

Alexander Cowan Wilson

1866 - 1955

his finances and his causes

By

STEPHEN WILSON

FRIENDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FRIENDS HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON NW1 2BJ

1974

This paper was delivered as a Presidential Address to the Friends Historical Society at a meeting held at Friends House on 2 November 1973. Friends Historical Society is grateful for a special contribution which has enabled the paper to be published.

Supplement No. 35 to the
Journal of the Friends Historical Society

© Friends Historical Society 1974

Obtainable from Friends Book Centre, Friends House, Euston Road,
London NW1 2BJ, and Friends Book Store, 302 Arch Street,
Philadelphia, Pa 19106, USA

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY HEADLEY BROTHERS LTD
109 KINGSWAY LONDON WC2B 6PX AND ASHFORD KENT



ALEXANDER C. WILSON (1866-1955)
aged about 55

ALEXANDER COWAN WILSON 1866-1955: HIS
FINANCES AND HIS CAUSES.

AN initial explanation should be given for selecting my subject—some account of the life of my father, to whom I shall refer as ACW, and his wife E. J. W. Primarily it is a subject with which I had an intimate acquaintance over a period of fifty years, and which therefore has involved a minimum of original research. But apart from this it may I think be useful to record a few of the circumstances in which he grew up two and three generations ago, and to mention some of those concerns and interests which he and various of his contemporaries regarded as important, which frequently interlocked with Quaker traditions and activities, and which collectively formed part of the dissenting and radical streams of thought and outlook which influence society.

ACW was born in 1866, and was the child of his family background which was a mixture of religious dissent and of political radicalism. Although the two strands often coincided they were in fact distinct. Dissent, which was not necessarily connected with any particular religious denomination, was based on a deep distrust of the association of church and state; that association has been a characteristic of primitive societies, and in this country was accepted in the middle ages but has been gradually relaxed since the Reformation, although traces of it still remain with the appointment of bishops by the Prime Minister and the continued exclusion of Catholics from certain offices. But the vestiges of that association were still strong in the middle of the nineteenth century and it is perhaps difficult now to appreciate how bitterly Dissenters resented the privileges which the established church was then enjoying; Dissenters were excluded from the universities and through them from most of the learned professions; and when elementary education, which they had largely pioneered, became compulsory they were outraged that the established church should claim a right to preferential participation in its implementation.

Political radicalism implied free education and adult suffrage, and it was believed that the two in combination—though not necessarily votes for women—would make for a healthy democracy. But at this point radical thought diverged, one element holding that human progress and human happiness would best be secured by leaving individuals free to pursue their own ways and compete with each other, while another element felt that the state had a direct obligation to assist and support the weaker members of society.

This combination of dissent, of laissez faire and of embryonic socialism, was a century ago a characteristic of many successful industrialists, particularly in the north country. Among them was H. J. Wilson, ACW's father, who in addition to running a prosperous business in Sheffield, found time to enter Parliament as a Liberal and to concern himself with a number of causes which in varying degree were unpopular with the leaders of his party; these included disestablishment, secular education, temperance, the Josephine Butler crusade against the state regulation of vice, and a general disquiet with the growing imperialism of the time. Oliver Cromwell was his hero. Although his wife was a staunch Presbyterian and family prayers were said daily in the presence of all the servants, H. J. Wilson was not himself a member of any denomination, but on occasions attended the various non-conformist chapels and Quaker meetings in the neighbourhood. It was in this family atmosphere that ACW was nurtured, and inherited some of the causes which his father had sponsored.

But there were other influences at work. In 1859, seven years before ACW was born, three books had been published which were destined to have a continuing impact; Samuel Smiles' *Self Help*; Mill's *Essay on Liberty*; and Darwin's *Origin of Species*. The two former opened the way to the liberation of the individual; Darwin's work threw doubts on much of the orthodox beliefs of the time. In parallel with this expansion in thought and outlook, science was producing a series of physical changes which were to have a profound effect on the conditions in which people lived. In the 1860s the major growth industries were coal, iron and railways; cheap steel was hardly known; the electric telegraph was in existence, but there was no telephone and no means of

turning electricity into power; the internal combustion engine had not been invented; there was no central heating in houses and plumbing was rudimentary; there was no popular press; education was not compulsory; there was no form of social security other than the workhouse; the franchise was limited to men with a substantial property qualification; Ireland was in a state of ferment; colonial wars were gradually accreting the British Empire; passports were unnecessary; and the pound sterling was a stable currency, and inflation unknown.

When ACW died in 1955 much of this had changed. Coal, steam power and railways were in decline; electricity and oil had become major sources of heat and of power; the telephone, radio and TV were in many homes; the internal combustion engine had put millions of cars on the roads and had driven out the horse as a means of transport; the aeroplane was fast overtaking the steamship as a means of foreign travel; education was free, compulsory and universal; organised religion was losing its appeal; the Welfare State had come into being; great strides had been made in reducing pain, and Freud, Jung and others were probing the unconscious; in art, the Pre-Raphaelites, Impressionists, Cubists and others had revolted from earlier traditions; the franchise was universal and had been extended to women; Ireland was temporarily quiescent; world trade had been distorted by tariffs; the pound sterling was no longer stable; the British Empire had reached its zenith and was passing into a state of disarray; conscription had twice been introduced; two world wars had been fought; and the atom bomb had been made and dropped.

