

THE BLOOD VOTES

A HISTORICAL DRAMA

By Michael Futcher

Incorporating verbatim extracts, news reports, public speeches, songs and propaganda from the 1916 and 1917 plebiscites, including letters from the front

Rehearsal Draft

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Mrs Reibe – A Quaker, of German birth, mid-50's
Amy Reibe – Mrs Reibe's daughter, 16
Margaret Thorp – A Quaker, mid-20's
Kathleen O'Neill – Boarder of Mrs Reibe, Irish Catholic, 40
Robert O'Neill – Kathleen's son, 18, Australian
Ada Crawley – Secretary of the All Loyal League, late 40's
Ruby Crawley – Mrs Crawley's daughter, 17 in 1915
Anna Patterson – President of the All Loyal League, early 60's
Elizabeth Mitchell – Treasurer of the All Loyal League, mid-30's
Reverend Taylor – A Baptist Minister, mid-40's
Adela Pankhurst – Women's Peace Army, early 30's
Cecilia John – Women's Peace Army, mid-30's
Ernie Lane – Queensland Labour Movement, late 40's
Mabel Lane – Queensland Labour Movement, mid-40's
Recruitment Committee Official, early 40's
William Morris "Billy" Hughes – Australian Prime Minister, Labor, then
the Australian Nationalist Party, mid-50's
Mr Davis – Greengrocer, late 40's
Frank Tudor – Federal Labor Minister for Trade and Customs, then Labor
backbencher, then party leader, early 50's
Ray Crawley – Mrs Crawley's second son in the AIF, mid-20's
Munro Ferguson – Governor General, mid-50's
Joseph Cook – Federal Liberal leader – mid 50's
Eva Lynch – Industrial Workers of the World member – late 30's
Pat Brosnan – Irish dissident and egg-thrower – mid 20's

All other roles and voices played by the ensemble

CAST BREAKDOWN

ACTOR 1: Margaret Thorp

ACTOR 2: Mrs Reibe, Mrs Patterson, Munro Ferguson

ACTOR 3: Ruby Crawley, Cecilia John

ACTOR 4: Kathleen O'Neill, Mrs Crawley, Mabel Lane

ACTOR 5: Amy Reibe, Mrs Mitchell, Adela Pankhurst, Eva Lynch

ACTOR 6: Robert O'Neill, Joseph Cook, Policeman, Pat Brosnan

ACTOR 7: Billy Hughes, Mr Davis, Officer 1

ACTOR 8: Reverend Taylor, Recruitment Official, Ernie Lane, Frank Tudor, Ray Crawley, Officer 2, Policeman 2

THE BLOOD VOTES

PART 1

PROLOGUE – AUSTRALIA WILL DO ITS DUTY

October, 1915. Brisbane. A town hall recruitment meeting. Union Jacks and portraits of King George V feature prominently. A lectern stands upstage centre, on a raised platform. As audience members arrive they are greeted warmly by the actors who hand out recruitment flyers and mini Union Jacks, urging the audience to support the war effort by encouraging enlistment to the Australian Imperial Force overseas. Actors improvise chatting to the audience, placing them as people of 1915. An upbeat feel to proceedings – encouragement not haranguing - with a piano vamping jolly tunes in the background.

NB Some historical reference points/themes the actors can use: helping reinforce the heroes at Gallipoli for one final push; doing our duty to our fallen comrades; any able-bodied man between 18 and 45 is needed; six shillings a day guaranteed; support the Empire in its time of need; be true to our promise of supporting the Mother Country to our last man and last shilling; fighting German atrocities in Belgium; avenging the murder of 1198 civilians passengers and crew on the RMS Lusitania by a German submarine.

As the hall doors close and audience is in place, the pianist strikes up. The actors assemble across the stage to sing the recruitment song:

SONG: AUSTRALIA WILL BE THERE

VOICES

There has been a lot of argument going on they say,
As to whether dear old England should have gone into the fray.
But right-thinking people, all wanted her to fight;
For when there's shady business, Britannia puts it right.

Chorus:

Rally round the banner of your country,
Take the field with brothers o'er the foam,
On land or sea, wherever you be;
Keep your eye on Germany.
But England home and beauty have no cause to fear,
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
No! No! No! No! No! Australia will be there
Australia will be there.

The cast shouts "God Save the King!" then throw ad-libs to the audience as they exit: "See you here next week!", "Don't forget – sign-up is here next week!", "For King and Country!", "Tell your son it's six bob a week!", "Tell your son he'll see the world!" "Support our brave boys at Gallipoli!" The piano vamps underneath.

SCENE 1 – THORP ARRIVES IN BRISBANE

The lodgings of MRS REIBE, Glenrosa Rd, Red Hill, Brisbane. A young woman, MARGARET THORP, appears through the audience carrying a large suitcase. She checks an address on a piece of paper. On the edges of the stage, the actors watch on.

VOICE Red Hill, Brisbane

VOICE November, 1915...

AMY, a slow-witted girl of 16 runs to a window and looks out.

AMY Mother! She's here!

MRS REIBE *(looking out to THORP. Slight German accent)* Help her with her suitcase, child.

THORP *(seeing MRS REIBE at the window)* Mrs Reibe?

AMY *(running outside to greet THORP)* I'm Amy.

THORP *(smiling)* Hello.

AMY I'll help you.

AMY roughly takes the suitcase off THORP. MRS REIBE comes out of the house.

THORP Really, there's no need –

MRS REIBE Gently girl!

AMY Not heavy!

MRS REIBE *(a strained smile)* She's ardent. Please forgive her.

THORP Nothing to forgive, I admire enthusiasm.

MRS REIBE It can be misplaced. Please come in.

THORP Thank you. I hope my staying here isn't an imposition.

MRS REIBE A Friend is always welcome.

THORP I doubt it'll be more than a couple of weeks, just until I find my feet –

MRS REIBE *(calling out to AMY, of the suitcase)* The bedroom!

THORP - the Committee is adamant that you shouldn't be out of pocket, please allow me - *(gets some money out of her purse).*

MRS REIBE No money.

THORP It's all been budgeted and approved. Please take it.

MRS REIBE Absolutely not. *(to AMY)* Take Miss Thorp's hat and put it in her room.

AMY does so.

THORP Thank you.

MRS REIBE Breakfast is at 7.30. Dinner, 6 o'clock sharp. *(to AMY)* Not the laundry, child! The bedroom! *(to THORP)* Have you any questions?

THORP No, that all sounds...I won't be taking dinner much anyway.

MRS REIBE ...?

THORP In the evenings - I have a lot of meetings.

MRS REIBE What meetings? There will be no meetings here. This is a quiet house.

THORP Of course, Mrs Reibe. I won't be -

MRS REIBE Nobody said you would be holding meetings.

THORP I'm sorry. I thought they told you about it all.

MRS REIBE About what?

THORP The new branch of the Peace Board we're opening in Brisbane.

MRS REIBE No they did not.

AMY Can I come to the meetings?

MRS REIBE Certainly not. Go and fetch the washing in.

AMY But mother -

MRS REIBE I have spoken.

AMY Yes Mother.

AMY leaves. MRS REIBE makes tea.

THORP Anything I do won't affect you or Amy in any way, Mrs Reibe, I guarantee it.

MRS REIBE Milk and sugar?

THORP Just milk, thank you.

Beat

MRS REIBE So what is discussed at these meetings?

THORP A wide range of topics. Women's welfare, prison reform, but most commonly I speak out against militarism and the war.

MRS REIBE Speak out?

THORP Millions are dying, Mrs Reibe. Nothing is being done. It's a different world now. The time has come for women to make a stand.

MRS REIBE It is not our purpose to involve ourselves in the machinations of the world's evil, child. It is to contemplate God's light and to observe the scriptures. God has his plan.

THORP Sometimes praying isn't enough.

MRS REIBE looks askance.

THORP Did not James write that faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead?

MRS REIBE I'm not sure he meant this sort of action, child. Beware the modern way doesn't lead you into danger.

THORP I have faith in women. In women we will see the light.

MRS REIBE These times have unleashed evils I have not seen in people before. Women are not free of it. Take great care.

ROBERT O'NEILL, 18, appears at the door, holding a box.

ROBERT I've got your groceries, Mrs Reibe.

MRS REIBE Thank you. Put it over there.

ROBERT puts the box down. KATHLEEN O'NEILL, supported by a walking stick, comes to the door, looking troubled.

MRS REIBE *(going to her purse)* Yes, Mrs O'Neill?

KATHLEEN *(Dublin accent)* I wanted to speak to Robert before he goes.

SONG: THE CALL TO ARMS - YOUR KING AND COUNTRY NEED YOU

ALL Your King and your Country now need you,
 And Britons they fear no alarms,
 Father, brother and son they respond every one,
 To the sound of the loud call to arms...

A discordant crash on the piano. The cast assembles into a tight chorus of voices, eyes focussed ahead as if in a trance. The animated energy of the song has been replaced by haunted eyes, and a stunned horror. The lines are not barked out – rather delivered as if shell-shocked, slow and measured.

VOICE Gallipoli, 1915...

VOICE Did they hesitate?

ALL *(a whisper)* No

VOICE They tore up the roof from those front trenches and leapt down
 into a darkness ripe with death.

VOICE Then there was bloody work!

Sound under. The voices are now haunted. Almost a whisper.

VOICE In and home went their steel. It had a thirst in it for the blood of
 those Turks.

VOICE Then did they fight like the men they were,

VOICE Now

ALL thrusting,

VOICE Now

ALL holding off,

VOICE Now

ALL twisting,

VOICE Now

ALL turning,

VOICE Now

VOICE wrenching out their bayonets from this

ALL crush of flesh,
VOICE Now dropping down with their
ALL limbs shattered,
VOICE With their bowels slit and torn out by the foe.
ALL Then there was bloody work.

Beat

VOICE Along through those trenches, dark and stinking, men fought
hand-to-hand.
VOICE With clubbed rifle,
VOICE With rusty spade
VOICE With anything to hand
VOICE They split out the brains of others
VOICE Trodden soon to mud on the floor...

A quieter discordant crash on the piano which transforms into a plodding underscore for the song, sung with a quiet determination.

SONG: THE CALL TO ARMS - YOUR KING AND COUNTRY NEED YOU

VOICES They fear not the fight that's before them,
Side by side to the end they will stand,
Our soldiers so true and the lads in blue,
For the sake of the Motherland.

SCENE 3 – THE ALL LOYAL LEAGUE

Concordia Hall, Brisbane, November 1915. MRS CRAWLEY is at the podium, Union Jack displayed prominently.

MRS CRAWLEY ...and finally I would like to thank the heads of our committees
for their sterling efforts: Mrs McLennan's knitting circle for the
boys at the front, and Mrs Mitchell for her fundraiser raffle,
which raised...

MRS MITCHELL Five Pounds ten shillings.

Applause

MRS CRAWLEY A wonderful effort Mrs Mitchell. In finishing, I call on you all to continue your support of our troops across the seas. God Save the King.

ALL God save the King.

A smattering of applause. MRS CRAWLEY sits next to her daughter RUBY, who looks uncomfortable. ANNA PATTERSON takes to the podium.

RUBY Mum, I need to –

PATTERSON Thank you Mrs Crawley. And it's nice to see your daughter here this afternoon, at last. Welcome Ruby! Give her a badge.

MRS CRAWLEY hands a badge to RUBY, who reluctantly accepts it, as the others give a small round of applause.

PATTERSON Last month, in response to the horrendous casualties suffered by our gallant boys in Gallipoli, the Universal Service League was formed in New South Wales, to lobby the Commonwealth Government to adopt compulsory service. So far, here in Queensland, our patriotic menfolk have been sluggish in organizing any complementary organization, so it must now fall upon us as women of the All Loyal League to also petition the Prime Minister to bring this about.

Applause

MRS MITCHELL Hear hear!

PATTERSON We need equality of sacrifice and service, but there are tens of thousands of eligible men here in Brisbane who have not enlisted and are determined not to go.

VOICE Shame!

PATTERSON I feel that Christ himself is calling on the women to take a hand and compel these men to get off their backsides and support our boys overseas!

Applause. ROBERT appears in the doorway to the side of the women. RUBY turns round and sees him. ROBERT beckons to her.

PATTERSON These shirkers remain here, well fed and clothed and enjoying every liberty as though there were no war at all.

RUBY Mum?

MRS CRAWLEY Sshh!

PATTERSON I would like to voice the indignation that we all feel at the present position and the attitude of these men who will not fight.

VOICE Dirty cowards!

RUBY I have to go.

MRS CRAWLEY What?

PATTERSON They not only will not fight, but sneer at those that do. It is time the position ceased.

VOICES *(applauding)* Hear, hear!

RUBY I've got to get my dress back from Isobel before she leaves.

MRS CRAWLEY Can't you get it afterwards?

VOICE Send them to the front!

RUBY She's leaving now! That's what I was trying to tell you before!

ROBERT steps into the hall. RUBY frantically waves him away. ROBERT steps back.

PATTERSON I urge you all to work towards forcing the hand of the federal Government and allow the Prime Minister to do what he knows is right!

Applause.

RUBY Mum!

MRS CRAWLEY *(put out)* Off you go then. But next time, you'll be here for the entire meeting!

RUBY Thanks Mum. *(kisses her and walks quickly to the back of the auditorium)*

PATTERSON In the meantime, it is our duty to compel all eligible men to enlist. We must ostracise those who fail to answer our country's call. Hand them a white feather if you have to.

RUBY meets ROBERT. He kisses her, they link hands and rush off.

PATTERSON Shame them in front of their employers and girlfriends. Call them shirkers and cowards. And to the women who are not meeting their responsibilities to enlist their sons, brothers and fathers, we say to them: "You are unpatriotic! You are enemies of the Empire!"

Applause

VOICES Hear, hear!

SCENE 4 – YOUNG LOVE

A park nearby. RUBY chases ROBERT. Much laughter and messing about as RUBY tries to get her All Loyal League badge off ROBERT.

RUBY Give it back!

ROBERT I'm going to chuck it in the river!

RUBY Don't! Give it to me!

RUBY lunges at ROBERT who dodges out of the way and in giving chase, RUBY almost slams straight into REVEREND TAYLOR.

REV TAYLOR Careful!

RUBY Sorry Reverend Taylor!

ROBERT Sorry.

REV TAYLOR Just watch where you're going in future.

REVEREND TAYLOR throws a glance at Robert before walking away. Stifled giggles from RUBY and ROBERT.

RUBY You idiot!

ROBERT All right, all right. I'm sorry I nearly desecrated the sacred symbol of the All Royal League.

RUBY All Loyal League.

Takes the badge off RUBY and pins it on.

RUBY Do you have to?

ROBERT You're an official member now. Got to remind everyone of their duty to the Empire. Got to round up all those shirkers.

RUBY Don't. Mum nearly saw us today. We've got to be more careful.

ROBERT We could meet at my house.

RUBY Mad Amy's always there.

ROBERT She's not mad.

RUBY Gawking at you.

ROBERT Jealous?

RUBY pushes him away semi-playfully.

RUBY Shut up. We can't keep going on like this. We need a place where we can meet.

Beat

RUBY In private.

Beat

ROBERT Give us a kiss.

RUBY Not here...

ROBERT Over here, no one can see.

RUBY Robert –

He leads her over to a bush and they sit down. He kisses her. She responds, then he looks at her.

ROBERT I love you. I want to spend the rest of my life with you.

Pause

ROBERT What's the matter?

RUBY I feel the same.

ROBERT Then why are you upset?

RUBY I'm not. But what are we going to do?

ROBERT I don't know. Tell your Mum?

RUBY You've got to be joking.

ROBERT We could run away. Up north. No-one would know us there. I could get a job cane-cutting, you could work in the kitchens.

RUBY Sure. Can you speak Italian?

ROBERT I'm serious. No-one gives a damn about anything up there. I've heard it's like another country. We could get a little place of our own, grow vegetables, open a shop, start a family –

RUBY Hey, hey, hey, slow down!

ROBERT - eventually, once we're married –

RUBY Is that a proposal?

ROBERT It might be. If you want it to be.

Beat

RUBY *(laughing)* You've got it all planned out haven't you?

ROBERT Why are you laughing?

RUBY You're funny when you get a bee in your bonnet. You get all...I don't know...bossy.

ROBERT So, is that a yes?

RUBY Depends if you're going to ask me properly.

ROBERT It'll happen.

They laugh

ROBERT What about running away?

RUBY Might be a bit of a shock for your mum – since you're the one bringing home the bacon. Not to mention my mum, with two sons at the front.

ROBERT Eloping with a shirker.

RUBY You're not a shirker.

ROBERT I'm eighteen and I haven't signed up. That makes me a shirker.

RUBY That's all Mrs Patterson's rubbish and you know it. You've got rights. No-one can force you to kill a person if you don't want to. And no-one has the right to send you to a place where you might get killed if you don't want to.

Beat

RUBY I wish I could tell Mum that.

ROBERT Why don't you?
RUBY It's not worth the pain.
ROBERT So we keep stealing around in secret.

Beat

RUBY At least we're together.
ROBERT No matter what?
RUBY No matter what happens...

