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NORMAN ANGELL AND *THE GREAT ILLUSION*: AN EPISODE IN PRE-1914 PACIFISM¹

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ON 11 January 1910 Lord Esher, a permanent non-government member of the Committee of Imperial Defence and a close confidant of King Edward VII, dispatched these encouraging words to a relatively unknown journalist: 'Your book can be as epoch making as Seeley's *Expansion of England* or Mahan's *Sea Power*. It is sent forth at the right psychological moment, and wants to be followed up.'² The recipient of the letter, a Mr Ralph Lane (better known under the pseudonym of Norman Angell), had just begun to receive recognition for his small monograph, *Europe's Optical Illusion*, later revised and expanded into its more celebrated version, *The Great Illusion*. Esher's words were prophetic. *The Great Illusion* ran into numerous editions: it sold over two million copies from 1910 to 1913, in 1939 over half a million, and was translated into twenty-five languages.³ That it is today a forgotten best-seller; that it lies, often in several editions, on university library shelves but rarely touched by students; and that the credo of 'Norman Angellism' which it embodies has been left to the curious historical scholar to ponder: these facts are not difficult to explain. Its central thesis that modern wars are economically irrational has been misrepresented to read that they are utterly impossible; its analysis of economic issues was extremely shallow; and it failed to achieve the author's underlying purpose – the persuasion of the public that war is unprofitable for victor as well as vanquished. But the doctrine of Norman Angell cannot be lightly dismissed; for in the years immediately preceding the Great War it not only inspired the 'New Pacifism', with its streamlined approach to world affairs and a combative theory for dispelling the notion of 'the inevitability of

¹ The Angell Papers are lodged at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. I am deeply indebted to Dr E. V. Ferrill, Chairman of the Department of History of Ball State University, for having provided access to these papers and for his assistance in collecting the necessary documents.

² Lord Esher to Norman Angell, 11 Jan. 1910, Norman Angell Papers (hereafter cited as A.P.), A-14-6.

³ See P. D. Hines, 'Norman Angell: Peace Movement, 1911-1915' (unpublished D. Ed. dissertation, Ball State University, 1964), p. 18. Dr Hines must be credited with the initial sorting and cataloguing of Norman Angell's papers. His dissertation furnishes interesting data on the 'Norman Angell' movement from 1911 to 1915. As he points out, Angell was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for *The Great Illusion* and other literary contributions to the cause of international understanding. Among the distinguished personalities who signed the formal nomination were Bertrand Russell, J. M. Keynes, Harold Laski, G. P. Gooch, R. H. Tawney, John Dewey and J. A. Hobson (see p. 18).

war'; it also exercised a pervasive, if short-lived, influence upon the minds of Liberals, Radicals, Socialists and statesmen alike, deluding them with an optimistic view of the material foundations for universal harmony. This paper will attempt to place the man, his movement and his ideas in their proper historical perspective with special reference to the pre-1914 peace movement.⁴

I

Norman Angell's early life suggests the environmental elements which shaped the future radical thinker, his incurable optimism and his abounding energy in pursuing objectives. An inquisitive youth, rebellious by nature, and born into a respectable middle-class family, he almost inevitably rejected the inhibitive conventions of late-Victorian society, no less what he felt were its thread-bare conceptions of morality. He spent his formative years reading the works of Voltaire, Tom Paine, Carlyle, Spencer, Bradlaugh and Walt Whitman – to which he assigned his youthful radicalism: 'It was the result of the exposure of the world's injustices, miseries and follies' found in the writings of these great men. From Mill he acquired his penchant for logical analysis and a sceptical outlook. A few years at a French lycée and several courses at the University of Geneva completed his erratic education. Declining the opportunity of attending University, a decision he subsequently regretted, he chose, instead, to satisfy his restless energy by staking out a freer life in the American West where he served apprenticeship as farm-hand, cowboy, homesteader and newspaper reporter. Lack of funds (squandered in unfruitful ventures), and perhaps disappointment, brought him back to the Old World. Here, in Paris, he secured the post of sub-editor, then editor of the *Daily Messenger*, and was finally selected by Lord Northcliffe to manage the French edition of the *Daily Mail*.⁵ Northcliffe's choice of Angell to expand his own enterprise, a compliment paid to the young journalist's organizational talents, was mutually rewarding; for the latter it opened a world of contacts upon which he would draw when commencing the crusade for international understanding.

⁴ It is not within the scope of this article to plunge into a discussion of the diversity within the peace movement nor to essay an interpretation of the term 'pacifism'. Elie Halévy has shown the origin of the latter in *The Rule of Democracy* (London, 1961), p. 222, n. 1, but most historians who have grappled with the term admit it was often ambiguously used and extremely elusive. See A. J. A. Morris, *Radicalism against War* (London, 1972), pp. 198–9, n. 3 and L. R. Biscegalia, 'Norman Angell and the "Pacifist" Muddle', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLV, 3 (May 1972), p. 105, n. 2. Suffice it to say that contemporaries of the period preceding the First World War who identified with pacifism generally shared a common faith that peace was not only the most practical and vital interest of the people, but that it was actually attainable in their time. The rational basis for this faith grew out of the Cobdenite and liberal view of evolutionary progress to which Norman Angell gave an immense boost in *The Great Illusion*.

⁵ Norman Angell, *After All* (London, 1951), chs. 1–5. In this autobiography Angell sometimes misrepresents facts and misleads the reader as to his associations with colleagues, but there is no better source for an insight into his early life.

This wide range of experience, fairly uncommon to Edwardians, doubtless enabled Angell to mix freely in most social sets, though he always remained estranged from the labouring population. It may also have taught him the art of collaborating with associates, overlooking their shortcomings while stressing their virtues; and it certainly added to his over-confidence about altering human nature through the sheer power of reason. But, above all else, it strengthened Angell's interest in world affairs. Journalistic involvement in three countries (the United States, Great Britain and France) alerted him to the deep under-current of jingoism which arose as a groundswell amongst the people of a country whenever the national mind was confronted by problems of war and defence. This phenomenon, the so-called irrational outbursts of the masses in politics, especially in international affairs, perplexed and disturbed him 'during the whole of his life'.⁶ Indeed, it inspired his first book, *Patriotism Under Three Flags: A Plea for Rationalism in Politics*, in which he endeavoured to demonstrate that the underlying cause of such traumatic events as the Spanish-American War, the Anglo-Boer conflict and the anti-Dreyfusard hysteria was essentially the same: 'that the passions [of people] were excited most in defence of a policy which affected their welfare... little or not at all; or affected it adversely' – because they were governed by a 'crowd-mind' psychology, driven by motives of national pride and unresponsive to the process of ratiocination.⁷ Although this first effort at awakening the public to their own illusions drew but scant attention, the theme of irrationality was to run through everything he subsequently wrote or said.

Angell renewed attempts to publicize his ideas on war and irrationalism towards the end of 1908.

He had already perceived the imminence of European conflict at the time of the Tangier incident of 1905. Recurrent tensions between the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance reinforced the feeling that a military upheaval was perilously close and could only be averted by bringing the hostile parties to their senses. But it was specifically Anglo-German naval rivalry which compelled him to plunge into controversy. His new literary production (*Europe's Optical Illusion*), written at the peak of the invasion scare and denouncing fatalist notions of an impending Anglo-German war, aimed at popularizing a saner vision of the necessary interdependence of European nations.⁸ Although initially rejected by publishers because they lumped it together with current but unappealing peace propaganda, it soon achieved immeasurable success. In part this was due to Angell's talent for self-advertisement: he financed publication from his own funds and, when the book did not sell, distributed the unsold copies *gratis* to eminent statesmen. Through his association with newspaper men,

⁶ Ibid. p. 105.

⁷ Ibid. pp. 106–7; also Norman Angell, *Patriotism Under Three Flags: A Plea for Rationalism in Politics* (London, 1903), pp. 2–25.

⁸ Angell, *Europe's Optical Illusion* (London, 1909), *passim*.

Percy Parker of *Public Opinion*, Tighe Hopkins of the *Daily Chronicle* and H. W. Massingham of the *Nation*, he secured generous reviews.⁹ Other organs of the press, with which Angell had no direct links, reacted somewhat belatedly; but by the end of 1911 a wide array of newspapers, journals, reviews, both domestic and foreign, were commenting favourably, if critically, on *The Great Illusion* (1910), the expanded version of *Europe's Optical Illusion*. *The Quarterly Review*, albeit not altogether in accord with the author's analysis, ranked his book as 'one of the most damaging indictments that have yet appeared' concerning the principles governing inter-state relations; while *The Times* readily acknowledged that 'few writers have stimulated reflection upon International Politics more than Mr Norman Angell'.¹⁰ Equally symptomatic of the respectable position the young journalist had won in contemporary political thought were the admiring references to his work made in parliament, the French Chambre and by distinguished personalities at home and abroad.

