

2018

Imagining Peace and War: Plymouth 1918-1939

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/11858>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/933>

University of Plymouth

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University of Plymouth

Imagining Peace and War

Plymouth 1918-1939

by

Glyn Potter

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for the
degree of

Research Masters

School of Humanities and Performing Arts, History

June 2018

At no time during the registration for the degree of Research Masters has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

Word count of main body of thesis: 25,000

Signed: *Glyn Potter*

Date: July 2018

Abstract

After the trench warfare of the Great War the development of aerial warfare and widespread urbanisation meant that military doctrine in any future conflict would likely bring unprecedented death and destruction to non-combatants. Therefore, war prevention became the most important foreign policy issue in Britain, and after the collapse of the disarmament conference in 1934 and the Spanish civil war (1936-1939), war preparation became the dominant concern for the decision makers and the public. Both were hotly debated at all levels of British public life in the 1920's and 1930's.

This dissertation uses Plymouth as the case study for an exploration of the debates in the public arena, mediated by the local press, in a period when pacific supporters of disarmament were countered by calls for rearmament; and in the context of fears about the nature of modern warfare (aerial bombardment and rapid collapse of civilian morale). By exploring how a future peace and war were being imagined by city planners, decisions makers, military men, and the civilian population, the dissertation seeks to understand the complexities of how both peace and war were being imagined as those in positions of leadership and responsibility, were often responsible for imagining both peace and war.

Plymouth had a significant military presence with the Royal Naval Dockyard Devonport, the Citadel and Mount Batten Air Base; and was identified as a target for aerial bombardment in the First World War, although it never witnessed an air-raid. Plymouth's history, culture and economy are closely tied to the armed forces and consequently created a city divided on issues of peace and war, for Plymouth had both successfully conquered and suffered through war and peace.

Future peace and war were being imagined during a time of vast technological and scientific advancement; creating speculation and a wide divergence of opinion. The first chapter (imagining and working for peace 1918-1935) investigates how peace was being imagined detailing the challenges, failures, and successes in working for peace in city designed for war and conquest. The second chapter explores how the terrors of 'the next war' were being imagined and prepared for. It seeks to understand why the horror of 'gas' that dominated the fears associated with modern warfare, and why the city was so divided on how to protect themselves from high explosive bombs- which was revealed as the most likely form of attack after the aerial bombing in Spain (1936-1939). It was a debate which subsequently exposed a nation and city divided on how war and peace should be imagined and ultimately prepared for. Therefore, the dissertation explores the competing visions of peace and war in Plymouth from 1918 to 1939.

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“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.”

Albert Einstein

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Abbreviations used in this thesis

Air Raid Precautions (ARP)

Committee of Imperial Defence (CID)

High Explosive (HE)

Incendiary Bomb (IB)

League of Nations Union (LUN)

Plymouth League of Nations (PLUN)

Plymouth United Nations Association (PUNA)

Royal Air Force (RAF)

Royal Navy (RN)

United Nations (UN)

United Nations Association (UNA)

Western Morning News (WMN)

Map 1 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.

Map 1: Map of Plymouth (1930)

Source www.etsy.com

Map 2 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Map 2: Plymouth as a Regional Centre

Source: Watson. J. Paton., Abercrombie, P. *A Plan for Plymouth (1943)*, Underhill, Plymouth, 1943) p.27.

Introduction: Peace and War

Those who read the signs aright in those faraway days, saw the approaching storm, but the extent of its violence and how it would come to every door, and like an ever-growing avalanche envelop the whole world in its awful grip, could not be seen by ordinary man and woman. In their imagination, they could only measure by past standards. But the madmen of Europe had put a spark to start a conflagration beyond human comprehension. Perhaps it was as well that we did not know.¹

For many Plymothians the notion that within a year of the declaration of war against Germany, the city would only be a hundred miles from enemy aerodromes, and in a further ten months would be described as ‘the worst blitzed city’, was inconceivable. Plymouth’s war story, as regaled by historians and local storytellers, is one of a city that was underprepared for the violence of the air invasion that shook the city in the spring of 1941.² [Yet it is also a story of a radical reconstruction which was unique among blitzed towns across Britain.³] After the blitzes, Commander-in-Chief of the Western approaches, Admiral Dunbar-Smith, accused the civil authorities of a lack of vision and preparedness for the war which arrived in earnest on the evening of 20 March 1941. This would be a war that according to experts such as Air Vice Marshall Sir Frederick H Sykes, would be organised around the principle of the aerial ‘knock-out blow’ which ought to have made, as it was ubiquitous with modern warfare in the 1920s and 1930s, (and as this thesis will demonstrate) Plymothians aware of the possibility of a war which would ‘penetrate into the enemy’s country for the attack of his centres of population, his mobilisation zones, his arsenals, harbours, strategic railways, shipping and rolling stock.’⁴ The

¹ H.P. Twyford, *It Came to Our Door Plymouth in the World War* (Plymouth: Underhill, 1946), p.2.

² G. Wasley, *Blitz: An account of Hitler’s Aerial War over Plymouth in March 1941, and The Events that Followed* (Exeter: Devon Books, 1991); G. Wasley, *Plymouth a Shattered City: The Story of Hitler’s attack on Plymouth and its people 1939-45* (Wellington: Halsgrove, 2004); F. Wintle, *The Plymouth Blitz* (Callington: Bossiney, 1981).

³ S. Essex and M. Brayshay, ‘Boldness Diminished? The Post-War Battle to Replan a Bomb-Damaged Provincial City’, *Urban History* 35:3 (2008), pp. 437–461.

⁴ F. H. Sykes, *Aviation in Peace and War* (London: Arnold, 1922), pp.100-1.

decimation of cities by aerial bombers was ubiquitous in the inter-war collective consciousness; as imagined in novels, broadcasts, political debates, architectural and planning documents, and aeronautical displays.⁵ The theory of the knock-out blow imagined that the next war ‘would start and end in the air.’⁶ The basic elements of the theory imagined an aerial attack on a massive scale, with millions of British casualties poisoned by gasses that might render entire cities uninhabitable, and massive damage to urban environments from high explosive and incendiary bombs.⁷ The theory of the knock-out blow ‘solidified into a consensus during the 1920s and by the 1930s and almost become an orthodoxy, accepted by pacifists and militarists alike.’⁸ Both Susan Grayzel and Lucy Noakes observe that the imaginings of a future war, were shaped by the Great War and grounded by the experiences of civilians in Iraq (1920-1932), Abyssinia (1935-36), China (1937-1939) and Spain (1936-1939),⁹ the latter having a significant impact on public opinion, which ‘has seldom had the attention it deserves.’¹⁰ Therefore, this is the vision of modern warfare which provided the backdrop for debates on how war could be prevented and prepared for.

This dissertation offers an examination of how both peace and war were imagined in Britain during the interwar years, using Plymouth as the case study for an exploration of debates in the public arena, reported by the local press, in a period when supporters of disarmament were countered by calls for rearmament amidst fears about the nature of modern warfare aerial bombardment and rapid collapse of civilian morale. By investigating how both peace and war was being imagined by pacifists and militarists; planners, politicians, (ex)

⁵ L. Allwright, ‘The War on London: Defending the City from the Air War 1932-1943’, PhD Thesis (University of Warwick, 2011); L.E.O. Charlton, *War Over England* (London: Longmans, 1936).

⁶ B. Holman, ‘The Next Air War: Civilian Fears of strategic bombing in Britain 1908-1945’, PhD thesis (University of Melbourne, 2009), p.1.

⁷ P. R. C. Groves, *Our Future in the Air* (London: Harrap, 1935); H.M. Hyde and G.R.F. Nuttall, *Air Defence and the Civil Population* (London: Cresset, 1937)

⁸ Holman, ‘The Next Air War’, p.2.

⁹ L. Noakes and S.R. Grayzel, ‘Defending the Home(land): Gendering Civil Defence from the First World War to the “War on Terror”’, in A. Carden-Coyne, ed. *Gender and Conflict Since 1914: Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 29-40.

¹⁰ Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilisation, 1919-1939* (London: Penguin, 2010) p.319.

military men and the civilian population; this study seeks to understand what British men and women thought about the dangers of war (and peace), it also examines the origin or motives for these [beliefs?] and determine how far they altered during the interwar period, and how they were reimagined and reapplied when the imagined became real.

Therefore, this thesis challenges the mythologised narratives of blitzed cities in the UK. As Calder writes “‘The Blitz’ supports a myth of British or English moral pre-eminence, buttressed by British unity.”¹¹ The ‘myth of the Blitz’ is a story about how everyone pulled together, spirits were high and all classes muddled through together. Yet Calder’s counter-narrative exposes incompetence, contempt, confusion, terror, and a nation divided in a time of class war and ideological divergence. Plymouth’s ‘Blitz’ story and subsequent resurrection is deeply mythologised in both private memory (as evidenced in the oral history archives) and public memorialisation, such as the ‘bombed-out’ Charles church. Plymouth has a long and well-rehearsed history of war-related fables including the Armada and the ‘legend’ of Sir Francis Drake which are deeply ingrained in the city’s identity. The blitz story became a twentieth century addition, presenting a public myth about how the city was unified and protected by the spirit of Drake and the British Navy. A spirit that Lord Astor, the wartime Mayor, described after the war as, ‘a strange thing, invisible, intangible, imponderable, and, as we know now, of an audacity well-nigh incredible. It can hardly be analysed.’¹² Yet the reality reveals a more complex and divided history before, during and after the war.

¹¹ A. Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.2.

¹² Twyford, *It Came to Our Door Plymouth in the World War*, p.10.

Through the interrogation of the imagination, this study exposes the many ambiguities contained within interwar debates about peace and war in the public arena in Plymouth and beyond. By doing so, the thesis has begun the important task of re-framing, re-imagining, and reinterpreting Plymouth's wartime experiences. The study was conceived as part of a larger exploration (and challenge) to Plymouth's mythologised wartime history, as it intended to link the interwar imaginings to the lived experience of the war years (including the Blitz) through to the reconstruction of the 'municipal dream.' As it stands this thesis is the first part of a new history confronting the persistent narratives of the Plymouth Blitz.

Historiography of Peace and War

This study aims to treat peace and war debate as a whole, to address what Ceadel describes as the narrowly focused work of many academics who have failed to shed light on the political assumptions of ordinary people or those who have only focused on one side of the debate (either the peace movement or defence policy makers). Ceadel acknowledges during the 1920s 'few people would have dissented' from the notion after the Great War, that ensuring peace through peaceful settlement between states, was the most widely accepted antidote to war. The largest of the groups dedicated to ensuring peace was the League of Nations Union (LNU), alongside the Peace Pledge Union and the National Peace Council, which enjoyed a peak membership of 406 868 in 1931.¹³ In Plymouth, the Plymouth League of Nations Union (PLNU) was the most prominent peace organisation whose membership peaked in 1939, which contrasted with the national picture which saw a 75% decrease in the Union over the decade.¹⁴

¹³ D. Stevenson, 'The Sheffield Peace Movement 1934-1940', PhD Thesis (Sheffield Hallam University, 2001), p.14.

¹⁴ M. Ceadel, *Semi- Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.2-3.

The LNU has attracted a great deal of scholarly interest most of which concurs with AJP Taylor's picture that it was a 'staid middle-of-the-road movement.'¹⁵ For many scholars the LNU was reluctant to burn bridges with the Right or fully embrace the more radical internationalism of the Left.¹⁶ This led the LNU to the woolly thinking associated with consistent compromise, which in turn limited their political influences. Existing accounts of the legacy of the LNU include a school of classical realism which accuses the pacifism of the LNU movement as the cause of appeasement in the UK, and promoting world war.¹⁷ E.H. Carr argued that the utopians of the movement were to blame for the pacific moods that inhibited rearmament, accusing the movement of naïve liberalism.¹⁸ Overy suggests the challenge to death ultimately failed not through a lack of faith, but through a lack of political certainty.¹⁹

Many of these scholars have focused on the thinkers and public intellectuals who crafted the League charters, but Helen McCarthy's study moves beyond current framework to explore how the LNU became a practical experiment in the possibilities of democratic participation and cross-party mobilisation. McCarthy's methodology brought an analytical approach which sought to bring formal and informal political structures, elite and popular modes of participation, together into one field of study which recognised the forces for change in wider culture, including class, gender, technology, intellectual traditions and socio-economic change. In doing so McCarthy managed to broaden the scope of the impact of the LNU on domestic political culture. Both Celia Lynch and McCarthy have argued against the conventional interpretations of the peace movements in the interwar years and conclude the LNU successfully contested traditional security norms and legitimised the norms that underpin

¹⁵ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792–1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957); D. Birn, *The League of Nations Union 1918–1945* (New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1981); D. Waley, *British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War* (London: M Temple Smith, 1975); Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*.

¹⁶ M. Pugh, 'Pacifism and Politics in Britain', *Historical Journal* 23:3 (1980), pp.641-656; Overy, *The Morbid Age*, pp.262-264.

¹⁷ W. Lippman, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943).

¹⁸ E.H. Carr, *The twenty years crisis: An introduction to international relations* (London: Macmillan, 1939).

¹⁹ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.264.

modern international global organisations including the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Association (UNA).²⁰

Overy argues anti-war sentiments were deeply affected by regional identity.²¹ David Stevenson's study of peace activism in Sheffield, revealed that the character of local peace movements depended very much on the political, social and economic context in which they flourished.²² Jane Bowen and Stevenson both discovered the importance to local pacifism of a few key figures, as only a few individuals acted as spokespeople for the movement.²³ Whilst there is little scope to judge how these individuals views reflected their constituents; never the less they were a factor in defining the character of local peace movements. Anthony Carroll's 'The Debate of Disarmament in the North-East England between 1931-1935' suggested there was a correlation between parliamentary constituencies, military and rearmament connections, and voting patterns.²⁴ Although as Ceadel points out these are obvious enough, yet there has been no systematic explanation of the variations in peace and war debate. The determinants of the debate must acknowledge the current international situation, which determines 'the ebb and flow of the debate in each state.'²⁵ In 1920 Britain played an important part in constructing the League of Nations and pacifism became a mass movement of international dimensions.²⁶ British governments were committed to working within its framework, and 'signed-up pacifism became a pervasive part of domestic political discourse.'²⁷ When constructing ideas of how

²⁰ C. Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1999); H. McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c.1918-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

²¹ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.221.

²² Stevenson, 'The Sheffield Peace Movement 1934-1940', p.8.

²³ J. Bowen, 'Attitudes to Peace and War, Sussex Peace Groups (1914-1945)', *Southern History* 9:2 (1987), pp.149-155.

²⁴ A. Carroll, 'The Debate of Disarmament in the Northeast England between 1931-1935', MA dissertation (Durham University, 1992).

²⁵ M. Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.166.

²⁶ The country reduced spending on the armed forces from £604m in 1919-20 to £102.7m in 1932-33. Coupled with international treaties that restricted naval building, this resulted in only six ships being built in Devonport dockyard until 1929. The Naval treaties happened without the League of Nations as they involved the USA who never agreed to join the League.

²⁷ R. Mackay, "War Imagined." *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp.1-2.

peace and war were being imagined this study features the debates and the ‘fundamental cleavage’ between government and defence policies on one side and the peace movements and their supporters on the other.²⁸ Asking ‘what is fear doing?’ as scaremongering ‘consisted of a two-sided dialogue between critics and government.’²⁹

The historiography of war protection is still dominated by military history and by the official histories developed on the themes offered by the seminal ARP study of Terence O’Brien’s *Civil Defence* (1955). O’Brien’s official history written from a privileged access to the national archives, maps the national development of ARP, with little reference to provincial planning and preparation. He devotes the early chapters to the secret planning of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) which in 1924 formed a sub-committee for ARP, chaired by John Anderson, Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office. In 1935 the government officially invited the local authorities to form a local civil defence service; the decentralisation of ARP planning was evident in the circular as it was explained that each authority was responsible for its own protection scheme.³⁰

However, that does not mean that councils, businesses, military bases and individuals had been ignoring the dangers that a future war posed for communities before 1935. The history of local authority defence services needs to recognise the local differences and each warrant separate study as they were formed according to the local circumstance and shaped by local and regional cultures. Most ARP histories are unsurprisingly written by local historians who concentrate their work on the wartime functions rather than pre-war ARP planning, and this is true of the regional histories of civil defence.³¹ Exceptions include Paul Barnfield’s account of

²⁸ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.3.

²⁹ J. Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2005) and J. Bourke ‘Fear and anxiety: writing about emotional history’, *History workshop journal* 50:5 (2013), pp. 111-113.

³⁰ T. O’Brien, *Civil Defence* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1955).

³¹ H. Sutton, *History of Civil Defence Wardens Service, Torquay* (Torquay: Borough of Torquay, 1945); T. Gray, *Exeter Remembers the War, life on the Home Front* (Exeter: Mint Press, 2005); H.P. Twyford, *It Came to Our Door Plymouth in the World war*.

Tottenham which includes a section of ARP planning 1935-1939, Blake's history of Bromley (1929-1939) which covers early planning and preparation in anti-gas measures, and Gerald Wasley's account of the Plymouth blitz, which has three chapters of ARP planning, which only focuses on the years after 1935.³²

More recent studies of preparing the civilian for war have started to elongate the timeframes of investigation. Overy makes the point that convention has been to see the imaginings of future war as 'products of the dark 1930s', but they were evident in the 1920s, and even before the Great War.³³ Susan Grayzel insists studies on wartime and war preparation need to be considered in a longer timeframe, as there are continuities between the Great War and World War Two; and this is particularly important when reviewing the gendered history of imagining war-and-peace.³⁴ Grayzel's work demonstrates the importance of culture in imagining and preparing for air raids which was influenced by the raids of the Great War, which informed state planning and literature of air war. Leo Mellor and Martin Ceadel both analyse how interwar fiction shaped the cultural background and filled the significant spaces between what air power could do and the reality of the time, especially important when both governments and local authorities were planning in secret.³⁵ As Adam Page notes when exploring how war was being imagined any study must note the interlocking of fearful literary visions with official government approaches, as they are essential in the role of cultural

³² G. Wasley, *Blitz: An account of Hitler's Aerial War over Plymouth in March 1941, and The Events that Followed* (Exeter: Devon Books, 1991); P. Barnfield, *When the Bombs Fell, Twickenham, Teddington and the Hamptons under Aerial Bombardment during the Second World War* (London: Borough of Twickenham Local History Society, 2001); L. Blake, *Before the War: A Portrait of Bromley and District 1929-1939* (Bromley: Blake, 1985).

³³ R. Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.28.

³⁴ S.R. Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); S.R. Grayzel, "A Promise of Terror to Come"; Air Power and the Destruction of Cities in British Imagination and Experience, 1918-1939', in *Cities into Battlefields: Metropolitan Scenarios, Experiences and Commemorations of Total*, ed. by, S. Gooble and D. Keene, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

³⁵ L. Mellor, *Reading the Ruins: Modernism, Bombsites and British Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); M. Ceadel, 'Popular Fiction and the Next War, 1918-1939', in *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s*, ed. by F. Gloversmith, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).

understandings of war in this period; from the international conventions, down to the peace gatherings at a local church-hall.³⁶ Indeed Joseph Miesel's paper on air-raid shelter policy, acknowledged the conflicting visions of war and defence by studying the critics responses to central governments ARP plans and procedures.³⁷ And as Grayzel noted Major Tomlin of the Metropolitan Police suggested that H.G. Wells should help to fill in the picture.³⁸

Michelle Haapamaki states the fear of future war was most often referenced through cultural sources such as film or fictions; and Holman cites the rapid development of mass media in the late 1930s– mainly newspapers, but newsreels and radio would further play 'a crucial role in propagating the fear' of an apocalyptic vision of modern war to a wider audience.³⁹ Ulf Schmidt and Robert Mackay both review the literary approaches to chemical warfare, which usually created a culture of fear by presenting weapons that would bring the end of civilisation, as portrayed in H.G. Wells in *The World Set Free* (1914) or *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933).⁴⁰ MacKay further reviews how chemical warfare was portrayed in the cinema. All local histories reviewed for this study indicate that anti-gas measures dominated the attention and training of local planners, and this was true of the national picture as evidenced in both O'Brien's official history and Joseph Miesel's paper on air raid shelter policy.⁴¹ Miesel reveals how the debates and developments that took place nationally on how to best shelter the public in an air raid expressed two different visions divided on ideological and political fronts. Lucy Allwright's thesis reviewed the competing visions of planning and polices that emerged to protect the civilians of London; she traces the trajectory of these policies from 1932 right

³⁶ A. Page, 'Foreshadows and repercussions': Histories of Air War and Recasting of Cities and Civilians', *Contemporary European History*, 23:4 (2014), pp.645-655.

³⁷ J.S. Miesel, 'Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', *Twentieth Century British History* 5:3 (1994), pp.300-19.

³⁸ S.R. Grayzel, *At Home and under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.140.

³⁹ Holman, *The Next Air War*, p.2.

⁴⁰ U. Schmidt, *Secret Science: A century of Poison Warfare and Human Experiments*, (Oxford, University Press, 2015); R. Mackay, "War Imagined." *Half the Battle*.

⁴¹ Miesel, 'Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', pp.300-19; O'Brien, *Civil Defence*.

through to 1943 which allowed her to analyse the sociological imaginations used to protect to later govern the local populace.⁴² All other local histories centre on the experiences of shelter life and the trenches that were dug during the Munich crises, none attempt to analyse the debates on shelter policy offered by Meisel and Allwright.

Historians are divided on the impact that war had on the social change. Marwick argues that the Second World War produced profound changes in British society, and he readily cites the beneficial changes that came from the Beveridge Report, which include the comprehensive health system. He further argues war was responsible for narrowing the gulf between social classes.⁴³ Yet Penny Summerfield argues against this notion, she recognised that war brought together people of different social class, but there was no permanent reduction in class difference when peace returned.⁴⁴ Indeed Alastair Reid states there was less social change than had previously been thought and Harold Smith argued the legacy of the war was the strengthening of gendering roles, rather than the emergence of new ones.⁴⁵

Theory and Methodology of Imagining Peace and War

This study takes inspiration from Richard Overy's overview of a 'crisis of civilisation' in his *The Morbid Age*, which was careful to explore the many ways 'which ideas were communicated and how extensively, socially and geographically'.⁴⁶ Furthermore, this study, in an attempt to demonstrate 'that the core perceptions' of how war was being imagined were

⁴² Allwright, 'The War on London: Defending the City from the Air War 1932-1943'; C. Wright Mills defined sociological imagination as "the awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society". It allows one to make more self-aware decisions rather than be swayed by social norms or factors that may otherwise dictate actions. Lack of sociological imagination can render people very apathetic.

⁴³ A. Marwick, *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War* (London: Thames and Hudson 1976); A. Marwick, *Class, Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930* (London: Collins 1980).

⁴⁴ P. Summerfield, 'The Levelling of Class in War and Social Change', in *British Society in the Second World War*, ed by H.L. Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), P.179.

⁴⁵ A. Reid, 'World War I and the Working Class in Britain' in *Total War and Social Change*, ed by A. Marwick (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1988); H.L. Smith, *War and Social Change. British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1986), pp.208-9.

⁴⁶ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.5.

not confined to the ivory tower, will put an emphasis on different mechanisms of dissemination – public meetings, demonstrations, reading groups, broadcasts, letters of correspondence, local productions, and lectures in schools.⁴⁷ Grouped with air-raid precautions (ARP) training and planning, military displays, and war games, this panoramic view of ideas will demonstrate how the complex amalgam of attitudes and visions of peace and war were created, and ultimately shaped into policy and practice; as these policies and practices contain ideas about how the population was imagined as a body of citizens.⁴⁸ As Haapamaki noted of her own study, elements of the enthusiasm and fear that will be explored in this dissertation ‘existed in the imagination, almost a dream-like parallel world’ when compared to the more pragmatic one of the building of aerodromes, aircraft construction and the slow development of a localised ARP policy.⁴⁹

As part of the aim of this study is to explore why people disagreed about war prevention an interpretive framework is necessary to make sense of the different ideological preconceptions. Ceadel argues that unlike domestic politics there has been difficulties in consenting to what the analytically useful ideologies are; thus, the understanding of the war and peace debate has been conceptually stunted.⁵⁰ In understanding the peace movement since the 1930s narrowing of the term pacifism, which is an absolutist position and excludes the vast majority who have always been pacific but not pacifist. To conceptualise the debate on war-and-peace the study will use Ceadel’s ‘five war-and-peace theories’ as outlined in Table 1.