Such were some of the broad changes which took place during ACW's lifetime, and others have occurred since; in the time scale of human history they were sudden and violent, and in adapting themselves to those changes our parents and grandparents unconsciously created a huge, intricately organised and bureaucratic society in which the individual now has difficulty in finding who is responsible to him for the circumstances in which his daily life is carried on.

ACW was first sent to an elementary school in Sheffield

as his father wished to demonstrate that the new school system was for the well-to-do as well as for the poor. From there he went to Oliver's Mount, the Quaker proprietary school at Scarborough, where he appears to have had no particular distinction. His father believed in a university education for his daughters but not for his sons, and as there was no room in the family business for ACW he was sent in 1885 as an engineering apprentice to Priestman Bros., a Quaker firm at Hull who were then developing the gas engine as a new invention which provided a prime mover in a much smaller compass than the steam engine, and which had a brief life before it was superseded by the electric motor and the petrol engine. He served his apprenticeship for four years at Hull and later with the Yorkshire Engine Company at Leeds. At both Hull and Leeds he became deeply involved in the local Adult Schools. Towards the end of his apprenticeship his health began to suffer and it was believed that he was threatened with tuberculosis; as this was regarded as a hereditary disease in the family he was in 1892 sent to South Africa where he travelled around the veldt, worked on a farm, and took jobs installing electric pumps in the gold mines at Johannesburg and Pretoria.

His father meanwhile had been appointed a member of the Royal Commission on the Opium Traffic and at the end of 1893 while the Commission was in India ACW joined him as secretary and spent six months with him travelling around the subcontinent. Among those who accompanied the Commission was J. G. Alexander, the secretary of the Anti-Opium Society, and a prominent member of the Society of Friends, and it was partly as a result of his influence that ACW came to take a lifelong interest in Indian affairs.

ACW returned to England at the end of 1894, and as he was advised to lead an open air life he had lessons in surveying and then took employment as a contractor's engineer on the extension of the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway (shortly renamed the Great Central Railway) then under construction from Nottingham through Leicester to London. He was concerned with the section around Leicester, and during the four and a half years while he lived in lodgings in Leicester he renewed his active association with the Adult Schools, and faced what was I think a

difficult moral choice between the repudiation of religion on the one hand and acceptance of the Christian ethic on the other. He was attracted by Fabian socialism; Unitarianism also had its appeal. But the association he had had with Quakers through the Adult Schools, coupled with the uncompromising peace testimony at a time when relations with the Boers were deteriorating, led him to apply for membership of the Society in April 1899. There appears to have been some hesitation on the part of local Friends, and in writing in May to the clerk of the Monthly Meeting, whom he addressed as *Mr Sewell*, he said:

there are three points I would like to emphasise so that there may be no possible misunderstanding. First, I do not want to feed the Meeting from the Adult School, except with great caution. But I think the two are not brought together as much as they might be. As an instance, when the School went to their new premises on May 7 there was not a single scholar on the platform, and the majority of Friends in the room were. It may have been accident or design but in any case was to my mind unfortunate . . .

Secondly, the exclusion of the boys' class from the women's meeting house and lavatory was in spite of your explanation I think a great pity. If the artisans and labourers are to be refined, we must sacrifice something and having misused their privileges could not some pleasant doctor have been asked to give a short address on personal and moral cleanliness and included warning of their shortcomings. The surroundings in a coffee house are not nearly so refining, of which those in the Albert public house are a deplorable example.

Thirdly, ever since I have been to Leicester meeting I have been sorry for the attendance of so many carriages in Prebend Street after morning meeting. I gladly recognise that they are hardly used except by those who suffer from the infirmities of age, but for all that I am afraid their presence may do harm to those who have never heard or understood Friends' views on the 'Observance of Days'.

He continued: 'I am young [in fact he was 33] and may modify my views and I hope my readiness for criticism as I grow older. But I would rather not be admitted to membership than have any misunderstanding as to my feeling that the Society is in need of improvements in many directions, and that in Leicester it is in some danger from undemocratic and exclusive tendencies'.

Notwithstanding this prickly attitude, the Leicester Monthly Meeting admitted him to membership, and he

attended Yearly Meeting in 1900, where he met Edith Jane Brayshaw whom he married early in 1902.

Meanwhile the section of the railway through Leicester had been completed and at the end of 1900 ACW took employment as a dock engineer at Liverpool. The Leicester Monthly Meeting proposed to transfer his membership and in acquiescing he wrote to Hardshaw West Monthly Meeting:

I feel that I ought to say that I am not a born member and that partly in consequence many of the ways and proceedings of the Society seem to me far from perfect. In applying for membership at Leicester I mentioned this and said that I had no intention of being a silent member and I now wish to repeat this at Liverpool. It seems to me the more necessary to say this now in consequence of the attitude of the Society towards the war in South Africa. Almost everywhere I have been there has appeared a compromising "all things to all men" spirit instead of an unflinching advocacy of truth. At Quarterly Meeting recently a proposed minute as to "arbitration" was shunned as much as if it had proposed a paid ministry . . . The shedding of blood on a large scale may now be almost over—for a time—in South Africa, but for years there will be bad feeling and great difficulties there. I think it is the duty of the Society to encourage discussion and expression of opinion among its members on that and other problems in this country. Prominent among those other problems is the reduction of the difference of condition between the rich and the masses of our poor.

