

5. PROBLEMS OF WAR AND ADJUSTMENT, 1914-22

The outbreak of war inevitably wrought havoc on the Round Table organisation, although it did not "go bust", as Kerr initially predicted.¹ The London group was depleted by the enlistment of Amery, Craik and Grigg. Kerr at first thought of enlisting, but was persuaded otherwise by Curtis and Selborne. He was, in fact, called up for service in March 1916, and his first application for exemption was turned down - "apparently none of the tribunal had ever heard of the Round Table" - but the influence of his friends eventually prevailed.² Equally important in circumscribing Round Table operations was the drying-up of donations to the movement. The result was the enforced redundancy of three office staff and calls for economies in the printing of Curtis's studies.³

Round Table operations in the Dominions were likewise severely curtailed by the war. The London group lost two of its staunchest allies, the Canadian E J Kylie and the New Zealander S A Atkinson, and all the Dominion groups were greatly diminished by enlistment. Those who remained complained of the difficulties of recruiting new members, and of the

¹ Kerr to Lady Anne Kerr, 29 July 1914, Lothian Papers 464, fol 26.

² Kerr to Lady Anne Kerr, 31 March 1916, Lothian Papers 465, fol 27. The appeal tribunal was chaired by Lord Salisbury.

³ Kerr to Curtis, 12 Aug 1914, RT Papers c 782, fols 187-88.

general lack of interest in the Round Table's "academic" programme.¹

However, the war did not result in any change of tack by the Round Table group, which decided in October 1914 to continue with its original plan. Indeed, the *Round Table* magazine was thought all the more useful as a vehicle for the views on war policy espoused by the Moot,² which agreed that it "must now concentrate practically its whole attention on the business of winning the war".³

War Politics and the Lloyd George Coalition

The most remarkable result of the First World War for the Moot was the way in which, individually and collectively, Round Tablers moved from a position on the margins of British political life to one very much nearer its centre.

Conscription, for which Milner, Oliver, Amery and others had pressed before the war, and which Curtis hinted at in his *Round Table Studies*, now occupied a central place in the group's desiderata. An article on the subject was prepared for the December 1914 *Round Table*, which included the contention that military service was a Common Law duty; in the event, the

1 See, eg Glazebrook to Curtis, 27 Aug 1914, RT Papers c 782, fols 195-6.

2 Curtis to Glazebrook, 3 Nov 1914, RT Papers c 779, fol 127.

3 [Kerr] to Curtis, 4 June 1915, RT Papers c 809, fols 46-47.

death of Lord Roberts provided a different angle from which to tackle the subject.¹

The following year, 1915, saw a large number of references to the issue in the pages of the magazine, and the publication of Oliver's *Ordeal* by *Battle*, a trenchant statement of the case for compulsion. At one point a "National Covenant" was proposed, by which people would pledge themselves to "subordinate their whole lives during the war to carrying out the declared purpose of the Government to bring this war to a successful issue".² Although this project was ruled out on the appearance of Northcliffe's National Service Society,³ the London group continued to press for the "organising and disciplining of the whole population".⁴ Once conscription was enacted, London Round Tablers called for harsh penalties against conscientious objectors, Kerr going so far as to suggest exile (following a period of imprisonment with hard labour) as a suitable punishment.⁵ In the Dominions (which the *Round Table* declared to be a "second reservoir"⁶) Round Tablers were again prominent in the ultimately unsuccessful campaigns for the local introduction of conscription.

1 [Kerr,] "Draft Article on Compulsory Service", Nov 1914, RT Papers c 779, fols 137-49; [Amery,] "Lord Roberts", *RT*, Dec 1914, pp 1-2.

2 Curtis to Lady Selborne, 10 Aug 1915, Curtis Papers 2, fols 180-84.

3 Kerr to Evelyn Wrench, 3 Sept 1915, RT Papers c 845, fol 18.

4 [Kerr,] "National Duty in War", *RT*, Sept 1915, p 709.

5 Kerr, "Memorandum on the 'Absolutist' Conscientious Objectors", [1917/18,] Lothian Papers 219, fols 744-48.

6 [Kerr,] "The Burden of Victory", *RT*, June 1915, pp 516-17.

The Koot's views on conscription and on the need for a more vigorous war policy pitted it against the dilatory "Squiff" (Asquith, with whom the Koot had quarrelled before, over Anglo-Dominion relations, Ireland, and a whole range of other issues). The latter's incompetence as a war leader and loosening grip on his own party enabled Milner and his colleagues to ally themselves with powerful political forces in both major parties and in the War Office. Their "war gingerite" credentials, patriotic rectitude and experience in administration ensured that the Round Tablers were well placed to share in the spoils following Asquith's fall.

Much has been written about the "Monday night cabal" of Milner and his followers, and its rôle in Asquith's downfall.¹ A forerunner of this group was the Round Table weekly subcommittee set up in June 1915 to discuss war policy, consisting of Milner, Oliver, Amery, Hitchens, Brand, Kerr, Zimmern and Chirol.² In January 1916, Dawson recorded the first meeting of the "Monday night" group, consisting of himself, Milner, Oliver, Amery and Sir Edward Carson.³ Others who joined included Kerr, Waldorf Astor, General Sir Henry Wilson and (occasionally) Lloyd George. Although the group was separate from the Round Table, Round Tablers were numerically preponderant, and contemporaries often confused membership of the two.⁴

¹ A locus classicus of the conspiratorialist view is Wrench, *Geoffrey Dawson and our Times* (London, 1955), chapter 12.

² [Kerr] to Curtis, 4 June 1915, RT Papers c 809, fols 46-47.

³ Dawson's diary, 17 Jan 1916, Dawson Papers 22.

⁴ See, eg, Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets, Vol I* (London, 1970), pp 422-23 (Hankey's diary for 15 Aug 1917).

The purpose of the "Monday night" group was to discuss and co-ordinate demands for a more effective organisation of the war effort. It also promoted the talents of its own members, particularly Milner. In June 1916 Oliver suggested "various means . . . for forcing Milner on the reluctant Government", including Conservative party pressure, press "clamour", and "private Tadpoling" (the method he preferred).¹

A meeting of the "Monday night" group on 27 November 1916, including Carson and Wilson, agreed to put pressure on Lloyd George and Bonar Law to pull out of Asquith's cabinet.² This was confirmed by a Round Table meeting the following weekend, during and after which Dawson composed his famous editorial of 4 December, which scotched Asquith's hopes of containing the cabinet revolt.³ The following day the government collapsed, to be replaced by a new Coalition under Lloyd George. The rôle of the "Monday night" and Round Table groups was relatively minor, but it was timely, and helped to put a principled gloss on the intrigues of politicians.⁴

Milner himself became a member of the new five-man War Cabinet. In 1918 he was briefly Secretary of State for War, responsible for the unified

¹ Oliver to Carson, 9 June 1916, Oliver Papers 87, fols 9-12.

² Dawson's diary, 27 Nov 1916, Dawson Papers 22.

³ *The Times*, 4 Dec 1916.

⁴ See P A Lockwood, "Milner's Entry into the War Cabinet", *Hist Journal*, Vol VII (1964), pp 120-34, and Cameron Hazlehurst, "The Conspiracy Myth" in M Gilbert (ed), *Lloyd George* (New Jersey, 1968).

war command at Douellens which staved off the Allied collapse, and from 1918-21 he served as Colonial Secretary, notable mainly for his advocacy of measured retreat in Egypt.

Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretary, managed to forestall Milner's attempt to foist Steel-Maitland on him as an assistant. He was forced to accept Amery, however, "as Milner insists", even though he "would much sooner see him elsewhere".¹ Amery found that Hankey's rule of minuting definite conclusions was "not easy after some particularly woolly discussion. But my experience was that, if one invented the best decision one could think of, it was rarely queried by those concerned".²

Kerr was appointed a member of Lloyd George's "Garden Suburb" in January 1917 (and was replaced as *Round Table* editor by Coupland, although he continued to contribute a large number of articles). By the end of the war, Kerr was Lloyd George's only private secretary, in which position he remained until 1921, when he was replaced by Grigg. Milner predicted that Kerr would have "a great chance of making himself heard" from his position in Downing Street.³ Kerr was indeed regarded in many quarters as the "power behind the throne".⁴ It was his job not only to brief the Prime Minister, controlling the flow of information and often conducting

¹ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets, Vol I* (London, 1970), pp 343-4.

² Amery, *My Political Life, Vol 2* (London, 1953), p 94.

³ Milner to Sir Hugh Thornton, 3 Feb 1917, Milner Papers 19, fols 7-12.

⁴ *New York Times*, 24 March 1921.

interviews on his behalf, but also to liaise with government departments, and even occasionally to act as Lloyd George's representative at government meetings. Kerr's influence was increased by Lloyd George's tendency to 'shuffle everything on to' Kerr, and his reluctance "to use the constitutional machinery".¹

Others in the Moot moved into positions of less influence, but still of importance. Oliver served briefly as secretary to the Economic Offensive committee of the cabinet. Brand and Hichens were enlisted to set up the Imperial Munitions Board in Canada, which was subsequently chaired and staffed by members of the Canadian Round Table. Brand went on to Washington, where he was deputy chairman of the British Mission. Coupland and Zimmern both served in the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, which acted as a "brains trust" for the development of British war aims.

John Turner has argued persuasively that the movement of Milner's protégés into positions of office and influence was less the result of a concerted "Fabian-like Milnerite penetration" than of "opportunist lobbying".² Nevertheless, the prestige and power of the group as a whole was enhanced significantly by the changes which brought some of its members so close to the centre of power in Britain.

¹ Hankey to Kerr, 11 Sept 1920, Lothian Papers 210, fols 407-11; cf Alan Sharp, "The Foreign Office in Eclipse, 1919-22", *History*, Vol 61 (1976), pp 198-218.

² J A Turner, "The Formation of Lloyd George's 'Garden Suburb'", *Hist Journal*, vol 20 (1977), pp 165-84.

The position of Milner, Amery and particularly Kerr enabled those Round Tablers who were still independent of the government to enjoy a privileged access to the corridors of power. Moreover, this was at a time "when", as Curtis wrote, "everything is plastic and when by a touch you can direct policy in one direction or the other".¹ Curtis himself sought to exert an influence through Kerr and then Grigg on at least three issues - immigration policies, India and Ireland.

Nevertheless, the activities and influence of the Round Table were clearly constrained by the needs of the day-to-day running of the war and its aftermath, and also by the political priorities of the Coalition's supporters. The Moot could not set the agenda; it could only hope to exert influence on each issue as it arose. Furthermore, as Curtis realised, the Round Table's intimacy with the Government was double-edged.

"To do our work we must like *The Times* be in close touch with men in office. But if once you allow the *Round Table* to become an official organ its power for good will die in your hands. Now that so many of our colleagues are in official positions we run some danger of our fundamental principles suffering . . . eclipse."²

The close connections between the Round Table and the Lloyd George Coalition necessarily entailed some loss of its claim to disinterestedness. In Kerr's case, the effect of his years in Downing Street was dramatic, causing him to transfer his allegiance wholeheartedly to Lloyd George.

¹ Curtis to Kerr, 25 March 1917, Lothian Papers 33, fols 8-10.

² Curtis to Coupland, 15 Oct 1917, RT Papers c 810, fols 191-94.

Allegations that the younger Round Tablers had become mere mouthpieces for Lloyd George were, indeed, both to damage relations with the Dominion Round Table groups, and to give rise to acrimonious disputes within the London Koot.

The Dominions in Wartime

The Dominions' response to the outbreak of war appeared, at first, to confound those who believed the Anglo-Dominion relationship to be in process of slow disintegration. As Duncan commented, the war "brought to the test . . . theories of neutrality and partnership-at-will".¹ And the Dominions' answer was unequivocal. A million men from the Dominions enlisted to fight for the Empire, in theatres ranging from the Western Front through the Dardanelles to the various German colonies in Africa and the Pacific.² "Surely in all history there has been no such striking demonstration of the unity of a far-flung Empire", asserted the Canadian Round Table.³

The mobilisation of Dominion resources on such a scale, and on a purely voluntary basis, appeared to many commentators also to prove that co-operation afforded a workable basis for the future of the Empire. This

¹ [Duncan,] "South Africa", *RT*, Dec 1914, p 229.

² See "The Military Effort of the British Empire", *RT*, June 1919, pp 495-509 for an early attempt to quantify the Imperial war effort..

³ "Canada", *RT*, Dec 1914 (pp 179-200), p 186.

view, which had always been an element in the thinking of some Round Tablers, steadily gained ground as the war progressed. By 1916 key figures in the London Moot, including Brand and Milner, were prepared to subscribe to such a view.¹ On the other hand, Curtis remained unconvinced. At first, Kerr shared Curtis's doubts.² So, too, did Kylie, who emphasised that "what really counts is the intelligent and combined effort which if made in time of peace will prevent war".³

While the tensions between federation and co-operation thus remained unresolved, the Moot was unanimous in believing that some constitutional change was both necessary and inevitable either during or immediately after the war. Even if co-operation represented a viable future strategem for Anglo-Dominion relations, the ramshackle, chaotic and unstructured form in which it existed before 1914 did not. On this point the Moot was encouraged by some of the reports sent by Dominion Round Tablers. New Zealand's first *Round Table* contribution of the war included a plea for "a better organized Imperial system".⁴ The following year, the Australian *Round Table* acknowledged "the defective system under which the Empire's affairs are conducted", as a result of which "the desire and the capacity

¹ See Milner to Glazebrook, 8 March 1916, Milner Papers 44, fols 61-64; Brand to Sir Edmund Walker, 22 Feb 1916, RT Papers c 780, fols 32-3. See also above, pp 98-99.

² Kerr, "The Meaning and Purpose of the British Commonwealth" [1916], Lothian Papers 4, item 278; [Kerr,] "The Schism of Europe", *RT*, March 1915 (pp 345-411), pp 409-10.

³ Kylie to Curtis, 30 Sept 1914, RT Papers c 779, fols 80-81.

⁴ "New Zealand", *RT*, Dec 1914, p 257.

[in the Dominions] to serve are not availed of to the full".¹

To the London *Round Table*, it was still clear that if the Dominions were to share in the permanent control of the Empire's foreign policy, "a new government must be created to deal with it, constitutionally representative of all the democracies under the Crown". Nevertheless, such a radical change in the Imperial constitution was unlikely to be brought about in the conditions of war. "It will be time enough to overhaul it when the strain is relaxed and peace is attained."² The important point for the moment was that the "absence of adequate representative machinery" could be "no excuse" for not using "the machinery of consultation which already exists".³

The *Round Table* therefore urged the British Government to convene a wartime Imperial Conference. Cable and post were entirely inadequate as a means of consultation. A whole range of questions - such as manpower, finance, trade restrictions, shipping and prize law - needed to be hammered out. More importantly still, it was essential for the Dominions "to know, well in advance, the mind of the British Government" regarding peace terms. The latter would "commit the Dominions as completely as Great Britain". A wartime Conference would therefore have a full agenda even without discussing "any of the larger problems of Imperial partnership".⁴

1 "Australia", *RT*, Sept 1915, p 865.

2 [Grigg,] "The Dominions and the Settlement: A Plea for Conference", *RT*, March 1915, pp 325-44.

3 [Kerr,] "National Duty in War", *RT*, Sept 1915 (pp 707-23), p 720.

4 [Grigg,] "The Dominions and the Settlement . . .", *loc cit.*

The Dominion *Round Table* articles responded to the Moot's plea for a Conference, but not in such a way as to give great cheer. From Australia it was reported that "responsible opinion appears cautious . . . and anxious to wait awhile". There was even a possibility of "embarrassment" and "danger" if agreement on peace aims could not be reached.¹ In New Zealand, "scant consideration" had been given to the possibility of a Conference. The war had brought about "a wider, more discriminating, and more instructed loyalty to the great Commonwealth", but also a "feeling that the war has altered for all time the position of the Dominions".²

The London Round Tablers still believed that Dominion nationalism could be accommodated and even co-opted by a movement for closer Imperial integration. Nevertheless, the difficulties of doing so were brought home forcefully, first by the disagreements (particularly between Curtis and the Canadian Round Tablers) over publication of *The Problem of the Commonwealth*, and secondly by the public and press response to Curtis's book. Even if the Round Tablers themselves did not see Imperialism and nationalism as necessarily antagonistic, many of their critics did. The *Toronto Globe*, for instance, suggested that in

"appealing at this time to the perfervid loyalty of ultra-Imperialists, and in opposing Imperialism to Nationality, [the Round Tablers] . . . are awakening latent forces in this and every Dominion which prudent statesmanship would refrain from antagonizing at this critical juncture".³

1 "Australia", *RT*, June 1915, pp 670-91.

2 "New Zealand", *RT*, Sept 1915, pp 887-902.

3 *Toronto Globe*, 30 April 1917, copy in *RT Papers* c 822, fol 89.

This was a caricature of the Round Table's position, but it was one which illustrated clearly the suspicion with which many Dominion nationalists now viewed proposals for Imperial reform.

Matters came to a head at the Imperial War Conference of March to May 1917. At a private dinner with the Round Table, Borden emphasised that the creation of an Imperial Parliament was for the moment "wholly impossible and that it was dangerous to urge it"; on the other hand, he asserted that the new "Imperial Cabinet" set a valuable precedent, which "accorded with the principle of responsible government because all its members were responsible to their several parliaments and electorates for its decisions". (Curtis, who was in India, would have shuddered.) Two days later Smuts likened the new body to a board of directors who would meet occasionally to decide the general lines of policy, leaving Great Britain to be "the managing director on the spot". On this occasion Brand and Kerr broke ranks with their more dogmatic colleagues, "and the discussion broke up".¹

Kerr's article for the *Round Table* gave no hint of the disagreements within the Moot; indeed, it was a perfect example of his skill in skating over thin ice. Kerr welcomed the new Imperial Cabinet - which, by its own resolutions, promised to be annual - as a "valuable advance", providing

"a simple yet elastic machinery . . . which will enable all the Governments of the Empire to keep in constant, if not continuous, consultation on every aspect of Imperial policy, and which will enable all its peoples to understand far better their common problems".

¹ Minutes of discussion, 2 Mar 1917 (Borden) and 4 May 1917 (Smuts), Lothian Papers 474, items 3 and 4. See also above, pp 108-110.

On the other hand, even if the "Cabinet" were complemented by a Conference representative of all the Parliaments of the Empire, there was "no use pretending" that the changes involved "will in themselves solve the fundamental Imperial problem".

"The improved system for conducting Imperial affairs . . . cannot give the Dominions more than a consultative voice in Imperial and foreign policy [It] will greatly increase the influence of the Overseas nations in foreign policy But it will in the last resort still be the British Parliament which will decide."

The new system "might be made to work for many years", but eventually "it will . . . fail".¹

Kerr's re-iteration of the arguments against co-operation was dictated as much by the need to hold the Moot together as by any real hopes of inducing a change of heart amongst the statesmen and peoples of Britain and the Dominions. Too much uncertainty still attached to the outcome of the war for questions of constitutional nicety to have more than a marginal interest. Moreover, as Kerr himself realised, the mood of the Dominions was such that the proponents of Imperial integration had been thrown on the defensive. The war had simultaneously increased "the sense of national self-reliance" in the Dominions and "greatly diminished the prestige of the British Government", with the result that the Dominions were "tending more and more to conceive of the Empire as five nations deliberating on equal terms round a table". In the longer term, this could only help the Round

¹ [Kerr,] "The New Developments in the Constitution of the Empire", *RT*, June 1917, pp 441-59. Butler does not include this in his list of Kerr's articles, but see eg Coupland to Curtis, 22 May 1917, *RT* Papers c 810, fols 66-67.

table cause; but in the short term, it would render any federalist campaign pointless or even counter-productive.'

