

TASMANIA AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

A study of the effects of the First World  
War on Tasmanian society and politics  
1914 - 1919.

by

MARILYN LAKE      B.A. Hons.

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of :

MASTER OF ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA  
HOBART

15 December 1972.

This thesis contains no material which has  
been accepted for the award in any university,  
and to the best of my knowledge and belief the thesis  
contains no copy or paraphrase of material previously  
published or written by another person except when due  
reference is made in the text of the thesis.

*Marilyn Lake*

Marilyn Lake

I would like to thank Dr. Michael Roe for his stimulating and interested supervision, Mr. Malcolm McRae who read through the whole messy manuscript offering valuable criticism and encouragement and Dr. Richard Davis for his readiness to offer information and advice. I am also indebted to Miss Margaret Littlejohn in the University Archives who found important relevant documents and Mrs. Mary McRae, Miss Robyn Hickman and Mr. Bill Taylor of the Tasmanian State Archives who assisted in every way. Finally I would like to thank Mrs. Gill for her speedy and efficient typing of the manuscript. To all these people I am grateful.

CONTENTS.

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter One :	
1914 - 15 : Initial Responses to the war - enthusiasm, victimization, discontent.           ..           ..	1
Chapter Two :	
1916 :       year of dissension and polarization           ..           ..	81
Chapter Three :	
1917 :       the parting of the ways           ..	153
Chapter Four :	
1918 - 19 : triumph - for old hates and new	236
Conclusion                   ..           ..           ..	332
Appendix                    ..           ..           ..	344
Bibliography                ..           ..           ..	345

---



### Abbreviations.

A.I.F.	Australian Imperial Force
A.W.U.	Australian Workers' Union
F.M.E.A.	Federated Mining Employees Association
I.W.W.	Industrial Workers of the World
M.H.A.	Member of the House of Assembly
M.L.C.	Member of the Legislative Council
<i>N.E. Advertiser</i>	<i>North Eastern Advertiser</i>
<i>N.W. Advocate</i>	<i>North West Advocate and Emu Bay Times</i>
O.B.U.	One Big Union
P.M.	Police Magistrate
P.M.	Prime Minister
R.S.A.	Returned Soldiers' Association
R.S.S.I.L.A.	Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial League of Australia
T.S.A.	Tasmanian State Archives
W.P.L.	Workers' Political League
Y.M.C.A.	Young Men's Christian Association
<i>Z.D. Herald</i>	<i>Zeehan and Dundas Herald</i>

## INTRODUCTION.

This thesis is an attempt to assess the impact and effects of the First World War on Tasmania. The original inspiration for the topic came from D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo* and the debate in *Meanjin Quarterly*, Nos. 1 and 2, 1965, about whether *Kangaroo* was "fact or fiction"; whether in fact Australia was racked by violent division and in particular, physical clashes between returned soldiers and socialists, or whether as Richard Aldington suggests in his Introduction to the Penguin edition, Lawrence merely transferred to the Australian scene the bitter contests between fascists and communists, he had witnessed in Italy.

From that point of departure I ranged widely through the newspapers, government files and private papers of the period and it was soon evident, that Australia during the war years and after, was torn by a number of bitter divisions, most of which (with the outstanding exception of conscription) have been largely ignored by general historians. Some historians specialising in specific fields however, have shown greater awareness of the discord and division in the Australian community during the First World War. Notable examples are Ian Turner in *Industrial Labour and Politics*, L.L. Robson in *The First A.I.F.* and P. O'Farrell in *The Catholic Church in Australia*. Although O'Farrell notes the "unprecedented storm of sectarianism" which swept Australia after 1916 nowhere does he mention Loyalty Leagues : did they only exist in Tasmania? Nothing to my knowledge has yet been published on the twentieth century temperance movement and the divisions it fostered, nor on the racialism which permeated

Australia during the First World War.

Practical considerations limited my study to the Tasmanian scene and unfortunately there are not as yet any detailed studies of the war period in other States (although a study on N.S.W. by Dan Coward is forthcoming) to enable comparisons. It is difficult therefore to determine how far Tasmanian reactions and trends were typical of the whole of Australia, how far divergent. It is clear that further research needs to be undertaken. Hopefully this thesis might suggest some directions. This particular "case study" is presented in the hope that it contributes something new to our knowledge and understanding of what happened in Australia from 1914 to 1919.

CHAPTER ONE :

---

1914 - 1915

---

Initial Responses to the war : enthusiasm,  
victimization, discontent.

On 1 July 1914, the usually dull pages of Hobart's *Mercury* were graced with the impressive photographs of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his royal wife. The accompanying cablegrams spoke of the importance attached to the assassinations at Sarajevo on 28 June and indeed the news succeeded in driving the impending civil war in Ireland from the main headlines. Tasmanian readers were informed the next day, that the day before, the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson had forwarded an expression of sympathy to the Emperor of Austria on their behalf. During the next few days the news stories elaborated on the detail of the murder plot and reported the growing anti-Servian feeling in Austria. With the report of the death of Joseph Chamberlain however, the Austrian-Servian conflict receded quietly into the background and the columns filled with tributes to the dead English statesman. Once concerned citizens could slump back into complacency.

But by 23 July the *Mercury* and the rival Labor paper the *Daily Post* featured stories on the threat of war in Europe and the mobilisation of Russian and Austrian forces. The conservative paper showed a greater awareness of the implications of the European situation than did its Labor counterpart. On 27 July the *Mercury* claimed

that the Austrian-Servian conflict represented a further step towards the establishment of Teutonic influence in the Balkan States and predicted the involvement of Germany, Russia and France. If the war should threaten Europe, predicted the editor<sup>1</sup>, Great Britain would resolve her domestic troubles in Ireland and offer strength and loyalty to her Allies. While the *Daily Post* remained apparently optimistic that Great Britain could maintain peace, the *Mercury's* headlines declared that there were no prospects of settlement.

Readers were counselled not to take comfort in Australia's and Tasmania's isolation for in the twentieth century, it was argued, anything which disrupted the ordinary conditions of international life involved interference with the business and progress of every country in the world. It was noted that Australian Stock Exchanges had been unusually quiet since the onset of the crisis. The *Mercury* spoke gravely of Tasmania's reliance on the well being of the mining and trapping industries and their susceptibility to the adverse effects of war. Tasmanians, one editorial concluded, had every reason to pray for peace.

On the last day of July when the proprietors of the *Mercury* deemed war to be imminent, the editor advised Australians that they should look seriously and carefully to their defences. Joseph Cook, the Prime Minister, was quoted as having said that the fatter the lamb, the stouter the fence should be. This theme, that Australia was the prize most sought after by Germany, was to be played out in numerous newspaper editorials and politicians' speeches. It was a

---

1. From 1914 to 1919 the *Mercury* was edited by W.H. Simmonds (1860-1934) and L. Broinowski (1870-1937).

theme, no doubt, which helped persuade men that it was worthwhile travelling many thousands of miles to fight in a foreign war.

A passion for war and slaughter, declared the *Mercury*, was to be deplored, but on the other hand there were circumstances when the doctrine of non-resistance was neither manly, safe nor just : men must be men in a world of men and stand up against wrong even if they were to be shot down. There was an imperative need, continued the conservative newspaper, for an extension of the rifle club movement. The editor, W.H. Simmonds, also took the opportunity to point out that the Liberal Minister for Defence had managed during the past year to allot riflemen £128,000 compared to the £92,000 allotted during the last year of the Labor government. The *Daily Post* also had the coming Federal election of 5 September in mind when it commented that it was unfortunate that the defence policy of the Labor party had not yet had time to develop its splendid objective of a self-reliant and self-defended Australia.

While most thus contemplated the fate of Europe and the world and pondered on the threat to Australia from Germany, Senator R.J.K. Bakhap, a Liberal from Launceston, discerned a threat from elsewhere. Australia, he said, was liable to be attacked by an East Asian power, notably, Japan.<sup>2</sup> Bakhap's denunciations of the Japanese seem to be a case of "over-compensation" for his own Oriental identity, as much as an expression of genuine conviction, however. His mother was Chinese.

On 3 August Germany declared war on Russia and the *Mercury*

---

2. *Mercury*, 31 July 1914.

announced that Armageddon was to begin. The editor was loath to place the blame on Germany, a country which, he believed, had made every sacrifice to hold back Austria and secure peace. On this point the newspaper was to radically alter its opinion within a month. It was to also change its opinion as to the reasons for British intervention. On 4 August it maintained that the legal or moral obligation of defending Belgium's neutrality was not important. What was important was that by refraining to intervene Britain would lose the friendship of two great powers without gaining that of Germany. In future months the reason for Britain's involvement was to be clothed in phrases of honour and righteousness and the fight for freedom. When war was actually declared the paper lamented that it was the most poignant of all tragedies that two nations so nearly allied in race and character as the British and the Germans should do battle against each other. Within a few months these most kindred of spirits, the Germans, had metamorphosed into "filthy Huns". Germany had become "a land of murderers".<sup>3</sup>

Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August. The news was received in Australia by the Governor-General at 12.30 pm. on 5 August. To the *Mercury* Australia's duty was plain : to go to the aid of the Mother Country. To the editor of the *Daily Post*, Irish radical E. Dwyer-Gray<sup>4</sup>, things were not so straightforward. Like other people who believed themselves socialist, Dwyer-Gray had to wade through a sea of self-justification and dubious logic before

---

3. *Mercury*, 10 May 1915.

4. E. Dwyer-Gray: born 1870 Dublin, son of E. Dwyer-Gray member of House of Commons; before emigrating to Australia edited *Freeman's Journal*, Dublin; in Tasmania M.H.A. for Denison 1928-45; Treasurer 1934-45; Premier June-December 1939; died 1945.

he too could arrive at the same imperialist conclusion. For the Sunday before a meeting of his colleagues in the Denison No. 1 branch of the Workers' Political League had carried unanimously a resolution rejecting war. They resolved that "this meeting of Hobart workers, believing that all modern wars are waged for profit and not for patriotism, urge the workers of all countries to use their combined power to prevent the return to barbarism at present contemplated in Europe."<sup>5</sup> Dwyer-Gray, announced that he too, felt no sympathy with war. "The debacle we are about to witness is a disease of capitalism"; but, "while we have no sympathy with war, self-preservation is the first law of nature and patriotism remains a civic virtue and a primal instinct. Because we do not approve of war we cannot permit ourselves to be destroyed."<sup>6</sup> Thus did the *Daily Post* justify its imperialist pro-war position. But although patriotism was a first priority, class loyalty ran a close second and Dwyer-Gray was quick to issue a warning as to the necessity to protect the people from "the unscrupulous efforts which [were] sure to be made by capitalists to exploit the food of the people."<sup>7</sup> An enemy abroad did not preclude Labor from recognizing its enemies at home.

The *Mercury* spoke grandly of sinking all differences and standing shoulder to shoulder as Australians. The immediate rapprochement of the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition was highly commended; but even while condoning this co-operation,

---

5. *Daily Post*, 4 August 1914.

6. *Ibid.*, 3 August 1914.

7. *Ibid.*



the conservative paper berated "the organ of the Trades Hall" for assisting the enemy and prejudicing security by divulging details as to the position of the Australian fleet.<sup>8</sup> Both parties were fighting an election and both hoped to win.

Although Australians were not informed of their involvement in the war until 5 August its effects were felt earlier. On 29 July the Imperial government had despatched a cablegram to the Prime Minister requesting him to adopt the precautionary stage of the defence scheme.<sup>9</sup> On 2 August the Minister for Defence, E.D. Millen, had sent an order to all states to adopt precautionary measures. From 6 o'clock on 3 August the port of Hobart was taken over by the Naval authorities. All vessels entering the port were examined by the two steamers of the river fleet, the *Cartela* and *Warrentinna*. All members of the Naval Reserves were called up to attend the drill hall for continuous training. The surrounding forts and magazines were manned and the searchlights at the foot of Mt. Nelson played over the waters of the harbour. By the end of the week Tasmania was being protected by guards and sentries armed with fixed bayonets and supplied with ammunition. This was not good enough for one *Mercury* reader who urged the authorities to mine the Derwent in case the Germans proceeded southwards and launched a surprise attack on Hobart.<sup>10</sup>

As soon as official information of the outbreak of war was

---

8. *Mercury*, 4 August 1914.

9. Ernest Scott, *Australia During the War* (Sydney, 1936) p.7. The scheme referred to was prepared by the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1907.

10. *Mercury*, 20 August 1914.

received, action was at once taken to detain the German ship *Oberhausen* lying at Port Huon. It was loading timber for South Africa when the District Naval Officer despatched ten naval reservists commanded by Sub-Lt. Russell Young to Port Huon to take charge of the vessel. In anticipation they were armed with regular service rifles but the task was effected without the least resistance. The ship was brought to Hobart and the officers and crew aboard became prisoners of war, stationed first at Claremont, then at Bruny Island.

In a cablegram to London the Governor-General had spoken of indescribable enthusiasm and entire unanimity throughout Australia in support of all that tended to provide for the security of the Empire in war.<sup>11</sup> He was obviously not thinking of the few consistent Marxists<sup>12</sup> and the larger number of doubtful Labor men nor the disgruntled workmen who were immediately thrown out of work, but certainly the dominant reaction was one of enthusiastic support for the war effort.

Although both daily newspapers called for calm and "Business as usual" the reaction was not free from hysteria. One Launceston resident declared she would cancel her visit to Hobart for "if she had to die, she would die in her own home".<sup>13</sup>

---

11. Scott, op. cit., p. 13.

12. For example, Clifford Hall (1894-1917): president, United Laborers' Union, who declared 13 August, that it was "truly a sin against civilization for the workers [of the world] to make war against each other in the interests of capitalism".

13. *Daily Post*, 7 August 1914.

In Hobart an indignant patriot protested she could no longer allow her children to attend many places of amusement because of the disrespect shown by a certain class of people when the National Anthem was played. Some men were even seen to leave the theatre before the sacred hymn had finished. Worse still, in some places the Marseillaise was substituted for the National Anthem; this, she concluded, was nothing less than an insult to the throne and person of her sovereign lord the King.<sup>14</sup>

There were also the more sober public protestations of loyalty. J.E. Ogden,<sup>15</sup> Acting-Premier in place of John Earle<sup>16</sup> who was in Melbourne, cabled an expression of loyalty on behalf of the people of Tasmania to the King. The Public Service called a special meeting to express its "unwavering loyalty" to King George. The Mayor, R.J. Meagher, in his capacity as chairman of the Public Service, assured the government servants that he was more proud of them that day than he had ever been before.<sup>17</sup> After much flag-waving and numerous choruses of "Rule Britannia" and the National Anthem the gathering dispersed. Letters from the Municipal Councils of Port Cygnet, the Huon and Esperance assured the Premier of their loyal attachment to the throne.<sup>18</sup> The Tasmanian Athletics Association

---

14. *ibid.*, 19 October 1914.

15. J.E. Ogden (1868-1932): miner and union official; M.H.A. for Zeehan, 1906-9, and for Darwin, 1909-22; Treasurer, October 1909; Minister for Mines and Labour and Chief Secretary, 1914-6; Tasmanian Senator 1923-32; expelled from A.L.P. 1928.

16. John Earle (1865-1932); blacksmith and union official; M.H.A. for Waratah, 1906-9 and for Franklin 1909-17; Premier and Attorney-General, October 1909 and 1914-16; Tasmanian Senator, 1917-23; Vice President of Executive Council 1921-3; resigned from A.L.P. 1917.

17. *Daily Post*, 7 August 1914.

18. Premiers Department, 43/86/14; 11, 12 August 1914, T.S.A.

consisting of harriers, cyclists and boxers was another of the many bodies which asserted their unswerving loyalty to the throne and offered their services in any capacity.

Support for the war was not always motivated by patriotic ideals however. The Cascade Brewery (whose chairman was G.P. Fitzgerald) enthusiastically welcomed the conflagration as an opportunity to increase their profits. The mainland states, predicted the chairman, no longer able to import beer from England, would be forced to drink Cascade.<sup>19</sup>

Candidates of the Labor and Liberal parties who were touring the State campaigning for votes in the forthcoming Federal election on 5 September, eagerly vied with each other in expressions of patriotism. Labor speakers used to their advantage the fact that the leader of their party, Andrew Fisher, had offered to postpone the elections in the cause of national unity - an offer that was turned down by the Cook government. Furthermore they emphasized that Australians had the Labor party to thank for the navy and the defence system, although this claim was often disputed by the Liberal candidates.

The enthusiasm for war was not however unanimous and notes of discord sounded from the West Coast. The Zeehan branch of the Workers' Political League carried a motion protesting against the action of "so-called patriots" in raising the price of flour at the first hint of trouble in Europe. "We consider the enemy inside the gate worse than the enemy outside".<sup>20</sup> Such protests were muffled

---

19. *Daily Post*, 12 August 1914.

20. *Ibid.*, 10 August 1914.

however by the noise of jingoism.

A large patriotic meeting of citizens gathered in the Town-hall on the first Saturday night after the declaration of war to consider the national crisis. The hall filled early and many were turned away. While waiting for the vice-regal party the audience amused itself with singing patriotic and South African war songs which were "literally swung along", said the *Daily Post*, by E. Scott-Power, the city organist.<sup>21</sup> The Mayor, in his address, remarked that the magnificent enthusiasm of the meeting rendered it unnecessary for him or any of the speakers to utter sentiments with the object of arousing their patriotism. Loud cheers and cries of "Hear, Hear" resounded through the hall. Ogden in his speech suggested that there might be some who did not agree with British participation in the struggle. He was assured to the contrary by loud cries of "No" and "Never". His statement that Britain did her duty in keeping an honourable compact was received with loud applause.<sup>22</sup>

The specific purpose of this gathering of patriots was to discuss the means of enrolment of all men between the ages of twenty one and sixty in the reserve forces. The result was that all who wished to enrol in rifle clubs could do so in the committee room of the Town-hall. Members of the already established Metropolitan, A.N.A. and Bellerive clubs were put in charge. The Rifle Club movement, whose aim was to provide efficient home defence forces, spread rapidly throughout the state. It was widely believed in 1914 that Australia herself would become the target for

---

21.    *ibid.*

22.    *ibid.*

attack and hence men were urged to join rifle clubs so that they might be better able to defend their wives and children. Promotion rallies and parades were held and politicians and others called upon men to take their place in the ranks. Within a month all Hobart suburbs supported separate rifle clubs, the membership totalling 600.<sup>23</sup> The women of Bellerive were apparently reluctant to rely on men for their defence for they established their own club and challenged men to rifle matches.

Not many months were to pass however before the war machine demanded more and still more men for the front and the rifle clubs were to dwindle into relative insignificance. Indeed so noticeable was this process that a *Daily Post* editorial in the second month of 1915 was moved to ask "what has become of the rifle club enrolment which gave such promise in the early days of the war?"<sup>24</sup> Part of the reason for the decline in the movement was the dwindling fear of direct attack by the enemy on Australian soil.

Further evidence of the support for the Empire's stand can be found in the rush of volunteers to join the First Expeditionary Force. This rush is also evidence however of the scale of unemployment, as seen in the large number of men who volunteered from the mining districts of the West Coast. Cut off from the ore markets in Germany, mining companies temporarily ceased operations, leaving hundreds unemployed. Of the 640 volunteers who registered in Tasmania by 11 August, 124 were from Queenstown, 61 from Zeehan and 57 from Waratah.<sup>25</sup>

---

23. *ibid.*, 4 September.

24. *ibid.*, 28 February 1915.

25. *Mercury*, 10 August 1914.

Tasmania's quota for the First Expeditionary Force was set at 1,070. At first only men already trained as well as those with previous war service were wanted, with the result that the first batch of recruits included many with experience in South Africa, India and Egypt. Within two weeks of the declaration of war, 2,020 had registered with recruiting depots in Tasmania.<sup>26</sup> Believing intensely in such concepts as honour, glory and duty, or perhaps merely motivated by the lure of adventure the men of Tasmania, innocent and eager, offered up their lives to the Great War. Railway stations in country towns became increasingly the scene for sad farewells. Accompanied by the district brassband, the men marched from a local drill-hall to the station, there to bid their families what was so often a last goodbye.

Although men were enlisting in all parts of the State, the authorities remained unimpressed. The situation was said to contrast markedly with that on the mainland, where "the recruiting depots ... received an embarrassment of riches".<sup>27</sup> Indeed the military authorities expressed great disappointment that Tasmania had made such an "indifferent response" to the Empire's call.<sup>28</sup> In part the low numbers were due to the high medical standards imposed, for although over 2,000 had volunteered by 22 August, only 700 of these had passed the medical examination. The most common defect was dental decay. Of 200 who presented themselves for medical inspection in Queenstown for example, two-thirds were rejected

---

26. *ibid.*, 22 August 1914.

27. L.L. Robson, *The First A.I.F. A Study of its Recruitment 1914-1918*, (Melbourne, 1970), p. 23.

28. *Daily Post*, 24 August 1914.

because of defective teeth.<sup>29</sup> Not until the end of September was the Tasmanian quota complete with reinforcements, attained.

Meanwhile training commenced in the camp at Pontville. "It seems hard to believe that such a quiet and unassuming township as Pontville should have been the birthplace of the A.I.F. as far as Tasmania was concerned", wrote L.M. Newton in his *Story of the Twelfth*.<sup>30</sup> Incredible or not, such was the case as officers were commissioned, non-commissioned officers were provisionally selected and the different units were organised into their companies and sections. Newton fondly recalled his journey to Pontville in August 1914. There was a long train journey with a number of happy companions, who, too excited to sleep, revived old patriotic and South African war songs. Often their first task as soldiers in this Great War was the unheroic job of cleaning up camp lines. It was the beginning of their disenchantment.

At the beginning of October Tasmanians were notified that the Tasmanian battalion of the first Australian contingent - about 1,000 men - would march through the streets of Hobart. Everyone was urged to turn out for the parade and to encourage this, shops were closed between 1 and 3 p.m. Describing the immense crowds which flocked to see the soldiers, the *Tasmanian Mail* pronounced the parade "the greatest popular demonstration ... ever seen in Hobart."<sup>31</sup> The *Daily Post* described it as historic and successful, both as a popular display and as a sort of crowning point of the military

---

29. *ibid.*, 30 September 1914.

30. L.M. Newton, *The Story of the Twelfth*, (Hobart, 1925), p.1.

31. *Tasmanian Mail*, 8 October 1914.



organisation which had been going on since the outbreak of the war.<sup>32</sup> But although the editor added that the small number of Tasmanians departing meant just as much as did ten times that number to the larger states, one who marched later lamented the "lack of enthusiasm" shown by the public.<sup>33</sup> It seems clear however that the silence of the crowds reflected not disinterest, but as the *Mercury* suggested, the solemnity of the occasion.<sup>34</sup> It was also a reflection of the generally recognised "non demonstrative" temperament of the Tasmanian people.

The Tasmanian troops departed for war 20 October 1914. The wharves were crowded with city and suburban residents, but few were present from outlying districts as censorship had prevented any mention of the departure in the press. To the background strains of "Rule Britannia", "The Girl I Left Behind Me" and the specially composed song "Goodbye Tassie", the people watched silently as the *Geelong* sailed down the Derwent to disappear as it passed beyond Sandy Bay point. On board the men were impatient to reach the front. They resented the stopover at Albury, Western Australia, and when they learnt they were to disembark at Egypt, it was commonly feared they would "miss out".<sup>35</sup> Back in Hobart, W.E. Bottrill a prominent Hobart barrister who had watched the parade and embarkation, was moved to a feeling of envy. He reflected over the dull, uneventful years in which he had practised bugling, shooting and flag-signalling without the inspiriting prospect of active service. But

---

32. *Daily Post*, 6 October 1914.

33. Newton, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

34. *Mercury*, 6 October 1914.

35. Newton, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

now came the romance of war. War for tyranny he thought an abomination, "but war for liberty, justice and righteousness, what could possibly be nobler?" How he envied those fine martial fellows their chance of "a crowded hour of glorious life".<sup>36</sup>

Another measure of Tasmanian support for the war effort was the ready contribution of thousands of pounds for relief and aid purposes. Throughout the war the people of Tasmania, like other Australians, contributed money for Red Cross operations, for relief and comfort of Australian soldiers and their families, for Belgians, Serbians and French.

Most prominent perhaps of the many organisations which sprang into being from the inspiration of patriotism was the Australian Red Cross Society. Only in Sydney did a branch of the Red Cross already exist before the war.<sup>37</sup> Immediately war was declared however, some leading society matrons including the wife of the Governor-General, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, moved to form an Australian wide organisation with branches in all states. Lady Helen appealed through the daily newspapers for support and on 13 August, the Australian Red Cross Society was formally launched in Melbourne. The next day enthusiastic Hobart women joined together in the Town-hall to consider what they might best do to help the country in its hour of need. They agreed to co-operate with the St. John Ambulance Association and to form work parties to make articles of clothing and generally provide for their men at war. When news arrived from Melbourne advising of the formation of the

---

36. *Daily Post*, 8 October 1914.

37. Scott, op. cit., p. 701; L. Broinowski (ed.) *Tasmania's War Record 1914-1918*, (Hobart, 1920), p. 185.

Australian Red Cross Society, the Hobart women agreed to associate themselves with it. Two divisions were formed in Tasmania, one in the north and one in the south.

The women working for the Red Cross occupied themselves mainly with raising money and knitting or sewing articles of clothing. It became legendary that in the early months the enthusiasm of the women far exceeded their skill. Surprisingly few had any knowledge of making up garments with the result of much waste of labour and materials. A *Red Cross Instruction Book* was published to edify initiates and by the end of 1916 118,000 copies had been sold in Australia, further supplementing their funds.<sup>38</sup> One of the characteristics of the Red Cross was that it was a grass-roots movement which reached out into the smallest towns and villages throughout the country. The *Mercury* made such a point when it commented in a somewhat patronising tone that the achievements of the Red Cross were derived from "the people in the true sense of the term, that is from every class in the community".<sup>39</sup> The editor thought it a matter for deep thankfulness that in that great work at least, there were no distinctions of class or of wealth and no question of politics. Within a few months there were one hundred and ninety work-circles and branches in the south of the state and about eighty branches in the north.<sup>40</sup>

By its constitution the Red Cross Society was restricted to providing for sick and wounded soldiers. It was soon realised that

---

38. Scott, op. cit. p. 704.

39. *Mercury*, 31 August 1915.

40. Broinowski, op. cit., p. 186.

financial aid and material goods must also be secured for soldiers in the fighting line and for their dependent families. To accomplish the first the On Active Service Fund was set up in Hobart at the beginning of 1915 and to relieve the distress of soldiers' families directly consequent upon the war, the Mayor's Patriotic Fund was established. The public librarian A.J. Taylor was the first contributor to the Mayor's fund. Others followed his example and emulated each other's acts of charity. Some citizens offered their professional services to raise money for the fund. The Manager of Palace Pictures Ltd., A.C. Davis arranged for two nights special performances to raise money while Elsie Berry, the "well-known Victorian elocutionist" staged a concert, the proceeds of which she offered to the Mayor's fund.<sup>41</sup> Within two weeks almost £2,000 had been donated.<sup>42</sup>

Hobart meanwhile was entertained on an unprecedented scale with concerts, shows, fairs and fetes, all in aid of charity. The Hon. Tetley Grant was 'at home' to the upper echelons of society at a garden fair at New Town while the Mayoress played hostess to the masses at a *cafe chantant* in the Town-hall. A patriotic concert in the Theatre Royal moved the *Daily Post* reporter to comment: "Patriotism is in the air. It is always in the air of course, but sometimes one seems to feel it more and there can be no doubt that the huge audience which filled the Theatre Royal last night to attend the monster patriotic demonstration and concert on behalf of the war fund, was in a highly patriotic mood".<sup>43</sup> Certainly Labor

---

41. *Daily Post*, 11 August 1914.

42. *ibid.*, 19 August 1914.

43. *ibid.*, 20 August 1914.

Senator J.J. Long<sup>44</sup> was in a highly patriotic mood when he declared at interval that there was no party but the Empire.<sup>45</sup> But if it was patriotic to attend such outings it was also fun, and communities as far afield as Flowerpot on the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Elliott on the North West coast busied themselves with dances, concerts and fairs, all in the interest of the Mayor's Patriotic Fund.

Schoolchildren were also called upon to make financial sacrifices. The Minister for Education, J.A. Lyons<sup>46</sup>, in August 1914 sanctioned the organisation of a State-school patriotic fund to supplement the Mayor's fund and Red Cross Society. It was hoped that through this organisation parents and children would donate money who previously had not had the opportunity to do so. No one was to be spared. Some of the senior schoolgirls in Hobart worked diligently to make two hundred shirts while the pupils of Moonah State School organised a fete. The proceeds of the fete were originally destined to buy a school piano, but without any prompting, said an admiring press report, the children generously offered their money to the Red Cross Fund. One *Mercury* correspondent remained unimpressed by the children's efforts and sternly advocated that they should learn real self-denial. To this end, the children should be "encouraged" to give up all their pocket money to the patriotic funds.<sup>47</sup>

---

44. J.J. Long (1870-1932): prospector and miner from Gormanston; M.H.A. for Lyell 1903-9; for Darwin 1909-10; Minister for Lands and Works 1909; Tasmanian senator 1910-18.

45. *Daily Post*, 20 August 1914.

46. J.A. Lyons (1879-1939): teacher, M.H.A. for Wilmot 1909-29; Minister for Education and Railways, 1913-16; Treasurer 1914-16; Premier, 1923-8; M.H.R. for Wilmot 1929-39; resigned from A.L.P., 1931; Prime Minister 1932-39.

47. *Mercury*, 25 August 1914.

Gifts in money were well supplemented by gifts in kind. Mr. Keen of Devonport for example presented the Tasmanian troops with 100 cwt. of curry powder. Soon after Henry Jones offered the troops 12,000 lb. of tinned fruits.<sup>48</sup> A deputation from the Tamar Farmers' and Fruitgrowers' Association waited on the Premier and advised him of the desire of a number of fruitgrowers to forward a supply of fresh fruit to the Allied troops. One Tasmanian orchardist enquired through the press which might be the best size and variety of apple to send to the troops. The Auto Club of Hobart also decided to present something special to the forces and they raised money enough to buy one motor-ambulance. Yet others worked industriously to produce sand-bags, kit-bags, rabbit-skin waistcoats and water-proof raincoats.

In June 1915 an Englishwoman, Lady Aileen Roberts, launched a special appeal for field-glasses for the use of the men at the front. She appealed through the Agent-General in London for Tasmanians to do all they could to add to the supply. The response was immediate. Field-glasses arrived at the Premier's office from all parts of the State: from New Norfolk, from Kangaroo Valley, from Gretna. One gentleman also offered his pair of portable telephones and his telescope. People's enthusiasm was at times indiscriminate as shown by a letter of reply from the Premier's office to one eager donor: "I beg to inform you that I have this day returned to you by parcel post one pair of opera-glasses which you presented for the use of the members of the Expeditionary Forces. These glasses I regret to say are not suitable for work in this field, but the Premier

---

48. Henry Jones (1862-1926) was knighted for his charitable services during the war.

desires to thank you for your kind offer to loan them and to say he accepts the will for the deed."<sup>49</sup>

The appeal which more than any other fired the imagination and aroused the generosity of the Tasmanian people was that for the invaded Belgian nation. By 1918 Tasmanians had raised over £59,000 for a nation which was totally foreign to them. One of the results of the German conquest of Belgium was the exodus of thousands of refugees, mainly women and children to Britain. Unable to cope with the influx the British government suggested that the Dominions might come to their assistance by placing some of the refugees themselves. The Agents-General in London communicated this proposal to the separate state governments of Australia. Earle, like A.H. Peake in South Australia, opposed the plan, explaining that already there were thousands of unemployed in his own state. The Tasmanian Premier offered instead to send financial aid to the refugees in England.<sup>50</sup>

In Devonport however a large public meeting, chaired by the Warden of the local council, declared itself adamantly in favour of importing Belgian women and challenged Earle to change his decision. One particularly outspoken advocate of the plan assured the meeting of her strong sympathy for the plight of the Belgian women. She elaborated on her position, saying that she had received many letters from upper class persons in England intimating that they would love to live in Tasmania if only there were not such a shortage of domestic servants. She explained that the simple, rustic Belgians would

---

49. Premier's Dept., 43/86/15, 20 October 1915, T.S.A.

50. Premier's Dept., 43/2/14, 26 August 1914. T.S.A.

make excellent domestics. The secretary of the local branch of the W.P.L., W.H. Lewis, condemned what he termed the "society dames' plea for cheap domestic labour" and Earle, similarly, was little moved by the north western women's call for "white slaves".<sup>51</sup> He replied that he sympathised with the Belgian women to the extent of £10; he asked the Devonport Council clerk to ascertain from each of the 400 people at the meeting the extent of their sympathy and to collect it.

The Premier continued to be criticized for not assisting Belgians to Tasmania. Probably not all of the critics were motivated by selfish greed; nevertheless the Tasmanian government's plan for Belgian relief remained that of sending financial assistance abroad. By October 1914 the Belgian Relief Fund had raised £500, all of which was forwarded to the Belgian Ambassador in London. Besides showing the large part self-interest plays in determining people's actions, the conflict over inviting Belgians to Australia also revealed the very real class divisions which underlay the apparent patriotic unity.

One of the features of fund-raising during the war was the institution of "Days": Wattle Day, Red Cross Day, Navy Day, Belgium Day, Australia Day. At a public meeting in March 1915, convened by the Mayor, W.M. Williams, to consider the best means of raising additional money for the Belgians, it was decided to hold a Belgian Flag Day. A meeting of Belgian Commissioners in London had asked Australia to supply £75,000 monthly for the relief of their people. Of this, Tasmanians were asked to subscribe £2,500. At the Hobart meeting, the Mayor endeavoured to persuade his audience to magnanimity

---

51. *ibid.*, 22 September 1914.



by speaking fervently in favour of the Belgian cause. He impressed upon his listeners that Belgium had practically defended Australia; for had not the Belgian people gallantly resisted aggression, then the Germans could have swept down to Australia and in his opinion, Hobart would have been the first port attacked.

On Belgian Flag Day, 26 March 1915, the *Daily Post* editorialized on the agony of Belgium and the bravery of her people and concluded: "the Belgian people are justly and properly the wards of the world."<sup>52</sup> The *Tasmanian Mail* greeted the Day as an institution which every patriotic Tasmanian would delight to welcome and lend his support to. In terms of money-raising and entertainment the Day did indeed prove a great success. "In years to come", enthused the *Daily Post*, "when the world is enjoying peace again, the residents of this fair city will at least be able to look back and say they did their duty on the day of all days."<sup>53</sup> Stalls were erected throughout the city, buildings were decorated with the national colours of Belgium and motor cars were also bedecked with ribbons and streamers of red, yellow and black. The *Mercury* in a rare flight of fancy compared the decorated cars to "so many gaily coloured butterflies."<sup>54</sup> Crowds thronged the streets to partake of the festivities. Some were entertained by the car procession led by the Hobart Fire Brigade's engine while others watched the bizarre collection of floats, some of which exhorted the Kaiser to beware, while others appealed for money to aid wounded soldiers. Paddy's Market in the centre of town also proved a fine attraction: shoppers were enticed to buy anything from

---

52. *Daily Post*, 26 March 1915.

53. *ibid.*, 27 March 1915.

54. *Mercury*, 27 March 1915.

a goat to a typewriter. After an evening concert in Franklin Square, the organisers estimated the day's earnings to be £800, a result which they felt reflected the greatest credit on all concerned.

The other big Day of 1915 was Australia Day, the purpose of which was to raise money for the Australian Red Cross. Such Days served functions however other than fund-raising. They provided escape and relief for a weary populace, they boosted morale and provided affirmation of the people's patriotic convictions. Australia Day - 30 July, 1915 - celebrated a special theme, the reawakening national spirit. Orators referred to the historic landing at Sari Bahr on 25 April and paid tribute to the gallantry and daring of Australian soldiers. The Chief Justice, Herbert Nicholls, considered that their men at the front had erected to Australia a statue in the gallery of History which their children's children would forever treasure.<sup>55</sup> The soldiers' deeds had inspired a new sense of national identity. "Historically the Commonwealth dates from the first day of the twentieth century; but it was in the fifteenth year that she felt herself for the first time one people", observed the *Mercury*. A year of "patriotic sacrifice shared in common", "a compact sealed in blood" had welded the States of Australia "inseparably together".<sup>56</sup> Confidence and pride in Australia marked every pronouncement. "Australians should realise that they are a peculiar people, a pioneer people, a people called and chosen by Providence for a great and noble purpose", declared the *Daily Post*. Australians had a world of their own wherein they

---

55. *Daily Post*, 16 July 1915.