From the start Angell was impelled by the belief that his book would profoundly affect the public mind. He hinted as much to H. N. Brailsford when thanking him for having treated it so seriously, and he boasted to Keir Hardie that he envisaged the day when 'thousands of debating societies' would be engaged in discussing its central thesis.¹¹ Further, to ensure a widespread audience for his views he simplified them, borrowing the style and journalistic devices of the Northcliffe press, so that, in the words of a modern historian, they seem to represent an 'economic determinism of a more primitive kind'.¹² Apparently this did not trouble him. Nor did accusations that he was reiterating what others had said before. As he told the French pacifist, Baron d'Estournelle de Constant, 'I am perhaps a mere popularizer and interpreter, but popularization and interpretation are a very necessary part of the work', and without posing as a pioneer in general peace work 'I think that no one in America or England [has] presented these precise notes of interrogation which I have attempted to do'.¹³ But Angell had also learnt from the 'King of Fleet Street' that ideas do not automatically become a powerful force in society; they must be broadcast through every channel available; people must be aroused to grapple

⁹ Percy Parker to Angell, 9 Feb. 1910: A.P., A-1-2; Tighe Hopkins to Angell, 6 Dec. 1910: A.P., C-1-18, and Angell to H. N. Brailsford, 1 Nov. 1910 (Copy): A.P., C-2-43. Brailsford, leader writer for the *Nation*, penned a glowing tribute to *The Great Illusion*, in which the originality and intellectual powers of the author were exaggerated by comparing him with Cobden.

¹⁰ *Quarterly Review*, 'The New Pacifism', Oct. 1912 and the *Times*, 15 Feb. 1912. Indicative, perhaps, of the *The Great Illusion's* growing reputation is the attention that Ernest Barker paid to it in his *Political Thought in England* (London, 1915). For foreign appraisals of *The Great Illusion* see the *New York Times*, 12 Mar. 1911, the *Boston Herald*, 21 Jan. 1911 and *La Revue*, Dec. 1913.

¹¹ Angell to H. N. Brailsford, 1 Nov. 1910 (Copy): A.P., C-2-43, and Angell to Keir Hardie, 17 Mar. 1911: A.P., A-40-23.

¹² A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers* (Panther edition, 1969), p. 94.

¹³ Angell to Baron d'Estournelle de Constant, 31 Jan. 1911 (Copy): A.P., File Box B/uncatalogued folder.

with them. Hence he assiduously set to work, cultivating relations with leading British pacifists, communicating with German parliamentarians, Austrian professors, French writers, leaders of the Second International – indeed, everyone and anyone likely to abet his campaign.¹⁴

Mass distribution of *The Great Illusion* was Angell's chief concern in 1911. Despite the favourable acclaim his thesis had won in diverse quarters, 'the millionaire pacifists did not seem disposed to occupy themselves with this objective side of peace propaganda'.¹⁵ The Independent Labour Party, on the other hand, waxed enthusiastic over the Angell doctrine. Keir Hardie, in particular, showered it with praise in a Commons' debate on armaments; in March he offered to print a half-million copies of *The Great Illusion* in a one-penny edition, and to defray any deficit from I.L.P. funds. Although Angell later claimed that Hardie had second thoughts and dissuaded him from pursuing the plan, it appears that Angell himself balked at the last moment; he feared lest his project be linked with 'any one political party and that an extreme one'.¹⁶ Yet, if he declined to work through the I.L.P., he nevertheless needed financial backing and was therefore willing to rely on Radical sources which came to his aid in the person of Baron de Forest, Radical M.P. for West Ham and heir to the Baron de Hirsch fortune. Unfortunately, here too there was a stumbling block. De Forest, besides being a social pariah in London Liberal circles, insisted on being announced as co-author of the French and German editions of the book.¹⁷ More repugnant still was the thought of formal association: it would 'create the impression that the whole thing is an artificial agitation run by Hirsch money' and thus 'increase the prejudice against which men of my opinion have to fight in any case'.¹⁸ In effect, when Angell imparted to Mrs Cobden-Sickert these reasons for avoiding de Forest, he no longer required the proffered assistance of Radicals, Socialists or social pariahs. The Carnegie Foundation, through the agency of Dr Nicholas Murray Butler, had allocated a tidy sum to undertake publication of his literature on the Continent.¹⁹

It would be wrong, however, to assume that Angell fought shy of further

¹⁴ Angell to Jean Jaurès, 12 May 1911 (Copy): A.P., A-15-75; also document of German Parliamentary Commission for Arbitration and Peace sent to Angell, 16 Mar. 1911 (Copy): A.P., C-11-66.

¹⁵ Angell to Keir Hardie, 17 Mar. 1911 (Copy): A.P., A-40-23. Similar complaints were echoed by W. T. Stead at this time: 'The one thing a rich English pacifist never does is pay, pay, pay for the cause to which he professes to be devoted. The result is that we have two or three miserable societies endeavouring to rid the world from this curse of war without having cash enough in their lockers to pay for postage stamps.' – *Review of Reviews*, Feb. 1911.

¹⁶ See Angell, *After All*, p. 170; Cf. Angell to H. W. Massingham, [?] Apr. 1911 (extract copy): A.P., A-77-12. Hardie was not terribly disappointed by Angell's withdrawal from the projected collaboration; the I.L.P. was shifting its emphasis from disarmament agitation to the questions of Land and Mines – see Keir Hardie to Angell, 20 May 1911: A.P., A-59-10.

¹⁷ See Angell to H. W. Massingham, 4 June 1911 (Copy): A.P., A-19-6.

¹⁸ Angell to Mrs Cobden-Sickert, 27 Dec. 1911 (Copy): A.P., A-20-1.

¹⁹ Nicholas Murray Butler to Angell, 15 Dec. 1911: A.P., A-19-21.

communication with left-wing groups. Quite the contrary. He frequently sought their advice, badgered them with appeals to disseminate his views, and occasionally even exploited their organizations for broadening his campaigns. Especially was this true of his relations with the I.L.P. He invited its members to participate in study groups dedicated to his work, and conducted a friendly dialogue in the *Labour Leader* with those who dissented from his analysis of the forces underlying war.²⁰ At one point he even attempted to enlist Ramsay MacDonald's assistance in securing the collaboration of Continental Socialists for publishing their views in the *Daily Mail*.²¹ Clearly, socialists of the moderate type were no bugbear for Angell, though syndicalists and advocates of class war were. Moreover, like most Liberal pacifists, he was keenly aware that the parties of the Second International furnished the most powerful, if inconsistent, opposition to war. That perhaps explains his quaint proposal to British and German Social-democrats that they send delegates *ex-officio* to sit in each other's legislative chambers and lobby for armament restraint.²² But in the summer of 1911 Angell aimed at building a vast network of organizations and societies comprising every strain of political thought, with the single purpose of spreading the gospel that 'war does not pay'. Convinced that his appeal had to be as unpartizan as possible, he avoided close connexion with the Left, i.e. public identification with the I.L.P., the Labour movement and Radical committees. So fastidious was he in maintaining this apolitical pose that he felt vexed with himself for 'having joined the National Liberal Club at the importunity of some personal friends'.²³ At the same time, he decided to keep a safe distance from the traditional peace societies, tarred as they were with the brush of Quaker moralism or secular radicalism. Of course, Angell knew that, excluding militant socialists, he could always depend upon strong support from the Left; they were the natural allies of any peace effort. In fact, Radicals like J. M. Robertson (Parliamentary Secretary for the Board of Trade), Sir John Brunner of Brunner, Mond & Co. and J. A. Hobson were of similar opinion. They too considered 'preaching to the unconverted' a far more challenging task²⁴; and if the author of *The Great Illusion* succeeded in enlisting them under his banner, then the cause of internationalism would be immensely reinforced.

The heartening reception that greeted Angell when he addressed the London Institute of Bankers in January 1912 persuaded him that men of finance could

²⁰ See No. 6 Divisional Council Minute Book of I.L.P., 10 Oct. 1912, I.L.P. Papers (London School of Economics); also *Labour Leader*, 29 Sept. and 6 Oct. 1911.

²¹ Angell to MacDonald, 8 June 1912 (Copy): A.P., R-44-4.

²² See Norman Angell Report for 1912: A.P., A-10-17; also Angell to Noel Buxton, 30 July 1912 (Copy): A.P., C-60-8. Angell claimed that Bernstein and Südekum of the German Social-Democratic party favoured this proposal.

