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## **Winston Churchill versus E. D. Morel, Dundee, 1922, and the Split in the Liberal Party**

**Jim Tomlinson**

**Abstract** In the November 1922 general election in the two-member seat of Dundee, Winston Churchill, Liberal member of Parliament for the city since 1908, lost his seat to Edwin Scrymgeour (Prohibitionist) and E. D. Morel (Labour). Before 1914, Morel, like Churchill, had been a member of the Liberal Party, and this article compares the political trajectory of Churchill and Morel across the war period in order to understand how their positions had diverged. While still a Liberal in party affiliation in 1922, Churchill was en route back to the Conservative Party, while Morel had become a prominent figure in the Labour Party. In examining this divergence, the aim is to shed light on one of the key issues of British politics in early twentieth-century Britain: the divisions in the Liberal party that undermined its place as one of the two leading political parties. The purpose is not to displace arguments about long-run socioeconomic change undermining the Liberals, nor of the severe impact of total war on Liberal thinking about the scope of state action; rather, it is to use this example to also stress the significance for the party of sharp divergences over war and peace, and more broadly, the conduct of foreign policy.

The divisions in the Liberal Party during and after the First World War, along with the parallel decline in the electoral fortunes of the party, is one of the central issues of twentieth-

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century British political history. This article offers a case study of the 1922 election battle between Winston Churchill and E. D. Morel in Dundee to further our understanding of these divisions.

An extraordinary amount has been written on the topic of Liberal decline, though interest has waned to some degree since the end of the 1980s as the immediate political environment in Britain has shifted.<sup>1</sup> The lines of that debate were mostly focused on whether the decline could be seen as linked to an ideological crisis in liberalism, or to underlying economic and social change making the Liberals unviable in a world of heightened class conflict.<sup>2</sup>

The first of these lines of argument emphasizes especially the impact of the First World War, with Trevor Wilson famously describing a party suffering from a variety of

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. Thompson, “The Historians and the Decline of the Liberal Party,” *Albion* 22, no. 1 (1990): 65–83, makes clear how much of the historical debate was tied to contemporary politics—which in no way disparages the quality of the work produced. Important recent work has been done on the meaning and significance of the heightened class consciousness commonly linked to the war; see Jon Lawrence, “Labour and the Politics of Class, 1900–1940,” in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*, ed. David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (Cambridge, 2011), 237–60.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Searle, *The Liberal Party: Triumph and Disintegration, 1886–1929*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, 2001), 125, 168. For a treatment that focuses on the effects of the war, David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party* (Basingstoke, 2004), 55, argues that “the more evidence that has been accumulated to show that the Liberal party was not in danger of imminent collapse in 1914, the more significance has to be attached to the war as the explanation for what happened subsequently.”

sicknesses prior to the war but being hit by a “rampant omnibus” in the form of the war itself.<sup>3</sup> The second argument sees the rise of Labour as the main challenger to the Liberals as a consequence of fundamental shifts in class structure and consciousness, though there is much disagreement on whether the franchise system held back the electoral articulation of these shifts before 1914. In this account, class consciousness was fatal to the cross-class alliance that historically had sustained the Liberals.<sup>4</sup>

I do not dispute the importance of this growing class consciousness across the war period but suggest that such explanations need to be complemented by attention to the ideological crisis affecting the Liberal Party. My approach here is to focus on the war and its immediate prelude, but also on the postwar period, as the impact of that conflict worked its way out. The question posed relates to the Liberal Party, not to the ideology of liberalism.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly, this was a period when that ideology came under great pressure, and the most important analyst of this development asks the question, “[W]hat befalls an ideology when, after a sustained period of attachment to a successful and powerful political party, the latter

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<sup>3</sup> Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914–1935* (London, 1966), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910–1924* (Oxford, 1974), 236–47; H. C. G. Matthew, R. I. McKibbin, and J. A. Kay, “The Franchise Factor in the Rise of the Labour Party,” *English Historical Review* 91, no. 361 (1976): 723–52. Cf. Peter Clarke, “Liberals, Labour and the Franchise,” *English Historical Review* 91, no. 364 (1976): 582–89; Duncan Tanner, “Class Voting and Radical Politics: The Liberal and Labour Parties, 1910–1931,” in *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820*, ed. Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (Aldershot, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> For the survival of liberalism more generally, see Ewen Green and Duncan Tanner, eds., *The Strange Survival of Liberal England* (Cambridge, 2007).

suddenly collapses under a barely foreseen set of political and economic developments?”<sup>6</sup>

But my approach here is not on the high theory of liberalism, to which neither Churchill nor Morel contributed.<sup>7</sup> Rather, the focus is on the speeches and writing of two prolific publicists whose words can be used to understand two strands of Liberal politics as they developed and diverged across the war period.

These speeches and writings allow us to reconstruct what Michael Bentley, echoing contemporary terminology, called the “Liberal mind.”<sup>8</sup> The term can be helpfully used to try to capture political understandings and beliefs that sit between high theory or doctrine, and a purely pragmatic response to events. This focus is especially important here, where Liberals (like everyone else) had to respond to the “rampant omnibus,”<sup>9</sup> but did so with habits of thought that had a much longer gestation. Most obviously, attitudes to the First World War related not just to the rights and wrongs of that particular conflict but also to war in general. As Bentley notes, “The coming of war substituted for a confused situation a more dangerous one in opening up broader horizons of discussion of and duty for Liberals.”<sup>10</sup>

The mind of liberalism had long been subject to strains on the issue of war, as had become evident during the conflict with the Boers. But that war had not led to a lasting split in the Liberal Party, partly because of astute management of the divisions by its leader, Henry

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Freeden, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought, 1914–1939* (Oxford, 1986), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Neither warrants a mention in Freeden’s book.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Bentley, *The Liberal Mind* (Oxford, 1977); see also Bentley, *The Climax of Liberal Politics: British Liberalism in Theory and Practice, 1868–1918* (London, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, *Downfall of the Liberal Party*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Bentley, *Liberal Mind*, 15.

Campbell-Bannerman.<sup>11</sup> But also very important was the fact that Lloyd George, the leader of the pro-Boer faction in the party, had no inclination to pacifism. As Richard Toye notes, “Lloyd George’s opposition to the war was not founded on anti-imperialism any more than it was on pacifism.” He saw the war as the result of government blunders, followed by cruel and incompetent conduct of the conflict, “wasting money that could have been spent on social reform at home.”<sup>12</sup>

The contest between Churchill and Morel is directly relevant to the broad Liberal divisions because, before 1914, both men had been Liberals. Churchill, who was Liberal MP for Dundee from 1908, was, of course, a leading light in the Liberal government of 1906–1914, occupying the posts of president of the Board of Trade and home secretary before becoming first lord of the Admiralty in 1911. But by 1922 he was clearly moving away from his previous allegiances. In the month before the election, he had told Lord Derby that “he had been on the point of joining the Conservative Party as he was more in accord with their general views than he was with those of the Liberals.”<sup>13</sup> As Table 1 makes clear, there were no Conservative candidates in Dundee in 1922, reflecting the Liberal-Tory alliance within the Lloyd George Coalition and paralleled by the support of local Unionists for Churchill. (The

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<sup>11</sup> On the Liberal Party and the Boer War, see for recent discussion David Boucher, “‘Sane’ and ‘Insane’ Imperialism: British Idealism, New Liberalism and Liberal Imperialism,” *History of European Ideas* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1189–1204. A much older but still valuable discussion is Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge* (1968; reprint, London, 2008), 73–84.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill: Rivals for Greatness* (London, 2007), 21.

<sup>13</sup> Churchill, cited in Robert Rhodes-James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900–1939* (Harmondsworth, 1973), 194.

candidature of Richard Pilkington reflected the discontent of a minority of local Liberals with this alliance with the Conservatives). Churchill was to stand only once more (unsuccessfully) as a Liberal candidate, in West Leicester in 1923, before shifting to the Conservative Party, which he had left in 1904.

Conversely, Morel, who had been a prospective Liberal candidate for Birkenhead from 1912 to 1914, had moved in the opposite direction, joining the Independent Labour Party in 1918 after being first approached by the party in 1916.<sup>14</sup> He was part of a numerous and important group of Liberals who shifted their allegiance in this way across the war period.<sup>15</sup> The migration was a significant element of the weakening of the British Liberal Party and the strengthening of Labour that is such a central part of the political history of post-1914 Britain.

The result of the 1922 election was that Churchill was beaten into fourth place. Churchill's Coalition Liberal ally D. J. Macdonald came third. Edwin Scrymgeour, a local man, and the only prohibitionist ever elected to the British Parliament, came top of the poll.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Birkenhead Liberal Association, "E. D. Morel, Prospective Liberal Party Candidate for Birkenhead," 1913, Morel Papers, F13/5/1, London School of Economics Archives (this repository is hereafter abbreviated as LSE Archives); Porter, *Critics of Empire*, 328; R. E. Dowse, *Left in the Centre: The Independent Labour Party, 1893–1940* (London, 1966), 25.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine Cline, *Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party, 1914–1931* (Syracuse, 1963); Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Defectors and the Liberal Party, 1910–2010: A Study of Inter-party Relationships* (Manchester, 2012), 27–92.

<sup>16</sup> John Kemp, "Drink and the Labour Movement in Early Twentieth-Century Scotland with Particular Reference to Edwin Scrymgeour and the Scottish Prohibition Party" (PhD diss., Dundee University, 2000).