The correspondence foreshadows what became two of ACW's main concerns—the right use of wealth and the Peace testimony, which was linked with his dislike of imperialism. The aggressive nature of the correspondence was modified, I think, by EJW who, with her Quaker ancestry, was accustomed to Quaker practice and tradition. She was of a more sensitive nature than her husband, and till her later years was more articulate. Some of her writings in the early part of the first war helped to clarify the minds of Friends, and from 1915 to 1921 she served as assistant clerk of Yearly Meeting.

Shortly after their marriage they moved to Birkenhead, where their four children were born in the first decade of the century. During those years ACW was engaged on the construction of dock walls on each side of the Mersey; the work was generally below water level, and he was rarely free from mud. He and his wife, so far as the claims of a growing family allowed, were active in Quaker and Adult

School affairs, and ACW became gradually involved in local politics, serving as secretary of the Birkenhead League of Young Liberals, and in 1909 was elected to the Town Council, then dominated by the Conservatives.

Around this time he and his wife came into inheritances which with their own savings gave a reasonable future prospect of a joint unearned income of about £1000 a year—or a purchasing power in present day terms of about £7000. He was a tolerably rich man, and although he had a growing family he felt that his circumstances were such that he could retire from his profession, live in reasonable comfort, and devote himself to public life and voluntary work in Birkenhead and Liverpool, where he was putting down his roots. Like many of his contemporaries in the Society and outside he had an uncomfortable feeling about property, and was embarrassed about the ownership and enjoyment of wealth which he had not himself created. I doubt whether he ever attempted to give any philosophical justification or explanation although at one period he was much attracted by the theories of Henry George who claimed that a single tax on land would reduce the economic problems of hereditary wealth; and later found himself in sympathy with the writings of R. H. Tawney who argued that wealth had a social purpose, that inequality of income was not necessarily wrongful, but that wealth should be re-distributed through progressive taxation—ideas which in general have been followed in the development of the Welfare State.

In 1910 he gave up his employment, and in the four years before the outbreak of the first world war was immersed in Quaker affairs, in mobilising non-conformist opinion for his hereditary causes of temperance and morality, and particularly in the local politics of the town council, where he served on the Police, Highways and Education Committees, and on the latter incurred some unpopularity for his robust hostility to the Catholic influence. While sympathetic to women's suffrage he appears to have taken no active part in the movement. He was largely instrumental in the selection of E. D. Morel, then at the height of his fame as the exposé of the atrocities in the Congo, as the prospective Liberal candidate for Birkenhead in opposition to Alfred Bigland, the Conservative member and a Quaker. During these years ACW was becoming known as a radical Quaker, and but for

the war would no doubt have lived for the rest of his life as an influential and respected citizen on Merseyside.

As a left wing Liberal he had been disturbed by the naval building programme, but the outbreak of war in August 1914 came as a shock to him, as to others. He quickly made known his complete opposition to it, and in the prevailing hysteria he was regarded as a pro-German. He received a number of abusive letters and his house was stoned. Partly as a result of the hostility he encountered, and partly to take advantage of the better educational facilities then available in Manchester, where his wife's relations might be expected to look after the children if their parents were incapacitated or imprisoned, ACW and EJW moved from Birkenhead in the middle of 1915, and Manchester remained the family home for the next ten years.

For the remainder of the first war his activities were largely devoted to assisting conscientious objectors, and at its conclusion he and his wife acted as hosts at Wrea Head, near Scarborough, a large country house which the Ellis family made available for the convalescence of those whose health had been impaired while in prison; during 1919 they welcomed and befriended more than sixty conscientious objectors. At the end of the year they returned to Manchester and for six months shared a house with Rendel Harris.

In the early 1920s he was one of a loose group of individuals in the Manchester neighbourhood who were keenly alive to some of the political and social problems of the time; the Quaker members included Anna Barlow, Vipont Brown, Herbert Crosland, Wilfrid Ecroyd, John William Graham and Bernard Taylor; among others were Margaret Ashton, Leonard Behrens, Canon Peter Green, Dean Hewlett Johnson, Will Melland, Leyton Richards, Ernest and Shena Simon and T. D. Barlow. Their precise interests varied, but collectively they tended to support each other's causes, and through the ready access they had to wider circles through such men as J. L. Paton, C. P. Scott and William Temple, they did much to carry on the earlier Manchester tradition of general enlightenment. For his part ACW busied himself with the peace movement, with free trade, with the work of the University settlement, and with assisting the rehabilitation of some of the conscientious objectors with whom he had previously been in touch.

By the middle 1920s his children were growing up, and as there was a sharp drop in the family income, he and his wife reduced expenses by living in Geneva for the two years 1926-8 where they assisted Bertram and Irene Pickard in running the Quaker hostel, and later in helping members of the Society and of the Women's International League to establish contact with officials in the League of Nations. On their return to England they settled in the Hampstead Garden Suburb to be near those of their children who were then gravitating to London.

