Great Britain. We urge them to drop the policy of being, as it were, a foreign or floating factor in the body politic, giving their votes now on one side and now on another, moved thereto by the question of Ireland, and so trusted by no party in the State... The formation of a powerful democratic Labour Party gives us the opportunity. Formerly the weakness of Labour impelled us to give our support where we thought it would do most for Ireland... Toryism was an impossible thing. Liberalism, unhappily, embodied a great deal of anti-Catholic narrowness and bigotry...

The new Labour Party is indeed and in truth the people's party, and as a vast majority of the Irish in Great Britain are toilers it is to that party they turn, drawn by bonds of affinity and common interests that make division or antagonism unthinkable." [1]

As for Sinn Fein, Diamond wrote,

"If Sinn Fein has Ireland at its back, it is the duty of those who have been discarded to make way for the new men and the new forces. Anything else is pure factionism". [2]

This change of attitude led the paper to regard the representatives of the old order sometimes contemptuously, sometimes merely dismissively. Diamond wrote in November 1918:

"Never were the feebleness and futility of Mr Dillon and the Irish Party leadership more clearly demonstrated than at the convention of the United Irish League at Manchester, and in the speeches made there as to Irish policy...

'We must not stand by Labour in Great Britain', says Mr Dillon, because Ireland may find herself without friends in the next Parliament... The Irish here... see that their own dearest interests are bound up with the emancipation of Labour, and they will not be such fools as to strike a blow at Labour and desert it on the plea put forward by Mr Dillon, that if they do so, 'the Irish Party may have no friends in the next Parliament'.

Will there be any Irish Party at all in the next Parliament? Mr Dillon dare not say so." [3]

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[1] "A Survey and Some Counsel: By C.D". Glasgow Observer, 26 October 1918, p.3

[2] Glasgow Observer, 1 June 1918.

[3] ibid., 2 November 1918, p.3.

The U.I.L. and its whole system of mandates was rapidly disintegrating.

> "...T.P's 'mandates', he will find, no longer run. He may call his spirits from the vasty deep, but the Irish electorates in Great Britain will think and act for themselves. They will vote Labour." 1

The first part of this prediction proved much more clearly true than the second, though exhortations to the Irish to vote Labour appeared stridently from almost every page of the Glasgow Observer and the Glasgow Star in the three weeks leading up to the election. The U.I.L. mandate, when it came, was much the same as before. In Scotland, 26 Free Liberals and 15 Labour candidates were couponed. Among the couponed Liberals who faced Labour opposition were Pringle in Springburn and McKinnon Wood in St Rollox. 11 of the ticketed Liberals in all faced opposition from Labour as well as from a Coalitionist.[2] "The selection", noted the political correspondent of the Glasgow Herald, "is too obviously capricious to merit the serious attention of electors".[3] Later, the paper commented,

> "The distribution of Irish 'coupons' among Liberal and Labour candidates in Scotland has given great dissatisfaction to local branches of the U.I.L., most of whom had already expressed a preference which does not harmonise with the 'dictation' from headquarters. Several branches have decided to disobey Mr O'Connor's instructions and place the 'coupon' where the best can be obtained. Local irritation at the ridiculous method adopted by the U.I.L. in selecting candidates will probably find an outlet in a 'split' Nationalist vote." 4

The outcome of the election provoked the author of Forward's Catholic Socialist Notes[5] to comment,

> "Not the least remarkable feature of the recent Election is the disappearance of Mr T.P. O'Connor's Irish mandate as a factor in, at any rate, Scottish elections. In Glasgow Messrs McKinnon Wood, Dundas White, Pringle and Watt, who had the Irish ticket, forfeited their deposits". 6

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 2 November 1918, p.6.

[2] It is a sign of the times that the Glasgow Observer did not even print the mandate in 1918. The list is from Glasgow Herald, 7 December 1918.

[3] Glasgow Herald, 7 December 1918, p.5.

[4] Glasgow Herald, 10 December 1918, p.5. Cf. Glasgow Observer, 7, 14 and 28 December 1918 for evidence of U.I.L. branches deserting the mandate.

[5] Probably William Regan, possibly Wheatley.

[6] Forward, 11 January 1919, p.2.

It is established, then, that the Irish did not vote Liberal in 1918. But the problem is that they do not seem to have flocked to Labour in large numbers. Two out of the three Labour gains in the West of Scotland (Hamilton and South Ayrshire) were not areas particularly strong in Irish voters.[1] Why, in spite of the continued exhortation by Diamond and the Catholic press, and the desertion by many ward bosses of the mandate, do the Irish seem to have affected the vote in so few constituencies? Were their leaders at the head of only a stage army?

