

## The Dunedin lawyer's seed of dissent: A.R. Barclay, the Boer war and the socialist origins of Archibald Baxter's pacifism

### 1. Introduction: the case for a consideration of the socialist aspect of Baxter's pacifism

Archibald Baxter's 'We Will Not Cease' is an iconic and rightfully famous pacifist statement. Narrated in a lucid and unadorned style, Baxter's story exposes the horrors and hypocrisy of war. It is also a memoir of courage and resistance, in which a humble farmer from Otago is pitted against the military authorities of an Empire. As Steven Loveridge points out, the 'success of the text owes much to its narration and the imparted impression of Baxter's strength of character against hostile circumstances<sup>1</sup>.'

Baxter's moral character is tenderly recalled by his wife Millicent, who picks out her son's poem 'To My Father' as her favourite poem, and cites this moving verse:

.... I have loved

You more than my own good, because you stand

For country pride and gentleness, engraved

In forehead lines, veins swollen on the hand;

Also, behind slow speech and quiet eye

The rock of passionate integrity<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Loveridge, S. 'Calls To Arms: New Zealand Society and Commitment to the Great War'. VUP. Wellington, 2014. p. 167

<sup>2</sup> Baxter, M. 'The Memoirs of Millicent Baxter'. Cape Catley, 1981. p.110

This verse is a brilliant and moving summary of the moral qualities of Archibald Baxter, which appear to be intimately wedded to the land itself. We think of the resolute and immensely strong will of Baxter resisting the pressure to fight as a soldier in the trenches of WW1 – the ‘rock of passionate integrity’. The verse also evokes the image of a gnarled and weathered farmer, who stands resolute and also ‘gentle’, a symbol of rural authenticity and humble goodness.

Reading *We Will Not Cease* very effectively fills out James K Baxter’s poetic sketch: what stands out most of all is the amazingly strong moral character of Archibald Baxter, who staunchly resists the immense and cruel pressures of the military establishment, and ceaselessly argues for his pacifist views. There is of course much more to be said for the book. Baxter offers us both a unique glimpse into the trenches of the Western Front, and a series of arguments for his pacifist views. There is a clear political aspect to Baxter’s pacifism, a stance which is informed by a process of critical thinking about the origins and nature of war. The intention of this article is to focus on and elucidate the historical and political dimensions of Archibald Baxter’s pacifism. What ideas, events and experiences led Baxter to develop his particular brand of radical opposition to militarism and war?

Millicent Baxter explains the origins of Baxter’s pacifism in this short paragraph:

“They hadn’t always held this belief [pacifism]. Archie as a very young man, adventurous, had actually thought of enlisting for the Boer War. Then he heard a lawyer lecturing on what war was really like, and he gradually worked out his pacifism and socialism. He was quite alone to begin with, a loner among ordinary conservative farming people, and in touch with no one of similar beliefs. His own family at first thought his pacifism foolish, but they gradually came round to it, particularly when the Labour Party put forward pacifist views. Keir Hardie came to New Zealand in 1912 and Archie greatly

admired him – our son Jim was named James Keir Baxter. But Archie really worked it all out for himself, and convinced his family<sup>3</sup>.”

Although Millicent credits the Dunedin lawyer and Keir Hardie as influences, she emphasises Baxter himself as the origin of Baxter’s pacifism: he is a ‘loner’ in the countryside who ‘worked it all out for himself’. There is a story here which does involve other people and wider political influences such as the Labour party, but Baxter’s individual character (defined against the background of a conservative countryside, thus heightening the sense of radical individuality), frames Millicent’s narrative.

Baxter himself tells a similar story to Millicent in the opening paragraphs of *We Will Not Cease*:

Many years before the war of 1914–18, I had reached the point of view that war—all war—was wrong, futile, and destructive alike to victor and vanquished. My first step on that path was taken in my early manhood, when I happened to listen to an address on and against war by a Dunedin lawyer, a brave and upright man, whose voice was as of one crying in the wilderness, so unlikely did it seem that his point of view would ever be accepted by more than the very few. However, the newspapers thought it worthwhile to attack him, and as proof that anti-militarist views were not, even then, altogether unpopular with the common people, he was returned to Parliament at the next election with a greatly increased majority.

For many a day I was without a single supporter, either in my pacifism or in the socialism which I looked on as a necessary part of it. There was no Labour Party. Only isolated radicals in and out of Parliament upheld what would now be the Labour point of view. We were geographically so far removed from Britain that we only had meagre accounts of the rise of the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 53. Note that Millicent makes a small mistake in citing the date of Hardie’s visit to New Zealand as 1912. The correct date is 1908: see, for example: Evening Post, 10 January 1908.

Labour Party there. It was not until Keir Hardie came out to us in 1912 that the workers' party in Britain really meant very much to me.

I ploughed a lonely furrow and for a long time did not even get the support of my own family. Gradually, however, they came to see there was something in what I said, all the more as they began to hear the same sort of thing from some of the members of the rising Labour Party.

I was, of course, outside the scope of the Act for the compulsory military training of boys and youths from fourteen upwards, which was introduced in New Zealand in 1911, but the strong and increasing opposition to it on the part of the boys themselves—in 1913 there were over 7000 prosecutions under the Act—encouraged me in thinking that there was an underlying objection to militarism amongst the people<sup>4</sup>.

Although it is possible to glean a few more clues from *We Will Not Cease*, these two passages sum up what is generally known of the origins of Baxter's pacifism. What stands out here is the fact that Baxter clearly develops his pacifist beliefs through an engagement with political ideas and events in the period between the Boer war era (1899 - 1902) and the beginning of World War One (1914). His brief sketch of these influential events very clearly indicates an engagement with and commitment to radical labour politics, intertwined with a strong anti-militarist perspective. As I shall demonstrate in what follows, the earliest event mentioned – that of the 'Dunedin lawyer's speech' – is a specifically anti-capitalist denunciation of war. Keir Hardie's principled opposition to both the Boer war and the First World War was framed in terms of a class conscious politics. The early New Zealand Labour party included numerous opponents of militarism, and the most vociferous of these articulated their stance in explicitly socialist terms.

Although these observations would appear to justify an approach towards Baxter's pacifism as a politically informed stance, with a heavy socialist influence, few (if any)

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<sup>4</sup> Baxter, A. 'We Will Not Cease'. Cape Catley, Auckland. 2014. p.19 - 20

commentators have elaborated on this theme. There are several quite good reasons for this neglect, and before I proceed to discuss the socialist influence on Baxter's pacifism, I shall point these out.