56. *Mercury*, 30 July 1915.

could "begin to create a new civilization and a new humanity."<sup>57</sup> The new mood of nationalism did not however cancel out Imperial loyalties, which were also strengthened through participation in the war. Rather, Australia was proudly considered "a responsible member of the British nation and guardian of the great British Empire."<sup>57</sup>

Although the *Daily Post* welcomed the appearance of a new national spirit it decried the necessity for such money-raising Days. The editor lamented the fact that wounded soldiers were not the charge of the Commonwealth but were instead dependent on the whims and caprices of voluntary donors. If the government took upon itself its rightful responsibility argued Dwyer-Gray, street collections and demonstrations would be unnecessary.<sup>58</sup>

The *Daily Post's* criticism of the system of private philanthropy was just one of the many complaints that were beginning to be made about patriotic fund raising. The generosity of spirit which seemed to characterize the fund-raising was but one part of the story; numerous citizens also nurtured ill-feelings and hostile suspicions. A letter from Smithton businessman, A. Betteridge, to the Premier, complained of the unpleasant pressure put on people to donate to Belgian relief. In one week, he claimed, he had been obliged to give away more money than he had actually made from his business. If he refrained from donating people called him mean and refused to buy from him. He suggested that a law be enacted against "cadging" and further that the State government raise the funds by levying a tax of two shillings a head on all over sixteen years.<sup>59</sup>

---

57. *Daily Post*, 31 July 1915.

58. *ibid.*, 17 July 1915.

59. Premier's Dept., 43/4/14, 23 September 1914. T.S.A.

Fund-raising exercised a divisive effect on society as each class harboured the suspicion that the other classes were not donating their "fair share". Workers were particularly vocal in their accusation that the rich were not donating a sufficient amount to the various funds. The real shirkers, claimed one malcontent, were not the young men, but the rich who shirked their responsibility to contribute generously to patriotic funds.<sup>60</sup> Large landholders' names, said another, were conspicuous by their absence from lists of contributors.<sup>61</sup> A north western reporter noted in the *Daily Post* that one of the distinguishing characteristics of patriotic appeals was the meanness of those who could afford to be generous.<sup>62</sup> Farmers were frequently accused of miserly tendencies. At the end of 1915 W.F. King, a unionist representative, stated explicitly in a deputation to the Premier that the workers had donated at least ninety-five per cent of all patriotic funds in Tasmania.<sup>63</sup>

A criticism of a different kind came from Marjorie Kearney of Hobart who complained that the organisation of Australia Day and Belgian Day was in the hands of a small coterie of "society people". The main positions in patriotic fund-raising bodies, she alleged, were always filled by the same prominent leading ladies. She suggested as an alternative that the government inaugurate these activities with mass public meetings.<sup>64</sup> So evident was class bitterness and so belligerent was the working class in its accusations that the *Mercury*

---

60. *Daily Post*, 7 September 1915.

61. *ibid.*, 25 August 1914

62. *ibid.*, 24 July 1915.

63. *ibid.*, 23 December 1915.

64. *ibid.*, 10 July 1915.

was forced to reply on behalf of its subscribers that "well to do" women sacrificed just as much to patriotic activities as did the working woman.<sup>65</sup> As class was set against class, so district was set against district. One *Mercury* correspondent for example felt particularly indignant that Port Cygnet, "one of the wealthiest of municipalities", offered one of the smallest sums to the patriotic fund.<sup>66</sup>

One reason for the spread of ill-feeling was the continuing demand by the authorities such as the Belgian Commission and the Red Cross for more and more money when the people were less and less able to give. Continuing demand resulted only in embarrassment and humiliation for many of those unemployed or on low wages. Even before the end of 1914 when the Agent-General asked Earle for public subscriptions towards the formation of an Australian War Contingent in England, Earle replied that he was extremely reluctant to put any further proposition before the residents of his State.<sup>67</sup> In a letter to the Premier the Launceston Mayor early in 1915 suggested that in view of the increased amount desired by the Belgian Commissioners, it might be easier for the State government to make a monthly contribution.<sup>68</sup> Earle in turn wrote to the Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, urging him to levy a war tax on wealth and thus reduce the obligation on ordinary people.<sup>69</sup> Fisher's reply to Earle is interesting. Discarding his public rhetoric about rewarding the

---

65. *Mercury*, 8 July 1915.

66. *ibid.*, 20 February 1915.

67. Premier's Dept., 43/15/14, 17 November 1914. T.S.A.

68. *ibid.*, 43/3/15, 26 February 1915.

69. *ibid.*, 27 February 1915.

gallantry of the Belgian nation, he said that he had considered ceasing all aid to the Belgians, but such a course of action would have had two disagreeable results. Firstly, the Belgians would starve and thus become alienated from their exiled government and secondly, in exchange for sustenance, the Belgian people would work for the German army and thus desert the Allied side. If the Allied governments contributed directly to Belgian relief, Fisher continued, the Germans would have some excuse for commandeering it for themselves; whereas if aid were the result of private subscriptions sent through the channels of the Belgian Relief Commission, it would carry out its objects without that risk.<sup>70</sup> Thus the pressure remained upon the private individual.

In November 1915 the Lord Mayor of London wrote to Earle appealing for further donations of sixpence per head to enable the Belgians to be fed on King Albert of Belgium's Fete Day.<sup>71</sup> The Premier replied that it seemed to him the beneficence of the Tasmanian people had been severely taxed over the last months and that being so, he suggested that some money be forwarded from the Belgian Fund already in existence.<sup>72</sup> Another fund raising occasion - Waterloo Day - was widely resented and attacked by one critic as "a further raid upon our well-disposed and free-giving community."<sup>73</sup> The Day was finally cancelled after objections had been made by the French Consul that it was an inappropriate celebration anyway.

---

70. *ibid.*, 8 April 1915.

71. *ibid.*, 4 November 1915.

72. *ibid.*, 23 November 1915.

73. *Mercury*, 7 June 1915.

That Tasmanians and Australians generally had just cause to feel overtaxed by patriotic appeals was revealed in the Pratten report, released in 1916. H.E. Pratten had enquired into the operations of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium and found that of the one and a half million pounds donated by the world, Australia and New Zealand had contributed one million. The Australian States and New Zealand had contributed from three to six shillings *per capita* compared with the United States' contribution of twopence-halfpenny *per capita*.<sup>74</sup> By March 1917 the British Empire had contributed collectively US 18 cents *per capita*, the Australian Commonwealth \$US 1:23 *per capita* and Tasmania the surprising amount of \$US 6:53 *per capita* (or in sterling £1:7:2½.)<sup>75</sup>

Towards the end of 1915 voices had become louder in their insistence that all patriotic funds be controlled by and responsible to, one authority. Several warnings had already been issued by the press that unauthorised collectors had been amassing small fortunes under false pretences. So successful were these private entrepreneurs that the Mayor was forced to appeal to citizens to exercise more care when approached by door-knockers.<sup>76</sup> It was little wonder that deputations to the Premier, like the one representing the Labor branches and unions of Denison expressed doubts as to whether the various funds were being spent in a proper way.<sup>77</sup> A *Mercury* editorial added to the voices of protest. The editor considered

---

74. Premier's Dept., 43/3/15; Agent-General to Premier, 4 May 1916.

75. *Daily Post*, 2 March 1917.

76. *Mercury*, 9 June 1915.

77. *Daily Post*, 23 December 1915.

that "in view of the overlapping, the waste of effort and in some instances even a certain amount of undesirable confusion and friction - bound to occur where there [were] so many funds and so many helpers - [it seemed] highly desirable that there should be some sort of co-operation between the various organisations and people concerned."<sup>78</sup> The next month the same paper called for the appointment of a central body to administer patriotic fund-raising.<sup>79</sup> Individual organisations wished jealously to retain their separate purposes and identities however and many months were to pass before any effective steps towards amalgamation were taken. In 1916 the State War Council (which was established in August 1915 to supervise the repatriation of invalided soldiers), advised the Premier to introduce a Bill providing for the collection and disbursement of patriotic funds throughout the State. By the time the Patriotic Funds Act 1916 became law Tasmanians had already contributed £148,000 to relief funds.

. . . . .

One of the most immediate and tangible effects of the outbreak of war was the spread of unemployment. Germany had hitherto provided Tasmania with its biggest market for the mineral ores extracted from the west coast, the north west and north east. With the outbreak of war the mines closed down. Renison Bell for example retained only 12 of its 200 miners, the Magnet mine 40 out of 170, and Arba mine at Branxholm put 20 men out of work and the shut down of Mt.

---

78. *Mercury*, 12 July 1915.

79. *ibid.*, 25 August 1915.



Bischoff put 400 men out of work.<sup>80</sup> In traditional Australian manner<sup>81</sup>, the miners under the pressure of unfavourable circumstances, looked towards the State for a remedy to their situation. A mass-meeting at Renison Bell on 13 August 1914 resolved to petition the Minister for Lands and Works, James Belton<sup>82</sup>, for an extension to the public works programme.<sup>83</sup> A further deputation from the west coast waited upon the Minister the following week. The Labor government accepted the responsibility and Earle offered the mine directors fifty *per cent* of the value of the ores extracted if in turn they would keep the mines working and pay the men half-wages. Most mining companies accepted this, but the Mr. Bischoff directors claimed they would lose too much money thereby. The consequent distress in the Waratah district was so acute that a relief fund was established to provide the miners and their families with the necessities of life. A deputation from the district waited upon Belton and the men spoke darkly of the limits to a man's patience : they would no longer be held answerable for desperate actions.<sup>84</sup> Murmurings of discontent were abroad and one man, it was said, suggested the men rise up and seize the mine and work it without their masters.<sup>85</sup>

Businesses and merchants' houses throughout the State were forced to close. The *Mercury* argued that distress would give way

---

80. These figures are from the *Mercury*, 14, 13, 12 and 17 August 1915 respectively.

81. See W.K. Hancock *Australia* (Brisbane, 1961), p.182.

82. James Belton (1855-1935): farmer; M.H.A. for Darwin 1909-1931; Minister for Lands and Works and Agriculture 1914-16, 1923-8.

83. *Mercury*, 14 August 1914.

84. *ibid.*, 17 August 1914.

85. *ibid.*, 19 August 1914.

to sweetness and light if the Wages Board's decisions were suspended : if everywhere all workers would accept lower wages.<sup>86</sup>

The workers however, faced with rising prices and rents chose to disagree with the *Mercury's* solution. In accordance with the decision of a Premiers' Conference in August the government extended public works and many new roads, railways and bridges were erected as a result.

Men who earned a living trapping wallabies, rabbits and possums and selling their skins were also hard hit by the advent of war. They were cut off from their markets (one of the largest of which was Leipzig) and many trappers and buyers were left with thousands of pounds worth of unsaleable furs. Newspaper columns filled with correspondents' grievances about the lack of employment and the rise in rents and already some discerned a capitalist plot. Others like W. Calvert, tenant farmer of Oatlands, wrote directly to the Premier asking that he might somehow reverse the trend towards rising land rents.<sup>87</sup> A Mr. Jones, also at Oatlands, wrote to the Premier pleading the urgency of his case and that of his fellow workmen, not only in Oatlands, but in all rural districts throughout the land. Jones had contemplated his situation and had attributed his miserable condition to the great war. "The consequent effect of the great war in the old world," he wrote, "has its influence felt in Tasmania inasmuch as it suppresses all reasonable and necessary works on stations etc. [it] stops credit and brings poverty and starvation to the doors of the many horny-handed, but honest unfortunate poor."

---

86. *ibid.*, 10 August 1914.

87. Premier's Dept., 43/3c/14, 9 September 1914. T.S.A.

He begged the Premier to provide work, not charity and concluded his letter with a prediction of yet gloomier times ahead.<sup>88</sup> Thus did many rage against their fate as victims of the great war.

In the face of such "unprecedented distress" as one newspaper correspondent put it, there were those quick to prescribe remedies. A common reaction was to look to the rural areas to support unemployed citizens. Once on the land they were in turn expected to raise fat cattle, pigs and dairy stock to benefit the State.<sup>89</sup> The government was expected to assist the would-be farmers until they were self-supporting. The idyllic picture of the Selection Act decades, of happy yeomen farmers with laughing healthy children, exuberant in their economic independence was redrawn. It was recommended that instead of keeping people "huddled up" in cities they should be brought out into the fresh air.<sup>90</sup> One *Mercury* correspondent, William Crooke of Hobart, suggested that interested settlers should be lent £50,000 interest-free by the government and under the supervision of local landowners, the bush could be cleared to make way for bucolic scenes of grazing live stock and fruitful gardens.<sup>91</sup> Another correspondent suggested that if men could not buy their own land they might work on government lands and thus provide the Allies with bread.<sup>92</sup>

The unemployed were not the sole victims of the war on the home

---

88. *ibid.*, 43/3/14, 19 August 1914, T.S.A.

89. *Mercury*, 19 August 1914.

90. Premier's Dept., 43/3/14, 15 October 1914, T.S.A.

91. *Mercury*, 21 August 1914.

92. *ibid.*, 20 August 1914.

front. Anyone it seemed who did not conform to the patriotic ideals of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority was under constant and virulent attack from the beginning of the war. The crusade for conformity quickly focused upon criticism of the war from any source but at first Germans or people alleged to be "pro-German" were the prime targets. In Australia as in Britain and the United States, racial hatred was to be one of the marked characteristics of the first world war.<sup>93</sup>

Australians learnt officially of their involvement in war on 5 August. Five days later a proclamation was issued calling upon German subjects to report themselves to police stations nearest their residence, and to notify immediately any change of address. On 13 August the measure was extended to Austrian subjects, war having been declared against Austria on the 12th. Immediately a number of alien reservists were interned (including two German scientists who happened to be attending the British Association for the Advancement of Science Congress in Melbourne); in February 1915 all alien reservists were collected for internment.<sup>94</sup>

There were estimated to be about 1,000 Germans in Tasmania at the outbreak of war; the majority of whom were the naturalised citizens of Bismarck.<sup>95</sup> A concentration camp was established at Triffit's Peninsula, Claremont, for the reception of German prisoners-of-war, thirty of whom moved there in October 1914. These were

---

93. For Britain see Arthur Marwick *The Deluge: British society and the First World War* (London, 1967) p.51. For United States see W.E.Leuchtenberg *The Perils of Prosperity 1914-32* (Chicago, 1958), p. 44.

94. Scott, op. cit., p. 109.

95. *Daily Post*, 16 September 1914.

the officers and crew of the detained German steamer the *Oberhausen* which had been moored off the Queen's Battery since August. In February 1915 when all enemy aliens of military age were detained there were forty-seven Germans at Claremont and eleven on parole.<sup>96</sup> The next month they were moved to the quarantine station at Bruny Island and were set to work clearing land. At least that was the intention, but the overseer, Capt. Cruikshank, was forced to write to the Premier urging him to hurry with the Bill providing pay for the prisoners as he was having considerable difficulty in persuading them to work.<sup>97</sup> Earle was reluctant to pay enemy subjects for their labour, nevertheless he conformed with the practice obtaining elsewhere and set aside two shillings a day for them.<sup>98</sup>

In many ways it proved more unfortunate for Germans to be left at large because they were tracked down relentlessly by a determined and war-crazed populace. Tasmanians were eager participants in what the *Daily Post* called "the delightful task of hunting up unnaturalized Germans and Austrians."<sup>99</sup> Early in August 1914 the District Naval Officer and his naval reserves, armed with fixed bayonets, believing a German to be inside, surrounded the buildings of the Commercial Travellers' Association in Launceston. Having seized upon one, Karl Haverland, they took him into custody where he produced papers showing exemption from German military service. The incident caused great excitement and the sight of guards with fixed bayonets soon drew a large crowd. With such incidents in mind the *Mercury*

---

96. *ibid.*, 15 February 1915.

97. Premier's Dept., 28/53/15, 8 July 1915, T.S.A.

98. *ibid.*, 43/98/15, T.S.A.

99. *Daily Post*, 12 August 1914.

in the early days of the war called for public restraint. "Strangers within the gate", that is Germans who had acquired Australian citizenship "virtual or legal" had to be treated with kindness and sympathy, admonished the editor.<sup>100</sup> "We must distinguish sharply between the Germans with whom we are at war and those who for better or for worse have woven their destinies into the warp and woof of our own Empire."<sup>101</sup> But reflecting public opinion, or perhaps shaping it, the *Mercury's* distinctions blurred and the "strangers" were quickly transformed into "enemies".

The Federal government contributed not a little to promoting a German scare and witchhunt by issuing circulars to all local police stations warning of the suspected spying activities of resident Germans.<sup>102</sup> Police officers in Tasmania were advised to be on guard lest the spies on the mainland ventured across Bass Strait. One, Father Linckens was especially to be feared as a "cunning man" and "a bosom friend of the Kaiser", Colonel Clarke the Military Commandant told the police. Furthermore the German agents were deemed to be particularly versatile in their methods and diverse in their activities. Police were asked to report alien subjects who owned homing pigeons for example and for some time all homing pigeon societies were prevented from conducting matches. The Commissioner of Police in Hobart also expressed the fear, communicated to him from Melbourne, that enemy subjects and sympathisers might set about to destroy the wheat crops by deliberately lighting fires in the fields.

---

100. *Mercury*, 10 August 1914.

101. *ibid.*, 12 August 1914.

102. The information in this paragraph comes from the records of the Tasmanian Police Dept., Northern District, Division 2. 1914-15. T.S.A.

German spies were also thought to operate wireless stations with intent to communicate with the enemy. In a secret circular the Prime Minister urged all police officers to direct every effort towards the discovery of spying wireless-telegraph stations. He suggested helpfully that they might be found in infrequented places and that the presence of individuals in a district with no convincing reason for staying there should be regarded with suspicion.

Anti-German sentiment spread rapidly throughout society. One *Daily Post* correspondent, "Common Sense", suggested that in view of what was known of the actions of Germans in other parts of the Empire and the fact that naturalisation did not relieve a German from duty to his country, it would be advisable for the police to visit at frequent intervals the home of every German in the State. Some very nasty rumours were afloat, he confided grimly, and it would be a good thing to set them at rest.<sup>103</sup> Another vigilant correspondent was perturbed to see that a number of Germans were still allowed to earn their living. Let us be wise in time, he counselled, and deport every German, naturalised or not, from the State.<sup>104</sup> "Briton" writing to the *Mercury* advocated treating Germans as a race apart: "Cut off their telephones, close their businesses and cease social intercourse with them."<sup>105</sup> Often, it seemed, people tried to pay off old scores under the guise of loyalty. Thomas Dove of Kellevie, for example, wrote to the Premier informing him of a property worth over £1,000 belonging to a German called Clifford who, it was said, was living in Germany and receiving £40 yearly in rent from the

---

103. *Daily Post*, 26 October 1914.

104. *ibid.*, 30 December 1914.

105. *Mercury*, 43/89/16, 23 February 1916. T.S.A.

property. Dove said he wished to know why the Kaiser should benefit from the land and added for good measure that the tenant, Clifford's son, was pro-German. The subsequent police report found that the father, Henry Clifford was ninety-eight years old and had not been heard of for many years. The son was fifty-one, born in Tasmania and considered by all who knew him to be thoroughly loyal. He had consistently expressed himself in favour of the British cause and had no sons, but two nephews, both of whom had enlisted.<sup>106</sup>

Another letter to the Premier told what it was like to be a naturalised German in wartime Tasmania. The writer was K. Gallus of Exeter, German by birth and naturalised in 1894. For six years prior to the outbreak of war he had been employed as manager of an apple orchard. In August 1914 he was asked to resign. He was offered a position on another orchard but after waiting for two months, he was informed by his prospective employer that on hearing that they were about to be supervised by a German, the other men downed tools and refused to work with him. Gallus pleaded his loyalty of word and deed. He contributed to the different patriotic funds, while his wife and daughter worked for the Red Cross. After twenty three years in the State he found himself stranded with a wife and two daughters dependent on him. Being penniless he appealed to the Premier for immediate help.<sup>107</sup> There were a number of letters to the press by self-styled "loyal Germans" requesting fair treatment. There were some Germans however, whose words and deeds seemed to provide sufficient grounds for authoritative action to be taken against them. Martin

---

106. Premier's Dept., 43/89/16, 23 February 1916. T.S.A.

107. *ibid.*, 43/89/15, 4 October 1915, T.S.A.



Longo for example, known to his friends as "the Kaiser" was a German who narrowly escaped being thrown down the shaft at North Lyell mine for condoning the sinking of the *Lusitania* and who was subsequently dismissed from service at Mr. Lyell. He was arrested at Linda in 1915 under the provisions of the War Precautions Act to suffer the fate of internment on Bruny Island.<sup>108</sup>

The spontaneous anti-German sentiment undoubtedly became at once more widespread and more profound with the publication of German atrocity stories. As Arthur Marwick suggests in *The Deluge* there was a strong relationship between popular hysteria and official propaganda.<sup>109</sup> As early as November 1914 before the propaganda department in Britain was working effectively, bold headlines in Australian newspapers screamed of Unrestrained German Savages and Frightful Barbarities such as Men and Women Torn Open with Bayonets and Roasted to Death. Premier Holman of N.S.W. was one of the few who criticised the popular press' indulgence in atrocity stories, postulating that war was inevitably one grand atrocity, but he was swiftly rebuked for his efforts.<sup>110</sup>

The British propaganda department's most brilliant stroke was the choice of Lord Bryce, the well-loved and much respected Ambassador to Washington, to chair a committee appointed in December 1914 to investigate alleged German outrages.<sup>111</sup> With access to the flimsiest of uncorroborated evidence the Committee nonetheless reported

---

108. *Daily Post*, 1 June 1915.

109. Marwick, op. cit., p. 140.

110. *Daily Post*, 20 March 1915.

111. Marwick, op. cit., p. 140.

unhesitatingly that the Germans were guilty of deliberate and systematic massacres of civilians, violation of women, the use of civilians as shields for advancing armies, and calculated looting, incendiarism and destruction of property.<sup>112</sup> Murder, lust and pillage, declared the report, prevailed in Belgium on a scale unparalleled in any war between civilized nations during the last three centuries. The *Daily Post* went even further deleting the "three" in the report, so that it read "for centuries".<sup>113</sup> Reports of the use of poisonous gasses and the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, also particularly outraged self-righteous Australians. Often people's interest in atrocity stories seemed to have a distinct sado-sexual tinge. During 1915 special meetings were held in Hobart for "men only", at which the alleged barbarities committed upon women were outlined detail by detail.<sup>114</sup>

The war differed from those previous in the bitterness of the hatred engendered between peoples : "in the past," wrote the *Tasmanian Mail*, "wars have been conducted in various lands without prominence being given to the hatred that is characterizing the present war."<sup>115</sup> The paper thought the British hatred justified and attributed the feelings to German atrocities and brutality. Evidently civilians, unlike many of the soldiers at the front, accepted all propaganda unquestioningly. There was little understanding that it was the British propaganda itself which was serving to stoke up the fires of hatred.

---

112. *ibid.*

113. *Daily Post*, 13 May 1915.

114. *Mercury*, 19 August 1915.

115. *Tasmanian Mail*, 20 May 1915.

The publication in the Tasmanian press of Lord Bryce's report stimulated a fresh batch of anti-German letters. One correspondent, signing himself "Pro Patria", a penname which rivalled "Britisher" in popularity, advised the authorities to intern all Germans indiscriminately "whether they be ministers or mechanics, peers or peasants."<sup>116</sup> Another correspondent over the penname "Wide Awake" also advocated that the government take stronger measures against enemy aliens. "Neglect, indifference and peace at any price with those who in their hearts hate us, brings trouble. Keep your enemies in subjection."<sup>117</sup> One Hobart citizen, August Piesse, advised readers of the *Mercury* that naturalization meant nothing to Germans. In his opinion, all Australian residents of German origin would be properly treated as "social lepers."<sup>118</sup>

The Bryce report seemed to be working its desired effect. Suspicion and fear plagued the Premier himself as he wrote to the Military Commandant, Col. Clarke, about *Oberhausen* sailors employed to pick fruit in the vicinity of the Glenorchy water-works. Of course he saw no reason why the men should not be put to useful work, but he wondered if it were wise to allow them to frequent a place where they could do such harm. If just half the reports concerning the atrocities committed by Germans were true, he said, showing more scepticism than most, then he thought they should be very careful in permitting any German subjects near the water supply.<sup>119</sup>

During 1915 editorials became more passionate in their

---

116. *Daily Post*, 17 May 1915.

117. *ibid.*

118. *Mercury*, 14 May 1915.

119. Premier's Dept., 43/34/15, 14 January 1915, T.S.A.

denunciation of the enemy and his supposed ways, repudiating any suggestion of a negotiated peace. One editorial in the *Daily Post* erupted into an orgy of revenge and self-righteousness:

The Prussians, who are masters of the art of barbaric warfare, have committed an unpardonable sin, a sin for which there is no vicarious atonement. We believe, righteously, that all sin must be expiated .... There is no doubt about the guilt of these crimes, these black, cruel, hellish deeds that stink in the nostrils of man and God. Germany's denial of the Eternal Verities could be left for the Spiritual Powers to deal with - but the crime of outraging women, of making women unwilling mothers to barbarians of Prussia is clearly a crime for man to deal with .... Humiliation, deep, dire, drastic soul-withering humiliation is what God orders as the punishment for Germany's sin. . . . This is a war in which ruth is a crime to posterity.<sup>120</sup>

It is clear that what at the beginning of the war had been merely a feeling of hostility to the military enemy had now developed racist overtones. It was believed that the German race possessed special vicious attributes belonging to no other. The *Mercury* claimed that the Bryce report showed beyond doubt that the atrocities were "national", that is, that they had the approval of the German government and people. Whereas in August 1914 that paper had advocated restraint towards fellow human beings who happened to be German, it now encouraged active hostility because they were German.<sup>121</sup>

There appears in wartime, observed Walter Lippmann, a Gresham's law of the emotions whereby leadership passes from statesmanship to virulent jingoism.<sup>122</sup> Although it might be too much to claim statesmanship for the Tasmanian politicians of the time, three specific incidents tend to exemplify this process of deterioration. The

---

120. *Daily Post*, 15 April 1915.

121. *Mercury*, 27 May 1915.

122. See Leuchtenberg, op.cit., p. 44.

first is the change of the town of Bismarck's name to Collinsvale.

As early as August 1914, letters to the press called for a change in name, one correspondent suggesting Liege as an alternative after their gallant allies in Belgium. The letters immediately provoked replies arguing against the proposal. By November deputations and petitions were in the making. On 21 November a deputation from the town waited on the Premier to induce him to alter the name immediately. The existing name of Bismarck, the deputation claimed, was not only a continuing source of discomfort and annoyance; it also prejudiced their export trade.<sup>123</sup> Earle was easily convinced for on 25 November, two days before he was to receive a counter-petition from the German residents of the district, he wrote to the Minister for Lands explaining that the brand name of Bismarck prejudiced the sale of export products. This, as well as the fact that a German name would be removed from the map, influenced him to recommend to the Minister to fall in with the wishes of the deputation and make a suggestion for a new name.<sup>124</sup> The counter-petition presented by Messrs. Voss, Fehlberg, Tottenhofer, Neumann and Brockman contained 121 signatures compared to the 102 in the first petition. They argued that they were the real founders of the place and that it was their pluck and endurance which had established the settlement. It was a matter of history that the then Premier, had named the township Bismarck to reward their forefathers' determination. Moreover, they argued, to change the name would produce more ill-feeling than existed already. They alluded to Senator Pearce's remark that the innocent

---

123. Premier's Dept., 130/10/14, 21 November 1914, T.S.A.

124. *ibid.*, 25 November 1914.

should not be made to suffer for the guilty. The present name, they concluded, did not prejudice the success of any enterprise in or about Bismarck.<sup>125</sup>

That this was a deliberate lie, was the contention of one, W.F. Andersen of Danish origin, who wrote to Earle on 1 December. The tourist trade in Bismarck, he said, had declined noticeably in the past few months. "As soon as [the tourists] hear Bismarck, they decide to go some other place", he complained. "If the name is not very quickly changed I am afraid that myself and the other tourist houses up here will be on the verge of ruin." Bismarck was a beautiful valley, full of charm, cajoled the tourist agent, only spoilt by a detestable name.<sup>126</sup> Another letter from Bismarck addressed itself to Comrade Earle and put the case of the local Branch of the Workers' Political League. The validity of the German petition was brought into question, the author claiming that school-children had been forced to sign it. Moreover, the letter suggested that if Earle changed the name the "movement" would benefit - an enticing argument for the leader of the Labor party.<sup>127</sup>

If Earle ever had any doubts they were resolved by 5 January 1915 when he wrote to the Minister for Lands asking him to take the necessary steps to change the name of Bismarck to Collinsvale. Earle then wrote to G.H. Voss, the leader of the German deputation expressing his regrets. Voss replied coolly and was obviously bitter. He attributed the agitation to "three very spiteful residents" and he asked if he could continue using the trade name of Bismarck for his

---

125. *ibid.*, 27 November 1914.

126. *ibid.*, 1 December 1914.

127. *ibid.*, 4 December 1914.

fruit exports as *he* found it very successful.<sup>128</sup>

Another case which illustrates the passing of leadership from statesmanship to jingoism is that of the alleged disloyalty of the first lecturer in Economics at the University of Tasmania, Herbert Heaton. Under the auspices of the University Extension Board, Heaton delivered a lecture at Scottsdale on 16 August 1914 on the subject of the war in Europe. The next month the lecture was referred to in the House of Assembly by Liberal member, H.J.M. Payne,<sup>129</sup> when he drew attention to a report of the lecture in a north eastern newspaper. It was reported that Heaton had suggested that the Allies too might have committed atrocities and that the Bryce report was inevitably biased. The House responded with indignant cries of "No" and "Shame". Heaton was also reported as saying that the best end to the war would be a "draw"; that would prevent the victors from becoming arrogant and might impress upon all sides the futility of war. If Heaton in fact made these statements, declared Payne, he should never again be permitted to deliver lectures in Tasmania. The House agreed with shouts of "Hear, Hear". The Treasurer, Joseph Lyons, dissented. He protested that the University Extension Board had already made enquiries and the lecturer had been exonerated from blame. But the debate had barely begun. J.B. Hayes,<sup>130</sup> Liberal and future Premier, informed the House that he had chaired the meeting in question and could say that Heaton's remarks had aroused hostile feelings throughout

---

128. *ibid.*, 130/10/15, 29 January 1915.

129. H.J.M. Payne (1866-1944): M.H.A. for Burnie 1903-9; for Darwin 1909-19; Treasurer, Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Railways 1912-14; Chairman of Committees 1909-12; Tasmanian Senator 1919-38.

130. J.B. Hayes (1868-1956): M.H.A. for Bass 1913-23; Minister for Lands and Works 1916-19; Minister for Works 1919-22; Premier and Minister for Works and Agriculture 1922-3; Tasmanian Senator 1923-41.

the State. He was followed by a Liberal colleague and ex-member of the University Council, R.J. Sadler,<sup>131</sup> who suggested that Heaton be hounded out of the State for suggesting that the Allies might commit atrocities. The Leader of the Opposition, N.K. Ewing,<sup>132</sup> solemnly warned the House that people whose sons were fighting at the Dardanelles would not tolerate such disloyalty, whereupon Lyons promised he would communicate the feelings of the Opposition to the University Council. The debate concluded on a lighter note. W. Sheridan,<sup>133</sup> a Labor member, suggested that the only mistake Heaton had made was to deliver a lecture at Scottsdale, where the people appeared unable to comprehend or appreciate him.<sup>134</sup> On further investigation by the University Council it was found that among other things, Heaton had said that German atrocities might be due to criminals in a conscript army and not a mark of the race as such and that there were rumours that Belgian, British and French troops had also committed atrocities. Heaton was consequently asked to refrain from expressing opinions on national policy, to which he replied he had not done so. It was also his opinion that the criticism was confined to "two cranks".<sup>135</sup>

One of these, A.W. Loone, member of the Legislative Council, had recommended that Germany be wiped off the face of the earth and

- 
- 131. R.J. Sadler (1846-1923): ex-Master Warden of the Launceston Marine Board and Grand Master of the Tasmanian Grand Lodge of Freemasons; Mayor of Launceston 1897; M.H.A. for Launceston 1900-3; for Central Launceston 1903-9; for Bass 1909-12; 1913-22; Chairman of Committees 1913-14; 1916-22.
  - 132. N.K. Ewing (1870-1928): Western Australian Senator 1901-3; M.H.A. for Franklin 1909-15; Leader of the Opposition 1914-15; Judge of the Tasmanian Supreme Court 1915-28.
  - 133. W. Sheridan (1868-1931): M.H.A. for Denison 1909-13; 1914-28.
  - 134. For the report of the debate see *Daily Post*, 16 September 1915.
  - 135. *ibid.*, 23 September 1915.



Germans torn limb from limb.<sup>136</sup> Heaton replied that while there might be a case for crushing the German "system", it was somewhat stupid to talk of wiping off the face of the earth a nation of sixty-six million people.<sup>137</sup> Loone remained unconvinced.

Heaton was insulted by letter and smeared as pro-German in public and although the Labor government was satisfied with the University Council's verdict acquitting him, others not so generous were loath to see Heaton go free. The *Mercury* judged him to be out of place in Tasmania and recommended his immediate dismissal.<sup>138</sup> Dr. Bottrill at a special meeting of the University Council moved a resolution condemning Heaton. After some discussion in which most people expressed themselves satisfied with the Council's findings, the motion was defeated, the mover, Bottrill, constituting the minority.<sup>139</sup> Still not satisfied the persistent Arthur Loone wrote to the press indicating his intention of moving in the Legislative Council for the appointment of a Select Committee to enquire into the lecturer's loyalty.<sup>140</sup> But it seemed that people had tired of the issue and nothing came of Loone's intentions; his patriot-sadism remained ungratified. Herbert Heaton did not remain long in Tasmania. The following year, 1916, he departed to take up a post at the University of Adelaide.

The next target of war engendered public hysteria appeared the following month in the form of the Tasmanian Colonising Association Ltd. Bill which was that month introduced into the House of Assembly.

---

136. *ibid.*, 24 September 1915.

137. *ibid.*

138. *Mercury*, 16 September 1915.

139. *Daily Post*, 30 September 1915.

140. *ibid.*, 2 October 1915.

The Bill provided for a co-operative scheme of community settlement whereby residents of Great Britain, Canada and elsewhere, would take up 13,000 acres of land in the north east of Tasmania under a lease in perpetuity on an annual payment of £10 in 200 acre areas.<sup>141</sup> In the debate on the second reading of the Bill a Liberal Protestant, A.T. Marshall,<sup>142</sup> struck the notes of opposition, the keynote being a paranoid suspicion of foreigners. He urged that precautions be taken to ensure that all prospective members of the association were loyal and held pro-British sentiments. For he had heard from a friend on the north west coast that many of the members were not desirable citizens, some being possessed of German names and German sympathies. Asked as to the source of his information he replied that his informant was a Roman Catholic priest, T.J. O'Donnell.<sup>143</sup>

One of the association members whose credentials were thought suspect was J. Ostenberg, a Swede from Canada, who had been dismissed from railway construction works on the north west coast because his fellow workers deemed him to be disloyal. In reference to his dismissal Ostenberg wrote:

It is evident to me that much of what by me was considered as kindness was a system of espionage. In my position as ganger I was apparently in someone's road and as no cause of complaint could be found with my work, a cause or reason to remove me was made by placing an evil misconception upon my utterances .... My attitude to war as a principle generally is

---

141.    ibid., 27 October 1915.

142.    A.T. Marshall (1881-1966): M.H.A. for Bass 1914-25; Chairman of Committees, 1922-25.

143.    T.J. O'Donnell (1867-1949): born Ballarat, educated Ireland, ordained 1907; the outstanding exception to the rule that the most zealous patriots were Protestants.

that it does not produce results that are beneficial to man and I in conversation with people deplore the necessity for it. I have never at any time expressed pro-German sympathies and feel that all this trouble is the result of malicious misconstruction.<sup>144</sup>

The *Mercury* was unimpressed by such sentiments and advised that instead of applying for land such foreigners "ought rather to be interned as prisoners."<sup>145</sup> The editor appeared hostile to co-operative effort of any kind and ridiculed J.J. Martin, the organizer of the association, accusing him of trying to "out Bellamy Bellamy."<sup>146</sup>

The Labor paper came to the defence of the hapless Colonising Association. Dwyer-Gray deplored the fact that the *Mercury* should have seen fit to give emphasis to Alec Marshall's pursuits of alleged Teutonic tendencies. "This is the most contemptible thing of all," wrote the editor, "one man is involved, not ten or twenty or half a hundred. He is one of the twenty five settlers so far brought out by the Association. He is not a German, but a Swede ...."<sup>147</sup> The Labor paper's indignation was to little avail as xenophobia seemed to grip the community. A meeting at Stanley of over 200 people expressed its "emphatic protest" against a Colonisation Bill which, it held, sought to hand over 15,000 acres of the best land in the district to some strangers from abroad, concerning whom little was known and regarding whose loyalty there was much suspicion.<sup>148</sup> In the ensuing discussion Fr. O'Donnell, the prime mover of the agitation, stressed that there was no doubt about the disloyal attitude which pervaded the association. Another meeting at Irish Town on the motion of Fr. O'Donnell also rejected the Bill.<sup>149</sup> Association

144. *Daily Post*, 2 November 1915.

145. *Mercury*, 29 October 1915.

146. *ibid.*

147. *Daily Post*, 1 November 1915.

148. *ibid.*, 5 November 1915.