During the 1930s he kept in close touch with various Quaker activities in the cause of peace, disarmament, temperance, and particularly with the work of the India Conciliation Group, of which Carl Heath was chairman. But during this period he was increasingly concerned with his wife's health, who in a motor accident some years previously had suffered concussion, which resulted in loss of memory and some general confusion.

On the outbreak of the second war he moved to a cottage in Derbyshire where he was near to his childhood haunts in Sheffield and where in spite of increasing age and the anxieties of the time, he enjoyed the countryside and for several months acted as the local postman; but he was frustrated that he could no longer take an active part in assisting the second generation of conscientious objectors.

At the end of the war he returned to the Hampstead Garden Suburb, and so far as the consideration of his wife's health and his own age and deafness allowed, concerned himself with his old activities—mainly Quaker and pacifist, and in particular the Peace Pledge Union.

EJW died in 1953, and ACW in 1955.

By temperament ACW was shy, and it was not easy for him to communicate with his contemporaries; but he could establish an easy relationship with small children and those with whom he had some professional contact. During the

first war he was a constant object of suspicion by those who were on the look out for spies, pro-Germans and the like, and he was frequently searched at anti-conscription and anti-war meetings and had his note-books and leaflets taken away, but he remained on good terms with the detectives and they greeted each other in the most friendly way when they met in the streets long after the war had ended. He made himself available to those who were in difficulty or in trouble, and on several occasions found that his confidence had been misplaced. He was not an original thinker; he was a poor speaker, but was willing to take the floor when occasion required, and his presence at any gathering gave it an air of respectability. The arts were largely a closed book to him—though not to EJW—but he kept himself abreast of public affairs, and was an enthusiastic collector of pamphlets and political broadsheets of an ephemeral character.

Like the rest of us he had his foibles. Although he always had a living-in staff and never cleaned his own shoes, he was careful to avoid what he regarded as snobbery. I have mentioned his dislike of the carriages of the Quakers at Leicester, and for the same reason he refused to own a motor car or to use taxis, and always travelled by public transport. In Birkenhead he lived in a long road where all the houses had fancy names, and as this gave a visitor no means of knowing where a particular house was, he obtained from the Borough Surveyor the number his house would bear if all the rest were numbered; but as none of the rest abandoned their names, his number—191—was unique, but he had salved his conscience by avoiding the snobbery of a name. In the engineers' mess which he ran he achieved a reputation for economy in making the joints go further by giving small first helpings on the principle that a hungry man would always come back for a second. The recollection that some of his ancestors had suffered from bank failures led him to keep his balances at at least two different banks, and generally with both a deposit and a current account at each, and this leads to mention of his financial affairs.

FINANCE

Apprenticed in 1885 for a premium of £100 he received initially 5/- a week, which rose within four years to £1. This

was supplemented by an allowance of £2 a week from his parents. At Leicester he was earning £3 a week. When he moved to Liverpool in 1900 his salary was £20 a month and when he retired in 1910 this had risen to £500 a year. By this time from savings and from gifts and inheritances he and his wife had an unearned family income of about £1000 net a year. About half of this was derived from dividends from family businesses, where the capital was locked up and they were not in a position to liquidate it. The other half came from Stock Exchange investments which they had been free to make from the cash at their disposal. He evidently took much care in making these investments to ensure that they were what he could regard as morally and socially unobjectionable. Most was invested in home and foreign railways and reflected his expectation that through improvement in communications general economic activity would be stimulated and through the inter-change of goods and ideas international harmony would be promoted. He had a Victorian partiality for preference stocks which were supposed to give a higher yield than debentures, and yet be free from the speculative character of ordinaries. Much of the remainder of his free capital was invested in housing trusts and in garden cities which were then appealing for funds on a fixed interest basis.

The family businesses in which he and his wife were minor shareholders were carried on by relatives, who before the days of modern sophisticated accounting practices, pursued a policy of distributing most of the current profits as dividends. Before 1914 the trend of their profits—and therefore of the dividends—was gently upwards. Inflation was unknown, prices were stable, if not falling, and in the circumstances of the time ACW had no apprehensions about his financial position and felt justified in abandoning his profession.

Towards the end and immediately after the first war, the profits and dividends of the family businesses rose sharply, and although ACW protested strongly to some of his cousins that the companies were profiteering from the making of munitions, the family income was substantially increased. By the mid 1920s, however, the family businesses were losing their prosperity, dividends were reduced or passed, and the family income from them fell away and remained at a

low level during the 1930s. In parallel with this there was no increase in the income from his Stock Exchange investments, and the value of the railway stocks sagged throughout the period. By the late 1920s he and his wife were drawing on capital, and shortly before the second war they liquidated most of the remainder of their free capital and purchased an annuity. Around the same time, and with a view to avoiding death duties, he transferred about one third of his holdings in the family businesses to his children, on the understanding that they would return the dividends to him—a procedure which complicated their tax returns. During and after the second war the fortunes of the family businesses somewhat revived, and the income from them, supplemented by the annuity, and notwithstanding the accelerating inflation, enabled ACW and EJW to live in reasonable comfort till their deaths. After payment of estate duty EJW left £3,500, and ACW £15,000 (which included £4,000 as the value of the house he had bought for £2,000 twenty-five years previously).¹

