1917

3 January

I call on Hodge,[1] Labour Minister, at Montague House Whitehall and find him sitting a little incongruously in one of the State parlours of the D. of Buccleuch.[2] I discuss with him the relations of my Committee to his Dept. and find him most friendly.

We dine with the Reggie McKenna's at Smith Square. The other guests are Mr. and Mrs. – McKenna and Sir Hedley Le Bas.[3]

McK. looks all the better for his release from office and is very cheerful and not a little malicious about the Ll.-G. Govt. (To say that there is no love lost between the two statesmen is putting it very mildly.) McK. has had a visitor from Germany and another from the United States, the one having been in touch with the German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg[4] and the other with President Wilson[5] who both, strange to say, give the following as Germany's minimum or ultimate Peace terms:

Evacuation of Belgium with return by Germany of tribute exacted.

Evacuation of N. France, with restoration of machinery, etc., removed.

Independence of Russian Poland.

Restoration to Germany of her Colonies except S.W. Africa and the Pacific islands.

Internationalisation of Constantinople, Trieste and Fiume.

Freedom for German commerce, meaning, I suppose, undertakings not to penalise her by differential tariffs.

[1]John Hodge (1855–1937): trades unionist; Lab. candidate for Gower 1900 and Preston 1903; Lab. MP for Gorton 1906–1923; Minister of Labour 1916–1917; Minister of Pensions 1917–1919.

[2]John Charles Montagu-Douglas-Scott (1864–1935): Unionist MP for Roxburgh 1895–1906; succ. as 7th Duke of Buccleuch and 9th Duke of Queensbury 1914.

[3]Hedley Francis Le Bas (1868–1926): founder of the Caxton Publishing Company; advised the government on propaganda during the First World War; knighted 1916.

[4]Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856–1921): Chancellor of Germany 1909–1917.

[5]Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924): US President 1913–1921.

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Balkan affairs to be settled by arrangement and conference (!!)

McK. and Sir H. Le Bas think these terms worth considering. I say, – but how can we leave the Balkan situation obscure? and what about shipping?

Sir H. prophesies that Northcliffe will be Prime Minister before the year is out.

4 January

In the evening I see Harold (Rothermere) at the Ritz. He foretells Peace in 3 or 6 months.

29 January

G. Lyster Todd,[6] a temporary officer with the Fleet, having told me of his misgivings in regard to the very free telegraphic facilities from H.M.S. Cyclops at Scapa, I go to see Sir John Jellicoe by appointment at the Admiralty. The famous admiral is an alert little man who but for the many rings of gold braid on his sleeves and his three rows of medal ribbons might pass any day for the excellent Vicar of a parish. He has the odd pinched in corners of the mouth of his portraits, brown eyes and coal black hair with only a grey hair or two above his ears. He was very simple and friendly and after some talk handed me on to Commodore Halsey,[7] 4th Sea Lord. They both said that they had no reason to suspect that any leakage of important news from the Grand Fleet had ever taken place but were not nearly so comfortable in their minds about other Naval stations near large centres of population.

Commodore Halsey said the rumours that information was given to the Germans leading to the blowing up of the Hampshire with Ld. Kitchener on board were all nonsense. Only 4 people in the Fleet knew of the precise movements of the Hampshire and these did not even include the Captain of the ship [before sailing. (C.H.)]

[6]George H. Lyster Todd: otherwise unidentified.

[7]Lionel Halsey (1872–1949): naval officer and royal official; Fourth Sea Lord 1916–1917; Third Sea Lord 1917–1918; knighted 1918.

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7 February

Opening day of new Session. Fine speech by Asquith of whom in his reply Bonar Law speaks involuntarily as 'Prime Minister' to the delight of many Members. B. Law is Leader of the House and Ll.-G. does not even take the trouble to come down for the first hours of the Debate on the Address.

12 February

To the Ministry of National Service, St. Ermin's Hotel, to see Miss Violet Markham[8] the assistant Director of the Women's department. I find Miss M. high up in a barely furnished room and amidst much confusion. It appears that Neville Chamberlain, new to departmental life, has omitted to set up a registry of correspondence and poor Miss M. spent the best part of Saturday answering urgent letters that had been mislaid a week in the department!

15 February

Debate in the H. of C. on the Ministry of Natl. Service. I make a hot little speech deprecating nagging criticism of these new ministries and am warmly complimented by Bonar Law and others.

16 February

Welfare Conference at the Home Office. [. . .]

Addison,[9] Minister of Munitions, meeting me at the Club tells me he wants me to take on the job of Director of Welfare work with full

[8]Violet Rosa Markham (1872–1959): Deputy Director of the Women's Section of the National Service Department 1917, and also fulfilled a wide variety of other public service roles; Lib. candidate for Mansfield 1918; Companion of Honour 1917.

[9]Christopher Addison (1869–1951): Lib. (then Coalition Lib) MP for Hoxton 1910–1922; Independent Lib. candidate for Shoreditch 1922; Lab. candidate for Hammersmith South 1924; Lab. MP for Swindon 1929–1931, 1934–1935; Minister of Munitions 1916–1917; Minister of Reconstruction 1917–1918; President of the Local Government Board 1919; Minister of Health 1919–1921; Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture 1929–1930; Minister of Agriculture 1930–1931; Dominions Secretary and Leader of the House of Lords, 1945–1951; cr. Baron Addison 1937, Viscount 1945.

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powers. But I shan't be able to do it. My new fisheries job will fully occupy me.

