

‘THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH’:
THE ABORTED EVOLUTION OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, 1917-1931

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of the Great War (1914-18), Britons could, arguably for the first time since 1763, look to the immediate future without worrying about the rise of an anti-British coalition of European states hungry for colonial spoils. Yet the shadow cast by the apparent ease with which the United States rose to global dominance after 1940 has masked the complexity and uncertainty inherent in what turned out to be the last decades of the British Empire. Historians of British international history have long recognised that the 1920s were a period of adjustment to a new world, not simply the precursor to the disastrous (in hindsight) 1930s. As late as the eve of the Second World War, prominent colonial nationalists lamented that the end of Empire remained impossible to foresee. Britons, nevertheless, recognised that the Great War had laid bare the need to modernise the archaic, Victorian-style imperialism denounced by *The Times*, amongst others.

Part I details the attempts to create a ‘New Way of Empire’ before examining two congruent efforts to integrate Britain’s self-governing Dominions into the very heart of British political life. The first occurred during the final year of the War, when the apparatus to coordinate imperial governance began to take shape. However, owing to the unexpected end of the War in 1918, little came of the Committee of Prime Ministers. More than a decade later, the Canadian-born press baron, Lord Beaverbrook, sought to make Empire Free Trade the cornerstone of British politics, but his campaign was thwarted by 1) his own missteps and 2) the broader Establishment intent on preserving

the restored, quasi-Edwardian political order. Part II deals with constitutional changes in Greater India, using the Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin (1926-31) and events in Ceylon and the investigations of the Donoughmore Commission as case studies. These examples saw Britons trying to counteract that impossible doctrine of Wilsonian self determination, while also thwarting bourgeois, colonial nationalists intent on supplanting British rule with ‘a narrow oligarchy of clever lawyers’.

DEDICATION

Memoria in aeterna

Margaret Scott
(1 April 1917 – 24 December 2004)

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1. INTRODUCTION

To many scholars, particularly younger ones, ‘the only point of studying European imperialism is to unmask the derogatory racial stereotypes encoded in the modernizing myths of the Enlightenment’. Yet, said another doyen, ‘the empire happened. A small island state off the northwest shores of Europe ran a quarter of the globe for hundreds of years. This was no small thing. And it demands close study.’¹ The question is: how. Almost an entire generation of scholars were preoccupied with the “holy trinity”: race, class and gender. ‘Discourse’, ‘representations’ and ‘imagined’ communities being the overwhelmingly preferred framework of choice, often with dubious results. In the case of gender and empire, Anthony Hopkins concludes, for example, ‘a good deal of it is disappointingly predictable and repetitive’ The older ‘nationalist’ approach is not much better.² Only recently has the pendulum swung back towards proper imperial history, that is to say the practice and pursuit of (imperial) power and/or trans-national studies.³ The latter is particularly important, being a corrective to the tendency towards regional specialisation which followed the end(s) of

¹ A. Hopkins, ‘Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History’, *Past and Present*, clxiv (1999), pp. 198-9; P. Kennedy, ‘The Imperial Mind’, *The Atlantic*, Jan./Feb. 2008.

² A. Hopkins, *The Future of the Imperial Past: Inaugural Lecture Delivered 12 March, 1997* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 26 n. 43 and 24 n. 40; J. Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 6-7.

³ See, for example, J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010), J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford, 2009), J. Pocock, ‘The Neo-Britains and the Three Empires’, in J. Pocock, ed., *The Discovery of Islands, Essays in British History* (Cambridge, 2005) and C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, ‘Mapping the British World’, in C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003).

empire: a development that was by no means preordained.⁴ Imperial historians should not, therefore, lapse into the assumption that because empires disappeared, it was a foregone conclusion that they were ‘always doomed to destruction by the forces of history’. Such are the pitfalls of the ‘tyranny of hindsight’.⁵ Historians of early twentieth-century Britain can *perhaps* be excused for lapsing into such thinking, given their subjects’ widespread anxieties, bordering almost on neurosis.

‘Will England Last the Century’, wondered one writer. Or will Germany (peacefully) supersede Britain? This was no idle speculation. Ever since the Renaissance, so went the argument, a new century had meant the ‘transfer of political supremacy’. Whether the ‘natural repetition of history’ would continue would remain (for another two decades, at most) an open question. But if Britons failed to take heed, warned ‘Calchas’, they would not only lose the Empire, but risked a ‘dispeoplement like that of Ireland [only] upon a greater scale’.⁶ Juxtaposed against Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*, commonly known as *Land of Hope and Glory*, was a steady stream of deeply pessimistic literature, only partly explained by the Second Boer War (1899-1902).⁷ Not even the centennial of Nelson’s victory at Trafalgar escaped this

⁴ Hopkins, *The Future of the Imperial Past*, p. 40; J. Darwin, ‘Diplomacy and Decolonization’, *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, xxviii (2000), pp. 5 and 10-21. Also see P. Buckner, ‘Whatever Happened to the British Empire’, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, iv (1993), pp. 3-32.

⁵ I. Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 13-14.

⁶ ‘Calchas’, ‘Will England Last the Century?’, *Fortnightly Review*, lxxv (1901), pp. 20-28 and 34. The article’s author was J.L. Garvin, future editor of *The Observer*. G. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2005), p. 302.

⁷ In addition to the lively debates over imperial preference/federalisation, see, for example, Rudyard Kipling’s [The Lesson](#) (1901), M. Bodkin, ‘Why Ireland is Disloyal’, *Fortnightly Review*, lxxii (1902), pp. 1019-27 and E. Mill, alias ‘For the Good of the Race’, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, a Brief Account of Those Causes Which Resulted in the Destruction of Our Late Ally, Together with a Comparison between the British and Roman Empires; Appointed for Use in the National Schools of Japan*,

solemn mood of ‘national self-examination’. Inspired by the examples of Oliver Cromwell and Cecil Rhodes, employing ‘methods ... weaker man would have feared to use,’ the solution—if not entirely new by 1905—was obvious, the ‘old colonial era’ needed to give way to a Greater Britain.⁸ Such sentiments were not universal, but there was a growing realisation amongst Edwardians that the British Empire ‘never had ... any engine of power to match those of the militarised Continental nations’.⁹ All at a time when the challengers were piling up, said one imperialist: ‘Nothing short of a miracle can enable the British empire, even as it stands, to tide over the first half of the new century’. Opinion differed on what, if anything could be done. The great Victorian portraitist George Watts simply ‘look[ed] forward to the judgement of the future without fear’, adding that if Britain falls let it be ‘with the dignity of Caesar arranging his robes’. Others persisted in championing, amongst other causes, national efficiency and the imposition of tariffs, without much to show for their tireless efforts.¹⁰ (Provided one

Tokio, 2005, (Oxford, 1905). British Library, Curzon MS, MSS Eur[opean] F112/85 has a series of newspaper clippings on the question of whether Britain was in decline, 1909-13.

⁸ C. Goldman, ed., *The Empire and the Century: A Series of Essays on Imperial Problems and Possibilities by Various Writers* (London, 1906; originally published Nov. 1905), pp. viii and xx-xxii. Also see E. Green, ‘The Political Economy of Empire, 1880-1914’, in A. Porter, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, III: *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999).

⁹ A.P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London, 1959), p. 125. Student journalism at (the antecedents to) Imperial College tended to paint a more optimistic portrait of the Empire, perhaps (as Hannah Gay speculates) because many hoped for overseas employment. H. Gay, *The History of Imperial College London, 1907-2007: Higher Education and Research in Science, Technology and Medicine* (London, 2007), p. 220 n. 2.

¹⁰ Quoted in B. Porter, ‘The Edwardians and Their Empire’, in D. Read, ed., *Edwardian England* (London, 1982), pp. 138-9. Perhaps the propagandists’ greatest feat was to lay the ground work for ‘Declinism’, one of the three ‘grand’ narratives of (twentieth-century) British historical writings. A. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, 2005), p. 7. For an introduction to (and sharp critique of) ‘Declinism’, see the special issue of the *International History Review* on ‘The Decline of Great Britain’, 13 (1991).

views Ireland as a domestic issue) It was the Empire of Queen Victoria that was plunged into war in the summer of 1914.¹¹

Even proponents of imperial reform balked at the staggering costs. ‘It will be difficult to say which is the worst’, wrote Garvin, ‘reorganisation or ruin’. Only a tax on wheat and tea could have raised the necessary revenue, without the public becoming unduly aware of the new burden(s).¹² Such thinking, however, was an absolute political non-starter before 1914. Simple-minded Britons, wrote the editor of the *National Review*, Leo Maxse, were unable fully to comprehend the world outside of the British Isles; a sentiment shared by society’s (supposed) betters.¹³ Nevertheless, the degree to which British society was interested in empire remains highly contested.¹⁴

Edwardians, in particular, seemed indifferent, perhaps (as Bernard Porter suggests) because expansion had drawn to a close, so developments were no longer marked with ‘bugles and bunting and bloodied bayonets’; defeating those preposterously little fellows—other commentators likened the Boers to peasants—had produced neither. Amongst the middle classes, the Empire had also yet to offer much in the way of

¹¹ On the problems of including Ireland in (modern) Imperial history, see S. Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2000).

¹² ‘Calchas’, ‘Will England Last the Century?’, p. 32. A decade later, nothing had changed. The Empire remained at a crossroads, confronted with ‘liabilities [of defence] so enormous that merely to think of them is nerve-shaking’, said an ‘Imperialist’. Newspaper clipping of ‘Our Empire of Fine Words’, 25 June 1911, Curzon MSS F112/85.

¹³ F. Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2008); Quoted in Porter, ‘The Edwardians and Their Empire’, pp. 139-40; 1917 diary entry of Cambridge don, A.C. Benson, quoted in R. Hyam, ‘The British Empire in the Edwardian Era’, in W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire. IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 47.

¹⁴ Compare, for example, J. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1984) with B. Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004).

tangible benefits.¹⁵ A minority may have found overseas employment, and potentially a better life, but the lion's share went to gentlemanly capitalists.¹⁶ The Victorian Empire was (in that well-worn phrase) one gigantic system of outdoor relief for the British aristocracy, yet for others it was a 'damned bore'. Nor was this an isolated refrain (during the long nineteenth century). Boredom was in fact the natural consequence of the prelude to the new imperialism, the period in which British rule came to depend upon centralised administration rather than swashbucklers of imperial yore, conspiring with and against indigenous rulers. (Travel) Literature by contrast continued to portray the empire as a thrilling, adventurous arena.¹⁷ A picture almost completely at odds with reality until the Great War, which (as had been anticipated) proved to be the 'hours of supreme crisis' needed to rouse (Greater) Britons into 'stand[ing] for Empire, for solidarity of race....'¹⁸

Materially the wealth (and by implication power) of the British Empire should never have been in question. But pre-war German propaganda, as Hitler later wrote, 'cultivated a conception of the Englishman's character, and almost more so of his empire, which inevitably led to one of the most insidious delusions ... [that the British

¹⁵ Porter, 'The Edwardians and Their Empire', pp. 128-9; L. Davis and R. Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Political Economy of British Imperialism, 1860-1912* (Cambridge, 1986).

¹⁶ N. Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York, 2004), pp. xiv-xvii, provides a stereotypical example; P. Cain and A. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, (2nd edn., London, 2002).

¹⁷ Early nineteenth century poem quoted in J. Auerbach, 'Imperial Boredom', *Common Knowledge*, xi (2005), p. 283; *Ibid.*, pp. 284-305. Numerous literary works went on to become standard-bearers of the Imperial adventurer film genre of the inter-war era and beyond.

¹⁸ 'A Conception of Empire', *The Outlook*, 13 May 1911, Curzon MSS F112/85. The far flung, extra-European naval skirmishes and theatres that made the Great War a truly global conflict are—presumably with the exception of Lawrence of Arabia—now all but forgotten; some of which, including the operations against Germany's South Pacific wireless stations discussed in Section 2.1, had all the makings of a *Boy's Own* adventure.

Empire was held] together by mere subterfuge and swindling'.¹⁹ Similarly, historians for decades wondered: 'Why Did the British Empire Last so Long?' There was after all no grand "imperial project", regardless of what post-colonial and cultural historians of empire prattle on about. There were simply too many competing, often contradictory, agendas amongst those interested in empire: the military, the church, humanitarians, business, banking, (varying types of) colonial governments, etc.²⁰ This perpetual inability to look beyond local interest(s), in favour of the Empire as a whole, prompted one observer to wonder: 'Are we [even] an Imperial people?' An answer came a few weeks later, when the 1911 Imperial Conference agreed that a Royal Commission should study the issue of an imperial council. Such a decision, said an 'Imperialist', was simply a 'polite way of shelving an inconvenient question'. Thanks to the continued predominance of the Royal Navy, proponents of the principle of local autonomy and those of joint control need not compromise.²¹ But as Canada's then prime minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who personally believed Empire meant 'freedom, decentralisation and autonomy', anticipated, if imperial security was genuinely imperilled, any government that did not pledge Canada's full resources to the war effort would be ignominiously

¹⁹ K. Neilson, 'Greatly Exaggerated': The Myth of the Decline of Great Britain before 1914', *International History Review*, xiii (1991), pp. 695-725; A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Unexpurgated edn., London, 1972), pp. 132-3. England's immorality was a 'major theme' of the popular, weekly German satirical magazine, *Simplicissimus*. P. Huggill, 'German Great-Power Relations in the Pages of "Simplicissimus", 1896-1914', *The Geographical Review* 98 (2008), p. 6.

²⁰ P. Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy, 1870-1945* (London, 1984), pp. 201-2; D. Cannadine, 'Big Tent' Historiography: Transatlantic Obstacles and Opportunities in Writing the History of Empire', *Common Knowledge*, xi (2005), p. 389.

²¹ 'A Conception of Empire'; 'Our Empire of Fine Words'; 'The Guarantee of Empire', *The Westminster Gazette*, 14 June 1911, Curzon MSS F112/85. Much of this debate occurred against the backdrop of the Second Boer War, which saw *limited* Dominion participation (as seen in Section 2.1).

driven from office.²² (Greater) Britons arguably were not a truly imperial people before 1914, nor did their empire—with its naval stations scattered across the world, treaty ports, protectorates, condominiums, Crown colonies, Dominions and India, an empire unto itself—appear even remotely coherent.²³ This apparent disunity, however, masked a sleeping behemoth, a subject pursued more fully in Section 2.1.

Awash in red, those old Mercator map projections grossly oversimplified Britain's *imperium*. Britain had not an empire, but an imperial system. This project of empire, as Adam Smith first termed it, sought to fuse Britain's settler empires, with Greater India and the financial power of the City.²⁴ But, unlike the "imperial project" referenced earlier, the British government exercised little, if any, control over its own imperial system. 'Of the half-dozen states whose loyalty was most vital to British power in 1914, only one could be given direct orders from London', John Darwin wrote.²⁵ Doubts even existed then over how much longer London could command the (resources of the) Raj, a development that made the Dominions even more vital. Contemporaries,

²² 'The Sixth Imperial Conference: Its Five Premiers and its Two Problems', *Review of Reviews*, May 1911, Curzon MSS F112/85. In the case of limited wars, such as the Second Boer War, Laurier argued, even though troops were despatched, Canada would have been within her rights to stand aloof.

²³ R. Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa and the Middle East, 1858-1947* (New York, 2003). Eighteenth-century Britons tended to identify with individuals or polities, like Carthage, that resisted Roman aggression, while for early-to-mid Victorians Roman analogies were associated with the republicanism that culminated in France's Reign of Terror and later the 'vainglorious swaggerings' of Napoleon III. Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, admiration for Rome's administrative competence grew. Roman notions of duty not surprisingly became inter-tangled with Kipling's white man's burden, with the 'moral indignation' aroused by the Second Boer War marking the end, not the beginning, of the traditional unease over Empire in British political thought. N. Vance, 'Imperial Rome and Britain's Language of Empire, 1600-1837', *History of European Ideas*, xxvi (2000), pp. 211-23; N. Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 49-50, 141 and 189-90.

²⁴ Darwin, *The Empire Project*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xi. In some ways this might even be said to be the high point of metropolitan control, an era that did not even really begin until the last quarter of the eighteenth century when successive Parliamentary Acts slowly brought the East India Company to heel. Company rule would not be brought to an end until after the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny.

however, were not troubled by this state of affairs. In fact, just as the Raj drove (the expansion of) Britain's imperial system during the nineteenth century, the Dominions seemed poised to do the same during the twentieth century.²⁶ A sentiment echoed during the Liberal's 1904 re-election campaign: 'The twentieth century shall be the century of Canada and of Canadian development!' Ahead of a new trans-continental railway and the creation of two new provinces—Alberta and Saskatchewan—out of the North West Territories, Laurier's statement was widely accepted by contemporaries. Limitless horizons, in fact, abounded. Australia's population multiplied almost twenty-fold between 1840 and 1900, in comparison to Canada and America's less than five-fold increase. In less than a century, Australia had reached the population that Canada took two and a half centuries to achieve. Not surprisingly therefore, as late as 1911, there was still talk of Australia being home one-day to 'a couple of hundred million'.²⁷ Diminished expectations aside, as Section 2.1 illustrates, the Great War marked the arrival of the Dominions as the foremost component in their/Britain's imperial system. A role only reluctantly abandoned.²⁸

²⁶ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*.

²⁷ Quoted in J. Schull, *Laurier: The First Canadian* (Toronto, 1965), p. 441; J.W. Gregory, 'The Geographical Factors That Control the Development of Australia', *The Geographical Journal*, xxxv (1910), p. 668; 'The Sixth Imperial Conference'. These predictions would have been reasonable had it not been for unforeseen ecological limit(s), which also led to estimates of New Zealand's future population being revised downward from fifty to five million. Population growth in Canada during the last three decades of the nineteenth century was retarded by the colossus to the south, but finally took off in the early twentieth century. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, pp. 363-4 and 408.

²⁸ In the case of Australia, see J. Curran, *Curtin's Empire* (Port Melbourne, Vic., 2011), pp. 84-116 and 131-4 and, particularly, W. Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb* (Carlton, Vic., 2000). Although Ottawa broke the indivisibility of subjecthood within the British Empire, with the introduction of a then radical distinctive Canadian citizenship in 1946, *English Canada* also continued to see itself as part of the British World; a trend that continued (to varying degrees) until the 1957 Suez Crisis, perhaps even beyond that. A view that stands in stark contrast to (the lone essay in) *The Oxford History of the British Empire*. J. Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-71* (Vancouver, 2006); C. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964-*

Scholarly interest in the British Empire has undergone something of a revival in recent years. The dizzying array of works on the eighteenth century, when the divide between domestic and imperial is not always clear-cut, has been likened to ‘the energy and radiance of an exploding galaxy’. In other respects, the field continues to resemble ‘those ancient charts with the legend “here be dragons”’.²⁹ Unlike scholarship on British foreign policy, which (as part of the broader effort begun a generation ago to write a new international history) found that the 1920s were in fact a period of adjustment to a ‘brave new world’, the inter-war era remains all but a ‘nomansland’ in imperial history.³⁰ Scholarship on migration, particularly the 1922 Empire Settlement Act, is probably the main exception to this regrettable development.³¹ That is rooted in the widely held, *instinctive* assumption that the ‘age of decline and dissolution’ extends back into the entire inter-war period, if not even earlier. Lord Irwin’s Viceroyalty (1926-31) may not have been animated with the self-confidence associated with Sir Alfred Milner’s tenure

1968 (Montreal, 2010); D. Mackenzie, ‘Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle and the Empire’, in W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998).

²⁹ A. Thompson, ‘Is Humpty Dumpty Together Again? Imperial History and the *Oxford History of the British Empire*’, *Twentieth Century British History*, xii (2001), pp. 511-27; P. Corfield, ‘British History: The Exploding Galaxy’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, xxxiv (2011), p. 517; J. Gascoigne, ‘The Expanding Historiography of British Imperialism’, *The Historical Journal*, il (2006), p. 577.

³⁰ J. Jacobson, ‘Is There a New International History of the 1920s?’, *American Historical Review*, lxxxviii (1983), pp. 617-45; A. Sharp, ‘Adapting to a New World? British Foreign Policy in the 1920s’, *Contemporary British History*, xviii (2004), p. 74; J. Darwin, ‘Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy between the Wars’, *The Historical Journal*, xxiii (1980), p. 657.

³¹ Amongst the works that have appeared since the publication of the *Oxford History of the British Empire* (1998-) include: R. Bickers, ed., *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas* (Oxford, 2010), C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003), J. Cavell, ‘The Imperial Race and the Immigration Sieve: The Canadian Debate on Assisted British Migration and Empire Settlement, 1900–30’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xxxiv (2006), pp. 345-67, K. Fedorowich, ‘Ex-Servicemen and the Politics of Soldier Settlement in Canada and Australia, 1915-1925’, *War & Society*, xx (2002), pp. 47-80, M. Harper and S. Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford, 2010), M. Johnson, ‘Promises and Pineapples’: Post-First World War Soldier Settlement at Beerburum, Queensland, 1916-1929’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, li (2005), pp. 496-512 and C. Miller and M. Roche, ‘New Zealand’s ‘New Order’: Town Planning and Soldier Settlement after the First World War’, *War & Society*, xxi (2003), pp. 63-81.

as high commissioner in southern Africa and governor of the Cape colony, let alone that of Lords Cromer or Curzon's proconsulships, but he had (as Section 3.2 argues) no qualms about trying to break (politically) the Indian National Congress.³² Moreover, Britain's victory in the Third Afghan War (1919) had not only led to the first stable frontier with Afghanistan since the 1830s, but left (nationalist) Indian politicians with no illusions that independence could ever be won by force of arms.³³ The history of the British Empire during the 1920s needs to be seen not as a plateau on the ascent to decolonisation, but as an autonomous historical subject in its own right.³⁴ Furthermore, those histories also need to consider Britain's imperial system in its entirety.

The Dominions, whose ties to Britain actually intensified during the inter-war period, have been expunged almost entirely from imperial history in the years since the publication of *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* (1929-40), first by national historians determined to downplay their country's imperial pasts and later by British academics, who spent (much of) their careers under the long shadow cast by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher. In fact, the editors and authors of (the latter volumes of) *The Oxford History of the British Empire (OHBE)* deliberately downplayed the actual Britishness of the British Empire.³⁵ Calls to reintegrate the Dominions into British

³² Darwin, 'Imperialism in Decline?', p 657. Irwin's ultimate aim was in a sense the same as Curzon's, though his methods were slightly subtler than partitioning Bengal.

³³ B. Robson, *Crisis on the Frontier: The Third Afghan War and the Campaign in Waziristan 1919-20* (Staplehurst, 2007), p. xiv. Also see N. Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (London, 2005).

³⁴ My phrasing here consciously echoes C. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), p. 11 and J. Ferris, *The Evolution of British Strategic Policy, 1919-26* (Basingstoke, 1989), p. xi.

³⁵ P. Buckner, 'Was There a 'British' Empire? The *Oxford History of the British Empire* from a Canadian Perspective', *Acadiensis*, xxxii (2002), pp. 110-128. Notwithstanding the fact that Australia's High Court only declared Britain was legally-speaking a foreign country in 1999, Australian historians have also spent

history are by no means new, but the task is probably more important than ever. Having already eclipsed the economic and political dimensions of the past, perhaps to the point of producing a ‘reductionist reading of British imperialism’, postmodernism, which increasingly holds sway amongst Americans, both in the field of colonial studies and the profession at large, likely threatens an emerging sub-branch.³⁶ The British World, which promises to move beyond Robinson and Gallagher’s overarching interest in the motivations underpinning imperial expansion, has the potential of giving British history ‘global importance’ once again. Understandably, India looms large in Robinson and Gallagher’s work, but its centrality has led to the neglect of ‘inter-coloniality, or the relationships within and between the periphery’. Furthermore, the metropole-periphery dichotomy is particularly ill-suited to the twentieth century, when colonial cities, such as Cape Town, Lagos, Hong Kong or Sydney, were not only acting as regional metropolises.³⁷ But policy was increasingly being set in imperial conferences, the 1920s

decades downplaying the significance once accorded to imperial ties. Bridge and Fedorowich, ‘Mapping the British World’, p. 10; See, for example, J. Moses, ‘An Australian Empire Patriot and the Great War: Professor Sir Archibald T. Strong (1876-1930)’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, liii (2007), p. 407 and G. Mansfield, ‘Unbounded Enthusiasm’: Australian Historians and the Outbreak of the Great War’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, liii (2007), pp. 369-73.

³⁶ J. Pocock, ‘British History: A Plea for a New Subject’, *The Journal of Modern History*, xlvii (1975), pp. 601-21; Thompson, ‘Is Humpty Dumpty Together Again?’, p. 514. It is also possible (given how little Dominion history is studied) that the British World could pass by virtually unnoticed.

³⁷ J. Darwin, ‘Gallagher’s Empire’, in W.R. Louis, ed., *Yet More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (London, 2005), pp. 236-9 and 243-6; D. Peers, ‘Is Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again?: The Revival of Imperial History and the *Oxford History of the British Empire*’, *Journal of World History*, xiii (2002), p. 467. An example of the sort of work Peers called for is J. Mwaruvie, ‘Kenya’s “Forgotten” Engineer and Colonial Proconsul: Sir Percy Girouard and Departmental Railway Construction in Africa, 1896-1912’, *Canadian Journal of History*, xli (2006), pp. 1-22.

would later be deemed the ‘age of Committees and Conferences’.³⁸ Much of this remains unexplored.³⁹

Understanding the British World is also a necessary prerequisite to telling the ‘full story’ of the British Empire, whether or not it will be ever be seen as a ‘golden age’—the term the Dutch use to describe their imperial past—is another issue entirely. Regardless, it will be an uncomfortable task for those that prefer being ‘thought of as part of the colonized rather than as part of the colonizers’.⁴⁰ Such delusions have given Canadian, and presumably other Dominion, histories more than a slight air of artificiality, little wonder that even practitioners cannot agree upon start dates for their field(s).

The chapters that follow—each have their own introductions, so in the interests of brevity—are both an attempt at understanding (aspects of) the British World, as well as a partial answer to what might have happened had the ideas primarily associated with Milner’s South African ‘Kindergarten’ been enacted.⁴¹ Arguably for the first time since 1763, Britons could look to the immediate future without worrying about the rise of ‘an

³⁸ W.T. Furse to Sir Frederic Aykroyd, 1 June 1932, A[dvisory Council on Plant and Animal Products]Y 3/7. A partial list of the conferences held is in Part I, footnote 35.

³⁹ A notable exception is R. Rajan, *Modernizing Nature: Forestry and Imperial Eco-Development 1800-1950* (Oxford, 2006). In the case of cotton, easily the most important imperial commodity, for example, there is nothing comparable to G. Stewart, *Jute and Empire: The Calcutta Jute Wallahs and the Landscapes of Empire* (Manchester, 1998) or B. King, *Silk and Empire* (Manchester, 2005), let alone L. Butler, *Copper Empire: Mining and the Colonial State in Northern Rhodesia, c.1930-64* (Basingstoke, 2007). A recent companion volume to the *OHBE* all but ignores cotton, while devoting entire chapters to Malaysian rubber and Kuwaiti oil, whose importance only began in the early-to-mid twentieth century. W. Beinart and L. Hughes, eds., *Environment and Empire, Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series* (Oxford, 2007).

⁴⁰ *The Guardian*, 28 Dec. 2012, [online edition](#); Buckner, ‘Was There a ‘British’ Empire?’, p. 128. Buckner was writing specifically of Canadian nationalists, but his point is likely applicable to others living in the former British World as well.

⁴¹ Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy*, p. 215, poses a slightly different question. This is not to say that other influences were not present, such as the imperialist wing of the Tory party and those whose views, while undoubtedly imperialist, fit awkwardly (at best) within Britain’s party system.

anti-British coalition of European states hungry for colonial spoils'.⁴² Examining post-war imperial policy wholesale would be Laputan. Fortunately, however, the British Empire offers an almost endless variety of case studies to choose from. Of the three principal components of Britain's imperial system discussed above, only the first two feature in what follows. Part I details the (challenges to the) creation of a 'New Way of Empire' before moving onto two congruent efforts to integrate Britain's settler empires, more commonly known then as the Dominions, into the very heart of British political life, while Part II is concerned with constitutional changes in Greater India, designed to thwart bourgeois, colonial nationalists intent on supplanting British rule with 'a narrow oligarchy of clever lawyers'.⁴³

⁴² J. Darwin, 'The Fall of the Empire State,' *Diplomatic History*, xxv (2001), p. 501. Also see J. Ferris, 'Treasury Control, the Ten Year Rule and British Service Policies, 1919-1924,' *The Historical Journal*, xxx (1987), pp. 859-83.

⁴³ *The Times*, 24 May 1916, p. 17; W[ar] C[abinet] Minutes, 14 Aug. 1917, CAB 23/3/214.

2. PART I: 'WE LIVE[D] IN AN AGE OF COMMITTEES AND CONFERENCES', OR (CHALLENGES TO) THE CREATION OF A 'NEW WAY OF EMPIRE'

No one pretends that we have made the most, in the past, of our vast Imperial resources. All are resolved that we shall make the most of them in the future ... Unless we bring ourselves to know the weakness of our Imperial system, unless we compel ourselves to reflect upon the best means of developing its huge latent strength—of structure, of resource, of moral influence—we shall fail in that duty. – *The Times*, Empire Day Edition, 1916.

Even before the war ended, attention had turned to the numerous challenges of reconstruction. Of the twenty-five resolutions passed by the inaugural 1917 Imperial War Conference, at least half dealt with reconstruction. A new Trade Commissioner Service would coordinate and promote Intra-Imperial Trade, while an Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau would collect and disseminate information on the 'mineral resources and the metal requirements of the Empire'. The Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, explained, using information previously conveyed to him by the manager of a prominent steel producer, who had visited the 'great Krupp works' just before the outbreak of war, that the Germans had 'made it their business to know what was being done in various parts of the world with regard to the production of minerals, and so on'. German consuls submitted (at a minimum) a yearly report on the 'most minute particulars', thereby allowing their country to exploit 'the minerals and other natural resources' of the British Empire. Britons said Borden diplomatically had 'not been alive to our advantages or opportunities'. Talk naturally turned to an 'Imperial Development Board', but the New Zealand Finance Minister, Sir Joseph Ward, predicted that cable

and wireless communication would also prove critical to the ‘development of the Empire’.¹ Their discussions reflected the broader (pre-war) faith that ‘practical knowledge’ offered a panacea whatever the problem, of which there were many: German superiority in chemistry and knowledge of ‘non-ferrous metals and their ores’ was undeniable by 1917; while, on the home front, Britons were experiencing serious food insecurity. Food prices by the summer of 1916 were 161 per cent higher than in 1914. A year later they rose to 204 per cent.² The Conference not surprisingly resolved to develop and control the natural resources required for imperial autarky. Further resolutions foresaw the ‘control of Wool Supplies ... of Ores and Metals ... [and] of Meat Supplies’. In effect, the 1917 Imperial War Conference reached some of the same conclusion(s), including the need for an ‘Imperial Development Board’, as the Dominions Royal Commission, which had been established by the 1911 Imperial Conference and issued its final report the very month the Imperial War Conference convened.³

After five interim reports, fifteen volumes of ‘evidence and papers’—gathered during sittings in London, New Zealand, Australia, London, South Africa, London, Newfoundland, Atlantic, Central and Western Canada and London one last time—and

¹ Imperial War Conference, 1917: Minutes of Proceedings and Papers laid before the Conference (Other than those published in [Cd. 8566]), The National Archives, CAB[inet Secretaries Notebooks] 32/1. Title quotations are from W.T. Furse to Sir Frederic Aykroyd, 1 June 1932, A[dvisory Council on Plant and Animal Products]Y 3/7; *The Times*, 24 May 1916, p. 17.

² P. Bowler, *Science for All: The Popularization of Science in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 2009), pp. 53, 26-7 and 60; Appendix XVIII, Imperial War Conference, 1917; F. Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 194-6 and 199. Worse was yet to come as Britain suffered “‘milk famines” in the winters of 1917-18 and 1918-19’. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 200.

³ Resolutions XVI & XXI; Resolutions XVIII, XIX and XX, Imperial War Conference, 1917; *Dominions Royal Commission: Final Report of the Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions*, Cd. 8462 (London, 1917), pp. 158-60.

three additional Command Papers of miscellaneous material, the Commission identified nine inadequacies of 'existing organisation to deal, promptly and efficiently, with the following matters:

- 1) Telegraph, cable and shipping communications between the various portions of the Empire.
- 2) Inter-Imperial Mail Services and postal rates.
- 3) The development of Harbours and Waterways on the great routes of commerce to meet Imperial requirements.
- 4) Migration as a factor in Empire Development and Trade.
- 5) Legislation affecting the mechanism of trade, such as that on patents, companies, copyright, weights and measures, &c.
- 6) The application and better utilisation of capital raised in the United Kingdom and other parts of the Empire towards promoting the development of the Empire's resources.
- 7) The systematic dissemination throughout the Empire of news bearing upon Imperial questions and interests.
- 8) The preparation and publication of Imperial statistics.
- 9) Better organisation for handling and for disposal of the produce of various parts of the Empire.'⁴

Collectively these recommendations constituted a reply of sorts to *The Times*' call for a 'new way of empire'. But could/would imperial authorities move beyond 'periodic conferences'?⁵

Unlike previous efforts undertaken in 1905 and 1911 to organise respectively an 'Imperial Commission' and a 'Standing Committee of the [Imperial] Conference', by the spring of 1917, no one doubted the 'urgency of promoting Imperial Development on scientific lines'.⁶ Such is the clarity proved by a Darwinian, imperial war. Not

⁴ Ibid., pp. ii and 159.

⁵ *The Times*, 24 May 1916, p. 17; Cd. 8462, p. 160.

⁶ Cd. 8462, p. 161. It was suggested that an 'Imperial Development Board' be appointed, with a dozen members—with the Dominions receiving one representative each and the remaining seven members representing the 'United Kingdom, India, Crown Colonies and Protectorates'—who 'should be required to give their whole time to the work'. The Board, whose 'main functions' were closely related to the inadequacies identified earlier, was to be 'advisory in its initial stage ... and [would focus on] matters

surprisingly, therefore, the recommendations of the Dominions Royal Commission were taken seriously, particularly in the case of materials, including ‘cotton, petroleum, nitrates and potash’, that came primarily from non-imperial sources.⁷ Control of ‘essential raw materials’ would be vital to reconstruction, consequently the second Imperial War Conference reaffirmed in 1918 the importance of science to the Empire’s future. The post-war period (as explained in the Conclusion) promised to be another ‘Antonine Age of peace and prosperity’. Britain’s official mind wasted little time, turning its attention in the summer of 1919 to (what Leo Amery, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies, deemed) the ‘great problems of reconstruction in the Empire’.⁸

Although a number of Britain’s colonies and protectorates profited from the ‘immense demand for raw materials of all sorts’, administration suffered universally for a want of men. Development work was at best set aside, at worst set back by nearby colonial military campaigns. Furthermore, said a prominent politician, in hindsight, a ‘century of [political] evolution’ had been ‘compressed into half a decade’.⁹ Britain’s *imperium* (as explained briefly in the Introduction) rested on three foundations: all of which were profoundly affected by the Great War. Anglo-Dominion relations were forever altered, though not as much as they could have been as Section 2.1 argues.

affecting the development of the natural resources and trade of the Empire’. Ibid., pp. 162-3. As discussed below, these discussions foreshadowed the creation of the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) almost a decade later.

⁷ Cd. 8462, p. 163-9.

⁸ Resolutions II and III; Resolutions VII, VIII, IX and XVI, Imperial War Conference, 1918: Minutes of Proceedings and Papers laid before the Conference (Other than those Published in [Cd. 9177]), CAB 32/1; J. Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 359; *Hansard*[’s *Parliamentary Debates*], cxviii. 2172.

⁹ *Hansard*, cxviii. 2174; Baldwin quoted in P. Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 263.

‘Imperialism as it was known in the nineteenth century is no longer possible’, concluded a former member of the Ceylon Civil Service by 1928.¹⁰ What would replace Victorian-style imperialism was therefore very much an open question. But the challenge, as Amery explained, was clear:

Reconstruction in the outer Empire, just as much as here at home, must mean something more than the restoration of pre-war conditions. It must mean that we must set up a new and more positive standard of our duty and obligation towards the peoples to whom this House is in the position of a trustee and to those territories whose boundless-potentialities call urgently for development in the interests of their own inhabitants, of the British Empire as a whole, and of the impoverished and wasted world.¹¹

To underscore the seriousness of the commitment of Britain’s imperial mind to the task of regeneration, less than a week after Amery spoke, King George V despatched the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII, on an extensive imperial walkabout, visiting Canada (and America) in 1919 and two subsequent tours of the East.¹²

Breaking with protocol, as David Lloyd George had deduced that the Dominions ‘wanted, if not a vaudeville show, then a first-class carnival in which the Prince of Wales should play a ... natural role’, Edward shook as many hands as possible. Obliviously, he spoke to the ‘relatives of the fallen’. Thousands turned out in Canada’s major cities, but ‘most touching’ were the ‘little parties waiting at wayside stations, often in the middle of

¹⁰ Quoted in J. Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918-1922* (London, 1981), p. 267. On the war’s impact on the third component, the City, see P. Cain and A. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (2nd edn., London, 2002). ‘In 1931,’ wrote Darwin, ‘of the great treasure trove of dollar securities built up before 1914, scarcely one tenth remained’. In July 1919, the Treasury held ‘a little more than 500,000,000 dollars’ versus £836 million in 1913. Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 375 and 736; [Poverty Bay Herald](#), 9 July 1919, p. 4.

¹¹ A. Toynbee, ‘Angora and the British Empire in the East’, *Contemporary Review*, cxxiii (1923), pp. 681-91; *Hansard*, cxviii. 2174. Also see, P. Johnson, *Land Fit for Heroes: The Planning of British Reconstruction, 1916-1919* (Chicago, 1968).

¹² P. Ziegler, ed., *The Diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten, 1920-1922: Tours with the Prince of Wales* (London, 1987), pp. 9-10; [Bay Of Plenty Times](#), 8 Aug. 1919, p. 9.

the night, many having come across rough country or prairie by journeys of many hours by horse or buggy or car'. Repeatedly the Prince of Wales insisted the train stop for a few minutes.¹³ By contrast, the itinerary of the 1920 tour was considerably more varied. Over the course of almost seven months, Edward visited Barbados, the Panama Canal, San Diego, Honolulu, Fiji and New Zealand and Australia, the 'most important period of the tour'. After almost four months, *Renown* departed; making brief visits to Fiji, Apia, Honolulu, Acapulco, Trinidad, British Guiana, the Windward & Leeward Islands and finally Bermuda.¹⁴ The Prince of Wales' third tour lasted eight months, of which four months were spent in India (including Burma and Nepal), a month in Japan and, on both the 'outward and homeward voyages, the Prince visited all British processions strung along the great highway between Gibraltar and the Pacific'. A banner in Aden asked the Prince of Wales to 'tell daddy we are all happy under British rule'.¹⁵ The bonds of imperial solidarity reaffirmed, attention slowly shifted to more substantive issues.¹⁶

Imperial tours may have remained commonplace during the 1920s, but to answer a question posed earlier: Imperial authorities could most definitely move beyond the

¹³ E. Windsor, *A King's Story: The Memoirs of the Duke of Windsor* (New York, 1951), p. 141; *The Prince of Wales' Book: A Pictorial Record of the Voyages of H.M.S. "Renown", 1919-1920*, (London, 1921), unpagged. The National Archives has made images from C[olonial] O[ffice Records] 1069 available via [flickr](#).

¹⁴ *The Prince of Wales' Book*. Crowds, especially gatherings of children, were larger and more enthusiastic than in Canada. On meeting the Prince of Wales in Barbados, an 'old negro lady' proclaimed: 'Tank de Lord, mine eyes hab seen 'im!' This was said to be a typical reaction. Quoted in *Ibid*.

¹⁵ P. Philips, *The Prince of Wales' Eastern Book: A Pictorial Record of the Voyages of H.M.S. "Renown" 1921-22* (London, 1922), unpagged.

¹⁶ Interestingly, while General Lord Byng of Vimy and Viscount Jellicoe were respectively appointed as the Governor General of Canada and New Zealand in the early 1920s, Australia's new Governor General was a career Conservative politician, Sir Henry William Forster; whose wartime service was confined to Whitehall. From 1915 until 1919, he was financial secretary to the War Office. C. Cunneen, 'Sir Henry William Forster (1866–1936)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, [online](#).

occasional conferences.¹⁷ The remainder of this section will briefly consider efforts to address (several of) the deficiencies identified by the Dominions Royal Commission, and to what extent said plans/efforts (could have) met Amery's desire to improve upon pre-war conditions. Efforts to preserve (and maybe even strengthen) that 'great Empire feeling' are dealt with first, before considering developments in technology/communication and efforts at fostering knowledge/trade.¹⁸

Building off the success of the Prince of Wales' tours, the Royal Navy undertook in 1924 an inaugural ten month 'Empire Cruise' headed up by the 'Mighty Hood' and, the battle-cruiser, HMS *Repulse*. The seven ship squadron was a demonstration of Britain's imperial commitment. But it was also a visible reminder of the continued need to find a means of ensuring greater Dominion participation in imperial defence; included in Section 2.1 is a brief discussion of an abortive scheme (proposed in the final months of the war) that would have done just that. Consequently, the Empire Cruise was also

¹⁷ The Prince of Wales made a private visit in 1923 to his Canadian ranch, purchased in 1919, which the *Press* deemed a 'Canadian Balmoral'. Between 1924 and 1928, he continued to travel extensively, undertaking additional visits to North America and a six and a half month tour of Africa in 1925, which meant that he probably travelled further than anyone since George N. Curzon. Edward was by no means the only member of the imperial mind venturing abroad: Stanley Baldwin and Winston Churchill visited Canada in 1927 and 1929, respectively, while Leo Amery regaled (what David Low depicted as disinterested) colleagues with 'tales of the Dominions' following his 1927-8 Empire Tour. Lesser known politicians, including Anthony Eden and Leslie Haden-Guest, undertook similar travels. Two further examples, to saying nothing of travel undertaken by officials on departmental/Parliamentary business, were writers, Agatha Christie and E.M. Forster, who respectively undertook a grand tour in 1922 and visited Africa in 1929. *Evening Post*, 2 Oct. 1924, p. 5; *Press*, 26 May 1920, p. 7; Windsor, *A King's Story*, pp. 425-31; *Evening Standard*, 14 Feb. 1928, British Cartoon Archive reference: [DL0054A](#). L. Amery, *The Empire in the New Era: Speeches Delivered During an Empire Tour 1927-1928* (London, 1928), D. Dilks, *The Great Dominion: Winston Churchill in Canada, 1900-1954* (Toronto, 2005), pp. 29-112.

¹⁸ Quoted in *The Advertiser*, 3 Apr. 1920, p. 8. The phrase has been taken out of context, but it is in keeping with Lord Palmerston's tribute to imperial spirit following the relief of Lucknow: 'It is impossible for any Englishman to allude to that which has been achieved in India—not by soldiers only, but by civilians, by individuals, and by knots of men scattered over the whole surface of a great empire—without feeling prouder than ever of the nation to which we have the happiness to belong. (Cheers.)' Such sentiment was unquestionably fitting of invocation following victory in the Great War. *The New York Times*, 23 Nov. 1857. Also see G. Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War, Myths and Realities* (London, 2001).

designed as a joint training mission between the Australian Navy and the Royal Navy's China Squadron; HMAS *Adelaide* joined the squadron at Sydney, before sailing to Canada to demonstrate what Australia was doing and ultimately Portsmouth, where *Adelaide*'s company were declared the 'squadrons aggregate for the best all-round sporting team'.¹⁹ Tours were merely one form of publicity imperial proponents employed.

Leaving aside postcards, paintings and prints, stamps, maps, board games, adventure stories and advertisements for everything from Bovril to Colman's Starch to cigarette and tea cards, as well as the Empire Free Trade movement, which is the subject of Section 2.2, the focus here is on the selling of empire.²⁰ While Empire Day—with its pageantry of a little girl, portraying Britannia in 1939, receiving tribute from her classmates appropriate to the country they represented and, after singing *God Save the King*, going home for tea—was principally for school children of all classes. There was also 'a significant degree of public sympathy with Empire Day and its message of triumphant imperialism'. Although advertisers filled pre-war Empire Day editions of newspapers with full and even double page features, the allure of the 'imperial trope' was not that strong.²¹ The 'cheap loaf', that potent symbol of Victorian and Edwardian Free Trade, loomed supreme. But the food insecurity referenced early meant that post-

¹⁹ 'The Empire Cruise', *United Empire*, 15 (1924), p. 5; R. Harrington, 'The Mighty Hood': Navy, Empire, War at Sea and the British National Imagination, 1920–60', *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxxviii (2003), pp. 171-82; [Chronicle](#), 4 Oct. 1924, p. 59. On the development of British naval propaganda see, C. Bell, *The Royal Navy, Seapower and Strategy between the Wars* (Stanford, 2000), pp. 162-79.

²⁰ A. Jackson, *Mad Dogs and Englishmen: A Grand Tour of the British Empire at Its Height, 1850-1945* (London, 2009) is richly illustrated with these and other examples of imperial mementoes/culture.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-9; J. English, 'Empire Day in Britain, 1904-1958', *The Historical Journal*, il (2006), pp. 249-52 and 256.

war consumers wanted not only fair pricing, but nutritional food. Vitamins had been discovered in 1912, but it was experiments on ‘special breads’ by the Royal Society’s Food War Committee during the last year of the war that produced remarkable results. Brown bread, said the wife of a London artisan in 1925, was ‘more nutritious to the children [and] I think it would be better if they had less pure white bread’.²² Further complicating matters was the enfranchisement of women over thirty in 1918, which turned housewives’ shopping baskets into arbiters of the Empire’s future. The first Empire Shopping Week was organised by the British Women’s Patriotic League in 1922, but only exploded following the creation four years later of the Empire Marketing Board (EMB); a subject discussed at greater length below. In this new world of imperialist consumers, women had to decide whether to buy (in the language of Christian cleanliness and race) ‘dirty’ Turkish sultanas rather than the ‘sweet, clean and carefully packed dried fruits of Australia and South Africa’.²³

Migration, as well as developments in technology, fostered imperial sentiment in and of themselves. Britons had left over generations by the millions; an act that is arguably ‘Britain’s most fundamental and enduring legacy to the modern world’.²⁴ The Imperial Government, however, took little notice of emigration before 1914; notwithstanding the creation of an Emigrants Information Office in 1886. By the first

²² Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, p. 88 and plate ix; *Ibid.*, pp. 213-5; Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 216. In the 1970s, eighty percent of bread consumed by Britons was white, down a mere fifteen per cent from its peak at the turn of the century.

²³ *Ibid.* pp. 229-31; Quoted in *Ibid.*, 236. One presumes that black, possibly Indian, labourers in South Africa were conveniently forgotten about.

²⁴ G. Magee and A. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c.1850-1914* (Cambridge, 2010); G. O’Hara, ‘New Histories of British Imperial Communication and the ‘Networked World’ of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries’, *History Compass*, viii (2010), pp. 609-25; E. Richards, *Britannia’s Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600* (London, 2004), p. 3.

decade of the twentieth century, approximately half of emigrating Britons opted for foreign lands, a figure that (for a variety of reasons) began to decline sharply in the last years of peace. A central issue in reconstruction planning was what to do with all the ‘ex-soldiers’, a term that included the men (and their families) of the army and Royal Navy, widows and orphans; as well as women who performed ‘war service, such as nurses and munition workers’. Wartime sacrifices had amply demonstrated that the ‘man or woman who leaves Britain is not lost to the Empire, but has gone to be its stay and strength in other Britains overseas’. Henceforth, London’s approach to emigration had to focus not on her needs, but on strengthening the ‘British world’, which, as Lord Burnham, owner of the *Daily Telegraph*, proclaimed in 1920, ‘is a world of its own, and it is a world of many homes’.²⁵ By the mid-1920s slightly more than three quarters of British emigrants opted to settle in one of those homes.

Those who left the British World, however, were not entirely forgotten. The Foreign Office sought ways to foster a ‘greater spirit of solidarity’ amongst British communities in foreign countries. While the telegraph annihilated the 10,000 miles of ocean that lay between Australia and Canada, it obviously did little, if anything, for regions unconnected to the inaptly termed ‘Victorian internet’. Furthermore, for decades, the telegraphic network could not get any messages ‘through to the borders of the Empire without a long train journey involved at the end of the line’. Nevertheless, the

²⁵ S. Constantine, ‘Migrants and Settlers’, in W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 172-3 and 167; *Report of Committee Appointed to Consider the Measures to be Taken for Settling within the Empire Ex-Servicemen Who May desire to Emigrate after the War*, Cd. 8672 (London, 1917), pp. 1-2 and 27; Quoted in C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, ‘Mapping the British World’, in C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003), p. 7.

‘mid Victorian cable revolution ... brought some of the distant spaces of the British Empire within mere minutes of one another, and aligned them more closely with both the metropole *and with each other*’. Technological developments during the 1920s had the potential therefore to reorder the entire Empire.²⁶

Not long after the first anniversary of the Armistice, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Viscount Milner, appointed an Imperial Wireless Telegraphy Committee to formulate ‘a complete scheme of Imperial wireless communication’, one that met both strategic and commercial interests. With the lone exception of the 7,364 miles that separated Vancouver and Brisbane, all the links on the main lines of imperial communication were feasible ‘under present conditions’. The Committee recommended building a chain of six ‘valve’ stations to link England-Egypt-India-Far East-Australia, which would be ‘entirely independent of the route England-Egypt-East Africa-South Africa’. It was envisioned that the ‘arc and valve’ stations in Egypt and England would provide extra capacity, while a decision on communication with Canada was deferred until a conference with authorities there could be held. It was anticipated that any Imperial wireless chain would initially operate at a loss, but financial costs had be weighed against the benefits ‘to commerce, to social intercourse and to national defence throughout the Empire’. Moreover, warned the Committee, ‘the overseas communities

²⁶ Constantine, ‘Migrants and Settlers’, p. 167; *Report of the Foreign Office Committee on British Committees Abroad*, Cmd. 672 (London, 1920), p. 3; O'Hara, ‘New Histories of British Imperial Communication’, pp. 610-613, 616 and 618-9; my italics. As Section 2.1 argues, the strengthened intra-Dominion ties had important wartime consequences, and had potential far reaching consequences had the Great War continued into 1919 (as was widely expected).

are eager and impatient for these Imperial links to be forged'.²⁷ Concern even extended beyond the British World. 'No matter how profound is our friendship with the English,' lamented a University of Hanoi professor, 'the subjection to which we were reduced in having to turn to foreign intermediates for our communications with the metropole was somewhat humiliating for our national self-esteem'.²⁸ Despite pressure from both the Dominions and peripheries, including Hong Kong, plans for an imperial wireless chain stalled; in large part due to the Home Government's reluctance to deal with Guglielmo Marconi, though the 'demanding' individualist Dominion cabinets did not help matters.²⁹ Long-wave wireless telegraphy, however, was not the only method of broadcasting to the Empire.

In the spring of 1924, Marconi announced that direct communication using short waves was a reality. A message transmitted from Cornwall was received in Australia, India, South Africa and America. Thanks to the skip effect provided by ionospheric propagation, short-wave radio had the potential to compete with telegraphic cables as it 'united audibility with commercial viability'.³⁰ However, the construction of 'an all-Empire chain' was no longer possible. Australians had rejected being the final link in the chain proposed by the 1920 Imperial Wireless Telegraphy Committee in favour of direct communication with England. The Australian Government concluded an agreement with

²⁷ *Report of the Imperial Wireless Telegraphy Committee, 1919-1920*, Cmd. 777 (London, 1920), pp. 3-4, 6-9 and 20-23. At the time, electro-magnetic waves were generated by the spark or arc systems as well as high-frequency alternators or thermionic valves. Further details can be found in *Ibid.*, pp. 5-8.

²⁸ Quoted in A. Anduaga, *Wireless and Empire: Geopolitics, Radio Industry and Ionosphere in the British Empire, 1918-1939* (Oxford, 2009), p. 62.

²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 62-3; See, for example, *Hansard*, cxxxviii. 794W. On the 1911 Marconi Scandal, which permanently embittered feelings against Marconi for many in Britain's Official Mind, see, P. Hugill, *Global Communications since 1844: Geopolitics and Technology* (Baltimore, 1999), pp. 101-6.

³⁰ Anduaga, *Wireless and Empire*, pp. 63-5. Page 68 has an illustrated explanation of the skip effect.

Amalgamated Wireless (Australia) Ltd, part of Marconi's empire, to build the main trunk stations in Australia and Britain; with communication to Canada to be arranged within two years. The other Dominions followed Australia's lead, as did the Government of India which rejected having its 'messages re-transmitted via Cairo'. Dominion public opinion held that wireless communication 'will improve Empire unity' by facilitating the spread of 'news and propaganda', thereby 'bring[ing] the people of the British Commonwealth closer together in good understanding and mutual friendship'.³¹ Two years after the high-power Leaffield Station, near Oxford, became operational, it was transmitting 'some 35,000 words of news weekly to Halifax, Nova Scotia, for a group of American and Canadian newspapers'. Those 35,000 words represented approximately half of the outward traffic.³² In time, those regions not connected to the 'Victorian internet' could be 'served by minor links in an Empire Chain'. In the case of the West Indies, for example, a central station at Barbados would disseminate news via wireless to the 'smaller islands'.³³ Ultimately, following the 1928 Imperial Wireless and Cable Conference, the British government merged all communication companies, including Marconi's, into a single entity, Imperial and International Communications. To contemporaries, the late 1920s witnessed a 'marked *idealisation*' of the potential

³¹ *Report of the Imperial Wireless Telegraphy Committee, 1924*, Cmd. 2060 (London, 2060), pp. 1-2. Owing to its close proximity to Canada, Newfoundland was the only Dominion that did not plan to build its own high-power station.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

unifying power of short-wave communication across large swaths of the British Empire.³⁴

If telegraph cables and wireless communication ‘broke the link between transport and communications’, aircraft, that third annihilator of space, held out the promise of Imperial Cabinets assembling ‘without the often serious loss of time now involved’.³⁵ Such enthusiasm is not particularly surprising, but predictions ‘that distances which have hitherto been expressed in weeks or days can now be reckoned in hours’ was optimistic, to say the least!³⁶ However, airpower demonstrated another application a year later when the Royal Air Force (RAF), acting ‘for the first time ... as the primary striking

³⁴ Anduaga, *Wireless and Empire*, p. 76 and 69; italics in original. Amalgamated Wireless (Australia), Limited had made this very point some years earlier with a brochure that depicted wireless communication between Australia and England taking a mere one-fifteenth of a second, compared to the one-hundred, sixty and thirty days previously taken by sailboats, paddle steamers and ocean liners, respectively. Part of short-wave’s appeal was also its cost, specifically the lack thereof. Whereas an intercontinental long-wave station cost roughly half a million Pounds, a short-wave station with a comparable range cost a mere £40,000. It also transmitted two and a half to three times more words per minute than a telegraphic cable. Image reproduced in *United Empire*, 14 (1923), p. 169; D. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (New York, 1988), p. 132.

³⁵ O’Hara, ‘New Histories of British Imperial Communication’, p. 619; ‘A Telephone Triumph’, *United Empire*, 12 (1921), p. 319. Even without air travel, a whole host of post-war conferences were held. Naturally there were Imperial Conferences, held in 1921, 1923, 1926 and 1930, as well as (to give a few examples of subjects not being discussed): the 1920 Air Conference (Cmd. 1157), the 1920 British Empire Forestry Conference (Cmd. 865), the 1920 British Empire Statistical Conference (Cmd. 648), the 1920 Imperial Entomological Conference (Cmd. 835), the 1920 Imperial Press Conference, the 1921 Conference of Prime Ministers (Cmd. 1474), the 1921 Imperial Customs Conference (Cmd. 1231), the 1921 Imperial University Congress, the 1922 Air Conference (Cmd. 1619), the 1923 Air Conference (Cmd. 1848), the 1923 Imperial Economic Conference (Cmd. 1990 and 2009), the 1924 Imperial Botanic (and Mycological) Conference, the 1925 Empire Press Conference, the 1925 Imperial Entomological Conference (Cmd. 2490), the 1925 Imperial Press Conference, the 1926 West Indian Conference (Cmd. 2672), the 1927 Colonial Office Conference (Cmd. 2883-4), the 1927 Imperial Agricultural Research Conference, the 1927 Imperial Press Conference, the 1930 Colonial Office Conference (Cmd. 3628-9), the 1930 Imperial Entomological Conference, the 1930 Imperial Horticulture Conference, the 1930 Imperial Press Conference, the 1930 Imperial Wool Research Conference, the 1930-31 Indian Round Table Conference (Cmd. 3772, 3778 and 3997) and the 1931 Imperial Sugar Cane Research Conference, to say nothing of committees, (Royal) commissions or seemingly *endless* (annual) reports. A number of these conferences, in particular, the four formal Imperial Conferences, also generated a considerable amount of unpublished material, principally the National Archive’s CAB 32 series.

³⁶ D. Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation* (London, 1991); ‘A Great Empire Feeling’, *United Empire*, 10 (1919), p. 132. The phrase ‘a great Empire feeling’ is attributed to the Canadian High Commissioner.

instrument', bombed and machine-gunned the forces of Somaliland's Mad Mullah to 'good effect'. In less than three weeks, Amery informed the Commons, 'the power of the dervishes in British Somali-land has been entirely destroyed', thereby ending more than a decade of 'continuous' hostilities.³⁷ Nevertheless, in (for want of a better term) a non-colonial war, Amery understood that British air power would be of limited use unless the Royal Navy maintained its control of the world's oceans, thereby safeguarding the sea and air stations needed for refuelling, etc. As Mr Punch later told Britannia: 'If you want to go on ruling 'em [waves], you've got to rule the air too'. However, in the 1920s, the future of airpower seemed to lie in the commercial and civilian realm. A development that had been anticipated by those associated with the Inter-Departmental Committee on Territorial Changes. A staff member in the War Office's Military Aeronautics Department divided 'aerial considerations ... into two categories: a) Routes immediately available; b) Routes available in (say) three to four years' time', including a possible trans-Atlantic route via Gibraltar, the Azores, Bermuda and St. Vincent.³⁸ That distinction between existing and potential routes is important, as previous scholarship has 'underestimated' the degree of technological change aircraft underwent during the 1920s.³⁹ Nevertheless, a Trans-Atlantic air route between Britain and Canada represented a 'much greater technological challenge' than the two routes that most

³⁷ *Hansard*, cxxv. 719-22. Aeroplanes also played a prominent role in the Third Afghan War; on which see, B. Robson, *Crisis on the Frontier: The Third Afghan War and the Campaign in Waziristan 1919-20* (Staplehurst, 2007). On the broader evolution of air control, see D. Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* (Manchester, 1990).

³⁸ K. Epstein, 'Imperial Airs: Leo Amery, Air Power and Empire, 1873-1945', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xxxviii (2010), pp. 579-80; 'Elementary', *Punch*, 14 June 1922, p. 473; Memorandum by Major B.C. Fellows, Appendix H, Second Interim Report, Interdepartmental Committee on Territorial Changes, 22 Mar. 1917, CAB 24/3/G118(a).

³⁹ Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane*, p. 33. Advances in engine power, airframe design and improved aerodynamics were masked by the fact that 'aircraft of 1930 looked like aircraft of 1918'.

excited opinion, Britain-India-Australia and Trans-Africa.⁴⁰ An Empire of the Air certainly seemed possible by the end of the Great War.

With 22,647 airplanes and 103 airships, Britain had the largest air force in the world and, as a consequence, the largest aircraft industry; with an estimated work force of 177,000 people, 112,000 of whom worked for the 122 companies that manufactured airframes. Towards the end of the war, Britain was producing some four thousand aeroplanes per month. All told an estimated 26,000 pilots were trained, with a further 266,000 officers and men having received aviation training.⁴¹ It was not long before idle, demobilised pilots sought adventure and fame. 1919-20 witnessed ‘three successful, privately funded “flights of discovery”’, which eventually crossed the Atlantic, flew to Australia and down the length of Africa.⁴² In passing, it is worth noting that the secretary of the Zoological Society of London accompanied the final flight as ‘little’ was known about a ‘large part’ of Africa. Britain therefore had the ‘chance to lead the world in air transport development’, but ignored the opportunity as Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War and Air, could not break free of his mid-Victorian mindset. It was the role of government to develop routes, aerial infrastructure and to legislate, not subsidise private enterprise. ‘Civil aviation must fly by itself’, he famously declared, ‘the

⁴⁰ G. Pirie, *Air Empire: British Imperial Civil Aviation, 1919-39* (Manchester, 2009), p. 3. A map of the (future) ‘great routes ... of the British Empire’ is on p. 16.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 21. Also see G. Graham, “‘We Shall Deliver the Goods’: The Development of British Air Power during the Great War, 1914-1918’ (Simon Fraser University M.A. Thesis, 2003).

⁴² Pirie, *Air Empire*, pp. 3 and 27-45. To make the Cairo-to-Cape route possible, forty-three aerodromes were built across 5,200 miles of (tsetse fly infested) African wilderness. Twenty-four petrol and oil stations were also constructed. Despite the harsh conditions, the infrastructure was considerably cheaper than building a trans-continental railway and promised faster travel once the service was established; the first journey took forty-five days and required two additional planes, but the 6,200 mile journey only took 105 hours’ actual flying time. Ibid., pp. 37 and 42.

Government cannot possibly hold it up in the air'.⁴³ By February 1921, the hurdles had proved too much and Britain's early airlines had all ceased operations.⁴⁴ As in so much, timing is everything. Britain's opportunity to establish herself as an aviation pioneer had come in 1919-20, but a visionary did not enter office until October 1922.⁴⁵

Although concern lingered over the commercial viability of an *Empire of the Air*, others were quick to point out Churchill's blindness to the strategic advantages of the airplane. 'For mails and for passengers in a great hurry, aeroplanes should have no rival, especially when meteorology is better understood,' anticipated *Nature*. An English woman living in Delhi foresaw air travel revolutionising life abroad (by making it possible—among other things—to visit one's children back in England during their school holidays). 'It is an interesting feeling that you can sail away in this great omnibus and read novels all the time', said one Viceroy.⁴⁶ However, in the early 1920s, it remained unclear what technology would prevail, lighter- or heavier-than-air transport.

Airships had a greater carrying capacity, but their adoption implied a rejection of Britain's steam-powered nautical past and a return to 'the days of erratic schedules and service'. More was known about airplanes, thanks to the war and two years of commercial service between London and Paris, but the key argument in favour of the airplane was cost. Capital costs were lower as were the per-word cost of airmail in

⁴³ 'Notes', *Nature*, 104 (1920), p. 607; Quoted in Pirie, *Air Empire*, pp. 30-31. Also see Section 2.2 n. 35. On the mid-Victorian conception of the state, see T. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 91-5, in particular.

⁴⁴ Pirie, *Air Empire*, p. 51. British Airways has a helpful [History and Heritage](#) section on their website.

⁴⁵ Viscount Templewood, *Empire of the Air: The Advent of the Air Age, 1922-1929*, (London, 1957).

⁴⁶ Pirie, *Air Empire*, pp. 51; H.H. Johnston, 'The Flight from Cairo to the Cape: Aviation and Exploration', *Nature*, civ, (1920), p. 632; Pirie, *Air Empire*, pp. 107-8; Lord Irwin to the Earl of Birkenhead, 13 Jan. 1927, British Library, Halifax MS, MSS Eur, C152/3/no. 3.

comparison to cable traffic. It was estimated air mail could reach the most distant outskirts of Empire, i.e. Sydney, in one hundred hours. Moreover, unlike telegraph messages, airmail could deliver a variety of documents, including signed contracts, blueprints, etc.⁴⁷ An *Empire of the Air* could also have distributed newsreels and other forms of imperial propaganda, thereby addressing the seventh deficiency identified by the Dominions Royal Commission. Implementing an Empire air service, however, was delayed by economic uncertainties and changes within the Air Ministry, as well as technological uncertainty that persisted beyond the 1921 fatal crash of the *R38* airship. As the mid-1920s neared, Britain's official mind increasingly favoured becoming (in the words of one politician) 'a flying race'. The first Labour Secretary of State for Air, Baron Thomson of Cardington, wanted to 'encourage an "air-faring outlook" to match the seafaring one of days gone by'. Consequently, in addition to the one being built by Vickers, which had won the Trans-Atlantic contract, the Government announced in 1924 that it would construct its own *R101* airship at the Royal Airship Works, Cardington. That same year also witnessed the creation (with a ten year subsidy) of Imperial Airways. Britain's *Empire of the Air* slowly began to take shape during the course of Stanley Baldwin's second government.⁴⁸ But fostering empire aviation was far from the lone effort at imperial reconstruction in the (second half of the) 1920s.

⁴⁷ Pirie, *Air Empire*, pp. 57-8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 67-73 and 80-127. Hoare, who would remain in office for five continuous years, had set forth three main aims by June 1925: improved air defences for London and the Empire, greater intra-Empire communication and to make Britons clamour for aviation. *Ibid.*, p. 76. However, *Imperial Airways* only began to literally take flight in 1928. On the first decade of airborne imperialism, see G. Pirie, *Cultures and Caricatures of British Imperial Aviation: Passengers, Pilots, Publicity* (Manchester, 2012).

Conventional wisdom holds that ‘constructive imperialism’, that is to say the policy taken up by Joseph Chamberlain in 1903, was a failure. The ever deepening Anglo-Dominion relationship detailed in Section 2.1 is said to be an illusion.⁴⁹ One that ‘evaporated as normality returned: Baldwin’s 1923 electoral fiasco is proof enough of that’.⁵⁰ Similarly, it is said that the Great War killed the ‘dream of imperial union’.⁵¹ Normality seems an odd description for a society that was so profoundly affected by a conflict, the likes of which had not been seen since the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Over a quarter of the men that had gone up to Oxbridge between 1910 and 1914 died in the Great War. While one can pose the ‘interesting if insoluble problem’ of what impact the generation of Harold Macmillan and Anthony Eden might have had on British policy in the 1950s had it survived intact, doing so ignores a more immediate

⁴⁹ P. Cain, ‘The Economic Philosophy of Constructive Imperialism’, in C. Navari and L. Tivey, eds., *British Politics and the Spirit of the Age: Political Concepts in Action* (Keele, 1996), pp. 58-9, in particular. A broader definition of constructive imperialism would be ‘a definite set of principles, a clear attitude to the questions which most agitate the public mind, a sympathetic grasp of popular needs, and a readiness to indicate the extent to which, and the lines on which, you think it possible and desirable to satisfy them’ A. Milner, *Constructive Imperialism, Five Speeches Delivered at Tunbridge Wells (October 24, 1907) Guilford (October 29, 1907) Edinburgh (November 15, 1907) Rugby (November 19, 1907) and Oxford (December 5, 1907)* (London, 1908), [Project Gutenberg](#).

⁵⁰ Cain, ‘The Economic Philosophy of Constructive Imperialism’, p. 59. Further proof would include Churchill’s ineptitude during the 1922 Chanak crisis. He cabled the Dominions seeking (military) support, while simultaneously informing the British press. Dominion governments consequently learned—long before the telegrams could be decoded—that they were on the brink of war from press reports. Aside from Newfoundland, only New Zealand, where some 13,000 male and 300 female volunteers ultimately reported to authorities, responded favourably. Churchill played right into the hands of the Canadian Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, who, in the interests of domestic politics, sought to establish as far as he dared ‘an isolationist position within the British system’. An outbreak of *English-Canadian jingoism* could ‘tear his government apart’, but Mackenzie King also had no sympathy for nationalists. The effect, said the Australian diplomat, Richard Casey, was that ‘surely no one man can claim credit for having done as much ... to damage what remains in these autonomous days of the fabric of the British Empire. His efforts to make political capital out of his domestic nationalism are analogous to a vandal who pulls down a castle in order to build a cottage’. J. Watson, *W.F. Massey* (London, 2010), p. 132; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 396-7; R.G. Casey to S.M. Bruce, 26 Apr. 1928, quoted in the introduction to M. Macmillan and F. McKenzie, eds., *Parties Long Estranged: Canada and Australia in the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver, 2003), p. 6.

⁵¹ L. Thompson, *A Wider Patriotism: Alfred Milner and the British Empire* (London, 2007), p. 206.

issue.⁵² Within a matter of weeks following the outbreak of war, Britons slowly began to realise that their country's industries were heavily dependent upon 'chemical products, colours, and dyestuffs of kinds hitherto largely imported from countries with which we are present at war.' A week later, just as the German advance into France was halted at the First Battle of the Marne (5-12 September 1914), *Nature* issued a call to arms of its own. Having found herself 'back in the days of the Huns', Britannia's (to use contemporary terminology) 'men of science' and her 'men of commerce' needed to unite, if they were to take advantage of the 'unprecedented opportunity' to develop a domestic chemical industry.⁵³ In the interim, imports of natural dye-stuffs from India and various dependencies resumed; though at levels far below those of the late nineteenth century. The Imperial Institute also investigated potential 'new natural dye-stuffs', some of which could even hold their own 'in competition with synthetic dyes'.⁵⁴ As Britain sought to exploit her vast (potential) agro-industrial estates, attention also shifted to the laboratory, or more specifically the lack there of.⁵⁵

British chemists after 1914 were principally occupied with the 'production of high explosives and the other direct needs of the forces'. But they nevertheless made

⁵² D. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1991), pp. 111 and 105. Also see R. Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain between the Wars* (London, 2009).

⁵³ 'Notes', *Nature*, xciv (1914), p. 5; 'The War- And After', *Nature*, xciv (1914), p. 29; presumably J[ohn].C[annell]. Cain, 'Openings for British Chemical Manufactures', *Nature*, xciv (1914), p. 61. Cain's 1921 obituary in *Nature* is fairly uninformative, doi:10.1038/106765a0.

⁵⁴ 'Natural Dye-stuffs', *Bulletin of the Imperial Institute*, 16 (1918), pp. 1-4. For a brief account of the Imperial Institute see, *The Imperial Institute, 1887-1956*, (London, 1956).

⁵⁵ P. Hugill and V. Bachmann, 'The Route to the Techno-Industrial World-Economy and the Transfer of German Organic Chemistry to America before, During, and Immediately after World War One', *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society*, iii (2005), pp. 159-60 and 163-6. A more positive account of non-dyestuffs British chemistry is given in H. Gay, *The History of Imperial College London, 1907-2007: Higher Education and Research in Science, Technology and Medicine* (London, 2007), pp. 121-6.

progress during the war in the ‘making [of simple] colours’. Development of a domestic dyestuff industry was slowed by the diversion of new dye works to the manufacturing of ‘service explosives and products for chemical warfare’. British manufactures nevertheless produced a surplus of the dyes used in naval and military uniforms, which were exported to allied countries. Problems persisted into the (short) post-war boom as the industry struggled to produce ‘high quality intermediates’, the very basis of synthetic chemistry.⁵⁶ British chemists first needed to be able to produce their own research grade chemicals, only then could they move onto elucidating the synthetic pathway(s) for all but the ‘simplest’ intermediaries *and* the colours themselves. Britons may have pioneered the chemical industry, but Germany by 1914 supplied ninety per cent of British dyestuffs and other chemicals.⁵⁷ Calls to scour the country’s universities and technical schools for chemicals (as a stop-gap measure) began emanating within weeks of the outbreak of war.⁵⁸ It is perhaps not surprising therefore that Britain is discounted in the twentieth century transition from an agro- to a techno-industrial world economy.⁵⁹ Contemporaries by contrast saw the war as presenting ‘an unprecedented opportunity ...

⁵⁶ A.W. Ashe and H.G.T. Boorman, *The Resources of the Empire: A Business Man's Survey of the Empire's Resources*, VII: *Chemicals* (London, 1924), pp. 77-8. A brief account of wartime efforts to recreate a synthetic dye industry can be found in Appendix II, ‘Scheme for the Development of the British Dye Industry’, 8 Jan. 1918, CAB 24/4/G187.

⁵⁷ Sir Frank Heath, Secretary of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, ‘Memorandum on Proposed Agreement between the British Dyestuffs Corporation and the *Interessen Gemeinschaft*’, 30 Jan. 1924, circulated by Lord Parmoor as ‘British Dyestuffs Corporation: Note by the Lord President of the Council’, 1 Feb. 1924, CAB 24/164/CP 49 (24); E. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day* (London, 1990), p. 180.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Cain, ‘Openings for British Chemical Manufactures’, p. 62.

⁵⁹ P. Hugill, *Cotton in the World-Economy: Geopolitics and Globalization since 1771* (forthcoming), chapter five suggests that Britain faced ‘increasingly unreliable access to raw cotton and chemical dyes as the protectionist [German-American] world-order tightened’. Greater security with respect to her cotton supply could not be ruled out. S. Kelly, ‘It can no longer be denied that our position is becoming unsafe in the extreme’: Fostering the Cultivation of Long-Staple Cotton in the British Empire, 1917-1929’, North American Conference on British Studies, Nov. 2011, Denver, Colorado.

to establish the manufacture of a very large number of chemicals which have hitherto been produced mostly abroad'.⁶⁰ Ongoing research, together with a 'much improved production of intermediates ... [slowly] brought the industry up to a high standard of production'. By the mid-1920s, English chemists were able to produce not only 'every colour of importance ... in first-class quality and sufficient quantity' but 'almost every colour obtainable in the world'. Furthermore, British industry had discovered 'a totally new class of colours called the ionamines, for the dyeing of acetyl cellulose silk'. British Dyestuffs Corporation was also exporting synthetic indigo, which as late as 1914 had been a German monopoly.⁶¹ 'British resources and brains are more than adequate to enable us to head the world in the production of intermediates and dyes', the survey concluded.⁶²

Such optimism—partially misplaced as it turned out—was unusual.⁶³ One of the more immediate lessons of the Great War was the inadequacy of an Oxbridge education

⁶⁰ Cain, 'Openings for British Chemical Manufactures', p. 61.

⁶¹ Ashe and Boorman, *Chemicals*, pp. 78-80. In 1913, 23,889 hundredweights of synthetic indigo had been imported into Britain. Post-war British exports of indigo paste and powder (in hundredweights):

Destination	1920	1921
Empire	2,960	1,444
Foreign countries	10,858	18,235
Total	13,811	19,679

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 80. Starting in 1916, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research 'made grants to 375 of the most brilliant university graduates in chemistry to enable them to be trained in research in preparation for employment by the chemical industries and by the Government in its own research establishments'. Heath, 'Memorandum on Proposed Agreement between the British Dyestuffs Corporation and the *Interessen Gemeinschaft*'.

⁶³ Stanley Baldwin's first government was troubled by the defence implications of an 'initialled' agreement reached in late 1923 between the British Dyestuffs Corporation (BDC) and the German dye cartel *Interessen Gemeinschaft* (IG). The British Government since 1920 had sought German co-operation to give the upstart British dye industry 'a real chance of developing during the period of the [Dyestuffs (Import Regulation)] Act', but, in exchange for half a century's access to 'all their patents, information, knowledge and experience' and a complete withdrawal from the UK market, IG wanted (among other provisions) to divide 'the export business to all other countries within the British Empire (including Egypt) ... according to quotas to be agreed [upon]'. The Cabinet was torn, and 'in view of the conflicting interests

in a capitalist, increasingly scientific world. Knowledge of Latin prose, acknowledged a classicist, was irrelevant to anyone that wanted to ‘spin cotton or build bridges’.⁶⁴ Classical education not surprisingly had its defenders, who maintained that the motto of ‘Know thyself’ remained as relevant in 1917 as when it was first ‘written 2,500 years ago on the walls of the Temple Apollo at Delphi’.⁶⁵ However, the debate over ‘educational reconstruction’ was not just about the merit(s), or lack thereof, of ancient literature. It also divided along economic/class lines, with ‘two opposing camps: those who recognise the humanity of the employees and those who do not’. Preparing ‘young people’ for the ‘work of the shop or the office’, however, was far from the central

involved’ opted to study the matter further; naturally further memoranda and notes were composed and a month later the first Labour government opted to form a Cabinet Committee ‘to examine the whole question of British Dyes’. While British negotiators were told privately that the Government was willing to consider ‘any proposed agreement’, the Cabinet also authorized the President of the Board of Trade the right to veto any agreement that strayed too far from the intent of the original Act. Ultimately, following the appointment of another Cabinet Committee and a subsequent investigation by the Committee on Civil Research, it was decided that the first Cabinet Committee had been correct, the deal was ‘impossible’. Baldwin’s second government accepted what a Labour government never could, that the best course of action was the liquidation of the state’s shares in the BDC. In 1926, in response to the creation the previous fall of the German conglomerate, *IG Farbenindustrie*, several British companies, including BDC, merged to form Imperial Chemical Industries Limited. C[abinet] C[onclusions], 14 Jan. 1924, CAB 23/46/4; Philip Lloyd-Greame, ‘British Dyestuffs Agreement: Memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade’, 15 Jan. 1924, CAB 24/164/CP 23; CC, 17 Jan. 1924, CAB 23/46/5; CC 18 Feb. 1924, CAB 23/47/14; Viscount Haldane, chairman, ‘British Dyes Committee: First Interim Report’, CAB 24/165/CP 133; CC, 28 Feb. 1924, CAB 23/47/17; British Dyes Committee, ‘Report’, 26 July 1924, CAB 24/168/CP 412; CC, 5 Aug. 1924, CAB 23/48/47; Arthur Balfour, ‘British Dye Industry: Report by the Chairman of the Committee of Civil Research’, 16 Oct. 1925, CAB 24/175/CP 430; CP 412; CC, 23 Oct. 1925, CAB 23/51/50; W. Reader, *Imperial Chemical Industries: A History*, I: *The Forerunners, 1870-1926* (London, 1970), pp. 451-66.

⁶⁴ General conclusion from reading wartime issues of *Nature*; C. Robinson, ‘The Future of Education: Education in our Public Schools’, *Nineteenth Century*, lxxxi (1917), p. 1329.

⁶⁵ R.W. Livingstone quoted in ‘Classical Education’, *Contemporary Review*, cxi (1917), p. 125. Also see, for example, Robinson, ‘The Future of Education’, pp. 1323-5, ‘Classical Education’, *The Guardian*, 3 May 1917, p. 4 and, in particular, J. Bryce, *The Worth of Ancient Literature to the Modern World* (New York, 1917; first published in the *Fortnightly Review*, April 1917). The strongest indictment of the ‘Greek monopolists’ came from H.G. Wells, ‘The Case against the Classical Languages’, *Fortnightly Review*, 101 (1917), pp. 567-74.

issue.⁶⁶ In the midst of the 1918 coupon election, Churchill proclaimed that nothing had been too good for war and, looking ahead, he was buoyed by the fact that ‘all the arts and science that we used in war are standing by us now ready to help us in peace’.⁶⁷ But were they, or is such rhetoric akin to invoking the Angels of Mons?

By the eighteenth century, Oxbridge colleges had (d)evolved into little more than finishing schools for the aristocracy; where non-firstborn sons prepared for an entry into politics or life as a schoolmaster or clergyman.⁶⁸ Early modern, proto-capitalist Britain saw no need for anything as intellectually rigorous as ‘higher study or research’.⁶⁹ Scientific work in Britain was primarily carried out by (often aristocratic) amateurs, including James Watt, Joseph Priestley, Henry Cavendish, John Dalton and Michael Faraday, working on their own as Oxbridge continued to forsake ‘original research’, in favour, complained a distinguished chemist in 1874, of lavishing ‘thousands of pounds ... each year ... upon the encouragement of classical and mathematical attainments’.⁷⁰ By contrast, Germany, lacking a colonial empire and the geographic diversity of America,

⁶⁶ J. Adams, ‘The Teacher and his Masters’, *Contemporary Review*, cxii (1917), pp. 172, 174 and 176. In a letter to the editor, a ‘teacher’ defined the issue in a similar manner: ‘rich boys have too much classical education; girls and poor boys have practically none’. ‘Classics in Education’, *The Guardian*, 6 Dec. 1919, p. 7.

⁶⁷ Quoted in R. Churchill and M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, IV: The Stricken World, 1916-1922* (Boston, 1966), p. 171.

⁶⁸ R. Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain: A Century of Struggle for Postgraduate Education* (Guildford, 1983), pp. 5-10. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, as the Public schools began expanding their curriculum beyond ‘Greek, Latin and games’, the careers open those with a classical education expanded to include donships and, if a boy was determined, ‘the career of “Gigadibs, the literary man”’. ‘Future Education in Public Schools and Universities’, *The Saturday Review*, 124 (1917), pp. 301-2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 10. At Cambridge, thanks to Newton’s successors, the mathematical tripos was introduced in the 1740s and henceforth required of all students. In the early 1850s, classicists were permitted to sit the classical tripos, which had been introduced in 1824, and potentially achieve ‘Honours without appearing in the mathematics class list’. Mathematicians only had to pass an ‘elementary examination in Greek and Latin ... [which led to complaints] that Cambridge was ruled by illiterate mathematicians’. *Ibid.*, p. 10-11.

⁷⁰ [Henry Roscoe](#), quoted in *Ibid.* p. 28.

embraced post-graduate research with (stereotypical German) zeal. Research labs in time became their irreplaceable colonies.⁷¹ Britons' interest in experimental science developed extremely slowly. Spurred on by the Great Exhibition of 1851, the establishment of a Natural Sciences Tripos that same year necessitated the construction of an experimental physics laboratory. When he became Chancellor of Cambridge University in 1867, William Cavendish, the Seventh Duke of Devonshire, donated £6,300 to build said laboratory on the condition that the Colleges establish a Professorship of Experimental Physics. Opened in 1874, under the direction of James Clerk Maxwell, the Cavendish Laboratory, despite its humble beginnings, produced its first Nobel Laureate three years after the founding of the award when Lord Rayleigh, the Lab's second director, was honoured in 1904 for his work on the density of atmospheric gases, which also resulted in the conjointly discovery of argon with fellow Nobel Laureate, Sir William Ramsay.⁷² The twenty-five-ish years before the outbreak of war

⁷¹ Hugill and Bachmann, 'The Route to the Techno-Industrial World-Economy', p. 160; Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain*, pp. 14-16 and 27. Agriculture in Western Europe depended upon fertilizer, primarily guano imported from Chile. The continued importation of which depended upon the magnanimity of the Royal Navy, so Fritz Haber, an assistant to a professor at Karlsruhe, sought a means of fixing atmospheric nitrogen. By 1905, using an iron catalyst, he was able to produce 'small amounts' of ammonia from N₂ and H₂ at 1000° C. Later he elucidated (what came to be known as) the Haber Process, which produced ammonia by circulating nitrogen and hydrogen over a variety of metals, including manganese, iron and osmium, at a pressure of c.200 atmospheres and at a temperature between 500° and 600° C. By 1914, the chemical conglomerate *Badashe Analine und Soda Fabrik* (BASF) could produce 250 tons of nitric acid—critical to the production of high explosives and propellants—per day from ammonia. Haber's work ensured that the Great War persisted past Christmas 1914. G. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2005), p. 625; Biographical and Nobel Lecture, [The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1918](#). For an in-depth treatment see, [V. Smil, *Enriching the Earth: Fritz Haber, Carl Bosch, and the Transformation of World Food Production*](#) (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

⁷² [The History of the Cavendish](#); Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain*, p. 38; D. Moralee, 'The First Ten Years', *A Hundred Years and More of Cambridge Physics*, [online](#); Presentation Speech, [The Nobel Prize in Physics 1904](#). Clarendon Laboratory, Britain's first purpose-built physics laboratory, opened in 1872. However, unless one harkens back to the time of Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke, 'Oxford was not a university whose name immediately sprang to mind when the subject physics was mentioned'. [A brief history of physics in the University of Oxford](#).

have been called ‘the age of discovery’. While new technologies transformed almost all aspects of daily life and slowly brought about the end of the ‘Carboniferous Age’, Britons were generally ill-prepared for the laboratory-based Second Industrial Revolution.

In the short run, it was the boffins or ‘ingenious mechanics’, as G.R. Searle terms them, who remained responsible for British technological innovations.⁷³ However, as time passed, scientific men pushed aside the gentlemanly amateurs. The percentage of Fellows of the Royal Society, who worked as academics or applied scientists, increased from 41 per cent in 1881 to 78 per cent by 1914. This impressive rise, however, masks the quantitative weakness of British science.⁷⁴ Germany by contrast needed by 1913 5,630 professional journals to disseminate the work of its presumably *considerably* larger scientific community.⁷⁵ Although British firms had their successes, including the Rolls-Royce engine and the Morris Oxford launched in 1913, Britain fell behind in automobile, and in turn airplane, design and manufacturing. However, it was not because

⁷³ Searle, *A New England?*, pp. 615-20.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 622. Using the complete listing of the Fellowship from 1660 onwards, available from [The Royal Society](#), one can estimated that its membership consisted of less than four hundred academics and applied scientists in 1914. Further evidence for the embryonic state of British science comes from the number of higher degrees awarded by British universities:

	Masters*	Ph.D.	Higher doctorates	Total
1890-91	18	-	161	179
1895-6	12	-	209	221
1900-01	47	-	212	259
1905-6	57	-	247	304
1910-11	271	-	262	533

* Excludes MAs awarded at Oxbridge and the Scottish Universities, but includes BSc, BLitt and BPhil from Oxford. Source: Table II, Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain*, p. 165.

