

# democracy in wartime: antimilitarism in england and the united states, 1914-1918

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The revelations in *The Pentagon Papers* distressed many American citizens. Yet their impact on public morale far outweighed their impact on national policy. Too many citizens had convinced themselves that Americans in high places would not lie to their constituents. Despite the evidence, many Americans continue to believe that the foreign policy of the United States is propelled only by an honorable quest for international law and is rooted in democratic agreements publicly made. For other Americans, however, *The Pentagon Papers* indicated that democracy is now, and has always been, endangered by war. They have concluded that since success in war seems to require secrecy and duplicity, one of the major functions of the peace movement may be to provide the public with the truth.

When the War was over, I saw that all I had done had been totally useless except to myself. I had not saved a single life or shortened the War by a minute. I had not succeeded in doing anything to diminish the bitterness which caused the Treaty of Versailles. But at any rate I had not been an accomplice in the crime of all the belligerent nations, and for myself I had acquired a new philosophy and a new youth. . . .

Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. II (Boston, 1968), 38-39.

I believe that the people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than any governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of their way and let them have it.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower to Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, London, 1959.

During World War I both Britain and the United States, two of the oldest and most self-congratulatory democracies, experienced periods of repression which left permanent scars on their proud heritage. But in both nations organizations emerged which sought to preserve political liberty. A survey of the goals and experiences of the American Union Against Militarism and England's Union of Democratic Control reveals not only the fragile nature of democracy in wartime, but suggests also that private citizens must prepare to fight against those forces which threaten their nation's democratic institutions.<sup>1</sup>

There were many parallels between the American Union Against Militarism and England's Union of Democratic Control. Not only were they similar in the vision and political attitudes of their membership, the structure of their organization and the means which they adopted to register their dissent, but also in the experiences which their members endured in wartime. These experiences served to measure the truth of that conviction which had brought the antimilitarists together in the first place—the belief that the real enemy was not Germany but war itself. They opposed war because war endangered liberty and all the political institutions which they cherished. As Jane Addams wrote, this was not a war between the forces of democracy and the forces of militarism. "War itself destroys democracy wherever it thrives . . . not only in Russia and Germany, but in the more democratic countries as well."<sup>2</sup> Bertrand Russell agreed with Addams' view. He wrote that what George Santayana had called "the Prussian educational-industrial-military domination" was just what the antimilitarists feared would conquer the democracies—not only by foreign imposition but internally.<sup>3</sup>

Both the AUAM and UDC emerged during the early months of World War I and were led by people who were convinced that the war would end all their work for progressive reform and social justice. Generally, the antimilitarists were not active in the established peace movement which flourished at the beginning of the twentieth century. They opposed World War I because they considered it the result of secret diplomacy forced on unknowing and unwilling citizens whose economic and social lives would be damaged by the war. The antimilitarists in both England and the United States were influenced by the same books and shared a common vision of democracy in which poverty would be abolished and individual freedom would thrive. Both English and American reformers were influenced by Charles Booth's monumental *Life and Labour of the People in London* and Seebolm Rowntree's first study of poverty in York, and members of both groups participated in the Settlement House Movement which was largely inspired by these studies. F. W. Pethick-Lawrence and Clifford Allen, the founder of the No-Conscription Fellowship, were identified with England's University Settlement and Toynbee Hall, whereas Jane Addams and Lillian Wald founded, respectively, Hull House and the Henry Street Settlement.

In Britain, 1906 was the year of the great Liberal election which meant to English reformers "a revolutionary swing in the direction of radicalism and social reform."<sup>4</sup> Many of Parliament's forty liberals were closely identified with the UDC, notably Joseph King, Richard Lambert, Arthur Ponsonby and Charles Trevelyan; J. Ramsay MacDonald was the leader of the Independent Labour Party. The other members were associated with all manner of reform activities. E. D. Morel, the UDC's secretary and most active member, was famous for his exposure of Belgian misrule in the Congo and he founded the Congo Reform Association; Helena M. Swanwick was a journalist and prominent suffragist; Charles R. Buxton, a Member of Parliament, was a leading proponent of labor reform; J. A. Hobson wrote on numerous subjects, including unemployment and the maldistribution and underconsumption of wealth; and Norman Angell through his writings inspired Angell Leagues for International Polity throughout Europe and America.

In the United States the AUAM was led by prominent reformers who worked closely with Jane Addams and Lillian Wald: Crystal Eastman, an attorney and pioneer in labor relations and fair housing legislation; her brother, Max Eastman, the editor of an exuberant magazine of protest, *The Masses*; Oswald Garrison Villard, who owned and edited *The Nation*; and Paul Kellogg, the editor of *Survey*, an important journal which focused on social problems and was directed to social workers.