23 February

Lloyd-George comes down to the House and makes his great speech on the measures necessary for winning the War – import restrictions, land cultivation, etc. [. . .]

The speech was the best, I think, I have ever heard Ll.-G. make in the House – as well-arranged and clear as one of Asquith's, and with eloquent passages.

W.R. [Walter Runciman] at the top of his form too in reply.

27 February

In the H. of C. Dillon moves a new clause excluding Ireland from the National Service Bill. I make a short speech (well-liked) warning him of the danger of seeking to contract Ireland out of her Imperial obligations. Dillon says nice things about me but persists and goes to a Division. New clause badly defeated.

7 March

Motor Committee all the morning. In the H. of C. a great debate on Ireland, the Irish members, led by John Redmond, marching solemnly, if a little sheepishly, out of the House. Fine, broad, conciliatory speech by Willie Redmond, a Major now in H.M. Army.

15 March

In the H. of C. general debate on Vote of Credit.

Bonar Law announces that the Czar[10] has abdicated and that his brother the Grand Duke Michael[11] has been appointed Regent. This is a triumph for the pro-War and anti-German party in Russia.

[10] Nicholas II (1868–1918).

[11] Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich (1878–1918). He never took up the throne and was later murdered by the Bolsheviks.

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16 March

With the Parliamentary Air Committee to Wool in Dorset to see the great training camp for 'tanks'. The camp is situated on a rugged heath, the softer parts of which are churned up into huge furrows by the mysterious craft that suggest immense antediluvian beetles as they crush their way through and over everything that lies in their path. We are afforded some surprising demonstrations of their power. In one case the tank advanced to a small deep shell crater, poised itself on the edge plunged heavily into it through the bottom and then laboriously but irresistibly up the other side. One is shot backwards and forwards violently as the tank plunges into a hollow or gathers its strength for an upward climb. They are very greasy inside and there is nothing much to hold on to, and the engines make a great noise. I travelled on the outside of one over a broad stretch of barbed wire, the wire and its posts going down like rough grass under a garden-roller. We butted into a sturdy pine-tree not much less than a foot thick at the roots and after two or three attempts laid it flat. [. . .]

The secret of the tanks was extraordinarily well kept. It is believed that they were a complete surprise to the Germans when they appeared at the Front last year, and I can well imagine that they would strike terror into the hearts of men in the trenches on which they advanced in their slow, methodical, remorseless way.

22 March

Leicester tells me in great confidence that Ll.-G. is seriously thinking of offering me the position of Chief Liberal Whip to the Coalition and is only deterred by the fact of the formidable Harmsworth name! This is news indeed to me, and L. won't say where he heard it. It seems certain that Neil Primrose is resigning the post and equally certain that there are 5 or 4 others in the running for it – Freddie Guest,[12] Hamar Greenwood, E. Shortt, K.C.,[13] and Illingworth, the Postmaster

[12]Frederick Edward Guest (1875–1937): army officer; cousin of Winston Churchill; Lib. candidate for Kingswinford 1906, Cockermouth 1906, Brigg 1907; Lib. (then Coalition Lib) MP for East Dorset 1910–1922, Stroud 1923–1924, Bristol North 1924–1929; Con. MP for Plymouth Drake 1931–1937; Lord of the Treasury 1911; Treasurer of the Royal Household 1912; Coalition Chief Whip 1917–1921; Secretary of State for the Air 1921–1922.

[13]Edward Shortt (1862–1935): called to the Bar 1890; KC 1910; Recorder of Sunderland 1907–1918; Lib. MP for Newcastle upon Tyne 1906–1918; Newcastle West 1918–1922; Chief Secretary for Ireland 1918–1919; Home Secretary 1919–1922; President of the British Board of Film Censors 1929–1935.

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General.[14] Well, I hope they are all as unconcerned about the event as I am!

28 March

The work of our Fish Food and Motor Loan Committee falls into two departments. We have first to promote by every means in our power the fitting out of the inshore fishing boats with motor-power so as to increase their catching capacity, it being estimated that on an average the fishing boat so equipped brings in three times as much fish as a boat dependent on sails and oars alone. Two difficulties arise in this connection – (1) the shortage of marine motors due to the fact that the makers generally are up to their eyes in Admiralty and War Office work and (2) the unwillingness of the fishermen in some places (as at Poole) to adopt motor-power.

The other branch of our work is more onerous and more responsible. We are charged with the duty of advising the Food Controller as to the best use to be made of the vast quantities of pickled herrings and pilchards and dried cod that are usually sent abroad and are so heavily salted as to be unacceptable in the home market. Pilchards, for instance, are not eaten fresh in this country. The bulk of the catch is salted down and exported to Italy in times of peace. Of the British herring catch 85 per cent is normally salted down and sold to Germany, Russia, etc. In addition to our own heavy stocks the Govt. has been buying large quantities of these pickled herrings in Norway, Holland, etc. in order to prevent the Germans getting them and has now in hand or in sight 150,000 tons of them.

How best to desalt and render these pickled herrings more palatable is an important object of our enquiry and we are getting all sorts of people to make experiments. Further, we must try to arrange things so that the herrings etc. of this season's harvest are not put into brine but are either marketed fresh or are kippered, 'redded' or bloatered. All this means in effect the upheaving of a great and complicated trade.

The tantalising circumstance is that here we have a huge supply of nutritious food that our people won't eat in its present condition unless indeed they are driven by severe privation to doing so.

