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978-1-107-16245-7 - Parliament and Politics in the Age of Asquith and Lloyd George:  
The Diaries of Cecil Harmsworth, MP, 1909–1922: Camden Fifth Series: Volume 50

Edited by Andrew Thorpe and Richard Toye

Excerpt

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## INTRODUCTION

Cecil Bisshop Harmsworth (1869–1948) was the third brother of a large, famous and influential family. His elder siblings were Alfred Charles William Harmsworth and Harold Sidney Harmsworth. These two self-made men – Lords Northcliffe and Rothermere, as they became – were amongst the most powerful and notorious press proprietors of their age. Both of them, Alfred especially, were brilliant and energetic, but they were not exactly well liked. By contrast, Cecil was an able person who had, by normal standards, a successful career as a Liberal MP and junior minister, and yet never acquired – and indeed never aspired to attain – the high profile of his brothers. If he was overshadowed, though, he had an important gift that they lacked: ‘a genius for friendship’.<sup>1</sup> It is related that, before he was elected to Parliament, Cecil was invited to the terrace of the House of Commons and made a very good impression on those he met. Supposedly, Northcliffe, when informed of this by one of his journalists, replied sardonically: ‘Oh, I understand. They were delighted to meet a human Harmsworth’.<sup>2</sup>

To the degree that Cecil Harmsworth is remembered today, it is as a walk-on player in his brothers’ lives. This does him scant justice, although it is true that a sense of promise unfulfilled hangs over his career. As the former MP J.M. Kenworthy (later Lord Strabolgi) recalled in 1933, he had been ‘an able administrator and politician, very popular with all parties, and [he] should have gone far in the public life of this country. His retirement from Parliament has been a great loss’.<sup>3</sup> Elected to the Commons for the first time in 1906 Harmsworth developed a reputation as a capable but unflashy speaker: ‘a shrewd hand in a debate, level-headed in his opinions, who never spoke without a real knowledge of the subject under discussion’.<sup>4</sup> Having secured minor office early in the Great War, he became a member of David Lloyd George’s personal secretariat after the latter displaced H.H. Asquith as Prime Minister in 1916. The following year,

<sup>1</sup>‘Death of Lord Harmsworth’, *Daily Mail*, 14 Aug. 1948.

<sup>2</sup>‘Pleasure and Problem in South Africa’, *Otago Witness*, 4 Nov. 1908.

<sup>3</sup>J.M. Kenworthy, *Sailors, Statesmen and Others: An Autobiography* (London: Rich Cowan, 1933), 184.

<sup>4</sup>‘Obituary: Lord Harmsworth’, *Manchester Guardian*, 14 Aug. 1948.

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Lloyd George offered him the post of Coalition Liberal Chief Whip. He declined because he knew that the position involved the sale of honours to raise party funds, which caused him disquiet. After the war he became Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the post-war Coalition government, an office of considerable importance during the period (after 1919) when the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, was in the Upper House and thus not available to deal with government business in the Commons. He retired voluntarily as an MP in 1922, although it is quite possible that had he chosen to fight the general election of that year he would have lost his seat. Although created first Lord Harmsworth in 1939, he failed to make much of an impression in the House of Lords. Nevertheless, in the later part of his life he played a role as a public benefactor. His successful efforts to preserve Dr Johnson's house in Gough Square, London, for the nation form his enduring memorial.

Harmsworth's significance also lies in his role as a diarist. He was well connected, within both British and Irish society. Like all MPs, moreover, he sat at the nexus of high and low politics, simultaneously involved in the world of elite political manoeuvre and the retail zone of workaday constituency life. Harmsworth was an obsessive angler and the diary began as a record of his fishing. However, as the constitutional crisis developed in 1909 the entries became increasingly political. The diary forms a highly readable record of the politics of the period, detailing late-night Commons sittings and the rough-and-tumble of the campaign trail as well as giving skilful pen-portraits of the major figures of the day. Above all, it illuminates social and political culture in the age of Asquith and Lloyd George, being as valuable for its detail on the minutiae of campaigning as for the new light it casts on well-known episodes and individuals. He may have lacked the ambition to make it to the front rank of politics, but in his diary Harmsworth bequeathed to posterity both a valuable historical source and a fascinating document.