To this question we can give no more than a succession of partial answers. The Irish stood to gain, proportionately, probably more than other groups from the electoral reform of 1918; but by the same token, they doubtless suffered worse from the defective compilation of the register. Furthermore, we should beware of taking the claims of, say, the Observer too much at its own valuation. The Irish vote, obviously, could be effective only where there were a lot of Irish electors. This did not cover every constituency in Scotland, nor even every working-class constituency in Scotland. Nevertheless, on what evidence there is, it is difficult to accept that the Irish did in every constituency what the Observer told them to. Especially is this true in Gorbals, where as we have seen Barnes had received the Irish ticket ever since 1906. After he had parted company with the Labour Party because of his refusal to resign from the War Cabinet in 1918, the Observer wrote,

> "... the Irish Nationalists of the Gorbals Division cannot change their politics when and because Mr Barnes changes his"[2].

So it counselled its readers to vote for John Maclean.[3] But Barnes won by a majority of 31.4%, and after the result the paper recorded that

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[1] Govan, on the other hand, had a high proportion of Catholic baptisms, though it is never thought of as being a centre of the Irish machine.

[2] Glasgow Observer, 23 November 1918, p.6.

[3] ibid., 7 December 1918, p.3.

> "notwithstanding official soothsaying to the contrary(1), those on the spot declare that Mr Barnes polled quite a substantial Irish vote".[2]

We have, I think, to conclude that there was a lag between the conversion of the Irish leaders to the Labour cause and the conversion of their followers. Between 1918 and 1922, the followers caught up with their leaders, a process we shall examine shortly. But in the meantime we have to try to account for the lag.

One reason can perhaps be seen in an implicit contradiction in Diamond's views as set out above. On the one hand, he advised his Irish-born readers to forget about Irish affairs and pull their full weight as electors in Britain by rallying behind a British party. In the long run, this was sound advice, and by 1922, many of the Irish in Britain were coming to take it.[3] But on the other hand, he urged that his readers should support Sinn Fein, as the coming party in Ireland. This was to contradict his own advice to keep out of Irish politics - a task which would surely have been next to impossible for the politically-conscious Irishman in Britain during the eventful years 1918-21. And the British parties were reluctant, especially before the 1918 election, to acknowledge the justice of the Sinn Fein cause, still less to appreciate the spread of its influence. In particular, Diamond's and the Glasgow Observer's warmth towards Labour was not reciprocated when Sinn Fein was under discussion. From the Easter Rising to the 1918 election, Glasgow socialists regarded Sinn Fein with a jaundiced eye. To start with, the participation of James Connolly, who was well known in Scotland, in the Easter Rising, had to be explained. What was a socialist doing in a nationalist rebellion?

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[1] Including, presumably, the Observer's own.

[2] Glasgow Observer, 4 January 1919, p.6.

[3] The principal exception is Liverpool, where the Irish were not integrated into the British party system until the 1930's.

> "Connolly's appearance in the Dublin outbreak is to Socialists on this side wholly inexplicable...
>
> He can have been under no delusion either about the chances of insurrectionary success, or about the value of success if it were achieved." [1]

The authors of "Catholic Socialist Notes" frequently returned to the theme that no movement of revolt which was backed by W.M.Murphy, the Dublin tramway-owner and newspaper proprietor who had broken Larkin's great strike in 1913, was worthy of socialist support:

> "It is time the British Labour movement was warned against bestowing its sympathy indiscriminately on every movement in Ireland that carries a banner bearing the device 'Revolt'. Our admiration for those who faced inevitable failure in the Irish rebellion to promote a cause in which they fervently believe, whether their action was wise or foolish, is apt to tempt us to accept without question policies that are now being offered by parasitical scoundrels in their name". [2]

Shortly afterwards, the attack was rephrased in these terms:

> "Sinn Fein does nothing, and proposes to do nothing, to protect the Irish working-class from Capitalist parasites, provided they are Irish". [3]

Later, the paper attacked the Sinn Fein attitude to conscription, which they regarded as purely selfish:

> "Yet in this crisis the Irish patriots seem to have completely forgotten their exiles. Like the Jingoes of Britain, their objection to conscription is not one of principle, but only to its application to themselves". [4]

But after the 1918 election and the Black-and-Tan War, Labour opinion changed. The election revealed to socialists the full strength of Sinn Fein; the Black-and-Tan War placed them strongly on Sinn Fein's side, as

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[1] Johnston, in Forward, 6 May 1916, p.1.

[2] Catholic Socialist Notes, in Forward, 28 October 1916, p.1.

[3] Catholic Socialist Notes, Forward, 4 November 1916, p.1. There are other attacks on Sinn Fein in Forward of : 2 December 1916, p.1; 20 January 1917, p.4; 20 October 1917, p.1.

[4] Forward, 13 April 1918, p.2.

was shown by the special trade union conference of July 1920 which promised a general strike (which never occurred) to stop the fighting in Ireland, and by the influential Labour Party Commission on Ireland, whose Report, published in 1921, provided the fullest condemnation from a disinterested source of Black-and-Tan behaviour. It is true that the independent Liberals, headed by Asquith, vied with Labour in their denunciations of the Tans; but Asquith's credibility among the Irish was shattered for ever by his handling, or failure to handle, the military regime after the Easter Rising. So Labour became seen as the most pro-Irish party. Not only this, but the Treaty of December 1921 really did remove the Irish Question from British politics (at least until October 1968). From this point, Irishmen could follow Diamond's first precept without any risk of its clashing with his second.