149. *ibid.*, 19 November 1915.

members Baguley, Webber and Jaguers were judged guilty of being at best foreigners, at worst pro-German. Xenophobia was rampant as many citizens seemed unable to make the not very subtle distinction between mere foreigners and disloyal or enemy subjects. "Mr. Martin can rest assured that there are no Tasmanians anxious to join his queer association," ranted Fr. O'Donnell, "especially now that they are getting to know something of Mr. Martin and his friends. What a piece of impudence to tell the native-born that if they want this land they must join this queer association that is going to do so many wonderful things on earth, in the skies or on the sea."<sup>150</sup> O'Donnell maintained the Bill should be rejected for two reasons. Firstly, to get the land native born should not have to co-operate with a lot of foreigners; secondly, Tasmania's sons at war had first right to it.

During November a vindictive personal debate ensued between J.J. Martin and Fr. O'Donnell in the pages of the daily press. Martin recognised that an "unaccountable animosity" existed against his scheme and he put it down to the fact that he and his colonisers were "co-operators and not to the manor born".<sup>151</sup> He singled out O'Donnell as his chief antagonist, behind whom he saw the Catholic Church, an institution which he acidly characterized as showing a never ending tendency to block progressive movements. O'Donnell threw himself into the fray with apparent relish, reiterating assertions that the association members were foreign, and by implication, disloyal : "Webber, a native of Germany! Ostenberg, a suppose Swede! Jaguers, another foreigner!"<sup>152</sup> The priest also referred in disparaging terms to their

---

150. *ibid.*, 25 November 1915.

151. *ibid.*, 4 November 1915.

152. *ibid.*, 25 November 1915.

"rationalism". Barbed words flowed from both sides, but it was already clear that what the Colonising Association called "hoary-headed prejudice", would triumph.

The Bill was rejected in the House of Assembly in mid-December thirteen votes to ten. The last word on the matter in parliament was that of Ernest Blyth who pronounced it one of the "rottenest" proposals to ever come before the House.<sup>153</sup>

One would think, remarked the *Daily Post*, that the block of land concerned was the only patch left for settlement and that there was an intense land hunger in the State; yet neither was true. The reason for the legislature's rejection of the Bill, surmised the editor, was a combination of suspicion of outsiders and a suspicion of all co-operative schemes for social betterment.<sup>154</sup> Some suggested that O'Donnell was being used by large landholders who wished to speculate in land.<sup>155</sup> Whether or not that was true, the dominant theme in the incident was the mass suspicion and hatred of foreigners, begot by isolation, strengthened by the war and goaded on by propaganda, official or otherwise. The incident is also important in showing how early and easily the hostility felt for Germans was transferred to radicals: they were identified as one. A few weeks later, J.J. Martin the defeated organiser of the colonising scheme departed for California.

Aliens were not alone in their victimization. Almost as unpopular as the German was the "shirker". The very sight of young men at

---

153. *ibid.*, 15 December 1915.

154. *ibid.*, 16 December 1915.

155. *ibid.*, 19 November 1915.

race-meetings, dance halls and football matches seemed to stimulate a sadistic response in some patriots. A.H. Sibley of Kempton, expressed the general contempt felt for shirkers when he designated them as "scabs": they had refused to join "the grandest and greatest union of all - the war union". He deplored the way young men stood idly by, drinking beer and smoking cigarettes, while Belgian women were being ravaged by Huns. To his mind they were unworthy of that glorious name, "Britisher".

It seemed that no name was invested with more repugnance than that of "shirker". "Shirker Detester" writing to the *Mercury* endorsed that paper's suggestion that a special burdensome tax be levied upon young men who had not enlisted.<sup>156</sup> William Baillie of Flowerpot continually expressed his displeasure at seeing "white-livered" young men enjoying themselves.<sup>157</sup> "Patriot" confessed an urge to attend football matches with a lasso so that he might rope in the players and convey them to the training-camps.<sup>158</sup> Conscription was frequently suggested, not as a means of defeating the enemy, but as a way of forcing the "selfish and cowardly young men" to war.<sup>159</sup> Others suggested that the names of all shirkers be published in the newspapers to shame them into enlisting.<sup>160</sup> Every pressure conceivable was recommended in order to turn men into soldiers.

With the one aim of persecuting young men not yet enlisted, a White Feather League was established in Hobart, as in other cities

---

156. *Mercury*, 15 September 1915.

157. *ibid.*, 23 March, 13 July 1915.

158. *ibid.*, 12 July 1915.

159. *ibid.*, 17 January; 3, 12, 16 July 1915.

160. *ibid.*, 5 August 1915.



To persuade shirkers to don khaki and set forth for the battlefields of Europe was the aim of the energetic recruiting campaign launched in 1915. This followed the extremely successful recruiting drive in Victoria where 21,698 men had enlisted in July - the highest number in any month during the war.<sup>165</sup> In announcing the campaign Earle spoke of the necessity of sending assistance to their fellow countrymen at the Dardanelles. He hoped the Opposition would help the government in its efforts. Ewing, leader of the Opposition, replied that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to accept the invitation.<sup>166</sup>

In this spirit of co-operation and unanimity the recruiting party set off in mid-July to the Huon area where their first stop was Dover. Both Earle and Ewing delivered stirring speeches and a local councillor, C. Hay, suggested that as the timber industry was slack, men employed in the mills might volunteer as the men on the west coast had done. Of the twelve volunteers who answered the appeal, seven were rejected. The party moved on to Southport, then Geeveston, then Franklin. Recruiting posters from Victoria were plastered on post offices, railway stations and public halls. One particularly popular one with the authorities, depicted a wounded Australian soldier grasping his rifle and guarding the body of a mate while shells burst around them. In the right hand corner in contrast to this scene was a huge crowd watching a football match.<sup>167</sup> In such dramatic ways did the Defence department endeavour to remind Australian men of their duty.

---

165. Robson, op. cit., p. 49.

166. *Daily Post*, 14 July 1915.

167. *ibid.*, 19 July 1915.



It was soon clear that the response from the towns of the Huon district was below expectation. The large town of Franklin was especially criticised for failing to do its bit. The recruiting meeting there attracted an audience of about 500. But even the vocal persuasion of Miss Madge Jacklyn who sang "We Don't Want to Lose You, But We Think You Ought to Go" was not enough to attract more than thirteen volunteers.<sup>168</sup> The *Tasmanian Mail* was particularly severe in its indictment of the reluctant heroes of the Huon and warned menacingly that they were qualifying for the white feather.<sup>169</sup>

In the month of July 1915 as politicians were stumping around the country calling upon men to step forth, other men were returning home. Soldiers began arriving from Gallipoli and they quickly emerged as a distinct social and political pressure group. They were received with warmth and praise and were generally treated as heroes. A number of the fitter soldiers quickly took their place on the recruiting platform and became some of the most ardent supporters of the demand for more men. They spoke with an authority arising out of first-hand experience and self-importance.

Recruiting meetings continued throughout July and the Premier and his followers moved north to Devonport and Burnie. The campaign on the north west coast seemed to achieve little and was often criticised for the chaotic state of arrangements. Few meetings were held in the country areas and those held in the towns were too little advertised.<sup>170</sup> Most prominent in the north west campaign was the energetic Fr. O'Donnell, who was fast gaining repute as a political demagogue.

---

168. *Mercury*, 30 July 1915.

169. *Tasmanian Mail*, 22 July 1915.

170. *Daily Post*, 24 July 1915.

From the first he was a staunch advocate of a maximum war effort.

The final recruiting meeting of the campaign was held in the Hobart Town-hall on 12 August. One week before, on the anniversary of the outbreak of war, large crowds had met in the same place and resolved to see the war through to an Allied victory. The Chief Justice, Sir Herbert Nicholls, had received loud and prolonged applause when he remarked that if he had to face death, then "by God, it would be an honourable death."<sup>171</sup> It was a big step however from resolutions of determination to actually offering one's life for the cause and the recruiting response in Hobart during that week remained disappointing to the authorities.

The meeting on 12 August was open to men only and returned soldiers figured prominently on stage. Most speakers dwelt long on atrocity stories, indulging in the detail of severed legs and breasts, bayoneted children and ravaged women. One soldier, Lt. Collins, assured his audience that the appendix of the Bryce report was too terrible to read - except in occasional doses. A veteran of Gallipoli, Sgt. Poulson confined himself simply to a description of the great losses incurred at the Dardanelles and a plea for reinforcements. The next civilian speaker, Rev. F. Boreham, leader-writer for the *Mercury*, resumed the consideration of atrocities. The audience of men were apparently very impressed and no fewer than sixty-two were inspired to enlist.<sup>172</sup>

Although the recruiting authorities and newspapers continually expressed their disappointment at the number of volunteers coming

---

171. *ibid.*, 5 August 1915.

172. *ibid.*, 13 August 1915.

forward and berated "slackers" for shirking their duty,<sup>173</sup> the campaign in July did produce a marked upswing in the numbers enlisting. Whereas 378 had enlisted in Tasmania in June, more than twice that number, 781, enlisted during July. During August, when the campaign concentrated on the north of the island and on Hobart, the number climbed to 1,119, the highest number for Tasmania for any month during the war. Despite the grumblings of organisers, the campaign was clearly producing results. Thereafter the numbers fell rapidly until December when only 150 men enlisted.<sup>174</sup>

. . . . .

It is clear that the most jingoistic supporters of the war were often the upholders of conservative political values, often directing their animus against radicals as well as alleged German sympathisers. The radicals in turn faced a difficult situation : if they joined with the jingoes they implied agreement with conservatism but if they did not their patriotism came under doubt. "He who is not with us, absolutely and without reserve of any kind," declared Theodore Roosevelt in the United States, and his words equally reflect the aggressive patriotism of Australians, "is against us and should be treated as an alien enemy."<sup>175</sup>

Ian Turner has argued that there was little qualification to the patriotic enthusiasm of the unionists at the outbreak of war. He cites as evidence the fact that of the 54,000 recruits who enlisted

---

173. *ibid.*, 19, 20, 24 July 1915; *Mercury* 20, 26 July 1915; *Tasmanian Mail* 22 July, 5 August, 1915.

174. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 871.

175. Leuchtenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

in the first five months, forty three *per cent* were unionists, well above the proportion of unionists among adult males in Australia.<sup>176</sup> It is my argument that the enlistment of unionists in the first five months of war, was in Tasmania at least, as much a reflection of the sudden and widespread unemployment in mining centres, as of the patriotic enthusiasm of the unionists. Nevertheless there was no unionist-organised opposition to the war and as Turner notes, what dissension there was sprang usually from discontent with the effects of war than with the war itself. The above-mentioned Zeehan workers' resolution condemning the rise in bread prices is an example of this.

Although there was no organised opposition to the war within the Labor movement, it is important to note the extreme reluctance of many Labor men to accept or support the war. On the Sunday before it was declared, the Denison No. 1 branch of the W.P.L. had unanimously condemned war and urged all workers to use their power to prevent its reoccurrence. The Devonport branch of the W.P.L. endorsed these sentiments.<sup>177</sup> But war did break out and Labor men everywhere rallied to their nation's cause. Many welcomed it neither joyously nor gladly however, but rather with feelings of sorrow and resignation. J. Guy<sup>178</sup> Labor candidate for the Senate, deplored the war as "the most dreadful event of modern times" and hoped for its speedy termination.<sup>179</sup> A. Needham,<sup>180</sup> member of the Denison No. 1 branch of the W.P.L.,

---

176. Turner, op. cit., p. 69.

177. *Daily Post*, 13 August 1914.

178. James Guy (1860-1921): M.H.A. for Bass 1909-13; Tasmanian Senator 1914-19.

179. *Daily Post*, 10 August 1914.

180. A. Needham (1860-1922): singwriter and talented minor poet, author of *The Radicals and other Verse*; father-in-law of John Curtin.

condemned the current "fanatic jingoism" and added that the workers had nothing to gain and everything to lose by taking up arms in war.<sup>181</sup> W.A. Woods,<sup>182</sup> was another of the Hobart members of the W.P.L. who sorely regretted the coming of war. Born William Head in Melbourne in 1862, Woods had a long and interesting career in union organizing and journalism on the mainland before his arrival in Tasmania. His was the "fertile brain" which founded the *Worker*<sup>183</sup> and he also edited the *New Australia* journal. He furthermore acted as Sydney secretary to William Lane's movement in Paraguay. Woods arrived in Tasmania in 1895 when he changed his name and took over the editorship of the Launceston radical journal, the *Tasmanian Democrat*. From 1903 to 1909 he edited the Hobart *Clipper* and continued contributing poems and articles to the *Bulletin*, often over the pseudonym "John Drayman". When war broke out Woods was a member of the House of Assembly for Denison. For him the advent of war provided conclusive evidence of the vital necessity for the workers of the world to unit and rule a world where war, the disease of capitalism, would be unknown. The workers should stand up, exhorted Woods, and declare that if the exploiters of humanity desired war they would have to do the slaughtering themselves. Some Denison Labor men were converted to a more positive stand of support for the British cause by the (false) news report that the German authorities had executed Karl Liebknecht for his refusal to bear arms.<sup>184</sup>

Unlike Woods who lamented the war but finally acquiesced in

---

181. *Daily Post*, 11 August 1914.

182. W.A. Woods (or William Head) 1862-1939: first federal secretary T.W.P.L.: Member W.P.L. Executive 1903-10; M.H.A. for North Hobart 1906-9; and for Denison 1909-17; and 1925-31; speaker House of Assembly 1914-16, 1926-8.

183. *Worker*, 4 February 1942.

184. *Daily Post*, 17 August 1914.

support of it, Clifford Hall, the youthful president and organizer of the United Laborers' Union, consistently condemned the war and the Tasmanian workers' participation in it. He reminded workers that it was their brothers they were asked to kill.<sup>185</sup> By January 1915 his position had hardened into total opposition to the war:

I am opposed to the present war and all wars, because war is in the interests of one class only, who take all sorts of care that they do no fighting themselves, but play on the ignorance. of the wage-slaves of the different nations by flag-flapping and talking patriotism to cajole them into flying at one another's throats in an effort to kill each other, so that the real shirkers and loafers may stay at home in their mansions and gather in the profits accruing from the nefarious business of wholesale murder.<sup>186</sup>

Hall urged the workers of Australia to recognise that they had a greater battle to fight at home than that 13,000 miles away. The *Daily Post* frequently censored his letters and sternly reminded him of the imperative need to secure victory against Germany.<sup>187</sup>

Hall's staunch opposition was however the exception in Labor circles. Most Labor men were still loyal Imperialists and indeed the first twelve months of war seemed to strengthen these loyalties. In February 1915, Irishman Dwyer-Gray stated: "Our people love the Empire and would come down to their shirt sleeves to save it."<sup>188</sup> The *Daily Post* proclaimed the British Empire "a glorious Empire with all its faults" and stressed that there was nothing incompatible between democracy and imperialism.<sup>189</sup> In July the editor reaffirmed: "we Australians of true Anglo Saxon stock will fight to the last man to defend our noble British Empire."<sup>190</sup>

---

185. *ibid.*, 13 August 1914. See footnote, page 7.

186. *ibid.*, 25 January 1915.

188. *ibid.*, 26 February 1915.

187. *ibid.*

189. *ibid.*, 20 April 1915.

Although 1915 saw the strengthening of Imperial loyalties there occurred also a strengthening in working class consciousness and ultimately it was the latter which was to vanquish the former. There was a growing awareness among the working classes that it was they who were bearing the brunt of the war. They began to see themselves as an exploited class: it was they who were doing most of the fighting and most of the paying.<sup>191</sup> They were also the chief victims of the war-caused unemployment. In July 1914 5.7% of the Tasmanian population was unemployed; by January 1915 the figure had leapt to 13.1%.<sup>192</sup> In February a deputation of Launceston unemployed waited on the Minister for Education Lyons, seeking to persuade him to proceed immediately with plans for the building of a new high school. Unemployment in Launceston, they said, was acute<sup>193</sup>; families were "on the verge of starvation".<sup>194</sup> The completion of public works at Wynyard the same month threw more men out of work, many of whom enlisted for the front.<sup>195</sup> In Hobart where unemployment was also bad, the Trades and Labor Council attacked the government Labor Bureau for failing to provide jobs.<sup>196</sup> In March the Federal government commandeered several Tasmanian woollen mills to meet the requirements of the Defence department with the consequence that still more men lost their jobs.<sup>197</sup> The acute unemployment situation was thought by the military authorities to account for the steady flow of volunteers in the first months of 1915.<sup>198</sup>

---

190. *ibid.*, 10 July 1915.

191. *ibid.*, 24 July 1915.

192. *ibid.*, 25 May 1915.

193. *ibid.*, 14 February 1915.

194. *ibid.* 5 March 1915.

195. *ibid.*, 18 February 1915.

196. *ibid.*, 3 March 1915.

197. *ibid.*, 6 March 1915.

198. *ibid.*, 9 April 1915.

Unemployment was accompanied by a steep rise in the cost of living. Letters abounded in the press complaining of high rents and food prices. In April a deputation waited on the Premier requesting the establishment of a Fair Rents Court. Earle prevaricated.<sup>199</sup> In July 1915 the Commonwealth Statistician showed that complaints of exorbitant price increases were justified. The figures showed that the cost of food and groceries had increased in Tasmania by 16.4% since the outbreak of war.<sup>200</sup> Many working men were said to be unable to buy meat and butter; there were suggestions that local families needed cash just as much as the Belgians.<sup>201</sup>

The practice of "economic conscription" still further exacerbated the working man's lot. In July the Launceston Marine Board for example, decided not to employ single men and to ask those already in employment to enlist for the front. Thus the war highlighted the differences between classes: between the employing class on the one hand and the working class on the other. Working men increasingly resented these distinctions. "Why should the man who earns his living with the pick and shovel be forced to go," asked *Daily Post* correspondent G.C. Llewellyn, "while those that have the means can ride in first class carriages, in motor-cars and sit on comfortable seats in Marine Board offices with no thought of going to the trenches?"<sup>202</sup>

As economic conditions worsened, dissatisfaction with the governing Labor parties and their seeming inability to improve the situation, grew: "Political action has been tried in Australia," wrote Clifford Hall, "and although we have a Labor majority in both Houses of

---

199. *ibid.*, 17 April 1915.

200. *ibid.*, 23 July 1915.

201. *ibid.*, 19 July 1915.

202. *ibid.*, 27 July 1915.



Federal parliament and Labor governments in three of the States the economic condition of the worker is the worst that it has ever been in the history of Australia."<sup>203</sup> Hall urged workers to bypass political institutions and to embrace industrial unionism. "Although we have a Labor party in office in Tasmania," he observed, "we have to fight for justice as strenuously as we had to fight the capitalistic governments." John Ball also wrote to the *Daily Post* of his disillusionment: "my belief in the futility of Parliament grows with observation. I notice the promises of politicians, the difficulties of fulfilment, the ceaseless streams of talk, the insincerity and red-tapeism ... there is one hope, revolution."<sup>204</sup>

As hardships went unabated some Labor men began to suspect Earle of indifference to the working class interest. Their suspicions seemed confirmed when Earle suggested that the unemployed should do their duty and respond to the Empire's call. There was an angry reaction. F. Ray of Battery Point wrote that to starve workers and thus compel them to enlist against their will was the cruellest way of recruiting possible. "We could not expect worse from Germany, let alone from a British nation that boasts of freedom."<sup>205</sup> He thought it particularly ominous that such remarks should come from a Labor Premier who ought to be against class distinction instead of fomenting it. Another indignant Labor man, W.H. Cripps, asked what had the unemployed to fight for. He maintained that Earle wished them to fight for "the drones, the merchants who are putting up prices of food, [who are] putting the burden on the worker, squeezing the

---

203. *ibid.*, 15 February 1915.

204. *ibid.*, 27 February 1915.

205. *ibid.*, 11 March 1915

the life blood out of him."<sup>206</sup> He advised all workers, unemployed or not, to remain at home until all the sons of "drones" had enlisted. A third correspondent, L. Ray, agreed. He advised that he was for "the Cliff Hall idea" and that he would not enlist until compelled to do so.<sup>207</sup>

The split in the Tasmanian Labor movement between the more radical unionists on the one hand and the more conservative parliamentary party on the other, deepened over two local issues: Earle's reluctance to grant preference to unionists and his refusal to offer a suitable site and financial contribution for the erection of a Trades Hall. In April 1915 a deputation representing the unions affiliated with the Trades and Labor Council together with representatives of the Carters' and Drivers' Union and the United Laborers' Union waited on the Premier to ascertain what action the government intended to take in regard to the granting of preference to unionists on government works. Earle replied that it would be as unfair for him to grant preference to unionists as it would be for a Liberal Premier to grant preference to non-unionists. The deputation interpreted Earle's stand as a challenge to unionism.<sup>208</sup> At a subsequent meeting of the United Laborers' Union the predominant opinion was that Earle had grown "too big for his boots" and that the sooner he was relegated to "private life" the better.<sup>209</sup> A Trades and Labor Council meeting also expressed its anger at the Premier's contempt of unionism and several unions threatened to withdraw support from the Labor party at the next elections.<sup>210</sup> At a subsequent meeting of the Trades and Labor Council following an unsuccessful deputation to the

---

206. *ibid.*, 15 March 1915.

207. *ibid.*, 16 March 1915.

208. *ibid.*, 8 April 1915.

209. *ibid.*, 15 April 1915.

210. *ibid.*, 2 August 1915.

Chief Secretary about a Wages Board decision, speeches were more militant and the attitude was belligerent. Many unionists condemned the Wages Board system as farcical and affirmed their belief in "direct action". In the eyes of these unionists the Ministers had deserted the Labor movement to collaborate with the enemy.<sup>211</sup>

The unionists' hostility to the political leaders increased further as the Labor government continued to ignore their long-standing request for a building site and financial support for a Trades-Hall. Tasmania was the only State without such a hall, and in other States, it was pointed out, Liberal governments had donated money and land.<sup>212</sup> Earle's lack of response to the demands of the unionists is indicative of the discrepancy between the industrial and political wings of Labor with respect to their views of the Labor government's function. The unionists held that the Labor party was the servant of the working class and that its sole objective when in power ought to be to serve the workers. Earle however talked (and most of his Cabinet thought) in terms of "justice for all". Questioned as to his willingness to support the project to build a Trades-hall, Earle replied that he had to look at the matter from the standpoint of the State taxpayers; if a monetary grant were made to one section of the community, all other sections would have to be treated similarly.<sup>213</sup> The conservative *Mercury's* warm support of and identification with, Earle's

---

211.    ibid.

212.    ibid., 26 November 1915.

213.    ibid., 10 December 1915. Earle's attempt to suppress his government's class identity and obligations was fairly typical of Labor administrations in Australia generally. See H. McQueen "Glory Without Power" in *Australian Capitalism Towards a Socialist Critique*, ed. J. Playford & D. Kirsner. Penguin, 1972. pp. 348-50.

position served to alienate radical unionists even further from their parliamentary leader.

The division between unionist and political wings was exacerbated in Tasmania by the peculiar organisation of Labor. It was the only State in which the trade unions did not join with and exercise an amount of control over, the political activities of Labor. Only three or four unions were affiliated with the W.P.L., for where the unions were necessarily small as in Tasmania, the ordinary expenses took up most of the revenue, leaving little for affiliation fees and active organising. The cost to a union of affiliating with the W.P.L. was two shillings per member per annum. Consequently the great bulk of industrial workers had no say whatever in the choice of their parliamentary candidates, unless they as individuals joined a branch of the W.P.L. As this entailed the cost and trouble of paying into two organisations it was not done by individual unionists to any large extent. During 1915, honorary union organiser, W.A. Woods, worked tirelessly to promote a closer unity between the industrial and political wings. His intention was to amalgamate the two executives and combine the functions then exercised separately by the Trades and Labor Council and the W.P.L. Woods took as his model the Labor Federation of Western Australia. His efforts met with little success however as suspicions between the two factions grew more hostile. A mass unionist meeting called to consider the Closer Unity Scheme had to be postponed indefinitely owing to the paucity of attendance.<sup>214</sup>

Criticism of the Earle administration by Labor rank and file sharpened when Earle decided in mid-1915 to form a coalition government

---

214. *ibid.*, 21 May 1915.

with the Liberals and postpone the elections until after the war. The party was divided on a question of priorities. There were those like Earle who thought the realization of Labor ideals should be relegated to the background and all energies turned towards winning the war and on the other hand, there were unionists and branch members who believed that the Labor government should direct all its present energies towards the fulfilment of Labor policies.

In August 1915 the rumour was abroad that a party truce was being considered in parliament. The *Daily Post* commented abruptly that,

if by a party truce is meant a coalition government we refuse to consider it at all. There is nothing however to prevent a certain co-operation of parties. However we have declared before that co-operation is essentially a cessation of criticism and as criticism is the peculiar duty of an Opposition, it is obvious that co-operation must come from the Opposition, not from the Government.<sup>215</sup>

The conservative papers on the other hand rejoiced in the prospect, the *Tasmanian Mail* affirming that there was not the slightest doubt that the public expected the welfare of the State and Empire to be considered before the interests of one party.<sup>216</sup>

It was clear however that not all of the public shared this view. Local Labor branch resolutions and letters to the press expressed considerable disquiet and condemned what they saw as the Labor government's "sell-out" of Labor principles. The New Town branch for example, passed a resolution declaring that Labor members should strive for Labor ideals only.<sup>217</sup> At a public meeting on the Domain in

---

215. *ibid.*, 16 August 1915.

216. *Tasmanian Mail*, 5 August 1915.

217. *Daily Post*, 7 August 1915.

September some Labor speakers condemned the truce, while others, notably politicians W. Sheridan and B. Watkins<sup>218</sup> spoke in favour of it. The latter argued that the present time was unsuitable for a disruptive election campaign and that the government had acted properly, wisely and patriotically.<sup>219</sup> Dwyer-Gray, editor of the *Daily Post*, spoke earnestly of the implications of any disagreement. He urged Labor members to beware of doing or saying anything which could interfere in the slightest with the solidarity of the Labor movement. He exhorted doubters to refrain from wild actions and not to assume an unfriendly attitude towards their "trusted representatives."<sup>220</sup> But already many unionists felt that their trust had been misplaced and their faith betrayed.

Some Labor men were particularly critical of the proposed truce because, since gaining office the Labor government had been totally impotent in that it was dependent for power on an Independent, J.T.H. Whitsitt.<sup>221</sup> They therefore claimed that an election was vital for Labor to win real and effective power and thus be able to implement the platform. Despite the protests, the Acting-Premier, J. Ogden, announced the terms of the agreement at the end of September. There was to be a Liberal committee to deliberate with the Ministry on all questions of administration and financial legislation. The Government intended to introduce a Bill for the purpose of extending the life of the parliament until March 1917.<sup>222</sup> The *Mercury* exulted

---

218. B. Watkins (1884-1964): newspaper printer; M.H.A. for Queenstown 1906-9; for Darwin 1909-17; for Franklin 1919-22, 1925-34.

219. *Daily Post*, 28 September 1915.

220. *ibid.*

221. J.T.H. Whitsitt (1870-1943): M.H.A for Darwin 1909-22; M.H.R. for Darwin 1922-5.

222. *Daily Post*, 30 september 1915.

in the decision claiming that Tasmania had given a lead to the rest of Australia in putting away contentious legislation and concentrating on the war effort. This was possible, the paper added, because the parliamentary Labor party in Tasmania, was more moderate than its counterparts in mainland States.<sup>223</sup>

Many of the rank and file of the Labor movement were not so pleased. David Clyde, a member of the Zeehan branch of the W.P.L. expressed horror and indignation at the proposed "unholy alliance". He reported that many Laborites along the west coast were greatly shocked at the developments in Hobart. That it was a time of war, Clyde saw as all the more reason for having an election to "cull the weeds from the flowers". He warned that if the government went through with the alliance it would be "digging its own grave".<sup>224</sup> J.J.Kenneally, Labor supporter and Catholic Federation activist, also opposed the truce. He asked how there could be a truce in parliament when there was "no truce between the merchant and the small shopkeeper; no truce between the landlord and the struggling worker; no truce between the employer and employee."<sup>225</sup>

Undeterred by rank and file criticism, Earle introduced the Bill for prolongation of parliament in October. In defence of the measure, he explained that in such perilous times the whole effort of the people should be directed as far as humanly possible along one path - towards the conduct of the great war. Only one Labor member of the House of Assembly, future government statistician and economic adviser

---

223. *Mercury*, 18 September 1915.

224. *Daily Post*, 4 October 1915.

225. *Mercury*, 4 October 1915.

L.F. Giblin,<sup>226</sup> spoke in opposition to the Bill. He suggested that at least there might be a postal referendum to ascertain public opinion on the important question. The Bill was passed in the House of Assembly 19 votes to 3. The minority consisted of Giblin, fellow Labor member V.W. Barker and H.J. Payne.

The *Daily Post* remained remarkably silent during September and October on the question of prolongation and the party truce. It appears that the editor was not in favour of the proposal, but that he did not wish to emphasize dissension within the Labor ranks. In the event, the fate of the prolongation Bill was not decided by either of the contending factions within the Labor party, but by the Legislative Council. At the end of October the Upper House rejected the Bill, most members arguing that it was unconstitutional and set a bad precedent.<sup>227</sup> The *Daily Post* commented that it resented the tyrannical nature of the Council as ultimate decision-maker, but that it could not feign disappointment at the result. "We never pretended by so much as a comma to be enthusiastic about the prolongation of parliament and if we were perfectly polite we were also perfectly cool in regard to co-operation. Faith can move mountains but we found we had not sufficient faith to render us optimistic as to any effort to reconcile opposing principles."<sup>228</sup> Thus John Earle was saved from

---

226. L.F. Giblin (1873-1951): son of the first Tasmanian born Premier of Tasmania; educated at Cambridge, became All England Rugby player, goldminer, seaman, farmer; M.H.A. for Denison 1913-16; served in the war, won the M.C. and D.S.O., promoted to Major; 1919 appointed Government Statistician; 1929 appointed first Ritchie Professor of Economics at University of Melbourne; member of first Commonwealth Grants Commission; 1940-8 chief economic adviser to the Treasury.

227. *Daily Post*, 27 October 1915.

228. *ibid.*, 28 October 1915.



incurring further unpopularity in the Labor movement by the traditional enemy, the Legislative Council. But already the events had estranged a significant number from their "collaborationist" political leaders.

The disintegration of the Labor party proceeded at both State and Federal levels. During 1915 the considerable friction between Federal Labor members of parliament was made public. A small group of radicals, Frank Anstey, Frank McGrath, J.H. Catts and F. Brennan grew increasingly outspoken in their criticism of the Labor government's policy and administration. When the government proposed to endow General Bridges' widow with a very generous pension for example, Anstey opposed the proposal because it singled out one soldier's widow for privileged treatment above the others. Brennan made public his pacifist convictions and was often heard at socialist-organised meetings advocating an immediate end to the war.

In April 1915 the government gave notice of its intention to amend the War Precautions Act. The chief amendments involved the suspension of civil law and trial by jury. The proposed legislation was fiercely opposed by Anstey and McGrath. In a division over a clause giving the Prime Minister power to proclaim martial law in an emergency the House voted 35 - 14 in favour. The minority consisted of Labor members including W.H. Laird Smith<sup>229</sup> and King O'Malley<sup>230</sup> from Tasmania. During May, debate on the amendments became heated with Anstey proving particularly active. "Mr. Anstey poured all the concentrated vitriol of a by no means gentle tongue upon the

---

229. W.H. Laird Smith (1869-1942): electrician; M.H.R. for Denison 1910-22; Minister for the Navy 1920-1.

230. King O'Malley (1858-1953): insurance agent; M.H.A. for Encounter Bay, S.Australia 1896-99; M.H.R. for Tasmania 1901-3; for Darwin 1903-17; Minister for Home Affairs 1910-13; 1915-16.

Ministers in front of him",<sup>231</sup> said the press report. At the end of his fiery harangue Anstey repudiated the government and declared he would no longer follow it. This action provoked another excitable member, W.M. Hughes, to an angry counter-attack. Scornfully, he dismissed Anstey as a mere visionary mouthing platitudes about civil liberty.

The stand of Anstey and his supporters was however widely approved and they received many assurances of support. In Hobart the Brick-makers Union for example, condemned the War Precautions Act amendment which, in their words, proposed "to turn over the trial of civilians to the mercy of autocratic military officers."<sup>232</sup> The Tasmanian Trades and Labor Council passed a similar motion, moved by Clifford Hall and decided to send letters of congratulations to both Anstey and McGrath.<sup>233</sup> An amendment guaranteeing trial by jury to civilians was finally passed by both Houses of parliament.

A more serious threat of disruption to the Labor movement occurred in June, when Anstey resigned from the party. It was his view that the Federal parliament had been inexcusably inactive in not curbing the rising cost of living. When Fisher announced his intention of holding a referendum to give the Commonwealth greater powers to deal with trusts and combines, Anstey insisted that parliament already had full power under the War Precautions Act to do anything it chose. He saw the Referendum Bills as a further delaying tactic. Prices had been constantly rising during the war, he argued, yet not one step had been taken by the government to protect the people from exploitation.<sup>234</sup> The N.S.W. Political Labor Council finally returned

---

231. *Mercury*, 4 May 1915.

232. *Daily Post*, 8 June 1915.

233. *ibid.*, 21 June 1915.

234. *ibid.*, 4 June 1915.

Anstey's resignation to him, a gesture which was interpreted by Anstey and friends as a personal victory.

The Anstey resignation is important, not so much for the specific criticism it entailed, but because of the rank and file support which rallied to his cause, rather than to the Federal Labor leaders'. The *Daily Post* offered Anstey unequivocal support and spoke with respect of his devotion to Labor principles, his ability in debate and his ability as an author. The editor hoped that Anstey would be treated with full justice for he was "a man the Labor party could ill afford to lose".<sup>235</sup> Labor solidarity had been seriously threatened.

J. Mathews, Labor member of the House of Representatives for Melbourne Ports, recognized this as well as Anstey's popularity when he observed: "The Labor party had gone as close to wrecking itself as it ever had, simply through putting a halo round the head of one man."<sup>236</sup>

Although there was considerable sympathy for Anstey's stand, the Labor movement warmly welcomed the government's announcement of a referendum to give the Commonwealth power to control prices.<sup>237</sup> In the early months of the war, Earle, like other State Premiers, had introduced legislation to regulate the supply and prices of food-stuffs, but it had been defeated by the Legislative Council. The referendum was thus greeted as the people's first real chance to curb the activities of the profiteer and the "avaricious" capitalists.

The referendum, set down for 11 December, had seven parts. It was intended to alter the Constitution to increase Commonwealth powers in seven areas, namely - trade and commerce, corporations, industrial

---

235. *ibid.*, 28 June 1915.

236. *ibid.*, 7 July 1915.

237. See Turner, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

matters, railways disputes, trusts, nationalisation of monopolies and the Senator's term of office.

From the start the plan for a referendum had met strenuous opposition from the forces of conservatism. In the House of Representatives the Liberal Opposition loudly accused the government of forcing party legislation on them, thus dividing the nation when maximum unity was necessary.<sup>238</sup> In the Tasmanian House of Assembly, H.J. Payne moved that the House protest against the proposals because Australia, as an integral part of the British Empire, owed her whole hearted attention and energies to the British cause. The proposals in question would divert attention from that momentous cause. After acrimonious debate the motion was defeated 11 - 6.<sup>239</sup> The *Mercury* preached solemnly of "the callous indifference of the Labor party to the needs of the Empire" and characterised the government's decision to hold the referendum "an act of disloyalty".<sup>240</sup> Every opportunity was taken by the anti-Labor press to compare the Labor party with Germany: by forcing the referendum on the country Labor was acting like Germany forcing war on the world.<sup>241</sup>

Labor was as jubilant as their opponents were hostile. Unionists and branch members alike acclaimed the decision to hold a referendum. For many it was a case of faith restored in the ability and desire of Labor governments to effect change. At the end of June Clifford Hall delivered a vigorous address on the Domain on the necessity of the referendum proposals becoming law.<sup>242</sup> The radical East Hobart branch of the W.P.L. welcomed the referendum as a means of rectifying the

---

238. *Daily Post*, 19 June 1915.

241. *ibid.*, 18 August 1915.

239. *ibid.*, 14 October 1915.

242. *Daily Post*, 1 July 1915.

240. *Mercury*, 24 June 1915.

many injustices of capitalism.<sup>243</sup>

The more oppressive economic conditions became, the more faith was placed in the referendum to rectify social injustice. Letters to the press complained of the increasing cost of food and the increase in rents and attributed them to the greed of merchants and landlords. "Why should avaricious people be allowed to victimize the poor?" demanded "Sufferer".<sup>244</sup> "Tenant" stated that it was "high time" some action was taken by the government to prevent "greedy property owners" from robbing tenants.<sup>245</sup> The question of passing the referendum became more urgent every day, argued the *Daily Post*. "The evidence of combination of the exploiters against the workers is becoming more evident every day and calls for something to be done in the way of nationalising industries such as flour mills, sugar refineries and butter factories".<sup>246</sup>

Every Sunday afternoon during the Winter of 1915 Labor orators on the Domain explained to people why the referendum had to be carried. On 15 June J.J. Lewis, president of the Denison Divisional Council of the W.P.L. told his audience that day by day the referendum became of more vital interest as prices continued to rise and capitalists continued to exploit. Although by means of Wages Boards and Arbitration awards the workers occasionally had their wages advanced, the exploitation which was carried on by that section of people who had control of combines and rings and "honorable" understandings rendered the increase in wages value-less to those who received them. Thus the referendum had to be placed before the people and carried.<sup>247</sup>

---

243. *ibid.*, 15 July 1915.

