

George, David Lloyd, first Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor (1863–1945), *prime minister* by Kenneth O. Morgan

George, David Lloyd, first Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor (1863–1945), prime minister, was born at 5 New York Place, Chorlton upon Medlock, Manchester, on 17 January 1863, the second child and elder son of William George (1820–1864), schoolmaster, and his wife, Elizabeth (1828–1896), daughter of David Lloyd, shoemaker and Baptist pastor, of Llanystumdwy, Caernarvonshire. Failing health led his father to return to farm in his native Pembrokeshire, and he died there in 1864. The family were then brought back to Llanystumdwy by Elizabeth's unmarried brother, Richard Lloyd, a master shoemaker. The children soon numbered three—Mary Ellen, the eldest, David, and a second son, William, born posthumously in 1865. Richard Lloyd proved to be a towering influence on the infant David. An autodidact of broad culture, he was also a strong Liberal politically and a lay preacher in the local church of the Campbellite Baptists, a radical offshoot of the main Baptist denomination. His role guided David Lloyd George's early steps in the law and politics. Indeed 'Uncle Lloyd' remained an influence in the shadows down to his death at the age of eighty-three in February 1917. By that time, his nephew David was prime minister of Great Britain.

Early years: the road to Westminster

The boy David's political ascent was almost pre-ordained. At the age of five he was carried on his uncle's shoulders at meetings during the dramatic Liberal victories in Caernarvonshire and elsewhere in Wales at the 'great general election' of 1868. Lloyd George went to the local village school at Llanystumdwy, where he stayed until July 1878 when he was fifteen. He was admirably taught mathematics and geography by the headmaster, David Evans. But even here politics intruded. The school was an Anglican foundation and when the children were invited to recite the catechism before a local landowner, Ellis Nanney, Lloyd George led a strike by the pupils. When his brother, William, broke the silence by intoning 'I believe', according to legend (later denied) he received a thrashing from his elder brother. Ellis Nanney was destined to be Lloyd George's opponent at his first parliamentary election in Caernarfon Boroughs. In 1878 Lloyd George was attached to a solicitor's firm in nearby Portmadoc, Breese, Jones, and Casson. In 1884 he passed the Law Society final examinations with honours. He could now set up practice on his own in Cricieth (brother William was shortly to join him there), a platform for a future political career.

It was a time of great political excitement in Wales. The impact of democracy after the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 fired campaigns by radical Liberals against landlordism and the established status of the Church of England in Wales. They fought for civic equality for nonconformists, social equality for tenant farmers and labourers—and increasingly national equality for Wales. Lloyd George plunged into political life while still in his teens. He took part in the

debates of the Portmadoc debating society and spoke in local temperance and foreign mission gatherings. He proved to be a naturally graphic and compelling speaker with a rare gift of imagery. His political ambitions were kindled by a visit to London in 1881 at which he saw the House of Commons for the first time. He noted in his diary for 12 November 1881 (W. R. P. George, *Making of Lloyd George*, 101), 'I will not say but that I eyed the assembly in a spirit similar to that in which William the Conqueror eyed England on his visit to Edward the Confessor, as the region of his future domain. Oh, vanity!' By 1885 he had established a reputation as a fiery young orator on Liberal platforms. He took some part in the Merioneth contest in the general election of November 1885, and made a particular impact in a brilliant performance on a platform in Blaenau Ffestiniog in January 1886 when the main speaker was the Irish nationalist and land leaguer Michael Davitt. He was already spoken of as an MP in the making even though he was only just twenty-three.

A major crisis for Lloyd George, as for many others, was the Liberal split over Gladstone's Irish Home Rule Bill in 1886. He veered towards the opposing faction under his boyhood hero, Joseph Chamberlain. Legend has it that the accident that he missed a train in May 1886 which would have taken him to the inaugural meeting of Chamberlain's Radical Union was decisive. At any rate, he remained in the Gladstonian fold, even though his enthusiasm for Irish home rule remained equivocal. It was an early sign of the looseness of his political attachments, to be demonstrated so graphically later on in 1910, 1916, 1918, and other key phases of his career. At all events after the Liberals' heavy defeat at the 1886 general election, he rose rapidly to political prominence. His diary (4 September 1887) spelt out the calculated strategy that he would pursue to promote himself as a politician. He took a vigorous part in campaigns against the payment of tithe to the established church, to reform the land system, and above all to disestablish the church. He was also a forceful delegate to the North Wales Liberal Federation. A legal case which made him famous was the Llanfrothen burial case when he successfully defended some local nonconformists who dared to bury their dead in the parish churchyard.

There was also an important personal milestone—marriage on 24 January 1888 to Margaret (Maggie) Owen (1866–1941) of Mynydd Ednyfed. She was the daughter of a prosperous Methodist farmer who disapproved of her wish to marry the radical young Baptist attorney. But Lloyd George won her over in the end. They settled in Cricieth at first, where a son, Richard, was born in 1889. He was followed by Mair in 1890 (who was to die young in 1907), Olwen in 1892, Gwilym [see George, Gwilym Lloyd-] in 1894, and later Megan [see George, Lady Megan Arfon Lloyd] in 1902. But Margaret's reluctance to live in London and Lloyd George's inclination to seek consolation elsewhere foreshadowed the later strains of their relationship. It was from the first made brutally clear to Margaret that her husband was driven by dominating political ambition. 'My supreme idea is to get on. To this idea, I shall sacrifice everything—except, I trust, honesty. I am prepared to thrust even love itself under the wheels of my Juggernaut if it

obstructs the way' (David Lloyd George to Margaret Owen, c.1885, NL Wales, D. Lloyd George MS 20,404C). The next half-century was to provide graphic commentary on this candid self-analysis.

First steps in parliament

In 1890 Lloyd George found his base in parliament. He had been nominated in 1888 for the small Caernarfon Boroughs constituency, then held by the Conservatives. He cultivated support in the area, including contributions to the press and a short-lived Welsh National Newspaper Company. He also became a 'boy alderman' on the first Caernarvonshire county council. Then in 1890 the sitting Caernarfon MP died and Lloyd George had to fight a fierce by-election against the Conservative squire Ellis Nanney. With the Anglican cathedral in Bangor, it was one of the few really marginal seats in Wales, there was much local pressure from the more nationalistic Liberals, and Lloyd George scraped home by just eighteen votes. Although he was to remain member for Caernarfon Boroughs for the next fifty-five years, it was a safe seat for him only from 1906 onwards. But the career of a great parliamentarian had been forged.

In his first ventures in parliament, Lloyd George showed himself to be a radical of distinctive style and outlook. This came out in a dashing maiden speech on the familiar theme of temperance. He was, like Tom Ellis and other young colleagues, strongly Welsh in his radicalism, deeply involved with the politics of the nonconformist chapel, with land and temperance reform, and with campaigning for the special needs and status of Wales. As throughout his career, he viewed the London establishment—crown, court, civil service, the armed services, high society—as a self-made Welsh nonconformist outsider. On the other hand, he was something of an outsider in the ranks of Welsh radicalism too. He took little part in the campaign for higher education which led to the University of Wales being created on a federal basis in 1893. After all, he had left school himself at fifteen. Again, while he battled for the civil rights of nonconformists, he viewed their creed privately with scepticism, even contempt. He loathed the moralism and the hypocrisy of wealthy deacons in the 'big pews' of the chapels; he told his wife how he hated 'being cramped up in a suffocating malodorous chapel listening to some superstitions I had heard thousands of times before' (David Lloyd George to Margaret Lloyd George, 13 Aug 1890, NL Wales, D. Lloyd George MS 20,407C). He was also a young politician of unusual independence of outlook, casual over party affiliations and orthodoxies. He ventured to irritate Gladstone himself in attacks on the Clergy Discipline Bill, though it probably added to his radical reputation. In the 1892 general election he increased his majority to 196. But the Liberal majority overall was only forty and that dependent on the support of the Irish nationalists.

Lloyd George's main concern, in a parliament dominated by Gladstone's second Irish Home Rule Bill, was to press for priority for Welsh disestablishment. This campaign reached a new level of rebelliousness in April 1894. With the succession of the imperialist aristocrat Lord Rosebery as prime minister after

Gladstone's resignation, Lloyd George joined three other Welsh Liberals, Herbert Lewis and Frank Edwards from rural Wales, and D. A. Thomas (later Lord Rhondda) from the industrial south, in a short-term revolt against the party whips. When a Welsh Disestablishment Bill came before the Commons in May 1895 Lloyd George engaged in complex manoeuvres to try to get a form of Welsh home rule tacked on to the disendowment parts of the measure. When the government resigned after defeat on the trivial 'cordite' vote in June, there were those who blamed Lloyd George and his freelance activities. The home secretary responsible for the Welsh Church Bill, Herbert Asquith, believed Lloyd George to be guilty of disloyalty and remembered these events long after. At the ensuing general election, Lloyd George was somewhat fortunate to scrape home by less than 200 votes.

Lloyd George's involvement with Welsh national issues now reached a crisis. In 1894 he had launched the so-called *Cymru Fydd* League (popularly known as Young Wales). The object was to take over the Liberal federations of north and south Wales in order to promote home rule for Wales. He made headway in the Welsh-speaking north and west. But *Cymru Fydd* ran into fierce opposition from the south Wales Liberals, and their leader, Lloyd George's former ally, D. A. Thomas. A crusading lecture tour by Lloyd George in the industrial valleys had only limited impact. At a fateful meeting of the south Wales Liberals at Newport in January 1896, Lloyd George met with the indignity of being howled down by the Anglicized mercantile representatives of the southern ports of Swansea, Cardiff, and Newport. *Cymru Fydd* promptly collapsed, as did hopes of Welsh self-government for almost another hundred years. Condemned by the 'Newport Englishmen', Lloyd George had suffered a serious defeat.

This coincided with much anxiety in Lloyd George's private life, leading to his suffering from a kind of nervous exhaustion, a feature of his career at moments of extreme crisis, as later on in December 1916. He had been earlier involved in a futile venture of investing in alleged gold deposits in Patagonia, losing significant sums of money on his shares, and had continual financial problems. They were only partially relieved by his starting a new law partnership in London in 1897. His marriage too was not altogether happy, with his wife Margaret still reluctant to move to London and Lloyd George himself seeking female company elsewhere. In 1897 he was mentioned in a paternity suit, when Catherine Edwards, the young wife of a Montgomeryshire doctor, alleged (unsuccessfully in the end) that Lloyd George had fathered her illegitimate child. As Lloyd George recovered from these various torments and his political defeat over *Cymru Fydd*, one thing became clear—that henceforth his political horizon would encompass far more than simply the local politics of Wales.

South African War and the progressive advance

In fact, Lloyd George bounced back as a leading Liberal spokesman, being eventually given a front bench role. He denounced the government's bills on agricultural land rating (1896) and education (1897), which gave him scope to develop assaults on landlordism and the church. Then his career was transformed in the course of 1899. In April, the untimely death of the chief whip, Tom Ellis, gave Lloyd George an unchallenged ascendancy in Liberal Wales. More importantly, the outbreak of the South African War in October made him prominent, or notorious, throughout British public life. He was on a visit to Canada when the war broke out, but from the start he was implacable in his opposition. Though not in principle hostile to the idea of empire, he put himself at the head of the 'pro-Boer' or 'Little England' opponents of the war. During the early British disasters in Natal, he became a devastating critic. In particular, he trained his fire on his old hero Joseph Chamberlain who, he believed, had not only connived at the war on behalf of capitalists on the Rand, but was personally profiting through his links with armaments firms. Lloyd George was fiercely attacked—his eldest son had to leave his school because of bullying. Even in Caernarfon Boroughs there were 'jingo' mobs threatening to assault him. In the 'khaki' election of October 1900 he did well to retain his seat by a somewhat increased majority.

But Lloyd George remained a target for imperialists. In December 1901 he had to flee for his life from Birmingham town hall when an anti-war meeting was broken up by a Chamberlainite mob. According to legend, he escaped by dressing up in the uniform of a (much taller) policeman. But it was to Lloyd George that the ultimate victory went. The war became increasingly unpopular as Boer guerrillas kept the British army at bay, and thousands of Boer women and young children died in concentration camps on the veldt. Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal leader, denounced the 'methods of barbarism' with which the war was being prosecuted. Lloyd George had become a major, nationally recognized politician now, prominent in rebuilding the Liberal Party by keeping his links with both pro-Boer and Liberal Imperialist politicians. He also ensured that the Liberal *Daily News* changed its politics to become an anti-war newspaper, by persuading the Quaker cocoa magnate George Cadbury to purchase it. Then as always, the press was vital for Lloyd George's advancement. When the war came to an end with the treaty of Vereeniging in May 1902, his public standing had been transformed.

Lloyd George's reputation continued to grow rapidly with the Liberal revival from 1902. The new Education Bill introduced by Arthur Balfour in April 1902 offered him new opportunities. While in many ways he approved of the new structure created for primary and secondary education, he led nonconformist resistance to the public financing of Anglican and Roman Catholic schools. He recalled from his own childhood the social resentment provoked among dissenters in Anglican 'single-school areas'. There was individual passive resistance by nonconformists in England. In Wales, by contrast, Lloyd George seized the initiative by leading a

collective revolt by the Welsh county councils which would have to administer the bill; by February 1904 all of them were under Liberal control. He offered a solution by which the act would be operated but on condition that the religious and other demands of nonconformists over the running of the schools be met. Several councils were declared to be in default. There remained an impasse until the autumn of 1905 by which time the Balfour government was in dire straits.

Labour issues were another priority for Lloyd George, not least after the three-year strike of the Bethesda slate quarrymen in his own constituency against their autocratic employer, Lord Penrhyn. He also warned of the dangers to trade unionism from 'free labour', using the example of so-called 'Chinese slavery' on the Rand in South Africa. He took a leading part also in the Liberal defence of free trade in the face of Joseph Chamberlain's campaign for an imperial tariff reform in 1903. He urged that pensions and other social measures should be paid for with redistributive taxation, not through protectionist food taxes. On the other hand, he was never the most dogmatic of free-traders, and he recognized the problems of foreign competition. Free trade was a means, not an end for him, then and always. As over Irish home rule or education, he was always an independent spirit, not a dogmatic adherent of the party line.