[14]Albert Holden Illingworth (1865–1942): industrialist; Lib. (then Coalition Lib) MP for Heywood 1915–1918; Heywood and Radcliffe 1918–1921; Postmaster General 1916–1921, cr. Baron Illingworth 1921.

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3 April

Today with a group of Liberal Members headed by Walter Runciman to see Bonar Law in the Prime Minister's room and discuss the submarine menace with him. Bonar confirms the disquieting conclusions we had already arrived at. It may become a neck and neck race between us and the Germans in the escape from famine. Our shipping losses lately have been most serious and Bonar tells us frankly that the Admiralty have not got the situation in hand.

19 April

This last week I have been fully occupied with my Fish Food problems and very little in the H. of Commons, finding that the duties and hours of an (unpaid) Civil Servant are hardly compatible with those of a Member of Parliament. I begin to think that an *increase* in the fish supply is not to be expected and that we must be content to make the best use of fishing fleets severely reduced by the Admiralty restrictions on seafishing and in consequence of their demands for patrol boats and minesweepers and, again, by their exactions in the matter of fishermen recruits for Naval services. We shall not get more fish but must catch and market all we can.

20 April

Great service at St. Paul's to celebrate the entry of the United States into the Alliance. Union Jack and Stars & Stripes flown together on the Houses of Parliament.

26 April

I walk into town with Bernard and meet Lord Rosebery, Lord Fisher and Neil Primrose in Pall Mall. Neil detaches himself from the others and tells me that the Prime Minister wants me to be Chief Whip. I indicate my dislike for this particular office, but promise to let him know. Walking later in Horse Guards parade I meet Ll.-G. with one

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of his Secretaries, Philip Kerr.[15] Ll.-G. makes me go along with him and we make a round of St. James's Park. He asks me first if Neil has spoken to me and presses the appointment on me. I ask him if I may give him my views quite frankly and on his assenting very readily I do so. (People recognise Ll.-G. all along as we go and touch their hats.) I explain my dislike of the Chief Whip's office. Ll.G. is good enough to say that I am popular with his Liberal colleagues in the Coalition and generally in the House and that he wants 'eyes' and 'ears' in the House to keep him informed. I express my deep obligation to him and ask him for leave to consider the proposal. My ground of objection is my invincible repugnance to that part of the Chief Whip's work that relates to the conferring of honours and titles. It is a pity and a disappointment and I am a fool – but there it is.

27 February

I call for Neil Primrose and we walk to Downing Street. I say again what I said before and implore him to beg me off. There is a man cleaning the windows at No. 10 and I tell Neil to tell Ll.-G. I will do that or anything for him that will help him on with the War.

1 May

With Neil Primrose to No. 10 to lunch with the Prime Minister. We are a party of three in a snug little pannelled room. I explain my position quite frankly to the P.M. who thinks things can be arranged by getting a trusted somebody else to share the financial responsibilities of the Chief Whip's office with me. A very interesting talk. Ll.-G. says he must go off again to France on Thursday. He doesn't want to go, but must. He makes light of the submarine danger but says that he should regard drowning as the most unpleasant of deaths.

There is much fun over a big brown jar of John Jameson's whisky that some Irish admirer has sent him. It is opened for us and we must all try it. Addison, Minister of Munitions, comes in and there is all sorts of confidential talk. Addison has to try the whisky too.

[15]Philip Henry Kerr (1882–1940): a key figure in Lord Milner's South African 'kindergarten'; founding editor of *The Round Table*; private secretary to Lloyd George 1916–1921; managing editor of the *Daily Chronicle* 1921–1922; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1931; Under-Secretary of State at the India Office 1931–1932; Ambassador to the USA 1938–1940; Companion of Honour 1920; succ. as 11th Marquess of Lothian 1930.

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I tell Ll.-G. that if I am an obstinate radical in some things he is to some extent answerable I having sat at his feet as a humble disciple for years; and that I have twists in my moral structure just as other men have. We sit long and smoke excellent cigars out of a box that looks like a golf prize of Ll.-G.'s. What a wonderful creature he is! He has just come from a prolonged War Cabinet and is as fresh and keen on my political foibles, the stone jar of 'J.J.' and Addison's more weighty problems, as if he had no other responsibilities in life.

Afterwards in Neil's room in the H. of C., and subsequently to a talk with the other man, I unburden myself fully to Neil and say that I cannot go on. We argue the subject of the traffic in titles earnestly and I plead that I never could share in that work. Both of us much agitated. Neil doesn't like the business himself and confesses that his dislike of it is one of the reasons of his giving up the Chief Whip's office and joining his regiment in Palestine. I beg him to help me to get out of an impossible position. [. . .]

I write my apologia to Ll.-G., begging leave definitely to decline.

