

Major Gwilym Lloyd-George
As Minister Of Fuel And Power, 1942–1945

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Among the papers of A. J. Sylvester (1889–1989), Principal Private Secretary to David Lloyd George from 1923 until 1945, purchased by the National Library of Wales in 1990, are two documents of considerable interest, both dating from December 1943, relating to Major Gwilym Lloyd-George, the independent Liberal Member for the Pembrokeshire constituency and the second son of David and Dame Margaret Lloyd George. At the time, Gwilym Lloyd-George was serving as the generally highly-regarded Minister for Fuel and Power in the wartime coalition government led by Winston Churchill. The first is a letter, probably written by David Serpell, who then held the position of private secretary to Lloyd-George at the Ministry of Fuel and Power (and who was a warm admirer of him), to A. J. Sylvester.¹ It reads as follows:

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

4 December, 1943

Dear A. J.,

I am afraid I did not get much time for thought yesterday, but I have now been able to give some time to the character study you spoke to me about ...

The outstanding thing in [Gwilym] L.L.G.'s character seems to me to be that he is genuinely humane – i.e. he generally has a clear picture in his mind of the effects of his policies on the individual. In the end, this characteristic will always over-shadow others when he is determining policy. To some extent, it causes difficulty as he looks at a subject, not merely as a Minister of Fuel and Power, but as a Minister of the Crown, and thus sees another Minister's point of view more readily perhaps than that Minister will see his.

He is, as you will know, a hard worker and can interest himself in almost anything, even in this very special field of fuel and power.

He is not, I think, really concerned about his personal position; he is not an adherent to the belief in the infallibility of Ministers! He is very approachable and dislikes forms and rules of precedence.

He has, of course, a grand sense of humour, though this Ministry does not give him the same opportunities of showing it in the House as he had when he was at the Ministry of Food.

I think the most heinous offence which can be committed, in his eyes, is disloyalty. The best summing up of L.L.G. that I know was

¹ *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* (London, 1944), p. 520.

uttered by one of my friends and colleagues here a little while ago. It was ‘If you scratch Ll. G., you will always find a principle.’

Yours ever,

David.²

Clearly, the letter was written in response to a request from Sylvester for a brief ‘character study’ of Gwilym Lloyd-George. Four days later, Sylvester made use of this material when drafting a tribute to Lloyd-George:

To his friends Major The Rt. Hon. Gwilym Lloyd George is affectionately known as ‘Gwilym’, or ‘G’, or ‘Gil’. His outstanding gifts are, first, that of an understanding of human nature, and the other, an abundance of sound common sense coupled with the great gift of humour.

He was born on December 4, 1894, into a good radical home, in the small town of Criccieth in North Wales. Both his paternal and maternal forbears came from agricultural stock. On his Mother’s side he is descended from the famous Owen Glyndŵr. His mother tongue was Welsh, but he had the advantage of being brought up to be bilingual. He was a home-loving boy, devoted to his parents: he never changed. Great indeed was the joy whenever he returned to the Criccieth home to see his parents and to associate with his old playmates with whom he has never lost touch.

He was educated at Eastbourne College, and went from there to Jesus College, Oxford. Unfortunately (or was it fortunately?) his university career was interrupted by the Great War. He volunteered for the Army and saw active service in France as a gunner and Major of his Battery until the end of the War.

In 1922 he was returned as Liberal Member for Pembrokeshire – much to the delight of his parents. If he has tasted success, he has also experienced setbacks – and he knows how to take them. In 1924 he lost Pembroke, and was out of Parliament for 5 years, being returned in 1929, where he has remained ever since. In all his ups and downs he has had the help, the sympathy, and the inspiration of an attractive wife, who has endeared herself to all.

The influence of his early home life has stood him in good stead in later years. He has a gift for making friendships. He is a good mixer. Thus, he is a favourite alike in the Inner Lobby, the Smoke Room and the Chamber of the House of Commons. He would be equally at home in the mansion of the mighty, or in the humble home of a Criccieth pal. There is no ‘side’ about Gwilym Lloyd George. He is keen on sport. In more normal times his happiest

2 National Library of Wales, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file B43, David [Serpell] to Sylvester, 4 December 1943.

moments are those spent in a small fishing boat off Criccieth or Pembroke with some of his 'cronies'; or when playing cricket for his old school at Eastbourne, or at Lords. Or when at a shoot. Or when playing golf. Last, but not least, in the privacy of his family and friends, when acting or impersonating. The stage can never gauge its loss! During the last War he met an Australian. 'What's your name?' asked the Australian. 'Lloyd George,' replied he drily. The Australian roared with laughter, and thought it was a great joke. 'What's yours?' asked Gwilym Lloyd George. 'George Vth,' replied the Australian.

It is not always easy to be the son of so very distinguished a father; people expect so much; sometimes too much, of the son. From the first moment Gwilym Lloyd George entered public life he showed great commonsense in not trying to emulate his father, either in style of speaking or action. He realised that it was no use his trying to wear his father's breeches, because he knew they would not fit! Physically and temperamentally father and son are totally different. In two things in particular, however, does he resemble his father: the first is his sympathy for the underdog, and the other his courage when it is most needed. It is no secret that, when Lord Woolton recently became Minister of Reconstruction, the Prime Minister offered the position of Minister of Food to Gwilym Lloyd George. But he is no quitter in times of difficulty and he chose to remain at the Ministry of Fuel and Power. Also, in 1931, at a time when he was one of the best exponents of the Free Trade doctrine in the Liberal party, only a few months after he had first set foot on the ministerial ladder as Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Trade, he resigned the position on a question of high principle because he disagreed with the policy of the Government of the day.