President of the Board of Trade

In the autumn of 1905 Lloyd George was recovering in Italy after a minor operation. Then it was announced that the Unionist government of Balfour had resigned and the elderly Liberal leader, Campbell-Bannerman, became prime minister. The Liberals were confirmed in power in January 1906 with a massive landslide majority. Lloyd George, with no previous experience of ministerial responsibility, found himself in the cabinet as president of the Board of Trade. It launched a career of nearly seventeen unbroken years at the pinnacle of power in peace and in war. His style as a minister was from the first unconventional. He was never one to be bogged down in official boxes, always preferring to obtain information orally from the widest range of contacts, however unorthodox. Some civil servants thought him lazy, but his free-ranging, intuitive style often led to their being by-passed in the interests of swift decision making. It was clear that his stage was now a British, if not an international one. He continued to be a powerful voice for Welsh Liberalism. In 1906 he was curiously involved with trying to tack on a Welsh educational council to the government's abortive Education Bill, which was thrown out in the Lords. Welsh disestablishment continued to engage him as a front-line issue. At the Treasury from 1908 he found new funding for the Welsh National Museum and National Library, and he was faithful in attendance at chapel and eisteddfod.

But as president of the Board of Trade Lloyd George made a far wider impact as a vigorous and dynamic executive minister. He showed especial skill and subtlety in his personal contacts, notably in handling deputations of businessmen and industrialists, flattering them, listening carefully, and probing for weak links. More, he passed a remarkable series of important legislative measures to defend

British commerce—the Merchant Shipping Act (1906), the Patents Act (1907), the Port of London Authority Act (1908), and a new census of production. Contemporaries noted that this pugnacious and eloquent free-trader was perhaps something of a protectionist. Certainly he was no doctrinaire free-trader. The government, as a whole, frustrated by the Lords in obstructing its bills, had in this area at least a record of major legislative achievement. It was one acknowledged by his Unionist opponent on the floor of the house, Andrew Bonar Law, with whom Lloyd George struck up an unlikely but most important political friendship.

At the Board of Trade, too, Lloyd George developed his skills in another crucial area—the handling of labour. Here he proved to be remarkably interventionist. He negotiated his way successfully through major disputes in the cotton and coal industries. Praise was lavished on him (perhaps to excess) at the settlement of a threatened national railway strike in October 1907 via a conciliation board to review wage agreements. It created new links between him and the trade unions; his special relationship with the labour movement (though not the Labour Party) was a main theme in his career down to 1919 or even 1922. Popular with the classes, Lloyd George was now something of a hero with the masses as well. He had also to endure a devastating personal ordeal—the death from appendicitis of his favourite daughter, Mair, in November 1907 at the age of seventeen. Perhaps through kindling a sense of guilt, it seems somehow to have pushed him on towards new campaigns for social reform. The old Liberal of Welsh chapel politics was becoming the leading new Liberal of his time.

A reforming chancellor

In April 1908 Asquith succeeded Campbell-Bannerman as prime minister. Lloyd George followed him as chancellor of the exchequer. It was in some ways a risky appointment. Lloyd George had no specialist knowledge of public finance, and his handling of statistics was always cavalier or perhaps romantic. His civil servants at the Treasury found him unconventional in methods of work: he seemed to have an aversion to paperwork and his command of detail was often hazy. But his vision now ranged far beyond narrow arcane financial details. After his earlier limited views on social questions, he sought to make the Treasury the powerhouse of long-term sustained reform. Already he had been in contact with his friend Winston Churchill, who succeeded him at the Board of Trade, to promote the new Liberalism of social welfare, to combat poverty, unemployment, ill health, and malnutrition, in place of the old Liberalism of Gladstonian days. This programme would deal with immense issues of human and social deprivation; it would also outflank the socialism of the Independent Labour Party while showing the Unionists that social reform could be financed in a free trade country through direct taxation. He had an early taste of reforming activity by taking over the passage of old-age pensions, launched by Asquith at the Treasury, which for the first time gave old people a state-financed pension of 5s. a week. In committee, Lloyd George accepted an amendment to remove the reduction of pension for a married couple: this cost perhaps an extra £400,000 a

year. Elderly citizens would collect it at their post office: some exclaimed 'God bless Lord [*sic*] George.' His passion for social welfare was taken further during a significant visit to Germany in August 1908 when he looked in detail at the Bismarckian legacy of social insurance and labour exchanges—and also for the first time engaged in serious discussions on foreign affairs, and Anglo-German relations in particular.

The main landmark of Lloyd George's social programme, which turned out to be an immense constitutional landmark as well, was the so-called 'People's Budget' of April 1909. It was one of the most momentous in British history, and was very much the chancellor's work presented to a somewhat sceptical cabinet. In a lengthy, somewhat rambling budget speech of over four hours on 29 April, he declared that it was a 'war budget' to 'wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness' (*Hansard 5C*, 4.548). It would do this through new direct taxation on spirits, on estates, on higher incomes (with a 6*d.* in the pound 'supertax' on incomes over £5000 a year) and, most sensationally, through various taxes on land, notably on the 'unearned increment' on the value of land enhanced by the effort of the community. It was subsequently claimed that Lloyd George deliberately framed a budget which the House of Lords would be compelled to reject. But there seems no evidence for this. His main need was for vastly more money—to pay for the new dreadnought battleships and to meet the £16 million cost of the new old-age pensions. It would also deal with a growing crisis in the finances of local government. But it was also an explicit attempt, through income tax and other direct taxation, to create a new platform for social advance—national development, road building, afforestation, and public works generally. It would seize the political initiative. If the Lords wanted to reject it, they would do so at their peril. The 'great assize of the people' would decide.

In the summer and autumn it became clear that the Lords would indeed reject the budget, the first time since the revolution of 1688. In retaliation, Lloyd George delivered a series of fiery speeches, notably at Limehouse and Newcastle, to drive them on to new heights of fury. The Lords, he declared at Newcastle on 9 October 1909 (*The Times*, 10 Oct 1909), in language that terrified King Edward VII, were only 'five hundred ordinary men chosen at random from amongst the unemployed', chosen on the principle of 'the first of the litter'. The chancellor seemed to be preaching class war. After the Lords rejected the budget, a general election was held in January 1910 at which the Liberals held on to power, though with a majority of only two over the Unionists, leaving them dependent on the support of Labour and the Irish nationalists.

Throughout the next eighteen months, Lloyd George urged his colleagues that there should be no surrender. He strongly backed a new Parliament Bill which would permanently limit the powers of the Lords by giving the Commons primacy on all certified money bills and by limiting the Lords' delaying power to only two years. That would open the way for Irish home rule and Welsh disestablishment both to become law. Lloyd George urged more conservative colleagues like

Haldane and Grey that, rather than embark on the quagmire of reforming the composition of the upper house, it was the powers of the Lords on which they should focus. Asquith himself handled the constitutional crisis over the Parliament Bill with judicial skill. Another general election was won in December 1910 with a very similar result. The People's Budget, land taxes and all, became law in 1910, and in August 1911, threatened with mass creation of new Liberal peers by the king if they resisted, the Lords narrowly passed the Parliament Act as well. Lloyd George's standing as a radical tribune had never seemed more secure.

Yet, in fact, during the height of the Parliament Bill crisis in the summer of 1910, soon after the accession of the new king, George V, an extraordinary episode had taken place. It showed that alongside Lloyd George the bitter partisan was a different figure, a man who envisaged national government through a coalition. He proposed this to colleagues such as Grey and Churchill on the Liberal side and to Balfour, the Unionist leader (with whom he struck up a surprising friendship). Lloyd George suggested that most of the controversial issues of the day—free trade, Irish home rule, Lords' reform, or Welsh disestablishment—were in fact 'non-controversial' and could be passed on to fact-finding independent commissions. A new national administration could focus on the supreme needs of the day—social reform or 'national efficiency', and, to a lesser degree, national defence. To promote the latter, he suggested selective national service on the Swiss model. Coalition appealed to free spirits like Churchill and Smith. But the party regulars, Asquith on the Liberal side, men like Austen Chamberlain among the Unionists, felt that the roots of party could not be erased by the magical touch of a Welsh outsider. The dream of a national coalition perished in 1910—although the idea was to remain part of Lloyd George's scheme of things henceforth.

The troubles of Liberal England

Lloyd George's next and even greater achievement reflected both his new Liberal zeal for social reform and his ability to work out strategic alliances to gain a broad base of support. This was his National Insurance Act of 1911, the zenith of his career as a social reformer. He had limited help in the cabinet. Ministers such as Haldane were frankly sceptical, while Churchill had moved to the right in the face of violent labour disputes in the mines and railways, and had become reviled among the working class for sending in troops to quell disturbances in the Welsh mining valleys around Tonypandy. Lloyd George's new allies were a wider group—lesser ministers such as Sir Rufus Isaacs, the Jewish attorney-general, and a radical reformer, C. F. G. Masterman, a kind of Christian socialist. On the back benches, health insurance drew him to Dr Christopher Addison, a distinguished anatomist newly returned for an East End constituency: 'we encourage each other to dream dreams but to base them on existing reality', the latter observed (C. Addison, *Four and a Half Years*, 1, 1934, 22). Among the intelligentsia Lloyd George received guidance from figures such as the sociologist Seebohm Rowntree and W. H. Dawson, an authority on German

social policy. The press provided another range of support, notably that zealous reformer, C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*, and George Riddell, owner of the *News of the World*, who bought the impecunious chancellor both a home at Walton Heath near his favourite golf course, and one of the new motor cars. But among the patrician Liberal Party leadership, Lloyd George was still the pushy, lower-middle-class Welsh Baptist on the outside looking in.

For all that, Lloyd George's National Insurance Act of 1911 was a triumph, Britain's most important measure of social reform prior to the Beveridge report of 1942. He used the familiar insurance principle, known to all householders, to underlie a system of state-assisted contributory social insurance broadly on the German model, as interpreted by W. H. Dawson. Contributors to the national health insurance scheme would pay 4d. and the state and employers together pay 5d.—'ninepence for fourpence', a bargain in anybody's language. There would also be a limited programme of unemployment insurance, to include construction and shipbuilding. His measure was fiercely attacked, in some cases rightly, since many of the basic financial principles were unclear. Trade unions were unenthusiastic about insurance contributions which would be a levy on the hard-pressed working man and his family. Insurance companies and friendly societies were worried about their own insurance schemes. An extraordinary campaign by duchesses and their housemaids declared they would never lick stamps for Lloyd George. Most damaging of all, the medical profession, who would man the panels under the health scheme, feared for their incomes. Lloyd George handled them all with great skill. With the aid of Dr Addison, he outmanoeuvred the doctors just as another Welshman, Aneurin Bevan, was to do over the National Health Service in 1948. The Labour Party was won over when the use of the trade unions as approved agencies led to greatly increased membership for both unions and party.

In the end, Lloyd George received all-party acclaim for a brilliant legislative coup. A major blow had been struck against Victorian poor-law ideas of 'less eligibility' and on behalf of the idea of social citizenship. The basis for a new public medical system had been set out, with key provision also for medical research. A nationwide machinery had been set up to run the system, with important public servants like Arthur Salter and Thomas Jones. It was a major advance towards a welfare democracy; overseas, admirers such as former president Theodore Roosevelt in the United States hailed Lloyd George's achievement.

This was a heady period in Lloyd George's public life. At the end of the great debate on national insurance, in April 1912 Lloyd George won yet more acclaim for his negotiating a settlement of a national miners' strike by creating the basis for a minimum wage. He seemed to be promoting the government's more radical programme almost on his own. Yet this also marked one of the great troughs of his career. His long-running difficulty with his marriage was reinforced in the summer of 1912 when Frances Stevenson (1888–1972) [see George, Frances Louise Lloyd], a young woman brought in as tutor in French for his daughter,

Megan, entered his life. She was soon his long-term mistress. She became his second wife on 23 October 1943; her memoirs, *The Years that are Past* (1967), noted that 'their real marriage' had taken place thirty years before.

More publicly damaging, by far, was a serious charge of corruption in the Marconi case. As over Patagonian gold in the 1890s, Lloyd George was seen to lack judgement in money matters. It emerged that he and the attorney-general, Sir Rufus Isaacs, had bought shares in the American Marconi company from Isaacs's brother, just when the British Marconi company was about to enter into a highly profitable deal with the British government to build telegraphy stations across the empire. The part played by radio during the sinking of the liner *Titanic* underlined the importance of long-range telegraphic communication. Lloyd George argued that he had lost money on the shares purchased, and that in any case American and British Marconi companies were quite distinct. But it looked like a case of major sleaze by ministers of the crown. There were overtones of antisemitism in the attacks on the roles of the Isaacs brothers and Herbert Samuel, while Unionists sought to get even with 'the little Welsh attorney' who had tormented them for so long. After a select committee reported on strictly party grounds, Asquith and the government took a simple partisan point of view, and Lloyd George narrowly escaped. But his reputation was undeniably tarnished by the stain of Marconi.

Politics were not going Lloyd George's way altogether at this time either. The government was under fire from many directions. There were long and often violent strikes in many major industries, with some loss of life. Ireland was a constant torment. In addition, the women suffragettes turned their wrath on the government, after fierce handling of demonstrators by the Home Office. Lloyd George himself was actually known to be a supporter of votes for women, but he found himself under attack from them for being insufficiently zealous—literally so when angry suffragettes blew up part of his new house being built at Walton Heath. In late 1913 he tried to find another great radical cry to rouse the Liberal masses, by raising again the old cry of the land. A national campaign was mounted in the autumn for rural and urban land reform, including the taxing of site values, and schemes for publicly supported housing were linked with it. It was launched with a major speech at Bedford on 11 October, and for a brief moment threatened to regain the political initiative for the beleaguered Liberal government. But somehow the new land campaign fell rather flat. In an increasingly urbanized world, it seemed out of date, a replay of the issues of Lloyd George's Welsh youth. His strident anti-landlord rhetoric failed to strike the chord that it once had done. Elsewhere he became caught up in a massive political battle with his old ally Churchill over the 1914 naval estimates and there was talk of his resignation. But in the event he came out the loser.