²³ Angell to Samuel Doncaster, 15 Dec. 1911 (Copy): A.P., File Box B/uncatalogued folder.

²⁴ See Address of Norman Angell to the National Liberal Club, 31 Jan. 1912 - 'War as a Capitalistic Venture', pp. 13, 23: A.P., Miscellaneous.

be recruited for his crusade. The attention that Lord Esher and Sir Edward Grey²⁵ paid to his work suggested that both conservative statesmen and Liberal ministers might lend a helping hand. And his victory over the Navy League spokesmen in a well publicized debate at the Cambridge Union demonstrated that intellectuals were decidedly in his favour. There was unquestionably ample evidence of untapped sources which veteran peace groups had ignored. Whether, as a result, Angell believed it essential to permeate the seats of power and influence in order to effect a revolution in the public mind it is difficult to say. He was certainly no Fabian. He rejected the notion that a handful of politicians could inaugurate universal harmony, or that some 'patent' scheme such as 'World Federation, an International Navy, a Concert of Powers, manipulated by statesmen' could impose it. Only if the European peoples adopted his principles, he argued, would they become operative and through them the world be saved.²⁶ Yet, for all that, this zealous pacifist esteemed the influence and prestige attached to leading personalities, devoted the bulk of his energies in lecturing to elite circles, and delighted in conversing with bankers, because 'at bottom' his whole conception of why war was undesirable was 'a business proposition'.²⁷ The rank and file of the Labour Movement, the inarticulate and 'sentiment-ridden' masses for whom his doctrine was initially elaborated, were ignored – a paradox which never seems to have crossed his mind.²⁸

Nevertheless, the Conservative support with which Angell sought to give his movement a non-partisan character was soon forthcoming. At the beginning of 1912 Lord Esher approached him about setting up an organization to further the goals embodied in *The Great Illusion*. Sir Richard Garton, a wealthy Conservative industrialist, would finance it; Esher, Garton and Balfour had agreed to serve as trustees. The object of the new organization, subsequently named the Garton Foundation, was to promote the *impartial* study of 'International Polity', i.e. the facts which concern the relations between States and the principles upon which their conduct to each other should be based. Its programme would stress Angell's thesis that increasing internationalization in credit, industry and communications was making nations economically interdependent. Its activities were more narrowly defined: to encourage the study of these and related subjects in universities, colleges, schools and other institutions by the formation of discussion circles and the presentation of awards to prize-winning essays; to broaden interest in the ideas of 'Norman Angellism' by furnishing lecturers to interested societies in the chief centres of the country.²⁹

²⁵ See Keith Robinson, *Sir Edward Grey* (London, 1971), p. 232 for the Foreign Secretary's interest in Angell's ideas.

²⁶ Angell, 'Man v. The Statesman', *War and Peace*, Oct. 1913.

²⁷ Angell to Wareham Smith, 2 May 1911 (Copy): A.P., C-79-13.

²⁸ George Barnes was distressed by the manner in which Angell treated Labour men, when he referred to their abundance of rhetoric and cheering but lack of enlightenment. G. H. Barnes to Angell, 8 Oct. 1913: A.P., C-89-5.

²⁹ Hines, pp. 43-8.

Evidently, the proposition thrilled Angell; it corresponded well with his own ambitious schemes, and he was promised general direction of its activities.

But behind this strange union of the radical journalist and the three prestigious trustees lay fundamental differences which time alone would disclose. Balfour, for one, had serious misgivings about Angell's doctrine: it lent itself to socialist interpretation, since the co-operative principle was emphasized at the expense of competitive individualism; moreover, its predictions about economic chaos resulting from the arms race, impressive though they were, seemed inherently inimical to military preparedness.³⁰ Garton, too, had reservations – the Foundation should 'not at present have anything to do with the relaxation of armaments'.³¹ Meanwhile, Esher, even before the Foundation became operative, issued a memorandum recommending that public lectures be stopped; they were not, he insisted, receiving adequate press coverage. In any event, he preferred confining the organization's work to encouraging research in universities and study circles. Months later Angell received an indignant, if restrained, letter from Esher complaining about the 'zealous and indiscreet' actions of Mr John Hilton, secretary of the Leeds Norman Angell League, who had engaged 'in *controversy* with politicians and others'.³² It was quite apparent that Esher, as well as Balfour and Garton, had little intention of educating the democracy. They intensely distrusted it. Esher had said as much, but far more bluntly, in a letter to Sir Bernard Mallet: 'I am the last imaginable person to approve the "democracy", which I frankly detest.'³³ What the three Trustees aimed at was to turn the Foundation into a centre for academic investigation and nothing more. For Angell, a field of activity so restricted was bound to be unattractive. It undercut the very purpose of the 'Great Illusion' – spreading light in the dark corners of the 'mass mind'.

There was yet another incongruous and disturbing feature to this alliance with Balfour, Esher and Garton. Esher's whole career had been dedicated to the Empire and its defence; Balfour and Garton, on the other hand, were committed to a party which had fought bitterly against the very assumptions from which Angell's doctrine was compounded. Further, Balfour had sat on the Committee of Imperial Defence and would do so again in an advisory capacity. Not unnaturally, then, moments arose when advocacy of Angell's ideas conflicted sharply with the policies they thought expedient for national security, moments when the Trustees found themselves at cross purposes with

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 42–3.

³¹ Ibid. p. 42.

³² Esher to Angell, 8 Aug. 1912: A.P., A-57-1; also Hines, p. 49.

³³ Esher to Sir Bernard Mallet, 4 Dec. 1913, quoted in *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher* (London, 1938), III, 146. The truth is that Esher never intended the Foundation to be other than a centre for academic research. Angell's movement he regarded as having no connexion with the Radical peace party, but he apparently thought that Angell's doctrine was worthy of propagating among the 'civilized' nations, for it would 'help to draw Europe together'. See Esher to Balfour, 4 Oct. 1912 in *ibid.* pp. 111–12.

the movement they had helped father. Most conspicuously, this occurred on matters pertaining to the army and navy. Whilst Angell agreed that armament growth could not be arrested till the policy which prompted it had been dealt with satisfactorily, he obviously did not belong to the school which demanded larger and more efficient measures in naval defence. Balfour and Esher did. Balfour, in fact, had taken a hand in instigating the invasion panic of 1909. Repeatedly he harped upon the German naval threat, even to the extent of telling a German audience in 1912 that it was the principal cause of Anglo-German animosity.³⁴ Esher, if less outspoken, was just as keen on preserving an unassailable British supremacy on the high seas. In 1913 he objected to Churchill's Naval Holiday on the ground that 'if we were . . . to keep such a pact we should find ourselves in a year or two minus the predominance in sea power we now possess.' Almost simultaneously and in contradiction to Angell's position, he began urging adoption of a conscript army for what he conceived as the coming struggle in Europe.³⁵ Clearly, therefore, a deep chasm divided the radical journalist from the Trustees on issues most vital to the peace movement.

Fairly conscious of these differences, and perhaps annoyed by the backsliding of the Trustees from the original understanding, Angell anxiously informed Dr Butler of the dangers ahead. Presently, he observed, the Conservatives were in opposition and, consequently, not harassed by the permanent services, the Army and Navy groups, unlike the Liberals, 'the more natural allies of peace', who were thus made chary about showing active support for peace principles. If the roles were reversed in the near future, the Liberals would no doubt vigorously advocate his own views, causing almost certain embarrassment to the Conservatives. In such a situation:

it is quite conceivable, that an organization, the control of which is divided between the man who during a generation has been the leader of the Conservative Party, and the man whose career is identified with Imperialism, might be used for rendering 'innocuous' the peace advocacy it was ostensibly founded to promote; at some juncture when the check or defeat of a Conservative Government on some question of increased armaments might mean a striking and significant victory for the Peace Movement . . . you might find very effective steps being taken to muzzle such peace propaganda. . . Or an attempt might be made to represent the *personnel* of this section of the movement as favourable to large armaments and an aggressive policy as the shortest road to peace.³⁶

Nonetheless, since Angell determined to reach the 'unconverted', the people who 'confuse war-making with patriotism', he readily overlooked the ideo-

³⁴ See A. J. Balfour, 'Anglo-German Relations', an article written for *Nord und Süd*, in *Speculative and Political Essays* (London, 1920).

³⁵ Esher to Lord Stamfordham, 26 Oct. 1913. Esher, *op. cit.* p. 142; also see Viscount Esher, 'A Mercenary or a Conscript Army' in *War and Peace*, Nov. 1913, for Esher's views on abandoning the voluntary system of military service.