At the commencement of this war he joined the London Welsh Regiment as a Major, and only left when he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to Lord Woolton at the Ministry of Food – a position he filled with outstanding success and distinction. This position bristled with Parliamentary difficulties. As his big figure stood at the Table of the House of Commons, his personality and manner were pleasing: his voice (so important a factor in Parliamentary life) was soft and kindly: he wanted to be helpful. Whilst he was never discourteous or aggressive even to his strongest critics, he knew when and how to be firm, though his firmness was wrapped up in the velvet of wit and humour. If ever he could, or can, be criticised, it is when, in his easy conversational style, he so lowers his voice at times that he becomes inaudible except to a few.

Today, as the first Minister of Fuel and Power, he has one of the most difficult tasks in the Government, – and as the Prime Minister recently said, a thankless one. His appointment to this Ministry met with the unanimous approval of all parties. The Coal Industry is a

most sensitive one. Everybody today knows of the difficulties which exist in raising coal, and the vital need for increased production. Through his personal contact with the miners themselves he will be able to prove his honesty of purpose, and demonstrate his genuine interest in their welfare. He is sincere and straight. He can be relied on to see that fairplay is given to both sides. If anyone can produce the coal, it is Gwilym Lloyd George.

May the gods be with him.

December 8, 1943.³

Major Gwilym Lloyd-George (1894–1967), born at Criccieth on 4 December 1894, was the fourth child of David and Margaret Lloyd George.⁴ Educated at Eastbourne College, a private school, and Jesus College, Cambridge, he spent the whole of the First World War on active service in France, attaining the rank of major, and he later accompanied his father, who was still at the height of his personal popularity and political prestige, to the Paris Peace Conference. Gwilym served as the Liberal MP for Pembrokeshire from 1922 until 1924 (when he was defeated there), and was re-elected in the ‘We Can Conquer Unemployment’ general election of 30 May 1929. When Ramsay MacDonald’s national government was formed in August 1931, Gwilym Lloyd-George, apparently acting on his own initiative and rather against his father’s gut instinct, agreed to accept the position of parliamentary secretary to the Board of Trade. This post, his first taste of ministerial office, lasted for no longer than five weeks, for Gwilym resigned from the position at the beginning of October in response to MacDonald’s precipitate decision to call a general election. Indeed, at this point he became one of a Lloyd George family party of just four independent Liberal MPs who sat, together with the severely truncated Parliamentary Labour Party of no more than fifty-two MPs, on the opposition benches in the House of Commons, a singularly unrewarding and potentially frustrating niche in the political spectrum. Gwilym also accompanied his father on his visits to Hitler at the Fuehrer’s mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps in September 1936.

Although nominally still an independent Liberal, Gwilym Lloyd-George’s marked ‘drift to the right’ in the political spectrum was already very much apparent. ‘Gwilym will go to the right, and Megan will go to the left, eventually,’

3 Ibid., typescript tribute to Gwilym Lloyd-George by Sylvester, 8 December 1943.

4 The fullest account of the life and career of Gwilym Lloyd-George is J. Graham Jones, ‘Major Gwilym Lloyd-George, first Viscount Tenby (1894–1967)’, *National Library of Wales Journal*, 32.2 (Winter 2001), 177–204, now re-published in Jones, *David Lloyd George and Welsh Liberalism* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 2010), pp. 536–63. See also Jones, ‘Major Gwilym Lloyd-George and the Pembrokeshire Election of 1950’, *Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society*, 11 (2002), 100–20; Jones, ‘A Breach in the Family: Gwilym and Megan Lloyd George’, *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, 25 (Winter 1999–2000), 34–39. For a brief introduction to Lloyd-George’s career, see also the admirable summary in Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘Gwilym Lloyd-George, First Viscount Tenby (1894–1967)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (available for on-line access).

David Lloyd George had predicted in April 1938.⁵ The old man evidently knew his children. Indeed, this prediction came a step closer at the beginning of the Second World War in September 1939 when, in the pseudo-coalition government then established, Gwilym returned to his old position as parliamentary secretary to the Board of Trade, conspicuously the only Liberal MP to accept office under Neville Chamberlain who, arch-enemy of David Lloyd George though he was, made no objection to the appointment of his popular son. The offer of the position had indeed been made partly in order to conciliate Gwilym's father, who was by now too old to accept governmental office himself. Gwilym was to remain in the position until February 1941.

At the time of the death of Dame Margaret Lloyd George at the end of January 1941, there were recurrent rumours in political circles that Gwilym was about to assume responsibilities in connection with the all-important Ministry of Food whose role was rapidly expanding due to the pressures of total warfare.⁶ Just three weeks later, among the ministerial appointments which occurred in the wake of Malcolm MacDonald's appointment as the United Kingdom High Commissioner in Canada, Gwilym Lloyd-George took up the position of parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Food in succession to Bob Boothby.⁷ Food production and distribution continued to be burning issues throughout the year, and particular concern was voiced about the availability of supplies of rationed foodstuffs. There was criticism that small-scale traders might well be treated over-harshly in the government's attempt to eliminate the abuse inherent in the widespread practice whereby individuals were registering as traders simply in order to supply their own families at wholesale prices. To some extent, at this time discussions on food production and distribution took precedence even over the intense debates on war production.