⁷⁵ Hugill and Bachmann, ‘The Route to the Techno-Industrial World-Economy’, p. 167. A contemporary estimated that Germany had ‘roughly ten times as many advanced students doing research in Universities and other teaching institutions’ as Britain had. E. Poulton, *Science and the Great War, The Romanes Lecture Delivered in the University Museum 7 December 1915* (Oxford, 1915), p. 8.

of ‘shoddy design or inadequate technical education’. Chemistry, however, was another matter. By the early twentieth century, German chemical works employed 4,000-odd chemists, approximately two-thirds of whom held a doctorate. British industry by contrast only employed an estimated 1,500 chemists, barely a fifth of whom held a degree let alone postgraduate training.⁷⁶ Britain’s weakness in pure and applied science had been highlighted as early as 1867, when British manufactures only won prizes in ten categories out of ninety at that year’s Paris Exhibition. Matters improved with the founding of provincial colleges of science and advanced technology, which led to a dramatic increase in student enrolment in higher education. Nevertheless, by 1900, Germany was thought to be spending over ‘six times as much as England on university science and technology departments’. Worse still was that Scotland, Wales and even Ireland all had more universities relative to total population than England. A wave of university openings would double the number of English universities to ten by 1909 and, on some measures, England had drawn almost even with Germany, but science had yet to cast off its ‘Cinderella-status’.⁷⁷ A further problem was that, even at the largest of British universities, only a ‘handful’ of students continued beyond a Bachelor’s degree.⁷⁸ If ‘knowledge’, as Imperial College’s motto proclaims, ‘is the adornment and protection of the state’, then, perhaps, the Declinists—discussed in the Introduction—were right to

⁷⁶ Searle, *A New England?*, pp. 623-6; R. Simpson, *The Development of the Ph.D. Degree in Britain, 1917-1959 and Since: An Evolutionary and Statistical History in Higher Education* (Lewiston, 2009), pp. 305-6. The inadequacies in the teaching of chemistry are detailed in Gay, *The History of Imperial College London*, pp. 16-21, in particular.

⁷⁷ Searle, *A New England?*, pp. 626-8, 630-631 and 635. By the early twentieth century, 1.2 per cent of Britons attended university in comparison to 1.47 and 1.65 per cent of Germans and the French, respectively. The figure for America was somewhere between two and four per cent.

⁷⁸ Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain* p. 1. Between 1938 and the early 1980s, the percentage of students studying at the post-graduate level rose from six to thirteen per cent.

worry. Arguably the biggest problem of all was that Oxbridge remained concerned with turning out not a well-trained cadre of experts, but a ‘governing national elite’. Typical of whom was Britain’s Prime Minister since 1908, Herbert Asquith, a man wholly unequipped to provide effective wartime leadership; to help pass the time during Cabinet meetings, when he was not writing love letters to one of his daughter’s friends, Asquith passed notes to Lord Curzon, challenging him to identify the author of Classical quotations.⁷⁹

The Oxbridge elites had been able to oversee Britain’s world system up until the Great War as doing so had been relatively easy; admittedly Foreign Office mandarins were needed to navigate the ‘new insecurity and instability’ of 1900-14, which they did as effectively as any other (aspirant) world system.⁸⁰ Wanton slaughter, however, could not continue indefinitely without provoking a backlash. Thanks to the Harmsworth papers, Britain experienced its first bout of political upheaval two years year ahead of the fall of German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and Russia’s dual revolution.⁸¹ In a sense both, the formation of a Coalition Government in the spring of 1915 and Lloyd George’s subsequent accidental coup against Asquith at the end of 1916 were a repudiation of the pre-war consensus.⁸² Curzon’s political career was unexpectedly resurrected when Asquith asked him to assume the post of Lord Privy Seal. David Lloyd

⁷⁹ Quoted in D. Edgerton, ‘Science and the Nation: Towards New Histories of Twentieth-Century Britain’, *Historical Research*, lxxviii (2005), p. 98; Searle, *A New England?*, p. 655; A. Wilson, *After the Victorians: The Decline of Britain in the World* (New York, 2006), pp. 182-4; D. Gilmour, *Curzon* (London, 1994), p. 454.

⁸⁰ J. Gallagher, ‘The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire’, in A. Seal, ed., *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and Other Essays* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 75-85.

⁸¹ Wilson, *After the Victorians*, pp. 184-6.

⁸² Searle, *A New England?*, pp. 676-8 and 698-704. Also see R. McKibbin, *Parties and People: England 1914-1951* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 1-32.

George latter doubled the number of ‘satraps’ in his government when Lord Milner joined the War Cabinet. These were ‘men whom no one would tolerate before the war as ... [they were] essentially reactionary’, proclaimed C.P. Scott, editor of *The Guardian*. Indeed. Such a development would have been unthinkable before 1914, but turning to two of the last great ‘satraps of the [British] Empire’ was a harbinger of things to come.⁸³

Curzon’s appointment was not a one-off. Expertise mattered. In reorganising the War Cabinet, Lloyd George turned to: Sir Joseph Maclay, a Glaswegian ship owner, to head the new Ministry of Shipping, Christopher Addison, a committed social reformer, was tasked with Reconstruction planning, John Hodge, a trade unionist leader and Labour politician, and Lord Devonport, the food-chain magnate, respectively became the first Ministers of Labour and Food. Similarly press barons became propagandists, while the distinguished Oxford historian, then serving as the Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield

⁸³ Lord Salisbury to Curzon, 9 August 1902, quoted in D. Dilks, *Curzon in India* (2 vols., London, 1969), I, p. 220; Scott quoted in Gallagher, ‘The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire’, p. 86. Salisbury also counted Lords Cromer and Kitchener (d. May 1916) amongst the Empire’s remaining satraps. The Lothian and Arnold Prizes, as well as election to All Souls, more than made up for Curzon’s failure to achieve a first in Greats (*Literae Humaniores*). ‘Duty, desire to learn ... and a mission from the *Times*’ had established Curzon as the leading expert on (what he termed) the ‘Central Asian Question’, laying the basis for his appointment as Viceroy in 1898. Curzon, like Milner, who served in South Africa, returned to Britain as a proconsul, and it was this reputation that led to their being given vital roles in managing Britain’s war effort. Milner became Lloyd George’s ‘chief lieutenant’. Similarly, upon the formation of the War Cabinet, Curzon became Leader of the House of Lords. But he is best known for his chairmanship of the Eastern Committee, which was created in March 1918 to deal with all military and diplomatic problems east of Suez. Curzon believed this position was distinct from other War Cabinet committees. It was the product of a public life that ‘had brought him into close contact with almost every aspect of Middle Eastern affairs; he had served as Under-Secretary of State both at the Foreign Office and the India Office; he had been Viceroy of India, and there were few countries concerned with which he had not personal acquaintance’. Quoted in D. Blakeley, “‘Duty, Desire to Learn, and a Mission from the *Times*’”: Lord Curzon and His Travel Writings’, *Nineteenth Century Prose*, xix (1992), pp. 100 and 102; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 311; Quoted in H. Mejcher, ‘British Middle East Policy 1917-21: The Inter-Departmental Level’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, viii (1973), p. 94. On Curzon’s varied personas see, G. Bennett and M. Gibson, *The Later Life of Lord Curzon of Kedleston- Aristocrat, Writer, Politician, Statesman: An Experiment in Political Biography* (Lewiston, N.Y., 2000).

University, H.A.L. Fisher, accepted the post of President of the Board of Education. This turn to non-political ‘experts’ was driven partly by the desire to diminish the strong Unionist element of his government; and perhaps suggests that Lloyd George was trying to construct a new political party. It also reflected the broader quest for national efficiency, and (wrote John Grigg) ‘exemplified Lloyd George’s flair for improvisation and disregard for convention’.⁸⁴ Expert advice, however, was slowly penetrating into other areas of British life. The Ministry of Munitions as part of its broad mandate sought to ensure that glass and steel works were operating at maximum capacity. Before 1914 these industries had been ‘very secretive about their methods, but a consequence of mandatory wartime inspections was that expert advice became more appreciated, and more eagerly sought, after the war’. To the Cabinet’s Reconstruction Committee, the answer was obvious: ‘Education is the foundation of true national greatness’.⁸⁵

The war stimulated research in a diverse number of fields, including medicine and surgeries obviously as well as aeronautics, botany, chemistry, entomology, metallurgy and physics. Minerals and oil also needed to be sourced. But complaints over the shortage of well trained personnel persisted.⁸⁶ Almost half a century on, the findings of the 1871-5 Devonshire Commission on Scientific Instruction and the Advancement of Science had yet to be acted on; discounting ‘minimal half-hearted concessions that

⁸⁴ *The War Cabinet: Report for the Year 1917*, Cd. 9005 (London, 1918), p. vii; J. Grigg, *Lloyd George: War Leader, 1916-1918* (London, 2002), pp. 45, 186-7, 211, 397 and 569; M. Pearce and G. Stewart, *British Political History, 1867-2001: Democracy and Decline* (3rd edn., New York, 2002), p. 216.

⁸⁵ Gay, *The History of Imperial College London*, pp. 114 and 121; ‘Memorandum of the Reconstruction Committee on the Final Report of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in relation to Employment after the War’, undated, but printed May 1917, CAB 24/19/GT 1305.

⁸⁶ Gay, *The History of Imperial College London*, pp. 126-9 and 196; Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain*, p. 73.

research-minded academics had ... been able to wring from their reluctant colleagues'.⁸⁷ Such was the stranglehold of liberal education, that is to say the Bachelor of Arts degree, Oxford did not introduce 'research degrees'—the Bachelors of Science and Literature—until 1895. That same year also saw the introduction of three five-year research degrees—the Doctors of Letters, Philosophy and Science—at all four Scottish universities.⁸⁸ A German Ph.D. by contrast took two years; alternatively, one could take a 'research bachelorship' at Oxbridge in a year or two. Post-graduate instruction at England's ancient universities only 'existed on paper'. A lack of funding was certainly an issue, but, in thanking Andrew Carnegie for his largesse donation to Scottish universities, Arthur Balfour, then Chancellor of Edinburgh University and First Lord of the Treasury, identified a deeper problem:

[I am] amazed and almost ashamed, at the indifference with which the British public have acquiesced in the wholly inadequate provision which we make for scientific teaching and research ... According to my view, (which I think you share), we ought to regard our Universities not merely as places where the best kind of knowledge already attained is imparted, but as places where the stock of the world's scientific knowledge may be augmented

Others were less confident. In 1907, at the outset of his eighteen year tenure as Chancellor of Oxford University, Curzon asked, in his two hundred plus page *Principles & Methods of University Reform: Being a Letter Addressed to the University of Oxford*, if it was even 'feasible, to convert Oxford into a place where the main occupation should be the pursuit of original Research'. He believed such an attempt to be undesirable, in

⁸⁷ Unless otherwise indicated the remainder of this paragraph draws on Ibid. pp. 43-112.

⁸⁸ The University of Edinburgh awarded fifty-one Doctors of Science between 1866 and 1887; eleven in mental science, six in philology and thirty-four in natural and physical sciences. Regulations for the doctorate existed at the Universities of Aberdeen and St Andrews, by respectively the latter 1880s and 'well back in the seventies, [but] no degree appears to have been awarded at the latter'. The University of Glasgow for its part never even published regulations.

part because Oxford could not hope to emulate the German influenced American universities when it came to post-graduate work. Nevertheless, with the Rhodes scholarship already five years old, overseas students would be arriving in numbers that would be hard to ignore.⁸⁹ Simultaneously, concern was building over the adverse effects of (to quote Professor A.H. Young of Trinity College in the University of Toronto) the fact that ‘Oxford has ceased to be the intellectual centre of the Empire’.⁹⁰ Worse still was that Oxford had not grasped the new reality of the laboratory-based Second Industrial Revolution. In 1906, the Hebdomadal Council decreed that anyone who had passed the examination for their Ph.D. either magna cum laude or summa cum laud from a German, Austro-Hapsburg or Swiss university could ‘read for the Oxford BA in two years instead of three!’ Germans, not surprisingly, did not flock to Oxford, nor did Americans as a Ph.D.—unattainable at Oxford—was by then the accepted route into the American professoriate. Curzon’s efforts had come to naught. Two years after his intervention, he confessed, in a letter to the President of Magdalen College: ‘Council and Congregation go pottering along term after term, amending and revising and postponing ...’ Meanwhile post-graduate studies developed at varying rates at Manchester and other provincial universities; the regulations for the first ‘bona fide MA by research’ appeared in the calendar of the University of Wales for the 1898-9

⁸⁹ Originally Rhodes willed two three-year scholarships of £300 per annum, tenable at any Oxford College, for each of the forty-eight states, with another seventy-eight for British subjects. Near the end of his life, Rhodes added an additional five scholarships of £250 for Germans handpicked by the Kaiser.

⁹⁰ Too many Canadian students, he worried, were joining the ‘great migration’ southwards to complete their doctorates at American universities. Upon graduation, they either accepted an academic position at an American university or returned to Canada with ‘American ideals’, which ‘if not hostile to England, are at least far from being friendly to her’. A concrete example of Young’s fear coming to pass can be seen in M. Friedland, *The University of Toronto: A History* (2nd edn., Toronto, 2013), p. 177.

academic year. But the introduction of the Rhodes scholarship had created a pan-Empire interest in education, culminating in the first Universities Congress of the British Empire in 1912, where the Principal of McGill University, after surveying existing opportunities for post-graduate education in America, Britain and Canada, pointedly asked why had not British universities—out of their own, as well as imperial, interests—established the Ph.D. Oxbridge, he reasoned, offered the best hope for not fetishising the Ph.D. and its (alleged) financial value. Another Canadian professor predicted that if an appropriate degree was not forthcoming, Rhodes scholarships would go unfilled. Although no formal resolutions were passed, plans were made for a second congress in 1917. Said meeting would not actually be held until 1921, but events would compel Oxford to introduce the Ph.D. in 1917.

The outbreak of war, with the cessation of imports discussed earlier, and the sudden need to become self-reliant in almost everything, laid bare ‘the short-sightedness of past British governments and of universities, in relation to science and technology, research and specialisation’ in a way that finally could not be ignored. Britons’ ignorance had become a danger to the realm!⁹¹ In the first fifteen months of the war, Britain’s ‘lawyer-politicians’ faithfully observed Article 28 of the Declaration of London concerning the Laws of Naval War, thereby allowing Germany to import British cotton, fats and oils, essential to the production of propulsive ammunition, through its ‘two mouths’, Holland and Sweden.⁹² A policy based on the faulty suggestion of an ‘eminent

⁹¹ Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain*, p. 112. Also see Poulton, *Science and the Great War*, pp. 4-9.

⁹² Poulton, *Science and the Great War*, pp. 14-18. Said policy was only reversed when Sir William Ramsay, a chemist and member of the Royal Society’s Committee that advised the Government on scientific matters, abandoned ‘personal interviews with many people in authority’ and turned to the press

lawyer-politician, who “at the beginning of the war gave as his opinion that it would be useless to make cotton contraband, as there were so many substitutes for it which the Germans could use”. Replacing cotton was actually quite difficult, if not impossible.⁹³ In the case of oil, a private company became aware of a ‘practical process’ for making glycerine, necessary to the production of nitro-glycerine, from linseed oil. Rather than profit on this previously unused pre-cursor, the company informed the Government and within forty-eight hours the exporting of linseed oil was prohibited. Such was the danger of neglecting science. In her greatest struggle, Britannia relied not upon a Government basing decisions on expert opinion but that the patriotism of her businessmen would trump their capitalist instincts.⁹⁴ However, those lawyer-politicians that the naturalist, E.B. Poulton, condemned were still the ‘true children of Palmerston, Lord Salisbury’s sons, cynical, calculating’ and determined to secure British interests, whatever the means.⁹⁵

Amidst considerable Treasury resistance, a 1915 White Paper laid the basis for the creation in 1918 of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.⁹⁶ In the

as the ‘last and only hope of saving our men from the results of the acts of our own government’. Similarly, cocoa, with its ‘exceptional food value’, also reached Germany via Holland in significantly higher amounts during the first ten months of the conflict. It was almost as if the Admiralty and War Office sought to fight the Huns, while the Board of Trade, under the partial protection of the Foreign Office, worked diligently to supply the enemy through neutral countries. A similar Gilbertian scenario occurred again in Arabia during the post-war struggle for power, where the Foreign and India Offices fought each other via proxies. Ibid., pp. 32-3; K. Jeffery, ‘The Eastern Arc of Empire: A Strategic View, 1850–1950’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, v (1982), p. 532.

⁹³ From Ramsay’s letter to the *Morning Post*, 19 July 1915, quoted in Poulton, *Science and the Great War* p. 18; S. Kelly, ‘How Far West?: Lord Curzon’s Transcaucasian (Mis)Adventure and the Defence of British India, 1918-23’, *International History Review*, xxxv (2013), p. 276.

⁹⁴ Poulton, *Science and the Great War*, pp. 21-2. The ‘most powerful ... smokeless, propulsive ammunition’ had two ‘essential’ ingredients: nitro-glycerine and nitro-cellulose, also known as guncotton.

⁹⁵ J. Ferris, *The Evolution of British Strategic Policy, 1919-26* (Basingstoke, 1989), pp. 50-51.

⁹⁶ Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain*, p. 112. The department would undertake ad hoc investigations of a particular problem through its committees, while research boards handled issues of an

interim, however, criticism mounted apace. A memorandum, signed by three dozen individuals, with numerous letters after their last names, on ‘The Neglect of Science’, appeared in *The Times* on 2 February 1916. Its message was stark and unequivocal. Addressing the near universal ignorance of science was ‘a reform which is vital to the continued existence of this country as a Great Power’.⁹⁷ Whether *The Times*’ article, and subsequent conference, forced the government to act is not clear, but in August 1916 Asquith tasked the third Cavendish Professor of Experimental Physics at Cambridge and President of the Royal Society, Joseph Thomson, to investigate the position of science in Britain’s education system. Henceforth, having proven itself in the *White Heat*, science was to be treated ‘as an honoured guest in our education system’.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, a durable, yet flexible, scheme of education was required to prevent ‘any relapse into the old conditions’.⁹⁹ The Committee therefore endorsed the findings of the 1917 UK Universities Conference, which had resolved that a Doctor of Philosophy should be

‘enduring nature’. Cotton presumably fell into the later group; by the mid-1920s, for example, the link between climate and rain-grown short-staple cotton, as well as the quality of ratooned Queensland cotton, were being investigated. A few years later a fibrous plant from British Guiana was evaluated as a potential source of ‘artificial cotton’. Topics of investigation ran the gamut from atmospheric and water pollution, to building and chemistry research, to food and forest products, to pest infestation and radio research. [The National Archives Catalogue entry for DSIR 3](#); Records Bureau Cotton Cultivation, The National Archive, D[e]partment of] S[cientific and] I[n]dustrial] R[esearch] 36/1340; DSIR 36/1343; [The National Archives Catalogue entry for DSIR 10](#).

⁹⁷ Reproduced in the Committee on the Neglect of Science, *The Neglect of Science: Report of Proceedings at a Conference Held in the Rooms of the Linnean Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, on Wednesday, 3 May 1916*, (London, 1916), pp. 3-6. ‘In the whole history of British Government there has been only one Cabinet Minister who was a trained professional man of science—the late Lord Playfair’, the authors noted. A fact that could be overlooked if the civil service were reasonably well-informed, but only a quarter of those sitting the Civil Service examinations took the scientific component. The low percentage is not surprising given that Classicists had preserved their dominance in ‘our ancient Universities and great [public] schools’. The structure of the exam meant an applicant could obtain 3,200 marks for ‘Latin and Greek alone (including ancient history) ... while for science the maximum is 2,400, and to obtain this total a candidate must take four distinct branches of science’.

⁹⁸ Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain*, p. 113; J. Terraine, *White Heat: The New Warfare, 1914-18* (London, 1982); *Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Position of Natural Science in the Educational System of Great Britain*, Cd. 9011 (London, 1918), p. 6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* The report was comprehensive, but the focus here is on post-graduate education.

attainable after a minimum of two years' advanced work.¹⁰⁰ A further incentive for reform came from the need to further reinforce the bonds of Dominion loyalty; with hundreds of thousands of neo-Britons fighting in France and elsewhere, British authorities could hardly be unsympathetic to Dominion desires for the Rhodes scholarship to be made viable for their graduates. Propaganda aimed at Americans who had attended German universities also attracted the attention of the British Foreign Office, stirred in part by the poet, Alfred Noyes, who levelled amongst other charges that there was something seriously wrong with Americans attending German universities to study English literature! Curzon saw things differently; save for a handful of schools, like Harvard, Americans were not sufficiently educated for Oxbridge. German universities, with their thesis-only Ph.D.'s, naturally became 'the happy hunting ground of these uneducated people'.¹⁰¹ Faced with protracted discussions, the Foreign Office ceded the problem of post-graduate degrees to the Board of Education. Further discussion, as well as conferences involving all British universities, followed. But Oxford's Hebdomadal Council had appointed a committee in December 1915 to consider how the university might meet the post-war needs of American and colonial students, thereby helping to turn the school into a bastion of post-graduate studies for the Anglo-Saxon world. Ultimately, Oxford became the first British university to introduce the Doctor of Philosophy, designating it (in Oxford's traditional individualistic fashion

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁰¹ Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain*, pp. 114-7; Quoted in Ibid., p. 118.

as) the D.Phil.¹⁰² ‘Chance for Rhodes Men’, was one *New York Times*’ headline. But what of Churchill’s claim?¹⁰³

On the one hand Churchill’s faith in science was undoubtedly justified, as evident by Britain’s wartime experience and the emergence of her proto-warfare state.¹⁰⁴ Edgerton’s ‘expert state’, however, is very much a feature of the latter half of the interwar era than the 1920s, when the technical experts of the armed forces predominated.¹⁰⁵ Such a development was to be expected as the Great War gave aviation, in particular, a considerable head start, whose development was further accelerated by the air scares of the early 1920s.¹⁰⁶ However, Churchill’s invoking the practitioners of wartime arts and science seems overstated in light of the preceding discussion on the shortage(s) of Britons with post-graduate training. Edgerton perpetuates this myth, when he claims that the exclusion of post-graduate students may ‘underestimate the research strength of the universities’ in comparison to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough and/or the Research Department at the Woolwich Arsenal.¹⁰⁷ In time, could an imperial equivalent to Britain’s warfare state have emerged?

Contemporary opinion certainly believed so. From the late-eighteenth until the mid-twentieth century, Europeans never doubted their ability to harness the natural

¹⁰² Ibid. pp. 126-36.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Ibid. p. 140; Also see note 67.

¹⁰⁴ Terraine, *White Heat*; D. Edgerton, *Warfare State Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ Edgerton, *Warfare State Britain*, pp. 111-8. The Air Ministry ‘spent many times more than the largely civilian DSIR, and more too than any British industrial firm’. One physicist, the Marxist J.D. Bernal, estimated that somewhere ‘between one-third and one-half of the money spent on scientific research in Britain is spent directly or indirectly on war research ... And this in peace time’. Quoted Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁰⁶ H. Hall, ‘British Air Defence and Anglo-French Relations, 1921-1924’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, iv (1981), pp. 271-84.

¹⁰⁷ Edgerton, *Warfare State Britain*, p. 120.

world to their own ends. Africa, in particular, was presented as a land of unlimited opportunities.¹⁰⁸ While a 1911 illustration in *Harmsworth Popular Science* may have depicted an academic—presumably Sir Ronald Ross, who confirmed that the *Anopheles* mosquito transmits malaria—opening the door to the colonisation of the tropics, arguably the apogee of this trope was the 1924 Empire Exhibition at Wembley. In his inauguration address, George V promulgated: ‘This Exhibition will enable us to take stock of the resources, actual and potential, of the Empire as a whole; to consider where these exist and how they can best be developed and utilised ...’ To develop His Majesty’s ‘tropical territories and ... the yet unexplored capacities of the Empire’, however, required a cadre akin to that which built the *Warfare State*.¹⁰⁹

Yet, as discussed earlier, in the quarter century before the outbreak of war, only a handful of Britons took higher degrees.¹¹⁰ By March 1918, however, the furtherance of post-graduate study had again come to the attention of the Foreign Office. Drawing international students into British universities had become a ‘sphere of [British] foreign relations’.¹¹¹ Two months later, in May 1918, the United Kingdom Universities Conference resumed their discussions from the previous year and agreed that they had to take action ‘to encourage immigration of students from foreign countries and from the King’s Dominions overseas’. Almost half of British universities had by then—or were

¹⁰⁸ J. MacKenzie, *Empires of Nature and the Nature of Empires: Imperialism, Scotland and the Environment* (East Linton, 1997), pp. 36-42. Also see R. Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven, 2000).

¹⁰⁹ Bowler, *Science for All*, p. 27; Quoted in ‘The British Empire Exhibition’, *Nature*, cxiii (1924), p. 648.

¹¹⁰ See note 74.

¹¹¹ Simpson, *How the Ph.D. Came to Britain*, pp. 147-53.

planning to introduce—the Ph.D. for foreign students.¹¹² The new degree proved an immediate success. The first five years, that is to say the academic years 1919-20 through 1924-5, saw 774 Ph.D.'s awarded; with the Universities of London, Cambridge and Edinburgh accounting for just over half of the first Ph.D.'s.¹¹³ But the first decade also witnessed considerable problems, including administering an ever-growing student population, evaluating overseas qualifications, the issue of admitting applicants before they arrived in Britain and how to evaluate the suitability of an individual for advanced studies.¹¹⁴ Then there was the issue of residence and research driven need(s) to study at other institutions, the supervisor's role(s) and who should select dissertation topics.¹¹⁵ Britons, said the physicist Oliver Lodge, were slowly learning to do for themselves 'what we have been too ready to allow other nations to do for us ... The new [Ph.D.] Degree is not to be a mark of achievement but an indication of promise'.¹¹⁶ But what exactly were students studying?¹¹⁷ In the early years, the "Arts" enjoyed a marginal lead, but, by the late-1920s, the gap between the "Sciences" and "Arts" had started to open up. Over the course of the 1920s, includes the years 1917-19, the percentage of Ph.D. students in the Arts declined by almost a third. The Social Sciences and Technology witnessed *modest* growth, but together only accounted for approximately twenty per cent

¹¹² Quoted in Ibid. p. 154. In time, the hold outs—Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Glasgow and especially the University of London—bowed to the inevitable. Ibid., pp. 155-9.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 164. The second half of the 1920s saw a further 1,580 Ph.D.'s/D.Phil.s awarded.

¹¹⁴ Simpson, *The Development of the Ph.D. Degree in Britain*, pp. 4-26. As early as 1926, it was suggested by the Association of University Teachers that a Master's degree should be a prerequisite to the Ph.D.. Ibid., pp. 28-9.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 53-73.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Ibid. p. 87.

¹¹⁷ Academic subjects fell under four classifications: Arts, Social Sciences, Science and Technology, i.e. architecture, engineering and metallurgy. Owing to the London School of Economics (LSE), some subjects, namely geography, history and philosophy, fell under Social Sciences as well as the Arts. A complete breakdown can be found in Table 1-4, Ibid. p. 229.

of all students. The Sciences held a dominant position, approaching sixty per cent by the end of the 1920s.¹¹⁸ Financial support for the Arts was virtually non-existent throughout the interwar period, while support for the Sciences ‘began almost simultaneously with the Ph.D.’ itself.¹¹⁹ Not surprisingly, in light of the preceding discussion, chemistry accounted for just over forty per cent of Ph.D. students in the Sciences during the interwar period. Biology, not physics, however, was the second most popular field.¹²⁰ An emerging principle of university education held that all men should be trained to be ‘useful members of the community, and to be ready to do their best in national [and imperial] service’. Its implementation can be seen in several ways: approximately a hundred postgraduate students in the Sciences during the 1920s opted to study medicine, agriculture or veterinary science.¹²¹ Secondly, of the little more than a third of overseas Ph.D. students during the 1920s, slightly more than a half came from India and the Dominions.¹²² In the absence of information on their specific courses of studies, as well as the specialisation(s) of the close to four hundred Ph.D. students in biology, it is difficult to say definitely whether or not a cadre akin to that which built the *Warfare*

¹¹⁸ Figures IIA-1 and -2, *Ibid.* pp. 245-6. It should be acknowledged that owing to an almost complete lack of quantitative data, Simpson’s conclusions are based on a subset of universities: Cambridge, Edinburgh, Imperial, LSE, Manchester, Oxford and University College London (UCL). The rationale for selecting these institutions is discussed on pp. 220-221.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 249 and 251. Divinity students made up the largest proportion of Arts students prior to the 1950s; Edinburgh, not Oxbridge, was the principle bastion thanks to the steady flow of American students. History was a close second, with English a *distant* third. These three disciplines together accounted for roughly two-thirds of all Ph.D. students in the Arts. *Ibid.*, pp. 286-9.

¹²⁰ Table IIB-7, *Ibid.* p. 307.

¹²¹ W. Cunningham, ‘The Reconstruction of the Universities and the Nation’, *Contemporary Review*, cxiii (1918), p. 280; Table IIB-7. Thirty-four studied medicine, sixty-eight agriculture and twenty-seven individuals were lumped into ‘Other’, studying ‘in order of magnitude’ veterinary science, history and philosophy of science and pharmacy/pharmacology.

¹²² Table III-1 and -3, Simpson, *The Development of the Ph.D. Degree in Britain*, pp. 325 and 331.

State was emerging.¹²³ Personnel are but one component of an expert state. Contemporaries, by the mid-to-late 1920s, had come to see science (and imperial advocacy, which is discussed below) as providing that ‘fresh wind’ which would propel the British Empire into a new era. Another commentator, contemplating the ongoing transition from the “palaeotechnic” to the “neotechnic” age’, anticipated that ‘Science [would come] to the Rescue’.¹²⁴ If Kew Gardens’ triumphant emergence as a scientific-imperial institution during the latter half of the nineteenth century represented a ‘scientific empire’, the 1920s heralded the creation in the not too distance future of a far more bountiful second empire.¹²⁵

Ever since Columbus’ discovery of the West Indies, in addition to gold and silver, Europeans frenziedly sought to identify potentially valuable plants. ‘*Historia Naturalis* is the base for all economics, commerce and manufactures’, wrote one of Carolus Linnaeus’ students in 1748.¹²⁶ The long eighteenth century (c.1670s-1760s) witnessed an intensification of this process as ‘*botanistes voyageurs*’ continued to search out new plants and, once classified, specimens were transported to ever-expanding slave

¹²³ Several hundred individuals may seem rather small, but His Majesty’s Colonial Service at the end of the nineteenth century totalled approximately 1,500 men; not all of whom were even recruited in Britain, posts with salaries of less than £100 per annum invariably were filled by locally appointed officers. By 1914, following a recruitment campaign, there were 1,400 Colonial Service officers in Tropical Africa alone, but forty-seven agricultural, twenty-two veterinary and 258 medical officers were spread unevenly across seven dependencies. Post-war League of Nations mandates brought the Colonial Office more than half a million square miles of additional territory to administer. A. Kirk-Greene, *On Crown Service: A History of HM Colonial and Overseas Civil Services, 1837-1997* (London, 1999), pp. 16-20.

¹²⁴ ‘A Fresh Wind’, *Punch*, 20 July 1927; ‘Lens’, ‘Science to the Rescue’, *New Statesman* (5 June 1926), pp. 193-4. To put Lens’ terms into modern terminology, he is referring to the transition to an economy based on organic chemistry, i.e. the techno-industrial world.

¹²⁵ Drayton, *Nature’s Government*, pp. 218-21. On the garden’s history see, R. Desmond, *The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew* (2nd edn., London, 2007).

¹²⁶ Quoted in L. Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 6.

plantations or one of more of the sixteen hundred botanical gardens—that Europeans had founded across the globe by the end of the eighteenth century—to be propagated and, if successful, subsequently cultivated elsewhere.¹²⁷ Botanical gardens were the first agricultural research stations, and as such remained an important institution, but efforts to engineer empire increasingly came to characterise the long nineteenth century (c.1760-1914).¹²⁸ While it would be a stretch to say that scientists in the 1920s could engineer nature, the rediscovery of Gregor Mendel’s work at the outset of the twentieth century, together with developments in genetics, meant that it was possible to ‘synthesize new plant varieties’.¹²⁹ Moreover, beginning in the early-1920s, there was a concerted effort to develop the dependent empire on a scientific basis.

The Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture (ICTA), Trinidad, founded in 1922, was to be ‘the main training centre in the Empire ... [for] instruction covering the whole field of agriculture and agricultural science under tropical conditions’.¹³⁰ Within a few years, some two dozen graduates had taken up appointments in a dozen different African and Caribbean colonies/dependencies, as well as in Ceylon.¹³¹ Details on the exact

¹²⁷ Ibid. pp. 7-12 and 23.

¹²⁸ D. McCracken, *Gardens of Empire: Botanical Institutions of the Victorian British Empire* (London, 1997); B. Marsden and C. Smith, *Engineering Empires: A Cultural History of Technology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke, 2005).

¹²⁹ N. Kingsbury, *Hybrid: The History and Science of Plant Breeding* (Chicago, 2009), p. 186. For an example of the work being done, see R. Anson, ‘The Possibilities of a New Variety of Cotton for Fiji’, *Agricultural Journal [of Fiji]*, i (1928), pp. 1-3. On the classification of cotton see, G. Watt, *The Wild and Cultivated Cotton Plants of the World* (London, 1907), which has been superseded by W. Smith and T. Cothren, eds., *Cotton: Origin, History, Technology and Production* (New York, 1999).

¹³⁰ *Hansard*, cixc. 1930. Instruction on a ‘limited scale’ was also available at Colombo University College, Ceylon’s Botanic Gardens and Mauritius’ Agricultural College. Also see Sir F. Watts, Imperial Commissioner of Agriculture in the West Indies and Principal of the ICTA, ‘The Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture’, *Empire Cotton Growing Review*, i (1924), pp. 15-24.

¹³¹ Ibid.; By the late 1930s, the ICTA had become the ‘recognized centre for postgraduate training in tropical agriculture for the agricultural services of the Colonial Empire’. Over a 150 past students were by

nature of these appointments are somewhat scarce, but the ICTA's first graduate, E.S. Eldridge, for example, accepted a post with the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation, becoming the 'farm manager' at their Nyasaland experiment station.¹³² Said station was but one link in the 'chain of agricultural research stations' that Britain was slowly building throughout the 'tropical and sub-tropical regions of the Empire'. Expansion was limited primarily by the lack of trained staff. A year earlier, the Agricultural Institute at Amani, Tanganyika, which had been established by the Government of German East Africa in 1902, and overrun by British Forces in 1916, had been reopened as a 'centre of agricultural research'. Its research programme focused on 'soil surveys, coffee investigations, problems connected with the conservation and restoration of soil fertility, plant breeding, insecticides, insect migration, virus diseases and plant pests'.¹³³ Perhaps the most important development, however, was the establishment of a central cotton research station in Trinidad; which (among other advantages) did not grow cotton,

then working in thirty locals throughout the British Empire. 'The Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture', *Nature*, cxliii (1939), p. 468.

¹³² 'University and Educational Intelligence', *Nature*, cxii (1923), p. 708. The Empire Cotton Growing Corporation (ECGC) was a major benefactor of the ICTA, contributing £2,000 in response to the appeal by Lord Milner, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, for funds to complete and equip the College. In the inaugural list of contributions, the ECGC's largesse was only outdone by the Rhodes Trustees, who donated £5,000. By contrast, the Fine Cotton Spinners' and Doublers' Association, Ltd and the British Cotton Growing Association donated £1,000 each. The ECGC made further contributions throughout the 1920s; in the fall of 1926, for example, ten of the twenty-seven post-graduate students leaving England to begin their studies were nominated by the ECGC. Of the remaining students, fourteen were selected by the Colonial Office as future members of the Colonial agricultural service and the remaining three were from Ceylon and India. Two students nominated by the Government of the Gold Coast were to arrive later, in addition to the 'many students from the West Indian Colonies'. 'Lord Milner's Appeal', *Supplement to Tropical Agriculture*, ii (1925); *The Times*, 10 Sept. 1926, p. 10.

¹³³ *The Times*, 13 Mar. 1928, p. 16; 'Agricultural Research in East Africa', *Bulletin of the Imperial Institute*, xxviii (1930), pp. 49-50. Further locations under discussion or proposed included: Northern Queensland (to study animal husbandry, tropical nutrition and, possibly, pasture problems), Peradeniya, Ceylon, Kabete, Kenya (veterinary research), West Africa, the Federated Malay States (tea and rubber research) and possibly a station for irrigation in the Middle East. Whether sugar and copra research necessitated new stations or could be carried out at an existing or already planned one had yet to be resolved. Extract from Report of Imperial Agricultural Research Conference (1928), CO 323/1001/4.

thereby avoiding the problem of hybridisation with commercial varieties, and the new station would be in close proximity to the ICTA. It was widely recognised by participants at the 1927 Imperial Agricultural Research Conference that all of this work was regarded ‘as “fundamental,” “long range” and “wide rang[ing]” research’.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, the atmosphere, the following year, wrote a visiting EMB official, gave the impression that ‘the College is a most important place [and] that its future scope for useful work is unlimited’ The staff genuinely believed that they were laying the foundations of a truly ‘great Imperial institution’.¹³⁵

A significant contributor of funds to the aforementioned efforts at basic research was the EMB. Created in the spring of 1926, with a budget of £500,000 for the remainder of the financial year and a planned £1,000,000 per annum thereafter, the new Board was the first step in thinking about imperial development in the same manner as the Committee of Imperial Defence (est. 1902) had been ‘charged with the duty of thinking out plans for the organised defence of the Empire’.¹³⁶ Its task was threefold: 1) publicity and education, 2) research and 3) promoting schemes for the improvement of production and marketing of imperial goods. The ‘immediate’ focus, however, was publicity and research; more specifically, ‘scientific research and economic

¹³⁴ J. Farmer, *Trinidad as a Possible Site for a Central Cotton Research Station* (London, 1925); *The Times*, 13 Mar. 1928, p. 16. In fact, the successor to the ECGC, the Cotton Research Corporation, continued publishing *Research Memoirs* well into the 1970s.

¹³⁵ G[ervas] Huxley, ‘Note on a Visit to the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, Trinidad’, 25 March 1929, CO 323/1043/2.

¹³⁶ E.M.B., *A Year's Progress* (London, 1927), p. 1; Draft of ‘The Future of E.M.B. and Imperial Economic Committee, 1926’, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, Sir Stephen George Tallents papers, box 1, file 3.

investigation’.¹³⁷ In terms of the former, building off the success of the 1924 Empire Exhibition at Wembley,¹³⁸ the EMB took part in almost seventy different exhibitions—including one overseas event, the 1928 Jubilee Anniversary of the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto—that had in excess of twelve million visitors. Between 1927 and 1932, more than 1.5 million people attended one of the over nine thousand lectures arranged by the Board, which also extensively utilised print culture; including some ten million booklets and leaflets, advertisements in nearly seventy leading British newspapers and hundreds of commissioned artwork/posters.¹³⁹ New methods of promotion were also being pioneered, most notably the creation of a film unit whose role was to be akin to Henry the Navigator’s fourteenth century School of Projection.¹⁴⁰ But perhaps the most visible form of propaganda were the Empire Shops and Empire

¹³⁷ E.M.B., *The Work of the Empire Marketing Board: Report No. 1* (London, 1926), pp. 1-2; E.M.B., *The Work of the Empire Marketing Board: Report No. 2* (London, 1926), p. 1. Summary details on the research grants and other schemes that received funding is in Appendix I, E.M.B., *Note on the Work and Finance of the Board and Statement of Research and Other Grants Approved by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs from July 1926 to March 1932*, Cmd. 4121 (London, 1932).

¹³⁸ For a contemporary description/account of Wembley, see *A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to London and the British Empire Exhibition* (45th edn., London, 1924), pp. a-y, in particular, and D. Maxwell, *Wembley in Colour: Being Both an Impression and a Memento of the British Empire Exhibition of 1924* (London, 1924). Also see D. Knight and A. Sabey, *The Lion Roars at Wembley: The British Empire Exhibition, 1924-1925* (London, 1984).

¹³⁹ The Board’s extensive promotional activities are detailed in a Confidential Report of ‘The Empire Marketing Board, Part V: Publicity’, Feb. 1933, Tallents papers, box 2, file 14. *The Times*’ art critic said of the ‘original designs in oil, water-colour and poster colour’ that they were ‘nothing short of a moral revolution ... [that] free[d] the word “Empire” from its hyphenated associations and ... [made] the Union Jack artistically as well as politically respectable’. The almost five hundred designs collectively enabled even the ‘most sensitive person’ to “Buy British” without feeling that he [or she] was compounding the less admirable kind of international transaction’, which the writer and caricaturist, Max Beerbobhm, had earlier typified in a carton in which Andrew Bonar Law, looking upon a ‘non-Aryan gentleman’ wrapped in the Union Jack, declared: “There’s a kind of a something about you, Laddie, that doesn’t inspire confidence”. Cutting from *The Times*, 20 Mar. 1934, Tallents papers, box 2, file 12. EMB posters held by Manchester City Galleries are organised thematically on [flickr](#).

¹⁴⁰ S. Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain: Stephen Tallents and the Birth of a Progressive Media Profession* (Manchester, 2012); Reprint of J. Grierson, ‘The Story of the Documentary Film’, *Fortnightly Review* (1939), Tallents papers, box 3, file 23. Also see S. Constantine, ‘Bringing the Empire Alive’: The Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Propaganda, 1926-33’, in J. MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (London, 1986), pp. 208-11

Shopping Weeks, which the EMB actively encouraged provided that local organising bodies were both ‘non-party and ... thoroughly representative of the district in which they were to be held’.¹⁴¹ The former ranked amongst the EMB’s ‘most successful ... activities’, while the impact of the over 200 Empire Shopping Weeks that were held throughout Britain and Northern Ireland by early 1933 is (as discussed below) debatable.¹⁴² Displays were not just confined to the larger cities—the borough of Bideford, North Devon, population (including adjoining villages) some 20,000, attracted 6,000 visitors over five days in October 1925—nor to the British Isles, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney held an Empire Shopping Week as early as May 1925, while Canada held its first three years later.¹⁴³ Window displays, particularly that of the Army and Navy Co-operative Society, demonstrated ‘to a remarkable degree the extent to which the colonies are able to feed us’. Sugar was the only ‘essential article’ lacking, but its absence was presumably only temporary.¹⁴⁴ Press advertisements by the early summer of 1929 were touting that Britain’s dependence upon foreign countries for dried

¹⁴¹ ‘The Empire Marketing Board, Part V: Publicity’. Several H.S. Williamson’s posters of ‘John Bull, Sons and Daughters’ can be found on [flickr](#). The posters presumably were all produced in 1928. Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, plate XVII.

¹⁴² Malcolm MacDonald, et al., ‘Report of Retrenchment Committee’, undated, attached to EMB/664, 20 Oct. 1931, CO 758/94/2; ‘The Empire Marketing Board, Part V: Publicity’. Anecdotal trade figures suggest that Empire Shopping Weeks were potentially having an effect; in 1905, Britain’s tropical African dependencies bought £3,000,000 worth of British manufactures and exported £4,000,000 worth of raw materials. Ten years later those figures had risen respectively to £10,500,000 and £5,500,000. In 1925, after several years of Buy British campaigns, the figures stood at £24,000,000 and £20,000,000. *The Times*, 3 Oct. 1927, p. 11.

¹⁴³ *The Times*, 7 Nov. 1925, p. 13; 26 May 1925, p. 11; 24 Apr. 1928, p. 16.

¹⁴⁴ *The Observer*, 18 May 1924, p. 18; *The Guardian*, 27 May 1924, p. 6. Sugar’s absence is curious as the West Indies alone produced 159,000 tons in 1923, down from 191,000 tons in 1919. By 1926-7, India was producing well over three million tons of raw cane sugar; with Australia, South Africa, Mauritius and British Guiana combined producing almost another ton. Various other islands within the Empire produced raw cane sugar on a smaller scale as well. Sir F. Watts, ‘Requirements for Sugar Production’, *Tropical Agriculture*, i (1924), p. 84; E.M.B., *Plantation Crops: A Summary of Figures of Production and Trade Relating to Sugar, Tea, Coffee, Spices, Cocoa, Rubber and Tobacco* (London, 1932), p. 12.

fruits was no more. Australia could now provide sultanas, currants and raisins, which were ‘sound, clean and wholesome’.

Said ad was part of a broader campaign championing ‘Empire Quality’. South African oranges of ‘splendid quality’ were arriving each week until the season ended in November. New Zealand’s apple orchards were ‘bursting into flower’ just as the harvest ended in Britain, thereby ensuring consumers a year round supply of ‘Empire Apples’. Between April and August, apples bearing a New Zealand label signified quality and freshness as ‘only the best fruit passes the government inspection for export to British markets’. Similarly, unlike its Western counterparts, Bengali and Burmese rice grew in its ‘natural surroundings’. Housewives were challenged by the EMB to ‘taste ... how good rice dishes can be, when every grain is separate, firm and full flavoured’. It was predicted that once the ‘quality and value for money’ were known, Britons would never give up Indian rice. A similar argument was made for East African coffee.¹⁴⁵ Like Section 2.2’s Empire Free Trade Crusade, which also originated in mid-1929, the EMB’s advertising campaign was designed to ‘make the British people realise, as they have never yet done, how great are the opportunities ... which the Empire affords’. It was, however, only a prelude to the five week intensive ‘Buy British from the Empire at Home and Overseas’ campaign of late 1931.¹⁴⁶

Recent scholarship has cast doubt on the effectiveness of these campaigns, arguing that visitors to the numerous exhibitions were merely sightseers and that almost

¹⁴⁵ *The Guardian*, 26 June 1929, p. 7; 4 July, p. 8; 25 Apr., p. 12; 21 Aug., p. 12; 12 June, p. 7. All of these ads appeared days later in *The Observer* as well.

¹⁴⁶ C. McCurdy, ‘Empire Free Trade’, *Contemporary Review*, cxxxvii (1930), p. 18; Bound volume entitled ‘Buy British Campaign 1931’, Tallents papers, box 2, file 14.

two thirds of 481 local grocers witnessed no increased interest in Empire goods in the months following the ‘North East Exhibition’, presumably centred upon Newcastle upon Tyne. Does that mean over a third did see an increased demand for imperial goods?¹⁴⁷ Demand certainly existed elsewhere in Britain. Personal visits to ‘nearly 3,000 shops’ in eighteen ‘large towns’, including London, Manchester and Liverpool, with a total population of twelve million, found regional variance in the butter market. Housewives paid two or three pence extra a pound for their preferred type of butter. Empire butter was more popular in the south as the ‘north-country housewife’ generally preferred foreign butter, with its familiar ‘cask-shaped blocks or “kiels”’.¹⁴⁸ A (presumably) subsequent tour of Yorkshire and Lancashire by agents of the EMB discovered that ‘firms stocking Empire butter had increased by some 30 per cent’. Such was the effect of ‘sentiment, quality and advertisement’ that foreign importers were increasingly using ‘British names’ for their goods, even going as far as to include a ‘lion or John Bull in them [to] imply British origin’.¹⁴⁹ A year earlier the EMB had reported that record amounts of a variety of foodstuffs, including wine, had been imported into Britain

¹⁴⁷ Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain*, pp. 30-32. The results at almost a dozen Waitrose branches, located primarily in Greater London, seems to directly contradict that of the local grocers in and around the ‘North East Exhibition’, though several branches stressed that some consumers favoured foreign goods entirely on price. Responding to an EMB query, the Chairman and Managing Director of F.W. Woolworth & Co tersely wrote that there had been ‘a very definite demand for goods of British make’. T. Walton Ltd, London’s self proclaimed ‘leading fruiterers’, summarised that the ‘demand for British goods has considerably increased amongst the better classes’. Here is yet more evidence of the fact that the degree to which British society was interested in the Empire is contested. ‘Managers’ Reports on “Buy British” Campaign’, 23 Feb. 1932; Letters to the Secretary of the EMB, 2 and 22 Feb. 1932, CO 758/94/6.

¹⁴⁸ *The Guardian*, 30 Oct. 1930, p. 4. While the empire provided an ever-increasing proportion of Britain’s imported butter, the ‘outstanding feature of the butter trade ... has been the rapid rise of New Zealand as a source of supply’. Accounting for twenty per cent of total imports compared to a negligible amount before the war.

¹⁴⁹ *The Spectator*, 27 June 1931, p. 1008.

principally from possessions in the southern hemisphere. The exact number of records broken is unclear. Twenty-one were set according to *The Spectator*, while the EMB reported a year later that twenty-five new records had in fact been established. Nearly half of the latter were broken that same year, in addition to a ‘substantial list of Empire foodstuffs ... [that] exceeded, in 1930, all earlier figures’. As far as the EMB was concerned, the motto (by the end of 1931) was ‘full speed ahead’.¹⁵⁰

While anecdotal evidence suggests that six months on there was still ‘no falling off in the “Buy British” sentiment in the shops,’ marketing alone cannot renew, let alone make, an empire.¹⁵¹ Nor for that matter could research or the training of (scientific) staff, the latter being but the first step in bringing about George V’s vision of a developed, prosperous (dependent) empire. Colonial development, however, had been far from a priority in the two decades preceding the Great War, if not longer. In addition to the prevailing financial orthodoxy of the Treasury (and the broader official mind), the Colonial Office was hamstrung by its prevailing ethos that it supervised, while governors and their staffs administered. But the Office also lacked vision, believing that economic growth, by which it meant the increased production of raw materials, could only be brought about by ‘scientific research, technical innovations and especially by an improved economic infrastructure, particularly the building of railways, roads and

¹⁵⁰ E.M.B., *Empire Marketing Board, May 1929 to May 1930* (London, 1930), p. 5; *The Spectator*, 7 June 1930, p. 927; E.M.B., *Empire Marketing Board, May 1930 to May 1931* (London, 1931), p. 5; ‘Advertisement’, *The Saturday Review*, 152 (1931), p. 800. The ad ran in earlier editions as well.

¹⁵¹ Sir William Furse, Director of Recruitment for the Colonial Service, discussing his family’s (far from unanimous) experience, Draft Minutes of the EMB’s Publicity Committee, 17 June 1932, CO 758/94/2.

harbours'.¹⁵² Such attitudes persisted, following the 1918 Imperial War Conference's endorsement of the creation of an 'Inter-Imperial [Shipping] Board'.¹⁵³ But the Colonial Office only reviewed developmental scheme(s) that originated overseas, with (as one official put it) 'excess caution' being their prevailing maxim. There was therefore no overarching empire-wide strategy for colonial development. Economic change after all was (potentially) at odds with the principle duty of any colonial government, the maintenance of law and order. Said policy is also said to reflect the 'official mind's [supposed] contempt for trade'.¹⁵⁴ But the division of the Colonial Office into six quasi-geographic departments—the Dominions, West Africa and the Mediterranean, Nigeria, East Africa, the West Indies and the East—during the generation before 1914 also inhibited economic development by favouring/creating regional specialists over or instead of officials capable of addressing broader, potentially empire-wide, issues. Lastly, only a minority of the upper echelon of the Colonial Office possessed a scientific education, but it would not have mattered even if they did as the increasing workload which accompanied imperial expansion meant that officials 'did not have the leisure to

¹⁵² S. Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy, 1914-1940* (London, 1984), pp. 9-17. Only a truly determined minister, like Joseph Chamberlain, who was Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1895 to 1903, could overcome Treasury obstruction, but even his successes have been grossly overstated.

¹⁵³ Dominions Royal Commission, *Memoranda and Tables as to the Chief Harbours of the British Empire and Certain Foreign Countries and as to the Suez and Panama Canals*, Cd. 8461 (London, 1917), p. vii-viii; *Imperial War Conference, 1918: Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid before the Conference*, Cd. 9177 (London, 1918), pp. 211 and 215-6. Also see, for example, Imperial Shipping Committee, *Report on the Prospective Size of Vessels in the Eastern and Australian Trades via Suez in Relation to Proposals for the Deepening of Colombo Harbour*, Cmd. 2250 (London, 1924), *Report on the Harbour of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanganyika Territory*, Cmd. 2917 (London, 1927) or *Report on the Harbour of Port of Spain, Trinidad*, Cmd. 3665 (London, 1930).

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, p. 17; *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18. Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, offers the most reasoned counterpoint to the official mind's abhorrence of trade and finance.

speculate on the future of the empire; they rarely had the opportunity of consciously moulding developments'.¹⁵⁵ The Great War seemingly swept away many of these old constraints, while the desire for imperial autarky (discussed at the outset of this section) implicitly implied extensive colonial development.

Little concrete, however, was accomplished by the numerous wartime committees and unofficial lobbies, including amongst others the Board of Trade's Faringdon Committee, Lord Balfour of Burleigh's Committee on Commercial and Industrial Policy, the British Cotton Growing Association or the Empire Resources Development Committee. The Colonial Office greeted this work/lobbying with a remarkable degree of disinterest, underlying its conservatism and continued faith in pre-war practices.¹⁵⁶ Paradoxically, the short-lived economic boom of 1919-20 further undermined proponents of colonial development. The seemingly rapid return of normality led once again to the ascendancy of the Treasury—whose overarching aim was to lower drastically government expenditure out of a fear of inflation and the (transient) weakening of British credit on international markets—thereby ensuring the continuation of pre-war developmental policy (in East Africa) through the early 1920s.¹⁵⁷ Persistent post-war unemployment, however, rendered the preponderance of the Imperial Exchequer impractical. Intra-imperial migration schemes could not alleviate the problem, the Dominions wanted settlers who could aid in rural development, not a

¹⁵⁵ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, p. 21; Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 31-6 and 39-41.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5 and 62-84. Other influences, such as the Aborigines Protection Society and Lord Lugard, also helped thwart any innovation in developmental policy. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-3. The extent to which these conclusions apply to the empire as a whole during the 1920s is unclear; Constantine's geographic-specific case studies all come from Africa.

resumption of the old practice of exiling paupers. By the winter of 1922-3, in an effort to confront the structural changes buffeting the domestic economy, the British government slowly began to see colonial development as ‘a *long-term* solution to Britain’s loss of overseas markets’. Treasury objections, nevertheless, continued (through the first Labour Government).¹⁵⁸ The controller of finance at the Treasury confided to an official in the Colonial Office: ‘I doubt myself if much will come of this business’. He was right. The 1924 Trade Facilities Act accomplished ‘trifling’ little during its three year existence.¹⁵⁹ Tentative, half measures clearly were not the solution. (As discussed above) The EMB was a more imaginative response, even if it was simply the implementation of the ‘Imperial Development Board’ proposed by the Dominions Royal Commission almost a decade earlier.¹⁶⁰ Empire Shopping Weeks and the subsequent Buy British Campaign, while successful, had two fundamental flaws. Demand at times outstripped supply.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ K. Williams, ‘A Way out of Our Troubles’: The Politics of Empire Settlement, 1900-1922’, in S. Constantine, ed., *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions between the Wars* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 35-41; Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, pp. 102-10; italics in original.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 111. In fact, as many officials, in both the Treasury and Colonial Office, recognised, all three Trade Facilities Acts (1921, 1922 and 1924) were ‘singularly useless’. Their enacting was borne out of the all-party need to do something about unemployment. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁶⁰ The tasks envisioned for the latter are detailed in *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁶¹ Waitrose was unable to supply the demand for empire-grown plums/prunes, while the Wallasey Wholesale Grocers Ltd could not purchase ‘tinned Australian fruits ... in large quantities’. T. Walton Ltd also voiced concern over the shortage of ‘English fruit’. The Chairman and Managing Director of F.W. Woolworth & Co perhaps hinted at a larger problem, when he complained that there were ‘some articles on which we are [simply] unable to satisfy the demand’. Jams ‘guaranteed to be made from English Fruit’ were all but non-existent, an issue that attracted comment from multiple sources. ‘It is a pity’, said Waitrose’s Managing Director, but, with Australian hams unavailable during the Christmas of 1931, ‘most of this business went to the Americans’. The previous year ‘several hundred’ Australian hams had been sent to destinations throughout the United Kingdom. Another firm somewhat surprisingly complained about the limited supply of ‘Empire eggs’. Although these examples are drawn from the early 1930s, there is no reason to believe that they are not reflective of the mid-to-late 1920s as well. If anything, the availability of Empire goods might have been even worse prior to (the ramping up of) EMB propaganda/advertising. ‘Managers’ Reports on “Buy British” Campaign’; Letters to the Secretary of the EMB, 5, 22 and 2, Feb. 1932; W.W. Waite, Waitrose’s Managing Director, to Maj. Lachlan Maclean,

Secondly, like the Trade Facilities Acts, it was only a short-term measure. Without ‘some definite step’, resolved the Marketing Committee of the EMB, ‘the impetus of the campaign’ would eventually be lost.¹⁶² With unemployment having become a structural problem, officials and politicians not associated with the Colonial Office were forced to question their view that colonial development was akin to ‘domestic public works programmes’. If it was treated as an investment, colonial development had the potential to increase the production of cotton and other imperial resources, thereby enriching (elements in) colonial societies, whose greater purchasing power could ultimately bring long-term benefits to the British Empire. But could the Colonial Office wrest control of policy away from the Cabinet’s Trade Policy and Unemployment Committees, the Treasury and, above all, the Board of Trade (who had ‘dominated’ the discussions that led to the Trade Facilities Acts)?¹⁶³

Resistance to the Treasury attempts to improve the position of the Imperial Exchequer at the expense of (portions of) the dependent empire in fact dated back to the fall of 1921 and only strengthened following Churchill and Edward Wood’s departure from office the following year.¹⁶⁴ The dispute over Uganda’s development loan and her war liability reminded William Ormsby-Gore, Wood’s replacement as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, of Lord Milner’s ‘outstanding impression’ of his tenure as Secretary of State for the Colonies. ‘The Treasury continuously and by tradition do

EMB, 10 Feb. 1932 and Williams Brothers’ Direct Supply Stores, Ltd to Stephen Tallents, 5 Feb. 1932, CO 758/94/6.

¹⁶² Quoted in a minute by (presumably) Leo Amery, 6 June 1932, CO 758/94/2.

¹⁶³ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, pp. 113-4. After hitting a high of almost seventeen per cent in 1921, unemployment in the ‘insured workforce’ never fell below nine per cent during the inter-war period. Williams, ‘A Way out of Our Troubles’, p. 41.

¹⁶⁴ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, pp. 121-5.

everything they can to make Colonial Development difficult', lamented Ormsby-Gore at the end of 1923.¹⁶⁵ As the previous paragraph suggested, as time passed, unemployment figures proved an ever more effective cudgel against Treasury enmity at sanctioning expenditure. Metropolitan lobby groups, like the Oldham Chamber of Commerce, also not surprisingly lined up in support of railway construction in tropical Africa, a prerequisite to expanding cotton cultivation, as the city was home to the world's greatest concentration of cotton weaving sheds and Platts, the world's largest producer of cotton textile machinery. While the Treasury complained of being 'blackmailed by the C.O. into wholly uneconomic expenditure on schemes which haven't been properly thought out', there was little they could do.

Parliament authorised the £3,500,000 loan for Kenya and Uganda on 3 March 1924. Significantly, while persistent unemployment had led to the Colonial Office's victory, unemployed Britons could not hope for any relief before the winter of 1924-5. The Conservative, and then Labour, government sought to assist the mill workers of Lancashire, not those in the iron and steel industries.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the loan was defended in the House of Commons on its ability to stimulate demand for British goods. In reality, the Colonial Office was assisting in the broader effort to offset the departure of the cotton growing states of the southern US from Britain's informal empire.¹⁶⁷ If

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.* p. 128.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 129-37; Controller of finance at the Treasury quoted on p. 133; Information on Oldham supplied by Peter Hugill, personal communication. In the case of Uganda's initial payment of her war liability, the Colonial Office and Treasury haggled for months over a mere £50,000.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 137. Efforts to foster the cultivation of cotton pre-dated the Great War, but work only begun in earnest in the summer of 1917 with the convening of the Empire Cotton Growing Committee, which was charged with scouring the whole empire for potential kingdoms for (long-stable) cotton. Although vast swaths of Australia could produce cotton under natural rainfall, the great hope was the Gezira plain,

Britain was to remain an 'industrial nation, it is to Africa that we shall have to look for our raw materials,' argued a delegation of Lancashire MPs and representatives of the British Cotton Growing Association, who lobbied the Secretary of State on 4 April 1924. Tropical Africa had little hope of attracting private capital given its undeveloped nature, but, with an area in excess of a million square miles, coupled with a 'native population of upwards of 30,000,000', its potential would have seemed almost limitless. Two years later, during the Parliamentary debate over a loan guarantee for East Africa and another for Palestine, a Conservative MP anticipated that the region could 'become the Eldorado of the twentieth century,' provided the Amani Institute was supplied with the necessary funds to undertake practical research on a scale that would 'serve the whole of East Africa'. Development, however, was also retarded by the lack of transportation, resulting in significant amounts of wasted labour.¹⁶⁸ Acting on a report by the 1924-5 East Africa Commission, whose main recommendations were later endorsed by numerous (un)official lobbies and, more importantly, the Cabinet Committee on Industry and Trade, the Colonial Office *proposed* the introduction of an East African Transport Loan Guarantee Bill which would authorise a £10 million loan, with the interest during the five year construction period to be advanced by the Imperial Exchequer. Once again, the

situated between the Blue and White Niles in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. R. Harding, *Cotton in Australia: The Possibilities and the Limitations of Australia as a Cotton-growing Country* (London, 1924); A. Gaitskill, *Gezira: A Story of Development in the Sudan* (London, 1959).

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 138; *Private Enterprise in British Tropical Africa: Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies [in July 1923] to consider and report whether, and if so what, measures could be taken to encourage Private Enterprise in the development of the British Dependencies in East and West Tropical Africa, with special reference to Existing and Projected Schemes of Transportation*, Cmd. 2016 (London, 1924), pp. 4-6 and 22-3; *Hansard*, cxcviii. 1343-6. EMB posters depicted the [old](#) and [new](#) styles of East African transport. Once railways were built, instead of employing two thousand men for a month to transport one hundred tons of produce a hundred miles, their labour could be put to more productive use. *Hansard*, cxcviii. 1344.

loan was sold, politically, at least, on the need to relieve unemployment in Britain. It proved to be of limited use.¹⁶⁹ During the year-and-a-half that passed between the Cabinet's provisional endorsement of developing East Africa and the Bill receiving Royal Assent in December 1926, Treasury officials, backed by Churchill at almost every step, waged a brutally effective campaign questioning the (fiscal) competence of Amery and the Colonial Office—who, unlike the lead up to the Kenyan and Ugandan loan, had been caught without even a provisional scheme(s) of how to spend the money—thereby preserving their 'financial omnipotence'. Although the 1926 East Africa Loans Act as developmental policy was essentially a failure, it nevertheless represented something of a breakthrough for the Colonial Office. Unlike earlier measures, it was not an ad hoc approach to colonial development (as evident by the provision for scientific research). In attempting to secure £10 million before even preliminary surveys had been conducted, Amery had sought a measure of independence for colonial development in East Africa from both Westminster and Whitehall, and the latter's ever-present budgetary *weltanschauung*. Secondly, the East Africa Loans Act signified that long-term considerations were beginning to assume equal sway to contemporary economic issues within elements of Britain's official mind. Lastly, the experience of 1925-6 laid the ground work for future policy.¹⁷⁰

Building also from the creation of the EMB, whose annual budget was already being spent at the discretion of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Amery continued

¹⁶⁹ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, pp. 138-43, 145-6 and 157-8. Loans totalling £6,680,020 had been recommended, but only £3,500,000 had actually been spent by decade's end. The combination of Treasury oversight, coupled with the dropping of the East Africa Commission's suggestion that the Imperial Exchequer aid with interest charges, rendered loans unappealing.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 143 and 145-58.

advocating colonial development as the solution to Britain's structural economic problems. Rising unemployment was one thing, but the Conservative Party also needed to devise a manifesto distinctive from that of the other parties ahead of the 1929 general election. Overruling his own officials, who had grown sceptical and even hostile, to the idea, Amery initially proposed an annual grant of £500,000 for colonial development; with unspent funds being retained by the Colonial Office for future expenditures.¹⁷¹ The 'bitter experience' of the previous four years had convinced Amery of the necessity of bypassing the Treasury entirely, their 'powers of obstructionism' being 'infinitely greater on an Imperial subject than on a domestic issue where there is constant parliamentary pressure'. Progress, he argued in a letter to the Prime Minister, could therefore only be achieved 'on Empire Marketing Board lines'. But results could not be rushed. Unemployment, Amery simultaneously told Churchill, could not be 'treated as if it were an exceptional emergency to be dealt with by special measures taken in a hurry, in a crisis'.¹⁷² What was needed was a 'real long range [colonial development] policy', lasting a decade, perhaps longer. Disregarding the trite Chamberlainite rhetoric of 'undeveloped estates', Amery sought to 'extend and expedite the policy already pursued [in part by the EMB] in Africa and elsewhere, which in the past 4.5 years has resulted in so great an expansion in the Colonial market for British produce'.¹⁷³ Ultimately, despite

¹⁷¹ Ibid. pp. 164-8.

¹⁷² Leo Amery to Stanley Baldwin; Draft letter to Winston Churchill, 26 Nov. 1928, CO 323/1016/8. A copy of the latter accompanied Amery's letter to the Prime Minister.

¹⁷³ Draft letter to Winston Churchill, 26 Nov. 1928; F. Craig, *British General Election Manifestos: 1918-1966* (Chichester, 1970), p. 45. In the longer term, reflecting a view of development more in keeping with Lord Lugard's notion of trusteeship, the Colonial Office envisioned providing funds for education and social services, as well as the promotion of industry and trade. D. Morgan, *The Official History of*

being humiliated again by Treasury officials, political expediency trumped economic orthodoxy and, by mid-April 1929, Amery had prevailed. Announcing the new policy, in a speech described by *The Guardian* as ‘one long, ostentatious refusal to make promises’, Baldwin unveiled (to cheers) his intention of establishing an ‘independent commission’ to oversee and advise the Government on colonial development.¹⁷⁴ It was just a matter of devising the details. A task easier said than done. Matters drifted in the months before the general election; owing to a lack of direction from Amery and Churchill, as well as persistent foot dragging by Treasury officials reluctant as ever to sanctioning expenditure. Not even the need to flesh out the details of their election manifesto could elicit a decision from Baldwin as to who, Amery or Treasury lackeys, more charitably known in Amery’s words as ‘eminent business men’, would chair the aforementioned commission. Electoral defeat relieved Baldwin from having to make a decision; though it also (as Section 2.2 argues) almost compelled his retirement from public life. In any event, acting in a manner reminiscent of its predecessor, the new Labour government quickly turned a ‘nebulous Conservative proposal’ into legislation.¹⁷⁵

Arguably the culminating act to the Empire Marketing Board, the 1929 Colonial Development Act received Royal Assent at the end of July 1929. It also arguably proved to be the high water mark of the ‘age of Committees and Conferences’. To contemporaries, however, the Act was proof that, a decade after the official end of the

Colonial Development: The Origins of British Aid Policy, 1924-1945 (Atlantic Highland, N.J., 1980), p. 40.

¹⁷⁴ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, pp. 169-79; *The Guardian*, 19 Apr. 1929, pp. 11 and 6.

¹⁷⁵ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, pp. 179-83.

Great War, the reconstruction of the British Empire was not only well under way, but was finally being extended to the ‘outer Empire’: the broader significance of which is discussed below in the Conclusion. For now, as this section highlights, a variety of ways of reforming/modernising/revolutionising Britain’s imperial system were being explored. But *truly* to create a ‘New Way of Empire’ change also needed to occur at the empire’s highest levels.¹⁷⁶ George V’s decision to despatch his eldest son on an *extended* imperial walkabout during the 1920s was a reaffirmation of imperial unity, as well as an acknowledgment of the evolving relationship between the Crown and its subjects.¹⁷⁷ This new ‘theatre of empire’, however, could not placate everyone.¹⁷⁸ Aden’s residents may have been happy with ‘daddy[’s]’ rule, but demands for change were rising elsewhere. As Part II argues, India and Ceylon in the 1920s could still be assuaged in part by constitutional tinkering, but not the Dominions. As a consequence of their wartime contributions they were demanding a greater say in imperial governance. A scheme for this emerged in the final months of the Great War, but the rapid, unexpected end of the conflict brought this political evolution to an abortive end. Whereas the next section exemplifies the almost limitless scope for refashioning the Empire, section 2.2 underlines the limits of reform. Contemporaries would have thought it macabre, but the Great War arguably ended too early, allowing just enough of Old England to survive to *barely* thwart another effort at reordering British political life.

¹⁷⁶ See notes 1 and 11 for citations.

¹⁷⁷ C. Kaul, ‘Monarchical Display and the Politics of Empire: Princes of Wales and India, 1870-1920s’, *Twentieth Century British History*, xvii (2006), p. 469.

¹⁷⁸ J. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 39-40.

2.1 A ‘new age’ brought about by ending ‘the days of the Huns’?

It was a few minutes before the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. I stood at the window of my room looking up Northumberland Avenue towards Trafalgar Square, waiting for Big Ben to tell that the War was over.... Our country had emerged from the ordeal alive and safe, its vast possessions intact, its war effort still waxing, its institutions unshaken, its people and Empire united as never before. – Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis* (1927).

Three years later in his Romanes Lecture, Churchill declared: ‘The compass has been damaged. The charts are out of date’.¹ In fact, they had been out of date since at least 1883, when John Robert Seeley highlighted the fact that ‘the old colonial system is gone’. Seeley’s ‘earnest’ desire that Britain’s colonial empire become ‘part of England’ was a reflection of wider idea(s) circulating in late-Victorian Britain.² Despite the unity implied by those old mercator map projections, which depicted large swaths of the globe awash in red, by the outset of the twentieth century, Britain’s imperium bore a closer resemblance to the ill-coordinated patrimony of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (r. 1519–56) than an organic whole.³ In reality, as discussed above, Britain’s imperial project was the fusion of three different empires which ultimately proved capable of transforming itself into ‘a fighting Empire’. The Second Boer War (1899-1902) had

¹ Quoted in P. Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 1. Title quotations are David Lloyd George quoted in the [Otago Daily Times](#), 29 Jan. 1917, p. 4; ‘The War- And After’, *Nature*, xciv (1914), p. 29. The block quotation is from p. 541.

² J. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London, 1895; originally published London, 1883), pp. 184-5. 80,000 copies of said book had been bought by 1886. J. Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 687 n. 6. Also see D. Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, 2007).

³ D. Cannadine, “‘Big Tent’ Historiography: Transatlantic Obstacles and Opportunities in Writing the History of Empire”, *Common Knowledge*, xi (2005), p. 389; J. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 25.

convinced many Britons that they were only suitable for ‘a peaceful Empire of the old type’. ‘Nothing will give us the power’ to change that, concluded a future Prime Minister.⁴ Although first articulated by Lord Palmerston during the 1850 Don Pacifico Affair, it was Benjamin Disraeli who truly understood that Britain’s power in world affairs was ultimately of her choosing.⁵ Churchill’s claim that Britain’s ‘institutions’ were ‘unshaken’ by the Great War is therefore rather curious, given the adoption of (quasi-industrial) conscription and that Britannia invoked ‘a war conference of the empire’ following David Lloyd George’s accidental coup at the end of 1916.⁶ Naturally, the Conference included representatives from Britain and India, but the ten meetings held over the course of a month also saw the participation of four of the five Dominions.⁷ Such a development at first glance seems at odds with the latter’s minimal

⁴ Henry Campbell-Bannerman, 26 Jan. 1903, quoted in A.P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London, 1959), p. 106. A month later Churchill expressed similar sentiments, telling the House of Commons that ‘war with a great Power ... would end in broken hearts and straitened purses; hunger would be in our streets, and ruin in our market-places’. *Hansard[’s Parliamentary Debates]*, xviii. 699.

⁵ Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies*, pp. xiii-xiv and 4.

⁶ W. Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1916-1918* (London, 1927), p. 541; *Punch*, 3 Jan. 1917, p. 9. On the change in government see, G. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 698-704. Contemporaries judged the Prime Minister’s ‘experiments on the British Constitution’ as a long overdue revolution. H. Spender, ‘The British Revolution’, *Contemporary Review*, cxi (1917), pp. 598-606. Also see S. Low, ‘The Imperial Constitution: The New Phase’, *Nineteenth Century*, lxxxii (1917), pp. 234-40 and ‘Editorial Notes and Comments’, *United Empire*, viii (1917), pp. 2-5.

⁷ Represented were Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand and South Africa; the Australian Prime Minister, William ‘Billy’ Hughes, was preoccupied by domestic affairs—namely, two referendums on the issue of conscription—and was unable to attend the first Imperial War Conference. Contemporary opinion blamed ‘political and party differences’ for ‘paralys[ing]’ Australian politics, thereby ensuring that Australia was not represented at the ‘most important constitutional development since the granting of responsible Government’. *Imperial War Conference, 1917: Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid before the Conference*, Cd. 8566 (London, 1917); C. Bridge, *William Hughes* (London, 2011), pp. 44-52; *The Mercury*, 11 Jan. 1917, p. 3.

role in Britain's world's system during the latter half of the Victorian and Edwardian eras.⁸

Unlike the Raj, whose army was deployed on imperial missions more than a dozen times in the second half of the nineteenth century, venturing as far west as Malta (1878) and as far south as New Zealand (1860-61), the Dominions still looked to the Mother Country for their defence. Construction of a Martello tower in Sydney Harbour, probably the last one built in the entire British Empire, was started in the early months of the Crimean War to calm the city's 'peculiar anxieties' with respect to its vulnerability to Russian naval bombardment; a highly improbable, but not impossible, event as Tsarist Russia did possess a Pacific fleet.⁹ Within a fortnight of the 1861 attack on Fort Sumter, the British Government decided to reinforce the 2,200 Regulars stationed in Canada. Two Regiments of the line, a regiment of rifles, a battery of flying artillery and half a dozen Armstrong guns, some four thousand men in total, sailed on the specially chartered *Great Eastern* on 27 June 1861. The crossing was made in eight days, two days faster than normal.¹⁰ The reinforcements 'excited comment in the United States' and some confusion among English journals, but the three regiments simply restored the Canadian garrison to its pre-Crimean strength. Moreover, with potential for trouble on

⁸ Earl Buxton, 'Sixty Years of Growth and Change [Reprinted from the *Morning Post*, 15 Nov. 1928]', *United Empire*, xix (1928), p. 696; B. Farrell, 'Coalition of the Usually Willing: The Dominions and Imperial Defence, 1856-1919', in G. Kennedy, ed., *Imperial Defence: The Old World Order, 1856-1956* (London, 2008), pp. 251-72.

⁹ Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies*, p. 97; S. Ward, 'Security: Defending Australia's Empire', in D. Schreuder and S. Ward, eds., *Australia's Empire* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 232-4. Martellos were small, circular, coastal forts, primarily built in Britain during the Napoleonic Wars.

¹⁰ C. Stacey, *Canada and the British Army, 1846-1871: A Study in the Practice of Responsible Government* (Rev. edn., Toronto, 1963; originally published London, 1936), pp. 117-8; *The New York Times*, 7 and 11 July 1861; P. Hugill, *World Trade since 1431: Geography, Technology and Capitalism* (Baltimore, 1993), p. 128.

the frontier, Palmerston thought an increase of regulars represented the ‘best chance for the continuance of peace’.¹¹ In soliciting the Governor General’s opinion, the Secretary of State for War, Sir George Lewis, opined that Washington would not be distracted from ‘punishing the South’. Talk of turning northwards was therefore nothing more than ‘swagger’. Less than two months later, with the St. Lawrence starting to freeze, plans were hastily drawn up in London to despatch an ‘Imperial army equipped for war’ *and* materiel for an unformed local army. Britons were not amused by the *Trent* provocation!¹² ‘We shall soon *iron the smile* out of their face’, pledged Lewis.¹³ During the winter of 1861-2, Britain rushed an additional eleven thousand troops to Halifax, some of whom then marched/sledded overland through New Brunswick to reinforce the reinforcements sent the previous summer. Bermuda also saw its garrison reinforced. Between late March and early January 1862, when Washington capitulated and troop transport was halted, the number of Regulars stationed in British North America rose from less than 4,300 to over 18,500. English and French Canadian volunteer corps were also organised, and 38,000 individuals from the local militia were called out.¹⁴ While almost fifteen and a half thousand Regulars were still in British North America on 1 April 1863, it was only a matter of time before they were withdrawn. However, the *Trent* crisis had provided an opportunity to counter perceptions created by the Crimean debacle. Britain was ‘not that insignificant *military Power*’ many believed, her military

¹¹ *The New York Times*, 11 July 1861; Palmerston to the Duke of Newcastle, 1 Sept. 1861, quoted in Stacey, *Canada and the British Army*, p. 119.

¹² Sir George Cornwall Lewis to Sir Edmund Head, 8 Sept. 1861, G. Lewis, ed. *Letters of the Right Hon. Sir George Cornwall Lewis, Bart.* (London, 1870), p. 402; Stacey, *Canada and the British Army*, p. 120.

¹³ Lewis to Edward Twistleton, 5 Dec. 1861, Lewis, ed. *Letters of ... Sir George Cornwall Lewis*, p. 406; italics in original.

¹⁴ Stacey, *Canada and the British Army*, pp. 121-3.

departments were sufficiently organised as to enable immediate action whenever Britain's strategic position and/or prestige was at stake.¹⁵ In March 1862, the House of Commons resolved after more than a decade of debate that the self-governing colonies should accept the 'main responsibility' for maintaining 'internal order and security, and ought to assist in their own external defence'.¹⁶

When the threat came from within, even a wide scale massacre of British settlers could hardly be constituted as a threat to the Empire as a whole, let alone Britain's status as a great power. Consequently, even before the Maori Wars (1845-8 and 1860-72) were over British Regulars were withdrawn. 1870 also saw British troops depart Australia. For the remainder of the nineteenth century, the only British Regulars stationed in Canada garrisoned the Royal Navy bases at Halifax and Esquimalt.¹⁷ Recalling British Regulars from 'distant' non-maritime posts cut expenditures by a third. As to whether this 'diminution of force' weakened imperial security, the Secretary of State for War, in 1869, Edward Cardwell, argued the opposite. Colonial forces would have to be raised, and these troops could be reinforced in 'strength' with British Regulars in a 'time of need'. Cardwell relayed the story of one of the 'Eastern potentates', possibly Hyder Ali,

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 149; Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge to Commander of British North America, Maj. Gen. Charles Doyle, quoted in K. Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley, 1967), p. 246; italics in original; R. Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defence': A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defence Organization, 1867-1919* (Durham, 1967), p. 34. In 1867-8, the Raj provided a further demonstration of imperial might, while on the Pacific coast, with Vancouver Island serving as the West Coast's Halifax, Britain maintained her ascendancy throughout the long nineteenth century. V. Matthies, *The Siege of Magdala: The British Empire against the Emperor of Ethiopia*, trans. S. Rendall (Princeton, 2012); B. Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1914: A Study of British Maritime Ascendancy* (Vancouver, 1971) and *Britain, Canada and the North Pacific: Maritime Enterprise and Dominion, 1778-1914*, (Aldershot, 2004).

¹⁶ Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defence'*, p. 32; *Hansard*, clxv. 1060.

¹⁷ Preston, *Canada and 'Imperial Defence'*, p. 34; P. Burroughs, 'Defence and Imperial Disunity', in A. Porter, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, III: *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 330 and 332; Ward, 'Security: Defending Australia's Empire', p. 235.

the onetime ruler of Mysore, who had said that he was afraid, not of the forces of the East India Company, but of the troops he could not see. Even if the Dominions neglected their own defence, and they did, they were still secure as ‘war with them is war with England’.¹⁸ Given that the Dominions cut a rather poor cloth in the decades before the outbreak of war, it is perhaps understandable why they have ‘been all but ignored by two generations of imperial historiography’. On the other hand, the Germans did suffer the consequences of declaring war on Britain’s Dominions, particularly in the Last Hundred Days’ campaign.¹⁹

Unlike India, the Dominions could not be compelled to make a greater contribution towards imperial defence. They did, however, in the years before the outbreak of war, take steps towards the functional integration of their nascent armed forces with those of the Mother Country. Australia and New Zealand, following Canada’s lead, established their own General Staffs, who could work with the Imperial General Staff; thereby allowing the War Office from 1909 onward to influence how Dominion troops were ‘organised, thought, trained and fought’. Consequently, if the Dominions choose to participate in ‘another “British war”’, their forces would easily

¹⁸ *Hansard*, cxciv. 1113-8. Defence ‘expenditures, population-weighted as percentages of the government budget’, clearly shows that the Dominions—New Zealand being the least guilty—neglected imperial defence:

	UK	‘Dominions’
1860-64	36.4	1.2
1880-84	30.9	3.6
1900-04	54.5	4.7
1910-12	37.8	5.6

In short, the Dominions adopted the position that until Britain’s world system itself was seriously threatened, they were happy to pay little and receive a great deal. Farrell, ‘Coalition of the Usually Willing’, pp. 276 and 266-7.

¹⁹ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 15; T. Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918* (Toronto, 2008).

function within the broader imperial command structure.²⁰ Dominion reasoning for participating in the Great War is discussed below, but it is worth noting here that Canada's Opposition Leader, the Catholic French-Canadian Sir Wilfrid Laurier, declared in August 1914 that 'when the call comes our answer goes at once ... Ready, aye, ready'. However, unlike past wars where Dominion volunteers simply joined British regiments, in 1914 London had to accept that Dominion forces would come *en masse*; Canada's offer of an 'army corps' was 'formally accepted' two days after Britain's declaration of war.²¹ The mobilisation of resources, men and otherwise, arguably became the dominant characteristic of the first two years of the Great War vis-à-vis the Empire; notwithstanding the fact that South Africans, Australians and New Zealanders quickly rolled up most of Germany's colonial possessions in Southern Africa and the South Pacific.²²

Once they got to the Western Front, Australians and Canadians proved to be 'the best fighting troops in any army', said the British officer and war poet, Charles Carrington. At the Battle of Amiens (8 to 14 August 1918), the Canadians, numbering slightly over 100,000 men, 'met and defeated elements of fourteen German divisions', destroying three whole divisions and capturing 9,311 prisoners, 201 guns, 152 trench mortars and 755 machine guns. It is little wonder that General Erich Ludendorff labelled

²⁰ Farrell, 'Coalition of the Usually Willing', pp. 275-6, 272 and 278. On British efforts to draw in the Dominions, see A. Offer, *The First World War, An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 266-9. As in so much else, the effort was directed by Maurice Hankey, whose parents were Australian, wife South African and his family had Canadian investments and owned land in South Australia.

²¹ Quoted in Farrell, 'Coalition of the Usually Willing', p. 282; *Evening Post*, 8 Aug. 1914, p. 5. Dominion naval vessels, however, remained under Admiralty control; in the case of New Zealand, a proclamation by the Governor General restored the 'whole of the New Zealand Naval Forces' to British control. *Ibid.*; *Dominion*, 4 Aug. 1914, p. 6.

²² Farrell, 'Coalition of the Usually Willing,' p. 281; Searle, *A New England?*, p. 757. Also see H. Strachan, *The First World War, Volume 1: To Arms* (Oxford, 2001).

8 August the ‘black day of the German Army’.²³ Admittedly, the Australians faltered in the end, owing to a shortage of reinforcements, but, between 26 August and 3 October, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), with Dominion forces acting as elite shock troops, breached the Hindenburg Line.²⁴ Made at the outset of what became the Last Hundred Days, Marshall Foch’s prediction that the Canadian Corps would be ‘the ram with which we will break up the last resistance of the German army’ came to pass. Moreover, the Canadians retook Mons, site of the BEF’s first major battle in 1914, in the early hours of 11 November 1918.²⁵ All told the five Dominions enlisted over 1.3 million men; versus the one and a half million Indians who fought for King and Empire. It is estimated that the Dominions provided at least one-fifth of Britain’s land combatants.²⁶ India also contributed £100 million to the war’s cost, but it was Canada that became the ‘indispensable ally’ providing millions of bags of flour in 1914 and, following the creation of an Imperial Munitions Board in late 1915, the country became ‘a western extension of Britain’s war production economy’, producing roughly a third of the artillery munitions required by the BEF from 1917 onwards. Britain also borrowed a billion dollars in Canada, an amount equal to British dollar securities sold off in the US, to pay for war materiel. Britain’s war debt to its senior Dominion was a quarter of what

²³ Quoted in Cook, *Shock Troops*, p. 438; *Ibid.*, p. 450; Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 437.

²⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 571 and 451-552.

²⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.* p. 458; *Ibid.*, pp. 571-7. Canadians accounted for roughly one-fifteenth of the BEF’s total strength in the last ninety-six days of the Great War (8 August to 11 November), but suffered 45,835 casualties, ‘almost an eighth’ of the total losses. Adjusted for population, Canada’s losses in the Great War were ‘proportionate’ to those killed in the US Civil War. *Ibid.*, pp. 579 and 619.

²⁶ Searle, *A New England?*, pp. 757; G. Stewart, *Burying Caesar: Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party* (London, 1999), p. 413; Farrell, ‘Coalition of the Usually Willing’, p. 288. On the difficulties of invoking statistics for British Empire forces during the Great War, see R. Holland, ‘The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918’, in W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 117.

it owed America. The entire Empire aided the war effort—though some offers of aid, such as, coconuts from the Marakei people of the Gilbert Islands, were less valuable than others—and in doing so ensured that ‘the woolsack and the trident’ did not pass to America.²⁷ Whatever doubts the British government may have harboured about the military value of the Dominions were long forgotten by the end of 1916. Henceforth, instead of the Empire aiding Britain’s war effort, the British ‘Empire was at war, orchestrated by Britain much more as a *primus inter pares*’.²⁸ Anglo-Dominion relations had become the central cornerstone of the British World System, yet this subject has been dismissed as nothing more than ‘Kevin O’Higgins’s comma and treaties about halibut’.²⁹ ‘Revision is long overdue’, suggested a recent work.³⁰

Traditionally, the participation of the Dominions in the Great War is said to have been ‘a formative moment in the evolution of national self-consciousness. Although the outcomes were diametric opposites, Gallipoli and Vimy Ridge became shibboleths to

²⁷ Searle, *A New England?*, p. 758; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 324-5.