⁴⁷ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, pp.11-15.

⁴⁸ Allwright, ‘The War on London: Defending the City from the Air War 1932-1943’, p.12.

⁴⁹ M. Haapamaki, *The Coming of the Aerial War: Culture and the Fear of Airborne Attack in Inter-war Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p.34.

⁵⁰ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, pp.1-6.

Table 1: Overview of Ceadel’s Five War and Peace Theories

(a) Militarism	This is the view that all war is necessary to human development and is therefore a positive good.
(b) Crusading	Is a willingness under favourable circumstances to use aggressive war to promote either order or justice – it is aggression for the sake of peace
(c) Defencism	Accepts that aggression is always wrong; but insists both that defence is always right and the maintenance of strong defences offers the best chance of preventing war.
(d) Pacific-ism	Rules out all aggressive wars and even some defensive ones, but accepts the need for military force to defend its political achievements against aggression. It also believes that war cannot only be prevented but in time abolished by reforms which will bring justice in domestic politics too.
(e) Pacifism	This is the absolutist theory that support for and participation in war is always impermissible. It comes in three different varieties; an optimistic version; a mainstream version; and a pessimistic version.

As this dissertation is a contribution towards a growing scholarly literature on civil defence, which has begun to link broader cultural, social, and political development, the focus of the investigation needs to move away from the conventional ‘top down’ approach that has dominated the civilian fear of aerial bombing, to be brought closer to exceptions which have been explored already in this chapter.⁵¹ To gauge public opinion, mood and attitude over the proposed expanded time-frame, the dissertation will use newspapers as the primary source. Newspapers offer full coverage for the scope of the investigation, as they are available for all

⁵¹ Holman, ‘The Air Panic of 1935: British Press Opinion between Disarmament and Rearmament’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 46:2 (2011), pp.288–307. Also see Holman, *The Next Air War*.

time periods.⁵² Taft concludes newspapers can be used for sources of documentary materials such as texts of speeches, press conferences and diplomatic notes, which is fundamental to this dissertation, as much of the archival material, as is the case in Plymouth, is either missing or incomplete, which is the case for the PLNU.⁵³ Taft further noted the important use of editorials and letters to the editor as a source of public opinion.⁵⁴

Bret Holman used newspapers as a foundation to his research, as leading articles and printed letters, ‘reflect public opinion as a whole, even if imperfectly’.⁵⁵ As Rhodes notes newspapers can be studied both as a reflection of and creator of public opinion and Knudson concludes that for the historian trying to understand public opinion the newspaper serves as both a primary and secondary source.⁵⁶ Local newspapers hold accounts of local and national discourse on the key thematic themes laid out in this study. Letters from the public matter as they can express both sides of an issue, as newspapers couldn’t afford to be out of touch with public opinion. Of course, the imperfections of the letters are they suffer from selection. Firstly, they are self-selecting (and thus you can read the views of those who were motivated or articulate enough to write a letter); secondly, they were a selected sample, so the editor would have selected letters on a number of criteria; lastly they have been selected by the researcher through digital searches which have limitations as outlined by Allen and Hall.⁵⁷ Patrick Kyba in his justification for using newspapers in his study of public opinion on defence issues in the early 1930s, claimed that it was common knowledge that certain papers printed letters on both

⁵² Holman, ‘The Air Panic of 1935’, p.14.

⁵³ W. H. Taft, *Newspapers as Tools for Historians*. (Columbia: Lucas Bros, 1970), pp.46-48.

⁵⁴ Taft, *Newspapers as Tools for Historians*, pp.46-48.

⁵⁵ Holman, ‘The Air Panic of 1935’, p.14.

⁵⁶ J.W. Knudson, “Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Sources.” *Perspectives*, 31:7, (1993), p.9.; J. F. Rhodes. “Newspapers as Historical Sources.” in *Historical Essays*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909), p.86.

⁵⁷ R. Allen and C. Hall. ‘Automated Processing of Digitized Historical Newspapers beyond the Article level: Finding Sections and Regular Features’ in, *The Role of Digital Libraries in a Time of Global Change*, ed. G. Chowdhury, C. Koo and J. Hunter (Berlin: Springer, 2010), pp.91-101.

sides of an issue in direct proportion to the numbers received.⁵⁸

This study uses the *Western Morning News* (hereafter *WMN*), almost exclusively, as the main primary source. The *WMN* was created in 1860 as a politically independent paper that was rivalled by the *Western Daily Mercury*, a Liberal paper. In 1921 Sir Leicester Harmsworth acquired the *WMN* and a few months later had assumed a monopoly of the West Country readership with the collapse of the *Mercury*. Gill argues that the *WMN* accepted that they had monopolised the readership and gave all sides a fair share of space.⁵⁹ It is not guaranteed that the paper printed letters in the manner used by the *Times* as stated by Kyba; but historians of Plymouth are united in their belief the *WMN* was a paper who gave fair coverage on the big issues.⁶⁰ That is not say that the paper didn't take 'sides' in certain debates, as it is clear the paper supported calls for rearmament after the collapse of the disarmament conference in Geneva in 1934 and became strongly conservative and anti-liberal towards the end of the 1930s.⁶¹ When reviewing the editorials and leading articles as a tool for depicting how war-and-peace was imagined the study will note, modern newspapers cannot afford to be consistently out of touch with their readers and thus they either lead or follow popular opinion.

As this study is using Plymouth as case study explore the culturally constructed ideas about a future war-and-peace, it will need to review how the cultural nuances and influences of Plymouth affected the creation of these ideas. Plymouth is a city whose civic pride was associated with the presence of the Royal Navy and the vital work and history of Devonport Dockyard and as Harry Bennett points out, high ranking retired sailors and soldiers took up

⁵⁸ P. Kyba, *Covenants Without the Sword: Public Opinion and British Defence Policy 1931-1935* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983).

⁵⁹ Gill, *Plymouth A New History: 1603 to the Present Day (Volume Two)*, pp.190-191.

⁶⁰ Holman, 'The Air Panic of 1935', P.14.

⁶¹ Gill, *Plymouth A New History*, p.191.

many positions in civil government and the police force.⁶² Plymouth was a sailor town, and as Beaven notes;

Those living in naval sailor towns were geographically and culturally marginalized from the centres of economic and political power and their relationship with the civic and naval authorities was one which varied between compromise and resistance.⁶³

War and Britain's ability to protect her interests at sea had seen huge state investments and guaranteed payments, so there had always been little reason to diversify the economy and find new business opportunities. According to Bennett, the military presence limited the growth of private enterprise; and it was highly likely that during post-war 1920s, when disarmament inspired by the Washington Naval Treaty of 1921 stifled naval and military spending in the great dockyards across the country, this limited and distorted how war and peace might be imagined.⁶⁴ In the 1920s and early 1930s Plymouth had a unique position as pointed out by William Munday, Chair of the Plymouth Board of Education, when addressing the problem of disarmament;

They would like the members of the government to understand Plymouth's peculiar point of view. Successive governments in the past had, as a matter of national policy and in the national interest, considerably curtailed the development of the port as a commercial one. They had done that in order to make Plymouth a great Naval arsenal and they had to accept that position. They realized and did not complain that Plymouth having been a fortified gate of the Empire, had not shared to any large extent in the national prosperity and national fund of wealth which it had been instrumental in safeguarding.⁶⁵

⁶² G.H. Bennett, *Dockyard, Naval Base and Town: The Social and Political Dynamics of Plymouth 1800 to 1950*, conference paper delivered in 2015.

⁶³ B. Beaven, 'The resilience of sailortown culture in English naval ports, c. 1820–1900', *Urban History*, 43:1 (2016), p.72.

⁶⁴ The Washington Naval Conference meant that USA, Britain, and Japan agreed to limit size of navies according to the ratio (5-5-3 - this ratio was changed to 10-10-7 at the London Naval Conference of 1930, and the agreement collapsed altogether in 1935 when the Japanese demanded parity with the USA and Britain).

⁶⁵ 'Pledge for Peace', *WMN*, 19 February 1927, p.8.

Plymouth had not been invaded for many centuries until the first air raid of 1940, and unlike many parts of Eastern England including Portsmouth in the First World War, Plymouth had not witnessed a single air raid or heard the din of shelling from the battle-fields of France. Although Plymouth suffered no direct attack by the enemy in the Great War, ‘the iron entered its soul after every naval engagement’; and the Plymouth regiment’s casualty list was tragically full. R.A.J. Walling writes in his *The Story of Plymouth*, the town was in constant mourning as ‘crowds of heavy-eyed women flocked to the offices to hear news or to have rumours confirmed or denied’.⁶⁶ And the erection and considerable cost of the war memorial on Plymouth Hoe is evidence of how deeply the community was shaken by the experiences of the Great War.

Organisation of Investigation

Chapter 1 considers how peace was being imagined by the people of Plymouth, from the making of the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and the creation of the League of Nations, through to the decision to prepare the British civilian population for the next war, in July 1935. It analyses how local League supporters positioned their cause in relation to interwar pacifism and popular militarism. It investigates the radical visions of peace represented by the PLNU, compared to the more centrist ideals of the League movement, and the opposition of defencists.⁶⁷ It further explores the barriers of representation, firstly exploring the challenges of traditional gender inequalities and stereotypes, and the difficulties of keeping a broad appeal across class divides. Finally, the chapter surveys the impact of education in the city’s schools and the challenges of adult education and public opinion.

⁶⁶ R.A.J. Walling. *The Story of Plymouth* (London: Westaway Books, 1950), p.251.

⁶⁷ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.9.

The second chapter investigates how war was being imagined and prepared for from 1918 to the declaration of war in September 1939. The first part of the chapter explores the divergence of opinion, expert vs public, gas tolerant vs anti-gas supporters, on the dangers of chemical warfare; uncovering the cultural processes (national and local) that influenced the imagining of a gas war. The second part investigates how two differing visions of protection from heavy aerial bombardment emerged in two parallel ideological and political positions. The official planning to protect civilians had been conducted in almost complete secrecy; so, the chapter explores how in the absence of a fully functioning democracy (the absence of official definitions and large public movements), the sociological imagination created ‘anticipatory policies’ (real and imagined) for the protection of the city’s civilians.

The concluding chapter attempts to draw together the cultural influences which influenced how both peace and war were imagined in peacetime, highlighting the challenges and failures of these influences in a semi-detached and semi-democratic country. Seeing how influences and failures (and successes) of imagination in peacetime were applied to the arguably more efficacious reimagining of prevention and protection, in wartime conditions, after the violence had shaken the foundations of British society; specifically focusing how the city had adapted its ARP practices, especially its social policies. Finally, it uses the debates and processes associated with the radical *Plan for Plymouth* (1944), the ambitious vision of reconstruction offered by a small team of architects, engineers, and pioneers, to demonstrate how the failures of imagination were adapted in the reconstruction of Plymouth, including how the PLUN was reborn as the Plymouth United Nations Association (PUNA).

Chapter 1: Imagining and Working for Peace in Plymouth 1918 – 1935

Introduction

Martin Ceadel opens his *Thinking about Peace and War* stating, ‘war prevention is the twentieth century’s most urgent issue.’¹ Increased levels of literacy and educational achievement, the mass media revolution, and the changing nature of modern warfare meant the public had a genuine stake in debates about war and peace in Britain during the decade after the Great War. To make sense of the war and peace debates taking place in England in the 1920s and 1930s it is vital to acknowledge the roles played by the state’s liberal political and economic culture, and the revolutions of modern warfare in this period including mechanical revolution and the invention of the bomber. Furthermore the debate must acknowledge the geographical influences as Britain with the Empire was at the centre of the Western world (the elite thought it to be so); Britain had not been invaded during the Great War and open debate was possible which was not the case in much of Europe.² R.W. Seton-Watson, a foreign policy analyst in the 1930s, described Britain’s’ peace activists as being semi-detached from international relations due to the ‘hybrid’ geographical position of being a part of Europe, but detached from it.³ E.H. Carr argues as a result they have always been ‘utopians’ or semi-detached idealists.⁴ Ceadel has described how, in the dozen years after the Great War many of the ideas associated with pacifism and pacificism, in particular, were received with

¹ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.6.

² Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.7.

³ R.W. Seton-Watson, *Britain and the Dictators; A Survey of Post-War British Policy* (Cambridge: University Press 1938), p.7.

⁴ E.H. Carr, *The twenty years crisis; An introduction to international relations*. (London: Macmillan and Company, 1939).

‘unprecedented sympathy.’⁵ Yet despite this sympathy for liberal internationalist ideals, a dockyard city like Plymouth provided a tough audience. As James John Moses, then Plymouth Labour Councillor and later the city’s first ever Labour MP for Plymouth-Drake, said after a lecture by Lord Robert Cecil, Chairman of the League of Nations Union (LNU) at Plymouth’s Guildhall, ‘Plymouth had been associated with conquest and war, and to come to place like Plymouth and talk about disarmament might seem like trying to persuade a butcher to become a vegetarian- (laughter)- but it was a gospel that would mean so much to the world’⁶

Yet as Mr W.T. Lees pointed out at the 1887 annual meeting of the Three Towns Auxiliary of the International Peace Association, he ‘thought the peace society was in its right place at Plymouth. They did not want to proclaim peace where there was peace, but where there were war and instruments of battle.’⁷ Despite being a city of ‘war and conquest’, Plymouth could paradoxically be viewed as a progressive city which could foster idealism; as Lady Astor stated after her success with the idealist and controversial, ‘Temperance Bill’ (Actually entitled ‘Intoxicating Liquor Bill and dubbed ‘Lady Astor’s Bill), which she attributed to the people of Plymouth whilst noting; ‘if one went through the history of England one found that the Westcountry played a prominent role in the really-great psychological moments. The West of England had always been progressive.’⁸ Therefore with all these factors considered, it is no surprise that Plymouth enticed all the UK’s protagonists of peace to come and lecture in the city’s great halls and preach from the pulpits during the 1920s and 1930s, usually under the guise of the LNU. However, any popular support for pacificism and pacifism was usually swiftly countered by strong supporters of defencism– who believed a strong defence offered the best chance of preventing war and preserving peace.⁹

⁵ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.62.

⁶ ‘Disarming the Nations’, *WMN*, 2 February 1924, p.5.

⁷ ‘International Peace Association’, *WMN*, 30 November 1887, p.7.

⁸ ‘The Key to the Empire’, *WMN*, 2 August 1923, p.3; A. Fort, *Nancy: The Story of Lady Astor* (London: Vintage, 2013), p.205.

⁹ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.5.

Therefore, it is the aim of this chapter to explore the war and peace debate that took place in Plymouth in the 1920s and 1930s which adds a significant regional dimension to the research already undertaken by Martin Ceadel. The early part of the chapter aims to situate the mood of the city's people, scrutinising the ideological differences on 'how to prevent war' in a city designed for 'war and conquest'. Using Ceadel's five war-and-peace theories it hopes to widen the often conceptually simplistic war-and-peace debate which is often presented exclusively as a debate about disarmament.¹⁰ It will examine the imaginings and workings of the Plymouth League of Nations Union (PLNU) as the largest peace organisation, including the gendered issue of representation and the education for peace.

Radical Visions

Plymouth's pacifists and anti-war supporters belonged to a wide range of peace groups and societies such as the absolutist pacifists of the 'No More War' movement and the Plymouth Women's Cooperative Guild to the ex-soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Royal British Legion and the National League of the Blind, to the National Union of General and Municipal Workers and the Transport and General Workers Union. As Overy points out 'to be anti-war in the 1920s and 1930s was to acquire a membership to a broad church, though scarcely a united front.'¹¹ Ceadel notes many pacifists joined the League of Nations Union (LNU) rather than explicitly pacifist societies as they were attracted by the positive proposals of 'arbitration and multi-lateral disarmament as ways to consolidate the post-Locarno euphoria into a permanent international peace'.¹² Founded in 1918, the (LNU) acquired a membership unprecedented in terms of quality and quantity.¹³ Ideologically the LNU was 'pacifist' rather than 'pacifist,'

¹⁰ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.5; see table 1 in introduction for further detail.

¹¹ Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilisation, 1919-1939*, p.221.

¹² Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain: 1914-1945*, p.62.

¹³ Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain: 1914-1945*, p.62.

believing the abolishment of war was best achieved by promoting international cooperation as a means of preventing war, yet willing to use military force to uphold international law.¹⁴ Helen McCarthy further points out that the LNU encompassed an ideological flexibility, allowing for a broad spectrum of opinion; and the Plymouth League of Nations Union (PLNU) was a fine example of this broad spread of opinion as demonstrated by its elected officials.¹⁵

According to McCarthy prevailing historical arguments suggest the genuine radical visions of international government such as H.G. Wells' 'world state' had 'perished amidst the power-play at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.'¹⁶ But in the early 1920s the leaders and mouthpieces of the PLNU were emerging as draftsmen of radical pacifist visions of peace. The PLNU had quickly attracted an inspired, respected and politically and religiously diverse leadership. The leaders of the PLNU were individuals with the capacity to share their ideals across the city to a wide and diverse audience through their religious affiliations and work, through the medium of lectures, speeches, political influence, and writings— from the halls of Westminster to village halls. Although numbers were initially low as experienced by Lord Astor;

I am not quite sure whether the smallness of the attendance is due to the fact that the existence and potentiality of the League of Nations is universally admitted, or because some people look upon it as a sort of visionary ideal which visionaries may discuss, but which the practical man of the world need not give his attention to.¹⁷

Lord William Waldorf Astor (1879-1952), served as the president for the PLNU's entire existence; the popular writer and lecturer Dr J.H.B. Masterman, the Bishop of Plymouth, served as vice-president until his untimely death in 1932; Isaac Foot Liberal MP for Bodmin was the

¹⁴ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.3.

¹⁵ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.3.

¹⁶ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.1.

¹⁷ 'Preventing Wars', *WMN*, 6 July 1922, p.3.; Mr F Whelan of the League of Nations Union also found his efforts were limited, as a PLNU talk to the women of Devonport attracted only nine women (and one left before the end).

parliamentary correspondent, and the chairman was always the elected Mayor (thus changing every year); which was significant as not all Mayors were allies of PLNU (which could be exposed during speeches and debates). The elected officers including influential individuals like the Chairman of the Education Committee William Munday (later Sir William Munday), and the well-respected journalist and writer R.A.J. Walling. The committee included some women but they were almost exclusively rooted in male familial connections, as they were invariably the wives of branch officers.¹⁸ Although Elsie Perry, the secretary of PLNU, represented an emerging group of young and well-educated women who were seeking careers outside of the home; her voice was loud, intelligent and often presented through letters to the press.¹⁹

There was no mistaking the running of the PLNU was the preserve of the Plymouth middle classes, who ‘lent considerable coherence through its local leadership of voluntary associations,’ and the respectability of the PLNU’s patrons were, it was hoped, to reassure those who feared the League’s ideals ‘stood for a dramatic transformation of the existing social order.’²⁰ Through the auspices of the Plymouth Rotary club, who were keen to emphasise the advancement of understanding, goodwill and international peace, were an official patron of the PLNU and were represented in practically every trade and profession in the city, made a direct appeal to the businessman through Sir Frederick Benson and Mr F. Whelan to support the League. Whelan claimed, ‘it is no longer the dream of idealists’ and cited the practical work already achieved; international law, the Labour department of the League, the Geneva based health organisation, and most significantly the Assembly, which he eloquently and intelligently pitched as a ‘parliament of the world’ which had its cabinet in the council of the League.²¹ It

¹⁸ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p192.

¹⁹ V. Brittain, *Women’s Work in Modern England* (London, Douglas, 1928); R. Strachey, *Careers and Openings for Women: A Survey of Women’s Employment and a Guide for those Seeking Work* (London: Faber, 1935).

²⁰ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.163.

²¹ ‘League of Peace’, *WMN*, 19 February 1921, p.8; ‘Rotary’s Work for Peace’, *WMN*, 20 March 1926, p.3.

was an appeal to mainstream pacificism to offset the dangers of utopianism, a use of intellectualism to capture attention.

During a series of speeches and conferences in Plymouth in the early 1920s Lord Astor revealed his vision for peace, and central to his thesis was a radical internationalist notion, the most utopian manifestation of optimistic pacificism, a ‘central world authority’.²² In a speech titled ‘World Peace’ at the Plymouth Conference in 1922, Astor presented a Wells-inspired liberal cosmopolitan ideal of unifying humankind in a world state of peace and prosperity through the liberation and emancipation of all citizens; who would ultimately govern themselves in a peaceful manner.²³ This self-determination vision was set out by Woodrow Wilson, and is what historian Jay White describes as a ‘minor utopia.’ The concept of the self-determination was to give all people, the right to determine their own futures when deemed able to do so. The Wilsonian vision failed as ‘the contradiction between democratic impulse and imperial aspirations was not resolved.’²⁴

His visionary paper *Is War Preventable?* argued the fundamental cause of war was ‘the division of the world into states’ which created a dangerous narrow patriotism. He recognised his proposition of a ‘world parliament’ seemed ‘completely utopian’ but he believed there were only two alternatives before the world unity or world war.²⁵ Astor stated, ‘disarmament, international courts, and the League of Nations although they might help in diminishing or postponing the causes of war, could not either by themselves or collectively settle world peace.’²⁶ Astor’s pacifist solution could be defined as optimistic, on the Utopian fringe, a vision undeniably Wellsian as it pitched for cosmopolitan unity as the only means to prevent

²² Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.180.

²³ J.S. Partington, ‘H.G. Wells and the World State: A Liberal Cosmopolitan in a Totalitarian Age.’ *International Relations* 17:2 (2003), pp.233–246.

²⁴ J. Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom: Utopian Moments in the Twentieth Century* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006), p.72.

²⁵ ‘Abolishing War’, *WMN*, 24 October 1922, p.3.

²⁶ ‘Abolishing War’, *WMN*, 24 October 1922, p.3.

wars and the death of the species as ‘war could no longer be humanised.’²⁷ Partington argues that Wells’ studies of human evolution led to his observation that human kind and human development was ‘constantly merging into larger and larger social units’; an idea Astor shared as he imagined a gradual change among people’s outlook and ideas, through education, to put ‘welfare of humanity as a whole, against the welfare of humanity in any one geographical area first’.²⁸ He did offset his optimism with doses of realism and pessimism, Ceadel has argued that for pacificism to flourish there needed to be the right blend of optimism and pessimism.²⁹ Astor outlined the challenges of a world parliament, including barriers in race, language, development, culture, willingness to join, and the practicalities of size (estimating a world parliament would consist of 10,000 MPs).

Astor’s pacifist ideals were inspired by two developments, a partial stabilisation of the international system (after the Napoleonic wars) which led to the establishment of the first peace societies in Britain, which according to Michael Howard meant a ‘theory of international relations, of war and peace had already developed.’ The second was the emergence of domestic political processes that mobilised support for peace.³⁰ The latter evidenced by Astor during his ‘Key to World Peace’ speech, when he gave a potted history of governance of England from mediaeval times to the present and stated;

The mere reduction or stopping of armaments would not assure the peace of the world any more than the peace of a country was secured because carrying firearms was permitted. We did not have an absence of bloodshed in England because we were not supposed to carry firearms, but because there was a central government or authority whose duty it was to maintain peace.³¹

²⁷ ‘Abolishing War’, *WMN*, 24 October 1922, p.3.

²⁸ Partington, ‘H.G. Wells and the World State’, p.3.

²⁹ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.103.

³⁰ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, pp.102-103; M. Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.32.

³¹ ‘Key to World Peace’, *WMN*, 11 December 1922, p.3.

Astor was not a lone optimistic pacifist voice in the PLNU; Elsie Perry supported his ideals when she directly quoted from H.G. Wells' *Outline of History* hoping that the vision of a 'United States of the World' would materialize in the future.³² Like Astor, Perry viewed the League of Nations as a 'splendid preliminary' to a world order that could preserve peace, believing after the shock of the Great War it was not wise to jump from one extreme to another. They were also united in their belief that for the League (and ultimately a centralised world authority) to work educating and mobilising opinion were necessary preconditions.