Generally, Gwilym Lloyd-George was considered to have performed well in the new position. On 24 July, his father, who had been a Privy Councillor ever since his own appointment as President of the Board of Trade by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman way back in December 1905 and who was now the 'Father' of the House of Commons, took immense pleasure in attending a meeting of the Privy Council when his son Gwilym was sworn a Privy Councillor.⁸ There was conjecture in political circles that he might well be moved to another ministerial position, possibly to succeed J. T. C. Moore-Brabazon as Minister of Aircraft Production, but this proved premature.⁹ David Lloyd George continued to follow his son's political career with fatherly pride and pleasure, often travelling up to London from his home at Bron-y-de, Churt in Surrey (and usually accompanied by his long-term mistress, Frances Stevenson) to attend debates in the House of Commons when he knew that Gwilym was due to participate. On one such occasion, on 3 March 1942,

5 C. Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George: the Diary of A. J. Sylvester, 1931–45* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 206–07, diary entry for 14 April 1938.

6 *The Times*, 21 January 1941, p. 7, col. d.

7 *Ibid.*, 10 February 1941, p. 2, col. d.

8 *Ibid.*, 25 July 1941, p. 2, col. d.

9 See B. Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940–45* (London: Cape, in association with the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1986), p. 308, diary entry for 7 November 1941.

the old man was present at Westminster to hear his son open the debate on food production, a ‘first-class’ speech, which at once led to Lloyd George senior being ‘inundated with congratulations’.¹⁰

By this time, it had become apparent that the pressures of wartime were increasing to such an extent that it was necessary to set up a separate ministry of fuel, in order to reduce the ever mounting burdens falling on Hugh Dalton as President of the Board of Trade. Dalton discussed the matter with Sir John Anderson, the highly influential Lord President of the Council, on 12 May:

[Anderson] thinks that Gwilym Lloyd George might make a good Minister of Fuel and Power. His appointment would also appease his old father, which would have political advantages. I also think well of it, since he is neither Conservative nor Labour. He could have another miner as his Under-Secretary, plus Geoffrey Lloyd. Anderson thinks that the question of Minister of Fuel and Power might be carried in Cabinet this morning.¹¹

A week later, Dalton discussed the same matter with fellow Labourite Sir Stafford Cripps, the Lord Privy Seal (in the war cabinet) and Leader of the House of Commons: ‘I also say that it is essential quickly to create a Ministry of Fuel and Power. The present position at the Board of Trade is quite impossible. I have no time for anything but coal ... Cripps says that the P.M. is now at last quite decided to make this new ministry. Gwilym [Lloyd-George] is definitely designated for it.’¹² Subsequent speculation that Gwilym might be despatched as a minister of state to West Africa in place of Harry Crookshank, who was suffering from health problems, proved groundless.

By 2 June 1942, it had been ‘all fixed’ that Gwilym Lloyd-George would take up the newly-created position of Minister of Fuel, Light and Power.¹³ It was the brief of the new ministry to assume the functions of the Mines and Petroleum Departments of the Board of Trade and also its responsibilities for gas and electricity. It thus became responsible for supervising the production and distribution of all forms of fuel and power. Officially, Major Lloyd-George (as he was still widely known) was appointed the new Minister of Fuel, Light and Power (subsequently modified to Fuel and Power), an appointment which proved highly popular at Westminster. The creation of the new ministry led to the simultaneous retirement of D. R. Grenfell (‘Dai Grenfell’), the veteran Labour MP for the Gower division since 1922 and former miners’ leader who had served as the Secretary of State for the Mines ever since Churchill had formed his first coalition ministry in May 1940. When Gwilym Lloyd-George rose in the House of Commons on 4 June 1942 to answer questions for the last time as parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Food, ‘a cordial cheer’ echoed from both sides of the

10 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A52, diary entry for 3 March 1942.

11 Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton*, pp. 432–33, diary entry for 12 May 1942.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 439, diary entry for 19 May 1942.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 453, diary entry for 2 June 1943.

House.¹⁴ The very same day, the diary column in *The Star* newspaper referred thus to the appointment of Gwilym Lloyd-George: ‘He has been handicapped in his political career by his family name. But in spite of it he has obtained Cabinet rank. I can tell you that today’s promotion is the reward of his own capacity as a Minister and administrator.’¹⁵ Having read the article, A. J. Sylvester concluded that its sentiments amounted to ‘a back-hander for LG [i.e. David Lloyd George] which I am told was deliberate’.¹⁶

On 1 June, before any announcement had been made, Gwilym had sent his father an express letter informing him of his new appointment. Neither Lloyd George nor Gwilym’s sister Megan congratulated him personally, but Megan had requested Sylvester to convey to him their congratulations second-hand. Both had stubbornly refused to telephone him too. Recorded Sylvester, ‘Frances says Edna [Gwilym’s wife] thinks that Megan is frightfully jealous and has influenced her Father, and that they are now waiting for the thing to get into a mess.’¹⁷ The next day, Frances commented, ‘Megan is clinging to LG like a leach.’¹⁸

