

New typed

In 1914, the British Army was solidly based upon the principle of voluntary recruitment, despite more than a decade of warnings by pro-conscriptionists that the system was not capable of meeting the needs of a major war. George F. Shee had provided "the first logically complete statement" in favor of a conscription system as early as 1901 and Royal Commissions investigating the adequacy of British forces had reported in 1902 and 1904 that only the adoption of conscription would provide the strength to meet a "great national emergency." The National Service League, formed in 1902 in response to Shee's book, provided an increasing number of publications and public speakers favoring compulsory service. However, the League found it politic to adopt synonyms such as "national service" and "universal training" for the word "conscription", due to the public's association of the latter with the degrading, brutalistic systems of the continent.

The conscriptionist cause gained a major boost in 1904 when the former Commander-in-Chief of the Army and hero of the South African war, Lord Roberts, became convinced that ~~national~~ conscription was necessary to meet modern warfare manpower requirements. The cause was further aided in 1908 by the purchase of the London Times by the outspoken Lord Northcliffe. Northcliffe used his newspapers to express "his enthusiasms, among them . . . compulsory training. . . ."

Opponents of compulsory service were equally influential. The Secretary for War, Haldane and his successor, Colonel Seely, both adamantly opposed any system not based on the principles of voluntarism. In his introduction to a strongly anti-conscriptionist

Haldane was
created Viscount in 1911

Mackie #78-79

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book by former Adjutant-General Sir Ian Hamilton, Haldane insisted that the ~~Navy~~ was the true "first line" for Home defense lay in the home Fleet and that the excessive costs of a conscript army would necessarily "trench upon what is requisite for the maintenance of Hamilton 20-21 the proper standard of seapower." This argument naturally found favor with the supporters of a strong British Navy. ~~Both~~ Viscount Esher ~~xxxxxx~~ claimed that "if conscription was adopted 'The primary danger would be to our sea power. . .'" since a strong d'Ombrain, n. 77 home army would "surely lead to the weakening of the fleet." The p. 237

First Sea Lord, John Fisher, was more blunt in his opposition, stating that "There's only so much money for the Defense Services, and every penny given to the Army is two pence taken from the Navy."

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Hamilton 35 Lord Haldane also accused the continued agitation over the conscription issue with hindering the recruiting for the Territorial Forces created under his reorganization scheme in 1909. Other anti-conscriptionists foresaw even more dire results among the regular forces. Colonel F. N. Maude claimed that German volunteers under ~~Frederick the Great~~ and English volunteers on the peninsula held their ground with only 10,000 men to the mile, while the 'conscript' continental armies were "obliged to provide 30,000 to 40,000 men to the mile of position." Maude assured his readers that "'the line' is the ideal fighting formation ~~if~~ for all, but only an Army raised A 34 by voluntary enlistment can risk its employment."

FF Sely t, S, ~~mm~~

To refute Hamilton's volume, Roberts published Fallacies and Facts: An Answer to 'Compulsory Service.' Comparing the two works, the Quarterly Review distinctly favored Roberts' arguments, ^{logic of} but noted that the English people seldom took the army seriously. ^{if really made no difference anyway.}

According to the Review, the nation "cares so little about compulsory service that it has not troubled, except in the most cursory and superficial manner, to investigate the material and ethical transformations which the adoption of such a policy involves." ¹³

Of ~~more importance~~ ^{greater import} for the future, however, the conscription issue had become intertwined with party politics, although ^{major} no party made it an official party stand. Liberals generally favored voluntarism, "while most of those who advocated national service were ¹⁴ Labourites and trade unionists associated with the Conservatives." The General Staff ~~xx~~ saw ^{addately} ~~opposed~~ ¹⁵ compulsory man power for any purpose, "no nonsense" conscription, as practised on the Continent, as vital ¹⁶ whether military or industrial. Liberal to the adption of a continental strategy, but the Prime Minister, ^{was certain}

Asquith, ~~xx~~ felt that "any government which proposed [compulsory service] ¹⁷ would have committed political suicide." Even the ^{most ardent} ~~leading~~ ¹⁸ ~~conservatives~~ saw the program ^{conscription} ~~compulsory service~~ as "militaryly wise but politically foolish as conditions stood" before the war, but in their private correspondence they assumed that it would be a "necessity in the event of involvement in a European War." Bonar Law later wrote that he did not think "that it would have been either possible or wise to raise the question of compulsion until the voluntary system has failed." ¹⁹

Failure of the voluntary system was hardly a consideration in ~~the~~

AA 575

Mackie 52
MacDonald

BB 90
Macmillan

Asquith ^{Gen} 14
Mackie 83

Mackie 108
Mackie 112

The early days of the ~~war~~ conflict.