The Round Table had long insisted that the negotiation of peace would test co-operation as severely as the conduct of war. Curtis, in *The Problem of the Commonwealth*, had gone as far as to assert that the Dominions' "representatives will not be admitted to the conference at which . . . peace is finally made".² Less categorically, Grigg suggested that plenipotentiaries "cannot be responsible to several different governments", but allowed that the Dominions would at least be able to send advisers.³ When peace finally came, the Dominions' uncertain constitutional position was reflected in an ambiguous representation, partly independent and partly within the British Empire delegation. Curiously, this was an aspect of the Conference on which the *Round Table* chose not to comment.

War Aims

A "Special War Number" of the *Round Table*, published in September 1914, examined the causes of the war. R W Seton-Watson emphasised the rôle of the Magyar ascendancy, alleging complicity in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. Nevertheless, the "dynamic cause" of the war was found to lie in German militarism, aiming, desperately, at "world-domination or downfall", and seeing in Britain its "real enemy". Articles by Kerr and Grigg set the tone for future *Round Table* contributions by

1 Kerr to Curtis, 21 July 1917, Lothian Papers 33, fols 19-21.

2 Curtis, *The Problem of the Commonwealth* (London, 1916), p 113.

3 [Grigg,] "The Dominions and the Settlement", *RT*, March 1915, pp 335-36.

describing the utter irreconcilability of the British Empire (which "stands for . . . peace, unity and freedom") with "Prussianism" ("a drilled and disciplined national monomania").¹ This was "a heroic conflict of ideals", a world-historical struggle between the forces of freedom and those of despotism.²

The logical inconsistencies of this view, especially given the participation of Russia on the Allies' side, were blithely ignored.³ The propagandist effect was both conscious and deliberate. A special letter accompanying the September 1914 issue told its recipients that any "notice that you can give to this statement of the British case will be warmly appreciated".⁴ Several *Round Table* articles were reprinted for sale at 3d or 6d, and the Foreign Office produced further copies for distribution in the United States and other neutral countries.⁵

The *Round Table's* interpretation of the war's origins made clear the Moot's belief that Prussian militarism was the most fundamental cause of the war. Accordingly, the utter defeat of Germany, and the dismemberment of its ruling élite, occupied first place amongst the Moot's suggested war aims. The real danger was thought to be of "a truce-like peace and a new

1 [Seton-Watson,] "The Austro-Servian Dispute", *RT*, Sept 1914, pp 659-76; [Kerr,] "The War in Europe", *ibid*, pp 591-615 (p 613 for "peace, unity and freedom"); [Grigg,] "Germany and the Prussian Spirit", *ibid*, pp 616-58 (p 644 for "national monomania").

2 [Grigg,] "Germany and the Prussian Spirit", p 617.

3 [J D Wilson,] "Russia and Her Ideals", *RT*, Dec 1914, pp 103-35, made out a rather weak case for Russia's "democratic spirit".

4 [Letter to *RT* subscribers,] 17 Sept 1914, *RT Papers* c 845, fol 5.

5 "Round Table War Pamphlets", *RT Papers* c 850, fol 217; Kerr, "Memorandum", [1919,] *Brand Papers*, box 42.

war".¹ Lansdowne, the most prominent advocate of compromise, was described by Coupland as "a typical product of the old régime".² Nevertheless, the Round Table was careful to dissociate itself from those who urged the imposition of a "vindictive" peace.

"A peace which gave any ground for the belief that the aim of the Allies was the destruction of the unity of the German people, or the restriction of their legitimate liberty or their opportunity to develop on peaceful lines, would only . . . render inevitable another war."³

The Round Table's analysis of the Austro-Hungarian rôle in precipitating war indicated a second element of the war aims advocated by the group. This was that "the map of Europe must be redrawn" to accommodate the aspirations of subject nations.⁴ The principle of "national self-determination" was particularly keenly adhered to by Coupland and Zimmern; and also by R W Seton-Watson, Arnold Toynbee and Lewis Namier, all of whom contributed articles to the *Round Table*, joined Zimmern in launching *New Europe* in 1916 and, again with Zimmern, staffed the Foreign Office's Political Intelligence Department from 1917.⁵

Within the wider Moot, the full application of the principle caused some misgivings. Grigg, in an article of December 1914, took issue with

1 [Kerr,] "The Burden of Victory", *RT*, June 1915 (pp 511-20), p 518.

2 Coupland to V Massey, 27 Aug 1918, *RT Papers* c 822, fols 137-38. Lansdowne's letter was rejected by Dawson's *Times*.

3 [Kerr,] "The Foundations of Peace", *RT*, June 1915 (pp 589-625), pp 613-14.

4 *Ibid.*

5 For the PID, see Erik Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1916-20* (Oxford, 1991), esp ch 2.

the liberal "sentiment in favour of small States per se".¹ Although Kerr endorsed the principle of self-determination, he also argued that self-determination could only be regarded as progressive if it were a first step towards some wider federation.² Coupland complained that Kerr was averse to "true" nationalism, as expounded by Zimmern and his allies.³ It was not the arguments of the latter which finally resolved the question, but the actual disintegration of the central Empires.

A third element of the Round Table's war aims was provided by the global nature of the war: the disposition of Germany's colonies and of Turkey's Arab territories. South Africa and the Pacific Dominions had a clear interest in the retention of the colonies which they had overrun. Equally, Britain stood to gain from a large increment in her Imperial "responsibilities". Nevertheless, the problem of formulating an appropriate justification for a policy of annexation was difficult. Lloyd George's declaration that "the wishes, the desires and the interests of the people" concerned should be the overriding factor was criticised by Feetham as at best indeterminate and at worst contrary to British interests.⁴ Yet, as Kerr realised, the argument from British interests was even more

1 [Grigg,] "Nationalism and Liberty", *RT*, Dec 1914 (pp 18-69), p 55 and passim.

2 See, eg, [Kerr,] "The Harvest of the War", *RT*, Dec 1915 (pp 1-32), pp 14-15.

3 Coupland to Zimmern, 18 Nov [1916], *RT Papers* c 817, fols 214-19.

4 Feetham, "Memorandum" [on German East Africa], 2 Oct 1917, *Lothian Papers* 475, item 1. Feetham suggested "no abandonment of our friends in the struggle" as a more pliable formula. Lloyd George's proposal was contained in his speech at Glasgow, 29 June 1917.

open to objection.¹ The question was therefore left only half-solved, to be taken up again in closer proximity to the peace conference.

The last element in the Round Table's war aims related to the future framework of international relations. Kerr's wartime *Round Table* articles lost few opportunities of reminding his readers that "world peace" was only possible through "world government". For the moment, however, conflicts could only be contained by the determination of the "most liberal Powers" to uphold "justice and liberty . . . if need be by force of arms". Kerr therefore urged the "development of the machinery of international co-operation" by means of "regular meetings of an informal council of the nations".²

Kerr's proposal bore superficial similarities to the "League of Nations" idea currently being formulated by Lord Robert Cecil.³ However, Kerr's views were vaguer and more limited. Whereas Cecil envisaged a scheme of universal disarmament and arbitration backed up by economic sanctions, Kerr opposed automatic commitments and advocated a purely consultative and political body: a revived "Concert of Nations", limited to "the great powers" and (initially at least) to those which fought on the side of the Entente.⁴ Calls for a negotiated peace on the basis of a League of Nations he regarded as "the most insidious form of pacifism".⁵

¹ Kerr to Smuts, 14 Dec 1917, Lothian Papers 219, fol 750.

² [Kerr,] "The Foundations of Peace", *RT*, June 1915, pp 616-19; cf [*idem*,] "The Harvest of the War", *RT*, Dec 1915, pp 16-21.

³ For Cecil's views, see H P Cecil, "The Development of Lord Robert Cecil's Views on the Securing of a Lasting Peace, 1915-19" (Oxford D Phil, 1971).

⁴ [Kerr,] "The Harvest of the War", *loc cit*, pp 19-21.

⁵ Kerr to Sir Esme Howard (British Legation, Stockholm), 22 April 1918, Lothian Papers 210, fols 487-90.

Kerr's interpretation of British war aims contained a fair dose of Realpolitik. Nevertheless, the liberal tone of his pronouncements "horrified" Oliver, whose drift away from the Moot can be traced back to wartime disagreements over the presentation of British policy.¹ Lloyd George, on the other hand, recognised the value of a liberal-democratic slant to British propaganda, and John Turner has identified Kerr as an important influence on his war aims speeches of 1917-18, formulated partly in response to labour unrest in Britain, and partly in response to American pressure.²

The First World War marked a decisive turning-point by bringing to the fore the hitherto ill-considered question of Anglo-American relations. The desire for some form of rapprochement with the United States had, in varying degrees, formed part of "new imperialist" thinking in the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, before 1914 Milner and the younger Round Tablers appear not to have shown much interest in the question. Kerr's notebooks from his 1909-10 tour reveal an almost exclusive interest in questions of race relations rather than Anglo-American relations. From September 1915, however, articles on America became a regular feature of the magazine. Most early ones were written by the historian G L Beer, who in 1914 wrote to Curtis of his desire for "a closer understanding, and a possible alliance, between our two countries".³

¹ Oliver [to Brand?], 26 Dec 1914, Brand Papers, box 2B; Oliver to Kerr, 6 Dec 1915, RT Papers c 780, fols 2-4.

² John Turner, *Lloyd George's Secretariat* (Cambridge, 1980), pp 150-51 and passim.

³ Beer to Curtis, [late 1914,] RT Papers c 779, fol 83; cf Beer's article on "Milner and British Imperialism", *Political Science Quarterly*, vol xxx (June 1915), pp 301-08.

American belligerence added enormously to the hopes of those who urged a liberal peace and a League of Nations. The *Round Table*, by now broadly aligned with such hopes, worked hard to downplay any divergence between British and American views. Even before America's declaration of war, Coupland professed to find in Wilson's interjections "a final and authoritative confirmation of the unity in hopes and aims of the American and British peoples".¹ A year later, Zimmern wrote of a direct line "from Plato down to President Wilson" in the advocacy of "the principle of the Commonwealth" which also animated the British Empire.² Beer agreed that there was a "perfect . . . identity of purpose" between Britain and America.³

American belligerence coincided with the first Russian revolution of 1917, an event which the *Round Table* welcomed as a patriotic revolt against the pro-Germanism of the Tsar's entourage.⁴ The collapse of the Russian war effort and the rise of Bolshevism confounded such optimistic assessments. Kerr was thrown into a state of near-panic, writing to Curtis in July 1917 that "the world is now rushing headlong towards the abyss of anarchy", the responsibility for averting which "will fall largely upon the shoulders of the people of the British Isles".⁵ Nevertheless, writing in

1 [Coupland,] "The Last Phase", *RT*, March 1917 (pp 195-217), p 206.

2 [Zimmern,] "Three Doctrines in Conflict", *RT*, March 1918 (pp 262-92), p 286.

3 [Beer,] "America's War Aims", *RT*, March 1918 (pp 238-61), p 255.

4 [Coupland,] "A War of Liberation", *RT*, June 1917 (pp 409-41), pp 423-28. Kerr was more pessimistic, realising as early as May 1917 that the Russians were likely to pull out of the war: Kerr to Lloyd George, [May 1917,] *Lothian Papers* 867, item 1.

5 Kerr to Curtis, 21 July 1917, *Lothian Papers* 33, fols 19-21.

the *Round Table* after the second, Bolshevik revolution, Kerr had recovered his equanimity: "it can only be a question of time before . . . Russia begins to emerge . . . as one of the great liberal Powers of the world".¹ While the Round Tablers expressed a general sympathy with the aims of the "White" counter-revolutionaries, none advocated a more active Western intervention.² Even Kerr, despite (or, rather, because of) his tendency to alarmism, believed that

"to start in on a new war against Russia is the surest way of producing Bolshevism at home. Perhaps there will be a call for volunteers, and if so, I've no doubt that there will be lots of officers to volunteer. But let's try and do in Bolshevism peacefully first".³

At Versailles Kerr played an important part in frustrating Winston Churchill's attempts to stampede the Conference into authorising a more active intervention in Russia.⁴

"Advanced and Backward Peoples"

Before the First World War, the Round Tablers (and Curtis in particular) had been made acutely aware of the need to propagandise the cause of Empire as part of the groundwork for imperial union. During the

¹ [Kerr,] "The Gathering of the Nations", *RT*, Dec 1917 (pp 1-17), p 3. For attribution (not in Butler), see Coupland to Brand, 22 Nov 1917, *RT Papers* c 846, fols 13-16.

² [Zimmern,] "Some Principles and Problems of the Settlement", *RT*, Dec 1918 (pp 88-113), p 91; [Leeper,] "Russia's Revolt against Bolshevism", *RT*, June 1919, pp 509-31.

³ Kerr to Lady Anne Kerr, 18 Feb 1919, *Lothian Papers* 466, fol 17.

⁴ Hankey, *The Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (London, 1963), pp 66-73; Martin Gilbert, *Winston S Churchill, Vol IV* (London, 1975), pp 243-55.

war, the new importance attached to an alignment with America and the need to justify annexation of the enemy's former colonies resulted in an even more fervent assertion of the British Imperial mission.

Far from believing Empire to be a thing of the past, Kerr was convinced that such was the "backwardness" of non-Europeans that the European powers (including the Dominions and the United States) would find themselves obliged to intervene more comprehensively in the twentieth than in the nineteenth century.

"Great, indeed, as has been the extension of European rule in the last century, the process does not appear even yet to have ceased. One has only to look around the world to realise that there are many states - Mexico, for instance, Persia, China, Turkey, the Central American republics - whose continued existence as independent sovereign states is in doubt."

While members of the Round Table admitted that individual "cultured types" such as Gokhale or Booker Washington could claim a level of civilization higher than that of the average Englishman², they believed that "colour prejudice", which "is exceptionally strong among the Anglo-Saxon peoples", had a firm basis in facts.³ Many emphasised climate as a differentiating factor. In the temperate zones were to be found "a more vigorous physique, a higher sense of the value of time, and a greater capacity for sustained and methodical action"; whereas in tropical zones

¹ Kerr, "Political Relations Between Advanced and Backward Peoples", pp 141-82 of A J Grant et al, *An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London, 1916), p 164. Kerr's choice of title echoed Bryce's Romanes lectures at Oxford in 1902, which provided a liberal justification for segregationism.

² Kerr, "Memorandum on the Representation of India" [April 1912], RT Papers c 826, fols 4-14.

³ [Dove,] "The Colour Question in Politics", Editor's Preface, RT, Dec 1922, p. 39.

the climate was "enervating" and nature's abundance was detrimental to the development of mental capacity.'

Although in Round Table eyes the most fundamental division was that between Europeans and non-Europeans, it was an axiomatic Round Table belief that the peoples and cultures of the world formed a kind of hierarchy, "a gradual scale varying infinitely from the zenith of civilisation to the nadir of barbarianism".²

The Round Table's views on international relations were coloured by a distinction between the peoples of North-West European origin and those of Latin and Slavic descent. Directly below them were deemed to be the peoples of the Middle East and Asia, "who are not uncivilised yet who, for one reason or another, have been unable to maintain a civilised government for themselves, once close contact has been established with the modern world".³

Further down the scale, Africans were viewed as a "child-race", completely unaccustomed to organised government and "centuries" away from self-rule. Their first contact with Europeans had resulted in enslavement, which was understandable because they were "so much below the standard humanity of the invaders that it was difficult to treat them as members of

1 Curtis, *Civitas Dei* (Volume 1) (London, 1934), p 2; cf Grigg, "Substitute Introduction to the Whitsuntide Egg", [July 1914], RT Papers c 779, fols 37-74., and [Kerr,] "Draft Chapters on India" [1915], Lothian Papers 6, fols 6 ff.

2 Kerr, "Political Relations Between Advanced and Backward Peoples", *loc cit*, p 142.

3 *Ibid*, fol 152.

the same family".¹ Finally, there were the aboriginal races of the Americas and Australia. Their extinction was inevitable, and no cause for shame or regret.²

It is possible to distinguish two separate, although clearly related, imperatives which, in Round Table eyes, made European rule of non-Europeans not only essential but beneficent. The first may be described as the regulatory imperative, arising from the contact between races.

Members of the Round Table believed that conflict was endemic in the relations between races: this was certainly implied in their repeated assurances that the Empire/Commonwealth had ruled out the possibility of open war between its various components.³ Drawing heavily on contemporary accounts such as that by Dr John Paton on the New Hebrides, it was argued that only control by some "advanced" power could ensure the maintenance of order and mitigate the disruptive aspects of Western intrusion.⁴ The purpose of Imperial control was thus to ensure the satisfaction of European demands, while repressing the conflict and violence which was their natural corollary.

The second reason for European rule of non-Europeans may be described

¹ Grigg, "Substitute Introduction to the Whitsuntide Egg", loc cit., fol 52.

² Curtis, *With Milner in South Africa* [early diaries] (Oxford, 1951), p 226. Cf [Kerr,] "The New Problem of Africa", *RT*, June 1927, pp 454-5.

³ Eg Kerr, *What the British Empire Really Stands For* (Toronto, 1917), pp 14-15; Coupland, "Citizenship in the British Commonwealth" [lecture of 10 Oct 1917], *Lothian Papers* 16, fols 507-8.

⁴ Kerr, "Political Relations Between Advanced and Backward Peoples", loc cit., pp 143-52.

as the missionary imperative, by which is meant the transplantation of European (or specifically British) social, cultural, religious and, eventually, political norms. A prerequisite for such activity was, of course, the destruction or at least modification of indigenous systems and values. It is therefore hardly surprising to find members of the Round Table adopting a consistently dismissive attitude toward non-European cultures, especially where those cultures appeared to differ markedly from European norms. Hinduism was described as "a religion [which] has little to do with morality", a mere amalgam of "dismal obscurantism and thaumaturgic priestcraft". A rather more sympathetic approach was taken toward Islam, with its insistence on monotheism, scripture and cow-eating, as also toward the Arya Samáj, with its semi-Christian version of Hinduism.¹

In his wartime leading articles, Kerr repeatedly referred to the necessity of "trusteeship" as the only alternative to "anarchy". He also emphasised the responsibility "to lay the material and moral foundations on which the structure of civilized self-government may eventually be built". A benevolent trusteeship had, he claimed, characterised British rule "for more than a century".² Equally, Kerr asserted that Germany's "selfish" and "oppressive" colonialism disqualified her from any right to control dependencies.³

¹ [Marris,] "Hindus and Mohammedans", *RT*, May 1911, p 302; [Marris,] "Memorandum" [April 1914], *RT Papers* c 827, fols 6-73 (fol 16); [R E Holland, revised by Marris,] "The Arya Samáj", *RT*, Sept 1913, pp 614-36.

² [Kerr,] "The Harvest of the War", *RT*, Dec 1915, pp 1-32 (quotations from pp 12-13 and 30).

³ [Kerr,] "The Foundations of Peace", *RT*, June 1915, pp 589-625 (quotations from p 614).

Kerr and Curtis identified American anti-colonialism as the main obstacle both to a closer understanding between Britain and the United States and to a resolution of the wartime colonial question satisfactory to British interests.