On 11 June 1942, Gwilym was formally sworn in as Minister of Fuel and Power. The creation of the new ministry marked a novel departure for Hugh Dalton whose ministerial career, first at the Ministry of Economic Warfare and more recently at the Board of Trade, had been dominated by the need to tackle spontaneously the short-term crises which arose. The hiving off of responsibility for fuel to a new minister provided Dalton with opportunities to plan in readiness for the manifold problems of the post-war world. Some felt that Gwilym, as the newly-appointed minister, had been given a poisoned chalice. Sir Archibald Sinclair, leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party since 1935, Secretary of State for Air in the government, and a close personal friend of Winston Churchill, described the new position as ‘a big job but one after your own & your father’s heart’.¹⁹ ‘I am so pleased to see more power and authority fall into your hands,’ wrote Lord Melchett. ‘All the same I do not envy you the task which you have undertaken. It is one of the trickiest and most difficult jobs in the country, but it is at any rate a great thing that one of our generation has been given a shot at it.’²⁰ The distinguished royal physician, Lord Dawson of Penn, a close personal friend to the Lloyd George family, also wrote, ‘Hearty congratulations on your elevation to Ministers’ rank – it is overdue – for you suffered for your qualities of outstanding success at M. of Food. You have a job worthy of your steel, though ... you will be like the people called upon to “make bricks without straw”.’²¹

When Gwilym Lloyd-George rose in the House of Commons to take questions for the first time as Minister of Fuel and Power, he again met with ‘a storm of

14 *The Times*, 5 June 1942, p. 4, col. b; Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton*, p. 454; NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A52, diary entry for 4 June 1942.

15 *The Star*, 4 June 1942.

16 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A52, diary entry for 4 June 1942.

17 *Ibid.*, diary entry for 8 June 1942.

18 *Ibid.*, diary entry for 9 June 1942.

19 NLW MS 23668E, fol. 79, Sinclair to Lloyd-George, 4 June 1942.

20 *Ibid.*, fol. 80, Lord Melchett to Lloyd-George, 4 June 1942.

21 *Ibid.*, fol. 83, Lord Dawson of Penn, Harley Street, to Lloyd-George, 5 June [1942].

cheers'.²² Before the end of the month he had addressed the nation on the radio, immediately after the nine o'clock evening news, on production and fuel economy, appealing earnestly to his listeners to exercise severe restraint in their use of fuel.²³ He followed very much the same theme in his address to the Institute of Fuel on 17 July:

Major Lloyd George said that fuel was not only the life-blood of a nation but life itself. In Britain coal was a priceless asset, and we had to make the best use of it. The first task of the new Ministry was to see that the whole of the great resources of the country were utilized to the full for the successful prosecution of the war ... The public were prepared to do their share if they were guided along the right way, and he was determined to do everything in his power to see they had that guidance.²⁴

The road ahead was certainly going to be rocky. In mid-September, Sylvester 'warned' David Lloyd George 'that some members of the staff of the Ministry of Fuel were not out to help Gwilym 100 per cent, and that he [Lloyd George] should talk diplomatically to Gwilym about his headquarters' establishment in London'. Ten days later, the diarist recorded rumours that the new minister was 'faced with colossal difficulties at the new Ministry of Fuel. But no man has more goodwill from all Parties in the House, so he should get over his difficulties'.²⁵ During these early months in the new ministry, Gwilym faced mounting and irresistible pressure to sanction the introduction of fuel rationing as the stocks of coal supplies were seriously diminishing. His personal predilection for voluntary economy had already brought some success as public gas and electricity consumption fell sharply as a result of insistent appeals. He displayed sensitivity towards the manifold problems faced by working miners throughout the British coalfields, and Gwilym's stock and standing in political circles gradually increased. Following a notably impressive performance during the debate on coal in the House of Commons on 1 October, Sylvester noted in his diary:

Gwilym opened the debate on coal and did exceedingly well. He was very confident in his manner and made a good impression on the House. At two o'clock, whilst L.G., Megan and I were at lunch, Gwilym joined us. L.G. said to him: 'However worried you were, it was nothing like what I felt.' I must say that L.G. looked the part, too, as he sat on the front opposition-bench. With his eyes and mouth open, he was terribly het up all the time Gwilym was speaking. During the whole of the lunch an endless number of M.P.s came up to congratulate L.G. on Gwilym's speech and saying that he must

22 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A52, diary entry for 16 June 1942.

23 Ibid., diary entry for 28 June 1942; *The Times*, 27 June 1942, p. 2, col. d.

24 *The Times*, 18 July 1942, p. 2, col. d.

25 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A52, diary entries for 14 and 24 September 1942.

feel a proud father. L.G. seemed really pleased.²⁶

In his typescript diary, Sylvester included the following two sentences (later omitted from the published version): 'I hope that Gwilym has not been sold a pup in becoming the first Minister of Fuel and Power. Personally, I think he has got a lousy Department anyhow, and I told LG this today.'²⁷ The following day, he told Lloyd George 'that everybody was loud in praise of Gwilym's speech yesterday, but that there was little praise for King Hall, who is in charge of Gwilym's publicity. King Hall is unpopular'.²⁸ On 6 October, arrangements had been made that Gwilym Lloyd-George should wind up on behalf of the government in a debate in the House of Commons on coal rationing, and the meticulous Sylvester had made plans for David Lloyd George to travel there from Churt by 2.30 pm when his son was due to begin his speech, but:

As often happens, Gwilym rose earlier, at 2.15 p.m., and LG did not arrive until 2.40 in the Chamber. He heard only ten minutes of Gwilym's speech, which lasted until 2.50.

Gwilym was answering an interpolation and saying that he was only anxious to learn from those who had gone before him as his Father walked in behind the Speaker's Chair and took his corner seat on the Opposition Bench immediately above the gangway. The House was amused.

I watched LG's face; it was grey. He stared at Gwilym through his glasses with his mouth wide open and his lips curled and the fingers of his right hand tapping nervously on the back of the Bench. He looked even older than usual. Above all, he looked sour. It was apparent that all was not well. I was right.