2 May

To my Fish Committee. Neil Primrose telephones to say that the Prime Minister would like to see me at 3, just before the meeting of the War Cabinet and that I am to be offered a place in his Secretariat. I present myself at 10 Downing Street at the appointed time. I wait in the passage to the Cabinet Room and Ll.-G.'s youngest girl, a pretty child of about 12 or 13 years of age [Megan], comes along with her pet dog in her arms. She greets her Father affectionately who comes from seeing the King at Buckingham Palace. Lloyd-George tells me that he wants me to join his Secretariat and I thank him warmly and accept with alacrity. As Ll.-G. goes into the Cabinet room I have a fleeting vision of that illustrious conclave. Then I descend to the 'Garden Suburb', the waggishly named temporary building in the garden of No. 10 where the Secretariat is established. It is a structure of light concrete and match-boarding and has the pleasant fresh smell of a wooden shack in Newfoundland. My room is airy and cheerful with budding hawthorns and fig-trees outside the window, and, inside, a huge safe containing all the Cabinet secrets. All specially confidential documents are lodged in this safe before we leave at night. Twice I am summoned to the Prime Minister whom I find I in the Cabinet room with the table still covered with the fresh red blotting-paper provided for the recent Cabinet meeting. On the first occasion Northcliffe is

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with him, and Mr. Alfred Butt[16] of the Ministry of Food who has been since January planning a scheme of compulsory rationing and who dwells woefully on the dilatoriness of the great Food Controller, Ld. Devonport.[17]

The Prime Minister asks Prof. Adams[18] and me to take pot luck with him and his family at dinner. It is a pleasant domestic scene at one end of the fine dining-room and a most frugal War time meal. There are Mrs. Ll.-G, a grown-up daughter and the newly married Major Ll.-G.[19] and his pretty wife (one of the Miss McAlpines of Totteridge).[20] The P.M. is as fresh as a daisy and at one moment breaks into a stave of two of a song, in Welsh.

Adams and I sit with him smoking until late although Ll.-G. is off to France at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning. We discuss the ever anxious food question and agree that it is not quite as gloomy as some people think it. Bonar Law comes in, a bit tired after a Budget speech. He leaves us early to play Bridge which he finds the best of tonics for his mind.

Ll.-G. maintains the old-fashioned habit that I like so much myself of taking tea instead of coffee after dinner.

3 May

The Prime Minister off to France this morning. I am busy all day in the 'garden suburb', devoting myself industriously to the three important questions he has assigned to me – food, shipping and National Service.

[16]Alfred Butt (1878–1962): Director of Rationing at the Ministry of Food, 1917–1918; Unionist MP for Balham and Tooting 1922–1936; theatrical figure and racehorse owner; resigned from the Commons after he was implicated in the scandal that brought down J.H. Thomas; knighted 1918; cr. baronet 1929.

[17]Hudson Ewbanke Kearley (1856–1934): grocery magnate; Lib. MP for Devonport 1892–1910; Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade 1905–1909; Chairman of the Port of London Authority 1909–25; Minister of Food Control 1916–1917; cr. baronet 1908; cr. Viscount Devonport 1917.

[18]William George Stewart Adams (1874–1966): Gladstone Professor of Political Theory and Institutions 1912–1933; member of Lloyd George's Secretariat 1916–1918; Warden of All Souls 1933–1945, Companion of Honour 1936.

[19]Richard Lloyd George (1889–1968): served in the Royal Engineers during the First World War; succ. as 2nd Earl Lloyd-George 1945.

[20]Roberta Ida Freeman Lloyd George, née McAlpine (1868–1966); m. Richard Lloyd George 1917, divorced 1933.

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5 May

The business of the Secretariat in the temporary building ('garden suburb') in the garden of No. 10 is to digest the vital questions of the day and to prepare memoranda for the P.M. We Secretaries are liaison officers between the Ministers and those Govt. Departments that are not represented in the War Cabinet of five. We see all secret documents of state and are in a position to make ourselves felt in all questions of high policy.

10 May
Secret Session.

The proceedings are opened in a gloomy speech by Winston Churchill who receives a more than adequate reply from Ll.-G. In the course of his speech Ll.-G. dwells on the Food question and gives a confident view of our position up to this year's harvest and is scarcely less reassuring about the situation in 1918. I gather subsequently from Lobby gossip that a good many Members and some Ministers regard his statement as too rosy and there is even some talk of his having misled the House. [A great deal of such talk, I remember. There were Members who roundly charged Ll.-G. with being a damned liar. In fact, the figures he gave were on the strictly conservative side.] This part of his speech is in fact based on our exhaustive enquiries in the Garden Suburb.

11 May

Secret Session. 2nd Day.

Adams, Astor[21] and I see Ll.-G. early this morning and impress on him the importance of his speaking again today in the H. of C. on the food question so that all misgivings may be dispelled. Ll.-G. furiously angry when he hears that even Ministers are reported to have questioned his sanguine account of the food situation. He damns liberally and even uses the word 'bloody' in apostrophising the disloyalty of his colleagues.

[21] Waldorf Astor (1879–1952): Con. MP for Plymouth 1910–1919; proprietor of *The Observer*; member of Lloyd George's prime ministerial secretariat; PPS to Lloyd George 1916–1918; Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Food 1918–1919; Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, 1919–1921; succ. as 2nd Viscount Astor 1919.

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He makes the desired re-statement in the House. Fine Admiralty speech by Carson.

12 May

In the Garden House Downing Street all the morning. Adams and I to see Lord Milner[22] in his pleasant old house in Great College Street (overlooking a fine old garden with tennis lawns) and talk about Food Economy with him. A man of power, Lord Milner, I think, with a surprisingly gentle manner considering his formidable reputation. He has the air of an ascetic – and is elderly and faded beyond his 65 years.

At night Alfred [Northcliffe] presides over the Annual Dinner of the Newspaper Press Fund at the Mansion House. A thronged gathering and a record subscription list.

18 May

Much of my time these last few days has been taken up by the repeated Conferences at the Ministry of Food (Grosvenor House) on the question of compulsory rationing. Lord Milner present at two of the Conferences and Lord Devonport usually in the Chair.

