

**The Making of Lloyd George, or the Making Up of Lloyd George? How far was the Shell Crisis 1915 exploited by David Lloyd George?**

There is no doubt that a national crisis like a war, or the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, places immense pressure on politicians to perform and deliver for the country. These crises are the greatest test for all politicians, and they either threaten to tarnish one's reputation permanently, or they promise to earn one an undying stature and prestige. Winston Churchill is a typical example of a leader who was defined by his response to a national crisis, with this test of the Second World War being the making of him as Britain's finest leader during her darkest hour. However, this case of a national crisis and its test for politicians can too be applied to the conduct of David Lloyd George in the Great War, and perhaps his most critical test in the Great War which helped define him as a wartime leader was the shell crisis of 1915.

It was highly unusual for a leading member of the government, during the unprecedented crisis of the Great War, to declare that 'the old PM does less work than any of us' and that he 'lacks initiative.'<sup>1</sup> However, those were the words of Chancellor David Lloyd George as shell shortages on the Western Front provided the backdrop for a political crisis in May 1915. With his role in the war remaining a hotly disputed topic to this day, Lloyd George's true motivations behind the crisis can be assessed by exploring the impact of the crisis on the British political landscape, industrial labour supply and, finally, his reputation as a statesman. Politically speaking, it will be argued that Lloyd George engineered the crisis in order to change the nature of the wartime government by assessing his dubious motives behind the formation of the wartime coalition and the convenient opportunities it gave him. On the other hand, Lloyd George's political response to the crisis was arguably sincere and handled with integrity as he was only seeking the best direction for Britain and, in doing so, put himself in a politically vulnerable position. Secondly, Considering the impact of the crisis on industry and workers, although Lloyd George succeeded in combatting labour shortages caused by recruitment into the armed services, his approaches were perhaps centred around his desire for personal acclaim, compromising the strength of frontline British forces. Lastly, for the long term ramifications on Lloyd George's reputation, whilst his self-motivated response to the crisis attracted praise and advanced him to the premiership, the risks he took as Minister of Munitions, including losing his image as a 'man of the people'<sup>2</sup> arguably portray him as a true wartime leader with no ambitions to exploit the crisis. Overall, in evaluating Lloyd George's exploitation of the shell crisis 1915, it will be argued that, although he personally emerged well from the crisis in all three aspects discussed, Lloyd George's motives and sincerity cannot be underestimated as he was primarily acting the country's best wartime interests. Thus, it was largely unintentional that his actions, in turn, benefitted himself as well as the British war effort.

Before assessing Lloyd George's exploitation of the shell crisis, it is necessary to review why shells were vital to the war on the Western Front. In 1916, the army targeted a weekly shell consumption level of 800,000<sup>3</sup>. The supply for this was unattainable, however, with a monthly output of just 70,000 in May 1915<sup>4</sup>. These high demands were caused by the nature of trench warfare on the Western Front, which generated a new use of shells. Traditionally, the British army preferred to use shrapnel shells over high-explosives, expecting anti-personnel weapons to be useful in trench warfare. However, it was soon clear that shells would not be used for killing enemy forces, but for destroying field defences and fortifications.<sup>5</sup> These fortifications included barbed wire entanglements which prevented armies advancing in battlefields. Hence, British forces needed to destroy defences and thus soften the ground for when soldiers went over the top, and this could be done with shells. Whilst ideal as anti-personnel weapons, shrapnel was ineffective in cutting barbed wire, and high-explosive shells were now needed to support British forces on the Western Front. Consequently, without high-explosive shells, British infantry suffered disastrous defeats, like in the Battle of Aubers Ridge 1915. In this battle, the British forces had limited shell supplies and could only manage a 40 minute artillery bombardment of shrapnel shells, failing to cut any barbed wire and thus leaving British soldiers

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation from Lloyd George. Cited from: Grigg, John. "Lloyd George. From Peace to War 1912-1916." New Government, New Job. The Penguin Group. 1985. Page 24

<sup>2</sup> The quotation is from Lloyd George, himself, during a speech in Manchester in 1908. Rowland, Peter. 'David Lloyd George, a biography.' The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1976. Page 51

<sup>3</sup> Figure cited from: Strachan, Hew: "The First World War. To arms, volume 1." Oxford 2001: Oxford University Press. Page 1048

<sup>4</sup> Figure obtained from Pugh's biography: Pugh, Martin. "Lloyd George." War and Peace, 1908-1916 (Munitions and Strategy). Longman Group UK Ltd. 1988. Page 87

<sup>5</sup> Information gathered from: Strachan, Hew: Shells Crisis of 1915, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War.