Cecil was the third son and fourth child of Alfred Harmsworth (1838–1889) and Geraldine Mary Maffett (1838–1925). Alfred was a barrister, Geraldine, the daughter of a County Down land agent. They started married life in Dublin but moved to London in 1867. They had eight boys and three girls who survived into adulthood (three further children died in infancy). Consequently, the family was usually short of money. Alfred and Geraldine's eldest son, also named Alfred (1865–1922), established the family firm in magazines and newspapers, founded the *Daily Mail* in 1896, received a peerage as Lord Northcliffe in 1905, and took over *The Times* in 1908. The second son, Harold (1868–1940), a key figure in the creation of the family media empire, was created Lord Rothermere in 1914 and took over the *Mail* after

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Northcliffe's death. Next came Cecil, followed by Leicester (1870–1937), who was also important in the development of the family firm and sat as a Liberal MP. Together, these four brothers were the weighty figures of the family: Paul Ferris refers to them, rather disparagingly, as 'the "heavies"': 'They were solid, dignified men with polished motor cars, their waists growing thicker and their vehicles getting bigger with the years.'<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, the fifth son, Hildebrand (1872–1929), was a louche figure, notorious for playing billiards in office hours and enjoying a somewhat hedonistic lifestyle. The three remaining sons, none of whom played a part in the business, were Charles (1874–1942), who lived as a reclusive invalid in Sussex, well supported by his brothers' finances;<sup>6</sup> the sporty St John (1876–1933) who, among other things, had an affair with Rothermere's wife;<sup>7</sup> and Vyvyan (1881–1957), who lived his life as a gentleman farmer in Sussex.<sup>8</sup> The daughters were the second child, the younger Geraldine (1866–1945) whose son, Cecil King (named after his eponymous uncle) would go on to be a major media figure in his own right; Violet (1873–1961); and Christabel (1880–1967). Geraldine Harmsworth, who bore fourteen children in twenty years, was a true matriarch, who held the family together, particularly after the death of her husband in 1889. The size of the family can be illustrated by the fact that by 1939 there would be five living Lady Harmsworths (the widows of Leicester and Hildebrand, as well as the wives of Cecil, Sir Alfred (son of Leicester) and Sir Hildebrand junior.<sup>9</sup> The Maffett family was also large, Geraldine being one of eight children. Overall, the extended family was huge (Geraldine had no fewer than forty-one grandchildren), but they were also close, with the elder Geraldine and the younger Alfred (Northcliffe), in their different ways, asserting considerable claims to primacy, which were, to a large extent, accepted by the rest.

Cecil Harmsworth was born in Hampstead, London, in 1869. He attended a prep school run by 'the Miss Budds' and subsequently the Philological School in Marylebone Road, London (later called the St Marylebone Grammar School), together with his brother Harold. Of

<sup>5</sup>Paul Ferris, *The House of Northcliffe: The Harmsworths of Fleet Street* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 90.

<sup>6</sup>Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe*, (London: Cassell, 1959), 229, 773; Ferris, *House of Northcliffe*, 22, describes him as 'mentally subnormal'.

<sup>7</sup>D.G. Boyce, 'Harmsworth, Harold Sidney, first Viscount Rothermere (1868–1940)', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33718/33718?back=.33717,33718,33717> (accessed 18 Feb. 2014). This information is not included in Cecil, Baron Harmsworth, *St John Harmsworth: A Brave Life, 1876–1932* (Tonbridge: privately printed, 1949).

<sup>8</sup>Pound and Harmsworth, *Northcliffe*, 229.

<sup>9</sup>Ferris, *House of Northcliffe*, 303.

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one or two masters he had kindly memories, but principally he recalled with resentment ‘the odious practice of summoning from class, in the loud voice of the school porter, the embarrassed urchins (myself sometimes among them) whose fees were in arrears’. He entered Trinity College, Dublin (TCD) in 1887, where his studies were to be sponsored by a long-standing friend of his father, George Robinson, and where his uncle-by-marriage Albert Maximilian Selss, Professor of German, allowed him free use of his rooms.<sup>10</sup> It was only after his father died in 1889 that the Harmsworth press empire really took off; from that point onwards Cecil never had any financial worries. For two years he studied theology, with a view to training for the Church. Two TCD figures who had a particular influence on him were the Revd Dr John Gwynn, the Regius Professor of Divinity, and Dr John Bernard, who would later become Archbishop of Dublin during a crucial phase of the Irish struggle for independence. Harmsworth, however, abandoned his plan of a religious career after experiencing a spiritual-intellectual crisis. As he recalled in some autobiographical reflections written during the First World War, he was unable to accept the Thirty-Nine Articles. ‘I awoke suddenly to the disturbing realisation that I had all sorts of speculative views about them and about other things too that however permissible in the case of laymen were scarcely compatible with taking Holy Orders’, he wrote. ‘This was a dark and troubled time and I will not dwell on it.’ He did, nonetheless, retain a ‘nebulous’ religious faith which was clearly important to him, although he felt little compulsion to discuss it with others. ‘In a sort of way that I cannot define I have always been a clergyman at heart and my best and dearest friends have been and are still clergymen’, he avowed.<sup>11</sup>