The call of the new Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, for volunteers for his "new army" was met with a great wave of

Barnett p 377
Times
11 Sept 1914
p 377

enthusiasm, particularly after news of the retreat from Mons. By 10 September the Prime Minister was able to announce that ~~minimum~~ 439,000

men had joined, including ^{over} 33,000 recruits on ~~minimum~~ 3 September.

18
ATL
alone. Because the flow of recruits was more than the army could equip or train, a scheme of deferred enlistment was devised, with the delayed men receiving sixpence per day. After remonstrances from Parliament

about the inadequate amount, Asquith raised the payment to three shillings per day. * *slowed the influx of men by* In the meantime, Kitchener ordered that minimum recruiting

standards be raised by increasing height and chest measurements by two inches each. *18* Refusal of the Asquith government to explain the reasons for these various actions appear to have left the general public ~~confused~~ slightly bewildered, just at the time when the initial spirit of enthusiasm began to wear thin.

*Although the increased stipend caused another brief flurry of enlistments, particularly from among the poorer classes, the deferment plan was soon out of favor and was quietly dropped.

Hayes, 150

the end of

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By October, the rush to the recruiting offices had decreased

sharply. Although Government spokesmen continued to publically express satisfaction ~~at~~ with the response to appeals for volunteers,

be unwelcomed," the audience responded with cheers. The Times (London) also welcomed Lord Haldane's January change in attitude when the former ~~Secretary of State~~ Cabinet Minister commented that "Compulsory Service

is not foreign to the Constitution of the country, and in a great

national emergency it might be necessary to resort to it."

imes 11 Jan
. 4

Times, 22 Jan
p. 33

See also, D294

in Parliament
Regularly, the question was put to the Government as to whether any

inquiries or planning had been commenced as to the possibility of introducing a program of national service, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

Ex. George
and regularly ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ it was denied that such an inquiry was necessary. When asked on 20 April "whether the Government was satisfied with the rate of recruitment," Lloyd George responded that

"The Secretary of State for War is very gratified with the response

Consc 2-3
... for voluntary enlistment."²² The Government, ~~xxxxxxxx~~ refused to reveal the recruiting results, but ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ there were indications

that recruiting had fallen off. In a leading article, the Times reported that what was needed was "a clear statement of the country's needs" instead of "the vague and humiliating appeals" being plastered on every wall in the country. The article also ridiculed the abortive attempt under the auspices of Sir Francis Trippel to conduct "registration by newspaper-coupon."²³

*129 MAR
n. 9*
A former adherent to voluntarism, Sir L. G. Chiozza Money, was also critical of what he termed the ""most extraordinary series of advertisements" by which the authorities were attempting to induce ~~some~~ ^{He called}

EE 866
the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ women of England to send their men to enlist. A correspondent to the Westminster Gazette characterized the recruiting system by threats.²⁴

program as one of "shrieking posters and a journalistic clamour against "shirkers," and loud abuse of professional footballers." The writer argued that the exertion of "moral pressure, with the outcries of public indignation, in order to drive civilians from their work into

ME GG 371
the army" was nothing more than ""a most undignified compulsion." Other

~~xxxxxxxx~~ critics likened the voluntary program to "conscription by

*Times, 10 July
1915, p. 72*
cajolery" or noted that the traditional British recruit often volunteered

as a result of economic pressures which differed little from compulsion.²⁶

Former Adversary of the Author

(Redacted)

T, 22 May 15.96

Former advocates of the voluntary system, such as ex-Cabinet Minister Ellis Griffith and Major-General Alfred E. Turner, joined in demands that a system of national service be adopted.²⁷

Within the Government, both Churchill and Lloyd George were reported to be ready to advocate conscription, ~~but~~

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but the Conservatives were still carefully ~~existing~~ awaiting a better time to challenge the Government on the issue. Curzon cautioned Long and Law "against any declaration in favor of conscription which might 'even retard its ultimate adoption by tempting the

Mackie 113 Government to declare prematurely against it."²⁸ By spring 1915 it had become obvious to even the most uninformed that the European struggle would be neither short nor glorious. Not only were the casualty lists growing daily longer, but serious ~~strikes~~ economic labor difficulties were arising, occasioned by the undirected ~~and~~ early voluntarism which had stripped industry of thousands of skilled workers just when they were needed most. Rumours of shortages of heavy munitions were soon confirmed in the Northcliffe newspapers, leading

