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THE SECURITY SERVICES IN SOUTH WALES DURING THE FIRST WORLD
WAR

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Abstract:

This article reveals the activity of British intelligence agents in south Wales during the Great War, and their involvement in the surveillance of those considered to be 'subversive' elements within the peace and labour movements. Within the context of south Wales, it considers the significant shift of the prime concern for the security agencies during the War, from German counter-espionage to domestic counter-subversion. Reports by local agents of MI5, the Ministry of Munitions and the Admiralty are considered in order to assess the efficacy of anti-war and industrial militancy, and the success or failure of the Government's approach to the anti-war movement. The relationship between the aggressive approach of the Glamorgan Chief Constable, Captain Lionel Lindsay and MI5 and the Home Office's more cautious approach is assessed in the context of the centralising of authority over the security services, and the diminution of local police autonomy.

Whilst Wales responded largely with enthusiasm to the call to arms at the beginning of the Great War, the country was also divided by endemic industrial conflict and a strain of political dissent, which undermined the image of a country fully dedicated to the war effort. Whilst Francis and Smith,¹ and Mor O'Brien² have highlighted the incidence of strikes and anti-war dissent within the South Wales Miners' Federation, others such as May³ and Doyle⁴ have featured the impact of pro-war jingoistic patriotism in Wales. This was exemplified by the Merthyr Boroughs by-election following Keir Hardie's death and the victory of the former miner's agent and quasi-syndicalist Charles Butt Stanton over the official Labour candidate, the moderate ILP member and President of the South Wales Miners' Federation, James Winstone.⁵ However, there has been little consideration of the response of the State to dissent and to the undermining of the war effort in south Wales, with the notable exception of Hopkin's study of archived Home Office papers describing attempts by the Glamorgan Constabulary to persecute key anti-war activists such as T.E. Nicholas.⁶ This article lifts the veil on the response of the British intelligence services in Wales during the First World War, examines their concern for the region's threatening

¹ Hywel Francis and Dai Smith, *The Fed: a history of the South Wales miners in the twentieth century* (London, 1980).

² Antony Mor O'Brien, 'Patriotism on trial: the strike of the south Wales miners, July 1915', *Welsh History Review*, 12 (1984).

³ Eddie May, 'Charles Stanton and the limits to patriotic labour in south Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 18.3 (1997).

⁴ Barry M. Doyle, 'Who paid the price of patriotism? The funding of Charles Stanton during the Merthyr Boroughs by-election of 1915', *English Historical Review*, 109, 434 (1994), pp. 1215-22.

⁵ Ivor Rees, 'Charles Butt Stanton 1873-1946', *The National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. 35.3 (2010).

⁶ Deian Hopkin, 'Patriots and Pacifists in Wales 1914-1918: the Case of Capt. Lionel Lindsay and the Rev. T.E.Nicholas', *Llafur*, Vol. 1.3 (1974) pp. 27-41.

cocktail of industrial and social militancy, and their role in attempting to frustrate pacifist and socialist anti-war protest.⁷

The prime concern of the intelligence services during the first two years of the war was to identify enemy agents and to monitor the presence of ‘aliens’ in order to ensure they did not pose a threat to the war effort. By 1916, however, they were also concerned by the growing anti-war movement which had developed as an alliance between primarily middle-class opponents of the war and those who believed that military conscription would lead to industrial conscription. The rapid expansion of the intelligence agencies’ activity from January 1916 onwards was an attempt to combat what was considered to be the influence of a subversive combination of pacifism, socialism and industrial militancy. MI5’s central registry already formed the basis of an international network for gathering and exchanging intelligence and it supervised the creation of military security units throughout the dominions and colonies of the British Empire.⁸ However, as the German threat from spies and espionage receded, the intelligence agencies re-directed their zeal toward combating the enemy within. The Defence of the Realm Act (1914) created ‘a watered-down form of martial law’, empowering the executive to bypass parliament and the courts⁹ and, as the head of the

⁷ Peter Catterall, ‘Introduction’, in Brock Milman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London, 2000), p. ix, x; Hywel Francis and Dai Smith, *The Fed; A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1980); K.O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation* (Cardiff and Oxford, 1980);

⁸ Nicholas Hiley, ‘Counter-espionage and security in Great Britain during the First World War’, *English Historical Review*, 101 (1986), p. 635-670.

⁹ Thurlow, *The Secret State*, p. 48.

Special Branch later admitted, 'the police had greater powers conferred upon them than they are ever likely to have again'.¹⁰ The instruments of a corporate police state were rapidly created, and the intelligence agencies became increasingly dedicated to policing, monitoring and taking action against those who were claimed to be undermining the war effort. The growth of the still-secret security arms of the state included the Metropolitan Police's Special Branch and the development of Military Intelligence 5 (MI5) as a counter-subversive organization.¹¹ Between July 1914 and the end of the war, the military unit working to locate German agents increased from fourteen men to 850, while the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police, which carried out much of the frontline investigation of suspected subversion, increased from 112 men of all ranks to 700. The two combined were spending well over £20,000 per year.¹²

The security services used the justification of national security to extend their intelligence gathering to protest groups and political organizations, even if they posed no threat to the state. As MI5 explained in 1917:

many actions of the public, in peace perfectly permissible, must, in time of war, either be categorically prohibited or conditionally controlled by regulation in the public interest. Such actions with or without evil intent, may have a tendency to

¹⁰ Basil Thomson, 'Scotland Yard and the war', *The Times*, 16 November 1921.

¹¹ *ibid*; Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1994).

¹² Hiley, 'Counter-espionage', 395; Thurlow, *The Secret State*, p. 50.

facilitate espionage, or to obstruct its prevention or detection. It is, therefore, necessary to take counter-active measures.¹³

Other government departments formed intelligence units to monitor public attitudes and to engage in political surveillance, including the Admiralty, the Home Office, Scottish Office, Irish Office, the Postmaster-General, the Registrar-General, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Munitions, which created its own labour intelligence branch known as 'Parliamentary Military Secretary 2'.¹⁴ Apart from its unofficial registration of some 75,000 aliens, it now kept records of any suspicious person; more than 38,000 personal dossiers were amassed in the first three years of war alone, while its central registry kept a working index of over a million cards for cross-referencing suspicious people and places.¹⁵ In the sixteen months from June 1916 to October 1917, MI5 investigated some 5,246 individuals solely because of their associations with 'pacifism, anti-militarism etc.' in a huge operation that covered most of the British peace movement.¹⁶

From the summer of 1917, the security services concentrated on the threat of 'revolutionary tendencies' in the labour force, while for Basil Thomson, the head of

¹³ *ibid*, p. 649.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 648; London, National Archives (hereafter TNA), CAB 24/13 GT 733; C. J. Nottingham, 'The state and revolution in Britain, 1916-1926' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1985), p.38.

¹⁵ TNA, INF 4/9, 'The organisation of the services of military secrecy, security and publicity', October 1917, section III, pp. iii-iv.

¹⁶ Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm* (London, 2009), p. 95.

Special Branch, the onset of conscription in 1916 meant that for the security services the three strands of pacifism, anti-conscription and revolution were now ‘inseparably mixed’.¹⁷ This broadening of the definition of counter-espionage to include lawful activities, and determined solely by civil servants, shifted the emphasis of the intelligence services towards ‘the widespread investigation and infiltration of political, industrial and pacifist organisations’.¹⁸

This plethora of intelligence agencies, and MI5’s increasing involvement in anti-subversive activity, provoked tensions with Special Branch, and its Director, Basil Thomson, successfully argued in 1917 that due to the overlapping of agencies’ responsibilities, domestic intelligence should be centralized in one body.¹⁹ Special Branch was commissioned to send regular reports to the War Cabinet on pacifist and revolutionary movements from October 1917 onwards²⁰ and was made solely responsible for domestic intelligence in 1918, while MI5 was limited to counter-espionage and subversion within the armed forces alone.²¹

A joint review of various pacifist groups by Special Branch and the security services in July 1915 had convinced them erroneously that peace groups were funded by ‘German money’ and were ‘capable of any inhuman action as long as it

¹⁷ Thomson, *Queer People*, p. 269.

¹⁸ Hiley, ‘Counter-espionage’, 660.

¹⁹ Thomson, *Queer People* (London, 1922), p. 274.

²⁰ TNA, War Cabinet minutes 245(20), 4 October 1917, TNA 23/4, 64; NA, CAB24/4/G173, report by Basil Thomson, 22 October 1917.