SCENE 5 - THORP TRIES TO SPREAD THE WORD

Sombre, funereal chords and tempo. The chorus gathers on the edges of the stage, assuming the expression of war-weary soldiers. THORP approaches the podium, a little nervously, holding a set of notes.

VOICE The letter of Cyril Lawrence
VOICE Gallipoli, 1915
VOICE The Charnel House.
VOICE Within a space of fifteen feet, I can count fourteen of our boys
stone dead...men and boys who yesterday were full of joy and
life, now lying there
VOICE cold, cold, dead

THORP steps up to the podium, amongst the chorus of soldiers. She is subliminally aware of them throughout her speech.

THORP Thank you, Mrs Dawson, it's a great pleasure to be here today
to speak to the National Council of Women.
VOICES Their eyes glassy, their faces sallow
THORP History has shown us that men are too easily predisposed to
destruction and violence, whereas we women, as instinctive
nurturers of humanity, must follow Christ's example
VOICES Soulless, gone
THORP And seize the moment.
VOICES Somebody's son, somebody's boy

THORP It is our duty to educate public opinion,

VOICES Now merely a thing

THORP But do we know in which direction? Too many of us are unclear about this. We are all told to nurture our children in order to sacrifice them on the bloody cliffs of Gallipoli.

VOICES God, what a sight.

THORP Is our worth as women and mothers to be gauged only by how many sons we are willing to abandon for the cause of war?

The sombre rhythm stops.

THORP Why not for peace?

WOMAN It's all very well to say that, but we can't talk about peace when war is raging.

WOMAN Why don't you put some effort into helping our boys at the front instead of causing trouble here?

WOMAN You ought to be at the wash tub!

A military drum-beat. VOICES sing aggressively as THORP takes a deep breath and steps off the podium.

VOICES Father, brother and son they respond every one,
To the sound of the loud call to arms.

As the chorus begins to surround her, THORP walks to a church for the next meeting and sees a recruitment poster on the notice board. She rips it off. She seems agitated. . The voices become more menacing, the chorus stalking her, the words chanted not sung:

VOICES From over the seas they have answered,
And help from afar they bring,
To uphold the right of our Empire's might,
And to fight for our flag and King.

SCENE 6 – THORP DUELS WITH THE CLERGY

THORP arrives at a church hall. A meeting is in progress. REVEREND TAYLOR is at the podium. ADELA PANKHURST and CECILIA JOHN watch on.

VOICE Twenty-five meetings later

VOICE The YWCA...

VOICE The Reverend Albert Taylor!

Applause

REV TAYLOR ...This war is a righteous and holy war. Our nation's integrity will rise victorious. However it will not be won without the support of our women.

WOMEN Hear hear!

REV TAYLOR And do not for a minute think women cannot be every bit as brave and dedicated to the holy cause of victory as the valiant men who are fighting in the trenches of France. I cite as an example the actions of a heroic woman during the Indian Mutiny of 1857...her name escapes me for the moment...who, when faced with a recalcitrant crowd of sepoy managed to shoot dead six of them! This is the type of courage our women need to aspire to in our support of the war effort. I thank you all for listening. Trust God and He will take care of you.

THORP I would like to say something if I may, Reverend?

REV TAYLOR Please...

THORP If we trust God, and really believe that national integrity will rise victorious, why do we slaughter thousands of men against whom we have no personal quarrel?

REV TAYLOR I appreciate your sentiments but with -

THORP During a time of military tyranny, Christ showed the way of overcoming the Roman Legions by peace not force -

REV TAYLOR - with respect, you obviously know nothing of the matter -

THORP - thereby illustrating the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. Yes it led Christ to the cross and an apparent failure but in actuality it was the most wonderful victory the world has ever known.

REV TAYLOR If you leave me your address I will send you some newspaper articles which I have no doubt will convince you of the righteousness of war and its consistency with Christianity.

THORP Reverend, I see that the walls and doors of your church hall are covered with recruiting notices and pictures of soldiers wielding bayonets. How did it come to pass that the Christian Church had become a recruiting agency?

REV TAYLOR The church is not a recruiting agency but we must side with the righteous cause.

THORP What about the sixth commandment?

REV TAYLOR “It is the wrongdoing of the opposing party which compels the wise man to wage just wars”.

THORP “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.”

WOMAN Put a sock in it!

REV TAYLOR You’re wasting everybody’s time.

THORP Do you not prefer Christ’s words over St Augustine’s?

REV TAYLOR Make no mistake. Our present business is to kill every man of the enemy.

WOMAN Hear hear!

THORP That’s very Christ-like!

REV TAYLOR Get her out.

VOICES Hear hear!

THORP No war is just.

REV TAYLOR Get her out!

Men come to escort THORP out.

THORP *(as she is taken away)* Ye shall be led out with joy, and be led forth with peace!

REV TAYLOR If you weren’t a woman I would have punched you in the face!

THORP The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing!

THORP is taken way. PANKHURST and JOHN watch on.

PANKHURST She has spirit.

JOHN Maybe too much of the holy sort but she’ll make a good speaker.

PANKHURST Come on.

SCENE 7 – THORP MEETS PANKHURST AND JOHN
PANKHURST and JOHN intercept THORP.

PANKHURST Miss Thorp?

THORP Yes?

PANKHURST Adela Pankhurst. This is Cecilia John - the Women's Peace Army. We've been following your progress for some time now.

JOHN Your peace work's very impressive.

THORP Thank you.

PANKHURST We're establishing a Brisbane branch, and think you have the perfect temperament to make a major contribution.

JOHN Would you be interested in joining us?

THORP I already have a lot of work to do here with the Society of Friends –

PANKHURST We could help you make all sorts of connections –

JOHN The workers movement, members of parliament -

PANKHURST Even the Premier himself.

THORP Isn't the Peace Army against affiliations with political parties?

PANKHURST and JOHN glance at each other.

PANKHURST You're well-informed.

JOHN You've no doubt heard about our founder's comments, but Miss Goldstein's views aren't shared by all our members.

PANKHURST We have many areas of agreement with Miss Goldstein, but many of us realise that to be most effective we have no choice but to integrate with the workers movement.

JOHN Where the real power lies.

PANKHURST And because of the strength of the movement here, Queensland is vital to our plans. We need someone who has the tact and intelligence –

JOHN - and passion –

PANKHURST - to be able to bring the Peace Army and the Workers Movement together. Unfortunately, since Miss Goldstein made her comments Cecilia and I have been tarred with the same brush by Trades Hall –

JOHN You on the other hand are someone fresh – slightly out of our circle. It could make all the difference.

PANKHURST You speak well and you believe in what you say.

JOHN And you're not afraid.

Pause

THORP I prefer to do my work quietly – without provoking people.

JOHN You could've fooled me.

THORP He got me angry.

JOHN Good!

THORP I'm not proud of it.

JOHN You should be. We're all angry. Thousands are dying each day for what? We've got to fight the people who are continuing to allow it to happen. Turning the other cheek is not going to work.

THORP Even if it makes us like them?

JOHN We do what we have to do to stop the killing.

PANKHURST We understand your obligations to the Quaker faith, Miss Thorp. There is no reason why you cannot achieve your goals alongside ours, in your own special way. We embrace that, do we not Cecilia?

JOHN Of course.

PANKHURST And think of the opportunities you will have to reach so many more people through the Peace Army.

JOHN How many do you normally get at your meetings? Twenty? Thirty?

THORP I don't court publicity.

JOHN With respect, then you're stupid.

PANKHURST Cecilia...

JOHN We had two thousand at our last meeting in Melbourne. And we're looking to double that at our next one.

PANKHURST Brisbane needs to hear the message too.

THORP I have my own way of communicating to them.

JOHN What are you afraid of?

THORP Nothing. Except God's wrath.

JOHN And do you think God would be angry with you for upsetting a would-be-murderer priest or a war profiteer? No – they are the ones in the wrong and we have to fight them – and God will applaud us.

THORP I don't think you should presume to know what God wants.

Beat

PANKHURST Look. I think we all want the same thing. But there's only so much we can do on our own.

JOHN The killing's got to stop.

PANKHURST We have to pull together. Nothing needs to change with your own work. This will only complement it. Think about it, please.

SCENE 8 – A WAR CENSUS INTERROGATION

Glenrosa Rd. A knocking at the door. An OFFICIAL is standing outside with a clipboard. KATHLEEN goes to the door.

OFFICIAL Good afternoon, I'm Sergeant Rodgers from the Recruitment Committee, I'd like to speak to Robert O'Neill. Is he in?

KATHLEEN What do you want? I'm his mother.

OFFICIAL I'd like to ask a few questions about his Census form.

KATHLEEN What's that got to do with recruiting?

OFFICIAL It's normal procedure Mrs O'Neill. Just a few basic questions.

KATHLEEN You can talk to me since I helped him fill in the form.

OFFICIAL That may be but I still need to speak to Robert. Can I come in?

KATHLEEN reluctantly obliges. They go inside.

KATHLEEN I don't see what the problem is. We answered all the questions clearly enough.

OFFICIAL I'm sure you did.

KATHLEEN Very nosey I thought they were, too.

ROBERT appears.

ROBERT What's going on, Mum?

KATHLEEN He wants to ask you some questions.

OFFICIAL Now Robert, let's just review what you've answered on the form. To the question "Are you prepared to enlist now?" You replied "NO". Is that correct?

Robert nods

OFFICIAL And to the question "If not willing to enlist now, are you willing to enlist at a later date?" You also answered "NO" is that correct?

ROBERT *(Quieter)* Yes.

OFFICIAL Why was that?

KATHLEEN The answer's there on the form

OFFICIAL I want to hear the boy's answer. Why don't you want to sign up, Robert?

ROBERT ...it's not because I don't want to sign up...I have to look after Mum.

KATHLEEN My husband died five years ago. I rely on Robert's income from his job at the grocer's.

OFFICIAL I see. *(to KATHLEEN)* And you have no other form of income?

KATHLEEN Obviously, no. As it says on the form.

Robert is uncomfortable.

OFFICIAL We'll be checking that out.

KATHLEEN Are you calling me a liar?

OFFICIAL Of course not. As I said, it's all normal procedure. *(to ROBERT)* And you have one brother, 23, living in...*(checking his notes)*

KATHLEEN Perth.

OFFICIAL Perth. *(to KATHLEEN)* Does he support you financially in any way?

KATHLEEN No.

OFFICIAL May I ask why not?

KATHLEEN You may not.

Beat

OFFICIAL So Robert, is it true to say that if it wasn't for you having to support your mother you would have signed up?

ROBERT Well I...I would have liked to, you know, do my bit, but –

OFFICIAL - Do your bit, good. Don't want to be seen as a shirker, do you?

ROBERT No.

OFFICIAL Do you honour your King?

ROBERT I suppose...

OFFICIAL You suppose?

ROBERT Yes.

OFFICIAL Good. And you want to enlist?

Beat.

ROBERT I -

KATHLEEN We've filled out your bloody form now will you leave us in peace?

OFFICIAL Please Mrs O'Neill, let the boy speak for himself -

KATHLEEN There's no law that says anyone has to enlist, and until there is, we don't have to answer to you, or to the bloody recruitment board or to the King himself!

ROBERT Mum –

KATHLEEN Now if you don't leave I'm going to call the police!

OFFICIAL All right Mrs O'Neill.

THORP on her way home, has heard the word "police" and approaches.

KATHLEEN Who do you think you are coming in here making your snide comments about shirkers and the like and putting pressure on the boy?

OFFICIAL Nobody was pressuring him.

KATHLEEN You bloody well were!

ROBERT Mum!

KATHLEEN He won't be signing up - now or ever!

OFFICIAL Where's your loyalty, woman?

KATHLEEN Why should we be loyal to Britain when it's been disloyal to Ireland for years? Now get out!

OFFICIAL He won't be able to hide for much longer.

KATHLEEN Get out!

The OFFICIAL goes out as THORP comes in.

THORP Is everything all right Mrs O'Neill?

KATHLEEN Bloody nerve!

ROBERT Why didn't you let me answer for myself?

KATHLEEN You don't understand what they're doing. It's all political -

ROBERT I'm not a boy anymore Mum, and I'll make my own decisions from now on!

Robert storms out.

KATHLEEN Don't you walk away from me! Where are you going?

ROBERT Work!

KATHLEEN Robert, wait! Wait!

But he's gone.

KATHLEEN God help us.

THORP comforts her.

KATHLEEN What right did he have? What right? Trying to force the boy to enlist.

THORP They can't do that.

KATHLEEN Jesus Mary and Joseph, they'll shame him into it!

THORP No-one can compel him to go.

KATHLEEN Not yet, Miss Thorp, not yet...but for how long?

THORP We won't let them...

THORP stares ahead – makes a decision.

SCENE 9 – LANE GRILLS HUGHES

A meeting hall. "The Red Flag" plays as an intro. ERNIE LANE walks up to the lectern. BILLY HUGHES stands nearby, watching.

VOICE December 1915

VOICE Brisbane City Hall

VOICE (*calling him to the stage*) AWU delegate, Mr Ernie Lane.

Cheering and applause from the assembled delegates.

LANE In July this year, the Prime Minister said, and I quote: "In no circumstances would I agree to send men out of this country to fight against their will." In light of the recent War Census which identified 600 000 fit men between the ages of 18 and 44, and in light of Mr Hughes's offer to send to Britain 50 000 men, as well as a monthly quota of 9000 men to account for "wastage", and in light of the fact that Conscription is likely to be introduced in Britain, is the Prime Minister prepared to again rule out the introduction of Conscription in Australia?

VOICE Hear, hear.

VOICE The Prime Minister, Mr Hughes.

Muted applause as HUGHES steps up to the podium.

HUGHES Mr Lane has reminded us of a speech I made over six months ago, as Attorney general, upon the introduction of the War Census Act Bill, which has been successfully implemented and has proven invaluable in giving this country an accurate assessment of its human and financial assets.

VOICE It's the Spanish Inquisition!

HUGHES It also has enabled the Government to impart to the people of Australia the vital necessity of giving our Mother Country every assistance within our power to crush Prussian military despotism once and for all, so I make no apology for encouraging our eligible single men to enlist –

VOICE We're not talking about enlistment, we're talking about Conscription!

HUGHES I make no apology for pointing out to our sons, that if they love their country, if they love freedom, they should take their places alongside their fellow Australians at the front and help them to achieve a glorious victory. Now of course the Census is not a forerunner to conscription –

LANE - if it looks like conscription, if it smells like conscription, it *is* conscription!

HUGHES - it is rather intended to organize the forces of our country that we may put forth the greatest effort of which we are capable –

LANE - conscription in its most insidious form!

HUGHES - Mr Lane will also remember from my speech of July last year, when I said that if the day ever comes when men will not fight, when their country is at death grips, it will be because the country is rotten to the core, and not worth fighting for. But I say to you that this country is *not* rotten to the core, it *is* worth fighting for and its brave sons will *not* refuse to answer the call when the freedom of the Empire is at stake.

LANE Then let it be their own choice and not by compulsion!

HUGHES However it would be irresponsible and unconscionable of me as Prime Minister to say that I cannot rule out possibilities in the future –

LANE - there we have it! Ladies and Gentlemen you have heard it from the man himself!

HUGHES I make no apology for saying that!

LANE You would compel young men to go to their deaths against their will?

HUGHES Compulsion is not a problem in principle. It is after all core to Union solidarity is it not? The temple of our liberty is in flames, and it is our duty to help put those flames out, and yet you stand there and rail about compulsion! The very foundation of our great movement is compulsion!

LANE You're in no position to preach about the Australian Labour Movement, Mr Hughes. The Australian Labor Party – or any other party for that matter - is NOT the Australian Labour Movement. The ALP is just a section of that movement, and as its current thinking is going, it is plainly a very mediocre and futile section! Its priorities have moved such a distance away from its true members that they might as well have been formulated by the Tory party!

Applause and jeers – general uproar and cries of “Shame! Shame!” “Tory whore!” “Well said Mr Hughes!” “Down with conscription!”, as Hughes descends from the podium. Hughes walks away and is harassed by the delegates singing:

SONG EXTRACT: AUSTRALIAN HYMN OF FREEDOM.

VOICES Arouse ye mothers of the free,
Stand loyal to your trust,
Lest all that stands for liberty
Be ground into the dust...

SCENE 10 – THE MENACE OF MILITARISM

Trades Hall. THORP meets JOHN and PANKHURST and shakes their hands.

VOICE Trades Hall, Brisbane

VOICE Thorp addresses the Workers Movement.

PANKHURST We're thrilled you've made this decision, Margaret.

JOHN From this moment we don't look back.

THORP I hope I live up to expectations.

JOHN Unfortunately they've plonked you onto the end of proceedings – most of them will be gagging for a beer, so you'd best keep it short.

PANKHURST Don't expect wonders from them - this is a bridge-building exercise – (*pointedly to JOHN*) isn't it Cecilia?

JOHN Of course.

PANKHURST The key is to make a good impression.

THORP I'll do my best.

JOHN Look them in the eyes. They're only men.

THORP Are there any women here at all?

JOHN There's a couple over there.

PANKHURST Speak from the heart – that's all they want.

THORP nods

JOHN Don't forget, they're mostly all atheist radical socialists out there so it might be best to go light on the religious stuff.

