

**WHY
WE
BURNT
THE
BOMBING SCHOOL**

BY
SAUNDERS LEWIS
AND
LEWIS VALENTINE

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The following is the address which
Mr. Saunders Lewis prepared for
delivery in Court at Caernarvon,
October 13, 1936.

THE fact that we set fire to the buildings and building materials at the Penrhos Bombing Range is not in dispute. We ourselves were the first to give the Authorities warning of the fire, and we proclaimed to them our responsibility. Yet we hold the conviction that our action was in no wise criminal, and that it was an act forced upon us, that it was done in obedience to conscience and to the moral law, and that the responsibility for any loss due to our act is the responsibility of the English Government.

We are professional men who hold positions of trust, of honour, and of security. I must speak now with reluctance for myself. I profess the literature of Wales in the University College of Wales at Swansea. That is my professional duty. It is also my pride and my delight. Welsh literature is one of the great literatures of Europe. It is the direct heir in the British Isles of the literary discipline of classical Greece and Rome. And it is a living, growing literature, and draws its sustenance from a living language and a traditional social life. It was my sense of the inestimable value of this tremendous heirloom of the Welsh Nation that first led me from purely literary work to public affairs, and to the establishment of the Welsh Nationalist Party. It was the terrible knowledge that the English Government's Bombing Range, once it were established in Llŷn, would endanger and in all likelihood destroy an essential focus of this Welsh culture, the most aristocratic spiritual heritage of Wales, that made me think my own career, the security even of my family, things that must be sacrificed in order to prevent so appalling a calamity. For in the University lecture rooms I have not professed a dead literature of antiquarian interest. I have professed the living literature of this Nation. So that this literature has claims on me

as a man as well as a teacher. I hold that my action at Penrhos aerodrome on September 8th saves the honour of the University of Wales, for the language and literature of Wales are the very *raison d'être* of this University.

And now for my part in Welsh public life. I speak briefly about it. I have been for ten years President of the Welsh Nationalist Party, and Editor of its organ *Y Ddraig Goch*. I've been a member of the Advisory Committee of the University of Wales on Broadcasting, the chairman of which has been the Pro-Chancellor of the University, the Bishop of Monmouth. I have made a special study of the economic problems of Welsh unemployment and reconstruction, and was the originator of the Welsh National Industrial Development Council.

In South Wales I have been in constant touch with my unemployed fellow-countrymen and have successfully founded a Club, the membership of which is growing and spreading over Wales, whereby on Thursday of every week a man whose position in life is comfortable gives up his dinner and sends the price of it to provide a three-course dinner for an unemployed fellow-Welshman whose larder on Thursday is empty.

Now, if you examine these activities and if you examine the record of the Welsh Nationalist Party during the past ten years, you will find that our works, our programme, our propaganda have been entirely constructive and peaceful. There has never been any appeal to mob instincts. In fact, our leadership has been accused of being too highbrow and academic. I have repeatedly and publicly declared that the Welsh nation must gain its political freedom without resort to violence or to physical force. It is a point I wish to re-affirm today. And I submit to you that our action in burning the Penrhos Aerodrome proves the sincerity of this affirmation. Had we wished to follow the methods of violence with which national minority movements are sometimes taunted, and into which they are often driven, nothing could have been easier

for us than to ask some of the generous and spirited young men of the Welsh Nationalist Party to set fire to the Aerodrome and get away undiscovered. It would be the beginning of methods of sabotage and guerilla turmoil. The Rev. Lewis Valentine and I determined to prevent any such development. When all democratic and peaceful methods of persuasion had failed to obtain even a hearing for our case against the Bombing Range, and when we saw clearly the whole future of Welsh tradition threatened as never before in history, we determined that even then we would invoke only the process of law, and that a jury from the Welsh people should pronounce on the right and wrong of our behaviour. We ourselves public men in Wales, and leaders of the Welsh Nationalist Party, fired these buildings and timbers. We ourselves reported the fire to the police. We have given the police all the help we could to prepare the case against us. It that the conduct of men acting "feloniously and maliciously?" I submit that we are in this dock of our own will, not only for the sake of Wales, but also for the sake of peace and unviolent, charitable relations now and in the future between Wales and England.