Lloyd George turned to another massive budget initiative to boost himself and the government in the spring of 1914, including more radical taxes than in 1909, an increased income tax, a new supertax, and further proposed land charges even though the land taxes of 1909 seemed to be yielding little or nothing. But the budget proved to be a great procedural mess, and was actually ruled by the speaker not to be a 'money bill' as interpreted by the Parliament Act. Again Lloyd George was frustrated. Charles Masterman described him in May 1914 as 'jumpy, irritable, overworked and unhappy' (Masterman to Arthur Ponsonby, 30 May 1914, Bodl. Oxf., Ponsonby papers). He was becoming detached from his roots in Wales, yet not finding many allies in London politics either. His two households, his wife in Cricieth, Frances Stevenson in London, testified to his divided existence.

Of course, Lloyd George was still the government's leading voice. He was frequently in conclave with radical allies such as Addison planning new initiatives for 1915, education, or housing, or perhaps a kind of national health service, all of them gaps in the armoury of the new Liberalism. He was still an important figure in labour matters, settling the great railway strike of 1911 as well as the miners' strike a year later. He saw the historic issue of Welsh disestablishment passed through parliament a first time in 1912. Under the Parliament Act this old radical objective could now take effect at the end of 1914. He himself delivered a slashing attack (16 May 1912) on aristocratic Anglican opponents of disestablishment. They denounced disendowment; yet, as a result of the land settlements after the Tudor Reformation, their own hands were 'dripping with the fat of sacrilege' (*Hansard 5C*, 38.1326). He was also an important intermediary, for the first time, in Irish affairs. By 1913–14 Irish home rule had reached a grave impasse. It passed the house as had Welsh disestablishment in 1912; there was no permanent obstacle that the Lords could offer in future to prevent Ireland achieving self-government. As always on Irish matters, Lloyd George had his doubts. He attempted a major modification in March 1914 under which the application of home rule to the six mainly protestant countries of north-east Ulster would be suspended for up to six years. But this too failed amid the historic antagonisms of Irish politics. A civil war between Ulster and the south, with gun-running on both sides, seemed a real possibility. Lloyd George had failed here too, and by comparison with his high noon of 1911 he was still somewhat in the shadows.

The road to war

Then Lloyd George's entire career, and the history of his country, was transformed by the coming of world war in August 1914. Usually thought of as an essentially domestic politician, he had in fact been involved with foreign policy to an increasing degree since 1908. He had met Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1907 and had discussed foreign relations with Bethmann Hollweg during his visit to Germany in 1908; he was deeply concerned at aggressive German naval rivalry. He was no longer the neo-pacifist little Englander that people had suspected him of being in South African War days. He served on the committee of imperial defence and

would undoubtedly have been briefed on the prospects of a German attack through Belgium and the channel ports. In July 1911 he shook the political world with a speech delivered during the Agadir crisis with Germany in Morocco in which he appeared to threaten the Germans with military or naval retaliation. He was never a peacemonger thereafter in public or in private. He showed some enthusiasm for the Balkan wars of 1912–13 since they involved set-backs for his old Gladstonian bugbear, the Turks, always 'unspeakable' to him.

On the other hand, on issues such as the naval estimates Lloyd George seemed to be in the 'peace party'. The Liberals' anti-war foreign affairs group saw him as a friend. It was known that he had been an opponent of Churchill's demands for increased naval estimates since 1912. He spoke of warmer relations with Germany in the early summer of 1914. At the Mansion House on 17 July 1914, well after the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo on 28 June, he declared that internationally the sky had seldom seemed to be so relatively blue. As events moved towards war on 1–3 August 1914, he seemed to be among those playing down Britain's territorial commitment to help France through the military links established within the entente. 'I am moving through a nightmare world these days' he wrote to his wife (David Lloyd George to Margaret Lloyd George, 3 Aug 1914, NL Wales, D. Lloyd George MS, 20,433C). Yet he had long foreseen a German invasion of Belgium, another 'small nation', with the direct threat to British national security, and there was never any real prospect of his resigning along with Viscount Morley and John Burns. Pro-war friends such as Churchill were pushing at an open door. After a moment of doubt on 3 August, he committed himself to Britain's going to war. Unwittingly, he had taken the decisive step that would lead him to the premiership.

Lloyd George at war

After the tensions of the pre-war years, Lloyd George now found a new buoyancy. The party truce he had visualized back in 1910 had now come about, with Irish home rule suspended for the duration of the war. He could now throw himself into vigorous executive action. Faced with the challenge of salvaging the national finances during total war, he reacted with remarkable confidence, working with Cunliffe, governor of the Bank of England. The 'flapping penguins' among the bankers, hoarding gold and calling in loans from the discount market, were given backbone by the chancellor's decisiveness. By 10 August, the immediate financial crisis was over. A bank moratorium was declared, the suspension of specie payments was avoided, new £1 and 10s. notes were issued by the Treasury as legal tender, banks were guaranteed against bad debts made on pre-war bills of exchange. Economists, including the new Treasury official John Maynard Keynes, previously scornful of Lloyd George's grasp of financial technicalities, now sang his praises. More questionable was his war budget that November which included a doubling of income tax and an increase in tea and beer duties but was generally too cautious.

Lloyd George followed up with further vigorous action on the home front, though with mixed results. He sought to reduce the impact of the drinking of beer and spirits on war production, a theme congenial to an old nonconformist advocate of temperance. The strength of beer was reduced, opening hours were cut, measures were taken to deter munitions workers from consumption of alcohol and the unfortunate King George V later agreed to 'the king's pledge' to abstain from consuming alcoholic drink for the duration of the war. There was even an ambitious attempt to nationalize the drink trade in the spring of 1915, but that collapsed, leaving only the unique state-run pubs of the 'Carlisle experiment'. More effective was a high-profile Treasury agreement concluded by Lloyd George with Arthur Henderson and the other members of the TUC in March 1915, the high point of his special relationship with organized labour. The unions agreed to accept the 'dilution' of the workforce in munitions factories (this would allow for women workers) and for the suspension of strikes in return for a vague promise to check wartime profiteering and a firmer guarantee of union rights of collective bargaining during the war. At a time when his fellow Liberals were viewing him with greater suspicion, over civil liberties or the prospect of military conscription, his standing with both sides of industry and with the general public seemed to rise ever upwards.

Inevitably, for so prominent a member of the Asquith cabinet, Lloyd George would be involved in debate on the conduct of the war. In the first few weeks, in fact, immersed as he was in the affairs of the Treasury, he made no public pronouncement and this led to much speculation in the press. However, in a stirring speech to a large audience of London Welshmen at the Queen's Hall on 19 September 1914, he made a strong commitment to all-out war, a 'fight to a finish' (*The Times*, 20 Sept 1914). Germany was condemned as 'the road hog of Europe'; the allies would advance 'from terror to triumph'. It was, Lloyd George proclaimed, a just war, a war for liberal principles including the defence of small nations against German and Austrian aggression. There was much sentimental reference to 'the little five-foot-five nations', gallant little Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro—and, by implication, gallant little Wales. Floods of enthusiastic letters poured thereafter into his office. He was also at odds with the mighty Kitchener, secretary of state for war during early wartime disasters. There was a small but significant clash over the admitting of nonconformist chaplains to the British army and to the creation of a Welsh division in France, a battle which Lloyd George won. More seriously in the early months of 1915, Lloyd George was attacking Kitchener for responsibility for the shortage of shells and other military supplies on the western front.

Increasingly now Lloyd George turned his attention to wider strategic issues. On 1 January 1915 he launched a fierce attack in cabinet on the hopeless war of attrition in the trenches in France, extending from the channel ports to the Swiss borders. He joined Churchill in calling for a more flexible strategy and for assaults on the enemy's 'under-belly' in the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean—what critics called 'side-shows'. Battle was joined in the government between

'westerners' who included generals such as Haig and Robertson, and mainly civilian 'easterners' among whom Lloyd George was conspicuous. He was certainly among those who approved of the sending of the expedition to the Dardanelles although when it collapsed in bloody failure it was noticeable that it was on Churchill that the main blame then fell. Asquith's government was now in serious disarray, the more so when Turkey entered the war on the side of Germany and Austria–Hungary. Lloyd George responded with calls for the dispatch of British forces to the Balkans and also for diplomatic initiatives to enlist the support of Greece, Romania, and Bulgaria.

On 17 May 1915 a week-long political crisis began at home, triggered off by a dispute between Churchill and admiral of the fleet Lord Fisher, when the Unionists declared that they could no longer support Asquith in a party truce. On 17 May Bonar Law had a meeting with Lloyd George at which there was some talk of Lloyd George's becoming prime minister. But he was not the agent of the Liberal government's collapse. Rather was it Asquith, saddened by personal circumstances and wartime set-backs, who seized the initiative to create a coalition with the Unionists and also Labour. An old Liberal ally such as Haldane was sacrificed to anti-German feeling while Reginald McKenna, an old rival of Lloyd George's, succeeded him at the Treasury. Lloyd George himself was the pivotal figure. His agreement to move to the newly created Ministry of Munitions, with Addison as his assistant, was decisive in Asquith's remaining prime minister. The Liberals still dominated the wartime coalition. Asquith's wife, Margot, often a critic, wrote 'L. G. has come grandly out of this—he has the sweetest nature in the world' (Margot Asquith to St Loe Strachey, 27 May 1915, Parl. Arch., Strachey papers). On the other hand, if he were to succeed in his new ministry, Lloyd George would clearly advance his power to new heights.

Minister of munitions

Going to munitions was a great gamble. But from the start Lloyd George proved to be a spectacularly effective executive minister. He sensed that in total war Britain must be turned into a war economy. New controls were imposed on the supply and allocation of raw materials. The engineering, chemical, and other industries were effectively taken over in the service of the war effort. Younger businessmen such as G. M. Booth carried out the minister's demands into the factories and workshops. They became popularly known as 'men of push and go', a term first used by Lloyd George himself in a speech on a new Defence of the Realm Act on 9 March 1915. Munitions factories also became laboratories of change in the improvement of working conditions. The agreement with the trade unions ensured that the workforce in arms factories was much expanded, including the employment of tens of thousands of women workers, in itself a notable landmark in the social emancipation of women. On the other hand, labour relations remained a complex and contentious area. There were many disputes in the engineering trades, especially in Clydeside, and Lloyd George attempted to quell a major strike by skilled workers there in a difficult address to them in Glasgow on Christmas day 1915.

Despite these problems, there is no question that the supply of munitions of all kinds vastly expanded. When Lloyd George left the ministry in July 1916, supplies which had taken a year to produce in 1914–15 were now assembled within three weeks. Supplies of shells and ammunitions grew massively, mortars and especially machine-guns (Lewis and Vickers guns) were manufactured in vast numbers. The British expeditionary force became a big-gun army. Highly significant for the future, fifty armoured gun-carrying tanks came into service by early 1916. Perhaps all this was Lloyd George's supreme contribution to the ultimate winning of the war. Unquestionably his high-profile and inspirational activity added even further to his reputation.

Lloyd George's location in politics was also notably different. He was drifting away from his fellow Liberals, especially when his ally Churchill was dropped from the government. Disaster followed disaster in France, under first General French, then Haig. There came a serious set-back at Loos, the collapse of the Dardanelles expedition, the bleeding white of the French army at Verdun, massive losses (142,000) in four days at Arras. This drove Lloyd George seemingly closer towards the Conservatives. He now built up contacts with the imperialist followers of Lord Milner; several of them, notably Philip Kerr, were later to become his closest supporters. Meanwhile, at sea the Grand Fleet was badly mauled by the German navy at Jutland. A bloody climax was to be reached on 1 July 1916 at the start of the battle of the Somme, a disaster which saw 60,000 British casualties on the very first day, 20,000 of them killed. Lloyd George outspokenly condemned the dilatory approach of generals and government, even in a major speech in the Commons on 20 December 1915 which caused a sensation: 'Too late in moving here! Too late in the mocking spectre of "Too late"!' (*Hansard 5C*, 87.121).

The focal point of Lloyd George's criticisms was the issue of military conscription. It was known that the Liberals were divided, with their traditional commitment to civil liberties, while Unionists such as Curzon, Long, Lansdowne, and the Irishman Edward Carson felt that in a total war it was essential. Lloyd George seemed to join them in the preface to a book of war speeches, *From Terror to Triumph*, published on 13 September 1915, when he called openly for a compulsionist view towards military recruitment. Throughout that winter, Asquith's cabinet was torn by arguments about conscription, with Lloyd George central to them. Many Liberals were unhappy: the home secretary, John Simon, resigned. At one point in November 1915 Lloyd George appeared almost to be offering his resignation. At the end of December, Asquith wearily conceded the main point—the military conscription of all single men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, subject to exclusions for key industrial workers and others. But the issue continued to rage and to tear the coalition almost apart. Eventually in May 1916 Asquith had to concede universal male conscription for married men as well.

There was much speculation at this point about Lloyd George's future. Some historians have subsequently seen the conscription issue as Lloyd George's 'bid for power'; evidence for this has been seen in the formation of a pro-Lloyd George Liberal war committee of Liberal MPs, including men such as Alfred Mond, Freddie Guest, William Sutherland, and others later among his closer allies. But the majority of Liberals still remained loyal to Asquith, while Unionists in general still viewed the mercurial munitions minister with much distrust. The government seemed to be failing almost everywhere. In Ireland, Asquith's maladroit response to the Easter rising by a small group of republicans in Dublin served only to maximize Irish disaffection and to trigger off the rise of Sinn Féin at the expense of the old nationalist party of Redmond. Lloyd George remained discontented, frequently contemplating resignation.