²¹ ‘Sir Basil Thomson’s reply to the Home Secretary’, *The Times*, 7 Nov 1921.

would serve their own political ends'.²² The growth of the anti-conscription movement in 1916 marked the beginning of MI5's concern about domestic subversion, and in June 1916 the main offices of the No-Conscription Fellowship, the support organization for conscientious objectors, and the National Council Against Conscription (NCAC) in London, were raided by officers of Special Branch by agreement with MI5. Over two tons of documents and leaflets were confiscated²³ and the MI5 officer who took the lead role in investigating the anti-conscription movement, Major Victor Ferguson, reported that the operation had been mounted to counter 'a dangerous weapon whereby the loyalty of the people is being prostituted and the discipline of the army interfered with'. He accused these organizations of working up anti-war sentiment and of being pro-German.²⁴

The Intelligence Services - Covert Action in South Wales

The impact of the anti-war movement in Wales 'led to much anxiety within the Home Office and the domain of the intelligence services and the Special Branch',²⁵ and the activities of the security services locally reflected the Government's concern for the security of its strategically important rail and port facilities, and the critical importance of ensuring a constant supply of Welsh steam coal to supply the Navy.

²² TNA, HO45/10782/278537/18c, 'Anti-War propaganda' by J. O'Brien and P. Quinn.

²³ Hiley, 'Counter-espionage', 651, 652.

²⁴ TNA, HO45/10801/307402/file 75, report by Major Ferguson MI5(g), 14 June, 1916.

²⁵ K. O. Morgan, *Revolution to Devolution: Reflections on Welsh Democracy* (Cardiff, 2014), pp. 157-

Together with Clydeside and north-west England, south Wales was regarded as one of the most militant and troublesome areas of Britain in this period, and it was here (and in London) that the campaign against conscription was at its most effective. The fear of industrial conscription following the Military Service Act's military conscription in January 1916 enabled the National Council against Conscription (later the National Council for Civil Liberties) to penetrate the trade union movement. Its organizer, Ivor Thomas from Briton Ferry, was also Wales's representative on the Independent Labour Party's (ILP) Administrative Council and anti-war activists merged with the anti-conscription movement in local trade councils and trade unions to create an influential lobby.²⁶

The increasing alarm of members of the War Cabinet was reflected by the memorandum circulated by Lord Milner in August 1917 entitled 'Labour in Revolt' by Professor E. V. Arnold of the University College of North Wales Bangor, which warned of dangers of serious conflict due to the 'angelic anarchy' of opposition to conscription and support for the Russian Revolution.²⁷

His memorandum warned of the Marxist and syndicalist influence in the south Wales coalfield, the Clyde shipyards and in the Manchester and Sheffield districts:

²⁶ Carlisle, Cumbria Record Office, Catherine Marshall papers, D/MAR/4/95, 'Report on the organisation of the NCCL in Wales, 1 July 1918'.

²⁷ TNA, CAB 24/24 GT 1849, 'Labour in revolt'.

‘Labour in Revolt’ is led by young men from 20 to 40 years of age. The older trades union leaders hold entirely aloof from it and cannot understand it. Nor can they resist it. The ideas of ‘Labour in Revolt’ are crude enough, but the believers accept them with absolute sincerity. They are identical with the theories of the Russian Revolution... The result of the present war is entirely indifferent to its members; England is not their country, and the war is not their war. Of the recently published reports on ‘Industrial Unrest’ only the Report on Wales, recognized this ‘propaganda’ as a serious danger.

Arnold alleged that recruiting had been brought ‘almost to a standstill’, and that the Munitions Acts had been made a ‘dead-letter’ by a series of strikes, or threats of strikes, throughout the country. He warned that this group of men now wished to pursue the Labour Party conference’s proposal ‘by which the International Proletariat will establish peace over the heads of all Governments’, and he feared a strike where ‘the theorists of South Wales have the game in their own hands’.²⁸ His view was shared by the intelligence departments active in Wales, including the police forces, Special Branch and MI5, and the Ministry of Munitions and Admiralty whose local concern lay in ensuring the continuing supply of steam coal for the Navy.²⁹ Another government department that had intelligence officers based in south Wales (in the Cardiff area) was the Ministry of Munitions’ intelligence department, PMS2 (the Parliamentary Military Secretary Department, number 2 section. In February 1916, Lloyd George, then Minister for Munitions, approved the creation of an intelligence

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Stephen Twigge, Edward Hampshire and Graham Macklin (eds), *British Intelligence: Secrets, Spies and Sources* (The National Archives, 2008), pp. 11, 12.

service in his ministry, whose initial role was to protect munitions factories from espionage and sabotage, and to scrutinize aliens seeking munitions work.³⁰ Vernon Kell provided the Ministry with a nucleus of MI5 officers under the command of Lt Col Frank Labouchere, although by December 1916 the Ministry of Munitions had also commissioned Basil Thomson's Special Branch to undertake the intelligence service on labour matters for the whole country, which they did by deploying agents and local police forces.³¹ Throughout 1916 Labouchere set about expanding his aliens' unit into a national intelligence organization, and by November of that year he had added a second branch to handle intelligence on labour unrest³² and he spent a substantial amount of money in recruiting 'a host of private agents' to report on local unrest.³³

Thomson's secret ambition to incorporate all of the disparate sections involved in civil intelligence into the Special Branch was bolstered by the involvement of PMS2 officers as *agents provocateurs* in a murder plot against Lloyd George that eventually led to the closure of the organization. Even though the case led to successful convictions against three people for conspiracy to murder the prime minister and other Cabinet members, their embarrassing involvement compelled Addison, the

³⁰ Hansard, HC, Vol 94, 12 June 1917, cols 752-3.

³¹ Nicholas Hiley, 'Internal security in wartime: the rise and fall of PMS2, 1915-1917', *Intelligence and National Security*, 1 (1986), 406.

³² Thomson, *Queer People*, p. 269.

³³ F. De Valda, *Full Measure: the Chronicles of a Restless Soul* (London, 1939), p. 217; Thomson, *Queer People*, p. 312.

Minister for Munitions, to close the section, and their role was transferred to MI5 in April 1917.³⁴

PMS2 was organized into four areas of Great Britain, divided into a Scotland and northern England section, headquartered in Glasgow. A second area covered Yorkshire, Lancashire and the north Midlands, headquartered in Leeds. A third area covered London and the south Midlands, with its headquarters in London, and a fourth covered south Wales and the west of England, with its headquarters in Cardiff.³⁵ The Cardiff office included at least three officers, including a 'Mr. A. Barker', who was the 'Investigating Officer' for Wales, assisted by a 'Mr. Callaghan' who worked for him. Unlike some officers in other districts, both lived in the area, and a third officer was identified in the Security Service files as William Faulkner.³⁶ These locally-based officers reported on the state of labour relations in the coal, docks and rail industries and they monitored and analysed the attitudes of the trade unions and the influence of anti-war organizations, such as the ILP. Those reports that have come to light provide a fascinating insight into the social and political conditions of the time, and of the seriousness with which the security services regarded the anti-war and anti-capitalist tendency of activists in the labour movement.

From at least the late summer of 1916, these officers submitted reports to PMS2 in the Ministry of Munitions which were circulated to MI5. One revealing report, dated 30 August 1916, written by Barker, described attitudes and the state of morale in the

³⁴ Hansard, House of Commons debates, 5s Vol 90, 7 February 1917, cols 55-6, p. 409

³⁵ TNA, KV1/13, memo from Major Sealy Clarke to Colonel Vernon Kell, 18 January, 1917, 90.

³⁶ *ibid*, 91.

Labour movement in Merthyr Tydfil and the influence of the local anti-war movement. He stated that although individual miners showed no wish to 'hamper Imperial efforts', nowhere else in the mining industry had the agent encountered such distrust between coal owners and their employees. He found that 'tacked on' to the trades unions' organization were 'combinations' such as 'a Council for Civil Liberties, a Council for Peace and the like'. He warned that although the objective of these organizations was no secret, 'they are slowly but surely bringing about an attitude which to a certain extent is bound to become prejudicial to major interests'. He highlighted the failure of prominent local figures, including Labour MPs, to support the war effort and to 'help the average man to keep in the right frame of mind':

At the moment, Socialists with whom the ILP is identified, and a section of the Welsh clergy, are out to either mould new ideas or disturb fixed ones, and thus divert essential enthusiasm. I do not think that very much assistance need be expected from Labour members in Wales; it seems to me they are the slaves of local dictation.