THORP steps up to the podium. PANKHURST and JOHN watch from the side. THORP momentarily hesitates, looking at her papers. She appears nervous at first but warms into it.

THORP “The Menace of Militarism”

JOHN *(quietly)* Speak up.

THORP War is a crime. Great Britain has no quarrel with Austria, Germany none with France or Russia. It is awful enough that millions of men are standing face to face with violent death. It is more awful that all the rest of the people of the world are in danger of starvation. The millions that war costs must be paid ultimately, and by the weakest, and these are the women and children of the working classes, who will pay with hunger and cold and cruel privations.

PANKHURST Good.

THORP War is a dreadful waste of human and economic resources. Currently the war costs 2 million pounds a day. The armament-mongers are the only beneficiary. To them the war means huge profits and increased dividends, while to the nation it means awful sacrifice. The warmongers would have us believe that this war is a righteous and holy one. How can war or any decision resulting from war have a relation to justice? War decides who is strongest, who has the most and best fighting men, and most munitions and money – not who is right. Men are sacrificing their lives for what they think is right – this is a noble quality, but it is a very different matter when this

sacrifice involves the sacrifice of others. Nations have not yet tried Christianity based on Christ's teachings...

JOHN Here we go.

THORP Unfortunately, the Church – though professing a Christian faith, has descended to the level of popular feeling, and assists in recruiting and backs up the war. Is this in keeping with Christ's teachings? Surely it is for us of the Christian Church to strive even now, not for the peace of expediency, but for a peace that is a living, glowing, burning expression of love – the love of Christ.

JOHN *(strangled)* Jesus!

PANKHURST Sshh!

THORP *(glancing towards JOHN a moment)*...So where does the future lie? It lies with the workers of each nation and particularly with the women who are already beginning to demand a permanent peace. On April 28th this year at The Hague, for the first time in history, women of opposing nations met together at a time of war to consider ways of ending the conflict. They urged governments on both sides to put an end to this bloodshed, and to begin peace negotiations. Women suffer most from the war and its consequences – and know the cost of life too well to risk it lightly. I will finish with the words of Olive Schreiner: "There is, perhaps, no woman, whether she has born children, or been merely potentially a child-bearer, who could look down upon a battlefield covered with the slain, but the thought would rise in her "So many mothers' sons!" This war, and the Menace of Militarism must end.

Polite applause.

SCENE 11 – THE WORKERS MOVEMENT AND WPA UNITE

THORP steps down from the podium with her papers. PANKHURST and JOHN approach her.

PANKHURST *(to JOHN)* Not bad.

MABEL LANE and ERNIE LANE make their way to THORP.

MABEL Hello. I'm Mabel Lane and this is my husband, Ernie, Chairman of the Brisbane branch of the AWU and member of the central executive.

THORP Pleased to meet you.

LANE Very straight-forward and interesting, speech.

THORP Thank you.

LANE Probably could have done without the God stuff but apart from that it struck a chord with a few of the members.

PANKHURST She's a natural, isn't she?

JOHN The Women's Peace Army's newest recruit.

LANE But we won't hold that against her.

Beat

PANKHURST We're keen to discuss how our organizations can work together more effectively.

LANE Maybe you should take up the matter with Miss Goldstein first.

PANKHURST Miss Goldstein isn't against the idea.

MABEL It's not the impression she gave us.

THORP Miss Goldstein doesn't speak for the majority of our members.

PANKHURST and JOHN look at THORP, shocked.

THORP The Women's Peace Army is evolving at a great rate, in proportion to the needs at hand: to unite the goals of the Peace Army and the Workers Movement, against a common foe.

LANE So you're distancing yourself from Miss Goldstein?

THORP No, but we believe, in the present climate, that we all need to put our differences aside.

MABEL Most rank and file members won't agree to do the work of any group which is straight-out against the war.

JOHN Long term peace won't be achieved by crushing Germany.

THORP frowns at JOHN.

MABEL Most of them don't trust the Germans to keep any peace deals unless the backbone of their military is broken.

THORP I believe there's more support for peace amongst the wives of Union members than you think, Mrs Lane. They've seen the casualty lists come in.

MABEL What about the WPA's position on keeping Australia white?

JOHN We're opposed to racism.

MABEL We protect the jobs of Australians.

JOHN White Australians.

MABEL Of course.

PANKHURST I think we have to agree to differ on this one.

Beat

THORP We can all agree on one thing. No-one wants conscription.

LANE That's true.

JOHN If it comes.

LANE If Hughes has his way – it's coming.

JOHN The Labor party won't support it.

LANE He's just offered to send 50 000 troops to Europe. He wouldn't make that sort of commitment if he wasn't sure that he could get that many.

JOHN He'd never get it through caucus.

LANE He doesn't need to. Not if he puts it straight to the people.

MABEL The rat.

LANE When he gets back from Britain, all hell's going to break loose, make no mistake.

THORP All the more reason to present a united front.

Beat

LANE *(smiling)* What do you reckon Mabel? We put it to the members? You reckon they'll like the idea of getting into bed with the Women's Peace Army?

JOHN If they're game enough.

MABEL They're game enough. Are you though?

THORP Try us.

Beat

LANE All right. This is what we do. We'll get all Unions to affiliate with the WPA under the banner of the Anti-Conscription League. Agreed?

THORP Agreed

LANE Ladies?

JOHN/PANK Agreed.

LANE If everyone behaves themselves we get the AWU on board, then we'll be an ace away from getting the support of Parliamentary Labor. If we get Parliamentary Labor and Premier Ryan – we'll be laughing.

MABEL (*smiling*) And I might join the WPA if you'll have me.

PANKHURST and JOHN glance at each other.

PANKHURST Consider it done.

LANE (*to PANKHURST of THORP*) You've got a bright spark there.

LANE and MABEL leave, JOHN winks at THORP.

JOHN We're on.

An up-beat musical bridge. THORP, JOHN and PANKHURST leave.

SCENE 12 – MRS PATTERSON SHAMES ROBERT

A grocer's, Brisbane. MR DAVIS enters with some vegetables. MRS PATTERSON is at the counter.

MR DAVIS Anything else, Mrs Patterson?

PATTERSON A pound of potatoes please. How much are the tomatoes?

ROBERT enters carrying a box of vegetables and places it on a shelf.

MR DAVIS Sixpence a pound.

PATTERSON That's outrageous.

MR DAVIS Sorry, they went up again yesterday – I'm hardly making a bob on them at all.

PATTERSON Forget about it.

ROBERT moves to the back of the shop to fill up another box. MRS PATTERSON looks at him.

MR DAVIS Anything else?

PATTERSON A pound of apples, please.

MR DAVIS Very good.

PATTERSON Who's that?

MR DAVIS Hmmm?

PATTERSON Your assistant.

MR DAVIS That's the O'Neill boy. Robert.

PATTERSON I haven't seen him before.

MR DAVIS He mainly does deliveries.

PATTERSON That one's rotten.

MR DAVIS Pardon?

MRS PATTERSON indicates an apple MR DAVIS has just put in the bag.

MR DAVIS So it is. My apologies.

PATTERSON I assume he's under eighteen?

MR DAVIS Turned eighteen last week.

PATTERSON I see.

MR DAVIS *(Packs up the apples).* That'll be...er...two -

ROBERT *(calling through)* Three shillings and sixpence.

MR DAVIS *(off MRS PATTERSON's look)* He's a bright lad. That's three shillings and sixpence please, Mrs Patterson.

PATTERSON Daylight robbery. *(gets out her purse. Calling to the back of the shop)* Robert is it?

ROBERT Yes.

PATTERSON Mr Davis just told me you'd recently turned eighteen.

ROBERT looks at MR DAVIS

ROBERT Yes.

PATTERSON *(smiling)* You'll be enlisting soon I imagine.

ROBERT I don't know.

PATTERSON You're not a boy anymore. It's every eligible man's duty to enlist to help the soldiers at the front.

ROBERT I hadn't thought about it.

PATTERSON *(smiling)* Perhaps you'd better start.

KATHLEEN enters, carrying a brown paper bag.

MR DAVIS Good afternoon Mrs O'Neill.

KATHLEEN Good afternoon.

MR DAVIS Three shillings and sixpence please Mrs Patterson.

ROBERT What are you doing here?

KATHLEEN You forgot your lunch.

MRS PATTERSON hands the money to MR DAVIS, as KATHLEEN hands ROBERT his lunch.

PATTERSON *(to KATHLEEN)* I think your son might need educating.

KATHLEEN I beg your pardon?

PATTERSON He seems to be totally oblivious of his duty to enlist.

Beat

KATHLEEN And when was that your business?

PATTERSON As long as this war is being fought, it's everybody's business. *(handing ROBERT a card)* That's the address of where you can go to enlist. It's the right thing to do.

KATHLEEN Leave the boy alone! *(Grabbing the card off ROBERT. To PATTERSON)* No-one's asking for your advice.

PATTERSON I have two boys over there – they have bravely answered the Empire’s call. If they can do it, so can your son. Or perhaps he’s a coward?

KATHLEEN How dare you!

MR DAVIS Ladies! Not in the shop, please.

PATTERSON *(to ROBERT)* Why not save some face and enlist before you’re made to go? It’ll make a man of you. *(as she leaves, to KATHLEEN)* As for you - you should be ashamed to call yourself British!

KATHLEEN I’m not British, I’m Irish!

MRS PATTERSON leaves.

KATHLEEN And you can stick the Empire up your arse!

The chorus gathers on the sides of the stage.

VOICES Rally round the banner of your country,
Take the field with brothers o’er the foam,
On land or sea, wherever you be;
Keep your eye on Germany.

Under the above, KATHLEEN goes to touch ROBERT but he breaks away and leaves. KATHLEEN looks to MR DAVIS, who tries to give her a comforting smile. KATHLEEN starts to weep with tears.

SCENE 13 – THE STATISTICS OF WAR

In the park, ROBERT meets RUBY, carrying a basket. They embrace.

VOICES *(sotto-voce and slowly, under statistics below)*
But England home and beauty have no cause to fear,
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
No! No! No! No! No! Australia will be there
Australia will be there.

VOICE Total casualties from the Gallipoli campaign:

ALL *(sombre)* 26 100

RUBY kisses ROBERT. Some distance away, REVEREND TAYLOR walks by and glances at them. RUBY leads him to a quiet spot and opens the picnic basket. ROBERT opens a newspaper and reads. The chorus slowly advances on ROBERT and RUBY, surrounding them.

VOICE The battle of Fromelles, July 1916

VOICE (*quietly*) Catastrophe upon catastrophes.

A discordant piano crash. ROBERT continues reading.

VOICE The letter of WH Downing...

VOICE The air was thick with bullets, swishing in a flat lattice of death

VOICE The bullets skimmed low, from knee to groin

ALL But still the line kept on.

VOICE The tumbling bodies riddled, before they touched the ground.

VOICE Hundreds mown down in the flicker of an eyelid,

ALL But still the line kept on.

Another discordant crash. ROBERT lifts his head from the newspaper and stares out front – in a degree of emotional turmoil, as if he's read the letter below. RUBY senses this and puts her arm around him.

VOICE The dead lie everywhere, some several days old

VOICE The stench is terrible

VOICE But that is nothing.

VOICE It is the sight of the poor fellows huddled up there -

VOICE Gruesome

VOICE Unsightly

VOICE Bloodied

VOICE Fine fellows who a few days ago were brave, and handsome
and full of life

VOICE Now nothing but horrible, putrid masses of flesh.

RUBY takes the paper and puts it away.

VOICE 5 500 souls

VOICE The unburied dead.

Softer chord crash. RUBY and ROBERT embrace.

SCENE 14 – FRACTURES IN THE ALL LOYAL LEAGUE

MRS CRAWLEY's house, July, 1916. MRS PATTERSON and MRS MITCHELL are sitting at the dining room table. MRS CRAWLEY serves tea.

MRS MITCHELL *(reading newspaper)* Poor Mrs Walker – both her boys gone now.

MRS CRAWLEY We'll do a collection for her at the next meeting.

MRS MITCHELL And Joan's husband went missing last week – still no word.

MRS CRAWLEY He could have been captured.

PATTERSON It can only be bad news.

MRS CRAWLEY *(to MRS MITCHELL)* Sugar?

MRS MITCHELL Thank you.

MRS CRAWLEY *(to PATTERSON)* Have you heard from your boys?

PATTERSON Only Stuart.

MRS CRAWLEY How is he?

PATTERSON He makes light of it all, but clearly they're all exhausted. They need reinforcements.

MRS CRAWLEY Indeed.

PATTERSON You know it makes my blood boil...I can take you into street after street and show you families, every son in which has gone to the front, as have ours, and yet in the same street, there are families with more sons, and not one of them has volunteered.

MRS CRAWLEY It's disgraceful.

MRS MITCHELL Well Mr Hughes is due back any day –

PATTERSON We can't wait for him to take action – it could be months. We have to get those shirkers into uniform. And if shaming doesn't work, get their employers to sack them so that they'll have no other option but to sign up.

MRS MITCHELL I'm not sure if that's an appropriate –

PATTERSON It's the mothers I blame. There's one boy – works at Davis's grocers. Living the life of Riley. When I asked him about enlisting he barely knew what I was talking about, or so it

seemed. Then his bog Irish mother poked her nose in – you should have heard the language. Well, I'm going to talk to Mr Davis about that young man, and make some enquires in high places about their situation, then we shall see what his fishwife mother has to say about it.

MRS MITCHELL But you can't ask Mr Davis to sack the lad.

PATTERSON These sorts of people understand only one thing, and that's being hit in the hip pocket. Once he realises the only way he's going to earn a living is by signing up, he'll be in a uniform in the blink of an eye. Isn't that right Ada?

MRS CRAWLEY I should think so.

MRS MITCHELL Well I'm sorry but I can't condone that sort of thing. It's one thing for the All Loyal League to do its best to encourage volunteers but this...well it sounds so underhand and –

PATTERSON So you don't think our boys at the front deserve protecting?

MRS MITCHELL Of course I do but we must keep right on our side.

PATTERSON Let there be no equivocation here, Elizabeth – any shirker must be dealt with in the harshest way possible in order to force him to see where his duty lies, and frankly I find it alarming that you should call into question methods which have been duly ratified by the committee –

MRS MITCHELL - not unanimously –

PATTERSON - of which you are a member, and which were *fully* agreed to, because as members of the All Loyal League we are of one mind, is that not right Ada?

MRS CRAWLEY (*uncomfortable*) Of course.

MRS MITCHELL Well we're certainly of *your* mind.

PATTERSON I beg your pardon?

MRS MITCHELL I'm sorry but I have to say it – there is a growing concern amongst some of the women that your, shall we say, single-minded methods, are perhaps not in the best interests of our cause.

PATTERSON And who are these women?

MRS MITCHELL I'm not at liberty to say.

PATTERSON And what, pray, do you think are the interests of our cause, if not to promote in the most effective manner the service of our Empire and the winning of the war?

MRS MITCHELL All I'm trying to point out is that in achieving our goals we must be careful not to overstep the bounds of common decency and fair play, and some of us have become worried of late that we are heading down that path.

PATTERSON I see.

Beat

PATTERSON What about you, Ada? Do you agree with this nonsense?

MRS CRAWLEY I think we must all be of the same mind.

PATTERSON That's not what I asked you.

MRS CRAWLEY Well...our priorities are to support our lads overseas, and if treading on a few toes happens along the way...then so be it. And we must all be united to that end.

PATTERSON There you have it. I think Ada's views sum up the views of a vast majority of the League, and if certain members cannot find in themselves the mettle to adhere to them, they should consider their positions.

A knock at the door. MRS CRAWLEY freezes. RUBY appears.

RUBY I'll answer it Mum.

RUBY goes out down the corridor to the front door.

MRS MITCHELL *(takes her hand)* I'm sure it's nothing Ada.

PATTERSON It's probably the milkman.

MRS CRAWLEY This time of day?

PATTERSON Have your tea.

MRS CRAWLEY I'll just see who it is –

MRS CRAWLEY heads to the front door.

VOICE *(off)* Can I speak to your mother?

MRS CRAWLEY *(off)* Hello?

MRS MITCHELL *(moving to the doorway to see what's happening)* It's Reverend Taylor.

REV TAYLOR *(off)* I have something to tell you, Mrs Crawley. Perhaps it would be best if I came in?

PATTERSON Oh dear.

MRS MITCHELL and MRS PATTERSON look at each other.

MRS CRAWLEY *(off)* Of course.

REV TAYLOR *(off)* Thank you.

MRS CRAWLEY enters with REVEREND TAYLOR and RUBY.

RUBY What is it?

MRS CRAWLEY Ssh Ruby!

REV TAYLOR Oh...good afternoon, ladies.

MRS M/PATT Reverend.

MRS CRAWLEY We were just leaving, weren't we Mrs Patterson?

PATTERSON Yes...*(to MRS CRAWLEY)* I'll call around later this evening.

MRS MITCHELL kisses MRS CRAWLEY.

MRS MITCHELL Goodbye, Reverend. Ruby.

REVEREND TAYLOR nods at MRS PATTERSON.

MRS MITCHELL All will be well.

MRS PATTERSON and MRS MITCHELL leave.