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stranded in No Man's Land<sup>6</sup>. The need for shells was thus paramount to the war, with Lloyd George claiming 'this is an artillery war. We must have every gun we can lay hands on'<sup>7</sup> when discussing the costs of supplying munitions and shells.

Firstly, Lloyd George's political exploitation of the crisis can be measured by reflecting on his role in the formation of the wartime coalition and the extent to which he exploited the crisis to engineer the formation. Ardent in advocating coalition politics, the shell crisis gave Lloyd George the perfect opportunity to engineer a political truce, satisfying his personal preferences. This perfect opportunity was brought on by the shell crisis because the crisis exposed the horrors and deprivation on the Western Front, thus providing the backdrop for a political investigation into the shell shortages. Hence, by May 1915, Conservative backbenchers pressurised their leader, Bonar Law, to take advantage and coerce the government into collapsing.<sup>8</sup> Despite Bonar Law's fears about acting on these pleas, Lloyd George was vocal in discussions with him and encouraged him to support a coalition. Lloyd George's manoeuvres included hosting Bonar Law at the Treasury on 17th May where the need for a coalition was mutually agreed. He also proposed this to Asquith, where the motion was sorted in 'less than a quarter of an hour.'<sup>9</sup> Although Asquith was tempted to resist the Conservative threat with his Irish Nationalist-Labour allies in parliament, Lloyd George's scheming and role as a 'go-between'<sup>10</sup> advanced his stance. Lloyd George, also, made no attempt to hide his rejection for Asquith's Liberal government, saying to Asquith he was 'unable to go on' and that 'the situation is impossible.'<sup>11</sup> A coalition would thus have perfectly satisfied Lloyd George's own political outlook. Consequently, with the opportunity the shell crisis provided, Lloyd George had successfully created a base which diluted the influence of the parties in the coalition, with the Liberals conceding their full control and the Conservatives, despite joining the coalition, remaining unthreatening and unpopular. This structure meant that party partisanship would break down, enabling Lloyd George, with his more fluid views and dislike for party politics, to thrive as a more indispensable and prominent coalition leader. Overall, it must be at least considered that Lloyd George used the shell crisis as a device to shape a political landscape which would suit him best, with little consideration of its impact on the war effort, thus adding strength to the claim that the shell crisis was indeed the 'making up' of Lloyd George.

Moreover, by considering the impact of the formation of the coalition on his role, one could argue further that Lloyd George exploited the shell crisis to force change as it gave him the unmissable opportunity to form his own ministry. Before the crisis, Lloyd George had greatly familiarised himself with the issue over munitions. In October 1914 at the very start of the war, a munitions committee was formed and resulted in Lloyd George, who participated in the committee, travelling to France to assess the situation. In this trip, Lloyd George liaised with General Deville and learned 'anything he wanted to know'<sup>12</sup> about munitions. Hence, Lloyd George was ready to apply his experience to the war effort and, simultaneously, showcase his quality as a man of action in the government. Because of the crisis in 1915, Lloyd George saw his chance to prompt a cabinet reshuffle to assume a role in munitions, which he claimed as the head of the newly formed Ministry of Munitions. As a result, Lloyd George could shape his ministry in any way preferred, with a sole aim of combatting the shell shortages he was resolute on achieving. Therefore, in this ideal position, he could display his competence and value to the war effort, crafting him as an indispensable member who would later 'deserve' the post of Prime Minister. These prospects meant that Lloyd George had extra motivation to enact change within the government. Consequently, with the opening offered by the shell crisis, Lloyd George now had clear grounds for orchestrating this change and thus would proceed to make full use and exploitation of the crisis to execute his accession to a critical position in munitions. To summarise, therefore, when reviewing the impact of the 1915 coalition on Lloyd George, it can be argued that Lloyd George slightly exaggerated the crisis for political advantage.