He identified local 'juveniles' as slackers and troublemakers but the tendency for shopkeepers and merchants to raise prices and the increasing cost of living caused 'considerable irritation'. While miners were not so badly affected because of their increasing wages, railwaymen, municipal employees, shop assistants and others could not keep pace. He warned that 'the agitators are out to engineer difficulties' and referred to the representation of 116 representatives of trade unions, together with

political and religious organizations at a recent meeting of the National Council for Civil Liberties in the area.³⁷

PMS2's close interest in labour disputes and trade union activity is reflected in its active and well-informed reporting and monitoring of the crisis in the rail industry following the threat of railway unions in south Wales to strike for an increase in wages from 17 September 1916. The Admiralty and the Home Office pressed for swift preventative action, including either invoking the Defence of the Realm Act or deploying the military, but in a crisis meeting of government departments on 15 September, the Minister of Munitions, Christopher Addison, and the Labour Cabinet Minister Arthur Henderson, insisted on a more conciliatory approach. That afternoon, J. H. (Jimmy) Thomas, the General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, was persuaded reluctantly by Addison to go to south Wales to dissuade the local unions from taking strike action: 'Thomas for the NUR shuffled and wriggled rather; but he was finally bound to agree to go down to South Wales to prevent any premature stoppage ... The result of the whole performance is that an agreement has now been arrived at for an immediate advance of 5/-.'³⁸

Two reports of meetings of railway workers on the following Sunday, 17 September 1916, were submitted by the agent identified as Callaghan. Labouchere was warned of collusion between rail workers and the tippers at Cardiff Docks, and of attempts by

³⁷ Bodleian Library, Addison Papers, Report by 'A. B.', dep. c88, folios 44-6. While the note is anonymous, his further report, KV/2/663/20444, dated 13 November 1916, suggests that the local intelligence agent A. Barker was the likely author.

³⁸ Bodleian Library, Addison Diaries, dep. c.2 C377-80.

ILP members in Neath and Bedlinog to press for an immediate strike. He reported that at the first meeting on 17 September, the south Wales district council of the Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen instructed the Executive Committee of the union not to accept less than ten shillings per week advance in wages and that in the event of an unsatisfactory settlement a conference should be convened.

The strike was averted in the second meeting that afternoon in the Park Hall, Cardiff. Jimmy Thomas addressed a large meeting of railway employees from all parts of the south Wales district and 'most earnestly' appealed to the men to withdraw their previous decision to cease work at midnight that evening. A further note by Callaghan reported that he had 'kept closely with the Military in this matter' and reported that the meeting of railway men and delegates representing south Wales, held at the Park Hall, Cardiff the following Sunday was 'moderate but with a strong undercurrent of resolve'. He agreed to press for the lower increase of five shillings, which was agreed by the employers.³⁹

One of the most intriguing covert interventions by the intelligence services in south Wales was the involvement of PMS2 in developing the political and policing response towards the anti-war and anti-conscription movement and the efforts to contain the level of discontent in the region between November 1916 and the autumn of 1917. This period witnessed the violent breaking up of a major anti-conscription meeting in Cardiff's Cory Hall in November 1916, and included the commissioning and

³⁹ibid, dep. c.2 folio 43.

publication of the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest. It culminated in the ballot on a comb-out of miners from south Wales collieries in November 1917. Their constant monitoring and reporting reflected the government's fear of and nervousness about the anti-war movement, and of industrial militancy in key industries such as rail and coal. In this period, PMS2 actively worked to stem the level of discontent towards conscription and the growing influence of the peace movement in south Wales.

The Cory Hall disturbance

The large-scale anti-conscription meeting held at Cardiff's Cory Hall on 7 November 1916 and disrupted by its opponents displayed the innate conflict in south Wales between the anti-war movement and pro-war organisations and was the subject of intense scrutiny by the intelligence agencies, working closely with the local police forces.⁴⁰ The flurry of political activity before the disturbance, and the illuminating discussions between Lloyd George's closest advisers and the second-in-command in PSM2 signify the seriousness with which they recognised the threat of anti-war activity.

⁴⁰ Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in Britain* (London, 2000). p. 138-166; Bodleian Library, *Addison Papers*, dep c88, folio 44-46; NA, *Security Services Papers*, KV/2/663/20444, 13 November 1916.

Four days prior to the Cory Hall disturbance, one of Labouchere's staff, Major William Lauriston Melville Lee, the author of *A History of the Police in England*, and who served as the ministry's investigating officer for the London District and the Midlands,⁴¹ met Major David Davies, Lloyd George's private secretary, to discuss the political and industrial situation in south Wales. He offered to help 'with all the means in his power' and arranged for Lloyd George to send a message of support to the 'patriotic' meeting convened on the eve of the Cory Hall meeting in order to oppose the anti-conscription meeting.⁴²

His report noted Davies and Lee's agreement to creating a pro-war campaign in Wales and to counter anti-war propaganda. Davies advised Lee to get in touch with a number of influential Welsh figures, including Professor Tom Jones, at the time the secretary of the Welsh Insurance Committee as well as editor of the *Welsh Outlook*,⁴³ and Edgar Chappell (who had previously also served as the magazine's editor), who he described as an authority on housing and 'kindred social subjects', although it was noted that Chappell was probably a pacifist. He also suggested Silyn Roberts, secretary of the Welsh Appointments Board. These men, he was advised, could tell him 'who can be depended upon and who to avoid'.

Lee's note of the meeting with Davies emphasized that the tone of the campaign should make it clear from the start that it was not 'being run in the capitalist interest'. They discussed the opportunities for pro-war propaganda in showing the new film of

⁴¹ TNA, KV1/13, memo by Major Sealy Clarke to Colonel Vernon Kell, 18 January 1917, 91.

⁴² TNA, KV2/663/19898, Confidential note by Colonel W. M. Lee to Lt Col. Labouchere.

⁴³ E.L.Ellis, *TJ; A Life of Thomas Jones* (Cardiff, 1992).

the Battle of the Somme, and discussed likely speakers. Davies suggested the name of the owner of Standard Colliery, Sir W. J. Thomas of Ynyshir as chairman of the campaign; the latter was said to be ‘no speaker’ but he was one of the most respected men in Wales. Other names mentioned by Davies as likely speakers were the general secretary of the South Wales Miners Federation (SWMF), Tom Richards, and the prominent district agent and member of the SWMF executive, Alfred Onions. He also suggested the name of Joseph Davies as a knowledgeable statistician of the coal trade as a useful source of information.

Two days later, on 9 November 1916, Lee met Thomas Jones and reported Jones’s view to Labouchere that ‘the only wise line of action to be pursued for the present is the educational, or ... an effort to counter bad propaganda by better’. Jones spoke ‘very highly’ of Edgar Chappell, who he described ‘as a three star man for our present purposes’, but warned against entrusting to a number of others whom he described as being in ‘David Davies’s pocket’. These names included the editor of the *Western Mail*, Willie Davies. Jones also gave information to Lee about George Davison⁴⁴, a prominent wealthy benefactor of the labour movement in Ammanford and north-west Wales, who he described as a ‘fundamental anarchist’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘quite irreconcilable’, although he was a personal friend and for whom otherwise had a great deal of respect.

Jones highlighted what he thought was the fundamental loss of authority by the older generation of miners’ leaders’ in the south Wales coalfield and blamed Davison’s influence:

⁴⁴ J. Beverley Smith (ed.), *James Griffiths and His Times* (Ferndale, 1981), p. 20-21.

a very large number of younger men are coming forward (largely educated by Davison) who are up to all the points in the game, students of the money market, readers of Marx, and keen and able controversialists. These men wield the real power in the S. Wales Coalfields.⁴⁵

Jones described two activists in particular, namely Nun Francis (sic) of Ammanford (presumably Nun Nicholas)⁴⁶, who he described as a ‘clever and determined stormy petrel’, and the second was Noah Ablett,⁴⁷ probably the most influential activist, but he also dismissed him as a ‘low type of man and a drunkard’. In his note of the meeting, Lee noted Jones’s view that it was of ‘prime importance’ that the government should give a clear lead to public opinion on such subjects as food prices, profiteering, coal for the Navy, domestic consumption of coal, gambling in shipping, and that mine owners, shipowners and colliers should be made to understand what sacrifices were demanded from them and on what grounds. Jones warned against attempting to ‘bamboozle the miners’ because ‘they know too much’, and that any such attempt would rebound disastrously on the whole situation. He warned that a policy of drift towards the mining industry would lead to certain trouble and also warned against taking police action against the anti-war minority and parliamentary leaders of the Independent Labour Party:

⁴⁵ NA, Security Service Papers, KV2/663/19898.