I was at work in my room when he came up from the Chamber. Frances went in to him. I heard the conversation. 'I did not think Gwilym did very well,' said LG, 'His speech was truncated; he did not deal with Manpower. He asked the House to have confidence in him which I thought was a mistake.'

LG had heard only one-third of the speech and he was criticising his son. Frances came out. I went in.

In a bright and breezy mood I said, 'Well, Sir, I think Gwilym did extremely well. He was confident in his tone, but if he is not confident at the commencement of his job where will he be in six months' time[?]'

LG hummed and hawed and fumbled nervously with his evening paper. 'His technique,' I continued, 'was different to that of Thursday, but that was necessarily so.'

He mumbled something that he was glad I thought Gwilym had

26 Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, pp. 304–5, diary entry for 1 October 1942.

27 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A52, diary entry for 1 October 1942.

28 *Ibid.*, diary entry for 2 October 1942.

done well.²⁹

The following day:

I telephoned Frances at Churt this morning and told her that I suspected LG was not very pleased with Gwilym's speech. She more than confirmed my suspicions! I said I thought it was disgraceful that he should form a judgement like this. He had heard only one-third of the speech. Frances thought Megan had been 'at' LG, because she is so jealous of Edna, and this is the way LG always reacts – on Gwilym! In the memo I sent to LG today I emphasised that Gwilym had done exceptionally well, and come out of the two day Debate with flying colours: any criticism there was, was being directed to the Govt and not to him personally.³⁰

At around the same time, Gwilym Lloyd-George paid an official visit as minister to the south Wales coalfield and returned to London 'appalled by the lack of spirit in the men. The excuse is that they come from a generation poisoned by the dole and unemployment.'³¹ Before the end of the same month, he chaired an all-important meeting of more than 3000 representatives of the coal-mining industry from all parts of the country (due to be addressed by both Churchill and General Smuts) where they were to be briefed on the government's view of the role of the coal industry in the war effort and on the distinctive new phase which the war was now entering.³² At about the same time, Gwilym inevitably became involved in the tense, indeed acrimonious, discussions about his father's intention to marry Frances Stevenson, his private secretary and mistress for nigh on thirty years. Following a heart-to-heart discussion with his son on this most sensitive issue, a somewhat dejected Lloyd George had informed Frances that 'Gwilym was not very favourable [to the idea of the marriage]. Gwilym had said that it would not be popular with the people of Crickieth. Megan would not accept it, either.'³³

Also at this point there was much speculation in political circles that Gwilym Lloyd-George, whose administrative competence, indigenous predilection for the complex niceties of parliamentary procedure, and harmonious working relationship with his fellow-parliamentarians had impressed his peers, might well be destined for the Speaker's chair, sooner or later. At the end of November, Hugh Dalton recorded in his diary:

Whiteley says that conversations have been going on about the Speakership. It had been thought, till Gwilym Lloyd George went

29 Ibid., diary entry for 6 October 1942.

30 Ibid., diary entry for 7 October 1942.

31 N. Nicolson (ed.), *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters, 1939–1945* (London: Collins, 1968), p. 249, Nicolson's diary entry for 8 October 1942.

32 *The Times*, 31 October 1942, p. 4, col. f.

33 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A52, diary entry for 23 November 1942. See also A55, diary entry for 24 January 1943.

to the M.F.P. [Ministry of Fuel and Power], that he would be the best successor. Mrs [*sic*] Carey Evans, old Lloyd George's daughter, has been saying that Gwilym is very 'uneasy' at M.F.P., and that the old man has been bleating that he would like to see his son in the Speaker's Chair before he dies, and adding that Shinwell (!) would make an admirable M.F.P. [Minister of Fuel and Power]. Whitley has warned Attlee to watch out on this, and has told him that such an appointment would meet the most furious opposition on the part of many people, including, in particular, the miners' MPs. I say I don't think it is conceivable that such an appointment could be seriously considered.³⁴

Just before the end of that year, 1942, the machinery to implement governmental policy on the coal industry had been brought into existence. The constitution of the National Coal Board had been completed, and the Board held its first meeting on 18 December. Gwilym Lloyd-George had divided the NCB into six sections, each with its own sub-committee. Commenting on the question of supply and consumption, Gwilym noted that these were 'better than was hoped for six months ago', but serious difficulties still remained to be tackled in 1943.³⁵ His political prestige was certainly in the ascendant.

By the end of February 1943, the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Hon. E. A. Fitzroy, who had been Speaker for almost fifteen years, was very seriously ill and not expected to recover. For some time, MPs had felt increasingly that he had been 'losing his grip' upon his position and on the proceedings of the House, while his tenure of the post had always been characterized by a general 'slow-witted impartiality'. There was a widespread feeling in the House that Clifton Brown, the Deputy Speaker, was the most suitable successor to Fitzroy, but 'a great intrigue to get it for Gwilym Lloyd George' was also anticipated there.³⁶ On St David's Day 1943, A. J. Sylvester wrote in his diary, 'Last Friday I went to see Gwilym at the Ministry of Fuel and ascertained from him that he was definitely interested in the Speakership, and that if it were offered to him he would certainly take it. I am doing a lot of propaganda on his behalf.'³⁷ Two days later, the Speaker died. Churchill at once sought out Gwilym Lloyd-George who expressed his wish to succeed Fitzroy but was warned of the strong feeling among MPs of all parties in favour of the election of Clifton Brown.³⁸ That evening, a packed meeting of the 1922 Committee came out strongly in favour of electing Clifton Brown, sentiments naturally very much shared by most Conservative MPs. When Gwilym's name had been mentioned at the Tory meeting, it had 'found little or no favour at all. Someone had the audacity, I am told, to suggest his name as Deputy Speaker!' The group

34 Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton*, pp. 527–28, diary entries for 28 and 30 November 1942.