Kevin Clements, in his foreword to Penny Griffith's biography of Millicent Baxter, locates Baxter's pacifism within the history of early New Zealand anti-militarism. His sketch includes reference to Christian minority sects who opposed violence on religious grounds, and focuses on the issue of conscription. Referring to the introduction of Compulsory Military Training legislation in 1909, Clements writes:

The first systematic assault on militarism in New Zealand was resistance to the CMT legislation of 1909. This was opposed by pacifist religious leaders, socialists, feminists and humanistic pacifist groups who claimed that the legislation denied civil liberties and would lead to the militarization of the nation's youth. The emerging New Zealand Labour Party opposed the legislation on both political and humanitarian grounds. Irish New Zealanders, for example, could see no reason why they should fight for a British Crown overseas when they were under British occupation at home. Little by little, a significant minority of New Zealanders chose to resist recruitment into what they saw as the 'sharp end' of British Imperialism. It was into this environment that Archibald Baxter and other New Zealand pacifists took their stand in refusing military service and refused to put on the uniform when drafted into the First World War<sup>5</sup>.

Clements' summary sketch does a good job of portraying the rich and diverse assortment of progressive ideologies within the cultural milieu of early 20<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand, and Baxter's place within this. Indeed, this heterogeneous picture is necessary if we wish to understand Baxter. David Tombs has recently written an excellent essay investigating the religious aspects of Baxter's pacifism<sup>6</sup>, which are

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 11

<sup>6</sup> Tombs, D. 'Under the Surface: Archibald Baxter's Christian Faith'.2015.(Unpublished essay)

both fascinating and undeniable. Baxter's pacifism has religious, moral and political aspects. It is also heavily formed by his lived experience, reflected so vividly in the pages of *We Will Not Cease*.

Another observation concerns the historical echoes and resonances of *We Will Not Cease*. Baxter expresses his pacifist arguments with a variety of rhetorical devices, which very clearly reflect the historical and cultural context. Yet the distinctively pacifist content of these arguments is clear and unchanging. Consider, for example, this passage from the preface to the 1968 edition:

'Reports from the present Vietnam War indicate that eighty percent of the casualties are occurring among civilians. War has at last become wholly indiscriminate. The military machine is turned against that communal life which is the seedbed of future generations of mankind. The only apparent justification that war ever had was that by destroying some lives it might clumsily preserve others. But now even that apparent justification is being stripped away. We make war chiefly on civilians and respect for human life seems to have become a thing of the past<sup>7</sup>.'

Throughout the preface Baxter repeats the 'military machine' phrase, clearly echoing the socio-cultural context of the Vietnam era. The argument against war is a distinctively pacifist argument, which focuses on the human cost of war rather than the political causes. A similar, yet distinct argument is expressed in quite different terms in Harry Holland's interview with Baxter in 1919:

'I have often been asked, "What are my objections to war?" and the argument of the "survival of the fittest" has often been used in support of military methods. I have wondered that educated men can be so illogical, for while this law may be natural enough throughout the animal kingdom, in war it is not

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<sup>7</sup> Baxter (2014), p. 12

the “fittest” who survive, but a great many of the world’s fittest and best men are slain, while a still greater number are rendered unfit. I am against war on this ground, and I wonder that any sane person who knows the destruction, the degradation, the misery, and the sorrow caused by war, can regard it as anything else than diabolical in the extreme<sup>8</sup>.’

Again, this is a distinctively pacifist argument, framed this time by a caustic reversal of Social Darwinist rhetoric. In both of these examples the same argument is made in different historical registers. The major premises of Baxter’s case appear to be the horror and human cost of war. There is no reference to the political causes of war, or any sort of alternative social order which would preclude war. What these two examples point to is the undeniable centrality of a distinctively pacifist objection to war. This objection is coloured by the historical and cultural context of expression, but has a very consistent and clear content. It is this clear and simple message which, arguably, dominates the narrative thrust of *We Will Not Cease*. Socialist arguments and political ideas exist in the text, but are of marginal importance.

Yet the ‘margins’ do challenge some of the points I have just made. With respect to the ‘heterogeneous’ aspects of Baxter’s pacifism, we may note the following passage:

‘We represented varying viewpoints: a member of the sect Testimony of Jesus, a pacifist Catholic, a member of the Labour party and an Irishman who wouldn’t fight for the British because of what had lately happened in Ireland. These were a few examples of the different attitudes from which we came to stand. *One thing was noticeable about the experimental fourteen. Almost without exception we were drawn from the ranks of the proletariat and the*

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<sup>8</sup> Holland, H.E. ‘Armageddon or Calvary: The Conscientious Objectors of New Zealand and the “Process of Their Conversion”’. The Maoriland Worker Printing and Publishing Company, Wellington, 1919.

*exceptions were known to be opponents of the government*<sup>9</sup>.’ [Emphasis added]

Underlying the variety of beliefs uniting the fourteen dissenters on board the *Waitemata* troopship is a unity based on social class. It is also important to note the central role Mark Briggs plays in Baxter’s text. Just how much influence Briggs’ Marxism had on Baxter is not entirely clear, but there are passages in *We Will Not Cease* where the socialist politics is explicit and passionately stated:

‘...war is a bad thing and will destroy the human race. I believe that if enough people in each country stood straight out against war, the governments would pause and be compelled to settle their disputes by other means. I also believe that the peoples of all nations are naturally peaceful until they are stirred up by the war propaganda [of] the governing classes. When the workers of all countries win their economic freedom, governments won’t be able to set them on to murdering their fellows<sup>10</sup>.’

These words, spoken in 1917, were of course uttered in ignorance of what was to come later in the century: not only the violence of Hiroshima and Mai Lai but that of the Gulag, Hungary and Cambodia. The twentieth century failure of the attempts to carry out the socialist project, alongside the massive amounts of violence involved in most of those same attempts, casts an historical pall over the connection between Baxter’s pacifism and its socialist heritage. The questions this line of thought lead to are deep and far ranging, and concern two rival traditions: Marxism and pacifism. The relationship between Marxism and the questions raised by pacifist approaches towards political action are substantial and complex, and beyond the scope of this essay. With this caveat noted it is hoped that the following historical sketch of the young Archibald Baxter and his journey towards pacifism casts a little light on this neglected topic.

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<sup>9</sup> Baxter, A. (2014) *Ibid.* p. 67 - 68

<sup>10</sup> Baxter, A. (2014) *Ibid.* p. 125



## 2. The young Archibald Baxter

In what follows I shall focus on the ‘Dunedin lawyer’ mentioned above in the extract from the opening lines of *We Will Not Cease*. Who was he, and why did his speech have such a huge impact on the young Archibald Baxter?