244. *ibid.*, 14 July 1915.

245. *ibid.*, 17 July 1915.

246. *ibid.*, 14 August 1915.

247. *ibid.*, 18 August 1915.

The *Daily Post* was fervent in its advocacy of an affirmative vote for the referendum. It was argued that the referendum was far more important than any election, State or Federal. Conservative and Liberal opinion that war-time was not the time for a divisive campaign was rejected. If the alterations to the Constitution were desirable before the war, they were ten times more so in the chaotic condition of industrial and economic affairs which the war had precipitated.<sup>248</sup> Figures from the Commonwealth Statistician's office continued to confirm people's daily observations about rising prices. There had been a marked fall in the purchasing power of the sovereign to the extent that £1:0:0 in October 1915 was needed to buy what sh.14:5 had eighteen months previously.<sup>249</sup> Wages on the other hand had hardly increased at all. "If the public of Australia can be made to realise how the capitalists have rushed up prices because the National Parliament had no power to prevent them, the proposals to amend the constitution to these powers will be carried triumphantly", predicted the north west reporter of the *Daily Post*.<sup>250</sup>

During October Labor bodies began organising in earnest. A meeting of State and Federal politicians was called to consider the best way of fighting an effective campaign.<sup>251</sup> An arrangement was adopted whereby every district, town and country, would be visited before December. Senator R. Ready,<sup>252</sup> who acted as secretary to the Tasmanian Federation of Labor members, wrote to the State Divisional Councils spelling out plans of organisation. He looked forward to seeing the united forces of Labor put into action in the coming fight

---

248. *ibid.*, 4 October 1915.

249. *ibid.*, 19 October 1915.

250. *ibid.*, 17 September 1915.

251. *ibid.*, 23 October 1915.

252. R.K. Ready ( ? -1958):  
Tasmanian Senator 1910-17.

for what he called "Australian ideals and democratic progress".<sup>253</sup>  
 Electors were reminded in the press that the rolls closed on 2  
 November and that enrolment was compulsory.

At the end of October it was announced that Andrew Fisher had  
 been appointed Australian High Commissioner in London. His successor  
 as Prime Minister was William Morris Hughes. The *Daily Post* observ-  
 ed critically that Fisher's "elevation" proved how much easier it was  
 for a Labor politician to advance his own interests than those of  
 Labor in general. "Mr. Fisher would have shown a better conception  
 of his duty had he stuck to his work here in Australia and seen the  
 referendum through" rather than retiring to the comfort and ease of a  
 London drawing-room.<sup>254</sup> The editor was somewhat suspicious of Hughes  
 from the beginning; his suspicion increased after the new Prime  
 Minister's first policy speech. At the beginning of November Hughes  
 announced the policy of his reconstructed government to be a vigorous  
 prosecution of the war until final and complete victory was assured.  
 The *Daily Post* was hostile, denouncing his policy-announcement as a  
 "pious platitude"; "if we recollect aright, the government is commit-  
 ted to another war policy - a policy which will enable the Australian  
 people to defeat the enemy within the gates".<sup>255</sup>

Within a few days all hopes of defeating Labor's enemy within  
 the gates were dashed. On 5 October it was reported that the new  
 Prime Minister had decided to call off the referendum. The Labor  
 movement was in uproar. Hughes had agreed to abandon a measure  
 which, as Ian Turner rightly says, "had aroused more enthusiasm than

---

253. *Daily Post*, 23 October 1915.

254. *ibid.*, 28 October 1915.

255. *Ibid.*, 30 October 1915.

any other act of the war-time Labor government."<sup>256</sup> The disillusionment was profound; the disintegration of the party had set in.

The next morning the *Daily Post* began its editorial with the significant announcement that its duty was to the principles and people of the Labor movement and not to the Federal government. It was suggested that the Federal Labor party was in revolt against the Labor movement and that the greatest act of betrayal known to modern political history may have taken place, leaving all connected therewith branded as arch traitors to the people. But the editor diplomatically reserved his final judgment until "all the facts were known".<sup>257</sup> The pain of betrayal was intensified by the gloating attitude of the conservative press: Hughes had recognised that the majority opposed the referendum, exulted the *Mercury*.<sup>258</sup>

As a condition of the abandonment of the referendums, State Premiers had promised to initiate legislation which would in effect grant the Commonwealth the powers desired. Few people were hopeful however of this alternative, as it was generally recognised that Legislative Councils would frustrate attempts to pass the legislation through the State parliaments.

The *Daily Post* was impatient. "The time to formulate the alternative intentions of the Commonwealth government is now, so that the Councils might be made aware of the consequences of obduracy".<sup>259</sup> The editor demanded that the people be given the right of Initiative and Referendum so that they might control the Federal parliament. The next day it was intimated that if the government refused to relieve

---

256. Turner, op. cit., p.79.

257. *Daily Post*, 6 November 1915.

258. *Mercury*, 10 November 1915.      259. *Daily Post*, 9 November 1915.



stress they could expect violence: "there is a point in the affairs of large bodies of men, in circumstances of difficulty and distress, when something must break, and if the trusts are not controlled and prices checked that point will be reached in Australia soon." For history had shown that popular tumult was always the last resort of "an outraged and robbed people".<sup>260</sup> Letters to the press during November and December also castigated the ease with which the government had pushed aside the referendum. The *Daily Post* continued to threaten that the people would not be abandoned without serious consequence, but it was clear that in most States the legislation for granting the Commonwealth increased powers had come to nothing. In Tasmania the Bill was dropped after the first reading in the House of Assembly as it became obvious that the Liberal Opposition and Independent Whitsitt were preparing to vigorously oppose it.<sup>261</sup>

By the end of 1915 there had clearly emerged a division in the Labor movement between those who thought all their energies should be directed towards winning the Empire's war in Europe and those who thought Labor should rather concentrate on winning the class war at home. The class war, noted the *Daily Post* in November, was the greater war.<sup>262</sup> The strong imperialism of some Labor men evinced in the first months of the war was weakening; their support for the war became more qualified than before. Symptomatic of this trend was the *Daily Post's* reaction to the death of Edith Cavell, or more accurately, its reaction to the world reaction. Cavell was a British nurse who worked for the Red Cross in Belgium. Because she had

---

260. *ibid.*, 10 November 1915.

261. *ibid.*, 22 December 1915.

262. *ibid.*, 20 November 1915.

assisted Allied soldiers escape she was court-martialled by the Germans and shot. The world was outraged and Edith Cavell became a martyr overnight. Funds were launched in her name, statues erected in her honour. Dwyer-Gray said he could not understand nor appreciate the world-wide revulsion. The sympathy and adulation he thought misplaced, for in the city of London alone thousands of women had died through starvation, when a superabundance of foodstuffs existed. "No memorials are raised, no pompous religious ceremonial is gone through in honour of the brave wife and mother who starved herself for her husband and child, no monument is erected to perpetuate her memory". By contrast he found that Nurse Cavell had never gone hungry in her life. She had been delicately nurtured, well-educated and had given her life while serving her country - a death many would envy. Why did John Bull become so disturbed at the murder of Miss Cavell, demanded Dwyer-Gray angrily, when he has known for years that hundreds of women and children were killed every day in so-called Merrie England by the cruel competitive system which he built up and defended with as much ardour as he did the House of Lords?<sup>263</sup> The *Daily Post* still held that the wickedness of the Kaiser needed to be fought; it also intended however to fight the wickedness of the capitalist system at home.

Just as the first eighteen months of war had accentuated the diversity of the elements which comprised the Labor party, so had the war accentuated the divisions which marked society at large. Racial animosities, opposing class interests and bitter personal resentments had all disrupted the community. Already the impact of war had

---

263. *ibid.*, 10 November 1915.

heightened the differences which marked people one from another. Tasmanian society at the end of 1915 was divided between rich and poor, eligibles and ineligibles, shirkers and volunteers, Liberals and Laborites, Germans and British, soldiers and civilians. Despite the divisions, there was still however a unity of purpose which held the various groups together. Most people still thought the war justified; most were earnest in their wish that Britain should triumph and that Germany should be thoroughly vanquished. "To talk peace is treachery", wrote the *Daily Post* in December 1915, "and to waver is to be lost".<sup>264</sup> The great majority of Tasmanians would have agreed.

---

264. *ibid.*, 13 December 1915.

CHAPTER TWO :

1916 : year of dissension  
and polarization.

1916 was a year of increasing dissension and conflict within the community. The domestic conflicts succeeded for a while in pushing the war into the background and correspondingly the amounts subscribed to patriotic funds declined drastically.<sup>1</sup> During 1916 Tasmanian society was divided by three referenda and a general election; the long-standing feud between Protestants and Roman Catholics was rekindled; and the State was racked by a fierce outburst of sectionalism. By the end of the year one of the major political parties was irretrievably split.

The first months of 1916 in Tasmania saw the growth of a moral crusade which swept the State in that year. The war seemed to provide a new environment in which moral reform movements flourished. The new conditions with the patriotic emphasis placed firmly on economy, duty and serving one's country provided the necessary atmosphere and stimulus.

From the moment the first men entered camp there had developed a new public interest in venereal disease and the ravages it might inflict on Australia's young men. In the spring of 1914 the public librarian, A.J. Taylor, visited the training camp at Pontville armed

---

1. Broinowski, *Tasmania's War Record*, pp. 193, 198-9.

with 500 copies of a pamphlet entitled "Vice Diseases".<sup>2</sup> The Tasmanian Temperance Alliance shared his concern for the health and well-being of the soldiers and members frequently called at the camp to obtain pledges of abstinence from the men before they embarked.<sup>3</sup> The temperance movement was given a considerable boost when King George pledged in 1915 to abstain from alcohol for the continuance of the war. His action was held up as an example for all to follow. In the same year the Tasmanian parliament passed a law changing the closing hour of hotels from 11.30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Temperance groups were not satisfied with the new hour however and repeatedly pressed for Early (6 o'clock) Closing. They argued that drink detracted from a soldier's efficiency and that temperance reform would assist recruiting by "freeing" some publicans and police and the "waster" element for enlistment. Also, the resultant savings at gaols, hospitals and asylums would greatly reduce the expenses of the State.<sup>4</sup>

In December 1915 a Bill was passed enabling a Referendum to be held to decide the closing hour of hotels. The question was to be put to the electors on the same day as the State election, 25 March 1916. For three months preceding the referendum the Drink Question aroused more interest and passion than either the war or the general election. Supporters of the two major alternatives - 6 and 10 - worked vigorously to gain a victory for their respective causes. The *Mercury*, a supporter of 10 o'clock closing, forecast that the referendum

---

2. *Daily Post*, 22 September 1914.

3. see for example, *ibid.*, 12 March 1915.

4. *ibid.*, 15 December 1914.

would cause an extraordinary amount of bitter feeling and that it would overshadow the far more important matters of State.<sup>5</sup> For already candidates for the election were asked to state their views on early closing and were recommended accordingly.

The Early Closing of Liquor Bars League busied itself organising meetings in the cause of 6 o'clock closing. Members of the various churches were always prominent on the speaker's platform. At a meeting in early January the Chairman, G. Woolnough, pastor of the Disciples of Christ Church, stated with that confidence which springs from righteousness, that they would accept nothing less than victory. After the meeting the audience of about 700, mostly women, marched on Parliament House and demanded to see a number of politicians. After one Legislative Councillor responded to their demands, they were eventually persuaded to leave the building.<sup>6</sup>

The temperance army marched up and down the State haranguing audiences on the Evils of Drink. Helen Barton, introduced as the renowned Scottish temperance advocate, toured the island with arguments designed for each district. In Zeehan she emphasized the money spent on drink: money which could be ill-spared in the depressed mining areas. What about the workers? she asked in this traditionally working class electorate. Should not the hotel employees be able to finish work at 6 o'clock like everybody else?<sup>7</sup> But finally and above all it was a moral question: drink was an evil of itself and caused other evils to flourish. Around the island 6 o'clock advocates made

---

5. *Mercury*, 13 January 1916.

6. *ibid.*, 11 January 1916.

7. *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, 12 February 1916.

impassioned appeals to keep young people from drink and men from drink and thus prevent them from beating their wives and killing their children.

In the Hobart area early closing advocates often used to their advantage revelations from Licensing Court cases. W.J. Fullerton,<sup>8</sup> Liberal M.H.A. and prominent Church of England layman claimed that court cases had shown that many hotels were nothing but "dirty drinking shops and little drinking hells".<sup>9</sup> Some like A.J. Taylor the energetic public librarian, claimed to belong to no temperance party, but thought that 6 o'clock closing would benefit the community as a whole.<sup>10</sup> But moderation was rare. H. Benjafield of Moonah declared Drink to be "ten times worse than the Devastating Hun." The "red plagues of syphilis and company were drink's most active henchmen", said Benjafield, and "between the hours of 6 and 10 was the time when drink waged his infernal war against the human race."<sup>11</sup> The metaphor of drink as a powerful enemy was frequently employed. In 6 o'clock advertisements drink was usually portrayed as a ferocious tiger.

If it was morally right to vote for 6 o'clock it was also patriotic. "Temperance is not merely a moral virtue", said the *Daily Post*, "but about the most effective form of patriotism those not serving at the front can show."<sup>12</sup> The pledge of the King to abstain from alcohol was frequently cited as an example of patriotic conduct and reference were often made to Lloyd George's admonitions about the threat of drink to the nation: "We are fighting Germany, Austria and

---

8. W.J. Fullerton (1888- ? ) barrister; M.H.A. for Denison 1913-19.

9. *Mercury*, 1 March 1916.

11. *ibid.*, 25 April 1916

10. *ibid.*, 16 March 1916.

12. *Daily Post*, 12 July 1916.

Drink and as far as I can see the greatest of these deadly foes is Drink."<sup>13</sup> It was also argued that it was unpatriotic to waste money on drink when it could usefully be invested in a war loan. Thus W.G. Thomas, the Rural (Anglican) Dean of the West Coast supported Early Closing as "an exercise in strict economy that the wealth of the nation might be conserved so that the inevitable burden of the war tax [would] be lessened."<sup>14</sup>

Protestant clerics and laymen were among the most fervent advocates of Early Closing; Catholics were less interested. Archbishop Patrick Delany remained neutral, offering neither cause support,<sup>15</sup> while the Catholic Federation had earlier expressed itself in favour of 10 o'clock.<sup>16</sup> There were few Catholics among the prominent temperance campaigners.

The drink question cut across party lines. Several Liberals, including the new leader of the Opposition, Methodist lay preacher, W.H. Lee,<sup>17</sup> took the stand for 6 o'clock. With him were W.J. Fullerton, H.J.M. Payne, J.C. McPhee<sup>18</sup> and Labor men, J.H. Cleary,<sup>19</sup> R. Cosgrove<sup>20</sup>

---

13. A Marwick, *The Deluge*, p.68. 15. *Mercury*, 21 March 1916.

14. *Z.D. Herald*, 23 March 1916. 16. *Daily Post*, 14 April 1915.

17. W.H. Lee, K.C.M.G. (1873-1963): M.H.A. for Wilmot 1909-46; Premier and Chief Secretary 1916-22; Premier and Treasurer 1922; Treasurer and Minister for Education 1922-23; Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Railways 1923; Minister for Lands, Works and Agriculture 1928-32; Minister for Lands and Works 1932-4; Premier and Treasurer 1934.

18. J.C. McPhee, K.C.M.G. (1878-1953): M.H.A. for Denison 1919-34; for Franklin 1941-6; Chief Secretary and Minister for Railways 1922-3; Premier and Treasurer 1928-32; Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Agriculture 1932-4.

19. J.H. Cleary (1856-1937): M.H.A. for Denison 1916-28.

20. R. Cosgrove, K.C.M.G. (1884-1969): shop assistant, retailer, union organiser; M.H.A. for Denison 1919-22; 1925-31; 1934-58; Minister for Agriculture 1934-9; Premier 1939-40; Premier and Minister for Education 1940-5; Premier, Treasurer 1945-7; Premier and Minister for Education 1948-58.



and E. Dwyer-Gray. On the other hand several Liberal supporters (including Sir Neil Elliott Lewis and the *Mercury*), Independent Whitsitt and Labor Premier Earle campaigned for 10 o'clock. Strongest support for 10 came from some city businessmen, including C.D. Davis and G.P. Fitzgerald, who was chairman of Cascade Brewery. The Brewery had a strong stake in defeating Early Closing, because it not only monopolized the beer trade but also owned many of the hotels which would be adversely affected if Early Closing became law.

The case for 10 o'clock was a difficult one to argue in the face of the moral and patriotic fervour of the temperance opposition. It was put in the main by the Licensed Victuallers' Association who were immediately disadvantaged by having to pit self-interest against the higher moral purpose of the temperance people. One *Z.D. Herald* correspondent suggested that hotelkeepers were being unfairly penalised. Publicans would be ruined financially if prevented from doing business after 6 p.m.<sup>21</sup> One of the leading exponents of late closing was J.R. Snowball, Federal Secretary of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, who argued that the government benefited enormously from the revenue of the liquor interests.<sup>22</sup> A *Mercury* correspondent pointed to the hopeless position of the 10 o'clock party. "None but those who are directly or indirectly interested in the financial concerns of the liquor traffic, have appeared as champions of the liquor traffic." By contrast: "the advocates of early closing of hotel bars have nothing to gain by the success of their efforts except the elevation of the community in moral tone and general happiness."<sup>23</sup> Snowball finally tried to discredit the temperance cause by pointing to the German

---

21. *Z.D. Herald*, 22 March 1916.

22. *ibid.*, 10 March 1916.

23. *Mercury*, 6 March 1916.

name of one of their speakers, Rev. C.E. Schafer, but such was the extent of the support for temperance that the allegation was disregarded.

During February and March newspaper columns filled with letters passionately defending one hour against another. Other letters were concerned with a different moral issue: whether or not it was proper to screen films on Sundays. Before the day arrived for the "Liquor Referendum", Hobart ratepayers were called upon to express an opinion on the Sunday pictures question. There were eight picture theatres in Hobart and most showed films from 1 to 11 p.m. continuously, seven days a week. There was no censorship either at a Federal or State level and there had been considerable agitation aimed at preventing the screening of lewd imported films. Some people particularly objected to the screening of "suggestive" films on Sundays. Not only were children escaping the moral instruction of the church, they were being positively corrupted in dark picture halls instead.<sup>24</sup>

Hobart ratepayers went to the poll on 2 March and voted by a small majority in favour of Sunday picture shows. The vote is an indication of the views of the propertied class only, the more powerful of whom enjoyed four votes to the ordinary ratepayer's one.<sup>25</sup>

All adults on the other hand were free to vote on the question of hotel hours. The result was an overwhelming victory for Early Closing. 42,713 voted for 6 o'clock as against 26,153 for 10. As well some 3,951 persons voted for other hours. The results show that most of the large population centres voted solidly for 6. The electorate of Denison showed the biggest majority with Taroona being the only

---

24. *ibid.*, 26 January 1916.

25. *Daily Post*, 1 March 1916.

subdivision to show a majority for 10 o'clock closing. The only areas with a significant majority for 10 were the west coast mining centres of Gormanston, Queenstown, Linda, Mt. Lyell and Renison Bell. Zeehan and Waratah were pro-6 however, as were the towns along the north west coast.<sup>26</sup>

Some unhappy Tasmanians saw the referendum result as wowserism triumphant. "Old Bark Stripper" presaged worse things to come. "Now that our brave men are fighting at the front," he lamented in a letter to the press, "these same temperance people could carry a successful referendum for total prohibition, the doing away of smoking, the evil of young girls hanging around the streets at night, Sunday pictures, steamer excursions, picnics in the bush, eating too much, Tattersalls and last but not least regulating the time we shall go to bed and the time we shall get up."<sup>27</sup> Another argued that the 40,000 majority consisted of spinsters and young men who paid no rates.<sup>28</sup> The *Mercury* blamed professional demagogues, fanatics and ignorant young people,<sup>29</sup> a claim which was strongly disputed by Syd. Cummins of the Tasmanian Temperance Alliance who claimed that victory was achieved by the intelligent and industrious citizens of the state, by religious leaders, scholastic leaders, directors, lawyers and business people.<sup>30</sup> But as the *Mercury* pointed out no-one could really know how people voted; one could only judge by promises and probabilities. One probability is that those who were accustomed to visiting hotel bars in the evening voted to retain that pleasure, whereas those who were not so accustomed (i.e. the great majority of women) would be more likely to vote 6.

---

26. *ibid.*, 6 April 1916.

27. *Mercury*, 10 April 1916.

28. *ibid.*, 17 April 1916.

29. *ibid.*, 29 March 1916.

Clearly women played an important part in determining the overwhelming majority for 6. The electorate of Denison, where temperance won its biggest majority, was the only electorate where female electors outnumbered their male counterparts: 9,595 women cast a vote in Denison compared to 8,414 men.<sup>31</sup> At the west coast mining centres on the other hand, where men heavily outweighed women numerically, the strongest majorities for 10 were recorded.

Passions were easily inflamed during wartime and the Liquor Referendum had certainly been attended by much heat and excitement. The question had divided the community and the accompanying vituperation was widespread. Insult and slander replaced reasonable argument. "A great deal of bitterness has arisen from the contest," commented the *Mercury*, "and this will not be easily allayed."<sup>32</sup>

The Referendum was held on the same day as the State election. The Premier opened the Labor campaign on 3 February with a speech at Bellerive: "The first and always uppermost consideration in the policy of our Government will be how best to assist in bringing this war to a victorious and permanent end."<sup>33</sup> If this was to be the slogan of the election, remarked the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, there would be very little political division among the people.<sup>34</sup> In the event the State economy became a major election issue and there was much political division.

A major theme of the *Mercury's* campaign against the Labor government was spelled out as early as January when the editor wrote that

---

30. Ibid.

31. *Report on Parliamentary Elections 1916-1950* (Hobart, 1950).

32. *Mercury*, 27 March 1916.

33. *Z.D. Herald*, 5 February 1916.

34. *ibid.*

the career of the Earle government had been marked by woeful extravagance and slipshod methods of administration.<sup>35</sup> The specific area of extravagance was said to be public works. The Liberal Opposition promptly followed the *Mercury's* lead when Sir Neil Elliott Lewis<sup>36</sup> at Battery Point denounced Labor's "orgy of financial extravagance".<sup>37</sup> The leader of the Opposition, Walter Lee, confined himself to a more modest criticism of Labor's wheat deal, which although giving the people cheap bread, had cost the State over £33,000.<sup>38</sup>

On the question of economy there was a clear difference between the Labor and Liberal policies. Generally speaking, the Labor government thought it more important to keep men employed than to limit borrowing and spending. Thus they praised their Minister for Mines, Jim Ogden for keeping the mines open at the beginning of the war by government purchase of fifty *per cent* of the ores. W.A. Woods was a clear exponent of Labor policy: "No Labor government would propose to cure unemployment by an application of soup tickets - Labor's way is to find work for the workers at decent wages - as a right, not as a charity."<sup>39</sup> The *Daily Post* asked Lee sarcastically whether he intended to economise on wages as well as works if returned to power.<sup>40</sup> Senator J.J. Long described Lee's policy as one of stagnation and

---

35. *Mercury*, 14 January 1916.

36. N.E. Lewis, K.C.M.G. (1857-1935): educated at Oxford; admitted to the English Bar 1885; M.H.A. for Richmond 1886-1903; for Denison 1909-22; Attorney-General 1892-4; Attorney-General and Premier 1899-1903; Treasurer and Premier 1909, 1909-12; Treasurer 1916-22; Chief Secretary 1922.

37. *Mercury*, 15 March 1916.

38. *ibid.*

39. *Daily Post*, 7 March 1916.

40. *ibid.*, 25 February 1916.

suggested the Liberals be renamed the "one railway, one road, one bridge and one idea party".<sup>41</sup> Earle warned that the Liberal policy of retrenchment would lead to "conscription through starvation".<sup>42</sup>

Few electors seemed to care however what the various candidates said. Reports from the west and north west coasts spoke of sparsely attended election meetings and empty halls. People seemed to be quite apathetic about the election results. Still, some of the candidates were writing to friends and newspapers describing successful meetings. "It seems," noted the *Z.D. Herald* reporter, "that if one elector and a dog turned up to hear the views of the speaker that meeting would not be considered altogether a failure."<sup>43</sup> The conflict over hotel hours was the only issue which held people's interest. Twelve days before the poll the *Mercury* reported that interest in politics throughout the Lyell district was practically dead.

There were also reports of Labor supporters staying away from polling booths because of Earle's failure to implement the Labor platform. "The Earle Ministry's confession that they have not started their party's policy has led to a split so that one [supporter] recently estimated that hundreds of Labourites would not vote at the coming election", noted an observer.<sup>44</sup> The *Mercury* made much of the disaffection: "for the sake of keeping in office the Earle government broke its pledge to the Labor Conference and the Labor leagues."<sup>45</sup> The editor suggested that Earle, far from being more loved than ever, as the *Daily Post* suggested,<sup>46</sup> was likely to be replaced by Lyons.<sup>47</sup>

---

41. *ibid.*, 7 March 1916.

42. *ibid.*, 18 March 1916.

43. *Z.D. Herald*, 3 March 1916.

44. *Mercury*, 19 February 1916.

45. *ibid.*, 16 March 1916.

46. *Daily Post*, 23 March 1916.

47. *Mercury*, 18 March 1916.

Indeed Earle's neglect of working class interests had alienated many; so incensed were some workers there were serious proposals to oppose Labor candidates with union nominees.<sup>48</sup> The *Daily Post* tried to dissolve the dissension by defending Earle and his inaction, pointing out that if voters had given the government a clear majority they could have passed more effective legislation. The Labor paper issued stirring calls for unity and solidarity. Referring to the likelihood of a "real split" the *Daily Post* proclaimed: "There never was a time in the history of the Labor movement in Tasmania, or Australia, when so urgent a call was sent out for the workers to fall into line and dropping all small differences, show voting strength."<sup>49</sup> The editor realised well that the differences were not so "small". Letters expressing dissent were censored and correspondents critical of the Earle administration were sharply reminded that the way to forward working class interests was to return a Labor government.

The Earle government was attacked from both the left and the right. Conservative forces, attempting to whip up a mood of jingoism, initiated an extensive smear campaign aimed at identifying the Labor cause with the German enemy. "Labor rule or German rule, it is all a matter of degree," advised the *Mercury* in February, "and with very little difference even in that."<sup>50</sup> In the north, too, the Labor party had to defend itself against imputations of German sympathies and disloyalty. Robert Coplestone of Scottsdale, driven by a burning hatred of socialism, wrote frequent and provocative letters to the *North Eastern Advertiser*. In a letter to the newspaper one month before the election, he asked if it were true that Labor had endorsed

---

48. *Daily Post*, 12 January 1917.

50. *Mercury*, 18 February 1916.

49. *ibid.*, 24 January 1916.

a "half bred German" for Bass. He implied that there were German teachers in State schools, a German inspector of schools and that one teacher, dismissed from the north east because of disloyalty, had since been promoted by Labor Minister for Education, Lyons.<sup>51</sup> Another correspondent, "Anxious", stated that all candidates should declare their nationality.<sup>52</sup> A writer over the pseudonym "Swede", announced that although a life-long Labor supporter, he was now forced to change his allegiance because of the "half-bred German" standing in Bass.<sup>53</sup> Lyons was finally provoked to answer the charges. There were no German inspectors and no German teachers transferred or promoted; there were four Tasmanian born teachers of German parents. "Have all the Liberal bogies about Labor been buried," queried Lyons, "that they must endeavour to manufacture one out of the war?"<sup>54</sup> It appeared so, though few people in the autumn of 1916 paid any attention.

The Labor candidate in question, G.G. Becker,<sup>55</sup> born in Tasmania of German parents who had emigrated to Australia 62 years before, was returned to parliament with the top Labor vote. His vote was second only to Alec Marshall's, a patriotic Liberal who was soon to be instrumental in establishing Loyalty Leagues.

Overall Labor secured a majority of votes but a minority of seats. Labor with 36,398 votes returned 14 members; the Liberal party with 35,939 votes returned 15 members. One independent, J.T.H. Whitsitt, also secured a seat. Although Labor had for the first time won a

---

51. *North Eastern Advertiser*,  
25 February 1916.

53. *ibid.*, 21 March 1916.

52. *ibid.* 14 March 1916.

54. *ibid.*, 17 March 1916.

55. G.G. Becker ( ? - ? ): M.H.A. for Bass 1912-21; 1934-41; Attorney-General, Minister for Education and Minister for Forestry 1927-28; Chairman of Committees 1914-16.



majority of votes in a State election, there was no cause for celebration. The Labor vote was in fact considerably smaller than that recorded for the party at the 1914 Federal election. In Darwin 8,585 votes had been cast for Labor in 1914 compared to 6,846 in 1916; in Denison 9,752 compared to 8,430; in Wilmot 5,255 compared to 5,066 and in Bass 9,731 compared to 8,313.<sup>56</sup> (In Franklin there was no Labor candidate in 1914, so there is no basis for comparison.) Thus 4,668 people who had voted Labor in 1914 had refrained from doing so in 1916; the Liberals, on the other hand, in the same four electorates lost less than half that number of votes.

This suggests that apart from there being a number of people in both parties who were less inclined to vote at a State election than at the Federal election, there were also a significant number of Labor supporters who deliberately withheld their support from Earle. It was in Darwin, the traditional Labor stronghold, that Labor's vote dropped most dramatically. There, and to a lesser extent in Bass and Denison, unionists and branch members held fast to their threats and stayed away from the polls. Disaffection in Labor ranks had cost Labor the government.

Temperance advocates were quick to attribute Labor defeat to Earle's stated preference for 10 o'clock closing. Such a link is doubtful. In Franklin, where electors voted 3:2 in favour of 6, Earle secured a remarkable personal triumph, topping the poll for the whole State. In Denison where electors voted 2:1 in favour of 6, Sheridan, a Labor candidate topped the poll, while the ardent Liberal temperance advocate, W.J. Fullerton, just managed to retain his seat. Cosgrove

---

56. Figures from *The Parliament of Tasmania: Report on Parliamentary Elections 1916-1950* Hobart, 1950, and *Commonwealth Parliamentary Handbook* 1938.

(Labor) and McPhee (Liberal), both active campaigners for 6, (and both future Premiers) were defeated. Contrary to expectations, the effect of the temperance issue on the election results was slight. What was indeed remarkable was the extraordinary discrepancy between the large majority for 6 and the very slender majorities of the parties in the various constituencies. It seems that traditional party loyalties determined how people voted, not their preference for a particular hour.

Finally, Labor's majority of votes suggests that as yet few people paid heed to the accusations of disloyalty and Germanism levelled against the party. The Labor government was defeated in 1916 by discontent on the left, not the false charges or jingoism of the right.

The election campaign, though it aroused little interest, was nevertheless one filled with abuse, slander and misrepresentation. The Labor party in particular was the object of scurrilous and defamatory attack. In his returning member's speech, C.R. Howroyd,<sup>57</sup> Labor member for Bass, remarked that there had never been any occasion in his memory - and he had taken part in every election since 1901 - when there had been so much personal slander and innuendo as this one.<sup>58</sup>

Personal slander and innuendo were however rife in Tasmania in 1916 outside and apart from election campaigns. The hatred of things German, so apparent in 1915, hardened. In January 1916, a letter pointed to the presence of the Vienna trio in Hobart. Are they British citizens, or as their name implies, German? asked the writer.<sup>59</sup> A

---

57. C.R. Howroyd (1867-1917): born England; M.H.A. for North Launceston 1906-9; for Bass 1909-17; elected M.H.R. for Darwin 1917 but died before the declaration of the poll.

58. *Daily Post*, 6 April 1916. 59. *Mercury*, 18 January 1916.

*Daily Post* editorial of the same month provides a fine example of Labor's seeming affinity for racist views. Headed "No More Huns!" it read: "we do not care for Chinamen as immigrants, but we prefer Chinamen to Huns. We want the Huns in Australia roped in - for their good and ours."<sup>60</sup> The racist hatred of Germans expressed by the Labor paper was far more savage than that emanating from its conservative counterpart. Partly this was a response to the continual accusations of disloyalty; it was Labor's patriotism which was in question, never the Liberal party's and certainly never the *Mercury's*. (Thus the *Daily Post* was able to claim some months later in defence of its loyalty: "we have been as anti-Teutonic as the Prime Minister."<sup>61</sup> It was an attitude which seemed to come easily.)

Members of parliament were also alert to the German menace. On 21 January in the House of Assembly, W.J. Fullerton gave notice of his intention to ask the Premier if it was a fact that Captain John Bowie Wilson of the Intelligence department was married to the daughter of a naturalised German named Stoltenhoff and if so would the Premier call the attention of the Federal authorities to the undesirable position of an officer with German connections occupying such a confidential position. The Speaker suggested the propriety of withdrawing the question; Fullerton refused to do so. Finally the notice of the question was allowed to stand but the House adjourned without an answer being given and the question lapsed.<sup>62</sup>

---

60. *Daily Post*, 27 January 1916. The editorial clearly belongs to that "long tradition of Labor leaders reinforcing racial antagonisms in Australia", to which H. McQueen makes reference in "Glory Without Power" op. cit., p. 353.

61. *Daily Post*, 16 August 1916. 62. *Mercury*, 21 January 1916.

Meanwhile prominent housewives of Hobart had formed an association to promote patriotic shopping. The movement, aimed at the encouragement of Australian and British goods at the expense of those from German and enemy nations, had already taken strong root in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia, when the Mayoress, Mrs. Macleod decided to call a meeting in Hobart. She felt that women being responsible for most of the shopping, were in a powerful position to boycott German manufactures.<sup>63</sup> Some women generously felt that they should extend preference to goods from Allied nations, but this suggestion was not popular and was promptly denounced by the *Mercury*, which reminded women that the Allied nations already owed Britain enough as it was.<sup>64</sup> In Launceston a more protectionist organisation was formed. There it was believed that resolutions of the Hobart meeting were ineffective and that the real object should be first to develop local industries and shut out German trade altogether. The associations from the north and south combined to form the Enemy Trade Defence League, which body sent a deputation to wait on the Premier. The League urged him to ask the Minister for Customs to place a prohibitive tariff of 100-200% on enemy goods and a high tariff on the goods of neutral countries. Earle's response was cordial: he was in full agreement with their movement and would forward their resolution to the Federal government.<sup>65</sup>

The Federal government meanwhile was busy issuing further proclamations aimed at penalising Germans. In January the Cabinet issued a proclamation aimed at extirpating German influence by excluding persons of enemy origin from having any holdings in public companies in Australia. In April regulations were drawn up which prohibited

---

63. *ibid.* 22 January 1916.

65. *ibid.*, 22 March 1916.

64. *ibid.*, 27 January 1916.

the making of any contract for the sale of land to an enemy subject and provided against the acquisition in any contingency of the freehold title to land by an enemy subject.

North west coast residents were unusually vigilant to the activities of the German (or Austrian) born in their midst. An extraordinary meeting of the Table Cape Council was convened to consider the employment of a man of German parentage on local public works. Residents of the district were especially resentful because this "enemy" had been retained in employment when local married patriots had been dismissed. Councillors noted the enemy-born employee's Labor allegiance and recommended his internment.<sup>66</sup>

The citizens of Stanley were further outraged when they heard that their recruiting sergeant, S.T. Creagh, had been attacked by one, Constantine, said to be of Austrian origin. Constantine had been driven to the act by what he saw as ill-treatment of his Swedish friend Ostenberg. Ostenberg had suffered prolonged persecution during the last year by Fr. T.J. O'Donnell and others, as a result of his connection with the Tasmanian Colonising Association and what O'Donnell called his "German-sounding name". He had attempted to leave the State by steamer for Sydney, but Sgt. Creagh, invoking the War Precautions Act, prevented him. When Creagh in a hotel bar subsequently denied any responsibility for his action, Constantine had grown excited and plunged a knife into the sergeant's chest. The assailant was swiftly incarcerated in the local gaol.<sup>67</sup>

On the west coast, the local branch of the Australian Natives Association, concerned about the purity of the Australian race and

---

66. *ibid.*, 7 April 1916; *Z.D. Herald*, 6 April 1916.