Astor, Masterman, Perry and other elements of the PLNU leadership all knew the emancipation of the working classes, was vital and they shared Wells' view that for a new peaceful world order to prevail, there needs to be 'universal education, organized on a scale and of a penetration and quality beyond all present experience. The whole race, not simply classes and peoples, will be educated.'³³ Astor's speech to the Reconstruction Society, which became the Plymouth Rotary, echoed this ideal when stating;

To win the peace it was not enough to have the few possessing knowledge, education and common-sense; the many had to possess these things, and the interdependence of the classes coming together and facing the difficulties of the moment would make an enormous difference to the outlook of Plymouth.³⁴

The PLNU executive recognised the importance of the public 'knowing the facts' both as fundamental to democracy and to challenge the fears stirred by the populist press and 'New Journalism' which was replacing the educational mission of the 19th mid-century press with crass propaganda, which was most prominent in Northcliffe's *Daily Mail*.³⁵ So when the *Morning News* was bought by Leicester Harmsworth, brother of Northcliffe and Rothermere in 1921, Lord Astor even considered buying the *Mercury* as he believed the *Morning News* to be 'politically very undependable'— indeed Isaac Foot 'thundered against the Harmsworth

³² 'No More War', *WMN*, 11 August 1923, p.6.

³³ H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History; Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind* (London: George Newnes, 1920), p.500.

³⁴ 'Key to World Peace', *WMN*, 11 December 1922, p.3.

³⁵ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*.

press' accusing them of thinking; in his parody of Psalm 60.³⁶ J.H.B. Masterman, the first Anglican Bishop of Plymouth, thought democratic idealism was best achieved primarily through adult education, believing 'a world at school would be a world at peace'.³⁷ As Overy notes LNU propaganda targeted the working classes believing they would be 'more resistant to Union activity,' believing that the best approach was the infiltration of the propaganda to trade unions, working man's clubs and a string of popular associations.³⁸ Both Astor and Masterman, were aware of the challenges of engaging the popular base as 'the people who can be reached in meetings in buildings, represent only a small proportion of the overall population.'³⁹

J.H.B. Masterman, recognised the challenges of evoking enthusiasm for those on the borderline of want and working long hours. He acknowledged the full spectrum of cultural pessimism as a barrier, as the workers 'had become habituated to noisy and ugly things in the places where they live and work, and true education should express itself in a new intolerance of ugliness' or as McCarthy and Stuart MacIntyre write, the working classes were being 'drugged into apathy by modern-day circuses' of cinema and dance-halls; but Masterman recognised 'mental stagnation' was not confined to any one class in the city— noting that bankers should attend a class to study the philosophy of Plato.⁴⁰ He believed the best approach should include the method of discussion and cooperation, best achieved through the openings of music and drama.⁴¹ Astor hoped bodies like the Workers Education Association could shape opinion, as they could permeate the deep rooted working-class cultures based in the pub, trade

³⁶ Gill, *Plymouth A New History*, pp.190-191.

³⁷ 'World at School and Peace: Bishop of Plymouth on Education', *WMN*, 24 August 1929, p.5.

³⁸ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.227.

³⁹ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.38.

⁴⁰ 'World at School and Peace: Bishop of Plymouth on Education', *WMN*, 24 August 1929, p.5; S. MacIntyre, 'British Labour, Marxism and Working- Class Apathy in the Nineteen Twenties', *Historical Journal*, 20:2 (1977), pp.479–496; C. Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture*, 1884–1918 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). H. McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.22.

⁴¹ 'World at School and Peace: Bishop of Plymouth on Education', *WMN*, 24 August 1929, p.5.

unions and friendly societies.⁴² Both Astor and Masterman worked tirelessly to create a full regional university to try and embrace the ‘international turn’ that was evident in higher education after the war in an attempt to internationalise local adult education.⁴³ Lord and Lady Astor really forced the pace for a university by creating student accommodation at Devonport, even inviting George Bernard Shaw to open it in 1929. But it would be over twenty years before the University College South West (UCSW) became a university at Exeter.⁴⁴

Winning the Peace

Isaac Foot was often heard preaching in the region ‘the historian of the future would conclude that the peace which followed the war was more disastrous than the war itself,’⁴⁵ Citing the failure of the Allied statesmen at the peace talks in Versailles as the peace they imagined was not the one they looked at in the days before the Armistice. Like many liberals, he was dissatisfied with territorial settlement embodied in the Treaty and was thus not a natural ally of the League as it forced him to make concessions on their traditionally *laissez-faire* approach, but he was a staunch believer in disarmament as the best means to prevent war, and he (and most other Liberals) believed the League offered the best mechanism to achieve this.⁴⁶

Although disarmament was an integral part the League’s purpose as it was enshrined in the Covenant of 1919, mainly under article 8.⁴⁷ Historian Andrew Webster argues that there were six distinct varieties of disarmament pursued in the aftermath of the Great War that had a meaningful impact; the arms restrictions imposed on the defeated powers; unilateral cuts to

⁴² ‘Abolishing War’, *WMN*, 24 October 1922, p.3: Mass- Observation, *The Pub and the People: A Worktown Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1943); A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working- Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900–1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992).

⁴³ Gill, *Plymouth A New History*) p.192; H. McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.117.

⁴⁴ Gill, *Plymouth A New History*, p.192.

⁴⁵ ‘Disastrous Peace’, *WMN*, 8 October 1923, p.3.

⁴⁶ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War* p.102-103; M. Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p.112; ‘A Misquotation’, *WMN*, 24 August 1922, p.3.

⁴⁷ Article 8 stated ‘The members of the League recognise that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety.’

armaments and military budgets by the victors; Naval disarmament through ‘private treaties’ among the big maritime nations; and three limited League attempts from 1920 through to the failed World Disarmament Conference in 1934.⁴⁸ In the 1920s and early 1930s Plymouth was directly affected by the unilateral cuts to naval spending⁴⁹ and, the most successful disarmament measure of the entire interwar period, the naval arms limitations resulting from the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-22; both of which occurred outside of the remit and influence of the League of Nations as the naval treaties were all ‘private’ disarmament deals ‘undertaken outside of any larger international framework.’⁵⁰ Indeed, when the League of Nations attempted to sponsor the extension of the Washington Treaty to other maritime nations it was a hopeless failure.⁵¹

Winning a peace in a city whose economy and welfare were so reliant upon and intertwined with the dockyard and the fighting services; even after over a decade of naval disarmament and a stagnant economic business cycle, in 1931 still 40% of the working population were either in the dockyard or the fighting services and there was an average of 16.3% unemployed (1.5% higher than the national average; plus, all of the associated business that relied on the RN custom) would prove challenging. The fear of unemployment caused by disarmament was a central political issue in Plymouth and other cities who were reliant on the industries of defence throughout this period.⁵²

⁴⁸ A. Webster, ‘From Versailles to Geneva: The Many Forms of Interwar Disarmament.’ *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 29:2 (2006), pp.225-246: The League initiatives were listed as; to establish regimes control of armaments during 1920-25; linking arms reductions to the simultaneous creation of new systems of security 1922-25; and the Leagues ‘general disarmament’ process of 1926-24.

⁴⁹ The Royal Navy scrapped an enormous amount to tonnage to place the RN on peacetime footings. 27 pre-dreadnought capital ships; 27 heavy cruisers and 48 light cruisers were struck-off or scrapped within months of the end of the war. Defence spending was cut from £66,559,660 in 1919 to 122,011,000 and to an interwar low of £104,364,300 in 1932.

⁵⁰ Webster, ‘From Versailles to Geneva’, p.233; there were ‘four more attempts to advance naval disarmament after Washington; the 1927 Geneva Naval Conference; the 1928 Anglo-French ‘compromise’ on armaments; the London Naval Conference of 1930; and the final naval conference in London 1935-36.

⁵¹ Webster, ‘From Versailles to Geneva’, p.233.

⁵² Gill, *Plymouth A New History*, p.184; 28% in the dockyard and 12% in the fighting services although the latter was a very transient population.

Yet for the pacific minded, the economic arguments were simple as disarmament referred to the distorted priorities evident where people suffered in poverty ‘while resources were squandered in a futile search for security which only creates further insecurity’.⁵³ Many pacific-minded were optimistic about disarmament, as it meant there must be a programme of economic demilitarisation, and as naval, army and air estimates were reduced, the institutions, enterprise, and activities which it now mobilises must be changed or replaced opening new possibilities for socially responsible uses and development of technology.⁵⁴ Indeed as Wells noted for peace to prosper and a new social order to prevail, militarism and the extravagances of private ownership had to be removed, ‘just as we would want to abolish some idiot guardian who refused us admission to a studio in which there were fine things to do.’⁵⁵ The Lord Mayor of Plymouth W.S. Knight set out his ambitions for creating a city for peace in a speech to the South-Western section of the Junior Institution of Engineers. His desire was to transform the work of war to the work of peace and he had two influential supporters in William Munday, the chairman of the Education Committee and Rev T. Wilkinson Riddle. The Mayor told his young audience ‘if there is science in war, then there is science in peace.’⁵⁶

The LNU attempted to allay the fears of unemployment associated with disarmament by explaining how displaced labour could be absorbed into other industries. Norman Angell, a prominent Union support and key peace campaigner, produced an optimistic pamphlet which argued ‘in truth there is more employment in spending the money productively on things which add to your efficiency by adding to your comfort, health, peace of mind, than in spending money on armaments.’⁵⁷

⁵³ D. Smith and R. Smith, *The Economics of Militarism*, (Oxford: Pluto Press, 1983), p.101.

⁵⁴ Smith and Smith, *The Economics of Militarism*, p.102.

⁵⁵ H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, p.502.

⁵⁶ ‘Work for Peace’, *WMN*, 31 January 1921, p.7.

⁵⁷ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, pp.170-171.

Yet the realities of post-war disarmament in Plymouth, amidst high taxation and an economic slump, afforded Captain Brenan, a veteran of the Great War, an opportunity whilst addressing a Plymouth conference on “the end of Militarism” in 1921 to claim, ‘that there was [...] no such thing as winning a war and in destroying other nations we had destroyed ourselves’ citing Plymouth’s ‘terrible condition in regard to housing’ as a result of war.⁵⁸

The imagined post-war utopia of a ‘home fit for heroes’ was all too often a desperate nightmare of slums, unemployment and pauperisation, and these hopeless conditions were restricting imaginations and creating apathetic attitudes towards both war and peace. Indeed, Mr W.T. Gay, chairman of the local *No More War* campaign and Labour Party Candidate for Plymouth Sutton, admitted at a 1923 demonstration, that ‘most people had [already] forgotten the horrors of the last war’ and in Plymouth were asking “what are we to do if you take away our bread and butter?”

According to the Plymouth Labour leader J.J.H. Moses, these squalid wards of Plymouth were now full of vagrants, the victims of a post-war peace economy which the government was seemingly impotent to revive. The ‘rank and file’ were ‘fed-up’, the unemployed of Plymouth wished for war, as the peacetime government were either unable or unwilling to find employment on the industries of peace.⁵⁹ Moses acknowledged, while the situation was outrageous, monstrous and appalling, it was not surprising as ‘it was the argument of starving men’ who ‘recall wistfully the days when they were earning good money because the nation was at war and look without serious alarm at a return to those conditions’.⁶⁰ In a lengthy letter to the local press ‘a representative of organized Labour’ stated;

⁵⁸ ‘Plymouth address on Militarism’, *WMN*, 31 October 1921, p.5; the UK had suffered a post-war recession from 1920-21 which was followed by a period of relative stagnation from 1922-6. Despite a short boom between 1927-29 Britain suffered a major recession known as the ‘Great Slump’ from 1929-32.

⁵⁹ ‘Unemployment and War’, *WMN*, 27 September 1922, p.3.

⁶⁰ ‘Unemployment and War’, *WMN*, 27 September 1922, p.3.

One can imagine nothing more Gilbertian than the suggestion that we should go to war because, during the last war, a national emergency and a grave need for the instruments of destruction and waste threw us into a morbid state of feverish industrial activity. It reminds one of the story of the Chinamen who burned down their houses to roast their pigs.⁶¹

The historical amnesia amongst the working classes is an intriguing one, as it raised two fears. First, it reframed the notion of fear and the fear of death, and secondly it exposed the fear of an apathetic attitude towards war and peace amongst the workers induced by the post-war economic slump. In tackling the first point, Joanna Bourke argued poverty was ‘the hell that Englishmen fear the most.’⁶² Those who died in abject poverty feared being ‘relegated to a final bedding down on top of strangers in a mass grave and covered in a sheet of quick lime to hasten decay.’⁶³ Even worse there would be no plaque to commemorate a life, let alone being mourned. According to Mosse, after the Great War there emerged a ‘cult of the war dead’ which became central to a new ‘experience of war myth’, one evoked through war memorials, remembrance and military ceremonies. All were plentiful in a city like Plymouth. One characteristic of the myth was that death transformed fallen soldiers [sailors] into ‘saints of the nation’, the fallen soldier embodies the national hero.⁶⁴ Therefore the memorialisation of the city’s war dead in public spaces and ceremonies fashioned a new solidarity in post-war societies by continuing a patriotic mission that transcended death. So to call for war was better than an inglorious and ignominious death in pauperisation.⁶⁵

The Bishop of Plymouth reiterated the concerns of a recovering community with underdeveloped and restricted imaginations during a post-service sermon titled ‘War and the Cross’, stating the main concern was not the inability to remember the last war or imagine a

⁶¹ ‘Unemployment and war’, *WMN*, 27 September 1922, p.3.

⁶² Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*, p.28.

⁶³ Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*, p.28.

⁶⁴ G.L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memories of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁶⁵ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memories of the World Wars*.

future war, but those charged with imagining a future peace were painting pictures so ‘hopelessly dull’ he feared ‘the younger generation would cry out for war again’; so it was fundamental in order to imagine a peace we had to ‘give men adequate things to live and die for’.⁶⁶ The LNU were also aware of the supposed indifferent attitudes of the working classes towards politics of any kind, a phenomena which was quite prevalent in areas outside of the influence of defence spending.⁶⁷ Yet the fear of apathy existed everywhere, and this fear stimulated the PLNU to organise a series of lectures led by Dr Norwood of City Temple London and the Ebenzer Brotherhood of Plymouth. The lectures took place in many Christian places of worship across the city such as the Sherwell congregational church and George Street Baptist church. Norwood consistently pleaded for support for disarmament to win the peace as ‘the crux of the peace problem is the question of disarmament’ as ‘we had to rise to great moral heights or slip into the abyss.’⁶⁸

Utopia or Chaos?

The pacifist imagining of a way to peace, offered primarily by the PLNU but also pacific groups like the ‘No More War’ movement, met stubborn defencist opposition. The well-respected former Mayor of Saltash (1929-31), ex-Royal Marine Officer and notable playwright and author, from Devonport, Lieutenant-Colonel William Prince Drury (1861-1949), accused the League of Nations of being born thousands of years too late and being too idealist.⁶⁹ He acknowledged the noble intentions, and the need for great dreamers such as the well respected and much admired Viscount Grey, but declared ‘the real danger’ was the visionaries and

⁶⁶ ‘Bishop of Plymouth and Disarmament’, *WMN*, 7 December 1931, p.3.

⁶⁷ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.170.

⁶⁸ ‘Peace Campaign in the West’, *WMN*, 21 February 1927, p.3.

⁶⁹ William Price Drury most noted play was *The Flag Lieutenant* a WW1 play. Drury was a Royal Marine intelligence officer stationed at Plymouth during WW1.

dreamers who believed ‘that the fighting passions of a menagerie like Europe can be restrained by an international debating society.’⁷⁰ Comparing Grey’s ‘dream’ of the union, presented to a packed Plymouth Guildhall, to Sir Thomas More’s vision of utopia during the reign of Henry VIII, he even suggested it was more idealistic than More’s Utopian island 400 years ago; confirming a moderate realist view that reality was too anarchic for idealistic reforms to be possible.

The most utopian manifestations of the pacifist PLNU, the belief that a world government was feasible, had weak conservative and defencist traditions, so naturally invited criticism on these grounds.⁷¹ W.E.R Rear-Admiral Martin, a member of the British Union of Fascists (BUF), accused supporters of a world parliament of having ‘the fantasy of a well-meaning but disordered brain.’ He felt that nations could learn from each other but never amalgamate while human nature was what it was, so pitched an isolationist view that all nations should be left to develop of their own will.⁷²

Colonel Drury, who could be described as part of the ‘moderate majority’ of realists, was accepting of the need to be realistic about the distribution of power and the direction in which social rivalries were heading after the Great War; thus he consistently argued a far more expedient method of preventing another war and maintaining peace, would be a strong and armed union between America and Britain.⁷³ He was a leading advocate for a strong and well-resourced navy as the ‘wall and face of the nation’ and was consistently critical of the disarmament policy. During a speech at a party organised by the Plymouth group of Empire and India Defence League, Drury made a stirring plea for a powerful British Navy;

⁷⁰ ‘League of Nations Born to Late’, *WMN*, 05 February 1924, p.3

⁷¹ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War* p.102-103; Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p.180.

⁷² ‘World Nationalism’, *WMN*, 25 September 1934, p.3.

⁷³ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.115.

Since England began to lick her wounds after the war she has been doctored by a succession of quacks, most of whom, if they had had an address at Harley-street, instead of Westminster, would have been struck off years ago.⁷⁴

During a speech unveiling a new war memorial in Plymouth, Col. Drury declared ‘the horrors of the last have already been forgotten’ and that after the failures of post-war peace Europe was ‘in a worse state of chaos’ than in the summer of 1914. He quoted from Luke 11:21, ‘when a strong man armed keepeth his house, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he cometh upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all that he hath, and divideth the spoil.’⁷⁵ It is a passage often quoted by defencists, linking the theory of armed deterrence to the Christian pilgrims of peace. Foot accused Drury of a deliberate misquotation by excluding the final line ‘he taketh from him all his armour in which he was entrusted,’ which destroys the entire defencist argument as it means ‘there is something more than armour to protect the people.’ He argued Drury had no alternative to the League of Nations other than an armed truce, which would stifle any social reforms required to build a better world and would only end when the ‘whole of society goes up in one confusion and explosion.’⁷⁶ Foot argued the only ‘worthy memorial to the dead was a better world,’ which meant reforming the disastrous Peace Treaty to restore the stricken nations of Europe. Drury’s lengthy reply revealed his view that the League of Nations was a ‘pleasing fiction’ but the ‘sanest’ alternative to war yet proposed. Yet he feared it would lull the ‘unthinking’ portion of society into a false sense of security and was thus becoming ‘a grave potential menace’; as the comfortable doctrines appealed to armchair pacifists who, had not, unlike the fighting man witnessed ‘the primeval savage always beneath the thin veneer of civilisation,’ exposing Drury’s near militarist pessimism.⁷⁷ Ceadel argues Drury’s defencist arguments were by far the most

⁷⁴ ‘Doctored by Quacks Britain’s Plight Since the War: Col. Drury’s Plea for Navy’, *WMN*, 25 June 1936, p.5.

⁷⁵ ‘A Misquotation’, *WMN*, 24 August 1922, p.3.

⁷⁶ ‘A Misquotation’, *WMN*, 24 August 1922, p.3.

⁷⁷ ‘A Strong Man Armed’, *WMN*, 29 August 1922, p.3.

popular war and peace visions as they seemed both realistic and humane, recognising the importance of the nation state, and accounts for the anarchic international systems, whilst rejecting aggression and working for order. Yet defencism had to tolerate a perpetual arms race and readiness for war, and as Foot and Masterman consistently pointed out, it offered no inspiring vision of the foreseeable future.⁷⁸

There was also a minority of extremist realists, fringe militarists, in opposition to the PLNU's utopianism. Plymothian H.S Hutchings questioned whether peace could ever be a reality, arguing there had been 'more than 800 peace treaties, meant to remain in force forever [...] the average time they remained in force was two years.'⁷⁹ He was quoted in a letter to the *WMN* saying the Lord implied the sword of aggression must be met with the sword of defence, showing that all war was not necessarily wrong or immoral. Hutchings represented an extremist view that the human and international world was too turbulent for stability to be achieved for any significant period, therefore no attempt should be made to restrain human competition.⁸⁰ Drury, Hutchings, Martin and the masters of the *WMN* were all believers in a cultural pessimism and were, we might say variations of 'Vulgar Darwinians', believing the causes of war were partially biological.⁸¹ Overy describes the vulgar Darwinian idea 'that war was simply the human variety of the contest in Nature observed by Darwin' which was biologically determined; 'the universal economy of nature' the weaker go under, the stronger prevail.⁸² Although many anti-militarists accepted this human condition exists, as scientific argument in this period could do little to put these assumptions aside, most insist progress could be achieved by 'repressing it rather than indulging it.'⁸³ It is not surprising to find these

⁷⁸ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.100.

⁷⁹ 'Is Peace Possible?', *WMN*, 12 October 1932, p.11.

⁸⁰ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War* p.16.

⁸¹ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, pp.195-196; M. Ceadel *Thinking about Peace and War*, p.27.

⁸² Overy *The Morbid Age*, p.196; F. von Bernhardi, *Germany and the next war* (New York: C. A. Eron, 1914), pp18-19.

⁸³ Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War* p.25; Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.197.

extremist and nationalistic views in a city whose civic pride is so closely associated with the presence of a Royal Navy which dominated national history and development of Plymouth (for there are no monuments of naval failure on the Hoe, or anywhere.⁸⁴)

The 'No More War' movement, founded in 1921 was a pacific group for socialists (including Christian socialists) and 'was committed to only one ambition, to achieve total disarmament worldwide and end war for ever.'⁸⁵ In Plymouth their absolutist ideals were divisive and harder to accept than the more centrist pacifist arguments presented in the main by the PLNU. Realist supporters of defencist policies roundly accused the movement of 'utopian naivety'. After a 'no more war' procession which saw over 800 people assemble at Manor Street in July 1923, the *Western Morning News* accused the movement's vision of 'universal disarmament' as being idealist and foolishly 'utopian'. The peace processions marched from the Guildhall, Devonport and the Octagon, displaying provocative anti-war banners with slogans like 'war in the air means war on babies', 'War means unemployment for the victors', 'War means famine for the vanquished' according to the *WMN* the 'most effective was carried by the ex-servicemen bearing the legend "We've been through it, we know"'.⁸⁶ Yet these visionaries of peace were further attacked by the Conservative city councillor Charles John Tozer, who wrote to the press protesting;

Whilst I appreciate the good intentions of the handful of irresponsible enthusiasts who are wasting their time in vain to endeavour to make their Utopian imaginings convincing, may I ask by what method to these deluded organizers of "mass" (?) meetings of citizens" propose to persuade and force Germany (the highly expert and systematic violators of her solemn treaties) to honour the mutual agreement to disarm. These foolish 'No More War' meetings are on a par with the unregretted "Anglo-German Friendship society... I hope the No More War party will soon discover the hopelessness of their well-meant but impossible proposals, and devote their talents to 'something that matters'⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Bennett, *Dockyard, Naval Base and Town*.

⁸⁵ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.239.

⁸⁶ 'No More War Meeting Falls Flat', *WMN*, 30 July 1923, p.3.

⁸⁷ 'The "No More War" Party', *WMN*, 3 August 1923, p.8.

The leaders of the procession wrote a riposte to the paper, ‘your description of the idea as utopian will be seen to be an exaggeration. At the same time if the issue is between a utopia and another war, then we are most emphatically utopians’.⁸⁸ The ‘No More War’ idealist cause found support in a letter to the editor of the *WMN* from an anonymous author, known only as ‘Welfare’, who cleverly used Lady Astor’s controversial Intoxicating Liquor Bill which she dubbed the ‘Preachers and Teachers Bill’ (as according to Adrian Fort, Nancy Astor’s biographer), the bill’s success was attributed to 116,000 teachers who signed a petition worried about the mental and moral development of adolescents; she stated she had the support of ‘all organised women’, heads of private and state schools, the Church of England and the country’s highest medical authorities.⁸⁹

The Bill was used as an example of how, so called utopian, principles can be brought ‘into the realm of practice’ – ‘welfare’ quoting Astor’s belief ‘if you appeal to the higher instincts of anybody they would respond.’ The author referred to another *WMN* article, ‘Key of the Empire’, which attributed the Bill’s success to women, as the ‘electorate had changed and there were now thousands of women voters’; and Plymouth had the courage to send a lady to parliament and only a woman could have got such a Bill through, as ‘Men although they wanted to get such a measure, had the old foolish prejudice the minute drink was mentioned.’⁹⁰ At the annual dinner of the Plymouth Soroptimists, a volunteer organisation that sought equality, peace and international goodwill for women, the Bishop of Plymouth stated;⁹¹

It was the call of the Virgin Queen that the men of Plymouth set forth to do deeds of daring for their country, and it was the call of Plymouth that the gracious lady from Virginia as the first woman in parliament [...] Plymouth will go down in history as being distinguished, and that was the discernment and perspicacity with which the capabilities will be recognised.⁹²

⁸⁸ ‘No More War’, *WMN*, 01 August 1923, p.7.