²⁸ J. Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics’, in W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 67; Holland, ‘The British Empire and the Great War’, p. 125. The changing nature of the conflict was reflected in the pages of *Punch*. It was largely troops from South Africa that captured German East Africa, but the victory was depicted as a single lion resting on the ruins of ‘Fritz[’s] place in the sun’. Six months later, the Imperial War Cabinet (IWC) or ‘a family council’ reconvened, with seven, *full-grown* indistinguishable lions gathered under the Union Jack. *Punch*, 12 Dec. 1917 and 19 June 1918, pp. 393 and 387, respectively.

²⁹ J. Gallagher, ‘The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire’, in A. Seal, ed., *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and Other Essays* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 75. The ‘O’Higgins’s comma’ refers to the comma after Britain in the phrase: ‘Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas’. D. McIntyre, *The Britannic Vision: Historians and the Making of the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1907-48* (Houndmills, 2009), p. 170.

³⁰ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 16. Also see M. Macmillan and F. McKenzie, eds., *Parties Long Estranged: Canada and Australia in the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver, 2003), which claims on the back cover to ‘cover the entire twentieth century’. Yet chapter one ends with the Great War and the Paris Peace Conference and chapter two addresses the emergence of independent foreign policies between 1931 and 1945. *Ibid.*, p. v.

Australian and Canadian nationalism, respectively.³¹ Gallipoli and the Anzac legend would seem to possess the stronger allure, but, nevertheless, there is a sense amongst Canadians and, in particular, Canadianists, that *Imperial Canada* ended at (the Battle of) Vimy Ridge.³² Like many nationalist myths, however, such reasoning is highly suspect. Five years after the battle, the former commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Arthur Currie, worried that placing Canada's national memorial on Vimy Ridge would 'confirm for all time ... that Vimy was the greatest battle fought by the Canadians in France. We fought other battles [Amiens, Arras and Cambrai] where the moral and material results were greater and more far reaching than Vimy's victory.'³³ The relationship—taking the geopolitical component first—between the Dominions and Britain was far more complicated than most recognise. The truth is that the 'Dominions fought for Britain as though they co-owned it'.³⁴ They had no choice, particularly in the case of Australia and New Zealand. By the early twentieth century, the metropole/periphery binary no longer applied. London was unquestionably the central hub of empire, but select colonial cities across the globe acted as or aspired to be regional metropolises.³⁵

³¹ See, for example, Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, p. 271; Searle, *A New England?*, p. 758. On the evolution of the Anzac legend, see J. Macleod, *Reconsidering Gallipoli* (Manchester, 2004), pp. 209-30, in particular. Gallipoli dominates public perception even though 'far more' New Zealanders died on the Western Front. J. Watson, *W.F. Massey* (London, 2010), p. 49.

³² B. Scates, *Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War* (Cambridge, 2006); J. Sturgis, review of *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917*, edited by C. Coates, *English Historical Review*, cxiv (1999), pp. 486-7.

³³ Quoted in Cook, *Shock Troops*, p. 625.

³⁴ J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford, 2009), p. 467. This was a point that was accepted unquestioningly by the *Cambridge History of the British Empire*. P. Buckner, 'Was There a 'British' Empire? The *Oxford History of the British Empire* from a Canadian Perspective', *Acadiensis*, xxxii (2002), p. 127.

³⁵ D. Peers, 'Is Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again?: The Revival of Imperial History and the *Oxford History of the British Empire*', *Journal of World History*, xiii (2002), pp. 466-7.

Westward expansion is a given in American historiography. However, the American West had a twin, who was only recently rediscovered. The ‘British West’ also began in the 1780s, when United Empire Loyalists fled the Thirteenth Colonies for Canada, and Britain began dumping its convicts at Botany Bay. Britain, like America’s Mid-Atlantic States, drove the growth of these new worlds, which witnessed population growth rates similar to their American counterparts. By 1860, the British West had a combined population roughly a third of the American West.³⁶ Growth rates in parts of the former during the second half of the nineteenth century were astounding. Melbourne had a populace of almost half a million by 1891, which made it larger than the ‘ancient cities of Cairo, Mexico City and Madrid’. San Francisco and Los Angeles were respectively eighty and nine hundred percent smaller than ‘Marvellous Melbourne’.³⁷ Between 1851 and 1891, the population and economy of the state of Victoria experienced explosive growth, increasing by over 1,300 percent.³⁸ The result was the creation of a sub-empire centred on Melbourne, which stretched from pastoral Queensland to as far abroad as New Guinea. New South Wales’ sheep and coal were exported though Melbourne, as was New Zealand timber and Queensland beef. Moreover, Melbourne was the financial centre of Australia, Fiji and the West Coast of New Zealand. Australia’s ‘imperial age’ had begun.³⁹ To contemporaries there was no

³⁶ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, pp. 68-9 and 79-84. Also see M. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York, 2011).

³⁷ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 356. During the week, three hundred trains were needed to link Melbourne’s suburbs to its industrial area.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 360. Had this growth rate continued for another four decades, Australia’s population would have reached roughly a 100 million. However, the county had unknowingly reached an ecological limit and growth was confined to a mere sixty percent in the ensuing four decades. *Ibid.*, p. 360 and 363.

³⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 356-7; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 160.

contradiction between (to use Richard Jebb's famous phrase) 'colonial nationalism' and British subjecthood. 'The architects of the Australian Commonwealth ... believed they had built a dwelling-place spacious enough to house a nation—a nation that was to be new and old; Australian, yet still British', wrote W.K Hancock at the outset of his chapter in volume seven of the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* (1933).⁴⁰ As Australia's second Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, once said, '[we are simply] Independent Australian Britons'. Drawing on Canadian scholarship, *Australia's Empire* suggests that perhaps Australian settlers—like Canadian colonists—adopted imperialism as their nascent nationalism.⁴¹ But they also stress that Melbourne's Empire was a joint

⁴⁰ Quoted in D. Schreuder and S. Ward, eds., *Australia's Empire* (Oxford, 2008), p. 9.

⁴¹ Quoted in *Ibid.* p. 10. The relationship between nationalism and imperialism is highly problematic in the case of Britain's settler colonies. By the early 1970s, it was evident to scholars in Australia, Canada and New Zealand that imperialism was a part of each country's similar early nationalisms. A finding not particularly surprising as one of the many problems of studying Dominion nationalism is that the 'study of the ideology has been infected by the ideology'. No one would deny the existence of Australian, Canadian or New Zealand nationalism in the post-World War Two era; if C.P. Champion is correct this is the period when a *distinctive* Canadian identity began to replace the more traditional Red Ensign nationalism. Australian nationalism presumably experienced a similar alteration with the end of White Australia, but Deakin's self-identification as an independent Australian Briton sounds like an invocation of neo-Britoness and/or Britannic nationalism, which is addressed elsewhere. Imperial (race) patriotism ran far stronger in the Antipodes than it did in Canada. Lacking a significant minority population, nationalism had yet to develop any meaningful difference from imperialism for late-nineteenth, early twentieth century Australians (and presumably New Zealanders). Google Books' [Ngram viewer](#) suggests that the word Pommie had yet to enter the lexicon, depending upon which data set is used it entered in the 1920s at the earliest and as late as the 1950s. Moreover, the absence of an enormous 'other' on their doorstep, allowed Antipodeans to view the wider-world in purely imperial, Anglo-Saxon terms. A worldview that was not fully available to English Canada. It is possible that neo-Britons, and even Britons themselves, were unmoved by the nationalist impulse of nineteenth century continental Europe, but most likely is that the 'sub nationalisms' that John Mackenzie identified as existing within Britain were carried to the colonies where they eventually recombined into a common British identity, with varying conceptions of nationalism that ranged from liege loyalty, to Britannic nationalism coupled with imperialism or autonomism, to embryonic Canadian/Australian/New Zealand nationalism, likely coupled with some degree of imperial patriotism. D. Cole, 'The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism" in British Settlement Colonies', *Journal of British Studies*, x (1971), pp. 160-182; K.R. Minogue quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 161; italics in original; C. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964-1968* (Montreal, 2010); P. Buckner, ed., *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2008), p. 6.

project between periphery and metropole, as will be seen New Zealand had similar aspirations, whereas Canada did not.⁴²

As part of the Tasman world (1769-1840), 'Old New Zealand' was tethered to the 'convicts, commerce and sheep farms of Eastern Australia'. The three decades following annexation saw both the Maori and maritime frontier slowly gave way to a settlement colony, with Auckland developing into an entrepot. By the twentieth century, as they came to number nearly a million, New Zealanders had come to regard themselves as being the most British dominion.⁴³ 'The ambition of the New Zealand settlers', said a journalist in 1864, 'has been to make in the Southern Hemisphere an exact counterpart of Great Britain in the Northern'.⁴⁴ To achieve this, Julius Vogel argued, New Zealand needed to create 'a maritime version of Canada' that incorporated Fiji, Samoa and the lesser Polynesian islands. A dream dashed by the economic and social crisis of the late 1880s.⁴⁵ However, Vogelism was quickly resurrected following technological advances in refrigeration during the mid-1890s that transformed New Zealand's economy. Imported meat in Britain was marketed under three labels:

⁴² Schreuder and Ward, eds., *Australia's Empire* p. 11. South Africa is being excluded wherever possible from this chapter as its Britons constituted a minority within the country's white population, which itself was a minority. The country's distinctness can also be seen its unique languages of being loyal and loyalism. A. Thompson, 'The Languages of Loyalty in Southern Africa, c.1870-1939', *English Historical Review*, cxviii (2003), pp. 617-50.

⁴³ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 169-71 and 694. The highest praise that could be lavished on a New Zealander was to say that 'they seemed more English than other colonists'. *Otago Daily Times*, 17 Sept. 1864, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Vogel's place in New Zealand history is akin to that of Sir John A. MacDonal in Canadian history. He was a visionary, 'like that of Cecil Rhodes', who launched a transformative settlement scheme and created a single colonial state in 1876 but, unlike Rhodes, died in 'near poverty'. Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 171-2.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 173; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 364. Also see S. Masterman, *The Origins of International Rivalry in Samoa, 1845-1884* (London, 1934), pp. 96-100. A digitised version can be found in the New Zealand [Electronic Text Collection](#).

‘American’, ‘Colonial’ and ‘Foreign’. Lamb carcasses arrived in Britain bearing the slogan: ‘I’m British from New Zealand’. As early as 1882, the *New Zealand Herald* foresaw that the ‘exportation of frozen meat makes the colony of New Zealand as much a province of England ... as Yorkshire or Devon’.⁴⁶ This secondary colonisation of the country, which lasted into the 1930s, was only part of the story. The liberal reforms enacted following the crisis of the late 1880s reaffirmed the ‘unwritten Magna Carta of New Zealand politics’, equal opportunity for all Anglo-Saxon men. New Zealand, at the outset of the twentieth century, was a ‘progressive experiment in Britishness’, which further reinforced the image of New Zealand as Arcadia. Although the landscape was still only half conquered, an important milestone was reached in 1907 when the country shed its colonial status in favour of dominionhood.⁴⁷ Now with two “neo-Britains” in the South Pacific, the obvious question was which one would safeguard British interests?

The answer before 1914 would be neither. Wilhelm II’s decision to adopt a policy of *Weltpolitik* in the final years of the nineteenth century was not at first particularly alarming. It was centred after all on China, specifically Kiaochow. Its chief

⁴⁶ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 175; Quoted in Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, pp. 450 and 368. British meat imports rose fivefold in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Frozen meat allowed the lower-middle and upper-working classes to consume prime roasts. Meat travelled to London in ‘freight steamers’, while Antipodean passengers arrived in Vancouver, where they boarded a train to transverse the ‘Empire’s Highway’, the Canadian Pacific Railway, before embarking on a steamship—at Montreal in the summer and St. John, Halifax in the winter—for London, Liverpool, Bristol or Glasgow. From Vancouver one could also sail to Japan, Manila and Hong Kong, passage to South Africa and elsewhere could be arranged in either Australia or New Zealand. *The Times*, 24 May 1916, p. 18.

⁴⁷ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 173-5. To cite but a few examples of the Antipodes’ experimental nature: the secret ballot was first introduced in Australia, while New Zealand introduced old age pensions long before the Mother Country did. Both countries introduced women’s suffrage in the late nineteenth century and levied land taxes far above those of the so-called radical people’s budget of 1909. Pollard attributed this experimentalism to the fact that the ‘flighty Anglo-Saxon’ went unchecked in the Antipodes. By contrast, the ‘pendulum’ swung ‘little more in French Canada than it does in Celtic Ireland’. Bridge, *William Hughes*, p. 5; A. Pollard, *The History of England: A Study in Political Evolution* (London, 1912), pp. 217-20.

goal was *domestic* peace, but the style of German foreign policy provoked other powers as the years passed.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, as a consequence of the imperialist war against Spain, the US Navy's interest in Pacific bases had been reawakened. 'We surely have an abundance of them within the United States, but there is imperative demand for the establishment of a naval station in the Philippines and in the West Indies or the Caribbean', concluded a 1902 Navy Department report.⁴⁹ Three years earlier, it was said 'without fear of contradiction' that an American fleet could not in times of war operate on 'the coasts of Europe, Africa, a large portion of Asia and South America for want of coal'.⁵⁰ The Germans were also building up their ability to operate in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Britain's most vulnerable waters. Acquired in 1898, Tsingtao, China was Germany's only major overseas naval base. But Germany's East Asiatic Squadron could hide/resupply in the islands of the Marianas, Marshalls, Carolines, New Guinea and Samoa, as well as German East Africa.⁵¹ Both powers were eager to acquire further bases in the region; if for no other reason than to deny them to rivals. Germany, unlike Britain, did not disguise its displeasure at Washington taking the entire Philippine

⁴⁸ Strachan, *The First World War*, pp. 9-11.

⁴⁹ N. Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy, 1814-1914* (New York, 1992), p. 359; *Annual Reports of the Navy Department: Report of the Secretary of the Navy: Miscellaneous Reports*, (Washington, 1902), p. 25.

⁵⁰ *Annual Reports of the Navy Department: Report of the Secretary of the Navy: Miscellaneous Reports*, (Washington, 1899), pp. 304-10. Of the sixteen foreign coal depots established during the Civil War, and maintained until c.1870, the Spanish-American War netted a single, useable one in Puerto Rico. Presumably, Guantanamo and Havana, Cuba went unused due to their geographic proximity. The annexation of Hawaii added a fourth station from that list of sixteen, but Spain also ceded Guam and Manila. At some point coaling stations were also established at Yokohama, Japan and, technically, Pichilique Bay, Mexico. War with a 'first-class maritime nation', nevertheless, remained almost unthinkable.

⁵¹ Strachan, *The First World War*, pp. 447-52 and 467. German agents also established an *Etappen* system in Asia and South America to gather fuel and food locally, and distributed it via pre-arranged rendezvous. Germany started the Great War with a global wireless network, whose only gap was both sides of Cape Horn.

archipelago.⁵² Opportunities, however, still existed elsewhere. Three turbulent years in the late 1870s had led to the supposedly united front of the American, British and German consuls playing a leading role in the governance of the chaotic Samoan Islands. In reality, said a frustrated Lord Salisbury, the then Prime Minister, the administration was ‘furor consularis’, which left Britain to ‘quarrel either with the Germans or the Americans once a month’. Salisbury wanted to end the triad arrangement as early as 1889, telling the British Ambassador at Berlin that ‘Samoa matters very little to us’.⁵³ And by ‘us’ Salisbury meant Britain, narrowly conceived, as the islands were rather important to both New Zealand and Australia.⁵⁴ To the Colonial Office, however, Vogel, who by now was Prime Minister in Wellington, was ‘the most audacious adventurer that perhaps has ever held power in a British Colony’.⁵⁵ Then Colonial Secretary, the Earl of Kimberley, supposed that the ‘New Zealand Government would have thought it as well first to get possession of the whole of New Zealand before undertaking to govern other

⁵² Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy*, pp. 359-60 and 384. Also see D. Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States before World War I* (Ithaca, NY, 2012).

⁵³ Masterman, *The Origins of International Rivalry in Samoa*, pp. 131-46; Quoted in A. Roberts, *Salisbury, Victorian Titan* (London, 2000), p. 719. Correspondence over the island ran into the hundreds of pages. *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Samoa, 1885-89*, C. 5629 (London, 1889) and *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Samoa*, C. 5907 (London, 1890). For an exhaustive treatment of the Samoan question, see P. Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle: A Study in Anglo-German-American Relations, 1878-1900* (New York, 1974).

⁵⁴ Mid-century gold rushes in California, New Zealand and Australia increased trans-Pacific trade, which raised the importance of the Fiji, Tonga and Samoa island chains. Samoa sat on the main route that connected eastern Australia to Panama, and therefore held strategic importance to the defence of Australian gold shipments. Public opinion in New Zealand and, especially, Australia, increasingly felt that the ‘whole island world from New Guinea to Tonga at least should be reserved for them to develop’ in the future. Dreams of a British Pacific were thwarted by the financial realities of Australia and New Zealand in the 1880s, as well as a disinterested Home Government. Nevertheless, in 1890, for example, British imports to Samoa were ‘nearly three times’ that of any other nation. Australia provided the most, with New Zealand a close second and British Columbia a *distant* third. (Copra) Exports, however, went predominately to Germany. Masterman, *The Origins of International Rivalry in Samoa*, pp. 82-6; *Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance, no. 885, Western Pacific. Supplementary Report for the Year 1890 on the Trade of Samoa*, C. 6205-116 (London, 1891).

⁵⁵ 1873 Minute by the Permanent Under-Secretary, quoted in Masterman, *The Origins of International Rivalry in Samoa*, p. 89.

territories’, not an unreasonable position when one remembers that the Maori Wars had just ended.⁵⁶ Neo-British sentiment had led Britain to resist German annexation of Samoa in 1886, but, in 1899, notwithstanding a Colonial Office memorandum warning the Foreign Office of Australia’s ‘strong and legitimate feeling’ against Samoa—which lay ‘directly in the track of steamers from Australia and New Zealand to North America’ and the Panama Canal—passing into the ‘hands of a foreign Power,’ London acted to lessen the hostility aroused by the Second Boer War. Samoa was a small price to pay to secure German disinterest in Southern Africa.⁵⁷ In making that calculation, the Home Government sent a clear message. Neo-British interests mattered naught.⁵⁸ Undeterred, the New Zealand Prime Minister, Richard Seddon, undertook a South Seas cruise, ostensibly for health reasons, in the spring of 1900. By now, the population density of New Zealand had risen from less than half a person per square mile in 1871 to almost seven and a half people.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 96. His comment was likely made in 1873.

⁵⁷ Masterman, *The Origins of International Rivalry in Samoa*, p. 104; Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 24 Jan. 1899, G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, The End of British Isolation* (London, 1926), p. 110; Roberts, *Salisbury*, pp. 718 and 720. Australian interest in Samoa is reflected in press coverage. Searching digitised newspapers in [Trove](#) with the keywords, Samoa and Germany, produced: 140 hits for 1880, 29 for 1881, 14 for 1882, 77 for 1883, 120 for 1884, 740 for 1885, 500 for 1886, 547 for 1887, 450 for 1888, 1,810 for 1889, 272 for 1890, 184 for 1891, 336 for 1892, 411 for 1893, 736 for 1894, 313 for 1895, 134 for 1896, 130 for 1897, 337 for 1898, 1,448 for 1899, 222 for 1900 and 131 for 1901.

⁵⁸ D. FieldHouse, ‘New Zealand, Fiji and the Colonial Office, 1900-1902’, *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, viii (1958), p. 114. Similarly, Britain sided with Washington, and not Ottawa, in the 1903 Alaskan boundary dispute.

⁵⁹ R. Seddon, *The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon's (the Premier of New Zealand) Visit to Tonga, Fiji, Savage Island and the Cook Islands* (Wellington, 1900), p. 1; Registrar-General's Office, *The New Zealand Official Yearbook*, (Wellington, 1901), chapter 50. Electronic versions are available from [Statistics New Zealand](#). In 1901, New Zealand had a total population of 815,820 people, which broke down to 767,455 Europeans, 39,978 Maori, 3,123 half-castes and mixed races living amongst Maori tribes, 2,857 Chinese and 2,407 half-castes and mixed races living amongst Europeans.

However, the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia at the outset of 1901 heralded a diminished role for New Zealand in the councils of empire. The cruise was the first move in a two year campaign by “King Dick” to forge an ‘island empire in the Pacific’, which would enable New Zealand to stand as an equal with Canada and Australia. Unlike previous campaigns by Vogel and others, this latest one came as New Zealanders were fighting in South Africa and news of a ‘weary Titan’ wafted across the British world. Ultimately, while the Colonial Office had no objection to New Zealand annexing the Cook Islands, the country was judged ill prepared to govern a Crown Colony like Fiji. ‘We must try them on a small scale first’, minuted one official.⁶⁰ The utterances of Joseph Chamberlain notwithstanding, the 1902 Imperial Conference served to confirm that Britain’s great offices of state would resist giving Antipodean opinion a role in formulating imperial policy. In contrast to the well-bred men who staffed the Colonial Office, politicians like Seddon tended to come from the lower middle, or worse still, the working classes. As one official explained, ‘colonial “statesmen” are in many respects very like children, and have to be treated accordingly’.⁶¹ Seddon’s campaign to annex Fiji had represented ‘a moment when the future of the Empire was in the melting-pot’. A federation of equal states, sharing the benefits and burdens of empire, might have emerged if not for the arrogance of the English governing class.⁶²

Whereas London clearly and unequivocally rejected Antipodean claims to a greater role in the administration of the colonial empire, Canada rebuffed several

⁶⁰ FieldHouse, ‘New Zealand, Fiji and the Colonial Office’, pp. 113-5 and quoted on p. 128. Also see A. Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations in the Pacific in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1964).

⁶¹ FieldHouse, ‘New Zealand, Fiji and the Colonial Office’, pp. 128-9 and quoted on p. 130.

⁶² *Ibid.* pp. 113 and 130.

opportunities to expand its borders and/or responsibilities. It is said erroneously that ‘Canadians had few dreams of “empire” for themselves’.⁶³ This conclusion also ignores the less than gentlemanly capitalism of Canadian banks. Building off a Royal Commission appointed in 1909 to investigate ways to foster closer trade relations between Canada and the West Indies, a campaign started to annex tropical territories as a means of re-asserting Canada’s ties to the Empire in light of the 1911 Reciprocity Agreement with America; ultimately rejected by the Canadian electorate.⁶⁴ The West Indies, it was predicted, would find themselves on a ‘secure[r economic] footing’ by associating themselves with ‘a member of the Empire as wealthy, powerful and patriotic as Canada’.⁶⁵ News of the West Indies’ desire for a ‘union’ with Canada appears to have been common knowledge in Australia, and presumably therefore throughout the British

⁶³ D. Mackenzie, ‘Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle and the Empire’, in W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 576. This is a rather curious statement that overlooks the fact that ‘Canada began as a colonial enterprise – first French, then British – it should be no surprise that’ Ottawa perpetuated said enterprise. Two years after Confederation, the Dominion of Canada acquired its own empire by purchasing Rupert’s Land; the northern domain of the Hudson’s Bay Company—corresponding roughly to present day Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon and the southern part of the Northwest Territories—that was largely inhabited by Aboriginal peoples, whose affairs are still (poorly) managed by officials in Ottawa. British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871. John A. MacDonald, who ranks amongst the greatest of Victorian Empire-builders, sought to construct a trans-continental state, which would be welded together by the Canadian Pacific Railway, before America expanded northward. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada*, p. 227; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 148; Buckner, ed., *Canada and the British Empire*, p. 6. Also see A. Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto, 2001).

⁶⁴ P. Hudson, ‘Imperial Designs: The Royal Bank of Canada in the Caribbean’, *Race & Class*, lii (2010), pp. 33-45; [The Advertiser](#), 28 Sept. 1910, p. 11; A. Smith, ‘Thomas Bassett Macaulay and the Bahamas: Racism, Business and Canadian Sub-Imperialism’, *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, xxxvii (2009), p. 31; R. Winks, *Canadian-West Indian Union: A Forty-Year Minuet* (London, 1968), p. 23.

⁶⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Relations between Canada and the West Indies*, Cd. 5369 (London, 1910), p. 56. A prediction strengthened by the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, which had led indirectly to the American market being ‘practically closed’ to West Indian sugar. Between 1899-1900 and 1908-9, Canada supplanted America as the main market for sugar from British Guiana, the largest sugar exporting colony. This new Canadian market helped avert the abandonment of sugar cultivation across the West Indies. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7. A contrary view, which further highlights Canadian imperialism, can be found in the *Britannic Review*, i (1914), pp. 86-8.

World.⁶⁶ Speaking before the Empire Club of Canada, a month after the Conservatives returned to power, the Governor of the Bahamas, Sir William Grey-Wilson, who was a cousin of Canada's late Governor General, Earl Grey, not surprisingly stressed the island's attractive climate, but also predicted that, if a regular steamship line could be established, Canada could possibly supply all the trade goods that were currently imported from America; thereby binding together 'the outlying portions of the Empire'.⁶⁷ Though a proposal that proved popular with those assembled the Governor, warned that if 'commercial unity is to be adequately secured, it can best be done by political fusion'. Both Bahamas' appointed Legislative Assembly and the elected House of Assembly had passed 'practically unanimous resolutions' asking that a joint commission 'examine this problem in detail'. To Canadian statesmen, who viewed the issue as one of annexing the 'whole of the West Indies or nothing at all', Grey-Wilson maintained that the former would wreck the whole scheme owing to 'the different constitutions, the divergence of interests, the geographical separation of the West Indies', etc. If the Bahamas 'experiment' proved successful, the governor anticipated, 'the rest of the West Indies would tumble over one another to come in at some time'.⁶⁸

For reasons poorly understood, the 1911-12 campaign to acquire Canadian *départements*

⁶⁶ See, for example, [The Mercury](#), [The Register](#) or [The Argus](#), 3 Mar. 1911, pp. 5, 7 and 7, respectively.

⁶⁷ Smith, 'Thomas Bassett Macaulay and the Bahamas', p. 40; An Address by [Sir William Grey-Wilson](#) before the Empire Club of Canada, 25 Oct. 1911. It was 'abundantly clear' that the largest impediment to the 'development of the trade between the West Indies and Canada' was the absence of an 'adequate means of transportation'. Creating new markets for West Indian goods, such as fruit, in Canada was 'impossible' without a reliable steamship service. Cd., 5369, pp. 35-6 and 41.

⁶⁸ An Address by [Sir William Grey-Wilson](#). A Canadian annexation of the Bahamas was not sub-imperialism per se, rather (in Grey-Wilson words) 'Canada in coming forward to help a small and insignificant portion of the Empire which has been sorely crushed by the American tariff ... will do you good as well as us. (Applause.)'

outré-mer failed; though a trade agreement was reached in 1912.⁶⁹ The Colonial Office strongly opposed a political union, in part out of a reluctance to surrender Britain's strategic position over the (still uncompleted) Panama Canal. Interest died off quickly; save for a few Canadian commercial information services and pressure groups, most notably the Canadian West Indian League.⁷⁰

However, by the summer of 1916, Britain's official mind had turned its attention to 'the question of territorial changes in Africa and elsewhere outside Europe which may be expected to follow as a result of the war'. Borders, wrote Margaret MacMillan, 'had suddenly become quite fluid'. Writing to the acting Canadian High Commissioner in London, Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden, wanted to know how the Imperial Government would view bringing Jamaica—and possibly other West Indian islands—into Canadian Confederation. The war presented an 'opportunity ... more favourable than it ever will be in [the] future'. He admitted that the proposal might be 'chimerical', but also laid out five advantages for it.⁷¹ Canadian annexation of Greenland, Trinidad and/or Antigua was also considered.⁷² However, by the spring of 1917, the sub-committee on

⁶⁹ Smith, 'Thomas Bassett Macaulay and the Bahamas', pp. 29 and 31-2. Smith is right to see Wink's explanation, which almost fifty years on remains the 'most thorough study of Canadian interest in tropical expansion', as wholly unconvincing. However, claiming that 'race was probably the most important single factor that undermined the plans for tropical expansion' seems less convincing in light of subsequent efforts—discussed below—to extend Canada into the Caribbean. Furthermore, Canada was all but ignored by P. Morgan and S. Hawkins, eds., *Black Experience and the Empire* (Oxford, 2004).

⁷⁰ Winks, *Canadian-West Indian Union*, pp. 27-30.

⁷¹ From the terms of reference for the Committee of Imperial Defence's sub-committee on territorial changes, 27 Aug. 1916, CAB 24/3/G118; M. MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York, 2002), p. 47; Sir Robert Borden to Sir George Perley, 2 and 3 June 1916, in *D[ocuments on] C[anadian] E[xternal] R[elations]* (27 vols. Ottawa, 1967), I, 1909-18, pp. 714-5. All subsequent references to *DCER* refer to volume one.

⁷² Smith, 'Thomas Bassett Macaulay and the Bahamas', p. 30. At the Paris Peace Conference, the Canadian delegation discussed with their American counterparts swapping British Honduras or British possessions in the West Indies for the Alaska panhandle. MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, p. 47.

territorial changes had resolved that the British North American Dominions would likely receive no territorial 'reward' for their sacrifices; the only possibility that remained was the recovery of the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. Opinion within the Canadian official mind was split. The President of the Privy Council, for example, hoped that Canada, like America, would not seek territorial gain. Nevertheless, the idea of a 'Greater Dominion of British America', encompassing Canada, Newfoundland, Bermuda, the West Indies and 'if you liked to have them thrown in, the Falkland Islands', was raised in the summer of 1918 as part of the discussion surrounding the 'future of the Imperial Cabinet system'.⁷³ Less than a week earlier, however, Borden had told a joint meeting of the British and Imperial War Cabinets that 'a very bad impression will be created in Canada if we do come out of this war with [a] great increase of territory'. Canadians, he strangely proclaimed, would not fight 'for any territorial extension of the British Empire'. The continuance of the Empire depended on the Dominions, and the 'co-operation and support of the United States of America'. However, the following morning Borden, after a 'long discussion' with Lloyd George, 'acquiesced' to the suggestion that Canada 'should take over the West Indies'. Yet days later, during the voyage home, Borden told several American passengers, including Herbert Hoover, that 'Canada would not fight for a policy of aggrandizement'.⁷⁴ A policy he clearly (and correctly) discerned after reading an Eastern Committee memorandum on territorial adjustments. The following day, amidst all the talk of

⁷³ Third Interim Report, 28 Mar. 1917, CAB 24/3/G118b; Winks, *Canadian-West Indian Union*, p. 38; Leo Amery to Borden, 19 Aug. 1918, in *DCER*, p. 717.

⁷⁴ IWC Shorthand Notes, 13 Aug. 1918, CAB 23/43/30; Quoted in H. Borden, ed., *Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs* (2 vols., Toronto, 1938), II, pp. 844-5.

conquest, Borden struck a discordant note, warning the Imperial Cabinet that a ‘scramble for territory’ would be the prelude to ‘further wars’.⁷⁵ Perhaps he remembered the ideals he had invoked in closing his speech to the House of Commons on 18 August 1914. Equally plausible is that Borden was too obsessed with American opinion, particularly the difficulties Irish- and German-Americans would create for Woodrow Wilson.⁷⁶ Ottawa’s central geopolitical concern was the management of the ‘North Atlantic Triangle’, though the desire for Caribbean territory lingered. Australia and New Zealand by contrast had a far freer hand to play at the Paris Peace Conference.⁷⁷

‘Am I to understand that if the whole civilised world asks Australia to agree to a mandate in respect of these islands, Australia is prepared still to defy the appeal of the whole civilised world’, asked an annoyed Wilson. Hughes answered: ‘That’s about the size of it’. The long serving New Zealand Prime Minister, William Massey, whom a Canadian delegate described ‘as thick headed and John Bullish as his appearance would lead one to expect’, grunted his agreement.⁷⁸ Fuming over leaks that appeared in the Paris edition of the *Daily Mail*, Wilson would not let the matter drop; adding that ‘Australia and New Zealand with 6,000,000 people between them could not hold up a

⁷⁵ Diary entry, 19 Dec. 1919, quoted in *Ibid.* p. 883; IWC Minutes, 20 Dec. 1918, CAB 23/42/44.

⁷⁶ M. Thornton, *Sir Robert Borden* (London, 2010), pp. 39-40; MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, pp. 47-8. It is worth noting that Borden had no issue with the other Dominions retaining the German colonies they had overrun as these acquisitions were ‘necessary for the future security of the Empire’. IWC Minutes, 20 Dec. 1918, CAB 23/42/44.

⁷⁷ Mackenzie, ‘Canada, the North Atlantic Triangle and the Empire’, pp. 574-5. In 1974, and again in 2003, a Member of Parliament (M.P.) proposed annexing the British overseas territory of the Turks and Caicos, while the island’s government approached Ottawa in 1988 with the idea of establishing a ‘special relationship’. The issue, said one M.P. recently, resembles the Loch Ness monster, surfacing ‘every now and then before disappearing without a trace’. ‘Canada’s Caribbean Ambition’ and ‘Turks and Caicos visit leads to talk of annexation ... again’, CBC News Online, [16 Apr. 2004](#) and [26 May 2014](#).

⁷⁸ Quoted in MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, pp. 103-4 and 49.

conference in which, including China, some 1,200 million people were represented'.⁷⁹ Hughes later claimed that he replied: 'I represent sixty thousand dead'. If true, it was a devastating putdown (as everyone assembled knew Wilson represented fewer). Australia and New Zealand, like Canada, drew diplomatic strength from membership in the British Empire—which elevated their representatives past those of any number of other smaller nations, into the corridors of power—as well as their early contributions and ultimate sacrifices in the war effort.⁸⁰ Two days after the declaration of war, the Colonial Secretary enquired if the New Zealand government felt 'able to seize German wireless station at Samoa'. On the following day, the Governor telegraphed his government's assent to the request, with the only reservation being the availability of an escort.⁸¹ Apia

⁷⁹ Quoted in Bridge, *William Hughes*, p. 82.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Ibid. pp. 81-2; Ibid., pp. 76-7; Thornton, *Sir Robert Borden*, pp. 89-90. Almost one in five adult men from New Zealand served abroad, while the percentage for Australia and Canada was over thirteen. Canadians stood a fifty percent chance of being killed or wounded, while the respective percentages for Australian and New Zealanders were sixty-five and fifty-nine. Australian (5 million), Canadian (8 million) and New Zealand (1.1 million) war dead stood at 59,000, 60,000 and 16,000 or 59,000, 57,000 and 17,000, respectively, depending upon source consulted. Estimated 1914 populations are given in brackets. Speaking on the contribution made by the Dominions, a Conservative MP told the House of Commons, in July 1919, that 'whether you take as your standard of measurement the number of lives sacrificed or the numbers of the enemy killed or captured, or the total number of hours spent in the trenches, it is a fact that both Canada and Australia alone, each of them, contributed a greater total military effort up to 11th November last in this War than the great United States of America, with their population of over 100,000,000 souls.' Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 333; Holland, 'The British Empire and the Great War', p. 117; *Hansard*, cxviii. 2173.

⁸¹ Lewis Harcourt to the Earl of Liverpool, 6 Aug. 1914 and Liverpool to Harcourt, 7 Aug. 1914, in *Correspondence Relating to the Occupation of German Samoa by an Expeditionary Force from New Zealand*, Cd. 7972 (London, 1915), p. 1. Margaret MacMillan sarcastically wrote that the greatest risk facing the New Zealand troops who occupied Samoa was 'boredom' and the 'huge quantities of beer'. In doing so she overlooked the fact that the German Eastern Asiatic Squadron—which 'greatly outgunned' any escort that would sail from New Zealand—was still at large. In fact, after the ships had sailed, Massey received a telegram from the Governor General of Australia warning that German warships were likely in New Zealand waters. A wireless message recalled the transports. Massey's threat to resign ensured that the expedition received a stronger Allied escort. Nevertheless, two German cruisers appeared 'shortly' after the occupation of Western Samoa, but left to bombard French Tahiti. Parts of coastal New Zealand were still being blacked out to lessen the chance of bombardment. Massey's labelling of this operation at the Paris Peace Conference as one that involved 'great risk' was clearly an embellishment, but the German Eastern Asiatic Squadron was (to quote Hew Strachan) capable of 'establishing at least temporary

was captured without resistance on 30 August 1914. Less than two weeks later, ‘after eighteen hours’ bush fighting over six miles of country’, an Australian Naval Reserve detachment captured the wireless station at Rabaul, German New Guinea. ‘Australians will be very pleased with the disappearance of the name Kaiser Wilhelm’s Land from the map ...’, anticipated a New Zealand paper. Meanwhile, another Australian landing party destroyed the wireless station at Nauru in the Marshall Islands.⁸² British cruisers destroyed the wireless station at Yap in the Caroline Islands, thereby severing Berlin’s wireless link to the Far East.⁸³ Although the Australian Defence Minister publically proclaimed that the ‘sea routes [were] now safe’, the two Dominions were reluctant to act on the Colonial Office’s promptings to undertake operations north of the equator as German cruisers remained at large; Anzacs meanwhile were focused on preparations for service in Europe, the first convoy of thirty-eight transports sailed from Albany, a port on King George Sound, Western Australia, on 1 November 1914.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, contemporaries were quick to grasp the significance of their seizing ‘the outposts of the [Antipodean] Empire’. The captured wireless stations, whose retention would be determined by the ‘clash of arms on the Continent’, represented the last piece necessary

domination of the ocean’. MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, p. 102; Watson, *W.F. Massey*, pp. 45-6; Strachan, *The First World War*, pp. 466-7.

⁸² Rear-Admiral Commanding Australian Squadron to Admiralty, in Cd. 7972, p. 3; *Evening Post*, 14 Sept. 1914, p. 3; *Press*, 30 Sept. 1914, p. 3. Entries for the two ships involved, [HMAS Sydney](#) and [HMAS Melbourne](#), point to a co-ordinated landing.

⁸³ *Press*, 5 Oct. 1914, p. 8; *Evening Post*, 2 Oct. 1914, p. 7. A map of Germany’s cable and wireless communications can be found in Strachan, *The First World War*, pp. 450-451. At some point during the assault on Tsingtao, the Japanese Fleet destroyed the wireless station. *Press*, 30 Sept. 1914, p. 3.

⁸⁴ *Evening Post*, 16 Sept. 1914, p. 8; M. Rutledge, ‘Edward Davis Millen (1860-1923)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, [online](#); Strachan, *The First World War*, pp. 465 and 468; [HMAS Sydney](#). The Japanese occupation of the Marshall and Caroline Islands in early October made the equator the ‘de facto division between the two occupying powers’. However, with the Marshall Islands laying to the northeast of Samoa, one should really speak of three occupying powers.

to creating a miniature Far 'Eastern Arc of Empire' to guard the western coasts of New Zealand and Australia. Capturing German Samoa, in particular, also demonstrated that the Australian Navy was not 'the "tin pot" nonentity which a certain school of Imperialists in this country [New Zealand] has been pleased to declare it'.⁸⁵ Before the Colonial Office had even requested their assistance, the Committee of Imperial Defence had already decided that those islands 'east of the line of longitude 170° were to fall to New Zealand, those to the west to Australia'.⁸⁶ Britain had no essential strategic, economic or telegraphic interests in the islands north of the equator, but diplomatic reasoning pointed to Japan receiving 'a fair share of the islands captured'.⁸⁷

Captured German territory in the South Pacific was also 'not in any way suitable for bargaining with'. Islands captured by Anzacs 'must remain British', while it was 'impossible to disturb' the Japanese. The sub-committee on territorial changes 'unanimously' agreed that New Zealand and, in particular, Australia would not accept any suggestion of restoring the islands to Germany. The latter, advised the Colonial Office, had 'always resented the intrusion of Germany into what she looks on as a

⁸⁵ *Dominion*, 17 Sept. 1914, p. 5; *Marlborough Express*, 13 Oct. 1914, p. 6; K. Jeffery, 'The Eastern Arc of Empire: A Strategic View, 1850–1950', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 5 (1982), pp. 534–5; *Evening Post*, 2 Sept. 1914, p. 6. It was HMAS *Sydney* that finally sunk *Emden*, a German light cruiser whose exploits captured the imagination of both the British and German public. Strachan, *The First World War*, pp. 479–80.

⁸⁶ Strachan, *The First World War*, p. 465.

⁸⁷ 'Admiralty Remarks on the Claim of the Japanese to occupy the Islands captured from the Germans North of the Equator', 15 Nov. 1916, Appendix B, Interim Report, 25 Jan. 1917, CAB 24/3/G118. My phrasing here consciously echoes K. Neilson, 'For Diplomatic, Economic, Strategic and Telegraphic Reasons: British Imperial Defence, the Middle East and India, 1914–18', in G. Kennedy and K. Neilson, eds., *Far-Flung Lines: Essays on Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman* (London, 1996), pp. 103–23.

British sphere'.⁸⁸ In the case of New Guinea, Hughes was uncompromising, later declaring that 'if you want to shift us, come and do it: here we are – *J'y suis, j'y reste*'. The bluster, however, was premature. As far as the sub-committee was concerned—vis-à-vis Germany's Pacific possessions—all was decided and it was simply a matter of obtaining the 'endorsement of the Allies'.⁸⁹ Here lay the origin of the confrontation referenced at the outset of this paragraph. Wilson's Fourteen Points stood in stark contrast to wartime Allied diplomacy, consequently ahead of the decisive Council of Ten session, the French Prime Minister, George Clemenceau, reportedly suggested that Lloyd George should 'bring your savages with you'.⁹⁰ Unlike Hughes and Massey, who respectively dismissed the League of Nations as 'utopian' and 'idealistic', Jan Smuts, the South African warrior-statesman, championed its creation.⁹¹ All three, however, were horrified when the Americans suggested that the League of Nations should assume responsibility for all conquered German territory. Mandates, Smuts had suggested prior to the Conference, were for countries 'sufficiently civilised to become democracies in time', namely former Ottoman territory. Having the three Dominion statesmen, with Borden present for diplomatic unity, address the Council of Ten signalled that Britain

⁸⁸ 'Extract from a Memorandum by the Colonial Office', 14 Sept. 1916, Appendix D, Interim Report, 25 Jan. 1917, CAB 24/3/G118; Interim Report, 25 Jan. 1917, CAB 24/3/G118.

⁸⁹ Bridge, *William Hughes*, p. 60; Interim Report, 25 Jan. 1917, CAB 24/3/G118. Hughes' persona is best illustrated in a 1916 Sydney *Bulletin* cartoon by D. Low. British Cartoon Archive reference: [LSE3690](#). Also see D. Low, *The Billy Book, Hughes Abroad* (Sydney, 1918).

⁹⁰ Quoted in Bridge, *William Hughes*, p. 78. The Council of Ten consisted of the President/Prime Minister and Foreign Ministers of the 'Big Four' and Japan.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 60; Watson, *W.F. Massey*, p. 67; A. Lentin, *General Smuts South Africa* (London, 2010), p. 49. Massey, who had a cabinet full of well-educated men, like Hughes, found Wilson's manner irritating and his claim to be speak for the 'plain people' of the world patronising. Born in Ireland, he joined his family in New Zealand at the age of fourteen after obtaining 'some secondary education privately'. 'Farmer Bill', as he came to be known, became a 'pillar of the local community', thereby paving the way for a political career. Watson, *W.F. Massey*, pp. 105 and 24-9.

herself was uninterested in acquiring further territories; even if Lloyd George agreed with the position put forth by his colleagues from the British Empire delegation.⁹² Against the backdrop of a map specially prepared by the Royal Geographic Society, Hughes laid out the central thrust of his argument: ‘As Ireland is to the United Kingdom, as Mexico is to the United States, as Alsace-Lorraine is to France, so is New Guinea to Australia’. Massey, having previously called for ‘something like the Monroe Doctrine’ being applied to Australasia, also pointed to the danger his country faced from the German East Asiatic Squadron at the outset of the Great War as reason enough to exclude Germany from the South Pacific. If the islands were returned, in addition to naval and wireless stations, they would likely also become submarine and even airship bases. Ultimately, following an address by the South African Prime Minister, the ex-Boer commando, Louis Botha, the compromise put forth by other members of the British Empire delegation was accepted. The three Dominions would keep their spoils, but as League of Nations mandates under the newly invented ‘C’ class.⁹³ Hughes, the lone holdout for annexation, only accepted the compromise when Col. Maurice Hankey, the Secretary to the British War Cabinet and Empire Delegation, assured him that a ‘C’ class

⁹² Bridge, *William Hughes*, pp. 77-8; Watson, *W.F. Massey*, pp. 74 and 92. New Zealand, like Portugal, who sent 60,000 men to the Western Front, received a single representative to the Paris Peace Conference. Thanks to Wilson, who (Watson writes) ‘was particularly concerned about the feelings of Latin American nations, especially Brazil ... which had been exposed to considerable German influence before the war’, a medical unit and a handful of aviators secured three representatives for Brazil. Australia, India, South Africa and Canada all by contrast received two delegates each. All told the British Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference comprised two hundred and seven people, including seventy-five individuals from the Dominions; roughly fifteen of whom were Canadian. By contrast Serbia sent over a hundred people. MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, p. 57; Watson, *W.F. Massey*, p. 165 n. 5; Bridge, *William Hughes*, p. 70; H. Nicolson, *Peacemaking, 1919* (London, 1964), p. 45; Thornton, *Sir Robert Borden*, p. 69.

⁹³ Quoted in Bridge, *William Hughes*, pp. 78-9; Quoted in A. McLaren, ‘A Monroe Doctrine for Australasia’, *Contemporary Review*, cxiv (1918), p. 158; Watson, *W.F. Massey*, p. 72-3. On the ‘power of General Botha’s deliverance’, see D. Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (2 vols., London, 1938), I, pp. 543-6.

mandate was ‘the equivalent of a 999 years’ lease’. A ‘pestiferous varmint’ was Wilson’s private description of the Australian politician.⁹⁴

Whether purely mischievous or a ‘classic piece of ambit claim negotiating technique’, Hughes’ performance was appreciated far beyond the British Empire Delegation. ‘You made out our case for Dalmatia’, said the Italian Prime Minister. Clemenceau was equally impressed.⁹⁵ Hughes’ desire to be a ‘better Briton’, however, was not without its downside. ‘The only unpleasant episode of the whole Congress’, was how one participant later characterised the debate over what to do with the captured German colonies. Compromise eventually prevailed, but the ‘catastrophe of a break up’ had been a possibility.⁹⁶

In geopolitical terms, this improvised new Anglo-Dominion relationship had worked well, for the most part. Disagreements simply were not strong enough to break the bonds of ‘Britannic solidarity’.⁹⁷ As Seddon explained at the close of the nineteenth century:

We are of the English-speaking race. Our kindred are scattered in dispersed parts of the globe, and wherever they are, no matter how far distant apart, there is a feeling of affection – that crimson tie, that bond of unity existing which time does not affect – and in the end will become indispensable.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Quoted in Bridge, *William Hughes*, pp. 80 and 82, respectively.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 82 and quoted on p. 79.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 65; Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, I, p. 541. In response to an extremely ill-tempered Lloyd George, who is alleged to have suggested that Australia might not always be able to count on the protection of the Royal Navy, Hughes reportedly threatened to ‘go to England and ask the people who own the Navy what they have to say about it’. Bridge, *William Hughes*, p. 80.

⁹⁷ R. Jebb, *The Britannic Question, a Survey of Alternatives* (London, 1913), p. 249. Hughes’ threat to place his dispute with Lloyd George before the British public was a clever one, and symptomatic of his determination to (in his words) ‘hold up Australia’s end, and to prevent any peace that does not guarantee peace of world and safeguard our interests in Pacific and elsewhere’. Bridge, *William Hughes*, p. 65.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 176.

His successor voiced a similar sentiment. Speaking at the Guildhall in November 1916, Massey proclaimed his belief that ‘the Empire would last to the end of time, and London would always be the capital’.⁹⁹ Surviving Germany’s 1918 spring offensive, ahead of outright victory in the Great War, confirmed Massey’s ‘British Israelism’. However, two titanic confrontations with ‘what [historian] J.A. Cramb in 1913 called “our enemy of enemies,” the equivalent of France in the eighteenth century and Spain in the sixteenth’, halted the evolution of ‘Greater Britain’. Had there been a lone war, speculated a recent work, the ‘capital would be moving from London to Vancouver about now’.¹⁰⁰

But, in 1914, ‘even close observer[s] of contemporary events’ were struck by the attention, however fleeting, Britons devoted to the question: ‘How would the Dominions and Dependencies take it?’ Save for a handful of the ‘most farsighted publicists’, it was widely expected within Germany that the opening salvo of a general European war would constitute the ‘signal for the break-up of an Empire which had never rested upon any substantial basis’¹⁰¹ It is true that the ‘imperial mind’ struggled with how to strengthen intra-imperial bonds in the late Victorian and Edwardian years.¹⁰² Furthermore, regardless of whatever ‘*confederation*’ actually meant, the dream of a ‘Britannic Confederation’ died long before the outbreak of war in August 1914; only months earlier a new journal proclaimed that its aim was ‘to explore and encourage the

⁹⁹ Quoted in Watson, *W.F. Massey*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. pp. 70-71; John Mackenzie’s introduction to D. Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester, 2006), p. x; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 467.

¹⁰¹ J.A.R. Marriott, ‘British Federalism: A Vanished Dream?’, *Nineteenth Century*, lxxxii (1917), p. 489.

¹⁰² Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship*, p. 3. Gorman defines the ‘imperial mind’ as that ‘particular set of individuals, assumptions, perceptions, prejudices and hopes which influenced the geopolitical shape of Empire’. It is therefore a considerably broader group of individuals than made up of the official mind.

non-political forces of Britannic Union¹⁰³ That is to say the *Britannic Review* sought an alternative to the ‘Britannic question’, or the ‘problem of how to effect a closer and permanent union’ of the self-governing parts of the Empire. Prior to 1914, as the writer G.K. Chesterton noted, the Dominions, like Londoners then and now, acted as though they were on the Underground and did their best to ignore each other. Bilateral ties to Britain, however, remained strong. The Second Boer War roused the Dominions ever so slightly into action—Australia, Canada and New Zealand *combined* contributed 31,500 men to the war effort—but the declaration of war on Germany (as alluded to earlier) prompted an entirely different reaction.¹⁰⁴ (To invoke the language of the turn of the century *Toronto Globe*) The ‘Britons of Greater Britain’ had heard the ‘ominous’ news: ‘The barbarians [truly] were thundering at the frontiers’.¹⁰⁵ With efforts to avert war likened to ‘whispering around the death bed’, a provincial newspaper wondered: ‘Is it Armageddon?’ Regardless of what the future held, another thought the Dominions’ task clear: ‘We are called upon to show to all the world the character of the metal of which our bonds of Empire are forged, and our patriotism must display itself not in loud

¹⁰³ H. Thring, ‘Britannic Confederation’, *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, viii (1892), p. 61; italics in original; ‘Ourselves and Our Purpose’, *Britannic Review*, i (1914), p. 2. Also see A. Bosco and A. May, eds., *The Round Table, the Empire/Commonwealth and British Foreign Policy* (London, 1997), chapter ten, in particular.

¹⁰⁴ Jebb, *The Britannic Question*, p. 9; C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, ‘Mapping the British World’, in C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003), p. 7. Although a contingent could have been ready to sail before mid-August, the first 31,200 Canadians sailed for England on 3 October 1914. In Australia, whereas the government pledged to raise 20,000 men by Christmas, enlistment exceeded 52,000, while in New Zealand 14,000 enlisted by the end of the war’s first week. [Grey River Argus](#), 3 Aug. 1914, p. 5; Thornton, *Sir Robert Borden*, p. 42; Bridge, *William Hughes*, pp. 29 and 34; Watson, *W.F. Massey*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Bridge and Fedorowich, ‘Mapping the British World’, p. 2; *The Standard*, 29 May 1912, quoted in P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (Amherst, NY, 1998), p. 205.

outbursts of jingoistic song¹⁰⁶ Those outbursts frequently emphasised a parental theme, a notable (and more than a bit prophetic) example is Herbert Kaufman's 'Mother Britain and Her Sons', which begins:

We are coming, Mother, coming—we
are coming Home to fight,
To defend the Empire's honour, to
uphold the Empire's might.
From the Plains of Manitoba, from the
diggings of the Rand,
We are coming, Mother Britain—com-
ing home to lend a hand.
From the islands and the highlands,
fast across the seven seas;
Look where'er the sun is shining, and
your Flag is in the breeze.
We'll prove our breed in your hour of
need, and teach the bally Huns
Who strike at Britain, they must like-
wise reckon with her sons.

We are coming, Mother, coming—save
a good place at the front;
Where the battle wages fiercest ...¹⁰⁷

While the poem maybe 'about as bad as verse can be', the last three lines highlight the ideal of Better Britons.¹⁰⁸

Being British-born, the bulk of the first contingent of Canadians to arrive in Britain experienced a homecoming of sorts. The chance to visit relatives was welcome,

¹⁰⁶ [Grey River Argus](#), 3 Aug. 1914, p. 5; [The Advertiser](#), 5 Aug. 1914, p. 14. On the Canadian reaction see J. Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire: Canada, Britain and Two World Wars* (Don Mills, Ont., 2012), pp. 38-44 and colour plates 4, 5 and 12.

¹⁰⁷ [Wanganui Chronicle](#), 11 Nov. 1914, p. 7. The poem was reprinted from *Reynolds* newspaper; but only appeared in one other Antipodean title, the 3 November 1914 edition of [Bendigoian](#). However, the poem was published in Kaufman's *The Song of the Guns* (October, 1914), which, said another paper, 'feverishly excited the poets, as well as the prose writers, of the Empire'. Ironically, many Canadians found colonising Britain to be less than enjoyable as 'Britain's flaws were now clear to them, just as Canada's advantages were'. [Western Mail](#), 1 Jan. 1915, p. 44; Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, pp. 56-7.

¹⁰⁸ [Dominion](#), 12 Jan. 1915, p. 6.

but as time passed some came to see England (in the words of one soldier) as ‘one of the most godforsaken places in the world’.¹⁰⁹ Such attitudes were not commonplace. The increasing assertion, particularly after 1900, of Britannic nationalism, which combined being an equal partner in the pan-British world, with localised nationalism, meant that New South Wales was akin to Yorkshire or any other part of London’s hinterland. Australian, Canadian, etc, simply became another sub-regional identity of Britishness, no different than Manx or Irish.¹¹⁰ Dominion nationalism was in many ways ‘not a repudiation of imperialism but its confident vanguard’. Britons, however, dismissed the (Canadian) troops arriving from their Dominions as ‘colonials’, (descendants of) men who could not make it in Britain. Their indiscipline was taken as proof that abroad ‘the British race had slipped a bit’.¹¹¹ Residents of Australia, Canada and New Zealand rejected this charge in favour of viewing among other descriptions their respective countries as representing a ‘New Britannia’, a ‘*Nova Britannia*’ and even ‘God’s Own Country’.¹¹² It had long been known that members of the Canadian Militia tended to be ‘far taller and larger’ than British Regulars; similarly, a minority of Australians saw their ‘climate, soil and social system’ as the basis for the creation of the ‘New Australian

¹⁰⁹ Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, pp. 53-7. Harold Sands’ condemnation, which was written 24 January 1915 and quoted on p. 57, reflected the conditions on Salisbury Plain, where the troops were encamped. Following a few days of decent weather, on 21 Oct. 1914 it started to rain and continued to do so for eighty-nine out of the ensuing 123 days. Reports of the poor conditions compelled his H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught, to warn the Imperial Government that they were an impediment to ‘rapid recruiting throughout the Dominion’. Governor General to Colonial Secretary, 2 Feb. 1915, *DCER*, p. 64.

¹¹⁰ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 147 and 153; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, pp. 462 and 465.

¹¹¹ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 167; Vance, *Maple Leaf Empire*, pp. 57 and 59.

¹¹² Quoted in N. Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections’, in C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003), p. 127; Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada*, p. 33; Seddon quoted in J. Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Honolulu, 2001), p. 43.

Man'.¹¹³ Undeniable, however, is the effect less rigid class barriers had. Only ten years after immigrating, Hughes, the onetime itinerant worker, was elected to the New South Wales Parliament; ten years later, he was Minister for External Affairs in a short-lived minority Labour government. Furthermore, it was part-time civilian soldiers, such as Currie and John Monash, who planned many of the offensives during the Last Hundred Days Campaign and who were made the 'centre of congratulations' at a chance gathering of senior allied generals and politicians three days after the Amiens' operation had begun.¹¹⁴ The Dominions 'provided the back-up that the German army never had'. But even here the shadow of Better Britons loomed; approximately a third of all British pilots were Canadian, while Australian engineers were equal to, if not faster than, Britons at counter-battery operations.¹¹⁵ 'Magnificently equipped and highly trained in storm tactics,' was the German view of the Canadian Corps by the summer of 1918. The Commander-in-Chief of the BEF, Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig's judgement notwithstanding, scepticism exists as to this supposed superiority of Dominion troops over those from Britain.¹¹⁶ What is undeniable, however, is the decisive impact Better Britons had away from the front lines.

Although the Colonial Secretary was in 'continual communication' with the Dominions, and Borden became the first Dominion Prime Minister to visit London for

¹¹³ *Saturday Review*, 10 June 1871, p. 731; Cole, 'The Problem of "Nationalism"', p. 169.

¹¹⁴ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 468; Bridge, *William Hughes*, pp. 28 and 150-156; J. Grigg, *Lloyd George: War Leader, 1916-1918* (London, 2002), pp. 547 and 557n; G. Serle, 'Sir John Monash (1865-1931)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, [online](#).

¹¹⁵ J. Winter, 'Migration, War and Empire: The British Case', *Annales de Démographie Historique*, i (2002), p. 152.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Cook, *Shock Troops*, p. 411; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 468. Although he thought highly of him, Haig 'seems not to have ... considered [Currie] for the command of an army, though he surely deserved to be'. Grigg, *Lloyd George: War Leader*, p. 557n.

‘full and confidential discussion[s]’ in the summer of 1915, the Acting Canadian High Commissioner was growing increasingly frustrated with the calls for more troops without finding a way to ‘consult more with you [Borden] and other Dominions regarding general policy of war operations’.¹¹⁷ *The Times* had already pronounced that the war had forever altered the relationship between Britain and her Dominions. Moreover, advised the correspondent, ‘Imperial problems as well as Canadian problems’ were mounting and would need addressing once ‘peace comes’.¹¹⁸ The New Brunswick-born Bonar Law, however, continued on as if nothing had changed, not recognising that Borden and the other Dominion leaders were responsible to their own populaces for the ‘conduct of [the] war’. Borden merely wanted ‘fuller and more exact information from time to time’. He struggled even in London to obtain information, seemingly because of a ‘lack [of] proper co-ordination between several Departments responsible for conduct of war’.¹¹⁹ Perley duly conveyed his government’s concerns to the Colonial Secretary, who uttered the correct platitudes but incredibly said of the ‘question of consultation’ that ‘if no scheme is practicable then it is very undesirable that the question should be raised’.¹²⁰

Such attitudes were reflective of a far ‘too-prevalent fallacy’. ‘Responsible Canadians’, warned *The Times*, were tired of the ‘constant talk in this country about “help” from Canada’. Thanks to the war Britain’s status as ‘the “Mother Country” of the Empire’ existed only in ‘sentiment and tradition’. One could excuse the commoners’ misunderstanding of the changes hastened by the war, but as to ‘the Government nothing

¹¹⁷ Andrew Bonar Law to Governor General, 23 Sept. 1915, *DCER*, p. 89; Perley to Borden, 19 Oct. 1915, *DCER*, p. 90.

¹¹⁸ *The Times*, 29 June 1915, p. 7.

¹¹⁹ Borden to Perley, 30 Oct. 1915, *DCER*, pp. 93-4.

¹²⁰ Perley to Bonar Law and Bonar Law to Perley, 3 Nov. 1915, *DCER*, pp. 95-6.

excuses the old spirit of mingled patronage and surprise'.¹²¹ Privately, Borden had lost patience with the Home Government. Writing to the Acting High Commissioner, he fumed:

Mr. Bonar Law's letter [of 3 November] is not especially illuminating and leaves the matter precisely where it was before my letter was sent.

During the past four months since my return from Great Britain, the Canadian Government (except for an occasional telegram from you or [the Canadian newspaper baron] Sir Max Aitken) have had just what information could be gleaned from the daily press and no more

It can hardly be expected that we shall put 400,000 or 500,000 men in the field and willingly accept the position of having no more voice and receiving no more consideration than if we were a toy automata. Any person cherishing such an expectation harbours an unfortunate and even dangerous delusion. Is this war being waged by the United Kingdom alone or is it a war waged by the whole Empire? If I am correct in supposing that the second hypothesis must be accepted then why do the statesmen of the British Isles arrogate to themselves solely the methods by which it shall be carried on in the various spheres of warlike activity and the steps which shall be taken to assure victory and a lasting peace?¹²²

From the war's outset, Borden had seen the conflict as a just one, with Britain and the Dominions fighting 'for the cause of honour, to maintain solemn pledges, to uphold principles of liberty, to withstand forces that would convert the world into an armed camp'.¹²³ Although the carnage of the Western Front appalled him, while in Britain, Borden visited wounded Canadians in fifty-two different hospitals.¹²⁴ It is against this backdrop that Borden questioned continuing Canada's war effort if her 'role of

¹²¹ *The Times*, 28 Nov, 1916, p. 11.

¹²² Borden to Perley, 4 Jan. 1916, *DCER*, p. 104.

¹²³ House of Commons' speech, 18 Aug. 1914, quoted in Thornton, *Sir Robert Borden*, p. 40.

¹²⁴ Farrell, 'Coalition of the Usually Willing', p. 283; Thornton, *Sir Robert Borden*, p. 44.

automata' persisted.¹²⁵ He was angry that 'procrastination, indecision, inertia, doubt, hesitation and many other undesirable qualities have made themselves entirely too conspicuous in this war'.¹²⁶ Less than two and a half weeks later, a fellow-traveller boarded the R.M.S. *Makura* already at sea. The Australian Prime Minister landed in Vancouver—via Auckland, where he consulted Massey 'on vital matters to the Dominions arising out of the war'—on 15 February and, after refusing to speak to the press, boarded a 'special train'.¹²⁷ While in Ottawa, Hughes was sworn in as a Privy Councillor, discussed imperial affairs with the Cabinet, addressed a meeting at the Rideau Club—in which he paid tribute to the Royal Navy for safeguarding the Seas and announced (to an 'immense cheer') that Australia would soon have 300,000 men in the field and that Germany would never again interfere with Australian commerce—told the Canadian Club that Australia would fight to the last man rather than agree to an 'ignoble peace' with Germany.¹²⁸ Publically the Governor General said Hughes' speeches 'made an excellent impression', while the two premiers discussed privately 'the conduct of the war and the future relations of the Empire'. Both men, and presumably Massey as well, agreed that the 'Overseas nations' needed an 'adequate voice' in the councils of the

¹²⁵ Borden to Perley, 4 Jan. 1916, *DCER*, p. 104. Eight days later, Borden telegraphed Perley to direct him to ignore the letter of 4 January, which was still en route. His secretary was then tasked with confirming that the cable had been received.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* While in England, he heard a 'very prominent Cabinet Minister' declare that another department's officials were not actually 'traitors', they simply acted like them. Amidst the ongoing shortages of military *matériel*, Borden heard from another 'very able Cabinet Minister' that the 'chief shortage was of brains'.

¹²⁷ [The Sydney Morning Herald](#), 16 Feb. 1916, p. 13; [The Argus](#), 10 Mar. 1916, p. 7; [Barrier Miner](#), 9 Mar. 1916, p. 1; [The Brisbane Courier](#), 15 Feb. 1916, p. 6;

¹²⁸ [The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times](#) and [The Argus](#), 21 Feb. 1916, pp. 2 and 7, respectively; Quoted in [The New York Times](#), 20 Feb. 1916. For more on the German peace efforts see, [The Advertiser](#), 5 Jan. 1916, p. 6.

Empire.¹²⁹ They also agreed publically to pressure London to achieve their aims. This ‘rare lateral consultation spooked Asquith’, who decided to invite Hughes to attend two March Cabinet meetings. Symbolism fulfilled, Hughes spent the rest of his visit to London delivering speeches; which the Press Association said ‘were electrifying the Empire’.¹³⁰ Through a young-ish Melbourne journalist, Keith Murdoch, father of Rupert Murdoch, Hughes met Lord Northcliffe and other press barons. Hughes’ view of the war was similar to Borden’s, which thereby assured Hughes favourable press coverage.¹³¹ Following his first speech in London, the influential *Evening News* declared: ‘Mr. Hughes not only talks bravely, but also acts bravely. He comes from a country where the Britons have not been afraid to cut out the German cancer, while England has done little beyond consultations regarding the necessity for such an operation’. Hughes, to the editor of the liberal *Daily News*, arrived as a ‘representative statesman of Greater Britain, called in to advise on the biggest work of Imperial reconstruction the world has ever seen’. Germany had set out to destroy the British Empire, now, declared Alfred Gardiner, “‘John Bull’ must become ‘John Bull and Sons’”. Even *The Times* could not ignore the ‘plain warning from Mr. Hughes’.¹³² In Hughes, Britons had finally found an ‘outstanding figure to command public confidence’, proclaimed the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The paper’s suggestion that Hughes join the Cabinet for the ‘duration of the war’,

¹²⁹ Quoted in *The Argus*, 23 Feb. 1916, p. 8; Borden to Perley, 24 Feb. 1916, *DCER*, p. 115.

¹³⁰ Farrell, ‘Coalition of the Usually Willing’, p. 284; *Dominion*, 23 Mar. 1916, p. 5. Also see [LSE3690](#).

¹³¹ Bridge, *William Hughes* pp. 37-8 and 29; G. Serle, ‘Sir Keith Arthur Murdoch, (1885–1952)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, [online](#).

¹³² *Portland Guardian*, 13 Mar. 1916, p. 2; *The Register*, 13 Mar. 1916, p. 6; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 Mar. 1916, p. 7; *The Times*, 10 Mar. 1916, p. 7. The phrase John Bull and Sons dates back to the later nineteenth-century in both *Trove* and *Papers Past*. On Hughes’ effort to excise the ‘German cancer’, see Bridge, *William Hughes*, pp. 30-31.

however, was a non-starter.¹³³ Before Lloyd George's accidental coup in December 1916 elements of Britain's official mind regarded the Dominions with 'an attitude of suspicion and arbitrariness that might perhaps be appropriate in dealing with a private firm but is scarcely to be expected or tolerated by the Government of one of the Dominions of the Empire'. Borden, however, was far from alone in decrying the 'present anomalous constitutional organization (or lack of it) of the Empire'.¹³⁴

While there had been earlier calls for imperial reform—specifically with respect to the Crown Colonies, who were subjected to neglect as 'the "limelight" is monopolised by the Dominions'—the trickle had turned into a torrent by the spring of 1916.¹³⁵ Gardiner's two and a half columns' 'character sketch' of Hughes was reprinted/summarised in at least six New Zealand papers, including the *Auckland Star*, and fifteen Australian papers, including the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Brisbane Courier*. Meanwhile, the Empire Club of Canada considered the issue of how the 'United Kingdoms of Greater Britain' should organise themselves (to do away with 'autonomy at home and subordination abroad' and ensure that the 'burdens of Empire'

¹³³ Quoted in *The Daily News*, 23 Mar. 1916, p. 5. Prime Minister Asquith's government was by March 1915 prone to internal feuding, and was hit by the 'Shells Scandal' the following month. A coalition government was formed that May, with the Liberals retaining all but one of the positions—Arthur Balfour replaced Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty—related to the war effort. The Cabinet remained the final arbiter, though it was dismissed by one critic as '22 gabblers round a table with an old procrastinator in the chair'. Searle, *A New England?*, pp. 676-80.

¹³⁴ Borden to Perley, 28 Oct. 1916, *DCER*, p. 146.

¹³⁵ 'The Need for Reform' and 'Defects of the Present System', *Britannic Review*, ii (1915), pp. 169-72. Also see, for example, M.A. Jinnah, 'Reorganising the India Council', *Fortnightly Review*, xcvi (1914), pp. 612-20, *The Times of India*, 23 Sept. 1915, pp. 7-8, S. Low, 'The War and the Problem of Empire', *Fortnightly Review*, ic (1916), pp. 405-20, C. Kinloch-Cooke, 'The Reconstruction of the British Empire', *Fortnightly Review*, c (1916), pp. 274-81 and 'Imperial Federation and its Enemies', *Saturday Review* cxxi (1916), pp. 493-4.

are shared equally). ‘Call us to your councils’, was the Dominions’ common refrain.¹³⁶ Thanks to ‘the accidental and haphazard growth of this curious political organization to which we belong’, explained the influential Canadian journalist, and correspondent for *The Times* since 1908, Sir John Willison, ‘we have no more voice in the making of this war than has the State of New York’.¹³⁷

Britain’s imperial mind was not blind to this problem, but (said *The Guardian*) ‘the problem ... is in what way can political union be made more definite without undoing the growth of sentiment which is worth more than the most perfect political institutions. Yet there must be some definite expression of unity.’ For Sidney Low, a ‘well-known’ journalist and Lecturer on Imperial and Colonial History at King’s College London, the shift of responsibility for the war effort from the Cabinet to the War Committee represented ‘a transitional stage towards a true Empire Constitution’. The writing of which could take years of negotiations and multiple Imperial Conferences, in the interim admitting the Dominion premiers to ‘full and definite membership’ on the War Committee would give them an effective voice in military and imperial affairs.¹³⁸ Mr Hughes, proclaimed an editorial on Empire Day, ‘stands for the new ideals of Imperial organic unity’ and says the things, others merely thought about in that ‘vague British way’. Almost two years into the war, even *The Times* was ‘beginning to see that things imperial cannot just go on as they are’.

¹³⁶ *Papers Past and Trove*; An Address by [R. S. Neville](#) and [Sir John Willison](#) before the Empire Club of Canada, 2 and 30 Mar. 1916, respectively. Also see an Address by [Lt.-Col. Mulloy](#) before the Empire Club of Canada, 23 Mar. 1916.

¹³⁷ An Address by [Sir John Willison](#); R. Clippingdale, ‘Sir John Willison, (1856-1927), *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, [online](#).

¹³⁸ Quoted in *Press*, 21 Mar. 1916, p. 8; [Hawera & Normanby Star](#), 21 Mar. 1916, p. 5; Quoted in [The Sydney Morning Herald](#), 21 Mar. 1916, p. 7.

Symbolically things were changing: 1916 witnessed for the first time the ‘hoisting of the flag on public buildings’ officially to mark Empire Day. Britons everywhere had succumbed to the ‘vague belief that ... [the world,] despite the much advertised German menace, had got past the days of universal wars’. Too busy ‘pour[ing] their manhood and their treasure in a manner which would have been thought impossible a year or two before’, few noticed that ‘inter-Imperial relations’ had undergone a transformation.¹³⁹ Henceforth foremost was not the place of the Raj in Britain’s imperial system, but deciding ‘what the constitutional relations of the self-governing portions of the Empire are to be’. It was time, said a correspondent, for ‘a new way of empire’. Much to the surprise of ‘those who were most aware of its fundamental weakness’ the existing Imperial system had survived the test of war thanks to the prevalence and depth of Britannic nationalism. Pursuing a theme reminiscent of Willison’s speech to the Empire Club of Canada, the correspondent argued that the Dominions were not truly self-governing as they lacked a voice ‘in any question of the foreign policy of the Empire’. Had he stayed in Scotland, Andrew Fisher, a former Australian Prime Minister, would have had a greater ability to influence imperial policy as he could heckle his local M.P. before voting. Wartime efforts to keep the Dominion governments apprised of developments cannot disguise the fact that the Dominions were never consulted during the July Crises.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps, as Willison speculated months

¹³⁹ *The Times*, 24 May 1916, pp. 17, 9 and 22. Also see p. 5 and J. English, ‘Empire Day in Britain, 1904-1958’, *The Historical Journal*, il (2006), pp. 247-76.

¹⁴⁰ *The Times*, 24 May 1916, p. 17. The only hint provided by the editorial as to the identity of the correspondent is that ‘his conclusions are the same as those reached by Mr. Lionel Curtis in “The Problem of the Commonwealth”.’ Willison was a member of the Round Table, but he resisted the ‘more centralist prescriptions of the movement’s London leader, Lionel George Curtis’. Clippingdale, ‘Sir John Willison’.

earlier, European capitals might have taken greater notice of Sir Edward Grey's words had they known that he spoke for Greater Britain.

Peace represented the next flash point. What if, as part of a compromise peace, for example, Britain had to return South-West Africa to Germany? It seems reasonable to assume that the South African Government would likely have voiced its opposition during the promised consultation of the Dominion premiers. But, if Britain ignored said opinion, the South African Government faced a difficult choice: 'acquiesce, or it could declare its independence of Britain, occupy the territory, and do its best to hold it'. Such were the 'grave contingencies ... inherent in the present Imperial system', warned *The Times*' correspondent. Obviously, no one expected a solution to be found while the Empire remained at war, but the Dominions needed to know that 'the people of Great Britain are earnestly determined to attempt a solution of the problem'. A gesture was needed, something beyond 'a mere *non possumus*'.¹⁴¹ British public opinion was said increasingly to favour the Dominions' position. *The Times* took up the Round Table's call for an Imperial Conference in late November, elsewhere Massy told an audience in his hometown of Londonderry that 'some of their leading British statesmen were not enthusiastic in promoting a closer Empire Union'.¹⁴² Leading statesmen, however, were

¹⁴¹ An Address by [Sir John Willison](#); *The Times*, 24 May 1916, p. 17; italics in original. It was asserted that the only solution was an Imperial Parliament (and Ministry), elected by the people of Greater Britain. The new body would be responsible for: 1) the conduct of foreign policy, 2) naval and military defence, 3) voting funds necessary for the previous two tasks and 4) administration of the dependent empire.

¹⁴² An Address by [Sir George Perley](#) before the Empire Club of Canada, 29 Aug. 1916; [Marlborough Express](#), 29 Nov. 1916, p. 5; See, for example, [Evening Post](#), 27 Nov. 1916, p. 7; Quoted in [Evening Post](#), 29 Nov. 1916, p. 6.

quickly losing their ‘position of supreme responsibility’. For his part, Lloyd George, like the Dominion premiers, wanted to talk war, not peace.¹⁴³

The change in government initially promised to bring about a greater sharing of information. The new Colonial Secretary, Walter Long, opted for the radical (sic) measure of writing a weekly private letter to the various governors general and their prime ministers in which he would ‘summarize the main points of interest as they arise’. Lloyd George was ill, so further statements, which offered the ‘fullest recognition for status of Dominions’, were delayed until the following week. As far as Anglo-Dominion relations were concerned a ‘new leaf’ truly was turning over.¹⁴⁴ In his first message to the Dominion premiers, Lloyd George spoke of ‘our brothers beyond the Seas’, whose ‘determination is no less high than ours and that however long the path to final victory we shall tread it side by side’. Writing ‘on behalf of [the] Canadian people’, Borden submitted that ‘our determination as resolute as when we ranged ourselves in Empire’s battle lines two years ago’. Anything less than outright victory would render ‘all our sacrifices ... worse than useless’. Borden, then in western Canada working to better mobilise ‘resources from Atlantic to Pacific’, pledged to ‘throw the full strength of Canada into the struggle’. ‘We shall indeed tread the path side by side ...’, he said in conclusion.¹⁴⁵ Wilson’s peace note was despatched the following day. ‘That conceited Yankee wind-bag, Mr. W.J. Bryan, who was kicked out of his Secretaryship of State by Woodrow Wilson on account of his pro-German sympathies, has had the unspeakable

¹⁴³ [Evening Post](#), 29 Nov. 1916, p. 6. Asquith’s fall is discussed in Searle, *A New England?*, pp. 700-704.

¹⁴⁴ Long to the Duke of Devonshire, 14 Dec. 1916, *DCER*, p. 153; Searle, *A New England?*, p. 703.

¹⁴⁵ Long to Devonshire and Devonshire to Long, 19 and 20 Dec. 1916, *DCER*, pp. 154-5. A similar sentiment existed in New Zealand. [Press](#), 28 Dec. 1916, p. 6.

impudence to telegraph to Mr. Lloyd George urging him to enter into peace negotiations’, opened one indignant New Zealand newspaper. Nothing less than total victory over the ‘Hun hordes’ was acceptable. The paper hoped that Lloyd Gorge would bin the ‘impertinent’ telegram, while saying ‘to his secretary, “Next business, please.”’¹⁴⁶ Lloyd George’s response was considerably bolder; and, unlike Wilson and his “‘kiss and be friends” policy’, most definitely ‘suited to the present temper of the Allies’. Rather than hold an ‘ordinary Imperial Conference’, Lloyd George invited the Dominion premiers (and representatives of British India) into the War Cabinet as part of a ‘special War Conference of the Empire’. *Punch* aptly depicted the announcement with the figure of Britannia trumpeting from the shoreline. A cursory reading of *Trove* and *Papers Past* shows that the message was heard loud and clear, with the Canadian press hailing Lloyd George as a ‘statesman with the widest Imperial outlook’.¹⁴⁷

While the existing constitution vis-à-vis the Dominions was ‘in theory ... more autocratic than that of the Hohenzollern Empire in Germany’, it was nevertheless unanimously agreed that the ‘readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire is too important and intricate a subject to be dealt with during the War’. Besides (the majority agreed that) until ‘the days of the Huns’ were brought to an end, the ‘new age’ Lloyd George spoke of had to wait.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, in

¹⁴⁶ [Free Lance](#), 21 Dec. 1916, p. 6. Wilson’s note, which was suppressed by the British censor, aroused ‘intense indignation in Britain’. [Marlborough Express](#), 22 Dec. 1916, p. 5.

¹⁴⁷ [The Register](#), 22 Dec. 1916, p. 4; Quoted in [Evening Post](#), 27 Dec. 1916, p. 7; ‘An Answer to Peace Talk: Britannia calls a War Conference of the Empire’, *Punch*, 3 Jan. 1917, p. 9; [Wairarapa Daily Times](#), 28 Dec. 1916.

¹⁴⁸ J.A.R. Marriott, ‘The Problem of the Commonwealth’, *Nineteenth Century*, lxxxi (1917), p. 57; ‘Imperial War Conference, 1917: Minutes of Proceedings and Papers laid before the Conference (Other

December 1916, Britannia made the decision to transform herself into ‘the foremost military power in the world’.¹⁴⁹ While Hankey was ‘amused’ by the summoning of the Dominion premiers to London to ‘discuss [unknown] “questions of great urgency”’, he was also apprehensive ‘as Bonar Law said “When they are here, you wish to goodness you could get rid of them”’. After explaining why Germany’s false peace overtures at the end of 1916 must be rejected, if the ‘arrogant spirit of the Prussian military caste’ was to be broken, said Lloyd George, Britons had to plunge ever deeper into the ‘vortex of blood’. Continuing he told the House of Commons that his government ‘departed, perhaps, from precedent’ in three areas. In reality, the decision ‘formally’ to consult the Dominions constituted a fourth departure.¹⁵⁰ Lloyd George opened the first IWC—held to plan for the waging of total war—with an apology of sorts for why the broader Empire and the Dominions, in particular, were not consulted in 1914, before discussing ‘what it is we are aiming at, what we should like to achieve, what we hope to achieve’. In the days that followed, the IWC were briefed by all the relevant offices of state and (military) officials. Lloyd George, however, left no doubt as to what he wanted: ‘more men’. The outcome of the conflict depended ‘upon the efforts which the British Empire is able to put forward’ in the year(s) to come. ‘To be ready for 1918 means victory,’ he

than those published in [Cd. 8566]), The National Archives, CAB[inet Office Records] 32/1; See note one; Quoted in *Otago Daily Times*, 29 Jan. 1917, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ E. Ingram, *The British Empire as a World Power* (London, 2001), p. 29. Also see D. Edgerton, *Warfare State Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge, 2006) .

¹⁵⁰ S. Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets, 1877-1918* (London, 1978), p. 348; *Hansard*, lxxxviii. 1333-56. Asquith’s government considered it ‘almost impossible to convene [an Imperial] Conference before the conclusion of the War’. The Canadian Government agreed that Australia’s suggestion of holding a meeting was ‘exceedingly difficult if not impracticable’. A position later endorsed by ‘all other governments’. Colonial Secretary to Governor General, and vice-versa, 16 Dec. 1914, *DCER*, p. 284; Colonial Secretary to Governor General, 9 Jan. 1915, *ibid*.

boldly predicted.¹⁵¹ The tone of Britain's government had at last caught up to Dominion sentiment. The German peace overtures referenced earlier were dismissed as an 'insult to the Empire'. Massey, in the same piece for *Lloyd's Weekly*, went even further, pledging to 'carry on until Germany atones for her crimes'. Borden, who spoke after Lloyd George, also stressed the need to continue fighting until the newly sown 'spirit of the [military] autocracy' was driven from the German people. Germany must be made to understand that a 'war of aggression cannot be undertaken as a profitable enterprise'. Massey's position continued to harden, telling the IWC of his belief that the 'people of the Empire are prepared to go on until the power of Germany is broken'. Next to winning the war, uppermost in Massey's mind was the hope that the first meeting of the IWC meant that the Dominions would forever more be 'properly represented in the councils of the Empire'.¹⁵² The following day Long met with the overseas representatives at the Colonial Office, the 'Imperial War Conference' was to be the 'corollary of the Imperial [War] Cabinet'. Over the course of five and a half weeks, a whole host of topics ranging from 'the future of the Empire to the immediate work of the proper conduct of the War' and the 'care of soldiers' graves' were discussed *at great length*.¹⁵³ On day two, the Secretary of State for War and his advisors were 'good

¹⁵¹ 'Procès-verbal of the First Meeting of the I[mperial] W[ar] C[abinet]', 20 Mar. 1917, CAB 23/43. All the Dominions, including Newfoundland, were represented save for Australia; which was embroiled in a general election following a nasty referendum over conscription in late 1916. Bridge, *William Hughes*, pp. 44-6.

¹⁵² Quoted in *Evening Post*, 18 Dec. 1916, p. 7; IWC, 20 Mar. 1917. For India's Princely States, the conflict was 'a true *Dharma Yudha* [righteous war] ... in which India is only too proud to participate, and to make any sacrifices that it may involve'. Sufficed to say imperial disunity was not an issue.

¹⁵³ *Imperial War Conference, 1917: Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers laid before the Conference*, Cd. 8566 (London, 1917), pp. 3 and 8-10. 163 pages of (corrected) verbatim discussions were printed in May 1917, while the archival record—cited earlier—runs to over 300 pages (with almost no overlap).

enough' to attend, but, before discussion could begin, Borden objected to the terminology used in departmental memorandum, specifically the word 'America':

Sir Robert Borden ... I suppose "America" there means the United States. I have always considered that Canada was in America.

Mr. [Austen] Chamberlain: We are rather apt here to think you have outgrown America.

Lord Derby: I offer on behalf of the Quartermaster-General my apologies, and ask that the words "U.S.A." be substituted for "America."

Mr Chamberlain: The difficulty here is that the United States Ambassador calls himself the American Ambassador and calls the Embassy, not the Embassy of the United States, but the American Embassy.

Sir Robert Borden: I am aware that they have assumed in their official communications a title which embraces both the North and South American Continents. But we have never adopted that designation in Canada, and I hope it will not be adopted here

Mr Chamberlain: Did I understand the Secretary of State for War to say that we would not discuss "War Medals" to-day?

Lord Derby: I have had a message to say that medals would not be taken to-day

Mr Massey: It is on the Order Paper

[Derby:] If it comes up I can be over here in five minutes.¹⁵⁴

Neither noblesse nor holding a great office of state offered much protection from the representatives of Greater Britain; as will be seen, Lloyd George made good use of their verve. It was hoped, however, that the deliberations might (in the words of George V) 'lead to the closer knitting together of all parts of His Empire in their united efforts to

¹⁵⁴ 'Imperial War Conference, 1917', CAB 32/1.

bring the present war to a victorious conclusion'.¹⁵⁵ Contrary to the predictions of the 'greatest intellects of the Empire', Dominion self-government had strengthened the imperial bond. The proof was the million men from the Dominions then under arms, a development that Borden thought should be 'constantly in mind'. Granting 'full citizenship, which involves a voice in foreign relations,' would likely further strengthen imperial loyalty, particularly with George V having been the first Sovereign to visit 'all parts of the Empire' prior to assuming the throne. The simultaneous sitting of the IWC and a British War Cabinet was of 'great significance', said Borden in opening the discussion on the Empire's Constitution. Massey believed it to be 'one of the most important events that had ever taken place in the history of the British Empire'.¹⁵⁶ Smuts had a similar reaction, though he warned that the problems, which would confront them in this new 'era', would likely be far greater than in the previous one. Smut's prediction presumably contributed to the discord expressed by the former New Zealand Prime Minister. Sir Joseph Ward on the one hand recognised the importance of Borden's resolution, but worried about the effect(s) of postponing the 'consideration of this question'. Asserting that local autonomy is to be preserved would create the impression among the millions of 'sensitive or nervous people' that their autonomy was open to negotiation. Westminster, even if it wanted to do so, would find that it lacked the power to 'interfere with the local autonomy of South Africa, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or any other portion of the self-governing Dominions unless they each separately so decide[d]'. Foreign policy and the issue of naval defence necessitated some sort of

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Cd. 8566, p. 15.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 41-2 and 44.