The years 1918 to 1922 saw the completion of the changes in the Irish machine which have been mentioned already. The position, as it seemed to the writers of "Catholic Socialist Notes" late in 1918, was that

> "there are many cross-currents in the local Irish movement at the moment. The Sinn Feiners have considerably strengthened their ranks... The U.I.L., which in previous contests was the unquestioned dictator, is now very weak. The divisional members of the central executive are mostly cordially pro-Labour, but T.P's influence... will be used in an effort to preserve the Irish vote for Liberal Capitalism.
>
> During recent years the Ancient Order of Hibernians... has to a large extent superseded the U.I.L. In this country at least, the leaders of the organisation are pro-Labour. The local Catholic paper, which until recently was anti-Labour, has under the direction of Mr Diamond, its proprietor, become a warm advocate of the Labour Party". [1]

The ex-U.I.L. men sometimes went straight into the Labour Party, but more often went through a period of political twilight. For instance,

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[1] Forward, 14 September 1918, p.3.

> "A new political portent swims into our ken this week in the founding of an Irish Labour Party in Springburn... The new movement is officered by competent, experienced men formerly prominent in the U.I.L., but now sensible of the need of a more democratic and democratically governed organisation". [1]

The A.O.H. was a friendly society which had been banned by the Scottish hierarchy in 1899 because they regarded it as "in part a secret society pursuing political ends".[2] The ban was lifted in 1909, and the Order became increasingly popular as an alternative power-base to the U.I.L. In Ireland itself, the Order was under the control of "Wee Joe" Devlin, who used it to preserve the ascendancy of the old Irish Party among Belfast Catholics against the threat from Sinn Fein - no mean feat. In Scotland, or at least in Glasgow, its political role seems to have been as a home for those U.I.L. leaders who left the league to promote the Labour Party. This was especially true of the leaders of the Home Government branch which, as we noted earlier, was both the largest in Glasgow and from an early date suspect among the orthodox for its pro-I.L.P. tendencies. It is therefore no surprise that six A.O.H. members should have appeared among the 1921 Labour candidates, and that two of the successful candidates in 1922 should have been specifically described as "member[s] of the now defunct Home Government Branch of the U.I.L.... member[s] of the A.O.H".[3]

By the 1922 election, the power of the U.I.L. had totally vanished. Commenting on a request by O'Connor for funds to pay off the U.I.L's debts, the Observer said:

> "Nobody wishes any ill to T.P., and nobody wishes even to say one unnecessarily hard word to or of him. But his day is past..." 4

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 28 December 1918, p.3.

[2] Handley, op.cit., p.283.

[3] See above, p.290.

[4] Glasgow Observer, 4 November 1922, p.3.

Earlier, a leader initialled by Diamond had confidently dismissed "T.P.":

> "A very great number of the Irish in Great Britain, many of them former officials of T.P's League, are now members of the Labour Party. The great bulk of the Irish in Great Britain will vote Labour, and nothing T.P. can say or do will prevent their doing so." [1]

This claim seems to have much more force, at least as far as Glasgow is concerned, for 1922 than for 1918. As we have suggested in Chapter 13 and the present chapter, 1922 was a year of revival for Labour's municipal and parliamentary fortunes. Irish leaders were now without exception on the Labour side; the lag between their views and their followers' had been made up; the settlement of the Irish question, and the end of Labour's enthusiasm for prohibition, had removed the two policy issues which kept the Irish and Labour apart in 1918.

At the beginning of this chapter, in presenting the residuals analysis of ward voting, I explained that much of the chapter would be devoted to explaining the exception rather than the rule: to accounting for those Irish wards which had not the strength of Labour allegiance which would have been inferred from their poverty, as measured by housing density. The exceptions to the exception can be dealt with summarily. It is not at all surprising that Gorbals and Hutchesontown should have been deviantly pro-Labour in 1920. For the integration of Labour and Irish causes which we have been exploring above clearly took place in that part of Glasgow some fifteen years earlier than in Anderston, or Calton, or Cowcaddens. As already explained, the U.I.L. mandate went to Barnes in 1906, and O'Connor suspended the William O'Brien Branch after its members had tried to continue, quixotically, supporting Bonar Law.[2] Alone of the Labour candidates in the West of Scotland, Barnes

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[1] Glasgow Observer, 7 October 1922, p.8.