Commentators agree that the ‘Dunedin lawyer’ was Alfred Richard Barclay, a Fabian socialist who was also a member of the ruling Liberal government<sup>11</sup>. He was elected into the House of Representatives in 1899, and served two terms. The speech he gave which had such a profound impact on Baxter was given during the Boer war (1899 – 1902). According to Millicent Baxter, Archie was considering enlisting for service, and his mind was changed after he heard Barclay’s speech<sup>12</sup>.

Before I turn to Barclay and his speech, it is worth sketching a picture of the young Archibald Baxter. Born in December 1881, Archie would have been aged just 17 when the Boer war started in October 1899 and 20 when it finished in May 1902. In the year 1898 Archie won a small block of land on Scrogg’s hill, Brighton – a small town about 18km south of Dunedin. He stocked the farm with animals and handed it over to his father. Unfortunately his father was not very good with money, and also had a drinking problem. Archie was forced to quit his work rabbiting in Central Otago and return to the farm. He re-purchased the farm from the Bailiffs and made it profitable again.

This episode, and the other scanty facts we have about this early period, paint a picture of hard work and few privileges. Leaving school at 12, and playing a leading

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<sup>11</sup> Grant, D. ‘Field Punishment No.1: Archibald Baxter, Mark Briggs and New Zealand’s Anti-Militarist Tradition’. Steele Roberts & Associates Ltd. 2008, p.42. See also Griffiths, P. *ibid.* p.79

<sup>12</sup> Baxter, M. (1981) *Ibid.* p.53

role in his family as breadwinner and organiser – a role his own father was not able to fulfil – Archie's adolescence was tough and full of responsibilities<sup>13</sup>.

Although it is definitely conceivable that Baxter had an interest in and some knowledge of politics, it is most likely that he did not know very much about the political and economic rivalries which led to the Boer war. Many New Zealanders wholeheartedly supported the British cause against the tiny Transvaal republic, and few were critical of the imperial interests driving the late nineteenth century 'scramble for Africa'. As the events of 1899 – 1902 are now quite obscure, I shall take a brief detour from Baxter and New Zealand and sketch the international outlines of this South African conflict.

The attractions of the massive Witwatersrand gold reserves discovered in the 1880s alongside other sources of economic wealth such as the diamond mines of Kimberly were a major reason for British intervention in the region. The Dutch Boer settlers had set up two small states in southern Africa, the Transvaal republic and the Orange Free State. The gold and diamond discoveries led to a massive influx of international capital. Mining magnates such as Cecil Rhodes plundered what were at the time the largest gold reserves on the planet. Thousands of European immigrants worked in the huge mines, and the Boer farmers struggled to adjust to the cultural and economic pressures of the rapid developments. The mine owners and their financial backers chafed against the labour regulations and taxes imposed by the 'backward' Boer farmers, led by the determined President Kruger. Threatened by the huge numbers of foreign immigrants, Kruger's government placed restrictions on voting rights for the Uitlanders. In 1895, Cecil Rhodes engineered what is now known as the 'Jameson Raid'. Hoping to instigate an Uitlander rebellion against the Boer government, a small group of British commandoes led by Leander Starr Jameson attempted to invade the Transvaal state. The raid did not spark any sort of revolt, and failed shamefully. Four years later, the British government, led by the arch imperialist Joseph Chamberlain, used the same pretext of 'Uitlander rights' to send thousands of troops to fight against the tiny Transvaal state in what is now

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<sup>13</sup> McKay, F. 'The Life of James K Baxter'. Oxford University Press, 1990. p.5 - 9

known as the 'Boer War'. The war lasted for three years, far longer than expected by the vastly more powerful British, and is also notable for its use of concentration camps. Thousands of Boer women and children were taken into these camps to prevent them assisting the men fighting the British. The unsanitary conditions led to the deaths of thousands of civilians.

Cecil Rhodes was in a very clear sense the archetypal figure of British Imperialism. As both an influential politician and wealthy mining magnate, he embodied the interests of both business and Empire. Charging his way through massive swathes of the so called 'Dark continent', his victories for the British Empire involved the brutal dispossession of native Africans. This racist and arrogant element of white colonialism, which went largely unchallenged in the Victorian era, is of course today much more recognised and visible. The Boer war, as a war framed in European terms (Dutch Boers versus British Empire), needs to be seen in the light of this submerged colonial history. Modern historians, for example, acknowledge the importance of Emily Hobhouse and her exposé of the brutal and deadly conditions of the concentration camps, but also point to the existence of black concentration camps. Critical African historians help us understand a deeper level of dispossession and exploitation beneath the white imperial conflict<sup>14</sup>.

These important qualifiers, however, do not invalidate the principle insights of J.A. Hobson and his theory of imperialism. Hobson's theory, based largely on his close observation of the Boer war period as a journalist together with a critical focus on global capital flows, was taken on by Marxists such as Lenin and popularised<sup>15</sup>. If we compare the Boer war to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the essence of this interpretation becomes clear. Both wars were motivated by geopolitical and economic interests; gold in 1899, oil in 2003. Both wars involved manipulative propaganda: in 1899 the democratic rights of the immigrant 'Uitlanders', in 2003 the

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<sup>14</sup> The historian Noah Sangster argues convincingly for the expression 'South African War' over the more narrowly Eurocentric term 'Boer War'. I use the term 'Boer War' here because it reflects accurately the Eurocentric prejudices of the time, and is consistent with the articles, books and speeches to which I refer. For an excellent overview of the historiography, see Sangster, N. 'The South African War of 1899 – 1902: A historiography'. *Historia* 2013, Volume 22. p. 100 - 121

<sup>15</sup> Lenin, V. I. 'Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism'. Penguin Classics, 2010.

weapons of mass destruction. This anti-imperialist critique of the Boer War developed by Hobson will play a major role in Barclay's speech, as I shall describe later in this essay.

To return now to 1899 New Zealand, we must make an effort to set two historical prejudices aside. The first concerns our reprobation of racism. This critical attitude, laudable as it might be, was simply not a widespread phenomenon in the British colonies. The second concerns imperialism. As Malcolm McKinnon notes, imperialism 'had not yet become a wholly negative word and still carried positive connotations of empire unity and advancement'<sup>16</sup>. The widespread suspicion and cynicism directed at Bush and Blair by millions of western observers in 2003 simply had no cultural parallel in 1899.

Returning now to Baxter with these contextual points in mind, we can identify two barriers which Barclay's speech must have overcome in order to change his mind. The first barrier concerns the weight and baggage of the received cultural pressure to share in the values and beliefs of Empire patriotism driving support for the war in New Zealand. The second consists in the pressures of his own life: enlisting for the war would have released him from his familial responsibilities, and opened up a world of adventure beyond the confines of rural Otago.