Dominion representation 'at the heart of the Empire'. But Ward objected to Borden's desire that the matter be settled at a future meeting as it meant everyone returned to their respective countries in a 'state of generalisation', unable to say what said conference would even debate. How the 'equality of nationhood' was to be brought about needed to be addressed at the current conference, Ward argued. Based on Dominion experience, the forthcoming extension of the franchise in Britain was bound to have a negative effect on the Empire. The House of Commons would be debating an ever widening array of issues, thereby lessening the chances of 'having purely Empire matters expeditiously dealt with'. After all, said an exasperated Ward, it is 'notorious that the machinery of the House of Commons has been clogged and has been inadequate for years'. Until Britons came to the realisation that Westminster cannot be both a domestic and imperial body, said Ward, it would be impossible 'to raise a structure for the Empire that is going to keep the Empire for the English, the Irish, the Scotch, and the Welsh, the South Africans, the Indians and for all the people of the other dependencies of the Empire'. Ironically, Ward correctly anticipated that rapidly moving events would force this issue to the fore 'at an earlier period than perhaps any of us imagine at the present moment'.¹⁵⁷

To mark the importance and significance of their meetings, the Conference addressed a request to the Palace 'to present a humble address to His Majesty'; which in part read:

Summoned to the centre of Your Majesty's Empire in the midst of the greatest War that has ever afflicted the human race, it has been our privilege to share in the deliberations of Your Majesty's advisers in this country and ... have further in our Imperial War Conference considered the steps which may be required to

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 48 and 51-6.

ensure that the fruits of victory may not be lost by unpreparedness in the time of peace, and so to develop the resources of the Empire that it may not be possible hereafter for an unscrupulous enemy to repeat his outrages upon liberty and civilisation.¹⁵⁸

Two different interpretations, however, emerged as to what had actually occurred. Whereas Lloyd George saw the gathering as an ‘Imperial Cabinet’, less than a fortnight later, Borden, in a speech to the Empire Press Association, spoke of ‘two Cabinets’. The War Cabinet directed the British war effort, while IWC had a ‘wider purpose, jurisdiction and personnel’. Given the flexibility of the British Constitution neither vision was initially problematic.¹⁵⁹ Both interpretations, however, were faulty; a point Lloyd George recognised in the final meeting of the IWC. ‘If there were to be a resurrection of the old British Cabinet system it would be obviously impossible to graft an Imperial Cabinet on to a Cabinet of twenty or more members’, he reasoned. Lloyd George foresaw an Imperial Cabinet as ‘a delegation of the British Cabinet meeting’ with the Dominion Premiers and Indian representatives, including the Secretary of State. A true Imperial Cabinet, however, came into existence in the final months of the war. Borden and the other Dominion politicians came to regret their initial agreement with Lloyd George’s interpretation of future Imperial Cabinets.¹⁶⁰

The overseas representatives possessed real influence, while in London. As the Imperial War Conference ended, Lloyd George was awarded the Freedom of the City of London. The summary cable of his Guildhall speech emphasised that the Prime Minister

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-122.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in C. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies, 1867-1921* (Toronto, 1977), p. 208. Borden’s entire statement is in *The Times*, 3 Apr. 1917, pp. 7-8. Concluding, Borden anticipated that the summoning of the IWC would mark the ‘birth of a new and greater Imperial Commonwealth. (Cheers.)’

¹⁶⁰ IWC Minutes, 2 May 1917, CAB 23/40.

believed that the ‘Council of Empire must become a reality’. Moreover, he said, the Empire should be consulted before, not during, a war. However, the IWC adopted rather vague objectives as to ‘the policy of the Empire’. None of these dealt with the conduct of the war effort.¹⁶¹

Once the Dominion politicians left Britain, their influence evaporated. Consequently, with the failure of the Nivelle offensive and the collapsing Tsarist state, and consultation by cable being deemed ‘practically impossible’, it was left to the British War Cabinet alone to sanction the Flanders Offensive, with the capture of Vimy Ridge in April 1917 having had no affect on the ‘strategic picture of the war’. Between 9 April and 17 May, the British suffered 159,000 casualties; with a daily causality rate *higher* than during the Battle of the Somme. The major British offensive for 1917, however, was Passchendaele, also known as the third Battle of Ypres, which Haig had been planning since 1915. Two of Britain’s five armies attacked on 31 July 1917, but quickly became bogged down in a ‘quagmire of mud and misery’.¹⁶² An assault on Hill 70 overlooking the city of Lens was designed to draw German reserves away from Flanders, but the ten days of fighting in August 1917 saw 8,677 Canadians killed, wounded or missing. But with an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 German casualties, it was, to quote the commander of the Canadian Royal Artillery, General E.W.B. Morrison, ‘the greatest Boche-killing week that anyone on the Canadian Corps has ever taken part in’. The Battle of Hill 70 was to that point in the war one of the Allies’ few successful

¹⁶¹ Cd. 8566, p. 125; [Thames Star](#), 28 April 1917, p. 5; IWC Minutes, 1 and 2 May 1917, CAB 23/40.

¹⁶² L. Amery, ‘The Future of the Imperial Cabinet System’, 29 June 1918, *DCER*, p. 334; Cook, *Shock Troops*, pp. 145 and 255.

examples of attrition warfare. Such a strategy was repellent, but unavoidable on the Western Front.¹⁶³ Passchendaele, however, ‘epitomizes the nadir of warfighting’. ‘Seemingly homicidal, chateau-dwelling generals’, kilometres from the front, seemed delighted in cycling through fifty-one of the sixty British divisions in theatre. The Australians alone suffered a ‘crippling 38,000 casualties’, in comparison to the 16,404 suffered by the Canadian Corps. The 109-day campaign cost the British Empire some 275,000 men, versus an estimated 220,000 German casualties.¹⁶⁴

Lloyd George, in particular, was shaken by the Flanders Offensive but felt powerless to stop the carnage as that meant forcing the generals to ‘conform to his strategic judgement’. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), Field Marshall Sir William Robertson, had his own concerns about Haig’s Flanders’ Offensive, and, in turn, Haig had concerns about Robertson, but neither officer accepted that the War Cabinet had ‘any effective say in military affairs’.¹⁶⁵ Even the CIGS had to plead for ‘some interesting information’ to assuage the War Cabinet.¹⁶⁶ Six weeks later, the newest member of the War Cabinet, Sir Edward Carson, assured Haig that ‘the War Cabinet would not be allowed to interfere’ with his offensive. Meanwhile, events in Russia were rapidly moving Lenin’s way.¹⁶⁷ Opinion differs on which country least could afford the loss of manpower wasted in the mud fields of Flanders. In hindsight, the answer was clearly Germany. Contemporary perspective, however, suggested the

¹⁶³ Ibid. pp. 263-307.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. pp. 309, 316-7 and 365-6.

¹⁶⁵ Grigg, *Lloyd George: War Leader*, pp. 228 and 224.

¹⁶⁶ Robertson to Haig’s Chief of Staff, 2 Aug. 1917, quoted in Ibid. p. 224.

¹⁶⁷ Haig diary, mid-Sept. 1917, quoted in Ibid. p. 235; R. Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), pp. 54-60.

opposite. The Russian armies were disintegrating long before the Americans would enter the line. Moreover, in light of what was to come, Haig's depletion of imperial manpower is indefensible.¹⁶⁸ As the Germans were planning their spring offensive, in response to the suggestion of holding another Imperial Conference sometime before mid-February 1918, Bonar Law, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, stressed that the 'Government fully realises the importance of keeping in the closest touch with ... [the Dominions] and will be guided by their wishes as to time of holding the next Conference'. Parliamentary business meant that Borden did not sail until 27 May, while Hughes set off for London—via Vancouver, Seattle and Washington, where he met Wilson on 29 May and addressed the Anglophile Pilgrims Club of New York a few days later—the previous month. Hughes' propagandising meant that he did not arrive in Britain until after the start of the second Imperial War Conference. Massey travelled with Hughes' party on the Pacific crossing, and evidently parted company at some point as he attended the first session of the IWC.¹⁶⁹ Whereas Lloyd George and the rest of the British War Cabinet were reluctant to address the problem(s) of the ascendancy of 'professional advice', the Dominion premiers would be undaunted.¹⁷⁰

'Since we separated last year neither our hopes nor our fears have been realised', announced Lloyd George at the outset of the second IWC. As problematic as the

¹⁶⁸ Cook, *Shock Troops*, p. 366; Grigg, *Lloyd George: War Leader*, p. 277; M. Kitchen, *The German Offensives of 1918* (Stroud, 2001).

¹⁶⁹ *Hansard*, ic. 568; Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, p. 219; Bridge, *William Hughes*, pp. 52-4; [Poverty Bay Herald](#), 17 June 1918, p. 3; Imperial War Conference, 1918: Minutes of Proceedings and Papers laid before the Conference (Other than those published in [Cd. 9177]), CAB 32/1; [Otago Daily Times](#), 17 June 1918, p. 4; IWC Minutes, 11 June 1918, CAB 23/41.

¹⁷⁰ Grigg, *Lloyd George: War Leader*, pp. 278-9. Borden (and presumably the other premiers) received a number of worrisome telegrams from Lloyd George in the days following the initiation of the German offensive. Colonial Secretary to Governor General, 30 Mar. and 5 Apr. 1918, *DCER*, pp. 192-3 and 197.

Bolshevik Revolution had been, with only one of a promised seventeen divisions in the line, the ‘American Army undoubtedly is our worst disappointment’. Aeroplanes and artillery were also lacking. Lloyd George could not say this publically, but the Dominions had the ‘right ... [to] know exactly what the position is’. The wanton slaughter of Passchendaele, claimed Lloyd Gorge, was really the fault of General Petain, who had refused to throw the ‘whole of his strength’ at the German lines. Had he done so ‘great results might have been achieved’. As to the future, Lloyd George warned that the war effort was entering a ‘very critical time’, but that the Allies could look forward to possessing ‘superior forces’ in 1919. Two days earlier, the Secretary of State for War, Lord Milner, had warned Lloyd George to prepare ‘for France and Italy being beaten to their knees’. If this came to pass, the ‘German-Austro-Turko-Bulgar bloc will be master of all Europe and Northern and Central Asia up to the point where Japan steps in to bar the way’. Milner advised ‘knit[ting] together in the closest conceivable alliance’ the ‘remaining free peoples of the world’ to confront this nightmare scenario.¹⁷¹ Long, not surprisingly, therefore stressed the need to further strengthen imperial bonds in his opening address to the 1918 Imperial War Conference, while also hoping that their work would also contribute to the ‘oiling of the great Imperial machine’.¹⁷² Borden, for better or worse, stuck a spanner into that very machine.

After summarising the ‘war activities’ undertaken by Canada since they last met, with the new CIGS, General Sir Henry Wilson, having just re-entered the room, Borden

¹⁷¹ IWC Shorthand notes, 11 June 1918, CAB 23/43. Quoted in Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 313-4.

¹⁷² *Imperial War Conference, 1918: Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers laid before the Imperial War Conference*, Cd. 9177 (London, 1918), p. 15.

said that ‘in order to discharge my duty both to you and to my own people, I will be perfectly frank’.¹⁷³ Alarmed at Lloyd George’s statement, and lacking advanced ‘knowledge of military matters’, Borden, who wanted to know the reason(s) behind the ‘terrible disasters’ that had befallen Imperial forces since the onset of the German offensive, had earlier ‘ordered’ Currie ‘to tell me the truth so far as he understood it’. In short, 16,000 Canadians were lost in taking Passchendaele for what Currie considered ‘no result of importance’. Worse still, improper planning led to two British battalions positioning themselves roughly a hundred yards from where they were supposed to be. When the British artillery barrage lifted, the men were ‘non-existent’. In the confusion, another two British battalions mistakenly attacked adjacent Canadian troops. Currie, said Borden, disregarded all documents signed by the Chief Intelligence Officer, as they were ‘more likely to mislead than to inform’. Whereas the Canadian Corps used 375,000 yards of barbed wire in their defences, the Portuguese used none and two British commanders *together* used a paltry 63,000 yards. Borden naturally enquired about the difference, which Currie said was due to the misplaced belief among ‘many’ British Corps Commanders that having ‘held the Germans in 1914 without barbed wire ... they could hold them in the same way in 1918’. Another British officer told Currie that when his men were constructing their extensive barbed-wire entanglement, his battalion were busy ‘preparing lawn tennis courts’. A clearly angry Borden declared: ‘This war cannot be won by casual allusion to or reliance upon what was done in 1914’. The past four

¹⁷³ IWC Shorthand notes, 13 June 1918, CAB 23/43. The CIGS had left the room when Borden began speaking, but was recalled by Lloyd George once it became clear that the military was being criticised. The shorthand notes omit the CIGS’ initial departure. Borden, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 813.

years had simply seen too many ‘remarkable changes in methods of warfare’. Furthermore, the apparent policy of limiting promotions to no higher than Brigadier-Generals amounted ‘to scrapping the brains of the nation in the greatest struggle of history’. Had Canada adopted such a policy, Currie’s talent and leadership would have been missed (to give but one example). ‘I think Sir Robert Borden was justified in expressing the opinion that he has expressed ...’, said Massey at the outset of his remarks. Quite simply, proclaimed the New Zealand Prime Minister, ‘the Empire is in danger’.

New Zealanders also struggled to understand the setbacks of 1918; to say nothing of the ‘great deal of uneasiness felt ever since the Passchendaele fight’. Massey had ‘reliable officers and men’ volunteering ‘horrifying [information] with regard to what took place at Passchendaele’. Another man Massey had known for years said New Zealanders were ‘simply shot down like rabbits’. Massey demanded accountability.¹⁷⁴ Borden had thought Smuts would speak in support, but he said nothing. Later that day, Lloyd George circulated an explanation of why the Flanders Offensive was launched. The next day Smuts, who was a member of both the Imperial and British War Cabinets, explained why Lloyd George’s ‘policy of conserving our resources for the great effort which was to come in 1918’ was abandoned. ‘In the last resort,’ Smuts proclaimed, ‘the Government was bound, in regard to matters strategic, to follow the advice of its expert military advisers’. Moreover, both the Canadians and New Zealanders arrived in the later stages of the offensive, so their comments emphasised the ‘indescribable’ without

¹⁷⁴ IWC Shorthand notes, 13 June 1918.

bearing ‘the whole situation in mind’. The New Zealanders were not ‘sent to a useless slaughter’, suggested Smuts. They simply ‘appeared in this offensive in its later stages when it had already become impossible to achieve success’. Half a million men were sacrificed at Passchendaele over the course of six months when (as it turned out) the Royal Navy and a ‘very small force’ were able to secure the same strategic objective—depriving the German fleet of the use of Ostend and Zeebrugge—over the course of two nights. Lions were indeed led by donkeys. The meeting ended with Lloyd George suggesting that the discussion be continued as the Australian representatives had yet to arrive.¹⁷⁵ In the interim, Borden was undaunted. In a memorandum written the next day for a colleague in Ottawa, he repeated his belief that the ‘present situation is due to lack of organisation, lack of system, lack of preparation, lack of foresight and incompetent leadership’. Quite simply, he concluded, ‘we are being defeated by our own methods’. Overall, his rebuke was well received; particularly amongst the overseas representatives, who ‘either openly or privately’ expressed gratitude for Borden’s ‘service’.¹⁷⁶ Lloyd George thought the speech was ‘memorable’, while Lord Curzon and Long offered ‘very warm congratulations’. Borden later recalled Milner whispering to him that his remarks would not go unanswered. But they did.¹⁷⁷ Not surprisingly, Hughes also wanted to know: ‘Are the men that we are pouring into this machine, the men who are dying, the men who are suffering, are they being properly led? Is the strategy as good as it possibly

¹⁷⁵ Borden, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 813; Lloyd George to Dominion Premiers, 13 June 1918, *DCER*, p. 201; IWC Shorthand notes, 14 June 1918, CAB 23/43.

¹⁷⁶ Borden, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 808; *DCER*, pp. 202-3.

¹⁷⁷ Borden’s diary and 1930 Address to the Professional Institute of the Canadian Civil Service quoted in Borden, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 814. The CIGS later said that he would ‘answer’ Borden ‘some other time’. IWC Shorthand notes, 18 June 1918, CAB 23/43.

can be? If there have been blunders, at the eleventh hour can we repair them?’ With all the overseas representatives, Lloyd George said, ‘following largely on the same lines as Sir Robert Borden’, the Prime Minister suggested that the premiers and, as the representative of South Africa, Louis Botha, Smuts, meet to discuss the matter.¹⁷⁸

Technically, only a sub-committee of the IWC, the Committee of Prime Ministers held their first meeting the following day. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State for War joined the CIGS in the ranks of those ‘also present’. With the latter warning of a ‘grave crisis on the Western Front, the CIGS proposed transferring a British and Australian division from Palestine to France. Concluding his memorandum, Wilson wrote that he ‘shall be glad to have the War Cabinet’s approval of these proposals as soon as possible’ At the Conference, however, the CIGS was asked to choose which force he preferred, ‘if only one were decided on’. The ‘higher direction and strategy of the War’ was slowly passing to Lloyd George and his overseas counterparts.¹⁷⁹ With Lloyd George held up in the House of Commons, the Dominion premiers peppered Milner and Smuts with questions. Hughes wondered if air power could ‘produce greater results than the costly and exhausting offensives’ like Flanders and were imperial scientists doing all they could? Hughes and Borden both enquired as to why Britain’s 5th Army collapsed when the German Offensive hit. Massey wanted to know if plans to have Allied troops join the Japanese intervention in Siberia would weaken the Western Front. Next, they heard a detailed statement from Curzon on the ‘position and prospects

¹⁷⁸ IWC Shorthand notes, 20 June 1918, CAB 23/43. Borden excused himself from attending the Imperial War Conference to ‘devote’ his attention on the ‘conditions at the front’.

¹⁷⁹ Secretary’s Notes from the Conference of Prime Ministers, 21 June 1918, CAB 23/44A; Henry Wilson, ‘Reinforcements for the British Army in France’, 13 June 1918, CAB 24/54/GT 4837.

of the War in the East'. The Admiralty had already supplied its brief.¹⁸⁰ Five days after ordering the transfer of the 54th Division from Palestine to France, the Committee of Prime Ministers issued instructions to the Deputy CIGS temporarily to suspend their departure. The successful Italian repulse of an Austrian attack meant that reinforcements for the Western Front could now be withdrawn from Italy, which also had the advantage of being able to be transported in ten days, whereas the 54th Division 'could only be rapidly withdrawn when the shipping was available'.¹⁸¹

Meanwhile, the IWC resumed consideration of the post-war naval defence of the Empire. In response to Resolution IV of the 1917 Imperial War Conference, the Admiralty proposed that a lone Fleet be placed 'under the control of an Imperial Naval Authority both in peace and war'. Ministers would be responsible to their local Parliaments for the 'Local Navy Boards', which would oversee dockyards, training institutions and all 'other subjects connected with the maintenance of the Fleet in a state of efficiency'. Policy/Strategy, however, would be set by a (yet to be defined) Imperial Naval Authority. The Admiralty 'tentative[ly]' proposed modelling the new Authority on the Committee of Prime Ministers. Whenever possible, 'and at least once a year,' the Dominion Ministers of the Navy would gather to consider the 'Annual Estimates and deliberation on large matters of policy'. When not assembled, they would be represented by the First Lord of the Admiralty, whom they would be in 'direct communication' with 'at all times'. It was expected that such a system would in time give way to one of

¹⁸⁰ Secretary's Notes from the Conference of Prime Ministers, 24 June 1918, CAB 23/44A; IWC Shorthand notes, 25 June 1918, CAB 23/43; 'A General Review of the Naval Situation (April 1917 to June 1918)', 15 June 1918, CAB 24/54/GT 4861.

¹⁸¹ Secretary's Notes from the Conference of Prime Ministers, 26 June 1918, CAB 23/44A. A final decision was postponed until the CIGS returned from Italy.

‘continuous representation’, and that Dominion officers would move into ‘higher administrative posts’.¹⁸² It was hoped ‘preliminary discussions’ would occur before the Dominion representatives departed. When the British War Cabinet asked for ‘any information as to the course which the Committee of Prime Ministers was taking,’ Lloyd George had nothing to offer. The Premiers were still largely ‘asking for information’.¹⁸³ Hughes was demanding an explanation of the British government’s policy regarding manpower and technology. Victory, he proclaimed, had to come at an ‘infinitely lower price of blood’. While Lloyd George wondered what was behind the Australian’s outburst, it was the Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill, who understood the point Hughes was trying to make. ‘Why do our men go on foot and get shot down in tens of thousands and the [unmanned] Tanks should be handed to the Americans’, asked Churchill. Imperial manpower should be channelled into the ‘highest forms of scientific apparatus’, leaving infantry duties to the ‘fresh’ Americans. Talk of fighting to the ‘last man’ had to be abandoned, particularly as the conflict might persist for ‘another two years’. Casualties on the ‘scale of 1916 and 1917’ were unsustainable. ‘England has to live’, Hughes proclaimed. Chamberlain appears to have abruptly ended the discussion, upon enquiring whether this was not the kind of issue that the Committee of Prime Ministers was to deal with.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² IWC Minutes, 27 June 1918, CAB 23/41; Cd. 8566, p. 4; First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir R.E. Wemyss, ‘Naval Defence of the British Empire’, 17 May 1918, CAB 24/51/GT 4571. If accepted by the ‘Overseas Nations’, the Admiralty thought the scheme could even be made to include India.

¹⁸³ IWC Minutes, 27 June 1918; War Cabinet Minutes, 28 June 1918, CAB 23/6. Subsequent sessions of the IWC were devoted to detailed surveys of the ‘air position’ and the Ministry of Munitions. IWC Shorthand notes, 28 June and 12 July 1918, CAB 23/43.

¹⁸⁴ IWC Shorthand notes, 28 June 1918; IWC Minutes, 28 June 1918, CAB 23/41.

At Lloyd George's suggestion, the premiers visited France the following week, in part to participate in discussions at the Supreme War Council.¹⁸⁵ Before the resumption of meetings of the IWC, Borden, Hughes and Smuts discussed the 'desirability of a change in the method of communication between the Governments of the Dominions and the Home Government'. Lloyd George's invocation of an IWC in December 1916, they thought, had forever rendered passé the conduct of Anglo-Dominion relations through a 'Department of the Home Government'. Akin to the proposed Imperial Naval Authority, communications henceforth should be between the Dominion premiers and the British Prime Minister, who would, if necessary, convey information to the Imperial Cabinet.¹⁸⁶ Leo Amery, then an M.P. and Assistant Secretary to the IWC, thought that there was no reason why Borden should not be able to 'send a cable from Ottawa to Hankey containing your views in any matter of common Imperial interest either for the Prime Minister himself or for circulation to your colleagues of the IWC'. In an enclosed memorandum, labelled for 'private circulation', Amery made the case for appointing an 'Imperial Secretary of State'. But if the 'Imperial Cabinet system' were to go forward, Amery argued, then Borden was correct. Communication was the central crux. However, he also raised a second point: to be effective an Imperial Cabinet needed a means of measuring imperial opinion. Consequently, Imperial Conferences had to be broadened

¹⁸⁵ Borden, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 820; *Evening Post*, 8 July 1918, p. 7.

¹⁸⁶ Borden to Lloyd George, 28 June 1918, *DCER*, p. 331. To address Asquith's 1911 complaint that such a system would impose an impossible burden on the Prime Minister, Borden suggested that the British Prime Minister 'should be *ex officio* Secretary of State for Inter-Imperial Affairs (Dominions) and that there should be a Parliamentary Secretary upon whom all matters of detail and many matters of minor importance might be devolved. But the Prime Minister's functions and duties must be real and not nominal.'

into a ‘Conference of Parliaments’. Such a system had the potential of avoiding the constitutional troubles associated with even the simplest form of Imperial Federation.¹⁸⁷

Although the Imperial War Conference endorsed a change in the ‘channels of communication’, and the IWC generally accepted that the ‘old machinery’ needed replacing, the issue of how the Dominions would remain in communication with Lloyd George once the ‘Cabinet of Governments’ disbanded quickly became moot.¹⁸⁸ By the time the Committee of Prime Ministers met to discuss their ‘preliminary draft Report’ on future military policy, the Last Hundred Days’ campaign—discussed earlier—had begun. As Borden was about to sail for home he spoke first, and his only ‘remark of substance’ concerning the ‘body of the Report’ related to the phrase: ‘The Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated ... that public opinion in the Allied countries could be sustained by the hope of almost certain victory to be achieved, by the accumulation of overwhelming forces, in 1920’. Other sections of the Report, Borden suggested, pointed to the Allies being at their greatest strength in July 1919.¹⁸⁹ No one, least of all the General Staff, knew that the end was nigh; though Haig was once again claiming that victory was at hand.¹⁹⁰ It was estimated that the arriving American divisions would by June 1919 simply ‘make up for the drop in French and British strength’. German

¹⁸⁷ Amery to Borden, 8 July 1918, *Ibid.*, p. 332. The memorandum, dated 29 June 1918, is on pp. 333-44. Technological developments in the 1920s would have rendered this new system almost practicable. A. Anduaga, *Wireless and Empire: Geopolitics, Radio Industry and Ionosphere in the British Empire, 1918-1939* (Oxford, 2009); G. Pirie, *Air Empire: British Imperial Civil Aviation, 1919-39* (Manchester, 2009).

¹⁸⁸ Cd. 9177, p. 6; IWC Minutes, 23 and 25 July 1918, CAB 23/41. Also see IWC Minutes for 30 July.

¹⁸⁹ Committee of Prime Ministers Minutes, 15 and 16 Aug. 1918, CAB 23/44A; Borden, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 845.

¹⁹⁰ ‘Summary of the Military Situation in the Various Theatres of War for the Eight Days Ending 9 August, with Comments by the General Staff’, 10 August 1918, W[ar] O[ffice] 106/319; D. French, *The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition, 1916-1918* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 235-6 and 258; B. Millman, *Pessimism and British War Policy, 1916-1918* (London, 2001), pp. 255-7 and 262-9.

divisions, it was predicted, would considerably outnumber the Allies on the Western Front, even ‘allowing 21 Divisions in the Eastern theatre’.¹⁹¹

It is, of course, impossible to say what would have happened if the Great War had persisted. One can say with certainty, however, that the unexpected end of the Great War rendered the Committee of Prime Ministers into an all but forgotten development that usurped, albeit in an ‘unconstitutional but commonsensical way’, the British and Imperial War Cabinets.¹⁹² Lloyd George remained in communication with his Dominion counterparts, informing the Canadian Prime Minister (and presumably Massey, who departed shortly after Borden) of the Ottoman request for an armistice in late October; in part because he ‘sympathized with Dominion nationalism, as Churchill never did’.¹⁹³ However, Lloyd George also needed the Dominion premiers. In his memoirs, Borden recalls a mid-July 1918 walk on which Lloyd George confessed to having been ‘boiling with impotent rage’ for the previous eight months. ‘He explained at great length their constant mistakes, their failure to fulfil expectations, and the unnecessary losses which their lack of foresight had occasioned’, wrote Borden. Borden enquired why had not those responsible been removed from their position(s) within the ‘high command’? Lloyd George, of course, had tried, but he was unable to persuade the Cabinet. Furthermore, as was seen with Carson, ‘the high command had their affiliations and roots everywhere’.¹⁹⁴ Lloyd George later admitted that the Passchendaele Offensive

¹⁹¹ General de Radcliffe, ‘Forecast of Situation on Western Front in June 1919 ... Paper Prepared by DMO for CIGS to take to Supreme War Council Conference’, 30 May 1918, WO 106/314.

¹⁹² Grigg, *Lloyd George: War Leader*, p. 541

¹⁹³ Colonial Secretary to Governor General, 22 Oct. 1918, *DCER*, pp. 213-4; Grigg, *Lloyd George: War Leader*, pp. 576 and 454. Hughes and Smuts remained in Britain.

¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Borden, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 827; *Ibid.* p. 827.

could have been halted if the War Cabinet ‘had the moral courage to do it’. But they feared generals later insisting ‘they had been on the point of breaking through, that the enemy was demoralised, and at the last moment they had been stopped by civilian politicians’. Both Massey and Hughes declared that had they been present, they would have opposed Passchendaele. It was the responsibility of the Committee of Prime Ministers to ‘fully examine the probabilities before sanctioning the operations’. ‘If the British Empire won a victory on the field of battle, but bled to death in the process’, Hughes added, they would ‘have gained the shadow but lost the substance’.¹⁹⁵

The Great War effectively ended before the Committee of Prime Ministers could accomplish the task envisioned by Lloyd George. That new age never came; thereby creating the paradox that the Great War both strengthened and weakened the British world.¹⁹⁶ Instead, as the next section demonstrates, Churchill was in a sense right. Institutional Britain had indeed survived, but it too would eventually shake.

¹⁹⁵ Committee of Prime Ministers, 1 Aug. 1918, CAB 23/44A. Also see the (discussion surrounding the) ‘Report of the Committee of Prime Ministers, Preliminary Draft as a Basis for Consideration’, 14 Aug. 1918, appendix to Committee of Prime Ministers Minutes, 16 Aug. 1918

¹⁹⁶ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 393-5. The Committee of Prime Ministers seems relatively unknown. A Google site search for the phrase produced a lone hit, a 1963 debate over the control of ‘NATO’s nuclear armoury’. *Hansard*, ccxvi. 1046-7. The same search in *Trove* brought up twenty-seven hits, twenty-four of which were in the 1920s. *Papers Past*, by contrast, only had five results.

2.2 ‘The laurels were with the new second Tory party’: The Empire Free Trade crusade and the United Empire by-elections, 1929-1931

In our lifetime dynasties have fallen, empires have been shaken, nations have emerged. But the same English politicians go on playing the same game in the same way. Once he has scaled the ladder at Westminster, only death or directorships have [the] power to dislodge a British statesman. – Novelist, Robert Gore-Browne, *Saturday Review*, 1 November 1930.

Whereas the previous chapter was concerned with the views of that small cadre of officialdom that set the tone for discussions of imperial issues, this chapter examines the efforts of one man—who while powerful, was not part of the Establishment—to force Westminster to recognise that not only was the ‘Second Age of Union’ over but that Free Trade as a political philosophy had lost its allure.¹ Ultimately, the Empire Free Trade Crusade came to naught, later dismissed as ‘a trivial episode hardly worthy of record’. The fact that a press baron drove the leader of the Tory party to the brink of resignation speaks volumes to the abortive evolution of the British Empire.² For

¹ J. Pocock, ‘The Neo-Britains and the Three Empires’, in J. Pocock, ed., *The Discovery of Islands, Essays in British History* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 181; F. Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2008). The block quotation is on page 553, while the title quotation comes from *The Guardian*, 16 Sept. 1930, p. 10.

² A. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (New York, 1972), p. 273. Outside of accounts of varying lengths and quality in the bibliographies of the principal players, scholarship on the Crusade itself is rare; the introductory essay in J. Barnes and D. Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1945* (London, 1988) being perhaps the most significant account. The only relevant result from the *Bibliography of British and Irish History (BBIH)* using the terms ‘empire’ and ‘by-election’ in the search anywhere option was the 1997 reprint of G. Peele, ‘St George’s and the Empire Crusade’, in C. Cook and J. Ramsden, eds., *By-Elections in British Politics* (London, 1973), pp. 79-108. A search for the phrase ‘empire free trade’ revealed an additional article, but it views the Crusade through the lens of Beaverbrook’s supposed problematic status as a member of the—now widely accepted—British world. J. Calton, ‘Beaverbrook’s Split Imperial Personality: Canada, Britain and the Empire Free Trade Movement of 1929-31’, *The Historian*, 37 (1974), pp. 26-45; this article was also the only relevant entry in *History & Life*. A final search of *BBIH*, using the phrase ‘empire crusade’, yielded Peele’s article again and D. Gossel, ‘The Impact of Mass Media: British Foreign Economic Policy, Lord Beaverbrook and His Empire Crusade’, in C. Haase, ed., *Debating Foreign Affairs: The Public and British Foreign Policy since 1867* (Berlin, 2003),

thousands of years contests over imperial power have ‘inspired ambition and imagination and opened up and closed down political possibilities’, thereby constantly altering imperial trajectories. Imperial history therefore has to take conflicts, like Empire Free Trade, seriously.³ Moreover, recent scholarship has suggested that Britain’s political system throughout the 1920s was inherently unstable owing to the near total destruction of the linchpin of the Edwardian era, the Liberal Party. The restoration of quasi-Edwardian politics after 1922 simply delayed the inevitable reordering of party politics in Britain.⁴ The assistant secretary to the cabinet attributed the problem to the absence of a figure ‘comparable to Joseph Chamberlain’, but the Conservative Party was also plagued by deep, ongoing internal divisions.⁵ The Tories were also the only party to periodically advocate the abandonment of Free Trade in favour of imperial preference throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century, thereby making any sort of ‘rapprochement with other parties most difficult’.⁶ In a sense, the Empire Free Trade Crusade was an ‘embryonic attempt to refashion some elements of the Conservative

pp. 63-77. Gossel, however, is more concerned with Beaverbrook and high politics than the media. Beaverbrook’s crusade would have been inconceivably without Sir Henry Page Croft, who pledged to never lower the standard for imperial preference at the bedside of a dying Joseph Chamberlain and ensured that conservative party leaders never forgot the appeal that Chamberlain’s cause exercised amongst backbench MPs. L. Witherell, ‘Sir Henry Page Croft and Conservative Backbench Campaigns for Empire, 1903-1932’, *Parliamentary History*, xxv (2006), p. 381.

³ J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010), p. 8.

⁴ R. McKibbin, *Parties and People: England 1914-1951* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 64-8 and vi-vii, in particular. A contemporary took a broader view and concluded that the post-war generation across Europe ‘is tired of the old parties and everything for which they stand’. *Saturday Review*, 20 Sept. 1930, p. 332.

⁵ K. Middlemas, ed. *Thomas Jones’ Whitehall Diary, 1916-1925* (London, 1969), p. 249; S. Ball, ‘The Legacy of Coalition: Fear and Loathing in Conservative Politics, 1922-1931’, *Contemporary British History*, xxv (2011), pp. 65-82. Even the furore over the Irwin Declaration—see Section 3.2—was perceived by the editor of *The Times* as ‘a relic of the old Coalition intrigue’. Geoffrey Dawson to Lord Irwin, 31 Oct. 1929, quoted in Ball, ‘Legacy of Coalition’, p. 77.

⁶ G. Stewart, *Burying Caesar: Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party* (London, 1999), p. 56.

Party into a new political alliance'.⁷ Lord Beaverbrook, the proprietor of the *Daily Express*, had hoped his Crusade would capture 'Socialist and Liberal votes'.⁸ But in fighting the all important St George by-election, which was a straight-up contest between two conservative candidates, on the issues of 'Irwinism' and 'the leadership of the Conservative party', Beaverbrook, writing to a supporter, soon after the victory of the official Tory candidate, confessed that 'the defeat is due to my own stupidity'. Continuing he wrote, 'the issue might have been the policy of Empire Free Trade and the cause and cure of unemployment. On that platform we can turn and win Socialist and Liberal votes.'⁹ Whether Beaverbrook was right or not will never be definitively known; his Crusade was a one-off affair as a series of crises precipitated the formation less than a year later of a National Government, which radically altered the political landscape in Britain down to 1945.¹⁰ A.J.P. Taylor 'implicitly' thinks not, but a speculative essay suggests that 'the fragmentary evidence that exists at least invites an open mind on this issue'.¹¹ Measuring public opinion before the advent of the [Mass Observation](#) project is highly problematic. Consequently, this chapter will use newspaper coverage of by-

⁷ Peele, 'St George's and the Empire Crusade', p. 67.

⁸ Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 305. It is worth noting that the *Daily Express*, unlike the rest of Britain's daily papers, drew readers from all walks of life. Taylor claimed that the *Daily Express* 'was what England would have been without her class system'. Circulation numbers for the paper were rising from 1,603,490 in August 1929, to 1,633,892 a few months later and over 2.3 million by the late 1930s. Quoted in F. Gannon, *The British Press and Germany, 1936-1939* (Oxford, 1971), p. 35; *Daily Express*, 10 Aug. and 13 Nov. 1929, p. 1; Gannon, *The British Press and Germany*, p. 34.

⁹ Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 305. 'Irwinism' was the preferred term of the Indian Defence League and a regular feature of the popular Tory press. Quoted in A. Roberts, *The Holy Fox: The Life of Lord Halifax* (London, 1997; originally published London, 1991), p. 29. Beaverbrook was not alone in seeing the electorate as being fluid. David Lloyd George worried that if the second minority Labour government lasted for awhile and remained moderate, it could poach 'half the Liberal party'. Entry for 27 June 1929, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 40.

¹⁰ For a brief account of the three separate crises that together toppled the second Labour government, see McKibbin, *Parties and People*, pp. 69-70 n. 1.

¹¹ G. Peele, 'St George's and the Empire Crusade', in C. Cook and J. Ramsden, eds., *By-Elections in British Politics* (London, 1997), p. 83. No evidence, however, is cited.

election results, including the traditional five empire by-elections, Twickham, Bromley, South Paddington, East Islington and Westminster, St George's, as a means of assessing Beaverbrook's appeal with non-Tories; a methodology that admittedly is not without flaws.¹² However, it is necessary first to consider the intertwined factors that enabled the rise of the Empire Crusade.

On the one hand, the Empire Free Trade Crusade took place against the favourable backdrop of rising unemployment and the defeat the Conservative Party suffered in the 1929 election, which further increased doubts over Stanley Baldwin's leadership. Its significant, albeit brief, success is also attributable to the dwindling band of defenders of Free Trade, along with even broader changes in post-war British society. It was not simply a case of Cobdenite Liberals dying off. The Cobden Club itself was fading in importance, with Coalition Liberals resigning en masse in 1921-2 and John Maynard Keynes abandoning the Club that was once home to the Liberal titans of Victorian society in 1924. Four years later, the Club, once the standard-bearer of Free Trade, had 'almost ceased to function'.¹³ Keynes was not alone in questioning pre-war assumptions. Whereas consumers had previously associated the cheap loaf as the principle benefit of Free Trade, wartime shortages, over milk, in particular, led many to demand (in the words of a woman from Salford) 'an equitable distribution of food'. The hundreds of thousands of Britons who descended on Hyde Park less than a year after the Armistice wanted not free markets, but 'democratic entitlements, fair shares, and

¹² By the end of the 1920s, with newspapers largely under the editorial control of their owners, parties turned to their 'local constituency officials and agents' to be 'the eyes and ears of MPs'. S. Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929-1931* (New Haven, 1988)p. xv. Also see footnote 38.

¹³ Walter Runciman, 18 Sept. 1928, quoted in Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, p. 254.

regulated, stable supplies and prices'.¹⁴ Industrialists also worried about stable supplies; in August 1914, Germany effectively supplied all of Britain's magnetos and tungsten, plus three quarters of the 'lifeblood' of the textile industry, dyes. The chairman of the Bradford Dyers' Association, Milton Sharp, told a Board of Trade Committee mid-way through the war that although a Tory, he had also been 'an out and out unrepentant Free Trader' but, once the war was over, planned to 'be a little child again and learn my lessons anew'.¹⁵ Similarly, segments of the electorate were also re-examining Britain's classes, which led to tariffs becoming the lesser of two evils and, in the city of Leeds, voters abandoned Liberalism wholesale.¹⁶ Middle class voters, already weary of the possibility of higher income taxes under Labour, concluded in the midst of the Crusade that the working classes were 'getting too uppish'. 'The inability of would-be employers', noted a long time Liberal organiser, 'to obtain domestic servants and unskilled labour, while they see the statistical records of the participants in "the dole" mounting every week, is making a formidable impression, particularly on the mind of the middle-class voter, and especially of the women'.¹⁷ The Empire Free Trade Crusade came about only a year after women under thirty but over twenty-one received the vote. And, as Fleet Street's first press baron, Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, wrote, in 1903, 'every extension of the franchise, renders more powerful the newspaper

¹⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 191 and 193. Also see pp. 200-202.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 293 and 286; Sharp to the Committee on Textile Industries, 7 July 1916, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 285

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 319. In 1918, Coalition Liberals were returned in four of the city's six constituencies. The last Liberal was returned by West Leeds in 1922. Unless otherwise indicated, all election results in the remainder of this chapter come from F. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-1949* (Rev. edn., London, 1977).

¹⁷ E.G. Brunner, 14 Nov. 1930, quoted in Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, p. 345.

and less powerful the politician'.¹⁸ 'It was commonly believed', writes one media historian, that 'the arrival of a mass electorate would ... open the door to demagogues and newspaper proprietors who could appeal to the poorly educated and excitable new electors'.¹⁹ Moreover, Beaverbrook's Empire Free Trade Crusade took place against the backdrop of the Empire Marketing Board's motherly 'Buy British' campaign and the safeguarding vans of the Empire Industries Association, which promoted the hundreds of open-air, pro-tariff meetings that were being held initially in London and later in Lancashire and Yorkshire, as well. In 1929-30 alone, there were a thousand rallies.²⁰ Beaverbrook launched his campaign in an even more favourable environment than that accorded by the preceding summary of the twilight of Free Trade thanks to the unforeseen consequences that followed from the Tory's unexpected poor performance in the 1929 general election.²¹

The crisis that enveloped the Tory Party following its shocking loss in the aforementioned election has received little scholarly attention; particularly, in comparison to the numerous works on the Liberal and Labour parties from the fall of Herbert Asquith in 1916 to the mid-1920s.²² Together these two periods of crisis determined the nature of party politics in Britain until the emergence of Margaret Thatcher. And yet writing on the Conservatives' time in opposition between 1929 and

¹⁸ Quoted in *The Guardian*, 14 July 2011, [online edition](#).

¹⁹ C. Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India, c.1880-1922* (Manchester, 2003), p. 14.

²⁰ Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, pp. 231-5 and 325. A picture of a van is on page 326.

²¹ In the months leading up to the election, *Punch* likened the British electorate to the Sphinx and depicted the three party leaders staring intently at an egg (by-election results), with the hen (general election) declaring: 'That's not a real egg, gentlemen. You wait till I get to work. I'll show you the genuine article.' 'The Devout Sceptic' and 'The Easter Egg', *Punch*, 20 Feb. and 27 Mar. 1929, respectively.

²² Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, is by far the most important work, with P. Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992) being principally concerned with the broader economic crisis and its fallout.

1931 remains ‘not so much one of debate as a vacuum’.²³ The present chapter seeks not to challenge the conclusions of Stuart Ball or Gillian Peele, who incidentally do not even agree on which by-election was the decisive one, but to further illuminate the Empire Free Trade Crusade by data mining newly accessible material, including material from the databases *British Periodicals* and *Periodicals Archive Online*, supplemented as needed by the conservative press and diaries, the very epitomisation of ‘high politics’.²⁴ While Peele privileges the March 1931 Westminster, St George’s by-election and Ball argues that the most critical phase in the prolonged campaign against the leadership of Stanley Baldwin came in September and October 1930, the high water mark of Beaverbrook’s Crusade actually came in the days following the by-election at East Islington.²⁵

Running on a platform of ‘Safety First’, Tories were stunned to lose the election on 30 May 1929, and dissatisfaction with the increasingly directionless Baldwin mounted. Among the many conservatives that lost their seats that night was the future prime minister, Harold Macmillan; who decades later wrote that he was quite rightly voted out as his ‘unhappy constituents did not want “safety”- which meant hanging about the streets or haunting the factories in despair. Safety meant the dole. They wanted work’. On 5 June, Labour formed its second minority government, prompting

²³ Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. xii.

²⁴ Ball’s book primarily rests on an impressive mixture of ‘high’ and ‘low politics’ sources, which (as this chapter was conceived of post-research phase) are not utilised. Gillian Peele understandably utilised a much more narrow set of sources, with press coverage of (the run up to) the St George by-election drawing on the *Westminster and Pimlico Gazette*, *The Times*, *Daily Express* and the *Daily Herald*. In addition to looking at a broader timeframe, this chapter utilises whenever possible the *Observer* and/or *Guardian* newspapers, which acted as the liberal conscious of Britain. Key word searches were carried out in the various databases for ‘by-election’ and the constituency being contested, the phrase ‘Empire Free Trade’ and so on.

²⁵ Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. xvi-xvii.

Beaverbrook to write (in a letter to the food and shipping magnet, Sir Edmund Vestey): ‘In my opinion the Conservative Party will have no success in the future unless there is a change of leadership. Mr Baldwin is a stubborn man, and like all stubborn men, he is weak and vacillating and quite unable to take decisions in most matters’.²⁶ Neville Chamberlain, a generally loyal lieutenant, later likened his leader to a spinning top, advising that ‘you must keep whipping him or he falls over’.²⁷ Baldwin eventually drifted into the belief that what the Tories ‘were at present fighting was not a programme, but an atmosphere, which no amount of promulgation of counter-programmes would affect’. While there probably was some degree of truth in this, Lord Irwin, who returned to Britain in June 1929 in order to consult the government over constitutional changes he proposed for the Raj, thought that Baldwin found the ‘task of opposition ... constitutionally repugnant’ and that ‘his temperament leads him to push it over far into encouraging himself to sit in the front row of the stalls while the play [Question Period] is being performed’.²⁸ A position that the newly empowered ‘blood-and-thunder Tories’ found increasingly intolerable.²⁹ Nevertheless, the first inklings of

²⁶ Quoted in A. Horne, *Macmillan, 1894-1956* (London, 1988) and A. Chisholm and M. Davie, *Beaverbrook: A Life* (London, 1992), pp. 84 and 278, respectively.

²⁷ Quoted in Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 14. For the counterview, see P. Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999).

²⁸ Lord Irwin to the Chairman of the Tory Party, 25 Feb. 1930, quoted in R. James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers, 1910-37* (London, 1969), p. 306.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 306. Even at the best of times, the inter-war Tory caucus was never a truly national body. And this was particularly true after the 1929 election, where the Tories only captured one of thirty-five and twenty of seventy-one Welsh and Scottish seats, respectively. Defeated MPs, like Macmillan, predominately lost marginal seats in Northern England and, to a lesser extent, the Midlands. The result was almost half of the Tory caucus elected in 1929 came from southern England, which is where the Diehard faction was concentrated. Owing to a variety of reasons, this group of Tory MPs, which numbered between forty and fifty, was largely beyond the control of the Whips and, while they could never overthrow a party leader singlehandedly, they could spearhead a revolt from below as had occurred between 1920 and 1922. Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 18-19 and 21-4.

revolt emanated from Tory constituency associations. Ex-Cabinet ministers, by contrast, quickly attributed their electoral defeat to swinging pendulums, socialist propaganda, working class alienation arising out of the depressed state of British trade and, of course, the continued machinations of Lloyd George. The only minister to lose his seat, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, simply chalked up his loss to the absenteeism from one's constituency that inevitably comes with being a cabinet minister. A group prone to retrospection they were not; the exception being the former secretary of state for Dominion Affairs and the Colonies, Leo Amery, who sarcastically recorded in his diary that after the last Cabinet meeting everyone 'parted very happily, voting ourselves the best government there has ever been, *and full of genuine affection for S.B.*' Amery attributed their defeat in large part to 'Winston's hostility to Empire development', but kept his thoughts to himself.

In early July 1929, as part of a half-hearted enquiry, questionnaires were distributed unevenly to riding associations across England and Wales to seek local perspectives on the electoral disaster.³⁰ While party stalwarts quickly lost interest in the exercise, the surviving draft reports make clear the position of rank and file Tories: 'elections are won and lost on questions of policy, which should be definite and constructive'.³¹ Or, for those that do not speak Tory-esse, a 'definite and constructive'

³⁰ Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 29-31; J. Barnes and D. Nicholson, eds., *The Leo Amery Diaries, 1896-1929* (London, 1980), p. 597; my italics.

³¹ Draft Report of the National Union's Executive Sub-committee, 7 Jan. 1930, quoted in Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 32. Replies to the questionnaire were not preserved, but Ball traced local opinion through surviving constituency minute books. Although most simply recorded that a response was sent, fifteen constituencies minuted their responses in detail—with four additional detailed entries that presumably were at least part of a reply—and criticism of 'Safety First' and the lack of a constructive policy was cited by almost three quarters of these constituencies as the principal cause of defeat, second

policy was a euphemism for protectionism. Why the response from the North Oxfordshire association may have been a bit tardy—arriving in late September 1929—it was succinct. The defeat lay principally with ‘the actions of the Cabinet in riding roughshod over *public and party opinion* in the country, as expressed locally and at Conferences of the Party’.³² Ties of party loyalty were not as immovable as one might presume (in light of the present tyranny of party in several Westminster systems).³³ Long term proponents of more robust imperial policies were now emboldened. Speaking at the Empire Industry Association, only days after the aforementioned enquiry was initiated, Neville Chamberlain announced that the Tory Party was no longer bound by its pre-election promises and called for the introduction of tariffs. The speech attracted ‘immense interest’ from ‘many quarters’, Chamberlain told one of his sisters following ‘an uncomfortable week in the House’.³⁴ Amery used the debate on the throne speech to publically lay bare the deep division within the Conservative caucus between those that favoured tariff reform in whatever guise and Winston Churchill, who as one of the last Unionist free traders, remained ‘tied down by dead dogma’. Although the speech garnered ‘much applause from our people’, Amery thought his attack on the former

only to criticism of the de-rating policy at almost eighty percent. Tied for third place, at just under fifty-eight percent, was granting the vote to the ‘flappers’ and hostile press coverage. Owing to the randomised survival of these minute books, Ball believes that ‘there is no reason to assume that it does not represent an accurate microcosm of the state of feeling within the Conservative Party’ (p. 220). The brief success of Beaverbrook’s Empire Free Trade Crusade further supports the view that rank and file Tories were displeased, at least momentarily.

³² Quoted in *Ibid.* p. 33; my italics.

³³ The parliamentary Conservative Party was held together through both public and party opinion. During the inter-war period, that opinion derived from four main components: 1) an MP’s extended social circle, 2) press opinion, 3) their constituency association and 4) the (fleeting) reaction to stump speeches. Only the first three factors operated more or less year round. *Ibid.* p. xv.

³⁴ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 13 July 1929, in R. Self, ed., *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, The Heir Apparent, 1928-33* (Aldershot, 2002), p. 149.

chancellor of the exchequer aroused ‘anxiety and horror’ amongst the Tory Front Bench.³⁵ A considerable number of young Tories avoided the division lobbies, thereby allowing the minority Labour government to survive its first vote with a majority of one hundred and twenty. There was a widespread belief amongst backbench MPs that Baldwin had been ‘in Winston’s pocket’ for some time.³⁶ Even as Churchill reacted ‘like a bear with a sore head’, the combined effect of Amery and Chamberlain’s speeches

finally induced [Stanley Baldwin] to have a meeting to discuss policy ... [but the caucus] refused to consider making any new statement about policy lest the Liberals should take fright but on the whole they were not averse from the idea that we should make Empire the starting point when we did come to consider the future.³⁷

It is into this environment that Beaverbrook—believing that he could coerce Baldwin and the Tories into adopting imperial preference through the ‘efficacy of the weapon of the press’—launched his Empire Free Trade Crusade.³⁸

³⁵ Entry for 9 July 1929, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 42. During the course of a trans-Atlantic crossing, Amery came to understand that ‘the key to Winston is to realise that he is Mid Victorian, steeped in the politics of his father’s period, and unable ever to get the modern point of view’. Churchill simply repeated ‘the old phrases of 1903 and no argument seems to make any difference on him’, Amery lamented. Entry for 5 Aug. 1929, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 49. The full list of ‘Unionist free traders’ can be found in H. Clayton, ‘How Not to Run a Political Campaign: The Failure of the Unionist Free Traders 1903-6’, *Parliamentary History*, xxx (2011), p. 159.

³⁶ *Daily Express*, 10 July 1929, p. 1; Beaverbrook to William Lyon Mackenzie King, 4 August 1928, quoted in Witherell, ‘Page Croft and Conservative Backbench Campaigns for Empire’, p. 371.

³⁷ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 13 July 1929, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 149. Seen in this light, Ball’s suggestion that Amery’s ‘outburst’ was ill-timed rings a little hollow, particularly as Amery was a member of that dwindling band of forty Tories MPs with Parliamentary experience pre-dating the War. Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 36 and 21.

³⁸ From Beaverbrook’s 1926 speech on the power of the press, quoted in Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 276. In the interwar period, the mass circulation press was thought to reflect rather than shape public opinion. Press Barons, particularly Northcliffe, knew ‘what the public would want if it knew how to make its wants known ... It is Lord Northcliffe’s special gift that he knows what the common man will be saying the day after tomorrow, and says it in advance’. Political ideals, like Empire Free Trade, were just another commodity to be sold to sceptical consumers. M. Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Urbana, IL, 2004), pp. 130-167. Hampton quotation from E.T. Raymond’s *Uncensored Celebrities* (1919) is on p. 149.

Writing in his *Sunday Express*, Beaverbrook acknowledged on 30 June 1929 that he too was guilty of ignoring imperial affairs during the recent election campaign before proclaiming that ‘the fiscal union of the Empire will only be achieved by a crusade carried on by those who are animated by the crusading spirit’.³⁹ Days later, he told Churchill that the forthcoming campaign would be ‘worth a lifetime of strife’. Whatever his motivations were, his ‘Who is for the Empire?’ article generated a ‘mass of correspondence’. The Canadian Pacific Railway’s European general manager hoped the article would prove to be ‘the first advance in a great crusade’. The widely respected businessman, Sir Herbert Morgan stressed the importance of finding proper leadership, namely ‘a poet with the inspiration of Kipling voicing true economic principles’. Retired Brig.-Gen. P.R.C. Groves, who among other titles was the Hon. Secretary General of the Air League of British Empire, bemoaned the neglect in the aerial integration of the empire but ended his letter with the declaration of ‘more power to Lord Beaverbrook’s proposals’.⁴⁰ A week after asking ‘Who is For the Empire?’, Beaverbrook next outlined, again in the *Sunday Express*, ‘A New Project For Empire’. The political correspondent for the *Daily Express* naturally declared it ‘the greatest project that can ever be offered to the British people’. In its simplest form the plan proposed free trade within the entire British Empire and a tariff ‘barrier will be raised against the foreigner until such time as

³⁹ Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 262. It should be noted that the twentieth century editions of the *Sunday Express*, when this chapter was written, were not included in [UKpressonline](#).

⁴⁰ Beaverbrook to Churchill, 3 July 1929, in M. Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill*, V, pt. ii: *The Wilderness Years, 1929-1935* (Boston, 1981), p. 12; *Daily Express*, 2 July 1929, p. 1. Morgan’s obituary appeared in *The Times*, 5 July 1951, p. 8. Explanations for Beaverbrook’s sudden interest in the Empire range from boredom, a handy club to beat Baldwin with, to his deepest held political belief. Churchill had ‘no doubt [it was] an effective way of revenging yourself upon the Conservative Party’. Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 262-3; Churchill to Beaverbrook, 6 July 1929, in Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill*, p. 15.

he shall plead for economic admittance into the greatest Free Trade unit the world has ever seen'. To those that objected to a tax on foodstuffs from outside the Empire, the Empire Crusaders told Westminster:

The fight is on. The minority movement is launched. If the old parties fail a new party must rise. If the older generation is afraid then youth must carry on the cause. A new vision of Empire has been created—with all its possibilities, spiritual and material. A new political force is knocking at the door of Westminster.⁴¹

Unlike Joseph Chamberlain, whose campaign for Tariff Reform at the outset of the twentieth century included a tax on all foodstuffs, Beaverbrook insisted on 'absolutely free trade among all the countries under the British flag' in response to America's 'impenetrable tariff wall ... that it can open or close the gates just as it pleases, with the Dominions powerless to retaliate'. If the empire was welded into a 'One Great Free Trade Unit', Beaverbrook argued, it would be a 'far more powerful free trade unit' than the one that existed within America's borders. Having launched the 'Imperial crusade', in conjunction with the *Daily Express*, Beaverbrook intended to step aside and await the emergence of the British Empire's 'Hamiltons' and 'Madisons'.⁴²

At the outset of the campaign, Amery spoke with Beaverbrook and was convinced of his 'sincerity and enthusiasm'. Britons were 'more than ready to respond', while the 'rank and file of the Conservative Party, in Parliament and outside, were delighted to find someone who ... really meant action'. Baldwin may not have understood what all the 'fuss' was about, but the ideas underpinning the Crusade

⁴¹ *Daily Express*, 8 July 1929, p. 1.

⁴² *Daily Express*, 11 July 1929, p. 1.

appealed to a broad wing of the Conservative party. H.A. Gwynne, editor of the die-hard newspaper, *The Morning Post*, thought in hindsight that the party leadership erred in not pre-empting Beaverbrook during the Crusade's initial phase. What had been intended to be an intra-party movement eventually became a campaign to forge a new party that would draw 'strength from Conservatives and Socialists and offering a raft to the Liberals who flee their sinking ship'.⁴³ Less than a week before Beaverbrook launched the Crusade, he learned that he and Viscount Rothermere, a fellow press baron and the brother of the late Lord Northcliffe, who by the end of the 1920s owned fourteen newspapers, were on the Conservative party's 'list of "Untouchables"'. It was a position Beaverbrook thought advantageous, as he had 'seen almost every Conservative ex-Cabinet minister. I do not believe the leader [Baldwin] has a single sincere supporter.' In reality, suggest Middlemas and Barnes, 'it is difficult to gauge just how far dissatisfaction had spread.' Nevertheless, Rothermere believed that he and Beaverbrook had 'the situation entirely in our hands', telling Churchill that the Rothermere Press views 'two or three Conservative ex-Ministers' as 'Untouchable'. It seemed that the 'Era of the Press Caesars' was at hand.⁴⁴

Ten days after the Crusade was launched, the *Daily Express* triumphantly proclaimed that the 'empire issue to be fought at Twickenham'. Speaking at York House

⁴³ L. Amery, *My Political Life, The Unforgiving Years, 1929-1940* (London, 1955), pp. 18 and 22; Baldwin's comment comes from *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce* and Gwynne to Davidson, 8 May 1930, as cited in Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 4; Beaverbrook to J.L. Garvin, 12 July 1929, quoted in Calton, 'Beaverbrook's Split Imperial Personality', p. 37.

⁴⁴ D. George Boyce, 'Harmsworth, Harold Sidney, first Viscount Rothermere (1868-1940)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Beaverbrook to Rothermere, 3 July 1929, quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 263; K. Middlemas and J. Barnes, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London, 1969), p. 546; Rothermere to Beaverbrook, 5 July 1929, quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 263; L. Amery, 'The Era of the Press Caesars: A Hectic Fantasy (Pre-Printed from *The Nineteenth Century* of May 2231)', *Nineteenth Century*, cix (1931), pp. 521-8.

the night before, the Conservative candidate, Sir John Ferguson, told those assembled that ‘there comes a time in politics, as in religion, when a man must recite his creed’. To ‘Little Englanders’ and those opposed to a ‘stomach tax’, Ferguson welcomed the Empire Crusade and thought

that when we have learned to regard, say Canada or New Zealand as fiscally a prolongation of the British Isles, when we have made up our minds that the seas, so far from sundering us, are links and highways that bind us together, just as America is bound by her railways, then the British Empire will be not only secure but eternal and impregnable.

Ferguson went on to call for a ‘vision of statesmanship’ that was tantamount to resurrecting the Navigation Acts. The *Daily Express* noted the ‘immense enthusiasm’ that the speech generated, which was ‘a striking contrast to the lethargy which characterised the general election campaign’.⁴⁵ Amery wrote in his diary that same day that Baldwin was ‘very indignant with Ferguson’, who had a respectable, if somewhat undistinguished, record of public service.⁴⁶ Consequently, official support from the Conservative Central Office was withdrawn, and Baldwin refused to endorse his candidacy. Ferguson’s local association remained undaunted. The chairman for some thirty-three years said: ‘I approve entirely of the line Sir John Ferguson has taken. We are all behind him and will do our utmost to secure his return.’ Relations between Ferguson and the Central Office were already on ‘bad terms’.⁴⁷ But Amery attributed this ‘stupid blunder’ to Baldwin’s inability to overlook ‘his dislike of Ferguson as a rich

⁴⁵ *Daily Express*, 17 July 1929, p. 1. A by-election was necessitated by the elevation of the sitting MP, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, to the peerage.

⁴⁶ Entry for 17 July 1929, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 45. On Ferguson’s background and reputation, see *The Guardian*, 4 July 1929, p. 6, Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill*, p. 141, n3 and *The Times*, 10 July 1929, p. 12.

⁴⁷ James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 318; *The Guardian*, 23 July 1929, p. 15.

man who ousted better candidates, his conviction that Beaverbrook is out to wreck him and the idea that it is possible to carry on indefinitely an ostrich policy about food taxes'. The 'official excommunication' (as Amery termed it) alarmed the Tory backbenches, particularly members of the Empire Industries Association. Party heavyweights were hopelessly divided over how to respond to Beaverbrook's Empire Crusade, which from the outset had the potential to tear the party apart.⁴⁸ Concluding his speech, which had put the Crusade at the forefront of British politics, Ferguson asked ironically: 'Is there a Socialist, a Liberal, or a Conservative who will dare to say that this great project of Empire is not a thousand times worthwhile?'⁴⁹

Discounting the *Daily Express* for the moment, coverage of the Twickenham by-election amounted to little more than an occasional story and/or letter to the editor.⁵⁰ One suspects that the various controversies surrounding Ferguson in part led to said coverage. There was, of course, the standard assertion that the Liberals were the party of free trade, with Lloyd George denouncing the 'grotesque policy of the Conservative candidate, involving, as it does, the taxation of food and raw materials' for good measure. Another leading Liberal, Sir Herbert Samuel, called on readers of *The Guardian* to 'vote against' Ferguson as he 'accepts the Protectionist policy in its most extreme form'.⁵¹ All three candidates 'motored' across the constituency ahead of polling to attend final rallies and visit 'many institutions and places of employment'. Ferguson told a reporter that they

⁴⁸ Entries for 22 and 23 July 1929, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 47; James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative*, pp. 318-9. Also see *The Times*, 8 July 1929, p. 17.

⁴⁹ *Daily Express*, 17 July 1929, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Sampling method is outlined in footnote 24. *The Guardian* covered the by-election far more extensively than *The Times*. The Anglo-Indian, *The Times of India*, by contrast, simply reported election results.

⁵¹ *The Times*, 6 Aug. 1929, p. 7; Quoted in *The Guardian*, 6 Aug. 1929, p. 16. Lloyd George's letter also appeared verbatim in *The Guardian*.

were 'quite confident' but, just to be sure the late member, Joynson-Hicks, now Lord Brentford, wrote to Ferguson to say that 'defeat in Twickenham is unthinkable' and to make a 'final appeal to all my old friends and supporters to stand firm by you as for many years they did for me'.⁵² Interestingly, Ferguson went on to say that 'there has certainly been more enthusiasm throughout the constituency since I introduced the Empire policy. The people have awakened up to it. "At last," they say, "we have something to counter the deadening effects of Safety First."' A Labour party official by contrast predicted an upset, on the assumption that not even a longstanding 'Conservative stronghold' would vote for 'a tax on their food'.⁵³

In the end, they did and Ferguson won, though it was 'by the skin of their teeth'. In post-war elections, Tories majorities in Twickenham never fell 'below about 6,000'. Ferguson was returned with a majority of a mere five hundred and three votes.⁵⁴ Turnout was a low 49.5 percent. Many were away for the Bank Holiday, but the Chairman of the Tory Party noted that in the other by-election being fought in Preston the Tory vote went up and wrote in his draft memoirs that 'there were about 6,000 Conservative abstentions' in Twickenham. Yet Ferguson told the press that he won because the people agreed with his opinion 'that in the Empire lies our one great hope'. Before going on to say that

⁵² Quoted in *The Guardian*, 8 and 7 Aug. 1929, pp. 18 and 6, respectively.

⁵³ Quoted in *The Guardian*, 8 Aug. 1929, p. 18. The Liberals were mainly concerned with keeping their 'party organisation in good working order' for the next general election.

⁵⁴ *The Guardian*, 9 Aug. 1929, p. 9. Ball views the outcome as victory for those that favoured the 'status quo', and a 'severe disappointment' for Beaverbrook as Ferguson almost lost what was supposed to be a safe seat. Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 44. However, if one compares the Tory vote versus those of the other two parties combined, the results cast doubt on his conclusion. Joynson-Hicks had a 'minority of 1,280 as against the other two parties[, while] Sir John Ferguson is in a minority of 1,417'. The hostility of the Central Office amounted to little it seemed. The Liberal candidate forfeited his deposit. 'The great Coddenite Party cut a ludicrous figure with a vote that would hardly represent a good sized village', mocked the *Daily Express*, 10 and 9 Aug. 1929, respectively, p. 1.

Unemployment can be cured by the development of the Empire The subject I put before the electors of Twickenham was of such an engrossing nature that they had to consider it thoroughly before arriving at a decision, and because they addressed the matter so wholeheartedly they were brought round to a very strong and fixed opinion This constituency is very highly organised and it is a keen Empire trade centre. This fine result is but the start of a great popular movement It must not be allowed to be lost sight of for one moment, but must be continually before us all.⁵⁵

The outcome empowered the rank and file members of the party, who in effect had been told by Baldwin and the Central Office ‘to abstain from voting’. The *Daily Express* even boasted that ‘a man flew from Paris and back-again today in order to record his vote on the question of Empire’. Beaverbrook (to quote his biographers) ‘had tasted blood, barely a month after he had unmasked his batteries’. Moreover, in the process had disgusted influential figures within the Tory establishment, who lamented ‘the cynical audacity of modern journalism’.

After proclaiming sentiments like those in the above block quote week after week, Neville Chamberlain noted that ‘on the day when the result was announced not only did the “Empire Crusade” disappear from its [*Daily Express*] pages but we searched its columns in vain for any mention of the election at all’. Beaverbrook sailed for the Soviet Union a few days after the by-election and upon his return concentrated on building an organisation for his Crusade.⁵⁶ It was claimed that ‘Twickenham’s lesson’ was that the ideals of the Empire Crusade could save seats that would otherwise be

⁵⁵ Quoted in James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 318; Quoted in *The Times*, 9 Aug. 1929, p. 12.

⁵⁶ *Daily Express*, 9 Aug. 1929, p. 1; Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 282 and 285; Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 11 August 1929, Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 154. Chamberlain’s assertion is generally correct, though a story on the by-election did appear on 10 August and then nothing—according to my data mining—until 14 October 1929.

lost.⁵⁷ Others, however, drew different lessons. Churchill, writing to his wife from Quebec, worried that this by-election ‘is a forerunner of what would happen in every consistency if we let ourselves be lured into it’. Liberal voters, concurred another observer, ‘went almost *en masse* to Labour’.⁵⁸ However, coverage of the campaign in the *Daily Express*, along with the liberal monthly magazines/journals, suggests that opinion was more fluid and complex than a simple *en masse* move to Labour.

By the spring of 1929, persistent unemployment was changing attitudes towards ‘safeguarding’. The executive sub-committee of the Wool Textile Trade Union voted fifteen to nine to support their employer’s bid for protective tariffs against ‘foreign worsted and woollen goods weighting from two to eleven ounces per square yard’. Yorkshire Liberal candidates reacting to this shift in policy reaffirmed their ‘unqualified adherence to Free Trade’ and warned that hunger would once again plague Britain if protective duties were not abolished. Appeals to the ‘hungry forties’, however, rang hollow in post-war Britain, where memories fixated on wartime shortages.⁵⁹ In a letter to the editor, Arthur Conan Doyle drew attention to the fact that in November 1918 ‘Germany had 125 U-boats upon the stocks’ and, in the intervening years, ‘our margin of home grown foodstuffs is much less’. Britons ‘lived in a more dangerous position’ than any other nation in history. Doyle thought that if explained ‘fairly’, the British public

⁵⁷ *Daily Express*, 10 Aug. 1929, p. 1

⁵⁸ Winston to Clementine Churchill, 12 Aug. 1929, Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill*, p. 44; S. Gwynn, ‘Ebb and Flow: A Monthly Commentary’, *Fortnightly Review*, cxxvi (1929), p. 416; italics in original.

⁵⁹ F.W. Hirst, ‘Safeguarding in Theory and Practice’, *Contemporary Review*, cxxxv (1929), p. 290-291; Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, p. 312. Introduced in 1921, the Safeguarding of Industries Act allowed select sectors of the British economy to petition the government for protective tariffs. All told these duties only ever applied to roughly three percent of British trade during the 1920s. Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, pp. 301-2

would accept a tax on non-imperial food as ‘the memory of the past might lead to wisdom for the future’.⁶⁰ In proposing to remove all tariffs from imported food from the Dominions—and colonial empire—Beaverbrook’s Crusade was in a sense appeasement in its more noble sense.⁶¹ Patrick Hannon, a conservative MP from Birmingham, argued that the Dominions’ contribution to Britain’s prosperity ‘in the last quarter of a century has been incomparably greater than the contribution of all foreign countries combined’.⁶² Wartime cooperation in defeating the Central Powers, thought the chairman of Waring & Gillow, Lord Waring, bode well for imperial development. Still others saw the challenges facing Britain as too big to be ‘measured by the foot-rule of any of the parties’. During his brief interlude as a Conservative, Leslie Haden-Guest, who served as a Labour MP from 1923-7 and 1937-50, wanted to cast ‘aside fearlessly all shackles on the freedom of our thought and action’ The possibilities for the ‘British Commonwealth of Nations’ were almost limitless, which rendered Empire Free Trade into a ‘political war cry’ for a policy that did not go far enough. New wealth needed to be created, if unused imperial resources were to be developed.⁶³

Others were more open, provided certain conditions were met. Less than two weeks into the Twickenham campaign, Beaverbrook wrote in the *Daily Express* that the former Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, Reginald McKenna, was willing to support Empire Free Trade, including tariffs on foreign foodstuffs, if the Dominions

⁶⁰ *Daily Express*, 15 July 1929, p. 2.

⁶¹ The magnanimous history of appeasement is discussed in P. Kennedy, ‘The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy 1865-1939’, *British Journal of International Studies*, ii (1976), pp. 195-215.

⁶² Quoted in the *Daily Express*, 16 July 1929, p. 11.

⁶³ *Daily Express*, 24 July 1929, p. 8; L. Haden-Guest, ‘A National Policy a Non-Party View’, *Nineteenth Century*, cvi (1929), pp. 162 and 161, respectively.

reciprocated; which that day's edition of the *Morning Post* declared would never happen. Lord Melchett, who amalgamated several companies into the colossal Imperial Chemical Industries, dismissed such doubts over Empire Free Trade. But warned that the task would not be an easy one as

it involves, of course, an adjustment between competing industries here and in the other parts of the Empire, and especially in the case of industries fostered by tariffs. But it will be the task of those who will have the arranging of this Empire merger to see that neither capital nor employment suffers.

In closing Beaverbrook concluded, based on the 'innumerable communications' he had received from 'many Liberals and from some supporters of the Labour Party, that the whole country is stirred by our campaign'. Such an assessment was not entirely idle boasting.⁶⁴ The tobacco magnate, Hugo Cunliffe-Owen, in a letter to the editor, expressed his support for Empire Free Trade as being beyond the realm of party politics and that supporters of the Crusade 'are tired of the Safety First slogan in an Empire which has been made by adventure and daring'. He urged Britons to embrace this courageous new 'trail', predicting that:

if we arrive at a system of rational tariffs between the Colonies and the mother country, with surtaxes on foreign imports, we shall have prosperity, employment for our people and employment at higher wages, which will more than pay for any slight and very problematical increase in the cost of foodstuffs.⁶⁵

Support from industrialists was one thing: 'A political bombshell', proclaimed the *Daily Express*. Charles McCurdy, a 'dyed-in-the-wool Liberal', a Privy Councillor and an ex-

⁶⁴ *Daily Express*, 16 July 1929, p. 1. Beaverbrook's letter is dated 15 July. Stornoway House, which served as headquarters for the Crusade, was inundated with letters from 'soldiers, farmers, local newspaper editors, cotton manufactures, Conservative candidates disappointed at the last election, working men and aristocrats'. The majority of people complained that the 'dumping' of foreign goods was making it almost impossible for British farmers and industrialists. Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 286.

⁶⁵ *Daily Express*, 8 Aug. 1929, p. 1.

whip in Lloyd George's coalition government, had renounced free trade in favour of the 'new and wider Liberalism' that was Empire Free Trade. A project that if enacted would create, McCurdy proclaimed, 'the greatest market, the most perfect machine for the creation and distribution of wealth which the world has ever known'.⁶⁶ Roughly, a year would pass before Britons got another chance to see the Crusade in action—the death of the Conservative member for Bromley precipitated another by-election, which was held in early September 1930—and, in the interim, developments took a baleful turn.⁶⁷

As late as the end of October 1929, Beaverbrook still had not decided if his ultimate goal was 'to wreck or to capture the Conservative party'. Others perceived that his 'dominating motive is detestation of S.B. It is difficult to see how we can have any accommodation with him if that be so'. Nevertheless, a mutual friend arranged a meeting between Beaverbrook and Neville Chamberlain, where the latter pledged that the Conservatives would not come out against a tariff on foodstuffs. A day later, the former agreed 'to do a deal'. Beaverbrook then published (what Amery termed) a 'signal of reconciliation in the *Sunday Despatch*'.⁶⁸ Writing on Armistice Day, no less, Baldwin invited Beaverbrook to 'come and have a private talk' the following day. Nothing came of the meeting.⁶⁹ As the drama of high politics peaked, over the course of the Parliamentary recess (late July to late October) the rank and file of the party were

⁶⁶ *Daily Express*, 14 Oct. 1929, p. 12; Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 286; Quoted in the *Daily Express*, 14 Oct. 1929, p. 12. Also see C. McCurdy, 'Empire Free Trade', *Contemporary Review*, cxxxvii (1930), pp. 13-18.

⁶⁷ *The Guardian*, 1 Aug. 1930, p. 5.

⁶⁸ Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 267; Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 160-161; Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 268; Entry for 11 Nov. 1929, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 54.

⁶⁹ P. Williamson and E. Baldwin, eds., *Baldwin Papers: A Conservative Prime Minister, 1908-1947* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 225; James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 319.

equally busy absorbing the criticisms of Baldwin and the alluring entice of the Empire Crusade. The back of the Conservative Party was breaking, and ‘in Beaverbrook the protectionist dissidents would find a leader of national stature, prepared to go the full distance in pursuit of their ends, whatever the political cost.’⁷⁰ Looking back on the past ‘five somnolent and uncomprehending years’, the influential editor of *The Observer*, J.L. Garvin, worried that, unlike Germany, Britain’s ‘further greatness is [not] assured’. To the ‘average citizen’ the Tories would be ‘dead and forgotten’ if not for the Empire Crusade, which was, he declared, ‘the only vivid, living thing that is now going on in the Conservative Party’.⁷¹

Yet that very vitality worried others, who judged ‘it will be a real business trying to keep these things from being run by Beaverbrook’ The ‘informal sub-committee of the Empire Crusade’ that centred on Melchett had planned to organise an association of businessmen as the Empire Economic Union, while ‘reserving the possibility of bigger things’. To forestall Melchett, who ‘was not definite enough on food taxes’, Beaverbrook rushed out his *Empire Free Trade* pamphlet in late October, thereby securing control over the Crusade as neither Melchett nor Amery could openly advocate for tariffs on foodstuffs.⁷² Appearing on the same day as the crash of the American stock market, the pamphlet’s coloured cover ‘showed a helmsman at sea, bare-chested, gripping a wheel beneath a high curling wave Round the rim of the wheel ran the

⁷⁰ Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 45. The unofficial dates for the recess were determined by the sittings for 1929 in [Hansard](#).

⁷¹ *The Observer*, 27 Oct. 1929, p. 16. That said, Gavin predicted that an ‘overwhelmingly urbanised [Britain], with a majority of women, will never accept a food tax’.

⁷² Entries for 22 and 25 Oct. 1929, in Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, pp. 51-2; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 47-8.

words “The British Empire”, and, on the visible spokes, “Canada”, “Australia” and “Ind” *Empire Free Trade* cost a penny, as its author believed that propaganda worked better when people paid for it. Beaverbrook also pursued his Crusade through constitutionally appropriate venues.⁷³

On 19 November 1929, he made a rare appearance in the House of Lords ‘to ask His Majesty's Government if they will do anything to encourage the movement for Free Trade within the Empire’. At the outset of his speech, Beaverbrook defined what the Crusade’s desire for Empire Free Trade entailed:

We mean a movement which is to develop the resources, the industry and the commerce of all parts of the Empire to the fullest possible extent and for that purpose, so far as may be possible, to make of the whole British Empire one economic unit, to do everything in our power to break down all obstacles to Free Trade within the Empire, and to make the financial resources of the Empire more fully available for the benefit of all parts of the Empire. I suppose that in these proposals we shall have general agreement, but when it comes to the methods by which we hope to carry them out there may be considerable points of difference. We hope to carry them out by building up such tariffs against the foreigner as may be necessary to realise those ideals.

As the speech that followed was ‘one of the most considered expositions that the Crusade manifesto ever received’, it is worth examining it in some detail.⁷⁴

Beaverbrook began by explaining how his Crusade differed from the plan put forth by Joseph Chamberlain in 1904. Whereas Chamberlain wanted to erect a tariff wall around Britain, as the Germans and Americans had already done, Beaverbrook and his Crusaders called for ‘a tariff wall around the whole Empire and, of course, the building of that tariff wall is conditional upon reasonable response from the rest of the Empire’.

⁷³ Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 288; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 51.

⁷⁴ *Hansard[’s Parliamentary Debates]*, lxxv. 546; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 51.

The early statement proclaiming that ‘Canada joins the Great Empire Crusade’ based on an editorial in the *Alberta Farmer* speaks to the audacious reporting that offended Neville Chamberlain and others; one seriously doubts that the endorsement of the ‘greatest farming journal in Canada’ mattered little to anyone outside the Canadian wheat belt.⁷⁵ A little over two weeks after the speech in the House of Lords, the *Daily Express* published a ‘frank survey’ of opinion from the Canadian press, which demonstrated that the ‘outstanding newspapers of the Dominion are lending their strength to create support in every province and city’. The conservative *Toronto Mail and Empire* said that, unlike Chamberlain’s time, the Canadian people were ‘ready for Empire Trade co-operation’. But it was the *Vancouver Province* that put it best:

They (the majority of the British Conservative journals) cannot understand that a man who has been for years a political jumping-jack should finally have jumped into something good and something that in the long run—and not a very long run at that—should make the British Empire the leading aggregation of traders in the world.⁷⁶

The degree of support varied, with the *Daily Colonist* of Victoria, BC being outraged that the ‘economic re-creation of the Empire’ had become subject to party politics. But on the whole, the view that ‘critics of the Empire Crusade who have been crying out that Canada would never come in must look elsewhere for comfort’ was likely accurate.⁷⁷ This change in attitude is due in part to the fact that Empire foodstuffs would enter Britain duty free, whereas Chamberlain had called for ‘a duty on Empire foodstuffs, subject to rebate’. Beaverbrook informed their Lordships that were he still alive

⁷⁵ *Hansard*, lxxv. 547; *Daily Express*, 6 Aug. 1929, p. 1.

⁷⁶ *Daily Express*, 5 Dec. 1929, p. 1.

⁷⁷ *Daily Express*, 5 Dec. 1929, p. 2. As noted in footnote two, not surprisingly, Canadianists seem to have overlooked this debate in their efforts to write a national history.

Chamberlain would undoubtedly be a Crusader before moving on to address the viability of his proposal.⁷⁸

Utilising figures from Melchett's recent 'manifesto', Beaverbrook told the Lords that the empire imported £2,200,000,000 in all, but 'only £900,000,000 are brought in from one part of the Empire to another, leaving a surplus of £1,300,000,000 imported from foreign countries'. To Beaverbrook's mind, this surplus alone justified Empire Free Trade. Nevertheless, to further his argument, he brought up the fact that post-war British exports to the Empire had risen by sixty-seven percent, while exports to foreign countries were only up sixteen percent. Sixty percent of Britain's re-exports went to the Empire, with a paltry five percent going to foreign destinations. Exports to Australia and Canada were flat or falling, yet their imports from America were steadily growing. American exports to Australia actually doubled between 1913 and 1927. Beaverbrook argued that America's success was:

due to mass production in the United States, and that this mass production is founded on the American domestic market. We argue that the Empire, with a larger area, with a bigger population and with more buying power, offers as good an opportunity or a better opportunity for the same development of mass production and for the same reliance upon the domestic markets. But in order to attain this we urge that economic fusion within the Empire is completely essential.

As compelling as these figures are Beaverbrook's main argument was actually rooted in history and aimed squarely at sceptics who claimed the Crusade's plan could never be implemented.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *Hansard*, lxxv. 547.

⁷⁹ *Hansard*, lxxv. 547-8.

‘We think it can be done,’ Beaverbrook reasoned, ‘because it has been done.’ Drawing on the examples of the Thirteen Colonies and Australia, Beaverbrook reminded their Lordships, that even these contiguous colonies took years to form a united country, under a common fiscal policy. It was the *Zollverein* that over the course of fifty years drew together the numerous states/duchies of varying sizes and power of the German Confederation into modern Germany. This was a development that was ‘perhaps more familiar to the people of this country than any other,’ mused Beaverbrook. More worrying was that newspapers were reporting that the ‘German Empire’ is making ‘immense progress ... in competition with us, in the sale of manufactured goods’.⁸⁰ It was, however, the history of his native Canada that provided Beaverbrook with his most compelling answer to sceptics of Empire Free Trade. A quarter century before Confederation, there were six colonies—Province of Canada, formerly known as Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia—in British North America, all with separate tariffs designed for protection and/or for generating revenue. In 1865, two years before Confederation, the voters of Beaverbrook’s adopted province, New Brunswick, voted against confederation. Ultimately, on 1 July 1867, the British North America Act created the Dominion of Canada, with the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and, the Province of Canada being split to create Ontario and Quebec. Winter tended to isolate each province, but British Columbia was ‘over 2,000 miles’ from Canada and completely isolated with (as Beaverbrook said) ‘no communication by telegraph or telephone, as there is now. There

⁸⁰ *Hansard*, lxxv. 550-551.

were no means of access by [inland] waterways. And yet this Union was [eventually] carried out.’⁸¹ It was the promise of a trans-continental railway that led in large part to the province joining Canada in 1871.⁸² If a *projet national* could succeed under these circumstances, surely, with time and negotiations, it could be made to work across the entire British Empire, which was already integrated by ‘*Our Ocean Railways*’ and would increasingly be bound ever tighter by new technologies.⁸³

Having addressed the feasibility of custom unions, Beaverbrook moved on to ‘the very next question directed against us most frequently and, as our critics think, with most damaging effect. That is, will the Dominions consent to it and have a fiscal union?’ In addition to the support expressed by broad sections of the Canadian Press alluded to earlier, Beaver informed their Lordships of a statement made on 17 July in Parliament House, Wellington, by the Minister of Industries and Commerce, Mr. Cobbe, who declared that ‘the Empire of which we are part should not be a mere counter for the display of the manufactures of other countries’ Empire Free Trade, along with retaliatory tariffs on foreign goods, Cobbe thought, was the only plausible solution at hand. The Canadian Parliament had also begun to study the issue, and with good reason. Under Empire Free Trade, Canadian wheat farmers would not need to worry about being

⁸¹ *Hansard*, lxxv. 549-50. A brief background to Canadian Confederation can be found at the [Library and Archives Canada](#).

⁸² R. Gwyn, *Nation Maker: Sir John A. Macdonald: His Life, Our Times*, II: 1867-1891 (Toronto, 2011), p. 174. Also see pp. 335-7. The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway was central to Macdonald’s nation building as it would eventually create a domestic market large enough for Canadian industry to be protected by tariffs. Canada began as ‘a geographical expression’, and time was needed for ‘gristle into bone’. *Ibid.*, pp. 336-7 and, quoted on, 191.

⁸³ The quotation comes from the title of an 1893 book by A. Fraser-Macdonald, quoted in D. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (New York, 1988), p. 49; G. Pirie, *Air Empire: British Imperial Civil Aviation, 1919-39* (Manchester, 2009) and A. Anduaga, *Wireless and Empire: Geopolitics, Radio Industry and Ionosphere in the British Empire, 1918-1939* (Oxford, 2009).

undersold by Argentina and other foreign competition as they would have a near monopoly.⁸⁴ Particularly troubling was the creation of the American Federal Farm Board, which was given \$500,000,000 and had a twofold mandate: 1) to subsidise farmers and 2) dump any surplus wheat onto the international market, i.e. Britain, for whatever ‘price it will bring’. Any losses would be borne by the Federal Farm Board. Ultimately, Canada could see her cost advantage in the production of wheat disappear as the ‘American farmer, with a sure market for his wheat, will increase his acreage under wheat, and there will be more American wheat for export’.⁸⁵

Australia was also held up as an example of a country that would never accept preference. Invoking the fact that ‘many Australians’ viewed the issue ‘entirely from the economic point of view’, Beaverbrook did the same and first suggested that seeing as ‘Australia is very greatly in need of credit,’ perhaps the ‘financial resources of the Empire’ could eliminate this need. Beaverbrook was ‘convinced’ that if this did not happen, Australia would turn to America. Britain was the largest importer of Australian wool, meat and wheat; consequently, Australia also had to contend with competition from Argentina and eventually America. Exports of manufactured goods were ‘practically negligible’. Almost half of all manufactured goods imported into Australia came from foreign sources. A fact that led Beaverbrook to conclude that Britain could

⁸⁴ *Hansard*, lxxv. 551-2. The *Daily Express* submitted its numbers to an unnamed man, who understood Canada’s trade better than ‘anyone else alive’ and he confirmed the figures Ferguson had announced during the campaign. Canada alone could supply all the wheat Britain needed; ‘nearly half’ of the Canadian wheat exported to Britain passed through American ports, thereby making it appear in British trade statistics as being American wheat. *Daily Express*, 6 August 1929, p. 1.