³⁶ Angell to Dr Nicholas Murray Butler, 9 Sept. 1912 (Copy): A.P., A-17-17.

logical rift as well as organizational difficulties. He went further and coaxed the Trustees to vent their reservations in public, on occasion even tempered his own position on armaments to suit their tastes; for, as Angell perceived, through the good offices of Esher, Garton and Balfour both he and the young Cambridge dons, who formed his 'kindergarten', were able to penetrate Conservative circles. Under the auspices of the Garton Foundation they managed to convene conferences, most notably one in Edinburgh, attended by spokesmen from the Navy and National Service Leagues and prominent leaders of the Conservative party. The Foundation also facilitated dialogues with representatives of the Round Table group, protectionist societies, in fact nearly every right-wing pressure organization worth mentioning.³⁷ Moreover, in the spring of 1914 the young 'Norman Angell' activists were led to believe that Esher would throw in his lot with them more completely than hitherto anticipated. As Harold Wright, chief liaison between Angell and the movement, noted: Esher's letters to the press and his Sorbonne lecture have 'committed him so fully and deeply that he cannot, as far as I can see, retract'.³⁸ Meanwhile, the money that Garton had advanced on an annual basis, though by no means covering all expenses, had helped the 'New Pacifism' to its feet. Modest as the movement appears in retrospect, it could boast, by the end of 1913, debating unions in at least ten universities, and more than forty clubs and study circles in the major cities of the United Kingdom. Cambridge was outstanding among the seats of learning, with its one-hundred-and-eighty 'Norman Angellites', but the Universities of Manchester and Oxford made respectable showings. Of the cities, Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow had thriving Norman Angell societies – the last-named, not least because it was sponsored and led by D. M. Stevenson, the Lord Provost of the city. In London, on the other hand, the 'New Pacifism' secured an alliance with the Civil Union, a body of distinguished left-wing intellectuals.³⁹

Despite this impressive growth within the span of barely two years, the 'New

³⁷ Memorandum for Mr Norman Angell from Harold Wright (undated but apparently prepared during the autumn of 1913): A.P., A-15-9. The memorandum provides material on Angell's efforts among Conservative groups, but there are also various letters in the A.P. files which indicate this.

³⁸ Harold Wright saw only the bright prospects ahead: 'His Lordship [Esher] is in a very sweet temper and has been calling L[angdon]-Davies and myself into consultation with regard to the proposed Garton extension [Angell minuted this – ' ? ']'; while Hilton was 'steadily capturing the leading Conservatives'. Harold Wright to Angell, 1 Apr. 1914: A.P., C-9-11; also see Memorandum for Mr Norman Angell; A.P., A-15-19.

³⁹ Angell to the Executive Committee of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, [?] Aug. 1913 (Copy): A.P., A-7-19; also see Memorandum for Norman Angell from Harold Wright. It must be remembered that the reports reflect only what had been achieved within a very short period of time. Furthermore, the existence of the debating unions and urban clubs does not exhaust the extent of the movement's influence, which reached into such societies as the R.U.I.I. (the Society for the Right Understanding of International Interests) and maintained contacts with many local groups concerned with peace issues.

Pacifism' was continuously hampered by the Garton Foundation's narrow and restrictive policies. The Foundation simply refused to approve the ambitious designs of the Cambridge dons who stood at the head of the movement. It declined a subsidy from the Carnegie Endowment Fund, which was earmarked for training new lecturers, as Sir Richard Garton shrank from associating with friends of the 'Old Pacifism' (predominantly Liberal) and imagined that it was merely a device for acquiring control over *his* organization. For somewhat different reasons the Trustees failed to fund the special conference held at Le Touquet, France.⁴⁰ But these setbacks did not distress Angell. He had prepared himself for such contingencies. His links with the Carnegie 'junta' were not through the Foundation but his personal contact with Dr Butler; and his relations with the Rowntrees and Sir John Brunner were inconspicuously but avidly cultivated. From these and other supplementary sources he built up a General Norman Angell Fund which made him relatively independent of the Garton Trustees.⁴¹ Yet he persisted in working through them; he genuinely believed that pacifism could never progress until it captured the political Right.

There is a certain irony in the fact that the author of *The Great Illusion* laboured under the false vision that it was possible to convert Conservatives and those who championed naval expansion, or militarist doctrines, to the 'Peace Party'. His efforts to do so proved sterile. The 'New Pacifism' had little in common with, or support from, the Right. It came from a 'spontaneous impulse of the alerter men at Cambridge' (Angell's phrase) – Harold Wright, William Searle, Geoffrey Toulmin, Dennis Robertson; and they were almost invariably of Liberal background.⁴² John Hilton, who started the Leeds Norman Angell League, was a reputed Liberal Free-Trade agitator, and B. N. Langdon-Davies, another fiery activist, was a Radical who became treasurer of the Union of Democratic Control. Even the visiting lecturers to the various university societies, if Cambridge is typical, were largely of the same political stamp.⁴³ Additional evidence of the movement's Liberal character can be found in the list of those who subscribed for shares in the private company of *War and Peace* (the literary organ of the 'New Pacifism'); in the membership of the short-lived Neutrality League which Angell set on foot at the end of July 1914; also in the Manchester,

⁴⁰ Esher to Angell, 28 Aug. 1913, quoted in Hines, pp. 61–3. The peace conference at Le Touquet, France was an inspiring affair for Angell's movement. For a list of the outstanding figures who attended see Report of Conference held at the Hermitage Hotel, Le Touquet, 19–22 Sept. 1913: A.P., A-10–18.

⁴¹ Angell informed Sir Joseph Rowntree that his contribution enabled him to give his work 'a much wider scope than if I were to depend merely on the co-operation of the Garton Foundation'. – Angell to Sir Joseph Rowntree, 4 Apr. 1913, quoted in Hines, p. 52; see also his acknowledgement of Brunner's assistance in A.P., A-15–22.

⁴² Harold Wright was the son of Charles Wright, a director of Lloyds Insurance and an old Gladstonian Liberal, and Geoffrey Toulmin, president of the Cambridge Liberal Club, was the son of Sir George Toulmin, Liberal M.P. for Bury.

⁴³ Among those who lectured to the Cambridge War and Peace Society were G. L. Dickinson, G. M. Trevelyan, Noel Buxton, Sir Thomas Barclay and Bernard Pares.

Glasgow and Leeds clubs, formed independently of the Garton Foundation, where the officers and prominent luminaries were often stalwarts of the Old Pacifism.⁴⁴ But most significant of all, those who joined Angell in anti-war dissent were to a man Radicals and Socialists, not Conservatives; the Garton Foundation, not unexpectedly, dissociated itself from him during this critical period. Although Angell later lamented the 'indiscreet' decision to consort with E. D. Morel, Charles Trevelyan, Arthur Ponsonby and Ramsay MacDonald in launching the Union of Democratic Control, thereby abandoning his non-party stance, one wonders what more he could have accomplished by clinging to an arid *neutrality*. His immediate, instinctive reaction to the 1914 explosion was far more genuine than his later assessment of how he should have acted. Of course, the above-party approach was an illusion, which merely confused issues for the peace movement. Pacifism could never be politically unaligned; it was very much part of the ideological baggage of late nineteenth-century Liberalism.

With the illusion of apoliticism Angell compounded a more fatal error, that of social bias. His 'broad' appeal was largely confined to a business and professional audience or to literary celebrities and the young intelligentsia in the universities. His organizations – the leagues, the debating clubs, the study circles, even the affiliated society for the Right Understanding of International Interests (the '*enfant terrible*' of the movement) – were composed essentially of the same elements, with the key roles played by the 'hard-boiled' men of wealth: Sir Frederick Huth Jackson, Governor of the Bank of England, Sir Robert Hadfield, chief ironfounder for the city of Sheffield, Henry Bell of Lloyds, etc. And to press forward his publicity campaign he regularly solicited backing from principal figures in the provincial chambers of commerce or from benevolent captains of industry.⁴⁵ The working man, on the other hand, with rare exceptions, did not fill the ranks of 'Norman Angellism'. To be sure, Angell maintained the ambivalent flirtation with social democracy, but that was because he was again dealing with an educated leadership, not the sphinx-like labouring masses.⁴⁶ For whatever reasons he disregarded them

⁴⁴ See Report marked 'Confidential' in A.P., A-36-2; it provides the names of subscribers for shares in the 'War and Peace' company. The list of the signatories to the manifesto of the Neutrality League can be found in the *Manchester Guardian*, 3 Aug. 1914. Of the 'Old Pacifists' who were active in Leeds, Manchester and Glasgow one might mention J. W. Graham, Quaker Principal of Dalton Hall, Sir John and Lady Barlow of Stockport, D. M. Stevenson, Lord Provost of Glasgow, Lord Airedale (formerly Sir James Kitson) and T. E. Harvey, a Quaker member of parliament.