It is also worth noting that Baxter in 1899 lacked, as did most of his contemporaries, the awareness of the 'horrors of war' taken for granted today. Images of things like napalm and concentration camps did not exist, and there was no popular notion of war as a dehumanising activity. Ian McGibbon describes 1899 New Zealand as a society which largely shared 'a widespread acceptance of war as a legitimate means of settling disputes and establishing power relationships'<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Crawford, J. & McGibbon, I. 'One flag, one queen one tongue: New Zealand, The British Empire and the South African War'. AUP, 2003. p.30

<sup>17</sup> Crawford, J. & McGibbon, I. Ibid. p.3

Given these considerations, it is hard not to share Penny Griffith's expression of wonder at the effect of Barclay's speech. In the introduction to her insightful biography of Millicent Baxter, Griffith expresses admiration for Archie's moral character, yet longs to be able to sit down with him and ask him a few questions:

“...I would ask, ‘What *really* made you become a pacifist, Archie?’ What was it about the speech from a pacifist on his soapbox that day in Dunedin in 1899<sup>18</sup>?”

### 3. Alfred Richard Barclay

So who was Alfred Richard Barclay? Born in Ireland, he arrived in New Zealand as a six year old, and his father was a respected Presbyterian minister. Barclay was one of the earliest graduates of Otago University, and deserves recognition for his political pamphlets. In 1899 he wrote a pamphlet on Karl Marx and his labour theory of value. In 1909 he wrote on unemployment, and in 1910 wrote a stinging and perceptive account on the shortcomings of the Ward ministry<sup>19</sup>. Although not nearly as famous as contemporaries such as Edward Tregear or William Pember Reeves, Barclay's writings show clear evidence of an intelligent and critical political thinker who was well read in the international literature of the period.

Many left wing historians point out the numerous failings and weaknesses of the Liberal era under Seddon. Although they recognise the significance of the land reforms of the 1890s, and the initial impetus of the labour reforms introduced by William Pember Reeves, they argue that the Liberal party ultimately acted as a preservative force: it maintained class privilege and absorbed and tamed the radical

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<sup>18</sup> Griffith, Penny. ‘Out of the Shadows: The Life of Millicent Baxter’. PenPublishing 2015. p.8. I disagree, however, with Griffith's claim that the speech which Baxter heard took place in 1899, and I also disagree with the portrayal of Barclay as a ‘pacifist’.

<sup>19</sup> Barclay, A.R. ‘The Origin of Wealth, being the Theory of Karl Marx in simple form’ – An address delivered by A.R. Barclay at Roslyn, Dunedin, on Tuesday April 11 1899; ‘The “Achilles Heel” of Civilisation – being a Consideration of the Question of Unemployment’ 1909; ‘The Premier and his Troubles: Being an address delivered at the Trades Hall, Dunedin, by A.R. Barclay’ 1910.

interests of its working class supporters<sup>20</sup>. Critics of settler colonialism also point out the massive amount of Maori land confiscated during this period<sup>21</sup>.

As a Liberal politician, therefore, we must make some effort to see Barclay through the prism of 1899, rather than from a more dismissive retrospective point of view. The Liberals were a broad and diverse group of people, and Barclay was part of the radical flank. His radical views led him to become very frustrated with the Liberal party, and his Fabian socialist outlook involved him taking controversial positions on a number of issues. In David Hamer's study of the Liberal era, Barclay merits several mentions, all of which position him firmly on the left. His criticisms of Joseph Ward were vehement and bitter: in 1901 he denounced Ward for accepting a Knighthood, and in 1908 Barclay attacked the conservative 'standing still policy' adopted by Ward in the face of widespread labour movement agitation. Hamer describes Barclay's political positions as both atypical of what most Liberal politicians supported and also as 'unrealistic' by establishment standards<sup>22</sup>. In an address delivered to the Fabian Society in April 1899 entitled 'The Origin of Wealth, being the Theory of Karl Marx in simple form', Barclay credits Marx as the one of the main influential sources of New Zealand's 1890s labour reforms<sup>23</sup>.

In an opinion piece written just before the Hillside speech, motivated principally by a desire to undermine and ridicule Barclay's anti-war stance, the editor generously concedes to the fact that Barclay is a formidable politician:

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<sup>20</sup> Tony Simpson, for example, argues that 'By 1895 the reforming impulse of the Liberals towards the urban and rural workers was spent [...] By the turn of the century the Liberals had become politically a coalition of farmers, businessmen and the white collar middle class, all of whom had benefited from the social changes which had taken place.': Simpson, T. 'A Vision Betrayed: The Decline of Democracy in New Zealand'. Hodder and Stoughton, 1984. p. 46 - 47

<sup>21</sup> There is more to be said on this topic: according to Penny Griffith, the land won by Baxter in a ballot was confiscated Maori land. Tony Simpson quotes figures which reveal the enormous disjunction between the 'egalitarian' land reforms of the 1890s and the concurrent dispossession suffered by the Maori: whereas 1.3 million acres of farmland was transferred to small (pakeha) farmers, over 2.7 million acres of Maori land was either confiscated or purchased for ludicrously small amounts of money. Ibid. Griffiths (2015) and Simpson (1984)

<sup>22</sup> Hamer, D. 'The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891 – 1912'. Auckland University Press, 1988. See pages 50, 54, 219, 255, 281, 308, 361 for references to A.R. Barclay.

<sup>23</sup> Barclay, A.R. 'The Origin of Wealth, being the Theory of Karl Marx in simple form' – An address delivered by A.R. Barclay at Roslyn, Dunedin, on Tuesday April 11 1899. (McNab Collection pamphlet). p. 14

‘So far as his Parliamentary work is concerned the pages of Hansard show that Mr Barclay’s speeches were very frequently distinguished by a resource in argument, a facility in allusion, and a command of information which made them much superior to the ordinary run of members’ speeches. If Mr Barclay is a Socialist of the most soaring type, he is at least able to state the grounds of his convictions with more force than many of his opponents display<sup>24</sup>.’

Most noteworthy for my purpose here is Barclay’s outspoken opposition to the Boer war. He made just one public speech against the war in January 1902, and it is this talk given to the workers at Hillside Railway Workshops I believe to be the speech heard by the young Baxter<sup>25</sup>. Before looking at this speech in more detail, however, it should be pointed out that it took place near the end of the Boer war period. It appears that Barclay’s public stance prior to mid – 1901 was somewhat ambiguous. There were other outspoken New Zealand critics in the earlier period, and it is worth sketching some of this history to put Barclay’s speech in context.