In their statement of principles, entitled "Towards a Peace That Shall Last," issued in 1915, the members of the AUAM declared that their right to protest war was established by the unemployment of the waterfronts, the augmented misery of the cities, and by the financial depression "which has curtailed our school building and crippled our works of good will. War has brought low our conception of the preciousness of human life, as slavery brought low our conception of human dignity." Like Clifford Allen who wondered while in prison why England, "so famous for its love of liberty, should have never yet achieved that real liberty of the individual that can only come with the abolition of poverty,"<sup>5</sup> the antimilitarists on both sides of the Atlantic resented the war because it threatened to destroy their life's work. Even the Fabians who refused to join any dissident movement against the war believed that it would destroy England's rebels, feminists and Guild Socialists. Beatrice Webb, for example, feared that England might "slip into a subtle form of reaction—lose faith in democracy and gain enjoyment from the mere display of Power."<sup>6</sup>

The leaders of the UDC made a specific appeal to the rank and file of British labour because, as E. D. Morel noted, "British labour in the mass had never appreciated the fact that the conduct and character of its foreign relations was intimately bound up with its own internal emancipation." Morel believed that "the entire burden" of the British Empire ultimately rested "upon the shoulders of British labour."<sup>7</sup>

But Morel did not want the UDC specifically identified with Labour Party politics. He rejected the idea popular among some of his associates that the antimilitarists should use the occasion of the war to build momentum for a socialist revolution. Morel believed that the unjust and dangerous use of capitalism “had to be attacked from a thousand sides.” However, no progress would be made so long as war could arise to “set back at any moment” the advances made by labour. Morel wanted every “people in every land . . . free to pursue their march towards emancipation.” He was convinced that nothing permanent would be achieved as long as war remained a perpetually threatening force.<sup>8</sup>

In the UDC’s first publication, “The Morrow of the War,” Morel wrote that the “idea of a federalised Europe . . . involving the disappearance or substantial reduction, of standing armies and navies” was the ultimate goal. But it could not be attained until the democracies of the west realized the impossibility of having “a system of government which leaves them at the mercy of the intrigues and imbecilities of professional diplomatists and of the ambitions of military castes; helpless, too, in the face of an enormously powerful and internationalized private interest dependent for its profits upon the maintenance of that ‘armed peace’ which is the inevitable prelude to the carnage and futility of war . . . .”<sup>9</sup> According to Morel, all social progress depended on the establishment of democratic control of foreign policy.

The English antimilitarists eschewed all questions of domestic politics during wartime and worked solely for the settlement of disputes by international arbitration and a progressive and lasting peace. In the first open letter sent by the organizers of the UDC to potential members, Ramsay MacDonald, Charles Trevelyan, Norman Angell and E. D. Morel outlined the goals of the UDC: to secure real parliamentary control over foreign policy and to prevent secret diplomacy from ever again being “forced upon the country as an accomplished fact”; to establish direct negotiations with democratic parties and influences in Europe, “so as to form an International understanding depending on popular parties rather than on governments”; and to secure a peace treaty which will not, “either through the humiliation of the defeated nation or an artificial re-arrangement of frontiers,” become the starting point for future wars.<sup>10</sup>

Like the members of the AUAM, the members of the UDC were neither absolute pacifists nor revolutionaries. Indeed, both groups worked well within the established political structure and went out of their way not to embarrass the Administrations whose military policies they abhorred. Due to hostile press reaction which followed the publication of their first open letters, the UDC issued a statement explaining that it was not “a stop the war movement.”<sup>11</sup> Charles Trevelyan, for

example, sought a reduction of armaments but, like the other members of the UDC, he was very careful to apply his demands to “all the belligerent powers” so as not to seem to be requesting the disarmament of Britain alone.<sup>12</sup> Trevelyan believed that it was his duty as a citizen and as an MP to vote for supplies and to avoid “hampering the conduct of the war.” But he believed patriotism did not require him “to be silent about the blunders of the Government past, present, or future.”<sup>13</sup> The UDC did not urge resistance to the war and did not “propose to take *active* steps.” It was created to build an enlightened public opinion “which would take action in the Press and on the platform when the time comes . . . .”<sup>14</sup>

The UDC was primarily concerned with keeping liberal war aims before the public. At no time did the members of the UDC become involved in an active campaign to insure the freedoms of speech, assembly and press. But the very nature of their activities dragged them into that controversy. They asserted that the war “might have been prevented if the people had been aware of what the government was committing it to.”<sup>15</sup> In order to counter official censorship and to make the people aware of alternatives to Britain’s official policy which they believed existed, the UDC distributed pamphlets containing the early speeches of President Wilson, statements by German socialists and pacifists and, in 1916, published secret agreements made between Britain, France and Italy, along with the denials of those agreements made by Herbert Asquith and Sir Edward Grey during 1913 and 1914.<sup>16</sup>

The first phase of the AUAM’s wartime program was almost a replica of the UDC’s program. For the first three years of the European War the AUAM campaigned against preparedness and conscription and worked to maintain the neutrality of the United States. When war was declared the leaders of the AUAM announced that once the United States was in the war they would cease all opposition to it. But they still believed that America would have been in a stronger position as a neutral to bring the nations into a lasting federation for peace and that war would make “all the evils of militarism more active and virulent” and indefinitely delay “their ultimate goal of world federation and disarmament.” Therefore, they demanded a clear statement of America’s peace terms, the publication of all international agreements, and they promised “vigorous opposition” to compulsory military service.<sup>17</sup>

Several members of the AUAM wanted to move faster than did Paul Kellogg and Lillian Wald, who were particularly reluctant to oppose Wilson or embarrass the Administration. In order to maintain the support of these two prominent leaders, Crystal Eastman suggested that a statement be issued to the press clarifying the Union’s position and making it clear that their’s was not “a party of opposition” nor a “policy of obstruction.” It was a “democracy first” movement. The declaration, when issued, also explained that the AUAM had believed that there were

alternatives to war, but since “the war was a fact” it wanted “America to win.” By victory the antimilitarists meant the achievement of those conditions for a negotiated peace which Wilson had called for, conditions outlined also by the UDC and by the “revolutionary government of Russia,” namely, no forcible annexations, no punitive indemnities, and free development of all nationalities.<sup>18</sup>