Harmsworth’s TCD years were a formative experience and his existing family connections with Ireland were reinforced by his marriage in 1897 to Emilie Maffett (1873–1942). ‘Em’, as she was known, was Cecil’s first cousin. She was the daughter of his mother’s brother, the barrister William Hamilton Maffett of Finglas, County Dublin. The moderate Protestant circles in which he moved were far distant from die-hard Unionism. He was sympathetic to Irish national aspirations and understood the resentment caused by ‘the blockheads of Dublin Castle’, the seat of British administration in Ireland.<sup>12</sup> His connections with Bernard, and with the agricultural reformer Horace Plunkett and other liberal-minded Unionists, were to prove useful

<sup>10</sup>Cecil Bishopp Harmsworth (henceforward CBH), ‘Lord N. and other Harmsworth memorials’, unpublished MS, mid 1930s. Unless otherwise stated, all documents cited are part of the Cecil Harmsworth Papers, University of Exeter Special Collections.

<sup>11</sup>CBH, autobiographical notes, 1917, in diary volume for 1900.

<sup>12</sup>CBH, note of Oct. 1936 attached to diary of 19 Sept. 1911.

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to him when he was involved in the British government's efforts to secure a political settlement in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. Although a peaceful solution remained elusive, the existence of this non-doctrinaire elite Protestant milieu is illustrative of the complexities of Irish society in the revolutionary era. Harmsworth's own role in these networks also casts significant light on the Anglo-Irish political world.

After leaving Dublin, Harmsworth went into the burgeoning family business, under Alfred's tutelage. He recalled these as 'days of happy memories, days of youth and dawning success'.<sup>13</sup> He appears to have been roped in to help with anything, including dealing with the mass of entries generated by a competition in *Answers* in 1889.<sup>14</sup> The 1891 census lists him as living with his widowed mother and seven of his siblings (including Harold, but not Alfred) in Maida Vale, London. His occupation was given as 'Journalist/Author'. In 1895 he passed a Bar exam but seems to have taken the Law no further.<sup>15</sup> Harmsworth Brothers Ltd. was incorporated in 1896, bringing together the existing Harmsworth publishing interests; each brother was allocated a shareholding according to family seniority, giving Cecil the third largest stake. He was described as the firm's 'literary editor'.<sup>16</sup> He insisted later that in spite of the Northcliffe legend, 'others of the brothers contributed largely if not essentially to the success of the firm'. He acknowledged, however, that he himself lacked 'the instinctive sense for news or the sleepless interest in the passing events of the day that are essential elements in the make-up of the true journalist'.<sup>17</sup> He edited *Answers* and, notionally, all the firm's other publications too. In 1898 he became the first editor of the monthly *Harmsworth Magazine*, which published middlebrow popular fiction.<sup>18</sup> 'Its production should greatly increase the prestige of our business,' Alfred advised him.<sup>19</sup> It was a tremendous commercial success, the first issue selling around 800,000 copies. Cecil retained the role until circa 1902, although he probably delegated much of the work as his political interests grew.<sup>20</sup> Afterwards, he maintained a

<sup>13</sup>CBH, 'Lord N. and other Harmsworth memorials'.

<sup>14</sup>J. Lee Thompson, *Northcliffe: Press Baron in Politics 1865–1922* (London: John Murray, 2000), 13.

<sup>15</sup>'Council of Legal Education', *The Times*, 24 Apr. 1895.

<sup>16</sup>'Harmsworth Brothers, Limited', *The Times*, 19 Oct. 1896; 'The Harmsworths and their publications', *The Bookman*, Dec. 1897.

<sup>17</sup>CBH, 'Lord N. and other Harmsworth memorials'.

<sup>18</sup>Sue Thomas, *Indexes to Fiction in the Harmsworth Magazine, later, The London Magazine (1898–1915)*, Victorian Fiction Research Guides X (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1984), 9.