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<sup>6</sup> Information from: <https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/battles-of-the-western-front-in-france-and-flanders/the-battle-of-aubers/>

<sup>7</sup> Quotation by Lloyd George. Cited from: "The Riddell Diaries 1908-1923." The Athlone Press. 1986. Page 92

<sup>8</sup> Information gathered from: Gordon, John. 'H. H. Asquith and Britain's Manpower Problem, 1914-1915.' Wiley, Page 403. Accessed via JStor: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24423466>

<sup>9</sup> These were Lloyd George's own words. Quotation cited from: Pugh, Martin. "Lloyd George." War and Peace, 1908-1916 (Munitions and Strategy). Longman Group UK Ltd. 1988. Page 85

<sup>10</sup> Pugh's words of Lloyd George's role in the formation of the coalition: Pugh, Martin. "Lloyd George." War and Peace, 1908-1916 (Munitions and Strategy). Longman Group UK Ltd. 1988. Page 85

<sup>11</sup> Quotations by Lloyd George in Griggs' biography: Grigg, John. "Lloyd George. From Peace to War 1912-1916." New Government, New Job. The Penguin Group. 1985. Page 248-249

<sup>12</sup> Quotation from John Grigg in his biography: Grigg, John. "Lloyd George. From Peace to War 1912-1916." Coming to Grips with the War. The Penguin Group. 1985. Page 180

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That said, this argument can be balanced by examining the political and reputational risks involved in the formation of the Ministry of Munitions, which would threaten Lloyd George and his career prospects. Although well equipped and experienced in the field of munitions, Lloyd George was by no means assured of success in dealing with the shell crisis. The situation in May 1915 was very discouraging and alarming; monthly shells output was just 70,000<sup>13</sup> and these shortages were highlighted from the disastrous and shell deprived battles on the Western Front. These battles included the Battles of Aubers Ridge, in which the lack of shells left barbed wire on the battlefields intact, causing 11,000 British casualties from men stranded in No Man's Land.<sup>14</sup> With his new role in munitions, therefore, Lloyd George was now assuming all responsibility for any shortcomings on shell production, making him susceptible to the blame for any failed military developments such as Aubers Ridge, regardless of whether the supply of shells was an issue. This duty meant that Lloyd George was at risk of becoming a scapegoat in the war effort, meaning he could destroy his reputation and public opinion could turn against him. Hence, with the formation of the coalition, Lloyd George exposed himself to a precarious situation and gave himself no margin for error in resolving the crisis. Also, by transferring to the Ministry of Munitions, he was arguably demoting himself from the Treasury, meaning he had taken a great political risk of sacrificing his position as Chancellor in favour of venturing to the unknowns of an untried and new ministry. His political gamble here thus shows that a coalition would not have benefitted him enough, if he were acting purely in self-interest, to make him demand change within the government. For these reasons, it could be argued that Lloyd George's support for the coalition was never entirely self-motivated, nor for purely personal gain. This is because the coalition forced him to make some political risks by moving to a brand new ministry and to risk his integrity for the war efforts. He, too, was aware of these risks in forming a new ministry, claiming that the newly found ministry 'had a greater struggle over getting a carpet than over getting 50 millions for munitions.'<sup>15</sup> Consequently, on balance, Lloyd George would have had no motivation to exploit the crisis for personal gain as the impact of a coalition required him to take immense political risks, something he would be opposed to if his ambitions were purely self-centred, thus indicating that his actions were out of recognition for the country's needs.