MRS CRAWLEY What is it?

REV TAYLOR Can we talk alone?

MRS CRAWLEY Why?

REV TAYLOR I think it would be best.

MRS CRAWLEY *(gesturing for her to leave)* Ruby?

RUBY What's going on?

MRS CRAWLEY Out. Please. Now!

RUBY reluctantly leaves the room but paces around outside trying to hear what is being said.

REV TAYLOR Shall we sit down?

MRS CRAWLEY Which one is it?

REV TAYLOR I beg your pardon?

MRS CRAWLEY It's William isn't it?

REV TAYLOR Nothing of the kind Mrs Crawley. I'm here to discuss your daughter –

MRS CRAWLEY What?

REV TAYLOR - and what she's been getting up to with that O'Neill boy!

MRS CRAWLEY stands motionless.

REV TAYLOR I'm sorry to break it to you like this, but something has to be done. Yesterday, in the park near the Domain I saw her -

MRS CRAWLEY collapses.

REV TAYLOR Mrs Crawley!

SCENE 15 – MRS CRAWLEY CONFRONTS RUBY

REVEREND TAYLOR tends to MRS CRAWLEY, helping her to a chair. She tries to recover herself as the voices overlay.

VOICES *(singing)* Fighting the Kaiser, fighting the Kaiser,
Who'll come a-fighting the Kaiser with me?
And we'll drink all his beer,
And eat up all his sausages,
Who'll come a fighting the Kaiser with me.

VOICE July, 1916

VOICE Pozieres

VOICE The letter of Archie Barwick

VOICE The shelling became heavier and heavier.

VOICE The earth rocked and swayed like a haystack.

VOICE Some were buried by the falling trenches

VOICE Others were crying like children

VOICE Some went mad and rushed out of the trench to certain death.

VOICE In all my life I've never seen men so shaken up as these...

VOICE Dead and wounded, Moquet Farm and Pozieres

VOICE 23 000 souls

VOICES *(singing)* Who'll come a fighting the Kaiser with me...

MRS CRAWLEY has called RUBY into the dining room.

MRS CRAWLEY Well? Obviously you're not going to deny what Reverend Taylor has accused you of?

RUBY We were only having a kiss and a cuddle.

MRS CRAWLEY In a public place!

RUBY We were hidden away in the trees. No-one could see us.

MRS CRAWLEY Obviously Reverend Taylor did!

RUBY Yes and why was that I wonder?

MRS CRAWLEY What are you insinuating?

RUBY Have you seen the way he looks at me?

MRS CRAWLEY How dare you tell disgusting lies about Reverend Taylor!

RUBY They're not lies!

MRS CRAWLEY You'll wash your mouth out if I hear such filth again!

RUBY Why don't you believe me?

MRS CRAWLEY How do you expect me to believe a word you say when you've been telling me for months that every Saturday afternoon you go to see your friends, when you've actually been seeing that boy!

RUBY You wouldn't have let me see him if I told you.

MRS CRAWLEY So you deceive your own mother?

Beat

MRS CRAWLEY I just don't know what to do with you. Did I bring you up to be like this? You father would be turning in his grave.

RUBY Don't say that Mum.

MRS CRAWLEY And what would your brothers say if they knew you were carrying on with a shirker?

RUBY He's not! He has to look after his mother.

MRS CRAWLEY What's the matter with her?

RUBY She doesn't have a job and Robert has to provide for her.

MRS CRAWLEY Why can't she get a job herself?

RUBY She can't walk properly!

MRS CRAWLEY A likely story. Anybody can get a job to support themselves if they have a mind to it. He's just using it as an excuse not to enlist.

RUBY That's not true!

MRS CRAWLEY He's lying to you to make himself look better, and he'll make anything up if it stops him having to put on a uniform! Give him up!

RUBY No!

MRS CRAWLEY I won't have a daughter of mine being seen with a layabout and a coward!

RUBY That's all you're really worried about isn't it? Looking bad with all the ladies from the All Loyal League!

MRS CRAWLEY How dare you!

RUBY It's true! You can't bear the thought of Mrs Patterson's disapproval.

MRS CRAWLEY That's quite enough! If you want to remain under this roof you will detach yourself from this...liaison, and you will apologise to Reverend Taylor for your disgraceful conduct in the park. You will then have a long hard think about how you can mend the wilful damage you have caused.

RUBY I don't want to stay under this roof any longer!

A knock at the door. Pause. Another knock. MRS CRAWLEY goes to the door.

MRS CRAWLEY (off) Yes?

Indistinct voices for a few seconds. RUBY is concerned. MRS CRAWLEY re-enters with a telegram. They look at each other. MRS CRAWLEY opens the telegram.

RUBY Mum?

MRS CRAWLEY reads.

RUBY What is it?

MRS CRAWLEY I knew it. I knew it.

A discordant crash. RUBY looks at the telegram and then runs out. MRS CRAWLEY stands motionless.

SCENE 16 – HUGHES RETURNS

VOICE 29th July, 1916

VOICE Hughes returns to Australia.

Hughes is pursued by a crowd of reporters. Overlapping dialogue.

VOICE Mr Hughes! The Melbourne Herald - now that you have seen our troops on the battlefield/, will you be introducing conscription?

HUGHES /No comment.

VOICE Mr Hughes! The West Australian – will you act at last?/ Public opinion is for conscription!

HUGHES /There will be a full briefing in due course.

FRANK TUDOR burst through a group of journalists trying to get to HUGHES.

VOICE The Minister for Trade and Customs, Frank Tudor!

TUDOR Out of my way!

TUDOR walks with HUGHES down the corridors followed by journalists ad-libbing question fragments..

TUDOR No Labor government will stand for conscription!

HUGHES I for one am not going to leave our boys under-strength and see them butchered in the trenches!

TUDOR Nor am I going to stand for sending a man to his death if he doesn't wish to go!

HUGHES If the state has the power to take away the liberty of those who break its laws, it has also the power to take away life itself!

TUDOR Who do you think you are, God?

HUGHES Desperate times call for desperate measures!

HUGHES steps up onto the podium.

VOICE 30th August, 1916

VOICE The Prime Minister speaks.

HUGHES The British Army Council has recently informed me that the Australian Imperial Force in France, requires no less than an immediate draft of 20 000 troops, and a further 16 500 troops for each of the next three months to keep our divisions in operation. In August our enlistments totalled just 6145, which, seen in the light of the needs outlined, are woefully inadequate. We can come to no other conclusion: The voluntary system of recruitment has failed – the only alternative is compulsory service. To falter now is to make the great sacrifice of lives to no avail. There rests upon every man an obligation to do his duty in the spirit that befits free men. Therefore the Government has decided that there will be a referendum on conscription for overseas service to be held on October 28th. In this great hour, we Australians must rise, and putting aside all other things, we must prove ourselves worthy as free citizens in a great democracy. Vote “Yes”!

An ominous chord. Howls of protest and clamouring, boos but also some cheers. HUGHES steps down from the podium. On another part of the stage ROBERT and RUBY sit together.

ROBERT I'm sorry.

RUBY Mum always knew... whenever there was a knock at the door.

ROBERT Did they say how?

RUBY Nothing. It was at Pozeers or something.

ROBERT Pozieres.

RUBY He died “for King and Country”.

ROBERT Whatever that means.

Beat

RUBY He was brave

ROBERT Yes. Is your other brother all right?

RUBY So far. He’s all I’ve got now – apart from you.

ROBERT You’ve got your Mum.

RUBY I hate her.

ROBERT You don’t mean that.

Beat

ROBERT Are you all right?

RUBY I’m scared. Will they make you go if they vote “Yes”?

ROBERT I suppose so.

RUBY They can’t.

ROBERT I was thinking of signing up anyway.

RUBY What?

ROBERT A little while ago. After Mrs Patterson came into the shop. When she made me feel like I was a coward. Like a piece of dirt. It got to me. I sneaked out of work the next day to sign up.

RUBY You didn’t tell me about this. Robert you didn’t actually -

ROBERT I got into the hall with all the posters and cake stalls and women smiling and the piano playing. I gave my name and got into the queue, and then this stuck up horsey woman looked at me and said “Oh the O’Neill boy - I’ve heard all about you. And your mother. Well, it’s good to see Mrs Patterson straightened you out – pulled you Irish lot into line. About time you saw sense.”

Beat

ROBERT Then I turned around and walked back out.

Beat

RUBY Thank God you did. Bitches.

ROBERT Doesn't mean anything now.

RUBY We *should* run away.

ROBERT (*smiles*) We don't have any money.

RUBY We can't just stay here and wait for you to get called up.

ROBERT They'd find us wherever we went.

RUBY So what do we do?

ROBERT We stick together - no matter what.

RUBY No matter what.

They embrace. Music: a sense of rising tension. On another part of the stage, LANE, MABEL and THORP are about to set off to a crisis meeting.

MABEL So, the bastard's gone and done it.

LANE He has become, if we may judge him by his recent utterances, a doddering Tory.

THORP We've got eight weeks...

MABEL You're going to have to be strong now, Peg. Not be afraid to tread on a few toes.

THORP I know.

MABEL You may not like what's coming but sometimes we have to play a little bit dirty. Are you ready for that?

LANE She's ready.

THORP I'll do it my own way, Mabel. People can recognise the truth when they hear it. They aren't stupid.

MABEL I wouldn't be too sure about that.

The music builds as they arrive at the meeting.

SCENE 17 – THE CAMPAIGN IS LAUNCHED

Lane steps up to the podium. Up tempo rhythm - a steady marching underscore.

VOICE September 18th, 1916

VOICE The Campaign is launched.

LANE Why are we wasting our time with this referendum when families are struggling to put food on the table? A country that is not prepared to provide a man with three meals a day has a dashed impudence to ask him to fight.

VOICE You're a traitor to your country!

LANE Who's bearing the burden of the war? The workers! Beware of the Capitalist in a lefty's clothing! Vote No!

Applause and boos. PATTERSON steps up to the podium.

PATTERSON Will you join our battalion? It includes the mothers, wives, sisters, and sweethearts of the men who have gone to fight for everything in the world worth fighting for. And to those treacherous and disloyal enough to say they will not vote yes –

VOICE Freedom to choose is not disloyalty!

PATTERSON - we say to you: why should our sons, fathers and brothers die while your cold-footed malingerers cower under their mother's skirts? Vote yes!

Applause and boos. THORP steps up to the podium.

THORP We believe in human brotherhood, in the sanctity of human life and personality. We will not kill. We appeal to the workers in factory, workshop and mine to maintain the right of every man to decide for themselves the issue of life and death. Vote no!

Applause and boos. HUGHES steps up to the podium.

HUGHES Europe has been drenched with blood, innocent non-combatants foully murdered or subjected to unspeakable outrages. This is a war to the death. Our only hope of national safety lies in decisive victory/

JOHN and her protesters begin to drown out HUGHES with song:

JOHN /I didn't raise my son to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy

HUGHES *(continuing without stopping)* - by Britain and her Allies over the hosts of military despotism. You must all, vote yes!

NO VOTERS Who dares to put a musket on his shoulder
To kill some other mother's darling boy?
The nations ought to arbitrate their quarrels,
It's time to put the sword and gun away/

POLICE / Break it up! That song's seditious!

NO VOTERS There'd be no war today if mothers all would say
I didn't raise my son/ to be a soldier!

POLICE /Cut it out or I'll arrest you!

A discordant crash. A riot breaks out in the darkness as the meeting degenerates. Loud crashes and shouts (actors to ad-lib). On another part of the stage, two policemen ransack MRS REIBE's house looking for something. Drumming underscore maintains the tension.

MRS REIBE Stop! What are you looking for?

The Police continue trashing the house.

MRS REIBE Stop!

On another part of the stage the chaos continues. Police chasing rioters, loud altercations, police whistles and shouting all overlapping.

VOICE We have a right to express an opinion!/
POLICE /Arrest her!

VOICE /Say no to conscription!

VOICE /They're criminals! Lock 'em up! etc

On another part of the stage PANKHURST and JOHN hurriedly shake hands with THORP, MABEL and LANE. The percussive underscore continues.

LANE Keep up the good fight in Melbourne, ladies.

PANKHURST We're leaving the Queensland branch in good hands.

JOHN It's all up to you now, Peg. We can win but it'll take courage.

THORP I have faith in women.

JOHN We have faith in you.

More police whistles.

LANE You'd better get out of here.

JOHN Keep in touch...

PANKHURST and JOHN leave.

LANE *(to THORP)* Let's go out the back way...

THORP Is that necessary?

LANE Might be best to stay out of jail for now.

THORP and LANE leave. More whistles and scuffles.

VOICE Three cheers for Sinn Fein!

POLICE Get him!

On another part of the stage, MRS REIBE is being comforted by THORP. The house has been ransacked. AMY rights an upturned chair.

THORP I'm so sorry this happened Mrs Reibe.

MRS REIBE They said they were looking for the song. What is this song?

THORP It's against conscription.

MRS REIBE We're a God-loving house. Poor Amy was terrified.

AMY Evil men.

MRS REIBE And now the police...what am I to do?

THORP It's all right. I never kept a copy, so there's no way any of us can get into trouble.

MRS REIBE They called me enemy alien. They might send me away to a camp. I've lived in this country for twenty-five years! What will become of Amy?

THORP They're just trying to scare you.

MRS REIBE I warned you of this didn't I? I said you must not get involved in this sort of thing.

AMY Mother warned you.

THORP I'm sorry.

MRS REIBE It is not our way! What would your dear father have said? You must stop this.

AMY Not our way!

MRS REIBE You must stop!

THORP is disturbed.

SCENE 18 – LEAD UP TO THE VOTE

A soft percussive military rhythm underneath.

VOICE Friday October 20th, 1916

VOICE One week to go until the vote.

MRS CRAWLEY Ruby. A letter from Ray...

MRS CRAWLEY hands RUBY a letter. RAY crouches near her and looks at her directly as he speaks. RUBY isn't aware of him – only his presence in the letter.

RAY Dear Ruby, sorry I haven't written for a while. I hope you and Ma are keeping your heads up after the terrible news about William. Everything has quietened down while we wait to see what happens next. I'm all right so don't worry about me.

He puts a hand on her shoulder. She looks up a moment as if she can sense him. He stands up now, and looks out. RUBY continues reading.

RAY Conscription seems to be coming soon in Australia. Hughes has the people with him, and the Unions will have to bow to the people's will. Both things good. The national sentiment is right...

RAY turns back to RUBY.

RAY ...the shirkers will be where their betters are: on the battlefield, laying down life and limb for the Empire's existence - not where they are now: in the snug, selfish, lap of luxury...

RUBY stops reading for a moment to gather herself.

RAY I've written Ma a separate letter but I also wanted you to get a special one.

RUBY (*reads*) Because you're my special girl. My only sister. I love you always and live for the day when I will see you again.

RAY All my love, Ray.

RUBY takes a deep breath. The percussion continues...

VOICE Friday 27th October, 1916

VOICE One day until the vote...

THORP is on her way to a meeting, distracted. PANKHURST catches up to her.

PANKHURST Peg!

THORP What?

PANKHURST You forgot your speech.

THORP Oh. Thank you.

PANKHURST Are you all right?

THORP Fine.

PANKHURST You're not yourself. Do want me to do this one?

THORP It's all right, I'm fine.

PANKHURST isn't convinced. THORP turns away and nearly bumps into HUGHES on his way up to the podium. HUGHES looks at her coldly then steps up to the podium.

HUGHES The people of Australia are about to decide the destiny of their country. They are about to show the world what manner of men and women they are. They must declare that they stand loyally by the Empire and their kinsmen

THORP Mr Hughes has quoted the figure of 16 500 men per month to maintain Australia's five divisions in the field, but these figures were calculated from the severe losses on the Somme, not on average losses over the last two years.

LANE Mr Hughes has manipulated these figures in the manner of a conjurer drawing a handkerchief out of the darkness, and is not to be trusted! Say no to Conscription!

PATTERSON We are in this fight whether we like it or not, and all the theories in the world cannot alter that fact. Let us fight with all our vigour and resources. Let us fight to win! Say yes to conscription!

SCENE 19 – THE FIRST PLEBISCITE

The chorus lines up in a queue to vote. HUGHES waits at the podium/ballot box.

VOICE October 28th, 1916

VOICE The fateful day dawns.

VOICE What is the question exactly?

VOICE A simple choice one would think:

VOICE Are you in favour of conscription?

VOICE Yes

VOICE or no

VOICE That's not the question though

VOICE I beg your pardon?

A voter arrives at the voting booth and picks up a ballot form. He/She reads it with some difficulty, trying to make sense of it.

VOTER Are you in favour of the Government having, in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the term of this war, outside the Commonwealth, as it has now with regard to military service within the Commonwealth?

The voter looks up, perplexed.

HUGHES In this great hour, we Australians must rise, and prove ourselves worthy as free citizens in a great democracy. Our duty is clear, let us gird up our loins and do that which honour, duty and self-interest alike dictate. *(Beat)* You may place your vote.

Discordant crash. The voters cast their vote, as HUGHES watches them. PATTERSON sits with MRS CRAWLEY, and THORP with LANE.

PATTERSON Well – we'll know today whether our country is loyal and public spirited...or just plain selfish.