⁴⁶ Richard Lewis, *Leaders and Teachers: Adult Education and the Challenge of Labour in South Wales, 1906-1940* (Cardiff, 1993), pp. 97,182,188.

⁴⁷ Joyce Bellamy, John Saville, John (Eds) *Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol.3* (London, 1976), p.1-3.

Jones argued that *The Times* should be encouraged to create a ‘special commission’ to study the industrial situation in south Wales, and to write a series of explanatory articles on the real situation in the Cardiff and Rhondda districts. These articles, he said, would have to treat shipowners, coal owners and colliers equitably. An effort should be made to increase miners’ awareness of the importance of steam coal to the Navy and that with this object in mind, he believed Sir John Jellicoe would be willing to send a message to the colliers urging them not to desert their naval comrades.⁴⁸ A series of four feature articles written by a ‘special correspondent’, along the lines suggested by Jones, appeared in *The Times* between 20 and 24 November, 1916.⁴⁹ The lead editorial column of the paper addressed the danger of a strike in the coal industry in south Wales and warned against ‘pro-German agitators’. It accused the miners of taking the war too lightly and spoke of them as living in ‘valleys that are too sheltered and remote’ to permit any sense of danger or disaster’. Furthermore, it called on the government to intervene in the dispute over wages that threatened to paralyse the coalfield and to take ‘prompt coercive action’.⁵⁰

Within a month, Jones was made assistant secretary to the Cabinet and he and Davies became part of the key group of officials who surrounded Lloyd George as prime minister from 7 December 1916 onwards. The coal industry in south Wales had

⁴⁸ TNA, Security Service Papers, KV2/663/19898.

⁴⁹ ‘South Wales miners: causes of the present discontent: a perilous situation’, *The Times*, 20 November 1916; ‘The evidence of exploitation’, *The Times*, 21 November 1916; ‘Causes of unrest’, *The Times*, 22 November 1916; ‘South Wales miners – on the brink of a strike’, *The Times*, 23 November 1916.

⁵⁰ ‘The curse of south Wales’, *The Times*, 22 November 1916.

already been brought under Government control on 1 December 1916, and the government was concerned by the increasingly militant mood of the labour movement in south Wales, especially in the mining industry, as 1917 wore on.⁵¹

THE CORY HALL MEETING, NOVEMBER 1916

The break-up of the Cory Hall anti-conscription meeting in Cardiff has been granted particular significance by Millman, who describes the 'Battle of Cory Hall' as exemplifying an 'unbridgeable patriot-pacifist chasm' in which elements of the working class responded to the war in radically different ways.⁵² The meeting was held by the National Council for Civil Liberties on 11 November 1916 and the main speakers scheduled for the meeting were Ramsay Macdonald MP, the railwaymen's leader, Jimmy Thomas, and the president of the South Wales Miners' Federation, James Winstone. But pro-war protests' led by C.B.Stanton, MP for Merthyr Boroughs, Captain Tupper of the Seamen's Union, and organized by a Captain Atherley Jones, secretary of the pro-war British Empire Union, and a recognized 'rabble-rouser',⁵³ resulted in its break-up and its subsequent re-scheduling to Merthyr Tydfil a month later.

All three PMS2 officers were closely involved in monitoring and reporting on the Cory Hall meeting beforehand. MI5's Director, Vernon Kell, advised beforehand

⁵¹ Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge* (London, 2006), pp. 217-18.

⁵² Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*, (London, 2000), p.140.

⁵³ *ibid*, p.150, quoting PRO 30/69/1160, 'The Career of W.H. Atherley Jones'.

against banning the Cory Hall meeting, and whilst he believed that south Wales was 'a hotbed of peace cranks' and the subject matter for the conference included industrial conscription, the invasion of personal liberty and the maladministration of the Military Service Acts, it was impossible to judge beforehand whether the Defence of the Realm regulations would be contravened. Therefore, he recommended to the Home Office that the meeting be allowed to continue but that reports of the meeting should be made. Ominously however, Kell also suggested strongly that the NCCL's request for police protection should be refused:

I understand they have asked for police protection for the meeting so that would raise a question whether it is in the public interest to allow meetings which may lead to a disturbance of the peace, a time when the police force is depleted and military forces are required to defeat the King's enemies.⁵⁴

The subsequent violent breaking up of the Cory Hall meeting was witnessed by PMS2 agents, and in spite of MI5's caution, one of PMS2's agents was involved in planning to disrupt the meeting.⁵⁵ Barker was present in a meeting at the Park Hotel at Cardiff on 2 November 1916 that was convened by Captain Atherley Jones to organize the disruption of the Cory Hall meeting. There were twenty-five other people present, including Cardiff businessmen and a military officer (a second lieutenant in uniform).

In a note dated Monday 13 November 1916, William Faulkner reported that on the day after the disruption of the Cory Hall meeting the south Wales ILP branches held a

⁵⁴ TNA, KV2/663/19898, letter from Kell to Troup, 31 October 1916.

⁵⁵ *South Wales Daily News*, 13 November, 1916: *The Times*, 13 November, 1916

private conference of delegates there and were addressed by Ramsay Macdonald. Faulkner failed to enter the meeting of about 200 delegates, but he succeeded in speaking to a number of the members that evening. He reported that the ILPers were 'exceedingly wild at this latest example of 'British Prussianism', and he was obviously trusted sufficiently to converse with one of the ILP's prominent members and public speakers, Mrs Swanwick, who told him that Lloyd George was thought to be the man behind the 'patriots' of Cardiff and that he had wanted a row in Cardiff to provide him with an excuse for prohibiting peace meetings. He reported that arrangements were being made for the NCCL conference to be held in Merthyr in December and that the pro-war faction who had disrupted the Cory Hall meeting was keen to 'organise for a real fight at Merthyr':

Both sides talk of getting a crowd of miners who will fight in real earnest if necessary. In fact it may lead to a riot if the conference is not prohibited. I have come here today to ascertain the feeling in Merthyr. I think the meeting should be prohibited but perhaps I can form a better opinion after a talk with the ILPers here tonight.⁵⁶

Callaghan provided a more sober and cautious analysis of the implications of the disruption of the Cory Hall meeting, and in doing so gave a revealing assessment of the anti-war movement in south Wales. Entitled 'Assessment of the Peace meeting in the Cory Hall' and written on the day after the Cory Hall meeting, he warned of the

⁵⁶ TNA, KV2/663, Note from William Faulkner to Major Matthews, PMS2, 13 November 1916.

dangers of underestimating the influence of the peace movement on the labour movement:

It would be a mistake to overlook the character of the peace gathering itself. The very grades of people which were markedly absent from Stanton's anti-peace meeting meeting of the previous night were in large attendance here. Miners, railwaymen and other workers warmly greeted Macdonald, Thomas and Winstone. It is said that 417 peace delegates were present, and I am personally aware that the latter almost filled the body of the Hall which was reserved for them. Were it not for the part played by Stanton and Tupper the peace meeting would have been a comparative success; it was as well attended as the protest meeting of the previous night.

I regret that from observations I cannot conclude that the work of Stanton, Tupper and Atherley Jones is likely to have a permanent effect. The peace forces are well organised and it is to be hoped that they will not turn more attention to the undermining of the industrial situation. I regard the attitude of Winstone, Macdonald and especially Thomas as dangerous to the future peace of labour in this area. I doubt if Stanton and Tupper can be placed in the balance against men like Thomas and Winstone who influentially represent railways and miners respectively. I think Cardiff should be regarded as only a starting off point, and it is up to some organisation to carry opposition into the real strongholds of the ILP, and other places where agitators have had full sway in

their schemes of hostility towards the government and the conduct of the war, and of course the poisoning of the minds of the workers.⁵⁷

A further note, dated 17 November, 1916, sent by Barker to Labouchere and forwarded to MI5 and the War Office, suggested that if the re-arranged Cory Hall meeting was allowed to proceed, 'loyal' pro-war meetings should be held in other towns in the region, such as Pontypridd, Aberdare, Mountain Ash and Swansea, at the same time, but he warned that arranging such a meeting in Merthyr would be fraught with difficulty:

I do not think it would be altogether wise to arrange a meeting in Merthyr which is the most difficult place we have to deal with. The strictly loyal section of this town, namely professional men, shopkeepers, and such like, are largely dependent in their businesses on the direct support of the ILP and socialist factions, and therefore cannot be very well organised as an out-and-out serious opposition.