A much clearer picture is available of the family expenditure for the years 1902-1939. Both ACW and EJW kept meticulous accounts of their daily expenditure, and at the end of each year EJW made a careful analysis. The headings were not constant and in appendix A some have been amalgamated to give relative consistency; and to avoid an unmanageable mass of figures the annual average for each five-year period is shown, although this may conceal some striking variations. The cost of food, allowing for living-in staff, was usually less than £1 per head per week. Children's education loomed large in the 1920s when bills from school and university had to be met. A large item was 'Given away', which generally accounted for about one quarter of

¹ This account of his income is derived from what he told me over the years, supplemented by a cursory examination of his cash books, which he kept on a system which would have been fully intelligible to him, but which I found confusing. The system was designed to show the current balance on each of several different accounts and as he was frequently switching funds from one account to another, it is not clear what was the true income, and in the top line of appendix A there is some estimation. It is possible that there was another book of account which has not been traced, and would have shown the annual income.



EDITH J. WILSON (1869-1953)
aged about 50

expenditure and which reflected the unease he felt about the ownership of inherited wealth. He had a few charities and causes to which he was a modest but regular subscriber, but in the main it was his habit to respond to those appeals for objects of which he approved and which he suspected were unlikely to be very popular. For this reason he rarely contributed to hospitals, as he said there were plenty of people who did, and he felt that in any event they should be supported by the State. He avoided where possible appeals for foreign missionary work, which he suspected of imperialism and of undermining local cultures; and he was reluctant to respond to appeals towards the cost of building new meeting houses or extensions, as he felt that Friends were liable to spend too much effort in trying to pay for them, and that the life of a meeting did not depend on the ownership of premises.

It was his practice at the time of a General Election to send small donations towards the election expenses of some of his friends who were standing as candidates; this enabled him to keep in touch with them and when they were successful, he felt no hesitation in approaching them to urge on the government whatever cause was uppermost in his mind at the time.¹

CAUSES

In the earlier part of this paper I have touched briefly on some of the causes with which ACW was involved, but it is perhaps of interest to record in appendix B a list of about 100 bodies with which he had some sympathetic association. The list is derived from such of his papers as survive, or from the record of his subscriptions in the last years of his life, or from my personal knowledge; it is probably incomplete as no trace is likely to remain of some of the bodies which had an ephemeral or local existence, or with which

¹ Among those to whom he sent donations at the time of one or more of the elections after 1918 were: Norman Angell, Walter Ayles, Wedgwood Benn, George Benson, Fenner Brockway, C. R. Buxton, W. J. Chamberlain, G. M. L. Davies, R. J. Davies, H. Dunnico, Arthur Greenwood, A. Haycock, J. H. Hudson, Emrys Hughes, E. E. Hunter, Morgan Jones, George Lansbury, Ramsay MacDonald, E. D. Morel, F. W. Pethick-Lawrence, Alfred Salter, P. Snowden, R. Sorensen, C. P. Trevelyan, E. Thurtle, Wilfred Wellock.

his contact whether active or passive was of a fleeting character. On the other hand, there is likely to be some duplication as many of the organisations concerned with peace were affiliated to the Peace Society or the National Peace Council. But the list does I suggest indicate a few of the movements in the first part of the century with which radicals and dissenters—including Quakers—concerned themselves and which in some degree had their impact on contemporary thought and action. The extent to which ACW was himself directly involved varied and was liable to fluctuate over the years; he originated no movements and rarely took part in the higher direction of their policy, but when his interest had been aroused he found time and opportunity to press their aims at a lower level. His interest might be no more than a single donation or an annual subscription, but when he felt it appropriate extended to enrolling new members, organising meetings and generally to taking citizen action in propagating the cause. But he took a keen interest in the annual reports of those bodies to which he was a subscriber, and it will perhaps be a comfort and encouragement to those who bear the burden of compilation to know that there are some who appreciate their efforts.

Certain groups of his causes were clearly inherited from his parents. Prominent among these was the Association for Moral & Social Hygiene, founded in the 1870s to campaign for the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts which applied to the garrison and dockyard towns the system of registering and licensing prostitutes; the agitation which Josephine Butler organised resulted in repeal in 1886, but the campaign continued and was later directed to the abolition of the white slave traffic and state regulation of vice on the continent and elsewhere; it advanced the idea of a single standard of conduct and virtue for men and for women, and it powerfully stimulated the more general movement for women's rights.

Another hereditary cause was education and assertion of the principle that when the primary and elementary schools were supported by public money, they should be free from any sectarian control. The government in 1901 did not necessarily defend the principle of sectarian control, but in passing the Education Act which gave financial assistance to

denominational schools it thought that the state schools would be so much better that the denominational schools would wither away and secular education become universal. But non-conformists thought the issue to be fundamental, and for a few years the passive resisters, including ACW, surrendered their goods, which were distrained upon, instead of paying their education rates. As a national problem the issue died away, but ACW maintained his association with the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control, and in the 1930s was its treasurer; in 1925 he had resigned from the Revision Committee on the Quaker Book of Discipline owing to the refusal of the members to include a reference to the religious education controversy, writing that 'I should be sorry to let my forefathers' noble witness against church rates and ecclesiastical assumptions sink into oblivion'. While the controversy is dead in this country it remains acute in Ireland.