After reading Wilson’s June 14, 1917, Flag Day speech, however, most of the antimilitarists became more impatient and less concerned about embarrassing the Administration. Amos Pinchot wrote Crystal Eastman that Wilson had flourished “the knout over the objectors and all who would oppose the temporary little fatherhood which he is assuming in order to discourage autocracies in other climes.”<sup>19</sup> In his address, Wilson had identified the entire peace movement with treason and called the peace people schemers who sought to insure a German victory and implant German civilization throughout Europe. The President referred to the peace movement as “the new intrigue, the intrigue for peace,” and announced that the antimilitarists were “tools” of “the masters of Germany”:

The sinister intrigue is being no less actively conducted in this country than in Russia and in every country in Europe to which the agents and dupes of the Imperial German Government can get access. That Government has many spokesmen here, in places high and low. They have learned discretion. They keep within the law. It is opinion they utter now, not sedition. They proclaim the liberal purposes of their masters; declare this a foreign war which can touch America with no danger . . . ; set England at the center of the stage and talk of her ambition to assert economic dominion throughout the world; appeal to our ancient tradition of isolation . . . ; and seek to undermine the Government with false professions of loyalty to its principles.

But they will make no headway. The false betray themselves always in every accent. . . . This is a People’s War, a war for freedom and justice and self-government amongst all the nations of the world, a war to make the world safe for the people who live upon it and make it their own. . . . For us there is but one choice. . . . Woe be to the man or group of men that seeks to stand in our way in this high day of resolution when every principle we hold dearest is to be vindicated and made secure for the salvation of the nations. . . .<sup>20</sup>

This speech had a radicalizing effect on the antimilitarists. It served to put the repressive wartime measures sponsored by the Administration in perspective. As a result, the members of the Union pursued far more vigorously its programs devoted to the maintenance of constitutional freedoms and the rights of conscientious objectors.

From April the antimilitarists campaigned against what became, on June 15, 1917, the Espionage Act. They petitioned Wilson not to

“sacrifice” the constitutional rights basic to the continuance of American democracy and objected to the comprehensive nature of the bill which included a mail censorship clause so vague that it jeopardized the freedom of every newspaper and magazine in the country. Any literature which caused “insubordination, disloyalty or mutiny” in the military, or which discouraged draft or enlistment services, or which might “embarrass or hamper the Government in conducting the war,” was liable to confiscation. In their appeal the antimilitarists catalogued the meetings which already had been broken up, the instances of speakers arrested and of censorship imposed by mob violence. They urged Wilson to consider the future of America’s “cherished institutions” if the “psychology of war” were permitted to “manifest itself.” Lillian Wald asked if it were not “possible that the moral danger to our democracy” might become more “serious than the physical . . . losses incurred.”<sup>21</sup>

Even before the Espionage Act passed, mail was censored and several Americans were arrested for “public criticism of the President” on the basis of a statute passed February 14, 1917, entitled “Threats Against the President Act,” which covered any written or spoken word which threatened to do bodily harm or endanger the life of the president.<sup>22</sup> As a Canadian member of the Woman’s Peace Party wrote to the American section: “Well you Americans are not going to let the Germans, Turks or Russian autocrats get ahead of you when you go in for liberty and democracy.”<sup>23</sup>

The effectiveness of the Espionage Act was assured through the establishment, by executive order, of the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Originally the CPI was to be the administration’s news agency and was to control the press and public opinion. George Creel was chairman and the Secretaries of State, War and the Navy were members. The committee consisted of a domestic section, a foreign section and numerous divisions, including news, films, state fairs, industrial relations, civic and educational groups and a publicity establishment. Creel had been associated with the social reform movement as a crusading journalist. Indeed, as Arno Mayer pointed out, Creel’s entire committee was composed of former crusaders: Arthur Bullard, Will Irwin, Ernest Poole, Louis F. Post, Ray Stannard Baker and Ida Tarbell, a veritable “roll call of the muckrackers.”<sup>24</sup>

Creel himself noted that Wilson opposed free speech during the war and informed the antimilitarists that the President had said “there could be no such thing—that it was insanity.’” To allow public opposition to the war would be to permit dissenters to “‘stab our soldiers in the back.’”<sup>25</sup>

Shortly after the war was declared it became impossible for the antimilitarists to get an honest hearing in any newspaper anywhere in the country. Jane Addams wrote that after America “entered the war, the

press throughout the country systematically undertook to misrepresent and malign pacifists as . . . a patriotic duty.”<sup>26</sup> Most of the small magazines which reserved space for the views of the antimilitarists were either suppressed or denied access to the mails. Among the censored journals directly associated with the AUAM were *The Masses*, edited by Max Eastman, and *Four Lights*, the organ of the Woman’s Peace Party of New York which was chaired by Crystal Eastman. Other suspended magazines included *The Appeal to Reason*; the *Michigan Socialist*; the *Milwaukee Leader*; the *New York Call*; *The Nation* (for criticizing Samuel Gompers); and *The Freeman’s Journal* for reprinting Thomas Jefferson’s statements which favored Irish independence; the *Irish World*, for writing that Palestine would not become a Jewish state; *The World Tomorrow*, a religious pacifist magazine edited by Norman Thomas; and a Civil Liberties Bureau pamphlet which deplored mob violence.<sup>27</sup>