<sup>19</sup>Pound and Harmsworth, *Northcliffe*, 236.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas, *Indexes to Fiction*, 9.

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degree of involvement in the family business – notably as Chairman of Associated Newspapers Ltd., founded in 1905 – although it is hard to discern exactly how active he was.

In September 1899, Harmsworth was adopted as Liberal candidate for Mid-Worcestershire.<sup>21</sup> The next month, the second Boer War started. The conflict created major divisions within the Liberal Party, which was already struggling to find an ideological direction in the post-Gladstone era and which was confronted by a dominant Conservative/Unionist government under Lord Salisbury. Harmsworth associated himself with the Liberal Imperialists, led by former Prime Minister Lord Rosebery, who supported the war. He feared that unless the Liberal Party adopted ‘an unmistakeably patriotic tone’ it would face electoral annihilation.<sup>22</sup> In response to accusations of factionalism, he denied that the Liberal Imperialists constituted a ‘group’ or ‘section’. Rather: ‘They desire merely to bring the other members of the Liberal Party into the mainstream of political thought as it affects imperial concerns.’<sup>23</sup> At the general election of 1900, his opponent was the sitting Liberal Unionist MP R. Biddulph Martin, who had strong backing from the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, and his Birmingham political machine. While supporting the war in principle, Harmsworth criticised the government’s conduct of it, which he argued had led to ‘a great deal of avoidable suffering’.<sup>24</sup> He was forced to deny claims that he was a pro-Boer, but could at least rely on the *Daily Mail* to pour scorn on such charges.<sup>25</sup> (He later recalled that whenever he stood for election Northcliffe always sent a fleet of cars to help ‘and awaited the result with anxious interest’.<sup>26</sup>) An adept baby-kisser and a prolific speaker, he proved a very popular candidate, but, in the face of a pro-government landslide, he was defeated by 268 votes.

The following year, Harmsworth fought a by-election in North-East Lanarkshire, which occurred due to the death of the sitting Liberal MP. He urged a speedy and honourable end to the war, and advocated a range of policies that included a Catholic university in Ireland, an eight-hour day for miners and better houses for the poor.<sup>27</sup> According to the anti-war *Manchester Guardian*, his selection was a disappointment to local Liberals, who found his opinions too

<sup>21</sup> *Daily Mail*, 9 Sept. 1899.

<sup>22</sup> Diary for 1 Mar. 1900.

<sup>23</sup> CBH to the editor of the *Daily Mail*, published 5 Sept. 1900.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Mr. Cecil B. Harmsworth at Wollescote’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 Sept. 1900.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Election items’, *Daily Mail*, 9 Oct. 1900; ‘Meeting at Hanbury’, *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 13 Oct. 1900.

<sup>26</sup> CBH, ‘Lord N. and other Harmsworth memorials’.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Lanark campaign opened’, *Daily Mail*, 5 Sept. 1901.

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mild and indeed scarcely distinguishable from those of Sir William Rattigan, his Liberal Unionist opponent.<sup>28</sup> He was also damaged in the eyes of some by his association with the *Daily Mail*, which was seen as the epitome of distorted anti-Liberal journalism.<sup>29</sup> His chances were further prejudiced by the candidature of the trade unionist and socialist Robert Smillie. The United Irish League of Great Britain urged Irish nationalist voters in the constituency to vote for the latter rather than Harmsworth, who opposed Home Rule on the Gladstonian model, although he did strongly favour a more moderate measure of self-rule.<sup>30</sup> Rattigan polled 5,673 votes, Harmsworth 4,769 and Smillie 2,900. In an uncharacteristically bitter letter to *The Times*, Harmsworth blamed his defeat partly on the ‘treachery’ of Liberal MPs who had supported Smillie in opposition to his own official candidacy.<sup>31</sup> The setback was minor: he was quickly invited to stand again for Mid-Worcestershire, the seat that he would fight successfully at the next election.<sup>32</sup>