As Kerr wrote, in the closing stages of the war, Americans (like the inhabitants of the Dominions) possessed a "childlike faith in the virtues of democracy and *laissez faire*" [sic]. Inasmuch as they recognised the "necessity of some civilised control over politically backward peoples", they were likely to "force us into some kind of international system which may be a source of serious friction in the future". Kerr therefore urged Curtis to visit America to "get it into Wilson's head", or at least "into the heads of the editors of some of the leading papers", that, while international control might be desirable, international administration would be disastrous. Moreover, Curtis should assert "that the assumption of a share in the burden of world government is just as great and glorious a responsibility as participation in the war".¹

While Curtis did not go to America as Kerr wished, he did write a powerful article for the December 1918 *Round Table* arguing these very points. The American States' failure to control the "vacant lands" to their west in the period before Federation, and the derelict state of Egypt before British intervention, were held to be sufficient proof of the impossibility of co-operative control of dependencies. The only solution, Curtis argued, was for "some democratic Power" to "be made responsible for creating and maintaining peace, order, and good government . . . subject to

¹ Kerr to Curtis, 15 Oct 1918, RT Papers c 810, fols 229-37; cf Feetham to Curtis, 2 Oct 1918, (SA file,) RT (O) Papers.

conditions laid down in treaties". Curtis further suggested that the United States should accept the "responsibility" for "some or all of the regions of the Middle East".

"Her very detachment renders her an ideal custodian of the Dardanelles. For exactly similar reasons her task in preserving the autonomy of Armenia, Arabia, and Persia will be easier than if it were to rest in our hands. Her vast Jewish population pre-eminently fits her to protect Palestine."

"The future position of America in the world", Curtis summarised his argument, ". . . is the great issue which now hangs on the Peace Conference".¹

The Peace Settlement

The Round Tablers transferred almost bodily to Paris for the Peace Conference; even Curtis found an official post, as part of Cecil's League of Nations section. Again it was Kerr who occupied the most influential position as Lloyd George's secretary, adviser, and representative in various committees and ad hoc confabulations.² The question which naturally arises is whether, as a group, the Round Table exercised a significant influence over the making of the peace. The answer is largely negative. Other than Kerr, the Round Tablers (including Milner) were relatively marginal figures at the Conference. Kerr himself exercised

¹ [Curtis,] "Windows of Freedom", *RT*, Dec 1918 (pp 1-48), pp 1 ("The future position . . .") and 20-36. Curtis's plea for American involvement was reiterated in "America and World Responsibility: First and Second Thoughts", *RT*, March 1919, pp 249-60.

² See here John Turner and Michael Dockrill, "Philip Kerr at 10 Downing Street, 1916-21", in Turner (ed), *The Larger Idea* (London, 1988), esp pp 42-52.

influence only as Lloyd George's "watchdog"¹. Moreover, the Round Tablers' articulation of British war aims had been largely propagandist both in intention and in effect, and did not constitute the kind of detailed programme which could provide the basis for concerted political action.

On the central issue of the terms to be imposed on Germany, virtually all the Round Tablers followed Milner in hoping - vainly, as it transpired - for a moderate peace.² A recurrent motif was the conviction that, whatever terms were imposed, Germany would remain a Great Power, and that a vindictive peace would only serve to hasten another war or to drive the German people to Bolshevism. Only a peace of conciliation could ensure the triumph of democracy in Germany, and thereby provide real security for the victorious Powers.³

Zimmern condemned Lloyd George's "odious" election campaign. Kerr protested, but found himself in a minority of one: "the views expressed were held very strongly by all the members of the Editorial Committee except yourself", Kerr was informed.⁴ Kerr also found himself isolated on the question of reparations.⁵ As early as 1912, Brand had anticipated

¹ Hankey, *The Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (London, 1963), p 97.

² For Milner's views, and the controversy over his *Evening Standard* interview of October 1918, see in particular Terence O'Brien, *Milner* (London, 1979), ch 13.

³ "The End of the War", *RT*, Dec 1918 (pp 48-87), pp 78 ff.

⁴ [Zimmern,] "United Kingdom: The General Election", *RT*, March 1919 (pp 356-59), p 359; Coupland to Kerr, 13 March 1919, Lothian Papers 487, fol 2.

⁵ "My doubts about the wisdom of these clauses are not on the score of either expediency or justice, but on the score that I am not sure that the Allies will have the clear-sightedness and the resolution to live up to them": Kerr to Coupland, 15 Aug 1919, Lothian Papers 489 (single item).

Keynes's argument by pointing out the disastrous effects on Germany itself of the outflow from France following the 1870-71 war.¹ *Round Table* comment on the reparations clauses of the Treaty of Versailles followed the same line of argument: "A vast indemnity . . . will . . . act as a forcing house to German exports to the detriment of British trade".² Moreover,

"if these clauses are taken to mean what a very large section of public opinion in this country, and a still larger section in France, believes and wishes them to mean, they will form a constant and powerful incentive to Germany to repudiate her undertakings in all parts of the peace".³

The *Round Table* found other clauses in the Treaty pointing in the same direction: the proposal to try the Kaiser, the clause forbidding union between Germany and Austria, the fate of "other millions of German race", the clauses relating to the Saar Valley and the Rhineland, "the disproportion enforced by the League between Germany's armaments and those of everybody else". Generally, the Treaty was full of "latent dangers", basing security "on a balance of forces which cannot possibly endure".⁴

One aspect of the peace settlement which the *Round Table* did not criticise was that relating to the control of Germany's former colonies and the Arab territories seized from Turkey. On the question of American acceptance of "responsibility" for the Middle East, the Round Tablers were, of course, disappointed. On the question of national rather than international administration they were not. Here they were helped

¹ [Brand,] "Lombard Street and War", *RT*, March 1912, pp 246-84.

² [Brand,] "Finance and Reparation", *RT*, June 1919 (pp 455-67), pp 463-64.

³ "The Peace of Versailles", *RT*, June 1919 (pp 429-54), p 442.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 440-51.

considerably by Beer, who had already made clear his own belief that international administration of colonies would prove "disastrous".¹ At Beer's request, all the Round Table groups collected cuttings, articles and books, and in some cases composed memoranda, as ammunition for him to use.² As Wilson's colonial expert at the peace conference, Beer was instrumental in shaping the eventual Mandate system.³ Britain and the Dominions were rewarded by the lion's share of the territories thus disposed. The limitations on the exercise of Imperial control imposed by the terms of the Mandates were considered, by the Round Tablers at least, as of little importance. Indeed, it was generally agreed that the Mandates idea "singles out and develops the best side of what has been done hitherto by Western administration", and "was, in fact, an application of the 'commonwealth' idea".⁴

The Round Table group was less pleased with the eventual form taken by the League of Nations. The Round Tablers' wartime articles envisaged an institution considerably looser than that proposed by Cecil or Wilson. Kerr thought that "the chief danger to [any League] . . . is that it should become discredited through its inability to live up to the expectations

¹ [Beer,] "America's War Aims", *RT*, March 1918 (pp 238-61), p 249.

² See, eg, Coupland to Laby, 28 Dec 1917, and Laby to Coupland, 25 Feb 1918, (Aus file,) *RT* (O) Papers.

³ See V R Louis, "The United States and the African Peace Settlement of 1919: The Pilgrimage of George Louis Beer", *Journal of African History*, Vol IV, no 3 (1963), pp 413-33; also Kerr to Charles P Howland, 6 June 1929, *Lothian Papers* 235, fols 154-57.

⁴ "The Outlook in the Middle East", *RT*, Dec 1919 (pp 55-97), p 56.

which have been formed of it".¹ The Round Table's views were reiterated in a series of articles published during the peace negotiations, and in a memorandum drawn up for Lloyd George by Kerr.² These had little effect. The League of Nations contained many of the features which the Round Tablers had warned against. Nevertheless, the Moot accepted it, as the price to be paid for American involvement in upholding the peace settlement.³

Wilson's failure to push the Treaty/League scheme through Congress - foreseen by Beer in 1917⁴ - substantially confirmed the Moot's initial misgivings. The Senate's reservations, in the opinion of the *Round Table*, "have rendered [the League] the great service of pointing clearly to the flaws which at present neutralise its worth": in particular, "that the Peace of Versailles attempted too much, and that the Covenant, which guarantees it, implies a capacity for united action between the Allies which the facts do not warrant". The Senate was in fact expressing opinions which would also be held in the British Empire, were the true outlines of the situation known: "none of the democracies of the British Empire has grasped the extent of its obligations to the League . . . or would hesitate to repudiate them at once, if put to the test". The

¹ [Kerr,] "The Victory that Will End War". *RT*, March 1918, pp 221-37. For authorship (not in Butler), see Coupland to Brand, 23 Feb 1918, RT Papers c 847, fols 4-7.

² [Curtis,] "Windows of Freedom", *RT*, Dec 1918, pp 12-20; [Kerr,] "The Practical Organisation of Peace", *RT*, March 1919, pp 217-48; [Kerr,] Memorandum on the League of Nations, [Jan 1919,] Lothian Papers 54, fols 31-33.

³ [Curtis,] "The League of Nations and the British Commonwealth", *RT*, June 1919 (pp 468-94), esp pp 482-87.

⁴ [Beer,] "The United States and the Future Peace", *RT*, March 1917 (pp 285-317), pp 308 ff.

continuation of such an unrealistic situation could only bring harm, both to the cause of international stability and to the British Empire. It was therefore imperative to work for a reconstruction of the League, such as might bring commitments back into line with capacity to fulfil them, and open the doors to American involvement.¹ This was a task which was to preoccupy the Round Table for much of the following two decades.

Curtis and Dyarchy

Curtis later credited Marris with converting him to the idea of eventual self-government for India in 1909.² There is no evidence of Curtis voicing his new-found belief at such an early stage; nevertheless, Marris's influence did come to be felt, through Kerr rather than Curtis.

The Marris/Kerr argument initially encountered a great deal of resistance from within the Moot. Curtis acknowledged its propagandist value, but hedged its practical corollaries. Malcolm deplored the influence of "our Indian experts".³ For the moment, the Moot preferred to

¹ [Kerr,] "The British Empire, the League of Nations and the United States", *RT*, March 1920 (pp 221-53), pp 226-38.

² See above, p 139.

³ Malcolm, "Memorandum", nd [1912], *RT Papers* c 826, fols 167-72. See above, pp 90-92.

follow the advice of another, more conservative, "Indian expert": Sir Valentine Chirol. In Chirol's view, Indian self-government was "inconceivable . . . within any reasonably measurable period of time, be it generations or centuries", and mention of it was "most inadvisable".¹ It was Chirol, rather than any of the other "experts", who was asked to write the Indian chapter for Curtis's "egg".²

It would seem fair to assume that, had the second volume of *The Commonwealth of Nations* been published as planned, it would not have contained proposals as radical as those urged by Marris and Kerr in 1912. Such speculation receives support from the references to India in Curtis's *Problem of the Commonwealth*. Although publication under his own name gave Curtis a free hand - and he did modify some passages on India "to prevent a nationalist outburst"³ - Curtis made no mention either of Indian demands for self-government or of Indian representation in the Imperial Parliament.⁴ On the contrary, he claimed that "Indian leaders" would admit that authority in India had to lie where it did, and that India was patently "unequal to the task of self-government".⁵

Despite Curtis's caution, it would not be true to say that Round Table policy on India remained locked in its pre-1912 mould. The war forced

1 Chirol, "Memorandum on India", June 1912, RT papers c 826, fols 214-21.

2 Copy of Chirol's draft in RT Papers c 827, fols 167-234

3 Curtis to Milner, 24 Feb 1916, RT Papers c 780, fols 38-41.

4 Here, Curtis was criticised even by Chirol. See Curtis to Milner, 29 Nov 1915, Curtis Papers 2, fols 199-201.

5 Curtis, *The Problem of the Commonwealth* (London, 1916), ch 19, "The Dependencies", esp pp 199-20.

a change. India was denuded of British troops; war propaganda invited questioning of autocracy and alien rule; shortages and inflation ravaged the economy. The essential vulnerability - or, put another way, the consensual basis - of British rule became starkly apparent, while its critics swelled in number. As the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, realised in 1915, "India after the war will be a very complex question The old régime must be changed, and the people must have more to say to their own administration".¹

Once again it was Marris who urged the Round Table to take a lead. "The situation which will shortly be upon us in India is a critical one", he warned, towards the end of 1915. Marris identified the demand which the nationalists were bound to make: Dominion self-government. It was, he declared, "impossible for the demand to be conceded". At the same time, it was impossible to proceed by an extension of the Morley-Minto principle. The latter would put Indians

"in the position of a powerful Opposition which can seriously influence and all but thwart the Government, but can yet never turn the Government out or replace it. Elsewhere in the history of British Dominions this has been the feature of a highly explosive and short-lived transitional period".

Marris therefore suggested pressing for Indian representation at the Imperial Conference to "buy time", and then for an Imperial Convention which would throw the whole weight of the self-governing Empire behind a

¹ Hardinge to Sir Walter Lawrence, 29 July 1915, quoted in J Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power* (Cambridge, 1972), p 124. On the political effects of the war in India, see *ibid*, esp pp 123-6, and Sir Algernon Rumbold, *Watershed in India, 1914-22* (London, 1979).

solution necessarily unsatisfying for the Indian nationalists.'

Marris's prognosis was discussed by a revived "Indian Moot", which consisted of Kerr, Curtis, Coupland, Meston, M C C Seton and four new members, Sir William Duke, Sir Lionel Abrahams, (Sir) Cecil Kisch and (Sir) J E Shuckburgh. Members of this group shared Marris's concern lest the Indian demand for Dominion self-government be granted by default. They also agreed that an extension of the Morley-Minto reforms would "involve progress towards paralysis of government rather than responsible government". Curtis

"therefore suggested . . . the possibility of proceeding on another principle, that of calling into existence provincial authorities responsible to Indian electorates, and delegating thereto specific functions and revenues, adding others from time to time as experience warranted".

Curtis's idea was accepted; and Duke (a member of the Bengal Executive Council before being appointed to the Council of India) was given the task of outlining the principle as it would apply in Bengal.² Copies of Duke's memorandum were sent to Lord Hardinge's successor as Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, and to the Home Department of India.³

In October Curtis arrived in India. His first impressions confirmed the belief that India was heading for a "cosmic smash". The Indian

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- 1 Marris, "The Coming Crisis in India", 5 Oct 1915, RT Papers c 827, fols 79-97. Indian representation at the Imperial Conference had already been urged by a Round Table delegation to Austen Chamberlain and was urged again in "India and the Imperial Conference", RT, Dec 1915, pp 86-119.
 - 2 Duke's memorandum was printed as a pamphlet, *Suggestions for Constitutional Progress in the Indian Polity* (London, 1916), and in Curtis, *Dyarchy* (London, 1920), pp 1-37.
 - 3 Curtis to Lord Chelmsford, 8 Sept 1917, RT papers c 810, fols 146-52.

people were "as you see them in the Book of Genesis". To prepare them for self-government "needs generations of real education and patient work . . . yet the few thousands of articulates are demanding it within 25 years".¹ Nevertheless, Curtis realised that "our only safety lies in guiding opinion instead of sitting on it".²

Curtis stayed in India until March 1918, reeling off a series of *Letters* and *Studies* on the question of Indian self-government; organising a *Joint Address* from a group of Europeans and Indians in Bengal; and generally attempting to influence both Indian opinion and the lines of British policy, especially after the "Montagu Declaration" of August 1917 and the Secretary of State's decision to tour India.³

In one important respect, Curtis's opinions changed: he now definitely accepted the Marris/Kerr line on Indian representation in an Imperial Parliament. Britain's "war debt will to avoid bankruptcy have to be spread to the whole Commonwealth", including India. India's representation was necessary, because her money was needed.⁴

Curtis remained wholeheartedly opposed to the Congress/League demand for immediate "Dominion self-government". He similarly rejected any further moves on Morley-Minto lines, which he characterised as the "principle of strangling the responsible Executive by successive twists of

1 Curtis to Zimmern, 29 Nov 1916, RT Papers c 817, fols 169-71.

2 Curtis to Coupland, 15 March 1917, RT papers c 810, fols 12-16.

3 See Deborah Lavin, "Lionel Curtis and Indian Dyarchy", in A Bosco (ed), *The Federal Idea, Vol 1* (London, 1991). For the politics behind the Montagu Declaration, see Peter Robb, *The Government of India and Reform, 1916-21* (Oxford, 1976).

4 Curtis [to Coupland], 27 July [1917], RT Papers c 810, fols 122-6.

the noose placed in the hands of irresponsible electorates".¹ Curtis's efforts were therefore directed towards elaborating the scheme of "dyarchy" sketched out in Duke's memorandum.

"Dyarchy" was a term borrowed from the Roman Emperor Augustus, who devolved responsibility for a range of minor matters to a "parallel government" controlled by the Senate. As applied to India, "dyarchy" entailed the creation of parallel political structures at provincial level: one in which an Indian executive would be responsible to an elected legislature, the other in which elected Indians would merely advise an autocratic Governor.

As Chirol observed, the scheme was "avowedly experimental".² The Imperial Parliament would control the pace of change, and the committee charged by it with examining Indians' progress would be empowered to recommend that previously "transferred" subjects be "reserved", as well as vice versa. Provincial Governors would retain a power of veto even on "transferred" subjects. The central Government would remain untouched until the last phase. Even at the end point of India's political evolution, Indians would have no choice whether or not "to remain an integral part of the British Commonwealth. Her foreign affairs are those of the whole Commonwealth. She can never therefore control them apart".³ Nevertheless, the very fact that Curtis was advocating reform put him in conflict with powerful forces both at home and in India.

¹ Curtis, *Letters to the People of India on Responsible Government*, (London edn, 1918), p 24.

² Chirol to Coupland, 16 Feb 1918, RT Papers c 880, fols 7-8.

³ Curtis, *Letters to the People of India on Responsible Government* (London edn, 1918), p 61.

Curtis's perspective owed much to the influence of Marris, Meston and other Government of India reformers whose recognition of the need to conciliate Indian opinion brought them into conflict with the inertia particularly to be found in the Government's Home Department.¹ Curtis himself was increasingly critical of what he saw as the constitutional conservatism of the majority of the ICS. In turn, his abrasive manner won few friends; and his insistence on a "guiding policy" seemed to many naïve. As (Sir) Olaf Caroe later recalled, many Civilians feared "that the would-be reformers were intent on foisting on an unready India a top storey without a foundation".² The average District Officer was concerned to protect the peasantry, not to appease the intellectual élite. Moreover, in the context of war, the ICS looked at problems mainly from the point of view of maintaining law and order.³ By the autumn of 1917, Curtis thought that even Marris was "travelling towards what to me seems reaction".⁴ Marris, for his part, now thought that "the best service the R.T. can do to Indian politics till the crisis is over is to let them alone".⁵

In some respects, the Moot was also critical of Curtis's rôle in India. Curtis was an employee of the Round Table and was originally in

¹ See D A Low, "The Government of India and the First Non-Co-Operation Movement, 1920-22" in R Kumar (ed) *Essays on Gandhian Politics* (Oxford, 1971), pp 298 ff.

² Caroe, "Lionel and O.C." [Aug 1962], RT Papers c 868, fols 101-05. Caroe himself composed a memorandum arguing for a much slower progress to self-government, starting at village and municipal level.

³ [Hailey,] "Lionel Curtis" [1960], RT Papers c 864, fols 199-209.