⁸⁵ *Hansard*, lxxv. 559-61. At the private meeting with Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, described earlier, Beaverbrook produced ‘many figures to show that Canadians were really frightened about the Argentine competition in wheat and their own growing dependence on the U.S.A.’ Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 161-2.

‘at least double her present sales’ to Australia in select products, like motors, ‘without the slightest damage to the existing key industries of the Dominion of Australia’. The main loser in this case would be America. In time, under Empire Free Trade, the Dominions could develop their manufacturing base and look forward to finding a market for all their exports throughout Britain’s colonies and protectorates and all on an equal footing with Britain.⁸⁶ Less than six months after Beaverbrook’s appearance in the House of Lords, the leader of the Australian Country Party and ex-Federal Treasurer proposed that British engineering and electrical goods, not manufactured in Australia, be allowed into the country tax free in return for ‘preferential treatment for Australia’s primary products’. ‘Empire Free Trade is in sight’, extolled the *Daily Express*. However, at the time of his speech, Beaverbrook freely acknowledged that the Crusade still faced ‘very great difficulties’ notwithstanding the success at Twickenham.⁸⁷

The central argument against protection had always been that Britons would never consent to a tax on foodstuffs. Beaverbrook, however, found such statements unconvincing. The French had accepted tariffs on foreign foodstuffs, with French colonies enjoying free trade with the metropole. ‘If France could be persuaded to adopt food taxes,’ Beaverbrook reasoned, ‘I do not see why England cannot be persuaded to take the same course.’ After all, there were several key differences between 1929 and 1904; in addition to the absence of tariffs on empire foodstuffs mentioned earlier.

The biggest difference was that the British Empire was capable of feeding itself; except for ‘one or two negligible [and unstated] exceptions’. Canada and Australia had

⁸⁶ *Hansard*, lxxv. 553-4.

⁸⁷ *Daily Express*, 27 Mar. 1930, p. 1; *Hansard*, lxxv. 554.

increased wheat production fivefold in the preceding quarter century, thereby producing surpluses within the Empire of ‘20,000,000 quarters of wheat, 1,000,000 quarters of barley, and sufficient oats for our purposes’. Australia, to say nothing of Canada or Britain’s various African possessions, had more cattle than the entire British Isles, including ‘Ireland, North and South’/the Irish Republic.⁸⁸ Mutton, Beaverbrook claimed, came entirely from imperial sources, yet ‘as much as ninety per cent’ of imported beef came from Argentina. ‘Is it necessary to do that at all in order that we shall have cheap beef?’, he asked. The five firms—one British/Argentine and four American—that controlled the trade were simply just better organised and more efficient than producers in Australia or New Zealand, to say nothing of the extreme fertility of the Pampas.⁸⁹ By 1913, Argentina’s share of the import trade ‘amounted to fifty-eight per cent (£43m.) of the total entering Britain from Latin America, a figure which placed Argentina above any of the white-settled parts of the empire’. It is little wonder that the country came to be seen as the “Sixth Dominion”. However, while the real Dominions proved their dependability during the war, Argentina, presumably under pressure from Germany, halted wheat exports to Britain in 1917. The following year a British meat-packing mogul demanded that ‘foreign trading in the food of her people must be eliminated in favour of [Greater] British trading’.⁹⁰ Thanks to the so-called ‘Perfect Food Process’, developed by the Australian engineer, C.H. McLeay Rayson, after considerable

⁸⁸ *Hansard*, lxxv. 554-5.

⁸⁹ *Hansard*, lxxv. 556-7; J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford, 2009), p. 539.

⁹⁰ P. Cain and A. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (2nd edn., London, 2002), p. 253; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 536; Quoted in Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 539. Belich mistakenly gives 1919 instead of 1918 as the publication date.

experimental and research work, air-chilled beef arrived in England as near to fresh as meat imported from the other side of the world could be. Beaverbrook suggested it was simply a matter of persuading some/all of these firms into supplying Britain with 'Empire beef'. In addition to the 'fiscal and economic advantages' that Beaverbrook suggested be used to persuade these firms, there was also a marketing advantage to be had. As will be argued later the newly enfranchised housewives of Britain held in their shopping baskets 'the key to the welfare of their husbands and the Empire as a whole'.⁹¹

Overall the climate for introducing Protection was far more favourable in the late 1920s than it had been in 'Old Joe's' time. Concluding his House of Lords speech, Beaverbrook made a last pitch for a limited form of Empire Free Trade: 'Even if you exclude the Dominions, and if you exclude India and Egypt, and take only the United Kingdom and its non-self-governing Colonies and Dependencies, you find that we have an area of 3,500,000 miles against only 3,000,000 miles in the United States of America.' Whatever version was pursued, Beaverbrook (erroneously) warned, 'this is the opportunity. If we reject it now, we can never expect to get another chance.' The opening sentence from the Paymaster-General warned that 'the reply which I shall give to the noble Lord will not be that which he desires'. In light of the recent election, Lord Arnold, told the House 'that the mandate of His Majesty's present Government is to maintain Free Trade and they will do it'.⁹² Over all, Beaverbrook's speech was met (to

⁹¹ 'Chilled Beef from Australia', *United Empire*, xvi (1925), p. 457; *Hansard*, lxxv. 557-8; Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, pp. 229. A leading London store told the *Daily Express* that housewives had begun 'demand[ing] Empire goods'. In fashionable Piccadilly, a grocer reported that wholly Empire hampers 'have been selling in large quantities'. Quoted in *Daily Express*, 18 Dec. 1929, p. 9.

⁹² *Hansard*, lxxv. 562-3. Protection would be adopted at the 1932 Imperial Conference, which met in Ottawa.

quote the Earl Beauchamp) with a ‘chorus of criticism’. Arnold mockingly noted that Beaverbrook’s entire plan ‘is remote from reality. It does not deal with things as they are’ Pursuing the Empire Crusade through constitutionally appropriate venues and the Tory Party Conference was a road to nowhere. By the end of 1929, the Crusaders once again concluded that Baldwin was not serious about developing an imperial economic policy. Between December 1929 and February 1930, the Crusade slowly morphed into a movement outside the Conservative Party.⁹³

In channelling Beaverbrook into the House of Lords, where his inexperience as a debater was exposed very quickly by the ‘old hands’, ‘who had been logic-chopping over Free Trade and Tariff Reform for more than thirty years,’ Baldwin had made a tactical error. Beaverbrook had many virtues, including ‘the force of a revivalist preacher’ when speaking from a campaign platform, but patience was not one of them and he soon resumed his propagandist stance. On 4 January 1930, Beaverbrook ‘dined with Rothermere and his editors’, where it was decided that the two press barons’ agendas dovetailed nicely. The next day Rothermere’s *Sunday Pictorial* predicted that Beaverbrook would soon reside in 10 Downing Street.⁹⁴ Both men were profoundly pro-empire, but differed over the meaning of the word. Empire for Beaverbrook principally meant Canada, with the other white dominions a distant second. Rothermere, like Churchill, had a Victorian outlook that revolved around the Raj, and thwarting

⁹³ *Hansard*, lxxv. 587 and 566; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 50-53. A membership form, along with the official manifesto of the Empire Crusade, appeared in the *Daily Express*, 10 Dec. 1929, pp. 1 and 11.

⁹⁴ Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 269 and 280. Beaverbrook continued to publically profess loyalty to Baldwin, though it was conditional on the Tories (eventually) adopting Empire Free Trade. Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 11.

‘Irwinism’.⁹⁵ Although Beaverbrook was ‘indifferent’ regarding India, and Empire Free Trade, he, nevertheless, did harbour strong views:

There is no sense or reason in comparing the position with the Irish situation, which the Indians quote. In Ireland we were never free to bomb towns, wipe out villages, or turn machine guns on the people. In India we can, and the rebellion can be crushed the moment a decision is taken to do so.

Rothermere was just as problematic an ally for Beaverbrook, if not more so. Not only was he, like Baldwin, an ‘insular protectionist’, Rothermere (as Beaverbrook told Melchett) ‘never does get over his hostility to food taxes’.⁹⁶ If that was not bad enough, Rothermere was allegedly a Liberal. Ultimately, their common desire to dictate policy, and, if needed, bring about Baldwin’s demise, united the two press barons. Their Empire Crusade movement was at the outset of 1930 still akin to previous pressure groups, including the nineteenth century Anti-Corn Law League and Rothermere’s post-war Anti-Waste League.⁹⁷ Six days after dining with Rothermere, Beaverbrook, in a letter to the editor of the *Morning Post*, fired a shot across Baldwin’s bow:

we shall oppose every Parliamentary candidate, no matter of what party, who does not adopt and further the policy of Empire Free Trade as defined by the Provisional Committee of the Empire Crusade. We have one object ... and in the pursuit of that we shall not allow ourselves to be affected by existing party labels or divisions.⁹⁸

A few days later, Baldwin asked the novelist, later Governor General of Canada, John Buchan what he made of the press barons’ diversions and was told that while Beaverbrook ‘has no admiration for the other fatted calf. I fancy it is Lord B’s restless

⁹⁵ Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 269; Roberts, ‘*The Holy Fox*’, p. 29.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 270.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 271; Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 292.

⁹⁸ Reproduced in the *Daily Express*, 11 Jan. 1930, p. 1.

ambition temporarily combined with Lord R's detestation of you.' Beaverbrook finally agreed on 15 January to undertake a joint appeal and action with the Rothermere newspapers.⁹⁹

The last two weeks of January saw the *Daily Express* continue on as if nothing fundamentally had changed. Letters of support and political gossip continued to appear on the front page. Interestingly, the day after it was reported that the president of the National Union of Manufactures, George Terrell, would be contesting the anticipated by-election in Nottingham, Central as a Conservative Empire Free Trader, the Conservative Central Office issued a statement denying that the sitting MP intended to resign ahead of 'an extended absence abroad'. Terrell was quoted as saying 'that an election was pending has never been denied until now'. It was indeed quite the 'political surprise', and for once the *Daily Express*' headline was not an exaggeration.¹⁰⁰ It would seem that Beaverbrook's Crusade was making party officials uncomfortable, at the very least. Churchill thought Baldwin is 'absolutely hopeless' and complained that 'no instructions have been given to the provincial candidates and agents as to the line that decent Conservatives should adopt'. He feared 'that this Empire free trade is going to split the Conservative and possibly the Liberal Parties'. Beaverbrook's propaganda was definitely having an 'effect on the country'.¹⁰¹ 'Oxford is no longer the home of lost causes', was

⁹⁹ Quoted in Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 292; Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 293; *Daily Express*, 24 Jan. 1930, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Harold Nicholson's diary, 23 Jan. 1930, in Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill*, p. 137.

the *Daily Express*' reaction to the founding of an undergraduate Empire Free Trade Club.¹⁰²

With Neville Chamberlain touring East Africa, others were left the task of trying to reconcile Baldwin and Beaverbrook, who was still leery of a complete rupture with his party's leaders.¹⁰³ At the end of January 1930, Buchan, who had been trying to persuade Baldwin on the benefits of 'closer and franker co-ordination' between the Conservative Research Department and Beaverbrook, wrote the latter:

All we Conservative Members have been talking loosely for years about the necessity of treating the Empire as an economic unit, and it is high time that we got down to brass tacks. You have done a very great service in forcing this on, and I need not tell you how much I admire your courage and devotion.¹⁰⁴

Ultimately, when the two men met on 12 February, Baldwin flatly rejected any notion of a compromise, and called Beaverbrook's bluff. He would later write that 'I am fighting with beasts at Ephesus and I hope to see their teeth drawn and their claws broken before the battle is over!' 'Baldwin,' Taylor concluded, 'not Beaverbrook, was the good hater'.¹⁰⁵

'The rest of the Press largely ignored or pooh-poohed it' is Amery's description of the reaction to the announcement on 18 February that the Empire Crusade had

¹⁰² *Daily Express*, 24 Jan. 1930, p. 1. Also see the 21 January edition for its coverage of the speech by the twenty-two year old son of Sir James Erskine, ex-MP for St. George's, Westminster, 1921-9, that inspired the club's formation.

¹⁰³ Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 166; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 281.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in A. Lowrie, *John Buchan: The Presbyterian Cavalier* (Toronto, 2004; originally published London, 1995), p. 214

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 281-2 and 275; Baldwin to Sir John Simon, 19 Feb. 1930, quoted in Williamson and Baldwin, eds., *Baldwin Papers*, p. 228. Beaverbrook's account of their meeting is in *Ibid.*, pp. 228-9.

become the United Empire party.¹⁰⁶ But it did not matter. Lord Rothermere had accepted the necessity of food taxes, and the next day the *Daily Express* announced that the United Empire party had the support of Britain's largest newspaper. The *Daily Mail's* front page contained stories about the new party for ten straight days. 'With their combined total of eight national papers, and Rothermere's chain of provincial papers,' argues Chisholm and Davie 'the press barons were laying down a joint barrage scarcely paralleled in newspaper history.' Beaverbrook's strategy was that Baldwin would have to yield or forgo any chance of winning a majority in the next election. On 26 February, the *Daily Express* served notice that Conservative MPs had a choice to make; they could either embrace Empire Free Trade and win—if they wished—the support of the press barons or be opposed by a United Empire candidate. This was far from an idle threat. Two days after the new party had been announced Beaverbrook established a £100,000 'fighting fund of the United Empire Party' and pledged that all contributions would be acknowledged in the *Daily Express*.¹⁰⁷ Dismissed by Baldwin as not only unhelpful but 'very dishonest', the new party enrolled 173,000 members during the first two weeks and received over 100,000 subscriptions. Some supporters wanted to go even further:

Sir,—why only £100,000 fighting fund? Why only contest fifty seats?
Do you not realise that the *whole* country is solidly behind you?

¹⁰⁶Unless otherwise indicated, this paragraph is based on Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, pp. 63 and 15 and Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 293-4.

¹⁰⁷*The Daily Express*, 26 Feb. 1930, p. 3. For example, the number of names in the fifth list occupies roughly half a page, with contributions ranging from a few shillings to £5,000. *Ibid.* Beaverbrook and Rothermere contributed £25,000 and £5,000, respectively. Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 271. £40,000 was pledged from the outset by 'Beaverbrook, Rothermere, Cunliffe-Owen and Dreyfus of British Celanese, who were soon joined by [Canadians] Sir James Dunn and ... Andrew Holt of the Royal Bank of Canada'. Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 293; R. Davenport-Hines, 'Dunn, Sir James Hamet, first baronet (1874-1956)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; C. McCreery, *The Order of Canada: Its Origins, History and Developments* (Toronto, 2005), p. 26.

Copy Lord Kitchener and call it 'The First Hundred Thousand,' remembering that that developed into millions and won the war. This will develop into millions and win the Peace.

Let us leave timidity to Mr. Baldwin. Let us contest every seat in the country.

It will be the biggest political turnover in history.

Down with timidity. Up with the Crusade.

I enclose £2.—Yours,

J.B. Kingdon, Lt-Cdr.

RN. (retired).

Endsielgh-Gardens, W.C.1¹⁰⁸

Exciting rank and file Tories was one thing. But for the laurels to be truly with the new Tory party, Beaverbrook needed to persuade Liberal voters, in particular, to see the United Empire Party as a 'raft' and 'flee their sinking ship'.¹⁰⁹ Amery wrote in his memoirs that in the 'autumn of 1929 ... the public [was] more than ready to respond'. Perhaps because Beaverbrook's Empire Free Trade, like Lloyd George's recent election platform and Sir Oswald Mosley's Birmingham Proposals, was a plan for prosperity, but, unlike its competitors, Empire Free Trade looked beyond Britain and called for the 'deliberate sharing out of imperial markets and resources'.¹¹⁰

Traditionally, it is *The Times* that is credited with being able to influence policy, but amongst Liberals the '*Observer's* influence was undoubtedly great'. The *Guardian* did adopt a more independent position after the War, but it remained the 'liberal quality paper' and consequently was 'deeply opposed to what it deemed the ruthless exploitation

¹⁰⁸ Baldwin to William Lyon Mackenzie King, 25 Feb. 1930, in Williamson and Baldwin, eds., *Baldwin Papers*, p. 229; *The Daily Express*, 26 Feb. 1930, p. 3; italics in original.

¹⁰⁹ Amery, *My Political Life, The Unforgiving Years*, p. 22; Beaverbrook to Garvin, 12 July 1929, quoted in Calton, 'Beaverbrook's Split Imperial Personality', p. 37.

¹¹⁰ Amery, *My Political Life, The Unforgiving Years*, p. 22; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 269. Lloyd George's election manifesto can be found in F. Craig, *British General Election Manifestos: 1918-1966* (Chichester, 1970), pp. 60-62. The Birmingham Proposals are explained in O. Mosley, *My Life* (London, 1968), pp. 178-88 and Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London, 1975), pp. 136-41, in particular. Beaverbrook saw Mosley as a rival and viewed the New Party as a distraction from the Empire Crusade. It was the association with Rothermere and his fascist tendencies that ultimately proved to be Mosley's undoing. M. Worley, *Oswald Mosley and the New Party* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 134-5.

involved in colonies and the Imperial idea'.¹¹¹ Years later, when asked by the historian Robert Blake, why he chose the phrase Empire Free Trade, Beaverbrook answered 'that the British public was addicted to free trade and fond of the Empire, they would only swallow protection if suitably disguised'. He also thought his phrasing 'could be reconciled with Cobdenism', which would explain his interest in capturing Liberal voters for his new movement/party.¹¹² After the war, some Liberals, including Alfred Eckhard Zimmern, saw the Third British Empire as a more liberal, non-racialised organisation built on genuine cooperation. Self-determination, however, was still the exclusive domain of the 'white "adult" nations'; as will be seen in Part II, the policies pursued in Ceylon and India were ahead of their time.¹¹³ By the spring of 1930, having come to the conclusion that an economic slump of historical proportion had taken hold, Britons of all political stripes became increasingly open to new ideas as the number of unemployed continued to rise.¹¹⁴

Instead of taking the lead and committing to something 'definite', Baldwin, believing the party rank and file thought as he did, wanted to respond to the formation of the United Empire Party by arranging 'a suitable by-election which should expose the real weakness of the "Press Lords"'. He was only dissuaded from launching this 'frontal attack' by the party chairman, J.C.C. Davidson, who warned that 'by threatening to fight four by-elections at a time when the enemy's attack is at its zenith, would be disastrous to the Party, and might break it up altogether. This is not my view alone, but is shared by

¹¹¹ C. Kaul, *Media and the British Empire* (London, 2006), p. 9; Gannon, *The British Press and Germany*, pp. 51 and 75-6.

¹¹² Quoted in Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 280; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 163.

¹¹³ Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, pp. 280-281.

¹¹⁴ Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 277 and Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 76.

my officials.’¹¹⁵ Baldwin was advised two days later by the former Unionist MP, Viscount Elibank, and committee member of the Empire Crusade, to keep Beaverbrook ‘in his Councils until after the General Election’, the timing of which could not be anticipated as the 1929 poll had produced a hung Parliament. He was also told that any attempt to unite the two sides should be sooner rather than latter as ‘Lord Rothermere was getting out of hand with his Press’.¹¹⁶ Ultimately, Baldwin accepted Beaverbrook’s suggestion that a referendum be held after the next general election, thereby allowing voters to consider the issue of food taxes in conjunction with whatever agreement(s) emerged from an Imperial Conference. The day after Beaverbrook publically endorsed the compromise announced at the National Union Central Council on 3 March, Baldwin thanked him for having ‘played the game’.¹¹⁷

The 6 May West Fulham by-election is noteworthy as it split the Liberal vote.¹¹⁸ However, the lukewarm endorsement of Empire Free Trade by the Liberal candidate from the last general election, who *The Times* quoted as urging his supporters to ‘vote for Cobb’, could not bring about the decisive result Beaverbrook called for. Voter turnout was, of course, lower. Nevertheless, Cobb polled higher in 1930 than he had the

¹¹⁵ 24 Feb. 1930 entry, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 64; Davidson to Baldwin, 26 Feb. 1930, quoted in James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 322.

¹¹⁶ Memorandum, 28 Feb. 1930, in Williamson and Baldwin, eds., *Baldwin Papers*, pp. 230-231.

¹¹⁷ Baldwin to Beaverbrook, 5 Mar. 1930, in *Ibid.* p. 232. Initially Rothermere supported the compromise, but soon decided that the United Empire party would be his vehicle for opposing reforms to the Raj. Although the Party was instrumental in helping the Tories retake West Fulham from Labour in the 6 May by-election, Baldwin congratulated Beaverbrook for his ‘gallant conduct in the arena’ that helped Sir Cyril Stephen Cobb, who favoured fighting the next election on the issue of Empire Free Trade, regain his seat. Baldwin to Beaverbrook, 7 May 1930, in Williamson and Baldwin, eds., *Baldwin Papers*, p. 233 and *The Times*, 20 June 1930, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ The Chairman of the Liberal Party organisation, Ramsay Muir, campaigned on behalf of the Labour candidate, J.W. Banfield, to defend Free Trade. Liberals from four other divisions also offered their support to Banfield. *The Times*, 2 May 1930, p. 9.

year before, unfortunately for the Crusade the electorate had divided almost fifty-fifty.¹¹⁹ Beaverbrook, who was playing the role of a generally loyal party stalwart, had yet to realise that he was being played. ‘I was anxious to detach Beaverbrook from the United Empire Party and was willing to lead him on a bit’, wrote the party chairman in his draft memoirs.¹²⁰ Beaverbrook and the Tory party drew radical different conclusions on the meaning of Cobb’s victory. The narrow margin of victory alarmed the party leadership. But for Beaverbrook the results were encouraging given the large number of socialists that he encountered while campaigning. The West Fulham by-election demonstrated that the Crusade could attract Liberal support and co-exist with the ‘Baldwinites’. Maintaining this ‘alliance’ almost immediately proved difficult.¹²¹

Acting alone, and presumably unaware of the grievous ‘nature of his crime’, Lord Salisbury denounced Empire Free Trade in a letter to *The Times*. The task of keeping ‘Max from going off the deep end’ fell to Neville Chamberlain.¹²² More explosive still would be the reaction on the Tory backbenches, which forced Salisbury to write two additional letters to *The Times* in an attempt to clarify his thoughts.¹²³ A week after Baldwin announced his commitment to a referendum on food taxes, the chairman of the Empires Industries Association, Page Croft, called on Beaverbrook ‘for the sake of the cause to co-operate with the Conservative Party’, declaring that ‘of all crimes

¹¹⁹ *The Times*, 29 and 30 Apr. 1930, pp. 9 and 10, respectively.

¹²⁰ James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 322. The expectation that the Conservative party would act in good faith was made clear on the front page of the *Daily Express*, 2 Apr. 1930.

¹²¹ Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 71.

¹²² Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 29 Mar. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 173.

¹²³ T. Rooth, *British Protectionism and the International Economy: Overseas Commercial Policy in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 56. The second letter, which was sent a month after the earlier one, came about because Page Croft threatened to call a meeting of the Empire Industries Association (see next footnote) that threatened to have 187 of the 412 Tory MPs in attendance.

fratricide is the worst'. He argued that his Association constituted the 'most effective spearhead for achieving the objects you desire and for keeping the front bench up to the mark'.¹²⁴ It is true that Beaverbrook was 'supremely anxious for a coalition with the Conservatives', but he also felt somewhat betrayed by Baldwin. 'I see by the *Sunday Times* that Mr Baldwin has done me in the eye', Beaverbrook told Davidson. As part of their agreement, both men had agreed that neither should be portrayed as having 'sold the pass'.¹²⁵ Writing triumphantly to a friend, Davidson bragged that Beaverbrook and Rothermere were 'greatly pained and rattled' by the criticisms they suffered in the 'columns of the independent press from Aberdeen to Cardiff and from Glasgow to Fleet Street'. He went on to say that he had anticipated Beaverbrook's surrender for a full fortnight before it occurred, and that 'we won by patience and maintaining against all comers an outward appearance of complete confidence'. The result he (erroneously) concluded was that everything was settled and that 'Beaverbrook has definitely broken politically with Rothermere'.¹²⁶ Amery's view that Baldwin was not 'forthcoming enough for these very sensitive press magnates' proved to be too smug as Baldwin's handling of the by-election in Nottingham Central seemed to confirm that Beaverbrook 'had [in fact] surrendered everything for nothing'.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Croft to Beaverbrook, 12 Mar. 1930, quoted in Witherell, 'Page Croft and Conservative Backbench Campaigns for Empire', p. 374. Created in 1924, the Empire Industries Association consisted of 'backbench M.P.s and businessmen pledged to imperial trade unity'. The group, which counted amongst its members 280 Conservative MPs during the 1924-9 Parliament, worked to influence rather than challenge party leadership by operating within the Tory party. Witherell, 'Page Croft and Conservative Backbench Campaigns for Empire', p. 368.

¹²⁵ Beaverbrook to Gwynne, 19 Feb. and Beaverbrook to Davidson, 9 Mar. 1930, quoted in James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 323.

¹²⁶ Davidson to Lord Tyrrell, 9 Mar. 1930, quoted in *Ibid.* pp. 324-5.

¹²⁷ Entry for 7 Mar. 1930, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 66; Beaverbrook to Davidson, 9 Mar. 1930, quoted in James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 323.

The Member for Nottingham Central, Sir Albert Bennett, wanted to be freed from his duties as an MP to focus on business interests and the local association selected the ex-member for Luton, T.J. O'Connor, as the official Conservative standard-bearer. It was expected that 'the question of safeguarding duties ... [for] the lace and hosiery trades ... will play a prominent part' in the campaign.¹²⁸ In a message to constituents, republished in *The Times*, O'Connor declared that he had 'no intention of being stampeded into rash or ill-considered action by the syndicated Press' In reality, he, like everyone else, was waiting for Baldwin to set party policy.¹²⁹ O'Connor's unconditional acceptance of (what Beaverbrook termed) Baldwin's 'two jumps instead of one' approach to adopting protectionism was sufficient enough to allow the United Empire Party's candidate to refrain from contesting the seat, thereby ensuring Labour's defeat.¹³⁰ O'Connor was endorsed at the last minute by the Empire Crusade, but Beaverbrook saw the literature emanating out of the Central Office as proof that the Conservative Party saw 'the Referendum not as a spear with which to fight for Empire free trade, but as a shield behind which to shelter itself'.¹³¹ Publically Beaverbrook blamed those around Baldwin, but in private he had earlier told those very same people that Baldwin's decision to issue a letter of support to O'Connor, who had disparaged food taxes, in what Chamberlain termed 'a very foolish speech', was seen by the 'public'

¹²⁸ *The Times*, 14 Jan. 1930, p. 11.

¹²⁹ *The Times*, 27 Jan. 1930, p. 7; *The Times*, 8 May 1930, p. 13.

¹³⁰ Beaverbrook to the writer/journalist, Edward Shanks, 11 Mar. 1930, quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 285; *The Times*, 8 May 1930, p. 13.

¹³¹ *The Times*, 27 May 1930, p. 13; *The Times*, 20 May 1930, p. 9.

as evidence that he had been ‘swindled’.¹³² The reality was that Beaverbrook had by the end of the Nottingham Central campaign ‘lost *his* confidence in S.B.’ A sentiment increasingly shared by Chamberlain, who, like Beaverbrook, wanted to introduce food taxes right away, but hesitated ‘to throw the leadership into the melting pot’.¹³³ The Tory party remained in a ‘very disgruntled condition’, with the ‘malcontents’ still unsatisfied even after Neville Chamberlain replaced Davidson as party chairman. Beaverbrook believed he was wining, but the truth, Taylor writes, is that ‘Baldwin had taken Chamberlain prisoner’.¹³⁴ The perceptive editorial cartoonist, David Low, who had ‘complete freedom’ during his tenure at the *Evening Standard*, saw things differently.¹³⁵ Conservatives eventually would have to confront the contradiction(s) imposed by the fact that ‘opinion has moved so fast in our Party that a speech which would have been rapturously welcomed a year ago is now felt to be inadequate’.¹³⁶

In mid-June, the Conservative Association in North Norfolk decided that they fight the forthcoming by-election, which was necessitated by the elevation of the sitting MP, Edward Noel-Buxton, to the peerage, on a platform of ‘Empire Free Trade, with duties on foreign foods—and no referendum’. The vast majority of those assembled in

¹³² *The Times*, 20 May 1930, p. 9; Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 12 Apr. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 179; Comments made to the ‘big five of the Conservative party (not including Baldwin)’ on 3 Apr. 1930, quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 285. Assembled that night at the Savoy for a private dinner, hosted by Viscount Elibank, were Lord Hailsham, Sir Samuel Hoare, Robert Horne, Philip Cunliffe Lister, Amery and Chamberlain. Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 6 Apr. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 178.

¹³³ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 25 May 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 185. Also see Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 286.

¹³⁴ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 8 June 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 188; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 287-8. The full extent of the campaign against Davidson is detailed in James, ed., *Memoirs of a Conservative*, pp. 329-43.

¹³⁵ C. Seymour-Ure, ‘Low, Sir David Alexander Cecil (1891–1963)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; *Evening Standard*, 16 June 1930, British Cartoon Archive reference: [LSE1518](#).

¹³⁶ Entry for 5 Feb. 1930, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 62.

the town of Holt were tired of ‘half measures’. Such was the appeal of Empire Free Trade that motorists and their wives poured into the square where the Association was meeting and their cars caused a ‘complete block in the old-world streets’. After pledging loyalty to Baldwin and official party policy, the Association ‘unanimously pledged the candidate, Mr. Cook, to support to the full the policy of Empire Free Trade, “to accept it and all it implies.”’ In a related story, the *Daily Express* reprinted Beaverbrook’s letter to the *Daily Mail* from the day before announcing that it had become ‘abundantly obvious to Empire Crusaders that they have little assistance to expect from members of the Conservative Front Bench’. The truce with Baldwin was dissolved, and the appeal for funds issued once more. In conclusion, Beaverbrook pledged that candidates like Cook could expect no interference from the Crusade.¹³⁷ Finally, Beaverbrook had come to recognise what others in the Tariff Reform movement had long known. ‘The tariff Referendum has never been anything more respectable than the dodge of a hard-pressed politician to avert a party rupture’, wrote journalist and tireless tariff reformer, Richard Jebb. Implementing Empire Free Trade meant destroying Baldwin, and, possibly, the Conservative Party itself.¹³⁸ While Rothermere would not have hesitated, Beaverbrook, thought the former Secretary of State for War, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, ‘was on a different footing’ and consequently tried one last semi-independent approach.¹³⁹

Moving away from his slogan of Empire Free Trade, Beaverbrook told the people of North Norfolk that he wanted to surround the Empire with a ‘Garden Wall’.

¹³⁷ *Daily Express*, 18 June 1930, p. 1.

¹³⁸ R. Jebb, ‘Preference and the Referendum’, *Nineteenth Century*, cvii (1930), p. 641; Also see pp. 646-7; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 82.

¹³⁹ *The Times*, 23 June 1930, p. 16.

He added, to much confusion, that ‘there will be within it some smaller walls dividing one portion of the garden from another’. Beaverbrook’s audiences included members from all parties, but *The Times* was perplexed by this new explanation.¹⁴⁰ The goal was to aid industry across the Empire—thereby building upon the work of the Empire Marketing Board—and this could only be done through negotiation at an imperial conference. In the final rallies, Beaverbrook extolled the benefits of Empire Free Trade to the unemployed, farmers, agricultural workers and Liberals. A letter of support even from Baldwin was read out.¹⁴¹ Every time Beaverbrook spoke from a platform, a box would buzz every minute, and he would announce that Britain ‘has just spent another thousand pounds on imported food’. During the course of the campaign, fifteen influential bankers and businessman abandoned Free Trade in favour of Beaverbrook’s agenda.¹⁴² Little wonder that Conservative spirits were running high on the eve of polling. But it was not to be. Cook lost by 179 votes, much to the delight of Churchill.¹⁴³ The larger turnout the Tories had hoped for never materialised; in fact, numerous local Tories, like Hoare, abstained. Labour supporters, who had predicted a majority somewhere in the range of 1,500 to 2,000, were equally disappointed. An electorate which (according to Taylor) was ‘mostly Radical agricultural labourers’ had returned, the local Labour notable, Lady Noel-Buxton, with the smallest majority of the entire

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in *The Times*, 4 July 1930, p. 18.

¹⁴¹ *The Times*, 8 July 1930, p. 14

¹⁴² Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 290; Entry for 4 July 1930, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 75.

¹⁴³ *The Times*, 9 July 1930, p. 9; Beaverbrook to Amery, 12 July 1930, Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill*, p. 169.

interwar era.¹⁴⁴ Her claim that the election's outcome demonstrated that Britons would not be deceived by 'Empire protection masquerading as a free trade policy' rings somewhat hollow as Cook won the seat in 1931, with a majority of almost seven thousand votes. As he said in 1930, 'the process of unseating a Socialist candidate was a slow one'. Regardless, having 'lost the trick', Beaverbrook was eager to 'get on with the game'.¹⁴⁵ It was becoming apparent that public opinion was shifting as unemployment rose ever higher, but (according to Amery) Baldwin remained 'very convinced that Beaverbrook cuts no ice in the north and that any policy of taxing food would not go down there'.¹⁴⁶ A few weeks ahead of the North Norfolk by-election, voters in Glasgow, Shettleston had elected a replacement for their late member, and on the eve of polling the outcome was far from certain.¹⁴⁷ W.P. Templeton had campaigned as a supporter of both Baldwin and the Crusade, but lost by 396 votes; in comparison, the previous Conservative candidate lost the last general election by 6,724 votes. Nevertheless, he claimed a 'moral victory' for the greatly reduced majority, which was mainly the result of Labour voters, in particular, staying home.¹⁴⁸ Beaverbrook was undoubtedly delighted to read in *The Times* that a leading Scottish liberal, Francis Norie Miller, had advised 'Liberal voters in Shettleston to support the Conservative candidate. He states that lifelong Liberals and free-traders are not only justified, but as patriots it is their duty, to

¹⁴⁴ *The Times*, 10 July 1930, p. 14; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 290. Cook did have the support of the local branch of the National Farmers Union, whose executive committee 'unanimously' welcomed his call for 'a tax on foreign meat, wheat, and other imported produce'. *The Times*, 23 June 1930, p. 16.

¹⁴⁵ *The Times*, 11 July 1930, p. 14; Noel-Buxton and Beaverbrook were quoted directly. Cook saw his majority more than halved in the 1935 election and lost the seat to Labour in 1945.

¹⁴⁶ *The Times*, 20 June 1930, p. 9; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 75; Entry for 26 May 1930, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 71.

¹⁴⁷ *The Times*, 26 June 1930, p. 13.

¹⁴⁸ *The Times*, 23 and 28 June 1930 pp. 16 and 12, respectively.

vote for the Conservative candidate, who is a supporter of Empire Free Trade'. Meanwhile, the ex-suffragette and cofounder of the Women's Guild of Empire, Flora Drummond was working to get the 'flapper vote' in Shettleston to understand the wisdom of safeguarding, without endorsing any particular candidate.¹⁴⁹ It would seem that Baldwin was proven somewhat wrong about Scotland and the Crusade, but Beaverbrook and Central Office blamed one another when the 'sitter' in North Norfolk was lost. The Party establishment were surprised at how little damage talk of food taxes actually entailed. On the larger issue of whether there would be 'peace or war', Chamberlain would be disappointed as the 'Beaver' had finally opted for war.¹⁵⁰

As Chamberlain was writing to his sister, Beaverbrook told Amery of his desire to contest 'a seat against a Conservative Office candidate'. Although the last two by-elections saw his candidates defeated, the closeness of the races offered reason to hope, and Beaverbrook wanted to see if the Crusaders were 'stronger than the Conservatives' and, if so, could a 'Conservative Empire Free Trade candidate' win in an industrial constituency? Chamberlain's attempt—via an intermediary—to negotiate a settlement broke down, as another by-election had to be held to replace the late member for Bromley.¹⁵¹ Beaverbrook and Rothermere viewed Baldwin's approach to safeguarding with contempt, during one debate he even professed that it is (in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson) 'a far better thing to travel hopefully than to arrive'.¹⁵² Meanwhile, the

¹⁴⁹ *The Times*, 19 June 1930, p. 11; K. Cowman, 'Drummond [née Gibson; other married name Simpson], Flora McKinnon (1878-1949)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹⁵⁰ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 12 July 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 195-6.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 290-291.

¹⁵² Quoted in *Hansard*, ccxli. 1303; Entry for 16 July 1930, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 77.

Daily Express carried an appeal by Beaverbrook for donations to defeat ‘Cobdenism’ once and for all. ‘In 1845 Cobden raised a fund of a quarter of a million [and] in 1846 he won’, the paper reasoned. One supporter from Leeds was so ‘disgusted’ by Baldwin’s ‘“Red Herring” Referendum’ that he doubled his pledge to the Crusade as ‘*failure means the end of the Empire and my self-respect as an Englishman*’.¹⁵³ An opinion also held by the ex-middling-proconsul, Lord Lloyd, who told an audience in Portsmouth that Britons ‘deserve[d] to perish’ if they maintained their ‘silly trade policy’.¹⁵⁴ Baldwin’s future as party leader had become an open topic of conversation.¹⁵⁵ The by-election campaign in Bromley thought *The Times* was being ‘conducted in peculiar circumstances’. Thanks to an outdated register, it was estimated that at least 25,000 residents were disenfranchised and almost 14,000 people who had moved out of the constituency could still vote; how many would turn up, however, was uncertain.¹⁵⁶ The Conservative candidate sought to don the ‘amour of the Crusader’, while simultaneously flying Baldwin’s standard. Bromley, the *Daily Express* lamented, represented

the spectacle of what is going on in more than half the constituencies of the country How much longer can the Conservative Party keep its self-respect—to say nothing of the respect of the nation—when the constituencies are forcing their candidates to swear allegiance to an ideal and at the same moment the Central Office is forcing them to forswear it?

¹⁵³ *Daily Express*, 16 July 1930, p. 9; my italics.

¹⁵⁴ *Daily Express*, 15 Oct. 1930, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵ Witherell, ‘Page Croft and Conservative Backbench Campaigns for Empire’, p. 375. Also see the entry for 20 July 1930, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *Amery Diaries, 1896-1929*, p. 78.

¹⁵⁶ *The Times*, 1 Sept. and 8 Aug. 1930, pp. 11 and 7, respectively. Of the 73,785 people on the register, less than forty thousand cast a ballot on 2 Sept; of course, with the election being held during the holiday season a lower turnout—53.4 versus 73.1 per cent in 1929—is not surprising.

‘Bromley’s dilemma’ only got worse. Neville Chamberlain suggested that Rothermere and those around him viewed the crises threatening to consume the Tories as a means of driving newspaper sales and, unlike Beaverbrook, cared about ‘fun’, not Empire Free Trade.¹⁵⁷ Beaverbrook had previously suggested, presumably after conferring with Rothermere, that the best course of action was to adopt Rothermere’s son, Esmond Harmsworth, as the candidate for Bromley. Chamberlain refused to ‘split my party’ and worried that he ‘might have to go down fighting for S.B.’ when his closest ally was in fact Beaverbrook. In the end, Rothermere decided to field a United Empire Candidate in Bromley, much to Beaverbrook’s dismay.¹⁵⁸ Although the United Empire Party did not ‘excite the same enthusiasm as Max’s “Crusade”’, and the *Daily Express* sheepishly tried to distance Beaverbrook and the Crusade from Bromley, the Party placed an impressive third, with almost twenty-five percent of the vote. A ‘confidential report’ concluded that the result was a consequence of a ‘general dissatisfaction with the leadership and this is only the echo of a refrain that reaches me from every quarter with a dreary monotony’, lamented Chamberlain. The election took place in (as *The Times* put it) ‘peculiar circumstances’, but the party chairman had good reason to be gloomy.¹⁵⁹

The Conservatives’ share of the vote declined almost fifty percent, polling a mere 12,782 in a constituency with over seventy-three thousand voters. Tory dissidents made up the bulk of the almost ten thousand people that supported the United Empire Party’s

¹⁵⁷ *Daily Express*, 2 Aug. 1930, p. 8; Quoted in Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 26 July 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 200.

¹⁵⁸ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 26 July 1930, in Ibid. p. 200; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 291-2.

¹⁵⁹ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 22 Aug. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 206-7; *Daily Express*, 25 Aug. 1930, p. 8; to Hilda Chamberlain, 7 Sept. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 208.

candidate. The official Conservative candidate still won Bromley, but saw his majority fall to a mere 1,606 votes compared to over seven thousand in the two previous elections. Both the Labour and Liberal candidates polled lower than they had in the 1929 general election. The combined support of the Tory and United Empire Party was almost ten percent higher than the Conservative's showing in the 1929 general election. Was this result a consequence of the greatly reduced voter turnout? This is doubtful, as a 'large proportion' of the disenfranchised were servants, who are 'always regarded by Conservative organisers as a shade more blue than her mistress'.¹⁶⁰ More likely is that there was some movement of Labour and maybe even Liberal supporters to the United Empire candidate. Less than three weeks after the by-election the number of unemployed Britons rose by 'nearly 80,000' during a period 'when trade is usually improving'. The right wing, pro-empire *Saturday Review* predicted that if United Empire and the Crusaders joined forces 'they would make probably make Mr. Baldwin's position impossible'.¹⁶¹ Others characterised the outcome as 'a plague on all your parties' and dismissed the chances of the revolt attaining 'serious proportions' due to the 'amateurish methods of the United Empire Party'. Ahead of polling, the *Guardian* boldly declared that if United Empire fails in Bromley, it would find the rest of England as 'cold as ice'.¹⁶² Newspapers may speak of the 'lessons of Bromley', but in reality the situation was too chaotic. During the campaign *The Times of India* joked that the 'confusion of

¹⁶⁰ 'Notes of the Week', *Saturday Review*, 6 Sept. 1930, p. 273; *The Guardian*, 8 Aug. 1930, p. 12.

¹⁶¹ 'Notes of the Week', *Saturday Review*, 20 and 6 Sept. 1930, pp. 329 and 273, respectively. On Britain's weekly magazines, see B. Morris, *The Roots of Appeasement: The British Weekly Press and Nazi Germany During the 1930s* (London, 1991), pp. 11-47. The United Empire Party's platform in Bromley is outlined in *The Guardian*, 18 Aug. 1930, p. 12.

¹⁶² 'Current Comments', *The English Review*, Oct. 1930, p. 419; *The Guardian*, 19 Aug. 1930, p. 10.

the electorate would be complete' if only a 'Communist and an Independent candidate' entered the fray. Commenting on the results, Lloyd George said that 'the most startling feature of the result is the depth of the revolt in the Tory party against its leadership'.¹⁶³ It would be less than a month before *The Times* was reporting that Baldwin had no intention of resigning. Nevertheless, it could have been even worse. Beaverbrook had 'repudiated [the United Empire candidate in Bromley] on grounds both personal and political' and consequently kept a relatively low profile, which led one commentator to complain 'that these leviathans of the Press move incalculably'¹⁶⁴

All of that was about to change as yet another by-election had to be held following the death of the MP for South Paddington in a 'yachting disaster off the Cornish coast' on 20 August. The likely Conservative candidate was the three-time mayor of Paddington, Sir Herbert Lidiard, who rebuffed initial efforts by the United Empire Party for him 'to go into Parliament with my hands tied'. The United Empire Party and its eventual candidate Mrs. A.N. Stewart-Richardson began canvassing in mid-September. Lidiard, however, would not be able to fend off the Crusaders as easily. They had captured the riding association.¹⁶⁵ After hearing the report on his interview with their deputation, the Crusaders 'deplorts (sic) the negative attitude of Sir Herbert Lidiard ...[and resolved] to consider the adoption of another candidate who will be a whole-hearted and unequivocal supporter of Empire "Free Trade."' Lidiard faced his

¹⁶³ *The Times of India*, 5 Sept. 1930, p. 6; *The Times of India*, 20 Aug. 1930, p. 8; Quoted in *The Guardian*, 4 Sept. 1930, p. 12.

¹⁶⁴ *The Times*, 30 Sept. 1930, p. 12; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 291; S. Gwynn, 'Ebb and Flow: A Monthly Commentary', *Fortnightly Review*, cxxviii (1930), p. 543. The *Spectator* was equally confused, Aug. 1930, p. 267.

¹⁶⁵ *The Guardian*, 2 and 16 Sept. 1930, pp. 15 and 10, respectively; *Ibid.* p. 295. Lidiard's reply to the United Empire Party was published on 16 Sept.

Waterloo, Empire Free Trade *or* Baldwin? Choosing the latter meant facing Vice-Admiral Taylor as the Crusader's standard bearer. 'Party Candidate Surrenders. Will Disobey Whips for Empire Free Trade', screamed the headline in the following day's *Daily Express*. If elected, Lidiard would enter Parliament 'pledged against Mr. Baldwin, pledged against the Central Office and standing ... as a complete Empire Free Trader pledged to vote for duties on foreign foodstuffs, in defiance, if necessary, of his leaders'.¹⁶⁶ Chamberlain, as chairman of the party, found this intolerable and threatened to withhold support from the Central Office during the campaign, a decision that created quite the kerfuffle.¹⁶⁷ A stinging editorial in *The Times*—entitled 'The More the Merrier'—ended by concluding that not only did Lidiard not know 'his own mind', but also that 'South Paddington has today no [loyal] Conservative candidate. Why should it not find one, and have an election at once instructive and amusing!' As one MP said of this call for Crusaders to be 'excommunicated', 'such dictatorial instructions would mean the complete severance of many stout-hearted Conservatives from the party'. Another letter asked would not the Central Office be right to disown a candidate if, to take an 'extreme' instance, a local association asked for a pledge to work for the 'abolition of the Monarchy'?¹⁶⁸ 'Lidiard has been quietly transferred to my court and I have seen & approved his election address which ends by promising to support the Conservative Party loyally in the House', Chamberlain told his sister. The outcome was inevitable. Beaverbrook at last had the contest he wanted, and it could not have come at

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in *The Guardian*, 26 Sept. 1930, p. 6; *Daily Express*, 27 Sept. 1930, p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ *The Guardian*, 2 Oct. 1930, p. 11; Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *Amery Diaries, 1896-1929*, p. 32-3. Chamberlain's letter and Lidiard's reply were, of course, reproduced by *The Times*; 30 Sept. 1930, p. 12.

¹⁶⁸ *The Times*, 1 and 3 Oct. 1930, pp. 13 and 8, respectively.

a worse time for Baldwin. Unlike the 1922 revolt that ended Lloyd George's Coalition government, in which dissent was confined primarily to England's southern counties, by the end of September, local associations across Britain were 'within a hair's breadth of breaking out in open revolt'.¹⁶⁹

It is against this backdrop that the 'South Paddington Crusaders Declare[ed] War'. 'Prominent residents in the constituency' addressed a letter to Taylor in a bid to have him contest the by-election as an Empire Crusader. Supporters were sick of 'Mr Baldwin's Socialism', i.e. his support of Labour's quota system for wheat and the inevitable 'army of inspectors' that would be needed to once again bring trading under 'Government control'. Lidiard's behaviour, Beaverbrook told his editor, via a front page letter, must be denounced by all 'right minded citizens'. If pledges made at nomination meetings are permitted to become meaningless, 'then elections become a sham and the representation of the people in the House of Commons no better than a farce'. Rothermere had previously made a similar appeal. Beaverbrook, ever the skilful propagandist, highlighted that he had repeatedly subordinated his interests for the 'good of the party'. In this instance, however, he promised that no quarter should or would be given.¹⁷⁰ A leading Tory believed that the 'real fight' was with the Socialists, but to Beaverbrook the choice facing electors in South Paddington was clear, a 'conservative

¹⁶⁹ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 11 Oct. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 212-3; Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *Amery Diaries, 1896-1929*, p. 33; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 97.

¹⁷⁰ *Daily Express*, 17 Oct. 1930, pp. 1-2. Six weeks earlier in a public letter to the United Empire's first candidate, Rothermere complained that 'Britain today is being ruined by the dead hand of worn-out politicians. These gentlemen are solely concerned with the scramble for office. They sit with folded arms while one basic industry after another descends into ruin ...' Quoted in *The Guardian*, 1 Sept. 1930, p. 13.

imperialist v. Conservative wobbler'.¹⁷¹ At the nomination meeting, someone asked Beaverbrook what he thought of the fact that Rothermere also was fielding a candidate. 'The question was not answered', noted a smug *Times*.¹⁷² Three days later, the *Daily Express* published a letter written by Rothermere on 18 October 1930 to 'one of his followers in South Paddington' that endorsed Taylor in the strongest language possible. A decision that the paper praised as it put 'principle before Party'. Others, however, drew different conclusions with regard to Mrs Richardson being cast adrift. While the *Guardian* deemed the by-election 'most interesting', Baldwin dismissed it as 'the wildest farce'. As Taylor was adopted as the Crusader's standard-bearer less than two weeks before polling, 'Beaverbrook descended on the constituency with an array of canvassers and motor cars. He spoke at eight meetings.' Baldwin described the press lords' behaviour as that befitting of 'lunatics' or 'like the devil knowing his time is short are raving'.¹⁷³ Might Baldwin and others be rattled? The fact that the Central Office reportedly despatched every party agent in London into South Paddington and ordered them to defeat the 'Crusader[s] at all costs' suggests concern. As does the *Sunday Times* thundering that Lidiard 'runs with the hare and hunts with the hounds'. Chamberlain predicted victory for his candidate, telling his sister that 'unless the canvas is hopelessly misleading he [Taylor] hasn't really made a very deep impression' in South

¹⁷¹ *The Times*, 28 Oct. 1930, p. 9; *Daily Express*, 18 Oct. 1930, p. 1. Additional comments suggest that it was the Tories, not Beaverbrook, that facing defeat became 'desperate'. South Paddington was a conservative riding; since 1918 the Conservatives were only challenged twice, once by one of Rothermere's Anti-Waste League and then by a Liberal candidate in 1923. Losing by more than forty points led to the seat being uncontested for the remainder of the 1920s. In 1930, Labour polled a distant third place, more than 2,300 votes back of second place and more than 3,200 fewer votes than the winner.

¹⁷² *The Times*, 18 Oct. 1930, p. 7.

¹⁷³ *Daily Express*, 20 Oct. 1930, p. 1; *The Guardian*, 17 Oct. 1930, p. 10; Baldwin to Lady Davidson, 23 Oct. 1930, in Williamson and Baldwin, eds., *Baldwin Papers*, p. 241; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 296.

Paddington.¹⁷⁴ Yet the *Daily Express* declared, to take but *one* example, that ‘Admiral Taylor stirs South Paddington’ to such an extent that ‘even his opponents left the meeting with a new sense of his power and dignity as a candidate’. Tory predictions spoke to the older political-press nexus that they experienced in years past. The post-war political world by contrast saw ‘communications ... play a more important role in political practice than ever before’. Furthermore the papers of Beaverbrook and Rothermere reached millions of people ‘who had hitherto been beyond the reach of Westminster politics’.¹⁷⁵ The riding’s electoral history—last contested in 1923—makes any kind of analysis impossible, but it is worth noting that the *Fortnightly Review* credited/blamed ‘the cooks and housemaids of South Paddington who sent Admiral Taylor to Parliament’. Others viewed the results as proof that naval officers are the ideal candidate.¹⁷⁶ Headlines, like ‘Forty-Four Conservative M.P.s Demand Mr Baldwin’s Resignation’, the day before polling in South Paddington, no less, had to influence public opinion.¹⁷⁷ Whether or not this was a ‘manoeuvre to affect the Paddington election’ is beside the point, a fifth of the party publically called for Baldwin’s resignation and was at ‘the nearest point ... [of] throwing in their lot with

¹⁷⁴ *Daily Express*, 20 Oct. 1930, p. 1; Quoted in *Ibid.*; Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 26 Oct. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 216. It was reported that credible rumours held that the Central Office planned to bring in five hundred canvassers for the final days of the campaign. *Daily Express*, 23 Oct. 1930, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ *Daily Express*, 22 Oct. 1930, p. 2; Kaul, *Reporting the Raj*, pp. 13-14;

¹⁷⁶ J. Courtney, ‘The Suffragettes in Retrospect’, *Fortnightly Review*, cxxix (1931), p. 512; S. Gwynn, ‘Ebb and Flow: A Monthly Commentary’, *Fortnightly Review*, cxxix (1930), p. 829. *The Times of India* expressed views similar to those of Gwynn, 8 Dec. 1930, p. 8. Taylor represented Paddington South until 1950.

¹⁷⁷ *Daily Express*, 29 Oct. 1930, p. 1. Also see Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain*, p. 9.

Beaverbrook'.¹⁷⁸ Scholarly opinion differs on which event overshadowed the other; one should not overlook the 'curious' contemporary observation that Paddington South was the third Conservative association to demonstrate that it was not 'solidly behind Mr. Baldwin'. Low dismissed Baldwin as 'the late leader'.¹⁷⁹ The *Daily Express* not surprisingly devoted a fair bit of space to the fact that 'Mr Baldwin wins and loses (sic)'. A Saturday cartoon in the *Daily Express* had Chamberlain carrying the Central Office's baggage and depicted Baldwin's triumph at Caxton Hall as a mere handbag, but a kindly porter informed them that they had missed the last train. A grinning Beaverbrook just made it onto the last car. The *Guardian* by contrast concluded that both men triumphed, and predicted that the press lords 'will probably succeed in pulling him [Baldwin] down'. Beaverbrook ultimately failed, so perhaps the 'chief moral' of the Paddington South by-election is that there truly were 'seats which the Conservative Party cannot lose, no matter how hard it tries'. The same could not be said for 'Labour strongholds'.¹⁸⁰

Discontents were 'rife in all parties' by the beginning of November 1930, most notably Beaverbrook (and Rothermere), Lloyd George and, the former Conservative, then Independent, turned Labour MP, Oswald Mosley; who latter founded the British Union of Fascists. 'Were it not for the restraining influence of the Indian enigma the

¹⁷⁸ 'Notes of the Week', *The Saturday Review*, 150 (1930), p. 541; 'The South Paddington By-election', *The Spectator*, 145 (1930), p. 654; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 101. *The Saturday Review* suggested Baldwin should imitate Arthur Balfour, and if he did he could look forward to an 'honourable ... public career'.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 102-4; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 297-8; 'Notes of the Week', *The Saturday Review*, 150 (1930), p. 390; *Evening Standard*, 1 Nov. 1930, British Cartoon Archive reference: [DL0448](#).

¹⁸⁰ *Daily Express*, 31 Oct. and 1 Nov. 1930, pp. 1 and 8, respectively; *The Guardian*, 1 Nov. 1930, p. 10; Gwynn, 'Ebb and Flow', 129, p. 829.

political situation would very soon become in every sense a dissolving view', concluded *The Observer*. Britons were asking themselves if England made 'her prodigious effort and sacrifice in the War for this miserable sequel'. 'The younger generation in all parties', the paper warned, were 'in favour of "clearing out all the Old Gangs"'. Had the vote on Baldwin's leadership been held a day later—and the outcome in Paddington South known—'the vote for a change in the Conservative leadership would have been [even] larger'.¹⁸¹ As for Tory complaints about the 'wicked Press' and 'press-dictation', *The Observer* bluntly said that no one ever 'suggests that Press-influence is illegitimate when they are being supported by it'. Overlapping the 'uproarious' campaign in Paddington South was the campaign underway in the Shipley division, Yorkshire, to replace its late member, which was characterised as the 'most decorous on record'.¹⁸² Voter turnout was essentially normal and against expectations, the Tories won the Labour stronghold with a majority of over 1,600. In the 1929 election, Labour's majority had been almost five thousand but their share of the vote fell by just over ten points, with ex-supporters going to the Liberals and even more so the Conservatives.¹⁸³ There was no Crusade candidate, as Beaverbrook tended only to contest seats in the agricultural regions of southern England and London and its middle class suburbs. Presumably, the

¹⁸¹ *The Observer*, 2 Nov. 1930, p. 16. The British press' immediate reaction was to play up size of the rebel faction, which was deemed 'unprecedented' and seen as an indication that Baldwin's 'early retirement is inevitable'. *The Times of India*, 11 Nov. 1930, p. 11. The story itself, which was despatched by air mail, was dated 31 October.

¹⁸² *The Observer*, 2 Nov. 1930, p. 16; *The Times of India*, 10 Nov. 1930, p. 9. In addition to the resources of the Central Office, Lidiard had the 'direct support' of *The Times*, *The Telegraph* and *The Morning Post*, while *The Daily Herald*, *The News-Chronicle* and *The Star* attacked Taylor; who had the 'full support' of the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *The Evening Standard* and *The Evening News*. *Daily Express*, 1 Nov. 1930, p. 8.

¹⁸³ Chamberlain told his sister that he would be 'disappointed' if they failed to reduce the 'majority by a substantial amount'. Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 2 Nov. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 216.

fact that the Tory candidate ran on imposing tariffs on foreign textiles would have made him acceptable to Beaverbrook in any event.¹⁸⁴ All three candidates condemned the government for its failure to stem the rising tide of unemployment, but the Tory candidate was the lone voice advocating for ‘a tariff to enable the woollen manufacturers to sell their fabrics in the home market’. Chamberlain sent a telegram endorsing the benefits of protection. In the final days of the campaign, the Liberals to no avail ‘sound[ed] the old alarm of the dear loaf’.¹⁸⁵ Shipley returned a Tory MP for the first time.¹⁸⁶ When the *Daily Express* naturally celebrated the victory, Chamberlain and his wife

enacted the last moments of [General] Wolfe. Annie rushed into my room crying They run! (or words to that effect). Rousing himself from his lethargy the dying hero faintly asked Who run? “The Daily Express”! [“]Then I die happy” and unfolding my paper I attacked a breakfast which would have killed anyone whose constitution had been less seriously undermined by prolong abstinence from food [owing to a cold, etc] than mine.

To Chamberlain, ever since Bromley, Beaverbrook’s actions had been ‘double faced’. He imagined ‘the disciples asking themselves in doubt & fear “What has come to the Son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets”?’¹⁸⁷ Baldwin also took a dim view of the press, saying on one occasion that ‘the Beaver is trying to crawl back, and the foul press is lying back very quiet ...’ Neither accepted that Beaverbrook and Rothermere,

¹⁸⁴ Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 300; *The Times of India*, 10 Nov. 1930, p. 9. Also see *The Times*, 23 Oct. 1930, p. 16.

¹⁸⁵ *The Times*, 6 Nov. 1930, p. 11.

¹⁸⁶ *The Times*, 8 Nov. 1930, p. 12. The Tory candidate it should be noted ‘positively refused to pledge himself to immediate and indiscriminate duties on foreign foodstuffs’. Nor did he endorse the party’s new ‘free hand’ policy. Cries of ‘dear food’ were made, but safeguarding was the ‘dominating issue of the election’. *Ibid.*, p. 13. It was estimated that ‘approximately 70 per cent of the workers in the Shipley area are connected with some branch of the textile industry’. Another ten percent were engineers of various sorts, with varying ties to the textile industry. *The Times*, 23 Oct. 1930, p. 16.

¹⁸⁷ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 8 Nov. 1930, Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 218-9.

like all ‘independent’ journalists, had a ‘duty in times like these’ to act as a ‘counter-power’. Britons proclaimed *The Observer* were tired of ‘pre-war minds and their post-war platitudes’. Moreover, true statesmen, like ‘Palmerstone, Disraeli, Gladstone, [Joe] Chamberlain, knew how to manage their relations with journalism, and knew that it had no public value when subservient or echoing. Mr. Baldwin, better advised, might have managed as well’, the paper erroneously concluded.¹⁸⁸ Chamberlain confessed to his sister that ‘if S.B. will only play up and follow good advice our position ought steadily to improve’. Remember, as A.J.P. Taylor concluded, ‘Baldwin, not Beaverbrook, was the good hater’. Ten days before polling in Paddington South, *The Guardian* concluded that ‘the press lords want to show their power But they have chosen for this purpose a constituency where there is the least possible danger of their manoeuvres resulting in the Government’s gaining a seat.’ In Beaverbrook’s case, at least, these are the actions not of a two-faced press baron, but of a *Conservative, independent* press baron.¹⁸⁹

The Observer denounced Baldwin’s much vaunted desire ‘for a free hand to negotiate with the Dominions’ as being nothing more than ‘a dodge, and a weak dodge’ at that. For the Conservative party to get over its divisions, he needed to advance ‘from the free hand to the firm hand, and gives a lead to the Empire in Joseph Chamberlain’s sense’. ‘The boldest measures are the safest’, the paper chided; invoking Horatio Nelson, no less!¹⁹⁰ Time appeared to be running out for Baldwin. Yet another attempt was made at ‘healing the breach’ in the weeks following the Paddington election, but it seems that

¹⁸⁸ Baldwin to Lady Davidson, 27 Nov. 1930, in Williamson and Baldwin, eds., *Baldwin Papers*, p. 247; *The Observer*, 2 Nov. 1930, p. 16.

¹⁸⁹ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 2 Nov. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 217; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 275; *The Guardian*, 20 Oct. 1930, p. 8.

¹⁹⁰ Quoted in *The Observer*, 2 Nov. 1930, p. 16.

Chamberlain was the one most anxious to get down to 'business'. Beaverbrook focused on 'interesting incidents in connection with Bonar [Law]' during the bulk of their lunchtime 'tête-à-tête'.¹⁹¹ Thanks to the Crusading, Canadian director of public relations at the BBC and Mrs Philip Snowden, who was a governor but her motives are less clear-cut, the director of the London School of Economics, Sir William Beveridge, was allowed to expound on Empire Free Trade. No reply was given. The next day Beaverbrook told Chamberlain that he 'propose[s] to drift for a bit until we see how things are developing'. Beaverbrook ended the talks when he learned Chamberlain planned to run an official candidate against Admiral Taylor in the next general election. He informed Amery in late December 1930 that he intended to 'open up with propaganda'.¹⁹² Possibly, because the by-election held earlier that month in the Whitechapel and St. George's division of Stepney revealed that Labour strongholds rested on moveable foundations. In the four elections the late member contested, including the 1923 February by-election that first returned him to Parliament, Labour's share of the vote was greater than all the other party/parties combined.¹⁹³ Therefore, it was expected that Labour would hold the seat, but, in the aftermath of the Tory victory in Shipley, 'there is a feeling that anything may happen'¹⁹⁴ In 1930, even though the Conservative candidate came third again, Labour's share of the vote fell to under forty per cent. Voter turnout was almost identical to the last general election. Here is the

¹⁹¹ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 22 Nov. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 225.

¹⁹² Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 299-300. The East Renfrewshire snub is discussed in Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 300.

¹⁹³ In two of the elections, only the Liberals contested the seat. The 1923 by-election was contested by the National Prohibition Party, while the Tories fielded a candidate in 1929.

¹⁹⁴ *The Times*, 25 Nov. 1930, p. 8.

evidence of voter malleability or ‘cross-currents’ (to use the language of *The Times*) alluded to in the opening paragraph.¹⁹⁵ Empire Free Trade was an ‘elastic phrase’, which Beaverbrook utilised in whatever manner ‘might be useful. Thus in S. Paddington it merely meant Hands across the seas ... Empire Free Trade means prosperity for the country. In Norfolk however it meant taxation of foreign agricultural products under the cover of reciprocal trade relations with the Empire.’ The question was whether Britons could convince themselves to see what they wanted most in the ‘same cask’ as many leading Tories already had.¹⁹⁶

By mid-January 1931, Beaverbrook had finally concluded that Baldwin was the ‘enemy’ and now was time for ‘not peace but a sword’. Beaverbrook resolved to ‘make the by-elections the occasions for my propoganda. It then becomes more human and far less boring to the people.’ Rothermere welcomed the change of tactics.¹⁹⁷ But it was too late to run a candidate in East Bristol, whose member had passed away. The Tories last contested the seat in 1910; in part due to a defunct party pact that cast the Liberals, who won the seat in 1918, as the standard-bearer against socialism. Prior to the War, the ‘division was consistently Liberal’. At the outset of 1931, there was a ‘distressing amount of unemployment in the division’ and the Labour party wanted to avoid a three party race, lest the ‘free trade vote’ be split. Eleven days ahead of polling, *The Times*

¹⁹⁵ *The Times*, 26 Nov. 1930, p. 8. The division was characterised by its ‘dockers and the Jews’, neither a very receptive audience to the Tories. That said, it should be noted that Empire Free Trade ‘received the approval of the Trades Union Congress’. *The Times*, 28 Nov. 1930, p. 9. It seems likely that trade unionists, disgruntled over high unemployment, voted for the Communist candidate; who attracted almost ten percent of the vote, but still lost his deposit. The sixty plus percent increase in the Liberal vote is likely due to the high percentage of Jewish voters (almost forty percent) in the division and their anger over the white paper on Palestine. *The Times*, 25 Nov. 1930, p. 8.

¹⁹⁶ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 5 Dec. 1930, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 226-7; *Daily Express*, 13 Oct 1930, British Cartoon Archive reference: [GS0166](#). Also see footnote 112.

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 302.

learned that Tories ‘will be advised to abstain from voting’.¹⁹⁸ However, the next day a twenty-three year old London solicitor, P.J.F. Chapman-Walker, was adopted as the Tory candidate following a ‘private meeting of the local Conservative Association’; it was later revealed that local Tories ‘felt strongly’ about testing the party’s appeal. Chapman-Walker had previously contested the Abertillery Division in Monmouthshire, Wales, in the 1929 general election and placed a distant third, forfeiting his deposit.¹⁹⁹ Once again, the Tories were the only party to campaign on the success of safeguarding and the need for ‘an emergency tariff’ and ‘concerted action with the Dominions’²⁰⁰ The main industries—confectionaries and footwear—both would have benefited from safeguarding, but canvassers reported that while there was ‘wavering among many’ and a desire for change, ‘electors are reluctant to say how they will vote’.²⁰¹ That Labour held the seat surprised no one, though one wonders if the fact that the majority fell by less than three hundred votes—and was still over eleven thousand—was surprising, given the unemployment rate. The day before polling *The Times* reported that Chapman-Walker, having performed better than expected on the stump, would garner more votes than would be expected. In a traditional Liberal—that turned Labour—seat, a Tory candidate ‘would normally be left in third place in a three-cornered fight’.²⁰² Chapman-Walker garnered an impressive second place. Labour dropped a few percentage points but still polled over sixty percent, as it had in the last general election. The most

¹⁹⁸ *The Times*, 5 Jan. 1931, p. 9. Turnout wound up being the second lowest of the entire inter-war period.

¹⁹⁹ *The Times*, 7 and 14 Jan. 1931, pp. 7 and 14, respectively. In East Bristol, Chapman-Walker’s opponents were the Solicitor-General and an ‘old Liberal campaigner’, who had spent the past forty years doing ‘social and political work in the East End of London’. *The Times*, 5 Jan. 1931, p. 9.

²⁰⁰ *The Times*, 10 Jan. 1931, p. 12. Also see *The Times*, 5 and 9 Jan. 1931, pp. 9 and 14, respectively.

²⁰¹ *The Times*, 14 Jan. 1931, p. 14.

²⁰² *The Times*, 16 Jan. 1931, p. 9.

successful Tory in twenty years won just over a quarter of the vote, while the Liberals saw their share of the vote decline from 34.2 per cent in 1929, to 12.8 per cent.²⁰³ In the 5 February by-election, which was necessitated by the succession of the Hon. Henry Mond to the peerage, support for the Tories in the East Toxteth division in Liverpool rose from just under forty-eight percent to over seventy-five percent, presumably because there was no Liberal candidate. Labour's mid-twenties share of the vote remained unchanged from the last election. Two weeks later, in the election triggered by Davdison's retirement, the Liberal candidate in the Fareham division in Hampshire forfeited his deposit. Labour polled exactly the same percentage share of the vote as it received in 1929, while the Tories increased their majority by over thirteen hundred. Again the Tories were the only party in favour of promoting 'by every available means trade with the Empire' and restricting the 'freedom given to foreign nations to import the products of underpaid or forced [Soviet] labour'.²⁰⁴ To 'smallholders and market gardeners' unable to sell their strawberry crop at a profit due to the 'dumping of soft fruit from the Continent', the Liberal candidate, as 'an out-and-out free trader', suggested that 'better marketing ... not interference with trade' was the answer. 'A little healthy protection' was the Tory remedy.²⁰⁵ It would seem that public opinion really was trending in favour of the Tories, in both 'northern areas' of Scotland and the south- and north-west English coasts.²⁰⁶ But was opinion siding with the official party or the crusaders? To answer that question one must look at events in East Islington.

²⁰³ In 1931, Labour's majority fell to a meagre 429 in a two-cornered fight with the Conservatives.

²⁰⁴ *The Times*, 10 Feb. 1931, p. 9. Also see *The Times*, 13 Feb. 1931, p. 8.

²⁰⁵ Quoted in *The Times*, 14 Feb. 1931, p. 7.

²⁰⁶ Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 132.

Contemporaries speculated that only a lone Crusader could be fielded at any one time, so why East Islington? The most probable explanation is that Victor Cazalet, both of the presumed Tory candidate and M.P. for the Chippenham division, had spoken for Ferguson at Twickenham, only subsequently to denounce him for ‘his persistent denigration of Baldwin’s leadership’. When the Empire Crusade candidate realised that he and the official Tory candidate, Thelma Cazalet, had almost identical views, he withdrew from the race.²⁰⁷ Beaverbrook (as *The Guardian* saw it) ‘tried to make a Lidiard of Miss Cazalet’, with the invitation leaving no room for misunderstanding the consequences of saying no. Accompanying the letter was a pro-Crusade document awaiting her signature. She denounced the latter in a statement:

no Conservative or other candidate could have put his signature to it without losing every sense of independence and honour – naturally I refused ... his primary object and interest lies no longer in Empire matters but rather – as he has told us in two of his recent speeches – ‘in smashing up the Conservative Party’.

Victor Cazalet, who was now regularly belittled by the Beaverbrook papers, believed their proprietor was intent on arranging Thelma’s ‘political assassination’ out of spite. It is true that Beaverbrook held grudges, but he had more important matters to attend to.²⁰⁸ Back in January, he had concluded that ‘to achieve Empire Free Trade, we have got to defeat Baldwin’. As Rothermere told Beaverbrook, if they ‘can overthrow the Central Conservative organisation, the Conservative Party is ours’. With Baldwin under heavy assault on two fronts—see Section 3.2—Beaverbrook picked fellow Canadian,

²⁰⁷ *The Times*, 20 Feb. 1931, p. 11; Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *Amery Diaries, 1896-1929*, p. 109.

²⁰⁸ *The Guardian*, 11 Feb. 1930, p. 8; Quoted in Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 300-301.

Brigadier-General A.C. Critchley, DSO, who happened to be rich and was the ex-husband of his late wife's cousin, to go over the top in East Islington.²⁰⁹

Critchley's candidacy, proclaimed the *Daily Express*, was 'an open challenge to Socialist ineptitude, to Liberal strategy, and to Conservative compromise'. The campaign in East Islington represented the evolutionary 'struggle between Party and Progress'. As the dole lines grew ever longer, the existing leaders performed 'party acrobats' to entertain the masses.²¹⁰ While the establishment dismissed Critchley as 'hopeless on the platform', the 'other parties' thought that the Crusade was trying to capture the '20,000 electors' that never voted in the general election. Nine days before polling, Thelma Cazalet, who represented Islington on the London County Council, claimed that 'the Crusade had never been strong in East Islington and had not had a real organisation there'.²¹¹ However, Beaverbrook undertook his 'nightly pilgrimage to the constituency' and the atmosphere he created was described as 'electric'.²¹² A week after Cazalet made her pronouncement no one really knew what order the four candidates would finish in, though the returns from the three established parties suggested that Critchley's chances were 'negligible'. Confidence in them, however, was low. Estimating what impact the 'spectacular and well-advertised campaign' masterminded

²⁰⁹ Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 302; Quoted in Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 301; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 140. When asked at a public meeting if running a candidate, who represented the Empire Crusade and the United Empire Party, should be 'taken as a declaration of war'. "'Certainly,'" was Lord Beaverbrook's reply.' *The Guardian*, 31 Jan. 1931, p. 11.

²¹⁰ *Daily Express*, 5 and 6 Feb. 1931, p. 8 for both.

²¹¹ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 14 Feb. 1931, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 237. Also see *The Times*, 7 Feb. 1931, p. 9; *The Guardian*, 21 Jan. 1931, p. 8; *The Times*, 10 Feb. 1931, p. 9.

²¹² *The Times*, 12 Feb. 1931, p. 14; 'Notes of the Week', *Saturday Review*, 151 (1931), p. 289.

by Beaverbrook had was 'difficult', *The Times* concluded.²¹³ The *Daily Express* declared in the opening days of the campaign that only two men stood in the way of implementing Empire Free Trade. Philip Snowden, the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, had the 'Premier and Mr. Lloyd George tied like Roman slaves to his Cobdenite chariot'. He and his party preferred 'extinction' to yielding to the Crusaders. Baldwin's position in contrast was 'desperate' as the 'relentless march of events' was overtaking him.²¹⁴ The next day splashed across the front page was news that the Liberal candidate at the last general election was now a Crusader. These new 'Liberal Crusaders' (as *The Times* termed them) were like jigsaw pieces that had 'no place into which they can be fitted'.²¹⁵ Commenting on the general tenor of press coverage in the Rothermere and Beaverbrook papers, *The Guardian*, while lamenting 'their methods', wondered at the result:

All the resources of newspaper publicity and boost are exploited to the utmost, and with a shrillness that might be expected to repel an educated electorate. Astonishing photographs of their candidate appear day after day in their newspapers; astonishing descriptions of his flashing eye, his decisive manner, his profound sincerity. Any information that might be expected to affect his candidate adversely is simply not given; any information even remotely in his

²¹³ *The Times*, 17 Feb. 1931, p. 16. Opinion at *The Times* was fickle as a day later Beaverbrook was roundly condemned (p. 9). All four candidates claimed that they would be returned, while a 'special correspondent' working for *The Guardian* reported that 'those who have been in the closest touch with the campaign would not be amazed by the victory of any of the four candidates'. *The Observer*, 15 Feb. 1931, p. 18; *The Guardian*, 19 Feb. 1931, p. 8.

²¹⁴ *Daily Express*, 9 Feb. 1931, p. 10. Baldwin had 'taken his final stand on the line drawn between the manufacturer and the agriculturalists', only to have his flank collapse when Sir William Morris, the carmaker and president of the National Council of Industry and Commerce, called for the taxing of foreign foodstuffs. *Daily Express*, 9 Feb. 1931, p. 10. In his second address, Beaverbrook told the people of East Islington that he had 'brought Mr. Baldwin along step by step' and now it was time for them 'to bring him the rest of the way'. Quoted in *The Guardian*, 11 Feb. 1931, p. 9.

²¹⁵ *Daily Express*, 10 Feb. 1931, p. 1; *The Times*, 13 Feb. 1931, p. 8. Perhaps the *Saturday Review* was right, when it said after the election that the 'disintegration of parties proceeds apace'. 'Notes of the Week', 151, p. 289.

favour is prominently and lengthily retailed. Such methods, in East Islington at least, have had a remarkable success, easily outdoing the more weighty propaganda of eminent Conservatives like Lord Hailsham and of the whole Conservative press.²¹⁶

Having previously only spent £23,000 of the £109,000 raised, Beaverbrook's decision to field a candidate in East Islington turned out almost perfectly for his purposes. Contrary to the party's chairman expectations, the people of London were quite happy to 'vote for a man whose Master says he is out to smash the Conservative Party'. As Critchley did not 'cut a ridiculous figure', dear Neville was left 'very disappointed'. Nor would Chamberlain benefit from losing the seat due to vote splitting as the official Tory candidate placed third! But could the 'Beaverbrook bomb' really have destroyed the 'three jolly parties'?²¹⁷

Turnout was a mere fifty percent, the lowest of the entire interwar era. Labour held the seat; with the lowest percentage share of the vote in the inter-war period, but technically increased the majority over that won in the 1929 general election. The official Tory candidate trailed Critchley by more than eleven hundred votes. However, the number of votes cast for the two conservative candidates combined was 15,496 compared to 10,591 for Labour. Unlike the elections of the 1920s, the combined Tory vote was actually greater than the other two parties combined. The Liberal's share of the

²¹⁶ *The Guardian*, 21 Feb. 1931, p. 10. Speaking for the official Tory candidate in East Islington, Hailsham, an ex-Lord Chancellor, said: 'Lord Beaverbrook comes to East Islington, and is compared to an elephant trumpeting in the jungle, or a man-eating tiger. I am inclined to compare him to a mad dog running along the streets and yapping and barking, and I would remind his Lordship that the best way to treat a mad dog if you can't muzzle him is to shoot him.' The quotation appeared on the front page of the *Daily Express*, on polling day, in a box entitled 'Lord Hailsham's outburst' and was deemed 'one of the most vicious attacks on a public man that has ever been made in British political history'. Press barons tend to get the last word. *Daily Express*, 19 Feb. 1931, p. 1.

²¹⁷ Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 303; Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 8 Feb. 1931, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 236; 'The Beaverbrook Bomb', *Punch*, 26 Feb. 1930.

vote declined by almost fifty percent, and Labour was down roughly a third from the last election, while the combined Tory vote polled an additional two thousand votes. Perhaps the electors heeded Beaverbrook's message—reprinted on the front page of the *Daily Express*—to 'Socialists, Liberals, Conservatives and Crusaders [that] "Critchley is your man"'. In any event, it seems clear that people were not disgusted with the shrill tone of the Beaverbrook and Rothermere papers. However, there was speculation that Liberal electors, not normally given to abstaining, 'do not approve of Liberal support of the [minority Labour] government'. The phenomenon of missing Liberals was not limited to East Islington. Surveying the political landscape led Garvin to proclaim 'a plague on your parties!' It was clear to him that a large number of Britons loathed the 'present state of the party system and the impotent fatuity of all three factions'. Garvin called for a National Government, warning that if the 'conventional game of mutual paralysis' continues Britain risked inflicting on herself the sort of damage 'as defeat in the War could have inflicted'. However, at East Islington, the electors in 1929 were against protection two to one, but two years later 'an absolute majority' demanded it.²¹⁸ Had Beaverbrook played his hand better and waited for his bomb to detonate, it is conceivable that British politics might have been reordered in 1931 instead of 1945.

In hindsight, Beaverbrook attributed the ultimate demise of the Crusade following the by-election, which saw 'Mayfair goes mad', to running a Rothermere candidate more interested in running against Irwinism and to making Baldwin's leadership, not protection, the central issue. Beaverbrook's fatal mistake was actually

²¹⁸ *The Guardian*, 25 Feb. 1931, p. 8; *Daily Express*, 19 Feb. 1931, p. 1; *The Observer*, 22 Feb. 1931, p. 16.

made ahead of polling in East Islington as the election day edition of the *Daily Express* announced that ‘the Empire Crusade will fight the by-election in St. George’. It would have been wiser to ‘drift for a bit until we see how things are developing’, as Beaverbrook had done earlier.²¹⁹ Such a course of action would have likely had several outcomes, not least of which would have been to prove John Ralston Saul wrong. In the introduction to the *lightweight* Beaverbrook volume in the *Extraordinary Canadians* series, Saul wrote: ‘God knows Beaverbrook tried ... [but] empires can’t be shaped by colonials or outsiders of any sort’. Beaverbrook may have been fascinated by gossip, but it seems probable that he heard not even an inkling of what was being contemplated in the highest echelons of the Conservative Party and at Printing House Square in the days following the third place finish at East Islington.²²⁰

Two days after the loss, Chamberlain ‘dined alone’ with the owner and editor-in-chief of *The Daily Telegraph* and later told his sister that Lord Camrose ‘was coming definitely to the opinion that he [Baldwin] could never bring his party to victory’. Camrose was ‘disappointed’ that Neville would not entertain even the idea of seizing the party leadership for himself. Nevertheless, Camrose still doubted that Baldwin ‘could go on much longer’. Three days later, Sir Howard Frank, head of the firm of estate agents Knight, Frank & Rutley, felt compelled to visit Chamberlain as through his work he encountered ‘all sorts & conditions of men in all parts of the country’, and there was a ‘profound dissatisfaction with S.B.’s leadership and anxiety for change’. Chamberlain

²¹⁹ Peele, ‘St George’s and the Empire Crusade’, p. 96; Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 304 and 300; *Daily Express*, 19 Feb. 1931, p. 1

²²⁰ D. Richards, *Lord Beaverbrook* (Toronto, 2008), p. xiii; D. Cannadine, *History in Our Time* (New Haven, 1998), p. 248.

enquired whom the masses wanted, ‘and he said “Mostly you”’. Once Frank left, Chamberlain learned that the Marquess of Linlithgow was waiting to convey a similar message, plus that faith in Baldwin was dropping even in Scotland.²²¹ By 24 February, Chamberlain was ‘very distressed’ by the growing anti-Baldwin sentiment and worried that, unless there was a snap election, ‘things might come to a head very soon’. Amery, too, saw Chamberlain as the ‘natural’ successor. Ferguson meanwhile tried ‘to do what he can to mediate between Max and Neville ...’ But things looked grim. At the Carlton Club, Amery found a ‘terribly despondent’ colleague, who worried that the party could not ‘win a single seat in London against Beaverbrook’.²²² In the midst of the ‘crises’, a ‘deus ex machina’ appeared in the form of the party’s chief agent, Robert Topping, who asked Chamberlain if he was prepared to receive ‘a memorandum on the feeling in the Party about the Leadership’. Topping thought it ‘his duty to give me formal warning of the dangerous situation’ that was unfolding; on 28 February, the *Evening Standard* reported that the party’s candidate in Westminster, St. George’s refused to defend Baldwin and withdrew his candidature. Chamberlain concluded his letter to his sister with a postscript: ‘4:30 p.m. *Very Secret*. S.B has decided to go at once’.²²³ ‘Mr. Baldwin withdraws’ was to be *The Times*’ leader.²²⁴ Baldwin ‘probably ... would not stand again’, and he and his wife discussed ‘their financial position & the changes that

²²¹ Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 21 Feb. 1931, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 238-9; A. Smith, ‘Berry, William Ewert, first Viscount Camrose (1879-1954)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

²²² Entries for 24 and 26 Feb. 1931, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, pp. 149-50. What, if anything, came of Ferguson’s effort was edited out, so presumably little, if anything, was accomplished.

²²³ Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 1 Mar. 1931, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, pp. 240-241 and 243; italics in original. Also see H.R. Topping to Neville Chamberlain, 25 Feb. 1931, in Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill*, pp. 277-9.

²²⁴ Quoted in Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 304.

they would make'. Beaverbrook was victorious! Baldwin issued a summons for an emergency meeting the following day, where he intended to say goodbye. Such was the situation until ten pm when Sir William Bridgeman, Baldwin's closest ally in the shadow cabinet and who had dined with another Baldwin confidant earlier that evening, 'rolled in like an old Admiral and protested against my going out in so ignominious a fashion. Could I not make some stand, and go out on some first-class issue?'²²⁵ *The Daily Express* had announced on polling day in East Islington that a Crusader would contest the by-election necessitated by the death of Sir Laming Worthington-Evans. A decision made in a matter of days for an election that was a month away. Had Beaverbrook kept mum about his intentions in the 'impregnable Conservative' constituency of Westminster, St. George's until closer to polling day, as he had done at South Paddington, it seems likely that Baldwin's decision to resign would have stood. It was the outcome that was increasingly being seen 'as the least damaging solution to the Party's difficulties'.²²⁶ It is certainly plausible that Baldwin could have taken the decision to resign on 1 March but delayed the announcement in the hopes of a less ignominious departure. 'Only the absence of an obvious successor and the dislike of

²²⁵ Neville Chamberlain diary, 1 Mar. 1931, in Williamson and Baldwin, eds., *Baldwin Papers*, p. 252; Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 303; Entry for 2 Mar. 1931, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p. 150; Neville to Ida Chamberlain, 7 Mar. 1931, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 243; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 137; Tom Jones' diary, 11 Mar. 1931, in Williamson and Baldwin, eds., *Baldwin Papers*, p. 256. The version of events that Jones recorded is that of Baldwin's account.

²²⁶ *Daily Express*, 19 Feb. 1931, 9. 1; Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 304; Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 135.

being coerced by the Press has prevented things collapsing before now', thought Amery.²²⁷

As it turned out, Baldwin could have resigned on an important issue before Beaverbrook actually needed to make a decision about Westminster, St. George's. News of Lord Irwin's agreement with Gandhi—see Section 3.2— came on 5 March and temporarily improved matters, thereby offering an honourable exit as Baldwin, not his critics and Churchill, had been proven right. But, as Beaverbrook's intentions were known, Baldwin decided to await the result of St. George's.²²⁸ A decision that did not go down well as the consensus was that 'S.B.'s case is irretrievable', yet it was also deemed 'impossible for Stanley to resign before the result of the St George's election' is known.²²⁹ Had Beaverbrook been more patient and waited for the shockwave from his bomb to dissipate fully, he probably would have driven Baldwin into retirement. For six hours, 'the laurels [truly] were with the new second Tory party'.²³⁰ Had that victory become permanent, it is, of course, impossible to say what would have become of the Crusade. The consequences of Duff Cooper—who strangely volunteered to be Baldwin's champion after two prominent Conservatives had declined the position and had congratulated Beaverbrook, who was his son's godfather, after his triumph in South Paddington—defeating the Baldwinesque, Sir Ernest Peters are clear. While Beaverbrook campaigned on Baldwin's poor leadership and Rothermere harped on India, declaring on one occasion that 'Gandhi is watching St George's'. Baldwin

²²⁷ Entry for 2 Mar. 1931, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p 151.