As further defence of Lloyd George's motives, the political impact of the crisis was not intentionally exploited by Lloyd George as he was only responding to a very real crisis and acting in Britain's best interests, rather than wanting to weaken Asquith and replace him. When Asquith was Prime Minister, Lloyd George had a sustained positive outlook on Asquith. In October 1914, whilst talking to his close friend Riddell, he described Asquith as 'a very strong man,'<sup>16</sup> and in November, even when the realities of the war had set in and shell shortages had emerged, he reported that Asquith was 'as strong as a horse.'<sup>17</sup> These comments suggest that, initially, Lloyd George was a supporter of Asquith and trusted him on war policy. As a result, it is unlikely that Lloyd George viewed the shell crisis as an opportunity to pounce and profit at the expense of Asquith, given his earlier admiration for him. Hence, Lloyd George's role in the formation of the coalition could have only been motivated by his recognition of the severity of the crisis, as opposed to the personal gains from betraying Asquith. This outlook led to the cabinet reshuffle being restrained, keeping Asquith at the premiership still with a Liberal dominated cabinet, just with some Conservative influence. This element of continuity in the coalition thus shows that Lloyd George was certainly not out for blood in reacting to the crisis and was acting in the country's best interests. In summary, there is a valid argument that Lloyd George was not fabricating the crisis to force change because, in terms of Asquith and the cabinet's political leanings, there was a limited level of change, with Asquith remaining Prime Minister and the cabinet still with clear Liberal dominance. Therefore, Lloyd George did not exploit the shell crisis, especially given that Asquith's view on him had greatly improved and acknowledged his good intentions, vowing in a private letter to Lloyd George 'I shall never forget your devotion, your unselfishness, your powers of resource... your self-forgetfulness.'<sup>18</sup> Moreover, if he were purely self-centred in the formation of the coalition, he would have sought to bring Asquith down rather than let him continue as Prime Minister, demonstrating his good relations with Asquith and his lack of intent to exploit the crisis for personal political gain.

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<sup>13</sup> Figure obtained from Pugh's biography: Pugh, Martin. "Lloyd George." War and Peace, 1908-1916 (Munitions and Strategy). Longman Group UK Ltd. 1988. Page 87

<sup>14</sup> Information from: <https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/battles-of-the-western-front-in-france-and-flanders/the-battle-of-aubers/>

<sup>15</sup> Quotation from Lloyd George. Cited from: Grigg, John. "Lloyd George. From Peace to War 1912-1916." 'The Heaviest Burden'. The Penguin Group. 1985. Page 257

<sup>16</sup> Quotation from John Grigg in his biography: Grigg, John. "Lloyd George. From Peace to War 1912-1916." New Government, New Job. The Penguin Group. 1985. Page 245

<sup>17</sup> Quotation from John Grigg in his biography: Grigg, John. "Lloyd George. From Peace to War 1912-1916." New Government, New Job. The Penguin Group. 1985. Page 245

<sup>18</sup> An excerpt from a letter from Asquith to Lloyd George on 25th May 1915 (days after the formation of the coalition). Cited from: Grigg, John. "Lloyd George. From Peace to War 1912-1916." New Government, New Job. The Penguin Group. 1985. Page 255

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Secondly, for industry and labour supply, Lloyd George's exploitation of the crisis can be judged by evaluating his role in protecting the labour force and hence combatting the shell shortages. At the outbreak of the war, there was no protection for workers vital to supplying the Western Front with shells, for recruitment was indiscriminate in enlisting anyone to the war effort, whether or not they were better deployed in civilian employment. With this recruitment system or lack thereof, key industries were drained of their workers and were overstretched as British forces on the Western Front suffered terrible defeats (like Aubers Ridge). By July 1915, these industries had lost a third of their workers to enlistment,<sup>19</sup> and a Board of Trade report revealed that the vital industries of coal and engineering suffered the most, losing 21.8% and 19.5% of their workforce respectively<sup>20</sup>. Lloyd George, as Minister of Munitions, was tasked with reversing this and implementing a better system to secure protection for vital workers from enlistment. In these measures, Lloyd George protected workers through a centralised badging<sup>21</sup> system. Section 8 of the Munitions of War Act 1915<sup>22</sup> made the duty of badging exclusive to the Ministry of Munitions, having the sole power to issue and prohibit badges<sup>23</sup>. This system meant that vital industries could not lose as many workers to recruitment and so Lloyd George was ensuring that everyone's value to the war was not only maximised, but maximised in the most appropriate field, where everyone, according to Lord Lansdowne, had 'not merely a part in the national task, but the part which he is best qualified to undertake.'<sup>24</sup> Hence, with Lloyd George's successes in protecting workers from recruitment, the strain on industries was alleviated, and the issue over war efficiency was improved. Overall, Lloyd George's role in responding to the shell crisis, in terms of badging workers in critical industries, must be credited, highlighting how there is no evidence to suggest he exploited the crisis. Instead, he just rose to the challenge and delivered, meaning the shell crisis was arguably the 'making of' him.