Because Dundee was a two-member seat, the other successful candidate was the second-placed Labour candidate, E. D. Morel. There is a substantial literature seeking to explain the election outcome, but none of it takes up the theme of the divisions in Liberalism.<sup>17</sup>

Table 1—Election Result, Dundee 1922

E. Scrymgeour (Prohibitionist)	32,578
E. D. Morel (Labour)	30,292
D. J. Macdonald (Coalition Liberal)	22,244
W. S. Churchill (Coalition Liberal)	20,466

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 4, 1917–1922 (London, 1975), 871–92; William Walker, “Dundee’s Disenchantment with Churchill,” *Scottish Historical Review* 49, no. 1 (1970): 85–108; Tony Pattinson, *A Seat for Life* (Dundee, 1980); Donald Southgate, “Politics and Representation in Dundee, 1832–1963,” in *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland: The City of Dundee*, ed. J. M. Jackson (Arbroath, 1979), 287–328; Seth Thevoz, “Winston Churchill’s 1922 General Election Defeat in Dundee” (M Phil diss., Kings College London, 2009); Jim Tomlinson, “Churchill’s Defeat in Dundee, 1922, and the Decline of Liberal Political Economy,” *Historical Journal* 63 (2020): 980–1006. For the communist view, see Bob Stewart, *Breaking the Fetters* (London, 1967), 127; William Gallacher, *The Last Memoirs of William Gallacher* (London, 1966), 170. For local politics more generally, see John Kemp, “Red Tayside? Political Change in Early Twentieth-Century Dundee,” in *Victorian Dundee: Image and Realities*, ed. Christopher Whatley, Bob Harris, and Louise Miskell, 2nd ed. (Dundee, 2011), 217–38; Kenneth Baxter and William Kenefick, “Labour Politics and the Dundee Working Class, c.1895–1936,” in *Jute No More: Transforming Dundee*, ed. Jim Tomlinson and Christopher Whatley (Dundee, 2011), 191–19.



R. Pilkington (Independent Liberal)	6,681
W. Gallacher (Communist Party)	5,906

Source: Donald Southgate, “Politics and Representation in Dundee, 1832–1963,” in *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland: The City of Dundee*, ed. J. M. Jackson (Arbroath, 1979), 287–328, at 302. As Dundee was a dual-member constituency, each elector had two votes.

In this article, I look at Morel and Churchill’s versions of liberal politics before 1914 and then analyze the impact of war on their respective approaches, assessing their respective paths toward the 1922 election outcome.

### **Two Versions of Liberalism**

Morel’s considerable public reputation before 1914 was built on his critiques of European imperialism in Africa, and especially of the role of King Leopold II of Belgium’s direct rule in the Congo.<sup>18</sup> Morel’s interest in Africa began when he was employed as a clerk by the

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<sup>18</sup> For biographies of Morel, see Frederick Cocks, *E. D. Morel, the Man and His Works* (London, 1920); Catherine Ann Cline, *E. D. Morel, 1873–1924: Strategy of Protest* (Belfast, 1980); David Mitchell, *The Politics of Dissent: A Biography of E. D. Morel* (London, 2014); Rudi Wuliger, “The Idea of Economic Imperialism, with Special Reference to the Life and Work of E. D. Morel” (PhD diss., London School of Economics, 1953). On his role in the Congo, see Porter, *Critics of Empire*, 254–329; Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (London, 2006). On his relationship to the dissenting tradition in British foreign policy, see A. J. P. Taylor, *The Troublemakers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792–1939*, 2nd ed. (London, 1993), 119–22, 132–66; Martin

Liverpool shipping company Elder Dempster beginning in 1891. From there he developed an understanding of the commerce of West Africa that led him to see that trade as profoundly exploitative. He initially published material on Africa in 1893, but his first significant work was *Affairs of West Africa*, published in 1902. Morel's concern with the Congo was aroused by a visit to Belgium in 1898 and the realization that trade into the colony, controlled by King Leopold II, consisted of vast exports of rubber and ivory, while imports were dominated by instruments of oppression such as rifles and cartridges. Agitation against what was happening in the Belgian Congo predated Morel, especially through the pioneering humanitarian organization, the Aborigines' Protection Society, but the campaign took on new prominence with the formation of the Congo Reform Association in 1904, with Morel as its leading light.<sup>19</sup> In 1909, the work of the association, and the international agitation its efforts stimulated, succeeded in getting the Belgian parliament to take over the Congo from Leopold's personal rule, though how far that changed conditions in the colony is unclear.<sup>20</sup> Morel published prolifically on the Congo, but his most famous work was *Red Rubber*, first published in 1906, which ran into five editions.<sup>21</sup> In the years before 1914, he was commonly regarded as an expert on Africa and was, for example, a member of the Colonial Office's West Africa Lands Committee from 1912 to 1914.

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Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> On the Congo Reform Association, see Kevin Grant, *A Civilized Savagery: Britain and the New Slavery in Africa, 1884–1926* (London, 2005), chap. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Mitchell, *Politics of Dissent*, 68–76.

<sup>21</sup> Mitchell, 51; E. D. Morel, *Red Rubber: The Story of the Rubber Slave Trade Which Flourished on the Congo for Twenty Years, 1890–1910* (Manchester, 1919).

It was this reputation in foreign affairs that led to Morel's becoming Liberal candidate for Birkenhead in 1912. In a pamphlet setting out the case for his adoption, the local party association stressed that "he was the man who led and inspired a great campaign to free millions enslaved and suffering, from the most terrible wrongs, *and that he succeeded in the task he undertook.*" As a "recognized authority on Colonial, Imperial and foreign questions . . . the policy he advocates is invariably that of a humane and enlightened statesmanship."<sup>22</sup> Morel's approach to colonialism was fully compatible with contemporary liberalism. In his view, the exploitative nature of the colonies arose fundamentally from African farmers being deprived of ownership of land and the dominance of monopolization, rather than competition, in colonial trade. Morel saw the way to end that exploitation as through secure African land ownership and free trade, but with administration and infrastructure provided by European empires.<sup>23</sup> This approach was therefore compatible with belief in the civilizational superiority of Europe and the classic Enlightenment notion of trade as the route to higher levels of

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<sup>22</sup> Birkenhead Liberal Association, "Mr E. D. Morel," 4, 6, Morel Papers, F13/5/1, LSE Archives; italics in original.

<sup>23</sup> This view was articulated early on in Morel's pamphlet calling for more cotton growing in the British Empire; he characteristically claimed that West Africa would be an especially favorable place for expanding this activity because of "the commercial aptitude of the native, which is a very considerable asset, and will facilitate the taking up of the cultivation of cotton as a native industry, under expert direction and official encouragement." "Empire Grown Cotton" (Manchester, 1904), 25, Morel Papers, LSE Archives, F13/5/1. His most extended discussion was published after the war: E. D. Morel, *The Black Man's Burden* (1903; reprint, London, 1920). See also Porter, *Critics of Empire*, 256–60.

civilization. Thus, while he was a passionate critic of empire, Morel was certainly not an anti-imperialist in the sense of calling for the abolition of European rule.<sup>24</sup>

The strength of his commitment to free trade should be emphasized. For him, as for so many others at this time, this was not simply an economic issue concerned with efficiency and income maximization.<sup>25</sup> In his view, the ability of Africans to trade freely was integral to their freedom, as much so as their right to own their land. While this support for free trade led to accusations that Morel was simply the mouthpiece of commercial interests (and undoubtedly it helped to get such interests on his side), there seems no doubt that his belief in the liberating effects of trade was heartfelt.<sup>26</sup>

Morel seems not to have made any public statements on the Boer War, though he was very much associated with strong opponents of it such as Alice Green, who arranged his first public address to the Women's National Liberal Association in 1901.<sup>27</sup> It is also impossible to find public statements by Morel on domestic issues before he became Liberal candidate for Birkenhead in 1912. For almost his whole career, he "was content to be a single-issue politician," but in seeking a parliamentary seat he was obliged to make some comments on

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<sup>24</sup> Partha Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914–1964* (London, 1975), 32–35.

<sup>25</sup> Frank Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation* (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Morel was strongly supported and financed by the Liverpool merchant John Holt, who had major interests in expanding Britain's trade with its empire in Africa: Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement*, 16–17. See also Cocks, *E. D. Morel*, 50–55; Cline, *Recruits to Labour*, 55–56. Morel wrote an admiring obituary of Holt: "John Holt," by E. D. M. in *African Mail*, 2 July 1915, 393–94, Morel Papers, F13/5/1, LSE Archives.

<sup>27</sup> Mitchell, *Politics of Dissent*, 27.

domestic themes, though these were often in broad-brush terms.<sup>28</sup> In his adoption address of that year, he stressed the Liberals' closeness to the Labour Party: "[W]hatever differences there may be between us and our Labour friends, they are differences rather of degree and procedure rather than of motive or of purpose." He went on to attack the Tories, especially over tariff reform and what he saw as a confused and dangerous foreign policy.<sup>29</sup> In a speech the following day, he largely focused on foreign policy, stressing that it was an issue that should not be left to professional diplomats but one that every voter should be engaged with. He concluded by emphasizing his support for female suffrage, despite recent suffragette "outrages."<sup>30</sup> A year later, he again visited Birkenhead and spoke of his support for votes for women, while criticizing pressures for more money to be spent on the navy.<sup>31</sup> The following month, he was extravagantly praising the just-published book by Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion*, which argued that international interconnectedness made war inconceivable.<sup>32</sup> In sum, before 1914, Morel was a broadly mainstream Liberal, albeit on the more radical wing of the party, with an unusually sharp focus on foreign affairs.