In the same year that he fought North-East Lanarkshire, Harmsworth founded the *New Liberal Review*, which he edited together with Hildebrand Harmsworth, the fifth of the brothers. In one of his rare entries before he started to keep a diary systematically Cecil recorded a visit to the Liberal elder statesman Sir Charles Dilke to discuss an article on the war, which in due course appeared in the first issue.<sup>33</sup> The *Review*’s aim was to ‘clearly and faithfully reflect the best Liberal thought of the day’, and it presented itself as pragmatic and non-sectarian.<sup>34</sup> However, the reception of the first number was mixed. ‘It is put forth as an attempt to produce a 2s. 6d. review for 1s’, observed the *Review of Reviews* caustically. ‘It would be more accurate to describe it as an attempt to sell a sixpenny magazine for 1s. by eliminating the illustrations.’<sup>35</sup> *The Academy* was more generous, seeing it as ‘a capital shilling’s worth of opinion and criticism’.<sup>36</sup> Although the *Review* did have a Liberal Imperialist tinge, it attracted an impressive and eclectic range of contributors from well beyond the ranks of that group, including Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Irish nationalist leader John Redmond. Nevertheless, it survived only until 1904, presumably because it had failed to secure sufficient circulation.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Our London correspondence’, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Sept. 1901.

<sup>29</sup> ‘The Lanarkshire election’, *The Speaker*, 14 Sept. 1901.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Lanark election’, *Daily Mail*, 6 Sept. 1901.

<sup>31</sup> CBH to the editor of *The Times*, published 3 Oct. 1901.

<sup>32</sup> *Daily Mail*, 18 Nov. 1901.

<sup>33</sup> Diary for 29 Aug. 1900.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Introduction’, *The New Liberal Review*, 1, 1 (Feb. 1901).

<sup>35</sup> ‘The New Liberal Review’, *Review of Reviews*, Jan. 1901.

<sup>36</sup> ‘The literary week’, *The Academy*, 9 Feb. 1901.



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Em and Cecil's first child, also called Cecil, was born in March 1898, but he died in February 1899. A daughter, Stella, followed in August 1899, but she lived for only two months. Three further children survived infancy: Daphne Cecil Rosemary (1901–1993), Cecil Desmond Bernard (1903–1990) and Eric Beauchamp Northcliffe (1905–1988). Em struggled for acceptance but appears to have been roundly disliked by both Geraldines: Cecil King's much later account of his family would repeat suggestions that the deaths of the first two children were in some way Em's fault.<sup>37</sup> It does seem likely that the tenderness that Cecil Harmsworth felt for his last three children was intensified by the loss of the first two. A notable feature of his diary, which cannot be fully reflected in an edition which focuses on politics, is his description of family life. He was no stern and forbidding paterfamilias but rather a doting father who was actively involved with the upbringing of his offspring. Although the pace of political life was much slower in the Edwardian period than today, it is clear that Harmsworth found it exhausting and was glad, whenever he could, to relax in the bosom of his family. He had a strong sense of public duty but no great relish for politics as an activity. Nevertheless, it was the life to which he committed himself when he entered Parliament on the back of the sweeping Liberal victory of 1906.

As noted above, Harmsworth's failure to win North-East Lanarkshire had been followed by his re-adoption as prospective Liberal candidate for the Mid-Worcestershire, or Droitwich, constituency. Proximity to the Chamberlainite stronghold of Birmingham had hit Worcestershire Liberalism hard, and Droitwich had been a Liberal Unionist seat since the schism of 1886; successive Liberal challengers had failed to wrest it from the MPs John Corbett and Richard Martin, and in 1895 Martin had even been re-elected unopposed. The only Liberal success in the county's seven constituencies between 1886 and 1905 came in the Northern division, in Gladstone's last victory of 1892. However, this should not mask the varied nature of the county. In particular, the Northern and Mid-Worcestershire constituencies contained significant amounts of industry, and were in effect a kind of outer ring of the Black Country.<sup>38</sup> In Mid-Worcestershire, heavy industry in Stourbridge and carpet weaving at Stourport were particularly important, and gave the constituency a substantial body of working-class voters, although

<sup>37</sup> Cecil H. King, *Strictly Personal* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969), 80–81.

<sup>38</sup> Henry Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections, 1885–1910* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 197; Richard H. Trainor, *Black Country Elites: The Exercise of Authority in an Industrialized Area, 1830–1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1–4.



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middle-class and agricultural voters were also important.<sup>39</sup> It was not a hopeless seat for the Liberals, and Harmsworth had done well in 1900 to cut Martin's majority to only 3.4% of the votes cast.