Barker noted that a verbatim transcript of the Cory Hall meeting had been taken by E. Ellis Hughes, the chief reporter of the *Western Mail*, and sent on to PMS2 by Colonel Aspinall Turner, the military commanding officer for the Cardiff and Barry garrison.⁵⁸ Barker also sent a number of notes to Labouchere reporting the opposition of certain trade union lodges and trades councils to the conference that was to be held on 9 December, and warned that Stanton was 'endeavouring to organise a strong

⁵⁷ TNA, KV2/663/19898, note by 'J. C.', 12 November 1916.

⁵⁸ TNA, KV2/663/20444, note from 'A. B.', 17 November 1916.

opposition at Aberdare and Mountain Ash to the peace meeting'. He informed PMS2 that Captain Atherley Jones had said he would hold protests against the conference and that the police's attitude towards the conference should be to allow it to take place:

the competent military authority of Merthyr has, I understand, been communicated with on the matter, and his decision is to leave the question to the police. After a review of the situation and the present labour feeling in Merthyr, I am of the opinion that it would be unwise to allow the counter demonstration to take place, and I suggest that the diplomatic course to pursue would be to allow the peace conference to take place and let the local CMA [Competent Military Authority] send for Atherley Jones and let it be hinted to him that if he really wants to do anything no objections would be offered to his organising meetings at Pontypridd, Mountain Ash, Aberdare and Swansea, on or about the same date as the Merthyr conference.⁵⁹

Callaghan went further, warning that if any attempt was made to prohibit the meeting, then violence would result, and that even pro-war meetings should be prohibited:

The ILP and associated bodies have decided to go forward at all costs, and this decision is being endorsed by large number of miners and other workers. I have been advised that the use of revolvers is being spoken of should Stanton, [Atherley] Jones, or other individuals attempt active organised opposition. It

⁵⁹ TNA, KV2/665, note from 'A. B.' to Labouchere, 22 November 1916.

would be most deplorable if this Merthyr affair were to resolve itself into a bloody riot as there is positive danger that thereafter it would assume more serious proportions in industrial directions. I think that opposition meetings at any of the surrounding centres, if it to be held on the 9th idem should be prohibited.⁶⁰

He warned that the anti-war element in the Merthyr area was well organized by the younger miners:

I must say that the organisations in this part are well directed. A miner informed me that ILP men were capturing any vacant offices in their lodges, and that even when it came to a vote the ILP were scoring.⁶¹

The meeting in the Rink in Merthyr Tydfil on 9 December 1916 went ahead without interruption and, seemingly, the advice given by MI5 and PMS2 was heeded.⁶² No meetings were held to oppose the re-convened conference, apart from one mass meeting held locally two days beforehand, and a special 'Union Jack' train to carry 'patriotic' protestors was prohibited from running from Cardiff to Merthyr on the day.⁶³ The more sober assessment by the intelligence services of the events surrounding the disruption of the peace meeting in the Cory Hall highlighted the

⁶⁰ TNA, KV2/665, note from 'J. C.', 27 November 1916.

⁶¹ TNA, KV2/665, note from 'J.C.', 19 November 1916.

⁶² *Pioneer*, 16 December 1916;

⁶³ Rev. Ivor T. Rees, 'Charles Butt Stanton 1873-1946', *National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. 36.3 (2012), 13-14.

strength and potential of the anti-war movement rather than the success of the ‘patriots’ in disrupting the conference. The crowd of over 2,500 people in Merthyr was drawn from all parts of south Wales, and included individuals from as far as London and the English midlands. In comparison with the Cory Hall conference, there was an increase of 25 per cent in registered delegates, from 445 to 593, representing an aggregate membership of peace and labour organisations of 324,767, as against the 445 delegates representing 220,000 people at Cardiff.⁶⁴ The meeting drew together a wide cross-section of opinion that went beyond the anti-war movement and it included those opposed to the further encroachment of the state in extending conscription. The spirit of Merthyr was possibly more militant than that of Cardiff, and the breaking up of the Cory Hall meeting was said to have steeled the Merthyr delegates to display an impressive unity of purpose.⁶⁵ Another intelligent agent, William Randall, who worked for the Admiralty in south Wales, sought to criticise the pro-war protestors as ‘ill-contrived and ill-controlled “patriotic” movements - the effects arising from the incitement of mob law and the studied inactivity of the police, thus encouraging mob law’.⁶⁶

His view suggests that palpable tension existed between the local police force, who were instrumental in allowing protestors led by Stanton and Tupper to use violence to

⁶⁴ *The Pioneer*, 16 December 1916.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Edgar Chappell papers, letter from W. Randall to G. M. Hodgson, War Cabinet secretary, C1/1, 9 June 1917; Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*, p. 138-167; The novelist Lilian Tobias fictionalised this event in her novel *Eunice Fleet* (re-printed with introduction by Jasmine Donahaye, Dinas Powys, 2004).

disrupt the meeting, and MI5, who were disturbed by the implications of these scenes of mob rule.

Another task accomplished by PSM2's officers was to draw up a list of the key persons who were believed to be connected with the labour and peace movements in south Wales. This list was mainly compiled by Barker as the senior officer locally, and he provided an analysis of the character, political leaning and influence of those individuals who were considered to be significant in the labour and peace movements. The list, entitled 'Alphabetical List of Names of Persons connected with Labour and Peace movements in South Wales', was issued internally among members of the security services and provides an insight into PMS2's concerns about the threat to the war effort in the region at the time, and its assessment of the strength of the anti-war movement. It contains 184 names of people who were active in the labour and peace movements at the time.⁶⁷ While the list deals mainly with those in the labour movement and beyond who were considered to be opposed to the war, it is significant that the 'Labour and Peace movements' were conflated and a socialist outlook was invariably interpreted as being synonymous with an anti-war standpoint. For example, Joseph Branch,⁶⁸ a Dockers' Union agent in Briton Ferry, was described as a member of the No Conscription Fellowship and the Union of Democratic Control, and had been convicted for distributing anti-war literature. J. E. Edmunds,⁶⁹ a teacher in Cardiff, the secretary of the Cardiff Trades and Labour Council and Labour candidate in the 1918 general election, was described as 'extreme'. Matt Lewis of Aberdare,

⁶⁷ Bodleian Library, Milner Papers, Appendix One, Dep. 377, leaves 168-78.

⁶⁸ Philip Adams, *Not in OUR Name* (Briton Ferry, 2015), p. 197-198.

⁶⁹ Adams, *Not in OUR Name*, p.112-113.

another teacher, local secretary of the ILP and a close friend of Keir Hardie, was considered to be a 'dangerous' anti-conscriptionist.

The list also included three activists who opposed the anti-war movement, including T. Bubb of the British Empire Union, described as a 'paid anti-socialist and 'all bubble' and having 'no influence'; Matt de Lacy, who was described as anti-socialist and a supporter of the government, and G. Jackson, secretary of the Seamen's Union in Newport who was under the influence of the National Union of Seamen's leader, Captain Tupper. The list also included the more traditional prominent figures in the SWMF, such as William Abraham ('Mabon'), described as an 'advocate of fairly liberal views', Bernard (sic) Hartshorn, described as 'a writer and propagandist of fair repute', with considerable influence who was able to sway the SWMF's executive committee on vital questions and thought of as 'advanced', and Frank Hodges, the miners' agent for the Garw Valley, described as 'closely associated with the advanced labour propaganda'

It also featured a number of well-known British politicians and propagandists who were regular speakers at anti-war rallies across south Wales.⁷⁰ These included Clifford Allen,⁷¹ originally from Newport, and the first chairman of the No Conscription Fellowship, William Ayles, from Bristol and a member of the NCF's executive, Charles Buxton, a strong pacifist and leading member of the Union of Democratic Control and the ILP, Langdon-Davies, secretary of the National Civil Liberties Council, Ramsay Macdonald MP, described as a 'dangerous influence', E.