While in the years immediately before the war Morel was hoping to become a Liberal member of Parliament, Churchill had long been playing a central role in Liberal politics.

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<sup>28</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists*, 258.

<sup>29</sup> "Mr Morel in Birkenhead," *Manchester Guardian*, 3 December 1912.

<sup>30</sup> 'Mr Morel and the Foreign Crisis' *Manchester Guardian*, 4 December 1912.

<sup>31</sup> Birkenhead Liberal Association, "The Problem of Our Social Conditions; Being a Speech by Mr E. D. Morel on December 9th 1913," Morel Papers, F13/5/1, LSE Archives; 'The increase in armaments' *Manchester Guardian*, 10 December 1913.

<sup>32</sup> Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion* (London, 1909); 'The great satire upon civilization' *Manchester Guardian*, 27 January 1914.

When he first won Dundee in 1908, he had just become president of the Board of Trade, and in that role he was to become a key figure in the “New Liberal” reforms of the Asquith government, playing a strongly supportive role to Lloyd George. Over the next few years, major innovations such as old-age pensions, trade boards (setting minimum wages), labor exchanges, and National Insurance against sickness and unemployment were introduced on Churchill’s initiative or with his strong support. This was also the period of the People’s Budget of 1909, and the constitutional battle between the Commons and the Lords that followed. The battle was the occasion for Churchill’s most radical speech-making in attacking the privileges of the House of Lords and the aristocracy.<sup>33</sup>

Churchill’s politics at this time were not straightforward. As Paul Addison aptly summarizes, Churchill “alternated between radical attacks on privilege, and a conservative vision of social reform” and often stressed reform measures “as an antidote to socialism. Presented in this light, social policy had much more to do with the goal of national efficiency than the struggle for social justice.”<sup>34</sup> Churchill’s approach led to advocacy of a National Minimum (i.e., a subsistence level of income below which no one should be allowed to fall), which links his ideas to aspects of contemporary Fabianism. However, for Churchill, such advocacy was allied to a powerful anti-socialist defence of private property.<sup>35</sup> This anti-socialism was strongly evident in Churchill’s 1908 campaign in Dundee: “Liberalism is not Socialism, and never will be. There is a great gulf fixed. It is not a gulf of method, it is gulf of principle . . . Socialism seeks to pull down wealth, Liberalism seeks to raise up poverty . . .

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<sup>33</sup> *Liberalism and the Social Problem* (London, 1909); Randolph Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 22, *Young Statesman, 1901–1914* (London, 1967), 316–61.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front, 1900–1955* (London, 1992), 53–54.

<sup>35</sup> Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, 56–60.

Socialism would kill enterprise; Liberalism would rescue enterprise from the trammels of privilege and preference . . . Socialism attacks capital; Liberalism attacks monopoly.”<sup>36</sup>

However, such rhetoric alternated with strongly anti-Conservative themes as Churchill sought to attract voters from the left as well as the right.<sup>37</sup>

A perceptible shift to the right is evident in Churchill’s politics as early as 1909, symbolized by notably moderate comments on the incidence of the government’s tax proposals: “Be sure of this—after the taxes which this budget imposes are in force our island will still be the best place in the world for rich people to dwell in.”<sup>38</sup> His tenure as home secretary in 1910–11 showed in part the persistence of a reforming instinct, but this went along with a belligerent attitude to trade unions and strike action that started to build Churchill’s reputation as an anti-labor figure.<sup>39</sup> It was also during his time as home secretary in 1910 that he vehemently expressed his opposition to extending the vote to women: “I think the great mass of women are not in any sensible degree losers by the disability under which they lie. It cannot be proved that they suffer any disadvantage in legislation . . . I do not

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<sup>36</sup> Winston Churchill, cited in Robert Rhodes-James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900–1939* (Harmondsworth, 1973), 47.

<sup>37</sup> Jim Tomlinson, “Responding to Globalization? Churchill and Dundee in 1908,” *Twentieth Century British History* 21, no. 3 (2010): 257–80.

<sup>38</sup> Winston Churchill, speech at Saltburn, 7 August 1909, cited in Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, 87.

<sup>39</sup> Alan Baxendale, *Winston Spencer Churchill: Penal Reformer* (Bern, 1907); Chris Wrigley, “Churchill and the Trade Unions,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11 (2001): 273–93.

believe that the great mass of women want a vote.”<sup>40</sup> But such views on suffrage and other domestic issues were perfectly compatible with the contemporary Liberal mainstream, albeit on the more conservative wing.

Churchill’s knowledge and interest in Africa was much less than that of Morel, but he had engaged with British colonialism on that continent in his years as undersecretary at the Colonial Office (1905–1908) before becoming president of the Board of Trade. According to Ronald Hyam, in this period in office he showed a “generous and sensitive, if highly paternalistic sympathy for subject peoples.”<sup>41</sup> In his book *My African Journey*, published after a tour in 1907, Churchill showed his concern for the welfare of Africans alongside views of them as childlike and “secure in [their] abyss of contented degradation.”<sup>42</sup> The liberal paternalism in this approach not dissimilar to that of Morel, but as a policy maker, Churchill was aware that the stated noble aspirations of imperialists (which he shared) often

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<sup>40</sup> Winston Churchill, Speech to the House of Commons, 12 July 1910, Parliamentary Debates, *Commons*, 5th series, vol. 19 (1909–10), col. 221. Churchill continued his opposition when a far more straightforward proposal was put forward in 1911–1912. Much is revealed by the terms of that rejection: “What a ridiculous tragedy it would be if this strong Government and party which made its mark on history were to go down on Petticoat politics.” Cited in Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, 160–61. See also Paul Addison, “Churchill and Women,” in *Winston Churchill: Politics, Strategy and Statecraft*, ed. Richard Toye (London, 2017), 93–104.

<sup>41</sup> Ronald Hyam, *Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office, 1905–1908: The Watershed of the Empire-Commonwealth* (London, 1968), 503; Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, 54.

<sup>42</sup> Winston Churchill, *My African Journey* (London, 1907); Richard Toye, *Churchill’s Empire: The World That Made Him and the World He Made* (Basingstoke, 2010), 119.



had little to do with the sordid realities of governing colonies. As Richard Toye aptly summarizes the underlying approach to any challenge to British imperial rule, “He was prepared to question the conduct of a dirty colonial war but was in the end willing to assure its supporters of his backing.”<sup>43</sup>

Churchill’s politics were increasingly driven by perceptions of the international situation, linked to his move to the Admiralty in 1911. The shift to an aggressive anti-German stance was stimulated especially by the crisis with Germany over Morocco, and as Addison observes, “[I]t is almost true to say that from the Agadir crisis of 1911 to the armistice of 1918, Churchill was interested in nothing but war, preparations for war, and the conduct of naval and military operations.”<sup>44</sup> Churchill’s pressure for more naval spending was a point of tension with many of his Liberal colleagues, added to by his approach to the Ulster crisis where he was at the forefront of arguments for exempting Ulster from Home Rule, though his positioning on the latter issue was far from consistent.<sup>45</sup>

If Churchill was increasingly at odds on foreign policy with many Liberals before 1914, on one international issue he remained steadfast: support for free trade. It was integral to his thinking in this period. At the 1908 election, he gave a range of set-piece speeches, subsequently published as *For Liberalism and Free Trade*. The speeches strongly reinforced the traditional case for free trade that emphasized its appeal to poor consumers, arguing that protection would “allow people for private profit to impose taxation upon bread and meat”

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<sup>43</sup> Toye, *Churchill’s Empire*, xi.

<sup>44</sup> Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, 153.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Bew, *Churchill and Ireland* (Oxford, 2016), 29–82.

and “cheat and starve your children.”<sup>46</sup> The focus on free trade was well advised in a town like prewar Dundee with its strong liberal tradition, and where real incomes among wage earners relied heavily on the price of imported commodities in a situation where money wages fluctuated but showed no long-run trend.<sup>47</sup>

Churchill’s support for free trade was neither recent nor contingent. It was the one economic argument in which he had long engaged and was an important part of his reason for moving away from the increasingly protectionist Conservative Party in 1904. Churchill’s free trade principles, in short, “amid the shifting sands of his other vicissitudes, formed a rock to which he clung.”<sup>48</sup> It was also a policy fully compatible with his imperialism in the context of Britain’s free trade empire. He spelled out this stance in 1908 when he argued that if the benefits of protection for Britain’s employment level were as suggested by Chamberlain, why would not same benefits accrue to a protectionist India? “If foreign goods displace English labour, the English goods displace Indian labour. If protection against oversea importation is

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<sup>46</sup> Winston Churchill, *For Liberalism and Free Trade* (Dundee, 1908), 7, 8, CHAR 9/31/66, Churchill Archive, [www.churchillarchive.com](http://www.churchillarchive.com).

<sup>47</sup> Tomlinson, “Responding to Globalization.” It no doubt helped Churchill’s cause that the sugar duty was cut the day before the election, especially as Dundee was a heavy user of sugar for its jam industry. ‘Parliament. The budget’ *Times* (London), 8 May 1908.