67. *ibid.*, 14 April 1916; *Daily Post*, 8 April 1916.

the depravity of the German, proposed a resolution calling on parliaments to legislate to prevent intermarriage between Australians and Germans. The proponent of the motion, T. Coxall, observed that it was undesirable for persons of British blood to mix with a barbarous race, but he was unable to convince a majority of his listeners and the proposal was defeated.<sup>69</sup>

In Middleton there was a British subject who feared that Tasmania was in imminent peril of being taken over by Germans. In frequent letters to the *Mercury*, William Baillie warned of the "hold" the enemy had over sections of the State. "In the section of the [D'entrecasteaux] Channel from Flowerpot to the lower end of Middleton ... practically all the hill country facing the Channel is held by Germans."<sup>68</sup> All German or pro-German residents should be deported proclaimed Baillie. Another signed "British born", suggested that if they could not be deported they should certainly be interned.<sup>70</sup> One victim of these patriotic inquisitions was F.A. Wolf of Middleton, who attributed Baillie's attack to vindictiveness born of envy. Wolf had arrived from Germany when eight months old and had been living in Australia for fifty years. In a plea for justice he asked if fifty years made no difference, why should one hundred or for that matter one thousand. "Where does the German cease and the British begin, or when and where is the line to be drawn?"<sup>71</sup>

The case of Gustav Weindorfer illustrates well how the war affected men's minds, how moderation and reason gave way to extremes of emotion and how men were easily wronged and unjustly accused. Weindorfer was born in Austria in 1874 and had arrived in Australia

---

68. *Daily Post*, 26 April 1916.

70. *ibid.*, 20 June 1916.

69. *Mercury*, 14 June 1916.

71. *ibid.*, 23 June 1916.

in 1900. He had been Honorary Chancellor to the Austrian Embassy in Melbourne from 1901 to 1906, when he married at Stowport in north west Tasmania. He then lived on a farm at nearby Kindred and in 1910 both he and his wife, Kate, bought land in Cradle Valley, on which two years later he began building Waldheim Chalet.<sup>72</sup> When the war erupted in Europe, he wrote to his parents praying that they be spared the horrors of what he predicted would be "the most gigantic struggle the world had ever witnessed."<sup>73</sup> Weindorfer, so many thousands of miles away from the battlefields, could not know the extent to which the war would impinge on his own life.

Gustav Weindorfer was regarded by all who knew him as quite loyal to the British Cause. He was a good friend of H.J. Payne and A. Marshall, two very patriotic Liberal members of the House of Assembly and indeed he had tried to enlist in the A.I.F. At the end of April 1916 his wife died after a long illness and in the same month he received word of his mother's death in Austria. While recovering from this double blow he received a letter from a friend called Theresa Thomas of Devonport: "I think I should tell you what people are saying. Of course, I tell them they are wrong but it will be better that you know. They say you are a spy and a pro-German and that is why you are out on the mountain."<sup>74</sup>

Indeed people had been speculating on Weindorfer's motives for going to Cradle Mountain; they were also reporting him to the police. Charles Bailey of Bishopsbourne informed the Superintendent of Police at Deloraine that a friend had confided to him that "four foreigners"

---

72. Family Papers of Major Ronald Edgar Smith, (a close friend of Weindorfer) NS 234/11/1, T.S.A.

73. *ibid.*, NS 234/12/3, 20 September 1914.

74. *ibid.*, NS 234/12/4, 6 May 1916.

had taken up land in the vicinity of Cradle Mountain. As the land was considered in Bailey's opinion to be quite useless, it was his firm belief that the property had been taken up for no other purpose than to erect a wireless station to relay morse code to enemy ships.<sup>75</sup> A Deloraine resident reported to the police what he deemed to be decidedly suspicious activities. A car had passed by his house containing "four strange gentlemen" who appeared to be taking observations of the surroundings. His attention had been drawn to them because "one" spoke a foreign language, which to the best of his knowledge was German.<sup>76</sup> Weindorfer probably had been taking observations of the surroundings. He was a keen naturalist and with friends (including Professor Flynn of the University of Tasmania's Zoology department) made frequent excursions to the desolate country around Cradle Mountain. A kitchen stove they dismantled and carried to Waldheim Chalet was reported to the police as "Heavy Machinery"; a clothes line and wire for transporting firewood from the bush to the house became "Wireless Aerials."<sup>77</sup>

Weindorfer was also the victim of government proclamations. He had to release his shares in the North West Cooperative Freezing and Canning Company and when his wife died he was unable to have her land at Cradle Valley transferred to his name. In September 1916, he received a letter from W. Carnie of the Ulverstone Club of which Weindorfer was also a member. "I write to give you an opportunity to forestall an insult. Feeling ran high at the mention of your name last night and one who has just lost a near relative at the war constitutes himself

---

75. Tas. Police Dept. Records. T.S.A.

76. . ibid.

77. Smith Papers, NS 234/11/1. T.S.A.



a leader to 'purge' the club. He gave notice to have 'W' expelled."<sup>78</sup>  
 Weindorfer immediately resigned from the club. The day before his  
 dog had been poisoned with strychnine.<sup>79</sup>

Inevitably many naturalised citizens became increasingly embittered and disillusioned with so-called British fair play and justice. A letter to Weindorfer from a German-born friend points to the excesses of patriotism on the part of many Australians and the effects on enemy-born or Australian-born of German parentage:

People seem to be losing control of themselves.  
 One never knows what the next day will bring.  
 I always had the greatest respect for the calm  
 and deliberate temperament of the Australians,  
 but if they continue doing as they are they will  
 soon take the cake from our friends the Italians  
 as regards the lack of control of their feelings.  
 It is a great pity for it does not do them or  
 anyone else any good. However things that cannot  
 be cured must be endured. My most ardent wish is  
 to get a thousand miles away from everybody. The  
 whole thing gets so much on my nerves that I am  
 at most times incapable of fixing my mind on  
 anything. These eternal quarrels and abuses are  
 enough to drive any man silly. <sup>80</sup>

Gustav Weindorfer did get away from everybody. He was to spend an increasing amount of time secluded from fellow human beings at Waldheim Chalet on Cradle Mountain.

Happily hatred of things German was but one aspect of Tasmanian patriotism. People continued to raise money for the Allies, offering support to Russian, French and Belgian "Days" and for Australian soldiers and their dependents. There was however a noticeable decline in the amounts of patriotic funds raised: whereas £19,394 was collected for the Belgians in 1915, only £5,149 was collected during 1916;<sup>81</sup>

---

78. *ibid.*, NS 234/12/3, 14 September 1916.

79. *ibid.*

80. *ibid.* Letter by T. Gonley, 22 October 1916.

81. Broinowski, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

£11,712 was donated to the Mayor's Patriotic Fund in 1914-15 compared to only £432 during 1916;<sup>82</sup> £3,086 was contributed to the Disabled Soldiers' Fund in 1915, compared to £1,210 in 1916.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand the donations to French Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A fund remained steady. Overall however there was a clear decrease in the amounts people were willing to subscribe. This may have been due to flagging enthusiasm, limited resources, or both.

Anzac Day, 1916, was one of the more popular money-raising occasions of that year. The first anniversary of the Gallipoli landing in April provided Tasmanians with an opportunity to express their new found pride in Australia. In Tasmania it was decided to commemorate the landing on 28 April rather than the twenty-fifth, because the latter date was Easter Tuesday and as such considered unsuitable for fund-raising. Altogether £620 was collected at the Anzac celebrations. It was one of the larger sums raised that year, yet the *Mercury* felt called upon to explain why it was not more substantial: the weather was poor and "for close on two years people had been giving all the time."<sup>84</sup>

The day was not merely set aside for money-raising. More important, Tasmanians took the opportunity to honour the soldiers' deeds at Gallipoli. It was as if the Anzacs had validated Australian nationalism. The significance of 25 April 1915, wrote the *Mercury*, was that "Australia then took up the duties of manhood;" she had undergone "the baptism of fire" which marked admission to the "full grown family circle of British peoples."<sup>85</sup> Australia was now a "blood brotherhood in the best sense", noted the editor, with "our Australian rights,

---

82. *ibid.*, p. 198.

84. *Mercury*, 29 April 1916.

83. *ibid.*, p. 199.

85. *ibid.*, 28 April 1916.

Australian liberties, our Australian responsibilities."<sup>86</sup> The new national self-consciousness did not however suggest to the *Mercury* a weakening of Imperial ties. Australian nationalism existed within the wider framework of British imperialism. The editor suggested that the defeat at Gallipoli should be heeded as a warning: it should be remembered that Australia was vulnerable and that "all the whites in the British Empire" were still fewer in number than Germans. Australians, the *Mercury* exhorted, should learn to depend on themselves so that they would not need to rely on "the meek Hindus, the sullen Bengalis, the naked Kaffirs, or Indian squaws" for their defence.<sup>87</sup> It was always understood that there were two Empires: the white British Empire to which Australia proudly belonged and the "nigger Empire" which was to be exploited by the white Empire and at all costs kept in subjection.

To commemorate the deeds of the Anzacs the newly formed Fortieth Battalion led by the A.I.F. Band marched from Claremont Camp to the Domain. The crowds of admirers along the way, less restrained than those which farewelled the Twelfth, burst into rounds of cheering and applause. The *Daily Post* reporter remarked on the tone of triumph which pervaded the celebrations and thought it no doubt "due to pride that every patriotic Australian feels in the deeds of valour performed by our men at Gallipoli."<sup>88</sup> The Chief Justice, Sir Herbert Nicholls,<sup>89</sup> was certainly proud. The Anzacs had done a deed, he exclaimed, "the like of which man had never adventured before." Proceeding with this grandiose notion, Sir Herbert stated: "What the Australians did

---

86.    ibid.

87.    ibid.

88.    *Daily Post*, 29 April 1916.

89.    Herbert Nicholls, K.C.M.G. (1867-1940): M.H.A. for Central Hobart 1900-8; Attorney-General 1903-4.

on the first Anzac Day was as great a feat of arms as had ever been accomplished from the dawn of history down to the present day."<sup>90</sup>

The next month Australians celebrated the Empire as the object of their devotion and allegiance. Empire Day had assumed a new meaning since the war had plunged Australia into battle alongside the Mother Country. Nevertheless Empire Day 1916 was a much quieter occasion than Anzac Day. At the request of the King no parades of troops or reviews of any kind were held. The *Mercury* was at pains to stress that the absence of display and ceremonial did not denote a lack of interest.<sup>91</sup> Besides, Empire Day was a day for children.

It was also a day for propaganda. On that day children were taught their duty to the Empire and urged to be proud of the red on the map. In the Queenstown State school for example, infants were lectured on the advantages to be enjoyed under British Imperialism. The British were a peace-loving people, the teacher told the no doubt confused children. Cecil Rhodes was held up as a great example of an Empire Builder - an example all were urged to emulate. The proceedings terminated with several choruses of "Unfurl the Flag" and "The Sea is England's Glory" followed by the National Anthem and three cheers for King George.<sup>92</sup> Throughout the State,<sup>93</sup> school children were indoctrinated with authoritarian principles. At the Zeehan schools children were ushered into special classrooms where they were called upon to salute the flag and listen to an address by Warden Fisher on the glorious history of the British Empire. At the South Queenstown

---

90. *Daily Post*, 29 April 1916.

91. *Mercury*, 25 May 1916.

92. *Z.D. Herald*, 26 May 1916.

93. Although only examples from the west coast are given, reports from schools elsewhere reveal similar activities and speeches.

school, Councillor Briggs addressed the pupils on the value of obedience: "obedience to officers had gained wonderful victories for our armies; obedience to parents, teachers and those in positions of authority over them would be sure to bring success to the scholars of the school in their school and future life."<sup>94</sup>

The response to Empire Day suggests however that it held little interest compared to Anzac Day. The former was being eclipsed by the latter: the Anzacs' blood had sanctified a new national day. Speaking on 24 May to the Queenstown Central State school, one Councillor foretold of the day when Empire celebrations would be altogether overshadowed by the celebrations of Anzac Day. Anzac would in future be celebrated as the first thrilling event of the history of Australia.<sup>95</sup> There was also the personal significance: on that memorable day eight Queenstown boys had fallen.<sup>96</sup> The *Daily Post* agreed that Empire Day had served its purpose and that all patriotic celebrations should in the future be confined to Anzac Day. Certainly the relatives and friends of the boys fallen at Gallipoli, it was noted, took more interest in that anniversary than the day set aside for the glorification of the Empire. Moreover, "Anzac Day, unlike Empire Day, would always bring with it a reminder of the beginning of our greatness."<sup>97</sup>

That a fervent new Australian nationalism had been born can be seen in the change of emphasis in the *Mercury's* editorial appeal for recruits. The *Mercury*, which had once expounded at length on Australia's duty to the Motherland, now deplored that tendency (still evident in certain Liberal politicians' speeches) to put the call for

---

94. *Z.D. Herald*, 29 May 1916.

96. *ibid.*

95. *ibid.* 26 May 1916.

97. *Daily Post*, 25 May 1916.

recruits as a call to help Britain. "We are fighting primarily because we believe our own New Country in danger - our country, our liberties and the honour of our homes."<sup>98</sup> Again: "It cannot be too definitely known and realised that we are fighting our own battle in this War, not merely rendering filial and chivalrous assistance to a distressed Motherland."<sup>99</sup>

Although temporarily overcome by the sudden surge of Australian nationalism, Tasmanians still retained their strong identity as Tasmanians. The one did not submerge the other. Evidence of the pride Tasmanians felt in their State can be seen in the determined efforts to form an all-Tasmanian battalion - the Fortieth. Early in 1916, the District Commandant had received a telegram from the Chief of General Staff notifying that the whole of the Fortieth Battalion of the Tenth Infantry Brigade would be raised in Tasmania. The decision, it was felt, would greatly stimulate recruiting and the *esprit de corps* of the battalion. It was later rumoured and subsequently confirmed that the battalion which was to have been raised entirely in Tasmania, was being composed of Victorians as well. Tasmania was only to supply 21 officers and 567 men out of the total of 33 officers and 1,011 men.<sup>100</sup> The editor of the *Mercury* commented that it would be an unfortunate thing indeed if the wishes of Tasmanians to form their own battalion, were disregarded.<sup>101</sup> Senator Pearce, Minister for Defence, was forced to explain that Tasmania simply had not provided enough men to constitute a full battalion - and even as it was, Tasmania's obligations in regard to reinforcements were being fulfilled by Queensland. "I am loath to point out," wrote Senator Pearce, "that for what has happened

---

98. *Mercury*, 4 February 1916.

99. *ibid.* 5 October 1916.

100. *ibid.*, 16 March 1916.

101. *ibid.*

the manhood of the State is to blame."<sup>102</sup>

The intimation that Tasmanians were doing less than their duty stung their pride, with the result that a special effort was made in the next few days to raise the full number of men. When the Commandant announced at a function at Claremont Camp that the Battalion was complete, those present responded with a great burst of cheering - and no doubt with relief. During the applause the Colonel added quietly that Queensland still had to provide Tasmania's reinforcements.<sup>103</sup> Commenting on the part of the battalion in the Anzac celebrations, the *Daily Post* editor asked "were there not proudly marching past to an admiring populace the fighting fortieth? It is too soon perhaps so to term them but we know they will do or dare every man if they get the opportunity."<sup>104</sup> Said their commanding officer Lt. Col. Lord: "They only asked the opportunity to do great things."<sup>105</sup>

Tasmanian newspapers frequently featured lists of the State's achievements and predictions of still greater things to come. In March the *Daily Post* claimed that Tasmania would become the most prosperous State in the Commonwealth - "a hive of manufacturing industry".<sup>106</sup> The opening of the Hydro-Electric scheme by the Governor-General on 6 May was the occasion of various ambitious pronouncements on Tasmania's future greatness. Everyone confidently predicted that the Hydro scheme would do wonderful things for the State. The Chairman of Mt. Lyell claimed that it was going to be the biggest thing industrially in Australia.<sup>107</sup> The *Mercury* considered that "no greater event [had] ever happened in the history of the State since it was discovered."<sup>108</sup>

---

102. *ibid.*, 18 March 1916.

103. *Daily Post*, 6 April 1916.

104. *ibid.*, 29 April 1916

105. *ibid.*

106. *ibid.*, 7 March 1916.

107. *Mercury*, 8 May 1916.

108. *ibid.*

No longer would the island State be dismissed as a mere holiday playground or sneered at as a "Sleepy Hollow," for with the advent of the Hydro scheme, Tasmania, it was said, had come into her birthright.<sup>109</sup> It remained for successive governments, warned the *Mercury* prophetically, to see that the power thus secured was wisely used and with such foresight that it would always prove a benefit and never a curse to the State.<sup>110</sup>

Although Tasmanian pride in the State was strong in 1916, regional loyalties proved, for a time, stronger. While the establishment of the Hydro scheme was being applauded in Hobart, in Launceston it was fiercely denounced as yet another example of discrimination against northern interests. During the winter months, much heat was engendered by an impassioned outburst of sectionalism. The old battle between north and south flared again, while the west coast ("still so largely a province of Victoria", as the *Mercury* noted<sup>111</sup>) and the Huon district in the south expressed strong sectional protests. The north, the west and the Huon all charged Hobart with neglect of, and indifference to, their respective interests.

Northerners in particular felt particularly resentful at the centralization of all power and authority in Hobart. During the election Bass candidates of both parties pledged to work for the removal of the capital to Launceston. Probably one of the reasons for Becker's high vote was his earnest promise in this regard. The *Mercury* scornful of northern claims, claimed that "needless dissension and hostility" was arising out of the continual "North-South talk."<sup>112</sup>

---

109.      *ibid.*

111. *ibid.*, 8 February 1916.

110.      *ibid.*

112. *ibid.*, 14 April 1916.



Northerners however would not be so easily silenced. A letter to the southern press warned that "from Launceston westwards they were organising, holding meetings and were in deadly earnest."<sup>113</sup> In the north east of the State the movement won strong support. The sympathetic *North Eastern Advertiser* pointed out that the north east and north west were after all the "richest areas of the State."<sup>114</sup>

In July, the Northern Tasmanian League was formed. Its avowed aim was to further the interests of the north of the State. Other objects included the centralisation of railway management in Launceston, direct mail service between Melbourne and Launceston and Burnie, the extension of the hydro-scheme to northern Tasmania and the equal division of the government's tourist grant between the north and the south.<sup>115</sup> The establishment of the northern league immediately provoked the formation of a Southern Defence League. The *Mercury* regretted that southern residents had been forced to use in "defence of their rights against Northern aggression the energies which they would so much prefer to devote to defence of national rights against foreign aggression." They had been forced to protect themselves against "the malignity so openly and shamelessly displayed towards Hobart" by the Northern League.<sup>116</sup> The Southern Defence League soon transformed itself into the State Progress League, a change which, in equating southern interests with State interests, further outraged their adversaries in the north. Hobart remained the capital; northern wrath remained unappeased.

At the height of the strife the neutral *Z.D. Herald* observed that "we have the wholly unwelcome [spectacle] of two important sections

---

113. *ibid.*, 26 July 1916.

115. *Daily Post*, 2 August 1916.

114. *N.E. Advertiser*,  
9 June 1916.

116. *Mercury*, 29 June 1916.

of the people in more or less bitter opposition."<sup>117</sup> Two other groups in bitter opposition were the sectarian Protestants and Roman Catholics. Since 1914 Catholics had been working vigorously to extend the Catholic Federation so that it might become an effective power in the struggle for State aid to their schools. By September 1914 there were 16 branches in Tasmania.<sup>118</sup> Two months later there were 30 branches with 3,000 members.<sup>119</sup> This movement was strongly opposed by Protestant churches, Protestant politicians including N.K. Ewing and by the *Mercury* newspaper, all of whom passionately defended the "national school system" and Bible instruction in all schools. The *Mercury* also frequently implied that the Irish were disloyal and that the Pope was engaged in intrigue with the Kaiser.<sup>120</sup> This last accusation brought angry denials from Archbishop Delany, who defended the Pope's neutrality and his call for peace. Moreover, in Australia, said Delany, Catholics had been every bit as loyal as Protestants.<sup>121</sup> Fr. J.H. Cullen, a Hobart priest, fiercely denounced the *Mercury* for its blatant "anti-Irish and anti-Roman Catholic prejudice."<sup>122</sup>

While Tasmanians were preparing for the first anniversary of the Anzac landing, there occurred in Ireland the Easter Uprising against British rule. The importance of the rising in Australia, was, as Richard Davis has noted, that it encouraged tendencies already present. In Tasmania at least it did not initiate any new developments. To quote Davis, "the anti-Catholics were able to use the rebellion as proof of the fundamentally disloyal and unpatriotic designs of the Roman Catholic church, while their opponents regarded these attacks as but

---

117. *Z.D.Herald*, 30 June 1916.

120. *Mercury*, 13 March 1916.

118. *Daily Post*, 9 September 1914.

121. *ibid.*, 10 January 1916.

119. *ibid.*, 14 November 1914.

122. *ibid.*, 13 January 1916.

another example of unjust treatment already manifested in the refusal to consider Catholic educational grievances."<sup>123</sup> The growing hostility of the conservative press and Protestant sectarians was influential in pushing the Catholic authorities and the Labor movement closer together.

The Labor movement meanwhile was splitting apart. After the State elections the unionist and parliamentary wings of the Labor movement had become further estranged. At a meeting of the Denison No. 1. branch of the W.P.L. in April, it was observed with regret that the two sections were drifting apart "in opposite directions."<sup>124</sup> W.A Woods' proposal for the amalgamation of the Trades and Labor Council and the W.P.L. to form a Labor Federation was rejected by radical unionists who preferred what they called "straight out industrialism." The suspicion and distrust of politicians was profound. This was expressed at a meeting of the Trades and Labor Council in May, when a motion to co-operate with the amalgamation committee was discussed. J. O'Neill of the Carters' and Drivers' Union opposed the motion because "politicians always turned unions down." He recommended that unions nominate their own candidates who would be "straight out industrialists." L. Patten of the Waterside Workers' Federation also expressed hostility to any form of "political domination"; he rejected the amalgamation proposal on the grounds that his union would be debarred from unilateral strike action. The motion to affiliate with the amalgamation committee was lost on the voices.<sup>125</sup> A meeting of the United Laborers Union also decided to oppose the proposed Labor Federation.<sup>126</sup>

---

123. R.P. Davis, *State Aid and Tasmanian Politics 1868-1920* (Hobart, 1969), p. 82.

124. *Daily Post*, 11 April 1916.

125. *ibid.*, 6 May 1916.

126. *ibid.*, 16 May 1916.

The anti-parliamentary bias of unionists strengthened and grew more widespread during the winter of 1916. The Railway Employees Union was another union already critical of the parliamentary party's lack of achievement. In June the president, Adam Martin, made a scathing public attack on Labor M.H.A., J.A. Guy, for suggesting that the government grant a pay increase of sixpence a day to the lower paid men of his union. "[Guy's] action in requesting the government to grant such a paltry increase is tantamount to acquiescence in a policy of reducing the standard of life."<sup>127</sup> The incident prompted a full scale criticism of parliamentary democracy and political Labor parties. Martin's ideas reveal a strong syndicalist influence. After noting that political action did not seem to serve the interests of Australian workers because Labor parliamentarians were more inclined to oppose the working class than to assist it, Martin concluded:

This is the logical outcome of the attempt on the part of the Australian proletariat to circumvent an obstacle instead of having it removed, the obstacle being the want of economic power on the part of the working class. It should be abundantly clear to those who possess social perspicacity in the smallest degree that the State machine will only function for that section of society who possess economic powers. In the opinion of the writer, the wage workers can only attain such power by organising themselves into one united body on the industrial field at the point of production on the job where they work.

Martin advocated "one union for all workers"; the ballot-box, so far as workers were concerned, was simply a "delusion and a snare".<sup>128</sup>

This attack drew a sharp rebuke from *Daily Post* editor Dwyer-Gray, who continued to urge the value of political action. Martin's penetrating analyses nevertheless continued to be published by the

---

127. *ibid.*, 2 June 1916.

128. *ibid.*

*Daily Post*. His criticism was thorough. Like all syndicalists he abhorred the state: "the political state is simply a device set up by the property owning class to discipline the proletariat and to regulate the division of spoils, nothing more". Wages Boards and Arbitration Courts were dismissed as "buffers which protect the employers". The only effective way to combat the ruling propertied class was through industrial organisation based on the principle that "an injury to one is an injury to all".<sup>130</sup>

Industrial unionism was given a boost in Tasmania by the actions of certain employers who refused to employ union labour at Arbitration award rates. Employers in the building industry locked out unionist builders' labourers rather than pay the extra twelve shillings a week in salary awarded by Arbitration court.<sup>131</sup> The issue said the *Daily Post* was of "continental significance".<sup>132</sup> It certainly attracted attention. P.J. Smith, general secretary of the Australian Federation of Builders' Labourers arrived in Hobart and advised his intention to press for penalties against the employers. He was followed a week later by the president, J. Millard. Tasmanian unionists meanwhile were brought to realise that their power would be greatly increased if they joined a few large industrial unions instead of the numerous small trade or craft unions, all serving the same function but acting separately and without effect. Scattered unions meant dissipation of energies and financial waste. In mid-June the industrial disputes committee of the Tasmanian Trades and Labor Council called a meeting with a view to forming one union for the building industry.<sup>133</sup> Two

---

129. *ibid.*, 10 June 1916.

132. *ibid.*, 6 June 1916.

130. *ibid.*

133. *ibid.* 12 June 1916.

131. *ibid.*, 3 June 1916.

days later, the United Laborers Union resolved to amalgamate with the Australian Federation of Builders' Labourers.<sup>134</sup> The secretary of the U.L.U., T.W. Bentley, stated that closer organisation was essential: industrial unity was necessary to meet such powerful combinations as the Employers' Federation. Industrial unionism "would enable the workers to secure the full measure of economic justice which [was] their right and which under the present system [was] impossible to get."<sup>135</sup> On 30 June a meeting of the delegates of five unions associated with the building industry decided unanimously to combine into one union. The *Daily Post* hailed the event as the beginning of the era of the industrial union in Australia.<sup>136</sup>

Since the beginning of June the builders' labourers had held out against hunger and the employers. The distress of the unionists and their families was partially relieved by a "lock-out fund" composed of donations from all over Australia. Their most ardent supporter in parliament was probably David Dicker,<sup>137</sup> who berated the workers of other industries for failing to strike in sympathy with the labourers. Elected first secretary to the Tasmanian branch of the Timber Workers' Union at the age of twenty-one, Dicker revealed "a degree of militancy unusual for a Tasmanian born unionist" of that time.<sup>138</sup> Addressing a Labor meeting in the King's Theatre, Hobart, in July, Dicker declared: "The man who stands in the way of industrial unionism, be he union secretary, Trades-hall president or M.P., is a traitor to the movement."<sup>139</sup>

---

134. *ibid.*, 14 June 1916

135. *ibid.*

136. *ibid.*, 30 June 1916.

137. D.E. Dicker (1887-1967): timber worker, union organiser, orchardist; M.H.A. for Franklin 1902-22.

138. M. McRae "The Tasmanian Labour Party and Trade Unions, 1903-23" in *Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 5., No. 1, p. 5.

139. *Daily Post*, 24 July 1916.

Equally convinced of the necessity of stronger and closer unionism was James McDonald,<sup>140</sup> Labor M.H.A. and president of the Federated Mining Employees' Association. In May McDonald had proposed that the F.M.E.A. amalgamate with the A.W.U. "It must be quite patent to all," he told the annual conference of the F.M.E.A., "that closer combination of all workers is becoming daily more essential." He trusted that those assembled before him would give due consideration to "the one big union proposal."<sup>141</sup> McDonald used his words loosely. What he really aimed at was not the syndicalist's one big union based on industrial units but a mass union - an extended A.W.U. - based on geographical units. Only a few Tasmanian unionists as yet seemed to grasp the essential differences between industrial unionism and mass unionism. But for the moment the differences were less important than the general agreement on the need for stronger unionism freed from the restrictive trade and craft barriers. A ballot on McDonald's amalgamation proposal revealed strong support for the idea. Of the fifty *per cent* of Tasmanian F.M.E.A. members who voted, 976 favoured the amalgamation against 102, who opposed it.<sup>142</sup>

The support accorded stronger unionism signified a vote of no confidence in the political Labor party. The view that political activity was a waste of time and that the ballot-box was (as Martin had put it) "a delusion and a snare" gained increasing acceptance among unionists. "Political Labor seems to be impotent," wrote a *Daily Post* correspondent at the end of July. "It simply functions

---

140. James McDonald (1877-1947): miner and union official; M.H.A. for Bass 1915-16; M.L.C. for Gordon 1916-22; 1934-47; Honorary Minister 1934-9; Attorney-General 1940-6; Minister for Mines without portfolio 1946-7.

141. *Daily Post*, 15 May 1916.

142. *ibid.*, 22 September 1916.

in the capitalist state as any other political party does. It is now the day of industrial unionism. Yes, of the One Big Union. Education, agitation, organisation and when that is complete, the path will open up clearly enough."<sup>143</sup> A reader with similar views was "Black Hawk" who wrote: "parliament as at present constituted has outlived any usefulness ... unionists should give up the fetish of one man, one union and go in for wholesale amalgamation, but not with politicians ... my advice is not to be tied up with them in any shape or form, but make your own demands [backed] by your own strength."<sup>144</sup>

A small number of Labor men began to extend their criticism of capitalism to criticism of the war itself. Their recently acquired "class-consciousness" enabled them to view the war in a new light. Some merely withdrew their support from the war effort; others made hostile pronouncements. In the Deloraine Police Court in June, Levi Davis, trade unionist, was judged guilty of having made "disloyal statements, prejudicial to recruiting". It was alleged that Davis had stated all who volunteered for the front were loyal fools; that English "money-bags" had started the war and that the talk of atrocities in Belgium was just "newspaper talk". Davis was fined £5 and fifteen shillings costs or in default, two months' imprisonment.<sup>145</sup>

In the middle of August the Trades and Labor Council complained that the builder-employers were still flouting the Arbitration award with apparent impunity. Not until 15 September - three and a half months after the dispute began - were the first employers brought to court to face charges arising from their alleged breach of the Commonwealth Arbitration Act. It was said that this was the first action

---

143. *ibid.*, 31 July 1916.

145. *Mercury*, 21 June 1916.

144. *ibid.*, 14 September 1916.



of its kind initiated under the Arbitration Act.<sup>146</sup> Three employees were found guilty by Police Magistrate Wise and fined, the first £25, the second and third £10 each. (The maximum fine was £50). Charges against three other employers were dismissed. The general effect of the lock-out on the workers seemed to be radicalization of their ideas. The incident heightened their awareness of class distinction and privilege, created disillusionment with the arbitration process and provided a stimulus towards the formation of an industrial union embracing all building industry employees.

That Tasmanians spent so much time and energy in 1916 fighting moral, sectarian, political and sectional battles is a reflection of the very real distance which separated them from the battlefields of Europe. Indifference to the progress of the war reached a height in the winter of 1916. The first excitements and thrill of being at war had faded and the consequent lack of enthusiasm was reflected in the fall both in the amounts of patriotic funds raised and the number of men enlisting. After the special effort in March to raise the requisite number for the Fortieth Battalion, the numbers enlisting had steadily decreased. During July and August only 538 recruits were obtained compared to four times that number for the same period the year before.

Enthusiasm for the war was waning. Even fresh atrocity stories failed to provoke moral outrage. The *N.E. Advertiser* deplored the increasing tendency to view atrocities, or "stupendous outrages" as that paper chose to call them, with callousness or flagrant indifference. It was argued that the British conscience needed

---

146. *Daily Post*, 12 September 1916.

reawakening.<sup>147</sup> The *Z.D. Herald* also observed that Tasmanians were growing apathetic about the war. "The amount of interest which is being displayed by Tasmania in regard to the formation of the new Australian Army<sup>148</sup> and the effort being made to furnish the proportion of men required from this State do not inspire us as being either particularly enthusiastic or pronouncedly patriotic."<sup>149</sup> Four months later in May, the editor noted that recruiting which was quiet on the mainland, was dead in Tasmania.<sup>150</sup> What was needed in his view was conscription: only by that means would Tasmania be able to fulfil her commitments. Many came to share this view, particularly those who saw conscription as a means of forcing the despised shirker into the firing line. Very rarely did ordinary people relate their advocacy of conscription to the exigencies of the military situation. More often they were motivated by personal considerations and resentment. Those with relatives at the front often resented the freedom of other people's sons and brothers to choose not to go. "The desire for compulsion," said the *N.E. Advertiser*, "is largely prompted by this exasperated feeling."<sup>151</sup> Single working men resented the fact that they were forced by unemployment to enlist while the rich could afford to stay at home. Norman Summers of Russell expressed a popular sentiment when he argued that straight-out conscription was desirable because it was more "fair and democratic" than the "economic conscription" practised by employers.<sup>152</sup>

Newspapers were more likely to pay heed to military considerations.

The Mercury was a reluctant advocate of conscription. By March 1916

147. *N.E. Advertiser*, 7 January 1916.

148. The "new army" refers to the additional 50,000 men Hughes offered the British authorities in November 1915.

149. *Z.D. Herald*, 28th January 1916. 151. *N.E. Advertiser*, 12 May 1916

150. *ibid.*, 9 May 1916. 152. *Daily Post*, 29 February 1916

the paper had decided that "the war had brought us to such a condition that no man could any longer claim the right to be his own master."<sup>153</sup> Yet the *Mercury* felt compelled to apologise for its decision: "Readers of the *Mercury* are aware that we held out against conscription even in the limited sense introduced into Great Britain until the need was definitely shown and the demand was made by the responsible military advisers of the Government."<sup>154</sup> The *Labor Daily Post* was equivocal on the subject. At the beginning of the year its view was that conscription was so much preferable to defeat that no man could hesitate a moment if convinced that defeat would follow unless conscription were adopted. But the editor cautioned that conscription would not receive his support unless the military authorities declared it a vital necessity. Moreover conscription of wealth would have to accompany conscription of life.<sup>155</sup>

Others in the Labor movement were more resolute. The annual conference of the A.W.U. in January unanimously denounced conscription as being "opposed to the spirit of our time and race."<sup>156</sup> W.E. Shoobridge,<sup>157</sup> a prominent member of the W.P.L., returned from a Yarra Bank anti-conscription meeting convinced that the protest against conscription was another phase in the great struggle being waged by the workers against the forces of militarism and capitalism.<sup>158</sup> In April the Hobart branch of the Federated Liquor Trade Employees Union and the Municipal Employees Association both passed resolutions condemning conscription. Labor Premier, J. Earle, when interviewed the same month replied he was not in favour of conscription at that time.<sup>159</sup>

---

153. *Mercury*, 1 March 1916. 155. *Daily Post*, 5 January 1916.

154. *ibid.*, 10 April 1916. 156. *ibid.*, 31 January 1916.

157. W.E. Shoobridge (1846-1940): M.H.A. for Franklin 1916-19; 1922-28; for Wilmot 1929-31.

158. *Daily Post*, 23 March 1916. 159. *ibid.*, 15 April 1916.

The *Daily Post* continued to prevaricate, although clearly it was not opposed to conscription on principle: "If it is not a military necessity ... then conscription would be a crime. If on the contrary, it is a military necessity, then to postpone it is a crime."<sup>160</sup>

More Labor people were committing themselves - against conscription. On 10 and 11 May in Melbourne a special interstate trade union congress was held. Tasmania was represented by five delegates - J. Lewis, S. Champ, R. Cosgrove, G. Bigwood and W.E. Stafford - elected by the Trades and Labor Council. A manifesto drawn up by the congress and widely circulated, argued that conscription meant working class subjugation and the destruction of trade unionism. A resolution expressing uncompromising hostility to conscription of life and labour was passed 258,018 votes to 753.<sup>161</sup> A congress in Hobart the following week also recorded its "uncompromising hostility" to conscription. The mover of the resolution argued that it was not conscription for war purposes that the ruling class wanted but industrial conscription which would shackle the workers for years to come.<sup>162</sup> At the same time the Tasmanian Government Railways' Employees Association entered an emphatic protest against the possible introduction of conscription, it being anti-democratic and "equal to a reversion to chattel slavery."<sup>163</sup> In Launceston the radical No. 2 branch of the W.P.L. recorded its total opposition to conscription.<sup>164</sup>

Meanwhile people speculated what the Prime Minister would do when he returned from Britain. Would he introduce conscription or not? Since Hughes had been in England he had been fêted and lionised.

---

160. *ibid.*, 18th April 1916.

163. *ibid.*, 18 May 1916.

161. *ibid.*, 12 May 1916.

164. *ibid.*, 19 May 1916.

162. *ibid.*, 19 May 1916.

He had also revealed his aggressive militarism. No longer was the war deemed a sad necessity to guarantee liberty : it had become a good in itself. At a Mansion House banquet Hughes declared that the war had "saved us from degeneration and decay. We were in danger of losing our greatness and becoming flabby."<sup>165</sup> Hughes thought it remarkable that a representative of the Australian working-class should be received by the ancient majesty of the City of London and given its ancient privileges. Others thought so too, but for different reasons. An English M.P. when speaking against compulsion at Ashford, wondered what the Australian Laborites thought of Hughes for advocating conscription in England, when Australian Labor was all but unanimously against it.<sup>166</sup> The *Mercury* wondered the same thing. Now that Hughes was an Imperial statesman and no longer a class politician, commented the editor, it would be interesting to see whether his supporters would like the change.<sup>167</sup> The *Daily Post* refused to recognize a change. The paper ridiculed Joseph Cook for his prediction that the Prime Minister would return to Australia "full of compulsion." Had not Hughes stated that in no circumstances would he send men out of the country to fight against their will, objected the *Daily Post*.<sup>168</sup>

Hughes returned to Australia at the end of July buoyant with enthusiasm, determined to commit Australia totally to the war. Speaking at his first stop, Perth, Hughes thundered against the German menace: "No punishment [was] too great for the arch-criminals of Germany". The Prime Minister looked forward to the day when they would be placed in the dock and made to suffer for their sins. "If

---

165. *Mercury*, 20 April 1916.