⁴ Curtis to Chirol, 24 Sept 1917, RT Papers c 804, fols 119-24; cf Curtis to Coupland, 15 Oct 1917, RT Papers c 810, fols 191-94.

⁵ Marris to Coupland, 1 Oct 1917, RT Papers c 827, fols 136-41.

India to further Round Table business. The Moot did not share his enthusiasm for becoming embroiled in the quagmire of Indian politics. Matters came to a head in the summer of 1917. "After some discussion", Kerr was deputed

"to write to you and say that they thought it was essential that you should make it clear . . . that in expressing views about the future of self-government in India, you were expressing your own views only and not those of the Round Table movement".¹

Kerr himself now doubted whether Indians in fact wanted "the Western paraphernalia of suffrage and ballot-box" rather than the enhancement of existing "centres of Indian authority".² Any hopes Curtis may have had of using Kerr as a channel for his own views were to be disappointed; indeed, a memorandum written by Kerr for the Prime Minister specifically discounted the idea of a "'formula' or general declaration of policy" (six weeks before the "Montagu Declaration"), and made no mention of "dyarchy".³

Curtis's hand was considerably strengthened following the "Montagu Declaration" of 20 August 1917, which promised "the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the Empire". The Moot now agreed to act as agents for the distribution of Curtis's Indian tracts, and in March 1918 organised a London edition of Curtis's *Letters to the People of India on Responsible Government*.⁴ Nevertheless, tensions still arose. Curtis's attempts to have the *Round Table* publish articles

¹ Kerr to Curtis, 9 July 1917, RT Papers c 810, fols 106-7, responding to Curtis to Coupland, 19 May 1917, *ibid.*, fols 54-65..

² Kerr to Curtis, 21 July 1917, Lothian Papers 33, fols 19-21.

³ Kerr, "Indian Reforms", 7 July 1917, Lothian Papers 32, fols 1-9.

⁴ See RT Papers c 830, *passim*.

on India which reflected a viewpoint similar to his own met with considerable resistance. One such article, apparently by L F Rushbrook Williams, was rejected after Marris's criticism of the author's expertise: "He has not been long in India, and like Curtis has seen only one side of Indian life".¹

Curtis's attempt to find a middle path between the unrealistic expectations of Indian nationalists and the unwarranted fears of the bulk of Indian Civilians was shared by Edwin Montagu. Indeed, Montagu was writing in his diary early in 1918 that "I find that I see eye to eye with [Curtis] on every question".² Undoubtedly Montagu was influenced not solely by the persuasiveness of Curtis's arguments, but also by Curtis's impeccable Imperialist credentials and his connections through the Round Table. Montagu himself was painfully aware of how precarious was his own political leverage in Whitehall, Westminster and Downing Street.³

Montagu's report (written, under instruction, by Marris) was completed after Curtis had returned to England. It explicitly disavowed both the Congress/League and Curtis's *Joint Address* schemes; nevertheless, it incorporated significant elements of the latter, in particular the proposal of "specific devolution" at the provincial level. Where it differed was in failing to recommend a complete geographical, administrative and fiduciary separation between the two provincial governments, and in proposing an

1 Marris to Coupland, 1 Oct 1917, RT Papers c 827, fols 136-41.

2 [Montagu's Indian diary, unpublished version,] Lothian Papers 35 and 36 (quotation from 36, fol 113). The published version has Curtis agreeing with Montagu: Venetia Montagu (ed), *Edwin Montagu: An Indian Diary* (London, 1930), p 233.

3 See eg Montagu to Kerr, 12 May 1919, Lothian Papers 729, item 1.

extension of the representative principle at the Government of India level. Curtis accepted the report as a workable outline, hoping that "if subjected to careful enquiry [it] can be made a thoroughly sound one in the course of its passage through Parliament".¹

Curtis's activity during the period of Parliamentary and public debate on the Report was directed two ways: first, towards securing the necessity of some such reform against the reactionary opposition of the *Morning Post/Spectator* wing of the Conservatives, and secondly, towards modification of the Report's proposals to bring them to resemble more closely his own.

In pursuit of the first objective, Curtis urged a reaffirmation of the original "Montagu Declaration": "to a great extent the attacks which are being directed against the Report are really directed against the Pronouncement of the 20th August".² Curtis emphasised the dangers of delay, claiming, somewhat fancifully, that Indians saw the Report "as the sun obscuring the stars, but bathing the whole world in light". Curtis also emphasised the necessity of going to Paris "with a clear conscience".³

The London group as a whole now threw its weight behind Indian reform, even claiming it as the fruit of Round Table activity.⁴ Meston was

1 Curtis to N Chamberlain, 18 July 1918, Lothian Papers 33, fols 42-46.

2 *Ibid*; cf Curtis to Lord Sinha, 19 July 1918, Lothian Papers 33, fols 47-8.

3 Letter to *The Times*, 22 July 1918.

4 eg [Coupland] to B Dunfield, 17 June 1918, RT Papers c 802, fols 119-22. Cf Dove, "The Round Table: A Mystery Probed", 1924, Brand Papers, box 70.

induced to write a *Round Table* article welcoming Montagu's proposals (but emphasising their inadequacy where they strayed from Curtis's lines);¹ a "little Committee" was set up with the object of "placing" articles on India in various papers and journals;² and money was provided to "such propagandist associations as the WEA and YMCA" to pay for lectures bringing "the whole Indian problem before the public".³

In pursuit of his second objective, Curtis pressed for a Select Committee to examine the report, suggesting Selborne as Chairman,⁴ and then presenting it with a lengthy re-statement of his case.⁵ Here Curtis was less successful. The Government of India Act differed in some respects from Montagu's original proposals, but not in those which Curtis considered important. But if Curtis was not entirely satisfied with the end result, his share in its making was without doubt an important one. The original impetus, and most of the ideas, came from Marris and other reformers in the Government of India. Nevertheless, when they (and the Moot) hesitated, Curtis himself persisted. Moreover, Curtis's distinctive contribution was to present reform as the logical outcome of British rule, rather than as a panic reaction to crisis. Thereby he helped not only to make reform

1 [Meston,] "The Montagu-Chelmsford Report", *RT*, Sept 1918, pp 778-802.

2 [Curtis?] to H E Egerton, 19 July 1918, *RT Papers* c 831, fol 109.

3 [Coupland?] to E Barker, 15 July 1918, *RT Papers* c 831, fols 105-6. Details of money spent in fols 112 and 135.

4 Curtis to Montagu, 3 Aug 1918, *Lothian Papers* 33, fols 54-7.

5 *Memorandum of Evidence to the Joint Select Committee . . .* (London, 1919), reprinted in *Dyarchy* (London, 1920), pp 482-552.

respectable in England, but to strengthen the hand of "moderates" in India. In Hailey's judgment, this was the real value of Curtis's work: "the encouragement he gave to the . . . 'Liberal' section of advanced thought at a critical period in Indian history".¹

Sinn Féin and the Anglo-Irish Treaty

Ireland was another area where the Round Tablers (and particularly Curtis) were able to exert an influence on British policy. Again the Round Tablers' intervention was reactive - responding to a situation created by the Irish themselves - and primarily motivated by a desire for consolidation. Some shift in British policy became inevitable. Once the Round Tablers grasped this, their peculiar contribution was again to interpret that shift in terms of the continuities of British political tradition, thereby portraying concession as the product not of weakness but of the continuing strength and adaptability of British ideals.

The Easter Rising of 1916, as Nicholas Mansergh later wrote, effected "a psychological transformation so considerable as to constitute a near unbridgeable gulf in outlook and understanding".² At the time, of course, this was by no means clear.

The Moot remained resolutely opposed to Dominion status for Ireland until the summer of 1921. One reason was its belief that the relationship between Britain and the Dominions was dependent on a spirit of goodwill and compromise which was entirely lacking in Anglo-Irish relations. Writing for the June 1918 *Round Table*, Kerr adduced several more reasons why "a

¹ [Hailey,] "Lionel Curtis" [1960], RT Papers c 864, fols 199-209.

² N Mansergh, *The Unsolved Question* (London, 1991), p 81.

solution which has worked elsewhere" would not be appropriate for Ireland: her geographical proximity to Britain, which prevented Britain from allowing her independent control of armed forces, munitions, naval bases, harbours and wireless; the position of Ulster, which would never submit without safeguards to "a Roman Catholic majority which has now shown that its political life is mainly controlled by its clergy and bishops"; the chaos which would result from separate tariffs and income taxes. Moreover, there was a "larger aspect" to the question.

"We are to-day fighting two forces which stand across the path to a true Commonwealth - one is the tendency to autocracy, the other the tendency to anarchy We have all begun to see the dangers of autocracy. We are not so familiar with the subtle anarchism latent in the gospel of self-determination."¹

Dominion status was therefore at best a pis aller, as far as the Round Tablers were concerned. For most, the preferred solution remained "Home Rule All Round", which once again grew in attractiveness as the necessity of re-casting the 1914 compromise became more obvious.

The first move in re-opening the campaign for "Home Rule All Round" was made by Selborne, who wrote two articles for the *Morning Post* in August 1916.² Selborne himself was a reluctant convert to devolution: on the whole, he thought the Irish "quite unsuited" to parliamentary self-government.³ Nevertheless, he and Oliver worked closely for the next two

1 [Kerr,] "The Irish Crisis", *RT*, June 1918, pp 496-525.

2 *Morning Post*, 8 Aug 1916 and 18 Aug 1916. Selborne's and Oliver's activities have again been well covered by John Kandle in *Ireland and the Federal Solution* (Kingston, 1989), pp 179 ff. See also Kandle, "Federalism and the Irish Problem in 1918", *History*, Vol LVI (1971), pp 207-30, and D G Boyce and J O Stubbs, "F S Oliver, Lord Selborne and Federalism", *JICH*, Vol V (1976), pp 53-81.

3 Selborne to Oliver, 14 March 1917, Oliver Papers 95, fols 134-38.

years, pushing the federal scheme in various pamphlets, memoranda and letters, and in meetings with leading policy-makers. The federalists were particularly active during the early months of the Irish Convention, which met in Dublin from July 1917. A further bout of activity accompanied the setting-up of the Cabinet's Irish committee under Walter Long in April 1918.

The attitude of the Moot as a whole remained somewhat ambiguous throughout this period. As late as May 1918, Curtis was pressing the Moot to stop being "Asquithian" and come down firmly in favour of "Home Rule All Round"; Hichens was as "always . . . opposed", but agreed to "concede the point if the rest of us agree".¹ Only in September 1918 did the *Round Table* print an article such as Curtis and the majority desired. By then, the deterioration of the Irish situation was reflected in the suggestion that there was "no reason to insist on contractual equality in a measure of devolution".² Subsequent references to federalism were less than optimistic. In June 1919 it was suggested that federalism "has never been considered in Ireland upon its merits"; six months later, the *Round Table* was forced to admit that "in the Ireland of to-day it will be difficult even to get it a hearing".³

The latter remark exposed the weakness of the federalist case. For southern Ireland, federalism would have meant accepting powers less extensive than those contained in the original Home Rule Act; and this in a

¹ [Coupland] to Brand, 14 May 1918, RT Papers c 803, fol 127.

² [Curtis,] "The Better Government of the United Kingdom", *RT*, Sept 1918 (pp 750-77), p 768.

³ "United Kingdom: Public Opinion in Ireland" [from Dublin], *RT*, June 1919 (pp 580-87), p 583; "United Kingdom: Ireland: The New Interest in England" [from London], *RT*, Dec 1919 (pp 124-27), p 126.

context in which the constitutional Nationalists were steadily losing ground to the Sinn Féiners.

Initially, the *Round Table*, and particularly the magazine's Irish correspondent¹, cast doubt on the extent of Sinn Féin's real support. Republicanism represented "a mood rather than a policy".² Southern Ireland was "not so united as it seems", and "a majority would work any scheme which really settled the question". Only the insurgents' terrorism prevented the free expression of "common sense".³ The *Round Table* therefore exhorted the Government to redouble its efforts to suppress the "armed conspiracy", "and so make it possible for reasonable men of good will once more to play their part".⁴

While thus uncompromising in their attitude to Sinn Féin insurgency, the Round Tablers felt a growing sense of unease with the lack of success of British methods of coercion and with the resilience of Nationalist sentiment. They were also apprehensive of the damage being done to Britain's Imperial and international prestige by the Irish imbroglio. In Australia, Irish sentiment was believed to have been largely responsible

1 Possibly Allison Phillips (a follower of Sir Horace Plunkett); but possibly J J Horgan, then Crown Solicitor in Cork, and later a regular *Round Table* contributor. The Moot was especially secretive about the identity of its Irish correspondent before 1924, for obvious reasons.

2 "United Kingdom: Public Opinion in Ireland" [from Dublin], *RT*, June 1919 (pp 580-87), pp 581-82.

3 "United Kingdom: The Irish Problem Once More" [London], *RT*, March 1920 (pp 368-80), pp 377-79.

4 "United Kingdom: The Situation in Ireland" [Dublin], *RT*, June 1920 (pp 635-39), pp 638-39.

for the failure of the conscription referenda during wartime.' After the war, the crisis in Ireland was "known to obstruct a really thorough-going understanding with the United States".² "Irishmen everywhere", the *Round Table* observed in March 1920,

"are using their unique gifts of intelligence and oratory and political organisation and propaganda to create suspicion and to separate and estrange. . . What a difference it would make if those gifts were turned the other way - to softening and adapting and brightening the free civilisation of the Anglo-Saxon world, and explaining it to the backward millions of the earth!"³

The political advantages of a settlement were thus clear to the Round Tablers. What was less clear was the basis upon which such a settlement could be agreed. The magazine's Irish correspondent was not convinced that Dominion status would lead inexorably to independence, taking issue with Dicey's "remarkable statement" that the Dominions enjoyed a "right to secede".⁴ The London Moot, on the other hand, believed that "Dominion self-government" would reduce "the over-riding authority of Westminster . . . (as in Canada and Australia) to a shadow".⁵

Sinn Féin's rejection of the 1920 Act indicated the final exhaustion of attempts to appease Irish Nationalism on a basis of provincial

1 Curtis to Milner, 16 Oct 1916, RT Papers c 780, fols 189-95; T H Laby to Coupland, 8 Jan 1917, Lothian Papers 476, fol 3.

2 "United Kingdom: Public Opinion in Ireland" [Dublin], *RT*, June 1919 (pp 580-87), p 580. Cf Brand to Charles Altschul, 16 June 1919, Brand Papers, box 12: the settlement of the Irish question being "the one thing" which would remove American "suspicion of all our motives".

3 "United Kingdom: The Irish Problem Once More" [London], *RT*, March 1920 (pp 368-80), p 380.

4 "United Kingdom: Public Opinion in Ireland" [Dublin], *RT*, June 1919, p 582.

5 "United Kingdom: Ireland: the New Interest in England" [London], *RT*, Dec 1919 (pp 124-27), p 126.

devolution. The British Government was now faced with a clear choice, in Winston Churchill's words, between "war with the utmost violence" and "peace with the utmost patience". The former course of action apparently commended itself to Lloyd George and the bulk of his Unionist colleagues, although even they shrank from the measures which the army believed necessary.¹ The option of compromise, with Dominion status as the most frequently suggested basis, was supported by Labour, Asquithian Liberals, large numbers of Southern Unionists and Dublin officials, significant sections of the British press (including Northcliffe's *Times*), and broad swathes of Dominion and American opinion.²

The London Moot was torn between loyalty to the Union and desire for an end to Britain's costly and embarrassing embroilment. It was therefore agreed to send Curtis and Dove to Dublin, to assess the relative merits of the options before the Government, and to report on the situation for the magazine.³ The result was a remarkable article in the *Round Table* of June 1921, which registered a decisive shift in the magazine's attitude, in favour of compromise and settlement on a basis little short of Dominion status. This was, Curtis asserted, "a conflict in which no sense of genuine triumph can be felt". Even if the British army managed to pacify the country, it would do so by methods which were "a negation of the principle for which [the British Empire/Commonwealth] has stood". Moreover, there would be no "finality" in such an outcome.

¹ See N Mansergh, *The Unsolved Question* (London, 1991), pp 161 ff.

² *Ibid.*, pp 145-48 and *passim*; D G Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles: British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy, 1918-22* (London, 1972).

³ Minutes of RT meeting, 10 March 1921, RT (O) Papers. The Round Tablers stayed with Plunkett, but it is not clear who else they met.

"Want of experience in handling facts has left the Irish mind out of touch with actualities. No cure will now reach the root of this malady which does not give Ireland the strongest dose of responsibility which she herself is able to take".

While it was "impossible" to allow Ireland control of her own navy and bases or to secede from the Empire, in all other respects (including tariffs) southern Ireland should be given powers commensurate with "colonial autonomy". The six counties of Ulster should be excluded. "Southern Ireland must be free to choose its rulers, and Ulster must have time to see how she [*sic*] uses that freedom before a new prospect of unity for Ireland can dawn."¹

It was only relatively late in the day that the *Round Table* added its voice to those calling for a Dominion-type settlement in Ireland, and only when the possibility of reaching a settlement by smaller concessions had clearly been exhausted. Nevertheless, at the time of its publication, Curtis's article was considerably in advance of actual Government policy. It was amended to make clear "that the present situation . . . was not exclusively the fault of Great Britain"; but the Moot as a whole accepted his argument.² However, the *Round Table* lost a number of its Unionist allies over the issue, including at least one member, Lord Selborne, who "took to heart very deeply" the rôle played by Curtis.³

Curtis's article preceded a similar shift in Government policy only

¹ [Curtis,] "Ireland", *RT*, June 1921 (pp 465-534), pp 492, 505, 511-12, 515, 520.

² Minutes of RT meeting, 3 May 1921, RT (O) Papers.

³ Curtis to Lord Baden Powell, 30 July 1932, Curtis Papers 91, fols 23-24.

by a few weeks. Brought to Lloyd George's attention by Grigg, his article itself played some part in bringing about that shift.¹ Over the next few months, Curtis continued to provide Grigg with a stream of advice on questions of tactics and presentation. The basic principle of settlement being accepted, that advice tended to be of a conservative nature. Initially, Curtis hoped that the Government would "use the agency of Ulster" to obtain moderation from Sinn Féin.² Once it became clear that Craig was not willing to let Ulster be used in such a way, Curtis fell back on the Empire, urging "that no proposals can be entertained which would have the effect of depriving Irishmen of the citizenship which Australians, Canadians and South Africans enjoy (as well as ourselves)".³ On the whole, Curtis believed that the concessions contained in Lloyd George's preliminary correspondence with de Valera "may . . . have gone beyond the limits of the possible".⁴

Curtis's interest in the Irish settlement - and, no doubt, his insistence on setting limits to concession - was rewarded by his appointment as Second Secretary to the British delegation which met with Sinn Féin's representatives from October to December 1921. Oliver thought that the "best hope" for the failure of the Conference lay in the possibility of collision between Curtis and Erskine Childers, Curtis's

¹ Dove to J M A Ilott, 11 June 1923, Brand Papers, box 70; Curtis to Macadam, 6 July 1953, Curtis Papers 89, fol 111.

² Curtis to Grigg, 24 June 1921, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999. Curtis's article had originally envisaged Dominion status for the whole of Ireland, but had been amended by the Moot to advocate exclusion: Minutes of RT meeting, 3 May 1921, RT (O) Papers.

³ Dove (conveying Curtis's views) to Grigg, 22 Sept 1921, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999..