It is charged against us that our action was "unlawful." I propose to meet that charge by developing an argument in four stages. First, I shall show with what horror the building of a Bombing Range in Llŷn was regarded by us and by a great number of Welsh people in every part of Wales. Secondly, how patiently and with what labour and at what sacrifice we tried and exhausted every possible way of legitimate persuasion to prevent the building of the Bombing Range. Thirdly, how differently the protests and remonstrances of Wales and Welsh public men were treated by the English Government, compared with similar protests, though less seriously grounded protests, made in England in the same period. Fourthly, I shall try to put before you the dilemma and the conflict of obedience in which the Government's cruelty placed the leaders of the crusade against the Bombing Range, and the limits to the rights of the English State when it transgresses

the moral law and acts in violation of the rights of the Welsh Nation.

In an English pamphlet stating the case against the Bombing School in Llŷn, Professor Daniel has expressed with pregnant brevity the heart-felt fear of all thoughtful Welshmen. He says:

"It is the plain historical fact that, from the fifth century on, Llŷn has been Welsh of the Welsh, and that so long as Llŷn remained unanglicised, Welsh life and culture were secure. If once the forces of Anglicisation are securely established behind as well as in front of the mountains of Snowdonia, the day when Welsh language and culture will be crushed between the iron jaws of these pincers cannot be long delayed. For Wales, the preservation of the Llŷn Peninsula from this Anglicisation is a matter of life and death."

That, we are convinced, is the simple truth. So that the preservation of the harmonious continuity of the rural Welsh tradition of Llŷn, unbroken for fourteen hundred years, is for us "a matter of life and death." I have said that my professional duty is the teaching of Welsh literature. My maternal grandfather was a minister of religion and a Welsh scholar and man of letters. He began his ministerial career in Pwllheli. He wrote the greatest Welsh prose work of the 19th century, *Cofiant John Jones Talsarn*. One of the most brilliant chapters in that book is the seventh chapter, which is a description of the religious leaders of Llŷn and Eifionydd in the middle of the 19th century. It is impossible for one who had blood in his veins not to care passionately when he sees this terrible vandal bombing range in this very home of Welsh Culture. I have here in my hand an anthology of the works of the Welsh poets of Llŷn, *Cynfeirdd Llŷn, 1500-1800*, by Myrddin Fardd. On page 176 of this book there is a poem, a Cywydd, written in Penyberth Farmhouse in the middle of the 16th century. That house was one of the most historic in

Llŷn. It was a resting-place for the Welsh pilgrims to the Isle of Saints, Ynys Enlli, in the Middle Ages. It had associations with Owen Glyndŵr. It belonged to the story of Welsh literature. It was a thing of hallowed and secular majesty. It was taken down and utterly destroyed a week before we burnt on its fields the timbers of the vandals who destroyed it. And I claim that the people who ought to be in this dock are the people responsible for the destruction of Penyberth Farm-house. Moreover, that destruction of Penyberth House is, in the view of most competent Welsh observers, typical and symbolic. The development of the Bombing Range at Llŷn into the inevitable arsenal it will become will destroy this essential home of Welsh Culture, idiom and literature. It will shatter the spiritual basis of the Welsh Nation.

It was the knowledge of the catastrophe that the proposed Bombing Range would bring to Welsh culture and tradition in this, one of the few unspoilt homes of that culture, which led us and thousands of Welshmen not normally interested in political affairs to protest vigorously against such an outrage. I have to show now that these protests were on a national scale, that they were representative of the Welsh Nation, that nothing was neglected or left undone to convince English Government of the seriousness of the occasion, and that efforts of peaceful, legitimate persuasion were exhausted in our endeavour to prevent the catastrophe. I shall summarise the story of the protests as briefly as possible.

It was in June, 1935, that the Air Ministry's proposal to establish a Bombing Range in Llŷn was first announced. Immediately the Caernarvonshire branches of the Welsh Nationalist Party held a delegate committee and sent to the Ministry a statement of their unanimous objection to the plan.

In the autumn of 1935 the war in Abyssinia, the general expectation of an Anglo-Italian war and of a general European war, and then the dissolution of the English Parliament and the general election, all threw the Llŷn bombing range pro-

posal into obscurity. But Professor J. E. Daniel made it a special matter of protest and condemnation in his election address in Caernarvonshire.