[2] Handley, op.cit., p.290; Glasgow Observer, 2 December 1922, p.13.

had kept the U.I.L. mandate in the 1910 elections, and even the Observer admitted that its advice to the Irish in Gorbals to oppose Barnes in 1918 had scarcely been heeded. Barnes had been at pains to keep on good terms with the Catholic community in his constituency, and for years was a regular contributor to the Glasgow Observer.[1] In local elections, the Irish-Labour pact also came earlier than elsewhere in the Gorbals and Hutchesontown wards, which between them made up the Gorbals constituency as it was after 1918. In 1911, in Hutchesontown,

> "the United League have already resolved to support Mr John Stewart on account of the support given by the Labour Party to Nationalists in other contests"

- although in Gorbals ward,

> "the Nationalists are under obligations to Bailie Archibald Campbell for services rendered... Otherwise it would have been a great pleasure to have supported Mr Hardie,(2) who is an excellent Labour candidate". [3]

In the 1920 municipal general election, Gorbals Ward was the only one to return two Catholics out of three[4] - both Labour councillors. Hutchesontown boasted one out of three, but the Observer supported his two Protestant colleagues (John Stewart and George Buchanan) with gusto:

> "Hutchesontown should register a solid Labour and Irish vote for this trio". [5]

It is therefore no surprise that the figures show Gorbals and Hutchesontown to have been deviant in a pro-Labour direction in 1920: the Labour-Irish coalition, which came into existence elsewhere around 1922, already throve

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[1] Information from the review of Barnes's career on the occasion of his retirement, Glasgow Observer, 2 December 1922, p.13.

[2] George Hardie, younger brother of Keir Hardie and later M.P. for Springbur

[3] Glasgow Observer, 4 November 1911, p.3. Stewart and Campbell were both elected.

[4] Glasgow Observer, 6 November 1920, p.3.

[5] ibid., 30 October 1920, p.3.

in the Gorbals area by 1920.[1]

It would be wrong to conclude an account of the Irish and Labour without inquiring about the politics of the other group of Glasgow Irishmen - the Orange Protestants from the North of Ireland - and their Scots supporters. It is impossible to say how many Orangemen there might have been in Glasgow. The contemporary press was often prepared to guess at the size of the (Catholic) Irish vote,[2] but never the size of the Orange vote; there are no religious statistics to help us, of the sort which allow us to plot very roughly the distribution of the Catholic vote in Glasgow. At any rate, the Orange vote was certainly very much smaller than the Catholic vote, and it is not possible to trace its electoral effects. Orange organisations urged their supporters to oppose Labour:

> "We call upon every Orangeman and Orangewoman in Glasgow and throughout Scotland in all cases to vote for the moderate constitutional candidates, as opposed to the extreme Labour men" [3]

And as we have seen, Orange anti-Catholicism was appealed to by the Moderate Party and the lobby against the 1918 Education Act. But none of this amounts to very much, politically. We must conclude that the

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[1] Mile-End is more difficult to explain; perhaps the Labour solidarity of Parkhead Forge and other heavy engineering employees was enough to obscure any opposite tendency of the Catholic unskilled. One of the 1920 Labour candidates was an Episcopal clergyman whose service on the School Board doubtless made him persona grata with Catholic leaders.

[2] See, e.g. Scotsman, 18 January 1910; Glasgow Evening Times, 9 December 1918, where improbably high estimates of the Irish vote are given, ranging from 12,000 in Bridgeton and elsewhere to 3000 in Cathcart and Hillhead.

[3] Evening Times, 28 October 1920, p.3, reporting a statement of the Vigilance Committee of the Loyal Orange Lodge of Scotland.

Orange vote was not only much smaller, but much less coherent than the Catholic vote. It is not possible to point to any election result which was clearly influenced by the emergence of an anti-Labour Orange bloc of votes. In Glasgow, as in Liverpool, Labour eventually inherited the Irish machine; but in Glasgow, unlike Liverpool, it contrived to do so in a way which provoked no measurable Orange backlash.

The two outstanding features of working-class politics in Glasgow in the four years following the Armistice were the housing crusade and the collapse of the U.I.L. Both helped bring about the Labour victory in 1922. There is no statistical criterion whereby we can place them in an order of importance; it seems most likely that the housing crusade gave Labour the more votes, but that the Irish coalition gave it more new leading personalities. One purpose of Chapters 13 and 14 has been to help dispel the legend that wartime radicalism brought about the 1922 result; housing and the Irish seem to supply the best alternative explanation for that result.

Conclusion

Reference was made in the Introduction to the myth and the assumption which have often accompanied the study of Red Clydeside. It should now be possible to review the findings of this thesis, in order to see to what extent the myth has been dislodged and the assumption queried.

Much of Part I was devoted to demonstrating the restricted scope of wartime militancy and its craft-conservative appeal.[1] The war merely hastened and extended a struggle between the executive and the membership of the A.S.E. which was in any case inherent in the strains imposed by technical change - especially the threat to the craftsman's status. A number of the leading lights of the C.W.C., particularly John Muir, tried to graft a syndicalist demand for workers' control on to the engineers' agitation against the Government's dilution schemes. But most of the men (and later the C.W.C. itself)[2] preferred the more limited perspective of Kirkwood: "workers' control" meant workplace control, control over the conditions in which unskilled men and women were to be introduced. Furthermore, the engineers' movement was necessarily not only restricted, but divisive. If anything

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[1] Since the completion of Chapters 1-14, some of these themes have been well developed by J.S.Hinton in his essay "The Clyde Workers' Committee and the Dilution Struggle" in A.Briggs and J.Saville (eds.), Essays in Labour History, 1866-1923, London 1971, pp.152-184. While Dr.Hinton shows up clearly the link between craft conservatism and the C.W.C., his failure to mention such conservatism outside the C.W.C. might lead the reader to assume that the C.W.C. was the target of governmental "repression" far more than it actually was.