35 *The Times*, 19 December 1942, p. 2, col. c.

36 Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton*, pp. 562–63, diary entry for 3 March 1943.

37 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A55, diary entry for 1 March 1943.

38 The Rt Hon. The Earl of Avon, *The Eden Memoirs* (London: Cassell, 1965), p. 370, diary entry for 3 March 1943.

of independent Liberal MPs were in favour of Gwilym's election, but were not prepared to push for this result. After lunch on 3 March, A. J. Sylvester telephoned Gwilym at his office at the Ministry of Fuel to inform him of the prevailing mood in the House and his poor prospects of election, only to find him 'very surprised'. Sylvester then at once telephoned David Lloyd George at Churt to tell him that 'in the light of my present information, Gwilym was out of the running'. The news left the old man totally 'dumbfounded'. Sylvester then drafted a more detailed memorandum for the benefit of his employer: 'The batting is over and quite frankly Gwilym is out. That is the whole situation.' The conspicuous lack of support for Gwilym at this critical juncture Sylvester attributed in part to his refusal to accept the position of chairman of the Ways and Means Committee several years earlier, 'the strategic route which leads to the [Speaker's] Chair', and in part to his belief that the House had been 'rushed' into a precipitate decision regarding the Speaker. 'It was a thousand pities,' wrote Sylvester, 'and a burning shame that there was now no prospect of Gwilym being appointed.' It would seem that Churchill had expressed his personal support for Gwilym, but had pointed out to him that the decision was one for the membership of the House of Commons. This unfortunate sequence of events had been totally misinterpreted by the 79-year-old Lloyd George who believed 'that the PM had offered the Speakership to Gwilym. There seemed to be no doubt in LG's mind at all. Imagine, therefore, the force of the blow I gave him when I telephoned this morning to say he had no chance! Yesterday's *Evening Standard* had a lot of nice things to say about Gwilym: said he was favoured for the Speakership. This I learned was written by Lord Beaverbrook.'³⁹

Two days later, Sylvester drafted yet another memorandum for David Lloyd George which included the sentence, 'It is all over except for the prize distribution and the shouting.'⁴⁰ On 9 March 1943, after a tediously lengthy rigmarole, Colonel Douglas Clifton Brown was duly elected Speaker of the House of Commons. 'Lloyd-George would, I believed, have made the better Speaker,' wrote Anthony Eden, then the Leader of the House of Commons, in his memoirs. 'The decision is, of course, one for the House of Commons and not for the Government, and rightly so.'⁴¹ David Lloyd George, although the 'Father' of the House of Commons, had deliberately absented himself from the entire proceedings. But he did venture to the Commons a week later, commenting to Sylvester, 'I think it perhaps just as well that Gwilym did not get it. It is a lazy man's job! And he has done so well in his ministerial post.' Replied Sylvester, 'The test will be whenever they return to party politics. The Speakership would have offered him security!' Lloyd George did not respond, but, on Sylvester's suggestion, he agreed to shake warmly by the hand the new Speaker, a gesture which pleased Clifton Brown enormously. That same afternoon, LG was presented with a wooden casket and a most generous cheque to mark his fifty years' membership of the House of Commons.⁴²

In April 1943, there was some talk that Gwilym might be appointed Viceroy of

39 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A55, diary entry for 3 March 1943.

40 Ibid., diary entry for 5 March 1943.

41 Avon, *The Eden Memoirs*, p. 370, diary entry for 3 March 1943.

42 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A55, diary entry for 17 March 1943.

India but this again came to nothing.⁴³ There was some concern within the Lloyd George family about Gwilym's position as one of the trustees of the infamous Lloyd George Political Fund in the event of the old man's death, a fund which still amounted to some £75,000 in cash as well as shares in various companies like United Newspapers, Provincial Newspapers and Inveresk. It was considered likely that the fund might well outlive Lloyd George, while most of the papers deriving from its administration had been destroyed in the Blitz. Fears were expressed that, should Gwilym remain a minister in the government at the time of his father's death, he might well find himself in 'a very vulnerable position', as questions would undoubtedly be asked about the resources of the fund.⁴⁴

Gwilym pressed on as Minister of Fuel and Power. At the end of May 1943, the Select Committee on National Expenditure was highly critical of his allegedly half-hearted efforts to increase British coal production, criticism which was subsequently repeated in the national press. Lloyd-George himself still took a particular personal pride in what had been achieved in a time-scale of just twelve months by the new ministry which he headed, but saw that 'the strain on our fuel resources' would only grow as the war continued, especially in the light of the inevitable 'diminishing man-power'. He had become convinced that the need for such a ministry would still continue even after the Armistice.⁴⁵ Before the end of June, he reviewed the problems facing the British coal industry in an impressive performance in a House of Commons debate, as Harold Nicolson recorded in his diary:

We had a coal debate at which Gwilym Lloyd George made a heavy impressive speech. His old father sat opposite, smiling in affectionate pride. In the lobby afterwards I bumped into the old man. 'Well,' I said, 'what did you think of Gwilym?' 'He lacks my fire,' the old man answered. 'You see, Nicolson, he is not a Welshman. He is a Scandinavian. You have only to look at him to see that he is pure Scandinavian. His mother is directly descended from the Vikings.' It amused him saying that, and for an instant the old charm and vigour reappeared, but then once again there fell on his face that mask of extreme and inarticulate old age. He is now a yellow old man with a mane of dead-white hair, and uncertain movements of his feet and hands.⁴⁶

As the summer ran its course, there was some (presumably far-fetched) conjecture that Gwilym Lloyd-George might join the Labour Party.⁴⁷

The problems within the coal industry continued as the war ran its course. The

43 David Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan OM, 1938–1945* (London: Cassell, 1971), p. 521, diary entry for 20 April 1943.