167. *Mercury*, 6 July 1916.

166. *Z.D. Herald*, 27 May 1916.

168. *Daily Post*, 3 June 1916.

anyone deserved death they did," cried Hughes, "and the wrath of God in the shape of the Russian legions on the one front, and the British and French armies on the other were now flying upon them."<sup>169</sup> The conscriptionist press welcomed Hughes with open arms. "Mr. Hughes has come back converted," announced the *Mercury*.<sup>170</sup> Conservative commentators vied with each other in paeans of praise : Hughes was hailed as a king.

Labor men reacted differently. They felt disgust at the deification and sycophantic adulation heaped on the Prime Minister by his former opponents. But above all, they were disgusted with Hughes. "Hughes the Australian Labor man, the uncompromising foe of monopolies, of landlordism, of the exploiters of the common people ... is now the guest of Royalty, the confidant of Tory statesmen, the favourite of dukes and duchesses and the recipient of banquets from capitalist exploiters and Stock Exchange gentry," wrote an irate John Ball to the *Daily Post*. "There is nothing Mr. Hughes advocates today, that the greediest exploiter need be afraid of. While Hughes is heralded by the master classes as the saviour of the Empire, poor Australia was never more firmly in the grip of the capitalist than this day."<sup>171</sup>

Meanwhile Hughes' erstwhile supporters amassed their forces against the possible introduction of conscription. At the annual conference of the Tasmanian W.P.L. in Launceston at the end of July, a motion by the conservative Launceston No. 1 branch in favour of conscription met with an almost unanimous defeat. E. Dwyer-Gray then moved that the introduction of conscription was inimical to the civil and national interests of Australia and should be resorted to only to

---

169. *Mercury*, 2 August 1916.

171. *Daily Post*, 20 June 1916.

170. *ibid.*

save Australia from foreign invasion. The motion was seconded by W.E. Shoobridge and carried by the conference.<sup>172</sup> The same week, the Trades and Labor Council in Hobart decided, at the request of the anti-conscription League in Melbourne, to take sympathetic action with other anti-conscriptionists in Australia. The Council sent five guineas to the Melbourne League as a token of practical and moral support.<sup>173</sup> At a meeting in mid August the Council passed a motion recording its uncompromising hostility to conscription and pledging opposition to any Labor member of parliament who lent his support to a government which favoured conscription. It was further resolved to send a copy of the resolution to the Prime Minister and the leader of the Labor Opposition in the Tasmanian parliament.<sup>174</sup> The following week on the west coast the Lyell branch of the F.M.E.A. announced it was opposed to "conscription in Australia on any terms whatever."<sup>175</sup> Letters to the *Daily Post* railed against the iniquities of conscription, some lamenting that already militarism was present in Australia. John Ball asked cynically why Hughes should not be appointed dictator of Australia: with the help of the returned soldiers he could then stamp out the few remaining freedoms left in Australia.<sup>176</sup>

Hughes, it seemed, was set on introducing conscription in Australia but was faced with massive trade union and Labor party opposition. If compulsion was introduced as a regulation under the War Precautions Act, violent protest would no doubt erupt. If a Bill were put through parliament it would certainly have been defeated in the Senate. The decision to hold a referendum was in effect a compromise between what Hughes saw as national needs and party interests. Reactions were mostly

---

172. *ibid.*, 29 July 1916.

175. *ibid.*, 21 August 1916.

173. *ibid.*, 31 July 1916.

176. *ibid.*, 24 August 1916.

174. *ibid.*, 14 August 1916.

hostile; it was opposed by those who favoured conscription and those who did not. The former felt that Hughes had evaded his responsibility in foisting the decision on the people. "The decision of the Federal Ministers to hold a referendum as to conscription," wrote ex-Premier Henry Dobson, "has proved a shock to the community. Its weakness is considered deplorable."<sup>177</sup> Premier Lee also expressed shock and disapproval; he had expected a firm pronouncement.<sup>178</sup> The *Mercury* deplored the descent from Hughes' previous attitude of "high resolve and clear determination."<sup>179</sup> One impatient Tasmanian went so far as to suggest that Hughes should be presented with a white feather for shirking his duty.<sup>180</sup>

Australia was however given a month's reprieve. If 32,000 recruits were raised in September and half that number in each successive month, conscription would not be necessary. Tasmania's quota for September was set at 1,100 and the State War Council immediately resumed efforts at recruiting. A special train was hired to carry a band and recruiting speakers to country areas in the north and north west. Local recruiting bodies were urged to appoint more women to their committees: women, it was suspected, exerted a peculiarly powerful influence over men's minds. Thus, as the bloody battle of the Somme raged on the other side of the world devouring thousands of lives, recruiters went out in an effort to convince men to fill the gaps.

The Premier suggested that such was the seriousness of the position, the House should adjourn for a fortnight so that members could take part in the recruiting campaign. The proposal was opposed by some Labor men who objected to telling others to enlist while they remained

---

177. *Mercury*, 31 August 1916.

179. *ibid.*,

178. *ibid.*

180. *ibid.*, 5 September 1916.



comfortably at home. On the division, five Labor members - Dicker, Cleary, Ogden, Guy and Becker - voted against the proposed adjournment,<sup>181</sup> an action which resulted in numerous accusations of disloyalty. "We know our enemies now," advised Andrew Park of Dover in Dicker's electorate.<sup>182</sup> He declared Roger Casement an innocent compared to Dicker, which was strong indictment indeed considering Casement had been recently judged guilty of high treason. Dicker was also singled out for opprobrium by another correspondent who attacked among other things Dicker's "flamboyant disloyalty."<sup>183</sup> The *Mercury* strongly encouraged this definition of Labor radicals as traitors. Commenting on an anti-conscription meeting in the Trades-hall at Broken Hill, the *Mercury* noted that the chairman's name was Constantine. "The idea suggests itself," said the editor, "that possibly at Broken Hill there are five hundred Germans or Bulgarians or Austrian Dagoes masquerading as good citizens of the Commonwealth."<sup>184</sup>

The recruiting campaign of September saw a remarkable revival of patriotic enthusiasm. The opening meeting of the campaign in Hobart set the tone for those throughout the rest of the State. The Town-hall was filled to capacity so that an overflow meeting had to be held in the Mayor's Court Room. The admiring audience was addressed by its new heroes, the returned soldiers. The main address was given by Colonel Cyril St. Clair Cameron, acclaimed by the *Mercury* as "the man of the hour."<sup>185</sup> It was not what he said that counted, but that he had done his bit. The returned soldier represented a new and powerful phenomenon in Australian society. He assumed the roles of instructor, mentor and policeman all in one; he was also the supreme repository

---

181. *ibid.*, 6 September 1916.

182. *ibid.*, 11 September 1916.

183. *ibid.*, 14 September 1916.

184. *ibid.*, 27 July 1916.

185. *ibid.*, 13 September 1916.



The Prime Minister's decision to call up single men under the existing provisions of the Defence Act in anticipation of a victory for his referendum proposal, was a tactical blunder. It strengthened the radical opposition in the Labor movement and convinced doubters that in his impatience to impose conscription, Hughes was indeed a rabid militarist. At an interstate Trade Union Congress in Melbourne, the introduction of compulsory home service was condemned and it was decided to hold stop-work meetings throughout Australia on 4 October in protest. In Tasmania only the miners on the west and north east coasts, fell into line. Stop-work meetings were held at Gormanston, Queenstown, Linda and Cornwall where the unionists passed resolutions to the effect that they would show solidarity with the trade unionists of other States in whatever action they might take to defeat conscription.

Most Tasmanian Labor parliamentarians professed to be as determinedly hostile to conscription as their trade union brothers. In discussion of the Referendum Bill in the Senate, Tasmanian Labor Senators Ready, Guy and Long all spoke strongly against conscription although they favoured the referendum as the best means of ascertaining the people's wishes.<sup>188</sup> Senator Ready condemned the call-up of single men before the Referendum had been taken; he also observed that the conscription cry was a popular one in Tasmania and correctly predicted that those who took the opposite view would incur much odium and be termed disloyal and unsympathetic to the Empire. Senator Guy spoke in moral terms. To him conscription was "iniquitous, oppressive, hateful and a repulsive system." He doubted the right of any man to send another to his death. Senator Long was moved by more practical considerations. Australia needed her remaining men at home. It was a

---

188. *Daily Post*, 23 September 1916.

slander to say that she had not enough; she had done magnificently and the fall in enlistments was inevitable as the numbers ran out. Of Tasmania's Labor representatives in the House of Representatives W.H. Laird Smith and J. Jensen,<sup>189</sup> Minister for the Navy, supported Hughes' conscriptionist stand, while King O'Malley, to the fury of west coast anti-conscriptionists, remained silent. In the Tasmanian parliamentary party only the leader, Earle and C.H. Howroyd defected, leaving twelve Labor members of the House of Assembly to campaign against conscription.

The *Daily Post* after "deep consideration" backed the NO cause and was the only daily newspaper in Australia to do so. Conscious of the endless charges of disloyalty which were now being levelled against Labor, the editors Dwyer-Gray and Milford McArthur were at pains to point out that although anti-conscriptionist they were very patriotic. "Mr. Hughes and his supporters have no monopoly of patriotism," stressed Dwyer-Gray.<sup>190</sup> The reasons for the *Daily Post's* decision were varied. The primary and pragmatic reason was that the Labor movement had decided for NO and the paper saw itself as the mouthpiece of the Labor movement. "To advise otherwise," said the editor, "would be false to the doctrines of the great party."<sup>191</sup> Other than that, the *Daily Post's* stated reasons for opposing conscription were that militarism should not be allowed to become paramount to civil authority, that voluntarism had not been given a fair trial and that conscription would denude an already sparsely populated country

---

189. Jans Jensen ( ? -1936): orchardist; M.H.A. for George Town 1903-9; for Wilmot 1910; Chief Secretary and Minister for Railways 1909; M.H.R. for Bass 1910-19; Minister for the Navy 1915-17; Minister for Trade and Customs 1917-19; M.H.A. for Bass 1922-23; 1928-34.

190. *Daily Post*, 28 September 1916.

191. *ibid.*, 29 September 1916.

of men needed for industry and defence. The Labor press had always been strong believers in the "populate or perish" slogan: "An empty continent must remain a permanent invitation to aggression."<sup>192</sup>

Both sides to the conscription debate set about winning the hearts and minds of the people. The Prime Minister was anxious to start the campaign for YES and as early as 20 September had contacted all Liberal premiers asking them to act as chairmen to the National Referendum Councils in their respective States. Lee was pleased to co-operate and appointed an executive committee as the basis for the YES campaign in Tasmania. The committee consisted of Lee, Earle, E. Mulcahy<sup>193</sup> (Liberal M.H.A.), Rev. J. Brown of the Congregational church and Rev. J. Burge of the Methodist church. Arrangements were made for both the Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Opposition, Joseph Cook, to tour the State and all churches were circularised, their assistance solicited both in the pulpit and on the platform. Bishop Stephen was particularly eager to commit his clergy and laity to the cause while the Women's Council of Church Work was the first of the lay organisations to pledge assistance.<sup>194</sup> Branches of the Referendum Council were established in most municipalities, usually by the local municipal councils.

A swift polarisation of attitudes had occurred since the March election when indifference was the predominant response to questions of war. Liberal (and a number of Labor) patriots became passionate apologists for a total war effort: "ours is the solemn and sacred

---

192. *ibid.*, 25 April 1916.

193. Edward Mulcahy (1850-1927): M.H.A. for Hobart 1893-1903; Minister for Lands and Works and Mines 1899-1903; Senator 1903-10; M.H.A. for Wilmot 1910-19; Minister for Lands and Works 1912-14; Senator 1919-20.

194. *Daily Post*, 4 October 1916.

task to go on unflinchingly," proclaimed the *Mercury*.<sup>195</sup> Many Labor radicals on the other hand became increasingly cynical about it. "The war has been a war of lies. It has been a war of cruelty and misrepresentation," said the *Daily Post*. "There has been an organised attempt to conscript the men of Australia. They are going to war - for what reason? Have they been told? Like blind mice they are expected to follow the drum which their rulers are beating frantically."<sup>196</sup> Some had called for a stop to "the wholesale slaughter of the flower of the world."<sup>197</sup> Polarisation led to categorisation: all conscriptionists were dismissed by their opponents as jingoes or murderers, and similarly all anti-conscriptionists were branded as pro-German traitors.

Accordingly the Mayor of Hobart announced at the beginning of October that the real issue of the referendum was whether people were pro-British or pro-German.<sup>198</sup> Returned soldiers agreed. At a large meeting of the Returned Soldiers Association in the Masonic Hall, one Gunner McGregor remarked that only the day before he had seen "three Germans hold up their hands to vote against conscription." Sgt. Major Crisp added for good measure that in the Huon there was a German band conductor who refused to play the National Anthem. The meeting resolved that all Germans be interned and that the R.S.A. pledge its full support for the Prime Minister's efforts to "raise reinforcements." It was also recommended that returned soldiers take a prominent place on conscriptionist platforms.<sup>199</sup>

One of the conscriptionists' most valuable assets was John Earle,

---

195. *Mercury*, 6 October 1916.

198. *Mercury*, 3 October 1916.

196. *Daily Post*, 3 October 1916.

199. *ibid.*

197. *ibid.*, 25 August 1916.

leader of the Labor party in Tasmania. Some months before he had opposed conscription, but after a visit to Melbourne, where he conferred with Hughes, he returned a passionate convert. Like Hughes he also became an ardent critic of "extremists" in the Labor movement. He had written in sympathy to Holman when the latter had been expelled from the Labor party in N.S.W. : "Words fail me in my attempt to express my astonishment at the action of the Sydney executive in expelling you and other Ministers from the movement .... Such an attempted outrage upon the grand principles of the Labor movement must be resisted at all costs. Please convey my best wishes to your colleagues who are victims of this damnable conspiracy."<sup>200</sup> In Earle's view the war was in direct defence of Australia. If the Labor party believed in home defence then it should logically agree to send men where the defence of that home was most effective - in this case, France.<sup>201</sup> The conservative press portrayed Earle as he had seen Holman - a victim of a damnable conspiracy. He was depicted as a martyr suffering for his convictions. "Whatever may be the result," said the *Mercury*, "he will be able to claim with justice that he has deliberately, for conscience's sake, imperilled his political career, when expediency pointed to a different and easier road."<sup>202</sup> Earle was a popular man and his following was large; his strong stand was certainly influential in converting many Labor rank and file to a pro-conscription position.

The Labor party did not mourn the loss of their leader. Resolutions condemned his action, but few expressed shock or surprise. Earle's stand simply proved to unionists that their earlier suspicions

---

200. *Daily Post*, 28 September 1916.

202. *Mercury*, 7 October 1916.

201. *ibid.*, 3 October 1916.

203. *Daily Post*, 2 October 1916.

were warranted. It was confirmation, said N.H. Connolly of the Theatrical Employees' Union, that Earle had lost touch with the movement. A new leader had been long overdue.<sup>203</sup> In the event, the new leader Lyons, proved even less in favour of class militancy than Earle.

The threat of conscription had succeeded in bringing the industrial and parliamentary wings of the Labor movement together, just when it seemed they were going their own ways. Thus, the conscription crisis while precipitating a split in the party, at the same time averted a different and potentially more significant schism. The industrialists and parliamentarians were brought back together at the last minute by a new unity of purpose : a deep desire to defeat the common foe. The disintegration of the Labor party into two warring movements had been checked. The Trades and Labor Council expressed appreciation of the action of the Denison Divisional Council of the W.P.L. in foregoing their Sunday domain meetings in favour of anti-conscription meetings. Delegates remarked that this involved a sacrifice of revenue by the Divisional Council and was a sign that political and industrial labor were absolutely at one in the impending crisis.<sup>204</sup> Mass meetings were arranged by the secretary of the anti-conscription executive, Matt O'Brien, at which both politicians and unionists spoke of the dangers inherent in conscription. Two of the most energetic workers for the cause in Tasmania were O'Brien and David Dicker, M.H.A. Both stressed the effects of conscription on the working class : workers would be shackled and their unions rendered impotent. The war was used to get conscription, stated Dicker, and conscription would reduce workers to slaves of the employers.<sup>205</sup>

---

204. *ibid.*, 9 October 1916.

205 *ibid.*, 2 October 1916.



Both sides exploited Australian racial fears and prejudice. Anti-conscriptionists were particularly industrious in this direction, painting conscription as a threat to white Australia; and as the *Daily Post* affirmed "there [was] nothing more dear than that plank to the hearts of Labor."<sup>206</sup> Their argument was twofold : conscription would denude the continent of white males and thus open the way for the introduction of cheap, coloured labour and that Japan would take advantage of the absence of Australian manhood to launch an invasion. Speaking at a Domain meeting, Ben Watkins, M.H.A., lamented that already they had the spectacle of "fine sturdy white Australians" enlisting for the front and their place being taken by "Maltese and other cheap labour."<sup>207</sup> For at the end of September some twenty-two Maltese had arrived on the west coast under engagement to work at the Mt. Lyell mines.<sup>208</sup> Another shipload was due in October. Although the *Mercury* protested that in fact the Maltese were "not Asiatic pagans but good European Roman Catholics",<sup>209</sup> to anti-conscriptionists they represented the first batch of the dreaded influx of "cheap coloured labour"; they were evidence of the government's sinister intentions.<sup>210</sup> The bewildered Maltese met hostility on all sides : from the conscriptionists because their untimely arrival was an embarrassment; from other workers, because they were Maltese. Said one, T.J. Galea : "The reception to Australians in Malta was great, yet the Australians are rejecting us."<sup>211</sup> Labor's chief guest speaker from the mainland, Frank Anstey, also played on racial paranoia. In Launceston he told an audience that the Prime Minister, while in Britain, had made arrangements with the Japanese Ambassador there, to

---

206. *ibid.*, 11 October 1916.

207. *ibid.*, 9 October 1916.

208. *Z.D. Herald*, 29 September 1916.

209. *Mercury*, 19 October 1916.

210. *Daily Post*, 2 October 1916.

211. *ibid.*, 6 October 1916.

supply Australia with coloured (presumably Japanese) labour.<sup>212</sup> In Hobart he again insisted that by defeating conscription, Australia would be protecting herself against the Maltese and Japanese.<sup>213</sup> On the west coast a mainland unionist asked his audience to vote for conscription to keep Australia "clean and white".<sup>214</sup>

Conscriptionists knew well the appeal of racist arguments in Australia. They insisted that White Australia could only be protected by introducing conscription. The Prime Minister grimly warned

On our very borders are teeming millions, jostling each other for space, striving virtually for a foothold on the earth's surface ... the White Australia policy keeps them back ... if the allied armies were defeated they would come in their millions. They would not only submerge our industrial system, they would visit us with horrors worse than those of Belgium. We need not fear an influx of coloured labour while the people of Australia hold political power in their hands and while the power of the Empire is behind them. <sup>215</sup>

The power of the Empire had to be sustained by conscription. This was also the view of the *Mercury*. "At present enormous numbers of savages and others of different races allow whites to rule because they know whites are superior," the editor advised. "But what would happen if they, after the War, were convinced they could fight as well as the whites if only they were armed?"<sup>216</sup> The thought was clearly dreadful to contemplate.

As attitudes polarized and emotive images replaced reasoned arguments, meetings grew noisier and confrontations more hostile. Speakers on anti-conscription platforms especially, were subjected to

---

212. *ibid.*

213. *ibid.*, 7 October 1916.

214. *ibid.*, 3 October 1916.

215. *ibid.*, 11 October 1916.

216. *Mercury*, 23 October 1916.

a tirade of abuse and interjection. This usually emanated from returned soldiers who attended as a group. Two anti-conscription meetings at Zeehan in the first week of October are typical. The speakers on both occasions were M. Cunningham, the local secretary of the F.M.E.A., and J. O'Reilly, a visiting mainland unionist. Before the meetings commenced several returned soldiers, greeted by a hearty round of applause, took their seats in the middle of the hall. They booed the speakers and shouted that no-one had the right to criticise Mr. Hughes. Cunningham stated that he was against sending any more men to be "butchered"; a soldier suggested he ought to be interned. Asked why he was not wearing khaki, O'Reilly replied that the war was a commercial war in which Australia had already done her share through voluntary enlistment. He preferred to fight for organised labour against the capitalists.<sup>217</sup> Censorship prevented a full report of the second meeting being published in the papers.<sup>218</sup>

The advocates of "yes" were favoured with the services of a more popular guest speaker than either Anstey or O'Reilly. William Morris Hughes addressed huge and enthusiastic audiences in the City Hall in Hobart and the Albert Hall in Launceston. In Hobart the Prime Minister drew a record crowd - the City Hall filled in less than five minutes. On the platform were the Premier and leader of the Opposition, Earle, together with Liberal members of the House of Assembly and Legislative Council. The churches, the legal profession and business community were also represented. Hughes' appearance on the stage was the signal for a deafening outburst of cheering. He spoke grandiloquently of the necessity of saving the democracy and

---

217. *Daily Post*, 3, 6 October 1916; *Z.D. Herald*, 3, 5 October 1916.

218. *Z.D. Herald*, 5 October 1916.

freedom of Australia and of maintaining the White Australia policy : if Britain was defeated, thundered Hughes, so was White Australia. The Allies must fight on until Germany was crushed forever. To do this conscription was vitally necessary. The Prime Minister then referred at length to his opponents : they had nothing in common but a hatred of Britain, they were under the influence of the I.W.W., their creed was the essence of treachery and with them stood every man and woman of German origin in Australia. The Premier thanked Hughes effusively: he was "the greatest man in Australia."<sup>219</sup> The audience was aroused to demonstrations of enthusiasm and approval which for intensity, opined the *Mercury*, had never been surpassed in Hobart and very rarely equalled. "The vigorous personality of the Prime Minister, his gift of eloquence and the national character of the question to which he was addressing himself made a combination which appealed to all that was emotional in the natures of the people listening to him."<sup>220</sup> Appeals to the emotions meant all in the referendum campaign; there was perhaps never a time when moderation and reason counted for less.

Labor anti-conscriptionists might have hoped otherwise. Labor's credibility and reputation were suffering from the Prime Minister's obsession that all who were against him were disloyalists. "What we heard mostly last night," commented the *Daily Post*, "was a complaint against those who are in opposition to the views of the Prime Minister. If we agree with him we are loyalists. If we are so venturesome to disagree with him we are traitors."<sup>221</sup> The trouble was, for anti-conscriptionists, that many Tasmanians tended to agree with the Prime Minister's simplistic analysis.

---

219. *Daily Post*, 13 October 1916. 221. *Daily Post*, 13 October 1916.

220. *Mercury*, 13 October 1916.

In Launceston Hughes was just as warmly welcomed. After telling his audience that they must decide whether they were for or against Australia and the Empire, Hughes resumed his seat amid tumultuous cheering. Men flung their hats into the air while women jumped on to seats and waved handkerchiefs. When Hughes spoke further and referred to a letter written by Frank Anstey to Tom Barker of I.W.W. fame, a voice in the audience declared that Anstey ought to be shot.<sup>222</sup> The Prime Minister also addressed crowds of thousands who had flocked to hear him on the north west coast. At Devonport the local branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation presented Hughes with a gold pendant, shaped like Tasmania, with a ruby marking the position of Devonport. The gift, Hughes was told loyally, was a token of appreciation of his efforts on behalf of waterside workers.<sup>223</sup>

The identification of anti-conscriptionists with either Germans or extreme radicals or both, was pursued relentlessly by the *Mercury*. The paper suggested that German money was behind the antis' campaign and noted that Tasmanian Labor politicians were "fighting on the same side as incendiaries, as the friends of Germany, as the enemies of Great Britain and as the men who openly advocate defiance of the laws of their country."<sup>224</sup> Such arguments found a receptive audience. Letters to the *Mercury* also discerned the I.W.W. influence in Labor ranks, while one correspondent rechristened the Labor party the "Advance German Party."<sup>225</sup> The letter written by Anstey to Barker, alluded to in the Prime Minister's address was made much of. In the letter Anstey had stated he was "up to the hilt" with Barker. Senator Long, in defence of Anstey, advised the *Mercury*

---

222. *Mercury*, 14 October 1916.

223. *Daily Post*, 16 October 1916; *Z.D. Herald*, 17 October 1916.

224. *Mercury*, 17 October 1916.      225. *ibid.*, 14 October 1916.

that the letter did not refer to the current incendiarism trials but was written some time before in reference to Barker's goal sentence for a poster deemed to be detrimental to recruiting. "Matters are not improved," answered the *Mercury*, "by Senator Long's admission that Anstey many months ago opposed recruiting."<sup>226</sup> The editor then launched an obscene attack on Long, charging that by voting against conscription, the Senator was voting for the murder of his own son at the front. Senator Ready was also assailed:

Senator Ready and his dupes - or fellow dupes - will go into the polling box side by side with the vilest enemies of Britain and Australia and Tasmania that are to be found here and he and they will cast their votes for Dishonour, for Disloyalty, for Repudiation, for Cowardice, for Treachery to the Empire, for Betrayal of our soldiers, for Betrayal of the Commonwealth - for the success of the arch-criminal of the twentieth century.<sup>227</sup>

If Labor men could not be proved to have personal connections with the I.W.W., they were judged to be guilty by association.

The case for YES was strengthened by the authority of the churches. Unlike Victoria, Tasmania possessed no Irish Catholic leaders passionately opposed to conscription. The injustice in Ireland was rarely invoked in Tasmania as reason to vote NO.<sup>228</sup> Many Catholic leaders (including Archbishop Delany) favoured conscription. The most domineering and outspoken of the Catholic advocates of conscription was Fr. T.J. O'Donnell. His fervent oratory was such that people paid to hear him. He appealed to the emotional jingoism of his listeners : "By the blood of our martyred dead, our fallen sons, the bravest of the brave, I adjure you let the answer be Yes, Yes, Yes."<sup>229</sup> It was objected that O'Donnell's argument was non-existent.

---

226. *ibid.*, 19 October 1916.                      227. *ibid.*, 20 October 1916.

228. One exception was Fr. John Graham of Fingal. See Davis, *op.cit.*, p.83.

229. *Mercury*, 12 October 1916.

"He confines himself to mere rhetoric, to perfervid appeals to all and sundry to vote yes," complained A. Needham. "There are no substantial reasons; no necessity for compulsion shown; no attempt to show that the conscription proposals would be in the best interests of Australia and the Empire generally; no endeavour to show that the scheme is practical and desirable and no attempt to answer the reasonable objections to conscription. With reasonable people appeals such as the Rev. T.J. O'Donnell makes, cut no ice."<sup>230</sup> Probably not, but few men judged reasonably on the issue of conscription. People were impassioned and in the inflamed atmosphere, O'Donnell and his rhetorical appeals flourished and drew forth large responses. In Hobart an audience paid to hear what the *Mercury* termed "a great intellectual treat."<sup>231</sup> O'Donnell's reputation as a platform orator was widespread and halls throughout the State filled in anticipation of the famed Irish priest.

But O'Donnell was not loved by all. One of his most hard-hitting critics was his co-religionist and fellow-countryman E. Dwyer-Gray. Gray attacked the priest's love of the limelight and judged his advocacy of conscription misuse of his authority as a minister of the gospel. "That vanity which made you advertise an invitation to government House is now making you swallow the applause of those whose predominant virtue has never been self-sacrifice." Dwyer-Gray suggested that instead of flying around the country emitting highly inflammable eloquence, O'Donnell would be better and more properly employed starting a crusade of prayer for peace.<sup>232</sup>

Fr. O'Donnell was not alone of the ministers of the gospel in

---

230. *ibid.*, 13 October 1916.

232. *Daily Post*, 26 October 1916.

231. *ibid.*, 19 October 1916.

extolling the virtues of conscription. The Church of England clergy had been busy preaching patriotic sermons and blessing weapons of war since its beginning. Now many Anglican ministers accompanied by their Presbyterian and Methodist counterparts ascended the platform for conscription. At Brighton an Anglican minister exclaimed from the pulpit that conscription had a fine tradition : Christ himself was a conscript, "conscripted by heaven"!<sup>233</sup> At Scottsdale a Methodist preacher assured his flock that they were involved not merely in a national struggle, but in a Divine cause and in this holy conflict it was the duty of every man and woman to gird up his or her loins and vote YES to conscription.<sup>234</sup> Some individuals expressed doubt about the propriety of the clergy's enthusiastic endorsement of the war and conscription. They found it hard to reconcile the actions of the ministers in urging men to go to war with the teaching of non-resistance by Christ. "It appears to me," wrote 'Enquirer', "that all ministers of Christ should have condemned the war and all wars from the start and have thundered it forth from their pulpits ... They should either repudiate Christ and say he was wrong or support the teachings come what may."<sup>235</sup> James Murphy of New Town objected to the churches being used as conscription platforms. "I have attended both the 11 o'clock and 7 o'clock services at the Church of England on Sunday last and you can well imagine my disgust when I was treated to a sermon absolutely on conscription."<sup>236</sup>

Of the organised churches, only the Quakers bore witness to the Prince of Peace. At the general meeting of the Society of Friends of Australia in Hobart at the beginning of October, it was decided

---

233. *Mercury*, 28 October 1916.

235. *Daily Post*, 6 October 1916.

234. *N.E. Advertiser*,  
6 October 1916.

236. *ibid.*, 14 October 1916.



they should protest against the referendum and state their reasons for refusing to participate in any militarist action.<sup>236</sup> J. Francis Mather in a letter to the *Mercury* said simply that the use of armed force was out of harmony with the spirit of the life of Christ.<sup>237</sup> The Quakers stressed particularly their objection to conscription as being not only part of the military system but as a direct trampling on the inalienable right of freedom of conscience.

Another minister who cared about freedom of conscience was Presbyterian Pastor Arthur Prowse of Zeehan. He opposed his church's advocacy of conscription and resigned from the ministry in protest. Prowse bought large advertisements in the *Z.D. Herald* condemning the ninety clergy and elders of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church for committing the 600,000 members of the church to conscription. His solitary voice asked all who valued moral and political freedom to vote NO. In eloquent and unrelenting style he denounced the Prime Minister. "Hughes longs to spread waves of slaughter impartially over more and yet more of our manhood .... Those not agreeing are coupled with incendiaries, forgers, and murderers in Hughes' best style. Will the democracy ever forgive Hughes either his betrayal or his slander of the people that lifted him to his present power?"<sup>238</sup> All true democrats, the minister hoped, would pray and work for peace, not war. "By voting NO you give notice to your servants the Government that it is time to think of Peace .... Let Australia win the glory of first giving that signal of humanity to humanity."<sup>239</sup> But his appeals fell on deaf ears, for he was talking for the most part to people who believed with Hughes, that talk of peace was talk of treachery. Among churchmen, those who shared Prowse's views, formed

237. *ibid.*, 4 November 1916.

239. *ibid.*, 27 October 1916.

238. *Z.D. Herald*, 26 October 1916.

an exiguous minority.

Anti-conscriptionists in Tasmania faced massive opposition. The conservative press, politicians, municipal councillors, pulpits and returned soldiers were, on the whole, all working against them. In Hobart after a particular disturbance on the Domain, it even seemed that the supposedly impartial Police Magistrate was also. After consistently interrupting an anti-conscription meeting and causing a fight, a returned soldier, Sgt. William Thurley was charged and found guilty of creating a disturbance. The Police Magistrate decided merely to record a conviction against him, explaining that the speakers were as much to blame for the brawl as anyone and that some obscene remarks addressed to the soldier by members of the audience would have been better applied to the speakers.<sup>240</sup> Labor M.H.A.s reacted angrily. Ben Watkins claimed P.M. Wise to be guilty of bias of the grossest kind; it was suggested he be moved to another district. Watkins warned that if anti-conscriptionists did not get a fair hearing there would certainly be "civil war" in Tasmania. Other Labor members also gave vent to their fury and J. Ogden voiced the popular suspicion that returned soldiers came, or were deliberately sent, to smash meetings.<sup>241</sup> The *Mercury* did nothing to soothe animosities when it suggested that if the anti-conscriptionists were so sensitive to criticism they should not invite it by "violent and traitorous utterances" and by abusing soldiers.<sup>242</sup>

The more responsible of the returned soldiers confined their activities to speaking on conscriptionist platforms and submitting provocative letters to the press. The most prominent conscriptionist

---

240. *Daily Post*, 11 October 1916. 242. *Mercury*, 12 October 1916.

241. *ibid.*, 12 October 1916.

among them at this time was Sapper Duncan McRae. Early in the campaign McRae had asserted the right of returned soldiers, not only to hold their own conscription meetings, but also of speaking at the end of every anti-conscriptionist meeting. Not surprisingly, Labor anti-conscriptionists thought this suggestion unfairly infringed on their right to oppose the referendum proposals. There was further conflict between McRae and Labor spokesmen over his claim that he represented all soldiers in his pro-conscription stand. The *Daily Post* claimed he represented but a few. It seems that in Tasmania, at least in 1916, most returned soldiers did share McRae's stand; the soldiers at the front were more divided.

McRae denounced anti-conscription arguments as "contemptible in spirit."<sup>243</sup> He made full use of emotive images to sway his audience: "Every vote against conscription is a stab in the back to our comrades in France, a stab more deadly than all the German batteries and machine guns on the Somme."<sup>244</sup> Sapper McRae was a popular platform orator; he had played his part at Gallipoli and returned to Tasmania a cripple. It pleased him and his eager audiences to recite the story of the landing. It was his opinion that had there been more reinforcements for the Anzacs at Gallipoli, they could have captured Constantinople and knocked Turkey out of the war.<sup>245</sup> The people of Tasmania were happy to believe him and determined that next time, through conscription, the reinforcements would be at hand. Another soldier, Trooper Ross voiced a common soldier's sentiment when he said that only those who had felt the blood of a comrade splash on their faces, had a right to talk about conscription.

---

243. *Daily Post*, 9 October 1916.

244. *ibid.*

245. *Mercury*, 28 October 1916.

Labor was facing formidable odds. Their chances for a victory were lessened still further by the explosion of a bomb at a Beaconsfield conscription meeting. The bomb exploded at the back of the hall injuring the caretaker and Constable Roe who were on duty guarding the light generator, which had been interfered with during the Premier's visit a short time before. Tasmanians everywhere expressed outrage. The *Daily Post* painfully aware of the ill-effects which would accrue to the anti-' cause, declared the action a "dastardly" one and called for severe punishment for the perpetrator of the crime.<sup>246</sup> The *Z.D. Herald* observed that the "bomb outrage" had caused "a feeling of mingled horror, disgust and anger throughout the State." It was certainly not the fault of the bomb-tosser, continued the editor, that the direst consequences did not result. The *Z.D. Herald* joined with the *Daily Post* in calling for immediate police action to track down the culprit. If the elucidation of the crime proved over difficult for Tasmanian detectives, it was recommended that the best mainland talent be called in.<sup>247</sup> It sufficed for the *Mercury* to comment that when a cause needed such "arguments" as arson and explosive bombs, it had to be pretty hopeless.<sup>248</sup> It was assumed by all that the bomb-thrower was an anti-conscriptionist, but proof was not forthcoming. If investigations were made and charges laid they were not made public.<sup>249</sup>

The Prime Minister evidently feared the bomb-tosser would not confine his activities to Beaconsfield. The day before the Referendum he sent a secret and urgent telegram to Lee requiring him to furnish extra police protection to the polling booths rendering them as far

---

246. *Daily Post*, 24 October 1916. 247. *Z.D. Herald*, 24 October 1916.

248. *Mercury*, 24 October 1916.

249. Nor have I found any mention of the case in Police department records or the Premier's department file.

as possible "bomb proof".<sup>250</sup> In a second secret and urgent telegram he advised Lee to instruct the Military Commandant to hold the military in reserve in case State police required their assistance on polling day.<sup>251</sup> The *Mercury* also saw Law and Order threatened. The day before the poll the editor appealed to the "responsible" people of the State. The question to be decided was not whether conscription was necessary to supply reinforcements overseas, but whether the responsible people were "going to allow maniacs, murderers, forgers, fire raisers, bomb-throwers and rowdies to govern the country."<sup>252</sup>

Tasmanians decided they would not risk radicals and "rowdies" getting the upper hand. They voted by a large majority - 49,493 votes to 37,833 - for conscription. Voting was heavy and in all electorates except Bass the poll exceeded that of the last Federal election.

The result of the referendum in the west coast electorate of Darwin proved the biggest surprise. Traditionally the stronghold of unionism and the Labor party it recorded the largest majority for YES in the state. Darwin's Labor representatives in the State parliament were all anti-conscriptionist, but perhaps more important was the fact that their popular hero King O'Malley remained silent and that Earle, who first came to prominence on the west coast was still very popular with a section of unionists there. Letters written to Earle after the referendum reveal that his stand won much sympathy in the west<sup>253</sup>; undoubtedly a large number of Labor men followed his example in voting YES. Of the five mining districts where anti-conscriptionists were

---

250. Premier's Dept., 66/7/17, 27 October 1916. T.S.A.

251. *ibid.*

252. *Mercury*, 27 October 1916.