⁴⁵ In a letter to the Executive Committee of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Angell pointed out that in Manchester it was a body of local industrialists, including the Lord Mayor of the city, and chief members of the Chamber of Commerce, who were gathering funds for his movement and co-operating in every possible way. See Angell to the Executive Committee of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace [?] Aug. 1913 (Copy): A.P., A-7-19.

⁴⁶ The only distinguished member of the 'New Pacifism' who issued from the working classes was John Hilton. As for working-class 'Angell' societies, one such group did spring up at Ilford.

(class prejudice, inability to appreciate their mental powers, abhorrence of their unrefined culture), it was regrettable: it meant jettisoning the very purpose of his philosophy – converting the mass mind to enlightened self-interest. Though warned by a few perceptive ‘pacifists’ that the political reformation advocated in his own teachings would never take effect unless he reached out to the numerous strata of the population earning less than £200 a year, he remained unimpressed.⁴⁷ Perhaps he was unequal to the task, for the social barriers which separated class from class in pre-war England, and which gave the traditional ‘Peace Party’ difficulty in adjusting its middle-class paternalistic spirit to the workers’, were often insurmountable.

II

Angell’s meteoric rise to fame in the years immediately preceding the First World War did not occur simply within the realm of organization nor, for that matter, in cleverly devised techniques for diffusing propaganda. It was in fact his thesis in *The Great Illusion*, with its magnetic effect upon a receptive and ever-widening audience, that left an imprint upon history. Unsurprisingly, the very people – Radicals, Quakers and moderate Socialists – that Angell kept at arm’s length while moulding the movement he considered ‘peculiarly his own’ were the first to echo the ideas in it, for they too had drawn their principles from the same quarry of Liberal intellectualism; perhaps even inevitably, since the ‘Old Pacifism’, foundering from lack of anything better than an unshakeable faith in moral righteousness, and discordant radical shibboleths, was in need of a revitalized gospel to attract public notice. Yet they were also the ones most gulled by the implications which seemed to issue from the thesis, thus creating, as it were, the ‘pacifist illusion’.⁴⁸

The core of Angell’s analysis of international relations was economic: it rested on a materialist conception of the evolution of human society, crudely put, but not deterministic (as A. J. P. Taylor has argued); and it assigned to human intellect and ‘free volition’ a decisive role in the evolutionary process. For Angell, as for Cobden, Spencer and a host of other political philosophers, the transition to highly developed commercial societies, accompanied by an emerging world market and the growing division of labour on a universal scale,

⁴⁷ See Miss M. Talmadge’s letter to *War and Peace*, Mar. 1914. Lord Welby also emphasized the need to win the workers to the peace movement when Angell addressed the National Liberal Club on 31 Jan. 1912 and so did Lady Barlow when she told an audience of the Peace Society of the earnest and idealistic response of railwaymen at Crewe to her lecture on world amity (*Herald of Peace*, 2 June 1913). Mr A. J. A. Morris has made some relevant comments on the relations between middle-class pacifism and the workers in ‘The English Radicals’ Campaign for Disarmament and the Hague Conference of 1907’, *Journal of Modern History*, XLIII, 3 (Sept. 1971), p. 378, n. 29.

⁴⁸ J. A. Hobson describes this ‘illusion’ in *Democracy After the War* (London, 1917), p. 88.

portended a constant diminution in the use of force to settle inter-State disputes. Unlike Cobden or Spencer, he did not confine himself to peaceful attitudes shaped by commercial pursuits or the harmful effects that war had upon the national economy; he chiefly stressed the futility of force in attempting to realize material gain. Nations, he admitted, might go to war, but they could derive little advantage from defeating a supposed enemy. This applied whether one spoke of indemnities, confiscation, trade or colonial acquisitions. Whatever a victorious Power did in the way of extorting wealth, the net results would be counter-productive. Indemnities could only be exacted with great difficulty and at great expense if the vanquished nation refused payment; even if it consented voluntarily, the payment would necessarily produce monetary inflation in the economy of the victor and/or intenser industrial competition from the side of its former foe, especially if indemnification took the form of transferring commodities.⁴⁹ On the other hand, the trade of a rival Power could not be destroyed without limiting one's own markets. Nor could financial assets be seized, for they would become absolutely worthless without the security attached to them; much worse, confiscation tended to undermine international credit and financial confidence.⁵⁰ As for colonies, it mattered not who retained them; they were in reality independent countries giving or withholding their wealth as they saw fit.⁵¹ In general, then, Angell drew the conclusion that the exercise of force in international relations was bound to render a negative balance sheet for the world as well as for the States involved in a struggle; the increasing interdependence of national economies had established the kind of world community which cut across political boundaries; what benefited one, benefited others; what impaired the economic wellbeing of one, harmed the economic future of all. The novelty, if there was that, in this conception of loss and gain was not that it linked national self-interest with international welfare, but that it looked upon the interrelationship from a presumably disinterested European standpoint.

For yet another reason Angell cautioned against military confrontations: they were more than likely to have a disastrous impact on international credit – what he described as the most sensitive and reliable indicator of international stability. Should credit collapse because of a European conflict, then business activity would grind to a halt, at best stagnate; the financial dislocation, exacerbated by mobilizing masses of men for the armed forces, would so disrupt vital functions that ‘civilised life [would be brought] to a stop’ and the population faced with starvation.⁵² The social consequences were unpredictable, but Angell

⁴⁹ Angell, *The Great Illusion* (London, 1912), pp. 80–96; also Angell to P. Hughes, 29 Feb. 1912 (Copy): A.P., File Box B/uncatalogued folder.

⁵⁰ Ibid. pp. 28, 46–61 and 64–6; also Angell, *Europe's Optical Illusion* (London, 1909), pp. 53–6.

⁵¹ Angell is, of course, thinking primarily of the ‘white’ Colonies, but he believed that Crown Colonies tended to acquire the practical rights of self-governing colonies. Nevertheless, his position on this point is obviously simplistic. See Angell, *The Great Illusion*, ch. vii, pp. 107–9.

⁵² See Address delivered to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, ‘Results of Pacifist Effort’ [1913]: A.P., A-61–10.

probably thought they could be glimpsed from the dire effects the armament rivalry was having upon countries:

In every European country the present problems of the Day, Social and Industrial Unrest, etc. are worsened by the increasing military burdens and claims that they make in money, time, political preoccupation. . . . If military expenditure . . . is not attacked scientifically, revolutionary and anti-national solutions like that of Hervé in France and the extreme socialists in Germany will gain more and more favour.⁵³

The fear of social revolution was not new, but it had deepened because labour unrest and syndicalism appeared to be correlated with the terrible incubus of military expenditure. Statesmen as diverse as Lansdowne, Rosebery, Grey and Morley dreaded that war might be the final stage of 'rattling into barbarism'. In March 1911, Grey, reluctant to admit that war was possible, nevertheless thought that the armament race could of itself bring 'internal revolution, by the revolt of the masses of men against taxation'.⁵⁴ Three years hence, with war clouds hanging over Europe, he told the Austrian Ambassador, Mensdorff, that an armed conflict 'would be accompanied or followed by a complete collapse of European credit and industry [thus heralding] a state of things worse than that of 1848'. Morley said much the same to his colleagues a few days later; so did the ex-Prime Minister of Russia, Kokovstov, in a private conversation with Prince von Bülow in Rome.⁵⁵ Evidently this side of Angell's doctrine had left its mark, though, more precisely, it reflected the terrors then haunting the 'upper crust' of a civilization which had escaped total war for almost a century.

Angell's analysis of the ills of armed conflict and the futility of military victories did not go unchallenged. It drew sharp, if unhostile, criticism from diverse quarters: partly because his analogies (especially the claim that small nations without armies have been relatively more prosperous than great Powers) were worthless illustrations of the central thesis; partly because explanations were based on inaccurate data or discounted relevant factors; and more generally because the evidence adduced bore little relation to the conclusions reached.⁵⁶ Lord Sydenham, reviewing his work, was perplexed by its all-pervading elusiveness; the seemingly fallacious statement in one chapter was often qualified in another, limiting its application to 'the present generation or to conditions which do not yet exist'. Still, it was contested primarily on other grounds: what the *Quarterly Review* discerned as the 'error of disengaging the moral from the economic aspects of war, with the economic looming so large as to distort his

⁵³ Letter and Syllabus of Angell to Maurice Brett, 22 June 1912, quoted in Hines, p. 83.