<sup>48</sup> Peter Clarke, “Churchill’s Economic Ideas, 1900–1930,” in *Churchill*, ed. Robert Blake and W. Roger Louis (Oxford, 1993), 79–95, at 83; Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front*, 91–92; Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, 27–29; however, Churchill did support protectionism in 1931.

economically good for England, it is economically good for India too.”<sup>49</sup> He went on to stress the reliance of the Lancashire cotton industry on the Indian market, and the British government’s resistance to tariffs on imports into India—justified by the harms that tariffs would impose on the Indian consumer as well as the Lancashire producer.<sup>50</sup>

### **Divisions over the War**

On the eve of the war, Morel and Churchill both articulated positions within the Liberal mainstream, though differences are apparent. On domestic policy, the most obvious was in relation to women’s suffrage, with Churchill notably hostile and Morel enthusiastically supportive. Morel was also willing to speak in much warmer terms about the Labour Party, because he did not see the “great gulf” between Liberalism and Labour that Churchill spoke of in 1908.<sup>51</sup> But the big differences were on foreign policy, and this divide became a chasm in their attitudes to the war. While Churchill strongly endorsed Britain’s entry into the conflict, Morel was wholly opposed. His position led to his being asked to resign from his candidacy in Birkenhead, and the majority of the Liberal parliamentary party of course eventually endorsed the war effort. But these facts should not lead us to the view that Morel’s anti-war view was marginal or extreme in the 1914 Liberal Party. On the contrary, he was close to the center of Liberal thinking; as Rhodes James asserts, in the prewar years the Liberals constituted “a predominantly pacifist government.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Winston Churchill, *For Free Trade*, 2nd ed. (London, 1908), 69–70, CHAR 9/20, Churchill Archive.

<sup>50</sup> Churchill, *For Free Trade*, 71, CHAR 9/20, Churchill Archive.

<sup>51</sup> Churchill, cited in Rhodes-James, *Churchill*, 47.

<sup>52</sup> Rhodes James, *Study in Failure*, 52.

As a result, in the run-up to war, most Liberals, including, at least initially, Lloyd George, opposed the increase in naval spending of 1913–14. Because of this and related foreign and military issues, in the months immediately before the war began, many Liberals were becoming skeptical about Churchill’s credentials as a Liberal and rightly believed that he was open to some kind of deal with the Conservatives—a stance he was to maintain through the war and postwar years before his eventual shift to that party.<sup>53</sup>

Second, as most recently shown by Douglas Newton, it was touch and go almost until the declaration of war on 4 August 1914 whether the Liberal government would be drawn into the conflict.<sup>54</sup> The government and party were seriously divided, even if in the end only two members of the government resigned. It could easily have been more, thus undermining the agreement to declare war, if it had not been for astute maneuvering by Foreign Secretary Grey, supported by Prime Minister Asquith—and also by Churchill.<sup>55</sup> A key factor in shifting Liberal opinion was the German invasion of Belgium: although the British decision to go to war was effectively made before the incursion, it provided a moralistic argument for the war’s advocates that won over many waverers.<sup>56</sup>

Morel, like Churchill, condemned the invasion of Belgium but regarded British entry into the war as only possible because of public ignorance about the secret talks and arrangements that the Liberal government had pursued and that tied them especially to France

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<sup>53</sup> Paul Addison, *Churchill: The Unexpected Hero* (Oxford, 2006), 62–64.

<sup>54</sup> Douglas Newton, *The Darkest Days: The Truth behind Britain’s Rush to War, 1914* (London, 2014).

<sup>55</sup> For Churchill’s activities in the run-up to war, see Newton, *Darkest Days*, 61–62, 136–38, 178–92.

<sup>56</sup> Newton, *Darkest Days*, 283, 286–87, 290–93, 301.

and coming to the assistance of the French in the event of a German attack on that country.<sup>57</sup> This allegation of secret diplomacy allowing governments to pursue foreign policies at odds with the interests of the mass of the electorate was to become the central theme of Morel's public statements through to his death in 1924. It linked back to his view that the success of his campaign against Leopold's rule in Africa only succeeded to the extent it did because of public pressure.<sup>58</sup> Such analysis led him to a founding role in the pressure group Union of Democratic Control, whose purpose was clear: to prevent secret diplomacy and by that means stop Britain plunging into war in future.<sup>59</sup>

The division between Churchill and Morel over the war was profound. It reflected different views about Germany and deep disagreement about how to conduct foreign policy, but also different attitudes to war in general. As Richard Toye notes, Churchill had an "instinct for war and aggression" completely at odds with Morel's high-minded pacific temperament.<sup>60</sup> During the 1900 election campaign, and while still a Conservative, Churchill

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<sup>57</sup> E. D. Morel, *Truth and the War* (London, 1916), 1–13.

<sup>58</sup> Morel, *Truth and the War*, xxix–xxx.

<sup>59</sup> On the Union of Democratic Control, see Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics during the First World War* (Oxford, 1971); Helena Swanwick, *Builders of the Peace: Being Ten Years History of the Union of Democratic Control* (London, 1924); Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Democratic Control, 1914–1918* (Hull, 1996).

<sup>60</sup> Toye, introduction to *Winston Churchill*, 4. Addison describes Churchill as being "enthralled and intoxicated by war": Addison, *Churchill*, 21. In Geoffrey Best's account, all Churchill's warlike attitudes are excused by his role in 1940: "[T]he rough has to be taken with the smooth"; Geoffrey Best, *Churchill and War* (London, 2005), 31.

had described Liberals as “prigs, prudes and faddists,” and the first of those epithets would be an accurate if unkind way of describing Morel’s self-righteous approach.<sup>61</sup> It is impossible to imagine Morel reacting with anything but horror to Churchill’s assertion, “In politics vice and violence always prosper and the path of virtue is hedged with anxious thorns.”<sup>62</sup>

Churchill’s attitude to war was linked to a social Darwinist view, widespread in some circles in the late nineteenth century, that saw history as a struggle for survival of the fittest, in which war played a key role in securing the position of so-called superior races/civilizations. While Churchill was inconsistent in many of his views, this kind of attitude can be detected throughout most of his life. In 1899, he had attacked the Hague Peace Conference then in session, along with the whole spirit of liberal internationalism: “We are not meant to find peace in this world,” he argued; “the spirit of life cannot exist without effort. Destroy the rivalries of man and of nations and you will have destroyed all that makes for betterment and progress on earth . . . I do not want to preach a gospel of war, I only contend that all the virile virtues spring from competition—and from fierce competition.”<sup>63</sup> Almost half a century later in the early 1940s, he expressed similar social Darwinist views in conversation with the US vice president Henry Wallace.<sup>64</sup>

Unlike Morel, Churchill was no enemy of secret diplomacy. Indeed, as Addison notes, “Churchill’s thirst for adventure and publicity concealed the activities of an alter ego

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<sup>61</sup> Rhodes James, *Study in Failure*, 26; Taylor says of Morel, “He had sublime confidence in his own judgement and never shrank from attributing base motives to others”; Taylor, *Troublemakers*, 119.

<sup>62</sup> Churchill, note to John Morley, 29 April 1914, CHAR 21/36, Churchill Archive.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Addison, *Churchill*, 19.

<sup>64</sup> Toye, *Churchill’s Empire*, 240–41.

operating invisibly in the realms of the secret state.” While home secretary, he had secretly authorized the drawing up a list of enemy aliens to be used in the event of war, and he pressed hard behind the scenes for the draconian Official Secrets Act of 1911.<sup>65</sup> By contrast, Morel’s attitudes were precisely those of the liberal internationalism Churchill denounced. At the founding meeting of the Union of Democratic Control in 1915, Morel stressed that its purpose was not to “stop the war” but to “stop future wars.”<sup>66</sup> In this view, war was an abomination that only occurred because of the machinations of the unscrupulous hidden in a thicket of secrecy and hidden diplomacy. In this worldview, there was no good side to war; Morel dedicated his book *Truth and the War* to his sons “in the hope that they may help to free humanity from the curse of militarism and war.”<sup>67</sup>

The Union of Democratic Control went public in September 1914, announcing the four cardinal points that should govern any postwar settlement. First, no territory was to be transferred without a plebiscite. Second, foreign policy was to be brought under democratic control. Third, an international council was to be established, and fourth, drastic international disarmament and the nationalization of the armaments industry were to be proposed. In 1916 an additional point was added (at the insistence of J. A. Hobson), specifying that commercial warfare was to be avoided through the extension of the principle of the open door for trade.<sup>68</sup>

Morel’s anti-war posture linked to long-established concerns about the emergent anti-German stance in British foreign policy. These concerns can be traced back as far as the first

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<sup>65</sup> Addison, *Churchill*, 55.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Cambridge and War Problems: Mr Schreiner and Mr Morel’ *Manchester Guardian*, 8 March 1915.

<sup>67</sup> E. D. Morel, *Truth and the War*, 2nd ed. (London, 1916).

<sup>68</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists*, 200.

Morocco crisis of 1905, when he was alerted to the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale and the secrecy that surrounded its negotiation. He argued his views at length in *Morocco in Diplomacy*, written in response to the Agadir crisis of 1911. This crisis was the first time that Cabinet learned of military staff talks with France, and for Morel the revelation was indicative of the dangerous secrecy with which diplomacy was conducted. In his view, it was the Entente Cordiale that had provoked justifiable German reactions in North Africa, reactions that had been misrepresented by the Foreign Office and the anti-German press.<sup>69</sup>

This general stance led Morel into vehement opposition to the war of 1914. He rejected the argument that the German invasion of Belgium provided a clear example of the perfidious nature of German policy.<sup>70</sup> In his view, “The invasion of Belgium was not the inauguration of an era of treaty breaking in Europe. It was the culmination of an era.”<sup>71</sup> Morel’s position was not one of all-out pacifism; he made clear that in the case of a war of genuine national defense, he would be willing to fight.<sup>72</sup> Equally, his approach was clearly not Marxist. His analysis of the war did not follow that of writers such as H. N. Brailsford, whose *War of Steel and Gold* offered a view of the war close to Hobson’s *Imperialism*, which in turn was followed in important respects by Lenin’s *Imperialism*, published in 1916.<sup>73</sup> Morel was also entirely differentiated from the Marxist analysis of the war in his hostility to

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<sup>69</sup> Morel, *Morocco in Diplomacy* (London, 1912).