Furthermore, Lloyd George did not exploit the shell crisis because his further dedication and his badging system, which required him to take risks, showing his lack of consideration for himself and his reputation. Even with the new badging system, bitter stalemates emerged between the ministry and recruiting officers over enlistment, with recruiting officers tending to ignore these new controls on recruitment. In Autumn 1915 under the Derby scheme, badged and starred workers were still vulnerable to enlistment; they could still be attested, and there was still significant authority bestowed on Appeal Tribunals<sup>25</sup>. Hence, despite Lloyd George's efforts, critical industries were still vulnerable to being drained of their workforce. However, had Lloyd George been acting ignorantly to the interests of the country, he would have refrained from intervening further with workers' protection. This is because he would have been reluctant to anger recruiting bodies more, and it was arguably no longer his onus to intervene since his ministry had already acted sufficiently with the initial badging system. However, motivated by his desire for British victory (as opposed to personal motives), Lloyd George took on the duty of further reinforcing protection for workers. This commitment led to him delivering a poster broadcast in November 1915 which stated 'no men officially badged or starred for munitions work may be enlisted for immediate service.'<sup>26</sup> Consequently, he was resolute on upholding his policies on badged workers and was willing to risk his reputation and conflict with recruiting officers for the shell crisis. His commitment towards this aspect of the war effort was thus commendable and formed the 'making of' him. In summary, for the aspect of badging, there is an argument that Lloyd George did not exploit the crisis as he prioritised the war effort and national interest over his personal ambitions. His actions thus reinforced his sincere desire for the Western Front to be supplied with shells, regardless of the divisions he risked developing with war recruitment officers.

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<sup>19</sup> Information gathered from: Gordon, John. 'H. H. Asquith and Britain's Manpower Problem, 1914–1915.' Wiley, Page 401. Accessed via JStor: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24423466>

<sup>20</sup> Information gathered from: Wolfe, Humbert. 'Labour Supply and Regulation.' Oxford : Clarendon Press. 1923. Page 14. Accessed via: <https://ia802700.us.archive.org/26/items/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Badges were pin badges worn by civilians during the war to indicate that they were employed in a vital industry to the war

<sup>22</sup> References to the Munitions of War Act 1915. Cited from: Wolfe, Humbert. 'Labour Supply and Regulation.' Oxford : Clarendon Press. 1923. Page 318. Accessed via:

<https://ia802700.us.archive.org/26/items/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> References to the Munitions of War Act 1915. Cited from: Wolfe, Humbert. 'Labour Supply and Regulation.' Oxford : Clarendon Press. 1923. Page 318. Accessed via:

<https://ia802700.us.archive.org/26/items/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Quotation attributed to Lord Lansdowne. Cited from: Wolfe, Humbert. 'Labour Supply and Regulation.' Oxford : Clarendon Press. 1923. Page 29. Accessed via: <https://ia802700.us.archive.org/26/items/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Information on the Derby scheme and enlistment in late 1915 was gathered from: Wolfe, Humbert. 'Labour Supply and Regulation.' Oxford : Clarendon Press. 1923. Page 35. Accessed via:

<https://ia802700.us.archive.org/26/items/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> A poster broadcast from Lloyd George in 1915. Cited from: Wolfe, Humbert. 'Labour Supply and Regulation.' Oxford : Clarendon Press. 1923. Page 36. Via: <https://ia802700.us.archive.org/26/items/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft/laboursupplyrequ00wolffuoft.pdf>