Should we ration compulsorily?

Arguments against:

Encouraging effects on Germans and depressing effects on our own people.

Doubtful if necessary.

Arguments for:

Best means of ascertaining facts as to populations and consumption, and of satisfying a section of anxious opinion.

Only really satisfactory means of initiating scheme of general rationing should it ever be necessary – and needed quickly.

[22]Alfred Milner (1854–1925): Lib. candidate for Harrow 1885; High Commissioner in South Africa 1897–1905; member of the War Cabinet without portfolio 1916–1918; Secretary of State for War 1916–1918; Secretary of State for the Colonies 1918–1921; cr. Baron Milner 1901; cr. Viscount Milner 1902.

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24 May

My days are very fully employed what with the H. of C., my Fish Food Committee and my work at No. 10. Here I am very happily situated in a bright, airy room with hawthorns and laburnums blooming outside and a fig-tree spreading its big emerald leaves on the old wall. Prof. Adams [Afterwards Warden of All Souls], David Davies [Lord Davies],[23] Philip Kerr [Marquis of Lothian], and young Astor [Lord Astor] and I form a happy, friendly little party, and I think we are really helpful to Ll.-G. [And (Sir) Joseph Davies,[24] Secy.]

Food prices and Ireland engage the best part of our attention this week.

30 May

It is a function of members of the secretariat to attend Cabinet Councils when any subject with which they are specially concerned comes up for discussion. There is a shipping matter today and I attend for the first time. Ll.-G., of course, in the chair and present also Bonar Law, Lord Curzon,[25] Barnes,[26] Lord Milner, Sir E. Carson, Lord R. Cecil, Addison and others.

I am irreverent enough to think that the long Cabinet table with its green baize is very like one of the roulette tables at Monte Carlo.

[23]David Davies (1880–1944): industrialist; Lib. MP for Montgomeryshire 1906–1929; PPS to Lloyd George 1916; member of the prime minister's secretariat 1916–1917; cr. Baron Davies 1932.

[24]Joseph Davies (1886–1954): industrialist; member of the prime minister's secretariat (and from 1917 its secretary) 1916–1920; Co. Lib. MP for Crewe 1918–1922; knighted 1918.

[25]George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925): Con. candidate for South Derbyshire 1885; Con. MP for Southport 1886–1898; Under-Secretary for India 1891–1892; Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office 1895–1898; Viceroy of India 1899–1905; Lord Privy Seal 1915–1916; member of the War Cabinet 1916–1918; Foreign Secretary 1919–1824; Lord President of the Council 1924–1925; cr. Baron Curzon 1898; cr. Marquess Curzon of Kedleston 1921.

[26]George Nicoll Barnes (1859–1940): trades unionist; ILP candidate for Rochdale 1895; Lab. MP for Glasgow Blackfriars 1906–1918; left the Labour Party 1918 and re-elected as MP for Glasgow Gorbals against an official Lab. candidate; Minister of Pensions 1916–1917; member of the War Cabinet 1917–1918 and minister without portfolio 1917–1920; Companion of Honour 1920.

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13 June

An aeroplane attack on London this morning. We are startled in the Garden Suburb by loud explosions and by the sound of shells bursting in the air and we all run out into Horse Guards Parade to see what is going on. Nothing to be seen, but plenty more noise.

We hear later that many people have been killed and wounded in the City and in the East End – about 100 killed and over 400 wounded. Many children among the victims.

6 July

Long Conference at Downing Street today about the place of meeting of the Irish Convention. The College of Surgeons has been offered and the Provost [Dr. Mahaffy] has offered the Regent House in T.C.D. and twelve other rooms for Committees. I press hard for T.C.D. on the ground of its being obviously the one right place in Dublin and of its being strategically better in every way than the College of Surgeons if, as is apprehended, there should be Sinn Fein demonstrations against the Convention. [. . .]

A full and very interesting discussion. [. . .]

After the debate today Ll.-G. announces that the Govt. hopes the Convention will meet on the 25th. They are to choose their own Chairman, Duke acting in that capacity pro tem.

17 July

The Prime Minister sends down a message to me after 7 this evening to say he wants facts and figures about the shipping position – construction, purchases, submarine losses etc. – for a secret conference with journalists he is to hold tomorrow. It is a tough job, for amongst all their voluminous returns and memoranda, the Shipping Controller's people have never given us a clear account of the actual position at any time.

I work at Downing Street until 9.30 or so and then go home. A late and hasty dinner and then at work on the papers I have brought with me until 2 in the morning. For some of these documents, by the way, the Germans would give their ears!

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18 July

To Downing Street early to have my Memorandum typewritten. I take it to Mr. Anderson,[27] Secretary of the Ministry of Shipping, who much to my relief and surprise declares my calculations to be accurate.

Ll.-G. meets the journalists in the Cabinet room. I cannot be present for I have to attend a Conference on meat and wheat prices in Lord Milner's room at the offices of the War Cabinet, 2 Whitehall Gardens. A spirited tussle between Rhondda,[28] the Food Controller, who is out for beating down farmers' prices and Prothero,[29] President of the Bd. of Agriculture, who puts up a good fight for the agricultural interest.

16 August

March through town today of the first contingent of American soldiers. They are a body of strapping fine men – not yet very well-drilled but the best sort of material. It is strange how different they are from our own ruddy-cheeked types. Are the solemn dryasdusts right in assuming that it takes so many eras in which to change and develop an animal or human type? These Yanks in two or three hundred years have departed ever so far from the original English breed. They are tall, thin and sallow and at least as foreign in appearance as any of the European soldiers of the Continent.