Secretary of state for war

Then the situation was transformed in early June 1916 by the drowning of Kitchener at sea on a somewhat mysterious mission to Russia. Asquith had no option but to offer the crucial post of secretary of state for war to Lloyd George. After a month's ominous uncertainty, Lloyd George took it on 4 July 1916. He was now the central figure in the prosecution of the war. But at first he was embroiled in the ancient tribal animosities of Ireland. Asquith, tired and with his reputation tarnished after the Easter rising and the execution of republican leaders, asked Lloyd George to try to resolve somehow the endless impasse over Irish home rule. For three weeks he appeared to be within reach of a remarkable political triumph. It involved simultaneous but separate sets of discussions with both the Irish nationalists under their leader, John Redmond, and with the Unionists, Edward Carson and Walter Long, friendly Irishmen such as T. P. O'Connor MP acting as intermediaries. But the essential stumbling-block concerned the six mainly protestant counties of north-east Ulster which Lloyd George proposed to exclude from a home rule settlement. Was this exclusion to be temporary only for a period of years, or would Ireland be permanently partitioned? This circle could never be squared. Lloyd George had to admit failure at the end of July. Yet Asquith's very decision to hand over an Irish solution to him seemed only to confirm his indispensability to the government.

As secretary of state for war, even with the vast additional supplies of munitions, Lloyd George saw things go from bad to worse. The British offensive at the Somme had run into the sands with enormous loss of life, while a Russian offensive in Poland and another new offensive by the entente powers' new ally, Italy, also resulted in failure. Lloyd George was particularly disturbed by the failure to act in the Balkans which saw the defeat of Romania in October 1916. Depressed and angry, he spoke frequently of resignation and going to the country to tell the truth about the cause of failures. In early November, he had several meetings with Sir Maurice Hankey, observing, 'We are going to lose this war' (Roskill, 1.312 ff.).

These troubles were resolved in dramatic fashion in a complex series of events between 20 November and 9 December 1916, events that are still vigorously, even bitterly, debated. The fact that Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook, was both their major historian and a significant participant added passion to the controversy. The outcome was the permanent split of the Liberal Party and Lloyd George supplanting Asquith at 10 Downing Street. In fact, the crisis began with a threat to the leadership of the Unionist Bonar Law by his own back-benchers after a debate on Nigerian assets. The future of the coalition was now in real doubt. From 20 November, Lloyd George entered into private discussions with Bonar Law and the Irish Unionist Sir Edward Carson about remodelling the government. Asquith was kept informed of the existence of these talks, but it was clear that a lack of confidence in the present method of government lay behind their discussions. The subtle mediation of Aitken, a close ally of Bonar Law's and an open admirer of Lloyd George, added to the sense of unease.

On 1 December they sent a draft to Asquith which the prime minister rejected. Here was a crisis. Lloyd George rallied Bonar Law with a famous note—'The life of the country depends on resolute action by you *now*' (Lloyd George to Bonar Law, 2 Dec 1916, Parl. Arch., Bonar Law papers, 117/1/30). However, on 3 December Asquith did accept a revised scheme, which would set up a supreme war cabinet of three men, but would also retain Asquith himself as prime minister. Despite the mass of rumours in the press, the crisis appeared to be over. Then Asquith unexpectedly threw out the agreement after discussions with McKenna and other Liberal colleagues, and a naked struggle for power broke out.

In the next thirty-six hours it emerged that not only had Asquith lost the confidence of the Unionist Party, but also that many Liberals openly favoured Lloyd George as a leader who would win the war. Lloyd George and Bonar Law both resigned, and Asquith himself had to surrender the seals of office on 5 December. Bonar Law predictably turned down the offer of the premiership and on the evening of 7 December Lloyd George kissed the king's hand to become prime minister. By 9 December he had won the support not only of the Unionists but also, by the narrowest of majorities, of the Labour Party. Even more remarkably, over 100 Liberal MPs, many of them of the second rank, had endorsed his premiership. On 19 December, a stirring speech in the Commons confirmed his authority and his unflinching commitment 'to the rescue of mankind from the most overwhelming catastrophe' (*Hansard 5C*, 88.1357–8).

No part of his career has aroused more intense controversy. Lloyd George has been freely accused of blatant disloyalty, of mounting a conspiracy via Aitken and others behind his leader's back, to grasp the supreme office. In fact, attempts to show that he was building up a kind of anti-Asquith faction among his own back-benchers are not convincing, while it was Asquith who broke off negotiations and provoked the final trial of strength. Only after that, from the morning of 4 December, could Lloyd George amass the strength to create a viable government. On the other hand, the effect of his proposals was clearly to

undermine Asquith's authority. At every stage it was Lloyd George who emerged with enhanced strength, while the press offered open support. In the end, perhaps the explanation for the events of December 1916 is not so much political as psychological. Lloyd George simply looked like the vigorous, dynamic leader who could win the war, while the faltering, weary Asquith, so dominant in peacetime, did not. Lloyd George emerged through intricate manoeuvres among secret cabals at Westminster. But, just like Churchill in May 1940, he was the people's choice and their confidence proved not to be misplaced.

Lloyd George as wartime premier

Lloyd George's regime as wartime prime minister was without precedent. It marked a political and constitutional revolution as a new leviathan of state power was created. Lloyd George, after all, was a prime minister detached from his party. Most Liberals in the Commons stayed loyal to the fallen Asquith, and Lloyd George was dependent on the mercies of his old opponents, the Unionists. At least until May 1918 the survival of his government, as it lurched from crisis to crisis through the fortunes of war and rumour-mongering in the London press, seemed in doubt.

In part, the controversy his premiership aroused was purely personal. He was the Welsh Baptist outsider, a 'ranker' as prime minister who had not passed through the training of a university (although admittedly Wellington and Disraeli were at least two notable previous examples). His household at 10 Downing Street was austere and frugal, with occasional relaxation in Welsh singing around the hearth. The bleakness of Downing Street was underlined by Margaret Lloyd George's decision still to remain largely in Cricieth. The existence of an alternative household in Frances Stevenson's flat in central London (about which the journalists kept remarkably quiet) added to tension with his wife—and also his eldest son, Richard. The family, however, kept up appearances. Lloyd George frequently returned to Cricieth for partial relaxation, while his Thursday orations at the Welsh national eisteddfod were powerful events—none less so than the 1916 Aberystwyth eisteddfod when Lloyd George compared the singing of the Welsh people during war to the nightingale singing at the darkest hour of the night. But he was drifting away from Wales. The snapping of the links was symbolized by the death of old Uncle Lloyd in February 1917. One of the great mass leaders of his day, Lloyd George survived in lonely eminence.

The controversy surrounding Lloyd George's role in Downing Street concerned mainly the nature of his authority. He seemed to be turning the premiership into something like the American presidency, with power radiating uniquely from the man at the centre. He created at once a supreme war cabinet of five men to run the war. The others were Bonar Law, the Unionist leader, now chancellor; Curzon, another Unionist; Arthur Henderson, leader of the Labour Party; and, most remarkably, the old imperialist Lord Milner. Over them, Lloyd George's authority was unquestioned. His former Liberal ally Churchill was excluded until mid-1917. Beyond the war cabinet, Lloyd George appointed individual executive

ministers to run specific departments. Most were businessmen such as Sir Joseph Maclay (shipping), Sir Eric Geddes (transport), and lords Devonport and Rhondda (food). The traditional cabinet system seemed to be dissolving. Further signs of change was the bringing into the cabinet in June 1917 of General Jan Smuts from South Africa, an important influence on the premier, and the creation of an imperial war cabinet.

The centralization of wartime government and the personal ascendancy of the premier was underpinned by two further innovations. The Cabinet Office, under Sir Maurice Hankey with, as his deputy, the influential Welshman Thomas Jones, added to the authority of no. 10. It became a formidable machine of government, extending the control of the prime minister to all departments, civilian and military. In Thomas Jones's famous phrase (Thomas Jones to Eirene Theodora Jones, 12 Dec 1916, NL Wales, Thomas Jones papers), they were 'fluid persons moving amongst people who matter'. They had their own role in policy making, too. Hankey was a frequent operator in post-war diplomacy while Jones had much to do with the Irish settlement in 1921. Beyond them were a cabinet secretariat of talented young Milnerite imperialists such as Mark Sykes, Leo Amery, and Lionel Curtis, pushing government in a collectivist, perhaps imperialist, direction.

There was yet another novelty, the prime minister's own personal secretariat at Downing Street, popularly called the 'Garden Suburb' because it first met in huts in the gardens of no. 10. It consisted at first of five members, Waldorf Astor, a tory newspaper owner, and David Davies, a Liberal MP (who soon left), both wealthy businessmen; Professor W. G. S. Adams, an imperially minded professor from All Souls, Oxford; Sir Joseph Davies, a commercial statistician; and, most important of all, Philip Kerr, a Milnerite imperialist again of visionary outlook whose specialism was foreign affairs, an active figure in Lloyd George's summit diplomacy on the eastern front in 1917–18. These personal advisers underlined how presidential the traditional system of British cabinet government was becoming. Beyond this there were other aides, many of them Welsh. There were two principal private secretaries, J. T. Davies and the ever present Frances Stevenson; other assistants like John Rowland; and Lloyd George's personal link to the press, active in providing or withholding information and using patronage or censorship as appropriate, Sir William Sutherland, popularly known as Bronco Bill. At the parliamentary level, an important go-between was Captain Freddie Guest, the government's Liberal chief whip, active in the soliciting of political funding. The entire atmosphere seemed to many alarming, even sinister, with figures like Basil Zaharoff or the trafficker of honours, Maundy Gregory, hovering around the throne. But a war had to be won, and it was perhaps no time for constitutional niceties.

Wartime leadership

The crucial test was, of course, the winning of the war, which continued to go badly. A massive encouragement came with the entry of the United States as a belligerent in April 1917, whereas the virtual removal of Russia as a belligerent in the course of 1917 after the revolution there in March was another blow. But the news on sea and land continued to be mostly depressing, for all the prime minister's brave speeches. A major factor was the deep political antagonism between Lloyd George and leading figures among the military and naval high command. The prime minister had particularly bad relations with General Haig and the chief of staff, Robertson, after the disaster of Passchendaele. He used the press, even the French and the American military commanders, to undermine their authority. The generals for their part played politics quite openly, consorting with Conservative politicians, press lords, and soliciting sympathy even from the king. This profound clash, renewed with immense and unforgiving vigour in Lloyd George's war memoirs in the 1930s, was a massive complication in trying to delineate a successful war strategy.

One early victory for Lloyd George was over the navy. Alarmed at growing losses to German U-boats, he urged the need for the navy to adopt the convoy system. In a much debated episode in April 1917, he visited the Admiralty in person. By the year's end he had the convoy system accepted. The first sea lord, Jellicoe, whom he felt had been defeatist after Jutland, was removed from office. 'It is a good thing', observed Lloyd George (*Lord Riddell's War Diary, 1914–1918*, 1933, 301). The generals were a far tougher obstacle. Lloyd George pressed his broad objectives that allied resources be pooled, that the front lines from Flanders to Mesopotamia be treated as one, and that there should be unity of command on the western front. But there was military resistance, notably from Haig. Lloyd George's authority was weakened by his having given backing, at the London conference in January 1917, to a new French offensive under General Nivelle. This was a great failure, led to mutinies among the French troops, and almost removed them as participants.

Lloyd George was, therefore, unable to prevent a new offensive conducted by Haig in Flanders. Despite his deep misgivings, all his cabinet, Smuts prominent among them, gave Haig's plan their backing, and Third Ypres, more usually called the battle of Passchendaele, began on 31 July 1917. It was a terrible failure, with the British handicapped by heavy rain, quite apart from entrenched German defences. In three weeks, over half a million British troops were lost in advancing just a few miles, many of them drowned in the Flanders mud. The British army was unable to mount a major offensive for months to come. For Lloyd George, it confirmed his view that Haig's judgement could not be trusted, and he followed the risky policy of limiting the reserves available to him, lest he fritter away yet more lives. He would have removed Haig had there been an obvious successor. An unexpected British success at Cambrai in November, with a dramatic breakthrough for the new tanks, was some consolation. Meanwhile he

again urged a peripheral strategy, 'knocking the props away' from the enemy in the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean.

However, at the darkest crisis, Lloyd George remained buoyant. At an allied conference at Rapallo in November 1917 he pressed strongly the need for a unified command, using the Italian disaster at Caporetto as a justification: he had previously elaborated the idea to the Italians and the Americans. He proposed a new supreme allied war council at Versailles. The intended target was clearly Robertson, chief of the general staff, to whom he was now implacably opposed. He found the key at the war council meeting at Versailles on 21 January 1918 when it was agreed to create a mobile general reserve under an executive war board over which the French General Foch would preside. Robertson opposed this challenge to his power. In a major crisis in February 1918, pressure was put on him by the government to move to the new council in Versailles. He chose to stay put. But in the event, the Asquithian Liberals in the Commons failed to defend Robertson; the 'cocoa slop' from anti-government Liberal newspapers was ignored; Derby, the war minister, gave way; even Haig backed off. Robertson had to resign and the earthy figure of General Sir Henry Wilson replaced him. The so-called 'X committee' of Lloyd George, Milner, and Wilson oversaw high strategy from that time. With the military and economic resources of the United States coming on stream in early 1918, the prospects for an ultimate allied victory now seemed that much less bleak.

The personal domination of the prime minister over wartime diplomacy was always evident. Lloyd George was dominant in the supreme war council at Versailles, and in stiffening the resolve of the Italians after defeat at Caporetto. A constant priority was pressure on the United States to speed up its military contribution to the war in Europe. His influence also lay behind wartime peace treaties which would give Britain a dominant role in the Middle East including Mesopotamia with its oil supplies when war ended. He was involved in peace feelers with the new Bolshevik regime in Russia after October 1917. At home he worked to conciliate radical sentiment, encouraged by events in Russia, among the workers. In a notable speech to the trade unions at Westminster Hall on 5 January 1918, intended to counteract the damaging effect of news of the secret wartime peace treaties now published by Lenin's government in Russia, he appealed to labour and radical opinion as a lifelong Liberal intent on freeing mankind from exploitation and class rule, a world of economic co-operation and national self-determination for all peoples. The publication of Woodrow Wilson's 'fourteen points' shortly afterwards reinforced Lloyd George's appeal.