[2] As witness, for example, the text of the C.W.C. dilution proposals, reproduced in Chapter 6 above.

it increased the historic antipathy between the craftsman and the "handyman" or the labourer, especially later in the war when the craftsmen's grievances mostly concerned alleged breaches of their exemption from conscription. This was scarcely a flag round which to rally the unskilled who were not exempt at all. The legacy of this mistrust persisted into 1919, with the lukewarm support given by the unskilled to the Forty Hours' Strike; politically, it was not overcome until the local Labour Party had transformed itself from an artisan party into a working-class party.

All this tends towards the conclusion, foreshadowed in the Introduction, that the importance of revolutionary ideas on Clydeside in wartime has been consistently much exaggerated. For instance, there is no evidence that the "revolutionary defeatist" views held by John Maclean ever struck a chord among the engineers, even their nominally anti-war leaders.[1] Close examination of the history of the period may give the lie to the claims made by Gallacher in his writings, but the temptation to set up a counter-myth based on John Maclean should be resisted, because Maclean was at first carried along on the surface of an agitation not of his making, and later stood on the sidelines vainly exhorting a working-class with which he was fundamentally out of touch.

There are a number of perfectly natural reasons for the usual exaggeration of the importance of the more conventional revolutionaries. First, of course, comes the tendency to take them at their own valuation. For two or three decades Gallacher's and Kirkwood's accounts were the

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[1] See, for instance, the preamble to the C.W.C's dilution scheme, addressed to the Dilution Commissioners: "Your SOLE desire is increased output... We have every sympathy with your desire for increased output". BCM V. no 6, p.37.

only ones readily available of "Red Clydeside" between 1914 and 1922. A volume like the History of the Ministry of Munitions, which provides a different perspective, remained virtually unknown, even to professional historians;[1] while Addison's diary, as Professor Mowat remarked, "has never had much attention, and is not perhaps the most exciting reading".[2] In the second place, commentators have failed to make the point that unrest came in two stages: only a relatively small number of workers were involved in the dilution crisis, or even (given the failure of the unskilled to join in) the 1919 strike; but consequent protests against, say, the suppression of the Forward or the deportations - incidents which caught the popular imagination - were very much more widespread. The working men's reactions to events were like those of many students in the unrest of the late 1960's: they did not initiate brushes with authority, but they sympathised with their colleagues who had.

The revolutionaries' estimation of their own importance was often shared by authority, whether Munro describing Bloody Friday as a Bolshevist rising, the Glasgow Herald viewing the same incident as the squalid terrorism which precedes Bolshevism, or Basil Thomson and the Special Branch, seeing that they were compassed about with so great a crowd of Bolshevists, from George Lansbury to John Maclean. But the fears of the one side were as much exaggerated as the hopes of the other. In fact, the Government never mounted an organised assault on the revolutionaries, although in 1916 and again in 1919 it was panicked by these chimerical fears into taking unwarranted and unnecesarily severe action against them. The most recent attempt to prove that "the

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[1] Mr.Taylor, for instance, though he mentions the H.M.M. in the bibliography of his "English History 1914-45", makes no use of it in the text. Its great length, of course, is one disincentive.

[2] C.L.Mowat, "Great Britain since 1914" (London 1970, in the series "The Sources of History: Studies in the Use of Historical Evidence"), p.98.

suppression of the C.W.C. ... was the result of a well-planned offensive directed by the Labour Department of the Ministry of Munitions"[1] is ultimately unconvincing for several reasons. It fails to take account of the divisions between the Ministry of Munitions and other departments, or to distinguish between policy-makers like Llewellyn Smith and Beveridge and advisors like Weir and Paterson. More seriously, it appears to assume that much of the "repression", which was actually aimed at the A.S.E. and the fundamentalists, was destined for the C.W.C. In fact, the surviving papers seem to demonstrate that the attack on the C.W.C. was much less important, for the Ministry, than the attack on the A.S.E. Executive. So far from being a well-planned offensive, the former appears to have been a succession of disconnected and bungling reactions to events. In particular, the argument that the suppression of Forward was really aimed at the C.W.C. does not seem to hold water. And, on the evidence available, it seems more likely that the Parkhead affair of March 1916 originated inside the plant, from the middle management's dislike of Kirkwood, than that it was part of a divide et impera plot by the Commissioners and/or the Ministry of Munitions against the C.W.C.

Undoubtedly the most enduring product of wartime Red Clydeside was rent control, in bringing about which the C.W.C. played a part, though not a leading one.[2] But no amount of agitation on Clydeside would have brought about rent control had it not been for the support given by Lloyd George to that governmental broken reed, the Scottish Office under

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[1] Hinton, art.cit., p.153.