The AUAM’s protests against censorship and undemocratic practices were dismissed with little of the Administration’s former solicitude. Amos Pinchot, for example, wrote Wilson for “an expression of opinion” regarding the numerous magazines and small papers which had been denied access to the mail. Pinchot asked Wilson if he did not think “free criticism” was of the “utmost importance in a democracy? . . . Can it be necessary, even in wartime, for the majority of a republic to throttle the voice of a sincere minority?” Pinchot concluded, “As friends of yours, and knowing how dear to you is the Anglo-Saxon tradition of intellectual freedom, we would like to feel that you do not sanction” censorship at the “bureaucratic discretion” of post office officials.<sup>28</sup> Wilson replied that he hesitated to make a public statement which “would undoubtedly be taken advantage of by those with whom neither you nor I have been in sympathy at all.”<sup>29</sup>

Pinchot then went to Washington in order to request that Postmaster General Albert Burleson tell him on what basis the department suspended periodicals so that the editors might avoid suppression in the future. Burleson replied that he would not consider the question since “a remedy for the situation was amply provided for by the courts.” Pinchot met with Burleson for two hours and left wondering how Wilson could “keep that elderly, village-idiot in his cabinet?” Still believing that Wilson was sympathetic to the aims of the antimilitarists, Pinchot reported his interview with Burleson to Wilson and also the rumor that Lord Northcliffe, the British War Cabinet’s expert in psychological warfare, had commissioned Somerset Maugham to go to Russia to “buy up Russian newspapers” and that Northcliffe himself had organized a “vigorous campaign to persuade American newspapers to support Britain’s war aims.”<sup>30</sup> But Wilson was not sympathetic to the aims of the AUAM, and he wrote to Max Eastman that “a time of war must be regarded as wholly exceptional and that it is legitimate to regard things which would in ordinary circumstances be innocent as very dangerous to the public welfare.”

In September, 1917, the AUAM itself was investigated by the Post Office Department which had decided to exclude two of the Union's pamphlets. Lillian Wald believed that both were entirely innocent and protested that all the Union's printed material had been "submitted in advance" to New York's postmaster. One of the pamphlets, written by Roger Baldwin, included a request to conscientious objectors to send letters which stated their position to the Secretary of War; the other was a reprint from the *Survey* of Norman Thomas' article, "War's Heretics."<sup>31</sup>

After the Department withheld the pamphlets for several weeks but refused to make a decision on their legality, Baldwin went personally to William Lamar and demanded a decision. Lamar asserted that "he naturally gave first attention to people whose loyalty to the government was unquestionable" and he did not think Baldwin's organization worthy "of any particular consideration."<sup>32</sup> After four months the anti-militarists did go to court and the Justice Department ruled the pamphlets legal.

In October, Burleson announced his general criteria for censorship. Publications would be suspended if they implied: "that this Government got in the war wrong, that it is in it for wrong purposes, or anything that will impugn the motives of the Government for going into the war. They cannot say that this Government is the tool of Wall Street or the munitions makers. That kind of thing makes for insubordination in the Army and Navy and breeds a spirit of disloyalty throughout the country. . . ." In addition, there could be "no campaign against conscription and the Draft Law. . . ."<sup>33</sup>

Oswald Garrison Villard believed that Wilson was unaware of what the Post Office Department was doing. When *The Nation* was suspended Villard wrote Colonel House that the President "surely cannot know what is going on."<sup>34</sup> Other antimilitarists were not so charitable in their estimation of Wilson's wartime behavior. James Warbasse, for example, considered Wilson's announcement that the Allies "must not be criticized," the "last blow" to democracy and wrote that "if we are not to be permitted to make the world safe for democracy we at least must continue . . . to make the world unsafe for hypocrisy."<sup>35</sup> Victor Berger, whose socialist *Milwaukee Leader* had been barred from the mails, believed that Wilson was "afraid of a revolution after the war" and was trying "to prevent it by putting the [radical] press out of business." Berger did not blame Wilson's advisers. He wrote to Pinchot that his criticism of Burleson was unfair. Burleson was "simply Woodrow Wilson's special delivery boy. Men of Burleson's type have no chance to become full grown men in Texas, where they . . . hold office while still very green and immature. They may get rotten . . . but they never ripen."<sup>36</sup>

The AUAM also protested the violence which accompanied the Administration's appeals to patriotic Americans to fight what Wilson had

called the “sinister intrigue” of German dupes, and the misguided but also dangerous dissenters.<sup>37</sup> Some manifestations of that violence were limited to words, such as former Ambassador James Gerard’s declaration that “we should hog-tie every disloyal German American, feed every pacifist raw meat, and hang every traitor to a lamp-post to insure success in this war.”<sup>38</sup> Other forms of violence were physical. The antimilitarists were convinced that America witnessed the first victories of Prussian militarism when in Boston “thousands of peaceful citizens” who had a permit to assemble, “were attacked by lawless soldiers and sailors in uniform” as the police stood by “apparently overawed by the uniform and did nothing except to arrest the victims.” The AUAM noted that this scene had already occurred in “a dozen American cities” only three months after America’s entrance into the war.<sup>39</sup>

The greatest wartime outrage occurred in East St. Louis where scores of black people were beaten, lynched, burned and drowned, and the antimilitarists wondered at President Wilson’s silence:

Six weeks have passed since the East St. Louis riots and no public word of rebuke, no demand for the punishment of the offenders, has come from our Chief Executive. These American Negroes have died under more horrible conditions than any noncombatants who were sunk by German submarines. But to our President their death does not merit consideration.