⁵⁴ Grey in H. of C., 13 Mar. 1911, 5 Parl. Deb., 22, c. 1985.

⁵⁵ Elie Halévy, *History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century* (6 vols., 1961 ed.), vi, p. 665, n.; also L. C. E. Turner, *Origins of the First World War* (Norton ed., 1970), p. 115.

⁵⁶ For a friendly criticism of Angell's views on indemnity and the prosperity of small nations because they are unarmed, see H. H. O'Farrell to Angell, 11 May 1912: A.P., File Box B/uncatalogued folder.

vision'.⁵⁷ This indeed proved most irritating to staunch devotees of the 'Old Pacifism' who sensed neglect of ethical idealism. E. G. Smith, secretary of the Rationalist Peace Society, struck the keynote of protest when he upbraided Angell for promoting a 'sordid policy'. Smith complained that the 'New Pacifism' in desiring 'to be thought well of by emperors, bankers and journalists . . . will forget the faith and moral enthusiasm which have made the Peace Movement a live thing, and the fire will die down . . . until it becomes a cold, dead body, magnificently buried in the Carnegie Mausoleum of the Hague'. He was disgusted by the fact that the 'God of Peace' was now acclaimed a man of business; the danger lay in corrupting the movement by turning it into a financial proposition, in eroding its fundamentalism by dwelling on the practical approach to problems.⁵⁸ In a sense the criticism was apropos: the more pacifists, whether they belonged to religious bodies or groups expounding secular ethics, tackled issues with a practical-minded disinterestedness, the less likely were they to take an unflinching stand in defence of their cause. The Great War demonstrated this tendency with unmistakable forcefulness, first in the case of the Radicals who did not attach themselves to the Union of Democratic Control and later in that of the Conscientious Objectors who chose alternative service.

By no means, however, was Angell distressed by such verbal assaults from the 'Old Pacifists'. He deeply appreciated their long-standing service, no less their moral fervour which resembled his own fanatic obsession with 'pure reason'.⁵⁹ But, equally, he was intent on distinguishing his school of thought from that which relied exclusively upon intuition, sentiment and conscience – 'uncertain guides in leading men along the right path'. As he saw it, the Tolstoyian ideal might suffice for a 'little band of saints nursing their creed in monastic seclusion'; it could never generate a revolution in popular thought. What was needed, he declared, 'when discussing war in a society like ours' was the common sanction – 'the Least Common Denominator' – that would bind together all who willingly accepted a rational attitude towards international relations. Expressed in Benthamite terms, this meant securing the conditions for the 'general well-being' of the community, an aim which he was confident the peoples of the Western world shared, however much they may 'differ on other things'. It further implied that the pacifist would have to show that life was not a predatory game of 'beggar my neighbour', but an evolutionary process in which the 'most efficient methods of human co-operation' were progressively

⁵⁷ Lord Sydenham, 'The Foundations of International Polity', *War and Peace*, Apr. 1914; also *Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1912.

⁵⁸ E. G. Smith, 'Our Sordid Policy: Lest We Forget', *War and Peace*, Nov. 1913.

⁵⁹ Angell even offered to write a textbook for the Quakers (see Joseph Rowntree to Angell, 28 Apr. 1913: A.P., C-60-1). He was 'filled all through with his creed' as they were with the Inner Light (see Lady Courtney's Diaries, 5 July 1912, Courtney Collection in the London School of Economics).

identifying 'the individual interest with the common welfare'.⁶⁰ Here was a plea for a rational, constructive and all-embracing pacifism; and though it contained nothing more than a refurbished statement of traditional liberal aspirations, it evoked warm response from peace veterans. G. M. Trevelyan's reaction typified that of many. He had, he admitted, while reading Tolstoy's *Bethink Yourselves*, undergone a spiritual conversion which 'moved me nearly to the point of hysteria'; but the conversion, because it was only emotional, had 'passed away'; Angell's ideas, by contrast, had 'given him something he would always have in mind'.⁶¹ Even the die-hard moralists, unhappy that Angell undervalued ethical idealism, grudgingly agreed that his analysis had added a new dimension to pacifist propaganda.⁶² In general, peace advocates, while not always in accord with Angell's *dicta*, refrained from dissenting too violently; their movement, they felt, should eschew disunity and accommodate all strands of ironic conviction. They were, moreover, bewitched by the 'New Pacifism's' crusading quality and probably saw it assuming an *avant-garde* role.⁶³

That 'Norman Angellism' won unrivalled prominence among circles agitating for international understanding was not incidental. It emerged just after the peace movement entered one of its periodic troughs. Although by 1910 the naval scare had passed its peak and the crises in the Balkans and Morocco had subsided, pacifist sentiment had been a chief victim of the state of nervous hysteria they had engendered. There were obvious defections from the anti-armament coalition in and out of parliament after the collapse of the Radical attack on the 1909 naval estimates. Some outstanding figures like W. T. Stead became big-navy supporters; others, if not following Frederic Harrison in his vendetta with Germany, lost sympathy with the idea of Anglo-German rapprochement. The less politically versatile simply threw in their lot with the government on policies of defence and foreign affairs, or elected to keep silent.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Angell, 'Are We Sordid?', *War and Peace*, Dec. 1913. Angell in his controversy with the exclusively 'moral' pacifists ceaselessly hammered home the idea that 'self-interest and morality were not at variance'. See Angell to Edwin Mead, 18 Apr. 1913 (Copy): A.P., A-14-17.

⁶¹ G. M. Trevelyan, 'Norman Angell's New Book', *War and Peace*, Mar. 1914.

⁶² Evans Darby, *The Claim of the New Pacifism* (London, 1913), p. 5. Darby, secretary of the Peace Society, was a vehement critic of the 'New Pacifism', yet he did not belittle its contribution. Interestingly enough, the Quakers were more in tune with Angell's approach; they argued that his intellectualism complemented the moral enthusiasm of the older organizations. See the letter of J. W. Graham in *War and Peace*, Dec. 1913.

⁶³ For a prominent Anglican churchman's views on the relevance of 'Norman Angellism' see the address of the Lord Bishop of Oxford at the Third Annual Meeting of the Church of England Peace League, held in Church House, Westminster, 29 January 1914. It appeared in pamphlet form as *War and Christianity*.

⁶⁴ See H. Weinroth, 'Left-wing Opposition to Naval Armaments in Britain before 1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vi, 4 (1971); also A. J. A. Morris in *Radicalism against War*, p. 166 for the feeble reaction of the Reduction of Armaments Committee to the naval estimates of 1910. Additional proof of the weakening of the pacifist position can be found in the *Herald of Peace* of Apr. and June 1909, which alludes to tried and tempered spokesmen for Anglo-German

With the signing of the Anglo-American arbitration treaty (never ratified by the Senate) in the spring of 1911, hopes were stimulated for improved international relations, but merely hopes; nobody believed it signified more.⁶⁵ Then in the summer of that year the Agadir crisis shattered false dreams about governments clearing the way for universal harmony through diplomatic channels. Agadir also raised the spectre of imperialist rivalry becoming the source of a European holocaust. In this atmosphere Angell's doctrine gained currency; it dealt with the underlying errors of diplomacy, as well as pointing up the economic factor.

It would be difficult to contend that the revised sections of *The Great Illusion* (1912 edition) relating to the Agadir imbroglio are seminal. The diagnosis of the statesman's fallacy, i.e. his obsession with balance of power, diverged little from orthodox Radical views, and the expostulations against the 'misconception' that colonial aggrandisement enhances national wealth reiterated what had long been heard from the anti-colonial school. But the explanation why European war had been averted struck an unfamiliar note. Leaning upon his general theorem of economic interdependence, Angell elaborated the significance of the tight, interlocking relationship of world finance upon which every other section of the economy depended: 'In no department of human activity is internationalisation so complete as in finance'; disturbances in a single financial capital involve similar disturbances elsewhere; the American financial crisis (1907) had illustrated this 'truth', as the Bank of England, not from any altruistic motives, had rushed to Wall Street's assistance by drawing 'in the gold required for New York from seventeen other countries'. Surely, he reasoned, the temperamentally cosmopolitan banker would not give a warrant for military aggression; he knows that 'armies and conquests . . . serve no ends of his and may very well defeat him'.⁶⁶ The Agadir crisis had not exploded into a military conflagration, because restraint had been placed on the quarrelling nations by international finance. There had been a sharp and sudden decline in the German bourse as French banks removed their money; the German bankers, frightened by this move, immediately pressed their government to lessen its demands upon the Quay d'Orsay and so ease European tension.⁶⁷

amity who now expressed a more critical attitude towards Germany and justified naval expansion. Stead's views were heterodoxical. His 'two-keels-to-one' slogan was not intended to be an attack upon Germany, and indeed during the Agadir crisis he vented his wrath not on the Germans but the Anglo-French entente.