⁷⁰ Adams, *Not in OUR Name*, p. 272-278; *Pioneer*, 31 October, 1914; *ibid*, 1 December, 1915; 9 September, 1916; 24 June, 1916; 31 July, 1916.

⁷¹ Bellamy, Saville (Eds) *Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol.2* (London, 1974), p.1-9.

D. Morel, the founder of the UDC and 'dangerous on general lines', Philip Snowden, considered as anti-war and 'exercising pernicious influence in labour circles'. One figure who was certainly not anti-war but who opposed conscription and joined protests in south Wales against the dangers of conscription in the work place was the railwaymen's leader, Jimmy H. Thomas, who was described as one who 'dabbles in peace organizations. Should not be interfered with in any circumstances. Incline to be moderate but easily made hostile'. The SWMF's President, James Winstone,⁷² was identified as a 'Pacifist' and allied to the ILP. He had presided at the Merthyr peace meeting that had been held the previous day and although he may have balked at being described as a pacifist at this stage of the war, he was described as a 'waverer' and easily influenced by 'extremists'.

The main body of names on the list are those active in the ILP, trade unions and the trades councils who were considered as 'doubtful', 'extreme', held 'strong views' (that is, against the war), 'agitators', 'militant', 'undesirable', 'dangerous' or held 'advanced' views. These appellations covered the majority of those in the list.⁷³

Although government departments such as the Admiralty and the Ministry of Munitions had intelligence operations throughout the country, it was the police forces, working closely with them and with Special Branch, who undertook local intelligence gathering and monitoring of anti-war and labour activists.

POLICING

⁷² Bellamy, Saville, *Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol.1* (London, 1972), p.350-351.

⁷³ *ibid.*

As anti-war activity grew from 1916 onwards, so the level of police and security services' activity also increased and the anxiety displayed by the government and the security services was amplified by the aggressive and bellicose approach of the police in Glamorgan, and by the combative and uncompromising attitude of its energetic Chief Constable, Captain Lionel Lindsay.

Lindsay has been described as the 'apotheosis of the atmosphere of conflict between police and labour in twentieth century South Wales'.⁷⁴ His background in Ireland and his colonial military training in the 1880s gave him 'a quite incredible ignorance of and insensitivity towards the population he was trying to serve',⁷⁵ and the Marxist historian of the south Wales miners, Page Arnot, described Lindsay's period in the British Army in Egypt as a preparatory crusade against those who propagated class war.⁷⁶

Lindsay regarded himself as the ally of the employers and coalowners and as chief constable of Glamorgan between 1891 and 1936, in a period when county chief constables were known to be 'notoriously militaristic and autocratic', Lindsay was 'in a class of his own' and viewed the population of the Welsh mining valleys with the same suspicion with which he viewed the population of his native Ireland'.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁴ Jane Morgan, 'Police and labour in the age of Lindsay, 1910-1936', *Llafur*, 5, 1 (1988), 16.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, 15.

⁷⁶ R. Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners: A History of the S.W.M.F., 1898-1914* (Cardiff, 1967), p. 182 and passim, quoted in Deian Hopkin, 'Patriots and pacifists in Wales, 1914-1918', *Llafur*, 1.3 (1974), 29; 'Obituary for Lionel Lindsay', *South Wales Echo*, 16 April 1945.

⁷⁷ Morgan, 'Police and labour', 16.

autocratic executive powers of chief constables like Lindsay in county areas with large industrial populations like Glamorgan had grown throughout his period as chief constable, but the requirements of war and a centralized intelligence service commandeered by the Special Branch under Basil Thomson, reduced Lindsay's autonomy, thereby changing the dynamic of the relationship between chief constables, the military and Scotland Yard, so that either the local competent military authority, MI5, the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Home Office were able to over-ride the authority of chief constables to authorize prosecutions in their localities. Against Lindsay's wishes, the Home Office was increasingly reluctant to prosecute anti-war activists during the war.⁷⁸

The Home Office, assisted by other government departments and the local police, adopted a variety of indirect methods to curb pacifist propaganda. In south Wales, as elsewhere, hall proprietors were encouraged to refuse bookings from anti-war organizations, leaflets and anti-war propaganda were seized in raids on the homes and offices of members of the ILP, Union of Democratic Control and No-Conscription Fellowship members,⁷⁹ but the over-enthusiasm of the local police in Glamorgan disturbed the central intelligence agencies. The impact of raids by the police and the military to seize literature in the summer of 1916 were said to be 'all very well up to a certain point', but they drove 'the propaganda to seek better cover, and make it more difficult to cope with the trouble. The ILP and UDC are secretly very active'.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Hopkin, 'Patriots and pacifists', 28.

⁷⁹ Hiley, 'Counter-espionage', 651.

⁸⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Addison Collection, note from Major Maurice Caillard, Ministry of Munitions, to H. H. Piggott, dep c. 88 folio 39, 5 September 1916.

Legal opinion in the Home Office advised local police authorities to err on the side of caution and believed that prosecutions for seditious speeches were ‘seldom advisable’.⁸¹ Until the middle of 1916 prosecutions were initiated by the local competent military authority, usually the commanding officer of the local military barracks. This arrangement in south Wales was characterized by ready cooperation between Lindsay and the two local military commanding officers, Colonel Edwards Vaughan at Swansea and Colonel Schofield at Cardiff. Between April 1915 and December 1916, Lindsay submitted forty cases for prosecutions of anti-war activists in Glamorgan to the competent military authority, involving fifty-two individuals on the basis of offences under the Defence of the Realm Act, which included spreading disloyalty, making disloyal speeches and distributing pamphlets. In that period the competent military authority only refused to authorize prosecutions in three cases.⁸²

Fifteen of the prosecuted cases were against those who had spoken against the war in conversation, but they also included serious cases such as the successful prosecution of the leader of the Irish Citizen’s Army, Captain Jack White, who travelled from Ireland in May 1916 to agitate for a strike in the coalfield against the execution of the leaders of the Easter Rising, and he was imprisoned for three months.⁸³ Another nineteen individuals were prosecuted for distributing anti-war pamphlets, including ten members of Briton Ferry’s ILP branch. The three unsuccessful cases submitted for prosecution reinforced the approach of the Home Office and the military that caution

⁸¹ TNA, CAB 24/4/G173, Report by Sir George Cave on ‘Pacifist Propaganda’, 7.

⁸² TNA, HO 45/10743/263275.

⁸³ Leo Keohane, *Captain Jack White: Imperialism, Anarchism and the Irish Citizen Army* (Newbridge, Ireland, 2014).

should be displayed in dealing with displays of dissent, especially in relation to the press. All three cases arose from the coverage of speeches made at Keir Hardie's funeral in 1915. Two related to newspapers,⁸⁴ The third case was against the Revd T. E. Nicholas, following his fiery anti-war oration at Keir Hardie's funeral. Lindsay, who kept up a relentless but unsuccessful pursuit of Nicholas throughout the war, claimed this refusal to prosecute was 'for sentimental reasons'.⁸⁵

Lindsay's growing frustration was compounded by a further ten cases that he submitted to the Competent Military Authority, who from June 1916 passed on such requests for prosecution to 'higher authorities', either the Home Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions. These were primarily reports of speeches by visiting anti-war activists such as Bertrand Russell, the leading ILPers, Mr and Mrs Philip Snowden, and Ramsay Macdonald MP. Only in the case of a speech by Robert Williams, the secretary of the National Transport Workers' Federation, was prosecution recommended, but it was subsequently dropped because of difficulty in providing legal assistance. In the case of a submission for prosecution regarding a pamphlet, Lindsay reported that while the pamphlet was recognized as 'objectionable', and the Competent Military Authority had recommended prosecution, the Director of Public Prosecutions considered it a weak case.⁸⁶ He reported that the police carried out raids at the request of MI5 on the homes of two secretaries of the No Conscription

⁸⁴ *The Pioneer*, 3 November 1915; *Daily Mail*, 30 November 1915.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ TNA, HO45/10743/263275.