253. See "Letters and Press Comments on the Actions of J. Earle in the Great National Crisis", B 6/7 University of Tasmania Archives.

were active (Queenstown, Gormanston, Waratah, Zeehan and Strahan) only Gormanston recorded a NO majority. The Labor party, in opposing conscription, had gained the support of the left only to lose that of the right. Whereas few had heeded the accusations of Labor disloyalty and pro-Germanism in March 1916, by October more people paid attention. Jingoism had taken a new hold. If patriots did not actually believe Labor to be pro-German, they did believe the conscriptionists were more eager to win the war; they therefore received their endorsement.

Of the five electorates, Franklin, a largely rural area, came closest to voting NO. The municipalities of Campbell Town, Oatlands, Esperance, Port Cygnet, Richmond and Hamilton all recorded NO majorities. These farming districts had experienced severe labour shortages and hence the figures suggest that farmers, fearful of the worse labor shortages which would result from conscription, voted NO. At the end of September one Franklin farmer, W.F. Clavert, had estimated that most of the opposition to conscription in his district came from farmers who were suffering from a lack of capable farm hands.<sup>254</sup> Traditionally Liberal voters, on this occasion they joined with radical Labor men and voted NO.

The urban centres of Hobart and Launceston were about evenly divided on the issue, although the "well-to-do" suburbs voted strongly for YES. The other noteworthy feature of Tasmanian voting patterns is that large country towns, such as Huonville, Lilydale, Scottsdale, Deloraine, Beaconsfield and Devonport, tended to vote overwhelmingly for conscription. It was probably the citizens of these towns who most strongly disapproved of Labor's increasingly radical image.

---

254. *Mercury*, 28 September 1916.

Broadly speaking, the victory of the conscriptionist forces in Tasmania meant a triumph for the jingoistic values of the Anglo-Saxon conservative majority and the banishment of Labor anti-conscriptionists to the political wilderness.

The last months of 1916 saw the formalisation of the split in the Labor party. King O'Malley finally found his voice. He advised all sides, having had a "little difference" of opinion to forgive and forget the past and join together to maintain the solidarity of the party. The *Daily Post* responded bitterly to O'Malley's advice.<sup>255</sup>

"Mr. O'Malley would be better engaged in explaining his silence during the conscription campaign." The King's advice to forgive and forget was rejected; "the campaign of insult and slander was too gross for such sweet charity."<sup>256</sup> It was necessary that Hughes and the Labor movement part. "Better any government than a Labor Government that is led by a man who has abandoned his party, traduced his colleagues and brought Australia to the present deplorable impasse."<sup>257</sup>

There were also recriminations in the State parliamentary party. In the House of Assembly Earle forestalled insult by announcing his resignation. The parliamentary party accepted the resignation, declared the various positions of the party vacant and announced that the Caucus would proceed to elect new officers. Joseph Lyons was elected leader, Jim Ogden deputy leader and Ben Watkins Whip and secretary. Of his resignation Earle said it was the most painful trial he had experienced.<sup>258</sup> He had been associated with the Labor party all his life, he had occupied the position as leader of the party for ten years and for eight years had led the opposition in the House of

---

255. *Daily Post*, 31 October 1916.

257. *ibid.*, 30 October 1916.

256. *ibid.*, 1 November 1916.

258. *ibid.*, 2 November 1916.

Assembly. He was the first Labor Premier of Tasmania.

The Labor party's decision to dispose of Earle's services provoked a widespread critical reaction. The correspondence in the press and the personal letters he received, revealed the large extent of his following. Earle was championed as a "true Britisher" who made "loyalty to the Empire a first principle."<sup>259</sup> A letter signed by twenty-two Zeehan unionists and ex-members of the W.P.L. praised his ability "to take a broad view of a great national question."<sup>260</sup> The *Z.D. Herald* judged that the bulk of public opinion on the west coast would resent the punishment of a man for the performance of a duty which he conceived to be in the highest interests of the nation. The editor foretold that the west coast would emphatically express its resentment at the next election.<sup>261</sup> The *Mercury* meanwhile encouraged the idea that Earle and Howroyd had been disposed of "because they chose to defy the I.W.W. in Tasmania." The editor spoke of the "indecent haste" with which Lyons jumped into Earle's shoes; Lyons had thereby identified himself with the NO minority in Tasmania, which according to the *Mercury*, consisted of shirkers, pro-Germans and I.W.W. supporters.<sup>262</sup>

The Referendum campaign had brought the political and industrial wings of the Tasmanian Labor movement together and the following weeks saw efforts to strengthen this trend. Many within the movement felt that Labor had emerged from the Referendum refreshed, cleansed and invigorated. E. Carroll of the Denison No. 1 branch thought that for a long time Labor had been in need of a tonic, which though unpleasant to take was sure to do them good.<sup>263</sup> Earle and Howroyd

---

259. "Letters and Press Comments" op. cit.

260. *ibid.*, 2 December 1916.

261. *Z.D. Herald*, 4 November 1916.

262. *Mercury*, 3 November 1916.

263. *Daily Post*, 14 November 1916.



were classed as time-servers, seekers of place and pay who in the hour of trial had failed the movement. The Trades and Labor Council recommended that those who had opposed them in the late conscription campaign be not endorsed for re-election.<sup>264</sup> Matt O'Brien said that the conscription struggle had shown the importance of political power, but also the need for trade unionists to control that political power. To his mind the controlling influence of unionists in N.S.W. had defeated conscription there.<sup>265</sup>

At the end of November a State Union Conference was held to finally consider proposals for the State Labor Federation in preparation for a special W.P.L. Conference called for January. R. Cosgrove and M. O'Brien, who recommended to the conference that they accept the proposals for industrial and political amalgamation, received a heartening response. The hardline opposition of previous months dissolved and unionists expressed a new willingness to co-operate with politicians.<sup>266</sup> The conference also discussed the war and Labor renegades. On the former it was decided that Labor could not properly assess its responsibilities until censorship was replaced by truth and information. On the latter they were firm that with conscriptionists there could be no reconciliation.

Tasmanian unionists also attended a special interstate conference which was held on 4 December to consider the Labor party's future in Australia. A motion was put calling for the expulsion of all Federal members who had supported conscription or had left the Federal parliamentary party to form another party. The motion was passed by Conference with the Tasmanian delegates supporting it. The Conference also

---

264. *ibid.*, 13 November 1916.

266. *ibid.*, 27 November 1916.

265. *ibid.*

passed a motion that in the interests of humanity Great Britain and her Allies should formulate their joint demands upon the Central European powers and publish them to the world and thus pave the way for an early and honourable peace.<sup>267</sup> It was the first indication that a substantial part of the Labor movement was looking for an end to the slaughter.

Labor's reputation was further besmirched by the coal strike of November when miners in New South Wales and then all States except Western Australia, struck for an eight hour day from bank to bank. Trade and shipping everywhere was disrupted. Tasmania, dependent on the shipping link with the mainland, suffered accordingly when the steamship services were cut back. The crops of the north west coast farmers, prevented from reaching the markets on the mainland, rotted on the wharves. It was purported to be "the biggest trouble yet experienced by Coasters."<sup>268</sup> The conservative press perceived German influence behind the strike; everywhere people discerned the threat of anarchy. J.T.H. Whitsitt, M.H.A., suggested that if the Federal government would not act then it was for those who recognized the enemies of the King and industrial progress to consider calling upon an Ally, possibly Japan, to straighten things up. Law and order were to be upheld, he thundered, and he, Whitsitt, would support a measure to have every agitator shot on sight.<sup>269</sup> Senator Bakhap preferred the guillotine to deal with local "anarchists". He had read of its operations in France and his heart glowed as he read how head after head dropped into the basket.<sup>270</sup> The coal strike was finally settled

---

267. *ibid.*, 7 December 1916.

269. *ibid.*, 10 November 1916.

268. *Mercury*, 13 November 1916.

270. *Z.D. Herald*, 29 December 1916.

after four weeks, but only after Hughes had intervened and appointed a special tribunal to resolve the dispute. The miners won their claim, but at the expense of estranging public opinion from their cause. An image of extremism was being indelibly stamped on the Labor movement.

CHAPTER THREE :

---

1917 : the parting of the ways.

When the New Year came to Australia, the conscription referendum had long been disposed of, though the wounds and bitterness lived on in men's hearts. On the other side of the world the military battles raged on. "The War God is still abroad," wrote the *Daily Post* on the first day of 1917. "Nothing else matters so long as his insatiable appetite is appeased." It was to satisfy this appetite that the recruiting committees set about reorganising themselves, planning renewed efforts. The fit men of Australia, the "eligibles", of whom there were known to be thousands, were once again to be sought out.

The new recruiting campaign, under the leadership of the newly appointed Director-General of Recruiting, Donald Mackinnon, started badly, because although he and others called for unity, there was none. The appointment of Labor Senator R.K. Ready as chairman of the Tasmanian Recruiting Committee was assailed from all sides, but most determinedly by the Hobart branch of the R.S.S.I.L.A. (formerly the R.S.A.). The soldiers protested against his appointment and asked the Prime Minister to remove him; their reason, they said, was that he had offered insults to the R.S.A. during the late referendum campaign.<sup>1</sup> The *Daily Post* retorted on the Senator's behalf that he had not insulted the soldiers and moreover, if the soldiers desired fair treatment they should begin treating others so.<sup>2</sup> It was clear

---

1. *Daily Post*, 14 December 1916.

2. *ibid.*

to all that the real objection to Ready was that he was an anti-conscriptionist. The *Mercury* supported the soldiers, arguing that not only should Ready not chair a recruiting committee, but that "he would be more at home in an internment camp."<sup>3</sup> Letters to the press referred to the appointment as a "violation of decency" and a "slur on Tasmania".<sup>4</sup> Senator Ready acquiesced in his enemies' demands and resigned from the committee. Two weeks later however he renewed his position as chairman at the special request of the Director-General. It was his critics' turn to acquiesce.

The new scheme of recruiting involved the setting up of Federal Electoral committees and local recruiting committees in each municipality. Recruiting officers and organisers were appointed, preference scrupulously being given to returned soldiers, rejected volunteers or those ineligible. The Director-General visited Tasmania at the end of 1916 to supervise the initiation of the plan. He also endeavoured to instil enthusiasm and single-mindedness. In the Hobart Town Hall he told a large audience

The minds of the people must be concentrated on the one subject - war, war, war and on the fact that we must win the war, win the war, win the war. Personally, I do not think there is anything else worth living for or bothering about.<sup>5</sup>

Others, it seemed, did not share his dedication. The first meeting in the country districts were poorly attended. Many people still harboured objections to Ready's presence on the State Recruiting Committee. The Brighton Municipal Council for example resolved to take no further part in recruiting until Ready was removed from his position.<sup>6</sup> At Bothwell too, resentment and disapproval were voiced

3. *Mercury*, 13 December 1916.

5. *Daily Post*, 29 December 1916.

4. *ibid.*, 14 December 1916.

6. *ibid.*, 16 January 1917.

at his reinstatement.<sup>7</sup>

It was clear that past differences and personal feelings could not be sunk so easily. Nowhere was this more obvious than on the north west coast. The recruiting campaign in the electorate of Wilmot, began with a meeting in the Deloraine Town-hall. The gathering was dominated by one, T. Craze, of Sheffield, who asserted that a German doctor was employed at Claremont Camp and that Senator Ready had made statements prejudicial to recruiting. Ready who was present, denied the statements, claiming he was fully in favour of voluntary recruiting. His opponents however, remained adamant to the contrary and the meeting ended, as it began, in disunity.<sup>8</sup>

Meetings at other centres along the north west coast followed the same unsatisfactory pattern. A meeting at Burnie attracted only a handful of people; "it is painfully evident," observed the *N.W. Advocate*, "that the referendum political conflict is still with us."<sup>9</sup> The meeting to initiate the recruiting scheme in the electorate of Darwin was held at Wynyard and once again only about nine persons attended. Those present agreed that the appointment of Senator Ready and that of O'Malley to chair the recruiting campaign for Darwin, were having a disastrous effect on the new scheme. Warden Johnston considered O'Malley's appointment an insult to the Darwin electors; his silence would be neither forgiven nor forgotten.<sup>10</sup> Recriminations similarly marked the recruiting conferences at Launceston and Scottsdale.<sup>11</sup> Conscriptionists, once active in recruiting, all declared they would have nothing to do with a plan which included Senator Ready and his fellow anti-conscriptionists. A few letters to the

---

7. *ibid.*

10. *ibid.*, 25 January 1917.

8. *N.W. Advocate*, 18 January 1917. 11. *Mercury*, 12, 17 January 1917.

9. *ibid.*, 22 January 1917.

press called for justice for anti-conscriptionists; some pointed out that as anti-conscriptionists professed themselves against conscription but in favour of voluntaryism, they should be given an opportunity to practise what they preached.

The State Recruiting Committee itself, which included two other anti-conscriptionists (J. McDonald and E. Dwyer-Gray) together with various conscriptionists, managed to steer clear of personal feuds. The members met about once a fortnight and attempted to think of new ways of attracting recruits. Moving pictures and lantern slides were popular and considered effective in conveying their message. The proprietors of picture theatres were invited to co-operate in showing patriotic films. The Committee also decided to issue a circular to teachers requesting them to explain the war position to children in State schools and through them to the older members of the community. The Labor members of the Committee made frequent and strong objection to the use by Nationalists and Liberals of the "Win-the-War" slogan for political purposes when it was originally designed as a recruiting aid only. The Director-General supported them in their demand but to little avail, as the *Mercury* in particular, continued to use it as a synonym for "Nationalist party" government.

Compared to the city there was little interest in recruiting in the country areas and little effort to promote any. Recruiting meetings continued to be poorly attended. Reports from the Huon and Channel showed that at Sandfly no-one attended a meeting, at Margate two persons arrived, at Woodbridge about twenty and the same number at Franklin.<sup>12</sup> At Kingston only six people attended and it was consequently thought not worthwhile forming a recruiting committee

---

12. *Daily Post*, 10, 14 February 1917.

for that municipality.<sup>13</sup> The Esperance Council received a letter from the State Recruiting Committee deploring the apathy and urging action, but the Warden thought nothing more could be done. Councillor R. Clennet considered they were up against a dead end and any efforts made to gain recruits, he dismissed as a waste of money.<sup>14</sup>

The *Daily Post* blamed the Federal government for the lack of interest in recruiting. "The defeat of the militarist plot last year has left a bitter, vindictive feeling. There is very little genuine desire amongst the conscription party that voluntaryism should be a huge success," complained the editor.<sup>15</sup> Both Hughes and Cook were depicted, with considerable justification, as worrying more about portfolios than recruiting. By mid-February an angry editorial saw the recruiting scheme as deliberately dammed: "The inactivity of the "patriots" is slowly but surely making its way amongst the people and the result is that there are fewer recruits today than at any time during the war."<sup>16</sup>

In an effort to boost recruiting and also to stimulate a spirit of emulation between municipalities in the matter, the State Recruiting Committee decided to arrange a special Reinforcements Day to be observed throughout the State. 14 March was chosen and proclaimed a public holiday. The Hobart branch of the R.S.S.I.L.A. was put in charge and they in turn sought co-operation from the Education department. All children whose fathers and brothers were at the front were expected to take part in the proposed procession. The Tasmanian Racing Club also co-operated, displaying what was called "a fine patriotic spirit" in closing down all race meetings for the day. The

---

13. *ibid.*, 14 February 1917.

15. *ibid.*, 2 February 1916.

14. *ibid.*

16. *ibid.*, 15 February 1916.



preparations culminated in what the *Daily Post* described as "a magnificent and impressive spectacle".<sup>17</sup> The procession, including some 2,500 women, 4,000 schoolchildren and 1,000 troops, was about a mile long. Many present were dressed in the black of mourning; the demonstration was generally described as one of the most earnest and orderly since the war began. Children carried banners reading "my father's at the front - will you help him?" or "my brother's at the front - will you give him a spell?" Soldiers led horses with empty saddles inviting men to "enlist now and jump up." The prominence of women was frequently remarked upon; they failed to keep their usual place in the background commented the *Tasmanian Mail*.<sup>18</sup> The "pageant" as it was called was followed by a meeting in the City Hall where numerous speakers spoke on the need for men at the front. The Labor paper noted that the speeches erred on the side of jingoism but that they appeared to have been effective.<sup>19</sup> They certainly stirred some of the listeners for at frequent intervals, volunteers, amidst much loud applause, offered themselves up to serve. Although there were only 38 new recruits at the end of the day (20 more had been rejected) it was deemed a relative success in that Melbourne with ten times the population of Hobart had only produced 40 recruits on Reinforcements Day in that city.<sup>20</sup>

One reason the new recruiting scheme was not the grand success it was hoped it would be, was that during this time both political parties were more intent on attending to their own affairs. While the Liberals were worrying about whether to amalgamate with the newly formed National Federation, the Labor party was busy putting its

---

17. *ibid.*, 15 March 1917.

19. *Daily Post*,

18. *Tasmanian Mail*, 15 March 1917. 20. *ibid.*

rather shattered house in order. It soon became clear that although the Tasmanian parliamentary party had only lost two members over the conscription issue, many more branch members and trade unionists had deserted the party. The Nubeena branch of the W.P.L. for example, resolved to dissolve itself as a protest against the action of the State Labor members in "deposing" Earle from the leadership. The president stated that he could not remain a pledged member of a party which opposed conscription, which in his opinion amounted to disloyalty to the King and Empire.<sup>21</sup> The Devonport branch also left the party. A resolution had been passed by the branch at the end of 1916, which endorsed the actions of Hughes, Earle and Howroyd. The president of the branch, Joseph Lyons, called for the motion to be rescinded. The branch members stuck to the resolution with the result that Lyons resigned and was replaced in the chair by H.H. McFie, a prominent conscriptionist.<sup>22</sup>

The proceedings of the State Labor Conference in the second week of January revealed the full bitterness and vindictiveness produced by the referendum campaign three months before. Earle's wounds were particularly sore. In a letter to the president of the W.P.L. he stated his reasons for resigning from the party:

My reason for this is that the movement has been corrupted by bodies of extremists responsible in cases to distinctly disloyal men, aided and abetted by the weakness, cowardice and treachery of the officers of the organisation and members of the Parliamentary party obtaining control of the movement. The said movement which was once humanitarian and national in its aspirations and ideals is now a mere machine, owned, manipulated and controlled by a few unions of selfish men. The conduct of the leaders of these men during the last few months has been such that ... no self respecting, loyal, patriotic man could be associated with them.

---

21. *ibid.*, 17 October 1916.

22. *ibid.*, 6 January 1917.

They constitute a greater menace to the  
freedom, liberty and national life of  
Australia than the Hun. <sup>23</sup>

The reaction of the conference was inevitably hostile. G. Bigwood, a Trades and Labor Council representative, declared that if the conscription question had done nothing else, it had rendered the Australian Labor party a good turn by getting rid of Earle. Senator O'Keefe said that the insults contained in Earle's letter should be treated by the Conference with the contempt they deserved and he desired to add that to the motion (of acceptance of the resignation) as an amendment. The motion, as amended, was carried unanimously.<sup>24</sup> Joseph Benjamin thought even that response too generous. In a letter to the press he contended that the tone and insults of the letter required that acceptance be refused and that instead expulsion be decided on.<sup>25</sup>

The Conference also received a letter from C. Howroyd. He too submitted his resignation from the party but his letter was noticeably milder in language and less arrogant in tone. He said he had "no quarrel with the State platform or the 'State Parliamentary party'" and that it was with feelings of "keenest regret" that he took the course of resignation, but that to his mind there was no other honourable course open. The Conference then turned its attention to the apostasy of the branch members and motions were passed dissolving the pro-conscription Devonport and Launceston No. 1 branches.

The renegades had been expelled and the conference, cleansed and comforted, turned its attention to policy-making. But still unanimity eluded the Labor party. Significant divisions appeared - again in a discussion of conscription. Senator Ready moved that the Conference

---

23. *ibid.*, 9 January 1917.

25. *ibid.*, 10 January 1917.

24. *ibid.*, 11 January 1917.

endorse the resolution of the W.P.L. executive, carried on 5 October 1916, that conscription of human life for overseas service was inconsistent with the principles and spirit of the Labor movement. Senator Guy moved an amendment to delete "for overseas service"; Dywer-Gray seconded it. The conference was thus split over the important question of whether conscription was wrong *per se* or whether it was only wrong for overseas service. Those who supported Guy's amendment thought compulsion morally wrong and that it was out of tune with the humanitarian goals of the movement. Those favouring the original motion argued pragmatically: conscription was necessary to defend the country in time of invasion. Of further significance was the fact that the division was for the most part between unionists who favoured the amendment and politicians who stood by the original motion. (The notable exception to this was Guy the mover of the amendment.) Guy's amendment was defeated 22 : 20 - the conference was almost evenly divided.<sup>26</sup> A second amendment - that in no circumstances would conscription of life be imposed unless and until all incomes in excess of £300 were "conscripted" - was passed.<sup>27</sup>

Other motions relating to the war included a reaffirmation of support for the voluntary system of recruiting, but also a "peace motion". Moved by W. Sheridan, M.H.A., it read:

That in the interests of humanity, Great Britain and her Allies in response to President Wilson's request, should publicly formulate their terms of peace with a view to and as a basis for a conference between the warring nations and the neutral Powers and thus<sup>28</sup> pave the way to an early and honourable peace.

Inspired by President Wilson's idealism and shocked by the unrelenting horror of the war, the Labor party began to look for peace by negotiation,

---

26. *ibid.*, 11 January 1917.

28. *ibid.*, 11 January 1917.

27. *ibid.*, 11, 12 January 1917.

as opposed to the demands of their Liberal and Nationalist opponents for a crushing military victory.

The special business of the conference was to give effect to W.A. Woods' Closer Unity Scheme. The political wing of the Labor movement (the W.P.L.) was to join with the industrial wing (represented by the Trades and Labor Council) to form the Tasmanian Labor Federation. For a long time, the unionists, distrustful of politicians, had been reluctant to consider the proposal, but after the experience of co-operation in fighting conscription, both sides were enthusiastic to further their combination. The motion adopting the draft constitution of the Labor Federation was carried 36 : 2.<sup>29</sup> The *Daily Post* was pleased with the conference. The recent upheaval in the ranks of Labor, said the editor, had had the beneficial result of galvanising new life and energy into the whole organisation. The number of delegates attending was seen as "extremely gratifying" to all well-wishers of Labor.<sup>30</sup>

There were not a large number of Labor well-wishes in the Tasmania of 1917 however and the non-Labor press was quick to denounce the new Federation, as among other things "an I.W.W. plan of O.B.U."<sup>31</sup> Earle's letter of resignation was held up as essential reading for all; it moved the *Mercury* to suggest that "an Unholy Alliance of American Fenianism, German Anarchism and Communistic Desperandoism" was at large in the Labor movement.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, as the *N.W. Advocate* pointed out in connection with Earle's letter, "no stronger condemnation of the Labor machine had been written by any Liberal pen."<sup>33</sup>

---

29. *ibid.*,

30. *ibid.*, 12 January 1917.

31. *Mercury*, 11 January 1917.

32. *ibid.*, 10 January 1917.

33. *N.W. Advocate*, 11 January 1917.

Much sympathy was lavished upon Howroyd and Earle, hapless victims of "a party of mean hucksters snarling in dark holes against all their friends who are men enough to say Australia shall stand up against the Germans."<sup>34</sup> Letters to the press were fulsome in their praise of the "stand" taken by the two men. Clearly Earle still commanded a large personal following among erstwhile Labor supporters.

Further opprobrium was brought upon the Labor party through a court case in which David Dicker, M.H.A., was charged with making statements prejudicial to recruiting. Dicker was reported by two visiting actresses as having said in the Freemason's Hotel on 25 January: "I would as soon be under German rule as under British, and if Australia were in trouble Britain would not fire a shot to help her." In his defence Dicker denied he had said he would as soon live under German rule as British. Matt O'Brien who was dining with him at the time of the alleged remarks also denied he used the words. Dicker was nevertheless found guilty under regulation 28 1(b) of the War Precautions Regulations 1915, and was fined £15 and sh.14/6 costs, or in default three months' imprisonment.<sup>35</sup>

The prosecution was but the beginning of a prolonged and malicious persecution. After his conviction at the Police Court, Dicker walked down to Parliament House to attend a sitting of the Public Works Committee of which he was a member. He found however that instead of discussing its business of a site for new police buildings, the committee had been busy drawing up a resolution expressing its regret and concern at the gravity of his offence and demanding that some action be taken by the government to remove him from public office.<sup>36</sup>

---

34. *Mercury*, 11 January 1917.

36. *Daily Post*, 24 February 1917.

35. *Tasmanian Mail*, 1 March 1917.

The public outrage at Dicker's crime was enormous. A large number of people wanted to see Dicker severely punished and many considered his fine insufficient. The Police Magistrate, W.O. Wise, was widely condemned for his "leniency" and some called for his removal. J. Cavanagh of Scottsdale expressed typical feelings when he wrote "the whole proceedings are not calculated to raise a feeling of confidence in the Hobart court and already public feeling is strongly stirred upon what is thought to have been an inadequate sentence."<sup>37</sup> J. Kennally of Hobart was more vehement: he wished to see "strangled" "the unpatriotic viper that in our midst is earning the Huns' applause".<sup>38</sup> Other letters referred to the wide and increasing dissatisfaction with Wise's administration.<sup>39</sup> W.R. Stockdale of Sandy Bay hit upon the happy solution of exchanging "Dicker and his kind" for British P.O.W.s in Germany.<sup>40</sup>

The *Mercury*, which was to the forefront of the public outcry opened a fund in order to make a presentation to the actresses who reported Dicker to the authorities and stood as witnesses at the trial. The purpose was not so much to raise a substantial amount of money, advised the editor, but rather to provide an opportunity for as many people as possible to recognize the patriotic conduct of the women.<sup>41</sup> People responded and money flowed in, usually accompanied by warm congratulations for the witnesses. The *Daily Post* deplored the appeal, lamenting that the people of Hobart were being exploited for jingoism's sake.<sup>42</sup> Jingoism was rampant and it was as if all the hatred people had been taught to feel for things German had been

---

37. *Mercury*, 28 February 1917.      38. *ibid.*, 27 February 1917.

39. *ibid.* It is ironical that it was also Wise who had so offended the "left" during the conscription campaign.

40. *ibid.*, 3 March 1917.

41. *ibid.*, 24 February 1917.      42. *Daily Post*, 3 March 1917.

unleashed on Dicker. Their pent-up passions were given release. The Premier's office was besieged by petitions from the Franklin area, requesting the Premier to render Dicker's seat in the House of Assembly vacant.<sup>43</sup>

The Public Works committee remained obstinate in its refusal to sit with Dicker. Two of the members had lost a son at the front, another a nephew and they felt that they as "Britishers" could not work with a named "disloyalist". One member C.H. Hall (uncle of Clifford Hall) said that feelings were so intense in the north of the State that he dared not sit with Dicker, for fear of arousing the wrath of his electors.<sup>44</sup> Dicker objected that he had already been tried and punished once; what right, he demanded, had the committee to inflict further punishment? He refused to resign from the committee which had adjourned *sine die*; he informed the Minister for Lands and Works that he was prepared to continue working even if the others were not.<sup>45</sup>

Dicker had meanwhile appealed against the conviction recorded against him by P.M. Wise. His lawyer, W.M. Hodgman, argued that it could not be proved that the words allegedly uttered, had in any way affected recruiting. The appeal was dismissed. The Chief Justice, Sir H. Nicholls, decided that the offence depended on the character of the words, rather than upon the mentality of the hearers. Justice Crips in support pronounced that the fact that the words did not affect recruiting was immaterial. Both he and Justice Ewing agreed with the dismissal.<sup>46</sup>

---

43. Premiers Dept., 52/2/17, T.S.A.

45. *ibid.*

44. *Daily Post*, 7 March 1917.

46. *ibid.*, 28 March 1917.



The same month, another Labor man, Percy Smith, general Secretary of the Builders' Laborers' Federation, was charged with the same offence, namely making statements prejudicial to recruiting, this time in the Hobart branch of the Commonwealth Bank. Smith, a Victorian, was reported to have said: "What have the working men of Australia to fight for? They would be just as well off under German rule. I would just as soon be under them as under the British as things could not be worse." W.M. Hodgman, who had suffered boycott and abuse since he had defended Dicker, also defended Smith. The defendant, like Dicker, emphatically denied having made use of the words attributed to him by the prosecution. He probably did not help his case however by telling the Court that although he would not deter men from enlisting, neither would he encourage them. Smith was found guilty and fined, like Dicker, £15 with sh.11/6 costs or in default, three months' imprisonment.<sup>47</sup> The publicity accorded the cases together with the press headlines which always referred erroneously to the charge as one of "Disloyal Utterances" (and not of "Prejudicing Recruiting") did not provide a sympathetic environment for the beginning of Labor's Federal Election campaign.

The Federal Election had been set down for 5 May, but only after persistent efforts and manoeuvres on the part of Hughes to achieve a prolongation of parliament, had failed. One particular incident which brought discredit on the Federal government, Premier Lee and the Labor party alike, was the resignation of Labor Senator Ready and his replacement by Earle. This step ended the Labor majority in the Senate and it appeared as though Hughes would be able to pass

---

47. *ibid.*, 7 April 1917.

his prolongation bill and thus enable himself and Joseph Cook to attend the Imperial Conference in London. Men of all political persuasions were shocked at the behind-the-scenes manoeuvres:

The conjuring trick by which Senator Ready sitting erect in view of the whole of the people of Australia, was suddenly made to disappear and to give place to Mr. Earle was performed with a neatness which must evoke some admiration of the talented conjuror, Mr. Hughes. But admiration of the cleverness with which a trick is performed does not necessarily imply approval of the trick itself or love of the trickster ... the business<sup>48</sup> from start to finish is utterly discreditable.

What had happened was that shortly before 6 p.m. on 2 March, Ready had told the President of the Senate of his intentions of resignation. Within an hour, Earle, who happened to be visiting Melbourne, had handed to the Governor-General his resignation from the House of Assembly. By 9:15 that evening the Tasmanian Executive Council (parliament being in recess) had met and appointed Earle to replace Ready.

Senator Ready offered ill-health as his reason for resignation but his Labor comrades had their doubts. Rumours of corruption and bribery were rife and suspicions were increased when Senators Guy and Long, the latter "a man of robust appearance"<sup>49</sup> also absented themselves on health grounds. The Labor party sensing betrayal, vented its ire on Senator Ready. "Certainly severe Mr. Ready's illness must be," commented the *Daily Post* bitterly, "to compel him to leave his ship in an hour of need."<sup>50</sup> Jas. Belton, M.H.A., said he had never felt "so sick" in his life as when he heard of Ready's resignation.

---

48. *Mercury*, 3 March 1917.

50. *Daily Post*, 3 March 1917.

49. Scott, op. cit., p. 382.

He spoke darkly of the Prime Minister's hypnotic influence on weaker-minded persons.<sup>51</sup> The innuendoes and direct hostility from his old colleagues provoked Ready to speak out. He explained that, in opposition to his party, he had favoured prolongation. The various alternatives open to him - voting against the party, temporary leave of absence and resignation - all would have, in his opinion, drawn criticism. He chose resignation: "although I knew it would cause comment, I never imagined such dastardly criticism would follow my action, especially from my old associates."<sup>52</sup> Thus another internecine battle disrupted Labor's ranks and was accompanied by the usual anger and bitterness. As before, the conservative press rushed to the aid of the man called traitor, giving publicity to his wounded feelings. In the pages of the *Mercury*, Ready railed against the party without restraint. He denounced the vilification and slander of himself by his former friends, but more seriously he lay bare the disunity and divisions which racked the Labor party. He told of the marked difference of opinion within the party on the new recruiting scheme: "a number, larger than the public realised, refused to assist in any way with recruiting". He named Senators Guy and O'Keefe in particular as having done nothing to assist. He referred to the hostile criticism which he met in union and political circles when he acceded to the chair of the State Recruiting Committee. The letter concluded with an expression of joy at being out of "the sphere of such parliamentary pirates who sail under the black flag of malignity and party bitterness."<sup>53</sup>

To anyone observing the events surrounding the "Ready incident"

---

51. *ibid.*, 12 March 1917.

53. *Mercury*, 2 May 1917.

52. *ibid.*, 13 March 1917.

it might appear that the Labor party was intent on destroying itself. This would especially appear to be so when it was realised the destructive attacks and counter attacks were occurring in the weeks preceding the Federal election. Labor's desire to help recruiting had been impugned and the party's cherished image of solidarity and unity had been shattered once again.

The Prime Minister's efforts to postpone the elections were foiled, ironically, by his friends in the Liberal party. Two Tasmanian Liberal Senators, Bakhap and J.H. Keating,<sup>54</sup> in a bid to end the intrigue and "clean up" politics, had voted with the Labor members in the Senate against the prolongation bill. The *Mercury* congratulated them on refusing to be a party to a "dirty business"; "the Liberal party owes its deliverance to Tasmanian members".<sup>55</sup> The Liberal party had been "delivered", yet their friends the Nationalists had been defeated. The relationship between the two parties was confusing and ill-defined.

In early January a meeting had been held in Melbourne to formally establish the National Federation. Although its support and *raison d'être* came from the breakaway section of the Labor party it was claimed that it was more than "a Labor party plus patriotism." Hughes announced it was to be a true national party, embracing all. The *Mercury* saw it as "a British party, based on a hearty membership of the British Empire."<sup>56</sup> The only alternative the editor could envisage was "a continent of Germans and mongrels, or of yellow races." The meeting in Melbourne was supported by five Premiers, Liberal and

---

54. J.H. Keating (1872-1940): barrister; Tasmanian Senator 1901-23; Minister for Home Affairs 1907-8.

55. *Mercury*, 6 March 1917.

56. *ibid.*, 11 January 1917.

National, (Ryan's absence was noted) but it was unclear as to whether an amalgamation of Liberals and ex-Labor forces was expected to result.

After offering his support to the National party in Melbourne, Lee returned to Tasmania where the Liberal party remained aloof. The *Mercury* urged the Liberals to maintain a separate existence and identity. Hughes and his followers were advised to sink their Labor principles and enter the Liberal party.<sup>57</sup> Readers agreed. One letter by A. Conroy for example, expressed disgust at the Federal Liberals "compromising" with Hughes.<sup>58</sup> By early February the *Mercury* announced, without regret, that the National party had "fallen very flat" and that "for all practical purposes it could be counted as still-born."<sup>59</sup> It was a premature judgment and a mistaken one.

On the north and north west coasts much organisation had been undertaken to make the new party a success. Earle in particular was enthusiastic, as were his fellow ex-Laborites, Howroyd and Jensen, understandably, as in a very real way their political future was at stake. During February and March, meetings and demonstrations were arranged to promote the National Federation, Jensen being in charge of the campaign in the north and south, while Howroyd undertook a similar mission along the north west coast. The fiery Fr. O'Donnell soon emerged as an ardent propagandist for the new party and was appointed chairman of the National Federation at Wynyard.

At the end of March a branch of the Federation was formed in Hobart. The inaugural meeting was addressed by Lee, Senator Bakhap,

---

57. *ibid.*, 22 January 1917.

59. *ibid.*, 8 February 1917.

58. *ibid.*, 8 February 1917.

Jensen and W.H. Laird Smith. The theme of the speeches was Empire first, party second. Jensen spoke of the tears which ran down Hughes' face when he described what he had seen at the front and Laird Smith appealed to all Labor supporters to follow his example and to help the National Federation make Australia "one of the brightest jewels in the Crown of the greatest Empire the world had ever known." One time Labor men emerged as ardent Imperialists. D. Rees, formerly chairman of the Denison Divisional Council of the W.P.L., was elected president.<sup>60</sup>

As the campaign progressed and the Federation branches took root it was clear that many Labor supporters were indeed following the example set by Laird Smith and his fellow Nationalists. At the north west coast centres the campaign was forging ahead with an "enthusiasm and system" which had "never been equalled in the history of any political party."<sup>61</sup> Wynyard was the centre of the organisation for Darwin, and there, said the *N.W. Advocate*, "with characteristic energy, Fr. O'Donnell gave all his spare time to the thousand and one details of organisation in connection with [the] campaign."<sup>62</sup>

There were now two anti-Labor political parties in Tasmania. When it was learnt that the Federal Cabinet was composed of a majority of Liberals, people's fears about the Liberal party losing its identity and importance were largely dissipated. No longer did it seem likely that the Liberal party would fall into the inferior position as the "tail" of the Hughes party and Liberals were consequently exhorted to co-operate fully with the Nationalists to secure election victory.

---

60. *Ibid.*, 27 March 1917.

62. *ibid.*

61. *N.W. Advocate*, 28 April 1917.

