

# The Independent Labour Party

James Maxton was a prominent member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). The ILP believed in a brotherhood of all workers. Many of its members saw the war as a capitalist plot to make extra profit and to weaken the working classes. ILP members were frequently attacked, and many were imprisoned, for their anti-war stance.

James Maxton was ordered to appear before the Barrhead Military Tribunal in March 1916 after he refused conscription into the army. The tribunal offered him the opportunity to join the Royal Army Medical Corps. Maxton turned this offer down.

However, before he had the opportunity to reappear before the tribunal, Maxton was arrested and imprisoned for sedition. **“Sedition”** means to encourage others to rebel against the State.

GLASGOW, 30th March 1916.—Having again considered the foregoing Petition, and the said James Dunlop MacDonnell and James Maxton having intimated that they do not desire to emit a Declaration granting Warrant to imprison ~~them~~ <sup>James Dunlop MacDonnell and James Maxton</sup> in the Prison of Glasgow, for further examination, I, the undersigned, do hereby grant Warrant to imprison the said James Dunlop MacDonnell and James Maxton in the Prison of Glasgow, therein to be detained for further examination.

(Sgd) John Craigie

GLASGOW, 30th March 1916.—Having again considered the foregoing Petition, with the Declaration of James Dunlop MacDonnell and James Maxton, I, the undersigned, do hereby grant Warrant to imprison the said James Dunlop MacDonnell and James Maxton in the Prison of Glasgow, therein to be detained for further examination.

(Sgd) John Craigie

GLASGOW, 4th April 1916.—Having again considered the foregoing Petition, with the Declaration of James Dunlop MacDonnell and James Maxton, I, the undersigned, do hereby grant Warrant to imprison the said James Dunlop MacDonnell and James Maxton in the Prison of Glasgow, therein to be detained until liberated in due course of Law.

(Sgd) John Craigie

129 PETITION & C. JAMES DUNLOP MACDONNELL and JAMES MAXTON. GLASGOW, 30th March 1916. Copy for James Maxton. GLEN WILKIE 1409 313 MACDON

March 1916.] UNTO THE HONOURABLE THE SHERIFF OF LANARKSHIRE or his SUBSTITUTES. Peter Fraser Mackenzie THE PETITION of ~~James Dunlop MacDonnell and James Maxton~~ WRITER IN GLASGOW, Procurator-Fiscal of Court for the Public Interest;

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

That from information received by the Petitioner, it appears, and accordingly he charges, that on 30th March 1916 at a public meeting on Glasgow Green in the City of Glasgow, JAMES DUNLOP MACDONNELL, Belltrees, Barrhead Road, Pollokshaws; and JAMES MAXTON, Beechwood, Gatehead Road, Barrhead, did attempt to cause rioting, sedition and disaffection among the civilian population and to impede, delay and restrict the production repair and transport of war material and other work necessary for the successful prosecution of the war and that by advising and urging civilians in the audience at said meeting who were engaged in the production repair and transport of war material and other work necessary for the successful prosecution of the war to strike and 'down tools' contrary to the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act 1914 and the Defence of the Realm (Consolidation) Regulations 1914 particularly Article 43 thereof as amended by Order in Council dated 30th November 1916.

May it therefore please your Lordship to grant Warrant to search for and apprehend the said James Dunlop MacDonnell and James Maxton and to bring them for examination, and thereafter grant Warrant to imprison them within the Prison of Glasgow, therein to be detained for further examination, or till liberated in due course of Law: Further, grant Warrant to search the person, repositories, and domicile of the said delinquents, and the house or premises in which they may be found, and to secure, for the purpose of precognition, all articles found therein importing guilt or participation in the crime foresaid; and to cite all persons likely to have knowledge of the premises, in order to be precognosed thereon, and to make production for the purposes foresaid of such writs and evidents pertinent to the case as are in their possession. And recommend to the Judges of other Counties and Jurisdictions to grant the Warrants of Concurrence necessary for enforcing that of your Lordship, within their respective territories.

According to Justice, &c.  
(Sgd) P. Fraser Mackenzie P.P.

Served by me 7.4.16 James Craigh Wardle of the Barons of Glasgow

## Warrant for arrest of James Maxton on charges of sedition, 29 Mar 1916

Discuss with a partner:

do you think it was fair that James Maxton was imprisoned for what he did? Justify your opinion.



**Extract of letter from Maxton to his fiancée, Sissie McCallum, whilst in prison**

I have seen the Herald this morning with report of bail proceedings. I'm afraid that sort of thing won't make it any easier for you. It's very satisfactory to learn from the Lord Advocate that the extreme penalty is penal servitude for life. I believe if you're well behaved that only means 20 years. and it is popularly believed that the first ten years are the ~~worst~~ <sup>worst</sup>. Joking apart it looks as if we were going to get it

pretty stiff, and I'm quite prepared personally to take all that's going. I'm sorry about you and the folks at home, and being sorry won't help you much. I'll come through it however, and we'll have to make up then in a hundred ways for the time that we've lost. You'll probably hear and read ~~lots~~ of very disagreeable things about me during the next few weeks and I want you to try and think of me not on what you read and hear about me, but as you, yourself knew me. It is a matter of great



## Extract of letter from Maxton to his mother, whilst in prison

4.  
forget them.