⁸⁹ Fort, Nancy; *The Story of Lady Astor*, pp.205-6.

⁹⁰ ‘The Key to the Empire’, *WMN*, 02 August 1923, p.3

⁹¹ D. Doughan and P. Gordon, *Women, Clubs and Associations in Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp43-63.

⁹² ‘Women’s part in city’s history’, *WMN*, 14 February 1935, p.5.

The Reverend Thomas Nightingale, general secretary of the Free Church Council, at a well-attended Plymouth and District Free Church Campaign in King Street, also referred to the success of Lady Astor's Bill and called for a '100 Astor's in parliament', recognising the significance of the matriarchal drive behind the policy success, which was built upon a spirit of democratic idealism inspired by the success of near universal suffrage.⁹³ But as R.A.J. Walling mused at a Soroptimists dinner there were 50,000 women voters in Plymouth, and he could never understand why they did not insist on putting fifty women in the city council, for there 'are more petticoats in politics than any other garment today, but they did not realize the power they possessed.'⁹⁴ Indeed, as Ceadel points out when war failed to disappear even after women became the majority in the electorate, feminist pacificism completely faded. Nightingale made an appeal for 'all women to take an interest in international affairs for it was a subject which immediately effected every home in the land.'⁹⁵ Women not only had to be empowered to vote on issues of peace, they had to fight for positions in society where reform could be influenced so they had something to vote for.

A Gendered Plea for Peace and Internationalism

To have 'a woman' among the list of orators is the aim of every organiser of a meeting, no matter for what object. (Mary Agnes Hamilton, 1932)⁹⁶

Although there was 'accredited representation from the three political parties, the Anglican and nonconformist churches, and the leading educational and commercial associations in

⁹³ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, C.1918-45*, p.21.

⁹⁴ 'Women's part in city's history', *WMN*, 14 February 1935, p.5.

⁹⁵ 'Plymouth's Part', *WMN*, 29 November 1922, p.7.

⁹⁶ M.A. Hamilton, 'Women in Politics', *Political Quarterly*, 3:2 (1932), p.239.

Plymouth,⁹⁷ in 1924 the secretary of the PLNU and Quaker, Mr Kenneth. M. Angus, received several letters on the problem of ‘equality’. The Reverend Hatty Baker, a pioneer female preacher from Plymouth, who was more broadly known for her various feminist concerns and a ‘leading figure in the formation of the Free Church League for Women’s Suffrage’, noted she and other leading feminists in the city are ‘tired of seeing [...] the man platform and the man committee’.⁹⁸ Baker noted her letter was not in the spirit of criticism, but with the sole wish to see the local branch ‘full-grown, complete, perfect.’⁹⁹ The PLNU Secretary penned several responses through the press recognising the problem of equality, writing that he took the ‘full blame’ for the platform as it was ‘not in any sense representative’.¹⁰⁰ An author by the name of ‘Equality’ (capitalised in her letters) pointed out the detail of the underrepresentation of women of the 1924 PLNU executive, as it was comprised of 19 men (11 who were office bearers) and only four women; she further noted the audience was at least half women but there was not a single woman on the platform.¹⁰¹ Baker endorsed ‘Equality’s’ letter by adding that ‘year by year more men and more men are placed on the committee and speakers list, and the old idea of women’s inferiority demonstrated by practice, if not by speech.’¹⁰² In another letter Baker made the case for including women on the platform using the words of Olive Schreiner, the feminist and socialist writer, a fervent anti-war campaigner until her death in 1920, “‘The day when woman takes her place beside men in the governance of external affairs [...] will also be the day that heralds the death of war.’

Her thesis built on the notion that the knowledge of women was ‘superior’ to men as they know the ‘history of human flesh; the cost of it ... he does not.’¹⁰³ Susan Grayzel writes

⁹⁷ ‘League of Nations’, *WMN*, 26 May 1924, p.9.

⁹⁸ ‘League of Nations’, *WMN*, 26 May 1924, p.9.

⁹⁹ ‘League of Nations’, *WMN*, 4 June 1924, p.3.

¹⁰⁰ ‘League of Nations’, *WMN*, 4 June 1924, p.3.

¹⁰¹ ‘League of Nations Union’, *WMN*, 20 May 1924, p.3.

¹⁰² ‘League of Nations’, *WMN*, 23 May 1924, p.9.

¹⁰³ ‘League of Nations’, *WMN*, 04 June 1924, p.3.

‘feminist anti-militarists could speak [...] as outsiders of their states, immune theoretically to appeals of patriotism, militarism, and nationalism.’¹⁰⁴ Grayzel argues women took an interest in the League, hoping they would stop wars as it was women who got ‘nothing out of war but sorrow and trouble,’ and for women to take action they would need to see other women on the platform, as they had grown weary of the tales of men.¹⁰⁵ Helen McCarthy argues in ‘deploying such gendered language’ Baker, ‘drew on an age-old binary opposition twinning femininity with the values of pacifism and masculinity with those of militarism.’¹⁰⁶

Yet Baker thought there were many women in Plymouth ‘willing to help with local work if asked’, and Angus was keen to invite them to join the committee; in particular he wanted a woman to fill the post of secretary, although ‘she will have much tribulation and not a little stamp-licking and addressing envelopes’, exposing the problem of traditionalism and the tendency to task women with auxiliary duties, he did add the caveat, ‘but at our public meetings she shall have a seat on the platform.’¹⁰⁷ Angus made a point of noting that many women already supported the branch, one dealt with literature and ‘another who refused nomination to the executive committee, and would, I believe, prefer prison to a public platform.’¹⁰⁸ This response exposed several complex problems faced by women who were eager to participate in public and political life. Firstly, it was a daunting prospect for newly enfranchised women who were encouraged to speak on the platform, as there was a tendency to ‘conceptualise women in homogenising terms.’¹⁰⁹ Whilst this was a problem for recruitment it was also problem for women who were asked to serve on committees and speak on platforms as they were routinely called to represent the feminine perspective, and as suffragist and feminist Mary Hamilton

¹⁰⁴ Grayzel, *At Home and under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.151.

¹⁰⁵ Grayzel, *At Home and under Fire*.

¹⁰⁶ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.182.

¹⁰⁷ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.191.

¹⁰⁸ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.181.

¹⁰⁹ H. McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.188; As McCarthy points out unlike men, who were often targeted with the prefix of ‘ex-serviceman’ or ‘business’ man, women were targeted as ‘women’.

implied for any women on the platform it was ‘assumed she could speak with the authority of all women.’¹¹⁰ The wider issue of recruitment of women to the PLNU was further handicapped. It was hoped that given the traditionally feminine character of church congregations, organised religion could assist recruitment to the PLNU (and LNU nationally).¹¹¹ However, the Bishop of Plymouth, who regularly filled his church, felt strongly that the churches in Plymouth had not done nearly enough to preach the ideals of the League, and this directly contributed to low numbers in the PLNU. There is evidence that overly masculine language was used to entice church audiences to take up the causes of peace work, which frequently invoked the memory of trench warfare or focused on war’s disruptive impact on the masculine concerns of employment and industry, rather than empathising with women’s maternal qualities.¹¹²

Lady Astor, the local Women’s Liberal Federation and the Plymouth Citizens Association (PCA) encouraged women to work for peace, by engaging with civic life and internationalism, and by supporting the LNU and PLNU. Dr Mabel Ramsay, Chair of the PCA urged the members present at a talk titled ‘women’s responsibilities to the League of Nations’, delivered by Miss Florence Tann on behalf of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), to support a resolution for the PCA ‘to do all in its power to further the object of the League of Nations’.¹¹³ The PCA worked tirelessly for the ideal of emancipating women as a contribution to peace. The PCA and its leaders linked the suffrage and feminist ideals of enfranchisement and representation to peace activism and peace building; inspired by article 9 of the Hague Resolution of 1915 which states ‘Since the combined influence of the women of all countries is one of the strongest forces for the prevention of war, and since women can only

¹¹⁰ Hamilton, ‘Women in Politics’, p.239.

¹¹¹ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.185; Brown cites evidence from early twentieth-century London revealing that women made up 68% of Anglican churchgoers, 64% of Catholics, 66% of Baptists, 74% of Primitive Methodists, 76% of the Salvation Army and 87% of worshippers at Christian mission stations in the East End.

¹¹² McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.183.

¹¹³ ‘Avoiding War’, *WMN*, 23 February 1921, p.7.

have full responsibility and effective influence when they have equal political rights with men, this International Congress of Women demands their political enfranchisement.’¹¹⁴ They believed, like many former suffragettes there was a link between women’s rights at home and peace abroad.¹¹⁵ The PCA campaigned to get women into positions of power and authority in the city. They always supported Lady Astor at election time, and regularly stood independent women candidates for election to the town council; they were responsible for getting the first ever women city councillor elected, Mrs Mary Bayly, who became councillor for Mutley in 1919. The leaders of the PCA, Dr Mable Ramsay and Mary Bayly, were relentless in their quest trying secure women police and magistrates and getting women doctors into the city hospital.¹¹⁶ Lady Astor, was a supporter of the PCA and a very firm believer in the need for women in public office to secure peace and fairness after post-war; in 1928 she was quoted as saying:

It is a tragic thing that it required a terrible world war, in which millions of mothers’ sons were killed, to wake the world up to the fact women were just as necessary as men, and that justice, unless it gives an equal place to women, is really is really no justice at all. The coming of women into public office is going to make the greatest change that has ever taken place in the history of the world.¹¹⁷

Dr Mable Ramsay, founded the Plymouth chapter of the National Union for Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) (which was renamed National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship after 1919 (NUSEC)), was a founding member of the Women’s Medical Association, was president of that organisation from 1933 to 1934, and founded the Plymouth Soroptimists in 1930 (hoping the Soroptimists might become a unit of the LNU); who in 1935

¹¹⁴ J. Addams, E.G. Balch and A. Hamilton, *Women at The Hague: The International Congress of Women and Its Results* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), pp. 150-59.

¹¹⁵ L. M. Ashworth, *Feminism, War and the prospects of International Government -Helena Swanwick and the lost feminists of interwar International Relations*. Limerick Papers in Politics and Public Administration 2008, No.2

¹¹⁶ ‘Plymouth Ban Unreasonable’, *WMN*, 22 June 1932, p.5.

¹¹⁷ ‘Women, War and Empire’, *WMN*, 9 May 1928, p.7.

declared they would work unitedly for peace, as it was their duty to stop all wars by making everyone happy.¹¹⁸

In 1923 Ms F.D. Acland and Mrs Isaac Foot, in a primitive Methodist schoolroom in York Street Plymouth, attempted to mobilise and empower the liberal women of Plymouth to draw the country away from war and towards peace. They believed after the liberal win in Tiverton, a campaign based on the peace message and a policy of total disarmament, supported by a large female vote, that the liberal women of Plymouth could do the same. Their desire for peace in all facets of life was at the centre of the political aims for liberal women of the West as outlined at their annual area conference, and was a radical ambition in Plymouth. At the area conference of the Women's National Liberal Federation in 1925, the women delegates set out a radical disarmament stance, calling for total disarmament, imagining a day when there would be no more navies or armies, and referred to pacifists as ultra-patriots.¹¹⁹

Lady Acland a key member of the Women's Liberal Federation (President of the Federation 1929-1931), led the women of the west on the ambitious and radical Peacemakers Pilgrimage in 1926. The pilgrims of the west greatest challenge would be to garnering support and sympathy for the campaign of 'law, not war' administered through arbitration and supported by disarmament in the naval port of Plymouth. One progressive aim of the pilgrimage was the desire of women to express their opinion for arbitration and to ensure the 'people had the right to say whether the country should go to war or not, because, after all, if war came it was the people who suffered.'¹²⁰ Many local women's organisations signed up and were buoyed by the Locarno Treaties signed the year before which had arbitration at their

¹¹⁸ 'Women's Part in City's History', *WMN*, 14 February 1935, p.5; 'The League and the East', *WMN*, 12 December 1931, p.5.

¹¹⁹ 'Liberal Women and Peace', *WMN*, 30 September 1925, p.3.

¹²⁰ 'Arbitration – Not War', *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 2 June 1926, p.5.

core.¹²¹ Despite this enthusiasm the Peacemakers Pilgrimage was erroneously reported in the WMN stating ‘nothing was heard from the women of Devonport and Plymouth’, and even that it was cancelled due to the General Strike.¹²² But the march did take place and passed through Plymouth on 31 May and thanks to the work of Women’s Cooperative Guild and the PLNU Plymouth not only hosted an eclectic range of peace speakers including the Bishop of Plymouth and Hatty Baker who pleaded to the 1000 people at the Market-place to follow the example of the suffrage movement (who had demonstrated at the same place on the suffrage pilgrimage 13 years earlier) to work for peace with energy, effort and sacrifice that people had worked had done in other days for war.’¹²³ The *Western Daily Press* reported ‘the peacemakers were particularly proud of their successful meetings in the Army centre of Aldershot and the naval town of Plymouth.’¹²⁴

Like Dr Mabel Ramsay, Lady Acland knew that perpetual peace based on emancipation had to be delivered in unity- it had to exist beyond party politics, national borders and extreme feminism as although ‘men had been wagers of war- men and women must be the makers of peace.’¹²⁵ The prophesising suffragist and pacifist Helena Swanwick, recognised that the many pacific men were natural allies of the women’s movement as ‘It is the civilised men who are going to enfranchise women, and it is with such men that women should ally themselves.’¹²⁶ Lady Acland, like Lady Astor and Mable Ramsay, knew the importance of getting the women’s voices into public life both domestically and internationally. As Acland observed of the London Naval Conference 1930 (which created the London Naval Treaty-a

¹²¹ The Locarno Treaties of 1925 were seven agreements whereby Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy and Germany mutually agreed peace in Western Europe. A Year later Germany was accepted as a permanent member of the Council of League. The ‘spirit of Locarno’ can viewed as a period of optimism of peace that spanned from 1925-1930; the spirit of collaboration for peace was eroded by the Great Depression in 1929.

¹²² ‘Peace Pilgrimage’, *WMN*, 10 April 1926, p.5.

¹²³ ‘A Pilgrimage for Peace’, *WMN*, 1 June 1926, p.5.

¹²⁴ ‘Women Peacemakers’, *Western Daily Press*, 21 June 1926, p.12.

¹²⁵ ‘Women’s Work for World Peace’, *WMN*, 13 May 1930, p.7.; The aims of the Peace Crusade included cooperation with women working for peace in America. America not being in the League was often the focus of discussions amongst women’s groups in the city.

¹²⁶ H. Swanwick, *Women and War*. (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1915).

regulation of naval shipbuilding) ‘there has been a hitherto a radical defect in the composition of all such conferences. Only half the peoples concerned take part in them- the male half.’¹²⁷ Lady Horsely, added ‘it is a general danger that the strongest peace force in the world should be denied the means of expression.’¹²⁸ A frustration made greater by knowing several articles of The Hague Resolutions 1915 pointed to the inclusion of women in national and international politics through their enfranchisement as one of the strongest forces for the prevention of war.

As the 1930s progressed haunted by the earlier the failed World Disarmament Conference of 1932-34, and the ‘Great Slump’ (1929-32), and what Overy describes as a watershed change in perceptions of the inevitable slide to war from the mid-1930s, inspired by German rearmament and Italian aggression in Ethiopia; Jill Liddington concludes the increasing contradictions between feminism and peace ideas meant the women’s movement began to lose its earlier coherence and unity. This further created a despairing and feared apathy. Swanwick despaired of women’s ability to rouse themselves against war, a frustration shared by Elsie Perry after the limp response to the stalling disarmament conference in 1933, which allowed Plymothian George Tyler to ask, ‘where are our suffragettes, some of whom years ago were willing to suffer martyrdom for the vote, when they thought, and hoped, it was unattainable?’¹²⁹

The Women’s Cooperative Guild (WCG) were the most pacific, relentless, best represented, and most working-class women’s group in Plymouth. Nationally and internationally the Guild represented an absolutist pacifism that grew stronger and more contentious in the 1930s as other groups swooned towards collective security.¹³⁰ The WCG had achieved a membership of 66,556 by 1930 and it had become a mouthpiece for working-

¹²⁷ ‘Women’s Work for World Peace’, *WMN*, 13 May 1930, p.7.

¹²⁸ ‘Women’s Work for World Peace’, *WMN*, 13 May 1930, p.7.

¹²⁹ ‘Apathy of the Electors’, *WMN*, 20 November 1933, p.6.

¹³⁰ J. Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-militarism in Britain Since 1820*, (USA: Syracuse University Press, 1989), p.144.

women, almost all of them mothers.¹³¹ Margaret Llewelyn Davies, general secretary of the Women's Co-operative Guild (1889-1922), wrote 'for war casts its dread shadow in a special way on the lives of mothers and wives', for many Plymouth women this was all too true after the suffering of the Great War.¹³² They were dedicated but controversial pacifists. At the 1928 Plymouth Congress of Women's Cooperative Guild, there was a resolution calling for the banning of all Empire demonstrations and practices in schools and keeping their children out of the Boy Scouts and Girls Guides, due to their militaristic practices. They further wanted the abolishment of all war films and toys which suggested war to children and eulogized the Russian proposal for universal disarmament.¹³³ All resolutions were approved by over a 1000 woman who attended the congress at Plymouth Guildhall. As historian Black notes 'the Guild was particularly active and imaginative in this respect, demanding that war toys be kept out of co-operative stores, opposing war films [and] objecting to Officers Training Corps in schools'.¹³⁴ Indeed, the guild had managed to get working-class mothers on the board of film sensors.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-militarism in Britain Since 1820*, p.144.

¹³² Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-militarism in Britain Since 1820*, p.144.

¹³³ 'Peace for All Time', *WMN*, 14 June 1928, p.7.

¹³⁴ N. Black, 'The Mothers International: The Women's Co-operative Guild and Feminist Internationalism', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 7:6 (1984), pp 467-476.

¹³⁵ Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-militarism in Britain Since 1820*, p.143.

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Figure 1. 'Their Great Day. – Those schoolboys found delight in trying to discover the workings of one of the Air Force guns', *WMN*, 1934.

Empire Days, Navy Week displays and live war games, further antagonised the anti-militarist ideals of Plymouth women pacifists (and the Plymouth Labour Party). The 1932 Navy week plan caused, Elsie Perry, the honorary secretary of the PLNU, to condemn the demonstrations and bombardments of enemies as "horrors"- suggesting that the public had 'seen and known enough of the horrors of wars that these life-shattering must be recounted'.¹³⁶ The scornful letter to the local press acknowledged that it may be necessary to have trials and experiments in preparation for another war; but felt that 'to deliberately and blatantly thrust these horrible manoeuvres before the public is reprehensible', with the World Disarmament Conference 1932-34 taking place the displays were the antithesis of what the country stood for and urged 'anyone with a spark of humanity look on at the preparations for such "attractions" without strongly deprecating such rehearsals of future warfare'.¹³⁷ This protest was supported by Dorothy Shapcote, who described herself as 'an average member of the public' and 'not a

¹³⁶ 'Horrors', *WMN*, 24 May 1932, p.3.

¹³⁷ 'Horrors', *WMN*, 24 May 1932, p.3.

member of the League of Nations',¹³⁸ as she posed the question, other than adolescents and children who would be amused by such repugnance and urged the organisers 'to provide something adequately "thrilling" for the younger generation without recalling such horrors'.¹³⁹ The worrying impact of this spectacle on the young was also the reason why the Plymouth labour party passed a resolution that stated 'such spectacles develop in the young an admiration of war, and tend to nullify the efforts of ... international peace'.¹⁴⁰ They hoped the resolution would eliminate such 'objectionable features' such as the bombardment of an enemy coastline, submarines, air craft and air bombs from any future navy week.

There was another controversial but concise message from the Plymouth women's Co-operative guild (PWCG) when pledging their support for 'total disarmament'- their absolute pacifist message was based on the ideal that 'law and reason rather than war and force' were the only possible solutions to create a 'new social order' in which 'war is outlawed'.¹⁴¹ The resolution was ratified at a peace celebration meeting at Ford Cooperative hall, where there was a peace play and speech titled 'World Peace and Disarmament' during which, Mrs E Martin, secretary of the guild, envisioned the Dockyard 'making liners ... instead of warships'.¹⁴²

Further signs of the PWCG's growing pacifism were revealed against the darkening backdrop of wars in Ethiopia, China and Spain. They were prominent during a peace march wearing the costumes of women of all nations and creating a 'tableaux showing horrors of war'.¹⁴³ In 1939 the PWCG were disaffiliated after they refused to conform to rule 5, which meant that only those who support Labour or Cooperative

¹³⁸ 'Navy Weeks "Horrors"', *WMN*, 30 May 1932, p.2.

¹³⁹ 'Navy Weeks "Horrors"', *WMN*, 30 May 1932, p.2.

¹⁴⁰ 'Navy Week Spectacle', *WMN*, 21 June 1932, p.5.

¹⁴¹ 'Women and Peace', *WMN*, 12 November 1930, p.5.

¹⁴² 'Women and Peace', *WMN*, 12 November 1930, p.5.

¹⁴³ 'Peace Week', *WMN*, 15 November 1937, p.5. A march which included banners from the National League of the Blind, the National Union of General and Municipal Workers and the Transport and General Workers Union.

parliamentary or municipal candidates may hold office.¹⁴⁴ The increasingly politicised peace debates had frustrated Guild members who had always prided themselves as being non-political. Many socialist candidates who had denounced rearmament had changed their position because of the Spanish Civil War and had become supporters of intervention, anti-fascists, and thus pacifists, a stance that was out of kilter with the absolutism of the Plymouth Guild.

Despite the many meetings, conferences, resolutions, attempts to democratise the public institutions, the instinct of the past haunted the women's peace crusade. Lady Acland, who led the Women's Peace Crusade in 1928, a movement created from the enthusiasm of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, admitted 'the instinct of the cave woman to fawn on her protector and gloat over his prowess is not quite dead.'¹⁴⁵ A view which echoed that of Helena Swanwick who argued that women shared the responsibility for the cult of physical violence; 'if men have enjoyed fighting, and gloried in bloodshed ... the women of their age and race loved them for it.'¹⁴⁶ In a sailor town like Plymouth the instinct of the past would prove a difficult barrier to allowing women to imagine an emancipated peace, but on the flip side it easily enticed many women imagine their new freer selves a role in wartime as uniformed members of national defence, a civic duty that could be easier to imagine and work for than peace.

¹⁴⁴ 'Guild Women Stand Firm', *WMN*, 26 May 1939, p.4

¹⁴⁵ 'Women's Work for World Peace', *WMN*, 13 May 1930, p.7.

¹⁴⁶ Ashworth, *Feminism, War and the prospects of International Government*.

The battle for Peace in Plymouth's Classrooms

Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe¹⁴⁷

The Reverend Willian Riley, a Congregationalist minister, presented a resolution at the 1922 Plymouth Congregational Union, which demanded the government and the Minister of Education revise the education system of the country 'with a view to instilling into the minds of the young the international spirit and outlook.'¹⁴⁸ The Plymouth League of Nations spokesman Commander Norman M. Lewis RN, expressed his concerns about the attitudes of youth on peace, telling his Rotarian audience he had personally spoken to six or seven hundred schoolboys and girls, in an attempt to give the coming generation a broad international outlook, while keeping their decent patriotism, hoping that it would have a 'great effect' on keeping the peace.¹⁴⁹ Lewis's teaching of 'peace' to the city's school children was made possible after the Oxford scholar and Secretary of the LNU Max Garnett, successfully persuaded the Teachers' Association and Local Education Authority (LEA) to accept 'the teaching of peace' and the work of the League as part of the curriculum.¹⁵⁰ Through teaching in schools Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, who played a leading role in forming the Bryce Group, a group of internationalist pacifists, hoped the habit of peace would eventually be 'fixed in the offspring.'¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*, p.504.