⁴ Curtis to B C Waller, 23 Aug 1921, Curtis Papers 89, fols 64-65.

school-fellow from Haileybury who was now his opposite number on the Irish side.¹ In fact, Curtis's impact on the Conference was less dramatic, although Thomas Jones thought he made a significant contribution to keeping the negotiations within the parameters set by Dominion Status "with safeguards".²

The eventual Treaty Curtis welcomed, without irony, as "one of the greatest achievements in the history of the Empire".³ Nevertheless, the Round Table's original fear that Ireland would prove a loose cannon amongst the Dominions was to receive ample confirmation in subsequent decades.

Milner and Egypt

Although not technically a part of the British Empire, Egypt was an important field for British economic interests, and a crucial lynchpin in her worldwide military and communications network. Moreover, since Britain's occupation of the country in 1882 British control over the Khedive's administration had come to assume an increasingly colonial character. As Milner wrote in the *Round Table* in 1920, rather than "an entanglement from which we were anxious to escape, Egypt came to be regarded by us with pride, as one of the brightest spots in the whole field

¹ Oliver to Grigg, 14 Oct 1921, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999. The contrast in temperament between Curtis and Childers is the subject of an illuminating passage in Frank Pakenham (Lord Longford)'s *Peace by Ordeal* (London, 1935), pp 140-41.

² See Keith Middlemas (ed), *Thomas Jones' Whitehall Diary: Vol III: Ireland, 1918-25* (London, 1971), *passim*.

³ Curtis to Churchill, 17 July 1928, Curtis Papers 90 (fols 30-54), fols 30-31.

of British Imperial rule".¹ The latter interpretation Milner himself had done much to foster, with the publication in 1892 of his widely-read *England in Egypt*.

That the early Round Table conceived of Egypt as an integral part of the Empire is illustrated by the Moot's initial plans to set up a subsidiary group there, and to include a chapter on the country in the projected Round Table "egg".² Abdication of Britain's rôle was similarly anathema to the writer of the first (and only prewar) *Round Table* article on Egypt, who emphasised that "the plant of self-government is a slow-growing tree", and that in any case Egypt "cannot be independent".³ As late as December 1918, Curtis pointed to Egypt as "an example of the countries of the Near East for which there is at present no hope except in the guardianship of some civilized State". Nevertheless, he also declared that Egypt was at least "gradually contracting the habits of order from which progress towards self-government can begin".⁴

It was not Egypt's "habits of order" but her habits of disorder which thrust the question of her self-government to the foreground of Imperial politics. Widespread disaffection broke into violent unrest in March 1919. Various temporary causes were at work, but the underlying cause, as Arnold Toynbee recognised, was a "new and genuine nationalism" encompassing "not only the ex-governing class and the students, but doctors of religion, barristers, officials, town workers and peasantry".

1 [Milner,] "The Situation in Egypt", *RT*, June 1920, p 520.

2 Curtis to Kerr, 21 July 1910, Lothian Papers 1, fols 59-83; [Kerr,] "Memorandum" [1910], Lothian Papers 11, fols 46-58. Neither of these plans came to fruition.

3 [Hon S Peel,] "Egypt", *RT*, Aug 1911, pp 443-58.

4 [Curtis,] "Windows of Freedom", *RT*, Dec 1918, pp 23-24.

"The struggle for self-government is shifting its arena to the Middle East, and here, though we may be a Commonwealth in spirit and intention, we are in fact an Empire with the innate weaknesses of that polity."

Such was the strength of feeling in Egypt, Toynbee warned, that the "goodwill" upon which British rule had previously been able to count had now all but disappeared. Unless some new accommodation could be reached on the basis of Commonwealth rather than Empire, Britain would inevitably face a stark choice between "abdication or tyranny".¹

The shift in the Round Table's appraisal of Britain's Egyptian policy was thus dramatic and swiftly accomplished. It was essentially a pragmatic response to realities which could no longer be ignored. The British Government's response was not, and could not be expected to have been, as clear-cut. Repressive measures were employed, with little success, and Milner was despatched to report on the situation before any other steps might be taken.

Milner was already convinced of the need for conciliation before he left England. That this was so is clear from an (anonymous) article which he wrote for the *Round Table* of June 1920. Milner emphasised the extent of Egyptian disaffection, which was so widespread and so deeply-felt that on present lines Britain would be forced not only "to keep a considerable army in Egypt" but also "to take the administration of the country entirely into British hands". This was "a prospect so formidable . . . that it is impossible to contemplate it without extreme aversion". Was it necessary? Britain certainly had "vital interests" in Egypt and the wider region - the

¹ [Toynbee,] "The Outlook in the Middle East", *RT*, Dec 1919, pp 55-97 (quotations from pp 79 and 86).

Suez Canal, the garrisoning of troops, the exclusion of foreign powers, the maintenance of stability in the Sudan - as well as important economic interests in Egypt itself.

"But these are not interests, the defence of which necessarily involves our taking charge of the whole government of Egypt. A peaceful and progressive Egypt, in friendly alliance with Great Britain, and screened by that alliance from international interference, would completely serve our purpose."

That Milner should have found himself in the forefront of those urging a conciliatory policy in Egypt is at first sight more remarkable even than the volte-face performed by the Round Table as a whole. Milner never had any qualms about urging a policy of coercion in Ireland or South Africa. Nevertheless, in Milner's eyes Egypt was an altogether different case. There the Empire certainly had "vital interests", but these were mainly of a strategic or diplomatic kind. Above all, there was no comparable "loyalist" community whose interests needed protecting, and who could provide the basis for a continuation of the old, more or less colonial, régime. On the other hand, Milner believed, there was a good chance that Britain could pacify the "moderates", neutralise the "extremists", limit her liabilities, and still secure her most essential interests in the region. A conciliatory policy, as he put it to his Cabinet colleagues in 1921, was not only "just" but "politic . . . and calculated to strengthen and not to weaken our Imperial position".²

Milner's negotiating stance unsettled many Imperialists. Sir George Lloyd was mindful of the Indian situation in denouncing Milner's policy as

¹ [Milner,] "The Situation in Egypt", RT, June 1920, pp 520-35.

² Quoted in John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918-22* (London, 1981), p 106. For Milner's mission to Egypt and its outcome, see *ibid*, pp 84-109.

the first step in "withdrawing the legions".¹ Grigg had the Irish parallel more in mind in opposing "the moral claim of smaller communities to insist on rights and powers in conflict with the interest and even safety of larger communities".² Nevertheless, the Round Table as a whole welcomed the negotiations. Fears that "our action will be quoted to justify demands by other dependencies" were thought to be overblown: Egypt supplied "no valid precedent", because she was unusually homogeneous in race, language and religion, economically and politically advanced, and never technically a British dependency.³

The dramatic effect of a "generous" British gesture was an important element in Milner's and the Round Table's support for such a policy. Such hopes were scuttled, however, by Zaghlul's unwillingness to agree to British "reservations", and the Cabinet's unwillingness to concede Egyptian autonomy. It was not until February 1922 that Egypt received "Independence". By then the moment was lost. Dove was in Egypt at the time of the "Allenby Declaration", and in a series of letters to Brand (subsequently published in the *Round Table*), he described the "scepticism" and "suspicion" with which it was greeted. Nationalism was now "a landslide which carries everyone with it". It was in Britain's own interests to have a stable government in Egypt, and it was "part of our mission in the world" to encourage "responsibility". Dove could therefore

1 John Charmley, *Lord Lloyd and the Decline of the British Empire* (London, 1987), p 95.

2 Grigg to Sir V Chirol, 28 Dec 1921, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999; cf Grigg to Sir Godfrey Thomas, 26 Jan 1922, MSS Microfilm 1000.

3 [D G Hogarth,] "Egypt a Nation", *RT*, Dec 1920, pp 32-49.

see "no alternative" to further concessions.¹

As in the parallel cases of India and Ireland, the Round Table's analysis of Anglo-Egyptian relations was marked by a sudden but calculated shift. Although the Round Tablers were at pains to deny it at the time, this was a pattern which would later be repeated throughout the dependent Empire. The crucial ingredient was not metropolitan liberalism but indigenous revolt. Nevertheless, once galvanised, progressive ideology of the "Commonwealth" kind had an important rôle to play, in interpreting, mediating and attempting to reconcile the conflicting claims of Imperialism and Nationalism.

1 [Dove,] "Letters from Egypt", *RT*, June 1922, pp 555-88.

6. THE ROUND TABLE BETWEEN THE WARS

It was the war which really put paid to the Round Tablers' original strategy. Wartime conditions were hardly conducive to the organisation of a movement for fundamental constitutional change: the outcome was too uncertain, and too much else was in a state of flux. Curtis's argument that co-operation would break down seemed at best "academic", and at worst perverse, when set against the massive Imperial war effort and the new developments in the constitution of the Empire.

Peace brought further complications: uncertainty over the position of the United States, now a major military and naval as well as economic power; a new context of international relations through the League of Nations, which effectively recognised the Dominions as sovereign states; a whole host of challenges to Britain's colonial rule; and, of course, the absence of any clear external threat which might be used to galvanise the Dominions into Union.

The need for a new strategy was clear. As Glazebrook emphasised early in 1919, "if the Round Table is to fulfil its destiny as a leader of thought in Imperial matters it must make a fresh start".¹

Altered Strategies

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the Moot remained committed to the eventual realisation of some form of imperial federation. This was the case even with those members who had been the fiercest critics of Curtis's particular solution. At the time of the Versailles conference, Brand wrote that he still believed an "organic union" of the Empire to be a possibility

¹ Glazebrook to Coupland, 13 Feb 1919, RT Papers c 802, fols 179-81.

"not far distant".¹ Early in 1919 Coupland let it be known that

"most if not all of the members of the Moot are convinced that the case for organic union has been strengthened by the war and its sequel, and that steps should be taken as soon as may be possible or convenient to restate the case to the public".²

While there were lingering hopes of a constitutional convention until 1921³, the majority of the Moot soon realised that imperial federation was an "impracticable" proposition. With the disappearance of the German threat "the old motives and the old arguments for closer union of the Empire have entirely lost their force".⁴ Both in Britain and in the Dominions it was clear that public opinion expected more of the League of Nations than did the Round Tablers themselves. Above all, the war and the peace negotiations had given an enormous boost to Dominion nationalism. By the spring of 1920, the stalwarts of the Melbourne group were forced to admit that "people are shying off Imperial Federation", and that any attempt to orchestrate a federationist movement from Britain "will be disastrous".⁵ Curtis's arguments were now agreed to be outdated, and "a new catechism" was demanded before even the New Zealand groups could play any useful part in federationist propaganda.⁶

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- 1 Brand to Sir Charles Addis, 16 Dec 1918, Brand Papers, box 12.
 - 2 Coupland to the Australian groups, 22 March 1919, RT Papers c 802, fols 183-84.
 - 3 See eg Curtis to Grigg, 2 June 1921, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999. Cf Loring Christie to Kerr, 12 Jan 1920, Lothian Papers 207, fols 182-87.
 - 4 Grigg, "Memorandum", 26 Oct 1920, Lothian Papers 17, fols 7-12.
 - 5 Sir J W Barrett to Curtis, 23 Feb 1920, Lothian Papers 495 (single item).
 - 6 H F von Haast to Curtis, 8 March 1920, Brand Papers, box 42.

Curtis and Malcolm continued to fight a rearguard action in favour of the Round Table sticking to its guns: "the more unacceptable the doctrine, the greater . . . is the need for the preacher".¹ Nevertheless, the majority of the Moot believed that the Round Table would only destroy its credibility by continuing to insist on an ideal solution.

Federation was not a matter of "practical" politics. Such an admission was made by Kerr, speaking personally, in Canada in November 1922² - a course which he defended as necessary to explode "the old complex" about the Round Table being "an intrigue against Canada's liberty, engineered from London"³ - and in the *Round Table* magazine, on behalf of the London group, six months later.⁴

The Moot's decision to renounce its belief in the need for immediate federation was the result less of a change of heart than of careful consideration of tactics. Criticised by Coupland for supporting a policy which would leave the group merely "marking time"⁵, Dove justified the *Round Table's* announcement in terms which leave no doubt where the Moot's sympathies continued to lie.

"We have . . . been less 'prophetic' since the war, not from 'incuria' but because the majority of us, who still believe that some form of constitutional union must come some day if the Empire is to remain one, felt that in the new post-war mood of the Dominions more harm than good would be done by continually asseverating this Our present policy, good or bad, has been to let co-operation be tried, indeed to assist it in every possible

1 Malcolm to Coupland, 22 Feb 1919, RT Papers c 814, fols 155-56.

2 *Toronto Daily Star*, 7 Nov 1922, copy in Lothian Papers 19, fols 223-31.

3 Kerr to Curtis, 22 Nov 1922, Lothian Papers 19, fols 221-22.

4 [Kerr,] "The New Imperial Problem", *RT*, June 1923, pp 484-5.

5 Coupland to Dove, 28 Feb [1923], RT Papers c 804, fol 197.

way. Both its failures and its successes are milestones on our road, and in any case the King's Government has got to be carried on."

While the Round Table's "present principle is rather 'one step enough for me'", Dove concluded, "it has not altogether lost sight of the distant scene".¹

Coupland was right in describing the Moot's attitude to imperial federation as one of "marking time". Even Curtis now admitted that "there is not the least chance of any public agreeing with my views". He realised that federation would take "the next few generations".² He even conceded that it was an open question whether federation would come about as a result of a breakdown of co-operation or of a gradual development of co-operative measures.³ Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that he, and indeed other Round Tablers, still saw imperial union as a viable long-term goal. Imperial unity was a thing of the future, not of the past.

"Marking time" was not the only Round Table strategy for reaching this goal. As Dove indicated, the Moot admitted the "impracticability" of federation partly in order to be better placed to advocate intermediary, co-operative measures. The *Round Table* was, indeed, at the forefront of those pressing for a development of machinery for co-operative decision-making in the interwar years.⁴

The *Round Table's* task of providing informed coverage of the "real" issues facing the Commonwealth lost none of its urgency now that federation

¹ Dove to Coupland, 2 March 1923, Brand Papers, box 70.

² Curtis to Murray Wrong, 3 Nov 1920, RT Papers c 811, fols 10-11.

³ [Curtis,] "Preliminary Note on the Questions Raised . . .", Jan 1921, Brand Papers, box 41.

⁴ See below, pp 307 ff.

was conceived as a longer-term goal. The most striking difference between the prewar *Round Table* and its interwar incarnation was the increased coverage given to international affairs: 17.8% of total coverage before 1914, and 31.5% between 1918 and 1939.¹ As Dove commented in 1928, "we are now to a large extent a foreign affairs review".² This was not because the Round Tablers had "gone off" the Empire. As Dove, again, wrote, "the education of Dominion readers in foreign problems is essential for our main purpose. How otherwise can the Dominions advance on the road which we would have them tread?"³

Another way in which the Round Tablers hoped to contribute towards the long-term goal was by encouraging the Dominions to work out their own "national" policies with regard to the central questions of international and Imperial affairs. With hindsight, this appears contradictory; to the Round Tablers it certainly did not seem so.

A circular was sent out to the Dominion groups at the end of 1920, calling for "a fresh approach to the central problems of the Empire by the groups of each Dominion on their own initiative [*sic*] and from their own distinctive national standpoint". The "central problems of the Empire" were spelled out: defence, emigration, trade and commerce, mandates, the position of the Dominions in the League, diplomatic relations with Japan and other powers, the "tide of anarchy" flowing from Russia, and the possible breakdown of British rule in Egypt and India.

"In all these questions we believe that the study of national policy will lead of necessity to the Imperial problem, and that this process will throw an increasing

¹ See Appendix C, "Round Table Coverage, by Subject".

² Dove to Hichens, 5 Dec 1928, Lothian Papers 243, fols 590-94.

³ Dove to Coupland, 2 March 1923, Brand Papers, box 70.

light upon the central issue in that problem - whether, to wit, Imperial unity is incompatible with the full national development of the Dominions or, on the contrary, essential to it."

The Dominion groups were reminded of the importance of their reaching the latter conclusion. The alternative to Imperial union was not national independence side by side with a British Empire "curtailed in extent but wielding its old influence and power. The alternative is national independence in a world in which the British Empire has ceased to exist".¹

Finally, it should be emphasised that the Moot saw its original strategy as interrupted rather than altogether abandoned. The idea of reviving the Round Table's programme of "group study" was raised frequently after the war, usually in connection with Curtis. In November 1919, Brand wrote to Kerr, urging him to impress on Curtis the necessity of his returning to his unfinished work, which was "vital to the success of the Round Table as I conceive it", "like a University in a State or like a vital nucleus in a cell".² In a similar vein, Dawson described Curtis's work as "the very foundation of the whole Round Table movement".³ The problem was Curtis himself, and his tendency to serial obsessions. In 1922 it would seem as if his colleagues' arguments temporarily won him over, when he wrote to a friend that "it is up to me to carry on the Round Table and complete the *Commonwealth of Nations*".⁴

¹ Circular to the Dominion groups, 22 Dec 1920, Lothian Papers, 17, fols 16-29. A draft version, dated 21 Dec 1920, is in Brand Papers, box 41.

² Brand to Kerr, 17 Nov 1919, Brand Papers, box 42.

³ Dawson, "Organization and Personnel of the Round Table Office", 14 July 1920, Brand Papers, box 42.

⁴ Curtis to "Mary", 4 March 1922, Curtis Papers 3, fols 1-4.

The same year, 1922, a more ambitious project presented itself after a "vigorous" discussion of the Round Table's future. The Moot found itself

" . . . very strongly in favour of an attempt to get American support for a study of world politics upon the basis of our previous work on the Commonwealth nations What we want to get from sympathetic people in America is,

- 1) the formation of groups who will take our Memorandums [sic], tear them to pieces from the American point of view, send us the criticisms which result & supply us with American Memorandums for treatment in the same way.
- 2) money to keep our work going".¹

Kerr (who was already in the US at the time of the Moot discussion) set about floating the idea in New York with various contacts including Whitney Shepardson (one of Colonel House's advisers at Versailles) and John W Davis (chief counsel to J P Morgan and Co, and Wilson's ambassador to London). The idea of a French leg was added, "largely to sidetrack the idea that it was an Anglo-Saxon plot". The Moot's American contacts were adamant against any formal Round Table connection, although they were willing "to get a sort of central Moot together" and have Curtis "teach them your method". The Council on Foreign Relations which the Round Table thus helped to galvanise in fact enjoyed more equivalent relations with the Institute of International Affairs than with the Round Table. The latter, as Kerr realised, had to content itself with being "a purely British enquiry".²

Curtis was once more employed as a "researcher" from 1924.

Nevertheless, it was not until early in 1929 that the first section of his new *Round Table Studies* was issued (with a preface stating that "the world

¹ Grigg to Kerr, 6 April 1922, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1000.

² Kerr to Curtis, 22 April 1922 and 28 May 1922, Lothian Papers 18, fols 186-88 and 189-91.

had so changed, and also my own view of it, that I could not piece a second volume on to the first", ie, *The Commonwealth of Nations*).¹ Other preoccupations once more intervened, however, and it was not until 1934 that Curtis's work was actually published, as the first volume of *Civitas Dei*.

The Moot in the 1920s

Towards the end of 1915 Curtis had written to Milner that, as he saw it, the real value of the Moot was in its "mixed character". An "organisation which consisted exclusively of Olivers . . . would be lost in the Dominions and among the working classes from the outset". One "which consisted of Zimmerns . . . would probably lose touch with hard realities". "Such a combination" Curtis thought "worth holding together".² By the early 'twenties, the Moot had lost not only Oliver and Zimmern, but others who had been key figures in the early years, and (some would later claim) it was perhaps in danger of losing Milner himself.