In the main, Balfour the foreign secretary played a subordinate role—his policy was 'a free hand for the little man' (B. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, 2, 1936, 196). However, it was Balfour who directed another momentous wartime decision, his declaration in November 1917 to set up a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Lloyd George was a generally philosemitic politician. While at munitions he had struck up a relationship with Chaim Weizmann, a

chemistry professor and also leader of the Zionist movement. The premier now endorsed warmly a proposal that would, among other things, strengthen Britain's position in the eastern Mediterranean and the Suez Canal area. But it left a tangled web of promises or commitments to Zionist Jews and native Arabs alike that bequeathed a violent legacy to the region for the remainder of the twentieth century.

The ending of the war

In the spring of 1918 events at the front reached a critical point. On 21 March the Germans launched a huge assault on the British Fifth Army near Amiens; within a week the situation was critical and the French feared for the safety of Paris. A crucial conference at Beauvais on 3 April, attended by Lloyd George, Haig, and Foch, and with the American generals Pershing and Bliss also present, made the vital decision to entrust Foch with 'the co-ordination of the action of the Allied Armies on the Western Front' and the 'strategic direction of military operations' (D. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 2, 1938, 1749). At last Lloyd George had won the unified command for which he had long striven. However, at no other time in the war were his will-power and qualities of inspirational leadership more fully tested. He brought back reinforcements from Italy, Egypt, and Salonika, and speeded up the use of American troops, to be merged with allied divisions in France. There was gloomy news elsewhere, on the Italian front, in Russia, in Ireland, in German U-boat attacks on allied shipping. At home there were food shortages and the terrifying phenomenon of air raids by German zeppelins on British homes. But by the start of May it was clear that the German offensive had failed to break through; by a narrow margin, the Anglo-French line held.

There was an important political consequence. In a letter to the newspapers published on 7 May General Frederick Maurice alleged that Lloyd George and Bonar Law had made seriously inaccurate statements in the house and that Haig had been deliberately starved of reinforcements on the western front in the six months after Passchendaele. Asquith decided to move a vote of censure and the press seethed with rumours that the government would fall. But in the debate on 9 May Lloyd George launched a brilliant counter-attack and achieved one of his most remarkable parliamentary triumphs. He used figures which seemed to show that British military strength was greater in January 1918 than a year earlier. Further, if Haig had been starved of troops Maurice himself was partly responsible since the figures of personnel came from his own department. The opposition largely collapsed and Lloyd George won a large majority in the Commons debate. The accuracy of his figures has been hotly contested since; Frances Stevenson later wrote of a draft of the correct figures being found by herself and J. T. Davies, unknown to Lloyd George, and being deliberately burnt. What is indisputable is the political outcome. The 106 MPs who voted against the government in the Maurice debate included 98 Liberals. The campaign against them by the government whips marked the beginning of a permanent split among the Liberal Party. It also meant that, for the rest of the war, Lloyd George had total control of the Commons as well as of the country.

Elsewhere, Lloyd George's pre-war social radicalism was still very much in evidence. His government was responsible for major reforms at home. Fisher's Education Act of 1918 substantially extended the base of state education, elementary and secondary, and made some provision for part-time education. The Representation of the People Act hugely extended the electorate from 8 million to 21 million by enfranchising not only all adult men over twenty-one but, dramatically and with relatively little debate, all women aged thirty and over (assuming they were local government electors or wives of such electors). With over 8 million women enfranchised, it was a massive step towards gender equality. There were also major wartime reforms in housing, agriculture, and health; Addison's Ministry of Reconstruction planned a new Ministry of Health. There was talk of creating a land fit for heroes when hostilities ended.

Less successful by far was policy in Ireland which had lapsed into disarray after the failure of Lloyd George's diplomatic efforts in the summer of 1916. The old Irish nationalists were rapidly being overtaken by the militant republicans of Sinn Féin, their charismatic leaders (currently in British gaols) such as Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins, and Eamonn de Valera far more aggressively nationalist than the traditional nationalist parliamentarians. Lloyd George threw himself personally into trying to achieve a new settlement. He set up an abortive convention in May 1917 to try to find a home rule solution, and responded to its ending in April 1918 with an attempt to link the granting of home rule to the whole of Ireland with the imposing of military conscription. It had disastrous results. Southern Irish opinion turned massively towards Sinn Féin; relations between Britain and Ireland deteriorated alarmingly; and martial law was imposed in Ireland. Alongside his triumphs in the war must be set Lloyd George's failures in Ireland, a crucial factor in his later difficulties and decline.

But what mattered above all was the course of the war on the front. In the summer the news at last appeared better. Allenby's advance in Palestine and then Syria against the Turks was gaining momentum; on the western front, the German offensive had been rebuffed, and American troops were now coming into active deployment in large numbers. Lloyd George continued to appeal with charismatic effect to national morale. To mark the fourth anniversary of the war, an inspirational message from him was read out in theatres and cinemas across the land. A similar declaration was made to the Commons three days later.

Then on 8 August 1918 Haig launched a massive assault at Amiens, with the aid of Canadian and Anzac troops. This time he broke through the seemingly impregnable German 'Hindenburg line'. Enemy resistance rapidly collapsed and there were riots and much social unrest in Germany. On 5 October it was learned that Prince Max of Baden, the German chancellor, had approached Woodrow Wilson to discuss the restoration of peace. Austria-Hungary signed an armistice on 3 November. In tense discussions on the peace terms to be presented to Germany, Lloyd George insisted on important modifications of Wilson's fourteen points—'freedom of the seas', a key British proviso relating to the right of search,

and compensation for invaded territories with stern treatment of Germany on whom the stigma of war guilt would be uniquely placed. Without these, Lloyd George and Clemenceau of France declared they would continue the fighting, and Wilson had to give way. On 11 November Lloyd George announced in the Commons that an armistice had been signed that day with Germany, to take effect at 11.00 a.m. He received an unprecedented ovation in the house. Honours rained on him. He received the Order of Merit from the king, the grand cordon of the Légion d'honneur in France, the freedom of cities. He was hailed as 'the man who won the war'.

Even at his moment of greatest triumph, however, the political instincts of David Lloyd George were ever alert. After all, his post-war political future had been totally obscure. He was a prime minister with no real party base, in power for the duration of the war alone. He was constantly at odds with the press, where much of the political debate of the time took place, and developed an implacable feud with Northcliffe, owner of *The Times*, when the latter failed to receive the Air Ministry. In a swift coup, the opposition-minded *Daily Chronicle* was bought up by a pro-government syndicate, and its editor, Robert Donald, a former golfing companion, was cast into oblivion. Elsewhere, Lloyd George's hold over public opinion, in much of Ireland and in the world of labour, excited by the revolution in Russia, was indeed fragile. Relations with Labour were further soured when their leader Arthur Henderson quarrelled with Lloyd George after a visit to Petrograd in Russia prior to attendance at a socialist peace conference at Stockholm. After the famous 'doormat incident', according to legend, he left the government in August 1917. Somehow, the prime minister had to create a political base. There had been talks during 1917, involving Dr Addison, Waldorf Astor, the American owner of *The Observer*, and the ever-busy Beaverbrook, about creating a 'Lloyd George party'. But after the Maurice debate in May 1918 had opened up a massive schism in Liberal ranks, Captain Guest, Addison, and others took steps to create a pro-Lloyd George coalition Liberal party. Two months later, talks with the Unionists led to a list of pro-government candidates for the next election being drawn up (at that time, it was assumed it would be a wartime election) with 150 approved Liberal candidates. This was the origin of the notorious 'coupon' or signed letter of approval at the general election that followed. In October 1918 a draft manifesto with the Unionists laid down a basis for post-war policy: old Liberal priorities like free trade, Irish home rule, Welsh disestablishment, and social reform would all be there, especially the last, but in modified form. There were hopes that Labour might join the government again, but at its conference on 14 November Bernard Shaw successfully urged the delegates, 'Go back to Lloyd George and say—"Nothing doing!"' (*The Times*, 15 Nov 1918).

On 12 November the Liberal ministers, including Churchill, agreed on fighting the election as a coalition. A half-hearted offer of the lord chancellorship to the fallen Asquith was refused. At the subsequent election, Lloyd George dominated the campaign. It was an election later much denounced by Keynes and others as marked by chauvinistic, anti-German rhetoric about hanging the Kaiser and

'squeezing Germany until the pips squeaked'. There was indeed much of this, including Lloyd George's own aggressive speech at Bristol on 11 December in which he departed from his text to urge that Germany should pay the uttermost cost of the war. The remainder of his campaign speeches were in fact moderate statements of the need for major post-war social reconstruction, 'a country fit for heroes to live in' (speech at Wolverhampton, *The Times*, 24 Dec 1918) in the much touted phrase. At any rate, the outcome was a huge majority for the coalition, with over 520 supporters, largely Unionist but including 136 Coalition Liberals and a handful of coalition Labour. The Labour Party, despite a strong poll, won only 57 and the Asquithian Liberals (or 'Wee Frees') a mere 26.

The future seemed uncertain. Politics had been transformed by the war, and with them Lloyd George's role. The old issues of his youth, land reform, the chapels, even free trade, had lost their priority. Instead politics were shaped by the all-purpose term 'reconstruction'. There was a background of chauvinist and anti-alien right-wing reaction. The post-war world would be dominated by the giant clash between capital and labour, with Lloyd George now in alliance with right-wing 'anti-Bolsheviks' using red scare techniques. Abroad, Europe from the Pyrenees to the Urals was shattered and in revolutionary chaos. Beyond dispute, however, was the overwhelming personal ascendancy of David Lloyd George. Bonar Law observed to Beaverbrook, 'He can be prime minister for life if he likes' (Beaverbrook, 325).

Post-war premiership: Versailles and after

Lloyd George's domination after the 'coupon' election seemed complete. He was the most powerful prime minister since the younger Pitt, perhaps ever. The wartime cabinet system was retained until October 1919. Ministers who departed from the government line were fiercely slapped down—Milner, even Churchill who was repeatedly chided for his doctrinaire attitude towards Soviet Russia. The constitution seemed to be cast aside by a presidential prime minister backed up by his Cabinet Office and a cabinet itself dissolving into *ad hoc* 'conferences of ministers'. The point was emphasized in September 1921 when the cabinet met not in Downing Street but in Inverness town hall. The 'Garden Suburb' of private prime ministerial advisers, many of them Milnerite imperialists headed by Philip Kerr, aroused particular hostility. Even more did the activities of Sir William Sutherland in undercover deals with the press and in the trafficking of titles and honours in return for contributions to government or party funds. Critics quoted Dunning's famous resolution against Lord North's government in 1780 that the power of the prime minister had increased, was increasing and ought to be diminished.

The premier was initially wholly absorbed with the peace conference at Paris which began on 18 January 1919. Bonar Law held the fort in the Commons while the prime minister, along with Wilson and Clemenceau, changed the world. On the initiative of Lloyd George, the original unwieldy council of ten was reduced to the council of four (including the Italian prime minister, Vittorio Orlando) in March.

There followed months of hectic negotiations, Lloyd George being variously assisted not only by close aides such as Hankey and Kerr, but ministerial colleagues such as Balfour, Milner, and for a time the South African General Smuts. Eventually the treaty was signed, most reluctantly, by the German delegates in the hall of mirrors in the Palace of Versailles. Lloyd George's defence of its terms was given an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons.

Lloyd George's role over the Versailles treaty is central to the ways in which his career and purposes were later viewed. J. M. Keynes's slashing attack on the treaty in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* that autumn helped to create a mood of hostility towards an unjust and self-defeating settlement. He condemned the 'coupon' election as encouraging the spirit of vengeance of a Carthaginian peace. His later sketch of Lloyd George in his *Essays in Biography*, partly through the brilliance of his writing, did more than any other critique to create a view of the prime minister as ruthless and unprincipled, 'a vampire and a medium in one', a man 'rooted in nothing' (J. M. Keynes, *Essays in Biography*, 1961 edn, 36).

Certainly Lloyd George had his full share of responsibility for the harsher features of the treaty. He took a strongly nationalist position on issues deemed to be affecting Britain's national security or other interests. He fought to maintain Britain's right of search of naval vessels on the high seas in the face of American demands for 'the freedom of the seas'. He pressed for extending the empire, notably in the Middle East where new British-mandated territories such as in Mesopotamia were to reflect the massive oil supplies discovered there. At the same time, French claims to Syria under wartime secret treaties were resisted. He also upheld Britain's claims to German colonies in Africa, notably in German East Africa (Tanganyika). Over Germany, he joined Clemenceau in taking the harsh view, calling for the trial of the Kaiser, urging that war guilt be attached to Germany in clause 231, and imposing long-term reparations payments in compensation for the damage done to allied territories and supplies. It was this last that especially led to Keynes's bitter criticism.

Yet Lloyd George was also the most flexible of the peacemakers, sometimes taking an intermediate line between the nationalism of Clemenceau and the sometimes high-flown generalities of Woodrow Wilson, a zealot for the new League of Nations which in the end the American senate was to refuse to join. Lloyd George was always aware of wider themes—the devastation of European trade and industry, the problems of simple starvation in Germany and elsewhere, the dangerously fluid situation in eastern Europe where a civil war was taking place between the Bolsheviks and White Russians, the impossibility of a stable long-term international settlement based on a one-sided policy of revenge.