In January, 1936, the campaign against the Bombing Range was renewed with urgency, and from that time on it ceased to be a matter of local interest. It was taken up throughout Wales and became a national concern. Protest meetings were organised generally in Llŷn and Caernarvonshire. Resolutions of protest were passed by Welsh churches and representative meetings of the religious bodies throughout Wales. It is a tribute I rejoice to pay to the ministers and leaders of the Welsh Nonconformist churches that they gave a lead to the whole country in the matter.

Protests were equally general from all the Welsh secular societies and institutions. The University of Wales Guild of Graduates and the Welsh national youth movement (Urdd Gobaith Cymru), as well as Welsh Cymrodorion Societies in Cardiff, Swansea, Llanelli, Aberystwyth, and representative meetings of Welshmen living outside Wales, in London, in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham. Before the first day of May more than 600 Welsh societies and religious bodies had passed unanimous resolutions demanding the withdrawal of the Bombing Range. These resolutions were sent on to the Air Ministry, and the agitation in the Welsh Press was a sign of the widespread approval of the protests.

We kept the Prime Minister and the English Air Ministry fully informed of our opposition. On March 31st I wrote to the Prime Minister begging, in view of the gravity of the affair, for an interview. I said in my letter:

"An important body of Welsh people regard this proposal as one to prevent which even liberty, even life itself, might properly be thrown away."

The Prime Minister declined to grant an interview, and

sent in answer a stereotyped statement exactly similar to that sent to all other protesters.

On May 1st I was invited to broadcast a talk through the national wavelength of the British Broadcasting Corporation on Welsh Nationalism. I took the opportunity to make an urgent appeal for the saving of Llŷn from this bombing range. The talk was later published in *The Listener*. The Government continued to ignore every appeal.

We organised a plebiscite of the people of Llŷn. It was conducted entirely by voluntary workers giving their spare time to tramping the scattered villages and farmhouses of the peninsula and paying their own expenses in food and bus fares. Over 5,000 of the electors of Llŷn signed the petition to Parliament and to the Prime Minister asking for the cessation of the Bombing Range. Our workers were welcomed everywhere. They met with a practically unanimous sympathy, and with time they would have obtained the signatures of almost the entire rural population of Llŷn.

Similar plebiscites were conducted in Llanberis and among the Welsh of Liverpool, where 5,000 adult Welsh men and women also signed petitions. Before the end of May well over one thousand Welsh churches and lay bodies, representing over a quarter of a million Welsh people, had passed resolutions of protest.

On May 23rd we held a final national demonstration at Pwllheli. It was attended by seven or eight thousand people and they had come in motor buses from all parts of South Wales and central Wales, as well as from Welsh centres outside Wales, such as Liverpool and Birmingham. The meeting received much notice in the English newspapers everywhere because of the attempt of a gang of some 50 drunken roughs in Pwllheli to prevent the speeches from the platform.

The platform represented the whole of Wales, leaders of

religion, of scholarship and public life. The chairman was the most eminent literary man in Wales, Professor W. J. Gruffydd. A newspaper report (*Liverpool Daily Post*) says:

"Professor Gruffydd put the resolution calling on the government to withdraw their plans for Llŷn and inviting the Prime Minister to receive a deputation on the subject. A show of hands revealed an overwhelming majority in favour of the resolution. The negative did not exceed fifty."

On June 4th the request was sent to the Prime Minister to receive a Welsh National deputation. It was sent on behalf of the 5,000 petitioners of Llŷn, the thousands of petitioners outside Llŷn and the fifteen hundred bodies representing nearly half a million Welshmen who had resolved to protest against the Llŷn bombing range. The letter, requesting the Prime Minister to receive a deputation, was signed by over twenty eminent Welsh leaders. They included the Principals of Aberystwyth and of Bala and of Bala-Bangor Theological Colleges, the secretary of the Honourable Society of Cymrodorion, the Bishop of Menevia, Moderators of the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the Chairman of the Congregational Union of Wales, Editors of important Welsh journals and the Professors of Welsh Language and of Welsh Literature at the University Colleges of Bangor and of Aberystwyth.