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Though, it could be argued that Lloyd George did exploit the crisis as he was too fixated around earning personal credit which came at the expense of the strength of the British forces on the frontline. By mid-1916, issues of labour shortages in critical industries were now almost non-existent. Whilst this was indeed a massive achievement by Lloyd George's ministry, one could argue that Lloyd George had overcompensated in pursuit of labour protection. From a report involving 12,000 badged firms in 1916, 2,112,896 men were employed in badged work, yet, out of these men, 1,118,767 were fit for military service, and of these just 698,587 were skilled workers.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Lloyd George can be accused of excessively protecting too many workers, many of which were not skilled and may have been more valuable if they had been enlisted which they would be, in Lansdowne's words, 'best qualified to undertake.'<sup>28</sup> Consequently, Lloyd George had inflicted shortages upon the War Office, leaving British forces on the frontline exposed and lacking manpower. These faults demonstrated Lloyd George prioritising his work and interests to the detriment of the war as a whole. Hence, Lloyd George was short-sighted in his interests, only concerned about events and campaigns directly impacting him and where success could be credited to him. Overall, whilst the argument that he did not exploit the crisis due to his selfless duties of protecting vital workers is valid, one could counter this by accusing Lloyd George of engineering the course of the crisis by taking extreme measures in labour protection to gain personally, even if efforts elsewhere would be sacrificed. Therefore, Lloyd George's actions in protecting vital workers could have been thus self-centred as he did not always immediately intend on securing the best common outcome which benefitted all aspects of the war with a balance between supplying industries with enough workers and enlisting enough men, favouring the outcome from which he could claim the most success.

Furthermore, Lloyd George's actions as Minister of Munitions seem even more self-centred when one considers how he exploited the labour protection system to engineer the introduction of conscription. During his tenure at the munitions, Lloyd George had lost faith in the voluntary enlistment system. Accepting that the war would be longer than expected, he saw conscription as a 'military necessity'<sup>29</sup>. Simultaneously to Lloyd George's growing approval for conscription, the National Registration Act 1915 was a census carried out, primarily focused on protecting workers in critical industries, which required all males between 15 and 65 'to register himself in the manner provided by this Act'<sup>30</sup> which included stating their occupation. Although intended for the debate over munitions, the registration, with other reports under the Derby scheme, revealed damning figures on enlistment. In December 1915, it was reported that over 800,000 men were willingly available for military service, yet this was much lower than the anticipated 1.5 million. Moreover, the reports showed that 1,029,231 unmarried and fit men were yet to offer themselves for enlistment<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, because of Lloyd George's orchestration of the crisis, fundamental flaws in the voluntary system were exposed as his methods in protecting workers and conducting the National Registration provided evidence for the inefficiency of voluntarism. Furthermore, another aspect of the labour shortages which Lloyd George perhaps exploited to engineer conscription was his attitudes towards women in work and munitionettes<sup>32</sup>, in particular. Despite welcoming munitionettes into factory work to tackle the shell crisis, Lloyd George made little effort to appeal to women to join and took no action to improve the appalling factory conditions for women. These working conditions for women were summarised by Seebohm Rowntree, who knew a foreman in a factory who said that 'he would rather his daughter went to hell direct than through that factory.'<sup>33</sup> Consequently, Lloyd George's mishandling of women entering critical work limited their impact on tackling the shell crisis, meaning that men working in munitions would still be required and thus the issues over military enlistment numbers could not be alleviated as much as anticipated. Hence, Lloyd George could now convince others, namely Asquith, to adopt conscription as the only viable option left, thanks to his angling towards the policy during his stint at the Ministry of Munitions. To summarise, in respect of conscription, Lloyd George used the crisis as a base to reveal the liabilities of voluntarism to nudge the government towards the policy of conscription, which conveniently aligned with his stances, indicating his motives behind the crisis. On balance, however, whilst Lloyd George's self-interested views did impact his response to the