Lloyd George's thinking was set out in a document of 25 March, the Fontainebleau memorandum, worked out with Hankey, Kerr, and especially Smuts. This called for realism in German reparations payments, based on the facts of Germany's capacity to pay. More vigorously, the memorandum condemned the subjecting of German-speaking populations to French or Polish rule. Lloyd George fiercely, though unavailingly, condemned decisions such as the so-called Polish corridor, the Saarland, or placing the Sudeten Germans under the regime of the new hybrid Czechoslovakia: Lloyd George never held much regard either for this new creation, or for the main Czech spokesman, Edvard Beneš, as was to emerge in the Munich crisis twenty years later. He urged the dangers of creating a sense of mass grievance at a time when Russia and perhaps Europe were gripped by 'the spirit of revolution' (D. Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, 1, 1938, 407). Germany should be admitted to the League of Nations. The memorandum, however, withered on the vine in the face of French opposition.

Lloyd George, however, did have some successes at Paris, notably the placing of German-speaking Danzig under the League of Nations, and achieving a plebiscite for Upper Silesia (which in 1921 resulted in a massive vote for that territory to be restored to Germany). To meet Clemenceau's demand for occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, he and Wilson offered a guarantee of military aid to France against unprovoked aggression—an offer which the American senate's failure to ratify the treaty caused to lapse. On reparations he had the issue handed over to a non-partisan and supposedly objective reparations commission which might in time delay or even scale down to close to zero effective payments by Germany. In a later book, *The Truth about Reparations and War Debts* (1932), he called, in effect, for reparations to be abandoned altogether. It would not, he argued, be a breach of the peace treaty. On the contrary, such a policy would embody its proper intentions.

On his return, Lloyd George hailed a peace with honour which had fulfilled the aspirations of British Liberals for the principles of economic freedom and national self-determination. Nevertheless, both in terms of frontier settlements and of reparations, the Versailles treaty appeared harsh and vindictive to many observers. The 'stab in the back' could lead to a nationalist backlash in Germany. There were still peace treaties to be concluded with Austria and Bulgaria, and a final settlement with Turkey. For the remainder of his premiership he sought to redress major features of the peace settlement to bring Germany and the other former enemies within the comity of nations and to produce a more stable and productive economic order. The revision of the injustices of the peace treaties, for which he was partly responsible, was his overriding objective right down to the onset of a second world war in 1939.

The peacetime premiership at home

Freed from the strains of peacemaking at Paris, however, Lloyd George now threw himself for a time into domestic affairs. His constitutional role seemed ever more unusual. He stood aloof, it seemed, not only from party politics but from parliament itself from which for long periods he absented himself. He acted as a kind of minister of all departments, interfering in policy issues at will either directly or through intermediaries such as Kerr. Yet for a time the energies of the pre-war new Liberalism were revived. The economy remained buoyant until May 1920 when the post-war inflation gave way to a sudden and lasting depression and growing unemployment. There were progressive reforms such as Fisher's Education Act and Addison's Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919 which began the principle of publicly subsidized housing provided by the local authorities—though at what soon appeared to be an unacceptable financial cost. There was also a new minister of health, a position which Addison himself filled. Thomas Macnamara, minister of labour, began a remarkably generous nationwide system of unemployment insurance. Women now had the vote; one of them, Lady Astor, entered the Commons. There was also at least one nostalgic gesture to his Welsh past—the passage of Welsh disestablishment in June 1919, although by now few cared.

Lloyd George's major test at home, however, lay in the challenge from Labour. The British trade unions, having doubled in size during the corporate arrangements of wartime, were in militant mood. In major industries, especially the railways and the coalmines, class passions built up. The period from 1919 to 1921 was the worst for days lost through industrial strike action that Britain had ever known. Ministers talked of Bolshevik subversion. Even the police went on strike. Violent clashes in George Square in Glasgow seemed to suggest that a British revolution was at hand. Lloyd George was prepared to use the full resources of the state in response. He contemplated starving the striking railwaymen into submission in the autumn of 1919. Much use was made of the army, the navy, and even (for surveillance) the air force, along with MI5, in suppressing the strikers. The Emergency Powers Act of 1920 created a permanent anti-strike apparatus, both civil and military. But even in these years, Lloyd George's skills in handling the unions and negotiating his way through industrial crises were in evidence.

The main crisis arose in the mines. The Sankey royal commission in 1919 called, by a narrow majority, for the nationalization of the coal industry. The failure of the government to respond led to a national miners' strike in 1920. In the spring of 1921 there was a real prospect of a general strike by the 'triple alliance' of miners, dockers, and railwaymen. But on 'black Friday' (15 April 1921) Lloyd George managed to persuade or bamboozle Frank Hodges, the general secretary of the Miners' Federation, to accept the principle of a wages pool. The triple alliance broke up and the great post-war strikes diminished thereafter, especially as mass unemployment began to spread. Lloyd George in part was able to show the Trade Union Council that its ideological position was untenable.

If there were a general strike, the unions would have to become the government. 'We are at your mercy', declared Lloyd George. Robert Smillie of the Miners' Federation, in Bevan's later account, reflected that at that moment the unions were beaten 'and we knew we were' (A. Bevan, *In Place of Fear*, 1976 edn, 41). But Lloyd George's role as a perceived champion of labour was now effectively destroyed. He was seen henceforth as a man who had lied over the Sankey commission, and allied himself with capitalist bosses like the hated coal owners and red-baiting politicians of the far right. Worse still, promises of a land fit for the heroes back from the war seemed to be betrayed.

Lloyd George lost more credibility in another major area—Ireland. In 1919 violence spread throughout the island, between the Irish Republican Army under Michael Collins and the British army. Murders occurred everywhere and the government engaged in a policy of reprisals against the IRA. When the Government of Ireland Act in 1920 partitioned the island at least for the moment, by setting up a Northern Ireland parliament in Belfast (later in Stormont), southern Irish republicans ignored it. Hatred was stoked up by the army's being reinforced by the auxiliary and quite undisciplined 'Black and Tans'. Episodes such as the Black and Tans' firing indiscriminately into a football crowd at Croke Park, Dublin, on 'bloody Sunday' (21 November 1920) or the hunger strike which led to the death of the mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, shocked the conscience of the world.

Lloyd George was too absorbed with other priorities to focus on Ireland until the spring of 1921. His pronouncements were hawkish: the IRA was dismissed as 'the murder gang' (*The Times*, 11 Oct 1920). His own life was thought to be in danger at the hands of Irish assassins. When he did turn to Ireland, policy rapidly changed. Before, he had seriously miscalculated the strength of and support for Sinn Féin and the IRA. Now secret contacts began with Sinn Féin. The king delivered a remarkably conciliatory speech when opening the new Northern Ireland parliament in Belfast. From July 1921 Lloyd George began a lengthy series of face-to-face meetings with the Sinn Féin leader, Eamonn de Valera, at 10 Downing Street. The talks made slow progress, though Lloyd George used his Celtic background to persuade de Valera that neither in Irish nor Welsh was there a word for 'republic'. Full-scale talks began in October in London. The British delegation, headed by Lloyd George and also including Austen Chamberlain, Lord Birkenhead, and Churchill, wrestled endlessly with Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, the chief Sinn Féin delegates, over the precise relationship of a free Ireland to the British empire, finance and defence issues, and the oath of allegiance to the crown. In the background was the problem of Ulster, protestant and loyalist, dedicated to the historic call of 'no surrender'.

On 5 December 1921 Lloyd George brought the discussions to a head. He threatened the Sinn Féiners with an immediate resumption of hostilities unless they accepted the terms already agreed, including a future boundary commission to settle the problem of the territory of Ulster. He brandished two telegrams in the

air—‘Which letter am I to send? ... We must know your answer by ten pm tonight’ (F. Pakenham, *Peace by Ordeal*, 1972 edn, 239–40). It was a colossal bluff. But, helped by the good personal relations of Griffith with him and his Welsh aide, Thomas Jones, Lloyd George carried the day. By 3 to 2, the Sinn Féiners accepted terms. A month later, the treaty was endorsed by the Irish Dáil in Dublin by 64 to 57.

It was an ambiguous achievement. The future of Ulster was left in abeyance pending a boundary commission; in practice Ireland was to remain partitioned, at the cost of massive internal conflict in the north, for the remainder of the century. Appalling episodes such as the killing of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson in Eaton Square by IRA gunmen in 1922 showed that Irish violence was still a political reality. But still it was a settlement. The twenty-six counties of southern Ireland—the ‘Irish Free State’—were granted dominion status within the empire and became effectively a sovereign state. Lloyd George could claim to have solved the Irish question where Pitt, Peel, Gladstone, and Salisbury had all failed. Yet it was achieved at grave cost. Liberal and Labour opinion had been appalled by the government’s counter-violence in the troubles in Ireland. On the other hand, many Unionists resented an ultimate surrender to Sinn Féin/IRA violence. The prime minister responsible would have to go.

Even after his coup over Ireland, therefore, Lloyd George remained an isolated titan. Public spending on social policies aroused the opposition of the right-wing ‘anti-waste’ movement. Other Unionists opposed surrender in Ireland or the dismissal of General Dyer in India after the shooting of hundreds of Sikhs in the Amritsar massacre in 1919. On the left, Labour was largely alienated after the Sankey report and ‘black Friday’, while many Liberals were downcast by the Black and Tans and the undermining of free trade. In March 1920 there had been a scheme to organize the fusion of the unionist and the Coalition Liberal parties behind Lloyd George, who recalled as a parallel the unity of command between the French and British armies on the western front during the war. But the Unionists were hostile, and in the end so were the Coalition Liberals as well. They and their leader continued in a kind of political no man’s land, their political future unpredictable and precarious. The ‘man who won the war’ had yet to establish himself anew in time of peace.

Lloyd Georgian diplomacy

Lloyd George’s detachment from home politics was emphasized by the priority he gave to trying to modify the peace settlement at Versailles and create a stable post-war international structure. Conference after conference was held: the new foreign secretary, Lord Curzon, was treated by Lloyd George, it seemed, almost with contempt at times. Further treaties were concluded. The treaty of Sèvres in August 1920 managed an imposed settlement with the Turks by giving the Greeks, a favourite people of Lloyd George’s, large areas of territory in Asia Minor, including the great port of Smyrna, but it proved a cause of massive future conflict. The treaty of Rapallo (12 November 1920) reached agreement with Italy

over Fiume. But the main issue of contention was always Germany and particularly the question of reparations. The San Remo conference (19–26 April 1920) began the process of scaling down French claims. The French were persuaded to accept lump-sum figures for payment over the next thirty-five years. Further reductions were agreed in Anglo-French conferences at London and Boulogne. Clearly, some of Germany's alleged obligations would never be paid.

Lloyd George also paid much attention to French demands for security on its eastern frontiers; after all, Germany had invaded them twice, in 1870 and 1914. At Cannes in January 1922, he seemingly came close to agreeing with the French radical prime minister, Aristide Briand, a Breton and therefore another Celt, a new settlement of German indemnities alongside a permanent guarantee of French frontiers through a long-term continental commitment of support by the British government. This dramatic departure from British traditions towards continental Europe was, however, frustrated by the fall of the Briand government following photographs of a fateful golf match with Lloyd George on the Cannes links. Briand was succeeded by the intransigent right-wing Lorrainer, Raymond Poincaré, no friend of a settlement with Germany. But Lloyd George still felt that progress had been made in restoring the pariah enemy to the comity of nations.

The other great pariah proved unexpectedly more amenable. Soviet Russia was a massive problem for the British in 1919 since they had troops committed to aid the White Russians there during the civil war. In fact, despite pressure from Churchill and the political right, Lloyd George managed to wind up all British military involvement in Russia by early in 1920. Threatened assistance to the Poles in a brief war with the Russian Bolshevik government did not materialize either. Although there were threats of strikes by British trade unions, the decisive factor was that the Polish army managed to defeat the Russian invaders on its own. Lloyd George now strove to bring Russia also into the international community, mindful of the value of its huge markets to British industry still struggling after the war. His tactical skills evoked the admiration of Lenin who even dedicated a book to him as the most gifted political leader in the capitalist world. An Anglo-Russian trade agreement was signed in March 1921, and there seemed a real prospect of full *de facto* recognition of the Soviet Union being achieved early in 1922.

Lloyd George aimed to combine both a German and a Russian settlement in a massive international conference held at Genoa in April–May 1922. This might also afford him a platform for a political recovery at home and a new appeal to the voters. In fact, Genoa was undermined even before it began. Poincaré would countenance no concessions. The recognition of the Soviet Union was undermined by Churchill and right-wing critics at home. Disastrously, the German Weimar government and the Soviet Union concluded a private treaty at Rapallo before the conference even met. Genoa was a slow, long-running failure, with nothing agreed on the main issues. A face-saving conference of experts at The Hague brought no settlement on the issue of Russian debts incurred by the

tsarist regime and repudiated by the Soviet government. Europe after Genoa was as unstable as before. Lloyd George, assailed by the Northcliffe press and the Unionist right wing, no longer looked like an international messiah.

More difficulties occurred in another sphere, that of Greek–Turkish relations. In his other diplomatic policies, Lloyd George had been a conciliator and a peacemaker. Here it was very different. His enthusiastic backing for the Greek premier Venizelos after the treaty of Sèvres led to conflict. The post-war Turkish leader, Mustafa Kemal, refused to accept the treaty or the surrender to Greece of large parts of Asia Minor including Smyrna. Finally, after belligerent speeches by Lloyd George backing up Venizelos's claims in Asia Minor, the Turks attacked and smashed through the Greek armies there in late August 1922. Smyrna was put to fire and sword, with over 100,000 Greeks perishing. The British post at Chanak on the Dardanelles was now threatened with attack. A new crisis threatened to rock finally the unstable and unpopular coalition.

The downfall of Lloyd George

The crisis in Asia Minor came at a time when Lloyd George's position at home was slowly crumbling. Liberals of various persuasions were losing faith, especially after the one truly radical minister, Dr Addison, was sacked from the government in July 1921 after the expensive and inflationary outcome of his housing subsidies. Another Liberal, Edwin Montagu, followed in March 1922. There resulted serious cuts in social expenditure, the so-called Geddes 'axe' in 1922, which further reduced support among Liberal opinion. More serious, however, was Unionist disaffection over domestic, Irish, and foreign policy. Press attacks were remorseless; Lloyd George hit back after Northcliffe's death by suicide with an abortive attempt to purchase *The Times* as a pro-government organ. The retirement of Bonar Law through ill health had left leadership of the Unionists in the less effective hands of Austen Chamberlain. Then Law returned to politics, still loyal, but perhaps an alternative leader in waiting.

