

McManus poured scorn on such efforts, and once, as Gallacher told me plaintively, he had even destroyed the manuscript of some of his most cherished jingles. In the view of McManus, it was Gallacher's duty not to act the irresponsible comedian but to add dignity and popularity to the Clyde Workers' Committee.

A great source of discontent on the Clyde was the appointment, as the representative of the Minister of Munitions for the area, of a prominent employer of munition workers, William Weir, the managing director of C. J. Weir, Ltd., the Holm Foundry, Cathcart. Such a choice, for a position of such power over munition workers, was a glaring injustice no worker could fail to discern. It is amazing that Henderson—who was in the Government, we must remember, as its Labour Adviser—should have consented to it. Weir, acting both as Minister of Munitions for the area, and as managing director of his firm, was employing women on big shells at 15s. a week, and was resisting the Trade Union demand of £1 a week for women which Lloyd George had recommended, and now, under pressure—for we and others were still pressing him—had promised to make compulsory in Government factories.

On November 30th, in the Central Hall, Westminster, Lloyd George addressed representatives of the Trade Unions concerned in munition making, telling them that workers should no more be permitted to appeal against the refusal of discharge certificates by their employers, than soldiers in the trenches against the orders of their officers. During war, he averred, the State could not permit advances in wages in accord with the law of supply and demand. In the House of Commons on December 20th, he urged the employers to press forward with the dilution of labour, undeterred by any fear of trouble with the skilled operatives, for the Munitions Act would be enforced in support of any employer who put unskilled men and women to the lathes.

It was decreed that the munition factories and shipyards should work through Christmas. Lloyd George determined to address the stubborn recalcitrant workers of the Clyde on Christmas Day. Opposition to his purpose was immediately manifest. Arthur Henderson, with two Government officials, rushed up to Glasgow, and with Lord Murray of Elibank, addressed the Trade Union officials, in the vain hope of securing a friendly atmosphere. The Christmas morning meeting in the St. Andrew's Hall was fairly well attended, but violently hostile. Lloyd George was greeted by a storm of hooting, followed by the singing of "The Red Flag." He was unable to get a hearing till David Kirkwood, the Parkhead shop steward, called for order. The meeting ended in uproar when John Muir of the Clyde Workers' Committee claimed to be heard in defence of the workers, and was refused. Lloyd George then visited Parkhead Forge. The workers there had been called together before his arrival. When he entered with Henderson, Murray of Elibank, and the manager, the workers paid no attention, but continued debating some business of their own, so fearless was their defiance! Again it was only by Kirkwood's intervention that Lloyd George obtained a hearing. George conveyed, through the manager, a desire to be introduced to Kirkwood, and a request to

him to act as chairman. Kirkwood agreed, announcing the Minister in truculent style:

"This is Mr. Lloyd George . . . we regard him with suspicion, because every Act with which he is associated has the taint of slavery about it."¹

He demanded for the workers a share in the management of the works. Unless this were granted they would fight the Munitions Act "to the death."

Logan, one of the Parkhead shop stewards, was dismissed for an altercation with the manager arising out of Lloyd George's visit. A stay-in strike was organised in Logan's defence, and 28 men were fined £5 each in consequence. Hundreds of munitioners left work to attend the trial, and the strike continued for some time.

Lloyd George had warned every Glasgow newspaper, save one, to publish no unauthorised account of his Christmas Day visit; to every paper, with one exception, a report of his doings, edited by himself, was circulated by the Press Association. The one exception was the *Glasgow Forward*, a Socialist weekly edited by a clever good-looking young Scotsman, Tom L. Johnston, who later got a place in the Labour Government of 1929. He edited the *Forward* with a scathing pen throughout the War, and gained for it a wide popularity in the Labour Movement so far afield as London, which it lost when he left the editorial chair.

The *Forward*, as might have been expected, published a detailed and graphic report of Lloyd George's visit. At Lloyd George's direct instance² the paper was promptly suppressed by the military authorities under the D.O.R.A. Eventually the *Forward* was permitted to reappear, on promising to submit all doubtful matter to the Government Press Bureau. In the meantime the Clyde Workers' Committee had begun to issue a weekly publication of its own called *The Worker*. Its pages were illuminated with a racy and acid humour, which emanated from its editor, John S. Clarke, a genuine original, an odd figure, Atheist, Republican, and rebel Socialist. His caustic verse on topical subjects was much admired by a wide working-class following; his vitriolic epithets, which in some quarters might have been dubbed at times both blasphemous and obscene, were quoted with awe and delight as gems of priceless and daring wit. Clarke's biting propaganda rhymes, which added prestige and circulation to their paper, and were beyond their power to emulate, were regarded by McManus and his colleagues with a respect denied to Gallacher's guileless and unpurposed songs.

About this time Lord Balfour of Burleigh, that hugely built old Conservative, a most hardened reactionary in theory, who yet not infrequently proved more liberal in judgment than those who accounted themselves Liberals, was appointed, with Lynden Macassy, K.C., to enquire into the unrest on the Clyde. Their report in many matters justified the workers' most bitter complaints. They recommended the easing of

¹ Reported in the *Glasgow Forward*.