A secretary to the Prime Minister replied that:

"The Prime Minister does not feel that any useful purpose would be served by his acceding to the request that he should receive a deputation."

On June 15th the English newspapers circulating in Wales reported thus:

"More than 200 acres at Penyberth Farm have been cleared and levelled for an aerodrome site. The contractors are beginning to erect an aerodrome today."

Thus ended peaceful persuasion along legitimate democratic lines. There only remained now the way of sacrifice.

But the effect of the English Government's contemptuous rejection of this nation-wide protest from Wales, both on Welsh national sentiment in general and on the Reverend Lewis Valentine and myself as the accepted leaders of the crusade, cannot be properly gauged without considering also the contrast between the Government's treatment of Wales and their treatment of England.

Let me recount briefly the story of three bombing range sites proposed to be set up in England at the same time as the Llŷn establishment. One was at Abbotsbury in Dorsetshire. It is a well-known breeding place for swans. Because of that, and because English writers and poets were allowed space in the *Times* newspaper and generally in the English Press to express their passion for swans and natural beauty of scene, the Dorsetshire site was moved.

Then came Holy Island in English Northumberland. Mr. G. M. Trevelyan wrote a letter to the *Times* on January 13th to explain that Holy Island was a sacred region: it was a holiday resort for city workers; it had historical associations with Lindisfarne and St. Cuthbert; it was the most important home of wild birds in England. He argued that Northumberland duck were no less sacred than Dorset swans. He was supported by leaders of English scholarship and letters. The Air Ministry summoned a public conference to consider the matter, and the Bombing Range was withdrawn.

Thus again at Friskney on the Wash. Here the local authorities of the area took the lead and protested against the waste of so large an area of excellent agricultural land and the destruction of fishing. The Air Ministry withdrew.

Will you try to understand our feelings when we saw the foremost scholars and literary men of England talking of the

"sacredness" of duck and swans, and succeeding on that argument in compelling the Air Ministry to withdraw its bombing range, while here in Wales, at the very same time, we were organising a nation-wide protest on behalf of the truly sacred things in Creation—a Nation, its language, its literature, its separate traditions and immemorial ways of Christian life—and we could not get the Government even to receive a deputation to discuss the matter with us? The irony of the contrast is the irony of blasphemy.

On June 22nd the Union of the Congregational Churches of Wales met at Bangor. The chairman was one of the foremost divines in Welsh Nonconformity and he was also newly appointed Archdruid of Wales—the Reverend J. J. Williams. Speaking to a resolution condemning the Llŷn bombing range, he said:

"It is our intention to prevent the establishment of this bombing school by every legitimate means possible. But if legitimate means finally fail, I believe there is enough resolution in the Welsh Nation to remove the bombing camp by other means."

The Rev. J. J. Williams spoke for Wales. But—and I come now to a crucial point in my argument—he spoke also for the universal moral law which is an essential part of Christian tradition and is recognised by moral theologians to be binding on all men.

"Remember that the God Who created men ordained nations,"

said Emrys ap Iwan, and the moral law recognises the family and the nation to be Moral Persons. They have the qualities and the natural rights of Persons. And by the law of God the essential rights of the family and of the nation, and especially their right to live, are prior to the rights of any State. It is part also of the moral law that no State has the right to use any other national entity merely as a means to its own profit,

and no State has a right to seek national advantages which would mean genuine harm to any other nation. All that is universal Christian tradition.

It is also universal Christian tradition that men should obey the moral law rather than the law of a State whenever the two should clash. It is universal Christian tradition that it is the duty of members of a family and of a nation to defend the essential rights of the family and of the nation, and especially it is a duty to preserve the life of a nation, or to defend it from any mortal blow, by all means possible short of taking human life unjustly or breaking the moral law.

That is the Christian tradition as Emrys ap Iwan understood it, as the Reverend J. J. Williams understands it today, and as the Universal Christian Church has always maintained it.

It was in the clear light of this fundamental principle of Christendom that Lewis Valentine, D. J. Williams and I resolved to act in Llŷn. The responsibility of leadership was ours. We could not shirk it. We saw the English State preparing mortal danger to the moral person of the Welsh nation. We had exercised the greatest patience in attempting every possible means of persuasion and appeal to prevent the wrong. We had the unanimous voice of all the religious leaders of Wales with us. English government took no heed at all. The bombing range was begun. Building was proceeding.