<sup>70</sup> Mitchell, *Politics of Dissent*, 125.

<sup>71</sup> Morel, *Black Man’s Burden*, 71.

<sup>72</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists*, 200.

<sup>73</sup> H. N. Brailsford, *War of Steel and Gold* (London, 1914); J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London, 1902); V. I. Lenin, “*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 22, *December 1915–1916* (Moscow, 1974), 185–304.



any idea that it provided an opportunity for the revolutionary seizure of power. He remained strongly committed to parliamentary government, however strong his criticism of the failings of secret diplomacy in parliamentary democracies.

After his resignation as Liberal candidate in October 1914, Morel pursued a sustained and highly public agitation against the war's continuation, which eventually led to his being sentenced in 1917 to six months in prison under the Defence of the Realm Act.<sup>74</sup> His crime was a purely technical one, of sending via a third party written materials to a person in a neutral country—a copy of his pamphlet *Tsardom's Part in the War* to Romain Rolland, in Switzerland).<sup>75</sup> A. J. P. Taylor described this episode as “the most forced charge ever trumped up against a critic even by the British government.”<sup>76</sup>

Part of the significance of the Union of Democratic Control was that it helped to bring Liberals into close contact with Labour politicians, because the Liberals lacked their own organized anti-war grouping. Important roles were played in the organization by Ramsay Macdonald and Philip Snowden, alongside Liberal figures such as Arthur Ponsonby and Charles Trevelyan (who resigned from government on the outbreak of war).<sup>77</sup> This mixing made it easier for someone like Morel to eventually make the move from the Liberals to Labour. But it is important to emphasize that such a switch was in ideological terms a small

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<sup>74</sup> His resignation letter is in his *Truth and the War*, 1–13.

<sup>75</sup> H. D. Morel, *Tsardom's Part in the War* (London, 1917). There is a verbatim account of the trial in “Rex v E.D. Morel,” Morel Papers, F13/7, LSE Archives; Mitchell, *Politics of Dissent*, 132–44.

<sup>76</sup> Taylor, *Troublemakers*, 154; Morel later ascribed his imprisonment to a “puerile technicality”; ‘Why Mr Morel was put in prison’ *Dundee Advertiser*, 30 October 1922.

<sup>77</sup> Cline, *Recruits to Labour*, 10.

one, given the close agreement between Liberal radicals and much of Labour thinking on international issues. The Union of Democratic Control offered “a typical radical denunciation of the twin evils of tariff and reaction: there was a “close kinship between imperialism, conscription and tariffs, just as there is a natural association between peace, free trade and good will among nations.”<sup>78</sup>

Despite (or perhaps, partly, because) of Churchill’s enthusiasm for the war, the war itself was for him largely a period of failure. In particular, he played an important, if contested, role in the attempt to open a decisive front against Turkey by an invasion of Gallipoli in 1915, which had a disastrous outcome. This debacle led to his departure from the Admiralty, and a brief period as a soldier on the Western Front, which he seems to have greatly enjoyed.<sup>79</sup> He returned to the government as minister of munitions in the summer of 1917. His support for the war never wavered.

### **Toward the 1922 Election**

When Morel first accepted the candidacy for Dundee in 1920, he emphasized that his focus of attacks on Churchill would be foreign policy.<sup>80</sup> The Independent Labour Party in Dundee was strongly in favor of his candidature, especially as he would be replacing the previous Labour

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<sup>78</sup> Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, 251, citing Union of Democratic Control pamphlet of 1915; see also Cline, *Recruits to Labour*, 13.

<sup>79</sup> Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, 157.

<sup>80</sup> Morel to D. Watt, 18 May 1920, Morel Papers, F2 1/7, LSE Archives; Robert Smillie to E. D. Morel, 22 August 1920, Morel Papers, F2 1/7, LSE Archives. Morel had been put on the list of Labour candidates by the party executive in 1918; ‘Labour Party Candidates. Mr E.D. Morel Accepted’ *Manchester Guardian*, 16 July 1918.

MP, Alexander Wilkie, who was staunchly pro-war.<sup>81</sup> Foreign issues certainly dominated his campaign to an unusual extent for a twentieth century British election. After the war the most important issue for Morel was the Treaty of Versailles. Like many of the treaty's critics, he saw its reparation clauses as economically unrealistic and damaging to the revival of the world economy—a view famously expressed by the Liberal John Maynard Keynes.<sup>82</sup> But while sharing this opinion, which was common, Morel placed special emphasis on criticizing the war guilt clause that underpinned the idea that Germany should pay for the whole cost of the war.<sup>83</sup> This followed logically enough from his fundamental argument back to 1914 that the war was the result of the workings of secret diplomacy rather than the consequence of a single nation's aggressive intent. But Morel was keen to link his long-held views on foreign policy to the current concerns of Dundonians. In a key election speech, he claimed that, for every family in Dundee, “their food and the price of it, their houses or the lack of them, their wages and the amount of them, their salaries and the size of them, their employment or the want of it, their clothes and the cost of them—all these matters are closely affected by the character of the foreign policy their government is conducting; whether it makes for peace and good feeling, or for war and ill feeling, for open markets or for closed markets, for stable or unstable economic conditions.” Industrial collapse, unemployment, and high taxes were all the result of the wrecking of Europe on the rock of the peace treaties.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Morel to Watt, 18 May 1920, Morel Papers, F2 1/7, LSE Archives; Ewan Carr to Morel, 1 June 1920, Morel Papers, F2 1/7, LSE Archives.

<sup>82</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (London, 1919).

<sup>83</sup> Cline, *Recruits to Labour*, 74.

<sup>84</sup> “Morel replies to Mrs Churchill,” *Dundee Advertiser*, 9 November 1922.

In another speech, he argued that the instability of the world was encouraged by Churchillian-style belligerence, which in turn reduced trade and hence unemployment in export industries such as jute. “The problem of unemployment as it exists now had been created by a foreign policy for which the Liberal party and the coalition were responsible in about equal measure . . . the so-called Peace Treaties were destroying Central Europe, which was the pivot of the European economic system. Our policy was tending to more and more cut off Russia. We had alienated India. Most of our markets, outside the colonies, which were a restricted market, were rapidly dwindling. How was the nation going to live?” The same speech dealt with Churchill’s particular focus on anti-Bolshevism directly: the blockade of Russia “had brought wretchedness into thousands of Dundee homes by cutting Dundee off from the Russian market.”<sup>85</sup>

Morel’s linking of foreign policy to Dundee’s economic problems was particularly important in an election fought close to the bottom of the slump that had followed the initial postwar boom of 1919–20. Nationally, this slump was the sharpest of the twentieth century. It was especially severe in Dundee, where unemployment rose rapidly to a peak in the winter of 1921–22, reaching perhaps 30 percent in the jute industry before falling only very slowly thereafter.<sup>86</sup>

The extent of unemployment and the threatened collapse of unemployment relief led to a significant riot around such relief in Dundee in September 1921. Morel, along with the local Labour Party, condemned the violence, although local party members played a leading

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<sup>85</sup> “Morel’s Reply to Attack by Churchill,” *Dundee Advertiser*, 2 November 1922.

<sup>86</sup> “Problem of Unemployment,” *Dundee Courier*, 19 December 1921.

role in the delegations pressing for improvements in support.<sup>87</sup> But on employment revival rather than relief, Morel differed from some local Labour opinion, especially in the major jute trade union, the Dundee and District Union of Jute and Flax Workers, which shifted to supporting protection for the industry.<sup>88</sup> Morel's commitment to free trade had not wavered from prewar years. He recognized that the problems of jute were international, but his answer, rather than any kind of protectionism, was a general revival of international trade brought about by a more progressive foreign policy.

For Morel, the question of Irish independence was also essentially one of foreign policy, and he strongly endorsed the view that Ireland should be permitted to become a member of the society of nations if it chose to do so.<sup>89</sup> Having supported Home Rule before 1914, he was vehemently opposed to the activities of the Black and Tans during the war of independence in 1920–21, publishing a condemnatory pamphlet labeling the actions of the British government as “calculated and deliberate barbarism.”<sup>90</sup> Churchill, of course, was one of the chief architects of British policy in Ireland, and the Irish issue played a significant part in the election debates in Dundee in 1922, and in some accounts was important in determining the outcome.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Malcolm Petrie, “Public Politics and Traditions of Popular Protest: Demonstrations of the Unemployed in Dundee and Edinburgh, c.1921–1939,” *Contemporary British History* 27, no. 4 (2013): 498; William Walker, *Juteopolis: Dundee and Its Textile Workers, 1885–1923* (Edinburgh, 1979), 428–29.

<sup>88</sup> Tomlinson, “Churchill's Defeat,” 10–11.

<sup>89</sup> Mitchell, *Politics of Dissent*, 185.