F 1297
see dispute from Repington
T, 22 May 15.96

Government's recruitment policy continued to be based on the voluntary principle, even while Kitchener ^{again lowered} altered the physical standards, this

time to a minimum height of five feet two inches and a maximum age of

forty.²⁹ ~~Other previous opponents of conscription, however, were no longer so adamant in their views. Both Churchill and Lloyd George~~

Mackie 113 ~~were reported to be ready to advocate conscription. Sir L. Chiozza-~~

Money, ~~Ellis Griffith, and Major-General Alfred E. Turner~~ publicly declared ~~their reversal of position on the issue and~~ demanded ~~that~~ a system of national service be adopted.

Was

Coalition

~~under the Coalition was still
a coalition~~

Although the ~~First~~ Coalition Cabinet continued to be dominated by adherents of the voluntary system, Kitchener ^{apparently} could have had

conscription if he had asked for it.³⁰ Instead, the War Minister continued to express himself as satisfied with the progress of the existing program. To quiet the increasing ~~publicity during~~ ³¹ clamour in Commons and the press

over the need for central direction over the allocation of manpower between the forces and industry, the Prime Minister introduced a

National Registration Bill, designed to "disclose ~~the~~ unsuspected resources in productive power."³² In answer to objections that the

Bill was actually a forerunner of covert conscription, Mr. Walter

Long denied any connection between the two, explaining that all

the register would do was to help "avoid taking men [into service]

who ought not to be taken."³³ Pro-conscriptionists, however, saw the bill as a "step forward" in national organization and Lord Lansdowne

"aroused the 'Radical ire' because he noted that if compulsory service becomes necessary" the Bill would greatly assist its introduction,

because it would provide the information requisite for compulsion."³⁴ (259 to 16)

To the Times, the division on the Registration Bill proved how few

were the members "to whose ideas—and the fear of successive Governments to face them—we owe the scandalous neglect of our national security

in the past."³⁵

people were ahead

The Times contention that the ~~country~~ "is in advance of the government" in their thinking, ~~awaiting only positive direction from~~ and were only waiting for the government to ~~realistically~~ acknowledge ~~as to what needs to be done~~ ^{and wanted to} appeared to be justified by the letters ~~the realities of the situation~~ written to major newspapers in the three month period after the

Cabinet change. Of 166 letters surveyed, almost three-fourths were in favor of compulsory service.³⁶

113, 124
Mackie 113
Current Hist
4:669

F 1298-1300

Consc 7

Times 15 July
p. 7

Hayes 157

Times 10 July
p. 78

29 Mar 15
P. 9

Mackie 298

The feelings of the country were also indicated on 9 July by the reception given the Guildhall speeches of Kitchener, Carson and Long. The Times reported that "nothing . . . was more loudly ~~applauded~~ applauded then has [Kitchener's] hint that 'something more was required' than the present methods of appealing for recruits." Sir Edward Carson's statement that "if voluntary recruiting . . . fail, does anybody for a moment suppose that we ought to hesitate

Times 10 July to apply compulsory service" was also "cheered to the echo." ³⁷

p. 7 Asquith continued to report that "recruiting was very satisfactory" ³⁸

Consc 34 on 28 July.

~~The Times~~ Despite the Prime Minister's assurance, the Times of 16 August carried a Manifesto ~~signed~~ signed by fifty prominent men, including Lord Milner, urging the Government to make a national service policy. The following month a statement calling for compulsory

Times 16 Aug service, signed by twenty-two Peers and thirty Members of Parliament

p. 7 presently serving on active duty, appeared in all the London newspapers.

Times 15 Sept p. 72, Consc 23 The following day, the Prime Minister ^{finally} admitted that recruiting had

Consc 26 fallen off in the last few weeks, but upon inquiry, refused to supply " 35 the particulars of recruiting.