¹⁴⁸ 'League of Nations and Peace', *WMN*, 22 August 1922, p.4; Reverend H.E. Arrowsmith raised the point that the young people of the region were not impressed by the dangers of another war. He wrote in an article that for 'most men and women of 25 the war itself is a vague and misty thing. Hence, to the younger generation most of the Armistice Day celebrations must be to a certain extent unreal ... and many of them refuse to believe in the ghastly horrors of the last one'. He posed the question 'are we to concentrate on the danger of another war and implore the rising generation to having nothing to do with it?'

¹⁴⁹ 'Influence for Peace', *WMN*, 3 March 1934, p.6.

¹⁵⁰ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, pp.227-228.

¹⁵¹ Kings College, Cambridge, Lowes Dickinson papers, GLD i/5, journal, 1916-1932 entry for 2 November 1922m, 'Biological Inheritance'.

A debate on how to teach 'peace' in the schools emerged among educationalists and teachers; as the education provision was highly decentralised the curriculum was devolved to LEAs. So decision makers on curricula were lobbied by an eclectic mix of teaching associations and educational societies, whose imaginations were captured by the prospect of inspiring an 'enlightened patriotism.' It was believed the discipline of history offered the best opportunities to internationalise 'the story of the humanity's past and future progress'.¹⁵² The historian Eileen Power believed teaching history should show mankind its common heritage in the past and its common hopes for the future, indeed historians proved powerful in their ambitions to bring internationalist convictions into their classrooms.¹⁵³ The head teachers of the schools of Plymouth met with the regional LNU representative Lieutenant-Colonel G.N. Wyatt in an attempt to promote the LNU in schools.¹⁵⁴ The head teachers wanted to encourage internationalism through student exchanges with the French Scouts and German school children, and creating a city-wide international day delivered by the LNU and the Historical Society 'to give an account on what had been done towards promoting peace'. They argued that whilst they could not be too grateful for personalities like Drake and Nelson, history teaching 'should introduce the belief that their work would not be necessary in the future.'¹⁵⁵ Miss S. Matthias in a lecture on the teaching of history to the Society of Education of the South-West, contended that the teaching of history was not sufficiently preparing the child for citizenship, suggesting more attention should be paid to England as part of Europe and thinking less of the narrow patriotic point of view.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, pp.104-109.

¹⁵³ E. Power, *A Bibliography for Teachers of History* (London: Women's International League, 1919), p.4; E. Power, 'The Teaching of History and World Peace', in F.S. Marvin (ed.), *The Evolution of World- Peace* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p.180.

¹⁵⁴ 'Sowing the seeds of World Peace', *WMN*, 28 February 1933, p.6.

¹⁵⁵ 'Sowing the seeds of World Peace', *WMN*, 28 February 1933, p.6.

¹⁵⁶ 'Plymouth Lecture', *WMN*, 26 November 1923, p.6.

Despite the LNU's cautious educational policy, which as McCarthy notes, 'never really challenged the role of schools in fostering loyalty to the nation-state'; there was some evidence the city's school children were engaging in League activities.¹⁵⁷ Alice Boxhall's annual report for Mount-street Senior Girls School noted 'lessons on the League of Nations had proved valuable, and through them several girls had become members of the Junior Branch of the League Union.'¹⁵⁸ Over 2000 Plymouth school children were also treated by the PLNU, to a trip to the Gaumont theatre to see the anti-war film "The World War and after", in an attempt to show them how to solve problems without reverting to the language of men, war.¹⁵⁹ One school section had given a play entitled 'Humanity Delivered', which included many of the twenty-five junior members of the branch and was directed by the school teacher, there was also an essay competition on the topic of one the lectures they had attended.¹⁶⁰ The play and prize giving followed a speech from Isaac Foot outlining the collective effort required to maintain peace and provide an alternative 'for blood-shed and slaughter for the generation rising up'.¹⁶¹ June 1932 witnessed the inauguration of the Plymouth Central Junior Branch of the League of Nations, with a healthy membership of 470.¹⁶²

But politicising the classroom was an emotive and controversial issue and there were fears that the 'new compulsory' peace 'propaganda' would 'pervert the past in order to gain new sanctions for the visions of the future' and 'falsify history in the interests of peace.'¹⁶³ The Historical Association annual meeting in the West Country debated the question of 'Should history teaching be used for propaganda?' its members fearing propaganda from both the right and left. From the right, they wanted to avoid the possibilities of the commercial exploitation

¹⁵⁷ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.116.

¹⁵⁸ 'Schooldays made Attractive', *WMN*, 25 July 1934, p.3.

¹⁵⁹ 'Anti-War Propaganda at Plymouth', *WMN*, 26 January 1932, p.4.

¹⁶⁰ 'Organize Anxiety for Peace', *WMN*, 10 November 1934, p.7.

¹⁶¹ 'Organize Anxiety for Peace', *WMN*, 10 November 1934, p.7.

¹⁶² 'Sowing the seeds of World Peace', *WMN*, 28 February 1933, p.6.

¹⁶³ The Times, 8 July 1927, 15. See also 16 July 1927, 8; 1 August 1927; M. Stewart, *Bias and Education for Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), p.9.

of the cinema in schools and from the left the need to ‘avoid creating a new pseudo-aristocracy.’ The solution proposed by most of the delegates was to teach how to get to the truth, how difficult it had been, but how important it was for school leavers (at 14) to be able to navigate ‘the sphere of very serious propaganda,’ in order to arrive at their own opinions in their own way as they should be thoroughly dissatisfied at the mess we have made of civilisation.¹⁶⁴

After a disarmament demonstration by some school children in reaction to the Geneva World Disarmament Conference in 1932, the local press attacked the children by writing ‘what can school children know of these things?’¹⁶⁵ One ‘alleged’ recent school child penned a reply challenging each argument put forward in the article, defending the ‘school child’ – an article Colonel Drury incidentally described as ‘a welcome oasis of sanity in that Sahara of sentimentalism’. Responding to the question, a young John Foot, the third son of Liberal MP Isaac Foot, retorted ‘at least they know that the world of the last generation, which sought security in guns and cruisers, and whose watchword was “a keel for a keel,” failed dismally to find the peace they sought.’¹⁶⁶ The final rebuttal was against the articles claim ‘that disarmament postulates a radical change in human nature of which there is not a shred of evidence,’ to which the young John Foot retorted ‘then I would with all deference, advise a closer examination, starting with, let’s say, the school children.’¹⁶⁷

BUF member Rear-Admiral Martin criticised the teaching of peace propaganda in schools claiming, ‘when gallant deeds are taboo, not only constitutes a breach of faith, but invites another war.’¹⁶⁸ He felt the propaganda was not only infecting the city’s schools but also the sports clubs, and cinemas; arguing ‘that successive governments since the armistice have petted

¹⁶⁴ ‘Text Books replaced by Kinema: Historians and new era of teaching’, *WMN*, 6 January 1923, p.3.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Asking the School Children’, *WMN*, 3 February 1932, p.2.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Geneva and Elsewhere’, *WMN*, 3 February 1932, p.2; ‘Asking the School Children’, *WMN*, 3 February 1932, p.2

¹⁶⁷ ‘Asking the School Children’, *WMN*, 3 February 1932, p.2

¹⁶⁸ ‘Breaking faith with the War Dead’, *WMN*, 15 November 1932, p.5; Martin was also making a reference to the death of his only son in the Great War.

and encouraged these godless agents has not only been an insult to the dead, but an injury to the living.’¹⁶⁹

Despite the work of Commander Lewis and the Board of Education, the evidence suggests, as it did nationally, that the League instruction primarily assumed an indirect form within the curriculum, or through extra-curricular activities.¹⁷⁰ Extra-curricular activities in Plymouth were a significant battleground between the defencists and pacifists especially with the formation of OTC and cadet corps. A number of socialist groups across the city actively discouraged cadet corps and the Territorials from recruiting which prompted William Waldorf Astor, Conservative MP for Fulham East, to accuse them of ‘callous inhumanity to their own wives and children’.¹⁷¹ Members of Devonport High School Parents Association in 1935 voted against the school reintroducing a cadet corps by 70 votes to 21 after a debate revealed opinion was sharply divided. One member donned a gas mask in an effort to shock the parents into voting for the motion, and he spoke at length on the perils of gas warfare; but he was met with stubborn pacifist resistance when one parent commented; ‘he would strongly resent any military training for his children at the High School. He had seen his comrades slaughtered, and men, women and children gassed in spite of scientific protection.’¹⁷² *Headway* had produced a series of articles arguing both ways for the case of OTC’s and cadet corps in 1926, and the LNU’s position on the issue was one of perfect neutrality.¹⁷³ But the head teacher and chair of the association H.A.T. Simmons, felt it was against the tide of defencism when he announced ‘he could say definitely what no other headmaster in his experience could say. I know the parents of my scholars are against the formation of a corps 3 to 1.’¹⁷⁴ Interestingly in

¹⁶⁹ ‘Breaking faith with the War Dead’, *WMN*, 15 November 1932, p.5

¹⁷⁰ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.117.

¹⁷¹ ‘Territorials and Cadet Corps’, *WMN*, November 1936, p.7.

¹⁷² ‘Cadet corps banned’, *WMN*, 07 December 1935, p.7.

¹⁷³ Rev. Hon. E. Lyttelton, ‘The Effect of the OTC’, *Headway*, December 1925, p.226; J.H Badley, ‘The Effect of the OTC’, *Headway*., January 1926, P.5; ‘Both Sides’ *Headway*., February 1926, p.23, and ‘The Effect of the OTC’, *Headway*, pp.26–27. General Council minutes, June 1928, LNU/1/2, 22; ‘About OTCs’, *Headway*, April 1930, p.i.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Cadet corps banned’, *WMN*, 07 December 1935, p.7.

1934 the Head Master of Plymouth College H.W. Ralph, fully supported the governor's decision to maintain an OTC with the War Office at the school. As a member of PLNU he thought it was his duty to support the military training of Officers, so the League of Nations could fulfil its collective responsibility to preserve a barrier to war, at all costs.¹⁷⁵ The LNU position on OTCs was to keep an open mind; as Gilbert Murray argued, 'in OTC's we must not treat them as if they were opponents, but as people seeking the same sort of things as ourselves'.¹⁷⁶

Amidst the squabbling and indecision of a peace policy for the city's youth, there was a growing support for militarising the youth as a means of national defence. Captain R.C. Bridges, National Conservative agent in the Drake Division of Plymouth, gave a speech to the Conservative club, stating he wanted youth clubs to support the policy of 'bringing the defences of this country up to what they should be' - further noting that this could be achieved through the clubs acting as 'educational centres for the youth of the community' as 'we need political education among the young people, and political clubs can do a tremendous amount of work in this direction'.¹⁷⁷

A great coup for the pacifists attempt to expose the youth to the broader principles of international cooperation was the support of the Plymouth Scout Association for the LNU. The city's Chief Scout envisaged a Junior League of Nations which would take advantage of 'the obedience of youth of the world to Scout law' to increase the scout's understanding of peoples of the world in an attempt to remove the barriers of ignorance and misunderstanding that polarised societies across the world.¹⁷⁸ City Alderman Mason publicly condemned the Scout Association for being a militaristic institution with too many brass hats at the top of the

¹⁷⁵ 'School OTC Defended', *WMN*, 19 February 1934, p.4.

¹⁷⁶ Gilbert Murray, General Council minutes, June 1928, LNU/1/2, 22.

¹⁷⁷ 'Strong Defensive Position', *WMN*, 16 November 1936, p.8.

¹⁷⁸ 'The Great Jamboree', *WMN*, 30 July 1930, p.6; In 1935 70,000 British schoolchildren took part in overseas journeys (Bailey, *International Studies in Modern Education*, 110).

organisation.¹⁷⁹ But as Martin Dedman argues the view that the Boy Scouts was militaristic is not tenable; it was an international youth movement with universal values. It not only embraced international cooperation it did so in a classless manner – mixing boys from different social backgrounds.¹⁸⁰

Rear-Admiral Martin dismissed the peace movement in the youth groups as they could not unite in their quest for peace; yet in 1934, in the shadow of the collapse of the World Disarmament Conference, the city's youth peace groups joined together to contribute towards a national manifesto of peace and in late 1936 a resolution was passed that welcomed the formation of a youth group in Plymouth to bring all the youth organisations together to work for peace under the guidance of the LNU.¹⁸¹ Bristol MP Robert H. Bernays, at a public meeting in Plymouth, immediately challenged the new organisation, recognising the deepening fear of war, suggesting they had a 'very special responsibility' to ensure that the League of Nations survived citing three essentials; 'power of understanding, spirit of wisdom, and a sense of strength.'¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ 'Cadet corps banned', *WMN*, 7 December 1935, p.7.

¹⁸⁰ M. Dedman, 'Baden-Powell, Militarism, and the 'Invisible Contributors' to the Boy Scout Scheme, 1904–1920', *Twentieth Century British History*, 4:3 (1993), pp.201–223.

¹⁸¹ 'Challenge to Youth', *WMN*, 23 October 1936, p.5.

¹⁸² 'Challenge to Youth', *WMN*, 23 October 1936, p.5.

Chapter 2: Imagining and Preparing for War in Plymouth 1918-1939

Figure 2 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Figure 2: E.H. Shepard, 'The Blessings of Peace or Mr. Everyman's Ideal Home',
Punch, 1937.

Had the 'Blueland' warships and aircraft been really hostile, had the bombs-incendiary, gas, explosive-which rained on Plymouth been real, had the live shells been fired from the attacking warships-? A ghastly picture to imagine. [...] twenty years ago, during the Great War Plymouth lay in comparative security, but conditions have so changed that today it calls for a stern realization of the facts.¹

¹ 'Notes in the West: Grim Necessity', *WMN*, 17 July 1937, p.7.

Introduction

On a peaceful, sunny, spring afternoon in 1924, at the invitation of the gracious Commodore and his Officers, some children were playing football at the Keyham Gunnery School. As the zephyr finally blew in the correct direction the peace was shattered by the sudden sound of a maroon, as gas and smoke bombs descended from the sky. The children who had not provided themselves with anti-gas masks died instantly, whilst their more visionary chums callously continued the game having donned their gas masks. The agriculturalists masked themselves and the canteen horses so that these survivors could now ‘take part in the salvation of their country.’ After witnessing the gassing of the public in the Commodore’s garden, there was a plea to ‘our politicians, pedagogues, publicans, or priests’ to provide gas masks and instruction for the use for their charges.²

One spectator reflected;

I suppose no thinking woman imagines that the last war ended war, and most -whether thinking or unthinking- will have absorbed the fact that twelve hours before the declaration of next hostilities many great cities and rural districts will have been destroyed by aerial gas attacks.³

Another public display from the anti-gas school at Devonport in 1923, featured a ‘representation of civilians in the next war’, showing men, women and children- even a baby in a perambulator - wearing gas masks. All of whom were heartily applauded by the large crowd.⁴ These grotesque shows shocked their guests, yet they were in line with far-sighted war futurologists of the 1920s and early 1930s.

² ‘The Next War’, *WMN*, 17 May 1924, p10.

³ ‘The Next War’, *WMN*, 17 May 1924, p10.

⁴ ‘Olympia Thrills’, *WMN*, 5 July 1923, p.6.

A war of the future would witness an invisible death in the air, which would cause tremendous destruction and large numbers of casualties.⁵ A knock-out blow as imagined by the originators of the theory P.R.C. Groves, L.E.O Charlton and H.G. Wells became increasingly popularised in books, fiction and non-fiction, the media- mainly newspapers, but also newsreels, films and radio- together they played a role in propagating the fear and awareness of aerial bombardment to a wider audience.⁶ Therefore, by the 1930s the basic elements of how the knockout blow would be carried out were largely stereotyped; there would be massive damage to the urban environment from high explosives (HE) and incendiary bombs (IB) and gas might render cities uninhabitable. In 1922 the Air Staff reported to the Committee of the Imperial Defence on the scale of attack expected from the continent. They reported High explosive and incendiary bombs must be expected, but the incendiary bomb did not offer a serious menace and the use of poison gas was not considered likely.⁷ By 1937 the ARP Department anticipated a German air raid would devote 50% of HE, 25% IB and 25% Gas, but noted gas was problematic so this load would likely to be replaced by HE.⁸ These lurid depictions took hold in the popular imagination, yet while other European countries carried civil defence planning actively and openly, Britain's approach was 'extremely' low key. The work of Britain's ultra-secret ARP planners was only revealed when wars in Abyssinia, China and especially Spain provided 'vivid demonstrations of offensive air power used against civilian populations.'⁹ Yet with Plymouth's large naval and military presence it is possible that as R.A.J. Walling suspected, as well as the (intelligentsia) well read, informed and educated civilian in the local community, the armed services knew the terrible truth, and through

⁵ Holman, *The Next Air War*, p.2.

⁶ Holman, *The Next Air War*, p.2.

⁷ O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, p.17.

⁸ O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, p.144.

⁹ Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', p.300.

demonstrations, war games and support with ARP displays they contrived to influence the public imagination and opinion.¹⁰

An Attack from the Air

Thursday 16 August 1928 was the final night of four mock air-raids that darkened the skies of London. Over the week 300 tons of bombs were dropped on the capitals vital services by invading bomber squadrons. The air manoeuvres, the biggest ever staged in the UK, were again witnessed by the *WMN* London correspondent; the headline he chose to share with his West-country readership this time - 'civilians the worst sufferers'.¹¹ When interviewed by the correspondent, Brigadier-General P.R.C. Groves, secretary general to the Air League and chief referee of the raids, elaborated further by stating that in the next war each country would release a squadron of bombers to attack the other's vital systems using the devil's paraphernalia of chemical warfare and aerial bombing and thus;

there would be ruin and destruction. The people who would suffer most would be the civilian population ... vital points would be in ruins, and gas would render the other parts inhabitable. Local defence in air warfare can only be palliative... the air is so vast that evasion is almost always impossible.¹²

In 1924 the *WMN* joined the morbid parlour game of imagining the next war when reporting that 'an aeroplane attack upon the fleet at anchor, dropping gas bombs' was the most possible form of attack in the next war- until such times that the 'death-ray' was developed, then 'we shall have to find a new name for war'.¹³

¹⁰ Walling. *The Story of Plymouth*, p.267.

¹¹ 'Toll of the Air War', *WMN*, 18 August 1928, p.7.

¹² 'Toll of the Air War', *WMN*, 18 August 1928, p.7.

¹³ 'Naval and Military', *WMN*, 1 December 1924, p.6.

Although the year before Groves elaborate war games first took place the *WMN* printed a leading article envisioning how the air defence reforms in 1926 might impact the city. The article pointed out ‘the subject of an attack from the air had never particularly stirred the imagination of people in the West-country’, due to its geographical position.¹⁴ Indeed, there were only farcical or fantastical reports of hostile aircraft crossing the city borders in the last war; one story still persists that a single German machine ‘flew over Plymouth to try and ascertain what happened to the Russian Legions’.¹⁵ However, the article realised ‘immense advances in aviation’ meant that Plymouth, ‘as one the greatest naval arsenals in the world’, would be the immediate object of an enemy attack. It was imagined a ‘bolt from the blue’ would wreak havoc in Devonport dockyard, destroying the fleet in one blow, such a crippling blow would enable great air-craft carriers to float freely in the sound and launch air raids further inland in preparation for an invasion.¹⁶ There was no direct reference to civilian non-combatants as potential casualties – although as Hyde and Nuttal pointed out even if there was no deliberate targeting of the civil population, ‘casualties must be counted among those who live or work in the neighbourhood of objects of military or strategic importance’.¹⁷

Gas bombs and a city divided

Poison gas will play a part so important as to overshadow every other means. Uncontrolled and unlimited are these mists whose deadly fumes must settle to not only asphyxiate humans but kill all beasts and insects and strip the very leaves from the trees.¹⁸

¹⁴ ‘Air Defence’, *WMN*, 20 July 1926, p.6.

¹⁵ ‘Air Defence’, *WMN*, 20 July 1926, p.6.

¹⁶ ‘Air Defence’, *WMN*, 20 July 1926, p.6.

¹⁷ Hyde and Nuttal, *Air Defence and the Civil population*, p.2.

¹⁸ W. Booth-Clibborn. "The Suicide of Civilization." *Australian Evangel/Glad Tidings Messenger*, Sermon May canvass Cathedral, Australia, (1931).

The notion of a ‘knockout’ gas attack on the key cities and ports of the British Isles had occupied many thinkers and non-thinkers since the tragic gassing witnessed in the Great War; and it was a topic that presented a remarkable divergence of opinion. There were two main schools of thought. There were those who felt that any gas attacks must be so deadly that no manner of protection or precaution can be of any avail against them- with such advocates as Lord Halsbury and the LNU.¹⁹ The other school was one who held the view that gas attacks were the ‘most powerful and humane warfare ever invented,’ and could have little effect if the community was properly equipped and organised to meet them.²⁰ A school whose support included J.B.S. Haldane, a professor of genetics and biometry; Basil Liddell Hart, a British Military commentator, and H.M. Hyde author of *Air Defence and the Civil Population* (1937).²¹

Most of the people, who had no practical experience of ‘gas’, thought it was a mysterious weapon capable of inflicting untold damage, suffering and death upon the civil population. Ulf Schmidt argues that whatever people’s ideological or political views gas warfare represented the ‘ugly face of modernity, a threshold that had been irreversibly crossed’.²² The imagery of gas warfare and its association with catastrophic loss of life through systemic extermination through asphyxiation, could be found in the literature and artistic culture of the interwar period and became a part of the collective memory and imagination of the European public.²³

Plymouth library received the first copy of H.G. Wells’ *The Shape of Things to Come* in September 1933. The *WMN* provided its readers with a well-chosen selection of prophetic dystopian visions of a future war citing how the ‘the joyless frantic fighting people full of hate’ would fight a war in 1940 that had started in the Polish corridor would bring ‘death by fiendish

¹⁹ Schmidt, *Secret Science*, p.60.

²⁰ H.M. Hyde and G.R.F. Nuttall, *Air Defence and the Civil population*, P.60.

²¹ For a detailed account of duelling perspectives on ‘gas’ see M. Haapamaki chapter 3 ‘Dew of death - duelling perspectives on poison gas’ pp.51-67.

²² Schmidt, *Secret Science*.

²³ Schmidt, *Secret Science*, pp.72-73.

discoveries in gas' which further lead to a 'maculated fever that had put gas warfare into its place. It had halved the world's population'.²⁴ Wells's novel was merely the best known of a large body of popular fictional works about gas war that appeared in interwar period: *The Gas War of 1940* (1931), *The Poison War* (1933), *1944* (1926), *Public Faces* (1932). Famed producer Alexander Korda adapted Wells' novel into the film *Things to Come* (1936) which depicted a aero-chemical attack which reduced humankind to a new Dark Age, the film which was unusually reviewed on a whole page of the *WMN*, and took hold of popular imagination as borne out in contemporary testimony.²⁵ Writer George Beardmore recorded in his diary 'We had all taken *The Shape of Things to Come* too much to heart, also the dire prophecies of scientists, journalists, and even politicians of the devastation and disease that would follow'²⁶ Images of gas warfare whether in novels, cartoons, poems or songs were used by pacifists to build an argument for the abolishment of war, as gas warfare made modern war inhumane, immoral, humiliating and meaningless.²⁷ Yet supporters of chemical warfare argued these images and the prevailing artistic culture were grossly disproportionate. The Utilitarian argument cited the fact that gas shells caused only 5.7 per cent of non-life-threatening injuries and 1.32 per cent of deaths on the battlefield, as evidence of a more humane form of weaponry.²⁸

²⁴ 'Mr Wells has had a Dream', *WMN*, 1 September 1933, p.7.

²⁵ Haapamaki, *The Coming of the Aerial War*, p.28; Mackay, "War Imagined." *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War*, p.39.

²⁶ G. Beardmore, *Civilians at War: Journals 1938-46* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 34.

²⁷ Schmidt, *Secret Science*, pp.42-43.

²⁸ Schmidt, *Secret Science*, pp.42-43.

Figures 3 and 4 have been removed due Copyright restrictions

Figure 3: B. Partridge, 'The Armoury of Mars', *Punch*, 1936.