²²⁸ Entry for 5 Mar. 1931, Ibid. p 151; Topping to Chamberlain, in Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill*, p. 279.

²²⁹ Entry for 6 Mar. 1931, Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p 152.

²³⁰ See footnote one.

campaigned against press dictatorship, which the *Daily Express*, correctly denounced as ‘a clever attempt to obscure the issue’, before addressing the issue head on:

A. The *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* are trying to persuade Mr. Baldwin to retire and make room for his successor.

Q. Is that dictatorship?

A. The Baldwinites say so

Q. But *The Times*, *Telegraph* and *Morning Post* say that Mr. Baldwin should not resign. Is that dictatorship?

A. No. That is loyalty

....

Q. What would be said if the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* attacked Mr. Ramsay MacDonald or Mr. Lloyd George?

A. That would be magnificent.

Q. Then it is only dictatorship if Mr. Baldwin is criticised?

A. Certainly.²³¹

The campaign in St George’s was about far more than Baldwin’s future. It was about who had the right to control public life in Britain and, on this issue, the establishment closed ranks.²³² The *Daily Express* was the only paper known to be read by Britons of every class, though two thirds of sales came from the second lowest income bracket. Worse still, its proprietor believed, that ‘there was no difference between rich and poor except that the rich had more money’.²³³ Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times*, practically invited Cooper to assume editorial control as needed, while general manager of *The Telegraph* promised that everyone all the way down to circulation was ‘doing their damndest for you’. Baldwin even obtained a statement signed by prominent Liberals, including the former foreign secretary, Lord Grey and ex-Viceroy, Lord

²³¹ Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 304-5; Quoted in Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, pp. 303-4; *Daily Express*, 16 Mar. 1931, p. 10.

²³² Peele, ‘St George’s and the Empire Crusade’, pp. 105, 107 and 99. The reaction to Beaverbrook picking Crichley as the candidate in East Islington reinforces Peele’s view. Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 301.

²³³ Gannon, *The British Press and Germany*, p. 34; A.J.P. Taylor, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Reading, saying that the Beaverbrook and Rothermere papers constituted ‘a menace to our treasured political institutions, the gravity of which it would be impossible to overstate’.²³⁴ Had the result gone the other way, and Britons were and are capable of by-election surprises, the results could have been far reaching.²³⁵ It is difficult to say who would have won an early ‘battle for the Tory party’, but Chamberlain recognised that he risked being caught in the undertow, unlike ‘Winston who has left the Sinking Ship’.²³⁶ Amery’s diary entry for 27 February 1931 is suggestive: ‘Had a talk with George Hamilton, very down on S.B. and prepared to look to Winston [Churchill] as the future leader. I hope there are not many others like him but he shows what mugs our people can be.’ Perhaps Churchill might have averted the ‘years which the locust hath eaten,’ though there is every reason to believe he would have proven a total cock-up. Duff Cooper’s repudiation of the Munich Agreement and his decision to resign as First Lord of the Admiralty has *always* been portrayed as ‘high-principled and courageous’.²³⁷ One wonders if, as he rose to make his famous 1938 resignation speech, Cooper thought back to that famous by-election in Westminster, St George’s seven years earlier when, with

²³⁴ Quoted in Chisholm and Davie, *Beaverbrook*, p. 304.

²³⁵ For example, in 1933, the Conservatives lost East Fulham for the first time. A loss made all the more shocking as it fell to Labour in a two way contest. In the 1955 general election the Tories polled over fifty percent in Rochdale, but finished third, garnering less than twenty percent of the vote, three years later. Peele, ‘St George’s and the Empire Crusade’, pp. 112 and 195. A more recent example comes from Bradford West, where Respect politician, George Galloway, (again) humiliated the Labour party by winning fifty-six percent of the vote, which translated into a 10,000 plus majority. *The Guardian*, 30 Mar. 2012, [online edition](#).

²³⁶ Stewart, *Burying Caesar*, title page; Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 1 Mar. 1931, in Self, ed., *Chamberlain Diary Letters*, p. 241; Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Empire at Bay*, p 150. Also see C. Cooper, ‘Heir Not Apparent: Douglas Hailsham, the Role of the House of Lords and the Succession to the Conservative Leadership 1928–31’, *Parliamentary History*, xxxi (2012), pp. 206-29.

²³⁷ Quoted in *Hansard*, cccxvii. 1101; R. James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900-1939* (New York, 1970); P. Ziegler, Cooper, (Alfred) Duff, first Viscount Norwich (1890-1954)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

the establishment under assault, he choose to side with the *Guilty Men*. For a famed anti-appeaser, the irony is hard to overlook.

3. PART II: 'WE PADDLED IN A PURÉE OF WORDS AND HOPED TO
CATCH A FORMULA': BRITAIN AND THE POLITICS OF IMPERIAL
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

What was to be the future of the British Empire? What were to be the relations between its various parts? How were we to reconcile that which on the face of it seemed to be irreconcilable—the sovereignty, the political, and economic independence of each of the parts—with the concept of an Empire presenting a united front to the world? Australian Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, 1 July 1919.

These three questions were at the very heart of imperial policymaking during the 1920s. Yet, even with the dramatic post 11 September revival of British imperial history, constitutional history remains a 'neglected sub-branch'. A development made all the more remarkable as the field offers the possibility of escaping the seemingly dominant shackles of 'indigenous and national histories'.¹ Britain's response to the so-called 'crisis of empire' was governed by the 'principle of *solvitur ambulando*'.² Black and Tans were tried (unsuccessfully) in Ireland, while Gurkhas and the Royal Air Force were used to good effect at Amritsar and in Mesopotamia, respectively. However, Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, was puzzled by the 'squeamishness' his desire to use 'poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes' provoked. 'It is sheer affectation to

¹ A. Hopkins, 'Development and the Utopian Ideal', in W.R. Louis and R. Winks, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, V: Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), p. 651; A. Hopkins, *The Future of the Imperial Past: Inaugural Lecture Delivered 12 March, 1997* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 40. The title quotation, which comes from R. Vansittart, *The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart* (London, 1958), p. 487, was written in response to the Disarmament Conference at Geneva (1932-4), but equally applies to a host of inter-war British policy positions. Hughes' quotation is in W. Lang, 'The Imperial Position in 1919', *United Empire*, x (1919), p. 372.

² W. Worsfold, 'Where the Imperial War Conference Has Left Us', *Nineteenth Century*, lxxxii (1917), p. 1075.

lacerate a man with the poisonous fragment of a bursting shell and to boggle at making his eyes water by means of lachrymatory gas', he reasoned.³ As will be seen in Section 3.2 a variety of tactics were employed to thwart the (demands of the) Indian National Congress. Meanwhile, Britons fulfilled the wishes of their largest Dominions, while despatching a pro-consul on a 'special Mission' to Britain's Egyptian protectorate to make 'recommendation[s] with regard to the future administration of the country'.⁴ London took small steps after 1914 to 'introduce an elected element into the Legislative Council of the East Africa Protectorate' and increased the unofficial elements in Gambia and the Gold Coast.⁵ In the autumn of 1919, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Leo Amery, announced that the government intended to be considerably bolder. On the advice of Field-Marshal Lord Plumer, the government, Amery told the House of Commons, had decided that 'the time has come to entrust the people of Malta with full responsible control of their purely local affairs'. Issues related to Malta's role as an 'Imperial fortress' would remain the purview of the island's governor, Plumer. It was hoped that the new constitution would become law by the beginning of 1921.⁶

The decision to apply the 'principle' of the 1919 Government of India Act to a radically different context would seem to suggest that Britons were slowly starting to realise that 'the old idea of dependence as a doctrine of the Empire' had outlived its usefulness. But across the Empire there were few who argued with 'the notion of

³ Martin Gilbert, ed., *Winston S. Churchill, IV, pt. i: Documents, January 1917-June 1919* (Boston, 1977), p. 649.

⁴ *Hansard[']s Parliamentary Debates]*, xxxiv. 679.

⁵ *Hansard*, cxxii. 1345.

⁶ *Hansard*, cxxi. 909-10.

independence ... [being] equally absurd'.⁷ Calls to rebuild the (constitutional framework of) Empire were part and parcel of the immediate post-war period, but they emanated from all quarters throughout the 1920s.⁸ The relationship between coloniser and the colonised was to contemporaries 'one of the outstanding problems' of the late 1920s. However, set against the experience of America in the Philippines and Puerto Rico, or French Senegal, it appeared to some observers that the British possessed 'a peculiar genius in meeting the colonial problem'.⁹ As discussed in the introduction, the British Empire offers an almost endless variety of case studies to choose from. Selecting India needs no explanation, while Ceylon was Britain's 'premier Crown Colony'.¹⁰ And, if the 'principle' of the 1919 Government of India Act was successfully implemented, it might have provided a 'formula' for the entire Dependant Empire. By the spring of 1929, the world was looking to Britain (in the words of, then Lord President of the Council, Lord Parmoor) 'to show the way towards that reconciliation among the new principles of just liberty and government that is necessary if civilisation in its larger sense is to be preserved'.¹¹

⁷ *Hansard*, cxxii. 1314-5; The Maltese politician, and editor of the *Malta Chronicle*, Dr. Augustus Bartolo, quoted in 'Autonomous Malta', *United Empire*, xii (1921), p. 624. Maltese self-government went into effect in October 1921.

⁸ In the case of Palestine, a 'workable bridge from Crown Colony to responsible government' was desired as it was hoped that the Jews, the new Scots, would spread 'the English ideal' across the Near East. As to broader constitutional issues, the Secretary of State for the Colonies and Dominion Affairs mused, 'we must mark time hoping that experience in Ceylon and elsewhere will find us new lines of development to follow later'. In response to the suggestion that the Donoughmore Commission should expand its investigation 'beyond Ceylon to Malaya, Mauritius and Hong Kong', an official wondered what these colonies had in common. 'They are all "somewhere east of Suez"', was the answer. 26 July 1928 entry, J. Barnes and D. Nicholson, eds., *The Leo Amery Diaries, 1896-1929* (London, 1980), p. 559; The National Archives, C[olonial] O[ffice Records] 54/892/8.

⁹ R. Buell, 'Two Lessons in Colonial Rule', *Foreign Affairs*, vii (1928/1929), p. 439.

¹⁰ 'From West Africa to Ceylon', *United Empire*, xvi (1925), p. 701.

¹¹ *Hansard*, lxxiv. 125.

3.1 ‘Ceylon is to provide the British Empire laboratory with yet another constitutional experiment’: The Donoughmore commission and ‘democracy with autocratic reservations’

Firm and dignified insistence on Britain’s rights, in the East no less than in the West, against nationalistic onslaughts has become an imperative and vital necessity for the preservation of the Empire’s vast interests abroad. What is wanted is a masculine policy in which bullying and blustering need have no place. The magnificent fabric of Empire was not built on a foundation of supine, spineless sentimentality. A man with the qualities of mind of a Palmerston is needed today to save the Empire – Richard Hope, *United Empire*, November 1929.

Was Ceylon, that ‘magic island’ of P&O advertisements, really a suitable place for constitutional experimentation?¹ Absolutely! In fact, for a period, doubt would have been unthinkable. Between the founding of the Legislative Council in 1833 and 1870, Ceylon was to the colonial world what Canada was to Britain’s settlement colonies. To the Colonial Office, the Council—which consisted of three Europeans and a lone representative from the Sinhalese, Tamil and Burgher communities—was a source of information independent of the governor, and therefore a means of asserting Whitehall’s

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, xxviii (1930), back matter. The block quotation is from ‘The Empire and its Responsibilities: The View of a Briton in the East’, xx, p. 629, while the title quotations come from ‘The Ceylon Experiment’ and ‘Ceylon’s Seven’, *United Empire*, xxi (1930), pp. 5 and 297, respectively. Ceylon, to English-language historians, is an island barely visible on the horizon. K.M de Silva, ‘Ceylon (Sri Lanka)’, in W.R. Louis and R. Winks, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, V: *Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 243-52. Only two ‘comprehensive’ histories of the island by a lone author have appeared in English: Sir James Emerson Tennent’s *Ceylon* (1859) and de Silva’s *A History of Sri Lanka* (1981 and 2005). What scholarship there is tends to focus on the ‘pre-European or at least pre-British’ era, with the twentieth century almost ignored all together. Ceylon had no ‘key role’ in the work of K.M Chaudhuri, Immanuel Wallerstein or Janet Abu Lughod. de Silva, ‘Ceylon (Sri Lanka)’, pp. 248-9 and 251. Imputing the phrase ‘Donoughmore Commission’ into *Historical Abstracts* and the *Bibliography of British and Irish History* generated a couple of relevant hits, most notably T. Barron, ‘The Donoughmore Commission and Ceylon’s National Identity’, *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, xxvi (1988), pp. 147-87. Also see A. Strathern, ‘Controversies in Sri Lankan History’, *History Compass*, ii (2004), pp. 1-5.

will. However, members also needed to curry favour with the governor as he controlled who could stand for direct/indirect election, though in practice prominent Sinhalese and Tamil families tended to retain control over their seats. These unofficial members provided local knowledge to the governor, and other colonial officials, so it is not surprising that they—and some of the island’s newspapers—‘tended to look upon the Legislative Council as the local Parliament’. In the 1850s, planters and the Burghers lobbied to expand their presence on the Council. ‘If ... the system of representation were so contrived as to exclude the bulk of the native population from real power, in order to vest it in the hands of the European minority, an exceedingly narrow oligarchy would be created’, said a dismissive Earl Grey, then Secretary of State for the Colonies. A body dominated by ‘European merchants and planters and their agents’, concluded Grey, would advocate for legislation based on ‘narrow views of class interests’ at the expense of the ‘general good’. This policy continued well into the 1870s; in part, as successive governors noted, because there was no demand from native Ceylonese for constitutional reform. ‘Masterly inactivity’ prevailed until 1876-7, when a resident *British* journalist published two pamphlets that foreshadowed the argument political activists would articulate over the next four decades. Society and the economy had undergone a transformation since 1833, why had not the constitution and political system kept pace? Unlike Canada, Ceylon ceded its status as a constitutional pioneer to the West Indies, in part because the island was not a true plantation colony. Not only was there no settled, wealthy European plantocracy, but Ceylon, unlike the West Indies, possessed a large

indigenous population with a social strata robust enough that it survived the encounter with European imperialism.²

With the maritime districts of the island having been ruled by Europeans for four centuries, the island's elite had assimilated Western thought and consequently tended to be 'socially conservative, politically moderate and tactically gradualist'. Ceylon became a Crown Colony in 1802, with the last indigenous kingdom falling in 1815 following a brief military campaign. A unified administration was not established until 1830.³ The island's place in British grand strategy was far more limited in comparison to India, which served (in Sir Charles Lucas' famous phrase) as 'an English barrack in the Oriental Seas from which we may draw any number of troops without paying for them'. Trincomalee, by contrast, was simply a naval base; which admittedly remained important until the advent of the atomic age. This difference in roles had several notable consequences: first, administrative costs and revenues were far lower in Ceylon, where income tax and a general land tax did not exist 'as late as 1925'.⁴ Secondly, the vastly smaller population meant the island was easier to control and therefore posts in the

² K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (Rev. & updated edn., New Delhi, 2005), pp. 447-53; Grey quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 449-50.

³ S.R. Ashton, 'Ceylon', in W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 449. As will be seen, the different dates of conquest had a significant political impact as it divided the Sinhalese majority into 'two groups—the Low Country Sinhalese, who have been continuously under European domination since the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century; and the Kandyan who, though latterly ruled by a dynasty of Malabar descent, succeeded in maintaining their independence until 1815'. Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Leo Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, The National Archives, C[olonial] O[ffice] 537/692.

⁴ Quoted in K. Jeffery, 'An English Barrack in the Oriental Seas?': India in the Aftermath of the First World War', *Modern Asian Studies*, xv (1981), p. 369; A. Jackson, 'The Evolution of Ceylon as a Martial Colony, 1760-1960', *Distant Drums: The Role of Colonies in British Imperial Warfare* (Brighton, 2010), p. 72; Ashton, 'Ceylon', p. 450. The official [website](#) of the Sri Lankan Inland Revenue Department states that income tax was first assessed in 1931-2. The British, like the Dutch and Portuguese before them, simply had perpetuated the tax on paddy and dry grains, which originated during the 'times of the Sinhalese kings'. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, pp. 392-3.

Ceylon Civil Service ‘remained almost exclusively in European hands until the 1920s’. Imperial authorities did use influential locals as intermediaries, but they did not need them as collaborators to raise revenue as officials in India did.⁵ Successive governors did, however, employ the tactics of indirect rule developed primarily in Africa and, by the end of the nineteenth century, the political ties between the colonial regime and traditional elites extended deep into Ceylonese society.⁶ Rivalry amongst the Sinhalese and Tamil elites, whose privileged position was being challenged by lesser castes, provided yet another bulwark for the colonial regime.⁷ Consequently, opponents of the existing order faced a *far* greater challenge than did their Indian contemporaries. The challenge was further compounded by economics. Plantations began in the 1830s, with coffee being the dominant crop until an incurable leaf disease appeared in the early 1870s. Competition from Brazil ensured that coffee was supplanted by tea, rubber and coconuts by the outset of the twentieth century and without the influx of foreign capital. The indigenous population was involved in all three industries, with coconut production being almost monopolised by ‘local capitalists, smallholders and peasants’. Consequently, a far greater proportion of the populace in Ceylon was a stakeholder in the colonial economy than elsewhere in Britain’s tropical empire. Talk of boycotts and *swadeshi* campaigns found few adherents, particularly as Ceylon depended heavily on imported food.⁸ To paraphrase an early twentieth century British newspaper, the island’s

⁵ Ashton, ‘Ceylon’, p. 450.

⁶ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, pp. 408-9.

⁷ Ashton, ‘Ceylon’, p. 451. Also see de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, pp. 456-7.

⁸ Ashton, ‘Ceylon’, pp. 450-451. Further details about the (late) colonial economy can be found in K. Stahl, *The Metropolitan Organization of British Colonial Trade: Four Regional Studies* (London, 1951),

elite, and the Sinhalese, in particular, were far more interested in profits than political agitation.⁹

Even proponents of constitutional reform hesitated. ‘Why don’t you agitate for it? The political history of England has been one long series of agitations’, said one frustrated Whitehall official. It was well known on the island that the Colonial Office was not opposed to reforms. ‘It is useless to hope to get political privileges without our first agitating for them’, lamented the *Ceylon Morning Leader* in 1908.¹⁰ The stalemate eventually would be broken by the Great War, and developments in London and India rather than Ceylon. Such was the opposition amongst the Ceylonese that the conservative Ceylon National Congress (CNC) was not created until 1919, two years after Edwin Montagu’s (in)famous declaration (see Section 3.2 for details).¹¹ But the need to be taken seriously by those in a position to grant the elite a greater stake in governance won out in the end. The depth of conservatism in the new organisation, which was undemocratic and dominated by the westernised-middle class Sinhalese, meant that independence would not become the stated goal until 1942!¹²

Twenty-two years earlier, the president of the CNC declared that Ceylon’s destiny is ‘indissolubly bound up with England’. As stated in article one of the party’s 1920 constitution, the CNC sought to use ‘constitutional methods’ to ‘reform ... the existing system of government’ so that Ceylon could become ‘a self-governing member

while a snapshot of non-European planters can be found in M. Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress and Nationalist Politics in Ceylon, 1929-1950* (4 vols., Colombo, 1977), I, pp. xlvii-lii.

⁹ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* pp. 458-9.

¹⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.* p. 471.

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 474-80.

¹² Ashton, ‘Ceylon’, p. 453.

of the British Empire'.¹³ The language evolved over the years, with 'dominion status within the meaning of the Statute of Westminster, with control of finance, control of defence and the right to secede' being the goal by the end of 1939.¹⁴ The decision to opt for 'complete independence' was made after the fall of Singapore.¹⁵ Australia and New Zealand, once Britain's 'future pretensions of power in South-East Asia' was fatally exposed, similarly decided to reconsider their position and opted to ratify in 1942 and 1947, respectively, the 1931 Statute of Westminster.¹⁶ Ceylon's route to independence has more in common with the Dominions—and maybe even Malta—than India. For a variety of reasons, the CNC 'never underwent a Gandhian transformation'. The road to power for Ceylonese politicians, who frankly were already doing rather well under the existing regime, was through 'the exclusive and dignified confines of the council chamber, not in the demagoguery of the towns and villages'.¹⁷

Approximately a year after the Dominions demanded the 'readjustment of the[ir] constitutional relations' with Westminster, and it was agreed that henceforth the Raj would send representatives to imperial conferences, the forerunners of the CNC sought

¹³ Quoted in *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, cxxxiii. 488; Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, II, p. 1687. Ceylon's executive and legislative councils, with its mixture of *ex-officio*, nominated (un)officials and elected members, was not atypical, and the island therefore had the potential to serve as a model for democratising Crown Colonies as warranted. 'The Councils of the Crown Colonies', *United Empire*, xviii (1927), pp. 258-60.

¹⁴ Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, II, pp. 1690, 1694 and 1703-4; E.A.P. Wijeyeratne to Sir Andrew Caldecott, 17 Oct. 1941, in *Ibid.*, III, p. 2547.

¹⁵ 'A Memorandum Submitted by Gilbert Perera Proposing a Revitalised Congress Programme' in *Ibid.*, pp. 2558-60. The unsigned, undated typescript was attached to a notice of a meeting of the All-Ceylon Congress Committee scheduled for 3 Oct. 1942.

¹⁶ D. Killingray and D. Omissi, eds., *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c.1700-1964* (Manchester, 1999), p. 3.

¹⁷ Ashton, 'Ceylon', p. 454. India, Egypt and Ireland all had 'extreme demands for national recognition' that were at odds with British imperial interests, thereby making the three countries 'different aspects of one great problem'. 'Autonomy and Authority', *United Empire*, xiii (1922), p. 123.

‘a measure of responsible government’. In the short term, their request was easily brushed aside. The official reasoning being that Home Government could not possibly act without knowing the view(s) of the governor, and Sir John Anderson had (conveniently) passed away months earlier. It was obviously ‘impossible’ for the new governor to write a report, having just ‘taken up his duties’.¹⁸ Six months later, Amery, then Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, reported, that the question was ‘now engaging the Governor’s attention’. However, Britain’s official mind was preoccupied with the ‘great problems of reconstruction in the Empire’.¹⁹ The assertiveness that the Dominions displayed during the Paris Peace Conference and the constitutional changes being contemplated for India, which went ‘far beyond anything that has been previously contemplated or discussed in this country’, were both an outcome of unprecedented wartime service.²⁰ Ceylon’s contribution by contrast was more modest, but not without merit. By the end of 1917, ‘approximately 2,750’ men had left Ceylon to aid the war effort. It is unclear what service a lone ‘butler’ rendered in Mesopotamia, but the initial 105 men of the Ceylon Sanitary Company obviously performed valuable work in said theatre as the War Office telegraphed three times for additional men. All of whom were equipped and despatched using colonial funds. Donations also emanated from ‘every

¹⁸ *Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers laid before the Imperial War Conference*, Cmd. 8566 (London, 1917), pp. 4-5; *Hansard*, cviii. 1786; *Hansard*, cx. 3396.

¹⁹ *Hansard*, cxv. 1807W; *Hansard*, cxviii. 2172.

²⁰ M. MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York, 2002) pp. 44-5; ‘Note by Lord Curzon’, 3 June 1918, appended to W[ar] C[abinet] minutes, 7 June 1918, CAB 23/6/428. In moving a ‘vote of thanks to the forces’ in the *fall of 1917*, Curzon ‘reserved to the end the immortal service of the Canadians, the Australians, and New Zealanders and the men of the Indian Army’. By sending abroad more than three-quarters of a million men, the three Dominions earned themselves ‘a place that will never be lost in the gratitude of the Empire’. Not surprisingly, Curzon reserved his greatest praise for his beloved India. *Hansard*, xxvi. 818. On the even greater service of Canadians (and Australians) in the last year of the war, see T. Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918* (Toronto, 2008).

part of the Empire and every section of the population, from the native chiefs to the humblest of the people'. In pledging a portion of their revenues to pay for the war, Amery feared, the colonies were incurring a liability 'much larger than prudent finance would allow'.²¹ Ceylon's Legislative Council, for example, pledged in late October 1917 'one million pounds as a further contribution towards the cost of the war; payment to be made within the next ten years by such instalments as may be found convenient'. By February 1924, Ceylon had remitted £900,000 of the initial million pounds pledged in November 1915 and £600,000 of the second contribution. Amery need not have worried that Ceylon's wartime contributions would be forgotten. It would take longer than many would have liked, but *eventually* the Ceylonese people would have—for the colonial world—an unprecedented say in their country's governance.²²

After the Legislative Council was established in 1833, Ceylon's constitution remained largely unchanged until 1910, when 'modest' changes were made. Most significant was the creation of a standing Finance Committee that gave the Council's Unofficial Members a say in the budget and supplementary expenditures. In the spring of 1920, the governor, Sir William Manning, having learned 'local opinion' on several occasions, was invited to London 'to discuss the question of Constitutional Reform in

²¹ *Annual Report on Ceylon for 1917*, Cd. 8973-20 (London, 1918), pp. 4-5; *Hansard*, cxviii. 2173. It was later 'estimated that ... 1,573 Europeans and 609 Ceylonese joined the Army during the war'. More than 300 of whom were killed. A further 1,204 men were recruited for 'service in Mesopotamia and East Africa as clerks, mechanics, &c'. *Annual Report on Ceylon for 1919*, Cmd. 508-32 (London, 1920), p. 3.

²² Quoted in *Ceylon: War Contributions. Minute, 29th April, 1919*, Cmd. 145 (London, 1919); *Treasury Minute, 29th February, 1924, Relative to the Ceylon War Contribution*, Cmd. 2122 (London, 1924); *Annual Report on Ceylon for 1917*, p. 3; *Hansard*, cxviii. 2173-4 and 2176-7.

Ceylon'.²³ A variety of deputations from Ceylon also made their way to Britain, including the Kandyan Association, the CNC, the Ceylon Reform League and the European Association of Ceylon. Amery assured the Commons that the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Viscount Milner, would consider 'all proposals placed before him'. Amery hoped that he would soon be able to 'inform the House of the general lines of the policy which he [Milner] proposes to adopt'.²⁴ A year earlier, the CNC sent Milner a telegram highlighting the opportunity before him: 'Ceylon entitled more liberal treatment than India, being excellent field for realisation self-government subject to Imperial supervision. Such concession will prove to India and world genuineness of Imperial Government's desire for realisation of British ideals of liberty, self-development and self-determination for all peoples.'²⁵ Ultimately, the compromise Milner devised was not well received.²⁶ With the governor having a 'permanent majority' in the Legislative Council, 'reformers' dismissed the new constitution 'as no reform at all'. A leading Tamil politician, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam,

²³ C. Jeffries, *Ceylon: The Path to Independence* (London, 1962), pp. 32 and 35-6; *Hansard*, cxxvi. 2053W. Manning was 'one of the most masterful British governors' Ceylon ever had. He arrived in 1919 and immediately saw the newly formed CNC as an 'intolerable challenge' to British rule and 'set about fashioning its discomfiture with a grim determination befitting a more formidable adversary'. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, p. 484.

²⁴ *Hansard*, cxxviii. 2271W; *Hansard*, cxxx. 441W; *Hansard*, cxxxi. 645.

²⁵ Quoted in Executive Committee Minutes (ECM), Ceylon National Congress Committee (CNCC), 12 July 1919, Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, I, p. 214.

²⁶ Jeffries, *Ceylon*, p. 39. The CNC principally wanted eighty percent of the constituencies in the Legislative Council elected on a territorial basis, thereby assuring the low-country Sinhalese of electoral dominance. Minorities, of course, objected and 'bombarded the Secretary of State with protests'. The Colonial Office opted for adding three unofficial members to the Executive Council and created an unofficial majority in the Legislative Council. Of the twenty-three unofficial members, initially eleven were elected on a territorial basis and five minority constituencies were established; two for Europeans and the others went to the Burghers, the Chamber of Commerce and the Low Country Products Association, i.e. native planters. With fourteen official members and twelve unofficial members (charged a Liberal critic) 'elected or nominated on the Soviet principle', the new constitution did not enjoy all party support. Once the new constitution was in 'full working order,' nineteen of the twenty-three unofficial members were to be elected. Jeffries, *Ceylon*, pp. 37-8; *Hansard*, cxxxiii. 466-8 and 473.

‘characterised the whole thing as a farce’.²⁷ Upon his return to Colombo, Arunachalam told the *Times of India* that the problem was that ‘their demands [were] too moderate’ and the ‘many “safe-guards” and checks’ led the Colonial Office to conclude that ‘we distrusted ourselves’. By contrast, critics in the House of Commons charged that the Colonial Office deliberately ignored recent constitutional changes in India as well as the broader ‘experience of the India Office in dealing with people, not only similar in character, but very largely identical’ when drafting the 1920 Order-in-Council that implemented the new constitution.²⁸ But Colonel Josiah Wedgwood’s analysis overlooked a fundamental difference—to say nothing of differences referenced earlier—that created an enormous challenge for the Colonial Office. The percentage of society that was ‘educated’ was likely higher in Ceylon than India; in a debate filled with facts and counter facts of varying and unknown veracity, a Conservative MP put the total at forty per cent of the Ceylonese populace.²⁹ What is clear is that Ceylon was approaching a stage of development that Britain’s ‘experience of colonial administration up to that time provided little useful guidance’. As a former deputy Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies acknowledged:

The Colonial Office knew a lot about the problems of settlement colonies, large and small. It had learnt a good deal about the problems of governing countries

²⁷ *The Guardian*, 10 Aug. 1920, p. 6; *Times of India*, 11 Aug. 1920, p. 9.

²⁸ Quoted in the *Times of India*, 11 Aug. 1920, p. 9; *Hansard*, xccciii. 461.

²⁹ *Hansard*, cxxxiii. 481. Native English speakers formed ‘scarcely 1 per cent of the total population’. Yet, in 1919, there were 46,988 pupils enrolled in 265 English and Anglo-vernacular secondary schools. Results of the 1918 Cambridge School-leaving Certificate Exams were:

	Candidates	Honours	Other Passes
Senior	437	17	204
Junior	740	39	319

Of the 381 Ceylonese candidates that took the 1919 London University Matriculation Examination, 108 passed. A number of candidates passed various other exams, including ‘11 for the B.A. degree, 4 for B.Sc. and 2 for LL.B’. *Annual Report on Ceylon for 1917*, p. 23; *Annual Report on Ceylon for 1919*, pp. 21-2.

with a primitive population. Now it was faced with the problem of a country with a population mainly indigenous, rapidly developing political maturity, yet riven by communal loyalties and rivalries.³⁰

After suggesting an opponent ‘really cannot know much about the Cingalese (sic),’ Wedgwood proclaimed that thankfully Ceylon had ‘none of those silly rival religions or castes which separate people and make for intolerance and difficulty’. He was convinced that communal representation was invented by ‘bureaucrats’, presumably in the Colonial Office and/or Service, determined ‘to retain their present jobs and power’. In suggesting that a Labour government would in ‘every case’ move to establish colonial self-governance ‘as quickly as possible’, Wedgwood sought to abrogate the role of Westminster, the Imperial Parliament, as the centralising hub of the British Empire. Administering the empire on the ‘principle of democracy’ as Labour wanted, however, simply was not practical.³¹ Although not invoked by name, the arguments in favour of the new constitution drew heavily on the ideas of Edmund Burke. Transplanting the equivalent of the House of Commons into every colony was bound to fail; in part because its ‘strength’ and the ‘supreme’ power of the Speaker evolved over time; of course, it was also claimed that the success of the Commons was rooted in the hyperbolic ‘instincts of the English people’. Abandoning the existing Legislative Council, which allotted seats to the ‘different races and different classes’ in favour of a ‘territorial system’, would lead to a less representative body given the island’s demographics. It was also claimed that that ‘natives of Ceylon’ had no interest in ‘general representation’. To critics that charged the new constitution did not transfer

³⁰ Jeffries, *Ceylon*, p. 38.

³¹ *Hansard*, cxxxiii. 464-5; *Ibid.*, 472.

enough power to the Council or that the governor's powers remained too extensive, the retort given was that 'it gives a very greatly increased power to what the people of the country ever had before' and that the governor would be responsible to the Secretary of State.³² Progress in Ceylon 'must be slow', declared a Labour MP. William Royce, who like 'many of my hon. Friends round me' knew 'nothing about Ceylon,' concluded 'you cannot uplift a whole race to the same level of ideas that we possess in 24 hours'. Parliament clearly was not the best venue for debating the future of the Empire, little wonder when in all of 1919 'this House had about four hours for the discussion of Colonial affairs!'³³

Perhaps it really was for the best, as Amery told the House, that 'it is not the custom for changes in the Constitution of Crown Colonies to come up as Bills'. To the Colonial Secretary, the new constitution represented 'a genuine beginning of responsible government'. Although the governor retained control over the Legislative Council, the reforms did include 'urban and district councils, each with an elective majority and an elected chairman'.³⁴ The latter was part of the CNC's resolution on reforming the constitution, but the reforms were nevertheless denounced (in a cable to *The Guardian*) as 'crude and reactionary'.³⁵ The Colonial Office's offence had been to enact an order-in-council akin to the reforms Lords Ripon and Curzon had implemented in India a generation earlier. While the CNC recognised the importance of gaining 'administrative

³² Ibid., 473-6. Also see Ibid., 471. Just as in India, the British worried that if self-governance was rushed there was the risk that 'the whole power of Government' would fall to a 'small handful of lawyers'. Ibid., 492.

³³ Ibid., 483-5.

³⁴ *Hansard*, cxxxii. 646; *The Guardian*, 21. Aug. 1920, p. 8.

³⁵ *The Guardian*, 25 Aug. 1920. The full resolutions can be found in the ECM, CNCC, 9 Dec. 1919, Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, I, pp. 226-32.

experience’, they too favoured the ‘principle of *solvitur ambulando*’ and envisioned gaining experience by being ‘made responsible for the administration of Departments’ and ‘immediately’ assuming at least ‘50%, rising up to 75%, of the higher appointments in the Ceylon Civil Service and the other branches of the public service’. To ensure the ‘smooth working of the political machinery under the altered conditions’, the governor, with his ‘training in the public life of England’, would be retained as a ‘constitutional ruler’.³⁶ In rejecting these demands, which the CNC incredulously termed ‘studiously moderate’, the Colonial Office ran the risk of exposing Ceylon to the ‘evils of long and bitter agitation, unrest and discontent’.³⁷ Allegedly, it also created ‘advocates ... of the transfer of Ceylon to the administration of the India Office’ and led to fundraising for a ‘sustained and vigorous’ propaganda campaign in favour of responsible government that was to be conducted in Ceylon and London.³⁸ While the governor was later condemned for having ‘forfeited the confidence of this country’, the CNC was persuaded by the island’s distinguished Colonial Secretary, Sir Graeme Thomson, to refrain from a campaign of non-co-operation. Instead the CNC sent the governor a series of proposals—on the understanding that they were likely to be accepted—that gave ‘effect to the scheme of reforms’ and ensured that the new constitution would be revised within a year of the new Legislative Council’s first meeting.³⁹ No one in London regarded the

³⁶ Ibid. p. 226-7; W. Basil Worsfold, ‘Where the Imperial War Conference Has Left Us’, *Nineteenth Century*, lxxxii (1917), p. 1075.

³⁷ Quoted in ECM, CNCC, 6 Aug. 1920, Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, I, p. 239.

³⁸ ECM, CNCC, 17 Aug. 1920, Ibid., I, pp. 241-2. Arrangements were later ‘made to register a person as press correspondent in Ceylon for the English Press’. ECM, CNCC, 8 Nov. 1920, Ibid., p. 262.

³⁹ Quoted in ECM, CNCC, 30 Sept. 1920, Ibid., I, p. 253; ECM, CNCC, 8 Oct 1920, Ibid., I, pp. 241-2 and 256-7. Thomson’s [obituary](#) appeared in *The Straits Times*, 30 Sept. 1933, p. 11.

1920 Order-in-Council as a ‘final scheme’. But that is where the common ground ended.

Amery had told the Commons in August that disappointed Ceylonese politicians had a

duty ... to make the best of it, and the more capable you show yourselves of working this constitution in a practical and effective spirit, the more easy it will be for His Majesty's Government to introduce still further changes which will give you a wider representation and a greater element of responsibility.⁴⁰

The reformed Legislative Council met for the first time in June 1921, but the new Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Edward Wood, the future Earl of Halifax, warned that suggestions for further constitutional changes probably would not be forthcoming ‘until the Session has been in progress for some time’.⁴¹

Six months later, the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, erroneously told the Commons that the subject had yet to be addressed. The debate had actually concluded the previous week. The *Oxford History of the British Empire* notwithstanding, suggestions for a new constitution were proposed but no constitution was passed in 1921.⁴² As a result of Manning’s skilful efforts ‘to speed it on its way to self-destruction’, by the end of 1921, the CNC was confronted with internal and ethnic divisions; most notably, the Tamils no longer saw themselves as a majority community, like the Sinhalese, but as another minority community; a decision that still plagues Sri Lanka.⁴³ However, Tamils also thought they deserved more representation on the Legislative Council, and ceased supporting the CNC. In any event, when the ‘moderate

⁴⁰ *Hansard*, cxxxiii. 494.

⁴¹ Jeffries, *Ceylon*, p. 39; *Hansard*, cxlii. 1517.

⁴² *Hansard*, cxlix. 269; Manning to Churchill, 1 Mar. 1922, in *Correspondence Relating to the Further Revision of the Constitution of Ceylon*, Cmd. 1809 (London, 1923), p. 3; Ashton, ‘Ceylon’, p. 455, which asserts that ‘two new constitutions were introduced in quick succession in 1921 and 1924’.

⁴³ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, pp. 484-9 and 480. Also see ECM, CNCC, 21 Dec. 1921, Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, I, p. 291.

... Nationalist' member for Colombo Town, James Peiris, introduced a plan in December 1921 for a Legislative Council with twenty-eight of the forty-five seats elected on a territorial basis, with eleven and six seats for minorities and officials, respectively, the non-Congress majority balked and devised an alternative scheme, which proposed 'nineteen territorially elected members, eleven communally elected, three nominated unofficials and twelve officials'. It fell to Manning (and the Colonial Office) to sort it all out.⁴⁴ That did not, however, stem the tide of 'telegrams of protest from some of the communities in Ceylon'. Based on the information that reached him, Wood concluded that the slow progress in reforming the constitution was due to the 'clash of interest between the Cingalese (sic) in Ceylon'.⁴⁵

The central issue was whether Ceylon had a homogenous populace. The CNC insisted on the 'necessity of a territorially elected majority in Council'. *The Guardian* echoed their claim that Ceylon's population was 'substantially homogenous', and called on the Colonial Secretary to give the CNC's case 'a fair hearing'.⁴⁶ Something Manning was determined not to do. His initial letter relaying details of the debate in the Legislative Council immediately focused on the 'salient feature' of Peiris' proposed constitution, 'namely, the recognition of the fact that the population of Ceylon is not homogeneous, and that the social structure is founded on a communal basis'. Data from the 1921 Census drove the point home. A territorial system would likely produce pocket

⁴⁴ Jeffries, *Ceylon*, p. 40. The unofficial members consisted of 'eleven Low-country Sinhalese, three Tamils, three Europeans, two Burghers, two Kandyans, one Moslem and one Indian'. Ibid. *Hansard*, clvi. 241 has Peiris' political stance, while the full motion he moved can be found in Manning to Churchill, 1 Mar. 1922, Cmd. 1809, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁵ *Hansard*, clvi. 1146.

⁴⁶ ECM, CNCC, 28 Jan. 1922, Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, I, p. 294; *The Guardian*, 21 Aug. 1920, p. 8.

boroughs for the Tamils and Sinhalese, Low-country and Kandyan. A Sinhalese alliance would 'reduce all the other communities, severally and collectively, to political impotence'. Raising the number of elected seats to forty-five would mean—to take the two extreme ends—that a member would be returned from Batticaloa Town and the Province of Uva, whose populations were 10,000 and 233,355, respectively. The number of seats allotted to minorities was also skewed. The 298,400 Muslims would receive two seats, while the 514,300 Tamils 'were conceded at least nine seats'. An amendment to Peiris' motion, which would have raised the number of seats elected on a territorial basis to thirty instead of the original twenty-eight, was defeated by a wide margin. However, the Unofficial Members vote favoured the amendment by a one-vote majority. The twelve votes in favour came from members representing nine territorial electorates, the Low Country Products Association and the nominated Kandyan Sinhalese members. Opposed were the Tamil, Burgher and European members, as well as the nominated Muslim and Indian members and a nominated Sinhalese member.

All this led Manning to the obvious conclusion that voting 'proceeded on Communal lines'.⁴⁷ Voting on other amendments further demonstrated that 'there was

⁴⁷ Manning to Churchill, 1 Mar. 1922, Cmd. 1809, pp. 4-8. The larger number of seats for the Tamils alluded to above was a reflection of their parity with the Sinhalese in the previous Legislative Council, which was dissolved in March 1921. In Ceylonese society, the numerically smaller Tamil community had maintained 'almost equal[ity]' with the Sinhalese 'in most of the Departments of Government and in the learned professions'. Percentage-wise Tamils were also more likely to be able to vote in Legislative Council elections. In a letter to Manning, dated 13 November 1921, 'memorialists' for the Tamil Mahajana Sabhai (Tamil Association) accepted territorial elections in principle, but submitted 'that it has to be evolved gradually in a place like Ceylon, which is inhabited by people of diverse races hitherto represented in Council on a racial basis'. Otherwise, they feared, 'even outstanding men of eminence who have rendered public services' will be unelectable if their race differs from that of the 'predominant population'. Enclosure in *Ibid.*, pp. 23 and 18-19.

considerable divergence of opinion amongst the Unofficial members'.⁴⁸ If the Peiris' constitution were accepted, it would 'reduce the satisfactory conduct of public business in the Council'. Instead, Manning suggested a Council that incorporated aspects of the two schemes put forward by the divided Ceylonese politicians. In a nod to the CNC, the twenty-one territorially-elected seats would be filled via open elections. The Sinhalese would receive fourteen seats, while Tamils would be allotted all told eight seats instead of their previous three. Of the remaining communally elected seats, three were for the Europeans and two for the Burghers. The Muslims and Indians were allotted, respectively, three and two nominated seats, while officials had twelve seats and three nominated seats were reserved for special interests. The governor no longer had an official majority in the Legislative Council, though defeat on a central issue was unlikely given communal rivalry and the presence of European, Burgher, etc members.⁴⁹ Manning succeeded in convincing the Duke of Devonshire, who succeeded Churchill as Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1922, that Ceylonese society was organised on a communal basis and that this fact was 'one of the essential considerations on which my decision must be based'. It appeared 'many years' would pass before limitations on the 'territorial basis of representation' could be lifted.⁵⁰ It was a decision that would be welcomed by the 'Burgher, Tamil, Mahommedan, Indian and European Members of the Legislative Council'.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 9-12 and 14.

⁴⁹ Manning to Churchill, 1 Mar. 1922 and 14 Aug. 1922, in Cmd. 1809, pp. 8 and 29-30, respectively; Jeffries, *Ceylon*, p. 41.

⁵⁰ Devonshire to Manning, 11 Jan. 1923, in Cmd. 1809, pp. 34-5.

Naturally, the CNC condemned Devonshire's despatch 'as unsatisfactory and reactionary' and insisted that control of the Legislative Council should pass immediately to the Sinhalese through a 'substantial territorially elected majority'.⁵¹ Devonshire received a variety of 'representations' on the proposed constitutional changes, interestingly both the Ceylon Tamil League and the Representative in England of the European Association of Ceylon, H.J. Temple, noted that 'certain section of the Sinhalese ... have arrogated to themselves the name of the Ceylon National Congress and profess to speak on behalf of the whole people of Ceylon'. Temple would 'have nothing to say' had the CNC been named the Low Country Sinhalese Association. Instead, he went on to effectively counter CNC 'propaganda' by pointing out (among other inconvenient truths) that 'all the other races in the Island—together a majority of the population—stand out of Congress and have their own communal organisations for voicing their opinions'.⁵² Devonshire acknowledged the expression of Ceylonese opinion he received by making a number of small changes to Manning's constitution; most notably adding an additional two territorially elected members and insisting that the Muslim and Indian members be elected rather than nominated.⁵³ Once 'so reactionary', the receptiveness of the Colonial Office to 'representations' from Ceylonese political associations came as a surprise; moderation and 'well reasoned'

⁵¹ *Hansard*, clix. 487; ECM, CNCC, 9 Mar. 1923, Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, I, p. 315. Also see *Further Correspondence Relating to the Further Revision of the Constitution of Ceylon*, Cmd. 2062 (London, 1924), pp. 4-8.

⁵² *Hansard*, clxiii. 944; *Further Correspondence Relating to the Further Revision of the Constitution of Ceylon*, Cmd. 1906 (London, 1923), pp. 20 and 54. Also see *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17.

⁵³ Jeffries, *Ceylon*, pp. 41-2.

proposals were the key to unlocking a ‘sympathetical’ Colonial Office.⁵⁴ For his part, the Colonial Secretary thought the ‘concessions’ he made ‘constitute[d] a real advance in the direction of popular government’ and suggested that Manning ‘should now lay before the Legislative Council this despatch and the despatches you have addressed to me on this subject’. Although he was prepared to accept further ‘amendments in detail,’ Devonshire considered the matter closed and thought in the ‘interests of stability’ that further ‘amendments should be differed be deferred for five years at least, during which experience of the working of the revised constitution may be gained’.⁵⁵

While the practice of maintaining two voter rolls—one common, one communal—may have been ‘very skilful’, in so much as it satisfied the Tamils, Muslims, Burghers and Sinhalese, the same cannot be said for the constitutional reforms as a whole.⁵⁶ In hindsight, the main defect was apparent. ‘This constitution does not give any real responsibility to the new [Legislative] Council’, lamented an MP. A vote of no-confidence was meaningless to both the Governor and his Executive Council. The only power vested in the Legislative Council concerned the public purse. Whenever it came time to initiate new spending, if the unofficial members that controlled the Finance Committee would not vote supply, the executive branch only had two choices: abandon its plans or invoke the governors’ reserve powers.⁵⁷ The Colonial Office gambled that

⁵⁴ *Times of India*, 12 Nov. 1923, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Devonshire to Manning, 11 Jan. 1923, in Cmd. 1809, p. 39. Final changes to the 1923 Order-in-Council are in Devonshire to Manning, 22 Jan. 1924, in Cmd. 2062, p. 25.

⁵⁶ *Hansard*, xelviii. 1094.

⁵⁷ *Hansard*, cxxxiii. 470; Jeffries, *Ceylon*, p. 42. Under the new constitution, the governor ‘has power to pass any Bill that he desires, and that he certifies to be necessary, over the heads of the [Legislative] Council, and he has power, in addition, to veto any Bill that he objects to, over the heads of the Council’. *Hansard*, cxxxiii. 471.

the nominated and minority members would prove sufficiently friendly to the government's agenda; the lamenting MP referenced earlier actually dismissed the reformed Legislative Council as nothing more than a 'creature of the Governor'. Instead, the opposite happened. Communal loyalties tended to govern their interactions with each other, but a common culture, language (English) and social life united the Unofficial Members against the executive branch in most matters.⁵⁸

On the eve of the first anniversary of his arrival in Ceylon, the new governor, Sir Hugh Clifford sent his Colonial Secretary, then on leave in England, a 'manuscript' that was to be 'typed in this office' so that 'no copy' would exist in Ceylon. These 'extraordinary precautions' were warranted.⁵⁹ The despatch was a considered analysis of the prevailing political environment and 'the circumstances in which the local Government is attempting to carry on the administration of this important Colony'. In the headlong rush to reform the constitution, Clifford was unable to find any evidence to suggest anyone had tried to

forecast the consequences of those innovations, to examine the practical effects which they would inevitably have upon the actual work of administration, or in any way to adapt the administrative machine—which was designed to serve the

⁵⁸ Ashton, 'Ceylon', p. 455; *Hansard*, cxxxiii. 471; Jeffries, *Ceylon*, p. 42.

⁵⁹ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926; Sir G. Grindle to Clifford's successor, Sir Herbert Stanley, 1 Mar. 1927, CO 537/692. After spending almost two decades in the Straits Settlements and Malaya, with a brief interlude as governor of North Borneo, poor health compelled Clifford to sail for England in September 1901. During his convalescence, which lasted into the autumn of 1903, Clifford resumed writing to supplement his half-pay, but, having become fluent in Malay, also delivered papers to learned societies, including the Royal Geographical Society. Clifford returned to work as the Colonial Secretary for Trinidad (1903-7) and Ceylon (1907-12). In the first of a series of ever more prominent governorships, he departed Ceylon for the Gold Coast. From there he transferred to Nigeria in 1919, Ceylon in 1925 and, ending his 'years of exile', Malaya in 1927. Owing to 'mental imbalance', his term ended in October 1929. After a 'major proconsular career', Clifford spent his final years confined in The Priory, Roehampton; where he died of broncho-pneumonia ten days after Japanese troops had invaded Malaya. A.J. Stockwell, 'Sir Hugh Charles Clifford (1866-1941)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Crown Colony system of government—to the wholly new conditions amid which it would henceforth be required to function.

In the ensuing 136 pages, Clifford preceded to provide the missing analysis. Returning to the island after almost fifteen years away, the now-governor was noticeably struck by the changes that had occurred in Ceylonese society and politics.⁶⁰

Clifford was ‘forcibly struck by the great awakening of racial antagonism and of religious animosity’. A political awakening had also occurred. When he first came to the island, not ‘even the average highly educated Ceylonese’ found being ruled by Europeans to be ‘humiliating’. It was simply seen as being ‘part of the established and accepted order of things’. The Morley-Minto Reforms—see Section 3.2—passed by ‘almost unnoticed’. A situation that could not continue as the press grew ever more vocal and, in particular, because ‘the Great War let loose upon the world a flood of theories concerning the rights and wrongs of small nations, the doctrine of self-determination and the like’ A section of the ‘Ceylonese-owned’ pre-war press increasingly accused the government of being the ‘oppressor of “the people”’. However, such views were offset by European and Burgher publications that, while still critical of the Executive when warranted, dismissed the suggestion that ‘the Government was actuated by sinister and malevolent motives’. Despite the criticism, the ‘power and the authority of the Executive’ remained ‘unassailable’ and, ‘in any Asiatic land’, this, in turn, secured ‘a large measure of popular support’. Moreover, the administration had a ‘great body of

⁶⁰ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

sober Ceylonese opinion' on its side prior to the 1915 Riots.⁶¹ Not only did the crackdown introduce 'an element of bitterness' into relations between the government and the 'indigenous population', it further cemented the pre-war claim that the government and the governed were 'diametrically opposed' and that anyone 'claiming to rank as a patriot must necessarily be a consistent opponent of the Administration'. This development would prove disastrous when constitutional changes were made. The two constitutions introduced both preserved the Legislative Council's 'supreme authority' over spending, but they also left unchanged the 'administrative machine designed for the executive control of public affairs under that system'. That is to say, both constitutions assumed that the governor still commanded a 'sufficient majority' in Council to 'insure the good governance of the country'. The 'responsibility' for which 'still rests as of old upon the Governor', but his power over the Legislative Council 'has been taken from him'. Article LIV offered illusory power as invoking the governors' reserve powers would likely

cause locally such a turmoil of political excitement and disapprobation that the good will of the majority of the Legislative Council, upon which the Government is to-day dependent for all supply and for the means of carrying on the ordinary routine administration of the country, would thereby completely alienated, thus producing a situation which would render the work of Government impossible or would compel it to resort to measures that would be tantamount to a suspension of the Constitution.

In effect, constitutional reform had transferred to a 'majority of the Ceylonese Unofficial Members in the Legislative Council all power of decision in matters great and small that entail a penny of expenditure'. Power had been completely divorced from responsibility,

⁶¹ Ibid. On the origins of the riots and the poorly conceived British crackdown, see de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, pp. 474-8.

with the governor left at the mercy of the ‘many ... weaknesses and peculiarities of [the] Ceylonese character’.⁶²

Clifford was not blind to the ‘many good qualities’ of the Ceylonese, but their failings had to be ‘reckoned with’ in light of the transfer of ‘power to a Ceylonese Majority in the Legislative Council’. Before the War, the island had an ‘extraordinary restricted’ worldview. But Ceylon was not immune to the ‘world-wide unrest of recent times’. The ‘local press’, now almost entirely in the ‘hands of Ceylonese’, published ‘columns of telegraphic news, garnered from every quarter of the world’ on a daily basis. Unfortunately, the ‘Ceylonese publicist’ possessed a rather inexact ‘sense of proportion’ that led to the belief that ‘he is taking no mean part in the universal upheaval’. Consequently, the ‘educated sections of the community’ were inundated with this ‘flood of new and exciting ideas’, but were unable ‘to state facts which they know will be unpopular’. Overall, the Unofficial Ceylonese Members tended to be ‘as able, as sound, as moderate and as reasonable a set of men as this Island can at present produce’. However, they lived in ‘terror’ of being criticised by their community’s newspaper(s), or even worse being warned one was falling under ‘the malign influence of Queen’s House’.⁶³ Influence and their ‘very seats’ were all dependent on maintaining their ‘personal popularity’. Clifford thought that the ‘majority of them are convinced that a genuine and honest attempt is being made by the Government to administer the affairs of the Colony wisely and justly’. But whatever their private thoughts actually were,

⁶² Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

⁶³ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692. Queen’s House was the governor’s residence; the phrase was quoted by Clifford.

denouncing the Government was (understandably) ‘well nigh irresistible’. Any Unofficial Member compelled into agreement with the Government—by ‘common sense and force of argument’—assumes ‘an air of apology for such an act of apparent apostasy’. Speaking the truth (to the masses) required a ‘man of great strength of character and exceptional moral courage’. In the absence of a Gandhi-like figure, a ‘puerile and nonsensical’ atmosphere had developed. Discussion of ‘public questions’ occurred in an ‘atmosphere of complete unreality’. Newspapers and local patriots—of the ignorant and ‘highly educated’ variety—were, for example, ‘unwearying *laudatory temporis acti*; and daily the most shamelessly apocryphal history is being taught broadcast to an ignorant, vain and excitable people’. Numerous stories were spun of how Ceylon suffered ‘under the strangle-hold of British rule’ in comparison to the ‘glorious days of Parakrama Bahu [r. 1153-86]’.⁶⁴ The ‘agitators’ maintained that ‘the crimes of a British Colonial Administration’ are the reason that this golden period did not persist ‘to this day’. Earlier that fall, the Government Agent of the Western Province learned from ‘one of his most experienced Mudaliyars’ or chief headmen that the ‘villagers’ were starting to believe the anti-Government message(s). Moderate Ceylonese, who viewed these developments with ‘apprehension’, were unable/unwilling to ‘apply any corrective’ for reasons already explained. The Government by contrast was completely powerless as ‘local susceptibilities bleed at the lightest touch, and such a thing as a frank

⁶⁴ Ibid; ‘strangle-hold’ phrase quoted by Clifford.

discussion of historical facts would at once be attributed to prejudice and to “lack of sympathy with the people”.”⁶⁵

‘Agitation for constitutional reform is,’ Clifford explained, ‘in its essence, racial, rather than political’. In the language of the time, the ‘distrust and dislike of the Colonial Government’ was a consequence of its ““foreign” character’. As was suggested in the previous paragraph, the Ceylonese, and the Sinhalese, in particular, identified with Ceylon’s past glory. Blaming Britons for their country’s subsequent downfall was, Clifford concluded, ‘very grateful to the feelings and flattering to the vanity of a people who, for some hundreds of years, have never given token of any sort of originality and have not produced a single individual who has markedly excelled in any branch of human activity’.⁶⁶ Shockingly an official in the Colonial Office labelled Clifford’s despatch as too ‘caustic’ to be published. It was later determined that Clifford probably was ‘incensed’ at ‘Sinhalese intransigence (sic) and inefficiency’ when he composed his despatch.⁶⁷ As previously discussed, post-war constitutional reform in Ceylon seemed to follow the pattern of the Dominions, but the Ceylonese viewed things very different. Instead of ‘a gift freely made by His Majesty’s Government,’ the reforms were seen as ‘spoils wrung from a humiliated and defeated local Administration’. Three constitutions in fifteen years simply ‘whetted the local appetite for further concessions’. Relations between the ‘Government and the governed’ were actually worsening in light of the ‘daily execration and attack’, the governor lamented. Clifford blamed the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Minutes by H.R. Cowell, 15 Jan. 1927 and 4 Mar. 1939, CO 537/692. By the late 1930s, Cowell had become the ‘Colonial Office “expert” on Sri Lanka’. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, p. 542.

‘inordinate vanity’ of the Ceylonese people for the disharmony, writing that the ‘oriental mind is attuned to respect Authority’ and would remain so provided the Government vigorously defended itself ‘against assault’. However, this was impossible as the Legislative Council was ‘a highly hypersensitive audience composed of gentlemen who are at once excitable and temperamental, acutely suspicious, quick to take offence and to imagine that offence is intended, and capable when their passions are aroused of almost any act of impulsive folly’. Government business could only be carried out using the ‘utmost tact and ... inexhaustible patience’, while experienced ‘officers’ also stressed the importance of suppressing or ignoring ‘material facts’ that might ‘reflect adversely upon local characteristics’. Such an attitude would have been unthinkable in London. Yet, Clifford and others had no trouble treating their fellow Britons with contempt.⁶⁸

Recent scholarship has suggested that ‘Britishness’ was not limited to the white settler colonies, which, together with Clifford’s own observations, suggests that the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council should perhaps be treated similarly.⁶⁹ After all the Sinhalese elite were a ‘product of British training and influence’. Although Clifford condescendingly dismissed them as an ‘essentially imitative people’, the fact remains that they acquired a measure of that infamous English ‘public school spirit’ in the secondary schools referenced earlier. They delighted in ‘orthodox’ banquets and

⁶⁸ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

⁶⁹ A. Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford, 2011). The ‘imperial British identity’ in the Caribbean was not ‘egalitarian’ as it drew heavily on the ‘Victorian values of Western-style education, Christian morality and domesticity’. *Ibid.*, p. 2; italics in original. It is also worth noting that ‘certain Ceylonese political leaders with a Western education’ could no longer address their ‘compatriots fluently in the vernacular’. As will be seen, there were those that wanted the franchise to remain limited (to the ‘limited class who understood English’). Minute by Cowell, 9 July 1929, CO 54\894\10.

‘after-dinner oratory’, though they struggled with their Sinhalese and tended to rely on the ‘most hackneyed of English quotations’ to settle disputes. Many of them were also members of the Church of England, a fact that makes their reference ‘in ordinary conversation ... to England as “Home”’ seem less implausible. Whatever culture they possessed, Clifford concluded, was ‘essentially British in its origins’. Given his tone, it seems clear that Clifford did not view the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council as (near) equals, as Lord Curzon did with the Indian Princess. Nevertheless, the fact remains that these men were effectively cultural creoles; their proclamations of the ‘innate superiority of Sinhalese ... culture’ notwithstanding.⁷⁰ Ever since the British conquered the island, the issue was how to consolidate the (increasing diversity of) peoples—as of 31 December 1925, Ceylon’s populace consisted of 2,065,430 Low Country Sinhalese, 1,167,307 Kandyan Sinhalese, 532,535 Ceylon Tamils, 620,459 Indian Tamils, 259,399 Ceylon Moors, 34,005 Indian Moors, 31,532 Burghers and Eurasians, 14,404 Malays, 10,212 Europeans and 26,338 Veddhas and Others—of Ceylon into a ‘cohesive whole’.⁷¹ Whereas the British had originally labelled the ‘Sinhalese as “indigenous” peoples and the Malabars [later termed Ceylon Tamils] as recent arrivals from South India’, the issue in the mid-1920s was whether a Buddhist-infused-Sinhalese or a Creolised-British ‘spirit of nationality’ would prevail.⁷²

⁷⁰ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

⁷¹ S. Sivasundaram, ‘Ethnicity, Indigeneity, and Migration in the Advent of British Rule to Sri Lanka’, *American Historical Review*, cxv (2010), p. 440; Population figures come from Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

⁷² Sivasundaram, ‘Ethnicity, Indigeneity, and Migration’, pp. 440 and 429; Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692. To claim, as Sivasundaram does, that Sri Lanka’s current ethnic divided emerged in the early nineteenth century ignores a path (ultimately) not taken in favour of crude determinism.

Had the Kandyan aristocracy made common cause with their Low-Country counterparts, the Sinhalese would have assured themselves an ‘impregnable political ascendancy’. However, much to the annoyance of Low Country Sinhalese politicians, Kandyan leaders declined the opportunity to become a marginalised junior partner.⁷³ Instead, the recently formed Kandyan National Assembly tried to claim a variety of rights under the 1815 Kandyan Convention that sought to assert the connection between ‘His Britannic Majesty’ and the ‘Kandyan people’ and strengthen the position of ‘British gentlemen’ in the Kandyan Provinces, at the expense of the Low Country Sinhalese.⁷⁴ Their argument was ‘clearly not sustainable’, but Clifford thought that it demonstrated Kandyan ‘distrust of the present Legislative Council ...and apprehension which are aroused in them by the steady overflow of Low Country Sinhalese into the Kandyan Provinces’. The latter made the Kandyan position in Council even worse. Low Country Sinhalese comprised a little over thirty-two per cent of Kandy town’s populace, and therefore had little trouble getting one of their own elected to the Legislative Council. A predictable outcome when the Kandyans represented just under a quarter of the town’s population, and the remaining electorate consisted of Moors, Tamils and Indian traders, but the Kandyan aristocracy still saw it as ‘a deep humiliation’. It was also a harbinger of further problems. The Low Country Sinhalese, who were comparatively ‘better educated’ and more ‘politically minded’, were slowly colonising the ‘sparsely populated’ Kandy provinces; a development that was to ‘some degree welcomed’ by the ‘Kandyan people’ as it ‘strengthened them against their Chiefs’. While Low Country

⁷³ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

⁷⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*

Sinhalese denounced the ‘communal spirit’ as nothing more than ‘*divide et impera*, the Kandyans, no less than the [Ceylonese] Tamils and the Muslims, feel that their safety largely depends upon its continued recognition’. Indian Tamils played no role in Ceylonese politics; being largely mobile ‘estate labourers’ they typically could not meet the franchise qualifications and Tamils, who had the vote, like Indian and Ceylonese Moors, tended to be more interested in their ‘business affairs’ than politics. As descendents of troops brought from Batavia by the Dutch, the Malays occupied ‘no prominent place in the political or economic life of Ceylon’. By contrast, the Burghers had provided the ‘clerical’ backbone of the Public Service for years, being seen by ‘experienced Heads of Departments’ as ‘more trustworthy and often more efficient than other Ceylonese’. Nevertheless, they viewed the transfer of power with ‘acute apprehension’. Both the Sinhalese and Tamils looked upon Burghers ‘with dislike and with suspicion’. Feelings could be carried to ‘extremes’ if there was a perception of ‘preferential treatment’, such as ‘Burgher lepers’ receiving a different diet than Sinhalese lepers in the same asylum. Lastly, the Europeans, who could be divided into four categories—the planters, the business community, the superior artisan class and the Public Service officers—were largely ignorant of the ‘profound changes which have been wrought, during the last fifteen years, in the political constitution of the Colony, or the actual transfer of power from the Government to a Ceylonese Unofficial Majority in the Legislative Council’. The planters, in particular, were living ‘in something of a fools’ paradise’. The era of ‘racial superiority’ was ending. Moreover, their influence was further diminished by the creation in 1921 of the Ceylon Estates Proprietary Association,

which lobbied on behalf of the ‘big [limited liability] firms in Colombo’ and thereby undercut the ‘authority’ that the Planters’ Association of Ceylon had formerly exercised. The lone representative for the ‘planting community’ on the Legislative Council was ‘almost completely impotent’, while the two European members were only ‘listened to by their colleagues with attention when they speak on business questions’. All told, the prevailing environment was not exactly favourable to the CNC, which has to be seen as ‘a purely Sinhalese institution, to which, moreover, the Kandyans pay only a grudging allegiance’. The Low Country Sinhalese, in particular, were also growing increasingly resentful of the Tamils, who refused ‘to account themselves merely a minority section of an united “Ceylonese nation”’. As much as the CNC denounced it, ‘communal feeling’ was simply inescapable in such a ‘heterogeneous population’. In fact, Clifford noted, ‘Sinhalese politicians’ themselves were ‘*au fond* animated by it’ as their community’s ‘numerical strength’ made opposing communal politics a top priority. While Ceylonese society had evolved to the point that European officials—save for a handful of senior officials ‘brought up in the old school’—accepted the ‘rather insistent assumption of equality by the Ceylonese’ with ‘courtesy and with good temper’, administratively and constitutionally the island had regressed under the recently imposed ‘modern conditions’.⁷⁵

Clifford concluded that ‘senior civil servants’ had decided ‘to carry on the administration of the country very much as though no radical alterations in the machinery of administration had been made’. Unofficial Members were therefore left to

⁷⁵ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

discover information on their own, though they began to be seen by the public as 'convenient courts of appeal'. The result was an atmosphere of 'suspicion and antagonism'. Department heads were unamused by the 'deluge of criticism and advice' from frequently 'patently ignorant' Unofficial Members and the 'many hours' wasted in the anti-chamber awaiting their turn before the Finance Committee. Anyone that was also a Council Member was forced to endure 'very prolonged debates ... while the undealt-with files accumulate on their office tables'. The result was the 'regrettable' loosening of the Colonial Secretary's 'central control', a hallmark of the 'Crown Colony system of government'. As Department Heads became aware of this development, it became possible for 'quite serious happenings' to occur 'in a Department without the Governor or the Colonial Secretary being made immediately aware of them'. Both men, however, were still consulted on 'matters of great difficulty and moment'. Department Heads experienced a similar loss of 'control'. Meanwhile, the Civil Service's 'tone' and 'efficiency' was unchanged despite the admission of a 'large Ceylonese element', thereby destroying the 'homogeneity of that Body'; a change that made life 'less enjoyable' for the 'British civil servant' assigned to an 'out-station'. Overall, the Public Service was plagued by a 'marked decline' in 'spirit' and the ability 'to maintain secrecy with regard to confidential matters'. Lobbying, to fill vacant positions, in particular, was 'being carried on quite systematically by Ceylonese public servants', but Clifford directed his harshest criticism at the Unofficial Majority in the Legislative Council.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Not only were they using civil servants as ‘their private intelligence officers’ and examining the ‘contents of waste-paper baskets or of blotting-paper filched for their use from Government offices’, thereby ‘undermining’ the ‘integrity and the efficiency of the Public Service,’ the Unofficial Members of the Council were quite simply ‘constitutionally incapable of dealing impartially with any matter into which the personal, communal or racial equation enters’. Worse still, they were actively weakening the ‘administrative machine[ry]’ of the Government. ‘Having now completed this general survey of the situation in Ceylon to-day, as I conceive it to be,’ wrote Clifford, at the bottom of page fifty-three, ‘I must return to a consideration of the position in the Legislative Council itself.’ Over the course of sixty-plus pages, he outlined *in explicit detail* what had been learned from ‘working’ the current Constitution; before going on to draw conclusions in the remaining twenty-odd pages.⁷⁷ Clifford’s ‘colossal and exhaustive despatch’ defies easy analysis. ‘Impossible to summarise’, minuted one official. Who then went on to write: ‘I am afraid that it is necessary to read the whole of it’. A few things, however, do stand out. The 1923 Constitution should have accompanied a new governor. Instead, the new Council, with its enlarged Unofficial Majority and newly elected Vice-President, met for ‘some six months’ prior to Manning’s departure, whose ship was ‘appointed to sail from Colombo on April 1st’.⁷⁸ Sailing from Lagos on 8 May, Clifford landed at Plymouth two weeks later. He was expected to sail for Ceylon in a ‘few months time’. It was later reported that he would

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Minute by Cowell, 15 Jan. 1927, CO 537/692; *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 1 Apr. 1925, p. 14.

not take up his latest governorship until October.⁷⁹ Reports of ill health in *The Times of Ceylon* were denied, though Clifford did suffer from ‘occasional bouts of depression’. Finally, following a banquet hosted by the African chapters of the London, Liverpool and Manchester Chambers of Commerce, Clifford and his wife departed Liverpool on 6 November.⁸⁰ They arrived in Colombo ‘amid scenes of enthusiasm’ three and a half weeks later. However, during the eight-month ‘*interregnum*,’ the Ceylonese Unofficial Majority had taken on the airs of a ‘Parliamentary Opposition’. Their attitude hardened by the expectation that Clifford, as a former Colonial Secretary ‘under the old Crown Colony *régime*,’ would ‘prove strongly reactionary and desirous of depriving them of the power which, during my absence from Ceylon, they had won for themselves’. In fact, the opposite would happen as the consequences of the Unofficial Majority adopting a parliamentary attitude had proved utterly disastrous.⁸¹

Instead seeing themselves as an ‘integral’ part of the Government, ‘in all financial matters’ the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council ‘instinctively play the role, not of custodians of the public till, but of the leaders of popular raids directed alike upon revenue and the expenditure’. They were then judged by both the ‘virulence’ of their ‘attacks and denunciations’ and the degree of ‘embarrassment’ the Administration endured. Furthermore, there was the immediate need to use their newfound powers ‘to impress the local public’. Consequently, the acting Colonial Secretary received a resolution to reduce the 1925-6 budget by four million rupees,

⁷⁹ *The Straits Times*, 20 June 1925, p. 8; *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 3 and 5 June 1925, pp. 8 and 14, respectively; *Ibid.*, 22 July 1925, p. 14.

⁸⁰ *The Straits Times*, 23 July 1925, p. 9; Stockwell, ‘Clifford’; *The Straits Times*, 20 Oct. 1925, p. 8.

⁸¹ *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 10 Dec. 1925, p. 16; Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692; italics in original.

while also abolishing taxes on popular foodstuffs and reducing by varying percentages all railway fares. It was all grandstanding that in the end put half a million rupees into 'the pockets of the boutique-keepers without the consumer receiving any benefit whatsoever' and 'necessitated applications for supplementary supply upon a[n unprecedented] scale'. More damaging was that such actions created the impression that the Government was 'refusing to supply works and services for which the Council has duly voted the funds'. In one case, a million rupees that was to be used to improve the rail network was deleted from the budget, only to become a supplementary vote 'some six months later'. The monies were approved 'without a word of question or comment by Unofficial Members'. Naturally, the 'local newspapers' vigorously denounced the Railway Department. That the Government should not 'be held responsible for mistakes which it has been unable to prevent, is an idea that penetrates very slowly into the public intelligence', wrote a frustrated Clifford. In another instance, 'a number of Ceylonese Unofficial Members', who in 'some cases' were 'sincerely convinced temperance advocates', thwarted Government efforts to 'prevent the illicit sale of liquor'. Eventually they were persuaded to allow the Excise Department to gather admissible evidence, but 'for many months' it was 'some of the loudest advocates of prohibition' that ensured illicit liquor was available 'all over Ceylon'. Little wonder that Clifford went on to complain that the current constitution had produced 'a hopelessly illogical position'. Had this been an isolated example it could be dismissed as mildly ironic, but the interference with the Excise Department was (to varying degrees) 'occurring in almost every branch of the Administration'. Ultimately, Clifford concluded, the 1923 Constitution was

simply teaching the Ceylonese ‘how to weaken and disorganise the administrative machine and how to render good government difficult, if not impossible’. Furthermore, in exercising their power ‘capriciously, mischievously and with complete irresponsibility’, the Unofficial Majority were likely ‘postponing’ the granting of further reforms.⁸² However, in trying to solve an issue he first encountered in 1907, Clifford could give the Unofficial Majority what it craved, power; while also answering the dilemma posed by Thucydides of how a democratic empire might work.⁸³

Amongst all of ‘His Majesty’s Tropical Possessions’, Ceylon stood out for the degree to which its inhabitants ‘have become accustomed to depend upon government ... for services of all descriptions’. Clifford knew of no other colony where a ‘British Administration’ had failed to ‘engender ... even a rickety spirit of self-help’ in the populace. Government, he thought, should absolutely respond to floods, famines and other ‘calamities’, but the Ceylonese never thought that ‘anybody else should do anything’. Whereas the more prosperous members of the Chinese community in Malaya aided ‘their poorer fellows’, the Ceylonese ‘cry’ that the Government is not doing enough. Free pastureland could be allotted to a village. However, if the Government suggested that the ‘villagers should clear and fence it for themselves’, the free land would be ‘regarded as an act of tyranny’. In another village, coastal erosion threatened the coconut trees. The Government decided ‘to supply them with rubble and to transport it, free of cost, to their very doors’, but the villagers dismissed the idea that they ‘do the

⁸² Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

⁸³ A. Roberts, *The Holy Fox: The Life of Lord Halifax* (London, 1997; originally published London, 1991), p. 19.

necessary work themselves, even under technical instruction and supervision,' as 'altogether unacceptable'. *Numerous* other examples followed. Underlying all these demands for services, including a 'State Bank' that would give out loans to 'needy Sinhalese on terms that would not appeal to a Bank or other business institution', was the idea that the 'Government is the possessor of the purse of Fortunatus' and the Ceylonese, now in 'control of the public purse,' dreamed of seeing 'Colonial revenues devoted to the financing and stimulation of indigenous private enterprise'. Looking ahead, Clifford foresaw, 'many schemes of a highly risky and speculative character'.⁸⁴ If the Governor disapproved, his options were severely limited.

To illustrate the impotency of Government, Clifford detailed a dispute that arose 'shortly' before his arrival. The Officer Administering the Government, Sir Cecil Clementi, had lent a 'junior civil servant to the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services for the purposes of evolving order out of chaos in the headquarters office of his Department'. This decision aroused the ire of the Ceylonese Unofficial Members, for whom there was 'no term of contempt in their vocabulary so forcible, in their estimation, as that of "bureaucrat"'. A Select Committee was struck to study the appointment. Its lacking of 'any administrative experience' evidently was not seen as an impediment. Days later, the Committee recommended that a 'senior member of the Clerical Service', rather than said civil servant, be appointed. A decision that Clifford and 'all my

⁸⁴ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692. Dating back to the early sixteenth century Fortunatus was a Cypriot aristocrat, who fled court following a 'malicious rumour that he is to be castrated in order to be safely left with a king's wife. He goes to France and there in a wood he encounters lady Fortune. She offers him a choice of gifts, of which he chooses wealth. He is given an inexhaustible purse' Quoted in G. Anderson, *Folktale as a Source of Graeco-Roman Fiction: The Origin of Popular Narrative* (Lewiston, 2007), pp. 50-51.

experienced advisers' regarded as 'quite useless'. If the Unofficial Members insisted on appointing a member of the Clerical Services to the 'post of Office Assistant to the Director [of Medical Services]', Clifford would have no choice but to 'disclaim responsibility' for the consequences. 'A lot of good that would be', scribbled a Colonial Office official.

Although the appointment was 'very urgently called for', Clifford, unlike the Colonial Office official, and 'later governors', recognised that appointing a civil servant to such a minor post could 'hardly' be considered to be of 'paramount importance' to justify invoking the governors' reserve powers. Any decision, no matter how trivial, the Executive made was 'liable to be fettered by the caprices of the Unofficial Majority'. But to appoint an 'office Assistant' via emergency power was to make a mockery of the 'existing Constitution'. The Unofficial Majority had acquired power without even a 'shadowy appreciation of the fact that they, and not the Executive, [had] become responsible for the results if that power be unwisely exercised'. Clifford strongly recommended that a means needed to be devised to make the Unofficial Majority aware of the 'full burden of responsibility upon them, and of bringing home to them the heavy weight and the meaning of it'.⁸⁵ And what could be better than handing them even more power?

When the new constitution was handed down in 1923, Devonshire had indicated that 'no further constitutional reforms should be considered for at least five years' in order to provide sufficient time to determine the soundness of the reforms. 'The results

⁸⁵ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

of that experience are set forth in paragraph 25 *et seq.* of this Despatch', declared Clifford. In short, the Constitution 'can be made to function after a fashion'. But the 'prudent and efficient administration' of Ceylon was threatened, as 'deadlock [with the Unofficial Majority] is merely a matter of time'. Clifford hoped to 'take the initiative' in proposing further reforms, in part to avoid the impression that further reforms were the 'result of local agitation'. But the Governor had also obtained 'a copy of correspondence which has recently passed between the "National Congress" and the European Association, in which the former puts forward, as a basis of discussion, a scheme which would confer upon Ceylon full responsible government'.⁸⁶ Clifford quoted the 'document *in extenso*', including a letter from the secretary of the European Association of Ceylon that indicated the proposed reforms would be discussed at their 'next Council Meeting' and invited the CNC to provide 'fuller information' on seven issues, which they did.⁸⁷ The 'tentative scheme' drawn up by a sub-committee of the CNC called for a government 'responsible to the Legislature', with 'ministers chosen from among the elected members of the Legislature'. The Governor would select a 'chief minister', who would then 'nominate the other ministers for appointment by the Governor'. A Ceylonese executive consisting of Ministers of Finance, Justice, Education, Agriculture, Industries and Public Works, as well as a Home Minister, who would oversee eight disparate departments, would replace the existing Executive Council. Naturally, the CNC proposed that eighty percent of the seats in the Legislative Council be elected on a

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ R. Trefusis to the Secretaries, CNC, S. Muttiah and R.S.S. Gunewardane, 18 Sept. and Muttiah and Gunewardane to Trefusis, 24 Sept. 1926, enclosure in Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

territorial basis, though the final proportion was 'to be fixed after consultations with the various communities of the Island'.⁸⁸ Was this an admission that the island was not homogenous after all?

In any event, the CNC was rather conciliatory in comparison to previous proposals for constitutional reform; being 'quite open to discussion' of the Governor retaining an official element in his 'advisory body' and 'prepared to discuss further with ... [the European Association] any points you consider necessary'. On several of the issues on which the European Association sought clarification, the CNC held up 'British Parliamentary procedure' as their guide. The one departure they proposed concerned the Secretary of State's assent on legislation passed by the Legislative Council. For bills of a 'purely domestic nature' the CNC thought it was no longer needed.⁸⁹

While potentially more conciliatory to other Ceylonese, the CNC was also far more ambitious in comparison to the 'more modest' scheme put forth by Peiris at the end of 1921. Ever since his arrival Clifford had engaged in 'informal discussions' and these led him to conclude that 'leading Sinhalese Unofficial Members are anxious for more power, and are especially eager to secure to themselves the exercise of the patronage at present at the disposal of the Government, [but] they are at heart very reluctant to assume any real responsibility for the conduct of public affairs'. Appointing Unofficial Members to the Executive Council certainly had advantages, though the 'invidious' task of selecting Ministers would fall to the Governor as the Unofficial Members 'frankly'

⁸⁸ Untitled memo, 2 Aug. 1926, appended to Muttiah and Gunewardane to Trefusis, 14 Sept. 1926, enclosure in Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692. Most notably, the CNC proposed leaving the franchise, with its limited voting rights for women, unchanged.

⁸⁹ Muttiah and Gunewardane to Trefusis, 24 Sept. 1926, enclosure in Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

said that their ‘communal and personal jealousies and differences’ rendered it impossible for them to select the ‘best men’. But Clifford concluded that overall, the proposed reforms would not make governing easier nor would it bring about the ‘most urgently needed’ development, ‘viz. the transference of responsibility to the Ceylonese Majority in the Legislative Council’. The Governor advised that now was time for reforms that would be seen ‘to differ, not in degree but in kind’.⁹⁰

Dismissed earlier as being unsuitable to Ceylon, with its ‘central [rather than provincial] government’, Clifford thought a ‘system of Dyarchy ... might be tried in Ceylon’.⁹¹ Such a system held the devious potential for dealing (what Clifford termed) ‘the “National Congress”’ a two-fold blow. Not only would the Unofficial Members’ desire for an expansion of their ‘powers of active interference’ not happen, but in making select Members responsible for ‘certain Departments—e.g. Medical and Sanitary, Education, Agriculture, Forestry and perhaps even the Public Works Department—’ they would become ‘target[s] for newspaper criticism’. Anyone who possessed ‘any latent administrative abilities’ would prosper, which offered the possibility of a cadre of native intermediaries emerging (as occurred in India) that, like the planter class, could potentially act as a bulwark of the colonial regime. Clifford was fully conscious of the magnitude his recommended course of action represented, warning that Department Heads ‘would have to be given the choice of accepting the new conditions or of retiring on the enhanced pension provided for in the case of abolition of

⁹⁰ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692.

⁹¹ *Hansard*, cxxxiii. 492; Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692. Clifford prefaced his suggestion on the assumption that ‘the system in force in India’ would be adopted in Ceylon, i.e. dividing ‘money votes’ into non- and ‘votable’ ones.

office'.⁹² But the Governor recognised that Ceylon would 'sooner or later, [receive] some form of self-government'. If such an outcome is 'not only desirable but practicable' why delay its implementation, he wondered; as will be seen, Lord Irwin followed a similar line in India.

In light of recent experience, however, it was too soon to grant Ceylonese Ministers the 'authority enjoyed by Ministers under a system of responsible government, or to bind the Governor to accept their advice in all circumstances'. Clifford argued that while Indian-style safeguards were needed, 'to make a success of the experiment' the Ceylonese Ministers needed 'as much freedom of action as might be feasible' and should be accorded 'every support and assistance'. Having dutifully painted a 'true and unvarnished picture', Clifford recommended despatching a 'small Royal Commission', which should gather evidence '*in camera* ... to invite genuine expression of opinion' and included at least one 'gentleman possessing recent experience of Provincial administration in India,' to visit Ceylon if the Home Government was 'prepared' to introduce 'new measures designed to train the Ceylonese for eventual self-government'.⁹³

While it would later be 'cautiously detached from the files and locked up lest the ungodly should triumph', Clifford's despatch initially offered 'the best plan' to (what the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies deemed as) the 'stupid' decision of

⁹² Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692. Technically, the warning was in response to the reforms proposed by the CNC, but it holds for Clifford's suggested reforms as well since both plans envisioned Unofficial Members 'armed with more authority'.

⁹³ Clifford to Amery, 20 Nov. 1926, CO 537/692; italics in original.

giving the Ceylonese an ‘unofficial majority before they were ready for it’.⁹⁴ Even a future head of the Eastern Department admitted that ‘in the long run’ there could be no avoiding transferring ‘greater responsibility’ onto Ceylonese politicians, who continually called for the appointment of ‘responsible ministers ... [but] always find some fault with any definite proposal’.⁹⁵ Another critic accepted parts of Clifford’s analysis, minuting that the Ceylonese ‘are not fit yet for the power they have already got. Surely that is an argument for not giving them more?’ He ‘plead[ed]’ for a policy that would not ‘sell the pass in the East’.⁹⁶ But to no avail; the decision to appoint ‘a small commission’ was made less than three weeks later.⁹⁷ Amery endorsed Clifford’s analysis based on ‘the reports which had reached me of on the working of the existing constitution’ from unnamed sources, and planned to appoint a ‘small ~~Royal~~ Commission’ towards the end of the year.⁹⁸ With a general election expected ‘early in 1929’, it was thought that MPs would be hard to recruit if the Commission was held in the ‘autumn of 1928’, the eve of the fifth year anniversary of the existing constitution.⁹⁹ As was the case with the Simon Commission—see Section 3.2—the Conservative Government was anxious that it, and not a potential Labour Government, found a replacement for the seemingly defunct vis-à-vis Ceylon, at least, Crown Colony system of governance. Appointed on 6 August 1927, the four-man commission was chaired by the Earl of Donoughmore, who was far

⁹⁴ Minute by Cowell, 4 Mar. 1939; Minutes by Sir Samuel Wilson, 14 and 2 Jan. 1927, respectively, CO 537/692.

⁹⁵ Minute by Cowell, 15 Jan. 1927, CO 537/692.

⁹⁶ Minute by Grindle, 25 Jan. 1927, CO 537/692.

⁹⁷ Minute by Wilson, 14 Feb. 1927, CO 537/692.

⁹⁸ Amery to Clifford (draft telegram), 7 Mar. 1927, CO 537/692. An official had previously minuted that a Royal Commission ‘would be most undesirable’ as ‘all evidence before a Royal Commission has to be printed verbatim’. Minute by William Ormsby-Gore, 28 Feb. 1927, CO 537/692.