² This was stated in the House of Commons, January 4th, 1916, by J. H. Tennant.

me; the audience shifted and fluctuated; the speakers had lost their grip.

The No Conscription Fellowship¹ had officially decided to organise no resistance, and to submit to the ordeal of the Tribunals, but many of its members were not of this mind. The Glasgow branch declared its refusal to appear before the Tribunals.

Whilst the Tribunals were still forming, the *Worker*, the newly-published organ of the Clyde Workers' Committee, was suppressed. Gallacher, Muir, and Bell were arrested under the D.O.R.A. and charged with attempting, through its pages, to cause mutiny and disaffection, and to impede the production of war material. The *Worker* had called for common action between munition workers and miners, to compel the withdrawal of Conscription, and had named Robert Smillie as the man who could secure unity in the effort. The Clyde workers were advised to "approach Robert Smillie, and offer him their assistance and co-operation in any measures he may take to make Conscription ineffective."

Robert Smillie did not respond to this appeal. His speeches, whether he meant them fully or not, were incitements to industrial action against the Government and its policies. They created a ferment in the minds of others; but he took no steps to implement them.

Now that Conscription was in force notices were sent by the military authorities to unmarried men, ordering them to present themselves for service, and threatening them with arrest as deserters should they fail. These notices made no mention that exemption could be obtained for any cause, or of the Tribunals to which appeal might be made. Even *The Times*, which had vehemently and persistently demanded the Act, complained that men previously rejected as medically unfit were receiving these notices, and that when they displayed exemption certificates these were often taken away and destroyed. An atmosphere of terror was created to prevent resistance. At Lancaster, on February 22nd, a poor mother was sent to prison for "harbouring" her son, who was found crouching between the rafters and the ceiling of their home.

A special Non-Combatant Corps was formed exclusively for Conscientious Objectors. Their duties would be to dig trenches, erect barbed-wire entanglements, assist the lines of communication, sweep up mines, and any other work of danger which might not compel them to take part in actual fighting. A military representative rightly observed that the members of this corps would not have a very happy time! Prominent Conscientious Objectors at once announced their determination not to undertake war work, of this or any other sort. The vast majority of the C.O.'s refused to take service in the Non-Combatant Corps.

The public were admitted to the Tribunals. I attended a sitting at Bethnal Green, as soon as the Tribunal there was formed. The appeals of four Conscientious Objectors were heard and wholly rejected, though all

¹ It had counselled signing the National Register, adding a refusal to undertake military service or munition work.

could prove they had long held anti-militarist views, and one was a widow's only son. A fifth C.O. was a local propagandist of some prominence, well known to the members of the Tribunal. They cleared the court to hear his case, and awarded him service in the Non-Combatant Corps, which he promptly rejected.

Amongst the other appellants was a small greengrocer and furniture remover, who pleaded for total exemption to carry on his business, as the sole support of his aged father, and of his two widowed sisters and their children. He was brusquely allowed a month's exemption to wind up his affairs before joining his regiment. Jews were treated even more relentlessly than other applicants; the destruction of their small businesses seemed to give real satisfaction to the Tribunal.

A large proportion of the cases rejected by the Local Tribunals passed on to the Appeal Tribunals, but usually received from them no kindlier treatment.

Numbers of physically defective men were passed into the Army, despite their appeals. When they broke down, pension was refused on the ground that their disabilities did not originate through service.

Philip Snowden¹ cited the case of a Conscript whose eyesight was so defective that when he laid his spectacles on the table he could only find them by groping. The Under-Secretary for War had written to say that if the poor fellow had *three pairs of spectacles*, to change as the lenses became dimmed in battle, he would be fit for active service. Another Conscript was so far advanced in consumption that he died three weeks after enlistment, another was a physical wreck with a crippled hand, whilst one was vomiting blood and when taken for service, could only digest Benger's Food.

Asquith had said that agitation for the repeal of the Military Service Act was legal, and would not be prosecuted; yet the police were confiscating anti-Conscription literature, and police and military were breaking up meetings against the Act. When Members of Parliament complained that soldiers broke up meetings Tennant replied: "I must defend my military." When it was shown that Tribunals denied to Conscientious Objectors the protection accorded to them by the law, Walter Long protested he must "defend and maintain" the Tribunals. The Home Secretary admitted that the Press Bureau had prohibited the printing of a record of the decisions of Military Service Tribunals for the information of Members of Parliament.²

Nellie Best, a frail white-faced woman I had never seen before, was tried under the D.O.R.A. and imprisoned for six months. She had republished as a leaflet an appeal on behalf of starving and broken men discharged from the War, which had appeared in *Ainslee's Advertiser* in America, over the signatures of some of the richest and most prominent leaders of United States Society. She headed the leaflet: "*A Warning to those*

¹ House of Commons Official Report, August 23rd, 1916.

² Official Parliamentary Report. May 18th, 1916.

John MacLean, who had been held in custody since February, was brought to trial in April, 1916, and sentenced to three years' penal servitude for advising the soldiers to lay down their arms, and the workers to down tools against Conscription and the Munitions Acts. Gallacher, Muir, and Bell were tried, at last, for publishing the suppressed *Worker*, Gallacher and Muir getting twelve months' imprisonment, and Bell three.