LANE What is the good of victory abroad if it only gives us slavery at home?

Drum flourish.

VOICE The numbers are in!

Chaos and loud animated overlapping chatter from the chorus as they gather to hear the news. "I hear Queensland's voted in favour!" "Hughes is going to resign if he

*loses!”, “They should lock up everyone who voted No!” “God save The King!”
“Three cheers for freedom!” etc. Loud chaotic percussion.*

VOICE Let us have quiet please!

Silence. Then a slow rhythmic drum beat.

VOICE In the state of Victoria:

VOICE Votes for: 353 930

VOICE Votes against: 328 216

HUGHES Victoria votes in favour of Conscription!

*Drum flourish. Then slow rhythm continues. PATTERSON and MRS CRAWLEY nod
in approval.*

PATTERSON I always liked Victorians. Very upright people.

VOICE In the state of South Australia:

VOICE Votes for: 87 924

VOICE Votes against: 119 236

HUGHES South Australia votes against Conscription!

*Drum flourish. Slow rhythm continues. THORP and LANE raise their hands together
in quiet triumph.*

LANE I always liked Croweaters.

VOICE In the state of Western Australia:

VOICE Votes for: 94 069

VOICE Votes against: 40 884

HUGHES Western Australia decisively votes in favour of Conscription!

LANE Never trust a sandgroper.

VOICE In the Federal Territories:

VOICE Votes for: 2136

VOICE Votes against: 1269

HUGHES The Federal Territories vote in favour of Conscription!

PATTERSON *(to MRS CRAWLEY)* We're striding ahead. If we win New South Wales, we win the day.

LANE This is crucial.

VOICE In the state of New South Wales

VOICE Votes for: 356 805

VOICE Votes Against: 474 544!

HUGHES New South Wales decisively votes against Conscription!

LANE/THORP Yes!!!

PATTERSON No!

VOICE In the state of Tasmania

PATTERSON Come on Tasmania!

VOICE Votes for: 48 493

VOICE Votes against: 37 833

HUGHES Tasmania votes in Favour!

PATTERSON We need a big win in Queensland now.

Piano crash.

LANE It's down to this last vote.

VOICE In the State of Queensland

They all stand.

THORP This is it...the culmination of all our work...

VOICE Votes for: 144 200

VOICE Votes against: *(Pause)* 158 051!

VOICE Queensland votes against!

HUGHES The "No's" have it.

Uproar. Cheers and catcalls, hoots and jeers, applause and celebration. THORP and LANE embrace. PATTERSON and MRS CRAWLEY are stunned. HUGHES shakes his head. He approaches THORP as the cheers quieten for a moment.

HUGHES (to THORP) Do you realize how much damage you've done?

LANE (to HUGHES) Good luck holding down your job now!

Much mirth at HUGHES's expense. The mob gathers to wildly celebrate. A song begins, Catcalls from the pro-supporters during the song:

SONG: I DIDN'T RAISE MY SON TO BE A SOLDIER

PRO VOICES (throughout the verse below) Traitors! Go and live in Germany!
Kaiser's sluts! Shame! Traitors to the Empire!

ANTI VOICES I didn't raise my son to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy:
Who dares to put a musket on his shoulder
To kill some other mother's darling boy?

The pro-supporters start up their own song – the antis undermine with their version. They face off against each other - nose to nose. A duel. Towards the end they all turn to the audience – an appeal.

SONG: AUSTRALIA WILL BE THERE

PRO VOICES Rally round the banner of your country,
Take the field with brothers o'er the foam,
On land or sea, wherever you be;
Keep your eye on Germany.
But England home and beauty
Have no cause to fear,
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
No! No! No! No! No!
Australia will be there
Australia will be there.

SONG: AUSTRALIAN HYMN OF FREEDOM

ANTI VOICES Mothers, wives and sisters of Australians,
Would ye have your kinsmen bond or free?
Vote No! Preserve their liberty,
For "Yes" would mean our slavery,
And all the little children
Would future conscripts be-
Shall we permit this passively?
Vote No! No! No! No!
Australia will be free,
Australia will be free.

The song repeats but gets quieter as the chorus backs away. RUBY clutches the letter from RAY. ROBERT approaches and takes her hand. He smiles and kisses her. She smiles at him weakly. Blackout.

END OF PART ONE

PART 2

SCENE 1 - HUGHES FORMS A NEW GOVERNMENT

The chorus gathers

SONG: KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING

VOICES Keep the home fires burning,
While your hearts are yearning.
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out
Till the boys come home...

FRANK TUDOR steps up to the podium. HUGHES looks on, darkly.

VOICE 14th November, 1916

VOICE Federal Labor Party caucus meeting.

VOICE Frank Tudor

VOICE Ex-Labor Minister for Trade and Customs.

TUDOR Members of the caucus, two weeks after the plebiscite, I think
we can all agree that we have reached something of a
watershed moment in the life of this government.

MEMBERS Hear, hear.

TUDOR The whole affair has been a disaster for the leadership of this
party, and it is difficult to see any silver lining in the results of
this vote other than that the Australian people have made the
correct decision!

MEMBERS Hear, hear!

TUDOR The current leader has on numerous occasions flouted the core
values of his own party and in a manner which can only be
described as despotic, has openly defied consensus, resulting in
the resignations of several of his cabinet -

HUGHES - I make no apology for advocating any policy which will
support the winning of the war and protect our mother country
in its hour of need!

MEMBER Mr Hughes will please refrain from interrupting –

HUGHES - Mr Tudor and his friends may be crowing about their victory in the plebiscite but make no mistake: we are living in a divided country!

MEMBER Sit down Mr Hughes! You will have adequate time allotted to make any comments you deem necessary.

TUDOR I now move a vote of No-Confidence in the position of Party Leader as currently held by Mr William Morris Hughes.

MEMBER Seconded

TUDOR We will now debate the motion.

HUGHES *(standing)* That won't be necessary. I'm walking out this door now. Those who think with me can follow me.

Hughes walks to the door and stops. There is a stunned silence.

TUDOR What the hell do you think you're doing?

He is followed by several "rebel" members.

TUDOR *(to members as they leave)* What are you doing?

REBEL *(to HUGHES)* That's twenty-four Mr Hughes.

HUGHES *(to TUDOR)* Enough for a majority I believe.

TUDOR Just remember if you do this, Labor will never be the same again!

MEMBER You'll destroy the party!

Drum flourish. HUGHES gathers with his new party, leaving TUDOR isolated and fuming. Slow drumming rhythm underneath the rest of the scene to unify the montage:

HUGHES Gentlemen – I thank you for your support in this hour of urgency. When I return from visiting Munro Ferguson we will be the new governing party - the National Labor Party!

A near-riot. Members jostle HUGHES as he makes his way to Government House.

MEMBERS Scum! Rats! Traitors to your class! You'll destroy the party! He's in bed with the bloody Liberals! He's on his way to see the Governor General! Someone stop him!

HUGHES breaks free and arrives at Government House.

EQUERY This way Mr Hughes, the Governor-General will see you now.

MEMBERS Bloody traitor! Turncoat!

HUGHES meets the Governor-General, MUNRO FERGUSON, who remains seated at his desk. Clamour outside.

M FERGUSON Mr Hughes. Can you govern with the support of the Liberals?

HUGHES I guarantee it.

M FERGUSON And what of the Labor Party?

HUGHES Irrelevant. They're just a party of Catholics now.

M FERGUSON Then all I can say is: Time to build some order out of the prevailing chaos. Congratulations, and good luck, Mr Hughes.

They shake hands. HUGHES mounts the podium, A bible is proffered and he places his hand on it. The drumming continues.

VOICE Later that day

VOICE Hughes's new Ministry is sworn in.

TUDOR The bastard's out-manoevred us. Again.

VOICE Frank Tudor is elected new Labor Party leader

TUDOR *(without enthusiasm)* It's an honour.

VOICES Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag,
And smile, smile, smile

VOICE January, 1917

VOICE Behind closed doors

VOICE Hughes meets with the leader of the Liberal Party, Joseph Cook.

VOICE Otherwise known to Hughes in private as:

HUGHES *(aside)* The biggest damn fool in all creation. *(to COOK, warmly)* Joseph!

HUGHES shakes hands with COOK.

COOK William.

HUGHES What's your proposal?

COOK Your National Labor Party and my Liberal Party – a coalition.

HUGHES I don't like coalitions.

COOK Neither do I, but under the circumstances what other choice is there? It's in all our interests.

HUGHES That remains to be seen.

COOK *(smiling)* When the defence of the Empire is at stake I'm sure we'll find a way.

Beat

HUGHES I would be leader.

COOK We have no quibble with that. Naturally we would have the picks of cabinet: Deputy Leader, Treasurer...

HUGHES Pearce would want Defence.

COOK I'm sure that could be arranged.

HUGHES And we would want six places in Cabinet.

COOK *(smiling)* Non-negotiable, I'm afraid. If you're to be leader, the Liberals must have six in Cabinet. Quid pro quo after all.

Beat

HUGHES All right. We have a deal.

VOICE And the name of the party?

COOK Best to lose the "Labor" element perhaps?

HUGHES But keep the "National".

COOK The National Party?

HUGHES The Australian Nationalist Party.

COOK Has a good ring! Done!

VOICE 17th February, 1917

VOICE The new government is sworn in.

HUGHES and COOK stand with their hands on the bible.

VOICES (*singing*) God save our Gracious King
Long live our noble King
God save the King!

TUDOR steps onto the podium. THORP and MABEL watch.

TUDOR Nothing but overwhelming disaster can be expected from
association with such a gang as this! For it is a party that is
neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring –

VOICES (*singing*) Send him victorious

TUDOR It is the sort of party that Hughes deserves!

VOICES (*singing*) Happy and glorious

TUDOR And it is the sort of party that deserves Hughes for its leader!

VOICES (*singing*) Long to reign over us

MABEL (*to THORP*) At least Labor still holds the majority in the
senate, Peg.

VOICES (*singing*) God save the –

Piano crash. HUGHES approaches the podium.

THORP He doesn't need the senate to achieve what he really wants...

HUGHES ousts TUDOR from the podium.

HUGHES The Australian Nationalist Party may be composed of men of
diverse party creeds, but it is a party which has united to win
the war. If returned with a majority in the coming Federal
Election, the Australian Nationalist Party will pursue with the
utmost vigour and determination every course necessary for the
defence of the Empire!

VOICES God Save The King!

SCENE 2 – THORP ADVISES CAUTION

*A few bars of intro on the piano "I didn't Raise My Son to be a Soldier" HUGHES
steps off the podium, MABEL replaces him at a meeting of the WPA, Brisbane.*

VOICE Mabel Lane

MABEL To all of you, dedicated members of the glorious Women's
Peace Army: October 28th last year was a day of celebration. A

day when we could proudly say in the defeat of conscription, we made a difference. But we couldn't have done it without our warrior Peace Angel: Margaret Thorp!

Wild cheers and foot-stamping, as THORP steps up to the podium. MABEL grabs her hand and raises it high in triumph.

THORP Thank you Mabel, thank you all. It is an honour and profound joy to serve the Women's Peace Army. Already ripples of the plebiscite result have been felt around the world, which will presage the turning of the tide towards peace.

Cheers and applause.

THORP But let us be under no illusion: the forces of militarism will not be defeated without persistent vigilance and activism on our part. Already Mr Hughes and his patchwork coalition have hinted that the conscription issue is not dead. We must continue to increase our presence throughout the state, to counter the challenges which are undoubtedly coming. I have faith in all of you, and for women in general, to emanate a sensible, calm, life-affirming force which will be needed to quell the destructive and at times beastly behaviour of our pro-conscriptionist male counterparts. Let us never be tempted to stoop to their level of animalism. Let us be firm and animated but always peaceful.

Loud applause. AMY runs in.

AMY Miss Thorp!

THORP Amy. What is it?

AMY It's the men! The men! Quickly!

THORP What men?

AMY The men! The men!

THORP Be calm Amy. What about the men?

AMY Taking Mother away! Taking her away! Come!

AMY runs off. THORP and MABEL look at each other a moment then follow AMY.

SCENE 3 – MRS REIBE INTERNED

MRS REIBE is taken away by two officers.

MRS REIBE Please! My daughter! I cannot leave without her!

OFFICER 1 She should have thought of that before she ran off.

MRS REIBE She doesn't understand! Please! I must speak to her!

AMY, THORP and MABEL run in, breathless.

THORP Stop! Please!

MRS REIBE Amy!

AMY runs to MRS REIBE.

OFFICER 2 *(to AMY)* Get off her, she's under arrest.

THORP For what?

OFFICER 2 For being German! *(to AMY)* Get off or you'll be arrested as well.

MABEL Amy. Let go.

MABEL goes to grab AMY but AMY resists.

AMY *(to MABEL)* I'm staying here!

THORP Where's your warrant?

OFFICER 2 holds it in front of her at arms length.

OFFICER 2 Satisfied?

THORP What grounds do you have for arresting a peaceful innocent woman?

OFFICER 2 She's an enemy alien.

THORP She's a British subject. She's been here for 25 years.

OFFICER 2 She's been colluding with known agitators. Ring a bell?

THORP is momentarily thrown.

OFFICER 1 *(to MRS REIBE about AMY)* If she doesn't get off you she's going too.

REIBE No! She will stay. Amy. Be a good girl. Go with Miss Thorp. I will return.

AMY But Mother –

REIBE I have spoken!

AMY reluctantly lets go of MRS REIBE.

THORP There is no evidence whatsoever to link this woman to any illegal activities. You have no authority to take her away.

OFFICER 2 We have all the authority we need – it's called the War Precautions Act. Now if you interfere any more we'll arrest you too.

THORP Perhaps that's part of the plan? Because you couldn't find the song?

MABEL Peg...

THORP Is that what your superiors have told you? Then arrest me instead.

MABEL It's all right officer, we're leaving.

MRS REIBE *(to THORP)* Please, no more! No more arguing. Leave me, please.

THORP We must inform them of your rights Mrs Reibe.

MRS REIBE Amy must be safe. You must look after her!

MABEL There's nothing more we can do, Peg.

OFFICER 1 grabs MRS REIBE again and begins to take her away.

AMY Mother!

MRS REIBE Look after her!

OFFICER 1 Keep moving!

THORP Where are you taking her?

OFFICER 1 Enoggera concentration camp.

OFFICER 2 Don't try and visit. Hotel's full.

The Officers take MRS REIBE away. THORP stops pursuing.

AMY *(crying)* Mother! Stop!

THORP *(comforting her)* Sshhh, Amy! It's all right.

AMY Follow her!

MABEL She can't love or she'll get arrested as well. Then who would look after you?

THORP We'll try to see her tomorrow.

AMY Tomorrow?

THORP Yes, we'll try. If we're allowed.

MABEL looks drily at THORP: "Don't bet on it".

THORP Come on. Let's go home.

THORP begins to lead her away.

AMY Why did you come to our house?

THORP I'm sorry, Amy.

AMY Everything is unhappy.

AMY storms away towards home. THORP fights to keep her composure.

MABEL Bastards.

Thorp winces.

MABEL Sorry Peg.

THORP What have we done?

MABEL We knew there'd be tumbles along the way.

THORP I didn't want this.

MABEL It's a small price to pay for the bigger cause.

THORP When does it become too much?

THORP follows AMY. MABEL stares at THORP as she goes. Worried.

SCENE 4 – A PROPOSAL

ROBERT is waiting for RUBY in their usual place near the Domain. ROBERT looks around anxiously, and has almost given up when RUBY appears, looking low.

ROBERT Hello stranger.

RUBY Hello Robert.

Beat

ROBERT Do I get a kiss?

RUBY *(smiles)* Sorry.

They kiss.

RUBY Sorry we haven't been able to meet much. Things have been difficult.

ROBERT I understand. You all right? Any more news about Ray?

RUBY *(trying to keep it together)* We had another letter today...he's in England, a place called Guildford...he said the shrapnel in the leg got infected...gangrene or something...it was either his leg or his life so...

RUBY breaks down for a moment. ROBERT holds her.

ROBERT It's all right.

RUBY *(trying to be regain control)* But he's made a good recovery...

ROBERT That's good.

RUBY ...and they've given him a mechanical leg – can you believe that?

ROBERT Really? Does it work?

RUBY Takes a bit of getting used to he said but he's moving around fine on it now.

ROBERT So they'll be sending him home soon?

RUBY nods.

ROBERT You must be mad to see him.

RUBY Yes.

ROBERT Your Mum too.

RUBY ...yes.

ROBERT The worst is over...

Beat.

RUBY So what have you been doing?

ROBERT The usual. I got a promotion.

RUBY As what?

ROBERT Helping Mr Davis out with the books every month on top of my normal job. He thinks I've got potential.

RUBY Good for you.

ROBERT So I can learn all about having my own shop one day. Maybe even take over Mr Davis's when he gets too old to run it himself.

RUBY That's wonderful. (*genuinely happy, hugging him*) I'm proud of you.

Beat

RUBY Forgive me?

ROBERT For what?

RUBY You must have thought that I was avoiding you.

ROBERT Why would I think that?

RUBY I don't know. Just...don't mind me, I'm stupid.