#### **4. NZ Opposition to the Boer war: context and history 1899 – 1902**

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<sup>24</sup> Southland Times , Issue 15141, 11 January 1902, p. 2

<sup>25</sup> Penny Griffith identifies an address given by Barclay on 11 April 1899: ‘The Origin of Wealth, being The Theory of Karl Marx in Simple Form’. I disagree that this could have been the speech which influenced Baxter for two reasons: first, the Boer war had not yet started in April, so the claim made by Millicent Baxter that Archie changed his mind would not make sense. Secondly, there is a strong case for the Hillside 1902 speech based upon the age restrictions for enlistment. Baxter would have been too young to enlist right up to the beginning of 1902, when he turned 20. At the start of the Boer war the age of enlistment was 23, and as it progressed the age was lowered. In December 1901 the age was lowered to 19, and only then would Baxter have been legally able to volunteer. The fact that the Hillside Railway Workshops speech is the only identifiable public speech on record given by Barclay in the newspapers for the 1899 – 1902 period, and that the January 1902 date of the speech would make perfect sense of Millicent’s ‘change of heart’ narrative (the Eighth Contingent left New Zealand in February 1902, Baxter could have volunteered for this), constitute together a convincing and plausible case for this being the speech heard by Baxter. For evidence that the age of enlistment was 19 in December 1901, see: Colonist, Volume XLV, Issue 10287, 19 December 1901, p.2

New Zealand's commitment to the Boer war was significant and attracted widespread popular support. Richard John Seddon, the popular and influential Premier, was an ardent royalist and unquestioning supporter of British Imperial interests. The New Zealand press was ferociously pro Empire. Although there was significant opposition within Britain to the war, little if any news of the critical perspectives held by these opponents made it into the national newspapers. Without doubt the widespread support for the war was not just about ruling class interests and media manipulation, many of the workers at Hillside Railway Workshops, for example, took great pride in their fellow workers who enlisted and were enthusiastic members of patriotic celebrations throughout the 1899 – 1902 period<sup>26</sup>. Although I have some important reservations (which I shall explore at the end of this essay), I largely concur with Steven Loveridge's 'cultural mobilisation' thesis<sup>27</sup>: the large majority of pakeha New Zealanders were not opposed to the Boer war, and a significant and influential section of them were passionately in favour of it. This war fever had a great deal to do with a sense of identity: New Zealanders considered themselves British first and foremost, and wanted to prove their loyalty. Many shared James Allen's unquestioning sentiment: 'I do not know what the quarrel is but I believe our cause to be just'<sup>28</sup>.

In this cultural context of Empire loyalty and jingoistic sentiment, opposition to the Boer war was very much a minority pursuit. Yet the small but vocal minority of New Zealanders who did raise their voices were a very diverse and interesting group of people. They included a small group of Liberal ministers, a handful of outspoken feminists, and a sprinkling of radical Catholics and Irish Nationalists. As far as Barclay is concerned, two of these are particularly relevant.

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<sup>26</sup> In the victory celebrations following the relief of the siege of Mafeking, for example, '[p]rocessions, with every known musical instrument from a bass drum to a tea-tray, spontaneously formed, dissolved, reformed, drifted hither and thither. From Hillside the railway workmen marched in, 200 strong, with banners and emblems a "Long Tom," Boer prisoners, a guillotine for Kruger.' *Otago Witness*, Issue 2412, 24 May 1900, Page 3

<sup>27</sup> Loveridge, S. 'Calls to Arms: New Zealand Society and the Commitment to the Great War'. Victoria University Press. Wellington, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> James Allen, 28 September 1899, NZPD p.75 -



The first in historical order is J Grattan Grey, the chief Hansard reporter. Grattan Grey was clearly much more than a government functionary; he was also a keen observer of international events. On October 27<sup>th</sup> 1899, just after the Boer war had started, he wrote a letter to the New York Times in which he criticised NZ involvement in the Boer war:

“—Throughout the whole of the British colonies in these latitudes the people have gone wild with excitement over the declaration of war between Great Britain and the little Transvaal Republic. There is no limit to their enthusiasm, and the whole of these democratic communities have become suddenly infected with Imperialism of the most pronounced type. Nobody—very few, at all events —pauses to inquire whether the war is a just one, or whether England has any right to interfere with the internal affairs of the Transvaal<sup>29</sup> ....”

Grattan Grey was attacked by the editor of a powerful NZ newspaper, and his article was leaked to Richard John Seddon. In April 1900 he was fired from his post as Hansard reporter, and ended up leaving the country. There is little doubt that Barclay would have observed this sequence of events, and would have been keenly aware of the potential consequences of speaking out against the war. As a new member of the House of Representatives, who had gained his seat partly through proclaiming himself an ‘out and out’ Seddon supporter<sup>30</sup>, Barclay would have found it very difficult initially to voice what would have been taken to be a treasonous position.

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<sup>29</sup> Appendix to the Journals of the New Zealand House of Representatives, 1900, Session I, H-29. See also Grattan Grey, J. ‘Freedom of Thought and Speech in New Zealand’, April 2 1900, Wellington. (McNab Collection Pamphlett). In this pamphlet Grattan Grey claims to have received many letters from people in New Zealand supportive of his critical stance. One from Dunedin says ‘I hope one day will be disclosed how the existing excitement in New Zealand originated and has been worked up. *It was not spontaneous.*’ Another letter signed by ‘several gentlemen’ from Auckland states ‘There are hundreds of *genuine liberals* who feel on this matter as we do.’ These claims, even if exaggerated, run against the grain of received wisdom, and arguably complicate the ‘cultural mobilisation thesis’ of Loveridge as mentioned above.

<sup>30</sup> New Zealand Herald, 8 December 1899, p.6

In May 1900 the National Council of Women held their conference in Dunedin. Several of the women made critical comments about the Boer war. The most outspoken and radical was Wilhelmina Sheriff Bain. They supported arbitration and of all the critics listed best deserve the label 'pacifists'. Elsie Locke sums up their opposition as follows:

'But Wilhelmina Bain was not silenced, declaring herself neither pro-British nor pro-Boer but pro-humanity, and she was not alone. Mrs Louisa Blake of the CWI said the best time to speak against the war was when the war was on, and Mrs Margaret Sievwright of Gisborne said brave men were being sacrificed to fill the pockets of millionaires with the gold and diamonds of South Africa<sup>31</sup>.'

Shortly after the conference, The Fabian Society hosted a social event and invited women from the National Council of Women to attend. The Fabians spoke out in favour of freedom of speech, without actually endorsing any of the critical views voiced by the women. Barclay was a prominent member of the Fabian Society, and made a statement to the Press supporting the feminists:

'Mr A.R. Barclay, M.H.R., in proposing a vote of thanks to Mrs Sievwright and the performers, said he thought that the Women's National Council had been treated brutally, and he apologised for the Press and some of the residents of Dunedin. Mr Barclay's remarks, also Mr. Hutchison's references to freedom of speech and the mayor were loudly applauded<sup>32</sup>.'