<sup>90</sup> E. D. Morel, *Ireland: Our Shame and Our Peril* (London, 1921), 4.

<sup>91</sup> Walker, “Dundee's Disenchantment.”

Much of Churchill's attention since the war, as it was for Morel, had been on foreign policy. At the beginning of 1919, Churchill became both secretary of state for war and secretary of state for air. He did not play a significant role in the negotiations at Versailles, but his skeptical attitude to the initial proposals was shaped not so much by the arguments about the economic consequences, or even the question of German guilt, as by his obsession with Bolshevism. In his view, the Bolsheviks were now the enemy against whom all possible resources should be directed, and this meant achieving a peace with Germany that would make that country less open to the red peril.<sup>92</sup> Even Geoffrey Best, a notable enthusiast for Churchill's ideas, has to concede that in relation to his determination to pursue the war against the Soviets, the charge against Churchill of being a warmonger "has some merits here."<sup>93</sup>

In 1919 Churchill played an important role in the parliamentary debate on the fate of General Dyer, the commander of the British forces who massacred large numbers of Indians at Amritsar in the Punjab. Churchill's approach was to argue that Dyer deserved condemnation because the action of the troops under his command broke with the tradition of the British empire and Churchill's account bore little relation to what had happened in India, where the massacre was part of a much wider policy of repression, and of course was only one incident in the long history of bloodletting by the British in the subcontinent, dating back to the eighteenth century.<sup>94</sup> What Churchill offered was what might be called the rotten-apple

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<sup>92</sup> Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill*, 203–4.

<sup>93</sup> Best, *Churchill and War*, 95.

<sup>94</sup> Kim Wagner, *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre* (New Haven, 2019), 239, 251–52, 253; cf. Toye, *Churchill's Empire*, 152–54.

approach, enabling a defense of the empire in general while criticizing an individual's misconduct.

This was at first sight a more benign view of empire than that of Morel. Writing in 1920, Morel denounced the British government's recent "grave reactionary step in West African economic policy by decreeing that 90 percent of the palm kernel nuts exported from West Africa must be shipped to British ports."<sup>95</sup> He saw this policy as an example of the denial of African access to competitive markets, a denial that was at the core of his prewar attacks on Belgian and other colonial powers policies. But his condemnation of Britain's action in 1919 was linked to a claim that this policy marked "a lamentable declension in our West African policy." In other words, in West Africa at least, he suggested that the general stance of British policy had previously been more benign. But his view was clearly that things were threatening to get much worse, including in British colonies, where he saw the establishment of an Empire Development Resources Board as heralding wholesale expropriation of the native population and appropriation of the products of native labor.<sup>96</sup>

Morel saw the League of Nations as a possible route to protecting Africans from such exploitative policies.<sup>97</sup> The league, he hoped, might be an answer to the "the real problem," which "is to ensure that material relationship, which is inevitable, shall not preclude just,

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<sup>95</sup> Morel, *Black Man's Burden*, ix.

<sup>96</sup> Morel, 217–18. Thus, Morel's approach was in contradiction with a growing focus on colonial development on the left in the 1920s; Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement*, 71–75; Porter, *Critics of Empire*, 274–90.

<sup>97</sup> Generally, however, the Union of Democratic Control's approach was unsympathetic to the League of Nations, especially because of the potential for the latter to support collective military action; Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists*, 199, 261.

humane, and enlightened government of tropical African peoples by European states.”<sup>98</sup> His words emphasize that he was not an opponent of European colonialism per se but rather of its deterioration into an exploitative rather than mutually beneficial relationship. That view was grounded in unambiguously racist views. Tropical Africa, he stated, was peopled by “a profile, muscular race in various stages of development, but generally speaking—although the term is open to abuse—primitive, and incapable of offering effective resistance to exploitation and injustice at the hands of Europeans.”<sup>99</sup> In this regard, Morel was not so far from Churchill’s views on the inferiority of Africans and the benefits of European rule—even if Morel was much more skeptical about whether those possible benefits were being delivered.

Morel’s characterization of African primitivism could easily slide into even more pernicious positions. In *The Black Man’s Burden*, he had coupled critique of economic exploitation by Europeans with attacks on European militarism in that continent, by which he meant especially the French use of African troops in European wars. This practice, he argued, was not only bad for Africans but a grave danger in Europe, where such troops could be used in all sorts of reactionary ways, including “to fire upon French working-men should these at any time come into collision with the ruling classes in France.”<sup>100</sup> But in 1920, this line of thinking led to an extraordinary outburst of virulent racism from Morel, when he alleged that French African troops occupying the Rhineland had engaged in wholesale rape of German

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<sup>98</sup> Morel, *Black Man’s Burden*, 232.

<sup>99</sup> Morel, 216.

<sup>100</sup> Morel, 223.



women.<sup>101</sup> His pamphlet carrying this allegation, *The Horror on the Rhine*, disclaimed any intention of offering an indictment of the “colored” troops. They, he said, were also victims of French policy by being sent to the alien land of Germany. But given that, in Morel’s view, the problem arose from Africans’ sexuality—which he understood to be much greater than that of Europeans—being denied normal outlets, it is unsurprising that even at the time there was much revulsion at his views.<sup>102</sup>

Both Morel and Churchill, then, were racists in believing in the superiority of some “races” over others. Of course, race is an unscientific term, and the belief in White/European civilizational superiority was historically formulated in a wide range of ways, using varying and unstable categories mixing ethnicity, religion, and nationality in defining hierarchies. Churchill, for example, moved over time from hostility to Islam to a more pro-Moslem stance, while embracing a “near-fanatical hatred of Hinduism” and hostility to Indian nationalism, with disastrous consequences.<sup>103</sup> Morel, in strong contrast, supported Indian nationalism. He sharply distinguished India from Africa, arguing that in the latter case there was a problem of “just administration of peoples who are in a very different stage of

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<sup>101</sup> Robert Reinders, “Racialism on the Left: E. D. Morel and the “Black,” *International Review of Social History* 13, no. 1 (1968): 1–28; Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London, 2019), 285–90; ‘Black scourge in Europe’ *Daily Herald*, 10 April 1920.

<sup>102</sup> E. D. Morel, *The Horror on the Rhine*, 8th ed. (London, 1921), Morel Papers, F13/5/1, LSE Archives. Morel’s foreword to this edition recognizes how earlier versions had been deployed by racists in the United States but disclaims any motive of race prejudice.

<sup>103</sup> Toye, *Churchill’s Empire*, xv; Madhusree Mukerjee, *Churchill’s Secret War: The British Empire and the Ravaging of India during World War II* (New York, 2010).

evolution to the races of India, and among whom a sense of national consciousness has not yet arisen.”<sup>104</sup> In India, where such consciousness had been much encouraged by the First World War, Morel supported dominion status.<sup>105</sup>

In the early postwar years, Churchill had shared Morel’s focus on foreign and imperial affairs, and on these he generally stood well to the right of most Liberal opinion, most especially on the issue of intervention in Russia. His stance on domestic policy was less clear-cut. As Morgan argued, during the postwar boom, the Lloyd George Coalition government, with Churchill as a minister, pursued some significant social reforms including the extension of National Insurance and subsidization of housebuilding. Churchill was a supporter of these reforms, but once the boom had subsided, he was also a supporter of the cutbacks embodied in the “Geddes Axe” and falling especially on housing expenditure.<sup>106</sup>

On domestic policy, Churchill and his supporters were keen to attack the “extremism” of Morel and Labour Party proposals, but such attacks were often overdone.<sup>107</sup> For example, the Earl of Birkenhead, F. E. Smith, made a particularly virulent (and drunken) election speech attacking Morel in highly personal terms, but on policy one of his main examples of

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<sup>104</sup> E. D. Morel, *British Labour and the Problem of Empire* (London, 1921), 14.

<sup>105</sup> Morel, *British Labour and the Problem of Empire*, 8–9.

<sup>106</sup> Kenneth Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918–1922* (Oxford, 1979), 80–108. The Geddes Committee was set up by the Lloyd George government to recommend economies in public spending, and reported in February 1922.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Churchill howled down’, *Dundee Advertiser*, 14 November 1922. Morel later referred to Churchill and his friends “stooping to tactics that would have bought a blush to the cheeks of a bronze image”; letter to John Ogilvie, 27 November 1922, Morel Papers, F2/1/8, LSE Archives.

Morel's supposed excesses was support for a capital levy as a way of paying down Britain's postwar National Debt.<sup>108</sup> Yet two years earlier, Churchill had supported such a levy, and he had dissented when the Cabinet decided not to go ahead with the proposal.<sup>109</sup>

On the much more specific issue of the high level of unemployment in Dundee, Churchill did not of course accept that his "belligerent" stance on Russia and more generally accounted for the economic problems of the city.<sup>110</sup> He was certainly aware of these problems, and prior to the election had been active behind the scenes on the unemployment issue. When Sir Montague Barlow reported to Churchill on the situation in the city in 1920, the focus was on unemployed ex-servicemen, for understandable political reasons. Barlow's report fed into a Cabinet-appointed committee on unemployment, which Churchill encouraged the creation of, and which explicitly discussed the situation in Dundee.<sup>111</sup> With the slump in 1921, the unemployment situation greatly deteriorated. By April that year, fears of unrest led local Liberals to advise Churchill against holding a public meeting in the city. In September, against the background of the protest against the Parish Council noted above,

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<sup>108</sup> "Birkenhead in Dundee," *Dundee Advertiser*, 10 November 1922; on Birkenhead's speech, see Pattinson, *Seat for Life*, 237–39; Morel's argument in favor of the levy was mainly that it was the only alternative to higher taxes for the mass of the population; 'Personalities loom larger' *Dundee Advertiser*, 9 November 1922.