We resolved to act. We determined on an action that would proclaim our conviction that the building of this bombing range in Llŷn is by all Christian principles wrong and unlawful. We resolved on an act that would compel English government to take action at law against us. We made absolutely sure that no human life would be endangered. You have heard the pitiful story of the night-watchman. The only true statement in all his story is that he suffered no harm at all.

We damaged property. It is valued at some two thousand

pounds odd. Exactly by that action we have compelled the English State to put us in this dock. Only by appearing in this dock on a charge sufficiently serious to allow a maximum sentence on us of penal servitude for life could we bring the action of the English State to the bar of conscience and of Christian morality. Every other means had failed. But we have put our lives in the balance against this act of Government iniquity. It was in preparation for this day and this hour, when we should appear before you twelve, our fellow-Christians and fellow-countrymen, and should explain all our action to you and the meaning and significance of that action, and should ask your judgment on us—it was for this and in the belief that we could prove the moral justice, the absolute justice, of our act that we have lived and hoped from the moment that our decision was made.

It is perhaps necessary to say something about the amount of the damage we caused by our fire. It exceeds two thousand pounds, we are told. It is obvious that the damage caused is frivolous compared with the harm that the successful establishment of this Bombing Range in Llŷn will cause. Actually, if it were practicable to estimate in terms of money the cost to us of the efforts we all expended in our crusade to persuade the Government to withdraw the Bombing Range, the cost of the time and labour freely given by all our fellow-workers and by Welsh religious leaders who travelled to and fro addressing protest meetings, it could be shown that the Bombing Range has already cost us very many hundreds of pounds.

But the loss that this Bombing Range, if it be not withdrawn, will cause to Wales is not a loss that can be estimated in thousands of pounds. You cannot calculate in figures the irreparable loss of a language, of purity of idiom, of a home of literature, of a tradition of rural Welsh civilisation stretching back fourteen hundred years. These things have no price. You cannot pay compensation for them. It is only in Eternity that the destruction of these things can be valued. We were compelled, therefore, to do serious damage to the Bombing

School buildings. Only serious damage could ensure that we should appear before a jury of our fellow-countrymen in a last desperate and vital effort to bring the immorality of the Government's action before the judgment of Christian Wales.

You, gentlemen of the jury, are our judges in this matter. As you have to give verdict on a case that is not only exceptional but a case that is of momentous importance. I suppose there is no previous example of the leaders of a struggle for the defence of a nation's culture against an alien and heedless State staking their freedom, their livelihood, their reputation and almost their lives, and putting themselves in the dock in order that a jury of their countrymen should judge between them and the brute power of the State. To do this is to show our trust not only in your justice as the jury, but also in your courage. We ask you to have no fear at all. The terminology of the law calls this Bombing Range "the property of the King." That means the English Government. It means these bureaucrats in the Air Ministry in London to whom Wales is a region on the map and who know nothing at all of the culture and language of Wales, but will desecrate our sanctuaries like a dog raising its hind leg at an altar.

But there is another aspect to this trial that gives it special importance. We have said from the beginning, and it was the point we emphasised in our letter to the Chief Constable of Caernarvonshire, that our action was a protest against the ruthless refusal of the English State even to discuss the rights of the Welsh nation in Llŷn. Now, everywhere in Europe today we see Governments asserting that they are above the moral law of God, that they recognise no other law but the will of the Government, and that they recognise no other power but the power of the State. These Governments claim absolute powers; they deny the rights of persons and of Moral Persons. They deny that they can be challenged by any code of morals, and they demand the absolute obedience of men. Now that is Atheism. It is the denial of God, of God's Law. It is the repudiation of the entire Christian tradition of Europe, and it is the beginning of the reign of chaos.

English Government's behaviour in the matter of the Llŷn bombing range is exactly the behaviour of this new Anti-Christ throughout Europe. And in this assize-court in Caernarvon today we, the accused in this dock, are challenging Anti-Christ. We deny the absolute power of the State-God. Here in Wales, a land that has no tradition except Christian tradition, a land that has never in all its history been pagan or atheist, we stand for the preservation of that Christian tradition and for the supremacy of the moral law over the power of materialist bureaucracy. So that whether you find us guilty or not guilty is of importance today to the future of Christian civilisation and Christian liberty and Christian justice in Europe.