Fellowship, in the Swansea Valley and Gorseinon, who were subsequently fined for distributing leaflets. These were seized and destroyed.⁸⁷

In the ten month period from the beginning of January 1917 to the end of October 1917, Lindsay listed submissions for prosecution for forty-two individuals made on twenty-five occasions. These included anti-war MPs such as Thomas Richardson, R. C. Trevelyan and Ramsay Macdonald, prominent ILP leaders such as R. C. Wallhead and E. P. Wake, trade union leaders such as Tom Mann and Robert Williams, and anti-war activists such as Sylvia Pankhurst. Local figures included prominent members of the No Conscription Fellowship and the ILP, and some of the 'advanced men' in the South Wales Miners' Federation. The list included the increasingly anti-war president of the SWMF, James Winstone, and activists such as Noah Tromans, George Dolling, Arthur Horner and W. H. Mainwaring, as well as the increasingly influential ILP organizer for South Wales, Minnie Pallister.

In only two cases in this period was a prosecution brought forward, and both were against the ILP propagandist and future MP for Merthyr Tydfil, R. C. Wallhead.⁸⁸

The extraordinarily high refusal rate of over ninety per cent of Lindsay's requests for prosecution in the period between January and November 1917 stands in stark contrast with the preceding period, suggesting a dramatic reduction in Lindsay's influence.⁸⁹ Indeed, from the middle of 1916 onwards all proposals for prosecutions had to be referred to the regional military command, which for Wales was the army

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Saville, *Dictionary Labour Biography* Vol.3, p.195-199.

⁸⁹ TNA, HO45/10743/263275.

headquarters at Chester, rather than by local commands in the Cardiff area.⁹⁰ The competent military authority would then forward its recommendations to MI5 and its Director, Colonel Vernon Kell, who provided the analysis of the submissions and coordinated a response with the Home Office, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and other intelligence departments.⁹¹ Lindsay found the new arrangement exceedingly frustrating, and as early as January 1917 complained that his reports to the Home Office were being kept for months without reply; even then, his applications for prosecutions were routinely refused.

In February 1917 concern at Lindsay's bellicosity caused the Home Office's Under-Secretary of State, Sir Edward Troup, to commission the Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Leonard Dunning, to investigate Lindsay's complaints. Dunning supported Lindsay and warned that if firm steps were not taken against disloyalty, then lawlessness would become as great a problem in south Wales as across the Irish Sea:⁹²

Captain Lindsay, whatever his faults may be, has the knack of picking up information of what is passing in the minds of many classes of his people ... In discussing the matter with me Captain Lindsay drew a parallel between the state of affairs in Glamorgan and Ireland. He is an Irishman and still closely connected with that country and my experience of it makes me agree with him that a policy of overlooking offences against the law has not produced good

⁹⁰ Hopkin, 'Patriots and pacifists', 29.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² TNA, HO45/10742/21.

effects upon the public peace there, and may be expected to produce similar effects on a county like Glamorgan whose people in so many respects resemble the people of Ireland.⁹³

Comparing the situation in south Wales with the recent armed Easter Rising in April 1916 was clearly contentious, but it underlines the high degree of apprehension over industrial discontent and anti-war subversion in south Wales, and especially in Glamorgan. In November 1917, Lindsay sought to embarrass the Home Office by planting questions in the House of Commons with Charles (Clem) Edwards the Liberal MP for East Glamorgan. On Lindsay's own admission, the issue of cases put forward for prosecution had 'cropped up in a conversation' with Edwards. In response to the Home Office's irate enquiries, Lindsay responded acerbically that the information could hardly be news to them as it had been a subject of continual discussion by the public and the press in the district for the past two years.⁹⁴

This intervention was hardly contrived to improve the relationship between the chief constable and the Home Office, but it suggests that Lindsay regarded his local role as unassailable.⁹⁵ He alleged to the Home Office that the lack of action against disloyal elements meant that the efforts of the recruiting authorities had been thwarted, the traffic of the railways had been constantly endangered and the question on everybody's lips was 'What are the police doing?' A failure to secure agreement to

⁹³ TNA, HO45/10742/26375, letter by Leonard Dunning to Sir Edward Troup, 23 February 1917.

⁹⁴ TNA, HO 45/10743/263275/274, letter from Lindsay to the Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, Sir Edward Troup, 30 November 1917.

⁹⁵ Hopkin, 'Patriots and pacifists', 30.

prosecute A. J. Cook, one of the leading anti-war activists, and a 'seditionmonger', was, he stated, 'criminal',⁹⁶ and he warned that 'huge public meetings, at which disloyalty is openly preached, cannot pass without notice when vital interests are at stake'.⁹⁷ He argued that the loyal majority of the population would become disheartened if nothing was done about this 'disloyal minority', and that had repressive measures have been more in use he was sure that 'all signs of disloyalty in the Admiralty steam coalfield would have disappeared'.⁹⁸

In an alarming report to the Home Office on conditions in south Wales in February 1918, Sir Leonard Dunning concluded that 'the situation in Glamorgan, Carmarthenshire and Monmouthshire is highly discouraging. There is an active Socialist and pacifist party, a minority probably, but they do all the shouting.'⁹⁹ Lindsay alleged to Dunning that his efforts to prosecute anti-war activists were hampered by two men in particular, namely D. Lleufer Thomas and William Llewellyn Williams, MP for East Carmarthenshire. Thomas was an advocate of cooperation and adult education and in his capacity as stipendiary magistrate for the Pontypridd and Rhondda area had witnessed Lindsay's methods at first hand during the Cambrian Combine Strike of 1910.¹⁰⁰ In June 1917, as chairman of the Wales panel of the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest in Wales, his authoritative report painted a 'sombre picture of mounting tension throughout the coalfield'.¹⁰¹ W.

⁹⁶ TNA, HO45/263275, f. 315; Hopkin, 'Patriots and pacifists', 31.

⁹⁷ TNA, HO 45/10743/263275/274, letter from Lindsay to Troup, 30 November 1917.

⁹⁸ TNA, HO45/10743/263275/274, letter from Lindsay to Troup, 24 November 1917.

⁹⁹ TNA, HO45/263275, f. 334.

¹⁰⁰ Dai Smith, *Tonyandy: Definition of a Community*, Vol. 87 *Past and Present*, p. 158-184.

¹⁰¹ K. O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* (Cardiff, 1970), p. 284.

Llewellyn Williams MP, the Recorder for Cardiff, opposed conscription and had thus fallen out with Lloyd George. He appeared frequently as a defence solicitor on behalf of anti-war protestors and conscientious objectors throughout the war.¹⁰²

In his frustration, Lindsay applied to the Home Office in December 1917 for a grant to help pay the cost of employing shorthand writers to transcribe pacifist speeches which were being reported to him by his police officers. He complained that ‘not surprisingly’ given the low rate of prosecution, his police authority voiced dissatisfaction about paying the costs of transcribing speeches which were not leading to prosecutions. The Home Office thought Lindsay alarmist and took the rather more sanguine view that ‘inflammatory language in South Wales would have little effect on the rest of the country’.¹⁰³

Lindsay attempted to re-gain his ability to initiate his own prosecutions but the Home Office refused: ‘I am afraid that if Captain Lionel Lindsay be left a free hand, he will be likely to spend a good deal of time on unnecessary cases. Some check should be kept on him.’¹⁰⁴ Lindsay did not let up in his pursuit of what he viewed as the growing subversive elements in the labour movement in south Wales, which had its roots in the syndicalism he had attempted to combat before the war. A week after the end of the war, a joint report was presented by Lindsay and the army authorities in Chester which warned of growing socialist agitation and the need for active counter-propaganda in south Wales:

¹⁰² Pioneer, 17 June, 1916; *Llanelly Star*, 12 January, 1918.

¹⁰³ TNA, HO45/10743/274,295, folio 39 dep c. 88.

¹⁰⁴ Deian Hopkin, ‘Patriots and pacifists’, 63.

Ablett and his kind are undoubtedly gaining ground amongst the working classes of South Wales, especially in those districts that have the reputation of being socialistic and ‘storm centres’ of agitation, disputes and stoppages of work. These centres badly need some strong counter-propaganda. The people are absorbing the doctrines of men like Ablett for lack of speakers who will put before them the truth and some practical teaching on Social reform and the betterment of conditions of life for workers and how these objects can be attained.¹⁰⁵

An indication of the government’s anxiety about the dangers of industrial and political discontent was the establishment of the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest in June 1917. In June 1917, a ‘William Randall’ offered to give evidence to the Wales division of the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest, and identified himself as having worked for Admiralty Intelligence in south Wales investigating labour unrest and ‘certain anti-war movements’ from the summer of 1915 to the end of 1916.¹⁰⁶

Randall was a trained accountant who had worked for trade protection societies, which, as Hiley suggests, were a useful source of information and personnel for the intelligence services.¹⁰⁷ Randall initially wrote to the secretary of the overall

¹⁰⁵ TNA, HO45/263275, f. 439.