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<sup>27</sup> Information and figures attributed to: Wolfe, Humbert. 'Labour Supply and Regulation.' Oxford : Clarendon Press. 1923. Page 37. Accessed via: <https://ia802700.us.archive.org/26/items/laboursupplyregu00wolfuoft/laboursupplyregu00wolfuoft.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Quotation attributed to Lord Lansdowne. Cited from: Wolfe, Humbert. 'Labour Supply and Regulation.' Oxford : Clarendon Press. 1923. Page 29. Accessed via: <https://ia802700.us.archive.org/26/items/laboursupplyregu00wolfuoft/laboursupplyregu00wolfuoft.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Information attributed to: Grigg, John. "Lloyd George. From Peace to War 1912-1916." Tormented Government. The Penguin Group. 1985. Page 327

<sup>30</sup> Direct Quotation from the draft bill of the National Registration 1915. Accessed via the National Archives with ref. CAB 37/129/8 via file:///C:/Users/pompe/Downloads/CAB-37-129-8.pdf

<sup>31</sup> Information and figures attributed to: Wolfe, Humbert. 'Labour Supply and Regulation.' Oxford : Clarendon Press. 1923. Page 36. Accessed via: <https://ia802700.us.archive.org/26/items/laboursupplyregu00wolfuoft/laboursupplyregu00wolfuoft.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Munitionettes were British women who worked in munitions factories during the war to help solve the shell crisis

<sup>33</sup> Quotation by Seebohm Rowntree in November 1915. Cited from: Grigg, John. "Lloyd George. From Peace to War 1912-1916." 'The Heaviest Burden.' The Penguin Group. 1985. Page 302

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crisis, the risks and sacrifices he made at the munitions for protecting workers in critical industries must not be underestimated. Thus, if he had any purely selfish political ambitions, it was secondary to his ultimate goals of protecting the labour force, which contributed to the 'making of' Lloyd George.

Finally, one can assess the last aspect of Lloyd George's exploitation of the shell crisis by considering how much his response to the crisis affected his reputation, and thus whether his response was purely self-centred. Whilst directing the Ministry of Munitions and dealing with the pressing crisis, Lloyd George oversaw some remarkable achievements in increasing shell production. From May 1915 to July 1916, monthly shell production increased from 70,000 to over a million, and machine gun production rose from 6,000 in 1915 to 80,000 in 1918<sup>34</sup>. As a result, there were tremendous successes of Lloyd George's ministry to tackle the shell crisis and maintain a sufficient supply of shells to the Western Front, ensuring there would never be a repeat of the horrors of shell deprived battles such as Aubers Ridge. Lloyd George's stint at the munitions thus let his dynamism and eagerness for action be made clear, and this commanded recognition from important individuals in the war effort. The praise for Lloyd George's proactivity included Viscount Milner, renowned for his role in the Boer wars, lauding him as 'the greatest War Minister since Chatham.'<sup>35</sup> Praise also came from George Riddell, an ally of Lloyd George who recognised his expertise in solving the shell crisis when he noted his 'courage, daring, patience, bravery in the face of personal danger and responsibility.'<sup>36</sup> Consequently, this widespread support, in the wake of the challenges of the crisis, meant Lloyd George's status and value naturally made him the most suitable candidate for higher posts, including the premiership. Overall, whilst Lloyd George's approaches to the shell crisis attracted widespread recognition which fulfilled his selfish ambitions, this was inadvertent and only happened as a consequence of Lloyd George's sincere and initial aim of solving the shell crisis, regardless of its impact on his reputation. Therefore, he should not be accused of exploiting the shell crisis for his reputation as his immediate intention was only to play his part in supplying the Western Front with more shells.