If you find us guilty the World will understand that here also in Wales an English Government may destroy the moral person of a nation, may shatter the spiritual basis of that nation's life, may refuse to consider or give heed to any appeal even from the united religious leaders of the whole country, and then may use the law to punish with imprisonment the men who put those monstrous claims of Anti-Christ to the test. If you find us guilty you proclaim that the law of the English State is superior to the moral law of Christian tradition, that the will of the Government may not be challenged by any person whatsoever, and that there is no appeal possible to morality as Christians have always understood it.

If you find us guilty you proclaim the effective end of Christian principles governing the life of Wales.

On the other hand, if you find us not guilty you declare your conviction as judges in this matter that the moral law is supreme; you declare that the moral law is binding on Governments just as it is on private citizens.

You declare that "Necessity of State" gives no right to set morality aside, and you declare that justice, not material force, must rule in the affairs of nations.

We hold with unshakeable conviction that the burning of the monstrous Bombing Range in Llŷn was an act forced on us for the defence of Welsh civilisation, for the defence of Christian principles, for the maintenance of the Law of God in Wales. Nothing else was possible for us. It was the Government itself that created the situation in which we were placed, so that we had to choose either the way of cowards, and slink out of the defence of Christian tradition and morality, or we had to act as we have acted, and trust to a jury of our countrymen to declare that the Law of God is superior to every other law, and that by that law our act is just.

We ask you to be fearless. We ask you to bring in a verdict that will restore Christian principles in the realm of law, and open a new period in the history of nations and governments. We ask you to say that we are Not Guilty.

The following is the Address which
the Reverend Lewis Valentine prepared for delivery in the Court at
Caernarvon, October 13, 1936

I AM a minister of the Gospel, and I realise that I have a special responsibility for the part I took in setting fire to the Bombing School buildings at Penyberth at the beginning of September.

It was not lightly or thoughtlessly that I decided that there was on me a compelling necessity to do what was done, but rather after long and serious consideration, and it was in the fear of God that I went out that night.

The last thing I did before leaving home on that day was to take my four-year-old little girl to school for the first time, and it was natural for me to ponder what the course of her life would be, and silently I prayed that her burdens in life would not be too heavy and her path too rough, and especially that her lot would not be as sorrowful as that of the mothers of my own generation. I hoped that my own mother's sorrow would never be hers, and in motherhood that she would never have to see her sons—three of them—be compelled to leave all the tenderness and kindness of life in Wales, and dragged into the wars of the surly nations.

I would do anything to save her from the sorrow and grief which the mothers of Wales experienced during the last war.

I am proud of belonging to a nation that is peace-minded and, during her long history, has never fought a single war except in her own self-defence. She is a nation that has the will for peace, but more's the pity she has not the power to live peacefully with her neighbours in Europe, for the wars that have been were not our wars, and terrible has been the plight of Wales after each one of them.

I regard it as an all important part of my high office as Minister of the Gospel in Wales to demand for my people the

power to enforce their will of peace, and to destroy the arrogant spirit of war. I do not consider any sacrifice too great to achieve this end, for there is no more dangerous enemy to Welsh civilisation—a civilisation which is kindly and Christian.

A. This in the first place is my personal conviction. I enlisted voluntarily to fight in the last war, and in my innocence I believed the nonsense we were told that it was a war to end war. I believed that the political leaders of England were sincere in their protestations, and that the steely spirit of militarism would no longer be a part of the life and the policy of the country.

To-day, the people are terrified of war, and the leaders of the English Government are once more sounding the trumpets of war, and on every occasion possible they speak of the next war without fear or terror or responsibility, and often they speak of it as something which is bound to come and which ought to be welcomed.

B. This is not only my personal conviction, but it is also the unanimous and unshakeable conviction of the denomination to which I belong—from whose pulpits I am privileged to preach the Gospel.