⁶⁵ *Concord*, Mar. 1911. This peace organ detected a danger that the Anglo-American arbitration treaty would be transformed into an alliance. The same fears were voiced by Angell and Keir Hardie.

⁶⁶ Angell, *The Great Illusion*, pp. 50 and 54; also *Europe's Optical Illusion*, p. 118. Angell's insights were not his own but those of Hartley Withers in *The Meaning of Money*.

⁶⁷ Angell, *The Great Illusion*, pp. 151-2. Angell noted that the 'same order of economic and commercial considerations played a predominant though not so conspicuous role in German policy in 1905' (p. 152).

Though not alone in observing this extraordinary reaction of European finance, Angell's forecast of it before the event enhanced his public stature. Leading Radicals and pacifist organs turned to him as an authority on the subject.⁶⁸ In January 1912, he was invited to lecture at the National Liberal Club, where he endeavoured to demonstrate that capitalism and the Stock Exchange were allied with peace. A few attending this session did dispute his assumption by suggesting that war might be beneficial at times to the capitalist system, and if not to the system then to the governing classes – the office holders, the imperialists and the arms contractors – whose money was invested in imperial aggrandisement. But the majority assented to the opinion of the chairman, that Angell had made it abundantly evident that war was 'becoming more and more dangerous to capital all round'.⁶⁹ In time, this aspect of Angell's doctrine secured a powerful grip on the Radical mind. J. A. Hobson, for example, twisted his own view of imperialism to fit the concept of the pacific interdependence of capital, while Brailsford, despite deep concern over national competition for colonial preserves, wrote that Europe would not experience a major conflict, '*only the dry rot of war*'.⁷⁰ Even Lloyd George seems to have borrowed momentarily Angell's thesis. He told a packed crowd at the Mansion House in London that two years before:

the financial interests of the Continent stopped war . . . and it is only these great interests that will be able effectively to intervene in order to arrest this terrible growth of armaments. . . . There is one advantage they have got. Finance is international.⁷¹

For those who took issue with this facile optimism, the outburst of Balkan nationalism in 1912 came as welcome evidence against the 'bloodless pacifism' which occupied itself with theories about economic orderliness and the approaching millennium. Churchill, who led the attack upon the pacifist school, glorified martial virtues and passionately vindicated the use of force to rid the Balkans of the 'barbarous' Turk. The war, he asserted, had 'broken out in spite of all the rulers and diplomats could do to prevent it'; it had arisen notwithstanding the subtle and steadfast opposition of the monied classes; Englishmen should, therefore, understand that naval preparations could not be neglected.⁷² If Angell disliked the First Lord's belligerent tone, he did not disavow force as a means of

⁶⁸ See Angell to Noel Buxton, 10 Nov. 1911 (Copy): A.P., File Box B/uncatalogued folder; and Angell to J. A. Hobson, 15 Sept. 1911 (Copy): A.P., R-44-5.

⁶⁹ See 'War as a Capitalistic Venture', Angell's Address to the National Liberal Club on 31 Jan. 1912: A.P., Miscellaneous.

⁷⁰ Brailsford, 'The Public and the WarTraders', *Nation*, 4 July 1914.

⁷¹ *The Times*, 12 July 1913. Lloyd George made no reference to Angell in his speech. It is therefore quite likely that he was not directly influenced by Angell, but merely stating a proposition that had gained currency at the time.

⁷² See report of Mr Churchill's speech at Sheffield, *Manchester Guardian*, 31 Oct. 1912; Cf. Archibald Hurd's article in the *Fortnightly Review*, Dec. 1912.

liberating the Balkan communities, nor did most other pacifists.⁷³ The Gladstonian heritage bulked large in determining their attitude; it was indeed a common meeting ground between Radical imperialist and Radical peace advocate. But Angell's rationale for sanctioning war was poles apart from that of Churchill. In a brief exposition of the Balkan struggles he held that they were an exceptional case that proved the rule: the Ottoman Empire was not yet assimilated into the global area where commercial and financial interdependence had become paramount; it was a society outside the 'pale of civilisation', governed by a militarist code of ethics and recognizing only laws of force through which it had subjugated its Christian communities. To the *Manchester Guardian* he clarified his seemingly contradictory stand on war: 'In this war I am with the Christian populations because it is the Turks who represent the idea of military conquest – I am in favour of defence because I am not in favour of aggression.' Had the European Powers, he added, enforced the Macedonian treaties, they could have cleared up the anomaly of Turkish rule in Europe almost a century ago. That they failed to do so stemmed from their conventional but perverse belief in the 'necessary economic rivalry of nations' which made concerted action impossible.⁷⁴

By qualifying his thesis with respect to the Balkans, and by centring the blame for war on the shoulders of the great Powers, Angell retained its inner consistency. But inadvertently he had opened a Pandora's box for the peace movement. The rhetorical play on the words aggression and defence could not conceal their double-edged nature. Who was to give authoritative judgement whether an action was aggressive or defensive; whether a nation was liberating itself or merely destroying another, if not both at the same time? This problem had plagued pacifists in the past; it would do so again in 1914 when Belgium was invaded. Many who unequivocally supported Balkan nationalism in 1912, without fully comprehending the underlying ramifications (the Austro-Russian feud), responded equally to the call to arms against Prussian militarism; no great intellectual feat was needed to move them from one position to the next once they had shifted ground from their internationalist outlook. Those who did not, Angell included, still believed that total war could have been avoided, but for the bungling acts of diplomacy – if not for the fatal misconceptions of statesmen.⁷⁵

The brief respite in Balkan hostilities during the early part of 1913 served up new issues for the peace movement, but in paradoxical fashion. Redrawing the Ottoman Empire's boundaries had become the starting point for momentary

⁷³ Angell, *Peace Theories and the Balkan Wars* (London, 1912), passim; also interview with *Manchester Guardian*, 18 Oct. 1912. Though most pacifists were Gladstonians on the Balkan question and had few qualms about forcibly removing the Turks from Europe, they would have preferred less violent means.

⁷⁴ Angell, *Manchester Guardian*, loc. cit. and *Peace Theories and the Balkan Wars*, pp. 25, 33–6.

⁷⁵ Pacifists, and peace spokesmen, condemned the War of 1914 and British intervention in it for a variety of reasons; but, above all else, they ascribed its outbreak to a mischievous conception of diplomacy which failed or refused to grasp the underlying meaning of Angell's theories.

Anglo-German co-operation, arousing hopes for a revived European Concert while seemingly controverting the pessimistic prophecies that the break-up of Turkey would lead to major conflict. Those, like Angell, whose vision was blinkered by this development, took it as further confirmation of the integrated nature of the civilised world.⁷⁶ Yet the hostilities in South-east Europe were also the signal for an intensified arms race, what men of pacific persuasion decried as the 'Insanity of Europe'.⁷⁷ Not surprisingly, then, Liebknecht's startling revelation of the Krupp munitions scandal, broadcast in the Reichstag and the world press, caused more than indistinct rumblings in pacifist ranks.⁷⁸ In Britain, groups as widely apart as the Church of England Peace League, the National Liberal Federation and the I.L.P. protested against the 'sinister plots' of armament manufacturers to whip up war scares. To the *Manchester Guardian*, as to other kindred spirits, the case of the Krupp munitions scandal appeared to contradict the Angell-Cobden thesis, that international trade is bound up with peace and that as it extends 'war becomes absurd', because one nation 'cannot hurt another without hurting itself'. The paradox was 'wilder still' in the light of the mounting international traffic in 'instruments of destruction'.⁷⁹ Left-wing socialists, however, were less distracted. They had never been able to digest the whole of Angell's doctrine in so far as they subscribed to the nostrums spread by German Social-Democracy. The armament menace helped to expose their reservations. What Angell had forgotten, they claimed, was that national interests 'are not a harmonious whole'; powerful monied circles flourish on war scares and 'unload their charge at public risk'; even if individuals among them subscribe to the 'Great Illusion' thesis, collectively their actions contradict it. Angell, charged J. T. Walton Newbold (an I.L.P. Quaker), was pandering to the bankers instead of telling them they were engineering scares 'to secure more dividends'.⁸⁰

This blistering critique of 'Norman Angellism' sprang from an inherent distrust of the plea for a classless pacifism. The left-wing firebrands of the I.L.P., though not their leaders, equated war with capitalism, dismissed the idea that all classes shared equal responsibility for aggressive national policy and rejected the peace-making role Angell entrusted to financiers. They insisted that world

⁷⁶ See Angell's address to the Inter-parliamentary Union, 'The Pacifist Effort', p. 3: A.P., A-61-10.