Our young men who don their khaki are thus taught that, as they go out to battle under the flag of the United States, they may outdo Belgian atrocities without rebuke if their enemy be of a darker race. And those who guard our land at home have learned that black men and women and little children may safely be mutilated and shot and burned while they stand idly by.<sup>40</sup>

It is little wonder that an English member of the Woman’s Peace Party wrote: “In traveling about your country . . . it does not seem to me that you have a surplus of democracy here—certainly not enough to warrant exporting any of it.”<sup>41</sup> The antimilitarists recognized that possibility. Crystal Eastman wrote that if America destroyed its constitutional freedoms “in the first fine frenzy of war enthusiasm, we shall not have much democracy left to take to the rest of the world.” That was why the Civil Liberties Bureau was created—“to maintain something over here that will be worth coming back to when the weary war is over.”<sup>42</sup>

The Civil Liberties Bureau was established by the AUAM after a prolonged and divisive controversy which split the Union into two groups. Paul Kellogg, for example, decided after the United States entered the war that his primary concern was no longer “the struggle to hold the fort for democracy against militarism at home,” but rather to organize the world for democracy. He feared that if the Union supported con-

scientious objectors, the public would assume the AUAM was working for the military paralysis of America and it would lose its "influence and Power" in the post-war "drive for peace" toward a league of nations. The majority of the AUAM did not consider this a real conflict and decided to create the CLB anyway. Crystal Eastman stated that "the two go hand in hand. War is intolerable; we must get rid of war." Militarism, "which is the fruit of war," tends to destroy democracy. Therefore, Eastman asked, how could anyone work for world peace and world democracy without first guarding democracy against militarism at home?<sup>43</sup>

The Civil Liberties Bureau was established with offices throughout America to provide legal counsel to keep critics of the administration out of jail and to provide advice to conscientious objectors. It was headed by Roger Baldwin, Crystal Eastman and Norman Thomas, and it was staffed by an advisory committee of lawyers who volunteered their time under the direction of attorney Harry Weinberger.

Norman Thomas was elected chairman of the AUAM committee to deal with the question of conscientious objectors, and as early as April campaigned against the proposed federal conscription bill and compulsory military training, and appealed for regular civilian trials for objectors. Jane Addams, Lillian Wald and Norman Thomas met with Newton Baker on behalf of the objectors. They requested exemptions not just on religious but on ethical grounds, since "it is a matter not of corporate but of individual conscience." They noted in their appeal to Baker that England's law was "more liberal" than the one before Congress and England had at that time 4000 objectors in prison. The AUAM believed that it was better for "some slackers to escape" than for America to "coerce men's consciences in a war for freedom."<sup>44</sup>

The antimilitarists were convinced that upon the issue of conscription rested the future of "the last fortress of democracy in the world," and recognized the possibility that on that issue "the greatest adventure in human history would go down in failure."<sup>45</sup> Consequently, after the army bill was passed Thomas wrote to congressional committees demanding its repeal. He asked how America could "wage war 'for the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life' while we compel the conscientious objector to war . . . ?" "Autocracies may coerce conscience in this vital matter: democracies do so at their peril."<sup>46</sup>

Unlike the AUAM, the Union of Democratic Control had nothing to do with the agitation against conscription and the campaign to support conscientious objectors. Some members of the UDC realized that to ignore this crucial area of repression in wartime was seriously to limit the significance of the UDC's protest. F. W. Hirst, the editor of the *Economist*, wrote to Morel that he considered the absence of a conscription program a "vital omission." He believed that the first and most important thing was to prevent a military despotism from emerging in

England, bringing with it the “substitution of martial law for trial by judge and jury.” Hirst believed that if conscription was adopted self-government would be destroyed “and with it all possibility of influencing the course of events abroad” along the lines the UDC had postulated.<sup>47</sup> As opposed to the AUAM, the civil libertarians in the UDC were a minority, and activity in this area was rejected by E. D. Morel for much the same reasons that had led Paul Kellogg to abandon the CLB’s activities.

On June 9, 1915, a group of UDC members submitted a resolution regarding conscription which would have pledged the UDC “to oppose to the utmost any attempt to impose compulsory service either for military or industrial purposes as being unnecessary for the needs of the nation” and not in England’s “best interests.” Morel wrote to Charles Trevelyan that the resolution was “a tremendously grave step to take.” If it meant anything more than rhetoric, it meant resistance and that, concluded Morel, “would clearly bring the UDC within measurable distance of prosecution for sedition and rebellion. . . .” In addition, Morel made a distinction between compulsion for home defense and compulsion for service abroad. He personally would not resist the call for home defense, “not having reached the Quaker position. . . .” Morel also referred to what he had believed was the agreement of the UDC members: that “it was useless activity to oppose measures which would be persisted in despite opposition.”<sup>48</sup>

While the UDC remained England’s most significant coalition to end the war and promote a democratic peace, its timidity regarding the more immediate challenge of universal military conscription left a vacuum in the movement which was filled rapidly by the No-Conscription Fellowship. A. Fenner Brockway, editor of the official ILP paper, *The Labour Leader*, published a letter inviting those people not prepared to render military service under conscription to enroll their names. The response to Brockway’s letter was so good that on December 3, 1914, the formation of the No-Conscription Fellowship was announced, with an initial membership of 300 men. Led by Clifford Allen, later Lord Allen of Hurtwood, the NCF became “a breathtakingly efficient conspiracy against the organized might of the state.”<sup>49</sup>

Although the work of the No-Conscription Fellowship is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that the impetus for this organization was the same as that behind the establishment of the UDC and the AUAM—the belief that war was inimical to socialism and reform. Clifford Allen believed that men and women of commitment had “to face the only possible outcome of our Socialist faith,” by which he meant non-violent resistance to militarism.<sup>50</sup>

During his third trial by court martial for refusing to obey military orders, Allen explained that he opposed the war because he saw “no substantial reason to prevent peace negotiations being entered upon at

once. . . . I believe that the Governments of all the nations are too afraid of releasing their peoples to make peace. . . ." He added:

I resist war because I love Liberty. Conscription is the denial of liberty.