Moreover, in terms of his reputation, Lloyd George did not exploit the crisis since his methods of dealing with the crisis seriously risked tarnishing his radical political outlook. Before the war as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George had set out an unprecedented scheme of social reform. These Liberal reforms included the Old Age Pensions Act 1908, which granted 25p a week to low income over 70 year olds and also the National Insurance Act 1911, which covered 3 million workers against sickness and unemployment.<sup>37</sup> Hence, Lloyd George was traditionally mindful and sympathetic to the hardships of the working class, giving him a radical reputation. Additionally, given his humble backgrounds, Lloyd George shared great bonds of affection with the working class as he claimed to be 'a man of the people, bred amongst them' and spoke of 'fighting the battles of class.'<sup>38</sup> Therefore, when tasked with maximising shell production to combat the crisis, Lloyd George had conflicting interests between maintaining cordial relations with workers whilst squeezing as many shells as possible from them. Ultimately, Lloyd George, as Minister of Munitions, sacrificed workers' rights and limited their freedoms by passing the Munitions of War Act 1915. In this Act engineered by Lloyd George, the first clause detailed the 'prohibition of strikes and lock-outs...in any work connected with the supply of munitions' and the Act extended the government's powers by 'restricting workmen from leaving Government work without good cause.'<sup>39</sup> Consequently, Lloyd George had become so fixated around tackling the shell crisis that his radicalism and previously cordial relations with the working class were being compromised. His lack of consideration for the workers during the crisis generated more hostilities between the working class and himself, with many workers feeling that Lloyd George had failed to appreciate that they were unfairly bearing the brunt of the war effort. In summary, in this respect, Lloyd George had no ambitions to exploit the crisis because doing so disrupted and damaged his political reputation as a radical man of the people.

In conclusion, David Lloyd George did not intentionally exploit the shell crisis, no matter how well he emerged from it. In all three aspects discussed, he prioritised the action which was in the national interest, and it only happened to be

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<sup>34</sup> Figure obtained from Pugh's biography: Pugh, Martin. "Lloyd George." *War and Peace, 1908-1916 (Munitions and Strategy)*. Longman Group UK Ltd. 1988. Page 87

<sup>35</sup> Quotation by Alfred Milner, 1st Viscount Milner. Cited from: Jones, Thomas. "Lloyd George." *The Oxford University Press*. 1951. Page 283. Milner's mention of Chatham is referring to the 18th century British statesman William Pitt the Elder.

<sup>36</sup> Quotation by George Riddell, 1st Baron Riddell. Cited from: "The Riddell Diaries 1908-1923." *The Athlone Press*. 1986. Page 194

<sup>37</sup> Information cited from: Lynch, Michael. "Lloyd George and the Liberal Dilemma." *Lloyd George and the Liberal Reforms, 1906-1911*. Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 1993. Pages 43-50

<sup>38</sup> The quotations are from Lloyd George during a speech in Manchester in 1908. Rowland, Peter. 'David Lloyd George, a biography.' *The Macmillan Press Ltd*, 1976. Page 51

<sup>39</sup> Direct Quotation from the draft bill of the Munitions of War Act 1915. Accessed via the National Archives with ref. CAB 37/130/11 via file://C:/Users/pompe/Downloads/CAB-37-130-11%20(1).pdf

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that these actions in the national interest also matched his preferences and ambitions. His action in the crisis attracted widespread praise and recognition for his political risks and prioritisation of the war effort, including Asquith himself noting Lloyd George's 'incalculable help and support I have found in you all through.'<sup>40</sup> Whilst one could argue that Lloyd George, politically, exploited the crisis as it caused the breakdown in party politics which was suited to him, this benefit only came to Lloyd George as an inadvertent result of his desire to form the most effective government possible, which hence involved him convincing Asquith, for whom he nonetheless had great affection and continually praised as 'a very strong man,'<sup>41</sup> to form a coalition and resolve Britain's 'impossible situation.'<sup>42</sup> It is true that some of his approaches could be considered self-centred and the approach which would best suit him, such as his exploitation of the crisis to head to the new Ministry of Munitions and to engineer policies of conscription. However, behind all of these approaches, he prioritised the national interest first and foremost; he had no interest or influence on whether it would personally benefit himself or not. Hence, it was only later that the crisis would match his personal ambitions, causing an unintentional win-win scenario for himself. It would thus be foolish to accuse Lloyd George of completely exploiting the crisis just because of how it eventually satisfied his interests and ambitions. Overall, therefore, during the shell crisis 1915, Lloyd George reaffirmed his great quality of taking risks for the national interest without the immediate influence of personal ambitions, all which contributed to his deserved title as 'the man who won the war.'

Word count - 4751

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