A large part of the problem was the Moot's association with Lloyd George, which proved to be something of a poisoned chalice for the younger Round Tablers. Von Haast urged the New Zealand group to sever its connection with the London Round Table, on the grounds that it had become a mere "mouthpiece" for Lloyd George.³ While his motion was rejected, suspicion that the London group was no longer "disinterested" remained.

Zimmern's disagreements with the Moot sprang from his attachment to

¹ [Curtis,] *Round Table Studies, Third Series, Instalment A*, Curtis Papers 157, Item 4, Preface (dated Jan 1929).

² Curtis to Milner, 29 Nov 1915, Curtis Papers 2, fols 199-201.

³ J M A Ilott to Dove, 1 May 1923, Brand Papers, box 70.

the ideals of liberal internationalism and concern for the effects of British policy in Europe. He resigned in 1922. In December of that year he described his former colleagues as "subservient to Lloyd George", a charge which Brand found "insulting" and "quite uncalled for".¹ The mutual hubris eventually died down. In 1926 Dove reported Zimmern as "now quite friendly again".² Thereafter Zimmern was a useful contact in Geneva and Oxford, and one whose work meshed closely with that of the Round Tablers. Nevertheless, he was not to play any further significant rôle in the Moot.

The Round Table lost more friends on the right wing of British politics. Lord Selborne viewed Lloyd George with intense suspicion following the political crises of 1910-14. As Curtis later wrote, he was "a man whose conservative instincts run very deep", and he found it hard to forgive the younger Round Tablers for their part in what he saw as a betrayal of British interests in India and Ireland.³ Oliver was another who was never enamoured of Lloyd George. The final straw for Oliver, as for Selborne, was the rôle played by individual Round Tablers in India and Ireland. By 1923 he had decided to resign even as a Trustee, in order not to have "any official connection with an organisation with whose views on several fundamental matters I have the misfortune to disagree".⁴

The departure of others from the Moot was less dramatic. Amery's was perhaps long overdue, considering his failure to make an impact on the

¹ Brand to Dove, 11 Dec 1922, Brand Papers, box 70. Zimmern contested Carnarvon as a Labour candidate in 1924, on a platform consisting almost entirely of opposition to Lloyd George's foreign policy views. (See his *Election Address*, 1924, copy in Bodleian Library.)

² Dove to Kerr, 10 Oct 1926, Lothian Papers 224, fols 340-41.

³ Curtis to Baden-Powell, 30 July 1932, Curtis Papers 91, fols 23-24.

⁴ Oliver to Dove, 20 Feb 1923, Brand Papers, box 70.

Round Table's views on tariffs and imperial co-operation. As Colonial Secretary from 1924 to 1929, and as Secretary of State for India from 1940 to 1945, Amery sought the advice and collaboration of his former colleagues, but he was by no means a mere conduit for Round Table influence.¹

Lord Robert Cecil was another ex-Round Tabler who held office in both Lloyd George's government and its Conservative successors. As President of the League of Nations Union, and one of the foremost advocates of disarmament and collective security, Cecil found little support amongst Round Tablers. Dawson believed that Cecil had allied himself with an "impotent set of cranks", and Grigg thought that Cecil himself had become decidedly and unforgiveably "anti-Imperial".²

Lord Milner agreed with Zimmern that Lloyd George's conduct at the end of the war was neither statesmanlike nor prescient. Moreover, Milner feared for the Empire, haunted, as he told Oliver, by the example of the "glorious" years 1757-63 being followed by the "melancholy" 1763-83, in which the hero of the former was not entirely blameless.³

After his death, Milner's political inheritance was appropriated by his formidable widow (whom he had married in 1921). Lady Milner was a pronounced "diehard", and editor of the *National Review* from 1932 to 1948. Her views clashed with those of the *Round Table* on many issues. In 1936

¹ Amery's views and political career are the subject of illuminating analysis by Wm Roger Louis, *"In the Name of God, Go!"* (New York, 1992).

² Dawson to Oliver, 28 June 1928, Oliver Papers 85, fol 16; Grigg to Downie Stewart, 14 Oct 1933, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003. For Cecil's attempts to implement his views, see Dick Richardson, *The Evolution of British Disarmament Policy in the 1920s* (London, 1989).

³ Milner to Oliver, 23 Dec 1918, Oliver Papers 86, fols 67-68.

she published a short article which established the myth that Milner and the younger Round Tablers had disagreed profoundly over the League of Nations.' Her political differences with the Moot were accompanied by personal animosity, particularly towards Kerr whom, she claimed, Milner himself had come to mistrust, as he did other "unmanly men".²

Milner's authority was also posthumously employed within the Moot. At one point Grigg claimed that in his last years Milner was "deeply concerned about the extent to which the *Round Table* was drifting away from Imperial interests".³ Grigg's claim was made in the context of a particularly heated argument, in which Grigg found himself on the losing side. There appears to be no contemporary evidence of such misgivings on Milner's part. On the contrary, Milner continued to act as the patron of the group and to attend meetings - he had intended to join a Moot discussion on the day of his death⁴ - and it was in this postwar period that he contributed his only two articles to the *Round Table* magazine. Both were on Egypt, where Milner himself was responsible for initiating negotiations with the Wafdist leaders. It is by no means clear, therefore, that Milner's views and those of his Round Table colleagues were as discordant as "diehards" (particularly Lady Milner) later claimed.

Although the Moot was smaller in the 1920s than in its prewar days, the question which might reasonably be asked is whether it lost in cohesion

1 Viscountess Milner, "What Lord Milner Said", *National Review*, vol 107 (October 1936), pp 445-49; cf V Halpérin, *Lord Milner and the Empire* (London, 1952), pp 200-01, quoting Lady Milner's letter to him of 2 Mar 1946. Milner and the younger Round Tablers in fact made similar assessments of the League.

2 Lady Milner to Grigg, 23 June 1925, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1002.

3 Grigg to Hichens, 15 Dec 1931, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

4 [Brand,] "Lord Milner", *RT*, June 1925, p 427.

and commitment what it lost in size. The withdrawal or resignation of Oliver, Zimmern and others in many ways emphasised the political and ideological homogeneity of the remaining Round Tablers. It certainly emphasised their social homogeneity.

The "Kindergarten" now constituted a majority of the group, with Curtis, Kerr, Dawson, Brand, Hichens, Malcolm and Dove all remaining closely involved in Round Table affairs.¹ As Sir Olaf Caroe later wrote, there was "something in that association which goes beyond the individual".² Of the prewar Moot's non-"Kindergarten" members, only Grigg and Coupland persevered with membership. It is clear that when matters of fundamental importance to the group were discussed, these two carried less weight than their "Kindergarten" colleagues.³

Some attempts at widening the membership were made during the 1920s. One of Curtis's Oxford pupils (and an early member of the South African group), Percy Horsfall, was recruited in 1921. An employee first of the English Electric Company (a subdivision of Cammell Laird) and then of Lazard Brothers (of which he was Managing Director from 1937), Horsfall was a man whose "prejudices were few [but] very determined".⁴ He remained a member of the Moot until his death in 1965, and wrote many *Round Table* articles on finance and economics, and on British and European politics.

Valdorf (Lord) Astor frequently hosted weekend meetings of the Moot

¹ Craik attended meetings very infrequently after the war. J G Lockhart had him wondering in 1928 "what a good Tory like himself was doing in such wild company": Janitor, *The Feet of the Young Men* (London, 1928), p 177.

² Caroe to Morrah, 14 Dec 1949, (Lothian file,) RT (O) Papers.

³ See, eg, Curtis to the "aboriginal" members, 6 Aug 1930, Lothian Papers 252, fols 627-32.

⁴ [Lord Hampden,] "Percy Horsfall", *RT*, June 1965, pp 207-08.

at Cliveden, and was an important benefactor. Nevertheless, he rarely attended meetings (even when they were held at Cliveden) and was apparently never asked to join the Moot. Loring Christie (a member of Borden's team at Versailles, and an important figure in the early Department of External Affairs) joined the Moot between 1923 and 1926. He fell out with the Moot over Locarno, but rejoined the Canadian Round Table in the late 1920s.¹ Another of Curtis's protégés, Keith Hancock, attended Round Table meetings from 1924 to 1925 and again (after a spell in Adelaide) from 1934 to 1935. Hancock recalled leaving the Moot abruptly, in protest at the foreign policy views held by some of the senior members of the Moot.²

With the exception of Dove (who served as editor from 1920 until his death in 1934), none of the Moot was in a position to devote the bulk of his energies and time to Round Table business. Brand, Malcolm and Hichens were established and prominent, but therefore busy, figures in the worlds of finance, commerce and industry. Dawson was again editor of *The Times* from 1923 to 1941. Grigg entered Parliament in 1922; from 1925 to 1930 he served as Governor of Kenya. Coupland resigned as editor in 1919, in order to secure the Beit Professorship, which he held until 1948.

Even Curtis and Kerr were unable or unwilling to make the Round Table the primary object of their labours. From 1921 to 1924 Curtis was employed by the Colonial Office as an adviser on Irish affairs; thereafter, although funded by the Moot, he devoted the greater part of his attention to the

¹ For the disagreement, see below, pp 321-22.

² Hancock, *Country and Calling* (London, 1954), p 181. Hancock recalled the incident as taking place in 1936, but the Round Table minutes show that the last meeting he attended was over the weekend of 19 to 20 Oct 1935, at the height of the Abyssinian crisis. This sheds a rather different light on his claim that "a majority of our meeting accepted the argument that Great Britain had an interest in seeing Hitler established on the Brenner Pass".

(Royal) Institute of International Affairs, and to his - what seemed to his colleagues almost irrational - obsession with China (to which might be added skywriting, ribbon development, the preservation of Oxford, and university politics).

It had been hoped that Kerr would resume the editorship of the *Round Table* once he left Lloyd George's employment', but Kerr soon decided that his commitment to Christian Science "will preclude my taking a whole time job".² In fact, Kerr remained an active contributor to both the Moot and the magazine until his death in 1940. Nevertheless Kerr, like Curtis, went off on something of a tangent, entranced by the "much larger idea, the integration of the English-speaking world, [ie, including America,] also on an organic basis", which he believed was now "within the realm of practical possibilities".³ As Secretary to the Rhodes Trustees from 1925 to 1939, and Ambassador to Washington from August 1939 to December 1940, Kerr (who inherited the title and estates of Lord Lothian in March 1930) was in a good position to pursue his vision.

While the professional and other preoccupations of the Round Tablers are unarguable, their effect on the group is less clear-cut. Maturity, experience and "the enhanced prestige that achievement brings"⁴ ensured that the contribution which individual Round Tablers could make was, if quantitatively diminished, qualitatively more valuable. Within the Moot could be found experts and power-brokers from a wide variety of fields,

¹ See, eg, Curtis to Hichens, Brand, Kerr and Dawson, 3 Oct 1919, Lothian Papers 491, fol 2.

² Kerr to Curtis, 28 May 1922, Lothian Papers 18, fols 189-91.

³ Kerr to Curtis, 26 May 1927, Lothian Papers 227, fols 155-58.

⁴ John Dove, "The Round Table: A Mystery Probed", 18 Dec 1924, Brand Papers, box 70.

each with access to widening circles of potential collaborators. The *Round Table* undoubtedly benefited.

Moreover, the diversification of Round Tablers' interests did not in itself indicate the disintegration of the group, or disenchantment with its motive ideals. Indeed, it is remarkable how often Round Tablers rationalised their individual interests in terms of the common Round Table good. This was, of course, most often the case with the "Kindergarten" members, and especially Curtis, but it was also true of others in the Moot. Coupland saw his move to the Beit Professorship as being "both in my own interests and those of the Round Table"¹ while Grigg entered Parliament as a "lonely pioneer of the unborn Round Table Group".² Individual Round Tablers certainly acted idiosyncratically and without the backing of the wider Moot. Nevertheless, Round Table membership continued to be a vital and invigorating element in its members' contributions to public life: "something larger than friendship and nobler than day-to-day politics or business".³

The Moot and British Politics

Lloyd George's premiership was a turning-point for many of the younger Round Tablers. The Conservative backlash in 1922 launched the political career of Grigg, the only Round Tabler to become an MP during the interwar period. The anti-Coalitionists' ascendancy at the Carlton Club prompted him to write to Nancy Astor:

¹ Coupland to Kerr, 13 March 1919, Lothian Papers 487, fol 2.

² Grigg to Sir Abe Bailey, 28 Oct 1922, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999.

³ Hodson, "The Round Table's Early Life", *RT*, Oct 1976, p 420.

"After all that has passed there is for me a profound moral division between such people and any leaders that I can serve. I am going down to Bob[Brand]'s today to suggest to the Round Table that they should definitely . . . throw in their lot as independent men behind Lloyd George".¹

Grigg got the support he wanted. Brand, Kerr and Hichens spoke on his behalf in Oldham, the Round Table office provided useful "facts and figures", and Abe Bailey was persuaded by Curtis to provide £1000 for Grigg's "fighting fund".² Once in Parliament, Grigg realised "the justice of the instinct which made me feel that it was now or never if we were to tackle Parliament"; he was "only sorry that there are no other Round tablers in with me at the moment".³

At the time of Grigg's election, Kerr wrote to his mother that "I don't feel that he is much of a Liberal".⁴ Grigg's later career proved the truth of this remark. He was on the point of breaking up the Liberal Party's new-found unity in 1925 when Amery despatched him to Kenya as Governor. Back in England in 1930 he was active in trying to form a group of "Liberal Unionists" to assist in a realignment of the Right. Pre-empted by the formation of the National Government, he again spent much of the 1930s intriguing against the lacklustre and Imperially illiterate party leaderships. Grigg's parliamentary career appears marginal and almost bizarre; it derived a certain consistency, however, from his fervent imperialism. As he explained to Bailey, what he was really after was a

¹ Grigg to Nancy Astor, 21 Sept 1922, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999.

² Miss Handley to Grigg, 28 Oct 1922, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1000; Grigg to Bailey, 28 Oct 1922, MSS Microfilm 999. Bailey again funded Grigg's election in 1923.

³ Grigg to Bailey, 23 Nov 1922, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999.

⁴ Kerr to Lady Anne Kerr, 19 Nov 1922, Lothian Papers 467, fol 30.

'same' alignment of forces: "Empire" mobilised against "Socialism".¹

Similarly, he wrote to Milner that if "we fail to make the whole Liberal Party understand the Empire, it will end by adding an enormous strength to the Socialists on their international and unBritish way of thought".²

Kerr was offered a Unionist candidacy in 1922, but turned it down because "I don't think the old associations would approve of my views at all"; he again resisted pressure from Lloyd George and Herbert Samuel in 1928, this time on the grounds that he would not wish to drop his Rhodes Trust work.³ He was probably wise: Dawson thought him "one of the worst politicians in the world".⁴ Kerr's involvement in Liberal politics was nevertheless close, and more consistent than that of Grigg. He was one of the leading Liberal spokesmen on Imperial and international affairs throughout the interwar years, and, after inheriting a seat in the Lords in 1930, briefly served the National Government as Under-Secretary of State for India. He resigned as a result of the Ottawa agreements.

As editor of *The Times*, Dawson maintained a certain impartiality, although he himself was both temperamentally and by conviction a Conservative. Perhaps his proudest moment came when he managed to keep *The Times* going through the General Strike of 1926. Nevertheless, Dawson, like Oliver (with whom he maintained a close friendship), was an exponent and admirer of realpolitik. Consequently he was less moved by "anti-socialism"

¹ Grigg to Bailey, 24 Feb 1924, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1001.

² Grigg to Milner, 20 Nov 1923, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1001.

³ Kerr to Lady Anne Kerr, 3 Oct 1922, Lothian Papers 467, fol 26; Kerr to Lloyd George, 7 May 1928, Lothian Papers 229, fol 352.

⁴ Dawson to Oliver, 29 Sept 1931, Oliver Papers 85, fol 230.

than Grigg or even Kerr, believing in 1923, for instance, that it was much better to let Labour in and make a "botch" than to polarise politics by creating an artificial alliance to keep Labour out.¹

Dawson's contacts were wide-ranging, and he was the only Round Tabler with continuous access to the leading politicians of the day (including Baldwin, Halifax, MacDonald and Neville Chamberlain). It is tempting to picture Dawson exercising "power without responsibility" by means of his backstairs influence.² Nevertheless, it is important not to over-estimate the extent to which he was able, or indeed willing, to pursue his own agenda. After Dawson's retirement, Walter Monckton paid tribute to him precisely because of his "disinterested advice - without what we ex-lawyers call any 'indirect motive'".³

Other Round Tablers had more specialised interests in politics, and consequently fewer contacts at the higher levels of British statecraft. Brand, like Grigg and Kerr, was predominantly aligned to the Liberals, joining Keynes in a series of Liberal think-tanks which produced Lloyd George's policy books. (Unlike Keynes, Brand was an old-fashioned free-trader, and a firm supporter of Montagu Norman and the gold standard.) Brand's own expertise was recognised by politicians in other parties: he was a member of the Macmillan Committee appointed by Snowden in 1929, and he was an influence on the early financial policy of the National

¹ Dawson to Oliver, 23 Dec 1923, Oliver Papers 84, fols 113-14.

² J E Wrench, *Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times* (London, 1955) lists a number of occasions when *The Times* advocated a policy subsequently adopted by the government.

³ Monckton to Dawson, 21 July 1941, Dawson Papers 82, fol 22.

Government.' Hitchens' main concern was with "Industrial Fellowship" and similar Christian initiatives in the field of industrial relations, a concern which did not easily translate into politics at the conventional level. Curtis's range of contacts largely centred on academics and officials; All Souls and a number of his more politically-minded pupils (notably Malcolm MacDonald) provided his main contacts in party politics.

The younger Round Tablers appreciated less clearly than Milner the need to build working-class support for the Empire²: their contacts in the Labour Party (excluding the National Labourites in the 1930s) and in the Trade Unions were almost non-existent, and there appears to have been no significant attempt to rectify this situation. Instead, many Round Tablers clung to a naïve belief in the extent of Imperial patriotism amongst their fellow countrymen. It was left to more experienced and astute politicians to point out the truth, as when Neville Chamberlain deflated Grigg's hopes of a Liberal/Conservative alliance based on Empire:

"The people of this country have a deep sentiment about the Empire, but it is remote from their ordinary thoughts. What they are really concerned about is their bread and butter; and though, when it is explained to them, they are quite ready to appreciate that their bread and butter is largely provided by Imperial trade . . . their eyes are fixed on the factories at home, and overseas is out of the world to them".³

Grigg himself saw more clearly than other Round Tablers the domestic uses to which Empire could be put - as when he believed that "only very serious

¹ See Robert W D Boyce, *British Capitalism at the Crossroads* (Cambridge, 1987), pp 26 and *passim*.

² See J O Stubbs, "Lord Milner and Patriotic Labour, 1914-1918", *EHR*, Vol 87 (1982), pp 717-54.

³ Neville Chamberlain to Grigg, 30 Sept 1931, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

trouble in India" might discredit the Labour Government in 1930, or when he urged that only the "exploitation" of the Empire's resources could provide an effective counter to the assaults on "economic privilege" by the "underprivileged".¹ Others in the Moot were more concerned with Empire as international duty than as national asset.