By early fall, it appeared that the Prime Minister could no longer put off a Cabinet crisis over the compulsion issue. The demands of members of Parliament and of the press were becoming more strident every day. for resolution of the issue A sampling of major newspapers between 12 April and 16 May 1915 had ~~discovered~~ ^{revealed} only twenty-three editorials, letters, or stories concerning the voluntarist versus conscriptionist issue ~~during the period~~. ^{A subsequent} Another sampling, beginning 19 August and ending 30 September 1915, ~~discovered~~ ^{revealed} ~~699~~ ^{a thirty-fold increase} ~~in interest, with articles~~ ~~measuring~~ 699 items on the topic, including 257 editorials. Although ^{newspapers} the majority of the items continued to favor voluntarism, it was significant that the letters ^{from individuals} to the editors were almost evenly split on the topic. ⁴⁰

Mackie 298

M 374

N 417

L 573-74

Parl 38

Another disquieting aspect of the conscription issue was the attitude of the labour unions. In mid-September, ~~the~~ powerful railwaymen's union, told the House of Commons that if conscription were enacted, it would be followed by "industrial revolution." ⁴¹ Delegates ~~to~~

to the Trade Union Congress in Bristol were equally opposed to any system of compulsion, declaring that it had not been shown that the voluntary system was inadequate. ⁴² On 28 September, the Prime Minister attended ~~a secret~~ ~~meeting~~ ~~of the~~ Labour Conference, where he reportedly repeated his opposition to conscription. However, Kitchener, who also attended the conference, apparently left the impression that compulsion would soon be used if requirements were not met voluntarily. When

questioned in Commons, the Under-Secretary for War, Mr. Tennant, denied that any threat of compulsion had been authorized. ⁴³ The pro-conscriptionists in the Cabinet, however, prepared to bring matters to a head.

Threatened with a major cabinet split, Asquith successfully
circumvented the problem once more by appointing the universally
popular Lord Derby as Director General of Recruiting on 6 October.

Compulsionists were promised ~~that~~ ^{Derby} that if Derby's voluntary

Consc 44 scheme failed, Asquith would recommend "some form of legal obligation." ⁴⁴
a division in the Cabinet

The Prime Minister's efforts to avoid ~~the~~ ^{as} ~~the~~ were given a helpful
Carson

boost by the resignations of ~~the~~ ^{as} and
Churchill over the conduct of affairs in Salonika and the Dardanelles,
respectively. ⁴⁵ The sudden removal of these two strong conscriptionists
strengthened ~~the~~ Asquith's position.

To give voluntarism one more "fair trial," Lord Derby, who

Threatened with a major cabinet split, Asquith successfully circumvented the problem once more by appointing the universally popular Lord Derby as Director General of Recruiting. Derby, who had been particularly successful in recruiting in Lancashire, was given the task of resurrecting a new form of the deferred enlistment program which had failed and been discarded the previous year. Under the Derby scheme, the eligible population would ""attest" to their willingness to serve and would be ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ classified by age-groups. These groups would then be called upon as the government required. A unique feature of the plan was that the married men were placed in separate groups from those who were single and that the married groups would ~~not~~ be called until all the single groups had been summoned. Provisions were made for tribunals to determine whether individuals should be exempted or postponed to later groups for various reasons. Asquith told Commons that the success or failure of the scheme would be known by 30 November. ⁴⁶

Despite an apparently favorable beginning, the plan soon faltered. In an effort to stimulate volunteers, Lord Derby issued a press statement ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ assuring the married attestors that ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ if the single men did not "come forward voluntarily, other and compulsory means would be taken before the married men were called upon to fulfil their engagement to serve." ⁴⁷ When anti-voluntarist ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ conscriptionist members of Parliament called upon Asquith to say whether this press release represented the government position, the Prime Minister ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ merely called attention to his statement of 2 November in which he ^{said} stated that the obligation of the married men should not be binding "until—I hope by voluntary

Consc 43

Consc 52

Consc 45 effort, if it be needed in the last resort, as I have explained, by

other means—the unmarried men are dealt with."⁴⁸ This ambiguous statement satisfied no one, and Asquith was later forced to support the promise of the Derby, his Director General. ⁴⁹

from

In addition to these pledges of Derby and, eventually, from Asquith, local recruiting committees ~~did~~ frequently did not hesitate to give various assurances implying that attestors would be given preference or favorable treatment if compulsion ever came. Even so, the response from the eligible population was so poor that the Government found it necessary to extend the canvass deadline from 30 November to 13 December. Under increasing threats of compulsion, 1,070,478 men attested in the last four days of the ^{extension} scheme, almost 40 percent of the total number attested during the whole eight weeks campaign. Despite the last minute response, Lord Derby's efforts had proven voluntarism a failure. Of the five million men of military age, over two million had failed to volunteer. More importantly, 650,000 single men not exempt from military service had failed to appear, thus placing the PM in a difficult position. ⁵⁰

Despite the results of the Derby scheme, Asquith told the House of

Commons on 5 January 1916 that in his opinion "no case has been made out for general compulsion."⁵¹ Instead, Asquith introduced a Military Service Bill providing for compulsory service for all single men

between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, unless otherwise exempted.