The 'brutal treatment' involved vicious attacks on the feminists by the press, who went as far as advocating a charge of treason. The women were mocked as stupid, naive and unpatriotic for their critical pacifist opinions. Barclay in his turn was also

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<sup>31</sup> Locke, E. 'Peace People'. Hazard Press, 1992. p.28. CWI stands for "Country Women's Institute"

<sup>32</sup> Evening Star, 15 May 1900, p.4

labelled a 'pro Boer', even though at this early stage he had not made any criticisms of New Zealand involvement in the Boer war.

The end of the feminists' conference and the Fabian soir e coincided with a key event in the Boer war: the 'Relief of Mafeking'. Mafeking was a small British enclave cut off by Boer forces in the early stage of the war, and was under siege for several months. The news of the relief of the siege hit New Zealand on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, and there were huge patriotic celebrations all over the colony. There was a massive procession in Dunedin featuring 200 Hillside Railway workers with banners and Kruger effigies, and a half day holiday was declared<sup>33</sup>. At this early stage of the war the patriotic 'war fever' was at fever pitch, and Mafeking was a perfect victory. Even though Britain was the superpower aggressor, the Mafeking victory played into the propaganda narrative which painted a picture of 'brave Britons' defending themselves from an evil foe.

Barclay is attacked both via the vitriolic opinion pieces of all the major newspapers, and also in public as a dignitary involved with patriotic celebrations. In a hall packed with 3,000 patriots shortly after the Mafeking victory, Barclay is openly taunted and abused by hundreds of people:

There was, however, an unfortunate and jarring note, which at times became wearisome and disagreeable, running throughout the greater portion of the proceedings. Nearly every speaker and singer had to commence his or her part under a perfect storm of "Barclays." The word was hurled at the mayor, flung at the platform, pelted at the speaker, and aimed at the singer. No sooner had the item been rendered than from floor to gallery and front seat to back seat the word was shouted by a hundred throats. In vain the mayor, like the town crier, rang his bell; in vain the speakers sought to ignore the word; in

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<sup>33</sup> Otago Witness ,24 May 1900, p.3

vain the cries of "Order, order" were shouted; the crowd would not have it, and the term Barclay! Barclay! Barclay! rang through the auditorium<sup>34</sup>.

These attacks continue for several weeks, even after Barclay writes a statement to the papers in which he insists on his patriotism and attempts to distance himself from the unpopular feminists<sup>35</sup>. There follows a period of quiet, between June 1900 and mid 1901 Barclay appears not to have made any ripples.

Reading between the lines, it is clear that Barclay, like J Grattan Grey, came to regard British motives with critical suspicion. As Ian McGibbon observes, war weariness and reflections on motive informed the views of many Boer war critics: '[t]he certainty with which the issues were regarded by New Zealanders in 1899 was eroded [...] by new perceptions of the events leading to the crisis and of British motives<sup>36</sup>'. Barclay was a keen observer of international events who read beyond the limited and partisan sphere of national newspapers. From his later letters and statements it is evident that Barclay was familiar with both the scandalous expose of the concentration camps made by Emily Hobhouse in June 1901<sup>37</sup>, and the critical economic appraisal of the Boer war by J.A. Hobson<sup>38</sup>. Both these influences are visible in a noteworthy exchange between Barclay and Seddon in mid 1901<sup>39</sup>, and are passionately and eloquently expressed in a long letter printed by the Otago newspapers in late December 1901:

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<sup>34</sup> Evening Star, 19 May 1900, p. 3

<sup>35</sup> Evening Star, 22 May 1900, p.5

<sup>36</sup> Crawford, J. & McGibbon, I. (2003). Ibid. p.7

<sup>37</sup> Hobhouse, E. 'Report of a visit to the camps of women and children in the Cape and Orange River colonies'. 1901. <https://digital.lib.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.2/2530>

<sup>38</sup> Hobson, J.A. 'The war in South Africa: Its causes and effects'. London: Nisbet, 1900. <https://archive.org/details/warinsouthafrica00hobsuoft>

<sup>39</sup> Evening Star , Issue 11597, 10 July 1901, Page 3

'It is sometimes a wonder to me to see Presbyterians in Scottish Otago—and Presbyterian clergymen too—shrieking for the blood of practically their brothers in the faith—the descendants of the Huguenots and Dutch Protestants, men of the type of the Scottish Covenanters—and all, forsooth! in order that the lust for gold that devours a few unscrupulous schemers may be gratified. And the irony of thing is that all this is being done under the cloak of sacred patriotism, and we are told we are fighting for King and country. What a mockery! What a falsehood The truth is we are fighting to grab somebody else's country in the interests of the South African Chartered Company and the financial magnates who coveted the Transvaal wealth —that is the sort of "King and country" we are really fighting for [...] The honour of England has been deeply stained by this war. It is a scandalous and infamous war. It has excited the horror of the civilised world. Who would ever have expected to see Britain in South Africa copying the methods of warfare adopted, by General Weyler in Cuba?'<sup>40</sup>

## 5. The Hillside speech

The speech which Baxter heard took place on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January 1902 just outside the Hillside Railway workshop. It is possible that Baxter had read the letter quoted above, or that he had seen the posters advertising Barclay's speech around town before they got pulled down. It is also possible that Baxter just happened to be passing by, and stopped to listen out of curiosity. The speech took place in the afternoon, just after knock off time. It was planned to take place within the workshops, but Barclay was kicked out by a zealous foreman. Baxter would have

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<sup>40</sup> Evening Star, 30 December 1901, p.4. The reference to 'General Weyler' is an indirect reference to the concentration camps exposed by Emily Hobhouse. General Valeriano Weyler, also known as 'Butcher Weyler', was a Spanish general infamous for the deaths of hundreds in concentration camps in Cuba just a few years prior to the Boer war. See, for example: Jensen, G. "War and Genocide in Cuba, 1895-1898 (review)." *The Americas*, vol. 64 no. 1, 2007, pp. 111-112. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/tam.2007.0107

seen a large group of workers exit the workshop and assemble in a paddock just opposite the entrance on Hillside Road.