A third hereditary cause was Temperance, though it was never entirely clear how far this was due to an inherent objection to alcohol, with its social effects on the individual and his family, or to distrust of the influence of the brewers who through their control of the public houses were, he felt, in an unfair position to bring political pressure on those who frequented them.

It was inevitable that ACW should be a Liberal. There was much in the tradition of which he disapproved—Liberal Unionism and Liberal Imperialism—but the alternative to the umbrella which the Party afforded was to him unthinkable. Until he was 40 he was active at election times, but before then he had not I think held any party office; after becoming a town councillor he was busy in party affairs, was benevolent to women's suffrage, and felt it an affront that it should be a Liberal Government which had entered the war. When E. D. Morel and other dissident Liberals formed the Union of Democratic Control in 1914 he was one of the initial members, and joined in the hope that it would be a rallying point for pacifists. He maintained his membership of the UDC (including its offshoot, the 1917 Club, till 1922, when he felt it was too permissive) till his death, but was disappointed when its policy shifted from opposition to the war and became advocacy of a negotiated peace after an

allied victory, and when in the inter-war years it supported collective security with the use of military sanctions if necessary. The disillusion with the Liberal Party and with Lloyd George which was felt by Morel and others in the UDC induced ACW in 1919 to apply for membership of the Independent Labour Party, making it clear that 'there has been far too great a tendency to make liberalism and socialism exclusive of each other to the great gain of the arch enemy imperialism; and it is essential that I should continue to hold that belief if I am enrolled'.

Although he was no longer a member of the Liberal Party he was appalled when in 1922 the local constituency Liberal Party in Rusholme where he was then living invited Winston Churchill, who had recently been defeated at Dundee, to be their prospective candidate. He lashed up a local agitation on the ground that it was quite inappropriate that Churchill who had continued the war in Russia should be considered for a respectable constituency, but it is unlikely that his agitation had any connection with the fact that shortly thereafter Churchill became the Conservative member for Epping.

ACW's membership of the ILP lapsed on his removal to Geneva, and he did not renew it on his return, although he joined his local Labour Party and voted for the Labour candidate at the 1929 and all subsequent elections till his death. But he became increasingly critical of the Party, he greatly resented the treatment of Lansbury in 1935, and with the emergence of the Peace Pledge Union his sympathies reverted to the Liberal Party, and although he never rejoined that Party he became a subscriber to its publications.

I now turn to some of those causes which he adopted and which were not directly due to parental influence. As a youth of 18 at Hull he had greatly enjoyed the fellowship of the Adult School and the opportunity of mixing and arguing with those whose ability to read and write was limited, and he played a full part in its work there and later at Leicester and on Merseyside. Like a number of his contemporaries it was through that movement that he was attracted to Quakerism. But with the emerging generation of those who had been subject to compulsory schooling he gradually came

to the view that the educational content should be at a higher level and accordingly was drawn towards the Workers' Educational Association and the settlement movement, and with EJW was among those associated with the founding of the settlement known as Beechcroft at Birkenhead, and was responsible for the invitation to Horace Fleming to become its warden. Later he served as treasurer of the University Settlement at Manchester. Although his active association with the Adult Schools lessened, he retained his interest and to the end recognised the debt he owed to their influence.

At the end of the nineteenth century there were a number of organisations concerned in finding a way to abolish war, which tended to concentrate on arbitration, the development of international law and some measure of phased disarmament, and these aspirations together with collective security have been characteristics of many successor organisations which became loosely affiliated to the National Peace Council or the League of Nations Union. ACW associated himself with some of these bodies, but his pacifism went deeper than general support for non-violence and attempts to reduce the incidence of war. It developed I think from his experience in South Africa, and the threat of war with the Boers was probably the deciding factor which led him to Quakerism with its peace testimony and encouragement for the individual to withhold all co-operation in the waging of war. His reaction in 1914 was instantaneous, and he spent the first four days of August, while the family was on holiday at Llandudno, in distributing on the promenade leaflets which he had printed opposing entry into war. It was natural that he should be drawn into the no-conscription campaign, and although it absorbed most of his energies, he was irritated by the abrasiveness of some of those associated with it, and found more congenial company in the Fellowship of Reconciliation and in the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom which emerged during the war. After 1919, he was among the founders of the Manchester, Salford & District Council for the Prevention of War, but, along with other similar societies at the time, it largely disintegrated over the Geneva Protocol and military sanctions. Later he became deeply involved in the No More War movement, and in its successor the Peace Pledge Union, but was willing to maintain contact with any organisation

concerned with peace, notwithstanding that it did not accept the absolutist pacifist outlook.