Figure 4: B. Partridge, 'The Dawn of Progress' *Punch*, 1936.

Marion Girard in *A Strange and Formidable Weapon*, argued that in the 1920's the public were horrified by gas, but the military were largely more gas-tolerant.²⁹ Many of the military commentators thought an attack against the civil population was 'inevitable and that the public must both accept the threat and prepare effectively'.³⁰ Many of these contrarians were dispassionate and felt that the physical effects were not as grave as feared since they were so reliant upon climatic conditions. However, they were convinced the real danger of a chemical attack would be psychological and not material, and were concerned about the consequences of widespread panic. It was this notion that finally induced the government to set up the Air Raids Precautions Department (A.R.P.D) in May 1935. The main priority of the

²⁹ M. Girard, *A Strange and Formidable Weapon: British Responses to World War I Poison Gas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

³⁰ Haapamaki, *The Coming of the Aerial War*, p.52.

department was to provide advice to local authorities on how to protect the civil population in an air raid, with a view of creating a gas-tolerant public through large scale propaganda.³¹

Before the ARPD decided to launch the large-scale civil defence scheme the British public had been exposed to exaggerated reports about the power and mystery of chemical weapons.³² In a House of Lords in a debate in July 1928 the Lords debated the subject of ‘poison gas in Germany’. Lord Danesfort started the debate by summarising the report of an industrial accident;

Towards the end of May last the public of this country were shocked by the announcement of a serious explosion of poisonous gas, known as phosgene gas, at Stolzenberg’s factory in Hamburg.³³

This ‘accident’ (and the public concern) was used as a platform for those who found chemical warfare morally abhorrent to paint pictures of how a gas attack on the civil population might be envisioned.³⁴ As Lord Halsbury retorted;

The experiences of the affected area are widely described in the Press as a foretaste of the fate of civilian populations in the next war, and the occasion is used as propaganda, on the one hand for pacifism, and on the other hand for the movement, of Nationalist origin, in favour of militarism and civil defence measures on a large scale against gas attacks by hostile aircraft.³⁵

Halsbury, outlined his authority on the subject by stating that he had served as Chief of the explosives department of the British Ministry of War during the Great War. He proceeded to paint many vivid, alarming word-pictures of what a gas attack on London would look like. His visions were formed by what was reported on the accident in Hamburg and his personal

³¹ O’Brien, *Civil Defence*, p.51.

³² Schmidt, *Secret Science: A century of Poison Warfare and Human Experiments*, pp.66-7.

³³ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol.71, House of Lords, 11 July 1928, cc.963-86.

³⁴ The gas explosion was a shock to the public as it was reported in parts of the British press that Germany had secretly been stockpiling chemicals for use in conflict - which contravened the Great War agreements and the Geneva protocols. It fuelled the alarmist’s arsenal of propagandist anti-gas visions.

³⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol.71, House of Lords, 11 July 1928, cc.963-86.

research on the topic of chemical warfare.³⁶ He shocked the Lords (and the public when printed in the press) when he claimed, ‘that forty tons of diphenylchlorarsine would be sufficient to destroy the whole of London’ leaving all men, women and children dead. He claimed that this was not an exaggeration and was highly possible, as it was based on ‘*the Manual of Medical Aspects of Chemical Warfare*’ which had been published by the War Office.³⁷ It was a book that he thought should be given away.

If every adult in this country were to read that, you might have such a wave of indignant and righteous horror that people would do anything to make some agreement which would put these things under international control and prevent their use in future warfare.³⁸

Halsbury was accused of scare-mongering by some of his Peers (even during the debate) and would later be described as a layperson who would rely on emotional and humanitarian appeals.³⁹ Yet he had gained the support of many of the House that evening (and beyond) and would become a trenchant voice that would stand firm against the utilitarian arguments of the gas enthusiasts, and he was widely published in many newspapers. His future war novel *1944* (1926), was often referenced in official circles, as were many of his imaginative, dark visions of a chemical war in the UK.⁴⁰

It was both the distressing outcomes of the air manoeuvres over London and the alarming statements of Lord Halsbury in the House of Lords that stirred Plymouth based scientist and teacher Mr Raymond Butler, a well-qualified and respected scientist who possessed a MSc. and F.R.S who lectured at Plymouth Technical college, and a member of the Plymouth League of Nations Association, to present a mini-series of lantern and illustrated

³⁶ Reports were taken from *The Times* and the official German report.

³⁷ These estimates were repeated in an article in *The Times* in 1936.

³⁸ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol.71, House of Lords, 11 July 1928, cc.963-86.

³⁹ Haapamaki, *The Coming of the Aerial War*, pp.51-68.

⁴⁰ Haapamaki, *The Coming of the Aerial War*, P.56; The Novel depicts how the USSR attack UK from the air, leaving only a few survivors.

lectures on the topic of a chemical warfare the autumn of 1928.⁴¹ His spate of lectures coincided with the coming into force of the Geneva Protocol in 1928 and the registering of the protocol into the League of Nations Treaty Series in 1929.⁴² His first lecture titled ‘The Alternative to the League’ as part of the PLNU informed the audience that it was ‘almost impossible’ to defend a city like ‘Plymouth’ against an aerial attack ‘loaded with poisonous gas’, frequently referencing London’s vulnerability in the recent air manoeuvres and Halsbury’s lurid pronouncements as evidence.⁴³ He argued that ‘the production of poisonous gases from the same chemicals that supply us the medicines and dyes, combine to make man’s devices for the destruction of his fellow-men more terrible than at any-time in the world’s history’; thus, making disarmament futile and impossible. Therefore, only the wholehearted will of the people through the League of Nations would ‘save the world from the horrors of chemical warfare.’⁴⁴ He consistently used the argument that ‘since 1918 nations have made over 1000 poison gasses’ and that ‘it was impracticable to provide all men, women and children with gas masks’ (A notion often cited by Halsbury). He made it clear to his audiences in explicit and emotional pleas that ‘if there is no check on the manufacture of explosives, poison gasses and other weapons of mass destruction [...] then the enemy will exterminate half the population of [...] important towns’ by dropping ‘large quantities of poison gas from which there would be no escape’.⁴⁵ His tactic of asking his audiences to vividly imagine the consequences of taking a utilitarian attitude to gas was used as a means to motivate the members to action, whereas mere supposition would result in a more gas tolerant stance of the local population, which he believed would be catastrophic for a city like Plymouth in the next war. Butler’s final lecture

⁴¹ The London manoeuvres of 1928 have been covered in the last sub-chapter.

⁴² The 1925 Geneva Protocol (Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare) is treaty prohibiting the use of chemical and biological weapons in international armed conflicts. The 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions had also banned poison weapons.

⁴³ ‘Future Aerial Warfare’, *WMN*, 8 November 1928, p.5.

⁴⁴ ‘Future Aerial Warfare’, *WMN*, 8 November 1928, p.5.

⁴⁵ ‘Chemical Warfare’, *WMN*, 28 February 1928, p.11; ‘Work for The League’, *WMN*, 13 November 1928, p.5; ‘Thousand Poison Gasses’, *WMN*, 18 November 1928, p.8.

titled '*Geneva or Gas War*' emphasised the importance of the peace pact and international cooperation (he also explained how easy it was to convert any civil air craft into a machine of death).⁴⁶ The press described the lecture as 'an appeal' to the Plymouth League of Nations for volunteers as certain sections of the city were being exploited by 'violent propaganda' to support a more militarist and tolerant stance on gas.⁴⁷ As a response Butler upped the stakes by publishing an article in the press vividly introducing the readers to the 'dew of death', an artificial compound known as Lewisite, a liquid that was absorbed through the skin, rendering the gas masks useless, suggesting the facts of the threat of annihilation by gas, were being deliberately hidden from the public.⁴⁸

ARP and the evolution of anti-gas measures

The city's early ARP preparations were centred on dealing with the consequences of a gas attack from the sky. A short review of the national ARP policy development will reveal that war gasses were the principle focus of all ARP research, as experiments with gas were both cheaper and easier to conduct than research into the effects of incendiary and high-explosive bombs. The ARP budget for 1936-7 was £477,500 with £390,000 allocated for anti-gas measures suggesting a gas attack was primary focus for ARP.⁴⁹ Although expert military assessments suggested gas was the least likely weapon to be used in an attack, civil defence planners saw the propaganda value of gas to reassure and train the population in utilitarian defensive measures.⁵⁰ Furthermore, to publicize official policy the ARP department published a series of handbooks about gas in September 1936; the second edition of *Anti-gas Precautions and first aid for air raid casualties* (handbook No.2) sold 280,000 copies; the

⁴⁶ 'Geneva or Gas War', *WMN*, 15 November 1928, p.5.

⁴⁷ 'What will the Harvest be?', *WMN*, 29 April 1930, p.5

⁴⁸ 'Facts that should be Faced', *WMN*, 6 February 1930, p.3.

⁴⁹ Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter Policy and its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', pp.300-19

⁵⁰ Schmidt, *Secret Science*, pp.71-72.

next edition reached nearly half a million - suggesting a slow but sure realisation of the dangers of chemical warfare in Britain.⁵¹ While the book *On Guard Against Gas* (1938) and the film *Your Book* (1938) both advised and depicted how easy it was for the ordinary citizen gas proof their homes, and how defend their families against gas using respirators.⁵²

The city's authorities received the 'first circular' on 9 July 1935 and the *WMN* published a range of practical advice against a potential gas attack on Plymouth. Within three days of receiving the circular the Special Purposes Committee of the Plymouth Council had set-up a sub-committee to deal with the governments suggestions and were working with the constabulary, Red Cross Society and St John's Ambulance; although there was no time-table set-up and the committee would report their findings every 'now and then'.⁵³ At the first regional ARP conference in November, which was staged to disseminate further guidance on the 'first circular', unsurprisingly the focal point was anti-gas measures. The conference, which was attended by Plymouth councillors (amongst others), left the representatives (and newspaper readers) with a vision of a city awash with gas after an air-raid, with those living in the slum areas worst affected. Despite some good work in clearing sections of the city's slum areas, much was still to be done and this 'problem' spooked the city's authorities. Wing Commander Hodson, inspector-general of civil defence, further outlined the necessity for the local authority to organise decontamination centres, adapt the sanitation systems to clear away gas and stated the highway authority would need to free thoroughfares from gas. He added the government would provide gas masks and protective clothing (only for key workers at this stage) but it was the responsibility of the local authority to find and fix their own deficiencies in the event of an air-raid.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter Policy and its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', p.306.

⁵² Grayzel, *At Home and under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz*, p.221; Home Office, *Your Book* (Home Office, 1938).

⁵³ 'Defence Against Air Attack', *WMN*, 13 July 1935, p.6.

⁵⁴ 'Air Attack Precautions', *WMN*, 27 November 1935, p.7.

Since the circular the Local Authority had been quietly trying to train an ‘adequate’ number of qualified instructors in anti-gas and air-raid measures. Yet in early 1937 the local press accused Plymothians of showing a ‘curious apathy in attending gas lectures’, stating that some had seen the anti-gas films but most were not interested.⁵⁵

If a gas bomb was dropped in any of Plymouth’s streets, the average citizen would not know what precautions to take, and little trouble is being taken to find out.⁵⁶

The Mass Observation team had observed similarly apathetic attitudes towards gas training in other towns and cities. Of those who did attend the training, a quarter were less enthusiastic after attending and 26% made unsolicited disapproving remarks. Some people had accused the trainers of being ill-informed on the topic of gas, and many thought it was ‘boring’.⁵⁷ In a letter to *The Times* professor R.B. Onions had written that in Hampstead ‘about 1 per 1,000 is being interested [...] so when the scheme is complete 999 out of 1000 persons will have had no instruction.’ He cited the reason for the lack of interest was, the public knew nothing of what was being done, blaming poor communications. A notion which was emphasised at a Plymouth Chambers of Commerce meeting; when Mr W.K. Hall observed it was high time that something was done- ‘as the local public did not know whether provision was being made for gas masks, shelters or anything.’⁵⁸ Hyde and Nuttall suggested that better use of cinema, broadcasting and the popular press was required. A valid observation, but one that did not account for the idea that Plymouth city council would deliberately hold back their plans ‘until the opportunity prevailed’.⁵⁹ Although a study on the gas preparations of Kingston, London, suggested there was a genuine interest in anti-gas training inspired by the reporting of

⁵⁵ ‘Air Attack Precautions’, *WMN*, 27 November 1935, p.7.

⁵⁶ ‘Anti-Gas Apathy’, *WMN*, 3 February 1937, p.11.

⁵⁷ T. Harrison and C. Mudge, *War Begins at Home* (London: Faber & Faber, 1940), pp.105-6.

⁵⁸ ‘Link Across the Tamar’, *WMN*, 14 July 1937, p.8.

⁵⁹ ‘Link Across the Tamar’, *WMN*, 14 July 1937, p.8.

events in the popular press in Abyssinia.⁶⁰

The national policy for preparing the public for anti-gas measures was to train Constabularies, St John's Ambulance and Red Cross Societies centrally at the anti-gas school in Eastwood park, Falfield; and they would then 'apply their knowledge to a gradually widening circle'.⁶¹ It was estimated that one trained instructor can train 400 persons a year.⁶² The Plymouth constabulary completed a specially adjusted course for 'police and fire brigade duties' in 1936 and were working with the military in providing practical demonstrations for the public. Plymouth's newly trained Red Cross Society were soon working with the 'Royal Navy gas experts' to provide weekly public lectures at 62 Notte-street. Whilst Plymouth doctors and nurses were trained on a special course for medical treatment and care of gas casualties and the chemists were qualified in the detection and identification of gases.⁶³ Yet it was the city's St John's Ambulance Association who took the most visible lead in the city's anti-gas training (often at the request of the Local Authority). They had already provided seventeen courses by early 1936, although most of these were for their own staff.⁶⁴

The ambulance brigade created the city's first gas-proof room which the public could visit. This was a significant move which required large structural changes to their premises at 35-36 Notte-street and planning was approved quickly by the local authority in May 1936.⁶⁵ The Plymouth ambulance Brigade were led by, the very visible and busy, Lady County Superintendent Mrs R Balsdon, and her initiative and energy caught the imaginations of city's women in particular. She had already lectured to women institutes, the Guildhall working

⁶⁰ G. Wasley, 'The Civil Defence of Kingston upon Thames and its districts during the Second World War', PhD thesis (University of Kingston, 2013).

⁶¹ O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, p.68.

⁶² Hyde and Nuttall, *Air Defence and the Civil Population*, p.196; The authors point out that anti-gas precautions in totalitarian states of Germany, Italy and the USSR was obligatory and they were being constantly informed by the state machine through cinema, radio and lecture platform.

⁶³ Hyde and Nuttall, *Air Defence and the Civil Population*, p.196.

⁶⁴ Anti-gas measures training had started before the 'first circular' arrived in 1935 in preparation for the expected gas attack on the city.

⁶⁵ PWDRO, PCC/60/1/12701, *Planning for alteration to 35-36 Notte-street*. They also built a compartment where gas mask drills could take place, although no lethal gases were stored on the premises.

league (who were six ladies who had enrolled themselves on a course), and the Plymouth College of Nursing.⁶⁶ She had also led anti-gas training to range of Plymouth nursing divisions in 1935. The training used ‘imaginary’ air-raids, where civilian victims of mustard gas (actors played by the cadets) were treated by nurses in gas masks (general war service masks) to make the training realistic and visible to the greater public; the *WMN* published a very provocative photograph of the nurses training, which took place in the summer holidays, this was deliberately a very public exhibition.⁶⁷

Figure 5 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Figure 5: ‘Cornish Nurses Gas Mask Drill’, *WMN*, 31 July 1935, p.10.

In December 1936 the Lady Superintendent was asked to deliver a lecture to Plymouth housewives, which was typical of her well-rehearsed style, emphasised how housewives with

⁶⁶ ‘Anti-Gas Apathy’, *WMN*, 3 February 1937, p.11.

⁶⁷ ‘Air Raid Drill in Plymouth; Nurses in Masks’, *WMN*, 15 September 1935, p.7.

little or no money could protect their families from a gas attack at home - making a gas-proof room by selecting the correct room and transforming it by using cheap materials that they would already have at hand such as newspapers and sheets- and contending the housewives could put together a rudimentary gas mask in an emergency.⁶⁸ She was the authorities dream; upholding by instruction, a gas-tolerant policy which would see the local populace sit out a gas attack in their own homes, so as not to induce a wild panic. Gas-tolerant equipment was also prominent in the city's shop windows as ant-gas materials, gas masks, and even anti-gas baby cots.

Figure 6 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Figure 6: 'Safe as a gas mask' One of the anti-gas units

for the protection of babies, displayed by Messrs E. Attwill and Son, Plymouth. *WMN*, 1

November 1938, p.3.

⁶⁸ 'Air Raid Drill in Plymouth; Nurses in Masks', *WMN*, 15 September 1935, p.7.

There was opposition to this policy as it was thought the enemy would spray gas over the city with the intention of deliberately keeping people in their homes; then attacking with a wave of incendiary bombs, cremating the civilians in the very homes they had taken refuge in.⁶⁹ This was the vision that had inspired the PLNU secretary to remind the authorities that in Paris they had been told to evacuate the entire city.

Mrs Balsdon could be described as ‘rational’ commentator and regarded the threat of gas warfare as more psychological than material. Marion Girard argues her expertise as ‘gas tolerant’ would have been rewarded by the government, embracing her important and senior position within the region; a position which was allowing her to influence large swathes of the local population (largely women) of how a future gas war was being imagined, embracing the governments ‘anti-hysteria’ policy.⁷⁰ However, it is unlikely that her legacy in the city altered the public attitude that gas was a cruel and mysterious weapon. However, there was fervent opposition to Mrs Balsdon’s gas-tolerant attitude; when Mrs Vivien Gregory, PLNU secretary, condemned the foolish talk of ‘keeping out gas through the use of newspapers and blankets’. In a letter to the *WMN* Miss Gregory wrote, the League of Nations Branch feared that the people of Plymouth ‘might be lulled into a false and dangerous sense of security by these inadequate and ineffective measures’ which are being supported by the ‘queer-minded’ authorities.⁷¹ Gregory urged the public to ‘demand not fake protection but a policy that make those attacks impossible’, believing the current policy supposed that protecting civilians was of secondary importance, the policy was primarily designed to maintain essential services to continue a war.

Gregory readily cited, to her readers and fellow League members, as evidence for her (and the league’s) pacifist position, the controversial research of the Cambridge Scientists Anti-War Group (CSAWG). CSAWG had put Mrs Balsdon’s and the Home Office’s official

⁶⁹ Hyde and Nuttall, *Air Defence and the Civil Population*, p.189.

⁷⁰ Girard, *A Strange and Formidable Weapon*.

⁷¹ ‘No Air Raid Safety’, *WMN*, 22 September 1936, p.2.

instructions to the test and found that "proofed" rooms would leak at a rate of 50 cubic yards of air per hour'; meaning that the leakage would be fatal in three hours.⁷² The findings of the CSAWG experiments were heavily criticised by numerous commentators and provoked the ARP department to deploy their own army of scientists, to allay the public fears and counter the what the department termed 'misconceptions' that were created by the CSAWG, which were being readily published by the left-leaning publishers Victor Gollancz Ltd.

The psychological impact of a gas attack was a matter that 'was causing some keen discussion' in the city according to Lieutenant-Colonel Markwick, stating that evacuation schemes for London and Plymouth were being considered. 'Are the wide-open spaces of the countryside or the gas-proofed rooms of a city the safest place to be in an air-raid?' was the main question debated during a public meeting held at Crownhill Royal British Legion. Lieutenant-Colonel Markwick suggested he would be inclined to think it would be safer to get away than 'be slaughtered in one's home.'⁷³ In a similar debate at the Plymouth Incorporated Mercantile Association, members of the association shared a vision of the city that would panic at the first sight of gas, as they were at present 'unprotected and unprepared'. They created an image of Plymothians trampling over one another as the city emptied onto Dartmoor; leaving behind anarchy with 'mass robbery and violence'. Interestingly their more hysterical vision suggested the government should stipulate all new buildings have fully sealed gas-proof room (including air-tight doors, which was the only way the public could be protected in their own homes according to the PLNU) and all streets should have manholes that would allow people to descend into a network of gas free sewers; both suggestions were to be taken to the Home Office, but neither were realised.⁷⁴ At another lecture an audience member pointed out it was the panic of an unprepared Plymouth public that caused the most concern amongst those

⁷² 'Gas Attacks', *WMN*, 3 March 1937, p.2.

⁷³ 'Combating Gas', *WMN*, 27 November 1937, p.7.

⁷⁴ 'Mastering a Menace', *WMN*, 2 March 1937, p.4.

present, and the lecturer Captain L.C. Schlotel agreed that the gas attack boils down to a "bogy bogy", and therefore the palliative measures that he offered would prevent any panic and create a more gas tolerant community.⁷⁵

In late 1936 the *WMN* recruited the independent ARP expert Captain L.C. Schlotel M.C. to train the staff on ARP at the request of their proprietor Sir Harold Harmsworth.⁷⁶ Schlotel had a large influence over air-raid precautions and anti-gas ideas as he was delivering lectures and training to range of businesses across Plymouth. After completing the training of the *WMN* staff, he had written a letter to the Port of Plymouth Incorporated Chambers of Commerce Executive Committee, stating that in his opinion the people and businesses of the city were untaught and unimaginative on ARP measures and wondered if other employers of labour would benefit from his lectures and training. The Chair, Mr Stanley Leatherby, circulated his letter to all members after he had read it out the monthly meeting and he was soon engaged by a number of city employers. Schlotel was working independently from the Local Authority and official arrangements. He stated his training would not duplicate or interfere with official arrangements and all the information he shared was laid-down in official Home Office endorsed material. In an apparent attempt to entice the local populace from their apathy the *WMN* were providing a great deal of coverage of Schlotel's gas-tolerant interventions across the city. Tom Harrison had reported that newspapers were the most influential factor causing people to attend ARP training, conversation being second, although it was the other way around for the working-classes.⁷⁷

The consistent publication of Schlotel's training of Plymouth's businesses raised concerns on the equality and quality of ARP activity in the city; indeed; the nature of Schlotel's

⁷⁵ 'Mastering a Menace', *WMN*, 2 March 1937, p.4.

⁷⁶ Sir Harold Harmsworth served as President of the Air Council in the government of David Lloyd George 1917-18. He was also a well-known supporter of appeasement (and Oswald Moseley) who used some of his papers (notably the Daily Mail) to influence British Politics in the interwar years. Therefore, in the late 1930s his viewpoint could support a pro-Astor stance.

⁷⁷ Harrison and Mudge, *War Begins at Home*, p.106.

content stirred Gregory to action again, this time accusing Schlotel of being ‘uninformed and suspiciously vague’.⁷⁸ However it did expose some of the ideas the local public had on a gas war in the city. Intriguingly during one Schlotel lecture to 140 enthusiastic members of Plymouth Junior Chambers of Commerce Schlotel received a barrage of questions on the topic of gas.⁷⁹ The availability and integrity of gas masks dominated the questions from the audience; some were notably concerned at the possible invention of new gasses, which might render the masks ineffective; an idea that Schlotel strongly vetoed. Alarming one speaker suggested that gas masks could be tested by "turning on the gas oven", Schlotel retorted the gas mask offered no protection against that gas!⁸⁰

There was strong opposition to the utilitarian attitudes of influential individuals such as Balsdon and Schlotel. The impassioned resistance was further aimed at the local authority’s general support of a policy that accepted ‘wholesale murder as inevitable’. Visions of Plymothians (and animals) parading around a gas soaked city in their gas-masks like ‘troglodyte’ masses, moved W.E.R Martin to denounce the gas tolerant city as ‘an asylum for lunatics’.⁸¹ He further scolded the Oxford students who would ‘prefer a world of gas masks rather than use the brains ... to protect the human beings from inhuman devices invented by devils.’⁸²

There were a range of physical changes that could be seen across city providing a visualisation of anti-gas measures. Discussions amongst the city’s mercantile associations had already considered wholesale architectural adaptations for all new buildings to make the city air-raid ready and ‘gas proof’. Although the motion for a municipality based scheme had been quashed by a majority vote citing the budgetary burden. However, the *WMN* lead the way with

⁷⁸ “"Bogy, Bogy" Gas attacks’, *WMN*, 8 March 1937, p.2.