<sup>109</sup> Cabinet Conclusions 4 June 1920, CAB 23/21, The National Archives; Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, 240–41.

<sup>110</sup> 'Churchill howled down' *Dundee Advertiser*, 14 November 1922.

<sup>111</sup> "Dundee," CHAR 5/22/62-3, Churchill Archive; Barlow's report is at CHAR 5/22/64-7.

Churchill was worrying about disruption to possible public meetings.<sup>112</sup> But he was also urging action by the prime minister on the unemployment issue: “My discussions here have convinced me that there are very great grounds of complaint against the government’s policy on unemployment” (meaning policy on unemployment *relief*), with Churchill arguing for an extension of National Insurance provision to avoid more of the unemployed becoming reliant on the Parish Councils (responsible for poor relief in Scotland until 1929)—an extension that was granted.<sup>113</sup>

But like Morel, Churchill was not willing to move significantly away from free trade toward protectionist responses to unemployment. In May 1919, he had written, “I am willing and have always regarded, the giving of Preference to the Dominions on existing duties as a very small matter so long as there is no question of the protective or preferential taxation of food.”<sup>114</sup> But that was as far as his protectionism would go. He was a strong critic of the Coalition’s anti-dumping legislation, and in response to the specific complaints in Dundee about competition from Calcutta jute, he was happy to call it “unfair” but had no remedy to

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<sup>112</sup> Ritchie to Churchill, 15 April 1921, CHAR 5/24/ 26-50, Churchill Archive; Churchill to Ritchie, 11 September 1921, CHAR 5/24/76-100, Churchill Archive.

<sup>113</sup> Churchill to Lloyd George 23 September 1921, CHAR 5/24/94-9, Churchill Archive.

More generally on Churchill’s approach to unemployment policy in this period, see Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, 284, where he is described as a “vigorous supporter of more active policies.”

<sup>114</sup> Churchill to Ritchie, 9 May 1919, CHAR 5/21/5-6, Churchill Archive.

offer beyond wage reductions in Dundee.<sup>115</sup> His willingness to address the relief of unemployment went along with a public and fierce denunciation of socialism. It was in a speech in Dundee in February 1920 that Churchill first proclaimed an often-repeated phrase about Labour being “unfit to govern.” This opinion was grounded in three claims: that Labour was a class party fighting for class interests, that it had no constructive reform program, and that the leaders of Labour had “bowed down and chanted hymns before the Russian idol.”<sup>116</sup>

Churchill’s campaign in Dundee thus had a “distinctly anti-socialist bias.”<sup>117</sup> This vehement attack on Labour, and its supposed links with Bolshevism, was a staple of his election propaganda in 1922. It went along with his campaign’s focus on Morel among his electoral rivals; he had fought Scrymgeour in every election since 1908 but did not regard him with the same seriousness as he did Morel. In an opening salvo, he denounced Morel as one of “that band of degenerate international intellectuals who regard the greatness of Britain and the stability and prosperity of the British Empire as a fatal obstacle to their subversive

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<sup>115</sup> Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, 333–34. The previous year, Churchill had defended “dumping” of imports in the British market as having a welcome effect on “the uneconomic demands of labour”; Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, 303.

<sup>116</sup> “Mr Churchill on Peril of Bolshevism,” *Times* (London), 16 February 1920.

<sup>117</sup> Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, 353.

sickness.”<sup>118</sup> Churchill’s tactic was to bracket Morel with Gallacher, the communist: “Mr Gallacher is only Mr Morel with the courage of his convictions.”<sup>119</sup>

### **Two Kinds of Liberal Politics?**

When offered the Liberal candidacy in Dundee in 1908, Churchill believed it was “a life seat and easy beyond all experience.”<sup>120</sup> My purpose here is not to ask why that expectation was disappointed but to use the contrast between the approaches of Churchill and Morel to examine the division in Liberal Party politics.

Two years before the 1922 election, the *Times* had written of Churchill, “He has latterly become more Conservative, less from conviction than from the hardening of his political arteries. His early Liberal velleities have dried up, the generous impulses of youth throb more slowly, and apart from some intellectual gristle his only connections with Liberalism are personal.”<sup>121</sup> It was undoubtedly true that on a broad spectrum of liberalism to conservatism, Churchill had been moving to the right, perhaps from as far back as 1909—he

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<sup>118</sup> Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, 4:874. Scrymgeour, Churchill said, could, along with Pilkington, “be safely left to expound their doctrines to their particular sectaries”; Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, 4:877.

<sup>119</sup> Gilbert, 4:878. Clementine Churchill similarly claimed that “Mr Morel was just another Mr Gallacher, but a more refined and respectable form”; ‘Personalities loom larger’ *Dundee Advertiser*, 9 November 1922.

<sup>120</sup> Randolph Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, 2:261.

<sup>121</sup> “Front Bench Figures: II, Mr Churchill,” *Times* (London), 15 November 1920, cited in Rhodes James, *Study in Failure*, 193.

himself had said that he “had inclined more to the right as he got older.”<sup>122</sup> But such a summary is plainly too crude in a number of regards. First, while Churchill was a politician to his fingertips, his attachment to party was notably weaker than that of most politicians—twice he “ratted” on former colleagues by changing his party political allegiance. Like many politicians who switch party, Churchill maintained it was not he who had changed position but the party that he had left behind. This claim has some force in relation to the Conservative move toward protectionism after 1903. It was Churchill’s position as a consistent free trader that led to his first party crossing. As he put it, retaliatory tariffs became the “party test,” and he was not willing to go along.<sup>123</sup>

But what was the relevance of these prewar trade arguments after the war? In a speech in Dundee in April 1922, he argued, “The old disputes of Free Trade and Protectionists had no application to present conditions. It was not foreign imports or foreign competition that was injuring this country as a whole, though to a certain extent foreign competition was injuring Dundee. It was the failure of our export trade owing to the collapse of foreign markets.”<sup>124</sup> In fact, foreign competition was harming Dundee more than “to a certain extent.” Protectionism would have been at best a limited help, but in the crisis circumstances of the early postwar years, Churchill’s unwillingness to respond positively to the call of the biggest local trade union, the Dundee and District Union of Jute and Flax Workers, for some action on this front was one important step in alienating trade union opinion. There was, at least briefly in 1919, some chance of building on joint employer-trade union pressure on this

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<sup>122</sup> Toye, *Churchill’s Empire*, xv.

<sup>123</sup> Randolph Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, 2:99.

<sup>124</sup> “Mr Churchill on Free Trade,” *Dundee Advertiser*, 8 April 1922.

issue, but the moment was allowed to pass as both sides returned to conflict when the boom collapsed.

Churchill was right that the meaning of free trade had shifted. For most people on the left, it had become even more of a *political* issue, closely linked to pacific attitudes to international relations. Conversely, it had become less significant as an economic issue in the prewar form of a guarantor of cheap food.<sup>125</sup> In Dundee, as elsewhere in wartime Britain, a new politics of consumption had arisen, often spearheaded by women and taking both official and unofficial forms in which regulation of domestic production and prices was the key issue, not international trade.<sup>126</sup>

For Churchill, on the other hand, his advocacy of free trade seemed to have little relationship to his assertive international stance, not least on Russia, where his attitude had alienated working-class support far beyond the Communist Party. On the left also, free trade was combined with support for improving wages and conditions of jute workers in Calcutta. However utopian this strategy may have been (and impractical as a way of dealing with Dundee jute's problems), it detached free trade from the conservative trappings it acquired after 1918 in the hands of Churchill and his allies.

But if Churchill showed consistency on free trade as the Conservatives shifted, he had also embraced the biggest change in prewar liberalism, the shift to the New Liberalism of social reform. The next big shift in mainstream Liberal Party thinking was the war-induced shedding of most of its pacifism, a shift hardly uncongenial to Churchill. What was increasingly uncongenial to him was the equivocations of many in the party about socialism,

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<sup>125</sup> Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, 285–330.

<sup>126</sup> Jim Tomlinson, "The First World War in a 'Women's Town': Dundee 1914–1922," *Women's History Review* 31, no. 2 (2022): 173–97.



which he was convinced was the major threat to Britain, a view summarized in his famous hostility in 1923 and early 1924 to the imminent threat of a Labour government. As he put it in a letter to the *Times*, such a government would involve “a minority party innately pledged to the fundamental subversion of the existing social and economic civilization.”<sup>127</sup> This characterization was a wholly dubious misunderstanding of the highly constitutional Labour Party of the early 1920s, dominated by men, Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, who *except in their attitude to the war*, were conservative Labourites with no interest in “subversion.”

Morel (and, indeed, Scrymgeour) were anti-protectionists and showed no sign of following the (equivocal) deviation by the main jute union into the protectionist camp. Before the war, Morel had been a strong proponent of free trade, believing, like most Victorian radicals, that it was the route to international peace. His work on the Congo had led him to believe that free trade between free men was the best route to development in Africa. However, Morel is typical of those on the left who, as Trentmann emphasizes, stuck largely to anti-protectionism but ceased to see free trade as any kind of panacea and started to talk about the need for trade “regulation.”<sup>128</sup> What Morel certainly did not do, unlike Churchill, was put forward free trade as part of a conservative program of retrenchment, following the old Liberal logic that in the absence of tariffs for revenue, sound policy required tight limits on public spending lest the weight of other taxes (especially on income) place an unacceptable burden on the citizenry.