⁹⁹ Minute by Wilson, 14 Jan. 1927, CO 537/692.

from the Colonial Office's first choice, but he had at least been a member of Edwin Montagu's 1917 mission to India. They were more successful in securing their other preferred choices; particularly the Labour MP, Dr. T. Drummond Shiels, whose role in the Empire Parliamentary Association's visit to Australia the previous year was highly praised by Lord Salisbury, the Tory Leader in the House of Lords.¹⁰⁰ By the time the committee was appointed, doubts existed within the Colonial Office as to the veracity of Clifford's despatch, hence the terms of reference:

To visit Ceylon and report on the workings of the existing Constitution and on any difficulties of administration which may have arisen in connection with it; to consider any proposals for the revision of the Constitution that may be put forward, and to report what, if any, amendments of the Order in Council now in force should be made'.¹⁰¹

Amery's decision to despatch another commission, almost timed to the centennial of the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission, was momentous and had a 'galvanizing' effect on Ceylon.¹⁰²

Upon learning that a 'special commission' was to be appointed to consider revising Ceylon's Constitution, a member of the Legislative Council immediately served noticed that he intended to ask if the correspondence between Clifford and Amery would

¹⁰⁰ Barron, 'The Donoughmore Commission and Ceylon's National Identity', p. 148; Jeffries, *Ceylon*, p. 43; *Ceylon: Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution*, Cmd. 3131 (London 1928), p. 3; See, for example, Minutes by Grindle, Wilson or Ormsby-Gore, 10, 14 and 16 May 1927, respectively, CO 54/884/16. The two other members were the former Governor of the Gold Coast, Hong Kong, Natal and Queensland, Sir Mathew Nathan and the Conservative MP, Sir Geoffrey Butler. Reaction in Ceylon to both the commission and its chairman, who 'bore a very unfortunate name, "Mr. Do-No-More"' was obviously, not kind. Press clippings from *Times of Ceylon*, 25 July 1927, CO 54/886/6.

¹⁰¹ Cmd. 3131, p. 3. Cowell thought that Clifford gave 'an exaggerated picture of the political difficulties in Ceylon and suggests somewhat desperate renderings remedies for evils which are to an extent imaginary'. Next to which, the Permanent Under-Secretary scribbled, 'I entirely agree'. Minute, 27 July 1927, CO 537/692. Three days later the terms inadvertently appeared in the *Times*. Minute by Cowell, 30 July 1927, CO 54/886/6.

¹⁰² de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, pp. 517-8.

be published.¹⁰³ Meantime, the president of the CNC wrote the Colonial Secretary to see if Clifford's despatch would be published and in the interim to request that a 'copy' be forwarded to him to assist the CNC in formulating their 'policy as regards the Special Commission to be shortly appointed'. Clifford was not at 'liberty to publish his despatch', but the reply included several lengthy quotations that (in the words of K.M de Silva) 'must no doubt have given Congress politicians a great deal of encouragement'.¹⁰⁴ These extracts were subsequently published, thereby allowing the Government to sidestep increasingly pointed questions in the Legislative Council.¹⁰⁵ With said leaks seeming to endorse the CNC's 'own line of thinking', the other communities began 'making exaggerated claims and demands in the hope of influencing the commission's work and the political-constitutional structure it would recommend'. Not surprisingly this further exacerbated 'communal and political tensions in the island,' but it also 'led to a further weakening of the Congress as a political body' owing to infighting over whether constitutional reforms could be divorced from 'social and economic' conditions. Equally divisive was the call for universal (male) suffrage; the faction that prevailed

¹⁰³ *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 12 Apr. 1927, p. 8; V.S. de S. Wikramanayake to the Clerk, Legislative Council, 12 Apr. 1927, CO 54/889/8.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Perera to A.G.M. Fletcher, 12 April 1927; W.L. Murphy to Perera, 29 Apr. 1927, CO 54/889/8; de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, p. 517. Ultimately, on 15 March, the Legislative Council symbolically adopted a resolution by seventeen votes to fifteen condemning the Government for failing to publish Clifford's despatch as well as for its 'failure to assign any reason thereto[, which] impairs confidence in the Government and is against the interests of the Country'. Quoted in Stanley to Amery, 9 May 1928, CO 54/889/8.

¹⁰⁵ Enclosures in Stanley to Amery, 9 May 1928, CO 54/889/8. Clifford was given the 'option of staying on in Ceylon or taking up the Governorship of the Straits Settlements, which carries with it the High Commissionership of the Malay States'. Naturally, he chose his 'first love'. Quoted in *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 7 Apr. 1927, p. 7. It appears that the move was simply a consequence of Sir Laurence Guillemard wanting to retire rather than an effort to get Clifford out of Ceylon. Replacing Clifford as Governor of Ceylon was the then Governor of Northern Rhodesia, Sir Herbert Stanley, whose suggested successor was the Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast, Sir James Maxwell. Unsigned letter to Lord Stamfordham, 22 Feb. 1927, CO 323/978/2.

favoured restrictions—even if it meant being perceived as a ‘rigidly conservative, oligarchic body’—to ensure that only the right ‘class of person’ would be enfranchised.¹⁰⁶

It was into this fractured environment that the Commission found itself, when they landed on 13 November, having departed England on 27 October after they finished reviewing ‘copies of all despatches, open and confidential,’ and papers presented to Parliament.¹⁰⁷ Over the course of two and a half months, the Donoughmore Commission familiarised itself with ‘all sections of the community’ through unofficial tours of the island and examining 141 individuals and delegations, primarily in public sittings.¹⁰⁸ Evidence was gathered in private at the ‘request of witnesses or as in our opinion the public interested dictated’. In addition to interviewing political, religious and commercial associations, the commission received a ‘large number of letters and memoranda’ from people across the island that ‘either could not or did wish to give evidence in person’. This ‘great volume of evidence’ was later supplemented by interviews with representatives from the Ceylon Association in London. The Commission returned to London on 4 February 1928, and looked to the Colonial Office to make arrangements to print and index ‘over 13,000 folios’ of evidence as ‘early as

¹⁰⁶ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, pp. 518-20. Stanley forwarded a variety of letters, including one from the Archaeological Commissioner, a memorandum ‘prepared by the Ceylon Civil Service Association’ and even a ‘sealed envelope’ and asked for confirmation upon their reaching the Commission’s secretary. Eight days earlier, a further fifty-one ‘envelopes’ and seventeen ‘open letters’ were forward, again with a request that their delivery be acknowledged. A ‘communiqué’, which had been published in ‘early September’, detailed the procedure for those wishing to appear before the Commission and advised that all material submitted before 15 September would reach the Commissioners before they embarked for Ceylon. The material posted afterwards is likely to be ‘summaries’ rather than an individual or group’s ‘full statements’. Stanley to Amery, 28 and 20 Sept. 1927, CO 54/886/6.

¹⁰⁷ Cmd. 3131, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, this paragraph is based on Cmd. 3131, pp. 3-4; A full list of witnesses examined in Ceylon is given in Appendix II.

possible' to facilitate their writing the Report, which was not presented to Amery until the end of June.¹⁰⁹ However, printing anything more than the Report itself was deemed too expensive. As discussed above, Ceylonese history is not widely studied in the Anglophone world, which is unfortunate as the Donoughmore Report is possibly 'the most remarkable state paper on colonial affairs of the twentieth century', on par with the 1839 Durham Report. Having thoroughly studied the problems of governance in Ceylon, the Commission proposed a rather unique solution.¹¹⁰

'The most striking characteristic of the Ceylon constitution is the divorce of power from responsibility', the Commissioners declared at the outset of the section on the Legislative Council. Clifford's analysis was indeed correct. Set against the 'accepted standards of parliamentary practice', they found, Ceylon's constitution was quite simply '*reductio ad absurdum*'. The Island needed a constitution that was adapted to the 'peculiarities of its environment', namely the 'complete absence of any party system', which left Members of the Legislative Council 'free to vote as their judgment at the moment dictated' and the Executive perpetually unable 'to take stock of its position'. Elected Unofficial Members also faced the 'dilemma' of not being trained in the 'arts of government' if they refused to work with the Government, but 'if they acknowledged their co-partnership would they not be regarded as having abandoned their claim to manage their own affairs?'¹¹¹ Quite simply, given the political environment, Ceylon's existing Constitution had proven an 'unqualified failure'. However, in light of the

¹⁰⁹ Minute by P.A. Clutterbuck, 14 Feb. 1928, CO 54/889/10.

¹¹⁰ M. Wight, *The Development of the Legislative Council, 1606-1945* (London, 1946), pp. 94-5. The suggested link between the Durham and Donoughmore Reports was first made by W.K. Hancock.

¹¹¹ Cmd. 3131, pp. 18-21.

‘activities’ of the Unofficial Members in ‘Council, in the Press and in their constituencies’, it was also abundantly clear that the ‘old system of “Crown Colony Government”’ had outlived its era. The time had come for the Ceylonese to be ‘invested with a substantial measure of responsibility for the government of the Island’.¹¹² No ‘responsible quarter’ advocated stripping the Unofficial Members of their majority, thereby re-asserting the Crown Colony governance. Consequently, the only issue that needed resolving was the degree of ‘responsibility [that] may justifiably be transferred and the means by which such a transference may most advantageously be effected’.¹¹³

The Commission rejected as unsuitable the call (put forth primarily by the witnesses from the CNC) for ‘full responsible government’, regardless of Dominion status. In addition to the island’s fractured unity, no Ceylonese politician had any ministerial experience, and acceding to CNC demands would likely create an entrenched oligarchic society, given that the electorate consisted of a mere four percent of the population. Opposition to this proposal was also the only thing that united the ‘minority communities’. For a various reasons, a ‘nominated executive independent of the legislature’, a ‘mixed executive’, ‘ministries in commission’ and an ‘upper house’ were all rejected as unsuitable ‘half-way house[s]’.¹¹⁴ All of these proposed schemes suffered, to varying degrees, from the fact that they followed a ‘line which leads towards government on the traditional parliamentary model’. Overlooked by ‘many of the witnesses who gave evidence before’ the Commission was the fact that the proceedings

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 28-9.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 31-40.

of the Legislative Council offered no ‘clear cut lines of division on political, constitutional or economic issues which would form the basis of a party system suited to the constitution and forms of British Parliamentary government as that has generally been understood’. At the present juncture, not only was there ‘no immediate prospect of the appearance of a party system’ but also, if one was forced into existence, the Commission worried that ‘obligations of race or caste’ would dominate, potentially inflicting ‘untold harm on the social structure of the Island’.¹¹⁵ The Commission was guided by a desire to avoid ‘slavishly’ following:

the forms and practice of the British Model which was not designed to meet conditions similar to those obtaining in Ceylon, but to devise a scheme in consonance with local circumstances, a scheme which will be concerned not to reflect an alien philosophy but to give free play to the peculiar genius of the Ceylonese themselves and above all a scheme which may bring out about a resolute handling of social and economic questions before, as in most Western lands, they have grown too complicated to remedy.

Current ‘conditions in Ceylon’ rendered full responsible government ‘inadvisable’. Instead the Commission recommended (what was later somewhat misleadingly termed) ‘responsible government short of Dominion Status’.¹¹⁶

The Donoughmore Commission devised a system that was ‘calculated to divert attention from the academic discussion of political theory to the practical consideration of the pressing administrative problems of the day’. Ceylonese politicians would gain the power they craved, but would learn that with power comes responsibility! ‘Political

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 41-3. In light of the continued weakening of individual MPs and Parliament itself in Britain, the Commission did not want to recommend Ceylon adopt ‘a system possibility already obsolescent’. The Commission’s recommendations sought to ‘combine ... the best elements of the parliamentary system [with] features designed to escape its ascertained and acknowledged weaknesses’. It was erroneously anticipated that ‘substantial modifications’ would soon be made to Westminster, so Ceylon truly was an imperial constitutional experiment.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 44-5; Wight, *The Development of the Legislative Council*, p. 64.

progress' was to be tied to 'administrative knowledge'.¹¹⁷ The Legislative Council would be replaced by a Council of State, which consisted of 'seven committees, corresponding to seven Departments'. The elected chairmen, together with three Officers of State, who were in charge of the "reserved Departments," will form the Cabinet'.¹¹⁸ The Council served a dual role, sitting for both Legislative and Executive Sessions. The Officers of State were to have the 'full status as Ministers, but their functions will be mainly advisory'. Heads of Departments were to assume a similar advisory role. The seven committees, with their Ceylonese Ministers, would be responsible for the 'executive business of government'. The Governor would grant royal assent so long as proposed 'measures' did not 'infringe [upon] certain clearly defined principles'.¹¹⁹ The Council of State could vote no confidence in a lone Minister or the entire Board, thereby triggering a General Election; which normally would be held every four years. As bold as this proposed new 'constitutional system' was, bolder still were the proposed changes related to voter eligibility and the abolition of communal politics.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Cmd. 3131, p. 45.

¹¹⁸ 'Ceylon and Her Constitution', *United Empire*, xix (1928), p. 447. The Commission went even further than Clifford's despatch had and proposed placing Ceylonese politicians in charge of the Departments of Home Affairs, Agriculture, Local Administration, Health, Education, Public Works and Public Communications, while the Chief Secretary, formerly the Colonial Secretary, Treasurer and Attorney-General oversaw Departments 'either of Imperial importance or what may be called implementary of the decisions of the State Council'. It is worth noting that the police would be under the control of the Minister of Home Affairs, despite their role in colonial defence. Ceylon's 'skeleton defence force' meant that the island's police forces occupied a 'somewhat unique position'. Cmd. 3131, pp. 49-52.

¹¹⁹ Cmd. 3131, pp. 45-6 and 49. The Governor still retained the 'unqualified right of veto'. However, it could only be used if the 'recommendations of the Council' conflicted with the 'terms of the Royal Instructions issued' to every governor. Rather than use his right to veto, a governor would more likely exercise his 'right to refer any particular items back to the Council for further consideration'. A governor's decisions would still be subject to review by the Secretary of State. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹²⁰ 'Ceylon and Her Constitution', p. 447.

In abandoning the path to responsible government implemented in the Dominions, in favour of the administrative structure of the League of Nations and the London County Council, the Donoughmore Commission is said to have acknowledged that ‘Western parliamentary systems are irrelevant to non-Western communities’.¹²¹ The report itself suggests that such a conclusion is perhaps overstated, making reference to the ‘varieties of races and outlook’ represented within the League of Nations. One could just as easily speak of the ‘varieties of races and outlook’ in Ceylon; the 1921 Census had eleven different racial categories.¹²² Even the Sinhalese differed dramatically in outlook; the Kandyan chiefs strongly argued that the 1815 Convention entitled them to ‘self government of their own Provinces’.¹²³ Just as local circumstances in Ceylon pointed to trying standing committees, circumstances in British Honduras highlighted the absurdity of having an panoptic Crown Colony administration for a population of 30,000 to 40,000 people, ‘not a tenth [of whom] are white’. To ‘cut down a mahogany tree’ on Crown land required the approval of four officials, the ‘local Commissioner, the Finance Department, the local Colonial Secretary, and the Governor’. A ‘sham representative system’ would likely have proven even worse. What was needed to develop the colony was ‘the kind of mind that [Cecil] Rhodes applied to South Africa or

¹²¹ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, p. 521; Wight, *The Development of the Legislative Council*, p. 95. de Silva cites Wight. Butler was ‘first and foremost a historian of international relations and of modern diplomatic history’, amongst his publications was *A Handbook to the League of Nations* (1925). P. Martland, ‘Butler, Sir (George) Geoffrey Gilbert (1887-1929)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹²² Cmd. 3131, pp. 47 and 165.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 92. A position the British dismissed. Assuming for the ‘sake of argument’ that the Convention was a treaty, contemporary Kandyan politicians overlooked the fact that the ‘Kandyans broke the “Convention” by an almost general rebellion’ in 1817-8. Minute by the Government Agent, Uva Province and (according to Stanley) an ‘acknowledged expert in Kandyan history and affairs’, H.W. Codrington, 11 Aug., enclosure to Stanley to Amery, 19 Sept. 1927, CO 54/886/6.

the founders of the Canadian Pacific Railway to the North West'.¹²⁴ A similar tenacity would be needed if the 'disintegrating effect' of communal politics was to be broken.

The Commission came

unhesitatingly to the conclusion that communal representation is, as it were, a canker on the body politic, eating deeper and deeper into the vital energies of the people, breeding self-interest, suspicion and animosity, poisoning the new growth of political consciousness, and effectively preventing the development of a national or corporate spirit'.¹²⁵

It was hoped members elected on a territorial basis might proven even more attentive to the 'common weal', being able to devote their full attention to the 'general welfare of the Island' rather than being 'constantly on the watch, fearful of the antagonism or the oppressive action of the other communities'. Extending the franchise would further 'promote the union of the Ceylonese peoples'. Candidates, from minority communities, in particular, could elect members from parts of the Island on an unofficial communal basis, but elsewhere would need to reach across communal lines once constituency boundaries were realigned to have approximately '70,000-90,000' electors per seat.¹²⁶

While advancing 'strong demands for full responsible government', at first, the CNC wanted 'no extension of the present franchise'. Disqualifying women, coupled with property/income qualifications, which disenfranchised 'a large number of propertyless workers', produced a mere 204,997 electors from a population estimated to be 'in the neighbourhood of 5,125,000'. The Tamils also wanted to preserve the status quo; 'other

¹²⁴ S. Hoare, 'The Problem of Crown Colony Government in the Caribbean', *Nineteenth Century*, ix (1921), pp. 610-611.

¹²⁵ Cmd. 3131, pp. 94 and 39.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 99 and 101-2.

witnesses' wanted a more restrictive franchise!¹²⁷ The President of the Ceylon Tamil League, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, argued that women were 'needed for the quiet discharge of the most important duties at home' and extending women the vote in the current 'political life ... would lead to a destruction of domestic happiness, purity and harmony'.¹²⁸ Replying to the observation that the same argument had been used in the West, Ramanathan said: 'What suits the Western women won't suit us'.¹²⁹ 'It was obvious that the nationalist leaders of Ceylon desired to work full responsible government with an electorate from which the greater proportion of the people were necessarily excluded', the Commissioners dismissively wrote. Unless there was a dramatic extension of the franchise, the Commission 'could not recommend a further grant of responsible government'. Extending the franchise was deemed a 'more urgent [priority] than any increase of responsible government'. A wider franchise 'would expedite the passing of such social and industrial legislation as is now in force in every progressive country'. Britain's own history also suggested that enlarging the electorate lessens 'corruption and manipulation of the electorate'. Ultimately, 'political intelligence' can only be gained by experience, and suffering the consequences of poor decisions at the ballot box.¹³⁰ The Commission recommended full 'manhood suffrage', which increased the electorate to 1,200,000, but opted only for the enfranchisement of women over the age of thirty. Adopting universal suffrage would have increased the

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. 80-83. The Burghers also favoured the exclusion of women. *Times of India*, 25 Nov. 1927, p. 10.

¹²⁸ Quoted in the *Times of India*, 2 Dec. 1927, p. 12.

¹²⁹ *Times of India*, 2 Dec. 1927, p. 12.

¹³⁰ Cmd. 3131, pp. 83-4. Ceylonese 'social and industrial legislation' was condemned as 'backward' owing to the absence of relief for the destitute, 'workmen's compensation, only the most elementary of factory regulations, and no control over hours and wages in sweated industries'. Ibid., p. 83.

electorate from c.200,000 to roughly 2,175,000, and the Commission worried that the ‘magnitude’ of such a change could run the risk of ‘imperilling the success of the reforms which we have recommended by too drastic alterations in other directions’.¹³¹

In recommending that ‘complete control over the internal affairs of the Island’ be turned over to Ceylonese politicians, and that the governor’s role shift to a ‘supervisory rather than executive’ position, with ‘proportionately strengthened’ reserve powers, the Commission defied expectations.¹³² ‘Constitutional reforms of an important and far-reaching character’, declared the *Times of India*. ‘A bold and striking document’, *The Thunderer* opined; predicting that the franchise extension ‘will prove a powerful solvent of caste’.¹³³ ‘Far-reaching recommendations were anticipated,’ said the *Times of Ceylon*, but ‘few’ expected that the Commissioners would ‘go to such revolutionary lengths’. Other Ceylonese papers cautiously welcomed the Report, notwithstanding its various ‘incidental defects’. Days later Stanley telegraphed that the Report had been ‘received ... in friendly though slightly bewildered spirit’.¹³⁴ Communal leaders hesitated to pass judgment until they had thoroughly studied the Report, which suggested a constitution ‘so original in conception, so sensationally novel, so unlike any present-day model’ that it led a ‘leading Indian’ to condemn the Report as (quote) ‘a sinister document’.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 87-9. The Report states that if their recommendations were accepted the electorate would be 1,850,000. Elsewhere the figure given is 2,000,000. ‘Ceylon and Her Constitution’, p. 447. Universal manhood suffrage was established in Britain in 1918, with the passage of the Representation of the People Act that also granted women over thirty the vote. Tens year later all Britons had the vote.

¹³² Ibid., pp 149-50; Press clippings from *Times of Ceylon*, 25 July 1927, CO 54/886/6.

¹³³ *Times of India*, 18 July 1928, p. 9; *The Times*, 17 July 1928, p. 17.

¹³⁴ *Times of India*, 18 July 1928, p. 9; *The Times*, 19 July 1928, p. 15; Stanley to Amery, 23 July 1928, CO 54/892/5.

¹³⁵ *The Times*, 18 July 1928, p. 14.

Reaction from the island's political factions was mixed. The CNC lamented the fact that the Commission had not recommended a 'scheme of full responsible government' but resolved 'to accept for the present the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission subject to' several minor changes. Most notably, the CNC now advocated universal suffrage and complained that the governors reserved powers were 'too wide and comprehensive and inconsistent with the grant of any measure of responsible government'. The latter rationale was completely disingenuous as the sovereign and their representatives in the Dominions held and continue to (in theory) possess reserve powers.¹³⁶ The Sinhalese were united in their opposition to migrant Indian plantation workers being enfranchised on 'almost the same terms as for the indigenous population'. The workers might mimic the voting patterns of their employers, or seize control of constituencies in the island's central highlands; a prospect that horrified the Kandyans. Meanwhile, the minority communities were 'bitterly hostile' to the Report owing to its repudiation of communal politics and insistence on a wider franchise, which threatened to entrench the Sinhalese in power.¹³⁷ The All Ceylon Tamil Conference also passed a resolution condemning the 'extra-ordinary powers' that the Commission recommended be given to the governor.¹³⁸ Individuals, including the Vice-President of the Legislative Council, Sir James Peiris, may have spoken out against

¹³⁶ Quoted in ECM, CNCC, 31 Aug. 1928, Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, I, pp. 352-4. A third of the CNC's resolutions were tied to the strangely contentious issue of civil service salaries.

¹³⁷ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, pp. 522-4. The Commission recommended enfranchising plantation workers as a means of having their 'grievances and difficulties' addressed. British planters viewed their workers principally from an 'industrial point of view', while Ceylonese members of the Legislative Council, a 'number' of whom were planters, regarded this 'largely alien' population with little 'enthusiasm' and did not 'feel any great responsibility' for roughly 700,000 individuals. Cmd.3131, pp. 95-7.

¹³⁸ *Times of India*, 28 Aug. 1928, p. 10.

extending the franchise and that the ‘country was not ripe for responsible government’.¹³⁹ But only two groups, the Ceylon Labour Union and the arch-conservative Ceylon Unionist Association—a small group of ‘Colombo-based native pukka sahibs’ or gentlemen, who, like the old guard of the CNC, believed that Ceylon was not ready for self-government—‘supported the Donoughmore proposals unreservedly.’¹⁴⁰ But how would the Colonial Office react to a ‘unanimous’, if ‘somewhat novel’, Report on what had been a ‘very interesting and important experience’?¹⁴¹

A week after the simultaneous publication of the Report, the Colonial Office thanked Donoughmore and the other Commissioners for their work, writing that the Report was an ‘exceedingly interesting document’ but that it was ‘too early to appreciate the extent to which these novel proposals will be welcomed or criticized in Ceylon’.¹⁴² The Colonial Office invited Stanley to despatch by mail his thoughts on the Report once he could judge public opinion. Metropole and periphery awaited the other’s ‘views’.¹⁴³ In the interim, the Legislative Council passed a motion requesting that Amery wait until he received the Council’s ‘report of proceedings’, which were scheduled to end no later than 1 December, before making an ‘official pronouncement’ or taking ‘any action’ with regard to the Donoughmore Report. Debate on the Report began in late October and, not

¹³⁹ *Times of India*, 14 Jan. 1928, p. 13. Peiris’ testimony before the Commission was denounced by ‘Congress papers and Congress organisations’, who ‘demand[ed] his resignation from the legislature’! *Times of India*, 18 Jan. 1928, p. 13.

¹⁴⁰ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, pp. 524 and 520.

¹⁴¹ Earl of Donoughmore to Amery, 26 June 1928, CO 54/892/5.

¹⁴² Draft letter to Donoughmore, 23 July 1928, CO 54/892/5.

¹⁴³ Draft telegram to Stanley, 28 July 1928, CO 54/892/5. Also see Stanley to Amery, 23 July 1928, CO 54/892/5.

surprisingly, the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council quickly rejected key parts of the Report; including a motion—carried twenty-one to three—on the ‘unnecessary and retrograde’ proposed enhancement of the governor’s power to withhold royal assent. The governors reserve powers were found by a margin of twenty to four to be ‘too wide and are incongruous in a scheme purporting to grant a measure of responsibility’. On the more contentious issue of the degree of self-government the Ceylonese ‘people’ sought, the margin fell to sixteen to eleven. But it was decided that Ceylon was indeed ‘fit for responsible self-government of the Dominion type’. This was a questionable proposition considering that the Unofficial Members wanted the governor to ‘occupy a position similar to what is obtaining in self-governing Dominions in respect of those departments placed in charge of ministers’.¹⁴⁴ For whatever reason(s), only eighteen out of thirty-seven Unofficial Members voted on this motion, which was carried ten to eight.¹⁴⁵ Commenting on the ‘first part of the debate in the Council’, as summarised by the governor, a Colonial Office official minuted that demands for ‘full responsible government’ were ‘of course impossible’. One is left to wonder if the dismissive attitude was the thinking of what colonial nationalists would proclaim as the reactionary Colonial Office, or if said official actually considered the motion and quite rightly concluded that a quasi-Governor General overseeing the work of in essence Cabinet Ministers was ‘of course impossible’. In London, it seemed ‘useless to discuss

¹⁴⁴ Stanley to Amery, 19 and 26 Oct. 1928, CO 54/892/5. Also see J. Darwin, ‘Durham in the East? India and the Idea of Responsible Government, 1858-1939’, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, xxv (1990), pp. 144-61. More work is needed, but Ceylon seems to conform to Darwin’s suggestion that ‘constitutional experimentation became more and more bizarre’ in the years after 1914. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁴⁵ Stanley to Amery, 26 Oct. 1928, CO 54/892/5. *The Times* reported that nineteen members declined to vote on this motion, but gave no explanation, 2 Nov. 1928, p. 13.

the next step in the heat of the moment and on telegraphic summaries of the debate'.¹⁴⁶ It was predicted that the Legislative Council's debate on the Report would 'last throughout November, and possibly longer'. A lengthy debate was anticipated partly by the fact that only 'approximately one-third' of the 'over 30 motions' had been disposed of, but also by the ongoing power struggle. The CNC was trying to force its views onto the Legislature; including, for example, a completely transparent attempt to 'disfranchise practically every Tamil (Hindu) estate labourer in the country'. With Official Members only clarifying 'misunderstandings', it fell (in this case) to the Unofficial European and Indian Members to provide the 'strongest opposition'. One has the sense that alliances/abstentions shifted depending on the issue at hand.¹⁴⁷ For example, the combined votes of the Sinhalese and Europeans alone were sufficient to defeat a motion calling for the preservation of communal representation. Even if the Tamils had voted as a block, the motion would presumably been defeated fifteen to fourteen rather than the actual result of seventeen to fourteen. It was these debates, not the Donoughmore Report, which would rouse the Secretary of State to action. 'Bombshell for Ceylon', screamed the *Times of India*.¹⁴⁸

Within days of receiving a telegram summarising the first group of resolutions under discussion, Amery despatched a 'Confidential telegram' to Stanley outlining his

¹⁴⁶ Minute by Cowell, 29 Oct. 1928, CO 54/892/5. Two days before this minute was typed, Stanley despatched another telegram advising that it seemed probable that 'decisions recorded need be regarded as irrevocable on all points'. Stanley to Amery, 27 Oct. 1928, CO 54/892/5. Printed copies of the resolutions passed did not reach the Colonial Office until 12 Nov. 1928. Enclosure II to Stanley to Amery, 22 Oct. 1928, CO 54/892/5.

¹⁴⁷ *The Times*, 2 Nov. 1928, p. 13. On a related note, the CNC was also 'demanding representation equivalent to that of the employers on the [presumably tripartite] Labour Advisory Board'.

¹⁴⁸ Stanley to Amery, 28 Nov. 1928, CO 54/892/5; *Times of India*, 17 Nov. 1928, p. 13.

‘observations’ at the end of October. The contents of the telegram remained secret as the ‘Franchise group of motions’ were already under discussion and the governor rightly wanted to ‘avoid any semblance of intervention in that discussion’. Amery bluntly wrote that ‘the recommendations must be regarded as a whole ... I should not be willing to accept any amendments in principle which would destroy the balance of the scheme’. If a ‘substantial majority of the inhabitants of Ceylon’ were unwilling to ‘agree to a trial of the scheme as a whole’, Amery warned that he ‘might feel compelled to re-open the consideration of the whole question of any constitutional change’. Furthermore, in a warning aimed directly at the CNC, Amery advised that there was ‘no hope’ that the rejection of the Donoughmore Report would ‘expedite the possibility’ of the granting of ‘complete responsible Government’.¹⁴⁹ To soften the blow caused by Amery’s ‘fiat’, the Colonial Secretary announced in closing that Stanley was open to private meetings with Unofficial Members either in a ‘body’ or via a ‘small but representative delegation’ to discuss (what the *Times of India* deemed) ‘an entirely new situation’.¹⁵⁰ Attacking ‘every proposal’ was not—contrary to what an unnamed Unofficial Member thought—the best means of proving one’s ‘fitness for self-government’. As previously discussed, a quest for ‘publicity’ was probably also at play. On the other hand, a ‘strong body of opinion’ pressed for reform, but were ‘nervous’ about the behaviour of Sinhalese Ministers and could live with the ‘present constitution’ and its system of communal representation.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Stanley to Amery, 16 Nov. 1928, CO 54/892/5; Amery quoted in A.G.M. Fletcher, ‘Message of His Excellency the Governor to the Legislative Council in Connection with the Report of the Special Commission on the Reform of the Constitution of Ceylon’, 14 Nov. 1928, enclosure to Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ *Times of India*, 17 Nov. 1928, p. 13; Fletcher, ‘Message of His Excellency’.

¹⁵¹ Minute by Cowell, 21 Nov. 1928, CO 54/892/5.

Two weeks after Amery's comments were read out, 'several members ... mainly or entirely' from the CNC indicated a desire to discuss ways of devising a means of avoiding the 'complete rejection of scheme'. The Legislative Council finished voting on the remaining motions and then 'adjourned till the middle of January'. Little, however, appears to have come of said desire; though Stanley did learn that the 'real position' of the Unofficial Members differed from that which could be inferred 'from recorded results of the debate'.¹⁵²

Once again, a Secretary of State for the Colonies was awaiting receipt of a governor's report, in this case for 'comments on the ^{full} proceedings in the Legislative Council'—an answer again repeated in the House of Commons. Amery expected at the end of January 1929 that he would receive Stanley's despatch within 'two or three weeks'. Two months later, he informed the House that it still had not arrived.¹⁵³ Anyone who read the Donoughmore Report 'with any care will realise that it would be asking too much to expect a decision to be taken within a week or so of publication', was the suggested answer to a parliamentary question asked at the end of July 1928. Completion was delayed further by Stanley's desire to defend the 'local Government' from 'criticisms' expressed in the Report, most of which the Colonial Secretary thought stemmed from the fact that Clifford 'had no opportunity to explain his policy to the Commissioners'.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Stanley to Amery, 28 Nov. and 3 Dec. 1928, CO 54/892/5.

¹⁵³ Draft telegram to Stanley, 13 Dec. 1928, CO 54/892/5; *Hansard*, ccxxiv. 577; *Hansard*, ccxxvi. 2046. Stanley had hoped to finish his report by the end of 1928. Stanley to Amery, 14 Dec. 1928, CO 54/892/5.

¹⁵⁴ Minute by Cowell, 20 July 1928, CO 54/892/8; Stanley to the Colonial Office, 29 Aug. 1928 and A.G.M. Fletcher, 'Memorandum upon certain passages in the Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution', 28 Aug. 1928, CO 54/892/10. To the Colonial Office, Clifford had 'deliberate[ly] and

By February 1929, with the Department being 'pressed in the House of Commons', Clifford confessed that he still had not finished his despatch 'partly owing to pressure other work but mainly owing to grave doubts which I feel increasingly as to the wisdom of sudden change from present franchise to manhood suffrage'. He pledged to do his 'utmost' to despatch his report by mid-March. Despite rumours that members of the Round Table group were organising in 'opposition to the Donoughmore scheme', the Colonial Office could do 'nothing ... but ... wait'. 'We cannot "rush" the Governor in a matter of such importance', minuted an official.¹⁵⁵ Great importance was attached to Stanley's view as the Legislative Council had passed 'numerous' resolutions that were in 'many cases contradictory and showed that there was obviously a considerable divergence of opinion in regard to certain proposals of the Commission'. In addition to his recommendations as to what should be done, as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, the Earl of Plymouth explained to their lordships, in mid-to-late April, the Colonial Office depended on Stanley to indicate 'on which side as a whole the balance of opinion in Ceylon lies'. However, even if Stanley sent his report in the 'immediate future', the Colonial Office was unable to 'give early consideration to question of action to be taken' due to the 1929 General Election.¹⁵⁶ The Tories' pre-emptive attempt to reform Ceylon's constitution had backfired. Stanley's report would

public[ly]' abdicated 'all power' and the memorandum was a retrospective defence of a 'deep-laid Machiavellian policy' that had failed to convince the Ceylonese that they were not 'yet qualified for full responsible government'. A more senior member of the Colonial Office wondered if they were being 'a bit hard' on local officials given that the 'existing Ceylon Constitution is similar to that of Jamaica where it was almost impossible to get anything done' Minutes by Cowell and Wilson, 13 and 20 Nov. 1928, respectively, CO 54\892\10.

¹⁵⁵ Stanley to Amery and minute, 24 and 25 Feb. 1929, respectively, CO 54\894\10. Initials on the minute are undecipherable.

¹⁵⁶ *Hansard*, lxxiv. 134-5; Draft telegram to Stanley, 15 May 1929, CO 54\894\10.

be received by a new Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Fabian socialist, Sidney Webb, now Lord Passfield.

Fifty copies of a 'lengthy' report were due to arrive on 29 June. Stanley recommended extending the life of the Legislative Council until the end of 1929 as he could not 'guarantee acceptance [of the Report] after the [scheduled] general election'. If the Unofficial Members accepted the 'offer', Stanley 'recommended a further extension to the end of 1930 as arrangements preparatory to the commencement of the new Constitution would take much time'. Amery disregarded the former and opted for the latter course, thereby securing sufficient time to draft a new constitution even in the event of a 'prolonged interchange of correspondence with Ceylon'.¹⁵⁷ A decision Stanley mildly objected to, as his intention was to provide 'reasonable terms within which the present Council would have to come to [a] decision'. The Governor stressed the importance of making the Unofficial Members solely responsible for the 'acceptance or rejection' of any further constitution reform, thereby ensuring that London could not be held liable if the 'Scheme' failed. If the Ceylonese believed Amery would implement the 'Scheme' regardless of how they voted, Stanley warned that, some of the Unofficial Members 'might be tempted to reject ostensibly on the ground of disbelief in the committee system and thus retain free hand to clamour for full responsible Government without serious effort to cooperate in trying to make Donoughmore Scheme work'.¹⁵⁸ Stanley was insistent on the importance of either the 'Legislative Council or the people',

¹⁵⁷ 'Original decode of a telegram from the Governor, Ceylon', 14 June 1929; Draft telegram to Stanley, 25 June 1929; Minute by Cowell, 17 June 1929, CO 54\894\10.

¹⁵⁸ Stanley to Passfield, 27 June and 5 July 1929, CO 54\894\10.

via a referendum, on 'whatever franchise' Passfield devised, expressing 'some explicit signification of acceptance' of the Scheme. Otherwise, he worried, 'wreck tactics' stood a 'good chance of success'. The Colonial Office spent the latter half of the summer studying Stanley's despatch.¹⁵⁹

Crafted with an eye to the 'contingency of its publication', Stanley concluded that the Donoughmore Constitution was now acceptable to the 'present Legislative Council'. However, he also cautioned that the 'Unofficial Members are *varium et mutabile genus*'. Again the governor warned against forcing the Scheme onto Ceylon, such a policy he said would be a 'really disastrous mistake'. Even if the present Council rejected the Scheme, it would likely be acceptable to the 'next Council'. Ceylonese politicians, he reasoned, had to hear the 'unenfranchised thousands ... knocking at the gate'.¹⁶⁰ But the 'question of the franchise' also proved the 'most controversial'. In addition to local divisions, Stanley personally had 'certain doubts' over practically every proposal advanced by both the Report and its critics. But, like the Commission, he favoured 'a real advance in self-government'. The adjustment to the 'new order of things' had no doubt been difficult for everyone, but his experience of 'some twenty-one months' convinced Stanley that the 'growing disposition towards cooperation' should be encouraged. Where the Commissioners saw an 'unqualified failure', Stanley thought the present Constitution had proven 'a qualified success'. However, advised the governor, the 'present Constitution is not one under which either the Government or the Unofficial Members could hope to do themselves the fullest justice'. Nevertheless, Stanley

¹⁵⁹ Stanley to Passfield, 18 July 1929, CO 54\894\10; *Hansard*, ccxxx. 1282.

¹⁶⁰ Stanley to Passfield, 12 June 1929, CO 54\894\10.

‘experienced much difficulty’ and expended considerable prose in explaining his decision to recommend ‘an experiment which, if it proved successful, might be expected to remove many of the difficulties arising out of our local conditions’. Success was not guaranteed, and the early years he predicted would prove particularly difficult owing to minimal ‘fully applicable precedents to guide us’. Failure, therefore, would not ‘necessarily imply unfitness for self-government’. Again, Stanley was insistent that the Unofficial Members must decide for themselves whether or not to accept a revised constitution, and suggested informing the Members that any attempt to attach a ‘qualification or condition’ would be regarded by the Secretary of State ‘as equivalent to [a] rejection of the offer’. He recognised that such methods were ‘arbitrary,’ but would produce a ‘definite’ result.¹⁶¹

Speaking at Chilaw, a few weeks after submitting his observations, Stanley told those assembled that, if adopted, the Donoughmore Constitution ‘would give the future legislature of Ceylon a very much larger and wider share in the control of the administration and a more direct share than was enjoyed by the legislature of any other country he had known’, including the ‘House of Commons’ and the ‘Parliament of any self-governing Dominion’.¹⁶² But, as the island awaited Passfield’s decision, he also asked that ‘we should possess our souls in patience a little longer’ Although his conclusions differed on ‘minor points’, Stanley’s suggested course of action had been

¹⁶¹ ‘Despatch from the Governor of Ceylon to the Secretary of State for the Colonies’, 2 June 1929, CO 54\894\10, printed in *Ceylon: Correspondence Regarding the Constitution of Ceylon*, Cmd. 3419 (London, 1929).

¹⁶² *The Times of India*, 21 June 1929, p. 10. Stanley began his career in the Colonial Service as private secretary to the first governor-general of the Union of South Africa and spent the bulk of his career in southern Africa. J. Darwin, ‘Stanley, Sir Herbert James (1872–1955)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

‘anticipated’ by the Colonial Office. Having published the Donoughmore Report, masterly inactivity was off the table. To reject further constitutional reforms in favour of the status quo would inevitably invite ‘continued agitation and increasing difficulty in carrying on the Government’. Implementing the Scheme was therefore almost inescapable, so the ‘most promising course’ was to ‘put it into operation and leave it to be discovered from experience what detailed changes are desired.’¹⁶³ Such a course of action was regarded by the Permanent-Under-Secretary as ‘leaping in the dark’, with the Scheme being seen ‘more as an experiment than anything else’. But Wilson, like everyone else, did not know what else to do. His personal dislike of the Donoughmore Constitution notwithstanding, Wilson recommended that, if Passfield decided on this course, he should seek Cabinet approval ‘before you make any public announcement’.¹⁶⁴

In marked contrast to India, where the subject of constitutional reform proved (as will be seen in Section 3.2) highly controversial, Ceylon’s new constitution was approved following a single Cabinet meeting.¹⁶⁵ ‘Little interest taken in England’, was the subheading almost a decade earlier. Nothing had changed. Cabinet’s approval of Passfield’s decision to place a modified version of the Donoughmore Constitution—there were changes in the ‘franchise and other matters’—before the Legislative Council of Ceylon was presumably nothing more than a formality.¹⁶⁶ But would the Unofficial

¹⁶³ Quoted in *The Times of India*, 21 June 1929, p. 10; Minute by Cowell, 9 July 1929, CO 54\894\10.

¹⁶⁴ Minute by Wilson, 9 Aug. 1929, CO 54\894\10.

¹⁶⁵ Cabinet Conclusions, 25 Sept. 1929, CAB 23/61/35. Also see ‘Ceylon Constitution’, circulated by Lord Passfield, 31 Aug. 1929, CAB 24/205/CP 240, which contained a brief two and half page summary and two appendixes, Stanley’s despatch and a draft reply.

¹⁶⁶ *The Times of India*, 25 Aug. 1920, p. 9; Cabinet Conclusions, 25 Sept. 1929. The changes, which were made to either win a ‘greater measure of acceptance for the scheme as a whole or to improve the prospects

Members accept the invitation to (paraphrase the *Times of Ceylon*) escape the trap they had created for themselves by examining the Donoughmore Report in a ‘sectional and piecemeal’ manner?¹⁶⁷

Passfield’s despatch, unlike the Donoughmore Report, did not come as a complete surprise. Speculation, following a story in the *Daily Mail*, suggested that an ‘important despatch ... is now *en route* to the Governor of Ceylon’.¹⁶⁸ The conventional wisdom is that the Scheme was ‘remarkably progressive’ for its era, but ‘satisfied none of the important political groups in Sri Lanka’.¹⁶⁹ Passfield’s despatch, which altered the voting age of women from thirty to twenty-one, but otherwise approved the Donoughmore Scheme, was ‘published at midnight’, 22 October 1929. Passfield’s amendments won the general approval of ‘the London morning press’. The Ceylonese press, with the exception of the *Daily News*, which was the ‘most powerful national paper in the island’, favoured accepting the offer of further constitutional reform.¹⁷⁰

‘Taken as a whole, Lord Passfield’s despatch does not send Ceylon speeding deliriously

of its satisfactory working’, are detailed in Passfield’s response to Stanley’s despatch. ‘Despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor of Ceylon’, 10 Oct. 1929, Cmd. 3419.

¹⁶⁷ *The Times of India*, 1 Nov. 1929, p. 6.

¹⁶⁸ *The Times of India*, 23 Oct. 1929, p. 12; italics in original.

¹⁶⁹ Ashton, ‘Ceylon’, p. 455; de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, p. 522. Ashton erroneously suggests that the adoption of the Scheme ‘owed much to the fact that a Labour government was in office in Britain’. Yet, in invoking the comparison to the 1935 Government of India Act, he inadvertently highlights the fact that the Tories did not object to the policy pursued in Ceylon, which is not surprisingly as they initiated it. A point recognised by contemporaries, as Wedgwood told the House of Commons: ‘We have given Dominion Home Rule to Ceylon. To all intents and purposes the Donoughmore Commission, a Conservative Commission, gave universal franchise and self-government to the Ceylon[ese] people.’ *Hansard*, ccixl. 845. Amery had been informed in late January 1929 that the Labour Party supported the Donoughmore scheme, ‘subject, perhaps, to minor modifications’. *The Times of India*, 26 Jan. 1929, p. 14.

¹⁷⁰ *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 2 and 8 Nov. 1929, pp. 11 and 20, respectively. The National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, whose annual council meeting drew delegates ‘from all over Great Britain’, welcomed the ‘formation of a Woman’s Suffrage Society’ in Ceylon and had lobbied for Ceylonese women to get suffrage on equal terms with men. Parliamentary and Organising Secretary, Mrs Horton to Amery, 29 Mar. 1928, CO 54\889\8.

towards Swaraj’, was the hurried conclusion of the *Daily News*. In fact, the Scheme was denounced as a ‘retrograde step’.¹⁷¹ However, ‘representative women’ in Colombo welcomed their ‘great victory’, while the President of the Labour Union called Passfield’s despatch a ‘masterly document’ that moved Ceylon a ‘step’ closer to ‘democratic government’. Ceylon was on the verge of becoming the ‘first British colony in Asia—and indeed the first Asian country—to enjoy the privilege of universal suffrage’.¹⁷²

The *Daily News*, however, was not the only one unimpressed. On the evening of 1 November, some of the members of the Executive Committee of the CNC met. Divisions were exposed by the opening discussions, with six individuals named as being in favour of acceptance and five favouring rejection out of the almost thirty people assembled. A ‘lengthy discussion’ ensued.¹⁷³ Ultimately, it was resolved that ‘the Executive Committee of the Ceylon National Congress is of [the] opinion that the Legislative Council should reject the proposed scheme of reforms with a view of [sic] obtaining the wishes of the electorates’. Following an amendment, the Executive Committee was now ‘of [the] opinion that the Legislative Council should reject the Donoughmore Scheme of Reforms’.¹⁷⁴

Whatever happened to the wishes of the electorates? Rejection was ‘fast gaining in popularity’, in part because of Lord Irwin’s ‘announcement on the subject of Dominion Status for India’ and the fact that ‘British statesmen’ had said that Ceylon was

¹⁷¹ Quoted in *The Straits Times*, 8 Nov. 1929, p. 20. The article is dated Colombo, Oct. 23.

¹⁷² *The Times*, 31 Oct. 1929, p. 13; de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, p. 522.

¹⁷³ ECM, CNC, 1 Nov. 1929, Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, I, p. 376.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.* pp. 376-7.

'better fitted for self-government than India'. Left unsaid, was that 'Dominion Status' was the ultimate goal, not the next step.¹⁷⁵ It was 'beyond reasonable doubt', said *The Straits Times*, that the Legislative Council would reject the Donoughmore Constitution. If an election were held, it would be on the existing roll and would 'in all likelihood' produce a similar Council in 'personnel and political outlook', who would 'unhesitatingly' again decline Passfield's offer. The 'more closely' the Unofficial Members studied the Donoughmore Constitution, 'the more they have feared it'. In summary, said the editorial, 'the Donoughmore scheme is doomed'. As far as *The Straits Times*' correspondent could determine, 'those who opposed the Commissioner's recommendations are unchanged by the proposed modifications'. A week later, the Unofficial Members 'almost unanimously' were in favour of rejecting Passfield's offer. To their critics, such as the President of the Trade Union Congress, the Unofficial Members were 'aristocratic money-bags', who 'libels the masses and glories in doing so'. They were afraid that 'universal suffrage' would 'demolish the strongly-fortified citadels of aristocracy and plutocracy'.¹⁷⁶ Back in London, it was still impossible to 'anticipate' how Passfield's despatch would be received. Cracks, however, were developing amongst the Unofficial Members. At a meeting of the Welikada Mahajana Sabha, presumably a nationalist organisation based in a Colombo suburb, a resolution was passed in favour of accepting the Donoughmore Constitution. Repeating a point made by the Trade Union Congress, the Legislative Council reflected the views of a

¹⁷⁵ *The Straits Times* 19 Nov. 1929, p. 8. The article is dated 'Colombo, Nov. 3'.

¹⁷⁶ *The Straits Times*, 8 Nov. 1929, pp. 12 and 20; Quoted in *The Straits Times*, 15 Nov. 1929, p. 19.

mere ‘four per cent of the population, and if the reforms were not accepted they would be doing injustice to their countrymen and women’.¹⁷⁷

It seems that the Donoughmore Constitution was the main, if not only, subject of discussion for the entire island. By late November, ‘opinion now seems to be for the acceptance of the scheme and giving it a trial’. Even more ‘remarkable’ is that a number of Unofficial Members, including Sinhalese Congress members, ‘who vehemently opposed the scheme last year, both in the Press and in the Legislative Council when it came up for discussion there, are now for it’. Others refused to budge from their initial views. Undecided Unofficial Members were consulting their constituents, with colourful meetings ‘being held in various parts of the Island’. ‘Ceylon was to be vivisected for the benefit of England’, warned one politician. A number of the members of the Executive Committee of the CNC changed their position in the course of a week.¹⁷⁸ On the eve of the debate that would provide a ‘definite decision’, the Unofficial Members were thought to be ‘almost equally for and against the reforms’. A majority of the Sinhalese favoured acceptance, while everyone else—save the four European members—wanted to reject the Donoughmore Constitution. A ‘very close’ vote was expected.¹⁷⁹

The change in attitude amongst the Sinhalese politicians appears to have been brought about by the people, whose ‘interest [was] raised to fever pitch’.¹⁸⁰ ‘Of 53 public meetings held in 16 districts, 36 passed resolutions in favour of the reforms, 13

¹⁷⁷ *Hansard*, ccxxxi. 2062W; *The Times of India*, 19 Nov. 1929, p. 12.

¹⁷⁸ *The Straits Times*, 3 Dec. 1929, p. 8.

¹⁷⁹ *The Times*, 5 Dec. 1929, p. 13.

¹⁸⁰ *The Straits Times*, 18 Dec. 1929, p. 6. The article is dated ‘Colombo, Dec. 8’.

were opposed to them, and four passed no resolution', *The Times* reported.¹⁸¹ Ceylonese politics was experiencing such a profound upheaval that the *Daily News* had taken to calling the CNC a 'pious fraud'.¹⁸² A day later five 'prominent' members of the CNC's Executive Committee resigned, charging that the decision to now accept the reforms 'destroyed confidence in Congress and have rendered ineffective the greatest progressive political force in the country'. However, according to the chairman of the CNC's Executive Committee, the resolution against the reforms that was passed 1 November was simply an 'expression of opinion ... [that] had no binding force'. What a convenient ruling. A variety of arguments were put forth by those in favour of the reforms, including the 'present Constitution is detrimental to the best interests of the country'.¹⁸³ Others stressed the 'grant of universal suffrage' and that, if the Legislative Council rejected it, Ceylon 'would have no friends in the House of Commons'.¹⁸⁴ After five days of debate, the Unofficial Members divided nineteen to seventeen, as predicted. However, the amended Donoughmore Constitution was unexpectedly adopted. Though a decision generally welcomed by the Ceylonese Press, the *Daily News* remained opposed and called the verdict a 'mistake'. All journals, however, recognised that a 'new era' had begun.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ *The Times*, 10 Dec. 1929, p. 15.

¹⁸² Quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Quoted in *The Times*, 11 Dec. 1929, p. 13; ECM, CNC, 10 Dec. 1929, Roberts, ed., *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress*, I, pp. 378-9.

¹⁸⁴ *The Times of India*, 12 Dec. 1929, p. 11.

¹⁸⁵ *The Guardian*, 13 Dec. 1929, p. 12; *The Times of India*, 14 Dec. 1929, p. 20. It should be noted that less than a week after the verdict 'extremists' suggested that the Tamils should 'separate', but 'solid support' was absent. Meanwhile, the Kandyan National Assembly opted to telegraph George V and Passfield to protest the Legislative Council's adoption of the Donoughmore scheme, which 'was not in accord with the Sinhalese Magna Carta of 1815'. *The Times*, 20 Dec. 1929, p. 14.

The life of the Legislative Council was extended again to give the Colonial Office time to draft the ‘necessary Order in Council to give effect to the [Donoughmore] proposals’. Draft copies, ‘together with copies of draft letters Patent and Royal Instructions’, were despatched to Ceylon in February 1930. As was the custom, Stanley was invited to submit ‘any observations which you wish to offer on these drafts’. Consequently, the Donoughmore Constitution would not come into effect until the spring of 1931.¹⁸⁶ From the outset, doubts existed over the wisdom of the Donoughmore Report’s approach to ‘combining real power with real responsibility’. Vigorous criticism was expressed by the Unofficial Members, in and out of the Legislative Council, while, as was seen, the Colonial Office was sceptical. ‘While attack on two fronts may not be exactly pleasant,’ wrote an American observer, ‘it seems to show that the kernel of the report is sound’.¹⁸⁷

Further constitutional reform had come about in part by the increasing tendency of the Unofficial Members to work with the colonial regime. During this same period, Ceylon experienced a ‘few years of superabundant public revenue, and the Government was thus enabled to undertake work and to meet wishes for which provision could not have been made in times of financial stringency’.¹⁸⁸ Unfortunately, by the time the first government, under the new Constitution, took office Ceylon was ‘in the throes of the Great Depression’. Once again, the crash of the American Stock Market adversely affected another part of the British Empire. It is, of course, impossible to say whether the

¹⁸⁶ *Hansard*, ccxxxii. 1389; Passfield to Stanley, 6 Feb. 1930, CO 54\894\10; *Orders in Council, Letters Patent, and Royal Instructions of 1931 Relating to the Constitution of Ceylon*, Cmd. 3862 (London, 1931).

¹⁸⁷ See, for example, ‘Ceylon and Her Constitution’, p. 447 or ‘The Ceylon Experiment’, p. 5; R. Buell, ‘Two Lessons in Colonial Rule’, *Foreign Affairs*, vii (1928/1929), p. 453.

¹⁸⁸ Cmd. 3419.

Donoughmore Constitution would have proven successful if the Depression never occurred. Odds are not great as Ceylon experienced two ‘cataclysmic’ events in close succession. On top of the economic problems, to say nothing of the ‘unusually severe drought in most of the island’, a malaria epidemic ‘devastated the Kurunegala and Kegalla districts’. These twin catastrophes ‘baffled conventional wisdom of the day and the normal machinery of government in coping with the mass of misery they created’.¹⁸⁹ In the case of Ceylon, a ‘Crown Colonial administration’ was clearly outdated. ‘[D]emocracy with autocratic reservations’ was an attempt at moving away from the *Exclusionary Empire* of the past.¹⁹⁰ It was an experiment that sought to give the Ceylonese people control over their daily lives, as evident by the departments that were handed over, while still preserving (in the words of Richard Hope and a ‘high bred Sinhalese’) the ‘magnificent fabric of Empire’ and a ‘country for a gentleman to live in’, respectively.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, p. 532.

¹⁹⁰ ‘Ceylon’s Seven’, p. 297; J. Greene, ed., *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900* (Cambridge, 2010).

¹⁹¹ ‘The Empire and its Responsibilities’, p. 629; Quoted in Tom Villiers to Dr. T. Drummond Shiels, 16 Nov. 1928, CO 54\892\5.

3.2 ‘Congress must disabuse their minds of any idea that they were going to be accepted as speaking for all India’: The viceroyalty of Lord Irwin, 1926-1931

Wedgewood Benn was another statesman who took a sympathetic interest in Indian affairs. As Secretary of State in the Labour Government, he had tried to impress upon the Viceroy the necessity of reconciliation with the Congress. The die-hard British bureaucrats, however, foiled all his efforts. – From the ‘British Friends of India’ section of the Indian National Congress’ [website](#).

By the mid-to-late nineteenth century, British India had not only recovered from the trauma of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny and the unexpected peasant insurrections of the 1860s and 1870s, but had seen its bureaucracy professionalised and was moving towards defining distinctive roles for the executive and legislative branches of government.¹ Outside of the urban intelligentsia, a group of whom established themselves at a meeting in Bombay in late 1885 as the Indian National Congress (INC), the overwhelming majority of people in the subcontinent accepted the British presence as an *idée fixe*. However, the authority of the Raj at the village level was far from absolute. The British were too dependent upon native intermediaries—sepoys, clerks, lawyers, landowners, princes and the Muslim elite of northern India—ever to introduce reforms that would have radically altered the status quo. In fact, throughout its first thirty years, the primarily bourgeois INC worked to strengthen ties between Britain and India, lobbying

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, this paragraph is based on I. Copland, *India 1885-1947: The Unmaking of an Empire* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 3-45. All subsequent explanatory footnotes in this chapter, unless sourced, draw upon this work. The title quotation is from Lord Irwin to Wedgewood Benn, 31 Oct. 1929, British Library, Halifax MS, MSS Eur, C152/5/no. 31.

for reforms that would weld the (lower) middle classes to the Raj. Decades of relative calm gave rise to an ‘illusion of permanence’.²

The significance of the INC initially went largely unnoticed—similar organisations after all had come and gone—but its founding marked the advent of a new era in the relationship between the peoples of India and the Raj. Initially, however, the annual December meetings of the INC were nothing more than entertainment for the moneyed professionals that constituted the bulk of Congress’ early members. Reflecting on his attendance at the 1912 ‘Christmas *tamasha*’, one influential Congressman declared from his gaol cell that these meetings were ‘very much an English-knowing upper class affair where morning coats and well-pressed trousers were greatly in evidence’. It all sounds so ornamental.³ However, as the years past, the conclusion that the INC would one day contest British rule itself became inescapable. This is not to say that the British did not try. Their late nineteenth century policy of retreating to the club or, in the summer, hill stations, however, was unsustainable. Nevertheless, in the years before 1914, notwithstanding the lone endorsement of *swaraj* or self rule at the 1906

² F. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, 1967). The first three centuries of historiography on the English East India Company, the era of Crown rule and the Raj’s twilight is the subject of essays by Robert Frykenberg, Tapan Raychaudhuri and Robin Moore, respectively, in W.R. Louis and R. Winks, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, V: Historiography* (Oxford, 1999). Also see the foreword to D. Low, *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917-47* (2nd edn., New Delhi, 2004) for a brief history of the ‘Cambridge’ and ‘Canberra’ schools of thought on elite Indian nationalism, which the current chapter rests on. Subsequent developments in the historiography of the Company can be followed in P. Stern, ‘History and Historiography of the English East India Company: Past, Present, and Future!’, *History Compass*, vii (2009), pp. 1146-80. Scholarship pertinent to this chapter is summarised in A. Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act: Last Act of the Raj* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 1-5. Muldoon even suggests that there is perhaps ‘too much’ scholarship on the Raj’s final decades to work with!

³ Quoted in Copland, *India 1885-1947*, p. 41; J. Nehru, *An Autobiography; with Musings on Recent Events in India* (London, 1936), p. 27; D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London, 2001). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *tamasha* as a ‘show, display, public function’.

Calcutta Congress, radicals made little headway. London still had room to manoeuvre, but the educated Bengali was henceforth perceived as a threat to the continuance of British rule in India (and by implication Britain's status as a world power).⁴ Regardless of the degree to which Edwardians were fearful over the future of the empire, London needed to alter its strategies of governing this 'new' India. After two partial missteps, which are detailed at the outset of this chapter, a conventional yet ultimately radical viceroy would be despatched, who almost succeeded in transforming 'Britain's vision of the Raj'.⁵ Britons traditionally saw India as being intrinsically 'different' from the rest of their imperium. In proposing that the Morley-Minto and Montagu-Chelmsford reforms be taken to their logical conclusion, Lord Irwin sought to steer India onto a path analogous to that on which the Dominions had recently embarked. In contrast to previous scholarship that cast doubt over whether such a policy could ever have been endorsed by Westminster in light of ever greater campaigns of civil disobedience, this chapter argues that Irwin was successful in calling Congress' bluff that they alone spoke for India, but that his plans were fatally derailed by the 1929 crash of the American Stock market.⁶

⁴ T. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 160-171. On the importance of India to Britain, see G. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, 2 vols. (New York, 1966; originally published London, 1892), p. 4 and Lord Curzon to Arthur Balfour, 31 March 1901, quoted in S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 224-5.

⁵ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 223.

⁶ J.F.C. Watts, 'The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin, 1926-31: With Special Reference to the Political and Constitutional Developments' (Univ. of Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1973), p. 345-7. Such an argument is at odds with those that see a link between Irwin's policies and the process that led to the 1935 Government of India Act. See, for example, J. Gallagher, 'The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire', in A. Seal, ed., *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and Other Essays* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 121 and Muldoon, *Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act*, p. 85.

Lord Ripon made the first tentative concessions towards Indian self-government in the early 1880s before the formation of the INC; though the efforts were purposefully confined to municipal councils and district boards. Imperial rule, declared a future imperial proconsul, would not be subverted by ‘allowing the Bengali Baboo to discuss his own schools and drains’.⁷ Moreover, in shifting the issue of taxation for local matters onto elected Indian bodies, the Central Government would reduce its expenditures, while simultaneously creating an avenue for educated Indians to express their thoughts. Ripon was not motivated by any enlightened sense of equality; rather he aimed to co-opt the educated classes before they became implacable foes of British rule.⁸ The importance of these local bodies was further increased by the 1892 Councils Act, which made them responsible for electing representatives to the provincial legislative councils. Two decades later, the Ripon reforms resulted in an outcome that was clearly not what Britons intended. Instead of drawing in ‘the genuine, representative Hindus, the men we really want [as collaborators]’, elections for local bodies, explained the acting financial secretary to the government of India and famed anthropologist, H.H. Risley, ‘selects those who rise to the surface—the men who talk and canvass and agitate’, i.e. barristers. The illusive commercial community hid in ‘the silent depths of the steam’, thereby allowing the Calcutta Corporation to fall under the grip of (in the words of the then viceroy, Lord Curzon) ‘a clique of Bengali Hindus’. Reforming the ‘vile’ municipal administration of Calcutta proved impossible ‘for fear of the Bengali

⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, this paragraph is based on Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 200-203; Sir Evelyn Baring, ultimately first earl of Cromer, quoted in Copland, *India 1885-1947*, p. 26.

⁸ R. Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (New York, 1976), pp. 232-3.

Party'.⁹ Long before his viceroyalty (1899-1905), Curzon had been an out spoken opponent of those that equated the 'Bengali Party' with the true people of India. During the second reading in March 1892 of a bill to amend the 1861 Indian Councils Act, which had created three cabinet-style bodies—the Supreme Legislative Council of the Viceroy and the Provincial Legislative Councils of Madras and Bombay—the Liberal member for North Manchester, Charles Schwann, argued that any reform to these councils that did not embrace the 'elective principle' would not only be incompatible with good governance but would be opposed by the Indian people. After dismissing Schwann's attempt to be the 'mouthpiece of the people of India', Curzon, then the under secretary of state for India, informed the Commons that:

The people of India are the voiceless millions who can neither read nor write their own tongues, who have no knowledge whatever of English, who are not perhaps universally aware of the fact that the English are in their country as rulers. The people of India are the ryots and the peasants, whose life is not one of political aspiration, but of mute penury and toil. The plans and policy of the Congress Party in India would leave this vast amorphous residuum absolutely untouched [T]he constituency which the Congress Party represent cannot be described as otherwise than a minute and almost microscopic minority of the total population of India It appears to me that you can as little judge of the feelings and aspirations of the people of India from the plans and proposals of the Congress Party as you can judge of the physical configuration of a country which is wrapped up in the mists of early morning, but a few of whose topmost peaks have been touched by the rising sun.¹⁰

⁹ *Proceedings of the Bengali Legislative Council*, 4 April 1898, quoted in C. Furedy, 'Lord Curzon and the Reform of the Calcutta Corporation, 1899: A Case Study in Imperial Decision-Making', *South Asia*, i (1978), p. 86; Curzon to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Hamilton, 11 October 1899, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 81; Curzon to Hamilton, 3 April 1901, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁰ *Hansard[']s Parliamentary Debates*, iii. 65-6.

Ultimately, not even the most determined viceroy could 'cut the Baboo down to size'.¹¹ Curzon's inability to reform the Calcutta Corporation laid in part in his decision 'to shield his role in the affair (to protect himself and the viceroyalty) ... [Consequently,] he was unable to come out into the open and effect the radical changes he originally envisaged'.¹² Irwin (as will be seen) learned from Curzon's experience, preferring to wage his campaign for even more radical changes in the public and private spheres (of officialdom).

Britain's policy of trying to recruit loyal collaborators to work within a framework that safeguarded the interests of the Raj seemed to have backfired by the early twentieth century. However, Curzon's decision in 1905 to partition Bengal, which, like the Calcutta Corporation, was undertaken to improve administrative efficiency, while simultaneously undermining the growing influence of the Calcutta bar and press, inflamed the situation and further 'consolidate[d] Indian opposition to British rule'.¹³ Even Indian liberals, like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, wasted little time in claiming that Curzon's audacity in partitioning Bengal without consulting the so-called 'Bengali party' had incensed India. 'Never', he cried out, during his 1905 Presidential Address to the Benares Congress, 'was the discontent in India more acute and widespread than when the late Viceroy laid down the reins of office'. Hyperbole maybe, but the depth of Indian discontent was unmistakably growing deeper. It is against this backdrop that

¹¹ Quoted in Furedy, 'Lord Curzon', p. 82. D. Dilks, *Curzon in India* (2 vols., London, 1969) remains the definitive work on Curzon's viceroyalty.

¹² Furedy, 'Lord Curzon', p. 87.

¹³ P. Moon, *The British Conquest and Dominion of India* (London, 1989), pp. 934-5 and 911.

the Liberals came into office ahead of their landslide victory in the 1906 election, with John Morley receiving the India Office.¹⁴ Abandoning what the new prime minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, damned in 1899 as ‘the vulgar and bastard imperialism of irritation and provocation and aggression’ that characterised Conservative governments and their proconsuls, pre-war Liberal governments favoured an emphasis on compromise and co-operation in order not to unduly stress already frayed imperial bonds.¹⁵ Informing the new viceroy, Lord Minto, of his interviews with the Congress moderate, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who was visiting London, Morley assessed their inescapable fate: ‘it will mainly depend upon ourselves whether Congress is a power for good or for evil. There it is, whether we like it or not (and personally I don’t like it)...’¹⁶ Nevertheless, as one of the last standard-bearers of Liberal Party of John Stuart Mill and William Gladstone, Morley found the alternative, ‘open warfare against the Indian population as a whole,’ odious; to say the least.¹⁷

The unrest touched off by Curzon’s actions left those in London with little choice but to embark on another major face-off against Indian nationalism.¹⁸ The ensuing Morley-Minto reforms¹⁹ transformed the previously mentioned Legislative Councils into

¹⁴ Quoted in S. Wolpert, *Morley and India, 1906-1910* (Berkeley, 1967), p. 231; D. Hamer, ‘John Morley (1838-1923)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹⁵ Quoted in B. Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-2004* (4th edn., Harlow, 2004), p. 202. On the general Liberal attitude towards the empire, see *ibid.*, pp. 200-204.

¹⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.* p. 212.

¹⁷ Wolpert, *Morley and India*, p. 231. Morley was one of two ministers who resigned on principle from Cabinet in August 1914.

¹⁸ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 223. On the extent of the unrest, see R. Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire, 1904-1924* (London, 1995), pp. 57-9.

¹⁹ The main features of the reforms were 1) the appointment of an Indian to the council of the presidency governors and Viceroy and two Indians to the council of the British secretary of state for India, 2) elected Indian members now outnumbered the nominated members on provincial legislative councils and 3) both

(what the moderate R.N. Mudholkar termed in his 1912 Presidential Address to the Bankipore Congress) ‘Parliaments *in embryo*’, without altering the autocratic nature of the Raj. The effect of this so-called ‘order plus progress’ approach for the British was the continuation of the power struggle between Whitehall and Simla. Paltry returns for a policy that sullied Morley his reputation as the conscience of Liberalism. In India, the reforms merely brought moderate nationalists into formal contact with the Raj, thereby allowing ‘the governed a better chance of understanding, as occasion arises, the case for the Government, against the misrepresentations of ignorance and malice’.²⁰ The results, however, were enormous. Writing less than a year after Morley’s resignation, the new viceroy was ‘convinced that, were Curzon to return to India, he would hardly recognise the present situation’. How long a substantial measure of representative government in the provinces could have co-existed with new repressive measures—directed primarily at the press—is, of course, impossible to say. What is clear, however, is that, prior to the Great War, India (in the words of William Roger Louis) ‘had little prospect of evolving on the model of self-government enjoyed by the ‘White Dominions’’.²¹

British and Indian officials in Delhi,²² as elsewhere in the empire, greeted the outbreak of war in 1914 with an enthusiasm that the British could never have demanded, which perhaps explains the poor attendance at the annual INC meeting a few months

the central and provincial legislatures were now allowed to debate budgetary matters, to propose amendments, etc. Porter, *The Lion's Share*, pp. 214-5.

²⁰ Quoted in Wolpert, *Morley and India*, pp. 230 and 234, respectively. Italics in original; Morley to Minto, 27 November 1908, quoted in Porter, *The Lion's Share*, p. 215.

²¹ Lord Hardinge to John Morley, 11 May 191, quoted in Wolpert, *Morley and India*, p. 232; Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, pp. 237-42; W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, IV: *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 8.

²² In 1911, then viceroy, Lord Hardinge reversed the partition of Bengal but transferred the capital from Calcutta to Delhi—the old Mughal seat of power—thereby depriving the Bengali baboos of their ready access to the central government. Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, p. 242.

later. In the early years of the war, imperial forces were used in supplementary roles on the colonial periphery; in the case of India, this initially meant Mesopotamia.²³ The maladministration associated with this campaign, which culminated in the surrender of a British army and its colours at Kut-al-Amara in 1916, undercut British prestige. To Britons, the 1857 Mutiny symbolised India's rejection of western civilisation and the benefits associated with British rule. In place of the outdated 'civilising mission', 'prestige' became the catchphrase for Britain's new imperial ideology, which rested on moral, racial and military superiority. Throughout most, if not all, of the Great War, however, Britons were far more conscious of their diminished prestige than were their subject peoples east of Suez.²⁴ Such was the environment that, following his return to India in 1915, Mohandas Gandhi accepted an imperial honour, the Kaisar-i-Hind medal, for his work in South Africa and throughout his speeches that year called for India to pull its weight in the imperial war effort.²⁵ Whereas the far less populous white dominions contributed over 1.3 million men, ultimately, India only mobilised 827,000 men for imperial service.²⁶ Approximately, one in nine Dominion troops died in service of king and country. In comparison, roughly one in twenty Indians died; moreover, twenty-five to fifty percent of the wounds suffered by soldiers from the subcontinent in 1917 were 'probably self-inflicted'. Whatever happened to that that famous 'English

²³ R. Holland, 'The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918', in W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 115-7; J. Galbraith, 'No Man's Child: The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1916', *International History Review*, vi (1984), pp. 358-85.

²⁴ D. French, 'The Dardanelles, Mecca and Kut: Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy, 1914-1916', *War & Society*, v (1987), p. 58.

²⁵ Copland, *India 1885-1947*, p. 48.

²⁶ G. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2005), p. 757. Also see Lord Curzon, 'Indian Reforms', 27 June 1917, CAB 24/17/GT 1199.

barrack in the Oriental Seas'? As was seen in Section 2.1, the Dominions (almost) reaped the constitutional rewards of fighting 'for Britain as though they co-owned it'. The fact that the Raj occupied a position of diminished importance in Britain's imperial system was of little interest to Indian nationalists, who kept themselves busy during the war formulating ever-greater demands.²⁷

The ferocity of the Great War, along with such debacles as Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, collectively shattered whatever remaining illusions the Indian intelligentsia had regarding British superiority. There was little doubt amongst the educated elite that the status of India within the empire would change after the war, but Indians were concerned over talk amongst members of the *Round Table* movement that theoretically could have seen the governance of the Raj shared between Britain and the white Dominions.²⁸ Preoccupied by the war, officials throughout the first two years of the conflict in both London and India largely ignored the question of India's future.²⁹ Into the void stepped the Home Rule Leagues of Maharashtra and Madras, founded by Balwatrao Tilak and the theosophist Annie Besant, respectively, that slowly began to create for the first time an India-wide, anti-government propaganda campaign. With Lord Hardinge having declared in his final speech to his legislative council in March

²⁷ Quoted in J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 469; Quoted in K. Jeffery, 'An English Barrack in the Oriental Seas?': India in the Aftermath of the First World War', *Modern Asian Studies*, xv (1981), p. 369; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 467.

²⁸ The term refers to a 'movement, moot and magazine. Round Table, symbolising Anglo-Saxonism and equality, was the name taken by a prestigious Edwardian think tank about which more ink has probably been expended than on any other such small élite'. The roughly two dozen members were an outgrowth of Lord Milner's South African 'kindergarten' and were 'dedicated to the cause of Empire unity'. Presently, the journal remains the 'best means of keeping up with the [contemporary] Commonwealth'. D. McIntyre, *The Britannic Vision: Historians and the Making of the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1907-48* (Houndmills, 2009), pp. 87-9.

²⁹ A. Rumbold, *Watershed in India, 1914-1922* (London, 1979), pp. 33-6.

1916 that Indian self-government was ‘a perfectly legitimate aspiration’, the actions of the Home Rule Leagues were no longer seditious. It might have been possible to stamp out dissent at this early stage, but officials in neither India nor London had anything resembling tangible plans (for the eventual introduction of self-government).³⁰ ‘As the months passed,’ wrote a retired civil servant, who began his long career at the India Office, ‘the Government of India’s power to control events declined. The belief that the British were in India indefinitely ... and that they would deal rigorously with any threat to their position, was undermined’.³¹ In reality, during 1915 and 1916, British officials throughout the world were engaged in a covert campaign to prevent terrorism from rendering Bengal ungovernable. Once successful, the British downplayed (for obvious reasons) what a close-run thing it had been.³²

Neither the new viceroy nor the new secretary of state for India, Lord Chelmsford and Austen Chamberlain, respectively, made any reference in their private, official correspondence to the protracted negotiations between the INC and the Muslim League that ultimately led in 1916 to the Lucknow Pact.³³ Nevertheless, in late November 1916, the Government of India despatched recommendations to Chamberlain

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 46-8. Quotation is from p. 38.

³¹ Ibid. p. 50.

³² Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*, pp. 203-10, in particular.

³³ Rumbold, *Watershed in India*, p. 54. Originally formed at the end of 1906 to promote friendly relations with the Raj, the All-India Muslim League would morph into the equivalent of the ‘Hindu’ Congress following the reversal of the partition of Bengal. Under new leadership, the League worked from 1910 onward towards negotiating a common nationalist programme with the INC. The Lucknow Pact pledged to seek *swaraj* as quickly as possible, with the two parties pledging to share power at the national level according to a fixed seat distribution. Central to these talks was the Bombay-based barrister, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who secured separate elections for Muslims—thereby laying the seeds for the subcontinent’s partitioning—and in shepherding the talks to a successful conclusion earned the title ‘ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity’. Copland, *India 1885-1947*, pp. 55-6; J. Singh, *Jinnah: India, Partition, Independence* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 82. The quotation comes from *Jinnah*, which reproduces the sixteen main clauses of the Pact on p. 507 n. 59.

on possible constitutional reforms to implement after the war.³⁴ The belief that adjusting the constitutional relations of the ‘component parts of the Empire’ could wait until the war ended persisted through the first Imperial War Conference. However, as a result of their wartime contributions, London came to regard the Dominions ‘in the light in which they wish to be looked upon rather than the light in which we would wish to do so’. British India by contrast was to continue as an ‘important portion’ of the Empire.³⁵ Here is yet another manifestation of the ideology of difference that characterised Britons’ conception of the Raj.³⁶ Although some progress towards addressing the various concerns of moderate nationalists over the status of India and Indians within the empire was made in the first half of 1917, the downfall of the Tsarist autocracy, along with the entry of the United States into the war, in the spring of 1917 raised hopes amongst the Indian intelligentsia just as London began considering Chelmsford’s 1916 despatch. By the early summer, Whitehall acknowledged that the ‘demand for Home Rule in India is now serious and insistent, and that some concession must be made to it without delay’.³⁷

Neither developments within India since the passage of the Morley-Minto reforms eight years earlier nor wartime service—for those classes demanding reform had rendered none—warranted further concessions. And those Indians, who had made

³⁴ Rumbold, *Watershed in India*, pp. 54-7. Although the ultimate goal was ‘self-government’, there was considerable confusion over what exactly that meant. Did it refer to India’s external relations or to relations between the provinces and central government or to both? At a time when the status of the dominions was in flux the confusion was understandable.

³⁵ Resolution IX, adopted 16 April, in Minutes of proceedings and papers laid before the 1917 Imperial War Conference, The National Archives, CAB[inet Secretaries Notebooks] 32/1; Earl of Derby to General Haig, 2 Nov. 1917, quoted in T. Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918* (Toronto, 2008), pp. 395-6; Resolution IX, CAB 32/1.

³⁶ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*.

³⁷ Rumbold, *Watershed in India*, pp. 63-8; ‘Indian Reforms (Note by the Secretary)’, 28 June 1917, CAB 24/18/GT 1207.

valuable contributions to the war effort, ‘neither ask for nor [allegedly] want the particular reforms that are now under discussion’. However, with ‘the free talk about liberty, democracy, nationality, and self-government’ having become the ‘common shibboleths of the Allies’, concluded a member of the War Cabinet, Britain could not avoid translating ‘into practice in our own domestic household the sentiments which we have so enthusiastically preached to others’.³⁸ Like the Balfour Declaration made later that year, the statement made in the House of Commons on 20 August 1917 was precipitated by wartime circumstances (and changes within the India Office).³⁹

‘The policy of His Majesty’s Government,’ announced Edwin Montagu, who served as secretary of state for India under David Lloyd George from 1917 until 1922, ‘is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire....’⁴⁰ Considerable attention was devoted to the wording of the statement, in large part because ‘educated Indians were past-masters in casuistry, and their criticism of formulae were embarrassing subtle and meticulous’.⁴¹ But also because the policy went ‘far beyond anything that has been previously contemplated or discussed in this country....’ Curzon anticipated that relations between Britain and India would ‘as

³⁸ Curzon, ‘Indian Reforms’, GT 1199. It is worth remembering that the 120 elected members of the eight councils (viceregal and presidency governors) had an electorate of a mere 33,000 voters; ten thousand of whom were responsible for electing the 74 members of the municipal and district boards. *Ibid.* p. 60. India’s population at this time exceeded 300 million, the vast majority of whom were illiterate.

³⁹ Austen Chamberlain resigned following the publication of the Mesopotamia Report in June, which blamed the Government of India for the disasters that beset the campaign. His replacement was the Liberal Edwin Montagu.

⁴⁰ *Hansard*, xcvi. 1695.

⁴¹ W[ar] C[abinet] Minutes, 29 June 1917, CAB 23/3/172.

time proceeds' undergo a 'complete revolution' but, in the interim, were '*certain to give rise to an early agitation for concessions much more extreme*'.⁴² Indians would likely conclude that only a generation need pass before responsible government should be introduced, whereas the British Cabinet, Curzon presumed, 'probably contemplated an intervening period that might extend to 500 years'. Granting self-government more rapidly ran the risk of '*setting up a narrow oligarchy of clever lawyers*'.⁴³ Nevertheless, after *extensive* study and debate,⁴⁴ within both Britain and India, a new Government of India Act passed without division at the end of 1919, thereby beginning the process of transferring 'domestic concerns' unto Indian shoulders (and, by including a provision that the Act be reviewed by a statutory commission by 1929 at the latest, laid the foundation for the third and by far largest faceoff against Indian nationalism that would be taken this time by Irwin).⁴⁵

⁴² 'Note by Lord Curzon', 3 June 1918, appended to WC minutes, 7 June 1918, CAB 23/6/428; my italics.

⁴³ WC minutes, 14 Aug. 1917, CAB 23/3/214; my italics.

⁴⁴ Owing to the gravity of trying to 'revise a system of government, which has been constructed by builders who like ourselves had no models before them, during ... [the previous] century and a half', Montagu toured India, meeting with both the Viceroy and deputations of 'representative men' in Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. All told the Government of India and a committee of the India Office spent eight months preparing the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, which was presented to Parliament as *East India Constitutional Reforms: Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms*, Cmd. 9109 (London, 1918). Quotations are drawn from pp. 3 and 2, respectively. A summary of the one-hundred and twelve addresses presented to Montagu and Chelmsford by the 'various associations and political, communal and commercial bodies' was laid before Parliament as *East India Constitutional Reforms: Address Presented in India to His Excellency the Viceroy and the Right Honourable The Secretary of State for India*, Cmd. 9178 (London, 1918). Quotation is from p. i. In the interests of brevity, the reports of the various committees are not being cited but a cursory search of <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com> for the phrase 'Montagu-Chelmsford Report' shows that the report attracted a fair bit of attention in both Houses of Parliament.

⁴⁵ *Government of India Act, 1919: Proclamation of His Majesty the King-Emperor, and Resolution of the Indian Legislative Council thereon, with His Majesty's gracious reply*. Cmd. 610 (London, 1920). In a nutshell, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were a 'blueprint for dominionhood' that simultaneously did not surrender 'any real power'. C. Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New York, 1986), pp. 7-8.

Initially, reported the special correspondent for *The Guardian*, “moderate opinion” tended in principle to approve of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, while extreme nationalists demanded ‘its entire rejection’.⁴⁶ Once the 1919 India Act became law, though they still ‘stigmatised’ it as ‘unsatisfactory’, the extremists were prepared to work the new system of governance. However, with Indians increasingly emboldened by the ‘Wilsonian Moment’, Montagu feared that his entire scheme was in jeopardy.⁴⁷ India was by no means immune to the ‘crisis of Empire’, which followed naturally from Britain’s decision in 1916 to mobilise her resources on a scale not seen since the days of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815).⁴⁸ But the Third Afghan War, the negative effects of General Dyer’s deadly actions in the Punjab and, above all, Gandhi’s first Non-Cooperation movement were relatively short lived.⁴⁹ It is true that throughout the eastern arc of empire, the British were losing the support of those sections of colonial society that had traditionally supported British rule (or whose support would be needed if the empire was to be democratised, without sacrificing vital British interests).⁵⁰ But to infer as Thomas Metcalf has that ‘the transfer of power on 15 August 1947 was ... the only outcome that could be anticipated from the ideals that sustained the Montagu-

⁴⁶ Quoted in a memorandum on the reception accorded the Montagu-Chelmsford Report in India, circulated by Edwin Montagu, 31 July 1918, CAB 24/59/GT 5279.

⁴⁷ General appreciation of the situation in India, circulated by Edwin Montagu, 15 Oct. 1920, CAB/24/112/CP 1987. Also see E. Manela, ‘The “Wilsonian Moment” In India and the Crisis of Empire in 1919’, in W.R. Louis, ed., *Yet More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (London, 2005), pp. 271-83.

⁴⁸ J. Gallagher, ‘Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-1922’, *Modern Asian Studies*, xv (1981), pp. 355-68; D. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1991), p. 111.

⁴⁹ B. Robson, *Crisis on the Frontier: The Third Afghan War and the Campaign in Waziristan 1919-20* (Staplehurst, 2007); N. Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (London, 2005); J. Brown, *Gandhi’s Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-1922* (Cambridge, 1972), particularly pp. 342-9.

⁵⁰ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 185-99. Also see A. Roberts, *The Holy Fox: The Life of Lord Halifax* (London, 1997; originally published London, 1991), p. 19.

Chelmsford scheme' is too deterministic.⁵¹ The Raj was only doomed if Britons stubbornly clung to India's enduring 'distinctiveness' from the rest of the colonial world.⁵² The issue would be put to the test by the 'unexpected', but 'peculiarly interesting' appointment of the Right Honourable Edward Wood, soon to be Baron Irwin of Kirby Underdale, ultimately Earl of Halifax, to succeed the Earl of Reading as Viceroy of India.⁵³

Outside of a traditional post-Oxford tour of the empire that included stays with Curzon in India and members of Lord Milner's Kindergarten in South Africa, a 1907 visit to Canada and an official tour of the West Indies in the early 1920s, there was little in Wood's background to suggest suitably for an imperial post of such prominence.⁵⁴ There is, however, a certain irony to his appointment. It was the educational reforms of his grandfather, the first Viscount Halifax, both before and after the Mutiny, that begat the (political) environment that awaited the new viceroy. Outside of Madras and the Punjab, the 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had failed.⁵⁵ Instead of satisfying 'legitimate aspirations', Curzon informed their Lordships, they had 'produced a general impression in India of weakness on the part of the Central Government'. The Indian Civil Service was 'dispirited and alienated', while opponents of the Raj were 'encouraged and embittered [in] their hostility'. Worse still, parts of the subcontinent,

⁵¹ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 230. Similar conclusions are reached in Rumbold, *Watershed in India*, pp. v and 100 and R. Danzig, 'The Announcement of August 20th 1917', *Journal of Asian Studies*, xxviii (1968), p. 19.

⁵² Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 215.

⁵³ *The Times*, 30 Oct. 1925, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, this paragraph is based on Roberts, 'The Holy Fox', pp. 4-7, 16-17, 20-21 and 29.

⁵⁵ Moon, *The British Conquest*, p. 1017. The success in these provinces was the result of political parties forming that represented local interests at the expense of All-India politicians.

Curzon lamented, had witnessed a ‘shocking recrudescence of racial and caste antagonisms’. But the truly fatal weakness of diarchy had been identified months earlier. In deciding to meet simultaneously with his elected ministers and the reserved half of his government, the Governor of Bengal, the second Earl of Lytton, had hoped to make his appointed ministers more popular. Instead, his actions ‘destroyed the popularity’ of his elected ministers.⁵⁶ The whirlwind that Irwin’s grandfather had sparked only intensified as the years past. Although Congress’ Civil Disobedience movement had been suspended in December 1924, the secretary of state for India, Lord Birkenhead, still worried that ‘any spark’ could reignite the (educated, middle class) nationalist movement, to say nothing of ‘the failed B.As. who edit the newspapers and the thousands of politically-minded students whom the communists are trying to capture’.⁵⁷ Wood, who was long conscious of the ‘powerful revival of nationalism and racialism,’ however, was widely seen within the House of Commons as ‘the highest kind of Englishman now in politics’.⁵⁸ Whereas Curzon had spent years establishing himself as an expert on the Near East in preparation for his inevitable viceregal appointment, Irwin was selected largely because his character appealed to George V, as well as his friend and mentor, prime minister Stanley Baldwin.⁵⁹ One wonders whether either man knew

⁵⁶ *Hansard*, ilx. 169; ‘Notes on the constitutional position of India by Lord Lytton’, 4 June 1925, enclosed in Earl of Birkenhead to Irwin, 20 May 1926 (sic), Halifax MSS, C152/2/no. 2.