The cause which I believe gave him the greatest sense of personal satisfaction was that of assisting conscientious objectors during the first world war. Conscription presented a dilemma both to the government and to the objector. For the government, it was difficult to maintain that they were engaged in fighting for freedom and for peace, and at the same time deprive its citizens of their right to that freedom, and the surviving records show that at the highest level politicians were acutely aware of the moral problem involved; for the objector with a deep rooted instinct that the law should be obeyed, it was difficult to know at what point he should resist. The government did its best to avoid the dilemma by providing tribunals to judge the extent of the objection, but its machinery faltered in that some tribunals were unable to understand the dilemma with which they were expected to deal. The objector for his part could claim that his conscience should not be overridden by the law, provided that he was prepared to accept the consequences of his refusal.

The COs in the first war comprised Quakers, religious pacifists from other denominations, pacifists of various ethical and humanist beliefs, and non-pacifists opposed to a capitalist war. Most were young, most were lonely and isolated from each other, many were inarticulate and all were subject to the powerful force of public opinion that they were standing aside from the dangerous work of defending their country; the lot of many was harder than some recent literary biographies might suggest.¹ The problem was to give these men the strength and courage to maintain their convictions and to endure the consequences of their refusal to submit to military discipline. Many members of the Society of Friends took part in giving encouragement and support; ACW served on the national committee of the No Conscription Fellowship, and during the years 1916-1918 was continuously engaged in keeping in touch with COs in the Manchester neighbourhood, whether they were absolutists or willing to accept alternative service, in accompanying them at tribunals, at magistrates courts and at courts martial, and in visiting those in guard rooms of

¹ e.g. Quentin Bell, *Life of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 2, pp. 30-2.

military barracks and subsequently imprisoned at Caernarvon, Leeds, Liverpool and Wakefield gaols. EJW meanwhile took on responsibility for collecting and distributing funds for the relief of dependents of COs in the Manchester area, and for this purpose over £4,000 passed through her hands.

With many of those COs with whom he was associated during the war ACW had a warm and lasting friendship; among them were a number who subsequently became Members of Parliament, and he did not hesitate to let them know his views on some of the issues which became matters of controversy. The experience of the government in the treatment of COs during the first war led to a more humane, but not entirely satisfactory, treatment during the second. His own experience of prison conditions was a factor in the interest he took in penal reform, and in the campaign of Roy Calvert for the abolition of the death penalty.

Another cause was opposition to imperialism, whose besetting sin he felt to be contempt, compounded by ignorance and lack of interest. It took several forms, including his dislike of foreign missions, advocacy of free trade, membership of the Anti-Slavery & Aborigines Protection Society, and the secretaryship of the Quaker Committee on Slavery & Protection of Native Races. But it was his association with the India Conciliation Group in the 1930s that gave him a sense of achievement. Under the guidance of Carl Heath, and with the assistance of Horace Alexander, C. F. Andrews, Agatha Harrison and others, the Group maintained contact between British politicians on the one hand, and Gandhi and Indian leaders on the other. The history of the Group has still to be written, but there is no doubt that it played a significant part in securing the independence of India with less violence and confusion than might otherwise have occurred. ACW did not live to see other steps in the dismantling of the Empire.

I have given some account of a man who was born under a strong parental influence; who after hesitation joined the Society of Friends and found in the fellowship it offered a base of hope and of faith; who was strongly supported by his

wife; who had the means to retire early from his profession and—like many members of the Society of his own and previous generations—was left with time to worry about the community; who recognised some of the problems of war, poverty, and social and racial justice, and in a low key did something about them; whose instinctive reaction was either that the government should do something it was neglecting, or not do something where it was interfering; and whose children have become minor figures in the Establishment.

APPENDIX A
FROM ACW AND EJW's ACCOUNTS — ANNUAL AVERAGES

	1902- 06	1907- 11	1912- 16	1917- 21	1922- 26	1927- 31	1932- 36	1937- 39
INCOME (net) partly estimated	800	1150	1040	1900	2150	1200	820	850
EXPENDITURE								
General household *	145	177	189	212	267	216	201	239
Food	82	104	137	275	252	149	141	124
Wages	36	45	48	74	93	41	71	81
Clothing	19	19	14	22	27	28	19	20
{ ACW								
{ EJW	24	23	28	36	44	30	18	10
{ children	6	13	26	52	64	51		
Travel holidays etc.	62	77	98	196	207	145	57	43
Books, papers, stationery	43	38	41	72	79	72	59	60
Professional and medical	23	36	21	23	52	78	48	47
Given away	218	172	240	621	663	154	231	265
Children's education		5	47	163	350	208		
Other	31	96	132	110	101	105	61	56
TOTAL	<u>689</u>	<u>805</u>	<u>1021</u>	<u>1856</u>	<u>2259</u>	<u>1277</u>	<u>906</u>	<u>945</u>
Using CSO indexes, expenditure at 1971 prices would have been approximately		5500	7100	5800	8900	5300	4400	4200

* including rent, rates, fuel, furniture, garden, telephone, etc.