44 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A55, diary entry for 22 April 1943.

45 *The Times*, 10 June 1942, p. 2, col. c.

46 Nicolson (ed.), *Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters, 1939–1945*, p. 302, Nicolson to Ben and Nigel Nicolson, 23 June 1943.

47 Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton*, pp. 623–24, entry for 3 August 1943.

need to maximize British coal output was certainly urgent. By the autumn of 1943, Gwilym had concluded that the system of dual control of the mines set up during the previous year was unworkable. The only practical solution, he contended, was for the state to assume the ownership of the mines for the duration of the war. This step would much facilitate the grouping of pits, necessary to increase production, and set in train new methods of labour management which would enable the government to exercise effective day-to-day control of the 1,600 collieries under its jurisdiction. The proposals were, however, vetoed by the Cabinet, and in the subsequent debate in the House (in the face of an acknowledged danger that the coal supplies might easily run out), all Gwilym could offer was the setting up of a committee ‘to consider improvements’, while he appealed to his fellow MPs for ‘a placid debate’. Seymour Cocks, the Labour MP for the coalmining Broxtowe division of Nottinghamshire, responded belligerently, ‘The state of feeling among the miners at the moment is not placid, it is developing into a raging maelstrom, a foaming Niagara of discontent ... Unless the causes of discontent are removed great events are possible; unless they are removed I think it is the duty of Labour ministers to leave the Government.’ It was left to Churchill to intervene decisively to prevent a political crisis: ‘I certainly could not take the responsibility of making far-reaching controversial changes which I am not convinced are directly needed for the war effort without a Parliament refreshed by contact with the electorate.’ The existing state control of the coal industry was to continue, while negotiations were to take place between the Minister of Fuel and the miners concerning post-war development so that ‘the uncertainty and harassing fears’ about the future ‘shall be as far as possible allayed’. But there could be no question of the nationalization of the mines so long as Churchill remained prime minister of the coalition government.⁴⁸

Although politically decisive, Churchill’s intervention still left Gwilym Lloyd George and Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour, with the thorny problem of how to increase coal production. A publicity campaign to secure volunteers for the mines had proved a relative failure, and, four days after the November debate, Gwilym announced his decision to apply conscription. By mid-November, Bevin had finalized his scheme whereby the so-called ‘Bevin boys’ were to be given adequate training before being sent to the pits. By the end of the European war, a total of 21,800 young men had been commandeered to work in the coal mines, a modest total but sufficient to check the fall in the size of the labour force. The British war effort was never subsequently hamstrung for lack of coal supplies, but the labour problems which had long dogged the industry continued. Bevin wrote

48 *House of Commons Debates*, 5th series, vol. 392 (13 October 1943), cc. 920–1012, for the debate on the ‘coalmining situation’. A. J. Sylvester recounted that David Serpell, private secretary to Gwilym Lloyd-George, had cautioned that ‘he was not very jubilant about the matter of Gwilym’s speech and that it all depended how he put it over’. Sylvester continued: ‘That was a good forecast. LG sat for three-quarters of an hour, very greyish and his mouth often wide open. He looked thoroughly unhappy, for Gwilym did not have a very good passage. The Government’s policy obviously meant nothing new. There were many interruptions’ (NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A55, diary entry for 12 October 1943). Two days later, ‘Megan told her Father that she thought Gwilym had made a very good speech; but I did not think LG was very happy: certainly I was not’ (ibid., diary entry for 14 October 1943).

to Gwilym Lloyd-George in November 1943, 'I doubt very much if the bulk of the miners are worrying about controls. It is more or less a peg on which to hang further demands. What the miner is concerned about, in my view, is the removal of uncertainty so far as his wages and conditions are concerned and this particularly applies to exporting districts.'⁴⁹

On 23 October 1943, David Lloyd George at long last married Frances Stevenson at Artington House registry office at Guildford.⁵⁰ Gwilym Lloyd-George remained as Minister of Fuel and Power in the wartime coalition government until the end of hostilities, working generally amicably and successfully with Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour and National Service (soon to be appointed Foreign Secretary by Attlee in July 1945). Gwilym's success as a politician and parliamentarian at this time is reflected in the notably generous opinions of David Serpell and A. J. Sylvester, as recorded above. Right at the end of the year, Hugh Dalton recorded in his political diary:

The gossip is that, at the last ministerial reshuffle, when Woolton was moved up, Gwilym Lloyd George was offered the Ministry of Food and, after two hours' meditation, accepted. Shinwell was then invited by the P.M. to become Minister of Fuel and Power, and also accepted. That evening, however, Lloyd George changed his mind and told the P.M. so about 11 o'clock. He felt, on second thoughts, that a move now would look as though he had been a failure at Fuel and Power, and he wanted to have one more shot. So he stayed where he was, and Shinwell had to be told that the offer was off, and Llewellyn was fetched back from Washington, and Ben Smith sent out in his place.⁵¹

A further offer of a move to the Ministry of Information in April 1944, as part of a more far-reaching ministerial reshuffle, received short shrift from Gwilym, who remained determined to see his task through, at least until the conclusion of hostilities.⁵² In fact, he made an important contribution to the allied war effort, encouraging the miners to increase substantially the national output of coal (desperately required for both the war industries and domestic heating), and urging consumers to exercise rigid economy in its use, thereby winning the 'battle of the gap' which had threatened to undermine the problem of fuel supplies. He had also

49 Bevin to Gwilym Lloyd-George, 29 November 1943, cited in Alan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, vol. 2: Minister of Labour, 1940-1945* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 261.