ROBERT (*smiling*) Just a bit.

RUBY good-naturedly pushes him away. He grabs her arm and pulls her closer.

ROBERT Hey...look at me.

RUBY What?

ROBERT I know you haven't been happy for a while now. God knows I understand why. But nothing's changed between us. You know that, don't you?

RUBY nods.

ROBERT Things are going to get better. I know it. And...(he pulls out a small package from his pocket) I got this for you.

RUBY What is it?

ROBERT Open it.

RUBY But I –

ROBERT *(smiling)* Just open it.

RUBY takes off the brown wrapping paper. It's a small jewellery box. She looks up at him.

RUBY Robert –

ROBERT Shhh! *(motions to open it)*

RUBY takes a breath and opens the box. She gasps.

ROBERT You asked me to do it properly. So I'm doing it properly.

RUBY You can't afford this!

ROBERT I told you I got a promotion.

RUBY But –

ROBERT Mr Davis got it for me on tick. Won't take long to pay it back.
Put it on.

RUBY is conflicted. She takes the ring out of the box and puts it on.

ROBERT Perfect fit! What do you reckon?

RUBY It's lovely. It's lovely Robert. But I...

ROBERT What's wrong?

RUBY ...I can't...we can't do this now. Not yet.

ROBERT *(crestfallen)* Why not?

RUBY It's just not the right time.

ROBERT But I thought your Mum was getting used to the idea about us
and –

RUBY No.

ROBERT But you said –

RUBY She only lets me see you because since William was killed and Ray...she hasn't the energy to argue anymore. She hasn't changed her mind about you.

ROBERT But you said you didn't care what she thought –

RUBY I don't. But things are more complicated now. And when Ray comes home things are going to get a lot more difficult.

ROBERT I know it'll be hard but at least he'll be home and –

RUBY That's not what I mean.

Beat

ROBERT Right.

RUBY It's bad. The things he says about the people who don't enlist. He has a lot of anger towards them.

ROBERT And so...you think that he has a point?

RUBY No. But the next few months are going to be hard for a lot of reasons and I don't think it's going to be a good time around my house to be talking about wedding dresses and confetti.

ROBERT I see.

RUBY I'm sorry.

ROBERT Don't apologise.

RUBY I still love you.

ROBERT I know. I'm the one who should be sorry.

RUBY looks at the ring. Then hands it to him.

RUBY It's beautiful. Keep it safe.

ROBERT *(takes it back)* I will. I need to save up more money anyway. I don't know what I was thinking. *(smiles)* Still didn't do it properly.

RUBY Yes you did.

ROBERT I should have gone down on one knee...

SCENE 5 – HUGHES WINS ANOTHER TERM

A Noisy crowd. Three podiums. HUGHES steps up to the main podium.

VOICE March, 1917

VOICE Pre election speech, Bendigo.

HUGHES The Government accepts the verdict of the people as given on October 28th last. It will not enforce or attempt to enforce conscription, during the life of the forthcoming parliament. If, however, national safety demands it, the question will again be referred to the people.

VOICE Hear, hear.

Boos and cheers. On another platform, LANE addresses the audience.

VOICE Ernie Lane.

LANE True to form, the government, the Tory press and the Protestant Church, are once again trying to fan the flames of conscription. Perhaps it's an attempt to distract the people from the uncomfortable fact that over the last two years food prices have risen by over 35% and unemployment by over 6%! Mr Hughes is already imposing his own venal form of economic conscription: Good men are being forced to enlist to escape unemployment and the high cost of living. Is this not the most cowardly form of recruiting?

VOICES Shame!

LANE Is it any wonder the working classes are at breaking point?

Boos and cheers. On another platform, EVA LYNCH addresses the audience.

VOICE Eva Lynch

LYNCH Comrades of the Industrial Workers of the World! Until now, unscrupulous capitalists, waxing fat on the ghastly profits of war have had the multitudes at their mercy. But no longer! When their very livelihoods are threatened, the workers are not afraid to take up the fight through industrial action!

VOICE Overthrow the capitalists!

Boos and cheers.

HUGHES By threatening industrial action at this critical time of the war the IWW holds a dagger at the heart of society...as it seeks to destroy us, we must in self-defence destroy it!

Raucous clamour. Boos and catcalls.

LANE (*a warning*) Well might you threaten the IWW with extermination, Mr Hughes, but in cutting off the head of the hydra, you'd best beware many more heads don't take its place.

Slow drum beat.

VOICE 5th May, 1917

VOICE Election day.

VOICE The result:

VOICE The House of Representatives:

VOICE Australian Labor Party: 22 seats

VOICE Australian Nationalist Party: 53 seats

VOICE The senate:

VOICE All 18 vacancies to the Australian Nationalist Party.

VOICE A resounding loss for the ALP...

VOICE and a resounding win for Mr Hughes!

Great applause and cheering. HUGHES raises his hands and waves to the crowd. He is picked up and carried about.

SONG: THE CALL TO ARMS - YOUR KING AND COUNTRY NEED YOU

VOICES Your King and your Country now need you,
And Britons they fear no alarms,
Father, brother and son they respond every one,
To the sound of the loud call to arms...

THORP, LANE and MABEL turn away in dismay.

MABEL Here we go again...

THORP This time it'll be harder.

LANE He's got the momentum. We're going to have to play tougher.

THORP But fairly.

LANE They're not going to take prisoners, nor must we.

THORP We can still conduct ourselves with compassion and decency.

MABEL There's no room for politeness Peg. This time there's going to be blood...

SCENE 6 – MRS PATTERSON PRESSURES MR DAVIS
MRS PATTERSON visits MR DAVIS's grocery.

MR DAVIS Good morning Mrs Patterson, what would you like?

PATTERSON I'm not here to do any shopping. I've come to speak to you about the boy.

MR DAVIS Robert?

PATTERSON It won't do, you know, keeping him here. He should be at the front doing his duty. Don't you think?

MR DAVIS Well...as I said previously I need him here. And he does the books for me now.

PATTERSON The books?

MR DAVIS He's very bright.

PATTERSON There are at least two retired bookkeepers from the league that could do that for you.

MR DAVIS He also does my deliveries – with respect I can't see too many retired people doing that.

PATTERSON Then engage two people – one for the bookkeeping, one for the deliveries. It can't be too difficult, surely.

Beat

MR DAVIS So what would you have me do, Mrs Patterson?

PATTERSON Fire him, of course.

MR DAVIS And what reason should I give? He hasn't done anything wrong.

PATTERSON Just tell him the truth. His duty calls.

MR DAVIS I couldn't do that to the lad.

PATTERSON This is no time for sentimentality. We are at war.

MR DAVIS His mother relies on him.

PATTERSON Never mind his mother, what about our boys who are dying at the front? Had you thought of that? Or are you just frightened of that Irish harridan?

MR DAVIS Please, Mrs Patterson -

PATTERSON Frankly, Mr Davis, I find your evasiveness curious to say the least - particularly in light of the fact that you know very well I have two boys of my own fighting in France, who grow increasingly vulnerable because of the lack of volunteers to support them! And yet the sensibilities of a wastrel and his mother –

MR DAVIS He's not a wastrel –

PATTERSON - seem to command all of your sympathy!

Beat

PATTERSON I'm afraid if this situation continues, I will have to take my custom elsewhere.

MR DAVIS Is that absolutely necessary?

PATTERSON I'm sure there will be many other customers who will follow suit once I mention it to them.

MR DAVIS I see.

PATTERSON Up to twenty families.

MR DAVIS You would ruin me?

PATTERSON The choice is yours Mr Davis.

Goes to leave.

PATTERSON Oh. And I shouldn't worry about the mother. I have it on good authority that she does quite well out of a son in Western Australia - all very hush hush, of course. Good day.

SCENE 7 – RAY'S RETURN

MRS CRAWLEY enters in a frenzy, carrying a plate of sandwiches. RUBY follows her in. RAY, outside, approaches on crutches.

MRS CRAWLEY (*picking up shoes off the floor*) What are these still doing here?

RUBY Sorry Mum.

MRS CRAWLEY How many times do I have to tell you to put things away?!
Have you brought that washing in?

RUBY I forgot.

MRS CRAWLEY Ruby!

RUBY *(excitedly)* Mum! He's here! Ray's here!

MRS CRAWLEY What? He's early! *(handing RUBY the sandwiches)* Here, put
these on the table. *(she goes to the mirror to check her hair)*
I'm a bloody mess!

RAY Knock knock knock.

RUBY Ray!

RAY Hello baby sister.

She runs and embraces him.

RAY Hey, steady on!

RUBY I can't believe you're here.

MRS CRAWLEY appears.

RAY Hello Ma.

MRS CRAWLEY Hello Ray.

RAY You look exactly the same.

MRS CRAWLEY *(slightly self-conscious)* Do I?

RAY To a tee.

MRS CRAWLEY A bit greyer.

Beat. MRS CRAWLEY can't help but look at his crutches.

RAY Do I get a cuddle?

MRS CRAWLEY goes to him and embraces him. She struggles with tears.

RAY It's all right Ma. Don't get upset...I'm home now.

After a long embrace, MRS CRAWLEY slowly breaks free and looks at RAY.

MRS CRAWLEY Well...look at you...

RAY Not bad eh? Still getting used to it but it works fine.

RUBY Does it hurt?

MRS CRAWLEY Ruby!

RAY It's all right, Ma. Did at first but not now.

Awkward pause.

MRS CRAWLEY *(tries to smile)* I thought this day would never come.
It's good to have you back. *(beat)* I'll get us some tea.

MRS CRAWLEY goes out. RAY looks around the room.

RUBY Your bedroom's all ready - just like you left it.

RAY Everything in the same place. When I was in England, every night I used to imagine this. To help me get to sleep.

RUBY *(taking his arm)* Now you're here.

RAY Where's William's picture?

RUBY Mum put it away.

RAY Why?

RUBY It fell down. The day William died. Glass got smashed. She couldn't bring herself to put it back.

Beat

RUBY So, what are your plans?

RAY Dunno yet. Look a few people up if they're still about. Have a beer down the road. Maybe try and get a job somewhere, if anyone'll have me.

RUBY It'll take a while to settle – don't rush it.

RAY Don't worry about me.

RUBY *(smiles)* I can't help it.

RUBY puts her arm around him.

RUBY Come on. Let's sit down.

RAY goes to sit. RUBY grabs a crutch.

RUBY I'll take it.

RAY stumbles slightly dropping his crutch and half-falling into the chair.

RUBY Sorry!

RAY It's fine.

RUBY I'm so sorry Ray are you all right? I didn't mean –

RAY (*slightly irritated*) I said I'm fine! Don't fuss!

RAY leans the crutch against the wall. RUBY is concerned.

RAY (*trying to lighten up*) You want to have a look at it? (*indicates his artificial leg*) Won't bite you. (*He pulls his trousers up a bit so she can see his leg. He rolls his socks down a bit.*) Feel it.

RUBY (*tentatively touches the leg. Knocks it*) Like a cricket bat.

They laugh.

RUBY So how does it...

RAY Just straps on.

MRS CRAWLEY enters with tea.

MRS CRAWLEY Tea's up.

RAY Thanks Ma.

Drinks some tea.

RAY It's good. So what have you been doing with yourself, sis?

RUBY Not much. Helping Mum. Working a bit.

RAY Got a boyfriend?

MRS CRAWLEY glances at RUBY, goes out to the kitchen.

RUBY Yes.

RAY What's his name?

RUBY Robert.

RAY Robert. I hope he behaves himself.

RUBY Of course.

RAY How long have you been going with him?

RUBY *(smiles)* What is this? The third degree?

RAY Just showing a brotherly concern.

RUBY Just over a year.

RAY Same age as you?

RUBY Just about. A year older.

RAY Right. *(beat)* You didn't mention him in your letters.

RUBY Oh just...

RAY What does he do?

MRS CRAWLEY comes in with scones.

MRS CRAWLEY Scone, love?

RAY You've got to be joking.

He picks out a scone.

RAY You wouldn't believe how I dreamt of this.

RAY eats.

RAY Mmmm.

MRS CRAWLEY Good to see you eat. *(to RUBY)* You might need to nip down to the store – I forgot we're out of sugar.

RAY Not now. Plenty of time before it closes. What does he do?

RUBY Hmmm?

RAY Robert.

RUBY He works at the grocers.

RAY The grocers?

RUBY Yes

RAY Lucky boy...

SCENE 8 – RIOT AT THE SCHOOL OF ARTS

A podium, and a few chairs. PATTERSON stands to speak.

VOICE Monday, 9th of July, 1917

VOICE The School of Arts Hall.

VOICE Brisbane

PATTERSON Welcome ladies to this most important meeting of the Women's Compulsory Service League. It's heartening to see so many of you here this evening, responding to the call. No-one who doesn't have a son or a husband overseas can know how hard it is to live every day with the possibility that every knock that comes at the door might be the one you dread. Unfortunately our losses continue to climb and our brave battalions are now, more than ever, in need of reinforcement. Hence, the formation of this league.

VOICES Hear, hear.

THORP and PANKHURST enter quietly into the back of the hall and stand, watching.

PATTERSON Mrs Crawley.

MRS CRAWLEY Thank you Mrs Patterson. I move that this meeting of women affirms that the time has come when the Federal Government should adopt a fair system of compulsory service, thus following the example of all other democratic nations now engaged in resisting the tyranny of Germany and its Allies.

VOICE Seconded.

MRS CRAWLEY sits.

PATTERSON Thank you Mrs Crawley. Does anyone present wish to say anything for or against the resolution?

THORP I would like to say something.

PATTERSON Identify yourself please.

THORP Margaret Thorp. Women's Peace Army.

VOICE You're not welcome at this meeting.

PANKHURST Let her speak!

THORP Why send more women's sons to die when it's not necessary?
Germany has already made offers of peace, the United States is
now involved, our forces do not need reinforcing – as women
we have to say no.

MRS CRAWLEY You have some nerve coming in here preaching to us.

MRS CRAWLEY walks towards THORP.

PATTERSON Ada...

MRS CRAWLEY Do you have a man at the front?

THORP Whether I do or not isn't the point. Conscription's unnecessary
and violates the liberty of the individual conscience. It glorifies
the very system we're trying to crush in Germany.

VOICE If we wanted your opinion we would have asked for it!

THORP I'm sorry for the losses you have suffered. There is no remedy
for the pain you have within you now. That is beyond your
control -

VOICE Where is your loyalty?

PANKHURST Let her speak!

THORP - but it is within your control to act with compassion to others
who are threatened with similar pain but have/ the opportunity
of avoiding it.

VOICE /Get the Kaiser-loving rat out of here!

THORP *(turning to the audience)* We women give life, nurture life...it
is not in our natures to take it.

VOICE Go live in Germany where you belong!

THORP On October 28th last, the people of Australia decided by an
overwhelming majority –

VOICE It was a dud vote!

THORP - an overwhelming majority, that it would not have conscription for overseas service. All the troops that have left Australia have gone voluntarily -

VOICE And they want help too!

THORP - have gone voluntarily, so I therefore move that this meeting of Brisbane women –

MRS CRAWLEY If you don't get your arse out of here in ten seconds, as a woman I'm going to kick it out.

VOICE Well said, Ada!

Wild applause. Women surround THORP. THORP tries to speak over interjections and catcalls. There is cacophony and chaos.. THORP is grabbed by the throat by a woman who tries to push her out of the hall. THORP continues her speech as she gets punched and slapped. PANKHURST attempts to come to THORP's aid. Interjections continue under THORP's speech, as the women try to drag her out.

THORP *(over the top of the dialogue below)* - do protest against the Federal Government's repudiation of its repeated pledges during the election campaign that the verdict of the people given on October 28th would be respected, in so far as the Government has adopted economic conscription by proposing to force eligible public servants into the army by starvation, and, further, as the government is encouraging private employers to do likewise. We do hereby demand that the government abide in spirit and in letter by its pledge that the voice of democracy as expressed through the ballot box would be obeyed!

VOICE Traitor! Filthy traitor!

PATTERSON Ladies let us have order!

VOICE Get her out of the hall!

PANKHURST What about freedom of speech and English liberty?

VOICE Grab the little bitch!

VOICE Lock her up!

VOICE Shame! Respect your country!

Somehow THORP gets free and rushes to the podium, pursued by the women.

PANKHURST Get off her!

VOICE Get her out!

VOICE She's a bloody traitor – throw her out!

PANKHURST She has the right to speak!

PATTERSON tries to calm the women down. THORP hangs on to the podium as the women try to pull her off it.

PATTERSON Ladies! There's nothing to be gained by creating pandemonium! You can either accept or reject the motions. Order please!

VOICE Labour rat!

VOICE Thank God, I'm not a pro-German!

VOICE You bitch!

PATTERSON Ladies please! This is not worthy of you! Not worthy of the League!

Miraculously a few of THORP's words get heard through the shouting:

THORP I will repeat the amendment since it hasn't been heard –

VOICE I'll fucking kill you, you fucking slag!

THORP I move that this meeting of Brisbane women protest against the Federal Government's repudiation of its repeated pledges during the election campaign etc

VOICE Shut her up! Get her out girls!