Right-wing criticism reached a new level of venom in June 1922 in the so-called 'honours scandal'. Lloyd George's aides such as Guest and Sutherland, along with sinister figures such as Maundy Gregory, had been trading honours and peerages, it appeared, in London's clubland and elsewhere in return for contributions to party funds (Unionist as well as Liberal, though this was less commonly emphasized). The award of a peerage to a corrupt South African businessman led to attacks on the government in both houses of parliament. The prime minister was accused of dishonesty. In fact, Lloyd George was careless about honours himself; the purpose of the sale of honours was simply to raise a war chest for a premier without a party base. He was still a relatively poor man, and remained so until he made money after his fall from office through a lecture tour in America in 1923 and then through the sale of United Newspapers in 1927 which brought him perhaps £2.5 million. But the episode underlined for critics his role as a rogue elephant, trampling roughshod on the ethical standards of British life.

The crisis with Turkey brought these problems to a head. As the Turkish army advanced towards General Harington's British forces at Chanak, war seemed close at hand. But the public were weary of fighting; Keynes had taught them it was pointless anyhow. Bonar Law unexpectedly wrote a letter to *The Times*, published on 7 October 1922 observing that Britain could not alone act as 'policeman of the world'. Lesser Unionist ministers rebelled. On 17 October it was known that they were to be joined by the obscure Stanley Baldwin at the Board of Trade and even Lord Curzon, the foreign secretary. The French were pro-Turk; no member of the empire offered any assistance other than New Zealand. Lloyd George seemed oblivious to the danger he faced, and delivered a furiously anti-Turk speech at Manchester on 14 October. On 19 October at a meeting of Unionist MPs at the Carlton Club called by Austen Chamberlain, the coalition was voted down by 185 to 88. Baldwin described Lloyd George as a 'dynamic force' which he declared was 'a very terrible thing' (*The Times*, 20 Oct 1922). The party regulars had had their revenge for 1916. Later that day, in good humour, Lloyd George left Downing Street. Many, though, felt he would return.

The record of the Lloyd George coalition in the period 1919–22 has been severely criticized subsequently, perhaps for its tone as much as its policies, its atmosphere of intrigue and corruption captured in Arnold Bennett's novel *Lord Rainingo*. In some ways, it was not a bad government. It passed measures of social reform, it brought eventual peace to Ireland, it promoted naval disarmament, it extended some self-government to India and to Egypt, it tried to defuse labour unrest, it sought peace in foreign affairs. Liberals such as the education minister, H. A. L. Fisher, felt they could remain in office without shame. It provided some basis for a stable Britain in the inter-war years when many other European nations plunged into dictatorship.

In the end, the coalition's basic instability, moral, and political, brought it down. In addition, a post-war world which saw growing mass unemployment at home, and renewed instability overseas meant that the government's legacy was an unsuccessful one. Above all, Lloyd George's highly personal ascendancy, exemplified by novelties like the 'Garden Suburb' (promptly abolished after his fall) was appropriate only for emergency wartime circumstances. His presidential style now appeared anomalous, even dangerous. Politicians, like businessmen, hankered for the 'normalcy' of the world they had lost. So Lloyd George retired to the wings from centre-stage. He sought consolation less from Dame Margaret in Cricieth than from Frances Stevenson, for whom he had just built a new house, Bron-y-de, at Churt in Surrey, to face the imponderable challenges of his fall from power.

Liberalism in the 1920s

Lloyd George had lost office and was in search of a role. The Conservatives under Bonar Law won the general election in November 1922, with Lloyd George's Liberals winning only 57 seats, a few less than Asquith's followers. The Liberal Party remained bitterly divided, especially over Lloyd George's huge war chest of money, the notorious 'Lloyd George fund'. Labour under MacDonald was anxious above all to ensure that they replaced the Liberals as the main opposition to the Tories. In September 1923 Lloyd George left for a major lecture tour in the United States and Canada, appealing for clemency towards Germany—and also earning much needed money for himself. Then the situation changed in October when Baldwin, the new premier, declared for protection of the home market as the way to combat unemployment. At once Asquithian and Lloyd George Liberals reunited to defend free trade. At the next general election, called by Baldwin in December 1923, the Conservatives lost their majority. The Liberals joined Labour in voting them down in the Commons and the first Labour government, headed by Ramsay MacDonald, took office. But they were a minority dependent on the support of the 157 MPs of the reunited Liberal Party. However, the few months of Labour government were an unhappy time for the Liberals with endless acrimony within the party. At the general election in October 1924 their MPs fell alarmingly to only 40. Distrust between Lloyd George and Asquith continued. After they differed over the general strike of May 1926, towards which Lloyd George was far more sympathetic, Asquith resigned as party leader. Lloyd George now for the first time became Liberal leader, but of a rump third party only, engaged in endless internal rows over the Lloyd George fund and its master.

However, there was a far more characteristic aspect of Lloyd George's activities in the 1920s—a crusade to galvanize Liberal policies, and thereby to give a creative stimulus to British politics as a whole. Charles Masterman, recently a bitter opponent, told his wife, 'When LI. G. came back to the party, ideas came back to the party' (L. Masterman, *C. F. G. Masterman*, 1939, 345–6). He made use of the annual Liberal summer school begun by Ramsay Muir in the 1920s as a forum of new ideas. He assembled a kind of general staff of advisers, some of them pre-war new Liberals such as Rowntree, others younger economists such as Lionel Robbins, Hubert Henderson, and Walter Layton. They worked out new schemes to promote industrial and agricultural recovery. Most remarkable of all was Keynes, a fierce opponent over Versailles, but now reconciled with Lloyd George in advocating schemes for massive public works and counter-cyclical spending policies promoted by central government, instead of the deflation and Treasury orthodoxy that prevailed under the Conservatives. Both Keynes and Lloyd George condemned Churchill's return to the gold standard at the pre-war parity in 1925.

A series of multi-coloured policy books followed, dealing variously with land, industry and power, coal and power, and unemployment. They were highly radical in their proposals. The 'green book', *The Land and the Nation* (1925), which advocated a kind of nationalization of cultivable land, drove Sir Alfred Mond into the Conservative Party forthwith. The 'yellow book', *Britain's Industrial Future* (1928), set out comprehensive proposals for regenerating the economy. It was popularized in the 'orange book', *We can Conquer Unemployment* (1929), which urged that tens of thousands of unemployed men could be given work on national enterprises such as road building, housing, and land drainage. In a supportive document, *Can Lloyd George do it?*, Keynes and Henderson spelt out, almost for the first time, the 'multiplier effect' for employment of planned public spending.

It was a dynamic, novel programme which captured many of the headlines in the 1929 general election. Baldwin and MacDonald seemed almost united in trying to ensure that Lloyd George did not return to power. Baldwin called for 'Safety First', MacDonald for 'no monkeying'. But in fact the Liberals made only scant progress in the election. Their vote rose by nearly 2.5 million but their tally of MPs only from 40 to 59. Labour won 287 seats and MacDonald formed a second minority government, this time as head of the largest party. The years of this government, from 1929 to August 1931, were a dismal time for the Liberals. They were squeezed between the two large parties as an enfeebled third force. A few right-wing Liberals, headed by Simon and Runciman, moved over to the Conservatives. Lloyd George remained in touch with MacDonald through Addison, now a Labour cabinet minister, and there were talks about his joining the government in March 1931, but to no effect.

When a massive financial crisis in August 1931 led to the collapse of MacDonald's government and his re-emergence as head of a coalition National Government Lloyd George was convalescing after a serious prostate operation. However, he made it clear that he strongly disapproved of the National Government and of Samuel, the acting Liberal leader, joining it. The subsequent general election in October was won by the National Government with a colossal majority amid political hysteria which saw Labour almost wiped out. The Liberals were divided into three—Simon's pro-tory National Liberals, Samuel's main grouping, and a Lloyd George family rump of four Welsh members—himself, his daughter Megan (MP for Anglesey), his son Gwilym (MP for Pembrokeshire and briefly a junior minister in the National Government), and his family relative Goronwy Owen (MP for Caernarvonshire). The Welsh outsider was now almost alone.

The 1930s and 1940s: the end

Lloyd George was now an elderly man, entering his seventies. He spent much of his time at Churt, partly in farming and growing fruit, notably a famous strain of raspberries. His main and exhausting task, however, was the writing of massive works of reminiscence, his *War Memoirs* (1933–6) and *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (1938). They were written with the aid of advisers, notably Liddell Hart. These volumes, especially the *War Memoirs*, are a remarkable achievement, which bear comparison with Churchill's later. Based on a vast array of private materials, in them Lloyd George refought the old battles of wartime with zest, to confound critics and justify himself. There are vivid portraits of individuals such as Grey, Kitchener, and Wilson, and many brilliant insights. The purpose was in large measure polemical, to heap criticism on Haig, Robertson, Jellicoe, and other old adversaries, to argue the case relentlessly for a more peripheral military strategy, and to denounce the sterile bloodbath of the trenches. These volumes are central to the long, ongoing debate on the strategy and ethics of the First World War. They were also implicitly arguing the case for a totally different approach towards Germany and international affairs in the 1930s. Their purpose was the present as much as the past.

Even in his seventies, Lloyd George remained vigorous in domestic politics. Early in 1935, he launched a final crusade, the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction, or Britain's New Deal, calling again for active intervention in the economy, public works, and a presidential style of national government. Much was made of reviving agriculture, perhaps an echo of his old rural radicalism. MacDonald and Baldwin invited him to outline his ideas: there was talk of his entering the government, but it came to nothing. In the 1935 general election, the non-government Liberals, Samuelite and Lloyd Georgeite, won a mere 21 seats. The last bid for power had failed. Lloyd George now seemed a rudderless old man, as in his attacks on greater self-government for India and his support for Edward VIII after his abdication in December 1936.

Lloyd George's main preoccupation now was trying to reverse the effects of Versailles and the other peace treaties. As Germany fell into totalitarian dictatorship under Hitler, Lloyd George renewed his attacks on the reparations and unjust frontiers imposed on the defeated Germans. He was critical of the league and the failure to disarm as laid down in the peace treaties, and highly censorious of the French. Once again, he urged that frontier concessions be made to Germany over the Saar, Danzig, the Polish corridor, and the Rhineland. Hitler's occupation and remilitarization of the Rhineland on 7 March 1936, in flat defiance of the Versailles treaty, did not seem to distress him: indeed he urged that a non-aggression pact was possible. Fatefully, in August 1936 he went with Thomas Jones and others on a visit to Germany, which included a widely publicized meeting with Hitler in Berchtesgaden. Against the Wagnerian background of the Bavarian Alps, Hitler gave Lloyd George a signed photograph, addressed to 'the man who won the war'. Lloyd George expressed warm enthusiasm both for Hitler personally and for Germany's public works schemes.

He did not mention the treatment of the Jews. When he returned, he wrote ecstatically of Hitler as 'the greatest living German', 'the George Washington of Germany' (*Daily Express*, 17 Sept 1936). It was a serious miscalculation, partly influenced by his later biographer Thomas Jones, a key member of the All Souls group of appeasers, and did him much harm.

Lloyd George pursued a curiously schizoid approach thereafter. He continued to argue the case for a revised peace agreement with Germany. Even the Munich pact brought a somewhat mixed response. He saw the justice of the case of the Sudeten Germans and was savagely critical of the Czech leader, Beneš, 'that little swine' (Cross, diary, 5 Oct 1938, Cross, 219). On the other hand, he also urged the vital need to end appeasement and to promote a vigorous policy of rearmament, especially for the air force. He passionately denounced the government's craven failures over Abyssinia and the Spanish Civil War. He argued for an alliance with the Soviet Union, and had private meetings with Maysky, the Soviet ambassador. On 3 April 1939 in the Commons he devastatingly criticized the British guarantee to Poland: without Russia it was an empty gesture. Through this time, he attracted a variety of politicians and journalists, younger tory MPs such as Robert Boothby and Brendan Bracken, editors such as Garvin of *The Observer*, military and economic experts of all kinds. Right down to September 1939 he was a major political player.

When war broke out, Lloyd George remained relatively silent. He was believed to favour the idea of a possible negotiated peace. He made one last great Commons speech, on 8 May 1940, when his devastating attack on Neville Chamberlain helped to bring the prime minister down and led to the succession of Winston Churchill. There was much speculation that Churchill might bring his old comrade into his government, even at the age of seventy-seven. But discussions in June were inconclusive: Churchill perhaps suspected that Lloyd George had defeatist tendencies. Again that November, when Philip Kerr, Lord Lothian, the ambassador to Washington, died, Lloyd George, remarkably, was offered the post, but he turned it down. His appearances in parliament were now increasingly rare. A pessimistic speech on 7 May 1941 led Churchill to compare him, woundingly, with the venerable Pétain in France. He cast his last vote in the Commons on 18 February 1943 as one of the 121 MPs (97 Labour) condemning the government for its failure to back the Beveridge report. Appropriately, his final vote was in defence of the welfare state which he had helped to create.

Lloyd George's life now went into decline. He was deeply upset by the death of his wife Dame Margaret in January 1941; heavy snowdrifts prevented his getting to her bedside before she died. In October 1943, aged eighty, he married Frances Stevenson, his secretary-mistress for thirty years, in Guildford register office, causing severe tension with his daughter, Megan, and other members of the family. He viewed the course of the war with pessimistic resignation and was fearful of German air raids. One of his few pleasures was listening to the broadcasts of William Joyce, Lord Haw-Haw. Increasingly in his late years his

characteristic political courage gave way to physical timidity and hypochondria. He continued to attend Castle Street Baptist Chapel in London, and to preside over the national eisteddfod at its Thursday session each summer. At the end, he returned to Wales. In September 1944, he and Frances left Churt for Tŷ Newydd, a somewhat bleak farming property near his boyhood home in Llanystumdwy. He was now weakening rapidly and his voice failing. He was still an MP but learned that wartime changes in the constituency meant that Caernarfon Boroughs might go Conservative at the next election. In the honours list of 1 January 1945 it was learned that Wales's great commoner would become Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor. It did not enhance his reputation among his admirers. On 26 March he died of cancer in Tŷ Newydd, Frances and his daughter, Megan, at the bedside. Four days later, in a simple service, he was buried beside the River Dwyfor in Llanystumdwy. A great boulder marks his grave. There is no inscription.