If I hold that war and militarism are evils which will only cease when men have the courage to stand apart from them, I should be false to my own belief if I avoided the dangers of military service only to accept some safe civil work as a condition of exemption from such service.

This country is faced with the most insidious danger that can confront a free people on the claim of the State to dispose of a man's life against his will. . . .

A war which you can only win by the compulsion of unwilling men and the persecution of those who are genuine will ultimately achieve the ruin of the very ideals for which you are fighting.<sup>51</sup>

The UDC's unwillingness to campaign for the conscientious objectors caused it to lose the direct support of the most prominent peace people in England. Bertrand Russell, for example, wrote that he would join the No-Conscription Fellowship because the UDC was "too mild and troubled with irrelevancies. It will be all right after the war, but not now. I wish good people were not so mild. The non-resistance people I know here are so Sunday-schooly—one feels they don't know the volcanic side of human nature, they have little humour, no intensity of will, nothing of what makes men effective. . . ."<sup>52</sup>

Russell's decision to support conscientious objectors led to his imprisonment because of a pamphlet he wrote for the No-Conscription Fellowship which explained that if people chose to become conscientious objectors they would be sentenced to two years at hard labor. Deemed a violation of the Defense of the Realm Act, a statute very similar to America's Espionage and Sedition Acts, Russell was tried and sentenced to sixty-one days imprisonment or a fine of £100, which he refused to pay. During his defense, Russell summarized the convictions of the anti-militarist movement in both England and the United States. He denied that he alone was on trial:

It is the whole tradition of British liberty which our forefathers built up with great trouble and great sacrifice. Other nations may excel us in some respects, but the tradition of liberty has been the supreme good that we in this country have cultivated. We have preserved, more than any other Power, respect for the individual conscience. . . . I think that under the stress of fear the authorities have somewhat forgotten that ancient tradition . . . and the tyranny which is resulting will be disastrous if it is not resisted. . . .<sup>53</sup>

The failure of the Union of Democratic Control to campaign against conscription and to support civil liberties did not prevent its members

from becoming victims of the general wartime repression about which Russell spoke. Throughout the war the UDC continued to publish pamphlets and address large public meetings in order to expose diplomatic agreements and later to oppose what they considered an imperialist and reactionary treaty. In many cases they were met by riots which, according to Trevelyan, "were promoted by officers and recruiting authorities." On occasion meetings were stormed by soldiers who "were invited to break the heads of 'pro-Germans'"; these incidents were defended by the Government "as spontaneous outbreaks of popular indignation." Halls were refused by local authorities at the instigation of the police, and "every kind of political pressure was exerted to prevent our obtaining places to speak in." Newspapers announced that the UDC was in the pay of Germany and later in the pay of Bolsheviks; and "threats of personal violence were constantly proffered . . . in the reactionary press." Censorship prohibited UDC literature from going to neutral countries and from being distributed to the armed services. In 1917 two of Morel's famous works, *Ten Years of Secret Diplomacy* and *Truth and the War*, were censored and prohibited from distribution in neutral and allied nations. Later, Morel was sentenced to six months in prison under the Defense of the Realm Act because he sent a pamphlet, *Tsardom's Part in the War*, not banned from circulation in Britain or France to Romain Rolland, the French pacifist. But Rolland happened to be in neutral Switzerland at the time. By June 8, 1918, the censor refused a permit to export to any foreign destination the monthly UDC, or any of the pamphlets published by the Union.<sup>54</sup> As Philip Snowden noted, it became clear that the government's objective was "to suppress every opinion which is disagreeable to them."<sup>55</sup>

In addition to official censorship, the London police raided the UDC offices and ransacked document files and correspondence. Occasionally, the office was broken into secretly at night and papers and correspondence were taken.<sup>56</sup>

Trevelyan was particularly disturbed that such repression occurred under Liberal Party auspices. In a letter to Walter Runciman, the director of the Board of Trade, Trevelyan wrote that he had "never for a moment doubted that liberty of discussion would be in danger during the war. . . ." But he had hoped that the era of repression would be postponed as long as the liberals were in office. He had hoped that it would "be left to Toryism . . . to adopt a Prussian system." Moreover, Trevelyan was troubled that Tory newspapers and speakers could broadcast their views, "their creed of vengeance, and their insane policy of dismembering Germany" without repression. Only the antimilitarists who tried "to make people take saner and more Liberal views" appeared to be "silenced by police raids and confiscation of . . . literature."<sup>57</sup>

Like the reaction of the AUAM leaders to George Creel and his committee of former liberals, the UDC members were particularly disap-

pointed in the attitude of the Liberals in the British government. Trevelyan wrote to John Simon, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, reminding him that he had "remained in the Government because he had thought that it would be well to have some Liberalism left in high places." Trevelyan noted that the seizure of literature would have to lead to even greater repression because "police bullying" would not silence the dissenters who cherished England's history of liberty.<sup>58</sup>