I gathered from John that both Annie & you had regained your usual balance by Thursday morning. I knew you would. It wasn't surprising you should be a bit upset by the suddenness of the seizure but you've both got any amount of pluck for hanging on. At the same time, I advise you if you're going to suffer much inconvenience at home to shut up shop and the three of you women clear out — out of the country if necessary, or down to England, or over to Ireland. If serious financial difficulties

No. 71a.

Untried Prisoner's Letter.

### NOTICE CONCERNING COMMUNICATION WITH PRISONERS.

#### LETTERS.

All letters are read by the Authorities, who may keep them back if they think it right to do so. Every letter will be kept back in the following cases:—

1. If it is crossed, or otherwise not written in a plain manner, so as to be easily read.
2. If it contains indecorous or improper matter.

No unpaid letters will be received at the Prison.

Each letter must have on the back the registered number of the prisoner, as well as the name.

#### Prohibited Articles.

It is provided by the Statute that persons attempting in any way to introduce into the Prison, spirits, tobacco, letters, or any other article contrary to rule, shall be immediately taken before a magistrate and subject to a penalty not less than £2 or more than £5, or to imprisonment in default of payment.

Register number.

Name

The Prisoner's writing to be on the blue lines only.

H.M. PRISON,

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only, make you hesitate to do this, Plet Willie Stewart know and there are one or two good men who would see that right.

You'll better leave John a free hand to act as he thinks fit. He's able enough to fight his own battles.



Extract of letter from Maxton to his mother, whilst in prison (note that the pages are reversed)

4.

the war and get their verdict.  
It perhaps erred from the patriotic  
point of view, but not from the  
wide-world humanitarian view  
nor even from the national view if  
that view were clear enough.

However I'm not squealing. Everybody  
at the Central Police Station, at the Sheriff  
Court and here in Duke St. has treated us  
with the greatest kindness. ~~I want to~~  
~~say to you that I am~~  
~~very sorry that I am~~  
~~in prison and that I~~  
~~am not at home~~  
~~and that I am not~~  
~~able to see you~~  
I'm to be allowed newspapers.

6

In any case see that you take a  
good Easter Holiday the lot of you  
and don't worry about me. I can  
see my way through this business  
and out on the other side.

I have done everything that  
I have done during the last years  
on principles which are greater and  
more fundamental than those which  
have brought the panic legislation  
which has landed me here. I'll be  
quite prepared to repeat the speech  
that I am charged on to any  
unprejudiced group of men after

# Discussion activities

- What were the consequences of James Maxton's imprisonment:
  - For his mother?
  - For his fiancée?
  - For him personally?
- What is his advice to his mother if things get difficult for her?
- Parts of Maxton's letter to his mother have been crossed out.
  - Who do you think did this?
  - Why do you think they did this?
  - Do you agree with this?

# Release from prison

Following his release from prison in 1917 Maxton was ordered to reappear before the Barrhead Military Tribunal. Once again he was offered the opportunity to engage himself in “work of national importance”. Again Maxton refused to do work which aided the war effort.

He was instead found work with a firm of barge builders who manufactured barges for neutral countries. Maxton remained with this firm for the duration of the war.



Local Tribunal: Name **BARRHEAD**  
Address **MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS**  
Certificate No. 16

This is to certify that:—  
Name (in full) James Maxton  
Address (in full) Beechwood, Gateside Road  
Age 30  
Occupation, profession or business Teacher

is exempted from the provisions of  
the Military Service Acts, 1916.

The exemption is\*

**CONDITIONAL**

The ground on which the exemption is granted is  
Conscientious objection to  
the undertaking of combatant  
service —

Signature Wm. Laing  
Date 16/4/17 for the Tribunal.

\* State whether the exemption is absolute, conditional (in which case the conditions should be stated) or temporary (in which case the period of time should be stated).  
If the exemption is granted on conscientious grounds and is from combatant service only, this should also be stated.

*Certificate of James Maxton's exemption from military service on grounds of conscientious objection*

This Certificate must be signed by the holder in the space provided below and must be carefully preserved by him. It must be returned to the Local Tribunal when it ceases to be in force. If the Certificate is conditional and if the conditions are no longer satisfied, notice must be given to the Local Tribunal. The man who fails to do this is liable to a penalty.

Signature of holder of Certificate. (The Certificate should be signed as soon as it is received)

James Maxton

18232. Wt. 50130/550. 250. 1/17. R. & L. Ltd.

**MILITARY SERVICE ACTS, 1916.**

**CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION.**

Mr. J. Maxton  
Beechwood,  
Gateside Road,  
Barrhead  
109547/9.1