¹⁰⁶ Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales (NLW), Edgar Chappell papers, C1/1.

¹⁰⁷ Nicholas Hiley to author (private email 21 March, 2014).

‘Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest’, G. M. Hodgkin, who forwarded his letter to Edgar Chappell, the secretary of the Commission Enquiry in Wales. As his references, he gave the Director of Intelligence at the Admiralty, Captain Reginald ‘Blinker’ Hall, and the Assistant Commissioner at the head of the Special Branch at Scotland Yard, Basil Thomson. There is no record in Edgar Chappell’s papers that his request to the Admiralty for verification of Randall’s credentials and for copies of his reports received a response, but in their correspondence, Chappell seems to accept Randall’s credentials as an intelligence officer. In a subsequent letter, he introduced himself as a Special Service Officer in the War Staff of the Intelligence Division of the Admiralty, who had been based in Cardiff from July 1915 to 31 December 1916, and stated that he had spent a considerable time in south Wales, that he had a permanent address there throughout 1916, and had made Cardiff his headquarters. He stated that he was in a position to give evidence on the difficulties of loyal trade union officials and the influence of local extremists; on organizations of employers and the bad effects of certain ill-considered decisions of the coal owners’ association; on the effect of profiteering; the operation of the Military Service Acts; and what he described as the ‘unwise and unnecessary restriction of liberty’.

He stated his wish to give information about ‘the influences of Syndicalism, Extreme Socialism and several anti-war movements’ and his readiness to ‘make suggestions and recommendation of remedial measures of a permanent character’.¹⁰⁸ In a further letter to Chappell, dated 26 June, he vented his anger at the intelligence authorities’

¹⁰⁸ C1/220, 25 June 1917.

handling of industrial unrest in south Wales and contended that it had been provoked and aggravated by;

the unwise procedure originated or countenanced by certain Government departments – for instance the Intelligence Department of the War Office, known as MI5.¹⁰⁹

He explained he had been engaged principally in the investigation of labour unrest and the effect of anti-war and other revolutionary influences in organized labour, and wished the Commission to have more than a hundred of his reports dealing with labour matters and revolutionary movements in south Wales, including reports of threatened strikes by miners and railwaymen and movements in these industries for wage increases.

Randall's letters are querulous in tone, and he alleged that Chappell's insistence that he furnish a written statement, and his offer of only a third-class train fare and a sum for out-of-pocket expenses, was 'another studied snub to further your very obvious desire that I shall not give evidence'.¹¹⁰ He was not called as a witness, but the timescale for receiving evidence and the preparation of the report was little more than three weeks. A further concern for the panel and for Chappell may have been the toxic and controversial nature of Randall's comments. The secretary to the Enquiry

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, letter to Chappell, 26 June 1917.

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, C1/145, letter to Chappell, 28 June 1917.

had written to each of the regional secretaries of the Enquiry on 26 June 1917 requesting them to ensure that the Commissioners did everything in their power to avoid making any information public that might be of use to the enemy. He warned that the Commissioners should exercise the utmost caution in making statements to the press, and that the minutes of evidence or other documents ‘that could assist the enemy’ should be taken by the secretaries to the Commission and kept in safe custody.¹¹¹ In this febrile atmosphere, it was inevitable that controversial and contentious views emanating from intelligence sources were difficult to manage in the context of a report that in its warnings of serious industrial and social unrest was to be the most ‘remarkable’ and ‘exceptional’ of the regional reports published as part of the Commission’s findings.¹¹²

The end of the war did not reduce surveillance, and an internal report by the security services in April 1919 asserted that pacifism and revolutionary socialism were intertwined in a subversive alliance to undermine the state, and analysed the threat of political and industrial unrest as emanating from the revolutionary left. Its definition of the ‘socialist movement’ was extremely broad, ranging from Christian Socialism and the ILP to Marxian socialism and including elements of the influence of syndicalism, anarchism, and Bolshevism. It ascribed the growth of the Left to the influence of the Russian Revolution, the wider effect of the war, the influence of the Central Labour College and the Plebs’ League on the trade union movement. It highlighted the role of thirty-nine ‘prominent agitators’, including four from Wales;

¹¹¹ *ibid*, C2/3, letter to Chappell, 26 June 1917.

¹¹² Julie Light, ‘The 1917 Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest: a Welsh report’, *Welsh History Review*, 21 (2003), 704-28.

Noah Ablett, A. J. Cook, W. H. Mainwaring and Robert Williams. Ablett, at the time a miners' agent in Merthyr, was described as a 'well-known Socialist agitator and avowed Bolshevik. Has endeavoured to stop the war by preventing recruiting and urges a revolution'. Cook, from Trehafod in the Rhondda, was described as a 'revolutionary', who took a prominent part in agitation, said to consider the police as 'deadly enemies'.¹¹³ W. H. Mainwaring, from Clydach Vale in the Rhondda, a leader of the Rhondda syndicalist Unofficial Reform Committee, local secretary of the No-Conscription Fellowship and a member of the ILP, was described as an 'extreme socialist' who advocated a general strike during the submarine blockade in 1917 and was a supporter of the Russian Revolution. Robert Williams from Swansea, the former docker and the influential general secretary of the National Transport Workers' Federation, was described as a 'pro-Bolshevist, conscientious objector, protected by official position; revolutionary socialist; republican, a member of the ILP (Independent Labour Party), UDC (Union of Democratic Control), BSP (British Socialist Party) and NCCL'.¹¹⁴ Mounting concern about the growing influence of the left in the labour movement and its symbiotic relationship with the anti-war movement explains to a large extent why the security services became increasingly active against the left from the Spring of 1916 onwards, and the perceived threat of Bolshevism ensured that the security services continued their activity after the end of the war in order to combat the perceived threat of peacetime subversion.

¹¹³ Paul Davies, *A.J. Cook* (Manchester, 1987).

¹¹⁴ TNA, KV3/327, 'Revolutionary tendencies behind the labour unrest', MI5 internal report, 6 April 1919.

This article provides a glimmer of how different branches of the State's intelligence services operated within the regional context of south Wales during the Great War. From early 1916 onwards, the intelligence services had shifted their emphasis from counter-espionage to counter-subversion.¹¹⁵ The responsibility for the identification and increased monitoring of activists within the peace and labour movement during the war was distributed amongst a plethora of Government departments, especially PMS2, Special Branch, and MI5. MI5's caution in pursuing anti-war activists, and in discouraging public conflict, as in the aftermath of the Cory Hall disturbance, was in sharp contrast to Lindsay's boisterous and relentless persecution of individuals such as T.E. Nicholas. The deteriorating relationship between the Glamorgan Chief Constable, the Home Office, and MI5 reflects the diminishing power of local police forces and the corresponding centralisation of authority over security issues by MI5 and Special Branch. Lee's meetings with Lloyd George's closest staff in November 1916 suggest an extremely close and symbiotic relationship which led to the effective manipulation of newspaper coverage about industrial and economic conditions in the coal industry and the strengthening of the pro-war campaign in south Wales in 1917, whilst also recognising the serious social and economic issues that fermented industrial and political dissent. PMS2 was closed in June 1917 however, following the involvement of one of its agents as an *agent provocateur* in a plot to murder Lloyd George, but its staff were returned to MI5, and its case files sent to Special Branch.¹¹⁶ This presaged the consolidation of the domestic security services into a single intelligence organisation in 1919, under the command of the Special Branch's Basil Thomson, who became Director of Intelligence.¹¹⁷ By the end of the war, the security

¹¹⁵ Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: the Authorised History of MI5*, p. 86.

¹¹⁶ Hiley, 'Internal security in wartime: the rise and fall of PMS2, 1915-1917', p. 406-411.

¹¹⁷ Basil Thomson, *Queer People*, (London, 1922), p. 274.

services had themselves re-defined their roles to such an extent that it permitted the investigation and monitoring of any person or organisation that they considered to be subversive. The perceived threat of Bolshevism dominated the concerns of the security services after the War, and in south Wales, social and economic dislocation, the growth of Labour, and greater militancy within the mining industry did little to allay their concern.