Sufficient proof of this is the Resolution passed by the Baptist Union of Wales in its annual assembly at Rhosllannerchrugog in September, 1932, and that resolution has subsequently been frequently confirmed, not only by the Union itself, but by its County Associations and by individual Churches that are affiliated to it. Here is the resolution:

“That we, Ministers and Representatives of the Churches of the Baptist Union of Wales and Monmouthshire, in this our Yearly Assembly, having perceived the cruelty, the folly and the shame of War, and having observed its terrible aftermath in the present crisis of the whole world, with its economic poverty, its distress, its hatred, its hopelessness, and after serious and prayerful consideration, we declare our

definite and profound conviction that war is opposed to the teaching and example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that our clear duty as Baptists is to honour our allegiance to Him by renouncing armaments, as our fathers did in the early days of the Christian Church, and at the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.”

The Baptist tradition is one of resolute action and not one of passive resolutions, and it was a natural thing, therefore, for the foregoing resolution to contain the following significant words: “That we make it known that it is our purpose to do all in our power to prevent war.”

This attitude is not a new one in the history of my denomination, but courageously and consistently it has always opposed war as being unworthy of man's high status as a son of God, and of the splendour which the Gospels places upon him.

I believed that my denomination was in earnest when it passed this resolution so unanimously and enthusiastically, and on that morning of September the eighth, when I was privileged to participate joyfully with my friends in burning the buildings of the Bombing School, I was wholly convinced that I was acting in the spirit of this resolution, and doing the utmost in my limited power to spare my nation the hell of another war.

The standpoint of my denomination is the standpoint of Welsh Nonconformity to-day, and I have here in this court hundreds of letters from Ministers of Religion and leaders of Welsh religious life, commending my act, and rejoicing in the soundness of our interpretation of the Gospel.

But I will refer merely to the declaration of the Archdruid of Wales from the Chair of the Congregational Union at Bangor this year:

“Our purpose is to prevent the establishment of this camp (i.e., this bombing camp) by lawful methods. But if

every lawful method fails, I believe that there is sufficient will power in the Welsh nation to eliminate the bombing camp by other methods."

C. Not only is there a personal conviction and the conviction of Welsh Nonconformity, it is the clear conviction of

the Welsh nation. It is no easy thing to secure unanimity in Wales on any issue. The English Government has succeeded only too well in destroying the unity of our land, and its propagandists have achieved perfection in their craft. But in spite of that, during the last year in the Peace Ballot, almost a miraculous unanimity was secured in Wales. In that Ballot, the people of England and Scotland and Wales were asked to declare their opinion concerning war. The third of the five questions was this:

"Are you in favour of the all round abolition of national military and naval aircraft by international agreement?"

The pleasantest thing concerning this ballot was the way the churches of Wales threw themselves into the task of securing the returns. An army of supporters was secured without any difficulty to go from house to house to collect the answers to these questions—Old and middle-ages and young vying with one another to take part in the work. There was seen here in our country an uncommon enthusiasm. The peace ballot was the topic of every conversation throughout the land, at every street corner, and on every hearth, in the secular market, and in the religious Society, and it was also the burden of the prayers in our congregations.

In the County of Caernarvon, eight out of ten of the electors recorded their votes, and this county, together with Montgomeryshire and Merionethshire, Cardiganshire and Anglesey, was the highest in the whole of England, Scotland and Wales, and throughout the whole of Wales almost a million people voted for the total abolition of the use of the bombing plane in war.

The percentage in England was only 37; it was only 34 in Scotland; but in Wales it was 62 per cent. In the Lleyn Peninsula, the voting was wonderfully unanimous against the use of bombing planes.

But all this had no effect on the Rearmament Scheme of the English Government, although it boasts that it governs by the will of the people. Its only reply to this noble declaration of the people's will for peace was to make known its plans to build a bombing school here—HERE in the County of Caernarvon that had so ardently declared its opposition to war preparations—HERE, where the desire for peace is strongest—to plant HERE of all places the foulest and the cruellest form of armament—a form which makes even the Prime Minister of England physically sick when he thinks of it.

"The air armies will be the most important in the next war," said Saunders Lewis, "and the chief aim of bombing planes will be to destroy cities, to burn them and poison them, to turn the civilisation of centuries into ashes, to throw down from the security of the air the cruellest death on women and children and defenceless men, and to make secure, if any should escape with their lives, that there be no food to sustain them, and no hearth to keep them alive."