The atmosphere was tense and emotional, with a group of angry workers trying to prevent Barclay from speaking. Just prior to the speech a group of men carrying a huge Union Jack flag parade around, and after singing the national anthem, the chairman declared the meeting closed without letting Barclay speak at all. Several men speak out in favour of letting Barclay speak, with around 65 workers staying to listen while the rest dispersed<sup>41</sup>. According to Erik Olssen's detailed study of Caversham in this period, '[b]y 1905 Hillside was New Zealand's second largest engineering shop, employing 400 men<sup>42</sup>'. Sixty five is considerably less than the 200 who reportedly participated in the Mafeking victory parade two years prior to this speech, yet this number is still a significant minority of the total workforce.

Barclay begins his speech by explaining why his opposition to the war does not equate to denigration of the men fighting it. If the workers at a railway workshop built a train, and the owners and managers put the train on an unsafe section of railway, it would be the fault of the owners if an accident happened rather than the workers.

'That is my point, and you will see it at once. I repeat that so far as the soldiers are concerned the war is no affair of theirs. "Theirs is not to reason why." But it is a different thing with the politicians. If the politicians have gone off the rails and done what is wrong, it is our duty to check them, and point out where their errors have been.'

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<sup>41</sup> Observer, 1 February 1902, p.2

<sup>42</sup> Olssen, E. 'Building the New World'. Auckland University Press, 1995. p.125

Barclay then reads a quote from a British leaflet signed by 84 Labour leaders. He mentions several 'well known' names, including that of Keir Hardie.

'These names are familiar to you. They are the names of men who for years past have been identified with the cause of labour the most honest and honourable men in England. I would sooner trust them in labour matters than any other men in England.'

Barclay then proceeds to read from the leaflet<sup>43</sup>, which denounces the Boer war as a capitalist enterprise:

'... it is a war waged by capitalists with the object of gaining greater profits through cheap nigger labour. [...] In the Kimberley mines, controlled by Mr Rhodes, the ordinary wage of Kaffirs is from 1s to 2s per day for a day of 10 hours, and the law allows them, to be worked seven days a week. The ordinary wage of Kaffirs in the Transvaal is 1s 3d to 2s 6d per day. They only work eight hours per day, and by the Transvaal law six days in the week. It is clear that the owners of the Transvaal gold mines hope by means of war to reduce their Kaffirs to the same conditions as those of Kimberley. Away, then, with the delusion that this war is waged in order to open up new territory to British colonists. The capitalists who bought up or hired the press both in South Africa and England to clamour for war are largely foreigners. The cry which they raised about the Uitlanders' grievances, the arming of the Boers, a Dutch conspiracy, etc., were mere pretexts to deceive you. The enormous sums which they made out of the Rhodesian diamond mines emboldened them to become absolute masters of the Transvaal gold mines also. They

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<sup>43</sup> Arthur Davey refers to a "...leaflet attributing the war to a capitalist desire for cheap labour [which] bore the signatures of more than 100 labour leaders, among them G. Barnes, J. Burns, Keir Hardie, G. Lansbury and W. Thorn. So impressed was the chocolate manufacturer, George Cadbury, with it, that he bore the costs of printing and distributing three million copies to workshops, lodges and homes." The citation reads: TAP 32: "Labour Leaders and the War" (National Arbitration League) 1900; Gardiner: *Cadbury*, p.139. This is either the same leaflet, or some version of it. Davey, A. 'The British Pro-Boers 1877 – 1902'. Tafelberg Publishers. Cape Town, 1978.

have all along wanted war to double their profits by cheap forced native labour. This is now proved out of the mouths of the capitalists themselves<sup>44</sup>.

Reading Barclay's speech from a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective, the most initially striking aspect is the use of racist terms. We must remind ourselves, again, that in the context of 1902, Barclay's use of these terms would not have raised any eyebrows. Having said that, it needs to be duly noted that there lies submerged a vast continent of colonial racism and dispossession, of which Barclay's unthinking use of racist terms is but the tip of a proverbial iceberg. The sentence '[a]way, then, with the delusion that this war is waged in order to open up new territory to British colonists' is also noteworthy. Liberal and labour radicals who opposed the Boer war were not necessarily opposed to colonialism per se. In his discussion of the place of Africans in the debates between imperialists and their critics in this period, Arthur Davey observes that 'this issue was almost peripheral and of modest dimensions and weight<sup>45</sup>.' Noting that this topic is beyond<sup>45</sup> the scope of this article, mention should also be made of the critical anti - racist stance of Keir Hardie in his controversial visit to South Africa in 1907<sup>46</sup>, and the similarly anti – racist commentary of Baxter himself in the South African chapter of *We Will Not Cease*<sup>47</sup>.

For the young Archibald Baxter, however, we can confidently assume that the most striking and convincing aspect of Barclay's speech was the portrayal of capitalist economic interests driving the war. The message which surely resonated was that the war had been deceptively sold to the public as a defence of democratic freedoms, whereas in fact it was a war about money and exploitation. Was this the first exposure Baxter had to socialist arguments? I think this highly unlikely. As pointed out by other commentators, Baxter was a keen reader and had probably encountered socialist literature in some shape or form prior to this speech. His social position as a poor agricultural labourer would have informed his sympathies and political interests. Many of the Hillside Railway workers may also have had

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<sup>44</sup> Otago Witness, 5 February 1902, p.11

<sup>45</sup> Davey, A. (1978) Ibid. p. 67

<sup>46</sup> See this blog for a summary and references: <https://hatfulofhistory.wordpress.com/2014/08/16/keir-hardie-in-south-africa/>

<sup>47</sup> Baxter, A. (2014) Ibid. p. 76 - 90



considerable exposure to radical literature; they were keen readers who had access to an entire library on site<sup>48</sup>.

## 6. Responding to the mystery of Baxter

Does the content of this speech solve the ‘mystery of Baxter’ I described above? While I still share Penny Griffith’s longing to sit down with Baxter and ask him a few questions, the speech does provide grounds for some informed speculation.

The first and most solid conclusion is that Baxter’s pacifism has its origins in a radical, class conscious politics opposed to capitalism. The period between 1890 and 1914 in New Zealand witnessed the rise and development of a radical labour movement. As an agricultural worker, Baxter was on the fringes of this movement, but it is clear that he was familiar with and supportive of socialist ideals and politics. These ideals and politics are clearly in evidence on the pages of ‘We Will Not Cease,’ in which Baxter uses the language of class and socialism to back up his anti-war stance. There is a direct line from the socialist ideals expressed by Barclay in his speech to the Hillside Railway workers Baxter heard in 1902, to Baxter’s class conscious opposition to WW1 twelve years later. With all the caveats expressed in the introduction duly noted, this conclusion is backed up by both textual evidence from *We Will Not Cease* and the fact that Barclay’s anti-war speech was solidly couched in socialist terms.