⁵⁷ Birkenhead to Irwin, 19 July 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 26.

⁵⁸ Quoted in H. Begbie, alias ‘A Gentlemen with a Duster’, *The Conservative Mind*, (London, 1924), pp. 58 and 47, respectively; Gandhi would later described Irwin as ‘one of the noblest of Englishmen’. Quoted in ‘Foreign News: Noblest of Englishmen’, *Time Magazine*, 15 Jan. 1940.

⁵⁹ Curzon’s ‘travel[s] with a purpose’ are detailed in chapters six and seven of D. Gilmour, *Curzon* (London, 1994), while his (well earned) reputation as a ‘man of letters’ is discussed in G. Bennett and M. Gibson, *The Later Life of Lord Curzon of Kedleston- Aristocrat, Writer, Politician, Statesman: An Experiment in Political Biography* (Lewiston, N.Y., 2000), chapter six.

that their—albeit not first choice—replacement for Reading originally stood for election as a Conservative ‘more for lack of an alternative than any positive reason’.

Ideologically, the new Viceroy departed Victoria Station for India as the last Whig, arguably sharing more in common with his great-uncle, Lord Durham, than the right wing of his own party.⁶⁰ Evidence of this could be found in the public record.⁶¹ Sympathetic to the downtrodden, and believing that stability never arises out of stagnation, Irwin confessed to a journalist less than a year before his appointment as viceroy of his belief that ‘men no longer fear new departures any more than one who has been torpedoed in mid-Atlantic would shrink from being capsized on his garden pond’.⁶² India in the latter half of the 1920s accorded plenty of opportunity for new departures.

Outside of sporadic communal violence, the resumption of terrorism in Bengal and agitation by fundamentalist Sikhs in the Punjab, Indian politics remained relatively uneventful after the arrest of Gandhi in 1922, which led to the rapid demise of the non-cooperation movement. Communal tensions were ‘acute’ at the outset of Irwin’s Viceroyalty, in part because everyone had started jockeying for position since the end of the Raj seemed near. Under the terms of the 1919 Government of India Act, a statutory commission charged with investigating the progress of the reforms and making

⁶⁰ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 7.

⁶¹ *Report by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Hon. F.L. Wood, M.P., on a visit to the West Indies and British Guiana, 1921-22*, Cmd. 1679 (London, 1922). The report ‘sold well’. Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 13.

⁶² Quoted in Begbie, *The Conservative Mind*, p. 52. In the summer of 1918, Wood and Sir George Lloyd co-wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Great Opportunity*, which outlined their progressive, conservative view for reconstruction.

recommendations for the next step, if any, was to be appointed in 1929.⁶³ Within months of arriving in India, Irwin realised the necessity of breaking the 'present vicious circle of 'no advance without co-operation and no co-operation without advance''.⁶⁴ The elections of 1926 appeared promising; particularly at the provincial level. Although still the largest party in the Central Legislative Assembly, the Swarajist faction of the INC could not act without the support of both the Independent Congress Party and the faction willing to work the Reforms, the so-called Responsivists. Everywhere the Swarajists were 'actively and solidly opposed,' Irwin told Birkenhead, 'they have lost ground'. The following month Irwin, hoping to undercut the Swarajist position further, addressed the Legislative Assembly. He warned the assembled politicians that Parliament was unlikely to submit to coercion and would not understand

the line of argument which says that because the present foundations for responsible governments are alleged to be at fault, this is necessarily to be remedied by immediately asking those foundations to bear the entire weight of the whole edifice we desire to build.

Holding out the carrot, Irwin suggested that if Indian politicians exercised their 'albeit limited' responsibilities in a 'spirit of service to India', they might be surprised how quickly 'the very real powers of the British Parliament to intervene were silently allowed first to fall into desuetude and then to disappear' as had occurred in the Dominions.⁶⁵ This would never happen as long as Birkenhead—a man who considered extending the franchise to British women at twenty-one 'a change so dangerous and so

⁶³ Moon, *The British Conquest*, pp. 1020-1023 and 1026-7; Irwin to George V, 10 June 1926, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 6.

⁶⁴ Irwin to Birkenhead, 9 June 1926, Halifax MSS, C152/2/no. 11.

⁶⁵ *The Times*, 6 Dec. 1926, p. 14; Irwin to Birkenhead, 1 Dec. 1926, Halifax MSS, C152/2/no. 38; Lord Irwin, *Indian Problems: Speeches by Lord Irwin* (London, 1932), pp. 39-40 and 41.

revolutionary’—remained at the India Office. Irwin suspected that his secretary of state thought self-government might be feasible in India sometime in the early twenty-sixth century, thereby making Curzon appear something of an optimist! Birkenhead, however, was too clever by half. Anxious that the Conservatives might lose the next election, and fearful of the possibility of a Labour government introducing far-reaching reforms, Birkenhead (acting on Irwin’s advice) decided to appoint the Statutory Commission two years early.⁶⁶

After deliberating on the issue for almost a year, during which ‘objections to every course’ were raised, the Liberal Sir John Simon was appointed chair of a purely Parliamentary commission in November 1927. Birkenhead, who initially felt strongly inclined to include Indian commissioners, bowed to opinion within the India Office and in India, particularly that of the Viceroy. Previous scholarship has depicted the exclusion of Indians as evidence that Irwin had ‘as yet gained no insight into the minds of the Indian people’.⁶⁷ His most recent biographer declared it ‘a blunder so fundamental that it was to wreck any hopes of tranquillity for the rest of the Viceroyalty’.⁶⁸ Days before the membership of the Statutory Commission was leaked to the *Statesmen* by an Indian politician Irwin had taken into his confidence, Birkenhead had assured the Viceroy of his readiness to face the ‘howl of rage’ that would soon emanate from the native Indian

⁶⁶ Birkenhead to Irwin, 13 April 1927, C152/3, no 10; Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, pp. 19-20 and 22. Lord Butler remembers Irwin saying: ‘I remember so well how bloody it was serving under F.E’. Quoted in G. Peele, ‘A Note on the Irwin Declaration’, *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, i (1973), p. 337.

⁶⁷ Irwin to Birkenhead, 2 June 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/3/no. 24; Lord Birkenhead, ‘The Statutory Commission on Indian Constitutional Reforms’, 12 July 1927, CAB 24/187/CP 187; S. Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin, 1926-1931* (Oxford, 1957), p. 21. *The Viceroyalty* was written using ‘official files and records’ of the ‘Government of India’ on the condition that detailed citations were not used. In lieu of consulting British governmental records, which were sealed, the author discussed various subjects with (by then) Lord Halifax. Quotations are taken from the preface.

⁶⁸ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 22. Moon, *The British Conquest*, p. 1027 makes a similar point.

press.⁶⁹ It would seem that Irwin did not want a peaceful conclusion to his time in India, but why?

More than a week after his arrival in India, Irwin still lacked ‘any opinion worth having about the political situation’, but as he toured India, he discovered, much to his surprise, the extent to which many of the Princes were ‘not necessarily in favour of democracy’. Irwin explained to the King how the Nawab of Rampur, for example, managed to combine collecting Persian and Sanskrit manuscripts, within his broader patronage of the arts, while simultaneously possessing a ‘great dislike and contempt for democracy’. Perhaps influenced by his own social standing, Irwin came to see the ‘land-owners and upper middle classes’, whom he believed had the ‘greatest stake’ in India’s future, as ‘fundamentally conservative’.⁷⁰ Implicit in the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, as Lloyd George explained to Irwin’s predecessor, was the notion that ‘as the Government of India becomes more parliamentary in character, the Viceroy and his advisors must tend to speak and act more and more as representatives of Indian opinion’⁷¹ Irwin, like Curzon, a quarter century earlier, did not view the political intelligentsia as representing all of India and warned Birkenhead, and later George V, of the forthcoming ‘clash between what general opinion in Great Britain will consider to be required of it by its responsibility for the *whole of India and what will be desired by the*

⁶⁹ Irwin to Birkenhead, 9 Nov. 1927 and Birkenhead to Irwin, 3 Nov. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/3/nos. 45 and 29, respectively. Outside of the anticipated ‘bitter indignation’ of *The Daily News*, *Guardian* and the *Westminster Gazette* over the exclusion of Indians, Irwin’s announcement, which did include a process for Indians to not only challenge the Commission’s findings but to also advocate their position(s), was ‘extremely well received’ in Britain. Birkenhead to Irwin, 10 Nov. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/3/no. 30. The text of Irwin’s statement was reprinted in *The Times*, 9 Nov. 1927, p. 13.

⁷⁰ Irwin to Birkenhead, 13 April 1926, Halifax MSS, C152/2/no. 1; Irwin to Birkenhead, 3 April 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/3/no. 15; Irwin to George V, 20 Jan. 1927 Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 20; Irwin to Birkenhead, 1 Dec. 1926, Halifax MSS, C152/2/no. 38.

⁷¹ Lloyd George to Lord Reading, 26 July 1922, quoted in Rumbold, *Watershed in India*, p. 244.

small minority of political intelligentsia'. Irwin believed that the agitation was less about the exclusion of Indians from the Simon Commission than 'extremist pressure' fuelling a growing rejection of the supremacy of Westminster to pronounce on India's future.⁷² The British Government, Gandhi told the Viceroy in their first meeting, should (as in the case of Ireland) commit to granting India Dominion Status and then meet Indians as equals to discuss the specifics of implementing such a policy. Irwin confessed to his father that the encounter 'was rather like talking to someone who had stepped off one planet on to this for a short visit of a fortnight, and whose whole mental outlook was quite other to that which was regulating most of the affairs on the planet to which he descended'. Approximately a year and a half into his viceroyalty, as much as Britons may have wanted to pretend otherwise, Irwin had concluded that there could be no 'ultimate compromise' with the INC, or those members of the political class that held similar views.⁷³ Preserving the Raj, though diminished in importance, still remained an important component of Britain's imperial system, necessitated rallying its allies, a task easier said than done.⁷⁴

Within hours of the announcement regarding the composition of the Statutory Commission, Indian politicians denounced it; in many cases probably without even reading the official statements made in India and Britain. 'Our trouble is that we are so

⁷² Irwin to George V, 29 Nov. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 35. My italics; Irwin to Birkenhead, 16 Nov. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/3/no. 47.

⁷³ Irwin to Viscount Halifax, 6 Nov. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/27/no. 82; Irwin to George V, 29 Nov. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 35.

⁷⁴ Both sides relied on 'their shaky alliances' during imperial-national encounters, which were akin to shadow-boxing as neither side supposedly sought a conclusive confrontation. J. Darwin, 'Gallagher's Empire', in W.R. Louis, ed., *Yet More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (London, 2005), p. 247.

like the Irish, who speak first and think second', said an unnamed Indian. Talk soon turned to a national boycott.⁷⁵ The agitation continued for weeks, in part, explained the president of the Muslim League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, because the various factions were all afraid of losing ground. There was little doubt that Congress would boycott the Simon Commission. But at their annual conference, held at Madras in 1927, the older generation failed to stop Motilal Nehru's son, Jawaharlal Nehru, from successfully moving an almost unanimous resolution calling for complete independence, while the party elders who were present sought to co-operate with the other Indian parties to draft their own constitution, which retained Dominion status as the ultimate goal.⁷⁶ The later was welcome news in London. Even if the 'malcontents' overcame the formidable problems confronting everyone involved, Birkenhead predicted, that it would shatter their new found unity, 'which can only survive in an atmosphere of generalisation'.⁷⁷ More troubling, however, was that throughout late 1927 and early 1928 a large section of 'moderate' opinion remained silent, which Irwin attributed to a lack of 'moral

⁷⁵ Quoted in Irwin to George V, 29 Nov. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no 35. Writing from Bombay, *The Times*' correspondent speculated that the 'long statements' from leading Indian politicians, which followed shortly after the official release of the Viceroy's statement, bore 'the appearance of being prepared in advance'. *The Times*, 10 Nov. 1927, p. 14.

⁷⁶ Irwin to Birkenhead, 22 Dec. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/3/no. 52; Irwin to Birkenhead, 18 Jan. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 3; Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin*, p. 22. Nehru later wrote that the resolution probably passed because no one understood it. Irwin's publicity officer, J. Coatman, speculated that it passed out of a desire to make 'some adequate response' to the exclusion of Indians from Statutory Commission and, in particular, to inflammatory comments made not long before by Birkenhead. The absence of Jawaharlal's father was 'another favourable factor'. Its reception, however, was 'decidedly discouraging to its sponsors, for no politician of standing endorsed it.' It was in fact denounced by 'some well-known members of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature,' while Nationalists, Liberals and even Gandhi dissociated themselves from Jawaharlal's meaningless 'matter of jest'. Enclosure to Irwin to Peel, 15 Nov. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 54.

⁷⁷ Birkenhead to Irwin, 5 Jan. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 1. Simon and the other members of the commission found the 'constitutional arrangements very difficult to master', despite two days of 'informal instruction' at the India Office. Simon to Irwin, 21 Dec. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/30. Also see Simon to Irwin, 28 June 1928, in *ibid*.

courage'. Such attitudes were common. Much to the Viceroy's dismay, he could not find a single politician 'prepared to stand up against the clamour of his friends or of newspapers'.⁷⁸ Anyone that did stand against the 'boycott view', Irwin understood, was subjected to a 'good deal of pressure in public and private'. Those who bankrolled Indian politics were not above twisting arms. Irwin viewed the present political system as being 'not far removed from some methods Walpole employed in our own constitution development'.⁷⁹ Comparing the boycotters to 'a child refusing to eat its supper', Irwin believed:

There comes a point when it is no good pleading or reproaching any longer and when if its tempers are ignored it may return to eat it on its own. I should rather hope if we all, with the Press, could pursue this sort of tactic, a good many people here would seriously begin to wonder whether they had in fact missed the bus.⁸⁰

Irwin persisted in this vein following the Legislative Assembly's rejection by a mere six vote margin of co-operation with the Simon Commission; the other House of the Central Legislature, the Council of State, where almost half the members were appointed by the Viceroy, not surprisingly voted 'decisively' in favour of co-operation.⁸¹ Arguing that the Central Committee, which was the body of Indians who were to sit alongside the Simon Commission, should not be abandoned because it would be discouraging to those 'less

⁷⁸ Irwin to Birkenhead, 1 Dec. 1927, Halifax MSS, C152/3/no. 49; Irwin to Birkenhead, 7 Feb. 1928, Halifax MSS C152/4/no. 6. Also see Lord Stamfordham, private secretary to the King, to Irwin, 10 March and 22 May 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/1/nos. 32 and 33 and (although less strident) Birkenhead to Irwin, 8 March 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no.10.

⁷⁹ Irwin to Birkenhead, 23 Feb. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 9; Irwin to Simon, 13 Aug. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/30.

⁸⁰ Irwin to Birkenhead, 23 Feb. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 9. Irwin's children then ranged in age from seven to seventeen.

⁸¹ Irwin to George V, 19 March 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 40. Regardless of how the vote went, Irwin recommended that the Assembly be given 'a *locus poenitentiae*'. Irwin to Birkenhead, 16 Feb. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 7.

articulate' sections of society that not only wanted Government to assert itself over the 'noisy minority of unrepresentative politicians' but 'desire[d] to utilise the machinery contemplated for the purpose of securing that their point of view is brought forcibly to the notice of the Commission'. Simon, who was prepared to carry on without Indian members, nevertheless, asked Irwin to nominate co-operative Indians from the Central and the various Provincial Governments. Irwin sought to postpone any final decision until August in order to see how events unfolded. And, more importantly, forming the Central Committee six months ahead of time would be tantamount to 'a definite declaration of war on the Assembly politicians'. Being 'a man of peace', in the long-term interests of India, Irwin was 'reluctant to see my opponents and myself permanently entrenched in our respective zarebas, from which we continue to throw long-distance bombs at each other'.⁸²

Equally troubled by developments was the influential liberal, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, and some of his 'friends', who, recognising that the Parliamentary Commission would complete its task as originally constituted, worried about the potential damage the boycott could have on the findings of the Simon Commission.⁸³ Approximately a month before Irwin would declare the situation 'impossible',⁸⁴ Setalvad made it clear during the course of a lengthy chat with the Viceroy that he and his

⁸² Irwin to Simon, 27 Feb. 1928, Simon to Irwin, 8 March 1928 and Irwin to Simon, 26 Feb. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/30. Also see Irwin's telegram to Simon (118-S), 13 March 1928, in *ibid.* The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines zareba as an enclosure found in the Sudan and adjacent areas that was typically constructed of thorn-bushes for defence against both animals and enemies.

⁸³ Unless otherwise indicated, this paragraph is based on Irwin's telegram, dated 13 June 1928, and Birkenhead's reply, dated 20 June 1928, which were circulated to the Cabinet as Lord Birkenhead, 'Indian Statutory Commission', 22 June 1928, CAB 24/195/CP 200.

⁸⁴ Irwin to Simon, 23 July 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/30.

associates were also unhappy with the Swarajists. However, as Irwin explained to his secretary of state, without a ‘plausible reason for co-operation, it was quite impossible for the more reasonable elements to break away’. Irwin looked favourably upon Setalvad’s suggestions—the specifics of which are irrelevant—as they struck him as not being substantive questions. But if acted upon, there was good reason to believe a ‘wedge’ would be inserted into (what Irwin later termed) the ‘all-India politician class of boycotter’.⁸⁵ And wedges ‘tend to widen’, reasoned the viceroy. The propensity of Indian politicians to personal jealousies/rivalries, to say nothing of the generational divide within Congress (and the Nehru family), lends a fair degree of credibility to said strategy. Irwin’s broader motivation, however, was to cool ‘the general temper and condition of political India with which we have to work’, particularly in the post-Simon era. Birkenhead, not surprisingly, was unmoved. Even if the technical/legal difficulties inherent in Setalvad’s suggestions were not an issue, the secretary of state for India found it ‘impossible’ to endorse Irwin’s suggested course of action in its entirety.⁸⁶ Irwin, unable to accept the decision of his secretary of state, had the matter referred to Cabinet; which eventually sided with Birkenhead (and Simon). Irwin’s proposal was found to be of considerable substance, which proved to be the ‘fatal objection’ for the Cabinet. Opinion in London held that ‘so long as there prevails in Indian political circles [an] expectation that further pressure upon His Majesty's Government or [the Simon]

⁸⁵ Irwin to Simon, 5 July 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/30.

⁸⁶ Birkenhead conceded one issue; the details of which can be found in Lord Birkenhead, ‘Indian Statutory Commission’, 28 June 1928, CAB 24/196/CP 209.

Commission will produce further concession, so long will that pressure be kept up'.⁸⁷ Throughout the late summer, early fall of 1928, with the impending return of the Simon Commission, the situation in India remained 'restless'.⁸⁸ The same could not be said of the Viceroy, who was laying the groundwork for a policy that might have radically extended the range of political possibilities open to the Raj, but wound up throwing domestic politics in Britain into an unprecedented turmoil that persisted until 1935.⁸⁹

Believing that the Simon Commission would be akin to Lord Milner's 1919-20 Egyptian Mission, Congress and its fellow boycotters met at Lucknow, at the end of August, to formulate their demands ahead of Simon's 'endeavour to strike some sort of bargain with them'.⁹⁰ The so-called Nehru Report that emerged was nothing less than a 'Hindu attempt to take over a united, centralised Raj'. Not surprisingly, it found no support amongst India's minority Muslim, Sikh and Christian populations.⁹¹ Although the reception of the Simon Commission varied greatly by province, there was no escaping its derision nor did the Viceroy believe it likely to devise a solution to the deepening 'Indian problem', which Irwin later defined as the 'creation of a united India'. Feelings against the Commission were 'diminishing', but the boycotters were simply

⁸⁷ Lord Birkenhead, 'Indian Statutory Commission', 13 July 1928, CAB 24/196/CP 231; Cabinet Conclusions, 18 July 1928, CAB 23/58/39; Quotations are from 'draft telegram' in CP 231. The Cabinet's decision was 'absolutely unanimous'. Birkenhead to Irwin, 26 July 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 28.

⁸⁸ Stamford to Irwin, 20 Aug. 1928, Halifax MSS C152/1/no. 39. Also see *The Times*, 17 Sept. 1928, p. 13.

⁸⁹ J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010), pp. 7-9. On the latter, see G. Stewart, *Burying Caesar: Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party* (London, 1999).

⁹⁰ *The Times*, 4 Sept. 1928, p. 12. On the Mission, see J. Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918-1922* (London, 1981), pp. 84-94.

⁹¹ Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p. 23; *The Times*, 4 Sept. 1928, p. 12.

‘too deeply committed’ to their position(s).⁹² In the aftermath of the Nehru Report, which Irwin latter termed ‘a political blunder of the first magnitude,’ the rhetoric was ratcheted up as political India moved to the ‘Left’. Talk of ‘independence’ again emanated from the ‘most extreme quarters’. More troubling was that moderate politicians, like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, were now willing to ‘make terms with such talk’ and, contrary to the situation of few years earlier, no longer thought foreign affairs and defence should be left in British hands. The appeal of ‘these ideas’ would only increase as literacy levels rose. Irwin predicted that Britain’s ‘principal problem’ in the years ahead would be breaking the ‘artificial unity at present prevailing between the different sections of our political opponents’. Thwarted in his attempt to act on Setalvad’s September 1928 proposals, alluded to earlier in this chapter, Irwin simply noted that ‘there is nothing to be done at the moment’.⁹³

The Viceroy’s fortunes, however, were about to change dramatically. Birkenhead, who muttered about ‘dealing with the situation as a Mussolini might’, after earlier pressing the Viceroy to consider ‘a purging of the body-politic’, resigned his office in October 1928 (for financial reasons). Less than two weeks earlier, Irwin (disingenuously, perhaps) had written of his ‘very large misgiving[s over] the possibility of Government being in new and perhaps inexperienced hands when our troubles come to a head’. Birkenhead and his ilk on the right wing of the Tory Party were also

⁹² Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 25; Lord Irwin, *Some Aspects of the Indian Problem; Being the Inaugural Massey Lecture, Delivered before the University of Toronto on 27 April 1932* (Toronto, 1932), p. 10; Irwin to Birkenhead, 27 Sept. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 45.

⁹³ Extract from Irwin to Birkenhead, 6 Sept. 1928, circulated to the Cabinet as Birkenhead, ‘Attitude of Indian Politicians’, 4 Oct. 1928, CAB 24/197/CP 288; Irwin to Viscount Peel, 7 Nov. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 52.

genuinely terrified of the consequences of the Simon Report 'being examined by any but a Unionist Government'.⁹⁴ Their fears were completely misplaced. The danger was not the new minority Labour government but a Viceroy, that 'glorious and peculiar beast', on the prowl for 'a definite pro-Government party'.⁹⁵

Ever since the late eighteenth century, viceroys, along with the governors of the three presidencies and other senior officials remained in India until their five year terms were completed. Under more liberal rules implemented in 1924, a single leave of absence, of up to four months, could be granted for 'urgent reasons of public interest, or of health or of private affairs'.⁹⁶ Ostensibly made out of concern over his father's age, during the winter of 1928, Irwin secured permission to return to England the following summer to conduct personal discussions with (as it turned out) Wedgewood Benn, the new Secretary of State for India. The King approved of both reasons, though formal Cabinet approval would not come until mid-March 1929.⁹⁷ In the months before he sailed for home, Irwin would be given plenty to think about.

As the Simon Commission toured India throughout the fall of 1928 and spring of 1929, gathering evidence for a report which would ultimately run to seventeen volumes. Irwin was entertaining for three months an old friend, Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of *The Times*. Among the subjects of discussion were ways of pre-empting 'Simon and his

⁹⁴ Birkenhead to Irwin, 18 Sept. and 19 July 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/nos. 31 and 26; *The Times*, 15 Oct 1928, p. 16; Irwin to Birkenhead and Birkenhead to Irwin, 3 and 11 Oct. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/nos. 46 and 32.

⁹⁵ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 45; Irwin to Birkenhead, 16 Aug. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 37.

⁹⁶ *Hansard*, lvii. 208; *Government of India (Leave of Absence)*. [H.L.] Bill 220 (London, 1924).

⁹⁷ Irwin to George V, 6 Nov. 1928, and A.H.L. Hardinge, assistant private secretary to the King, to Irwin, 20 Dec. 1928, MSS Eur C151/1/nos. 54 and 44; Cabinet Conclusions, 13 March 1929, CAB23/60/11. Birkenhead's successor was Viscount Peel, who was in office only nine months ahead of the 1929 general election.

merry men'. The Viceroy was also being pressed by London to marshal the full (repressive) resources of the Raj in preparation for the resumption of non-cooperation. At their annual meeting in Calcutta, Congress adopted what Irwin saw as a 'very unreasonable ultimatum', which demanded the granting of Dominion Status before the end of 1929. In the interim, a boycott of all British goods would be launched. Irrespective of these developments, the INC remained as divided as ever. A resolution in favour of independence over Dominion Status was defeated by a margin of 1,350 to 973 votes.⁹⁸ It was the lower classes and the youth who were fuelling the increasing radicalisation of the INC, with Jawaharlal Nehru and, the future fascist Japanese collaborator, Subhas Chandra Bose emerging as the faces of this new generation. Liberals and the princes, in particular, were dismayed by developments, but were temporarily powerless to counter the 'gospel of independence'. Officials in India meanwhile were somewhat puzzled at the deadline of 31 December 1929, but suspected that Congress wanted to time their actions to coincide with the publication of the Simon Report and speculated that the INC also needed time to 'foster, in their own words, a revolutionary mentality'. In London, with the Conservatives still in office, the Cabinet pledged Irwin 'every support' so that his Government would not 'be hustled into making concessions fundamentally unsound'.⁹⁹ Exactly when the Viceroy decided upon a course of action that he knew was 'likely to bring down the full weight of right-wing Tory

⁹⁸ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 25; Irwin to Peel, 27 March and Peel to Irwin, 17 Jan. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/nos. 17 and 2; Irwin to George V, 30 May 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 61; *The Times*, 1 Jan. 1929, p. 11.

⁹⁹ 'Telegram from Viceroy, Home Department, to Secretary of State for India', 19 Jan. 1929, circulated to Cabinet as Peel, 'The Political Situation in India', 23 Jan. 1929, CAB 24/201/CP 12; Cabinet Conclusions, 30 Jan. 1929, CAB 23/60/3.

wrath upon him' is not clear from his weekly letters to the secretary of state for India; which, if Curzon is to be believed, is where the 'true story of each Viceroy is ... written'.¹⁰⁰ What is clear, however, is that by the end of January 1929 Irwin knew that London's approach towards Indian affairs made supporters of the Raj 'indignant'.

Prior to his departure from South Africa, where he had been the Indian Agent-General since the inception of the position in 1927, Srinivasa Sastri, told an official that Birkenhead's tenure at the India Office had 'hopeless discredited' moderate nationalist politicians like himself, Sapru and Setalvad. Sastri was reported as being 'bitterly disappointed' over the widening communal divisions, but (with Muslims co-operating with the Simon Commission) the official speculated that perhaps the true concern was that London had 'stolen a march on the Hindu intelligentsia'.¹⁰¹ Others in the subcontinent preferred a more direct solution. It was a 'great injustice', Sir Umar Hayat Khan, a leading Punjab aristocrat and member of the Council of State, complained to Peel, on a visit to London, that Britain's determination to preserve order prohibited the loyal martial races from dealing with the 'clerks, vakils and other noxious classes'.¹⁰² Peel, however, welcomed news of more practical allies a few weeks later. Indian commercial interests in Bombay had banded together with their British counterparts to form a single political association all in an effort to combat the 'Bolshevik tendencies of professional Indian politicians'. Meanwhile, Congress leaders refused to condemn

¹⁰⁰ Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 25; G. Curzon, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses* (2 vols., London, 1925), II, p. 129.

¹⁰¹ 'Extract from private letter from Captain Clifford to Mr. Amery, dated 4th January 1929', enclosure to Peel to Irwin, 24 Jan. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 3.

¹⁰² Peel to Irwin, 9 May 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 18. Vakil was an Anglo-Indian term for native attorneys or barristers.

terrorism, which the secretary of state for India attributed to the impact of the Irish settlement.¹⁰³ It was also symptomatic of the battle raging within the INC between the ‘younger and wilder elements’ who favoured Independence and the ‘old leaders’, who fell among the ‘Dominion people’ and/or the ‘more moderate elements’. Irwin remained convinced that Birkenhead and the Cabinet had made a ‘mistake’ in not trying to rope in the Liberals last summer but, with the struggle for the soul of the INC likely to last for years, all was not lost. In the interim, however, Irwin advised, that the best policy was one of patience to allow Congress ‘time to realise into what an impossible position they have got themselves’.¹⁰⁴

Even among the ‘many leaders and schools of political opinion’ that repudiated non-cooperation, Irwin acknowledged, in a speech to the Legislative Assembly, at the end of January 1929, that

many of them openly profess distrust of the attitude of Great Britain. They say, and would have others believe, that hitherto Great Britain has given no sufficient proof of her intention to fulfil the pledge that Mr. Montague have on behalf of His Majesty’s Government in 1917, and that Great Britain is seeking to forget or deny the high policy there enshrined.

Acknowledging that actions speak louder than words, Irwin conceded that he would not be standing before the Assemblée, if he thought the ‘British people had withdrawn their hand from that solemn covenant’. Before turning to why the words of a viceroy traditionally could not dissipate the ‘black cloud’ that had ‘enshrouded so much of

¹⁰³ Peel to Irwin, 23 May 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Irwin to Peel, 9 and 17 Jan. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/nos. 2 and 4.

Indian political thought', it is necessary briefly to consider encouraging developments beyond the borders of British India.¹⁰⁵

Just before his summer of discontent with Birkenhead over Setalvad's suggestions, Irwin had been reminded by the King's private secretary of His Majesty's belief that the Princely States 'will always be an element of loyalty and strength to the British Raj'.¹⁰⁶ The Princes, at their annual meeting, the following February did not disappoint. Unexpectedly the Indian Chamber of Princes resolved on the first day that all future proceedings were to be open to press correspondents. Before 'dramatically' declaring the next day their unanimous opposition 'to any proposals having for their object the adjustment of equitable relations between the Indian States and British India unless such proposals proceed upon the initial basis of the British connexion'. In light of their treaties with the Crown, to say nothing of the extent of their states and populations, the Princes were unwilling to partake in (what the Maharajah of Alwar labelled) 'any wild theories'. 'We stand for evolution not revolution', proclaimed the Maharajah of Bikaner. Not surprisingly, an editorial welcoming the 'slow' but 'singularly impressive' entrance of the Princes into the ranks of the Raj's allies, soon appeared in the pages of *The Times*.¹⁰⁷

Whereas those sent to India throughout most of the nineteenth century took it for granted that India was governed in the interests of Britain, or, more specifically, Lancashire, the appointment of the Welby Royal Commission in 1895 marked the

¹⁰⁵ Irwin, *Indian Problems*, pp. 64-5.

¹⁰⁶ Stamfordham to Irwin, 22 May 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 33.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, 13 Feb. 1929, p. 13; Resolution moved by the Maharajah of Patiala quoted in *The Times*, 14 Feb. 1929, p. 14; Quoted in *Ibid*; *The Times*, 18 Feb. 1929, p. 13. The Indian states accounted for a third of India's territory and more than twenty percent of the total population.

beginning of the end of such attitudes, and throughout the early twentieth century there was an increasing recognition of India as an integral part of Britain's imperial system. Nevertheless, India's position within and connection to the Empire could not endure unless the Raj was brought into 'organic relation with the rest of the Empire'. If the Government of India was not to 'relapse into a subordinate department of the India Office', concluded one influential pre-war observer, the Viceroy 'must be the head of the Administration in the Parliamentary sense'.¹⁰⁸ Irwin, as has been seen, bristled under the tight leash imposed by Birkenhead, in particular. But, at the outset of his viceroyalty, he could not consistently count on being able to command a majority in the Legislative Assembly, which seemed to rule out Curzon's advice.¹⁰⁹ Viceroys traditionally were surrounded by a 'strictly non-Party atmosphere', a tradition Irwin maintained right up until polling day when he addressed his weekly letter to the under-secretary of state for India.¹¹⁰ The advent of a minority Labour government transformed matters. A weak secretary of state, coupled with the Labour Party's sensitivity on imperial matters, thereafter allowed Irwin to run roughshod over the Home government.¹¹¹ Speaking at the Chelmsford Club ahead of (what *The Times of India* termed a few days later) his 'fateful mission', Irwin's intentions were unmistakable:

¹⁰⁸ G. Curzon, *The Place of India in the Empire, Being an Address Delivered before the Philosophical Institute of Edinburgh on October 19, 1909* (London, 1909). Quotations are from pp. 7 and 19.

¹⁰⁹ Irwin to Birkenhead, 30 Dec. 1926, Halifax MSS, C152/2/?. One of Irwin's officials concluded that 'whatever they may call themselves, the real party division' within the Assembly is 'those who will always vote against the Government, those who will sometimes vote with the Government and those who are fairly reliable for Government votes. He estimates the anti-Government Party at 41, the doubtfuls at 13, and the pro-government (including the nominated and *ex-officio* Members) at 49.' Italics in original.

¹¹⁰ Irwin to Sir Arthur Hirtzell, 30 May 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 28.

¹¹¹ My view of Benn tends more towards that of Peele, 'A Note on the Irwin Declaration', pp. 331-2 rather than Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 26, who places too much emphasis on Irwin's letter to his father (Halifax MSS, C152/27/no. 164).

When I go to England I shall seek an opportunity for discussing with His Majesty's Government all the grave matters concerning India, including the honourable settlement of India's Constitution. It will be my duty to represent to His Majesty's Government the different standpoints of those who can speak for Indian political opinion ...in the spirit and to the end outlined in what are for me the two governing pronouncements of British hope and purpose- namely, the familiar Declaration of 1917 and the Instrument of Instructions which every Governor-General receives from the King when he assumes office. In this Instrument of Instruction his Majesty affirms: "Above all things it is our will and pleasure that the plans laid out by our Parliament for the progressive realization of responsible government in British India as an integral part of the Empire may come to fruition, to the end that British India may attain its due place among our Dominions."

The Times' correspondent in Bombay warned that 'moderate opinion' had come to regard the Viceroy as the 'country's chief ambassador'. Irwin's description of his role as partly that of an 'intermediary' before the Legislative Assembly five months earlier was no empty gesture.¹¹² For someone whose imperialism was of the 'messianic variety' prior to his appointment as Viceroy, Irwin appears—at first glance—to have undergone a dramatic transformation.

Although he had 'two, or perhaps three, principle objections' to Irwin's scheme, when told about it in Calcutta, Simon would less than a month later declare it his 'duty ... to acquiesce'. In trying to satisfy Gandhi's *personal* desire to be convinced of Britain's intention one-day to implement Home Rule, Simon believed, the Viceroy's actions were 'truest statesmanship' but worried that his plan amounted 'to giving the authors of the threat what they want'.¹¹³ That maybe, but the Viceroy's intention at this point was not about Gandhi. Irwin, after reading the second volume of Lord Ronaldshay's *Life of Lord*

¹¹² Quoted in *The Times*, 29 and 21 June 1929, pp. 12 and 13, respectively. Irwin, *Indian Problems*, p. 66. A viceroy's other duty was to uphold 'due respect for the law'.

¹¹³ Roberts, '*The Holy Fox*', p. 17; Irwin to Simon, 16 February and Simon to Irwin, 14 March 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/30.

Curzon, told his father that democracy ‘whether final or not, it is an inevitable phase’ in the history of India. Before he ever set foot on the subcontinent, the Viceroy, then Edward Wood, had expressed a desire to ‘avoid the mistake of endeavouring to withhold a concession ultimately inevitable until it has been robbed by delay of most of its usefulness and of all its grace’.¹¹⁴ His previous attempt thwarted by Birkenhead, Irwin hoped to induce the more moderate elements into co-operating with the Central Government, thereby leaving the extreme-wing of the INC to ‘hav[ing] made their beds so must they lie on them.’ Eager to learn the ‘mind of the Olympians at home about our affairs’, Irwin, having been warned by the editor of *The Times* of the ‘abysmal ignorance’ he would encounter, returned to Britain ready for ‘a long up-hill course of primary education’.¹¹⁵

Arriving on 13 July 1929, Irwin meet ‘immediately’ with Benn and prime minister Ramsay MacDonald to discuss informally the documents he had brought from India, which included ‘drafts of imaginary letters’ to be exchanged between Simon and MacDonald, written by the Viceroy and his officials.¹¹⁶ Simon’s letter drew attention to the impossibility of the Statutory Commission ignoring the Butler Report and its findings on the relationship of the Princely States to the Raj. In light of their stand against the excesses of the INC, not surprisingly, Irwin saw the States assuming ‘greater

¹¹⁴ Irwin to his father, 28 Aug. 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/27; Cmd. 1679, pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁵ Irwin to Peel, 13 February 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 8; Irwin to his father, 20 May 1929, Halifax MSS C152/27/no. 161.

¹¹⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, this paragraph is based on Wedgewood Benn, ‘Narrative of events leading up to the publication of the letters between Sir J. Simon and the Prime Minister, and of the Viceroy’s Statement’, 4 November 1929, CAB 24/206/CP 307.

prominence'.¹¹⁷ In order to facilitate this, the letter suggested that London hold a 'tripartite conference' with representatives from both British India and the Indian states to discuss the 'provisional conclusions' of the Simon Commission before Parliamentary approval of the 'final proposals' was sought. The Prime Minister's letter would of course accept Simon's recommendations. To assuage sceptics, both in Britain and India, of the government's intention to fulfil Montagu's 1917 pledge, Irwin suggested that the letter also include a statement along the lines of 'India shall, through the realisation of responsible government, be enabled to obtain in due season recognition as a self-governing Dominion'. Initially, neither Reading nor (provided party leaders were consulted) Simon raised any objections. In late July, after listening to the Viceroy's description of the political situation, the Cabinet endorsed his plan.¹¹⁸ After further informal talks between Irwin, Benn and Simon over the exact wording of the letters, they were sent to the Prime Minister on 31 July. Ultimately, following further assurances from Irwin and officials in India that Irwin's policy was well worth the risk, MacDonald decided on 19 September to proceed with an exchange of letters.¹¹⁹ The examination of 'draft constitutional proposals' was dropped from the agenda for the Conference; presumably in answer to criticism like that voiced by the ex-governor of the Punjab and current governor of the United Provinces, Sir Malcolm Hailey, who worried the original

¹¹⁷ Irwin to Simon, 16 Feb. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/30.

¹¹⁸ The 'Narrative of events' gives the meeting date as 25 July; while elsewhere it is the next day. Cabinet Conclusions, 26 July 1929, CAB 23/61/31.

¹¹⁹ The Governor of Madras and acting Viceroy, Viscount Goschen, to Irwin, 8 and 14 Aug. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/28; particularly the enclosures to the second letter. The delay was also a consequence of the principal players being absent from London for the final two weeks of August.

invitation was not 'quite as full-hearted' as he thought Irwin intended. Moreover, Hailey continued:

The invitation to the Conference does not seem to me to make it clear that the whole range of subjects will be discussed (and not only the position and the Indian States, &c.) and that leaders of all sides will be invited. These may be only verbal cavillings, but when you take a step of this importance, it is a pity to fail of effect owing to suspicion that your offer is half-hearted.¹²⁰

Reading was shown the new drafts in person, while copies were sent to Simon and Baldwin, who was holidaying in France. Unable to contact most of his shadow cabinet, including Birkenhead and Winston Churchill, who were in America, Baldwin nevertheless concurred, promising MacDonald that he 'may rely on my doing all that is in my power to secure the unanimous support of my party'.¹²¹ Murmurs of dissent, however, began emanating from both Reading and the Simon Commission, who now questioned whether a statement on Dominion status was wise. Ignoring the 'held strongly' beliefs of Irwin and Goschen that the statement needed to be made by the prime minister in light of the looming threat of non-cooperation and non-payment of taxes, to say nothing of the belief held throughout India that the British people planned to renege on Montagu's promise, the Cabinet decided that the Viceroy would make an announcement concerning Dominion status 'immediately' upon his return to India.¹²² Although haggling over the exact wording remained, Irwin sailed for India on 10 October having achieved his objective, though not without cost(s).

¹²⁰ Hailey to Irwin, 8 Aug. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/28

¹²¹ Baldwin to MacDonald, 21 Sept. 1929, reproduced as appendix III, Benn, 'Narrative of events', CP 307.

¹²² Cabinet Conclusions, 25 Sept. 1929, CAB 23/61/35.

In announcing that London intended to hold a round table conference, the British government was tacitly admitting that the Simon Commission had in fact been ‘effectively boycotted’. Despite its voluminous length, a considerable amount of the opinion of those Indians responsible for the limited successes associated with the Montague-Chelmsford reforms would be absent from the Simon Report. The INC also officially ‘maintained [its] silence’. Opinion in India was divided over what impact the government’s new Indian policy would have. Hailey worried that the prime minister’s letter lacked the ‘attitude of surrender’ that would allow Motilal Nehru to convince the INC at its December meeting to cease ‘hostilities pending negotiations’, though the governor of the Punjab, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, wondered whether he might be forced into co-operation if his followers began ‘veneering off’ into the camp of his son and the other ‘advocates of Independence’.¹²³ Obviously, warned Benn, the political situation facing the Viceroy on his return was not ‘bright’. Concluding his memorandum, the secretary of state for India, in a very Irwin-esque phrase, wrote:

It is inconceivable that the settled and permanent policy of any British Government should be to hold India by force *without attempting to win to the side of Government the support of thinking leaders of Indian opinion.*

Cabinet approval of Irwin’s plan, which it noted merely ‘offered a hope of improvement,’ came less than a week before the *Sunday Times* broke the story, precipitating a crisis within the Tory party.¹²⁴

¹²³ Wedgewood Benn, ‘Indian Political Situation’, 3 October 1929, CAB 24/206/CP 266; Hailey and de Montmorency to Irwin, 8 August 1929, enclosure with Goschen to Irwin, 14 August 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/28.

¹²⁴ Benn, ‘Indian Political Situation’, CP 266 (my italics); Cabinet Conclusions, 7 Oct. 1929, CAB 23/62/37; Roberts, ‘*The Holy Fox*’, p. 28.

Irwin's declaration that India's attainment of 'Dominion status' was 'implicit in the declaration of 1917' was, as Jawaharlal Nehru later wrote, an 'ingeniously worded announcement which could mean much or very little'.¹²⁵ Although George V thought the draft statement he saw 'excellent', particularly as it sought to 'associate the Indian Princes with the problem', to the rank and file of the Conservative Party, Irwin was on the verge of further perpetuating the 'dreadful mistakes made in the Montagu era'. Having underestimated the depth of die-hard opposition, and with his own position as party leader weakened by losses in two general elections, using Simon's recent opposition as a pretext, Baldwin appealed to the Labour Government to 'avert ... disaster' of Indian matters potentially entering the 'field of party controversy'. Benn sent the Viceroy a private and personal telegram at 3:00 a.m., but it lacked Birkenhead-like instructions to delay the announcement (until the prime minister returned from America). Knowing that his secretary of state would stand by him 'absolutely', Irwin refused to budge. Besides, chided the Viceroy, delay 'at the eleventh hour when the atmosphere is one of intense expectancy would inevitably arouse immediate suspicions and incur great risk of spoiling the entire effect'.¹²⁶ The Cabinet did not demur.¹²⁷ Having failed to persuade the government, on the night before the declaration would be formally made public, Baldwin personally telegraphed Irwin imploring him to stop

¹²⁵ *The Times*, 1 Nov. 1929, p. 16; Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 195.

¹²⁶ Stamfordham to Irwin, 5 Oct. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 52; Earl Winterton to Irwin, 28 Sept. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/28; Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 28; Baldwin to (acting prime minister) Philip Snowden, 28 Oct. 1929, appendix VII, CP 307; Benn to Irwin and Irwin to Benn, 29 Oct. 1929, appendix IX, CP 307.

¹²⁷ Benn, 'Narrative of Events', CP 307. The Cabinet agenda simply notes that there was a 'question to be raised by the Secretary of State for India'. No other information was recorded. Cabinet Conclusions, 30 Oct. 1929, CAB 23/62/42.

before (in the words of Lord Salisbury) ‘the party will be shaken to its centre’. Whereas the Viceroy sent the Secretary of State for India ‘rather an uncompromising telegram’, replying to Baldwin, whom Andrew Roberts termed Irwin’s ‘political mentor, father-figure, Party leader, close friend and the man to whom he owed his Viceroyalty’, the Viceroy simply conveyed his polite regrets. Leaving aside the fact that Irwin had been leaking details of the announcement to various moderate politicians ever since his return, as he explained to his father, outside of ‘bayonets’, Britain’s ‘only solid asset’ in perpetuating the Raj was actually implementing the ‘hastily given pledges’ of 1917. Perplexed at the ‘political storm’ he precipitated at home, Irwin was also caught somewhat off-guard by the reaction of political India to his declaration.¹²⁸

It was expected that moderate opinion would be strengthened by the viceregal announcement that India would ultimately achieve ‘Dominion Status’. Irwin, nevertheless, was under no illusion as to the continued difficulty of forging the ‘compulsory partnership between Great Britain and India’.¹²⁹ Opinion in India was generally favourable to the so-called Irwin Declaration, in large part because outside ‘a small band of irreconcilables’, Irwin explained to the King, most Indians understood ‘Dominion Status’ to actually mean ‘Dominion Status with reservations’, i.e. diarchy. A meaning opposite to how the term was understood within the Anglo-world. Irwin was optimistic, but worried about the damage ‘imprudent speech in England’ could cause.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Quoted in Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 29; Irwin to Benn, 31 Oct. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 31; Irwin to Viscount Halifax, 4 Nov. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/27/no. 166;

¹²⁹ ‘Note by Lord Irwin on his Statement’, undated but written early Oct. 1929, appendix V, CP 307.

¹³⁰ Irwin to George V, 6 Nov. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 64; Irwin to Benn, 6 Nov. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 32

Parliamentary debate, however, produced a 'rather curious' effect in India. Some Indian politicians concluded the Irwin Declaration must be 'rather' good as 'it has the effect of annoying Birkenhead and Lloyd George'.¹³¹ A pleasant surprise no doubt, but the intention behind the Declaration was far more cunning. Two days after informing the president of the Legislative Assembly of his plan, Vithalbhai Patel reported that Irwin indeed 'had placed Congress on the horns of a dilemma'. London had disregarded the demand put forth by Congress for the granting of Dominion Status ahead of any conference, but to ignore the Irwin Declaration Patel predicted would likely split Congress, leaving the extremist faction isolated (possibly for the foreseeable future).¹³² Irwin's announcement, reported the director of public information for the Central Government, John Coatman, not only satisfied the 'great majority of Indian-owned newspapers ... but has to a certain extent even captured their imagination'. A special correspondent for *The Guardian*, writing from New Delhi, noted not only the friendliness of 'even the most extreme newspaper' but also the enthusiasm displayed by the *Allahabad Leader*, the *Calcutta Bengali* and *Bombay's Daily Mail*. Somewhat unexpectedly, continued Coatman, the European section of the press was now unanimous in their support of the Viceroy. One of the *Times of India's* journalists, quoting Curzon's former private secretary, Sir Walter Lawrence, declared that 'great and able as he was, Lord Curzon would not have been able to cope with the unprecedented situation in India as Lord Irwin has done.' Naoroji Dumasia then posed the question of

¹³¹ Irwin to Viscount Halifax, 12 Nov. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/27/no. 167.

¹³² 'Note by Lord Irwin on his Statement', undated but written early Oct. 1929, appendix V, CP 307; Irwin to Benn, 31 Oct. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 31.

the hour: 'Are we Indians to seize the great opportunity offered ... or shall we throw it away as Gandhi threw away the opportunity of peace in 1921. Surely we shall not be such fools twice'. In issuing his Declaration, Irwin brought about a 'complete change' in the Indian political world, but would it survive the inevitable counterpunch from Congress?¹³³

Initial signs were promising. Parliamentary debates in Britain did not alter the enthusiasm of the Raj's various 'friends'. Congress meanwhile remained mired, searching for a compromise position that would not completely rule out co-operation with the Government. 'If they fail in this difficult task,' Irwin predicted, 'they will either have to surrender to [Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and their] young men or split Congress'.¹³⁴ Very quickly, however, Irwin learned that the leadership of the INC intended 'to make the position of England as difficult as possible'. Less than three weeks after the publication of the Irwin Declaration, the authors of the so-called Delhi Manifesto, which issued within days of the Viceroy's statement set forth Congress' three conditions for co-operation, confirmed that their position stood unchanged.¹³⁵ Gandhi's attitude would be crucial. However, in the weeks ahead of the annual Congress meeting, Irwin received somewhat troubling news from some 'American friends':

if the Government mean business, why not convince me [Gandhi] and why not make a private statement to a few representative Indian leaders. If Mr.

¹³³ Unless otherwise indicated all quotations in this section are from 'Extract from a letter from Mr. Coatman', 7 Nov. 1929, circulated to Cabinet as Wedgewood Benn, 'The Political Situation in India', 2 Dec. 1929, CAB 24/207/CP 351; *The Guardian*, 5 Nov. 1929, p. 11; *The Times of India*, 29 Nov. 1929, p. 7. Also see note 74.

¹³⁴ Private and personal telegrams from the Viceroy, 17 and 26 Nov. 1929, circulated to Cabinet as Benn, 'The Political Situation in India', CP 351, respectively.

¹³⁵ 'Note of an interview with Mr. V.J. Patel on 5th November 1929' enclosure to Irwin to Benn, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 32; *The Times*, 19 Nov. 1929, p. 15.

MacDonald would wire the Viceroy a definite promise of Dominion Status at the Round Table Conference and send a pledge that the Labour Government would stake its political life upon that promise, I would be satisfied¹³⁶

Asking for the moon probably would have been more promising. Nevertheless, Irwin met with leading Indian politicians on the eve of the Lahore Congress but found both Gandhi and Motilal Nehru ‘very intractable’. Neither the Viceroy nor the trinity of Sapru, Jinnah and Patel were able to persuade them that the conference had to ‘examine the real difficulties that everybody knew to exist in the way of complete realisation of proclaimed British policy’. To the disgust of their Indian colleagues, Nehru and Gandhi would not budge from their stance that a round table conference could consider nothing but the specific details of a Dominion status constitution. Irwin, however, still held out some hope that during the days ahead Congress would devise a ‘temporising formula’ that left their hands relatively free.¹³⁷

At Lahore, Congress undertook the ‘momentous’ step of overwhelmingly reaffirming its support for complete independence, which was to be won through a new campaign of non-cooperation directed by Gandhi. However, the alliance between Gandhi and, the incoming president of the INC, Jawaharlal Nehru, proved, as Irwin predicated, too much for some. Thirty members, including two ex-presidents, resigned their positions within the INC, and formulated plans to form a new party. Congress, warned *The Times*’ special correspondent, at the end of 1929, had gone beyond the Calcutta resolution of the previous year and had effectively ‘return[ed] to the line held

¹³⁶ Quoted in Irwin to Benn, 12 Dec. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 36.

¹³⁷ Irwin to George V, 26 Dec. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 66.

after the Nagpur Congress in 1920'.¹³⁸ Furthermore, reversing previous policy, the Lahore Congress also called upon the Princes to implement responsible government within their states.¹³⁹ As Gandhi and other leaders began planning for the imminent campaign of non-cooperation, all Congressmen were ordered to resign from the Legislative Assembly and the provincial council in Bengal. Developments that the broader populace, if reports from the United Province held true for other regions, took little notice of only months earlier. The Raj had bemoaned the indecisive nature of moderate Indians ever since the emergence of terrorism in the winter of 1906-7. Events at Lahore, Irwin heard through the grapevine, convinced Sapru that 'the enemies of India are not in England but are to be found among our own people. Between them and us henceforth it must be a war of extermination.' Irwin assured London that moderate opinion throughout India would be stirred by 'Jawaharlal's vision of an ideal future'.¹⁴⁰ Spurred on by the coalescing of moderate opinion, the Viceroy too was fed up with the absolutist stance displayed by Gandhi and the elder Nehru and was anxious to demonstrate that Government no longer 'intend[ed] to stand [such] nonsense'.¹⁴¹

Although it took longer than anticipated for the commercial community to cease funding agitation, the second non-cooperation campaign unfolded largely as expected.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ D. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929-1942* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 41; *The Times*, 2 Jan. 1930, p. 12; *The Times*, 27 Dec. 1929, p. 10.

¹³⁹ Previously, Congress had always maintained that the future governance of the states was to be resolved by the princes and their subjects. I. Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 77.

¹⁴⁰ Irwin to Benn, 26 Nov. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 34; Copland, *Princes of India*, p. 28; Quoted in Irwin to Benn, 2 Jan. 1930, Halifax MSS, C152/6/no. 1.

¹⁴¹ Irwin to George V, 26 Dec. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 66; Irwin to Stamfordham, 6 Jan. 1930, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 68. On the second non-cooperation movement, see R. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-1940* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 165-86.

¹⁴² Irwin to George V, 5 Feb. 1931 and 24 April 1930, Halifax MSS, C152/1/nos. 100 and 75, respectively.

Gandhi and the Nehrus steadfastly rebuffed efforts at mediation made by friends of the Raj but the failure of their larger campaign was almost a foregone conclusion given the inherent weakness of Congress' position vis-à-vis the Raj and its numerous bulwarks. That Gandhi negotiated personally with the Viceroy ahead of an inevitable 'temporary truce' sounds more like spin than 'tough political horse trading', to use Andrew Robert's phrase. Regardless, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact aroused the absolute fury of Winston Churchill and the other Diehards within the Conservative party.¹⁴³ The Viceroy, unlike the Diehards, understood that the second non-cooperation campaign was but the first skirmish in a 'test of strength', with an opponent 'still intoxicated with ideas of its own power', that would determine the future of the sub-continent. No longer could Britons govern India '[un]disturbed by a bloody Indian', as Churchill put it. Ultimately, events beyond Irwin's control thwarted his plan to 'carry through a policy of wise and liberal reform'.¹⁴⁴

Nineteen days after he sailed for India, Britain experienced what contemporary American opinion terms an act of asymmetric warfare—the crash of the American stock market—that necessitated, less than a year after the Round Table Conference that Congress boycotted, the formation of a National Government in which MacDonald and his wee band of National Labour MPs became dependent upon the Conservative party for their remaining offices. Had the minority Labour government persisted, with the

¹⁴³ *Statement issued on 5th September by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. M.R. Jayakar, of the Course of their Conversations with the Congress Leaders, July – September 1930*, Cmd. 3728, (London, 1930); Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, pp. 27-30; Col. Sir Clive Wigram (assistant private secretary to George V) to Irwin, 27 March 1931, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no 84; Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 38. On the Diehard movement, see Stewart, *Burying Caesar*.

¹⁴⁴ Irwin to George V, 24 April 1930, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no. 75; Quoted in Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 41

King deprecating the position adopted by ‘retired die hards from India’ and Lloyd George animated to keep Labour in office partly out of fear over what a Conservative government ‘might do about India’, to say nothing of *The Times*’ support, a revised Government of India Act would undoubtedly have been enacted.¹⁴⁵ Even if Lloyd George returned to his mischievous ways of years past, Baldwin and the party whips only needed to convince forty-two conservatives MPs to abstain to ensure whatever reforms Irwin sought passed in the House of Commons. On the first of two occasions when Baldwin risked his political life to support Irwin, he declared in the House of Commons: ‘If ever the day comes when the party which I lead ceases to attract to itself men of the calibre of Edward Wood, then I have finished with my party’. Baldwin presumably therefore would have ensured that any legislation passed, thereby leaving the diehards and the *Daily Mail* to fume.¹⁴⁶

In the traditional historiography, outside of the truce negotiated by Irwin, the years 1930 to 1934 were characterised by the ‘most widespread and prolonged confrontation between the forces of Indian nationalism and the British Raj that ever occurred’. Less than two months into the non-cooperation campaign, Irwin told Benn, that ‘the present position ... must be transformed if we are not ultimately going to lose the big stake for which we are playing, namely, the retention of India within the Empire’.¹⁴⁷ No one, of course, can definitely say what would have happened had Irwin been able to enact his desired reforms, but, having been shown a copy of a memorandum

¹⁴⁵ Wigram to Irwin, C152/1/no 84.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Roberts, *The Holy Fox*, p. 30. Party whips estimated that Baldwin had the support on this occasion of at least 170 Conservative MPs.

¹⁴⁷ Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, p. 41; Irwin to Wedgwood Benn, 8 May 1930, MSS Eur C152/6, no 26.

that was to be submitted by the governor of Madras to the Simon Commission, one politician angrily declared 'your memorandum has killed us; it has given all that is wanted'.¹⁴⁸ Gandhi, after regaling some of Irwin's 'American friends' with his thoughts on why the Government needed to convince him of its sincerity, went on to indicate his willingness 'to fight the National Congress single-handed' if necessary. Are these the words (to paraphrase Churchill) of a half-naked, seditious, fakir or of the greatest ally the Raj never had?

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Goschen to Irwin, 13 Jan. 1929, enclosure to Irwin to Simon, 18 Jan. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/30. Madras was one of two provinces where the 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had been a success.

4. CONCLUSIONS

‘Today we can have the greatest failures or the greatest triumph—as we choose’, was Winston Churchill’s peroration to the people of Dundee in late 1918. The immediate post-war period was—to paraphrase another contemporary—quite simply glorious. Two years later, at the 1921 Imperial Conference, the Australian prime minister, ‘Billy’ Hughes marvelled: ‘What remains to us? We are like so many Alexanders? What other worlds have we to conquer?’ Such sentiments were perfectly in keeping with the scale of Britain’s victory in the Great War, which at a minimum was as extensive, and fortuitous, as that of 1763.¹ Together with Britain’s continued maritime supremacy, another ‘Antonine Age’ seemed at hand. Lester Pearson, then a young historian, at the University of Toronto, confidently predicted in 1927 the ‘successful solution of Britain’s Imperial problems’ by century’s end.²

Yet, if one picks up the ‘sequel’ to *Britain’s Imperial Century, 1815-1914* (1976), it will probably come as something of a surprise to read Ronald Hyam’s striking

¹ Quoted in R. Churchill and M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, IV: The Stricken World, 1916-1922* (Boston, 1966), p. 172; Acting minister in Tehran, Sir Percy Cox to Lord Curzon, 13 Jan. 1919, quoted in J. Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East, 1916-19* (London, 1999), p. 195; *Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India, held in June, July and August, 1921*, Cmd. 1474 (London, 1921), p. 23; J. Darwin, ‘An Undeclared Empire: The British in the Middle East, 1918-39’, in R. King and R. Kilson, eds., *The Statecraft of British Imperialism: Essays in Honour of Wm. Roger Louis* (London, 1999), p. 163. Also see E. Goldstein, ‘The Eastern Question: The Last Phase’, in M. L. Dockrill and J. Fisher, eds., *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Peace without Victory?* (Houndmills, 2001), p. 141 and G. Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War, Myths and Realities* (London, 2001).

² J. Ferris, ‘It Is Our Business in the Navy to Command the Seas’: The Last Decade of British Maritime Supremacy, 1919-1929’, in G. Kennedy and K. Neilson, eds., *Far-Flung Lines: Essays on Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman* (London, 1996), p. 125; J. Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 359; Quoted in R. Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 1.

opening assertion that ‘as the 1920s opened, Britain ... had become, in short, a declining, dysfunctional empire on the road to liquidation’. Perhaps he missed the call to write the history of empire with a ‘greater recognition of nuance, complexity, ambiguity, paradox and uncertainty’.³ Then again, Hyam immediately backpedals: insisting that his assertion ‘was not, of course, immediately apparent’. However, this, too, rings disingenuous. One would be hard pressed to find a contemporary Englishman, even in the 1930s, who believed that, to paraphrase Carl Bridge, the end of empire would occur in their lifetime; a sentiment lamentedly shared by prominent colonial nationalists. Imperialism remained an *idée reçue*, an outlook only reinforced by the continued *expansion* of colonial regimes across Africa. Furthermore, prominent Tories foresaw the Raj continuing for another half a millennia, perhaps even slightly longer.⁴ And yet, this is *supposed* to be the ‘period immediately before decline began to register’. Declinism may have had a significant impact on the writing of twentieth-century British history, but is now long-past passé.⁵ Hyam’s attempt to illustrate the ‘dysfunctional nature of the empire after 1918’ employs a similar sleight of hand.

Of the ‘five flawed projects’ discussed, three—Indirect Rule in Africa, the alleged ‘special relationship’ with America and curiously Charles Ogden’s ‘Basic’

³ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. xi and 1; D. Cannadine, “‘Big Tent’ Historiography: Transatlantic Obstacles and Opportunities in Writing the History of Empire’, *Common Knowledge*, xi (2005), p. 389.

⁴ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, p. 1; C. Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New York, 1986), pp. viii and 6; J. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 8; A. Roberts, *‘The Holy Fox’: The Life of Lord Halifax* (London, 1997; originally published London, 1991), p. 19.

⁵ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, p. xiii; P. Finney, ‘The Romance of Decline: The Historiography of Appeasement and British National Identity’, *Electronic Journal of International History*, i (2000), [SAS-Space Archive](#); Special issue of the *International History Review* on ‘The decline of Great Britain’, xiii (1991).

English, a scheme only published in 1929— failed long after the 1920s. Admittedly, the viceroy's palace in New Delhi is a more ambiguous example, partly because planning/construction began before the Great War and human error led to a mistake in the gradient of the ascending processional avenue. But to suggest that this 'vista was to be the [project's] principal visual excitement' surely misses the point. Building a new capital city, like the construction of Government House in Calcutta a century earlier, conveyed a symbolism, if not an outright demonstration of imperial confidence, that not even a bunged avenue can obscure. That this new capital lasted 'little more than a decade', says Hyam, is 'one of the greater ironies of history'. Such a conclusion is only possible if one writes imperial history without any consideration of contingency; having weathered Congress' second non-cooperation campaign, the Raj's last capital likely would have persisted had it not been for an even greater cataclysm.⁶ By contrast, Britain's new dominion capital at Canberra was completed less than five years before Anglo-Dominion relations were dramatically reshaped; Australia and New Zealand's

⁶ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 12-29; Section 3.2; C. Bayly and T. Harper, *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, MA, 2006). A similar argument can also be made for Hyam's fifth example, Kenya. That the country could ever have become a proper, that is to say a white, Dominion is doubtful, to say the least. But a future as 'an Asian grand-daughter colony', to borrow a phrase from Winston Churchill, was not an impossibility. While it is certainly true that Kenyan settlers had, said one viceregal correspondent, 'something of the grim "Ulster" spirit' about them, it is perhaps less an issue (as Hyam suggests) of 'however, well-intentioned, successive British governments ... [being] unequal to the challenge' as a *Conservative* government hesitating at adding yet another layer of complexity to an empire, whose 'constitution ... [already] must become daily more baffling and bewildering to the foreign observer'. Accepting the equality of British Indians in Kenya, which in light of the policy Irwin was pursuing in India vis-à-vis Dominionhood was not as farfetched as it might sound, would have led at a minimum to 'two separate equations in different parts of the Empire'. But the impact would have extended far beyond India as Kenya had become a 'test case' of whether British Indians were equal in status to those of other subjects. Quoted in Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, p. 20; C.F. Andrews to Viceroy, 12 Oct. 1926, enclosed in Lord Irwin to Lord Birkenhead, 11 Nov. 1926, British Library, Halifax MS, MSS Eur, C152/2/no. 35; Irwin to Birkenhead, 24 Nov. 1926, Halifax MSS, C152/2/no. 37; Viscount Peel to Irwin, 27 Feb. 1929, Halifax MSS, C152/5/no. 8; Birkenhead to Irwin, 21 June 1928, Halifax MSS, C152/4/no. 22.

refusal to ratify the 1931 Statute of Westminster until respectively 1942 and 1947, notwithstanding. Both construction projects have been taken as evidence that ‘empires in decline often undergo a resurgence of cultural vigour before the end’. Declinists are quick to seize upon changes, whether it is in New Delhi’s imperial role or the somewhat natural drifting away of the Dominions from their mother country, to cite but two examples, to turn the ‘inter-war world into a time of tragedy, when appearances misled, when power was a pretence, and when men were hollow’. But these same changes can also be interpreted as evidence of the continued vitality of British imperialism during the 1920s.⁷

Such an argument stands in stark contrast, not only to the Declinist school alluded to in the Introduction, but also to the idea that the twentieth century had an ‘over-arching historical framework,’ the struggle against totalitarianism; which is alleged to have begun in 1914 and ended in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall.⁸ There is no question that a new world was to follow the Great War, too many of Sir Edward Grey’s lamps lay smashed in the ‘graveyard of empires’ for it to be otherwise. But here again the issue of contingency arises.⁹ Nevertheless, Britain is said to be ‘weaker, its rivals stronger and more worrying’ Also doubtful, unless one focuses unduly on the nervous Nellies within the official mind, is Hyam’s envisioning of the immediate post-

⁷ A.J. Christopher, *The British Empire at Its Zenith* (London, 1988), p. x; G. Martel, ‘The Meaning of Power: Rethinking the Decline and Fall of Great Britain’, *International History Review*, xiii (1991), pp. 666 and 663.

⁸ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 37-8. As an aside, would not 1991 and the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics be a more appropriate end date?

⁹ J. Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405* (New York, 2008), p. 369; Z. Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919-1933* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 809-10 and 816.

war years as the stuff of ‘near-nightmares for those in charge of the empire’.¹⁰ That localised, ephemeral revolts sprang up across the globe was not exactly surprising. Between 1915 and 1918, Britain had been obligated to mobilise her resources on a scale not seen for over a century. Such was the geopolitical challenge posed by the Second Reich, “‘our enemy of enemies,” the equivalent of France in the eighteenth century and Spain in the sixteenth’, the historian J.A. Cramb had warned in 1913.¹¹ However, one should not overstate the comparison. Britannia found herself in a far better position in 1919 than she had been in 1815, in large part because she had been able to draw on imperial (military) resources to act as a terrene power on the Continent. Furthermore, as the Great War drew to a close, the Dominions were poised to assume a far greater prominence in imperial policymaking than ever imaginable. The Committee of Prime Ministers, however, came to naught.¹² A development that would seem to bolster Hyam’s critique that the ‘theme of “revival” is not all that significant’ in John Gallagher’s influential *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire* (1982); possibly, he suggests, because the word was simply inserted into the essay’s title to distinguish it from Edward Gibbon’s even more famous *The Decline and Fall of the*

¹⁰ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 1 and 30-31. Compare, for example, the attitude of the Cabinet faction, led by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montague, with that of the Foreign Office during the latter stage of the long search for an Eastern Settlement. The former was indeed plagued by the stuff of nightmares, while the latter was unconcerned by the fact that ‘the Mussalmans would be sulky’. Quoted in S. Kelly, ‘How Far West?: Lord Curzon’s Transcaucasian (Mis)Adventure and the Defence of British India, 1918-23’, *International History Review*, xxxv (2013), p. 282.

¹¹ Quoted in John MacKenzie’s Introduction to D. Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester, 2006), x. Britain (as opposed to the British Empire) lost a staggering 723,000 men, or approximately one in every sixteen men aged fifteen to forty-nine. Casualties in the Second World War by contrast were a mere 270,000. Losses in the Great War remain more than double those of the Second World War even when the significantly higher civilian losses in the latter are accounted for. D. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1991), p. 105.

¹² Martel, ‘The Meaning of Power’, pp. 686-7; Section 2.1.

Roman Empire (1776-88).¹³ Revival, according to Hyam, was simply impossible. Britain's imperial system was 'dysfunctional' after 1918.¹⁴ A more generous assessment holds that Britons failed to take full advantage of the 'extremely advantageous position' described above. Could things have turned out differently? Hyam's categorical rejection—'Success is not a theme ... that history can endorse for the twentieth-century British Empire'—is deeply flawed, owing to teleological objections as well as its disregard of a key juncture in British imperial history.¹⁵

In the space of half a page, an assessment of the 'crisis of empire' gives way to the depression triggered by crash of the American stock market in the fall of 1929. What about the intervening period? If revival truly was impossible then skipping over more than half a decade is understandable, given Hyam's modest aim 'to give some idea of what empire was about'¹⁶ However, ranking racism (without any consideration of the modifying effects of class and/or Britishness), together with Zionism, amongst the 'key ideas' and/or 'dominant preoccupations of the period' is somewhat dubious, particularly when talking about the mid-to-late 1920s. 'Keep[ing] the natives loyal and contented at the same time that one absolutely refuses to hand over the keys to the citadel', on the

¹³ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, p. 34 n. 13.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 30. A generalisation that rests on brief discussions of: 'racism ... Zionism and the Palestine Mandate, nationalism, Commonwealth idealism and geopolitical problems'. For Hyam, it is 'painfully apparent that the survivors of the First World War were [condemned] to live out their careers through yet another world war and in economic decline.' Dropping *The Road to Decolonisation* in favour of a title like *Britain's Declining Empire, c.1940-1968* would have made for a far sounder book. Ibid., pp. 36-7.

¹⁵ Martel, 'The Meaning of Power', p. 691; Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 1 and 36. It is perhaps a bit of a stretch to claim (as Lukacs does) that the influx of cultured Europeans to America is 'perhaps comparable only to the Greek exodus to Rome two thousand years ago', but his broader point that cultural developments, together with the advent of quantum physics, point to the 1920s as being the century's 'only truly Modern Decade' is worth bearing in mind. J. Lukacs, *A Short History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 2013), pp. 60-61 and 212; italics in original.

¹⁶ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 36 and xii-xiii. The discussion referenced in note 14 largely, if not entirely, skips over this period.

other hand, had long been recognised as a, if not the, central crux of the twentieth century.¹⁷ Britons, as Section 3.1 argued, had some genuine success in co-opting segments of the Ceylonese populace into co-operating with imperial authorities, while Lord Irwin's Viceroyalty saw the Raj win the opening battle in what promised to be a sustained conflict between the Indian National Congress (INC) and its native opponents, only some of whom had genuine pro-British sympathies. In both cases, imperial authorities, unlike their Die-hard critics—such as Winston Churchill, who favoured the preservation of the Edwardian status quo (in India)—recognised the need to abandon the *Exclusionary Empire* of years gone by.¹⁸ Furthermore, as alluded to earlier, heeding *The Times*' warning that a 'New Way of Empire' was needed, a concerted effort was also made to accommodate the various, often divergent, wishes of the Dominions, a processes which ultimately culminated—arguably for the worst—in the 1931 Statute of Westminster. It was a system that enabled a further weakening of 'the fabric of the British Empire', charged an Australian diplomat.¹⁹ Almost regardless of developments abroad, a genuine imperial revival depended upon a concerted effort by metropolitan authorities; the will for which certainly seemed to exist, as evident by the fact that the 1920s were an 'age of Committees and Conferences'.²⁰ However, the resumption of quasi-Edwardian politics after 1922 ultimately had the effect of quashing a nascent,

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 37; Curzon to Arthur Balfour, 31 Mar. 1902, quoted in Kelly, 'How Far West?', p. 286. Also see D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London, 2001), particularly, pp. 6-9 and A. Rush, *Bonds of Empire: West Indians and Britishness from Victoria to Decolonization* (Oxford, 2011).

¹⁸ J. Greene, ed., *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900* (Cambridge, 2010).

¹⁹ *The Times*, 24 May 1916, p. 17; R.G. Casey to S.M. Bruce, 26 Apr. 1928, quoted in the introduction to M. Macmillan and F. McKenzie, eds., *Parties Long Estranged: Canada and Australia in the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver, 2003), p. 6.

²⁰ W.T. Furse to Sir Frederic Aykroyd, 1 June 1932, A[dvisory Council on Plant and Animal Products]Y 3/7.

albeit slightly incoherent, pro-Empire political movement. That Lord Beaverbrook's Empire Free Trade Crusade got tangled up with Die-hard opposition to constitutional change in India only further undermined his efforts. Nevertheless, the fact remains that under threat the Establishment closed ranks, thereby delaying a re-ordering of British political life until 1945.

It is at least conceivable that had Beaverbrook dislodged Stanley Baldwin from the leadership of the Conservative Party, the Crusade's message of imperial development would have resonated with the public. In addition to the wing of the Conservative Party who already favoured such a policy, namely Leo Amery and the sizable membership of the Empire Development Parliamentary Committee, the middle-classes by the late 1920s were becoming 'more technical, scientific and commercial'.²¹ Might another generation of polite and commercial people have taken root?²²

Moreover, in light of their island's long history, Britons could reasonably have expected that decades could pass before Germany *might* resurrect her hegemonic ambitions. But a second Pax Britannica was not to be. Another 'global catastrophe' occurred a mere decade after the official end of the Great War. Diplomatic histories have long accepted that the 1929 Wall Street crash marked the end of the post-war era, but its effects vis-à-vis the nascent revival of the British Empire are far less well known.²³

²¹ R. McKibbin, *Parties and People: England 1914-1951* (Oxford, 2010), p. 178. Also see 'The United Empire Anglers', which depicts Amery (as a fish) nibbling at Beaverbrook's line, *Punch*, 5 Mar. 1930, p. 255.

²² P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1989). America's prosperity during the 1920s is attributed to its burgeoning, soon to be dominant, middle class. Lukacs, *A Short History of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 61-2.

²³ R. Boyce, 'World Depression, World War: Some Economic Origins of the Second World War', in R. Boyce and E. Robertson, eds., *Paths to War: New Essays on the Origins of the Second World War* (New

In both Ceylon and India, and likely elsewhere, imperial authorities were not only effectively countering nationalist politicians, but were in the process of outflanking them by the late 1920s. Universal suffrage promised to topple the ‘strongly-fortified citadels of aristocracy and plutocracy’ to which Ceylonese politicians had become accustomed, while their Indian counterparts faced the terrifying prospect of being ‘given all that is wanted’.²⁴ But things did not turn out as planned. The crash of the American stock market brought an abrupt end to the economic boom that began in 1927, in the case of Ceylon ‘years of superabundant public revenue’ had rendered the island’s politics far less acrimonious.²⁵ Worsening economic conditions also disrupted political unity within Britain over the future of the Government of India Act. Lord Irwin’s plans for reforms on liberal lines (to sideline the INC) had substantial support at home, most notably that of George V and *The Times*, but also the minority Labour government and David Lloyd George, who reportedly feared what a Conservative government ‘might do about India’.²⁶ There was also reason to be hopeful, the 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford reforms had proven successful in two provinces, Madras and the Punjab. Having shored up support during a highly unusual visit home, Irwin departed England determined to play for what he later termed the ‘big stake ... namely, the retention of India within the Empire’. But the resumption of his vice-royalty coincided almost to the day with the

York, 1989), pp. 55 and 66. For the argument against another Thirty Years War, see P. Bell, *The Origins of the Second World War in Europe* (2nd edn., London, 1998), pp. 35-43.

²⁴ Quoted in *The Straits Times*, 15 Nov. 1929, p. 19; Quoted in Viscount Goschen to Lord Irwin, 13 Jan. 1929, enclosure to Irwin to Sir John Simon, 18 Jan. 1929, Halifax MS, MSS Eur, C152/30.

²⁵ R. Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain between the Wars* (London, 2009), p. xxi; ‘Despatch from the Governor of Ceylon to the Secretary of State for the Colonies’, 2 June 1929, CO 54\894\10, printed in *Ceylon: Correspondence Regarding the Constitution of Ceylon*, Cmd. 3419 (London, 1929).

²⁶ Col. Sir Clive Wigram, assistant private secretary to George V, to Irwin, 27 March 1931, Halifax MSS, C152/1/no 84.

Wall Street crash, an event that ultimately compelled the formation of a Conservative-dominated National Government, which in turn led to the Raj being plunged into a titanic confrontation with the forces of Indian nationalism.²⁷ Irwin's policy, like that of Sir Hugh Clifford in Ceylon, had remained part of the broader effort (discussed briefly in Part II) to democratise the empire. However, he largely abandoned the principle of *solvitur ambulando* in favour of an older tradition, pro-actively appeasing the *just* concerns of those who remained open to a continued connection with Britain and/or took pride in their Britishness. As for those nationalist politicians unwilling to be persuaded, Irwin had absolutely no compunction about utilising the Raj's extensive repressive measures.²⁸ Although their rhetoric demanded a craven surrender, probably not even the most radical members of the INC believed one was in the offing. What does that say about Hyam's assertions of a declining, dysfunctional empire?

Nor had Britons by the late 1920s any reason to even contemplate taking up Adolf Hitler's subsequent solution to recalcitrant, native nationalists: 'Shoot Gandhi, and if that does not suffice to reduce them to submission, shoot a dozen leading members of Congress; and if that does not suffice, shoot 200 and so on until order is established'. It would be a mistake, however, to think (as Niall Ferguson might) that this reluctance to

²⁷ Irwin to Wedgwood Benn, 8 May 1930, MSS Eur C152/6, no 26; D. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929-1942* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 41. Also see G. Stewart, *Burying Caesar: Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party* (London, 1999).

²⁸ P. Kennedy, 'The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy 1865-1939', *British Journal of International Studies*, ii (1976), pp. 195-6 and 206, in particular. Irwin's authoritative lay Christianity also contributed—in ways that are not well understood—to his steadfastness; in presuming to speak for all of India, the INC sought to negate 'the moral principle of choice, which logically required the possibility of wrong choices'. Relatedly, and, arguably, more importantly, their actions fundamentally threatened India's national cohesion, the preservation of which was one of Irwin's leading preoccupations throughout his (political) life. P. Williamson, 'Christian Conservatives and the Totalitarian Challenge, 1933-40', *English Historical Review*, cxv (2000), pp. 609, 623-5 and 636.

kill in defence of empire reflected a slackening of imperial ruthlessness.²⁹ Imperialism may well have worn an ever-more ‘elaborate fig-leaf’ after 1918, but imperial authorities did not shy away from military deployments, a war was being fought somewhere in the British Empire throughout the inter-war period.³⁰ Contemporary observers continued to regard Britain as a ‘formidable power whose enmity was to be avoided’.³¹ Hitler’s encounter with Tommies in Flanders had taught him that Britons’ tenacity and ruthless pursuit of victory remained unchanged from years gone by. Others drew more ominous conclusions. ‘We shall have to face the fact that the Government of the United Kingdom is preparing for a new international deal and a new balance of power ...’, warned the US State Department’s Western Europe division ahead of the 1932 Imperial Economic/Ottawa Conference.³² Obviously, the onset of the Great Depression affected British planning, but America’s official mind had a tendency to regard Britain as the ‘most ruthless and dangerous state on earth’.³³ (Contrary to what modern critics may think) British policymakers were neither blind nor obtuse; they were in fact the ‘true

²⁹ Quoted in N. Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York, 2004), pp. 279-80. Said ruthlessness may have wavered at Amritsar, but the need to safeguard the Royal Navy’s fuel supply saw a resumption of lethality in Mesopotamia in the early 1920s, to say nothing of British Somaliland or the subsequent point.

³⁰ W.R. Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919* (Oxford, 1967), p. 160; A. Clayton, ‘Deceptive Might: Imperial Defence and Security, 1900-1968’, in W.R. Louis and J. Brown, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 287-93.

³¹ J. Ferris, ‘The Greatest Power on Earth’: Great Britain in the 1920s’, *International History Review*, xiii (1991), p. 741. Also see D. Edgerton, *Warfare State Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge, 2006).

³² Quoted in Ferris, ‘The Greatest Power on Earth’: Great Britain in the 1920s’, pp. 742-3. Also see J. Strachey, *The Coming Struggle for Power* (London, 1932). Following Lenin’s *Imperialism* (1916), Strachey anticipated that the ‘epoch of imperialism’ was set to begin (as the division of the globe between rival empires was all but completed), with the Empire Free Trade Crusade being the British capitalist’s ‘most clear and explicit policy for ... reserve[ing] the vast natural resources, and the vast markets, of the British Empire for the exclusive exploitation of Empire entrepreneurs’. *Ibid.*, pp. 233 and 242.

³³ Ferris, ‘The Last Decade of British Maritime Supremacy’, p. 134.

children of Palmerston, Lord Salisbury's sons', and as such, were determined to make full use of their victory in the Great War to (paraphrase Jan Smuts) recast the Empire.³⁴

The significant attention devoted to Imperial development, along with efforts at fostering an Empire of the Air, were arguably the two most tangible signs of this modernising impulse during the mid-to-late 1920s. The latter would have rivalled, if not surpassed, sea power as a central pillar of empire, both in terms of deterrence/defence and facilitating intra-imperial communication.³⁵ Wireless telegraphy promised yet another level of integrating communications. Modernising Britain's imperial system, however, would not be quick; at the outset of this chapter, it was predicted that the process could take almost a century. Striking a new constitutional relationship with overseas Britons was a relatively easy matter, being largely completed by the end of the 1926 Imperial Conference. Similarly, the Empire Marketing Board's advertising campaigns began the integration of the colonial and metropolitan economies; in the space of a few years, imports of dried, foreign fruits had all but ceased. Britons could also look forward to year round supplies of fresh empire fruits and other food stuffs. As important as these developments were, the seeds of far greater changes were slowly taking root in Whitehall. Britain's relative economic decline would make the dependent empire more important than ever. As discussed above, the likelihood of faster, more

³⁴ J. Ferris, *The Evolution of British Strategic Policy, 1919-26* (Basingstoke, 1989), p. 51; Smuts, writing to Sir Robert Borden in 1922, quoted in *D[ocuments on] C[anadian] E[xternal] R[elations]* (27 vols., Ottawa, 1967), I, 1909-18, p. 309. Not surprisingly, Smuts primarily saw the process as a constitutional one, whose ultimate purpose was to bring about 'some indefinable organic union' of 'equal' states. Others, like Lord Curzon, sought to recast the frontier, in order to significantly enhance imperial security. Kelly, 'How Far West?', p. 279.

³⁵ J. Ferris, 'The Symbol and the Substance of Seapower: Great Britain, the United States and the One-Power Standard, 1919-1921', in B.J.C. McKercher, ed., *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920's: The Struggle for Supremacy* (Edmonton, 1990), p. 56.

reliable communications pointed to a diminished future for the ever-famous ‘men-on-the-spot’ as between 1903 and 1925 the Colonial Office’s staff increased almost four-fold.³⁶ More significantly, the scientific and technical work, beginning to be undertaken in the 1920s, often in conjunction with the Imperial Institute and other organisations, represented the first genuine effort at (re)vitalising the dependent Empire.³⁷ A commitment reaffirmed with the passage of the 1929 Colonial Development Act. From the West Indies to Fiji, and numerous points in between, there was the potential/existent to grow a *wide* variety of tropical commodities, foremost amongst these being long-staple cotton.³⁸ As Part I explained, Britons were training staff, beginning to systematically undertake the research necessary to develop the ‘veterinary, agricultural and mineral resources’ of the empire.³⁹

Of course, there had been setbacks. But the empire was, however, tentatively, being recast. By the late 1920s, Britons could unironically invoke Tennyson: ‘The old

³⁶ A. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 126-7. For more on Britain’s increasing financial and trade dependence on the Empire after 1914, see P. Cain and A. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (2nd edn., London, 2002).

³⁷ In the case of Fiji, for example, cotton had been introduced sometime during the eighteen-thirties and, within a few decades, wild cotton thrived on several islands. A Kew Gardens’ botanist, who visited the region in late 1859, early 1860, discovered that plantation grown cotton was flourishing, becoming almost a mono-culture by 1870. The subsequent collapse was caused less by falling prices, triggered by the reappearance of American cotton on world markets, than absentee planters and their insufficient knowledge of tropical agriculture. E. Stokes, ‘The Fiji Cotton Boom in the Eighteen-Sixties’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, ii (1968), pp. 165-77.

³⁸ A survey of *Tropical Agriculture*, from its establishment in 1924 to the early 1930s, illustrates the point again and again. Incidentally, unlike eighteenth-century sugar plantations, new economic development was more likely to dampen demands for (political) change than exacerbate matters, thanks in large part to Lord Lugard and other native advocates. Prosperity could also be expected to mollify existing colonial elites as it had done before 1914. J. Darwin, ‘Diplomacy and Decolonization’, *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, xxviii (2000), p. 11.

³⁹ Terms set by Lord Milner, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 Nov. 1920, quoted in *Report of a Committee on Research in the Colonies, appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, Cmd. 1472 (London, 1921).

order changeth, yielding place to [the] new'. A decade later that 'new' was dramatically different, owing to the rise of aggressive, predatory imperial powers in Europe and Asia. Imperial history needs to acknowledge 'elements of accident', like the Wall Street Crash, that result in 'historical trajectories not ultimately completed'.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ S. Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans* (Chicago, 2009), pp. 9-10. J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010) make a similar point on page eight.

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AY 3/7 Advisory Council on Plant and Animal Products

CAB 32 Imperial and Imperial War Conferences

CO 54 Ceylon, Original Correspondence

CO 323 Colonies, General: Original Correspondence

CO 537 Confidential General and Confidential Original Correspondence

CO 758 Empire Marketing Board, Original Correspondence

DSIR 36 Department of Scientific and Industrial Research

WO 106 Directorate of Military Operations and Military Intelligence

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