[2] Dr.Hinton goes as far as to say, "One of the hoariest legends about the C.W.C. is that it led the Rent Strike of the autumn of 1915", Art.cit., p.163.

McKinnon Wood. Without Lloyd George's advocacy, Tory members of the Cabinet would never have supported a measure which they so evidently detested.

The assumed connection between 1916 and 1922 has rarely been set down so explicitly as the mythical revolution of 1916 (or 1919)[1], but it is worth examining none the less. In the 1918 general election, the Labour Party on Clydeside did not live up to the expectations harboured by friends and enemies alike, since it scored only one hit and one near-miss. This helped to harden the views of authority in January 1919, enabling ministers, civil servants, and union leaders to reject out of hand the S.T.U.C. appeals for intervention:

> "Why, for instance, if Glasgow wants the 40-hours' week, have they not sent to Parliament members to vote for it?" [2]

The resolute refusal to intervene - except with tanks - and the determination of unions to reassert their authority over their members contributed to the complete failure of the 1919 strike. It is not surprising that local Labour leaders on Clydeside were in a mood of depression by the middle of 1919. So far from there being a continuous, bouyant revolutionary tradition to sustain them, it seemed that they would have to restart from scratch. The political and industrial aspirations of the war both lay in ruins. As we have seen, the rebuilding of Labour fortunes depended on two things, one with wartime roots and one with none. On the one hand, Labour sailed to the top of the poll in 1922 at the height of its success in the housing crusade - the upholding of the judgment in Kerr v. Bryde in the House of Lords:

> "Never, probably, has a question of such potential influence on the electors been suddenly projected in the midst of a general appeal to the country". [3]

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[1] But see Kellas, op.cit., p.196.

[2] See above, p.247.

[3] Glasgow Evening Times, 8 November 1922, p.3.

This was a triumph the basis for which can be traced back to Wheatley's and Johnston's pre-war concerns as housing reformers (with the "£8 cottage" scheme), but whose real origin was with the 1915 Rent Act. Once that Act, itself apparently a triumph for Labour, had established the principle of rent control, successive governments found (as witness the 1919 and 1920 Acts) that they would never be able to return to normalcy, while Labour politicians discovered that in campaigning against rent increases they were on the strongest possible political ground. Their case seemed all the stronger in the light of the revelations of housing conditions contained in the 1917 Royal Commission Report.

On the other hand, the Labour Party's success in 1922 depended on widening its social base, a process which the disappearance of wartime conditions actually helped in so far as it lessened skilled-unskilled tensions. The main requirement, though, was reconciliation with the Irish. In the days before "Labour" had meant "socialist", there had been a working alliance on Glasgow Corporation between labour and Irish interests in the Stalwart Party, which extended in 1906 to encourage the U.I.L. to endorse Labour parliamentary candidates. The emergence of the Labour Party as such, however, actually damaged labour representation as it broke up the Stalwart Party and the Irish withdrew their support from the Labour Party because of its exclusiveness, its teetotalism, its socialism, and its refusal to nominate U.I.L. men in Irish wards. This breach was healed only when two of these faults were remedied, and Irish publicans appeared on the hustings as Labour candidates. At the parliamentary level, the success of Labour depended also on the collapse of the U.I.L. and of the "Wee Frees". The Irish vote was in limbo at the 1918 election, but in 1922 it was firmly committed to Labour. The recruitment of the Irish, together with the housing crusade, was able

to provide in 1922 the political success which wartime militancy had failed to produce in 1918.

It is worth asking what was the legacy of "Red Clydeside": what monuments, industrial, political, or social, it left behind it. Industrially, the answer must be very few. Revolutionary industrial unionism was a blind alley, either in its pre-war form appealing to non-unionised workers, at Singers, or in its wartime variety where it marched uneasily with craft conservatism to present the sectional demands of the skilled engineers. It was firmly based in the workplace, and centred around the shop stewards, and this was both its strength and its weakness. On the one hand, for almost the only time in British labour history a substantial number of workmen (albeit only in a relatively small number of plants) could be mobilised around revolutionary demands; but on the other, the local orientation of the leaders prevented them from succeeding in any attempts at national organisation, which alone might, for instance, have saved the 1919 strike from collapse. Such support as the revolutionaries had vanished, in any case, after the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act allowed craft unions to regain the control over their members which they had lost during the war. Cut adrift from its wartime source of strength, revolutionary industrial unionism died a sudden death, and was never resurrected. This may seem a perverse conclusion to come to at a time when the "work-in" of the employees of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders has once again drawn attention to Red Clydeside. But there is obviously nothing in common between the issues concerning the munitions workers in 1916 and those motivating the shipyard workers in 1971. All that the two situations have in common is evidence of strong class solidarity among the workers, a solidarity

which the events of the First World War perhaps helped to bring about. This might be regarded as one of the two political legacies of Red Clydeside between 1914 and 1922.