Another woman joins the fracas and tries to punch PANKHURST. PANKHURST responds with as good as she gets. Screams as THORP is dragged off the platform, but she holds onto a table and resists. More heavy blows. Faces are slapped, dresses ripped, hair pulled, punches thrown. THORP's amendment is torn up.

VOICE Three cheers for conscription!

VOICES Hip-hip hooray!

PANKHURST Three cheers for anti-conscription!

VOICES Hip-hip hooray!

PATTERSON Ladies! For the love of God!

VOICE You fucking asked for it!

THORP is thrown to the floor. She is set upon by the mob.

VOICE Get the bitch! Fucking kill her!

VOICE Stop it!

VOICE Bitch!

VOICE Fucking Bitch!!!!!!

POLICEMAN 1 arrives and blows his whistle.

POLICEMAN 1 Break it up!

PATTERSON Leave her, ladies! You give her too much power!

A sudden silence. THORP is let go and she drops to the floor, bloodied and bruised, but stands up quickly.

POLICEMAN 1 What the bloody hell's going on here?

MRS CRAWLEY (*pointing to THORP*) This woman sabotaged a peaceful meeting.

PANKHURST She was responding to an invitation by the Chair for comments on an amendment before she was set upon by a pack of wild beasts!

MRS CRAWLEY These "Wild Beasts" are mothers or wives of men at the front, fighting for our freedom and the Empire!

PATTERSON My invitation was to comment on any amendments to the resolution which were constructive. Miss Thorp had nothing constructive to add other than hostile statements against our agreed agenda –

THORP We are not hostile, we are Apostles of Peace.

MRS CRAWLEY God save us from such peace!

VOICE Give her a free pass to Germany!

POLICEMAN 1 All right ladies. (*to THORP*) I think you'd better leave.

VOICE You and your sort are not wanted here!

THORP I have every right to be here.

VOICE If you had a man at the front you wouldn't be on your high horse you'd be begging men to enlist to help him!

THORP Plenty of the men at the front don't want any more to enlist – 50 000 of them voted NO last October.

VOICE Get her out!

PANKHURST It's a public meeting – she's got the right to speak.

POLICEMAN 1 Ladies!

MRS CRAWLEY It is not a public meeting!

PANKHURST It was advertised in the paper!

MRS CRAWLEY There was no word "public" mentioned in that advertisement!

THORP I have it here (*pulls out the advertisement from her pocket*) "Every true-hearted and patriotic woman is earnestly invited to be present" -

MRS CRAWLEY Yes, patriotic!

THORP We are all true-hearted and patriotic Mrs Crawley -

VOICE We know your patriotism! You'd have our boys die at the front!

THORP - and we are appealing –

VOICE Socialist swine!

POLICEMAN 1 Keep it clean or I'll arrest you for indecent language!

THORP - appealing that all patriotic women/ accept the decision of the October 28th referendum!

VOICE /Get out!

The women begin to jostle THORP again.

POLICEMAN 1 (*taking THORP away as she is jostled*) Come on –

PATTERSON That's enough!

THORP (*as she gets pushed out*) You cannot gag free speech!

VOICE (*Singing*) God save our Gracious King/
Long live our noble King

God save the King!
Send him victorious
Happy and glorious –

POLICEMAN 1 /Come on out!

THORP *(over singing)* Mr Hughes may act like a dictator and an autocrat but the people won't put up with it. And they won't put up with conscription either.

POLICEMAN 1 *(struggling to push THORP out through the jostling)* That's it keep walking – there's the door!

PATTERSON Ladies!

VOICES *(joining singing)*
Long to reign over us
God save the King!
Thy choicest gifts in store,
On him be pleased to pour;
Long may he reign:
May he defend our laws,
And ever give us cause,
To sing with heart and voice,
God save the King!

PANKHURST *(singing)* I didn't raise my son to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy

THORP breaks free of the POLICEMAN and joins in the song with PANKHURST

THORP/PANK Who dares to put a musket on his shoulder
To kill some other mother's darling boy?/
The nations ought to arbitrate their quarrels,
It's time to put the sword and gun away,
There'd be no war to-day if mothers all would say
I didn't raise my son to be a soldier!

WOMAN /Get the bitch!

POLICEMAN 1 Don't go back in there!

POLICEMAN 1 manages to hold off the other women. POLICEMAN 2 arrives and THORP and PANKHURST are finally escorted out. The pro-conscription supporters continue to sing "God Save The King" at THORP and PANKHURST as they stagger to safety. Thorp has blood on her face.

PANKHURST Well done, Peg!

THORP For what?

PANKHURST For showing them that we won't be intimidated. You were magnificent!

THORP She said there'd be blood...

SCENE 9 – THE BLOOD OF THE BATTLEFIELD

The chorus gathers into a tight-knit group. The song is sung like a dirge. THORP remains on stage and puts her head in her hands.

SONG: RAINING AND GROUSING

VOICES Marching marching, marching,
Always bloody well marching
When this war is over
We'll bloody well march no more...

The song continues as a hum under the voices below: `

VOICE Shells and rain fell from the leaden skies

VOICE Some became tangled in the barbed wire

VOICE Hanging like scarecrows, wounded and helpless

VOICE Hands and faces protruding from the foul morass

VOICE There were no screams.

VOICE There was only death.

Piano crash. HUGHES with a handful of papers walks to a meeting, COOK catches up to him.

VOICE Government House, Melbourne

VOICE July, 1917.

VOICE Joseph Cook

COOK Billy, can I have a word? Just thought I'd let you know, cabinet's going to grill you about pushing through conscription again.

HUGHES *(sorting through his papers)* We've got the wharfies and miners about to go on strike -

COOK I know, but the cabinet feels -

HUGHES - we've got riots, shootings, food prices spiralling out of control. We can't throw the country again into the turmoil of another plebescite.

COOK I thought that in light of –

HUGHES We're not pushing it through, Joe. If we decide to do it again, we put it to the people. I made a promise.

COOK We all break promises.

HUGHES I won't do it.

COOK Have you seen the updated casualty lists?

HUGHES Not yet.

COOK *(holding out a folder)* I suggest you have a good look. The cabinet expects a positive answer.

HUGHES Expects?

COOK Recommends.

HUGHES Well they can bloody well wait for a positive answer for a while longer, and if they want to take it any further, behind my back, then let them try!

COOK Just read it, Billy...

COOK hands HUGHES the lists and exits. HUGHES looks down at the list and sighs heavily.

VOICE First Bullecort

HUGHES 10 869

VOICE Second Bullecort

HUGHES 9535

VOICE Messines

HUGHES 8451

SM Passchendaele

HUGHES Oh God.

ALL 36 500

Piano crash. Hughes and the chorus members drop their heads. Silence.

VOICE Some lay still, some crawled

VOICE No one yelled.

VOICE The human voice was too insignificant a thing there.

Beat

VOICE There was only blood...

Piano crash.

SCENE 10 – RAY PRESSURES RUBY

RAY sits sipping beer, a newspaper by his side, staring ahead – in a dark reverie.

RUBY enters carrying a box-full of groceries.

RUBY Good morning.

RAY Morning. You were out early.

RUBY (*unpacking*) It's the only way to get the freshest veg.

RAY A likely story.

RUBY What? (*off his look*) Robert wasn't even there.

RAY nods "OK".

RUBY By the way, I saw Mrs Redpath at the shop. She said that we can have her Dad's old wheelchair if we want it, wasn't that nice of her?

RAY What would you want that for?

RUBY Well I thought...for taking you out on walks. It'll save you having to...

RAY Hobble about?

RUBY No, I didn't mean...I just meant...

Beat

RUBY Sorry. Good idea, Ruby.

RAY It's all right.

RUBY I didn't think.

RAY You were just being kind. Everyone's being very kind.

Beat. RUBY tentatively touches his arm.

RUBY It'll take a while, but you'll gradually get back to normal. Well not normal, but, you know, you'll settle down.

Beat

RAY I was thinking of going to Melbourne next week.

RUBY Melbourne?

RAY With a few mates. Have a bit of a change of scene. Only be for a week or so.

RUBY Why so far away? Couldn't you go down the coast or something?

RAY There's a big meeting on.

RUBY What meeting?

RAY Anti-war demonstration.

RUBY You want to go to an anti-war demo?

RAY *(smiling)* Just thought we'd join the fun. Hughes should be locking them up for treason, don't you think?

RUBY Who?

RAY The bloody grubs that are trying to stop people enlisting.

RUBY *(looking away)* I don't know.

RAY You don't know? *(beat)* You might not want to think about it, Ruby, but take it from a person who's seen mates go mad with exhaustion, who's seen men walk over the top and get shot in the head because they couldn't stand it anymore: we need reinforcements, and plenty of them, or thousands more just like our William aren't going to be coming home. *(beat)* Do you know what those lefty bastards are doing? They're doing the Germans' work for them! Every person they put off enlisting gives the enemy more power!

RUBY But we can't force men to go if they don't want to.

RAY It's gone beyond all that free will rubbish Ruby! This is war! There's no such thing as freedom until we beat the enemy! You can't have it both ways. If we want to live in a country like Australia we have to fight for it. It's everyone's. Live together, die together. If you don't believe that, William's death means nothing! (*RAY puts his arm around her*) We owe it to him if to nobody else to make sure that our boys are being supported. You see that, don't you?

Beat. RUBY is conflicted.

RAY So why won't Robert sign up?

RUBY I knew that was coming.

RAY Well?

RUBY If you must know, he has to look after his mother.

RAY Sick is she?

RUBY She's got a bad leg and Robert's the only one who supports her.

RAY That's not what I heard.

RUBY What are you talking about?

RAY I heard she was getting a nice bit of income from someone else?

RUBY From who?

RAY Her other son in Perth.

RUBY That's rubbish. She doesn't have another son.

RAY That's not what Mrs Patterson said.

RUBY What are you talking to that old witch for?

RAY She's a respectable lady. And she knows more about your boyfriend than you do.

RUBY She does not!

RAY Ruby – she has a friend in the Recruitment Office who knows all about it.

RUBY That's not right.

RAY Ask Mrs Patterson yourself.

RUBY Robert would never lie to me.

RAY Then you'd better go and talk to him.

RUBY Why are you doing this? You're just trying to ruin my life!

RUBY runs out. RAY looks after her, saddened.

SCENE 11 – HUGHES LAUNCHES THE SECOND CAMPAIGN

Hughes sighs and wearily steps up to the podium. Hughes steps up to the podium.

HUGHES October 28, 1916, was a black day for Australia; it was a triumph for the unworthy, the selfish, and anti-British in our midst...they were doomed to a rude awakening on May 5th. The electors, being loyal at heart, saw them as they were, reckless extremists, dis-loyalists, and pro-Germans. The Government has decided that on December 20th there will be a new plebiscite on compulsory service. If you turn down the government proposal, you not only cover the name of Australia with dishonour and prove yourselves unworthy of freedom, but you condemn some of the best and bravest men in the world to death!

SCENE 12 – RUBY CHALLENGES ROBERT

RUBY meets ROBERT. They embrace.

ROBERT Mr Davis sacked me.

RUBY I heard. The bastard.

ROBERT is shocked by her language.

RUBY Sorry. *(smiles)* Been around Ray too much.

Slightly awkward pause.

ROBERT It's good to see you.

RUBY It's been a while.

ROBERT Missed you.

RUBY Me too. *(beat)* So what are you going to do now?

ROBERT *(shrugs)* Look for another job.

RUBY Will you have enough to live on?

ROBERT For a little while. With Mrs Reibe not around we don't have to be so prompt with the rent, at least.

RUBY So...you've got nothing else coming in at all?

ROBERT Like what?

RUBY I don't know, just...anything.

ROBERT Where else would we get money? No-one will employ Mum. We've got nothing.

RUBY Not even from your brother?

Beat

ROBERT What?

RUBY I heard you had a brother.

ROBERT Who told you that?

RUBY Ray heard about it from someone.

ROBERT Bloody hell.

RUBY Why didn't you tell me?

Beat

RUBY Why?

ROBERT Mum didn't want anyone to know.

RUBY You could have told *me*!

ROBERT Mum made me swear I wouldn't.

RUBY Blood's thicker than water eh?

ROBERT It's not like that. I made a promise.

RUBY So why the secrecy anyway? Is it because of the money?

ROBERT What money?

RUBY That he's sending your Mum?

ROBERT He's not sending her any money.

RUBY I know about it Robert. Mrs Patterson found out from the Recruitment Officer.

ROBERT Mrs Patterson?

RUBY You said you were the only one supporting her. You lied to me.

ROBERT What's going on? I've told you he's not sending any money.

RUBY I don't believe you!

ROBERT It's the truth! It's impossible!

RUBY Why?

ROBERT Because my brother's in jail!

Beat

RUBY In jail?

ROBERT Are you satisfied? You believe me now?

RUBY Oh God. Sorry, Robert. I just thought –

ROBERT You thought wrong!

RUBY I'm sorry.

ROBERT And Ray should get his facts right before spreading stuff like that around. Since when did you start worrying about what Mrs Patterson thinks anyway? She's the cow who got me sacked!

RUBY I know.

ROBERT Why did it matter, even if my brother was sending money?

RUBY It just made it easier for people to think...

ROBERT To think what? That I was a shirker?

RUBY Maybe.

ROBERT And what do you think about that?

RUBY I don't know.

ROBERT You think I should enlist?

RUBY I don't want you to.

ROBERT That wasn't the question.

RUBY It's not up to me to decide.

ROBERT So you think I should?

RUBY I don't know.

ROBERT You must think I should.

RUBY I said I don't know!

Pause

ROBERT Well I don't want to kill people, and I don't want to get shot.
What would your brother Ray say about that?

RUBY He'd probably say you were a coward.

ROBERT Maybe I am.

RUBY I don't think you are.

ROBERT I must be if I'm afraid to kill someone or to get blown up.

RUBY That doesn't make you a coward. Most men that enlist don't do
it out of bravery but out of duty. Like my William and Ray.
And they're still scared, but...

ROBERT Still they go...

RUBY *(looking at him)* Yes.

ROBERT Out of duty.

RUBY Yes.

ROBERT What is duty? To whom?

RUBY You don't know?

ROBERT No, I don't.

Beat

ROBERT Yes I do. *(he touches her face. Kisses her softly)* I love you.

RUBY I love you.

ROBERT No matter what?

RUBY ...

SCENE 13 – PANKHURST TRIES TO GET THORP BACK

Glenrosa Rd, Red Hill, Brisbane. MABEL walks in with PANKHURST.

PANKHURST Is she getting out at all, Mabel?

MABEL Not much. Spends most of her time looking after Amy. Still blames herself for Mrs Reibe being interned.

PANKHURST I'll speak to her.

MABEL Don't go too hard on her - that ruckus at the School of Arts shook her up good and proper. Just through here. Peg? Adela's here to see you!

They go through to where THORP is sitting on a chair reading.

PANKHURST Hello Peg.

PANKHURST and THORP embrace. MABEL goes out.

THORP Hello jailbird. Nice to be out?

PANKHURST It was only three weeks. Proved to be quite productive - formed a new division of the Peace Army at Melbourne Jail!

THORP Prisoners can be quite amenable. So you've been having some fun?

PANKHURST 80 000 we had at the last march – Hughes is running scared. He even mentioned me yesterday! “Adela Pankhurst is making herself a damned nuisance and I really don't know what to do with the little devil!”

They laugh.

PANKHURST He fears he shall have to deport me!

THORP Let him try.

More laughter. Beat.

PANKHURST So how are you?

THORP All right.

PANKHURST (*indicating THORP's head*) No scar?

THORP Healed up well.

PANKHURST I knew it would take more than that to knock you out of action. So when will we have you back on board?

THORP I'm not sure. Actually Adela, I was thinking of taking some time off. And leaving the Peace Army.

PANKHURST Leaving?

THORP Amy needs me all the time now, and I'm having to get up to Buderim to see my Father a lot more since his illness -

PANKHURST I understand that, but you can't leave, Peg! The plebiscite is less than a month away. We can easily sort out the logistics. Arrange for help for Amy and your Father.

THORP It's not just the logistics. Amy relies on me now.

PANKHURST Not twenty-four hours a day. There's more than enough good people who could fill in when you're not around. You can't blame yourself for Mrs Reibe's internment, Peg – it was bound to happen sooner or later.

THORP Maybe, but Amy still needs me.

PANKHURST Is that true or is it you that needs her?

Beat. Thorp drops her head.

PANKHURST What is it? Do you not have the fire any more?

THORP Stronger than ever.

PANKHURST Then what's the problem?

Beat

THORP When we first met we said to each other that we had similar goals.

PANKHURST Of course. We still share them I hope.

THORP I also said our methods were different.

PANKHURST Yes...

THORP That your way of political agitation was not my way, but we agreed that we could work together for the common good and still express ourselves in our own particular ways.

PANKHURST We did.

THORP And it was fine at the beginning, we had a lot of wins and served the cause well.

PANKHURST Undoubtedly.

THORP But little by little I've felt myself separating from... a wholeness that I've been building throughout my life. Splintering, floating in all sorts of directions, betraying what I've always understood to be sacred inside me. It's been happening by stealth, and I've kidded myself that I've been true to my way, while I get on that podium and rail against the evils of the world. But in the hall that night I saw it clearly. In the eyes of those women, attacking me with their snarling faces, and their spitting curses. I realized I completely lacked courage – that I was a coward.