One concern which united all Round Tablers was the need for stability and continuity in Imperial policy. The Round Table's attitude to specific problems was thoroughly conditioned by this need, whether it was a case of establishing a policy in India or East Africa to which Labour as well as Conservatives could subscribe, or of facilitating an Imperial foreign policy which would keep the Dominions in line with Britain. This concern was met less by direct pressure on politicians (which the Round Tablers were ill-equipped to attempt) than by a concerted and steady pressure at the level which Round Tablers thought more decisive: that of public opinion, determined above all by information and expertise.

Information and Expertise

The *Round Table* magazine was only one of a number of interlocking media through which Round Tablers, individually and in combination, sought to influence public opinion. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that the range of the Moot's influence was greater during the interwar period than the prewar.

As editor of *The Times*, Dawson was the premier newspaperman in Britain. Reinstated by a sympathetic consortium orchestrated by Brand,

¹ Grigg to Neville Chamberlain, 26 May 1930, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1002; Grigg, "The British Empire, the League of Nations and the Rhodes Ideal", (sent to Lothian 28 Sept 1932), Lothian Papers 268, fols 753-89.

Dawson was free to pursue what to him was evidently not a contradictory policy of "reflecting and guiding public opinion".¹ His surviving correspondence indicates the importance he attached to obtaining Dominion and Empire correspondents suitably imbued with his own Imperial ideas - the Canadian Round Tabler J A Stevenson was one who benefited. Regular Empire Day supplements were issued, often taking the opportunity to reaffirm Milner's vision of the Empire as "the most powerful bulwark . . . against the spread of international discord".²

Although by no means a mere tool in the hands of others in the Moot, Dawson saw that his colleagues enjoyed a privileged access to the letter pages of his paper, and Kerr wrote a number of articles under the pseudonym "Voyageur". They in turn kept Dawson on his feet, complaining vociferously whenever they thought a *Times* article or leader failed to show the "true inwardness" of a point.³

Round Tablers, particularly Kerr and Grigg, were prolific journalists, and their contributions became a feature of many publications other than *The Times*. Kerr wrote a regular column for the *Christian Science Monitor*, as well as numerous articles for *The Spectator*, the *Nation and Athenaeum* and the *Contemporary Review*. Grigg often wrote for the more right-wing *National and Fortnightly Reviews*, as well as for J L Garvin's *Observer*. *International Conciliation*, a magazine financed and published by J P Morgan

¹ A L Kennedy, "Geoffrey Dawson", *Quarterly Review*, vol 294 (April 1956), pp 155-68.

² *The Times Supplement*, 24 May 1934. For Dawson and *The Times*, see *The History of the Times*, Vol IV (2 parts, London, 1952) and Wrench, *Geoffrey Dawson and our Times* (London, 1955).

³ See, eg, Kerr to Dawson, 13 Nov 1925, Lothian Papers 222, fol 120 (on the Australian elections); on this occasion Dawson agreed.

and Co, reprinted whole articles from the *Round Table*, as well as *Times* editorials and fresh articles by individual Round Tablers (particularly Brand and Kerr). Also in America, a connection through Shepardson with the Williamstown Institute of Politics - "a real thinking machine on foreign affairs"¹ - resulted in the delivery and subsequent publication of lectures by Kerr and Curtis in 1922, Kerr in 1923 and Grigg in 1924. (Further lectures were given by the Round Table's allies Lord Eustace Percy in 1929 and Lord Neston in 1930.) These added to the numerous books and pamphlets published by Round Tablers between the wars. Mention should also be made of Reuters news agency of which Malcolm and Grigg, alongside John Buchan and Sir Roderick Jones, were directors; Buchan made clear the need for someone with "your point of view" when inviting Grigg to take up the post.²

As Beit Professor at Oxford, Coupland saw himself, somewhat bizarrely, as "not so much . . . a person as a vehicle of Imperial work".³ His inaugural lecture could almost have been written by Curtis. "Politics is a science as much as an art", he declared;

"and we cannot with impunity omit to look afield and ahead, to detect the crucial problem . . . before the crisis is upon us, and to prepare ourselves betimes to solve it by scientific study".

As examples of successful "scientific" pre-emption, Coupland chose Alexander Hamilton's federalism and the union of South Africa.⁴ In his historical writings, Coupland was particularly concerned to emphasise the

1 Curtis to Tom Jones, Aug 1922 (copy), Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 999.

2 Buchan to Grigg, 9 Feb 1923, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1000.

3 Coupland to Kerr, 15 Dec 1928, Lothian Papers 239, fols 153-58.

4 Coupland, *The Empire in These Days* (London, 1935), p 10 and ff.

missionary and humanitarian aspects of Empire. His *American Revolution and the British Empire* of 1930 claimed that the British Empire had been revolutionised in 1775-93 by "colonial assimilation", anti-mercantilism, anti-slavery and trusteeship. He hoped that this volume would help Americans in particular to "begin to look at [the Empire] from a new angle", which was indeed "why I wrote the book".¹ Despite protests from Curtis that he was already "one of the most fortunate people in the University of Oxford", Coupland's work was speeded by a Round Table grant of £400 pa.²

Oxford connections had always been important as a basis for Round Table activities; between the wars, they became even more so. Indeed, the "London" Moot came increasingly to resemble an "Oxford" one, with Oxford providing not only a spiritual and in many cases geographical home, but employment, ready sources of information and expertise, and a likely (if largely infertile) ground for the exercise of Imperial imagination.

Dawson's *Times* was once dubbed "the All Souls Parish Magazine".³ The description could perhaps more aptly be attached to the *Round Table*. Brand, Malcolm and Dawson were already fellows of All Souls, "and constantly there".⁴ In 1920 they were joined *ex officio* by Coupland. The following year, despite the fact that even his friends recognised that his

¹ Coupland to Kerr, [1930,] Lothian Papers 247, fol 110.

² Curtis to Kerr, 25 Nov 1928, Lothian Papers 239, fols 147-50; Minutes of RT meetings, 16 July, 31 July and 17 Oct 1929, RT (O) Papers.

³ C Hobhouse, *Oxford As It Was and As It Is Today* (London, 1939), p 18. "The duty of purveying honest news is elevated in their eyes into the prerogative of dictating opinion", Hobhouse claimed.

⁴ Curtis to Sir Arthur Salter, 17 April 1930, Lothian Papers 251, fol 599.

"feravour was stronger than his scholarship"¹, Curtis was elected to a fellowship. Kerr, Hichens and Dove were also often there.² For Curtis, at least, All Souls provided academic credibility which otherwise he would have found hard to acquire. The All Souls "mystique", as a "committee for running or helping to run the British Empire", was no doubt important also in adding stature to his colleagues.³

The All Souls connection had other, more definite, uses. It provided the Round Table with a number of helpers and new members. It also provided a number of experts who were willing to look at *Round Table* articles, as when Professors Brierly and Holdsworth vetted Cyril Asquith's "The Prerogative of Dissolution" for the December 1929 issue.⁴ Finally, it provided an ideal setting in which to buttonhole both visitors and the College's more prominent fellows, who included Amery, Sir John Simon, Lords Chelmsford, Curzon and Irwin/Halifax, and Archbishop Lang.

Another Oxford vehicle for the Round Table's influence was the Rhodes Trust. At one point Curtis was considered as a possible Trustee, but, as the Master of Balliol observed, "perhaps, great man as he is, he may be too prophetic".⁵ Dawson was in fact the only "Kindergarten" member to be made a Trustee; but with other Trustees including Amery, H A L Fisher (former tutor to many Round Tablers) and Sir Edward Peacock (a former Canadian

1 Malcolm, "Lionel Curtis", RT, March 1956, p 105. Curtis's fellowship was "an early dream" and "his greatest joy": Canon D M M Bartlett to Morrah, 5 June 1962, RT Papers c 868, fol 6.

2 Rowse, *Glimpses of the Great* (2nd edn, London, 1986), p 350.

3 [C W Brodribb,] *Government by Mallardry* (London, 1932), Dawson Papers, box 80; cf Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!* (New York, 1992), pp 35-39.

4 Kerr to Asquith, 18 Oct 1929, and Malcolm to Kerr, 26 Oct 1929, Lothian Papers 237, fols 300-05 and 312-14.

5 A L Smith to Milner, 13 Aug 1918, Milner Papers 471, fols 224-5.

Round Tabler), the Rhodes Trustees could be counted on to be broadly sympathetic to Round Table influence. More importantly, the Round Table provided three successive General Secretaries, Dawson (1921-2), Grigg (1922-5) and Kerr (1925-40). The latter's appointment was not universally welcomed, causing Kipling's resignation and protests from Lady Milner.¹

One of Kerr's more fruitful innovations was the introduction of Travelling Fellowships. The future Round Tabler John Maud was one who benefited; Margery Perham was another. Her case revealed the limits of influence by enablement, however. Shocked by the attitudes of white settlers in East Africa, she wrote a series of *Times* articles pleading the case for African interests. Grigg was enraged, and tried to get the Trust to withdraw her Fellowship. Kerr/Lothian was unhelpful.² On this occasion, Grigg decided against attempting to rebut Perham's views publicly: "it could only weaken such authority as I have . . . if I am constantly appearing in public controversy with people of little or no importance like her".³ Grigg's decision was perhaps wise: Curtis's controversy with Perham four years later was one from which, it was generally agreed, Perham emerged the victor.⁴

Curtis once wrote to Kerr that "there is a dangerous impression growing that if people want to learn, they had better go to Cambridge

¹ For the Rhodes Trust generally, see R Symonds, *Oxford and Empire* (Oxford edn, 1991), pp 161 ff.

² Grigg to Lothian, 14 Sept 1931; Lothian to Grigg, 30 Sept 1931, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

³ Grigg to M Ridley, 14 Sept 1931, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

⁴ See below, pp 285-86.

rather than Oxford".¹ To reverse this unfortunate trend, Curtis, Kerr, Coupland, Brand and Hichens formed themselves, in various combinations, into numerous committees and ginger groups, enlisting the help of such friends as H A L Fisher, W G S Adams, A D Lindsay and Professor Brierly. Amongst their proposals was a new magazine for Oxford graduates, aimed at raising funds for the Bodleian and other University facilities.² More significant, perhaps, were their plans for some new institute to signify and embody Oxford's connection with the Empire.

The earliest version of such a proposal envisaged a new research institute based at All Souls, whose fellows would study such subjects as the international economy, migration and "the colour problem". The work would be entirely postgraduate, and kept deliberately small, but "scientific study" would be undertaken in order to facilitate "political action".³ As the proposal evolved, Kerr conceived the idea of basing the proposed institute at Rhodes House, where its purposes could be widened to include the instruction of Rhodes Scholars, ICS and Colonial Service probationers. Dawson was enlisted to support Kerr's scheme.⁴ Brand and Coupland both warned of the danger that the All Souls and Rhodes House schemes might kill each other off.⁵ Kerr was therefore persuaded to limit the latter to problems of "colour"; Smuts, who was brought over to deliver the 1929 Rhodes Lectures and to "fall in with" Kerr's scheme, persuaded him

1 Curtis to Kerr, 31 July 1926. Lothian Papers 221, fols 42-44.

2 Curtis, Memorandum for Hebdomadal Council, Nov 1930, Lothian Papers 244, fols 134-39.

3 Kerr to Abraham Flexner, 13 May 1926, Lothian Papers 222, fols 160-69.

4 Kerr to Dawson, 11 June 1928, Lothian Papers 228, fol 203.

5 Brand to Kerr, 6 Oct 1929, Lothian Papers 236, fol 273; Coupland to Kerr, 11 Nov 1929, Lothian Papers 234, fol 75.

to limit it further to Africa. In this form, Smuts gave a hearty endorsement to the scheme both in his Lectures and at a special conference to bring together "African experts" and "people in Oxford whom it is important to interest in African problems". He also promised to find £10,000 to launch the new institute.¹

Discussions of both the "All Souls Project" and the "Smuts House" scheme rumbled on, but got little further. The problem was money. Smuts failed to make good his promise, while the Rockefeller Foundation decided to direct its largesse elsewhere. A similar fate befell plans for a new "Irwin House", with which Curtis and Kerr/Lothian hoped to galvanise Indian studies in Oxford. In this case the intended beneficiaries were not British policy-makers but Indians themselves. Again, however, the problem was money. Lothian appears finally to have given up in 1936, when he persuaded the Rhodes Trustees to support the new Social Studies faculty, on condition that it include within its remit the study of government in the Empire.²

Chatham House

No survey of the Round Tablers' rôle in the dissemination of information and expertise would be complete without mention of the (Royal) Institute of International Affairs. The Institute had its origins in a series of meetings at the Hotels Majestic and Crillon in Paris in the summer of 1919. There, members of the British delegation and press at

¹ Kerr to Coupland, 6 Nov 1929, Lothian Papers 234, fol 73; Coupland to Kerr, 29 Jan 1930, Lothian Papers 239, fol 176.

² R Symonds, *Oxford and Empire* (Oxford edn, 1991), p 170. For "Smuts House", see *ibid*, pp 173-78, and for "Irwin House", *ibid*, pp 116-18.

Versailles (including Curtis, Kerr, Dawson, Cecil, Lord Eustace Percy, G M Gathorne-Hardy, J W Headlam-Morley, Clement Jones and Harold Temperley) met with their American counterparts (including Shepardson, Beer, James T Shotwell, Archibald Cary Coolidge, and Thomas W Lamont) and agreed to work for the creation of Institutes in each country, "which would act as a telephone exchange between the few hundred men in each country who administer foreign affairs and create public opinion on the subject".¹

Back in England, it was Curtis who was the real "father" of the new Institute, as Gathorne-Hardy later emphasised.² Joint Honorary Secretary with the latter between 1920 and 1930 (resigning to prevent the Institute being seen as a "one-man show"³), Councillor from 1934, and President from 1944, Curtis it was who organised the preliminary meetings (which took place at the Round Table office), drew up lists of possible members, secured from Bailey the initial finance, and drafted the constitution.

Contemporary accounts link the Institute with the creation of the League of Nations.⁴ Curtis, however, saw it in Imperial terms. Like other members of the Round Table, Curtis was never more than lukewarm towards the League. Indeed, he regarded it as "a scaffolding . . . plastered with phrases", all the more dangerous because by its existence it deluded opinion in Britain and the Dominions as to the true nature of international affairs.⁵ Chatham House was in fact the outcome partly of Curtis's

1 "George Louis Beer", *RT*, Sept 1920, p 935.

2 G M Gathorne-Hardy, *Lionel Curtis, CH, 1872-1955* (London, 1955), p 1.

3 Curtis to Jerome D Greene, 20 Sept 1930, Curtis Papers 3, fols 212-15.

4 See, eg, Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (London, 1933), pp 352-53.

5 [Curtis,] "Windows of Freedom", *RT*, Dec 1918 (pp 1-47), p 25.

hostility to the League, his recognition of the need to inform and educate public opinion, and what Elie Kedourie has pertinently described as a "hopeful theory about the relation between knowledge and action".¹

Curtis envisaged a "postgraduate" Institute for "definite study and research", with a library and other facilities, publishing books and papers, and generally contributing to the formation of "sound" opinion. Equally importantly, the Institute would play host to closed meetings, where "men of theory" could meet with "men of practice", so that academics and specialists could trade insights with officials and politicians in an atmosphere of mutual enrichment. As well as a free-standing Institute in America - which, as has been seen, was finally jolted into existence by Round Tablers in 1922 - Curtis was concerned

"to get Branches of the Institute in the Dominions because such branches will at once find themselves directly depending for a supply of material and information on the London Branch, and a new and most important Imperial link will thus be created. In so far as we can get leading publicists in each of the Dominions to study foreign affairs in the true sense of the word, they will come to realise the vital necessity of Imperial Union".²

Curtis's creation enjoyed a remarkable and swift success. Its inaugural meeting in July 1920, at which Hankey delivered a paper on "Diplomacy by Conference" (published in the September issue of the *Round Table*), was attended by some 300 people. By 1922 the membership was 714, swelling to 1707 in 1929 and 2414 in 1936.³

Funding for the Institute came from a variety of sources, including

1 Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version* (London, 1970), p 352.

2 Curtis to Brand, 1 Dec 1919, Brand Papers, box 39.

3 Stephen King-Hall, *Chatham House: A Brief Account* (London, 1937), p 24.

Curtis's friends Lord Astor, Sir John Power and Sir Henry Price. The two most generous benefactors were Abe Bailey and Col R W Leonard. As well as the initial finance, Bailey provided £5000 pa from 1928, emphasising in his letter offering the gift that the Institute's work was "vital to the present needs of the British Commonwealth", because "to preserve its unity under the Crown, its peoples as well as its governments must learn how to handle their foreign relations together".¹ Leonard gave Chatham House to the Institute. In his speech inaugurating the building, he declared that "to us the British Empire is the greatest of human achievements. To serve it rightly is to serve mankind".²

Curtis had hoped that the overseas Round Table groups might be persuaded to form themselves into local branches of the Institute. Here, however, the other London Round Tablers disagreed. In their view, the local groups performed a useful function, while the Institute's value was as yet untested.³ Nevertheless, the links between Dominion groups and the local branches of the Institute were close. Nearly all of the original Dominion members of the Institute were also Round Tablers, and the latter often took the initiative in founding local Institutes. In Australia, the creation of the local Institute was largely the work of Eggleston, Sir Thomas Bavin and H S Nicholas; in New Zealand, of Downie Stewart and A R Atkinson; in South Africa, of E A Walker.⁴

1 Bailey to Prince of Wales [1928], Lothian Papers 244, fol 665.

2 Quoted by S C Leslie, "British Attitudes to the Commonwealth", RT, July 1973, p 369.

3 Curtis to Brand, 1 Dec 1919, and Brand to Curtis, 5 Dec 1919, Brand Papers, box 39.

4 "List of Names of those who are invited to become Original members . . .", [1919/20], Brand Papers, box 39; King-Hall, *op cit*, pp 67 ff; see also Foster, *High Hopes* (Melbourne, 1986), pp 56-57 and *passim*.

Curtis's belief that the local Institutes would be led to grasp the necessity of Imperial union was, of course, over-optimistic; but his view of the Institutes as an "important Imperial link" was perhaps not. Members of the various Institutes enjoyed reciprocal membership rights in other parts of the Empire and meetings were often organised at Chatham House to be addressed by visiting Dominion nationals.