However ephemeral the industrial unrest of these years may have been, it did leave its mark in one sense: it helped to make Glasgow, politically, a class-war city. In Glasgow, the shift of the political line of division from Liberal v. Tory to Labour v. the rest was complete by 1922. In 1918 only a very small number of places, mostly in the coalfields, had developed what might be called straight class politics. By 1922, they had been joined by two cities: Glasgow and Sheffield. Two developments in these cities justify the use of the term "class politics". On the one hand, the Labour Party had become the customary majority party of their working-class areas, where politics based on class superseded the earlier "status politics"[1] based on religion, drink, or ethnicity; on the other, the old parties had sunk their differences to put up a united front against Labour. In Glasgow, this process can be traced in municipal politics with the gradual crystallisation of the Citizens' Union, through the Good Government League, to the Moderate Party between 1918 and 1922, and an exactly analogous process took place in Sheffield, where

> "(t)he success of the Socialists in 1919 resulted in the formation by the Conservative, Liberal, and National Democratic parties of a Citizens' Association 'to fight the November 1920 elections on non-political lines, the aim being to find the best men for the City' ". [2]

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[1] The term is used (with appropriate acknowledgements to Max Weber) in the introductory chapter to P.F.Clarke, "Lancashire and the New Liberalism" (Cambridge, 1971).

[2] H.Keeble Hawson, "Sheffield: The Growth of a City 1893-1926" (Sheffield, 1968), p.295. quoting part of a statement from "Sheffield Year Book and Record", Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 1921.

In parliamentary politics, the process shows up in another parallel between the two cities: in the 1922 election, the local Conservatives and Coalition Liberals in both places agreed to keep the Coalition in being, so that there would be only one effective candidate in opposition to Labour in each seat. (As another sign of class polarisation, the Asquithians had ceased to count in both places). In Glasgow, the Unionist and National Liberal candidates issued a joint manifesto.[1] The political good sense of their cohesion was illustrated by the result in Cathcart, where the local Unionists rebelled and put up an anti-coalitionist, and Labour scraped in by 33 votes on an even split of the anti-Labour vote.

It is clear that some, at least, of the credit for the polarisation of politics in Glasgow ahead of other British cities should go to "Red Clydeside" and the reaction it provoked among local middle-class politicians and their supporters. The events of the war and the immediate post-war years had made men like Wheatley, Shinwell, and Kirkwood into bogeymen of the local middle class - far more so than the respectable Labour politicians of, say, Edinburgh or Manchester, appeared to be in their native cities. There is, however, one complicating factor.

We saw in Chapter 14 that one of the main impulses behind the formation of the Moderate Party was Protestant reaction against the Irish, and against any attempt by a "semi-alien population" to control city politics. The means used by the Irish was the Labour Party; but the reasons they favoured it had, as we have seen, nothing to do with "Red Clydeside" as it is conventionally understood. The reaction of

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[1]Printed in Glasgow Herald, 8 November 1922, p.8.

the Moderate Party to Labour had thus in it an element of the old politics as well as the new: dislike of Irish Catholicism played its part along with reaction to the formation of a self-consciously working-class party. With this proviso, however, we can admit that "Red Clydeside" had an important role in determining the shape of Glasgow city politics.

Its other political effect was on the careers of Clydeside politicians. Within the Labour Party, Kirkwood, Neil Maclean, Shinwell, and Johnston were perhaps the politicians most affected, and Wheatley rather less so. Maclean and Kirkwood provide the most clear-cut case: men who would never have entered national politics at all had it not been for their part in unofficial unrest between 1911 and 1919. A sympathetic, though very condescending, colleague later described Kirkwood as follows:

> "/His voice/ is the voice of the quintessential Glasgow of the working classes... He is simply the average man of the working classes of Glasgow endowed with a slightly greater power of expressing his sentiments than the average man possesses". [1]

Maclean and Kirkwood were surely the first two working-class Labour M.P's whose pathway to Parliament was at no time smoothed by trade union office. For his part, Shinwell probably owed his Labour nomination in Linlithgow in 1918 to his prominence as chairman of the Glasgow Trades Council, while Johnston's popular appeal derived from the success of Forward, which was mostly acquired during the First World War. Wheatley's claim to fame during these years was his activity in forging a Labour Party on Glasgow Corporation, and in leading the rent struggles of 1919-20. In a sense, his career owed less to the "Red Clydeside" background than that

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[1] Anon, "The Scottish Socialists: A Gallery of Contemporary Portraits" (London, 1931), pp.211-3. The author was Thomas Henderson, Labour M.P. for Tradeston.

of the others mentioned: he was more of an eminence grise during the war, and in any case his outstanding abilities as a municipal politician would surely have gained him a Parliamentary nomination whatever his home city.

