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CONSCRIPTION.

Mr Mullan has opened the conscription campaign with an anti-conscription speech. This coming from the father of soldiers, would be surprising, where it not remembered that Mr Mullan is an ex-Senator and an ardent supporter and advocate of the discipline of the Labor Party. The great mistake Mr Mullan and his party make in this vital question of conscription, is his and their insistence upon making it a political party question. Confronted with a real menace, he prefers to dwell upon an imaginary one, and all the while to belittle Mr Hughes. There are many people who do not approve of all Mr Hughes has done. He is not human, and it is human to err. The Labor Party have established a precedent in resubmitting referendums, for have they not confronted the public with no less than two referendums on the Constitutional question? But there is no need to follow established precedents at this critical juncture. No need for apologies for the reintroduction of the conscription question. To many right thinking people it is vital that we do our best, give of our best, and continue giving, until the war is won, or lost. When confronting danger of conquest, there is no time for quibbling, and no use for quibblers. After we have settled the Prussian question, it will be time to confront other dangers, but just now the Empire, of which Australia forms so desirable a part, has its hands too full to spare the time for nightmaric Labor Party vote-catching problems. Mr Mullan dwelt upon Press censorship, complaining somewhat bitterly, that the party which he represents, had been forced to submit to his ruling. That is true, but Mr Mullan forgot to tell his audience that this should not have been necessary, for surely it is neither polite nor wise to stir up trouble with friendly nations, nations to whom, we must admit, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude in this hour of our trials. He quoted at length from the same old Pastoralist utterance and melodramatically dwelt upon the horrors of it. Why not try new ground, and give a little praise where so much praise is due? The cost of keeping our soldiers at the front evidently concerns Mr Mullan. What matters the cost, so that we win? If our financial position worries Mr Mullan and the Labor party let them advocate for a reduction of members, or curtailment of cash and improper expenditure. Let them urge their followers to work, to produce, to rise up as one man to do the best for our country, as soldiers or as citizens. There is truth in the contention that many Australians could be of great service by staying at home. They could, if they would, but the great industrial unrest, the strikes and general chaos that exists in Australia does not emphasise the desire of those left at home to be helpful. If the Labor Party would advocate, entreat, or force its followers to work harmoniously, a great victory would be accomplished. This, Mr Mullan does not do. Rather does he dwell upon the class question and the injustice of wealth, stirring up class prejudice instead of the ennobling benefits of work. Figures were quoted, idle figures, and even the date upon which the referendum was to be held was made into a grievance. It is all too trivial to dwell upon, the time is not meet for such cheap oratory. Let us be fair and reasonable upon this vital conscription question. Surely this time is dramatic enough, and more than enough, for all of us, without indulging in melodrama. Our duty is to do our best to win the war, not to combat every earnest suggestion with bit-

ANTI-CONSCRIPTION MEETING.

An anti-conscription meeting was held near the Union Hall on Tuesday night, where a large crowd assembled at 8 o'clock to hear an address by Mr John Mullan.

The chair was taken by Mr A. Toy.

Mr Mullan was greeted with applause on rising. He said he was pleased to see such a magnificent audience, which augured well for the success of the campaign in which they were engaged to maintain for the boys at the front when they returned, the same freedom as they possessed before they left.

He referred to the campaign in October 1916, and quoted the figures then given by Mr Hughes that over 16,000 men per month were required to maintain the forces. Since that time Mr Hughes stated that a mistake had been made, that only about 7000 per month were needed. The conscription issue that year was defeated by the Commonwealth Labor Party with the co-operation of the State Labor Party. He stated that the great number of 362,000 would have been sent by this time from Australia, if conscription had been carried in 1916. He referred to the handicaps they had to fight against in the last campaign and expected there would be similar handicaps in this campaign. There would probably be strict Press censorship and platform censorship to prevent the people having the truth placed before them. He referred to Mr Hughes sending appeals to the soldiers at the front to vote for conscription. He did not object to that, but the anti-conscriptionists should have been allowed the same privilege. The Premier of Queensland, Mr Ryan, had sent a cable urging the soldiers to vote against conscription, but it never left Australia. He referred to the heavy mail received in Australia just after the last campaign, and many parents in Australia received letters from soldier sons imploring them not to vote for conscription. He contended that these letters were held back purposely until after the polling day.