PANKHURST There was no lack of courage, Peg. You faced them without backing down. You were a tiger in there! You went back for more!

THORP I was frightened –

PANKHURST - of course you were –

THORP - of myself. Of what I felt when I looked into those eyes that wanted to hurt me. Because I wanted to hurt them as well.

PANKHURST But you didn't hurt them. You got above those feelings and you avoided violence.

THORP Not in my mind. I didn't have the courage or conviction to love those poor women who had lost their soul-mates or their sons. All I could think about was what they were doing to us and I hated them for it. I hated their ignorance and their violence, and wanted to do the same to them.

PANKHURST Peg you're a human being, you're not Christ! Anyone else faced with that amount of provocation would have let fly – Peace Army or not. I know I did. You were extraordinary. You did have courage. You restrained yourself. You turned the other cheek!

THORP Not with my thoughts.

PANKHURST Thoughts are nothing, it's what we do that counts. Look at me. We have immense work still ahead of us. Does it matter to you?

THORP Yes.

PANKHURST Then you must not shirk from the fight. And yes it may be a bloody fight, but it's not an unholy one. There are bigger issues at stake here than your conscience, Peg. We are servants of the people, and right now we're in a fight that will shape how this nation sees itself for generations to come. When people will look back and ask: did the women sit back and let an entire generation be led into the flames? Or did they stand up and say the killing has got to stop? We're shaping history, Peg. We've gone too far to turn back - you're part of this whether you like it or not. Now, let's pull up our sleeves and win this bloody thing a second time!

THORP looks away – still undecided about what to do.

SCENE 14 – THE LOTTERY OF DEATH

LANE steps up to the podium.

VOICE The lottery of death!

LANE We are to have in Australia, if the people's enemies can get their way, the ghastliest gamble ever conceived in the brain of man. Conscription is to take the form of a lottery!

VOICE Shame!

LANE Lives are to be drawn for on Tattersall principles; souls to be the subjects of a hideous sweep! The equivalents of eligible males are to be tossed into a hat –

VOICE Or something

LANE - then someone –

VOICE Death?

LANE Who knows? Plunges in a hand, and all who are drawn are doomed to be the victims of the bloody war! It is the most immoral of all forms of gambling. It is fraught with tragedy; red with murder and foul with abomination! Answer, people of Australia, with a thunderous “No”!

SCENE 15 – THE DEBATE INTENSIFIES

The chorus assembles. Drum flourish.

VOICE WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

Voices rapidly reel off, slightly overlapping:

VOICE I believe in general strikes.

VOICE I believe that the men at the Front should be sacrificed.

VOICE I believe in taking all the benefit and none of the risks.

VOICE I believe that Britain should be crushed and humiliated.

VOICE I believe in the murder of women, and baby-killing.

VOICE I believe that treachery is a virtue.

ALL I BELIEVE I'M WORM ENOUGH TO VOTE NO.

VOICE Those who don't believe in this creed –

ALL VOTE YES!

Drum flourish.

VOICE WHO LOSES THE WAR?

Voices rapidly reel off, slightly overlapping:

VOICE The nation robbed of its young men and unborn children.

VOICE The women who lose their husbands, brothers and sons.

VOICE The babies sacrificed to feed the fires of war.

VOICE The children who lose their fathers.

VOICE The workers who lose their wages

VOICE The men who lose their lives.

ALL ALL THESE LOSE THE WAR.

VOICE Those who agree with this opinion –

ALL VOTE NO.

Hughes steps up to the podium. RUBY takes William's smashed picture out of a box and looks at it, under HUGHES's speech.

HUGHES This war is going to determine the destiny of every man and woman in Australia. There are men in Australia who say "we have done enough; we are safe." Yes they are safe, but only behind barricades of dead and dying men of their own race! On December 20th, issue a lethal blow to our enemies and vote "Yes"!

A few members of the chorus stand on either side of RUBY. RUBY is trying to make a decision, while clinging to the picture of William. On either side of her, the chorus speaks, directing their lines at her. RAY puts his hand on RUBY's shoulder.

VOICE The blood vote.

VOICES (*anti*) "Why is your face so white, Mother?
Why do you choke for breath?"
"Oh I have dreamt in the night, my son,
That I doomed a man to death.

VOICES (*pro*) "Why is your face so white, brother?
Why are your feet so cold?
Are you afraid to fight, brother?
To guard that Mother, old?"

SCENE 16 – RUBY PRESSURES ROBERT TO ENLIST

RAY kisses RUBY on the cheek. RUBY hands him the picture and walks to ROBERT, who is writing something into a ledger. She stands looking at him for a moment.

ROBERT Ruby?

RUBY Hello Robert.

He goes to kiss her. She responds non-committally.

ROBERT You all right?

RUBY nods.

ROBERT I've just been doing some figures.

RUBY Great.

ROBERT How's your Mum?

RUBY Fine.

ROBERT Ray?

RUBY He's in Melbourne. With a delegation of returned soldiers doing a march for conscription. They reckon they're going to get 100 000.

Beat.

ROBERT Did you hear I got offered a new job?

RUBY No.

ROBERT At the racecourse. With Mr Davis's brother. Mr Davis must have felt guilty.

RUBY Did you accept?

ROBERT Haven't decided yet. Thought I'd talk to you first.

RUBY So you want to take it?

ROBERT Of course. But I want you to be happy if I do.

RUBY You have to decide.

ROBERT All right. I think I'll take it.

RUBY That's your final decision?

THORP enters nearby, carrying a package for AMY.

THORP Amy? I've got something for you.

THORP overhears ROBERT and RUBY talking and can't help but eavesdrop.

ROBERT What's the matter?

RUBY So that's it?

ROBERT That's what?

RUBY You're just taking the job and carrying on as usual?

ROBERT We have no money. I don't have a choice.

RUBY You do, Robert.

ROBERT I don't actually.

RUBY You can sign up.

Beat

ROBERT You want me to enlist?

RUBY I don't want you to. But you have to.

ROBERT What?

RUBY Or else you'll get conscripted. This way it's your choice.

ROBERT Who says the "yes's" are going to win?

RUBY Everybody - people know better this time.

ROBERT Know better?

RUBY Don't you care about all the men over there?

ROBERT Of course.

RUBY Like my brothers. If they'd had the reinforcements they needed William might still be alive.

ROBERT So that's my fault?

RUBY I didn't mean that. But can't you see they need your help now?

ROBERT It's propaganda, Ruby – they've got plenty of help coming from the US. I'm not going to kill people just so that Hughes and all the Protestants can feather their nests.

RUBY You're sounding just like your Mum.

ROBERT And you're sounding just like your Mum! Why are you like this all of a sudden?

RUBY Because I need to respect you.

ROBERT And you don't now?

RUBY Not if you stay here. I'd go to fight if I could.

ROBERT Well I won't.

RUBY Are you a man?

ROBERT Are you joking?

RUBY pulls out a white feather and holds it in front of ROBERT.

RUBY Take it.

ROBERT is stunned. She puts the feather in his waistcoat pocket and walks away. ROBERT stands motionless. THORP watches RUBY go then walks to him. She slowly takes the white feather out of his pocket, and embraces him. A slow drum beat commences. PANKHURST appears. THORP slowly walks away towards PANKHURST. They shake hands.

SCENE 17 – CAMPAIGN NUMBER TWO

The drum beat continues. PANKHURST watches as THORP steps up to the podium.

VOICE November, 1917

VOICE A month until the second plebiscite...

THORP Three years ago Australia engaged in the war with Germany because she purported to love civil liberty and loath tyranny. In those three years our country has seen that civil liberty for which she has fought assailed by her own rulers. She has no longer free speech; she has no longer a free press. Public meetings, even private homes, have been invaded by police and armed soldiers executing military orders. The work of debasing Australia to the level of Germany has already gone too far. Mr Hughes will now attempt to complete this task...by conscription.

VOICES Shame! Down with Hughes!

THORP I call on all peaceful and freedom-loving people to vote “No”!

Cheers, Applause.

VOICE November 29th, 1917

VOICE Warwick Railway station

VOICE The Prime Minister

HUGHES steps up to the podium.

HUGHES We are about to decide the destiny of our country. We must declare if we are going to stand loyally by the Empire or be at the mercy of the Irish and their kinsmen.

VOICES Long live Sinn Fein! Long live the IWW!

HUGHES Will we go into that camp in which every German, every Sinn Feiner, every IWW man, every reckless extremist has pitched his tent?

VOICES Get back in your rat's hole Hughes!

HUGHES Or will we prove to all that an Australian patriot is a British patriot?

A man, PAT BROSNAN an Irishman, comes forward and hurls an egg at HUGHES. It hits his hat.

BROSNAN I won't be conscripted, you Tory rat!

Huge cheers. BROSNAN escapes. Chaos. HUGHES is outraged and tries to run after BROSNAN. The crowd makes it difficult for him. An AIDE tries to shield HUGHES.

HUGHES Arrest that man! Arrest him!

AIDE Please, Mr Hughes come back!

VOICES Bravo Patty! Ha! Ha! Ha!

HUGHES Stop him! *(reaches inside his pocket for his gun. To his aide)*
Where's my gun! Where's my gun?

AIDE You left it in the carriage sir.

HUGHES For pity's sake! *(to POLICEMAN 3)* You! Stop him! It's a terrorist attack!

POLICEMAN 2 Can't do that sir.

VOICE It was just an egg Hughes!

VOICE He'll need to get his hat dry-cleaned!

Laughter.

HUGHES *(to POLICEMAN 3)* I order you, under commonwealth law to arrest that man! He assaulted me!

VOICE With an egg!

More laughter.

POLICEMAN 2 I only answer to State Law. It's not in my jurisdiction.

Cheers and laughter.

HUGHES What do you mean it's not in your jurisdiction? I'm the Prime Minister!

VOICE Then behave like it!

POLICEMAN 2 I get paid by the state, not the commonwealth.

HUGHES *(to POLICEMAN 3)* You haven't heard the last of this!

VOICE Give him his dummy back!

More laughter and jeers as HUGHES beats a retreat.

VOICE Then raise the scarlet standard high
 Beneath its folds we'll live and die
 Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer
 We'll keep the red flag flying here.

Piano crash. HUGHES dusts himself off and stands at the podium. The Chorus assembles in a line. Drum beat under.

VOICE The eve of the second plebiscite...

HUGHES I put it to the women of Australia, what is your answer to the boys at the front? Will you be the proud mothers of a nation of heroes, or stand dishonoured as the mothers of a race of degenerates?

VOICE Every life is sacred. No mother should ever feel as I did, when I lost my own beautiful son. I will not support this blood vote to doom a man to death.

VOICE Any right-minded woman would rather be the mother of a dead hero than a living shirker.

Piano crash.

SCENE 18 – THE SECOND PLEBISCITE
The chorus gathers. Drum beat underneath.

VOICE December 20th, 1917

VOICE The day of the second plebiscite.

VOICE Please take out your voting cards from under your seats.

HUGHES and THORP stand on the stage and address the audience.

HUGHES Put selfishness aside. Duty to your country must be in your minds as you vote.

THORP The killing must stop. The personal will is supreme and sacred.
What does freedom mean to you?

VOICE The question:

VOICE Are you in favour of the proposal of the Commonwealth
Government for reinforcing the Australian Imperial
Force overseas?

VOICE Please cast your votes.

Piano crash. The audience votes. Drumming intensifies as the audience casts its vote, and votes are collected in ballot boxes. Then counted. A Map of Australia is placed in front of the audience with “yes” and “no” flags ready to attach to the states. Meanwhile the actors rotate with final appeals to the voters:

DIGGER 1 Don’t bring shame onto the name of Australia. Reinforce the
100 000 diggers already there, for King and country. Vote
YES!

DIGGER 2 It’s true we need reinforcements in the trenches. But the truth is
I wouldn’t bring my worst enemy over here to go through this.
Vote NO.

TORY Who made Australia white? Britain. Who guards Australia’s
shores? Britain. Who expects every man to do his duty? Britain.
Vote YES and help to save Britain.

FARMER The drought’s wiped us out. Don’t take my boys as well. If you
rob Australia of its white blood, you’ll leave us open to the
coloured workers of the world. Vote NO.

MANNIX SUPP To say we have not done enough is nonsense. The government
hasn’t even had the ordinary honesty, or even decency, to put a
fair straight question. Vote NO!

WIFE If he won’t vote yes then he’s a coward. Urge all loyal women
of the Empire to have no dealings with such draft dodgers. If he
doesn’t get himself a uniform I will cheerfully die an old maid -

MANNIX SUPP Elsie!

WIFE Vote YES!

Drum crash. The actors distribute the final election tallies to audience members.

VOICE The votes are in!

SONG: TOILERS OF THE NATIONS

VOICES Onward! friends of freedom,
Onward! for the strife,
Each for all we struggle,
One in death and life.

Piano crash. As each state is read out, a flag is placed on the map.

VOICE In the state of Victoria:

VOICE Votes for:

AUDIENCE 329 772

VOICE Votes against:

AUDIENCE 332 490

VOICE Victoria votes against Conscription!

VOICE In the state of South Australia:

VOICE Votes for:

AUDIENCE 86 663

VOICE Votes against:

AUDIENCE 106 364

VOICE South Australia votes against Conscription!

VOICE In the state of Western Australia:

VOICE Votes for:

AUDIENCE 84 116

VOICE Votes against:

AUDIENCE 46 522

VOICE Western Australia decisively votes in favour of Conscription!

VOICE In the Federal Territories:

VOICE Votes for:

AUDIENCE 1700

VOICE Votes against:

| | |
|----------|---|
| AUDIENCE | 1220 |
| VOICE | The Federal Territories vote in favour of Conscription! |
| VOICE | In the state of New South Wales |
| VOICE | Votes for: |
| AUDIENCE | 341 256 |
| VOICE | Votes Against: |
| AUDIENCE | 487 774! |
| VOICE | New South Wales decisively votes against Conscription! |
| VOICE | In the state of Tasmania |
| VOICE | Votes for: |
| AUDIENCE | 38 881 |
| VOICE | Votes against: |
| AUDIENCE | 38 502 |
| VOICE | Tasmania narrowly votes in Favour! |
| VOICE | In the State of Queensland |
| VOICE | Votes for: |
| AUDIENCE | 132 771 |
| VOICE | Votes against: |
| AUDIENCE | 168 875! |
| VOICE | Queensland votes against! |
| ALL | The “No’s” have it!! |

Celebration music. HUGHES drops his head and walks up to the podium. THORP and PANKHURST embrace, and raise their hands in victory. MABEL and LANE cheer. RAY shakes his head at the audience. RUBY comforts him. ROBERT looks at RUBY sadly. MRS PATTERSON stands stony-faced. The actors come forward and face the audience to sing.

SONG: AUSTRALIAN HYMN OF FREEDOM

ANTI VOICES Mothers, wives and sisters of Australians,
Would ye have your kinsmen bond or free?
Vote No! Preserve their liberty,
For "Yes" would mean our slavery,
And all the little children
Would future conscripts be-
Shall we permit this passively?
Vote No! No! No! No!
Australia will be free,
Australia will be free.

SCENE 19 – THE WASH-UP

HUGHES is at the podium

HUGHES I have been through many hells in the last few years, but in some respects the last month or six weeks has been the bitterest and worst of all...how do I account for the Australian vote? Well Sinn Fein and IWW selfishness, the sentimental vote of the women: and war weariness! *War-weariness* of a people who have escaped all the consequences of this awful war! But there it is. And upon my head these rotters have visited the consequences of Australia's failure to do her duty.

VOICE After receiving another vote of no-confidence after the second referendum, Billy Hughes resigned as Prime Minister.

VOICE He was immediately reinstated by the Governor-General in the absence of any credible alternative candidates.

VOICE He remained Prime Minister until 1923.

VOICE He died in 1952, aged 90.

VOICE In 1920 Adela Pankhurst became a founding member of the Communist Party of Australia

VOICE Within a few years she became an *anti*-Communist and devoted herself to helping underprivileged women.

VOICE She was interned in Japan in 1942, advocating peace.

VOICE She died in 1961, aged 75.

VOICE Cecilia John continued her musical education after the war, and also dabbled in poultry farming.

VOICE She moved to London and became the Principal of the school of Dalcroze Eurhythmic Dance.

VOICE She died in London in 1955, aged 77.

VOICE Not much is known of Anna Patterson

VOICE Her husband and sons survived the war.

VOICE Her house caught fire in 1922.

VOICE She died in 1924.

VOICE Ernie Lane remained active in politics throughout his life.

VOICE He died in 1954, aged 85.

VOICE Robert decided to enlist the day after the 2nd conscription plebiscite.

VOICE He was wounded in action within a week of arriving at the front.

VOICE He never walked again.

VOICE He died in 1938, aged 41.

VOICE After the war Margaret Thorp continued to devote her life to peace, and the welfare of the underprivileged.

VOICE In 1929 she became the first welfare officer of the NSW Society for Crippled Children.

VOICE She also worked tirelessly for the care of refugees and overcoming racial prejudice.

VOICE She died in 1978, aged 86.

THE END