The I.L.P. was meeting in Newcastle that Easter. Mrs. Boyce was organising there for our Federation. I went up with Smyth for a meeting Boyce had arranged, and to attend the conference. I had not been to an I.L.P. conference for many a year; but in those days there was a drawing together of all who worked for peace. The Union of Democratic Control and numbers of Pacifist societies, old and new, gathered round the I.L.P., with its long established branches, its touch with the masses these others desired to influence.

I had pleasure and sorrow in meeting old friends I had known in childhood. The absence of Keir Hardie loomed over us.

Katherine Bruce Glasier, Katherine O'Bruce, as she liked to call herself, spoke at out meeting, talking in her effusive way of the "noble and true work" of our Federation, which seemed to her to typify the "working woman's soul"; calling up images of "the good grey poet," Walt Whitman; of Keir Hardie, William Morris, Edward Carpenter; denouncing with fervour the "hideous blasphemy of war."

At the reunion before the conference the great attraction was the caustic Irish fiddler, Casey, striding the platform like a quizzical satyr, lean and fit for leaping as a goat; his hard legs tightly cased in knee breeches; his goat's face, handsome in its odd way, more than half covered by a short, stubbly black beard. All the wild things of the woods seemed to gambol round him when his fiddle sounded, and his sprite of an accompanist, Dolly, played like a creature enchanted by his spell. She had the gift of perennial childhood; for they had been travelling about the country together, playing to working-class audiences, more years than I cared to remember, and one might have taken her for a school-child still. It was Keir Hardie who had discovered and employed on the *Labour Leader* Casey's mordant irony. Subsequent editors of that paper had found his plebeian jests too inelegant for publication; Casey was driven back upon his fiddling, but he still yearned to express himself by the pen. He told me he had a notion that he ought to abandon music to write on the War, and "just satirise the whole thing."

"Dolly manages her harmonics very cleverly; what a child she looks!" Katherine O'Bruce cooed at my elbow.

R. C. Wallhead,¹ whom I first knew as a working decorator in Manchester, gave humorous improvisations in Lancashire dialect. He had grown to be a prominent man in the I.L.P. I wondered what had really drawn him into the movement. Was it the contact he had with the I.L.P. when Henry Cadness, the teacher of design at the Manchester

¹ Later M.P. for Merthyr Tydfil.

School of Art, introduced him to me as a manual assistant to aid in carrying out of the decorations for the Pankhurst Hall, Hightown, I had designed?

"That is a pathetic story on your front page," W. C. Anderson said to me. He was referring to the execution of the East London boy I had recounted in the *Dreadnought* that week. All the delegates were talking of it. Fenner Brockway reproduced it in the *Labour Leader*. A reader of that paper paid for the I.L.P. to reprint it as a free leaflet.

Snowden, with cold, keen eye, nut-cracker jaw and bulging forehead, hobbled in on his stick. His narrowness and acidity had long repelled me; but in those days he appeared to have shed the raucous uncouthness of his earlier period. True, he never seemed a Socialist in theory; but one fancied him mellowing and broadening to the type of an upright, incorruptible Quaker, frail of physique, sturdy of purpose, as though he were qualifying to wear the mantle of John Bright in his great attack on the Crimean War. Snowden never rose to that height, though the time was more hugely tragic than that which had inspired John Bright's lamentation: "The angel of death has been abroad through the land. You may almost hear the beating of his wings."¹

Ethel Snowden, who once had seemed like a caged bird in her marriage, chafing under her husband's infirmities and his brusquerie, now fair, plump and forty, had discovered his merit since the War. Wearing him, as it seemed, like a choice orchid, she declared herself "aided by a noble husband," and perorated: "I pray from the bottom of my heart that the War will soon be over." She came nearer to popularity with the rank and file Labour folk than she had ever been, though one of the zealous I.L.P.-ers grumbled: "When she is speaking in public she is like a cat walking on hot bricks—always afraid of offending the other class." She spoke to me affably: "You must have very able helpers, dear. Philip says your paper is about the best on our side."

I knew that the *Dreadnought* had one virtue: it was in touch with life—not made up in an office from Press cuttings, like most of the propaganda sheets.

MacDonald was there, erect and debonair, a drawing-room favourite rather than a Labour leader, he would seem to the passing observer; talking elegantly, with his Scots accent many people found charming; speaking so eloquently, as many considered, and at such length. He was really in the heyday of his popularity, had he but known it; for never again would comrades so zealously cheer him. Yet, even now, his temporising struck a chill to the heart of their warmth. I was anxious to think well of him. Despite his political gyrations and very obvious weakness, I appreciated the stand against the War he had taken, however imperfectly; I desired very heartily to unite in solidarity and comradeship in those ranks so hardly pressed; yet I could never overcome my distrust of him; he woke it within me perpetually by his tortuous strategy. To go by the straight road to a clear-cut objective seemed impossible to him. He must always be travelling roundabout, with so much concession to the

¹ House of Commons, 23rd February, 1855.