A historical assessment

David Lloyd George is not only one of the most important but also one of the most controversial of British statesmen. In his earlier years, perhaps down to the end of the First World War, biographers and other authors treated him as a great popular hero, a kind of British Abraham Lincoln, the simple 'cottage-bred boy' who tore down privilege and injustice in peacetime, and who then showed himself one of the great war leaders of history. But after 1918—perhaps indeed after the mysterious events of December 1916 which made him premier—treatment of him became almost universally hostile. Conservatives denounced him as an unprincipled dictator, tarnished for ever by the Lloyd George fund. Labour saw him as the ally of reactionaries who betrayed hopes of a land fit for heroes. Fellow Liberals condemned him for the destruction of their great party through the 'coupon' election and treachery to his Liberal past. Keynes's famous essay of 1933 marked him down as an unprincipled adventurer. He appeared almost to have become a national scapegoat, responsible for the downfall of Liberalism, perhaps the decline of Britain itself. Even generally favourable books on him like his official biography by Thomas Jones in 1951 were guarded. As late as 1966, the historian Trevor Wilson's *Downfall of the Liberal Party* placed the blame on Lloyd George alone. Closer to home, Lloyd George's son Richard, the second earl, wrote a book in 1960 in which he depicted his father as an unfeeling libertine. Novelists from Arnold Bennett to Joyce Cary followed this hostile tone.

Since the 1960s, however, historical opinion has changed significantly. In part, it may result from generational change, as older Asquithian enemies disappeared, and the 'permissive society' demolished Victorian puritanism. The opening up of the Lloyd George archives in the Beaverbrook Library in 1967, under A. J. P. Taylor, generated a flood of monographs and biographies, almost all of them emphasizing the greatness of Lloyd George's achievement in peace and in war, his inspirational qualities of leadership, his visionary grasp of the forces of change at home and abroad. Taylor himself in 1974 called him Britain's greatest leader since Oliver Cromwell (introduction to K. O. Morgan, *Lloyd George*, 8).

Many commentators bracketed Lloyd George and Churchill as giants kept in the wings in the 'locust years' of the 1930s while Britain languished under the 'pigmies and second-class brains' of the National Government. As a result, both the assessment of historians and of the wider public has become increasingly sympathetic; his heroic status seems to have returned. There was in the 1990s a campaign to install a statue of him in Parliament Square, and in 2001 a new bust of him was unveiled in the smoking room of the Reform Club. Labour prime ministers, Wilson, Callaghan, and especially Blair (speech to Fabian conference, 5 July 1995), paid tribute to him as a great social reformer and pioneer of the British progressive tradition. A millennial poll of historians on 31 December 1999 placed Lloyd George a strong second to Churchill as the outstanding prime minister of the twentieth century.

To a remarkable degree, earlier attacks focused on Lloyd George's personality and his private life. His sexual proclivities have aroused obsessive enquiry reserved for no other prime minister. The biography by his son Richard depicted his father as an oversexed philanderer. And, of course, with his secretary and mistress, Frances Stevenson, he maintained an alternative household over three decades. He was almost certainly the father of Frances's child Jennifer, born in 1927. He was always attracted to pretty young women; he never felt shackled by the marital vows and admitted as much to Maggie Owen when they were courting. Apart from the case of Mrs Kitty Edwards and a later story in a French newspaper (in both of which he was exonerated) he certainly had affairs with the wives of three Liberal MPs, Timothy Davies, Sir Charles Henry, and Sir Arthur Crosfield, with rumours of many others. He was immensely attractive to women, with his beguiling charm, bright blue eyes, fashionably long hair, and neat figure and feet. His personality was hypnotic: it was said that 'he could charm a bird off a bough'. At the same time, the abuse directed at him now seems overdone, as moral standards in society have changed: contrasted with the private activities of several American presidents, Lloyd George's peccadillos appear almost mundane. He was after all an intensely committed professional politician with great ideals to pursue. Nothing should get in the way of that. As regards his relationships with Margaret Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson, both responded to different facets of his make-up. Margaret, reluctant to join him in the metropolis, kept him in contact with the values of Welsh village democracy in which he was brought up. Frances Stevenson offered him more sophisticated assurance in the world of high politics in London. Her diary gives insights into a deeply human side of Lloyd George the critics tend to ignore. He loved two women, and perhaps needed them both.

It has also been claimed that Lloyd George was a man incapable of friendship. 'He had no friends and did not deserve any', A. J. P. Taylor once wrote (A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914–1945*, 1965, 74). Like all politicians who reach the top, Lloyd George had a ruthless streak towards those who crossed him, as Addison, Mond, Montagu, and others discovered. On the other hand, he forged lasting friendships with many honourable figures too—C. P. Scott of the

Manchester Guardian, the historian H. A. L. Fisher, the social scientist Seebohm Rowntree, a Christian socialist such as Charles Masterman, decent Welsh colleagues such as Herbert Lewis or the preacher-poet Elfed. In many ways, he seems to have been a warmer, more outgoing man than many of his patrician, better-educated contemporaries. He was usually splendid company, full of fun, a good listener, at ease with monarchs and working people alike, and always happy with children. Not a man of great literary or cultural interests, he relished the interplay of ideas in personal communication. His capacity for absorbing new ideas and for visionary insight was extraordinary. He had a lively, if romantic, interest in history, while his own historical volumes remain of immense value; perhaps in some ways they are more reliable than the more celebrated literary works of Winston Churchill.

Criticisms of Lloyd George's financial improprieties also need to be viewed with caution. Episodes like Marconi arose because he was a comparatively poor man. The trafficking of honours was to provide funding for political objectives. Better to sell titles than to sell policies, he said. He was not personally corrupt. He was very casual in his attitude to political funding, and the Lloyd George fund proved to be a huge public embarrassment, but it was acquired to pursue wider objectives. Public life not personal greed led him into the darker by-ways of the relationship between politics and business. He was, however, greatly remiss in not observing the harm they did to his career and the way they diminished his public reputation. One major cause for the downfall of his government in 1922 was its reputation for corruption.

As a politician Lloyd George was clearly in the front rank among British prime ministers, with a war reputation comparable to that of Churchill and a more creative record of reform during years of peace. He was one of the great mass leaders of his day, a superb orator in harmonious command of voice and gesture, full of spontaneous eloquence, native wit, and poetic imagery that could touch an audience, yet also uniquely effective in the Commons. In key crises such as the Maurice debate, his ascendancy over the house was to save the day. Many of his speeches have a universal quality that transcends time and place. Yet he was equally effective in handling smaller groups, and especially persuasive in face-to-face negotiation. His public style was a product of the pulpit and the Victorian music-hall; the mysteries of the 'wireless' he had still to master at his death.

As an executive minister Lloyd George was highly unorthodox, preferring face-to-face contact and oral information, substantiated or not, gleaned at private meetings, at discussions over breakfast, or perhaps on the golf course, to official material derived from red boxes or blue books. The statistician Sir Joseph Davies observed that Lloyd George tended to use statistics 'from a buoyant—not to say romantic—angle' (J. Davies, *The Prime Minister's Secretariat*, 1951, 153). This could plunge him into difficulties as in the Maurice debate in May 1918, while his flouting of constitutional convention added to the unpopularity of the post-war coalition from 1919 onwards. He would say of himself that, in government as in

warfare, he preferred to avoid 'costly frontal attacks if there were a way around'. At his frequent best, though, in peace and in war, he was a minister of astonishing capacity, speed of thought, and inspirational power, notably at the Ministry of Munitions in 1915. In a succession of key ministerial and prime ministerial posts between 1905 and 1922, he could show a remarkable record of legislative and executive achievement. The American envoy Walter Hines Page in February 1917 noted Lloyd George's changeability which he attributed to his Welshness—'a Scotchman's truth is a straight line, a Welshman's is more or less of a curve'. But he added 'he is the one public man here who has an undoubted touch of genius' (Harvard U., Houghton L., W. H. Page MSS, b MS Am 1090.5 (2)).

The legacies of Lloyd George's career are many and far-reaching. He was clearly one of the makers of the modern world. In his early career he helped to ensure that Wales was regarded as a political reality: he was a forerunner of devolution. At the Treasury he launched the welfare state and was a pioneer of Britain's 'middle way' of social democracy. In wartime he showed genius at munitions, and as prime minister he offered inspirational leadership that led the nation to victory, while achieving lasting changes in spheres ranging from Palestine to the enfranchisement of women. As peacetime prime minister his legacy was far more mixed, and his reputation in his unproductive final twenty years was thus a tarnished one. He was partly responsible for many of the worst features of the Versailles peace treaty. Yet even here were notable achievements such as the Irish Free State treaty. In the inter-war years his was a powerful voice calling for new policies to combat industrial depression and, to some degree, urging a reversal of the policy of appeasement. He was always a man with major long-term objectives. Where he was most open to severe criticism was in the means by which he sought to achieve them. He was never a pliant party man, not in 1910, 1918, nor in the 1930s. His loyalties were casual, and his friendships often flags of convenience. The lure of a government of 'national unity' too often ensnared him. He was condemned for fatally dividing the Liberal Party at the end of the First World War, and the 'coupon' election was certainly a major factor in this, although historians now observe that socio-economic and religious changes were weakening Gladstone's old party at the base even before 1914. It could be added that in welfare policies during the pre-war new Liberalism or in quasi-Keynesian planning programmes in the 1920s and 1930s he galvanized an old Victorian party with new life.

Lloyd George's political style, personalized, quasi-presidential, unpredictable, autocratic, went against the grain of British party politics. Perhaps he would have done better as an American politician, another Theodore or Franklin Roosevelt. But in the light of later transformations in the British political and constitutional system, the erosion of the social structure and received authority, changing perceptions of morality, and changing inter-actions between politicians, media, and people, he seems an increasingly contemporary, classless figure. Despite massive errors of judgement, as over Versailles, Ireland, or the meeting with

Hitler, he remains a giant whose stamp is indelible on modern British history. As Churchill observed at the time of his death (*Hansard 5C*, 409.1377–80), later generations would see how much Great Britain, in peace and in war, owed to the Welsh outsider from the shoemaker's cottage in Llanystumdwy, and how he had changed their world.

KENNETH O. MORGAN

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Likenesses

H. Furniss, ink caricature, 1890–99, NPG □ B. Stone, photographs, 1902, NPG □ Spy [L. Ward], caricature, 1907, NPG; repro. in *VF* (13 Nov 1907) □ M. Beerbohm, pencil and wash caricature, 1908, NPG □ G. C. Beresford, photograph, 1908, NPG [see *illus.*] □ B. Partridge, caricatures, watercolour, 1908–45, NPG □ B. Partridge, pen-and-ink caricatures, 1908–45, NPG □ L. Fildes, oils, 1909, Law Society, London □ B. Stone, photograph, 1909, NPG □ W. Adams, bromide print, c.1913, NPG □ C. D. Williams, portrait, c.1914, National Liberal Club □ A. John, oils, 1916, Aberdeen Art Gallery □ O. Edis, photograph, 1917, NPG □ C. D. Williams, oils, 1917, NMG Wales □ A. L. Coburn, photograph, 1918, NPG □ H. A. Olivier, oils, 1919, Gov. Art Coll. □ W. Orpen, group portrait, oils, c.1919 (*A peace conference at the Quai d'Orsay*), IWM □ E. R. Pinches, bronze plaque, 1919, NMG Wales □ J. Guthrie, oils, c.1919–1921, NPG □ J. Guthrie, oils, c.1919–1921, Scot. NPG □ W. Goscombe John, bronze head, 1921, NMG Wales □ W. Stoneman, photograph, 1921, NPG □ K. Kennet, bronze bust, c.1923, IWM, NMG Wales □ J. Guthrie, group portrait, oils, c.1924–1930 (*Statesmen of World War I*), NPG; study, Scot. NPG □ print, pubd 1926 (after D. Low), NPG □ W. Orpen, oils, 1927, NPG □ P. A. de Laszlo, oils, 1931, Gov. Art Coll. □ H. Coster, photographs, 1934, NPG □ J. Lavery, oils, 1934?, Dublin Municipal Art Gallery □ J. Lavery, oils, 1935, NMG Wales □ F. Man, photograph, c.1940, NPG □ M. Rizzello, bust, 2001, Reform Club, Pall Mall, London □ G. C. Beresford, photographs, NPG □ T. Cottrell, cigarette card, NPG □ J. Epstein, plaster head (posthumous), NMG Wales □ F. C. Gould, ink caricature, NPG; repro. in *Pall Mall Gazette* □ R. Guthrie, chalk drawing, NPG □ D. Low, caricature, National Liberal Club, London □ H. Lund, lithograph, IWM □ M. Milward, bronze head, NMG Wales □ H. L. Oakley, silhouette, NPG □ H. L. Oakley, silhouette, NPG □ D. Olfson, bust, NMG Wales □ W. Orpen, group portrait, oils (*The signing of peace in Versailles, 28th June 1919*), IWM □ A. P. F. Ritchie, cigarette card, NPG □ bust, House of Commons □ cigarette card, NPG □ oils, NPG □ statue, Caernarfon Castle Square, Cardiff

Wealth at death

£141,147 12s. 6d.: administration, 23 Jan 1946, *CGPLA Eng. & Wales* [cessate] □ £139,855 8s. 2d.: probate, 31 July 1946, *CGPLA Eng. & Wales*

Kenneth O. Morgan, 'George, David Lloyd, first Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor (1863–1945)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, by permission of Oxford University Press.

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