50 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers A55, diary entry for 23 October 1943.

51 Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton*, pp. 689-90, entry for 30 December 1943.

52 Dalton recorded in his diary for 14 April 1944, 'Attlee said it was proposed to move Gwilym Lloyd-George from Fuel and Power to [the Ministry of] Information ... Then he [Ernest Bevin] asked, "Who is to go to Fuel and Power?" Attlee said that the P.M. wanted Shinwell. "Then," said Bevin to me, "I really lost my temper, and I said, 'Bloody hell! If that bugger is brought in, I shall go out, and you can tell that to the P.M. I won't stand for it. He is just another nominee of Beaverbrook.'" Bevin then continued with the obvious point that to reward Shinwell would be to put a premium on disloyalty and discourage all the decent people in the Party who had played the game and supported the Government in moments of difficulty.'

set in train a far-reaching reorganization of the coal industry, establishing a National Coal Board to offer advice on wartime regulation. His tactful working partnership with the socialist Ernest Bevin resulted in the successful implementation of the 'Bevin Boy' scheme to increase the labour force in the mines (which had been haemorrhaging at the rate of 4 per cent a year) and the achievement of a national minimum wage for working miners. Had it not been for Churchill's decisive national veto, Gwilym might have inaugurated the nationalization of the coal industry and the conversion of the electricity supply industry into a public corporation.

Gwilym Lloyd-George was re-elected as Liberal MP for Pembrokeshire in July 1945, one of only twelve Liberal MPs in the new parliament, and was seriously considered as 'chairman' of both the Liberal Party and the National Liberal Party. He evidently enjoyed a close rapport with Churchill, generally lent his support to the Conservatives in the House, and genuinely regretted the decision of his fellow Liberal ministers to leave the Coalition government in the spring of 1945. So consistent was Gwilym's support for the Conservatives that in 1946 the Liberal whip was withdrawn from him. In his political speeches, Gwilym now insisted that no major policy issues divided the Liberals and the Conservatives, and that, to both parties, the battle against the 'Socialist menace to liberty' was paramount. In the ensuing general election of February 1950, the Labour candidate Desmond Donnelly ousted Gwilym Lloyd-George in Pembrokeshire by just 129 votes, a sensational victory at a time when the electoral tide was flowing strongly against the Labour Party. But Gwilym's sojourn in the political wilderness was to be notably short-lived, as he returned to the House of Commons as the Conservative MP for the Newcastle upon Tyne North constituency in the autumn of 1951.

While forming his first-ever peacetime administration, Churchill invited Gwilym to return to the Ministry of Food, in the certain knowledge that his proven ministerial efficiency during the war years, coupled with his unfailingly tactful and conciliatory approach, would equip him admirably to preside over the now necessary gradual withdrawal of wartime rationing controls. Gwilym remained in this position until 1954, regulating effectively the gradual ending of food rationing and making significant savings in the bill for food imports. His reward came in October 1954 when Churchill promoted him to Home Secretary and (the largely nominal) Minister for Welsh Affairs, offices which had fallen vacant as a result of the appointment of Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe as Lord Chancellor. During his early months in the position of Home Secretary, Gwilym Lloyd-George set in train laws to curb coloured immigration which, he feared, was likely to result in a coloured population of some 100,000 within a few years.

Gwilym retained his twin portfolios when Eden succeeded Churchill as prime minister in 1955. His political swan-song was the piloting of the 1957 Homicide Act through the House of Commons. Influenced by the notorious Ruth Ellis case, the Commons on a free vote in February 1956 had voted by 293 to 262 to suspend the death penalty for an experimental period of five years; forty-eight Conservatives voted with the majority, against the advice of Lloyd-George who had notoriously refused to grant a reprieve to Ruth Ellis. When Harold Macmillan succeeded Eden as Prime Minister in January 1957 and wished to bring his unsuccessful leadership rival, R. A. Butler, into the Cabinet as Home Secretary, Lloyd-George was rather

unceremoniously shunted off to the House of Lords as the first Viscount Tenby of Bulford in the county of Pembroke. He accepted his fate with characteristic good grace and humour, jesting that the title should have been ‘Stepaside’.

During the decade of his life which remained – Viscount Tenby died in February 1967 – he assumed a wide array of public offices, notably chairman of the council on tribunals from 1961, president of the University College of Swansea, and numerous positions connected with his love of football and rugby. Throughout his political career he had succeeded in carving out a distinct niche for himself, quite independently of his famous name. He had also remained disarmingly aloof from the long succession of political and personal storms which had wracked his father’s life, remaining on convivial terms with both his parents and his sisters. He was just about the only member of the Lloyd George family noted for his unfailing calmness, serenity and bonhomie, well-liked on all sides of the House of Commons, and one whose gradual ‘drift to the right’ was never especially resented or decried in political circles. While remaining a popular and placid figure, he certainly made his own distinctive contribution to the unique Lloyd George political tradition.