The circumstances of 1906 were more favourable to the Liberals locally and nationally. Martin retired ahead of the election, and squabbles on the Unionist side led to a Conservative, E.A. Knight, rather than a Liberal Unionist, opposing Harmsworth. There seems little doubt that this cost the Unionists votes they could ill afford to lose. Harmsworth fought a campaign that drew heavily on the issues that would carry the Liberals to a sweeping victory nationally: there was little that was obviously 'New Liberal' about his stance. In his election address, free trade took pride of place, and was followed by a pledge to support national economy, in the belief that 'The best guarantee for flourishing industry and full employment [was] a careful and economical Government.' He called for the bringing of 'the culprits in [Boer] war scandals to justice'. He also denounced Chinese indentured labour in South Africa, and called for educational reform and a series of other changes, including the rating of land values, the reversal of the Taff Vale decision, and housing and temperance reform. On Ireland, though, his earlier enthusiasm for Chamberlain was combined with a canny reassurance to potential local Unionist defectors: he pledged that he would not see a Liberal victory as a mandate for the introduction of Home Rule, and that the introduction of same would need 'a special appeal to the country' – that is, a further general election.<sup>40</sup> Harmsworth won the seat, taking 5,165 votes (52.8%) to his opponent's 4,611 (47.2%), a majority of 554 votes (5.6%). Nationally, the Liberals won a landslide, with 399 seats to the Conservative and Liberal Unionists' 156. The Liberal government of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was now in an exceptionally strong parliamentary position, especially because the 82 Irish nationalist and 29 Labour MPs could normally be expected to support it too.

In the autumn of 1907, Harmsworth took advantage of the fact that there was no autumn session of Parliament – which was itself indicative of the more relaxed pace of political life in those days – to travel to South Africa. The trip resulted in the publication of a travelogue, *Pleasure and Problem in South Africa* (1908), which also contained some political observations. Harmsworth was insistent that politicians and officials in London should leave the 'native problem' to their white fellow-subjects on the ground. 'The native in the town constitutes one of the gravest social problems in South Africa to-day', Harmsworth opined. 'Certainly it is the close contact between the two races in

<sup>39</sup> Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections*, 196.

<sup>40</sup> Cecil Harmsworth, election address, 4 Jan. 1906.

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the towns that is accountable for the largest part of dangerous racial prejudice.<sup>41</sup> It may seem bizarre that he argued for separation of the races in the same breath as he deplored racial prejudice. However, his views were perfectly conventional for the time. The *Times Literary Supplement's* reviewer scathingly commented that there was little in his account of South African problems that could not have been derived from a study of government Blue Books. At the same time, 'though we think that on most of these questions he gives a fair statement of the points at issue, we have not discovered a single suggestion which has not appeared in several of our English newspapers'.<sup>42</sup>

On the whole, at this time, Harmsworth was more focused on domestic affairs than foreign and imperial ones. The Liberal government of 1906 was, in many ways, a successful reforming administration. But the winter of 1908–1909 saw high levels of unemployment in industrial areas, while the government's dilemmas over public expenditure and how to balance demands for rearmament with those for greater social expenditure created real difficulties. When Asquith replaced Campbell-Bannerman on the latter's retirement in 1908, he was in turn replaced as Chancellor of the Exchequer by Lloyd George. Lloyd George's 1909 budget contained provisions, such as a land valuation ahead of a likely land tax, that were seen as particularly objectionable by many Unionists. The result was the unprecedented rejection of the budget by a House of Lords which had already obstructed significant parts of the government's programme; this, in turn, led to an intensification of radical demands for a reduction in the Lords' powers. This demand figured large in the Liberal and Labour campaigns at the general election that followed in January 1910. However, the Unionists recovered well from their 1906 disaster, helped by economic difficulties and some disillusionment with the failure of the Liberal government to fulfil its pledges in a number of areas, such as education. The Liberals fell back to 274 seats, as against 272 for the Unionists; the 82 Irish and 40 Labour MPs would keep the Liberals in power, but a third of the Liberal MPs had lost their seats. The election was taken as a mandate to pass the budget, but the failure of attempts at compromise meant that a further election had to be held in December 1910 to get a mandate for House of Lords reform; the Liberals came back with 272 seats, the Unionists with 271, the Irish with 84 and Labour with 42.

One of those defeated in January 1910 was Harmsworth. He had been a conscientious constituency MP, by the standards of the time, and had been an assiduous parliamentary performer. However,

<sup>41</sup> Cecil Harmsworth, *Pleasure and Problem in South Africa* (London: J. Lane, 1908), 143.

<sup>42</sup> Review of *Pleasure and Problem in South Africa*, in *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 May 1908.