The Prime Minister explained the apparent contradiction by noting

that the measure was presented specifically to fulfil the "promise"

he made the married men. Sir John Simon, unable to accept ~~the~~ Asquith's

niceties of distinction, resigned his Cabinet position. ⁵²

Times 1 Jan 1916, p. 5

Neither the Prime Minister nor any of his supporters explained why compulsion should be applied to 1,000,000 unattesting single ~~unmarried~~ men while the government ignored the fact that 1,150,000 married men also failed to appear under the Derby scheme. Nor did they explain why a married twenty-year-old should enjoy preference over an unmarried forty-year-old. Despite the obvious inequalities, the Bill easily passed with 431 ^{the second reading} Ayes versus only 39 Noes.⁵⁵ The extent of their victory must have surprised even the most ardent advocates of compulsory service.

However, the action in the House of Commons accurately reflected the changing mood of the nation. The last week in December saw ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxafxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ "the emergence of a conscriptionist majority among the nation's editorials for the first time," with fifty favoring conscription and forty-two against it. ~~xxxxxxxx~~ Even strongly voluntarist papers like the Westminster Gazette became converted to the need for compulsion. In January, while the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Military Service Bill was being debated in the House of Commons, over eight hundred editorials, letters, and articles on the issue appeared in the major national newspapers. Pro-compulsion editorials outnumbered voluntarists by almost a three to two ratio. By ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ when it was announced that the Military Service Act would take effect on 10 February 1916, only the extreme pacifist and labour journals remained in opposition. ⁵⁶ Asquith could finally hope that he

conscription controversy had received its last airing.

Procl & Act

With the passage of the Military Service Bill, the long argued compulsory system had become a reality, even if it only applied to a limited part of the British population. Under the provisions of the act, unattested single men between the ages of eighteen and forty-Times 5 Feb p3 one had three options. First, ~~they~~ as Lord Derby continued to urge, they could voluntarily attest until midnight, 1 March 1916, and be placed into the appropriate age groups. Second, they could enlist for immediate service. If the unattested single individual did not choose one of the previous courses by midnight, 1 March 1916, he would be "deemed to have enlisted" automatically and would be called up by age-class at the option of the authorities.

HH 132

Course 356-51

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Course 357

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requirements

In the meantime, the ~~xxmxx~~ of the Army could not wait for the completion of political maneuvering. ~~Exxpx~~ The Need for men to replace losses was emphasized in December with the release of ~~the~~ showing total British losses of 528,000 casualty figures ~~xxmxxfirstxfifteenxxmxxxfourxx~~ men in the first fifteen months of the war. Despite the gain of ~~xxmxx2000~~ 275,000 direct enlistments during the Derby enrollments, it became necessary to call up the first four eligible groups of unmarried attested men on 20 December 1915. Groups 2 through 5 were to report on 20 January 1916.⁵⁹ On 8 January Groups 6-9 were called up and again on 28 January four more age groups were summoned.⁶⁰

Times 9 Jan p 7
Times 28 Feb p 5

On 10 February, the first effective day of the Military

Service Act, the Government announced the first calling of the classes of unattested single men, ordering Classes 2 through 12 ^{unexempted} to report on 10 March. This took in all ~~xxmxxmxxmxx~~ single men

Times 10 Feb p 8
T, 12 Feb p 7
T, 14 Feb p. 8

between the ages of nineteen and thirty.⁶¹ Two days later, an article in the Times reported that the size of the army was no longer a problem with the working of the Derby Scheme and the Military Service Act. It therefore came as a shock when, on 14 February the Government announced the calling up of all remaining classes of unattested men. The reason became apparent when the Times reported that "It is stated that from the groups already called up the percentage of recruits actually obtained has been very small"⁶²

^xGroup 1, the eighteen year-olds, was passed over as a result of the Government's previous promise that no recruit would be summoned until he passed his nineteenth birthday. Times, ~~xxmxxmxxmxx~~, p. 8. 21 December 1915

T 25 Feb p. 9

On 25 February the nation suffered another shock when it was announced that the call up dates for the married groups would be released in a few days. Since the first of the unattested single classes would not report for two weeks yet, the married men considered this announcement a betrayal of the promises of Derby and the Prime Minister. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ The first few mutterings of discontent in February grew into a roar of anger in March. Far from stilling the compulsion debate as Asquith had hoped, the operation of the Military Service Act merely added fuel to the fires of controversy. In just one newspaper, the Times, 111 editorials,

T 1-31 Mar

letters, and articles on the subject appeared in the month of March alone. Irate protests were made concerning administrative inconsistencies by tribunals, the lack of government guidance for local boards, and the numerous bureaucratic errors being made. Especially criticized were the excessive number of single men given exemption because they were employed in reserved occupations and the Government's failure to take adequate steps to track down those individuals who failed to report when called up. On 1 March, Lloyd George, speaking for the government in the House of Commons, said that steps were being taken to reduce the large number of men claiming to be

T, 2 Mar p 12

"starred, badged, or in reserved occupations."