They have a splendid reception, and the Union Jack and Stars & Stripes fly from the Victoria Tower at Westminster.

16 August

Such a turmoil at No. 10 today. The P.M. is to make a general statement on the War position today (on the motion for the Adjournment for the Summer holidays) and the garden suburb is all bustle and activity getting together facts and figures for his speech. My job is to present a

[27]John Anderson (1882–1958): civil servant; Governor of Bengal 1932–1937; National MP for the Scottish Universities 1938–1950; Lord Privy Seal 1938–1939; Home Secretary 1939–1940; Lord President of the Council 1940–1943; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1943–1945; cr. Viscount Waverley 1952.

[28]David Alfred Thomas (1856–1918): industrialist; Lib. MP for Merthyr 1888–1910; President of the Local Government Board 1916–1917; Minister of Food Control 1917–1918; Cardiff 1910; cr. Baron Rhondda 1916; cr. Viscount Rhondda 1918.

[29]Rowland Edmund Prothero (1851–1937): Unionist candidate for Biggleswade 1907; Unionist MP for Oxford University 1914–1919; President of the Board of Agriculture 1916–1919; cr. Baron Ernle 1919.

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synoptic view of the shipping position and submarine losses. I take my Memoranda up to the great little man whom I find in one of the upper sitting-rooms stretched full length on a sofa surrounded by heaps of papers. His hair is longer than ever and strews wildly over the pillow. My view is that the submarine situation, black as it is, is nevertheless not so black as by some it is painted and I set out losses against gains (by new construction, purchase abroad etc.) in proof.

As always happens, he asks for the very data that I have not provided and I am told off to telephone to the Controller of the Navy and the Ministry of Shipping to make good the deficiencies in my more than ample details.

My Fish Food Committee meets in the afternoon and I miss the P.M.'s speech in the House. I get there in time to hear Asquith following him in full-rounded, sonorous sentences.

13 September

I lunch with Harold (Rothermere) at the Ritz. He has just received a cablegram from Alfred asking him to take his place at the head of the British War Commission in America and has said Yes.

1 October

The Prime Minister comes down to the Garden Suburb this afternoon and carries Philip Kerr and myself off for a walk round the parks. We make in the direction of Knightsbridge – Ll.-G. with short quick vigorous steps – and take tea in a restaurant there. Ll.-G. speaks to the policeman outside St George's Hospital and coming back stops to admire a pretty baby in its mother's arms. He is full of conversation about the air-raids, food supplies, the submarine position and matters generally connected with the War. He refers to the hatred he inspires still in some sections of the Press and wonders what there is in him to excite such rancour. He is as always entirely unaffected and simple. He lets Kerr and myself say exactly what we like to him.

2 October

Yet another glorious Autumn day. A little past one o'clock P.M. the warning of an air raid is given and when the guns begin to go off the population of 10 Downing Street migrates to the vaults of the

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Foreign Office – Ll.-G. and Lord Milner, as I hear, among them. The Garden Suburb, all compact as it is of lath and plaster and other flimsy materials, is quickly deserted but Profr. Adams and I are content with the morning room at No. 10. The walls of the old house are very thick and it would need a direct hit on the roof to do it much harm. When the 'All Clear' signal comes along we all repair to lunch at our various resorts. [. . .]

Before getting to Downing Street this morning I call on Harold (Rothermere) at the Ritz Hotel. He tells me that the supply of Army clothing is becoming difficult owing to the panic-stricken rush of the foreign Jew tailors from the East End of London. They are swarming into Brighton and the country towns within 50 miles of town.

3 October

Ll.-G. comes down into the Garden Suburb today. He is full of a scheme for publishing a Record of what his Govt. and the various departments have done. Such a Record is usually prepared by the Chief Whip' s department and serves as a handbook for speakers and for other purposes of reference. But in this case the Record is intended to prove to the people what great efforts have been made to solve the bigger problems of the War – Food Supply, Munitions, the Submarine menace etc. etc.

4 October

I am invited to the Cabinet Council this morning and Ll.-G. asks me to explain the situation in regard to insurance against the damage caused by air raids. There is a strong outside Committee, of which the chief spokesman is the Ld. Mayor of London, which advocates free Govt. indemnity in all cases and up to any amount, and they have been pressing Ll.-G. to adopt their view. The question has hung fire for months pending a decision on this point. Today the Cabinet decides to grant free indemnity up to £500. The larger risks are to be insured against under the existing Govt. insurance scheme. (War Cabinet Ministers present on this occasion are Ll.-G., Lord Milner, Lord Curzon, Sir E. Carson and Mr. Barnes, with Mr. Balfour, the War Cabinet Secretaries, Stanley Baldwin, Financial Secy., and myself).

In the late afternoon Ll.-G. sends down for me and takes me out for a run to Richmond Park. We are set down at one gate and walk briskly across the Park to meet the car at another. Ll.-G.'s detective follows

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us at a respectful distance. We discuss the War situation – Haig's fine advance before Ypres this morning, the satisfactory improvement in food, shipping etc., Horace Plunkett's skilful management of the Irish Convention, and a dozen other matters. Ll.-G. refers to Alfred's desire to return from America and to be succeeded by Harold. He is a good deal afraid that the Americans may jib at this proposal – to the headship of the Mission being treated as a sort of family affair.