He then referred at length to the trouble and difficulties placed in the way of electors by having the polling day on Thursday, 20th December, instead of on Saturday. The Parliament had passed an Act that all elections shall be held on Saturdays, because they knew that was the best day for thousands of Australians. Now, by a War Precautions regulation the day for this poll was changed to Thursday.

He then referred to the question submitted to the electors. It should be a plain straight question, "Are you in favor of Conscription?" to be answered "Yes" or "No." The Willy Billy had put the question, "Are you in favor of the proposal of the Commonwealth Government for the reinforcement of the Australian Imperial Forces overseas?" He impressed upon them that the question meant they were asking for conscription. Mr Hughes had stated that only the single men would be taken under conscription. That was only to try to get the married men to vote for sending the other fellow. (Laughter.) If they did vote for that and conscription be carried they would find that eligible married men would be taken the same as in New Zealand and England.

He quoted various statements made by Mr Hughes before he went to England, that he would not force any man to go to fight against his will. Also his remarks about maintaining the Labour temple without taking a stone out of it. He then referred to the change in Mr Hughes after he returned and suggested various reasons for it.

He referred to Australia, according to population, having sent a larger percentage of soldiers to the front than Canada.

lantly, but it was a grander thing to defend the women of Australia. (Applause.) That would not be done if they voted for conscription. He then stated there was no conscription of wealth. The men in Australia who put their money into the War Loans were getting better interest for their money than before, while they were exempt from taxation on that interest. He then referred to the great profits made by shipping companies and other concerns since the war started. They were at war to crush Prussianism, but they must not let Prussianism grow in this country. It would grow in the worst form if by any chance conscription were carried in this country.

He had contempt for men who cried He had contempt for men who cried out for conscription knowing that under conscription.

He referred to the responsibility of the people in voting on this question. He hoped they would do better in this fight than before. The boys when they went away left behind the grandest country on God's earth, and the people here should see that when the boys return the conditions will be as good as when they left. He concluded by thanking the people for their attendance, and strongly urged them to vote against conscription.

All through the address the meeting was very orderly and some passages of his speech were greeted with applause and laughter. Questions were invited but none were asked. A young man then came to the front of the table and said, Mr Barnes moves, and Mr Nevin seconds, "That this meeting of Charters Towers citizens in public meeting assembled pledge themselves to do all in their power to defeat conscription."

On being put to the meeting a large number of hands were held up for. The Chairman said there were none against, and declared the motion carried unanimously.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman was carried by acclamation, and cheers were given for Mr Mullan, who then invited all unionists to meet in the Hall to form a campaign committee.

(Signed.—John R. Cork, Felix Street, Charters Towers.)

of the number of men sent from Australia. These showed that 329,000 men had gone, and up to the same date the casualties were 112,000. They all knew that many reported as casualties got back again into the fighting line. Even if they were all totally put out there should still be 263,000 men left. Mr Hughes had stated there were five divisions of Australians at the front. That would mean 100,000 men, leaving 168,000 men in reserve. He wished to know where those men are now. He then quoted statements recently made by Mr Pearce, Minister for Defence, that there were not sufficient ships available to take over the sea the men they had now awaiting transport. Mr Cook, Minister for the Navy, had made a similar statement. He wished to know how they would ship the tens of thousands that would be obtained under conscription, when they had not the ships to convey the men they have now enlisted?

He claimed that conscription in Australia was inadvisable, unnecessary and impracticable, and gave various reasons at length in support of his opinion. He referred to the great cost of maintaining the large number of men under arms. If they had 500,000 men at the front, it would cost the Commonwealth one hundred and eighty-two and a half million pounds in the first year. This was too large a sum for the Commonwealth to maintain. There was the danger of a financial crisis, and all its evils. He then referred to the loss of production through the men being on active service. He contended experts on the other side would say that Australia could help the Allied cause better by sending over material, rather than more men. He contended that the "flag flappers" and the "would to Godders" in trying to get conscription carried were doing the Allied cause injury instead of helping it.

He then contended that if conscription were carried it would strike a deadly blow at White Australia. There was a party here working insidiously for the destruction of Australian ideals and they would do anything to destroy the White Australia policy. He quoted a paragraph from the Pastoralists' Review, and said that would not have been permitted to be published if it had been a Labor paper. He referred to Mr Hughes speaking about thousands of millions of colored people near Australia who were jostling one another for room. He asked if it was patriotic to send all the physically fit men from Australia. It was a grand thing for the Australian soldiers to defend the women of France, and they had done it gal-