⁷⁹ ‘Mastering a Menace’, *WMN*, 2 March 1937, p.4.

⁸⁰ ‘Mastering a Menace’, *WMN*, 2 March 1937, p.4.

⁸¹ ‘The Admiral Explodes’, *WMN*, 29 April 1936, p.2.

⁸² ‘The Admiral Explodes’, *WMN*, 29 April 1936, p.2.

the plans for their new head-quarters in Frankfort-street, which were approved in July 1937, after taking expert advice from Colonel L.N. Malan an ex Royal Engineer. The new building's chief feature was a special gas shelter. The subterranean refuge, which could accommodate 160 people, was a sophisticated design with ventilating fans and gas filters.

two ventilating shafts or pipes will lead from the shelter to the highest point on the roof, if possible 30 feet above the gutters or any point where gas in liquid form could lodge ... there will be airlocks at the two main entrances ... telephone connection will be direct from the shelter to the public exchange by a different route to the office lines.⁸³

Beyond the physical construction, effective ARP had to ensure there was full and effective training of the staff to ensure the fullest possible protection- Schlotel had created a scheme where members of the staff team were trained as experts in gas detection as well as creating first-aid teams (one in each shelter), rescue parties and repair squads.

⁸³ 'Splinter and Gas Proof', *WMN*, 4 November 1937, p.4.

Figure 7 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Figure 7: ‘Splinter and Gas Proof: Basement of the new premises of ‘The Western Morning News,’ where a gas shelter is being constructed as one of the provisions for safeguarding the staff in case of air raid’, *WMN*, 4 November 1937, p.4.

Royal Navy Gas Schools

Devonport opened the RN gas school in 1923 and the military had been trained in anti-gas measures since the Great War. Therefore, the people of Plymouth had the privilege of being exposed to the workings of an anti-gas school before the primary government (civilian) anti-gas school ran its first courses on 15 April 1936. The Royal Navy anti-gas school was responsible for the principle display of the 1935 annual Navy week show and which depicted an imaginary a gas attack. The show would see mustard gas bombs dropped from an ‘imaginary’ plane; unprotected sailors were incapacitated by the gas, whilst fully gas-protected sailors went about their business as usual. The show was realistic as ‘gas clouds were blown

across the action.⁸⁴ This was significant as it was the first public display of gas attack from the air in the City. Although the RAF had intended to provide a ‘practical demonstration of a Gas attack’ with ‘laying of a gas cloud,’ but it was deleted from the program, although interestingly other RAF stations carried out the displays.⁸⁵

In 1936 Royal Navy provided the first practical domestic anti-gas instruction available to the public of the west-country.⁸⁶ The local press described the safety measures as giving the ‘man-in-the-street the knowledge sufficient to preserve in part the traditional conception of an Englishman’s home as his castle.’ A move designed to tackle their great fear of panic, and thus the press described the Navy week gas demonstrations (there were three-a-day) as a ‘public service’. Although they were conscious of not ‘scare-mongering’, the displays demonstrated the ‘construction of air locks’ and how to enter and exit after ‘persistent gassing’.⁸⁷

In preparation for the 1937 Navy week demonstrations, civic and service notabilities plus press representatives were invited to attend a full-dress rehearsal of a gas attack from the skies. The repelling of a gas attack was stated as being ‘an item constituting a spectacle likely to appeal to the imagination of the general public.’⁸⁸ The scenes depicted in the press painted a vivid scene with diving planes, giant plumes of yellow smoke (mustard gas), a shift from the ‘imaginary’ air-attack from previous years.

However, the (actual) 1937 Devonport Navy week gas display was filmed. The 48 second film entitled *Anti Gas Moral for Navy Week Shows* was created by British Movietone and would have been shown in theatres across the country. The film emphasised the effectiveness of anti-gas precautions for both civilian and military personnel and shows the two working together- promoting the gas tolerant attitudes of military and the official ARP policy.

⁸⁴ ‘“Gas” Attack from Air’, *WMN*, 15 June 1935, p.11.

⁸⁵ ‘Air Display Incident’, *WMN*, 27 May 1935, p.5.

⁸⁶ ‘Gas and Anti-Gas and Navy Week Display’, *WMN*, 25 July 1936, p.10.

⁸⁷ ‘Gas and Anti-Gas and Navy Week Display’, *WMN*, 25 July 1936, p.10.

⁸⁸ ‘Gas Attack from Air at Navy Week Rehearsal’, *WMN*, 30 July 1937, p.4.

The opening sequence of the film presents a civilian house being gassed (with mustard gas) and the occupants being rescued by ARP workers as the decontamination squads secure the building from mustard gas. The commentary states; "what happens when you take precautions and what happens when you don't is convincingly portrayed in Devonport's programme".⁸⁹ There was footage of how to protect the family home against air-raids and mustard gas, which could be viewed from the stands. The ending of the film has the commentator narrating "the Navy visualises the gruesome dangers of gas," The scenes are indeed very realistic and are being witnessed by thousands of civilians.

In 1938 more than 8000 civilians attended the ARP display which included anti-gas measures and demonstrations on incendiary bombing; and 5000 passed through the new gas room at the Anti-Gas school, which the Home office representative described as the 'the best gas room that he had seen, being thoroughly up to date'.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ British Movietone, 'Anti Gas Moral for Navy Week Shows', (British Movietone, 1 August 1937).

⁹⁰ 'Navy Week in Retrospect', *WMN*, 8 August 1938, p.4.

Figure 8 has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Figure 8: British Movietone, 'Anti Gas Moral for Navy Week Shows',
(British Movietone, 1 August 1937).

Realities of a Gas War

Italy's reported use of mustard gas bombs in Abyssinia in 1935 increased the value of chemical weapons as a propaganda tool among anti-fascists and contrarians.⁹¹ Whilst the use of poisonous gas in Abyssinia was used as part of an asymmetric warfare, the graphic fear it caused sparked a frenzy in the press - although the propagandists on both sides undoubtedly distorted the imagination of the public, maybe to the point of indifference. The handful of aerial attacks was indeed the start of new, dark chapter of modern warfare, but one of which relatively little was known. The 'fog of war' when reporting the Italian aggression, had heightened the alarmists vision of chemical warfare. The eyewitness accounts of John Macfie (A British Red-cross worker), *An Ethiopian Diary: A Record of the British Ambulance Service in Ethiopia*, (1936) and George Steer, *Caesar in Abyssinia*, (1936) detailed some of the horrors inflicted upon civilians, serving as a warning to Europe.⁹²

Mr George Ward, the prospective Labour candidate for the Sutton Division (Lady Astor's ward), extrapolated the experience in Abyssinia to visualise what a gas attack would mean for Plymouth;

In Plymouth, there are hundreds of old people, how are we going to get them to safety and into gas masks. There were thousands of children; were they going to put gas masks on the babies? When they returned after a modern air attack from the quarries and bowels of the earth where they had hidden to the affected area, they would find all animal life and vegetation destroyed.⁹³

Despite the attempts of the military, alarmists and stoical ARP supporters, the city remained largely unconcerned about the dangers posed by gas bombing. An editorial written in the *WMN* to shake the public from their gas apathy, theorised the reasons for the apathetic attitudes

⁹¹ Grayzel, *At Home and under Fire*, p.181.

⁹² J.W.S. MacFie, *An Ethiopian Diary: A Record of the British Ambulance Service in Ethiopia* (London: University Press, 1936); G.L. Steer, *Caesar in Abyssinia* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936).

⁹³ 'League of Youth Aspirant', *WMN*, 14 September 1935, p.10.

amongst Plymothians.

It noted that the people of Plymouth had ‘been treated to a good many ghastly word-pictures of the gassing of London by an air armada under the cover of night.’⁹⁴ Based on the evidence presented it could well be argued the nature and distance of these ‘word-pictures’, both fictional and observational, accompanied with the moving-pictures (again fictional and news-based, both historical in the Great War and contemporary in Abyssinia, Spain and China), had created an imagery which moved beyond science and science fiction into the realms of fantasy- beyond what could be imagined to be real.⁹⁵ Yet it could be argued the imagery created by the ‘word-pictures’ was having the completely opposite effect- that it was perfectly feasible. Yet, so barbarous was the idea that a bolt from blue chemical attack would leave ‘hundreds of thousands of men, women and children stricken dead in their homes and on the streets’ that any nation undertaking these attacks would be vulnerable to certain reprisals of the same sort, therefore the public could not see any worth in such action, as was recorded in oral history of Plymouth at war. It could also be argued the city had adopted a total gas-tolerant stance, after the exposure of Balsdon, Schlotel and the gas-tolerant military and local Conservative authorities, thus not believing in the success of a gas attack. Especially after the rapid distribution of gas masks post-Munich. Finally, no gas had been used in Spain, a conflict that many commentators were describing as a foresight and testing ground for the next regional or global conflict, unlike the asymmetrical warfare witnessed in Abyssinia.

⁹⁴ ‘Air-raid precautions’, *WMN*, 31 August 1937, p.6.

High Explosives and Shelter Policy

It has been argued that ARP planning was limited to a few ministers, civil servants and local councillors; and had taken place in virtual secrecy until the civil war in Spain (1936-39).⁹⁶ The conflict in Spain (and to a lesser extent Abyssinia, Austria and China) ‘provided the first vivid demonstration of offensive air power used against civilian populations.’⁹⁷ Thus the war presented a shift from an imagined future war (with an imagined enemy) to the brutality of a real and present conflict - a prologue to a terrible drama that threatened to engulf the continent. The nature of aerial bombardment in Spain afforded Philip Noel-Baker, Labour MP and supporter of the abolition of aerial warfare, to accept the legitimacy of such tactics was to ‘settle now what the “next war” would be like. Guernica was a portent; Barcelona is the writing on the wall’.⁹⁸ The ferocious attacks on Barcelona moved Basil Kingsley Martin, Editor of the *New Statesman* to write:

Vienna and Barcelona have shaken England to the very core. Suddenly people have realised that this bombing business is not fantasy but real and that across the way, as it were, there is a government which is prepared to use overwhelming force to end the independence of a quiet neighbour.⁹⁹

Arguably for the British the most important aspect of the war ‘was the spectre of what future aerial warfare might entail, particularly its impacts on the individual citizens.’¹⁰⁰ The conflict provided not only a testing ground for fascist air war tactics, but it served as a model of how British citizens should approach their roles in a passive air defence scheme. The war afforded the lessons of air warfare - facilitating the advocacy for improved ARP with special emphasis on civilian protection and ‘design and provision of bomb shelters’.¹⁰¹ The bombed cities of Spain became colossal research laboratories for those interested in the effects of aerial

⁹⁶ Meisel, ‘Air Raid Shelter Policy and its critics in Britain before the Second World War’, pp.300-19.

⁹⁷ Meisel, ‘Air Raid Shelter Policy and its critics in Britain before the Second World War’, pp.300-19.

⁹⁸ Holman, *The Next Air War*, pp.249-252.

⁹⁹ ‘Critic’, *New Statesman*, 26 March 1938, p.514.

¹⁰⁰ Haapamaki, *The Coming of the Aerial War*, p.26.

¹⁰¹ Meisel, ‘Air Raid Shelter Policy and its critics in Britain before the Second World War’, pp.300-19.

bombardment. Architects, scientists, medics, politicians and planners all descended on Barcelona, Madrid and Guernica making observations and measurements - often publishing their findings in journals and papers. As a result, attention turned away from the imagined threat of gas and towards the new and real 'chief danger to be anticipated' high explosive (HE) and incendiary bombs.¹⁰²

In many ways, the bombing and the fear created by the Munich Crisis in 1938 invoked the need for a rapid transition between peace and war and provided a clear demonstration of the conflicts within the political imaginations of passive defence from both central and local governments.¹⁰³ The Munich Crisis in the Autumn of 1938 was a pivotal moment in imagining war preparation. As historian Gerald Lee argues 'the civilian decision makers read the reports—predominantly inflated and pessimistic—from Britain's top military brains. They came to believe that a war with Germany would be extremely dangerous and that the Luftwaffe could devastate Britain.'¹⁰⁴ Therefore arguing that pessimism, not optimism, dominated the minds of British civilian and military decision makers, created by the perceived physical threat posed by an air-raid.

Sir Reginald Ernle-Erle-Drax, Plymouth's last Commander-in-Chief before the war, gave the city a direct, quiet but grave warning of what was bound to happen - at least as well as his position allowed. The admiral who was Commander-in Chief for Plymouth 1935-1938, was regarded as a brilliant military thinker, an advocate of new ideas and strong critic of naval and national defence policy; who would later write *The Art of War* and other works which attacked national and naval defence strategy.¹⁰⁵ In October 1938, shortly before his term ended, the admiral spoke at a dinner, attended by the Lord Mayor of Plymouth, Alderman Solomon

¹⁰² Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter Policy and its critics in Britain before the Second World War', p.309.

¹⁰³ Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter Policy and its critics in Britain before the Second World War', p.309.

¹⁰⁴ G. Lee, "I See Dead People": Air-raid Phobia and Britain's Behaviour in the Munich Crisis, *Security Studies*, 13:2 (2003), pp.230-272.

¹⁰⁵ Sir R.P. Ernle-Erle-Drax, *The art of war, twentieth century version* (Poole: J. Looker, 1943).

Stephens (the only civilian present), about the city's unpreparedness for the near prospect of war. He left the Lord Mayor a document expressing his views on the need for the citizens of the city to rouse themselves to a sense of the realities that war would bring to the city. The eight-page letter was simply, yet forbiddingly, titled *England's Last Chance*. The document that Stephens read alone in Drax's office that evening stated that;

nearly a 100 years ago that wise man Abraham Lincoln said "tell the people the truth and the country is safe". In the last 30 years our leaders have never followed that policy; we have been living in a fools' paradise ... it is urgently necessary at this eleventh hour, that the people should be told the truth. At present, the ordinary man's idea of the general situation in this country and in Europe is nothing more than a grotesque travesty of the real truth... you young men are the guardians of civilisation, justice and liberty that we have accumulated in a thousand years.¹⁰⁶

The letter motivated the mayor to announce to the local press that;

after reading it I am filled with anxiety. The words were such as to fill every Britisher (sic) with anxiety today ... His letter has impressed me so that I have written to the admiral saying that his words are of such grave importance that the whole of the country should know how a man of his great experience views the situation today¹⁰⁷

He was so concerned by the letter, he further suggested that all the trenches that had been dug should be filled in as 'something far better and far greater is needed'.¹⁰⁸ Within a month Solomon Stephens had handed over his chain and robes as George S Scoble was elected Lord Mayor and Solomon Stephens would soon be elected as chairmen of the ARP committee.

Stanley Leatherby, detailed despite the lack of guidance from central government 'we are not bankrupt of ideas', before stating that after all he had read trench shelters offered the

¹⁰⁶ Admiral Sir R.P. Ernle-Erle-Drax, 'England's Last Chance' (article, 10 October 1938) Drax2/12.

¹⁰⁷ 'Grave Words from ADML. Drax', *WMN*, 29 October 1938, p.7.

¹⁰⁸ 'Grave Words from ADML. Drax', *WMN*, 29 October 1938, p.7.

best form of safety as they were the most ‘economic and practical form of protection for crowded areas.’ His views were contrary to many others on the council and in the city, and to that of the Lord Mayor.¹⁰⁹

In an angry and passionate address to the Plymouth branch of amalgamated Union of trade builders Labour candidate Lucy Middleton accused the national government of only thinking in gas masks, whilst Plymouth would have suffered badly if war had come as at the last-minute Plymouth furiously and foolishly dug trenches. Had the bombers appeared over the city people who were not ‘mangled’ by the high explosive bombs, probably would have killed one another trying to get into the trenches. Middleton’s assertions were in line with the criticism her party’s as The Labour Party asserted ‘Nowhere, has the government muddle been greater than in shelter policy, due to a preoccupation with anti-gas measures, and a refusal to face the cost.’¹¹⁰ Labour advocated for significantly higher levels of protection than official recommendations and asserted that the government should take full responsibility and foist no cost onto the local authorities.¹¹¹

The use of trenches was further condemned by two prominent architects Eric Bird and T E Scott who hosted a conference on the structural side of ARP in Plymouth in late November 1938. Scott surprisingly advised that the great danger of trenches was the potential illness caused by exposure, especially for women and children who would have hurried from their beds- stating that ‘exposure would probably have been far more serious than the effects of enemy bombing’.¹¹²

Bird and Scott were representatives of many technical observers outside of parliament (such as architects and scientists) who were critical of the inadequacy of official ARP plans of using gardens, cellars and basements for protection and ‘highlighted the absolute necessity of

¹⁰⁹ ‘Grave Words from ADML. Drax’, *WMN*, 29 October 1938, p.7.

¹¹⁰ Labour Party (ed), *A.R.P.: Labour’s Policy* (London: 1939), p.10.

¹¹¹ Meisel, ‘Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War’, p.306.

¹¹² ‘ARP public shelters criticised’, *WMN*, 22 November 1938, p.5.

deep underground shelters'.¹¹³ This group of people were motivated by a socialist-informed professional ethos. After the implementation of the 1937 ARP Act, which permitted local authorities to decide their own protection schemes, the politically divided council exposed another great divergence of opinion, as it did across the wider city.

This indecision from the central government was directly cited as a barrier to a deep shelter scheme in Plymouth by the ARP chairman Solomon Stephens at a fiery council meeting which debated the progress of Plymouth's ARP. The failure of the council to produce a report on deep shelters, afforded a passionate, yet scathing, attack on the lack of shelter policy from Labour Councillor Alderman H.M. Medland during a meeting in early 1939.

There has been wicked and criminal neglect on the part of somebody. We have an enormous responsibility to the women and children. When I look at it at this minute I think of Nero fiddling while Rome burned.¹¹⁴

There was support for an alternative 'maximum protection' scheme from within the local council, which was strongly advocated by the vocal and ageing Labour Councillor Alderman Churchward. After the bombing of Barcelona, he was quick to suggest a committee should be created to organize the immediate construction of bombproof tunnels and deep shelters. He had support from John Case, who criticised the local authority for their lack of imagination, initiative and awareness as they had not responded to the very convincing (alternative) precautions, that had been advocated at the four-day conference of the Royal Institute British Architects (RIBA), reported by the Association of Architects, Surveyors and Technical Assistants and amplified in a speech by John Langdon-Davies. John Case keenly urged the local authority to 'organize provision of bomb proof tunnel and shelters on the assumption that the raid will often precede the warning', believing the local authority should not wait for the central government to lead, as they had been so very slow in forming a valid

¹¹³ Haapamaki, *The Coming of the Aerial War*, p.94; Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', p.300.

¹¹⁴ 'ARP Attacked in City Council', *WMN*, 7 February 1939, p.5.

policy of protection.¹¹⁵ George Tyler lobbied for a more comprehensive protection scheme in a letter to the *WMN*. Tyler's daily commute had become occupied by imagining (on his various routes to work) where large underground shelter stations might be located. He offered the readers a list of potential deep shelter sites, including under the Royal citadel, beneath Millbay Park, through the cliff at West Hoe and under Freedom-field Park.¹¹⁶ He had even carried out some geological research and offered a possible cost after consulting mining experts, before sharing his solutions with the readers. He envisioned a Haldane inspired mass shelter scheme based on tunnels, new and old, built by unemployed workers at national expense; a proposal Haldane based on his extensive research on aerial bombardment in Spain, which made him one of the few scientists who could speak with authority on air raids as they were experienced in Spain, rather than the extrapolated data of the Great War air raids.¹¹⁷

It was further supported by the city's ARP committee who accused the council of acting with 'little thought of possible consequences' of not adopting a policy of deep shelters and issuing gas masks.¹¹⁸ Plymouth Education Committee also supported an alternative maximal solution; the finance and General Purposes Committee adopted a scheme which meant that all schools had to provide bomb-proof shelters, as the idea of sending children home during an air raid 'would be committing murder on the open highway.'¹¹⁹ Plymouth MP Lady Astor made a case for specifically built underground nurseries, as she believed that panicked mothers caused the gravest concern; therefore when the alarm sounded the police would usher the city's toddlers into specially designed subterranean play schools (accompanied by specially trained teaching staff).¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ 'Bomb-proof shelters', *WMN*, 12 July 1938, p.8.

¹¹⁶ 'Sites for Deep Shelters', *WMN*, 25 February 1939, p.5.

¹¹⁷ R.W. Clark, *JBS: The Life and Work of J.B.S Haldane* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.134; J.B.S. Haldane, *ARP*. (London: Left Book Club, 1938), P.7.

¹¹⁸ 'Gas Mask Distribution', *WMN*, 17 March 1939, p.2.

¹¹⁹ 'Bomb-proof Shelters for Schools', *WMN*, 03 June 1938, p.5.

¹²⁰ 'Lady Astor puts case for mothers', *WMN*, 15 September 1939, p.3.

The Plymouth Communist Party further attacked the government's ARP policy during the first meeting of a campaign titled 'Crusade for the Defence of the British People.'¹²¹ They accused the government (and local authority) of ignoring the lessons of Spain, highlighting to their audience, that Spain had thought it necessary to build 'great underground safety stations' whilst the British government had 'allowed men to stand idle.'¹²² The secretary of the Plymouth branch, Mr R. Bailey, made a pledge that they would 'wage a campaign demanding full protection for the population from air raids.'¹²³ They made a particularly detailed attack on the government's Anderson shelter scheme describing the shelters as 'steel kennels' that were entirely inadequate for the protection of the city's working-classes, stating that of the 40,000 houses in Plymouth 14,500 were occupied by more than one family (many had more than three families), accounting for 25% of the local population. As Anderson shelters were to be erected in gardens and yards they were not designed for the working-class blocks of flats, and an independent assessment in 1939 asserted 'in congested and vulnerable districts' such protection 'is vitally necessary *there is still no decision as to methods in many areas*' (Italics in original).¹²⁴ The 'tin shelters' had been tried out in Spain, and according to John Foot, the liberal candidate for Callington, during a speech in Antony, were found to be 'death traps'; the government in Spain had to pass laws forbidding the people to use them as they were 'so dangerous and so expensive to life'.¹²⁵ John Foot urged the national government to adopt a strategy deep underground shelter building as this effectively saved life in Barcelona; despite being raided by 20-30 'planes at a time loss of life was very small. He also 'called-out' the government for not using the two million unemployed to be used to help mobilise a large ARP team to implement a policy of full-protection for the civilian population. His criticism was

¹²¹ 'Steel 'Kennels'', *WMN*, 13 March 1939, p.5.

¹²² 'Steel 'Kennels'', *WMN*, 13 March 1939, p.5.

¹²³ 'Steel 'Kennels'', *WMN*, 13 March 1939, p.5.

¹²⁴ *Air Raid Defence: Official Publication of the Air Raid Defence League, Incorporating the National Association of Air Raid Wardens*, No5 (July 1939), p.28.

¹²⁵ 'Tin Shelters are Death Traps', *WMN*, 10 February 1939, p.5; Antony is a village just outside of Plymouth.

reflective of the Liberal Party Executive who a month previously adopted a resolution demanding the construction of bomb-proof, underground shelters.

Air raid polices across Europe and the reaction to the aerial bombing in Spain allowed Liberal Lord Davies to imagine the people of England 'would return to the existence and habits of cave dwellers' as the country and continent was transformed into a 'rabbit warren'.¹²⁶ Indeed the sight of the many complete and incomplete public shelters in the city inspired one *WMN* reporter to print "the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests" and man himself has his concrete burrow to go to earth'.¹²⁷ Whilst Davies' quip was merely an observation, the *WMN* was in support of the official advocacy of dispersed, house-based protection, in an attempt to cause as little disruption as possible to the social status quo, to prevent defeatism among the civilian population, which would have been vital in city that is closely linked to the countries defences and military capability.¹²⁸

At one particularly heated meeting at Mutley Church, the topic of ARP and shelter provision exposed the wide range of views that existed within the local Conservative party. One military man 'maintained that it was a fallacy that Plymouth would be a danger spot in the event of hostilities' and he felt that all shelter provisions were unnecessary.¹²⁹ This notion was further supported by Captain R.C. Bridges when stating 'that air raid shelters would not be needed' and that it was the Labour party that was 'urging extensive ARP expenditure.' However, Mr Klipp insisted that Plymouth was a 'danger zone' and strongly supported a policy whereby all future buildings had to provide shelter from aerial bombing and failure to do so would see their planning refused by the authority, with the support of the government. He highlighted his surprise and disappointment when the new Royal cinema and Royal hotel had been constructed with no air raid shelter. But it wasn't until the CD Act 1939 came into force,

¹²⁶ 'Dangers of Air Attack', *WMN*, 23 January 1937, p.9.