It may be thought surprising that anti-war candidates were by 1922 so popular in Dundee. (Scrymgeour had taken the same position as Morel.) There was very heavy

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<sup>127</sup> “A Serious National Misfortune,” *Times* (London), 18 January 1924.

<sup>128</sup> Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, 306–16.

volunteer recruitment in Dundee in the early part of war, and it was common to claim that Dundee's contribution to the military effort was outstanding.<sup>129</sup> But there was also a strong anti-war element, including substantial Conscientious Objection, linked in part to the strength of the Independent Labour Party in the city.<sup>130</sup>

After the war, across the country, many recoiled from an initial pro-war stance, especially because of the perceived failure to deliver a just peace. As Peter Clarke emphasizes, “[O]n the shape of the international settlement after the war there was a wide measure of agreement between the Asquithians, the UDC, and Labour supporters of the war.”<sup>131</sup> In his election campaign, Morel was able to gain public endorsement from prominent figures who had fought in the war, including Clement Attlee and R. H. Tawney.<sup>132</sup> According to Morel's election advertising two years previously, Attlee had declared himself proud to stand on a Union of Democratic Control platform. “The soldiers, like him, had believed that they were fighting for the good of the whole world. That is where the great betrayal comes in.” Around the same time, Tawney wrote, “For every man a year ago who knew and said the Peace Treaty was immoral in conception and would be disastrous, there are thousands who say it now.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Julie Danskin, *A City at War: The 4th Black Watch, Dundee's Own* (Dundee, 2013).

<sup>130</sup> Baxter and Kenefick, “Labour Politics,” 203–5; William Kenefick, “War Resisters and Anti-conscription in Scotland: An ILP Perspective,” in *Scotland and the Great War*, ed. Catriona Macdonald and Elaine McFarland (Edinburgh, 1998), 59–80.

<sup>131</sup> Peter Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge, 1978), 195.

<sup>132</sup> Morel election advertisement, *Dundee Advertiser*, 11 November 1922.

<sup>133</sup> Swanwick, *Builders of Peace*, 61.

In this context of disillusion with the war and its aftermath, an important feature of the 1922 election was the ability of Morel and Scrymgeour to capture a significant proportion of the ex-service vote. Churchill's denunciations of Morel as "pro-German" therefore had less resonance than he hoped and expected.<sup>134</sup> There was an obvious contrast with the by-election of 1917, when Scrymgeour had broken the wartime truce to contest a by-election focused on his opposition to the war and been trounced by Churchill for his pains.<sup>135</sup>

Morel's underlying notions about foreign policy did not radically shift between his prewar liberalism and his postwar socialism. By 1916, he was willing to place himself under the socialist label; why would he not, he wrote, if that meant "working for the betterment and increased happiness of humanity"?<sup>136</sup> What pushed him out of the Liberal Party was not such vague socialism but that his views on foreign policy no longer fitted. His views became more extremist when they led him to oppose the war, as Liberal opinion shifted in a pro-war direction. But in the postwar years, his opposition to the Versailles Treaty again resonated with much of that opinion. Being a consistent pacific Liberal was not a problem for a member of the Labour Party. At this time, Labour cannot be said to have had a clearly distinctive foreign policy but rather was committed to a "heady, generalised, internationalism" that owed much to the ideas of prewar radicalism, and specifically of Morel.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> "Churchill Attacks 'Advertiser,'" *Dundee Advertiser*, 15 November 1922.

<sup>135</sup> Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, 4:31, 34.

<sup>136</sup> Mitchell, *Politics of Dissent*, 125.

<sup>137</sup> Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, 327–28. There were emerging signs of a distinct Labour approach to foreign policy, but these were slow to gain support; see Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists*, 245–46.

Neither Morel nor the Labour Party were the Bolshevik dupes of Churchill's imagination. During the election, Morel had explicitly resisted the advances of the communist Shapurji Saklatvala.<sup>138</sup> His opposition to the intervention in Russia (and that of many people in the Labour Party and trade unions) had much less to do with pro-Soviet views than with general war weariness and a belief that such adventures were damaging to the revival of the international economy. In this case, Lenin offered a persuasive judgment. In Morel, he said, "[W]e are dealing with an exceptionally honest and courageous bourgeois"; nevertheless, he viewed Morel's "talk about peace and disarmament [as] a lot of empty phrases, since without revolutionary action by the proletariat there can be neither a democratic peace nor disarmament. Though he has broken with the Liberals on the question of the present war, Morel remains a liberal on all other economic and political issues."<sup>139</sup> More succinct but equally apt was the verdict of the pioneering historian of modern Dundee, William Walker: "In all of this work there was nothing to suggest that Morel was other than a Liberal, albeit one of a type that was disappearing."<sup>140</sup>

In a speech in 1908, Churchill had argued, "War is fatal to liberalism."<sup>141</sup> Many historians have agreed with this broad judgment, seeing the First World War as undermining Liberal Party views on the limited role of the state and the preeminence of individual liberty.

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<sup>138</sup> Saklatvala to Morel, 24 January 1923, Morel Papers, F2 1/8, Churchill Archive; Morel to Ogilvie, 28 January 1923, Morel Papers, F2 1/8, Churchill Archive; see also "E. D. Morel's Statement on Communism," *Dundee Advertiser*, 30 October 1922.

<sup>139</sup> V. I. Lenin, "British Pacifism and the British Dislike of Theory," *Collected Works*, vol. 21, *August 1914–December 1915* (Moscow, 1974), 260–65, at 263.

<sup>140</sup> Walker, *Juteopolis*, 455.

<sup>141</sup> Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, 394

Speaking about liberalism rather than the party, Michael Bentley argued: “Liberalism tore its heart out between 1914 and 1918 in a private agony about true and false Liberalism.”<sup>142</sup> The battle between Morel and Churchill suggests that in the party the same agonies were given public voice.

The analysis offered here supports this view on the effects of the war. What it emphasizes is not just the effects of the contingencies of fighting the First World War (above all, the burning question of conscription) but how that war brought to the surface profound differences in attitudes to war in general.<sup>143</sup> As Bentley writes, “Principles were brought to the fore of the Liberal mind only when they seemed to be assaulted by the challenges which the war threw up.”<sup>144</sup> This effect was clearly distinct from that of the Boer War, where differences in the Liberal Party were in the end largely confined to the specifics of that war.

Of course, the focus here on two figures cannot claim to capture what occurred across the whole party. Both Churchill and Morel were in their different ways idiosyncratic prewar Liberals. Nevertheless, their trajectories tell us something important about how the war radically challenged and reshaped the Liberal Party, above all by deepening and exacerbating prewar divisions over the role of war in foreign policy, the issue on which both focused their attention. While Churchill’s shift in allegiance was not part of a larger trend, Morel’s

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<sup>142</sup> Bentley, *Climax of Liberal Politics*, 9.

<sup>143</sup> On the role of conscription in Liberal division, see R. J. Q. Adams, “Asquith’s Choice: The May Coalition and the Coming of Conscription, 1915–1916,” *Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 3 (1986): 243–63; Matthew Johnson, “The Liberal War Committee and the Liberal Advocacy of Conscription in Britain, 1914–1916,” *Historical Journal* 55, no. 3 (2008): 399–420.

<sup>144</sup> Bentley, *Liberal Mind*, 209.

trajectory was certainly one followed by other prewar Liberals for whom foreign policy was a primary concern.<sup>145</sup>

A pioneering author on the divisions in liberalism has emphasized how much the new recruits to Labour focused their attention on foreign affairs. As Catherine Cline rightly notes, “Though Labour’s growing preoccupation with foreign policy coincides with the influx of converts, it must be pointed out that the activities of new members were not the sole cause of the party’s shifting interests. The war had impressed on the public the relevance to their own lives of questions of foreign policy . . . The postwar Labour party, in short, found itself in totally new circumstances, circumstances which required that increased attention be given to “the world.”<sup>146</sup> The enhanced political salience of foreign policy acted to divide Liberals even where, as in the election of 1923, they were still united by issues such as free trade (which, as noted, both Morel and Churchill continued to support).

Of course, after the war, both men still shared a number of assumptions, not least a broad sense of British civilizational superiority, especially in relation to Africa. But much now divided them in ways that were visceral, not just the product of divergent thinking. They had opposing views not just on specific issues, such as intervention in Russia, or Irish and Indian nationalism. More broadly, for Churchill, the war—however painful—had shown that warfare was a vital weapon of national policy. Its use had been the product of a legitimate process of national deliberation, which in turn should reinforce faith in the workings of British governmental institutions. Morel drew the opposite conclusions: for him the war demonstrated not only the immorality of warfare but also its ineffectiveness in securing its purported aim of leading to a just peace. Its use as a weapon of national policy was only

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<sup>145</sup> Wyburn-Powell, *Defectors and the Liberal Party*, 27–148.

<sup>146</sup> Cline, *Recruits to Labour*, 68–69.

possible because its true nature and dynamics were obscured by the veil of secrecy that surrounded it. For him, only a radical change in the whole manner of conducting international affairs (and by implication, the whole conduct of the state) could achieve peaceful international relations. These divergences were no doubt expressed in exaggerated form by Churchill and Morel, especially in the context of their election fight, but even in less strident terms they were very hard to contain within a single political party.