APPENDIX B

LIST OF BODIES WITH WHICH ACW HAD SOME
SYMPATHETIC ASSOCIATION

* subscribing in 1954-5; otherwise approximate dates when active

QUAKER

Bedford Institute Association	*
Friends Service Council	*
Friends Ambulance Unit	
Friends Association for the Promotion of Social Purity	in 1920s
Friends Relief Service	1940-50
Industrial & Social Order Council	*
Northern Friends Peace Board (chairman in 1920s)	*
Peace Committee	*
Penal Reform Committee	*
Race Relations Committee	*
Slavery & Protection of Native Races Committee (secretary in 1930s)	1933-1947
Spiritual Healing Fellowship	in 1920s
Woodbrooke Council	*

OTHER RELIGIOUS

Asia Christian Colleges Association	*
British Council of Churches	*
British & Foreign Bible Society	*
British & Foreign Unitarian Society	1900-1910
Conference on Christian Politics, Education & Citizenship (COPEC)	1924
Fellowship of Reconciliation	*
Free Church Federal Council	*
National Sunday School Union	*
Student Christian Movement	*
West London Mission	*

PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL

Africa Bureau	*
African Relations Council	
Anti-Slavery & Aborigines Protection Society	*

Association for World Peace	1952-3
Campaign against German Re- armament (off-shoot of UDC)	1954
Central Board for Conscientious Objectors	1940-46
Christ & Korea Campaign (merged into Christian Peace Campaign)	1950-51
Committee for Relief of Dependents of Conscientious Objectors	1917-19
Council of Christian Pacifist Groups	in second war
East & West Friendship Council	*
Fabian Colonial Bureau	1953
Increased Armaments Protest Committee	in 1890s
India Conciliation Group	in 1930s and 1940s
Indian Affairs Group (met under Horace Alexander to keep alive the spirit of the India Conciliation Group after the deaths of Carl Heath and Agatha Harrison)	1954
League of Nations Union	in 1920s and 1930s
Manchester, Salford & District Council for the Prevention of War (secretary)	1919-27
National Council for the Prevention of War	1927
National Peace Council	1908
No-Conscription Council	1950-
No-Conscription Fellowship	1916-19
No More War Movement	in 1920s
Parmoor Memorial for the Release of Conscientious Objectors	1919
Peace Letter (Ponsonby's initiative)	1925
Peace Pledge Union	*
Peace News	*
Peace Negotiations Committee	1916-19
Peace Society	in 1890s
Ruhr Re-habilitation Committee	1920
South Africa Conciliation Committee	1900
Union of Democratic Control (a founder member)	*
United Nations Association	*

War on Want	*
War Resisters International	*
Women's International League for Peace & Freedom	*

POLITICAL

Birkenhead League of Young Liberals	1905-12
Cobden Club	1900-34
Fabian Society	1919-32
Free Trade Union	in 1920s
Hansard Society	*
Howard League for Penal Reform	*
Independent Labour Party	in 1920s
Labour Pacifist Fellowship	*
Labour Party	1920-1940
League of Liberals against Aggression & Militarism	1899-1903
Left Book Club	in 1930s
Liberal Party	1884-
National Council for Abolition of the Death Penalty	*
National Council for Civil Liberties (a founder member)	*
National Reform Union (successor to the Anti-Corn Law League)	1910-1940
New Reform Club	1902-10
1917 Club	1917-22
North Western Free Trade Union	in 1920s
Parliamentary Pacifist Group	1937
Proportional Representation Society (a founder member)	*
Public Economy League	1937

SOCIAL AND MORALITY

The Alliance	*
Association for Moral & Social Hygiene (now Josephine Butler Society)	*
Birkenhead Vigilance Committee for the Enforcement of the Licensing Laws	in 1900s
British National Temperance League	in 1930s
British Sailors Society	*

British Vigilance Association and the National Committee for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons	*
Churches' Commission on Gambling	*
Family Welfare Association	*
National United Temperance Council	*
Liverpool & District Association for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice	1906-10
National Marriage Guidance Council	*
National Temperance Federation	*
Public Morality Council	*
Stockport Joint Temperance and Peace Parliamentary Committee	1936
Temperance Council of the Christian Churches	*
United Kingdom Alliance	*
Workers' Temperance League	*
Yorkshire Band of Hope	*

EDUCATION

Adult Schools	1884- *
Beechcroft Settlement, Birkenhead	1910-15
Maes-yr-Haf Committee	*
Manchester University Settlement	1920-25
National Education Association—to promote and defend the principles of national education, efficient, progressive, free, unsectarian and under popular control (merged with Liberation Society)	1889-1953
Northern Counties Education League 'to advocate the omission of sectarian and theological teaching from State-paid Education'	1896-1923
Society for the Liberation of Religion from State patronage and control (ACW was treasurer in 1940s)	1894-
Workers' Educational Association	1910-14

MISCELLANEOUS

Institution of Civil Engineers	
Institution of Mechanical Engineers	
Council for the Preservation of Rural England	*
National Council for the Deaf	*
National Trust	*
Mayflower Tercentenary Committee	1920
Pedestrians Association	*
Peterloo Centenary Committee	1919

NOTE ON ACW's PAPERS

It was his practice to keep the whole of his correspondence and when after five years or so this had reached an unmanageable bulk he would look through it and destroy most; he repeated this exercise shortly before his death, and what remained was left in a state of considerable confusion. In the confused state, it was recently accepted for preservation by the Library Committee of London Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends (Friends House, Euston Road, London), and although a start on the arrangement had been made, it had not at the time of preparation of this address proceeded sufficiently far to justify the inclusion of detailed references.