¹²⁷ 'Air Raid Shelters', *WMN*, 28 August 1939, p.3.

¹²⁸ Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', p.318.

¹²⁹ 'Shelters in all New Buildings', *WMN*, 12 May 1939, p.5.

that empowered local authorities to prepare existing buildings for shelter and building professionals were presented with officially sanctioned designs and methods in the ARP handbooks *Structural Defence* and *Bomb Resisting Shelters*.¹³⁰ He suggested that the *WMN*' building provided the perfect blueprint for the future of the city's planning, confirming the foresight they had shown when building their new headquarters.¹³¹ In the absence of official guidance the Lord Mayor received a plans for a shelter from Plymouth builder, designer and Conservative James Charles Tozer. The extraordinary design was an armoured portable shelter which 'is impregnable from the penetrative power of steel segments and splinters from bombs' and was gas-proof, according to its architect. It was claimed the shelter could be erected in any garden and could house up to twenty people. Incredibly the shelter would have the appearance of a strongly built summer-house that could be converted, in less than an hour, into 'a heavily armoured fortress, absolutely safe from enemy bombs.'¹³²

The Conservative members of the Laira division were advised from the Regional Commissioner, the best way to combat air raid dangers was to dig trenches in your back garden – as 'this would lessen the cost to the country', (members were given the caveat this might be challenging as geological conditions in Plymouth meant that there was only 18 inches of earth before shale was reached, and sandbags could not be procured to bank-up the sides); indeed the total cost of Anderson shelters for the 2.5 million families in vulnerable areas was an estimated £20 Million (shelters could be purchased at £5 for those not covered by National Health Insurance Acts or had annual incomes of less than £250).¹³³ The Anderson shelter further provided each home with illusion that it could defend itself, home could still be a castle,

¹³⁰ Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', p.307.

¹³¹ as described in the previous chapter.

¹³² 'Bomb-Proof Shelter', *WMN*, 29 October 1938, p.5.

¹³³ 'Dig trenches', *WMN*, 29 September 1938, p.5; Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', pp.306-307.

and was widely accepted at the time by their recipients.¹³⁴ They were fully supportive of what was constituted as a conservative revolution.¹³⁵

It is not surprising that given Plymouth's strategic value to the enemy, its geology and cultural history, the city should be so deeply divided on shelter policy, expressing strong views on each side of the debate. It is clear the air raids in Spain had occupied the imaginations of Plymouth's decision makers, politicians, and ordinary citizens; exaggerated by the governments (and local authorities) strategy of secrecy, allowing individual and collective imaginations to be influenced by the scientists and architects who envisioned an alternative, more comprehensive shelter provision. Equally in a city whose economy and *raison d'être* was so closely linked to the maintenance of the country's defence and military capabilities, it is easy to see how a Conservative City Council with budgetary realities could support the Conservative National Government's ARP policy which was created to avoid the fear of a 'deep shelter mentality.'¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Mass-Observation, *War Begins at Home*, pp.199-120.

¹³⁵ Meisel, 'Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War', p.316.

¹³⁶ O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, p.372.

Conclusion: Reimagining Peace and War

As a precursor to the national governments decision to create a war-time coalition, Plymouth's local political parties invited Lord Astor to become Lord Mayor of Plymouth to serve for the duration of the war and Astor at once appointed Alderman W.J.W Modley as the deputy Lord Mayor.¹ This meant that Astor had the unique position of leading Plymouth's largest peace party (the PLNU) and Plymouth's largest war-time organisation, the Lord Mayor's office. According to local historian and journalist Pat Twyford, there was a general agreement that politics as far as municipal government was concerned should be relegated to the background creating a "work together" unity for the common end. The War Emergency Committee was made up of the leaders of the three political parties in the city council: Alderman L.R. Dunstan, Conservative; Alderman J. Churchward, Labour; Alderman Solomon Stephens, Liberal.²

The war in the air that materialised over Plymouth on 20 March 1941, witnessed the mass murder of 1300 Plymothians during seven night of heavy bombardment in March and April, ushered in the realities of aerial bombardment and confirmed Hitler as the real enemy of civilisation.³ The Plymouth blitz completed the cycle from an imagined to a real war, which had been played out since the Armistice in November 1918, the real war provided a platform from which the imagined war could be analysed, and from which a 'new order', a reimagined peace, must emerge. As Alastair Reid writes since Britain was not invaded its population suffered less during World War I, unlike the Second World War which brought destruction and disruption. Marwick's work on war and social change after World War I exposed the idea that war would not bring about fundamentally new developments but that it could speed up and

¹ Twyford, *It Came to Our Door Plymouth in the World War*, pp.43-51; Gill, *Plymouth A New History*, p.193.

² Twyford, *It Came to Our Door Plymouth in the World War*, pp.43-48.

³ Twyford, *It Came to Our Door Plymouth in the World War*, pp.43-48.

intensify existing trends, especially in a country as stable as Britain.⁴ Yet after the bombed but inviolate Britain of the Second World War, social change for winning the peace (and more immediately the war) resulted in projecting people into new situations and offering opportunities they would not have had in peacetime; paradoxically creating the impulse to rebuild and change old patterns of behaviour in favour of peace; which could not be found in peacetime or during the last war. As George Orwell's observation of the interwar years notes, the middle class and better-off of the working class felt;

When England is in danger they rally to its defence as a matter of course, but in between times they are not interested. After all, England is always in the right and England always wins, so why worry? It is an attitude that has been shaken during the past twenty years, but not so deeply as is sometimes supposed.⁵

But the physical violation of city life after the blitzes of 1940-1941, shook the attitudes more deeply than could have been imagined and inspired a more vigorous and intense battle for lasting peace. But not before the city had to reimagine war in the face of a fiery holocaust.

A south-west wind, that would have saved the city from a devastating gas attack as imagined by Halsbury and the city's gas utilitarian's, absurdly stocked the flames of destruction on 21 March 1941 (the second night of intense bombing). The flames that engulfed the city have become a potent image that encapsulated Plymouth's war-time suffering, and exposed the gaps in the imagined war which would have grave consequences; but from which great hope emerged.⁶

⁴ A. Reid, 'World War 1 and the Working Class in Britain'; in A. Marwick, *Total War and Social Change*, (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp.16-25.

⁵ G. Orwell, 'Boys Weeklies', in *Inside the Whale and other Essays* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940), p.89.

⁶ S. Essex, and M. Brayshay, "Boldness Diminished? The Post-War Battle to Replan a Bomb-Damaged Provincial City." *Urban History*, 35:3 (2008), p.446.

O'Brien pointed out in his official *Civil Defence* a variety of reasons the threat of fire during an air attack 'appeared less grave to most citizens than the high explosive and gas risks.'⁷ He cited 'familiarity with fires in peace-time' and knowing that an organisation already existed that deal with fires, helped to quell any concern. He also points out how the Incendiary Bombs Committee witnessed tests at Barnes where teams of girls acting as fire-fighters, with little training and simple equipment 'could deal with the menace of the incendiary bomb promptly and with success- using the 'stirrup pump'.⁸ Or has Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Thomas Cook stated in a Commons debate on Fire Brigades Bill in 1938;

Making people fire-minded or fire-conscious is like playing an up-hill game. The average property-owner will secure his possessions from theft and will take precautions against corruption by moth or rust, but unfortunately, as far as the risk of fire is concerned, he is usually wise only after the event.⁹

Brett Holman further argued that;

Other aspects of protection which assumed great importance in practice, such as [...] strengthened fire services from the late 1930s, received much less attention from airpower writers, either because they guarded against a specific threat which seemed remote or because they seemed insufficiently comprehensive.¹⁰

This worrying lack of imagination was exposed in a Commons debate;

The history of fire protection in this country is one of the most interesting chapters of local history. A good deal of it is very scrappy and rather haphazard. Perhaps the feature of it that is most constant is the fact that we have seldom taken action in the development of fire protection unless we have been stimulated by some calamity or the threat of some calamity.¹¹

⁷ O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, p.148.

⁸ O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, p.146.

⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol.335, House of Commons, 10 May 1938, cc1429-515.

¹⁰ Holman, *The Next Air Warm*, p.141.

¹¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol.335, House of Commons, 10 May 1938, cc1429-515.

After the blitzes in the spring of 1941- the Fire Services (emergency provision) Bill was fiercely debated in parliament and the divergence of opinion on the creation of nationalised and regionally governed fire services exposed the political divide which had affected other protective measures. Meisel argues the delay or almost complete absence of shelter preparations indicated that shelters had a social dimension, citing that the official advocacy of dispersed, house-based protection was not a planning assumption but a social policy designed to cause as little disruption as possible to the status quo.¹² The decision not to make compulsory the recommendations of the Riverdale Committee, to centralise and in some respect militarise the fire service were perceived to be too radical in peacetime, to the point where they might endanger the structures of local governance; a notion that concerned Herbert Morrison, Labour Home Secretary, even after the fiery destruction of British cities (Plymouth being the worst) who was nervous of the undemocratic structures that would be required to modernise the fire service, which was exposed when he said;

I prefer the representative authority to the Gauleiter. I prefer the elected body to the French system of prefects, and if today I bring forward a proposal which takes a great service out of the hands of local authorities, it is not because I want to do so, not because I like doing so, but because the work of fighting fire has, in substance, become a military operation and not a municipal operation.¹³

Noel Baker proposed ‘the peoples of the Greater Powers allowed their governments to break the pledges they had made’, and this was reason war came.¹⁴ The scale of public’s apathy and complete indifference to politics was exposed when the M-O recorded everyday conversation related to politics in ‘Worktown’ averaged 0.3%, and only peaked at 6% during the Munich crisis.¹⁵ Whilst historians debate the impact of this apathy (and this reasons for the

¹² Meisel, ‘Air Raid Shelter and Its Critics in Britain before the Second World War’, p.318.

¹³ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol.371, House of Commons, 20 May 1941, cc.1413-79.

¹⁴ ‘Public Opinion and the Charter’, *Headway in wartime*, September 1939, p.6.

¹⁵ MOA, TC 25 ‘Political Attitudes and Behaviour, 1938-56’, pp.43-44.

apathy) on the prevention of peace; the same could be argued on the preparation for a war, which would for the first time in British history directly affect the public. Firstly, as C Wright-Mills argues in any fully democratic society the parties and publics must have two characteristics; (1) within them ideas and alternatives of social life, which are truly debated, and (2) a chance to influence decisions of structural influence. He further argues in the absence of representative political debate that is 'wide and open and informed, people can get into touch neither with the effective realities of their world nor with the realities of themselves'.¹⁶ The absence of these characteristics in the often ideologically and politically divided visions of war preparation (and war prevention) create distorted and poorly imagined 'anticipatory policies'; as exposed by the realities of Plymothian's experiences during and after the heavy bombing. Both the Mass-Observation team that was sent to Plymouth after the Blitzes and the Admiralty, accused the Plymouth authorities of failures of imagination to the potential social problems associated with heavy aerial bombardment. One of biggest criticisms was the poor cooperation between departments and the dissemination of information to the public. Out of which the Citizens Advice Bureau was created in September 1941; and another significant creation was the 'youth service squad'.¹⁷

Overy writes 'democracies are no more immune from the distortion of reality or from the dangerous power of popular fear that provokes it.'¹⁸ In Plymouth this was a doubled-edged sword due to strong naval presence. Plymouth had undoubtedly been over-reliant on the RN, which had created a feeling of immunity, further fuelled by the phoney war and the early successes of what O'Brien termed as a Conservative revolution with the policy of gas masks, Anderson shelters and stirrup-pumps. But when death rained down from the sky in March 1941, these myths of protection, especially for the underrepresented citizen (women, children and the

¹⁶ C. Wright-Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.190-191.

¹⁷ FR 626 'Second Report on Plymouth', April 1941; FR 683 'Third Report on Plymouth', May 1941; FR 903 'Report on Plymouth', October 1941

¹⁸ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.384.

working-class), were exposed and immediately reformed with more radical policies and greater sociological imagination. From these ashes emerged a reimagined peace and a new Plymouth.

After the declaration of war in 1939, Britain's political cultural shifted again.¹⁹ The blitz ended the uncertainty and disillusionment of the phoney war period and brought in the kind of war that most parts of the British public had been expecting.²⁰ Some LNU branches shut down completely, their members absorbed into civil defence organisations. Yet as McCarthy observes many gamely struggled on and made use of new war-based associations and structures. In 1939 PLNU membership increased by 25% and peaked at 1375 and they continued to campaign throughout the war, calling for a reconstitution of the League as the best means of securing lasting peace.²¹ Lord Astor used his platform as both chair of PLNU and Chatham House, and Lord Mayor of Plymouth to push for a 'new order' in the international and domestic sphere, based on equal opportunities for all boys and girls in Britain to develop their mental and physical capabilities by recasting the education system.²² His visions on the liberation of thinking were further revealed when he decentralised the organisation at Chatham House. He also acknowledged the unity of all Plymothians 'a spirit we shall need to win the peace' noting the 'excellent' cooperation between the city and fighting services.²³

There has been a prevailing argument among historians that interwar peace movements, as discussed in chapter one, were to blame for appeasement in Britain (and isolationism in the US), which ultimately led to war, thus confirming a failure in the democratisation of peace ideals. Thus, dispelling the assumption the experiences of total war (1914-1918) had awakened the interest of ordinary citizen's conduct overseas, the ideals of internationalism, and pacificism as means of securing lasting peace. This thesis was epitomized by Walter Lipman

¹⁹ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.248.

²⁰ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.384.

²¹ 'Plymouth L.N.U and War', *WMN*, 22 April 1939, p.13.

²² 'Lord Astor Talks of "New Order"', *WMN*, 18 February 1941, p.5.

²³ 'Lord Astor Again Civic Head', *WMN*, 10 November 1942, p.5.

who stated, 'the preachment and practice of pacifists in Britain and America were the cause of the [second] World War.'²⁴ Both McCarthy and Lynch disagree with Lippman and E.H. Carr's long-held theory that supporters of pacificism were naïve purveyors of 'utopianism' who failed to prevent rearmament.²⁵ McCarthy, unlike Lynch, does acknowledge that the LNU overestimated the readiness of the public opinion to engage with internationalism and misjudged the readiness of the political classes to open up decision-making to democratic methods. These were two notions that Astor and the PLNU believed would be essential in creating a new social order in the inter-war years. Astor had further argued the importance of knowing the facts, or what Norman Angell described as 'the moral obligation to be intelligent.' But Harold Nicholson presented a paper to Chatham House which argued that public ignorance of foreign policy was unimportant, but what most important was 'not knowledge of facts but habits of correct and fundamental thinking'; suggesting policy should never be secret and should always subject to democratic control, and negotiation should be delegated to trained officials away from the public glare.²⁶ These were lessons which Astor had learnt and applied in his radical visions for a new Plymouth, which according to Winant, 'from which will spring, in growing measure, the intelligence, the tolerance and the creative spirit which will form mankind's greatest hope.'²⁷

These were the visions of Plymouth held by the city's pacifists and pacifists after the last war; which failed to capture the sociological imagination of the public and the city's decision makers; the less radical and realist defencist policies of maintaining the status quo, and ultimately rearmament ensured Plymouth remained a city ready for conquest and war, but not home defence. But the wartime conditions, especially after the destruction of the Plymouth

²⁴ W. Lippman, *U.S Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943), p.59.

²⁵ C. Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp.3-4.

²⁶ H. Nicholson, 'Modern Diplomacy and British Public Opinion', *International Affairs*, 14:5 (1935), p.605.

²⁷ J.P. Watson and P. Abercrombie, *A Plan for Plymouth (1943)* (Plymouth: Underhill, 1943), p.iii.

blitz, spawned a physical and psychological space where peace could be reimagined along less partisan and ideological lines.

Astor's work for peace as the war-time leader

You in Britain have yet another task, and with it another opportunity- that of rebuilding the towns and villages which the enemy has laid to waste. And in the rebuilding, to create a finer physical setting for a richer social and economic life which you are planning to realize²⁸

Essex and Brayshay argue Plymouth managed to transfer so much of its original radical vision from the page into physical reality which stood in stark contrast to the experience of rebuilding that occurred elsewhere in the country; they argue that Lord Astor was the key architect in realising Plymouth's bold reconstruction plan.²⁹ Astor's radical visions of winning the peace which had been frustrated by the status quo and cultural pessimism of the interwar years, and the outbreak of the war, could now be applied with more vigour and wisdom gained from his lengthy leadership of the PLNU. Essex and Brayshaw argue he partly achieved this through a well-orchestrated promotional campaign which secured vital support from public opinion, a campaign won on idealist visions long-before the less appealing realities were revealed.³⁰ Essex and Brayshaw's case study suggests Astor had learnt the lessons of pre-war planning failures in peace and war, and was quick to apply the lessons, maintaining morale and engendering a sense of unity.³¹ Astor was critical of the both the Scott and Uthwatt committee reports during a house of Lords debate stating 'we had almost lost the war because before it

²⁸ Watson and Abercrombie, *A Plan for Plymouth (1943)*, p.iii.

²⁹ Essex and Brayshay, 'Boldness Diminished? The Post-War Battle to Replan a Bomb-Damaged Provincial City.' pp. 437-461.

³⁰ Essex and Brayshay, 'Boldness Diminished? The Post-War Battle to Replan a Bomb-Damaged Provincial City.' pp. 437-461.

³¹ B. Chalkley and J. Goodridge, 'The 1943 plan for Plymouth: war-time vision and post-war Realities', in B. Chalkley, D. Dunkerley and P. Gripaios (eds.), *Plymouth: Maritime City in Transition* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1991), pp.82-94.

started we failed to introduce controversial legislation [...] let us make sure we do not make the same mistake in wartime, thereby risking the peace.’ He pleaded to the members of the House of Lords to join forces across all party lines and to sacrifice certain things in the national interest to make sure of winning the peace;

Some of our opinions, some of our views, some of our privileges, some of our property, some of our rights. I am perfectly certain that the members of your Lordships’ House will be as prepared to make these sacrifices in the national interests as they have shown themselves willing to sacrifice their own persons or to sacrifice their own sons when it is necessary in the national interest. If we do that, if we take that line, we shall have made a contribution towards the winning of the peace.³²

Further evidence that Astor had recognised the success of the PLNU’s ability to transcend party politics which allowed them to cultivate so many non-party associations and present ideas of an increasingly peaceable political culture.³³ Lord Geddes’ share Astor’s concerns with the Scott Report when he commented;

I really felt shocked. It was so obvious that something other than reconstruction was in the mind, perhaps, of the majority. There was preservation, it seemed to me, rather than a vigorous going forward to the future [...] And so I put this question to myself when I read the Scott Report: Have the Committee really envisaged the fact that the young people of the country, always precious, are more precious than ever? Have they envisaged the fact fully and explicitly that these young people have got to be given a very much better environment than they have had in the years before the war if they are to develop into what they can develop into?³⁴

And Viscount Sankey was equally concerned with the Uthwatt report when he argued against the reports suggestion that planning ‘will be recognized that this involves the

³² *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol.125, House of Lords, 19 November 1942, cc.143-94.

³³ McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.246.

³⁴ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol.125, House of Lords, 19 November 1942, cc.143-94.

subordination to the public good of the personal interests and wishes of landowners', by suggesting;

It is clear from that statement that people's rights, as at present existing, may be severely restricted or even entirely taken away. In time of war rights must be surrendered, and they have been willingly surrendered, but it is to be hoped that in time of peace, first, that the rights of individuals to free speech and criticism will be respected³⁵

When questioned about the rebuilding of Plymouth, the deputy Mayor Alderman Modley, referred to the 'Wild-cat ideas' that were presented after the last war, and hoped for a city for all, and city with a more diversified economy, a city planned for business and pleasure, a city of profound peace.³⁶ After the Great War, the transition into a peacetime city was hampered by the naval and military presence, shading the attempts to democratise public spaces. Despite Lord Astor's ugly ending as a member of the city council, he was soon again a prevalent figure in Plymouth's latest peace organisation the Plymouth United Nations Association (PUNA).

The LNU officially reinvented their organisation as the United Nations Association (UNA) in October 1945. PUNA was set-up by Lucy Middleton, Labour MP for Plymouth Sutton (formerly Lady Astor's seat) and Joan Gaved the losing Liberal candidate for Plymouth Sutton; and they quickly had a more gendered approach learning the lessons of a fledgling PLNU by having a more representative platform and executive.³⁷ They were quick to create a women's section and youth group; and they embraced an internationalist culture from the start. The Lord Mayor envisioned a world where young people could visit all countries of the world to foster and understanding of other cultures and stated.³⁸ At one They also had the stalwarts

³⁵ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol.125, House of Lords, 19 November 1942, cc.143-94.

³⁶ 'Rebuilding of Plymouth', *WMN*, 1 September 1943, p.4.

³⁷ 'Alternative to Annihilation: Plymouth Women to Look to U.N.O', *WMN*, 3 October 1946, p.6; 'City Forms Branch', *WMN*, 1 June 1946, p.2.

³⁸ 'Youth of the Nations', *WMN*, 26 March 1945, p.2.

of the pacifist LNU as the first president was Isaac Foot and the vice presidents were Lucy Middleton and Lord Astor, and the executive which included Herbert Medland Labour MP for Plymouth for Plymouth Drake (1945-51). Although McCarthy argues the UNA never came close to inspiring the same popular movement which cohered around the League, and Gilbert Murray sensed there was ‘not the same buoyant hope, not the same expectation of a millennium.’³⁹ The PUNA chairman Lord Mayor H.J. Perry commented after a PUNA meeting which witnessed an inspiring talk from suffragist and president of the Women’s International Organisation in Geneva Mary Dingham, about America’s awakening from international isolation, commented ‘he had never been connected with such an effort which had aroused some much enthusiasm’.⁴⁰

The PUNA’s affiliation with Rotterdam brought the two cities together in an attempt to rebuild their cities for peace; as they had shared experiences of being blitzed and a history of sea faring; further evidence of the will to foster an international spirit. *A Plan for Plymouth* (1943) was duly given to the Rotterdam Burgomaster, as a blueprint for peace. As part of the UN week in Plymouth in 1946, the civic leaders, children and naval personnel of Rotterdam were invited to the Odeon cinema for a special extended showing of Jill Craigie’s *The Way We Live* (1946). The film about rebuilding Plymouth which gave the Plymothian’s, particularly women, a platform to contribute their ideas about housing, something which had been neglected under the secret proposals prepared by Astor et al.⁴¹ The film placed the future in the hands of the people as well as the bureaucrats and politicians, and broke all box-office records in Plymouth, which revived the man in the street to see what needed to be done to build a city of peace. This was Plymouth’s gift to the people of Rotterdam who had to rebuild their city ‘underground’ due to the German occupation.

³⁹ ‘UNA is launched’, *International Outlook*, November 1945, p.2.

⁴⁰ ‘War not Close or Inevitable’, *WMN*, 20 April 1948, p.6.

⁴¹ ‘Linked by Blitz’, *WMN*, 05 October 1946, p.2; J. Craigie, *The Way We Live*, (Two Cities Film, 1946).

McCarthy believes the UNA retained the non-partisanship of the LNU but its members were not advocates of radical schemes for social equality or a dramatically democratised world-order abroad; but she does recognise both the successes of both the LNU and UNA's in persuading the Britain's quiet citizens to support an international government.⁴² Yet from the embers of the pacifist optimism of the PLNU leadership the PUNA brought together the theories defencism and pacificism to reimagine a radical, utopian peace; just as the visionaries and citizens of Plymouth had radically reimaged and rebuilt their own city. No place in Britain has firmer ties with the New World; and a New Plymouth rose 'out of the disasters of war to snatch victory for the city of the future ...'⁴³

⁴² McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p.253.

⁴³ Watson and Abercrombie, *A Plan for Plymouth (1943)*, p.iii.

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