The conversation turns on Mr. Asquith and the other eminent occupants of the Opposition Front Bench. Ll.-G. tells me again that Asquith had decided to work with him in the new Govt. and had been persuaded out of this course by some of his political friends and against the advice of other friends, including Bonham-Carter, his son-in-law. We agree that Asquith would have made a superb Ld. Chancellor, the best perhaps for a hundred years; or the head of a College.

Of McKenna's conduct of the Welsh Bill in the H. of C. Ll.G. said that he treated the church and its temporalities as if he were winding up a bankrupt business concern. A good man for figures but strangely incompetent in dealing with a great human problem.

We talked about Simon and Ll.-G. asked me if I had ever heard of Balfour's description of him: 'A very big man on a small occasion, and a very small man on a big occasion.'[. . .] People may say what they like against Ll.-G. but I don't know where you will find a pleasanter companion for an afternoon' s walk.

5 October

Sir Horace Plunkett over from Ireland, full of news of the Irish Convention. All had been going finely with it but the unfortunate affair of the Sinn Feiner, Thomas Ashe,[30] had clouded its prospects. I asked him who were the outstanding figures in the Convention. John Redmond, he said, the Primate (Crozier),[31] and 'A E' (Russell),[32] while Stephen Gwynn and some others had done well. The Provost [Mahaffy] with his jokes and irresponsible speeches was the 'rogue elephant' of the Convention, serving a most useful purpose when

[30]Thomas Ashe (Tomás Aghas) (1885–1917): schoolteacher; sentenced to death for his role in the rebellion of 1916 but reprieved and subsequently released; imprisoned once more in August 1917 on a charge of sedition and died on 25 September after being forcibly fed following a hunger strike.

[31]John Baptist Crozier (1853–1920): Archbishop of Armagh of the Church of Ireland and Primate of All Ireland 1911–1920.

[32]George William Russell (1867–1935): poet and writer, who used the pseudonym Æ; author of, inter alia, *Ireland, Agriculture and the War* (n.p.: 1915) and a leaflet, *Talks with an Irish Farmer* (1916).

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things were getting too serious. He spoke very highly of a Methodist Nationalist from County Louth (I think) and thought well of Donoughmore.[33] Midleton (Brodrick)[34] he said, was hopelessly narrow-minded, and Mayo absurd.

Later in the day, in conversation with Adams, Plunkett said that Duke would have to go and that I was the right man to succeed him and that he was going to tell Ll.-G. so! I call this a high compliment from one who is perhaps the first Irishman of our time.

8 October

Downing Street. Horace Plunkett in and out all the morning. He thinks there are evidences of a split in the Sinn Fein forces – a MacNeill[35] group and a De Valera[36] group.

13 October

To Downing Street. I want to see Ll.-G. about an important matter connected with the Construction of merchant ships. My only chance is to tack myself on to him as he drives to his dentist's (in Stratford Place), which I do accordingly. Poor little man! Who else, making for his dentist's, would tolerate the intrusion of one of his Secretaries full of some topic, almost as painful as his toothache?

[33]Richard Walter John Hely-Hutchinson (1875–1948): Conservative peer and Southern Unionist; Under-Secretary of State for War 1903–1905; succ. as 6th Earl of Donoughmore 1900.

[34]William St John Fremantle Brodrick (1856–1942): Con. MP for West Surrey 1880–1885; Con. MP for Guildford 1885–1906; Financial Secretary to the War Office 1886–1892; Under-Secretary of State for War 1895–1898; Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1898–1900; Secretary of State for War 1900–1903; Secretary of State for India 1903–1905; leading Southern Unionist; succ. as 9th Viscount Midleton 1907; cr. first Earl of Midleton 1920.

[35]Eoin (John) MacNeill (1867–1945): scholar of Irish History; editor of the *Irish Volunteer* 1914–1916; Sinn Féin MP for Londonderry City 1918–1922 and also for the National University of Ireland 1918–1921 but did not take his seat; supporter of the Anglo-Irish treaty; Free State Minister of Education 1922–1925.

[36]Eamon de Valera (1882–1975): sentenced to death for his role in the rebellion of 1916 but reprieved and subsequently released; Sinn Féin MP for East Clare 1917–1922 (but did not take his seat); leading opponent of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921; Taoiseach 1932–1948, 1951–1959; President of Éire 1959–1973.

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25 October

Horace Plunkett in to see us at the Garden Suburb. The Irish Convention has passed through troubled waters of late but the good ship is still afloat. A Sub-Committee (of seven, I think) has been charged with the delicate task of formulating a definite plan and is meeting now in London. The rest of the Grand Committee continues at work in Dublin. Meanwhile De Valera, the leader of republican Sinn Fein, is making exceedingly provocative speeches in Ireland. His object is apparently to precipitate a crisis and at all hazards to damage the prospects of the Convention.

2 November

All day at the Garden Suburb. Northcliffe is leaving America by the 'St. Paul' tomorrow and I am anxious to hear what steps are being taken adequately to protect his ship. Ll.-G. is concerned about this and urgent messages go to the Admiralty enjoining on them the necessity for fully adequate measures. If the Germans can drown him or take him prisoner in a submarine it will be no end of a score for them.

9 November

A week of strenuous work in the Garden Suburb on the Government 'Record'.