Alongside Toynbee's annual *Surveys of International Affairs*, the Institute fostered many works of Imperial relevance. Funds from the Carnegie Trust (of which Hichens was UK representative) enabled Hancock to publish the first *Surveys of Commonwealth Affairs*. Hugh Wyndham published three volumes in the lesser-known "Problems of Imperial Trusteeship" series. Hailey's magisterial *African Survey* was also published under RIIA auspices. The RIIA was precluded by its Charter from expressing corporate opinions; nevertheless, Curtis himself was able to publish his *Capital Question of China* as the "common result" of an RIIA study group.¹ Of nine such groups in existence in 1936, four (on Empire relations, the Colonial Question, Imperial Trusteeship and Empire Trade) were directly Imperial in theme.²

Finally, mention should be made of the series of Commonwealth Relations Conferences organised by Chatham House and its sister Institutes. The purpose of these was, in the words of a Chatham House official, "to bring into the open those . . . problems of the Commonwealth which do not emerge (at any rate in public) at full-dress Imperial Conferences".³ If bringing problems into the open was one purpose, another was to discuss

1 Curtis, *The Capital Question of China* (London, 1932), Preface.

2 King-Hall, *op cit*, pp 114 ff.

3 *Ibid*, p 75.

solutions and provide reassurance. The 1933 Conference, for instance, suggested a number of improvements in the machinery for Imperial co-operation, and ended in the "unanimous belief . . . that the British Commonwealth ought to endure, and that it would in fact continue to hold its place among the Powers of the World".¹

In 1930 Curtis wrote that his aim in founding the Institute had been "to embody as much of our Round Table movement as possible in a permanent institution". In the same breath, however, he complained that this had not been done "as I could have wished by the Moot as the Moot".² There was some truth in his complaint. All the Round Tablers were founding members of the Institute, attended meetings frequently, and spoke perhaps more than their fair share. Nevertheless, none was as enthusiastic as Curtis. Brand agreed to act as first Treasurer of the Institute, but only reluctantly, as "it would not be possible to let anything get in the way of" the Round Table.³ Another worry was the Institute's journal. It was thought that few people would take both magazines, and that there would inevitably be competition for qualified writers.⁴ Finally, there was Curtis himself, who was funded (with difficulty) by the Round Table, but appeared to spend all his time furthering the work of the Institute. As Dove remarked, "this latter thing is all right. But Lionel's first love has still to be won, and unless he returns to it, we shall all be the losers".⁵

¹ [Hodson,] "British Commonwealth Relations", *RT*, Dec 1933 (pp 42-61), p 43.

² Curtis to Hichens, Dawson, Brand and Lothian, 6 Aug 1930, Lothian Papers 252, fols 627-32.

³ Brand to Curtis, 5 Dec 1919, Brand Papers, box 39.

⁴ Dove to Hichens, 5 Dec 1928, Lothian Papers 243, fols 590-94.

⁵ Brand (ed), *The Letters of John Dove* (London, 1938), p 321.

New Recruits: the Moot in the 1930s

Curtis was 58 in 1930 and, with the exception of Kerr, Coupland and Horsfall, all the other Round Tablers were in their 50s. Without the introduction of "young blood" there was a real prospect of "the petering out of the magazine", which was "the thing we most wish to avoid".¹

Other considerations, too, recommended a broadening of the Moot. The Dominion groups were now languishing under the weight of a good deal of neglect. The task set by the Moot, to study a range of questions which would confront the Dominions were they "outside" the Empire, was criticised by the New Zealand members as distinctly "nebulous".² In 1932 Eggleston suggested that the Dominion committees be allowed to revive themselves by providing an expanded quota of the *Round Table*, including more opinionated articles. There was now "no mutuality, no exchange", he complained, and the *Round Table* had become merely a "British Review with appendices". Meanwhile, "the Empire is disintegrating in the same mood of absence of mind as that in which it was built up". The Moot's response was again to suggest "that we cannot do better than return to our old method of group study".³ Nevertheless, as Dove emphasised, it was necessary to be sure "that, if the work is taken up, it should be carried to completion".⁴

A decade of "marking time" had also resulted in a weakening of the sense of purpose of the London Moot, hardening divergent interests into

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- 1 Curtis to Sir Arthur Salter, 17 April 1930, Lothian Papers 251, fols 596-99.
 - 2 J M A Ilott to Dove, 10 May 1927, Lothian Papers 20, fols 413-14.
 - 3 F V Eggleston to T H Laby (copy), 1 April 1932, Lothian Papers 267, fols 677-84; Dove to Laby, 16 June 1932, Lothian Papers 267, fols 718-21.
 - 4 Dove, "Decision with regard to Imperial problem" (sent 19 June 1932), Lothian Papers 267, fols 722-24.

something approaching irreconcilable obsessions. Curtis now believed that China was the storm-centre of world politics, both as the greatest challenge to international stability and as the means by which the Dominions would be brought to realise the necessity of imperial federation. Lothian, on the other hand, had "frankly abandoned [his] belief in the possibility at any time of constitutional union" for the Empire alone, and was now convinced that only if the United States were included in the equation could the security of the Empire be maintained.¹ Meanwhile, Grigg was obsessed with the problems of the settlers in Kenya, and was particularly bitter about the lack of support he found amongst the Moot.

In August 1931 Dove's drastic emendations to an article by Grigg sparked off a furious series of letters to other members of the Moot. To Brand he declared that "if we do not bring the Round Table back to its Imperial mission it will soon be nothing but a subsidiary and washy branch of the Institute of International Affairs."² A similar letter to Hichens at the end of the year elicited the confession "that your criticisms are just".

"But I don't think we ought to give it up
 [T]here is nothing at present to take the place of the Round Table and do the work that it set out to do. As a magazine I think it is first class and it has a great reputation What we want is, if possible, to steer it back on to the old lines. And there we get back to our root difficulty. How can the Round Table committee be so reconstituted as to carry out this work?"³

Grigg's feelings were eventually assuaged, and an answer found to Hichens' question: that "a group of younger men" should be collected, "so that we

¹ Dove to Coupland, 2 March 1923, Brand Papers, box 70.

² Grigg to Brand, 6 Aug 1931, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

³ Hichens to Grigg, 22 Dec 1931, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

could campaign again on the old lines".¹ It is clear, then, that great hopes were invested in the recruitment of younger members.

Three new recruits were added to the Moot in 1930-31: (Sir) Harold Butler, (Sir) Ivison Macadam and H V Hodson.² Butler was a fellow of All Souls and deputy director (from 1932 director) of the International Labour Office. He provided a number of *Round Table* articles between 1926 and 1932, and was an undoubted influence on the *Round Table's* European and economic coverage. Nevertheless, his commitments in Geneva prevented him from attending meetings on a regular basis, and he dropped out of the Moot after 1934.

Macadam was one of the few Round Tablers educated at Cambridge. After wartime service with the Royal Engineers and a spell organising the National Union of Students he joined Chatham House, serving as secretary and later director general, from 1929 to 1955. Hodson recalled him as a "strong practical man", "reliable" but "enthusiastic", "passionately loyal to his country, his causes and his friends".³ He joined the Moot in 1931, and was an active member until his death in 1974.

Hodson was another long-term contributor, joining the Moot in 1930 and remaining actively involved ever since. The youngest of the new recruits (just 24 in 1930), Hodson was another fellow of All Souls, elected in 1928. After a brief stint with the Economic Advisory Council (and serving as secretary of the Oxford Enquiry Society), Hodson was appointed

¹ Grigg to Downie Stewart, 14 Oct 1933, Grigg Papers, MSS Microfilm 1003.

² Sir Arthur (later Lord) Salter, then an official with the League of Nations, was invited to join, but various commitments (including a series of missions to China) prevented him from doing so.

³ Hodson, "Sir Ivison Macadam", *RT*, April 1975, pp 221-22.

assistant editor of the *Round Table* in 1931, and was funded to undertake an extensive tour of the Empire. In 1934 he succeeded Dove as editor, a position which he held until 1939. After the war he became assistant editor then editor of *The Sunday Times*, and in 1961 the first Provost of Ditchley (the Anglo-American "think-tank").

In 1934 Macadam and Hodson were joined by three further recruits, Malcolm Macdonald, John (Lord Redcliffe-) Maud and J H Penson. Macdonald, the son of the Prime Minister, was himself a junior minister at the Dominions Office. He resigned from the Moot following his appointment as Dominions Secretary in 1935, but he remained in close contact with Curtis, Macadam and other Round Tablers. Penson (a member of the Cabinet Secretariat) was also only briefly a Round Tabler: he was appointed one of the Newfoundland Commissioners early in 1937.

Maud was a young fellow of University College, Oxford, whose interest in local government and the Empire was stimulated by the award of a Rhodes Travelling Fellowship in 1932, which enabled him to study Curtis's legacy in Johannesburg.¹ Maud went on to become Tutor to the Colonial Administrative Services course in 1937-39, followed by a long period in government service which included four years in South Africa as the last British High Commissioner and the first British Ambassador. He was rewarded with a life peerage in 1967. He remained a member of the Moot until 1979, just three years before his death.

In 1934, Hodson, Macadam and the other new recruits formed a "junior Moot" to suggest ways for the Round Table to "sharpen the edge of its Imperial policy". The result was a remarkable re-affirmation of the Round

¹ Maud's book on *Local Government in Modern England* (London, 1932) was followed by *City Government: the Johannesburg Experiment* (Oxford, 1938) which praised Curtis's foresight.

Table's original aims. Co-operation was described as "a sham". Great Britain was still responsible for the defence of the whole Empire: only the existence of the League had prevented this from being more widely seen. With the re-emergence of "power states", the true situation was becoming clear. "In these circumstances, is the Commonwealth not faced with the same choice as the Round Table pointed out nearly a quarter of a century ago, between the path to separation and the path to organic union?"¹

Nevertheless, the younger Round Tablers believed that the time was not yet ripe for painting the moral. Co-operation was still "capable of growth", and "probably the path to organic union no longer starts in quite the same direction". The Round Table would have to work with the grain of opinion. To press too far ahead would be to forego the possibility of influence.²

Some thought was given to reviving the "study group" aspect of the Dominion Round Tablers' work. In Australia the idea was welcomed: the secretary of the Melbourne group thought that the Empire was fast returning "to conditions similar to those which existed when the Round Table groups were founded".³ In Canada, on the other hand, there was "no possibility" of such moves: opinion in the Toronto group, like public opinion generally, was by no means convinced of the need.⁴

The proposal was, therefore, again put to one side. The Round Table reverted to its policy of "marking time". Nevertheless, it is clear that

¹ Macadam to Curtis, 17 April 1934, and Hodson, "Prolegomena on Round Table Policy", (April 1934,) RT Papers c 860, fols 43 and 45-49.

² Hodson, *op cit.*

³ Laby to Dove, 27 Sept 1933, (Melbourne file,) RT (O) Papers.

⁴ G P de T Glazebrook to Curtis, 15 Aug 1934, Lothian Papers 285, fol 598.

even among the younger members the original aims of the movement still held good: "organic union", although as yet impracticable (and, of course, undefined) was still the long-term goal.

Two more members were added to the Moot later in the 1930s: Lord Hailey in 1936 and Vincent Harlow in 1938. Hailey was an eminent Indian Civil Servant, and in Curtis's view "the reverse of a reactionary".¹ He returned to England in 1933 (although he was retained by the India Office to help push through the 1935 Act). Curtis then persuaded him to direct the *African Survey*, which was published in 1938. Hailey's attendance at Round Table meetings was therefore irregular before the war, but he was an active and respected figure in the Moot thereafter.²

Harlow was an historian in the mould of Coupland, although "much less the public man and much more the devoted scholar": his historical writings presented a far more sophisticated version of Coupland's Anglican and anglocentric thesis.³ He joined the Moot at the time of his appointment as Rhodes Professor in London; he left after succeeding Coupland as Beit Professor in 1950.

The recruitment of Hailey and the younger Round Tablers failed to galvanise the Round Table in the way that had originally been intended. Nevertheless, they clearly widened the range of opinion and expertise to be found within the Moot. The *Round Table* certainly benefited.

¹ Curtis to J H Oldham, 29 May 1933, Curtis Papers 91, fols 42-43.

² Curiously, John Cell's biography of *Hailey* (Cambridge, 1992) makes no mention of his membership of the Moot. The lack of Round Table items amongst Hailey's Rhodes House papers may be the reason.

³ F Madden, "The Commonwealth, Commonwealth History and Oxford", in Madden and Fieldhouse (eds), *Oxford and the Idea of Commonwealth* (London, 1982), p 18; cf Ronald Robinson's contribution to the same volume.

Finance and the Round Table Magazine

The scale of contributions which the Round Table enjoyed between 1909 and 1914 was not to be repeated. A reduced level of operations was therefore maintained, with only one full-time secretary between the wars, Miss Handley, and with Curtis paying his own secretarial expenses. Despite its inevitable impact on sales, the price of the *Round Table* was doubled to 5/- per copy in March 1920.

The Rhodes Trust "£ for £" arrangement was never revived, although Milner was able to secure a one-off donation of £2500 in 1921. Abe Bailey was by far the most generous and dependable contributor, giving £1000 in 1923, £500 pa from 1924 to 1929, and leaving the Moot £1000 pa after his death in 1940. Sir Joseph Flavelle, the Canadian Round Tabler, gave £300 pa for most of the interwar period. Other substantial contributors included Lords Iveagh, Cowdray and Hambledon, the Macmillan family and Col R V Leonard. In addition, Brand, Hichens, Malcolm, Dawson and (after 1930) Lothian all gave regular amounts of between £50 and £200 pa.¹ Contributions nevertheless dwindled steadily throughout the interwar period. In 1925, for instance, they still amounted to £2028, in 1930 to £820, and in 1935 only to £170.²

The magazine just about broke even, if the editors' salaries are excluded. Dove drew the remarkably modest salary of £225 pa until 1930, and £300 pa thereafter. Nevertheless, the Round Table also had to pay Curtis's salary of £1500 pa after 1924, and Hodson's (initially £600 pa,

¹ "Contributors", Feb 1923, Brand Papers, box 70; "Note on contributors to Round Table", [1929,] Lothian Papers 22, fol 536; "Contributors", [1931,] Lothian Papers 267, fol 705; Lothian to Dove, 14 Dec 1933, Lothian Papers 277, fol 621.

² [Round Table accounts,] Lothian Papers 267, fols 698-709; Annual Reports, RT (O) Papers.

rising to £1000 pa) after 1930. It was therefore fortuitous, first, that Curtis was enabled by an inheritance to stop drawing a salary after 1930 and, secondly, that the Round Table was able to enter the 1930s with a "considerable nest egg" of at least £13000 in investments.¹ Income from the latter, which was probably in the region of £500 pa at contemporary interest rates, was helpful in making up the shortfall. Even so, the Round Table was making a regular loss of between £600 and £1400 pa throughout the 1930s, which had to be found from selling off investments. By the outbreak of war, the latter stood at just over £6500.²

The income from sales of the *Round Table* magazine dropped steadily through the 1920s, from £5400 in 1920 to £3483 in 1930. Taking into account Macmillan's commission, this would suggest sales of approximately 6000 copies in 1920 falling to 4000 in 1930. By 1939, sales had fallen further to 3700. In the latter year, some 750 copies were still given out free. After Britain itself, New Zealand remained by far the best national customer.³

The Moot's aim of taking "a distinctive line of its own"⁴ was not always easy. The Round Table contained many individuals with strong views and sometimes differing interpretations of the Imperial mission. Some of the problems which confronted the Empire between the wars brought out these differences to a peculiar degree. In a few cases, the clash of opinions

¹ Curtis to Sir A Salter, 17 April 1930, Lothian Papers 231, fols 596-99.

² Annual Reports, RT (O) Papers.

³ [Magazine accounts, 1920,] Brand Papers, box 42; [magazine sales, 1925-31,] Lothian Papers 267, fols 698-701; Minutes of RT meeting, 14 June 1945, RT (O) Papers.

⁴ Dawson to Brand, 31 May 1923, Brand Papers, box 70.

within the Moot resulted merely in acrimony. On the whole, however, such cases were rare. The group loyalty engendered by familiarity and shared ideals usually ensured that group discussions were genuinely productive, and resulted in the emergence of some form of consensus.

The Moot's practice of giving instructions to writers extended even to areas where members of the Moot themselves had little or no special competence.¹ Frequently, drastic revisions were demanded once an article had been written, even when the article in question was written by a member of the Moot. Authors were not always happy with this arrangement:

H V Massingham, who was commissioned to write an article on the British "yellow" press in 1924, suggested "that the reforms which the *Round Table* will eventually put forward for the future conduct of the Press should not include that of editorship by a Committee".²

Members of the Moot wrote some 58% of identified "policy" articles between the wars.³ Dove wrote few articles and, as he admitted, when he did he tended "to make bricks without straw or rather you may say to steal some of other peoples' straw".⁴ By far the most prolific writer from amongst the "aboriginal" members continued to be Kerr. Almost invariably his articles appeared as the first in each issue; Dove described them as the "voice" of the *Round Table*.⁵ Brand, Curtis, Grigg and Malcolm also provided a substantial number of articles; Coupland, Dawson and Hichens

¹ See, eg, Kerr to A W A Leeper, 19 Jan 1920, Lothian Papers 214, fol 144, for an article on the internal politics of Russia.

² H V Massingham to Dove, 13 Feb 1924, Brand Papers, box 70.

³ See Appendix D, "Round Table Articles, by Author".

⁴ Dove to Brand, 29 Oct 1923, Brand Papers, box 70.

⁵ Dove to Brand, 23 June 1933, Lothian Papers 276, fols 608-11.

rather less. Horsfall wrote at least 39 articles between 1919 and 1939, and Hodson at least 29 between 1930 and 1939.

In Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the Dominion Round Table groups continued to be responsible for the production of local "chronicles" throughout the interwar period. A short-lived Indian "group" was instituted at the end of 1920 by L F Rushbrook Williams, director of the Government of India's publicity department producing the annual "Blue Book".¹ He continued to provide *Round Table* articles until 1925; thereafter articles were provided by John Coatman (1926-32), Ian Stephens (1931-34), Maurice Yeatts (1934-37) and A Inglis (1937-42). Whitney Shepardson contributed articles from America from 1920 to 1934; he rejected the idea of a committee, on the grounds that agreement would be difficult, and that any good writer sought advice anyway.² Shepardson was succeeded as US correspondent by Erwin Canham (of the *Christian Science Monitor*), who continued to provide articles until 1955. John Horgan provided the bulk of Irish articles between 1923 and 1967. A short-lived Shanghai group to produce Far East articles was set up by Curtis in 1930, but was disbanded after the Moot decided against giving regular coverage to what they regarded as Curtis's latest obsession.³

The remainder of the *Round Table* consisted of articles individually commissioned, often, of course, following guidelines laid down by the Moot. Dawson's membership was here of considerable use. R M Barrington-Ward and Capt Colin Coote provided a number of articles on British politics, and *The*

¹ E ff Lascelles to Kerr, 30 Dec 1920, Lothian Papers 214, fols 126-29.

² Lothian to Shepardson, 16 Jan 1935, Lothian Papers 295, fol 660; Shepardson to Lothian, 4 April 1935, Lothian Papers 296, fol 708.

³ Curtis to the Moot, 24 Jan 1930, Lothian Papers 23, fol 636; Dove to Brand, 28 July 1930, Lothian Papers 252, fol 623.

Times' foreign correspondents (including Norman Ebbutt, Ernest de Caux and the Comte d'Ormesson) contributed several articles on their respective countries. The Moot sometimes obtained articles from local journalists (such as A Stanley Parker of the *Egyptian Gazette* or Herr Kirchen of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*) or from freelance writers (such as Maurice Hindus, who wrote on Russia). On the whole, however, the Moot preferred not to employ 'the hack writer type'.¹

Academics provided a number of articles: Sir Arthur Bowley wrote on the birth-rate, Prof H A Smith on the Imperial Conference, and Dr David Mitranj on the Balkans. All Souls was a particularly important source of authors (such as G C Faber, G F Hudson and Reginald Harris). Probably the largest group of outside writers, however, consisted of government officials, either serving or retired. Sir William Peters wrote on Russia from the British Embassy at Moscow, Sir William McClure on Italy from the Embassy at Rome. Sir Frederick Whyte provided a number of articles on India and the far east. Sir Arthur Willert wrote on Europe, Sir Reginald Paterson on Egypt and Sir Selwyn Grier on West Africa. Not all such writers merely reiterated government policy; indeed, many used the freedom which anonymity provided to venture expert and authoritative criticism.

¹ Brand to Dove, 19 Dec 1922, Brand Papers, box 70.