A second conclusion concerns the figure of Keir Hardie as an influence. Keir Hardie enjoyed great popularity in both Britain and New Zealand, and his appeal to Baxter was likely both political and personal. His rebellious cloth cap wearing demeanour would have appealed, and Baxter would likely also have identified with his distinctively Scottish radicalism. This influence, however, seems to date from a later

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<sup>48</sup> See this blog for a fascinating glimpse of this worker’s library:  
<http://antipodeanfootnotes.blogspot.co.nz/2013/02/the-hillside-railway-workshops-library.html>

period if we take Baxter's words from the opening of *We Will Not Cease* into account. Nevertheless the fact that Barclay uses the name Keir Hardie as a rhetorical bolster to his case is surely significant. The 'K' in James K Baxter comes from Keir, so it is clear that the figure of Keir Hardie had symbolic importance for Archibald Baxter. The origin of this importance can be traced all the way back to this influential speech in 1902.

A more speculative conclusion has less to do with the politics of Barclay's stance, and more to do with the moral courage Barclay needed to stand up against the immense pressures of conformist popular pro war sentiment. In his letter to the Otago papers written just before the Hillside speech, Barclay states:

“Probably many people will profess to be shocked at what I have written, and call me names of various kinds. But that will not in the least alter the facts, which are just as I say. For my part, I say a man is not worth his salt who has not the courage to speak out for what he believes to be the truth, and so far as I am concerned, be the cost what it will, I should only have a profound contempt for myself if I failed to do so on this occasion<sup>49</sup>.”

Barclay's speech to the Hillside workers can be seen in two ways: as a socialist argument against war and also as simply a man with a very unpopular opinion standing up for what he believes in. The moral example is clear: moral integrity is worth more than whatever negative consequences might follow from conforming to the popular will. The consequences of Baxter's principled opposition to war were far more harsh than those suffered by Barclay, yet the seeds of Baxter's dissent are visible in the image of a maligned politician standing up against the tide in a paddock next to the Hillside Railway Workshops in 1902.

## **7. Baxter and Barclay in context**

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<sup>49</sup> Evening Star, 30 December 1901, p.4

This article began by noting the emphasis frequently placed on Archibald Baxter's moral character, and the isolation in which his pacifist ideas developed. In this article I have attempted to sketch a picture of the origins of Baxter's pacifism which focuses more on the social and political context of his beliefs. To conclude I shall offer some brief remarks on the broader significance of Baxter's socialist pacifism.

Stephen Loveridge's book *Calls to Arms* provides a compelling and detailed account of a wide ranging consensus in support of the British Empire and its military activities. This consensus makes sense of the undeniable fact that large numbers of early twentieth century New Zealanders understood themselves in terms of a 'greater Britishness' which led them to identify the cause of Empire with their own identity, values and interests. In the terms of this cultural and ideological template, it is no surprise that opposition to the Boer war was a castigated and largely unpopular minority pursuit. The speech given outside the Hillside Railway Workshops was consequential for Archibald Baxter, but is surely a minor footnote in the history of New Zealand society and its attitudes towards war. It is impossible here to deny or downplay the importance of numbers: at the outset of the Boer war in 1899, 40,000 New Zealanders turned out to listen to Seddon's farewell speech to the first contingent of New Zealand troops sailing to South Africa. The sixty five workers who listened to Barclay's speech constitute a tiny sample comparison.

Yet the ferocity and extent of pro empire views should not be completely taken for granted, and there is at least some evidence for a more cautious appraisal. Baxter himself notes in the opening quoted passage that Barclay was 'returned to Parliament at the next election with a greatly increased majority', proving that anti-militarist views were not 'altogether unpopular'. Baxter's claim here is not quite accurate: Barclay lost the 1902 election, but was returned to parliament in the 1905 elections. Yet the figures for the 1902 election do not indicate a public rejection of Barclay. Comparing the total number of votes cast for Barclay in 1899<sup>50</sup> (7334) with

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<sup>50</sup> Evening Star, 7 December 1899, p.3

the total in 1902<sup>51</sup> (7034) there is a decrease of just 300 votes. There are of course many other variables in play here, but it is notable that Barclay's public opposition to the Boer war did not cost him his parliamentary career.

Another issue which complicates the consensus narrative concerns the place of Scottish and Irish identity. Barclay's letter written to the newspapers just prior to the speech can be read as an effort to communicate to the predominantly Scottish Dunedin community, employing an appeal to both ethnic and religious identity to encourage critical reflection on the motives behind the Boer war. David Tombs, in his essay exploring the religious dimension of Baxter's pacifism, speculates that Baxter's opposition to war 'may also have been strengthened by his sense of being Scottish rather than English<sup>52</sup>'. It is surely conceivable that Barclay's Irish voice appealed to Baxter, as a fellow member of a non-English minority. Malcolm McKinnon identifies Irish nationalism as one of five major motivations for Boer war opposition, and notes the fiery stance taken by Patrick O'Regan in this context<sup>53</sup>. Baxter's Scottish heritage and Barclay's Irish heritage fit into this picture, highlighting the tensions within the 'Greater Britishness' consensus.

Finally, there is a strong case to be made for looking at this minor historical episode from a broader point of view. Elsie Locke identifies Boer war opposition as a single episode in a much longer peace tradition, stretching from the late nineteenth century through to the Vietnam War era protests in the 1970s<sup>54</sup>. This tradition has been informed by a number of ideological perspectives including feminism, pacifism and socialism. A notable thread in this heterogeneous peace tradition is anti-imperialism. As noted in my earlier sketch of the Boer War, the idea that capitalist nation states wage war for reasons to do with resources and geopolitical power has become a popular and widespread belief in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This idea played a major role in motivating people across the world to protest against the 2003 invasion of Iraq, an event recognised by social movement researchers as 'the largest protest event in

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<sup>51</sup> Evening Post, 26 November 1902, p.5

<sup>52</sup> Tombs, D. Ibid. p. 18

<sup>53</sup> McKinnon, M. 'Opposition to the War in New Zealand'. Chapter 3 of Crawford, J. & McGibbon, I. (2003) Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Locke, E. (1992) Ibid.

human history<sup>55</sup>, involving up to 30 million people across the globe. In Dunedin, around 3,000 people protested against the invasion. The tiny gathering of sixty five workers outside the Hillside Railway Workshops was surely an inconsequential blip on the historical radar of 1902, yet the seeds of dissent sown by the anti-imperialist ideas of Barclay and Baxter are manifest in the massive protests of 2003. History cannot always avoid reckoning with unpopular ideas.

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<sup>55</sup> Walgrave, S. & Pucht, D. (eds) 'The World Says No to War: Demonstrators against the War on Iraq'. *Social Movements, Protest and Contention* Volume 33. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.