The sharpness of the break represented by the 1922 election has more than once been stressed in the course of this thesis. Whether parliamentary Red Clydeside is defined widely as the Labour contingent from the West of Scotland, or narrowly as the group of five or six members who continued to sustain the I.L.P. in its years of adversity, the overlap of personnel from the period before 1922 is not very great. By 1931 there were 37 Labour M.P's in Scotland, 25 of whom represented constituencies in the industrial west.[1] Of this number, only nine were involved in Glasgow politics during the war, and only four (Kirkwood, Johnston, Neil Maclean, and Shinwell) were in any way prominent. Of the hard-core I.L.Pers, only Wheatley (who died in 1930) and Kirkwood played a leading part in wartime politics. Maxton, Stephen, and Buchanan were not leading figures before their arrival in Parliament, even though their impact was immediate once they got there.

A record of militancy between 1914 and 1922 seems, in fact, to have been more useful as an entrance qualification for Communist than for Labour politicians. Both the ex-S.L.P. hierarchy which dominated the C.P.G.B. for the first three years of its existence and the ex-B.S.P. one which partially supplanted it after "Bolshevisation" had roots in Clydeside. Arthur McManus, Thomas Bell, and Thomas Clark were all leading functionaries in the S.L.P's "Communist Unity Group", while of

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[1] Defined as comprising the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Ayr, Dumbarton and western Stirlingshire.

course William Gallacher, once converted to orthodoxy after meeting Lenin in 1920, was to become a loyal and important member of the hierarchy for the rest of his life. Later generations of Communist leaders were also often recruited from Scotland, although they were too young to have taken a prominent part in wartime or postwar militancy.

Arguably, the principal legacy of "Red Clydeside" between 1914 and 1922 was neither industrial nor political, however. Hardly any trace of the attitudes of 1914 to 1922 survives in the industrial or political organisations of labour in the west of Scotland today; what does survive is an extremely curious housing market, which "Red Clydeside" did more than enything else to bring about. In both the private and the public sectors, house rentals in Scotland have for half a century been much lower than in England. An ad hoc enquiry in 1967 found that

> "Over a quarter of the tenants of privately rented unfurnished houses in Scotland pay less than £13 a year in rent. A further 37 per cent pay between £13 and £26 a year. Only 9 per cent pay £52 or more a year... With these rents... it is quite impossible to finance even the minimum amount of 'ordinary' repairs". [1]

As for the public sector, the Scottish council tenant in 1969 bore 40% of the cost of his house while 60% fell on public funds; the corresponding English figures were 75% and 25%.[2]

The years 1915 to 1920 did much to bring about this state of affairs. The Ballantyne Commission found, it will be recalled, that even before

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[1] "Scotland's Older Houses: Report by a Sub-Committee of the Scottish Housing Advisory Committee " (chairman Cullingworth), H.M.S.O. 1967, para.167. Emphasis in original.

[2] Glasgow Herald, 4 November 1970.

1914 the rents obtainable from tenement housing were too low to permit any rational entrepreneur to build new houses. The Rent Restriction Acts of 1915, 1919, and 1920 sealed the fate of private housebuilding for rental by working-class tenants; by sharply reducing rents in real terms, they ensured not only that no new tenements would be built, but also that arrears of maintenance would build up in existing houses. This, with all its ambivalent consequences, was largely the socialists' achievement. After the 1919 Act, the working-class tenant was paying less than half as much, proportionately, on rent as in 1914, and even when the slump had set in he was still paying less in real terms than before the war. The 1920 Act,none the less, provoked feelings of outrage, largely because it allowed increases in rent just at the time when unemployment was rising steeply and wage rates were being cut.

Both directly and indirectly, the socialists exercised a like influence on council housing when it came to be built. Wheatley's study of the Scottish housing market convinced him of the need for generous subsidies, which his own Housing Act of 1924 was the first to provide effectively.[1] And the state of the private rental market ensured that council rentals in Scotland would remain low, especially after Labour gained control of the principal industrial towns (including Glasgow) from the early 1930's.

Low-rental urban housing in Scotland goes back a long way before the first socialists appeared on the scene; the 1917 Royal Commission Report shows that rents were an awkward problem before the first Rent Restriction Act. But that Act and its successors, which instituted

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[1] 75,000 houses were built in Scotland under the 1924 Act. Cullingworth Report, para. 26.

rent control in its modern form, obviously did a great deal to shape the modern Scottish housing market.

To conclude finally that this was Red Clydeside's most lasting memorial may seem rather trivial: parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. But if we are concerned solely with 1914-22, then the subsequent parliamentary history of the Clydesiders is outside our terms of reference. Their achievements and their parliamentary influence owed much to their Glasgow background, admittedly, but very little to the specific events we have been discussing; and of the leading actors of 1914-22, only Wheatley, Johnston, Shinwell and Gallacher went on to play a leading part elsewhere. Perhaps, after all, the housing crusade should be seen as Red Clydeside's most enduring achievement in the years up to 1922.

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This bibliography is arranged in the following eight sections:

I. Public Records.
II. Other unpublished materials.
III. Contemporary Government publications.
IV. Periodicals.
V. Recollections.
VI. Articles and theses.
VII. Books used as primary sources.
VIII. Other books.

Note: All dates in brackets in Sections I, II, and IV refer to the period for which the documents concerned were consulted, not that which they covered.

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