And the holy ground of Lleyn is to be used to discipline and train men for this vile and godless work, and in the wake of this evil thing, there will come to Lleyn all the corruptions and depravities which usually are associated with a military camp.

In this court, to-day, is heard the history of the remarkable protest that the Welsh nation made against this abomination. No cost was counted, we spared neither energy or strength, but sacrificed our leisure and comfort, in order to prevent this evil in every legitimate way, but the English Government was dumb and deaf to every appeal.

There remained to us a choice of two methods:

One choice was to be silent, and say "We have done everything in our power—this evil thing must prevail—we can only look sadly and helplessly at the Government proceeding with its fell scheme contrary to the wishes of the religious people of the country—contrary to the will of the nation."

In an old book, universally revered, but seldom read, is the story of another small nation in serious straits, and the story of one who was raised to a high position, and an appeal was made to her to save her people in these words:

"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall perish."

Alas, we had no hopes of relief or deliverance from another place, and we could not hold our peace.

This was the position—we dared not hold our peace—if we kept silent, life would not be worth a straw for us. It would be a betrayal of our children's heritage of peace, and life would be a shameful thing for us, and we would deserve the just contempt of our contemporaries, and the contempt of generations yet unborn, and to every healthy man a short life on the side of truth is better than a long life allied with shame. To be silent was the one thing we could not be.

Therefore, we had to continue our protest, and since every courteous and legitimate protest had failed, any further protest would have to be in a manner that would be considered illegal.

We were faced by a great MUST—the greatest MUST of all—the MUST of Conscience. In the name of Christianity and in the name of our nation, conscience urged us compellingly to do what might be considered the breaking of the law of the land, and in the name of our Christianity and of our nation,

and thus urged on by our conscience, we did that in order to obey a greater law than the law of England.

We define our Christianity and Nationalism in terms of responsibility, and the measure of our responsibility to this nation of ours is the measure of our responsibility to God, for we believe with Emrys-ap-Iwan, and with all the great theologians of the Church, that God, who made men, ordained nations also, and the destruction of a nation is almost as great a crime as the destruction of the human race itself would be.

The establishment of this Bombing School in Lleyn would make imminent the death of our nation, and this we cannot endure, for the nation is sacred and holy, it is the instrument of the Kingdom of God, and, therefore, every fight waged for its life is a just fight.

This is not the isolated faith of a few opinionated men. In 1923 was published "Welsh in Education and Life"—the report of the Departmental Committee appointed by the President of the Board of Education. On that committee sat principals of various colleges, including the Principal of the college of the Church in Wales, and the Principal of a Congregational College, and the Chairman of that committee was the most beloved of Welsh Bishops, the late Bishop of St. David. They also maintained the faith which we hold, for they unanimously subscribed to these pregnant words:

"A nation's individuality is its birthright. War or conquest may overcome it; a foreign culture may overflow it; the influx of strangers may weaken it; and yet that nation is fighting for its life, *and that fight is a just one.*"

Our fight is also against this evil thing that endangers the very existence of our nation, and our fight is just. It was my responsibility for the Kingdom of God in Wales that urged me to strike a blow for Wales in this act, for there is a higher law than the law of an English State, and our allegiance to

Christianity is an infinitely higher thing than our allegiance to the laws of England. A man's supreme loyalty is to God, and when a State seeks to dislodge God, and by doing so, set at nought the judgment and conscience of men, when the state tramples the moral rights of a nation that it has conquered, then to a man who has a vestige of self-respect, be the cost what it may, there remains only the duty of challenging that state by what might be considered an unlawful act.

And because I believe that obedience to God comes before obedience to men, I now stand my trial in this court.

But my nation has already judged me; my fellow Christians in Wales have already passed sentence on me. I have spent the last three weeks travelling from place to place in North and South Wales, preaching at the anniversary services of our churches. Not a single Church requested me to cancel my engagement, but rather urged me to keep them, and my own Church beseeched me to continue to preach to them. I was given a reception greater than that given to a prince or a king—I was welcomed as a prophet of God—they approved my action—they gave me their blessing, and, to-day, as this court considers its verdict, their prayers are a wall of defence to me and an encouragement, and, therefore, I ask you also to declare the verdict of my fellow-countrymen, that I am not guilty.

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