

debates the Government regarded us as utterly negligible, and our attacks merely gave them an opportunity of expressing their extreme views. Neither Asquith and Grey nor Lloyd George and Balfour paid the smallest attention to what we said. This of course does not mean that we should not have gained great parliamentary strength had circumstances turned in another direction. Because throughout our arguments were listened to by the House as a whole with patience and often with attention.

Had there been an unequivocal declaration from the German Government on the subject of Belgium — that undoubtedly would have strengthened our position enormously. The whole Lansdowne movement would have been infinitely larger and more effective and (taking this point quite by itself) it might have been the turning point; and the weight of opinion by the end of 1917 of those who were tired of the war would have almost forced the Government to respond favourably to advances from Germany.

But a declaration with regard to Belgium is not the only consideration that must be taken into account. The military situation was really the governing factor throughout. I believe there were moments of deadlock of which advantage might have been taken, but there were far more moments of success or failure on one side or the other, and these moments were very unfavourable for any hopes of negotiation. The soldiers kept silent on the subject of policy, they never indulged in the foolish and provocative outbursts of politicians, but behind the scenes their control was paramount... I do not at all agree that Lloyd George was "always a hopeless case". But I am not certain that an unequivocal declaration on Belgium at the end of 1917 would have been necessarily successful. It certainly would have brought round a very large section of moderate opinion and tired and exhausted sections of the people, but as to whether it would have been sufficient to overcome not only the determined generals and their militarist supporters but opinion in France (for France did not care two straws about Belgium) is doubtful. At the same time it would have produced a division of opinion and this would have made the vigorous prosecution of the war much more difficult for the Government, who might therefore have been inclined to listen to reason.

I have dealt solely with the point about Belgium, because I think that is the only one about which I am doubtful.