T 25 Feb p 9

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T, 2 Mar p 12

Married attestors, suddenly faced with the realities of

a military obligation which many had never actually expected to happen, demanded that they be allowed to replace single men working in the reserved occupations. The attested men also realized that the one million married men who had not attested were snug and secure behind Asquith's declaration against any extension of the existing act. The letters to the Times and the debates in Commons became filled with bitterness and recriminations over pledges broken.

24 Feb p 9
T 6 MAR p 9
11 MAR p 7
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201-8, 218, 226, 227
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T, 15 Mar p.5

a step further and decided to form a "National Union of Attested
Married Men." A protest on behalf of the married attested men ^{reportedly}
~~rally~~ in Hyde Park, London,

T, 20 Mar p5

drew a very "business-like" crowd of ~~at~~ eight to ten thousand men.
~~Faced with these growing protests in the press and in Parliament,~~
Asquith once more attempted to evade the real issues.

Consc 264

~~Government announced that the~~
~~behind these protests.~~ The call up of further married groups ~~would be~~
delayed and a conference under the direction of Walter Long was
given the task of reducing the lists of reserved occupations, in
an effort to release more single men for duty. On 6 April, the
Prime Minister promised the House of Commons that he would make a
statement on the recruiting problems before the Easter Recess.
However, on 18 April Asquith again delayed his statement and on the
19 April he announced that disagreement within the Cabinet made the
break-up of the Government possible. ⁶⁸

Behind the

Continued

Mackie 276 Behind these delays was the Prime Minister's attempt to avoid being forced into a full scale program of ~~maintenance~~ by compulsion. The conscriptionists in the Cabinet, who had patiently bided their time for so long, had finally decided to exert their power. On 17 April, Bonar Law ~~had~~ told the Prime Minister that he believed "a coalition government was in the best interest of the nation, but that to prevent a breakup of the coalition it would be necessary to adopt a program of ""general compulsion." Law stated that it would be impossible for him to carry his party in favor of ~~the~~ Asquith's program any longer, but that the Prime Minister could carry his supporters in favor of compulsion if he tried. 69

Mackie 293-96

C 279 Following secret sessions on 25 and 26 April 1916, Asquith attempted to introduce another half-way measure ~~that~~ ^{but it} met with so little support in the House ~~of Commons~~ that he was forced to withdraw it. 70 ~~It appears that the Extent of Military Service in Ireland~~ However, news of the uprising in Dublin and of the disaster at ^{however,} Kut provided the excuse for announcing that a more sweeping proposal embracing general compulsion would be proposed.

C 291 On 3 May 1916, the Prime Minister who had fought against conscription for so long introduced the ""Military Service (General Compulsion)

Consc 292 Bill" in the House of Commons, explaining that "Such a measure is, in the unanimous opinion of all members of the Government and of the Army Council, urgently needed for the successful prosecution of the war." 71

On 4 May 1916, ~~after nearly twenty-one months~~ ^{after entering} ~~the war,~~ the House of Commons finally ~~demanded~~ ^{enacted} a general conscription from ~~1/20~~ ^{all her citizens}

On 4 May 1916, nearly twenty-one months after entering the war, the House of Commons ~~finally~~ enacted a general conscription law with only thirty-six dissenting votes. A. J. P. Taylor, in his English History, 1914-1945, says "compulsory service did not achieve its alleged purpose of providing more men for the army," citing the reduced enlistment rates during the first six months of conscription as his authority.⁷² What Taylor fails to consider is that enlistment rates were already falling and that the Cabinet's impotent stop-gap measure of trying to call up the attested and unattested single classes ^{as} a stimulus to voluntarism in early 1916 was a failure of the government to fully accept the need for national service. The fault lay not with the principle of conscription, but with the Government's failure to commit itself to a measure which many politicians thought would incur a generally unfavorable reaction from the people. In this the Government were misgaing the willingness of the people to get on with the war.