The news is thoroughly bad. Russia is in the midst of a fresh revolutionary convulsion and the Italians are stampeding down into the Venetian plain before the victorious Germans and Austrians. The P.M. is in Italy with Sir Wm. Robertson, General Foch[37] and Cadorna.[38]

15 November

Alfred telephones to me from the office of the British War Mission to the U.S.A. 29 Abingdon Street to read to me his letter to the Prime

[37] Ferdinand Foch (1851–1929): French Army officer; Generalissimo of the Allied Armies 1918; Marshal of France 1918.

[38] Luigi Cadorna (1850–1928): Chief of Staff of the Italian Army 1914–1917; Italian representative to the Allied Supreme War Council 1917–1919; Field Marshal 1924.

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Minister declining the great office of first Minister of the Air – ranking with a Secretaryship of State.

Lloyd-George must be tired of the Harmsworth family. Since he became Prime Minister nearly a year ago Alfred has declined the Air Ministry, Harold both the First Commissionership and the Ministry of Food and I the joint Chief Whipship of the Coalition.

20 November

During this week we have from Horace Plunkett a series of rather excitable and urgent messages about the Irish Convention. Briefly, the knottiest point of all has been reached i.e., whether or not the Irish Parliament shall have full fiscal autonomy. The Nationalists say 'Yes': the Ulstermen say 'No'. *I* say, that if the Ulstermen will concede the setting-up of any sort of Parliament *for all Ireland* nine points in ten have been gained and that other questions can safely be left to the future. The Nationalists seem unduly nervous of the Sinn Feiners who are clamouring for an independent, a Republican constitution – and the Nationalists are forgetting that a Constitution is a living organism capable of any degree of development. No one maintains that we are framing a cast-iron Constitution like that of the U.S.A.

23 November

J.T. Davies,[39] one of the P.M.'s private Secretaries, comes down to the Garden House today to tell us that Harold has accepted the Ministry of the Air.

1 December

A telegram from Harold to Mother to say that Vyv's wounds though serious enough are not dangerous.[40]

[39]John Thomas Davies (1881–1938): private secretary to Lloyd George 1912–1922; knighted 1917.

[40]Rothermere had been informed that morning that his eldest son, Vyvyan, had been wounded. He had also been injured on two previous occasions.

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5 December

Plunkett, Dr. Bernard and other Conventionists are over in London seeing the P.M. The Irish Convention is at the very crisis of its fate. (1) The Redmondites demand a large measure of H. Rule for all Ireland with control of Customs and treaty-making powers. (2) The Southern Unionists agree in the main but refuse Customs and the treaty-making powers. (3) The Ulstermen 'lie low and say nuffin'. The object of the Southern Unionists with Plunkett at their head is to get the P.M. and the War Cabinet to bring (1) and (2) to terms. E. Carson, a War Cabinet Minister, is perhaps the key of the situation or it may be W.M. Murphy, the formidable proprietor of the *Irish Independent* and of the Dublin trams etc.

Meanwhile the 'Representation of the People Bill' is in the Commons and the question arises of the redistribution of Irish seats. Tim Healy makes a coarse attack on T.C.D. and I rejoin in a heated little speech which is well thought of.

7 December

Dr. Bernard (Archbishop) and H. Plunkett in and out of the Garden Suburb all day. Bernard and Lord Midleton are the most influential of the Southern Unionists. B. is beautifully clear-minded as usual – H.P. a bit woolly and undecided. Adams and I go over the whole situation with them.

18 December

An early evening air raid. I retire with the others from the garden building at Downing Street and make for the H. of C. When the guns begin to go off Mr. Whitley[41] from the Chair announces that at the request of the authorities of the House he suspends the sitting during the raid and that the division bells will be rung when the sitting is resumed. Some few murmurs at this but the general feeling is that we can't expect the public to obey police directions to take cover during raids if we don't do it ourselves. Our glass roof too is not much of a protection! So we troop off to the Smoking rooms, libraries etc. and

[41]John Henry Whitley (1866–1935): Lib. MP for Halifax 1900–1928; Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons 1911–1921; Speaker 1921–1928; Chairman of the BBC 1930–1935.

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to the passage downstairs leading to the Harcourt room. This latter is said to be the safest place in the whole building.

19 December

No report in the papers today of our taking cover in the House yesterday. This thought to be a serious blunder. It looks as if we were ashamed of our caution!

20 December

House adjourned. Ll.-G. makes an important statement on the present position. Astor is engaged elsewhere so I act for the nonce as Parliamentary Secretary, sitting behind Ll.G. with his red box full of extra notes and memoranda. He does not ask for any of them.

Afterwards in his room I tell him that Jos Wedgwood[42] is going for Haig, F.M., hot and strong. Ll.-G. by no means sorry to hear it. We discuss the merits of other Generals – Monro,[43] in India, especially. Ll.-G. says he is too delicate – suffers from lungs or throat or something.

Then J.H. Thomas,[44] the Labour man, bursts in and no more conversation is possible.

[42]Josiah Clement Wedgwood (1872–1943): Lib. (from 1919 Lab) MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme 1906–1942; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1924; cr. 1st Baron Wedgwood 1942.

[43]Charles Carmichael Monro (1860–1929): army officer; C.-in-C., India, 1916–1920; Governor of Gibraltar 1923–1928; knighted 1915; cr. baronet 1921.

[44]James Henry Thomas (1874–1949): Lab. MP for Derby 1910–18 36; General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen 1916–1831; Colonial Secretary 1924, 1935–186; Lord Privy Seal 1929–1831; Dominions Secretary 1931–1935; resigned from the government and the Commons after he was found to have disclosed Budget secrets to two friends.

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