⁷⁷ *Nation*, 8 Mar. 1913.

⁷⁸ For Liebknecht's revelations see Karl Liebknecht, 'Die Vaterlandslosigkeit des Kapitals' (Rede im Reichstag am 18 Apr. 1913), *Ausgewählte Reden, Briefe und Aufsätze* (Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1952), p. 192. Liebknecht demonstrated how Krupp's agents had obtained mendacious articles in the French press purporting to France's intended increase in armaments so that Germany might be launched on a similar course. Radical reaction to the revelations was highlighted in a series of articles in the *Daily News*, 20 to 28 May 1913; also in *Concord*, June 1913.

⁷⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 22 Apr. 1913.

⁸⁰ J. T. Walton Newbold, 'How Monopolies Control the Press and Foreign Policy', *Labour Leader*, 11 Sept. 1913. See also George Aitken's article, 'Great Illusion or the Economics of War' in *Forward*, 8 Mar. 1913 and Tom Johnston's 'The Right to Work', *Forward*, 17 Feb. 1913.

brotherhood was unattainable without first fundamentally altering the economic system. But, for all that, their approach in practical terms did not differ radically from his. If they denounced the munitions profiteers and high finance for instigating international tension, Angell recognized the substance of their denunciation, but limited the profiteers to a narrow anti-social category; if they called for a general strike to counter war, he granted the usefulness of a partial strike; if they spoke of militarism grinding down the democracy, he admitted as much.⁸¹ What is more, both Angell and these left-wing socialists staked their faith in peace on an educated democratic opinion, and both adhered to the current fiction that because the credit system was internationalized the banking houses and other capitalist institutions would do their utmost to avert anything so foolish as a total war. As Walton Newbold put it, 'Capitalism will have *peace* and profits from armaments'.⁸² There was thus a near-symbiotic relationship between Angell and the non-Marxist Left: he supplied them with a credo that lessened their fears about a possible Armageddon, and they in turn compelled him to adopt a more positive approach to socialist attitudes on war armaments and militarism.

That Socialists, as well as Liberals and Radicals, adhered to the cardinal tenet in Angell's doctrine shows there was a remarkable degree of ideological, if not organizational, unity in the peace movement. The politically-oriented factions might have had their squabbles stemming from mutual antagonisms over domestic policies, but their disagreements on the peace question were less than marginal. Equally, the distinctions between the 'moralists' and the 'economic rationalists' were papered over by the overall consensus that their divergent philosophies were in fact complementary. If, in time, the 'moralists' were to grow into absolute war-resisters while the 'economic rationalists' were to become practical-minded internationalists, they were not *now* constrained to look for such divisions; the problem of 'pure' as opposed to 'conditional' pacifism was premature before the First World War.⁸³ Hence it is not only possible but fitting to speak of a common peace front in the period after Agadir. In this context Angell found himself, despite his apolitical pose, collaborating more and more with Radicals,

⁸¹ See W. C. Anderson, 'War and Workers', *Labour Leader*, 8 Jan. 1914; also 'Pacifists on War Path' in *Justice*, 1 Jan. 1914 and Angell, 'Capitalism and War', *Labour Leader*, 6 Oct. 1911. Of course, the real difference between Angell and the left-wing socialists was that while Angell refused to define his armament profiteers, the latter, as evidenced by Walton Newbold's series of articles to the *Labour Leader* in 1913, saw them as intricately connected with capitalist industry, finance and even the Liberal party.

⁸² J. T. Walton Newbold, 'Why We Fight War Trusts', *Labour Leader*, 4 Dec. 1913. Newbold, despite his fulminations against 'Angellism', was in 1914 'most sceptical of the great financial interests in the "City" allowing the Government to go to war against Germany and Austria-Hungary'. See the auto-biographical notes of J. T. Walton Newbold, *The Walton Newbold Papers*, Manchester University.

⁸³ For a perceptive and illuminating analysis of the split which occurred in the peace movement during the 1930s, see L. R. Biscegalia, *op. cit.*

Socialists and Nonconformists (chiefly Quakers) on the burning issues which faced the peace movement.⁸⁴ When the threat of compulsory military service loomed afresh, his 'New Pacifist' organ joined forces with those who battled against the conscriptionist pressure groups. During the drive for rapprochement with Germany in 1913 he toured the German universities with the intention of establishing a movement parallel to that which had arisen among British students; Radical politicians, sensing the moment opportune for improved relations between the two countries, also strengthened ties with German colleagues in an effort to concert actions in favour of international amity. Even on the armament question, over which Angell had long equivocated, he aligned himself with the 'reductionist' party (the small-navy men) and lambasted Churchill's spurious Naval-Holiday scheme.⁸⁵ The clear-cut logic of his outlook which decreed armament escalation and conscription to be utter folly, drove him increasingly into the arms of his natural allies on the Left. Conversely, they took intellectual refuge in the doctrine of the 'Great Illusion'; it provided the perfect explanation for what every pacifist felt were the false axioms behind the muddled and secret policies which dominated international relations.

It is tempting to ask – Why then did pacifism collapse so completely on the eve of the Great War, not only in terms of anti-war effort and organized protest, but more significantly with regard to ideological resistance? A clue may be gathered from Angell's summary of reactions during the diplomatic turmoil of July 1914:

A move was made on the anti-war side to resist propaganda with an equal 'kick and punch'; but immediately considerations of 'not being controversial', 'not embarrassing the Government', 'not alienating X, Y, and Z' began to paralyze . . . the clear downright expression of opinion hostile to intervention. *There seemed to be no realization on the peace side that the danger was desperate*, that we were on the edge of a volcano. There was thus created a situation in which all the psychological momentum which goes for so much in these things was on the side of war.⁸⁶

Countless statements, impressions and recollections corroborate this sense of inertia which pervaded peace activists and supporters alike. Unfortunately, the description, typical of its kind, omits a serious dimension. It overlooks the character of the peace movement, built by and large on the optimistic view of the steady internationalization of human society: that nations would not go to war once they had cast off the 'moth-eaten' illusions of the past; that their economic ties were too complex and intricately interwoven and world finance

⁸⁴ For a man who wished to keep aloof from internal political associations it is certainly odd that Angell offered E. D. Morel political assistance in his constituency of Birkenhead, Angell to Morel, 3 Feb. 1914 (Copy): A.P., A-II-3.

⁸⁵ Angell, 'The Clever Mr Churchill', *War and Peace*, Nov. 1911. Evidence of increased activity among Radical politicians to establish closer links with Germans who were equally concerned about Anglo-German friendship can be found in the papers of Sir Charles Trevelyan.

⁸⁶ Angell, 'The Unsound Foundations', an article written for the *Nation*, 8 Aug. 1914 – found in typescript in A.P., A-58-20 (my italics).

too delicately balanced for civilization to hurl itself into an all-consuming conflict. It was highly irrational, so the pacifists presumed; and if for them, then equally for others. That is why they could not see that 'the danger was desperate' nor that hostilities would be prolonged beyond the first Christmas. For this, Angell was partly responsible; he had psychologically disarmed the peace movement with his 'magic' formulae. The same may be said, if more hypothetically, about the 'democracy' for whom *The Great Illusion* was originally written. Had they, and probably some did, accepted its credo, they could not have been roused to resist the war effectively; for, given the premiss that it was merely necessary to shed light on the true nature of international developments to correct one's ideas, then they too must have responded passively to 4 August 1914.⁸⁷

To be sure, at bottom, the nexus of sentiments, values and conceptions harboured by the peace movement had developed independently of Angell's influence. They mirrored certain socio-political and economic realities – more precisely, the realities of a world rapidly fading out of existence. That which would replace it was already visible in the sharp but restrained clashes of nations during the early years of the twentieth century. Yet for men accustomed to the relatively quietist international scene of the preceding decades, who had set their sights on increasing harmony, or wished to see it increasing, it was difficult to relinquish their faith and abandon themselves to a helpless cynicism which preached the inevitability of Armageddon. Angell's doctrine, coming as it did at a moment of crisis in European affairs and within the peace movement, served to repair the old faith. By doing this it refurbished and perpetuated the 'pacifist illusion'.

⁸⁷ Angell's view of the ultimate power that would provide peace was 'ourselves, the correction of our ideas, the growing sanity of our minds'. Neither the actions of bankers, diplomats, emperors nor any new combination of military powers could serve as a substitute. Angell, 'Man v. The Statesman', *War and Peace*, Oct. 1913.