The entire British propaganda department at Crewe House was remarkably similar to the structure organized by the CPI. Crewe House under Lord Northcliffe was composed of "evesdroppers, letter-openers, deciphers, telephone tappers, spies, an intercept department, a forgery department, a criminal investigation department, a propaganda department . . . , a censorship department, a ministry of education and a press bureau." Like the CPI, Crewe House, staffed by former liberals, was well equipped to mobilize patriotism for the war effort.<sup>59</sup>

Both the UDC and the AUAM campaigned for democratic control of foreign policy, the abolition of secret treaties, early peaceful negotiations, a declaration of war aims by belligerent governments and a non-punitive treaty on the basis of what was to become the Fourteen Points. In addition, both the AUAM and the No-Conscription Fellowship gave legal counsel to conscientious objectors and worked to protect individual conscience and political freedoms even in wartime. Still, after the war Bertrand Russell reflected that all he had done "had been totally useless" except to himself. He had "not saved a single life or shortened the war by a minute." Nor had he "succeeded in doing anything to diminish the bitterness which caused the Treaty of Versailles." But at any rate he had "not been an accomplice in the crime of all the belligerent nations," and for himself he "had acquired a new philosophy and a new youth."<sup>60</sup> Other antimilitarists considered their work a vital challenge to the power of the state in wartime. They had refused to recognize "the right of the Executive to put the intellect of the citizen in chains" and they had refused "to admit as tolerable the conception of a 'State'" which could extinguish freedom of thought and expression in time of war. They insisted that "the statesmanship which conceals vital facts from the nation betrays the nation. . . ."<sup>61</sup>

In conclusion, it should be noted that the antimilitarists judged the situation accurately. War and democracy cannot both occupy the same air space. Bertrand Russell wrote that Jane Addams had "exactly the same outlook" as he did. They both recognized that war destroyed democracy. The English in the war, Russell noted, became "daily more like the Germans. The faults one hates in them are not confined to them, but are the products of militarism."<sup>62</sup> No individuals were more aware of that fact than the antimilitarists. Jane Addams, for example, was followed by secret agents and otherwise victimized by those who

called her traitor. John Haynes Holmes believed that he would never forget "the storm of hatred which broke over her devoted head when she denounced the [food] blockade . . . , and declared that the 'United States should not allow women and children of any nation to starve.'" In 1935, the year of her death, her name was added to a list of dangerous Reds, the enemies of America.<sup>63</sup>

Governments in wartime seem to fear the sovereignty of the people. Contemporary presidents have echoed Wilson's belief that the free expression of public opinion is dangerous and that to allow dissent "is to stab our soldiers in the back." As in World War I, democratic governments continue to use crude and often brutal methods to control dissent. Now, however, they also use a more sophisticated and more deceptive rhetoric in an attempt to forestall it altogether. In the United States, for example, government spokesmen now concern themselves with "peace actions" and troop withdrawal as they determinately escalate the war. But then, the more powerful and total the state becomes, the more apparent freedom it may allow its citizens. Able to transcend the limits of public opinion, the government's course need not be altered even with the publication of such revelations as were found in *The Pentagon Papers*. The vital force of a democracy can thus be threatened merely by the government's willingness to ignore the popular disapproval. As Norman Thomas wrote at the end of World War I, if "war brutalizes the individual it cannot ennoble the state."<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps it was such a thought which moved President Eisenhower forty years later to say during a television interview with Prime Minister Macmillan in London that "above all" he would like "to believe that the people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than any governments. "Indeed," he added, "I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of their way and let them have it."<sup>65</sup> The experiences of the antimilitarists of World War I and the dissonance of the contemporary peace movement have made it clear that governments will not move until large numbers of people mobilize to create genuinely public policy. If the history of the next fifty years is to be different from the history of the last fifty years, the people must recognize that the reformers and dissenters of the peace movement cannot themselves make the necessary changes in policy and democratic procedure; but that they have set the necessary example.

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## footnotes

1. For a full account of the American Union Against Militarism, see Blanche Wiesen Cook, "Woodrow Wilson and the Anti-militarists, 1914-1918" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1970); and for the Union of Democratic Control see Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (New York, 1971).

2. Jane Addams, "The Revolt Against War," *Women at the Hague: The International Conference of Women and Its Results* (New York, 1915), 77.

3. Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1914-1944* (Boston, 1968), 56.
4. Arthur Marwick, *Clifford Allen: The Open Conspirator* (Edinburgh & London, 1964), 7. Many of the UDC's leaders joined the Labour Party after the war.
5. *Ibid.*, 36.
6. Margaret I. Cole, ed., *Beatrice Webb's Diaries, II* (London, 1952), 31.
7. E. D. Morel to Mrs. Snowden, n.d., Union of Democratic Control Papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics. (Hereafter cited as UDC Papers.)
8. E. D. Morel to Edward H. Driffill, August 10, 1916, UDC Papers.
9. E. D. Morel, "The Morrow of the War," UDC pamphlet #1, 14.
10. Open Letter to Potential UDC members, August, 1914, UDC Papers.
11. Helena M. Swanwick, *Builders of Peace: Ten Years History of the Union of Democratic Control* (London, 1924), 33.
12. Charles Trevelyan to E. D. Morel, September 23, 1914, E. D. Morel Papers, London School of Economics.
13. *Ibid.*, September 26, 1914.
14. Morel to Maude Royden, September 9, 1914, UDC Papers.
15. Swanwick, *Builders of Peace*, 36.
16. *Ibid.*, 63.
17. Minutes, American Union Against Militarism, April 3, 1917, American Union Against Militarism Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania. (Hereafter cited as AUAM Papers.)
18. Crystal Eastman to Lillian Wald, June 14, 1917, Wald Papers, New York Public Library; Crystal Eastman to Paul Kellogg, June 14, 1917, Kellogg Papers, University of Minnesota.
19. Amos Pinchot to Crystal Eastman, June 15, 1917, Amos Pinchot Papers, Library of Congress, box 30.
20. Ray S. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters: War & Peace*, I (Garden City, 1927-1937), 63-65.
21. AUAM petition to Wilson, April 16, 1917, AUAM Papers. cf. Harry N. Scheiber, *The Wilson Administration and Civil Liberties* (Ithaca, 1960), 17-18; and Donald Johnson, *The Challenge to American Freedoms: World War I and the Rise of the American Civil Liberties Union* (Lexington, 1963), 79-84.
22. Scheiber, *Wilson Administration and Civil Liberties*, 14; for details regarding the arrests see Roger M. Baldwin to Oswald Garrison Villard, April 13, 1917, Villard Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
23. Elsie Charlton to Eleanor Karsten, April 13, 1917, Woman's Peace Party Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, box 2.
24. Arno Mayer, *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy* (New Haven, 1959), 349-350.
25. George Creel quoted in Donald Johnson, *Challenge to American Freedoms*, 62.
26. Jane Addams, *Peace and Bread in Time of War* (New York, 1945), 134.
27. See Scheiber, *Wilson Administration and Civil Liberties*, 31-32; Johnson, *Challenge to American Freedoms*, 79-84.
28. Pinchot to Wilson, July 14, 1917, Pinchot Papers, Library of Congress, box 27.
29. Wilson to Pinchot, July 18, 1917, Wilson Papers, Library of Congress, Series III, letter-book 42.
30. Pinchot to Wilson, July 25, 1917, Pinchot Papers, Library of Congress, box 27; for Pinchot on Burleson, cf. Pinchot to George P. West, October 15, 1917, *Ibid.*
31. Lillian Wald to Joseph Tumulty, September 12, 1917, Wald Papers, New York Public Library.
32. Lamar quoted in Johnson, *Challenge to American Freedoms*, 61.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Villard to Colonel House, September 16, 1918, Villard Papers, Harvard University.
35. Warbasse to Pinchot, October 10, 1917, Pinchot Papers, Library of Congress, box 30.
36. Berger to Pinchot, October 25, 1917, *Ibid.*, box 33.
37. For Wilson's remarks see Baker, *War and Peace*, I, 66, 129, & *passim*.
38. Gerard quoted in ACLU pamphlet, "Who May Advocate Force?" 27.
39. AUAM press release by Crystal Eastman, July 2, 1917, AUAM Papers, box 4.
40. From unsigned *Four Lights* article, August 25, 1917, XVI, Woman's Peace Party of New York Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.
41. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1917. For other examples of oppression in wartime see Elizabeth Gurley Flynn Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.
42. Crystal Eastman to press, July 2, 1917, AUAM Papers.
43. Crystal Eastman to Lillian Wald and Paul Kellogg, June 14, 1917, AUAM Papers.
44. Jane Addams, Lillian Wald and Norman Thomas to Newton Baker, April 12, 1917, Wald Papers, Columbia University, box 88.
45. George Nasmyth, *Four Lights*, VI, April 7, 1917.

46. Norman Thomas to congressional committees, May 1, 1917, Wald Papers, Columbia University, box 12.
47. F. W. Hirst to E. D. Morel, August 19, 1914, UDC Papers.
48. Morel to Trevelyan, June 9, 1915, *Ibid.*
49. Marwick, *Clifford Allen*, 23.
50. *Ibid.*, 22.
51. *Ibid.*, 40-41.
52. Bertrand Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell, June 1, 1915, *The Autobiography*.
53. Russell quoted in David Boulton, *Objection Overruled* (London, 1967), 183-184.
54. Ethel Sidgwick who transported the pamphlet was not arrested and there is evidence that British officials were eager to see Morel "safely lodged in gaol." I am grateful to Professor Catherine A. Cline of Catholic University for this information. Charles Trevelyan, *The Union of Democratic Control: Its History and Its Policy* (London, 1919), 6-7; Swanwick, 89-93.
55. Philip Snowden to Morel, November 9, 1916, UDC Papers.
56. Morel to Whiskaard, August 25, 1915, Morel Papers, London School of Economics.
57. Trevelyan to Walter Runciman, August 23, 1915, UDC Papers.
58. Trevelyan to John Simon, August 12, 1915, UDC Papers.
59. Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime* (New York, 1929), 12.
60. Russell, *The Autobiography*, II, 38-39.
61. E. D. Morel in foreword to Swanwick, *Builders of Peace*, 8.
62. Bertrand Russell to Jane Addams, Addams Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, box 6.
63. John Haynes Holmes, "Jane Addams Memorial," *Unity*, July 15, 1935, Wald Papers, New York Public Library.
64. Norman Thomas to Walter Mulbach, July 31, 1917, Thomas Papers, New York Public Library.
65. President Eisenhower in a TV interview, London, September 1, 1959, in UDC pamphlet "New Moves in the H Bomb Story."