

were not increased. A Government contractor of Bethnal Green, convicted of paying less than the low Trade Board Rate, was fined only 10s. for the first case, and 2s. each for seven others. In the same court a woman making soldiers' trousers at 3d. a pair was summoned for sending one of her children to school in a verminous condition. She pleaded that she was compelled to work so hard to pay her way that she was unable to do what she would wish for her family.

Stories of jobbery and corruption in Army work, of laxity and over-payment by the War Office had become current talk. A case in Shore-ditch County Court revealed that the Army Clothing Stores at Pimlico had sold 1,500,000 soldiers' body belts at 4s. a dozen, which were being bought up at 18s. a dozen, to be sold again at a still higher price for the use of the troops.

On November 18th, 1914, the Lord Chancellor promised that a flat rate would be established for the prices the Government would pay the contractors for Army clothing; eventually on February 18th, 1916—they took their time over such matters at the War Office—it was announced that in agreement with the Wholesale Clothiers' Association, certain rates had been fixed; 28s. for a greatcoat, 12s. 6d. for a jacket, 8s. 9d. for trousers and 18s. 6d. for pantaloons. It was shown that the combined labours of men fitters and pressers, and women machinists, finishers and buttonholers received on the average only 2s. 3½d. for a greatcoat, 2s. 1½d. for a jacket and 7½d. for trousers. Nevertheless the Government declined to fix any standard rate of payment for Army clothing workers. The request of the Workers' War Emergency Committee for a list of Army contractors, in order that the conditions of employment might be investigated, was also denied.

According to long-established social usage, it is ever a crime to be poor, a merit to be rich. The Government War Loan provided the great reward for possessing superfluous cash. By an Act of August 28th, 1914, the Government, with the opulent autocracy approved in war time, took power to raise money for the slaughter "in such manner as the Treasury think fit." The first War Loan prospectus was issued in November. It bore interest at 3½ per cent., with the added advantage that £100 of War Loan Stock could be purchased for £95. The Bank of England agreed to lend for three years, at 1 per cent. below Bank rate, sums equal to the value of the war loan stock deposited, which meant that for three years investors might patriotically lend to the nation, and be able to borrow an equivalent amount of capital, for disposal in other, yet more profitable war ventures. What a glorious game!

The terms were not yet good enough! Investors hung back, hoping for another loan at higher interest. The second War Loan (in March 1915) bore interest at 4½ per cent. and exceedingly favourable facilities were given for exchanging for it the first war loan stock. Consols, bearing what now appeared by comparison the miserable interest of 2½ per cent. and annuities with interest at 2½ and 2¾ per cent. could also be exchanged for war loan on excellent terms. Thus the whole Government-lending fraternity moved up to a higher scale of interest on their capital, securing better terms than any previous British Government had ever given to investors.

Later in 1915 came another loan giving 5 per cent. interest at par, another in 1916 again giving 5 per cent. interest, and in this case £95 would buy £100 of stock. Then came 4 per cent. loans, tax free. Exchequer Bonds and Treasury Bonds bore corresponding interest, War Savings campaigns, "Tank" weeks, "Feed the Guns" weeks, kept the ball rolling when investment flagged.

Except where the loans have been repaid, the tribute of interest still continues; the country groans under it, little alleviated by conversion schemes; social amenities are stultified by it. An international holiday from the external War debt has been negotiated, but the internal War debt continues.