The *Mercury* still preferred that they work side by side rather than amalgamate, for as the editor said, the Hughes party still claimed to be the true Labor party and professed the same domestic policies as they did before the split.<sup>63</sup> Confusion reigned in the public mind and even as the election approached, Liberals were still unsure as to whether they owed allegiance to the National Federation or the Liberal Party. The *Mercury* demanded information: "an end must be made of mystery and the Liberal League must tell the public exactly where it stands and what part it is playing in this drama."<sup>64</sup> Two days later the Liberal League responded with a resolution affirming that they "should co-operate heartily and vigorously with the National Federation party in the Australian effort to help win the war, and should work for such candidates as may be selected to contest the elections as supporters of the present National government."<sup>65</sup>

There were some candidates however who desired to co-operate with neither party but to stand alone. They were Sgt. G. Foster and Dr. W.E. Bottrill in Denison, D.N. Cameron and L.E. Page in Wilmot and Col. St.Clair Cameron and H. Goodluck for the Senate. Finally all but the two Camerons and Page were persuaded to stand down in favour of endorsed Liberal or Nationalist candidates. Bottrill felt keenly what he called the "disfranchisement" of Liberals in Denison: without himself their choice was limited in effect to two Labor men, Ben Watkins the Official Labor candidate and W. Laird Smith, an ex-Labor Nationalist. Laird Smith in his defence declared he was no longer a Labor man. He quoted Hughes' statements about the great differences which divided the old Labor party from the present one.

---

63. *Mercury*, 15 March 1917.

65. *ibid.*, 24 March 1917.

64. *ibid.*, 22 March 1917.

It was the difference, said Laird Smith, between freedom and slavery.<sup>66</sup> Arguments and slogans which were once the preserve of Liberals, he had now adopted as his own. He was a passionate convert.

Bottrill had stood down but others appeared; prospective candidates were being put forward by Temperance bodies and it took no less a man than Hughes to dissuade them from standing.<sup>67</sup> Because of the likelihood of Independents splitting the vote, especially for the Senate seats, which were of vital importance to the Nationalists, Lee wrote to J. Hume-Cook, general secretary of the National Federation in Melbourne, asking for special assistance in the form of speakers. He desired "one from each side"; for preference, Senator Lynch and Hon. W. Watt. Lee thought that in the end they would win but that they should "leave nothing to chance".<sup>68</sup> To determine that they would win, Lee with the State Liberal party, Earle, Howroyd, Jensen, Laird Smith and the returned soldiers, began to stump the country putting their case to the electors.

Earle sounded the theme of the campaign at his opening address in Launceston: there was only one plank for loyal Nationalists and Liberals, that was to win the war. The cry echoed throughout the State. They had to organise and consolidate Australia's efforts, said Earle, so that she could throw her whole weight with the Empire to bring the war to a victorious conclusion.<sup>69</sup> Never had an election platform been more simple: let the election, said the *Mercury* "be a complete, final and unmistakeable demonstration of Australian unity, of British solidarity and of our universal resolve to win the war."<sup>70</sup>

---

66. *ibid.*, 3 April 1917.

67. *N.W. Advocate*, 24 March 1917.

68. Premiers Dept., 111/1/17, 16 April 1917. T.S.A.

69. *Mercury*, 29 March 1917. 70. *ibid.*, 30 March 1917.



Hughes' allegations of Labor domination by "outside organisations" were reiterated loudly and often. The Nationalist candidates also devoted much time to recalling the split in Labor over conscription with the speaker inevitably cast as the loyal but ill-used hero, the Labor party the disloyal oppressors and villains.

There was a particularly lively interest taken in the election campaign in Darwin. The effort to unseat O'Malley had an intensely personal aspect as he had made numerous enemies in the area. T.Collett, of Ulverstone expressed widely held sentiments when he wrote that O'Malley should be replaced because he did not live in the State, because his visits were infrequent, because his attitude during the referendum was unsatisfactory and because, although chairman of the Divisional Recruiting Committee, he had left the State as soon as his preselection was assured.<sup>71</sup> Many people wished to see O'Malley brought low. They were annoyed by his arrogance and egotism and his smug confidence of re-election. He was referred to derisively in the local paper as "the American Comic-Opera representative" or "the American peace-loving anti-conscription absentee representative" and the optimistic among his enemies were certain his political career was at an end.

The people of the north west coast had ambitious plans. Not content to merely support the Hughes government, they desired to have the Prime Minister as their own representative. When it was known that Hughes would not contest his old seat of West Sydney, the electors of Darwin clamoured for him to represent them. Meetings drew up petitions urging the Prime Minister to comply with their request. H.A.

---

71. *N.W. Advocate*, 6 February 1917.

Nichols of Devonport thrilled at the honour to Tasmania if "the man of the hour of the Southern Hemisphere" could see his way clear to become their candidate. No speaker in British history, declared Nichols, had made a greater impression than W.M. Hughes by the brilliance of his speeches on the war.<sup>72</sup> It was firmly believed that an ex-Labor man would be needed to win the west coast votes. In all areas of Darwin there had been a falling-away from the Labor party, but the defectors might not go so far as to vote Liberal. A "patriotic" Labor man was needed - who better than the Prime Minister? Hughes was also seen as the only candidate who could soundly defeat the formidable King O'Malley. Large meetings at Burnie, Ulverstone and Devonport joined in a declaration in favour of Hughes' candidacy<sup>73</sup>; all were confident he would run. Their confidence was unwarranted and they suffered deep disappointment. Hughes chose to run for Bendigo.

The second choice of the Darwin Nationalists was C.R. Howroyd, a man of lesser stature, but still capable they hoped of dethroning the King. O'Malley for his part, was contemptuous of his opponent, dismissing him as a "plough-horse",<sup>74</sup> scarcely a worthy competitor. The Nationalists however prepared to win. That they took the campaign seriously is evident from the decision of Jensen, Minister for Trade and Customs and director of the Nationalist campaign in Tasmania, to move the administration of the Customs department from Melbourne to Launceston.<sup>75</sup> There he was able to keep closely in touch with the campaign.

The campaign to return a National government was fought in

---

72. *ibid.*, 14 February 1917.

74. *Daily Post*, 23 April 1917.

73. *ibid.*, 17 February 1917.

75. *N.W. Advocate*, 21 March 1917.

Tasmania mainly by Nationalists and returned soldiers, rather than by the Liberal organisations. The election campaign was thus reduced to a bitter personal fight between the conscriptionist and anti-conscriptionist factions of the old Labor party. Between the two sides there had grown a pitiless and enduring hatred. A consequent feature of the electioneering was the rapidity and ferocity with which Laird Smith, Jensen, Earle and others utilized the anti-Labor cliches and smears. Ready's published attack on the Labor movement was commended and it was suggested that his statements, if nothing else, should influence the electors to vote Nationalist.

Nationalist speakers grew increasingly disconcerted at the amount of hostility in their audiences. The opposition, always described disparagingly as emanating from "the back of the hall" consisted of embittered and insulted Laborites. At a meeting in Hobart Laird Smith was asked why he was opposing "Bennie Watkins" and when he attempted to reply interruptions became so numerous the chairman was forced to intervene. The interjectors were threatened with ejection from the hall. When asked to outline his policy, Laird Smith replied his policy was to lift humanity out of the mud where they, the interjectors, were grovelling.<sup>76</sup> Bitter interchanges were not confined to Labor opponents however. Sgt. G. Foster who was on the Nationalist platform as a supporter, was challenged as to the validity of his claim to have fought at the front. Infuriated, Foster replied to his detractors in bitter tones that he was sorry he had gone to fight for "curs" such as they.<sup>77</sup> The meeting ended in uproar; the concluding speeches were inaudible.

---

76. *Mercury*, 17 April 1917.

77. *ibid.*

The Labor party, aware that, as the *Daily Post* put it, Tasmania was overrun by "a jingoism of a rabid and dangerous kind"<sup>78</sup> attempted to win the electors' votes any way they could. On the one hand, they bowed to the prevailing mood in their nomination of Lt. James Hurst, a returned and wounded soldier as a Senate candidate, but on the other hand, they hoped to impress the electors with a cool and moderate front and calm and reasoned argument in contrast to the emotionalism of their opponents. But Labor candidates despite their cool intentions could not help but succumb to the heat of the day. W.A. Woods, Senate candidate, lashed out at "the damnable juggernaut of demented jingoism" which threatened in his view to crush Australian liberty.<sup>79</sup> In a passionate outburst at Geeveston, he outlined the "conspiracy" of Hughes and his government against the Australian people. Every transaction which led to the election was part of this conspiracy and was cited as a reason to vote Labor:

Hughes' trip to England, unAustralian and unauthorised cavortings amongst titled and untitled wire-pullers of Imperialism, his undenied flirtations with conscription, his quaint posturing at and after the Paris conference as a world statesman specially commissioned by jove to annihilate Empires and thrones and control the direction of all the world's trade, his return to Australia as an advocate of conscription which only a few months earlier he had solemnly declared he never under any circumstances would consent to; the shameless conduct of the referendum campaign, the lying accusations of German gold, the attempt to interfere with the rights of the citizen at the ballot-box; the endeavour to bludgeon the Labor party into acquiescence in a prolongation of Parliament ... the astounding resignation of Ready at a critical moment ...<sup>80</sup>

Hughes was judged guilty of all this and more; it was hoped the voters

---

78. *Daily Post*, 2 April 1917.

80. *ibid.*

79. *ibid.*, 5 April 1917.

would agree with the verdict. Woods' vehemence cost him dearly. At Deloraine he told an audience that the necessity for a bloody revolution could be averted by a peaceful revolution at the ballot-box.<sup>81</sup> The reference to a bloody revolution caused men to throw up their hands in horror. Political pundits urged Tasmanians to take the "threat" seriously. The *Mercury* remorselessly turned the phrase against Woods and the Labor party. The editor conjectured that the "bloody revolution" would be led by "a few trained German and American fenians at present lying low or to be smuggled into the country when the signal is given."<sup>82</sup>

The less radical of the Labor candidates chose other means to woo the electors. Ben Watkins used every opportunity to tell his audience how loyal and patriotic the Labor party really was; he pleaded that the Labor party had done everything that could be humanly devised to assist in the winning of the war.<sup>83</sup> The Labor candidate for Wilmot, C. Sheedy made similar pronouncements, even asserting that the Labor party was the true "win the war" party.<sup>84</sup> He cited as evidence Lt. Hurst's participation in the war and the fact that Belton and Woods both had sons at the front. The *Daily Post* also stressed the number departed for the trenches from the ranks of Labor, often naming specific men who had enlisted themselves or with sons at the front. These men were contrasted with the "prating pseudo-loyalists" of the Liberal party.<sup>85</sup>

The Labor party thus resorted to aping Nationalist tactics in continually asserting their loyalty. They vied with each other in expressions and deeds of patriotism. The Labor party yielded to and

---

81. *Mercury*, 30 April 1917.

84. *ibid.*, 14 April 1917.

82. *ibid.*

85. *ibid.*, 17 April 1917.

83. *Daily Post*, 19 April 1917.

was beaten by, the intensely jingoistic climate of the times; they began to rely increasingly on their trump card, Lr. J. Hurst, to win the election for them. But to their untold fury their opponents found myriad ways to discredit even him. Much was made of the fact that he had voted for conscription while at the front, but had subsequently been converted to an "anti-position". To the Nationalists there was only one explanation. As the secretary of the National Federation of Wynyard put it, he had "abandoned his principles at the dictates of the junta."<sup>86</sup> The *Mercury* supported this view, adding that although he had done his duty on the battlefield, he should not be elected because he was not "free"; he was controlled by "outside bodies".<sup>87</sup>

On the evening before the elections the National Federation held a large rally in the Hobart City Hall. Attention was paid to the "Ready Affair" and the divisions in Labor. "Was such a party," asked Laird Smith, "consisting of men divided and fighting among themselves and many openly disloyal fit to govern Australia at this serious juncture?"<sup>88</sup> The electors of Denison evidently believed not.

The result of the election was an overwhelming victory for the Nationalists and the Liberals; a crushing defeat for Labor. Labor speakers might complain that invective and patriotic platitudes would not win the war; they certainly appeared effective in winning the election. It was the biggest poll yet recorded in a Federal election. The voting was particularly heavy in Denison, where 2,059 more electors voted than in 1914. In all electorates the anti-Labor vote increased and the Labor vote decreased. Again this trend was particularly marked in Denison, where the anti-Labor vote increased from 7,701 in

---

86. *N.W. Advocate*, 17 April 1917.

88. *ibid.*, 5 May 1917.

87. *Mercury*, 18 April 1917.

1914 to 10,964 in 1917. The figures suggest that a section of usually non-voting middle class city-dwellers, fearful of the "disloyalist" Labor party, was roused to cast a Nationalist vote. Darwin also showed a significant swing against Labor with 2,350 more people voting against the party than had done in 1914. As Labor's vote fell from 8,535 to 6,361, it seems there occurred a straight switch of allegiance. In Bass the anti-Labor increase was 1,971 votes and in Wilmot 403. In Franklin the Liberal, McWilliams, had again stood unopposed. Labor had been defeated in all electorates.

The Senate figures strikingly confirmed the voting patterns for the House of Representatives contest. John Earle topped the poll with the remarkable score of 46,329 votes - a record individual poll for Tasmania. Next were the Liberals, Keating and Bakhap with 45,595 and 43,972 votes respectively. No Labor candidate was successful. (This contrasts with the 1914 Senate election when three Labor candidates topped the poll: O'Keefe with 39,879 votes, Long with 39,853, Guy with 39,656.) In 1917 Lt. Hurst significantly polled most votes of the Labor Senate team, ahead of Belton and Woods, the latter candidate receiving only 31,263 votes.

The soldiers' votes followed the same pattern as those polled within the State. The *Daily Post* charged that the soldiers had been deceived because their ballot papers did not contain any names, merely squares marked "Ministerialist" and "Opposition". As the paper pointed out, when the great majority of the soldiers left Australia "ministerialist" meant Labor and "Opposition" meant Liberal. There was likely to be some confusion. As the *Daily Post* saw it, the soldiers were "tricked and trapped". It is impossible to assess what effect the strange form of the ballot paper had; and it could have just as

easily worked against the Liberals as against Labor. The remarkable fact is how closely the soldiers' votes tallied with those polled within Australia.<sup>89</sup>

The election had been won by rhetoric. War jingoism had delivered to Labor a "knock-out blow". In concrete terms Labor was battling against not only the traditional Liberal vote but the very great number of onetime Labor supporters who were now enthusiastically backing the Nationalists. The election revealed the extent of the desertion from Labor ranks. The *Daily Post* blamed the lack of motor cars at Labor's disposal and the "unscrupulous tactics and duplicity of the Fusionists".<sup>90</sup> But it was also recognized that Labor was dealing with "a demented people temporarily aberrant",<sup>91</sup> who preferred for the time being the bellicose patriotism of the Nationalists to the uncertain and lukewarm stand of Labor.

The Labor party was thrown into a trough of gloom. It was said that the working men who had given their lives for Australia and the Empire might well "turn in their graves" at the turn politics had taken.<sup>92</sup> The defeated candidates lamented that the people had been blindfolded by the flag, had been deafened by war drums. But because hope does spring eternal, there were some Labor men who were confident that their party would rise again. W.A. Woods was of the opinion that the set-back Labor had sustained at the hands of the "renegades" was severe enough to act as a tonic and to improve the organisation.<sup>93</sup>

---

89. The soldiers' votes for the Senate were: Earle, 1,691; Keating, 1,673; Bakhap, 1,652; Hurst, 796; Belton, 733; Woods, 722; Cameron, 26. For the House of Representatives: Laird Smith, 265; Watkins, 76; Jensen, 280; Mooney, 76; Atkinson, 343; Sheedy, 127; Howroyd, 374; O'Malley, 260.

90. *Daily Post*, 7 May 1917.

92. *ibid.*, 7 May 1917.

91. *ibid.*, 26 June 1917.

93. *ibid.*



The anti-Labor forces were relieved and jubilant. The *Mercury* patronisingly congratulated the women of Tasmania for not letting down the side. Women were "naturally against war" advised the editor, hence the result was by no means inevitable. But happily the fears held about the wisdom of women's franchise were ill-founded; "women of British blood[were]quite as patriotic as the men."<sup>94</sup> Some saw the election result as a personal triumph for Hughes, while Hughes saw it as a triumph of good over evil. The outcome moved him to a characteristic flight of rhetoric: he and his followers had emerged from the fight not only with plumage unruffled, but with pinions outspread, soaring in the empyrean. He felt that the well-springs of his oratory were nearly dried up, but not quite it seems, for he went on to salute the spirit of Australia "which now stands erect, smiling and triumphant."<sup>95</sup>

The Nationalists were triumphant in Labor's humiliation and nowhere was this more pronounced than in the electorate of Darwin, where the over-weening O'Malley had been vanquished. The plough-horse had defeated the champion. "The spectacular victory for Nationalist C.R. Howroyd came as a surprise to even the most sanguine of the National supporters," wrote the *N.W. Advocate*.<sup>96</sup> There was little justification for such surprise. The victory had been foreshadowed by the outcome of the conscription referendum: only eight months before in what was considered the stronghold of the Labor movement, the conscriptionists had reaped the largest victory in the State. The battlements had already fallen. It is perhaps ironical that it was in Darwin, the birthplace of the Labor party in Tasmania, that

---

94. *Mercury*, 8 May 1917.

96. *N.W. Advocate*, 8 May 1917.

95. *ibid.*, 10 May 1917.

the National Federation won most supporters. O'Malley's defeat was the cause of great rejoicing among his enemies. "The disappearance of Mr. O'Malley from Australian politics," wrote the *Mercury*, "is a gain to the Commonwealth and removes a blot from the name and good fame of Tasmania."<sup>97</sup>

The man most entitled to savour the sweet fruits of victory, O'Malley's successor, C.R. Howroyd, was sadly robbed of that pleasure. Five days after polling day he dropped dead of a heart attack. He was only fifty years old; it was thought that the anxieties and pain of the last year had materially hastened his death. As the *Mercury* wrote: "he beat the hitherto unconquered O'Malley but the effort killed him."<sup>98</sup> The tensions of the war years were exacting their toll.

. . . . .

The Federal election was followed by a spate of by-elections. There had already been one by-election conducted in Franklin during the Federal election campaign, when four candidates contested the seat rendered vacant by Earle's resignation. There was little interest shown by the electors, only fifty *per cent* of whom recorded a vote. The Liberal candidate, A. Cotton, who described himself as an "out and out Imperialist", secured victory over his Labor opponent, J. Craig after distribution of preferences. A more important by-election followed for the House of Assembly seat of Denison, rendered vacant by the death of W.H. Burgess. This was contested by W.H. Watkins for Labor, who had just one month before been defeated by W.H. Laird Smith

---

97. *Mercury*, 7 May 1917.

98. *ibid.*, 11 May 1917.

in the House of Representatives election for the same seat and two Nationalist candidates, J.C. McPhee and Sgt. George Foster. Foster and his fellow soldiers had been somewhat piqued when forced to stand down in favour of Laird Smith's candidacy for the Federal elections. He was determined that this time he would not be pushed aside.

About a month before the Denison by-election a meeting was held of "all those interested in the formation of a soldiers' and patriots' political league and the candidacy of Staff Sgt. Foster."<sup>99</sup> A previous meeting of the promoters of the league had drawn up a constitution, platform and objective. Sgt. Hedley Barrett, the president, advised the meeting that the returned soldiers considered that they were not properly represented in the State parliament. The platform of the new league gives an indication of their general attitudes and aims which included: (I) cultivation of Australian loyalty (II) direct parliamentary representation of soldiers (III) the winning of the war with "a more effective method of obtaining reinforcements" (IV) maintenance of Empire solidarity (V) effective repatriation for all soldiers and sailors and (VI) a rigid enforcement of the War Precautions Act.<sup>100</sup> The authoritarian tone of the document came to characterise most of the soldiers' statements and their demand for special rights and privileges set the pattern for the future. Foster was a keen supporter of the league, openly avowing that its object was to secure more power and influence for himself and his fellows. The *Mercury* was hostile to the advent of what it disapprovingly called "this new sectional organisation". The editor, although at times posing as the soldiers' friend, had long fulminated against the "injustice" of the proposal to grant

---

99. *ibid.*, 25 May 1917.

100. *ibid.*

soldiers the Legislative Council franchise. "Returned soldiers," said the *Mercury*, "are simply citizens who have done their duty."<sup>101</sup>

D. McRae and F. Henshaw, two members of the newly formed league, responded vigorously to the attack. In their opinion the existing governments and politicians were dilatory and lacking in "honesty of purpose and firmness of execution," especially in matters of repatriation. They maintained that "soldiers having common interests peculiar to themselves and having made greater sacrifices than any other section of the community [were] entitled by every moral and practical right to a direct share in the government of the country."<sup>102</sup> Some people began to voice their misgivings about the extent of the soldiers' claims. Sgt. Foster assured his audiences however, that what some people were saying about them wishing to "dominate the country" was not true. It was not domination they sought, but that "sympathetic representation" which their actions and condition demanded.<sup>103</sup> A new division was emerging in Australian society : one between those who had fought and those who stayed at home.

The conflict which was emerging between civilians and soldiers was evident as early as 1916. In September of that year the *Daily Post* warned soldiers against insulting and annoying civilians in the streets. They were reminded that arrogance was what they were fighting against. "It ill becomes a soldier to swagger through a community and brush his brothers in mufti off the path."<sup>104</sup> The warning was not heeded. Verbal conflict developed into physical clashes, many of which led to court cases. At the very time Foster was campaigning

---

101. *ibid.*, 28 May 1917.

102. *ibid.*, 5 June 1917.

103. *ibid.*, 13 June 1917.

104. *Daily Post*, 2 September 1917.

for his return to parliament, another returned soldier was being charged with assaulting a citizen in the street. His reason was that the man had not gone to war like himself.<sup>105</sup>

Unionists had been quietly fearful for some months of the increasing powers and privileges soldiers were arrogating to themselves. Some argued that it was an urgent necessity to organise soldiers into unions; the Returned Soldiers' organisations were seen as usurping with increasing arrogance the function of the trade union, a function for which they had no qualification nor power. Preference to soldiers struck at preference to unionists, one of the basic principles of the trade union movement. The unionists' anxiety was expressed in a motion put forward by J. Cosgrave of the Gormanston branch of the F.M.E.A. at the April Conference of the Tasmanian Labor Federation : "That Conference instruct the Executive to immediately take all necessary steps to organise soldiers and further their economic and political interests."<sup>106</sup> The soldiers however, particularly those in the official R.S.S.I.L.A., had different plans and despite Labor protestations of sympathy for their cause, they maintained an attitude of active hostility towards the Labor movement.

The result of the Denison by-election was an easy win for Foster. The Labor vote fell from 8,507 in the Federal election to 4,586. "Labor was defeated on May 5," exulted the *Mercury*, "on June 23, so far as Denison was concerned it was routed." The paper saw in the startling decrease in the Denison Labor vote "an augury" : "a warning to the Labor party as to what will happen if it insists upon following paths which lead away from the prevailing sentiments and desires of

---

105. *ibid.*, 23 May 1917.

106. *ibid.*, 13 April 1917.

Australian democracy."<sup>107</sup> Undoubtedly the absence of Labor supporters at the polls reflected loss of heart; others may have been alienated by a strike at Mt. Lyell. The miners struck in May for higher wages. They considered that because of the high cost of living and bad climatic conditions, they deserved a share of the huge profits being made by the company out of the war.<sup>108</sup> Critics of the strikers were particularly incensed because the union encouraged men to seek work elsewhere in Australia, thus making the resumption of work at Mt. Lyell impossible.<sup>109</sup> Zealous patriots were outraged because the strike prevented the production of copper, essential for the making of munitions.<sup>110</sup> The strike provided further evidence, for those seeking it, that the Labor movement was in the hands of the "extremists".

No sooner had the strike been settled than the residents of the district were called upon to turn their attention to the by-election for the Darwin seat in the House of Representatives, rendered vacant by the untimely death of C.R. Howroyd. The Labor candidate was returned soldier Hurst. The Nationalists were faced with the onerous task of selecting a candidate from the twenty-two nominations received. Not for some years had there been such a desire to participate in politics. W.G. Spence who had lost his old seat of Darling, N.S.W., was a popular nomination, but many Nationalists wanted a candidate who lived in Darwin. O'Malley's absenteeism lingered long in their memory. Spence was finally selected however, most agreeing that his suffering at the hands of the Labor party warranted the choice. But all objections could not be silenced. Liberals could not easily forget that for forty years Spence was a "militant trade unionist". They suspected he must

---

107. *Mercury*, 25 June 1917.

108. *Daily Post*, 17 May 1917.

109. *Mercury*, 11 May 1917.

110. *ibid.*

be still imbued with Labor principles.<sup>111</sup> Proud Tasmanians were offended that they had to vote for an imported candidate, as if Tasmanians were "an inferior people".<sup>112</sup> Hurst sensed the dissatisfaction and made much of the fact that he was a native of the district. He also sought to ingratiate himself with the electors by endorsing McRae's and Foster's complaints about the treatment of returned soldiers. Victory came again to the Nationalists, but only after the intervention of both the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, who came to the aid of Spence with special appeals to the Darwin electors.

Spence's majority was considerably less than Howroyd's on 5 May. Whereas the Labor vote was reduced by less than 2,000, the Nationalist vote fell by over 3,000 and although Spence still commanded a majority of 1,500 votes, this was drawn mainly from the conservative farming communities and towns along the north west coast. Significantly Hurst secured majorities in Queenstown, Waratah, Strahan, Zeehan and Gormanston.<sup>113</sup> The figures support Turner's conclusion that there was by mid-1917, a considerable section of the working-class which was at least unperturbed by allegations that the Labor party was half-hearted in its approach to the war effort and was possibly even beginning to approve of a movement in this direction.<sup>114</sup>

Weary Tasmanian electors were faced with the daunting prospect of two more by-elections the following week, for the House of Assembly seats of Denison and Bass. W.A. Woods, member of the House of Assembly since 1906 and Labor candidate for the Denison seat was opposed by six other candidates, five of whom were Nationalists and one, an

---

111. *N.W. Advocate*, 1, 22 June 1917.

112. *ibid.*, 26 June 1917.

113. *Daily Post*, 2 July 1917.

114. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

independent. Again, the number of those eager to try their hand at politics was unusually high. The interest in Labor circles was less keen - much of the movement seemed overtaken by inertia. The *Daily Post* sent out a clarion call to the workers, urging them to rouse themselves and exercise their franchise. The Labor party was also suffering from the distinct disadvantage of limited funds: "our resources are not in any respect as inexhaustible as those which can be commanded by the champions of capital," noted Dwyer-Gray gloomily.<sup>115</sup> The more pertinacious of Labor members nevertheless persevered. The *Daily Post* with the boldness of those who have nothing to lose, raised its voice about the iniquities, not of the Hun, but of the capitalist. The editor warned readers against following false gods; he warned them against becoming "dupes of those orators of distinction whose words are war words, but whose chief function in the immediate future will be to protect the profits attached to war."<sup>116</sup> Woods, too, adopted a cavalier attitude to the war worshippers, ridiculing what he called "the hysterics of jingoism".<sup>117</sup> His disrespect for the prevailing mood of aggressive patriotism drew pious condemnation from his enemies. In "his depreciation of the sentiment of loyalty and patriotism," said the *Mercury*, Woods represented exactly the prevailing view of his party. The election result was another defeat for Labor; the winning candidate was Nationalist solicitor, C. Davenport Hoggins. The Labor vote had dropped even further; the Nationalist vote remained fairly stable. There had been a fifteen *per cent* swing against Labor since the 1916 State election.<sup>118</sup>

The total number of votes polled, had fallen at each consecutive

---

115. *Daily Post*, 29 June 1917.

117. *Mercury*, 6 July 1917.

116. *ibid.*, 26 June 1917.

118. *ibid.*, 8 July 1917.



election. Clearly people were tired of elections, preferring to remain at home or if they ventured out, to go to races, football or see the latest Chapman or Pickford moving picture. Both parties had suffered from absention in the by-elections (although the Nationalists less than Labor). More important Labor had been unable to win back the support of the large proportion of working and middle classes, who as ardent patriots had joined the Nationalist band wagon. Woods took his defeat philosophically, declaring that democracy always suffered as a result of the war and that people voted from fear.<sup>119</sup> The by-election in Bass on the same day saw six candidates standing, T.J. Earley for the Labor party against five assorted Nationalists. After distribution of preferences, Earley was beaten by J.C. Newton, 3,999 votes to 2,854. The vote in both the constituencies of Bass and Denison was even "more emphatically National than that of May 5."<sup>120</sup>

The same day, there was yet another by-election, in Darwin. Three candidates competed for two seats. Again there was an excess of Nationalist candidates of whom P.G. Pollard the ex-Labor miner and Warden of Waratah was selected. Again the Nationalist-Liberal marriage was strained; the more pessimistic might have pronounced it doomed to failure. Liberals resented voting for ex-Labor men, they yearned instead for a true Liberal candidate, or at least, as one dissatisfied Liberal put it, one more conversant with their interests than a Waratah miner.<sup>121</sup> Although Pollard made the traditional Nationalist noises about "the junta", "Labor extremists" and "outside bodies", many Liberals remained sceptical. The situation was even more confusing to prospective voters because as yet there was no Nationalist party in the

---

119. *Daily Post*, 9 July 1917.

121. *ibid.*, 7 June 1917.

120. *N.W. Advocate*, 10 July 1917.

State parliament: there, they were still Liberal and Labor. A.G. Brown was one who was convinced that Liberals were not getting adequate representation and in order to remedy this, he became a candidate in what he called the "Liberal and Democratic" interest. His candidacy was one of the last gestures of independence on the part of the Liberals; he had little hope of winning a seat against Pollard and Labor's J. Belton. Pollard topped the poll with 4,655 votes, thus gaining the third consecutive victory for the Nationalists in Darwin in three months. J. Belton was not far behind with 3,900 votes. Both took a seat in the House of Assembly.

The uninterrupted succession of Nationalist victories was stunning. The balance of parties in the House of Assembly had altered from government 15 seats, independent one and Labor 14 after the State election to government 20, Labor 10. It was Labor's darkest hour since the war began. The *Daily Post* hastened to assure the defeated candidates that it was in no way their fault : "The phenomenon is general and as long as present conditions and the war delirium endure we may expect considerable reverses."<sup>122</sup> The editor put the electoral disaster down to two causes : first, abstention from the poll - disheartened Labor supporters did not vote - and second, that Labor was not strong enough to outvote the conservative vote plus "the rebel Labor vote."<sup>123</sup> The *Daily Post* wanted no reconciliation with the leaders who betrayed the movement, but realised there had to be with their "deluded followers." The understanding that it was the war, a temporary phenomenon, which had disturbed the judgment of the people, led Labor men to hope for better things when it was over. This hope sustained the movement through its long night.

---

122. *Daily Post*, 9 July 1917.

123. *ibid.*

Elections passed but the problem of enlistments remained, insistent in its demands. The need to get recruits dominated all others, no matter how much people wished it were not so. Public spirits were low especially as casualty lists lengthened, reflecting the high toll of the spring offensives of Messines and Bullecourt. The tone of letters from the front reflected increasing disenchantment. Clifford Hall, who had volunteered to serve with the Field Ambulance, wrote of the destruction and desolation around him. He prayed that his brother would be spared the bloodshed.<sup>124</sup> One month later Hall was dead.

Members of the State Recruiting committee, described feelingly by Dwyer-Gray as "brave men struggling against adversity", continued to meet together and rack their brains for original ideas. A pamphlet was drawn up, asking "Is Tasmania Going to Quit?" It emphasized the stigma which would attach to Tasmania's name, if she could not raise more than the current twenty three men a week. Tables, showing that Tasmania had the lowest proportion of enlistments to population of all States, were given wide circulation. This "slander" was refuted by the *Mercury*, which charged that the only real test was the proportion of enlistments to eligible males in the State; then, Tasmania came out "triumphantly on top".<sup>125</sup>

All were in agreement however, that recruiting was meeting with little response; there was a difference of opinion as to the reason for this situation. The *Daily Post* blamed the Federal government and its lack of direction and information. The exact quota of men required was clouded in obscurity; recruiting agents had conflicting information as to how many men were wanted. (Robson in *The First A.I.F.*

---

124. *ibid.*, 9 June 1917.

125. *Mercury*, 11 June 1917.

states that the government set the quota at the beginning of 1917 at 5,500 men a month.<sup>126</sup> This fact was apparently never communicated to the recruiting authorities in Tasmania: in June E. Dwyer-Gray member of the State Recruiting Committee and editor of the *Daily Post*, assumed the Commonwealth required 10,000 men a month<sup>127</sup>; at the beginning of July the *Daily Post* announced the quota had been set at 7,000 a month.<sup>128</sup>) "The fogging of the figures and all the confusion about the quota, War Council demands and the real requirements ... is prejudicial to recruiting and should be moved," wrote the *Daily Post*.<sup>129</sup> The paper also indicted the government for failing to appoint a chairman to the State Recruiting Committee following Ready's resignation after his retirement from the Senate. It provided "a glaring instance of long continued government neglect."<sup>130</sup>

The medium most popular for the recruiting message was the moving picture. Films dealing with the war were screened as often as possible. The official war film "Why Britain went to War" was shown in front of the recruiting office and in the Palace Pictures cinema - in both places large crowds attended. Enthusiasm was evinced on all sides and the picture was praised as showing exactly "the inhumanity of the Hun and the horrors of the war."<sup>131</sup> The film toured around the island. On the north west coast it was hailed as a great educational medium, although it failed miserably in its object of obtaining recruits.<sup>132</sup> Indeed films were usually more popular than effective.

The Recruiting Committee tried all means of raising recruits. Business firms were written to and asked that for one day they replace

---

126. op. cit., p. 123.

127. *Daily Post*, 4 June 1917.

128. *ibid.*, 4 July 1917.

129. *ibid.*, 4 June 1917.

130. *ibid.*, 6 June 1917.

131. *ibid.*, 9 June 1917.

132. *N.W. Advocate*, 23 June 1917.

their advertisements in the press with recruiting appeals. The foot-paths of Hobart were stencilled with recruiting appeals and when the Mayor of Launceston refused to give permission for a similar project in his city, he was politely asked to reconsider his decision. The young men charged by jingoes with forgetting that there was a war on would surely have had to be blind to do so. The Recruiting Committee maintained a series of deputations to wait on the Minister for Railways, urging him to reduce train fares from Hobart to Claremont. The pulpits of the churches were used as recruiting platforms and lunch-time addresses were resumed in the city. By this time every suburb of Hobart boasted its own recruiting committee.

During 1917 recruiting organisers became increasingly convinced that women could be particularly successful in inducing men to enlist. In Hobart the women interested in recruiting merged with the "One woman, one recruit league" to form the Women's Recruiting committee.<sup>133</sup> A similar committee was formed in Launceston and where possible women's committees were formed in country areas. The women were expected to use their personal influence on men, whether directly or indirectly, to persuade them to join the colours. In mid 1917 canvassers of both sexes were provided with cards containing lists of eligibles whom they were to interview personally. The results were not always encouraging. Private Driver of the North Hobart committee was told by one man that he would rather be taken out on the Domain and shot, than go to war.<sup>134</sup>

The third anniversary of the war provided another grand occasion on which to appeal for more recruits. Recruiting meetings and public appeals were plentiful and again women were to the forefront in the efforts to help. Some led saddled horses through the main street beckoning the men of eligible age to come and help their mates.

---

133. *Daily Post*, 27 July 1917.      134. *ibid.*, 29 August 1917.

Government leaders were content to indulge in rhetorical speeches : the war was a righteous war and righteousness exalted the nation, the crowds were assured. Lest their will to win waned, the people were also reminded of the evil and wickedness of their enemies. The Hohenzollern and Hapsburg families were afflicted with hereditary insanity, advised the Chief Justice, and were "notorious throughout the world for evil and eccentric living fouled by disease and debauchery."<sup>135</sup> Thus were the fires of hatred continually stoked.

The number of enlistments continued far below the quota, which for Tasmania was 242 men a month. It seemed further action was necessary. The country districts, which were doing least well, were sent slides depicting the jolly camp and field life of the troops in training. A film "Australia's Duty" confirmed how pleased men were to don khaki and train to fight. But Claremont Camp was evidently not all fun and games. The number of deserters increased and many took drastic measures to ensure they would never return. At Huonville a youth was traced by police and when faced with an order to return to camp, he struck his foot with an axe, severing two toes and smashing the others, thereby rendering himself incapable of military service.<sup>136</sup> At Launceston, a deserter who had resisted police with a gun, was chased through the streets until he surrendered, fittingly, in a graveyard.<sup>137</sup> Another deserter was found hiding in a wardrobe at Latrobe.<sup>138</sup>

By mid 1917 Tasmania had raised 13,535 recruits.<sup>139</sup> This was 6.8 per cent of the population, the lowest per centage in Australia. Tasmania had the lowest per centage of eligible males to total population, but this fact provided little consolation to those entrusted

---

135. *ibid.*, 6 August 1917.

138. *Daily Post*, 7 August 1917.

136. *Mercury*, 11 February 1916.

139. *ibid.*, 23 August 1917.

137. *N.W. Advocate*, 20 January 1917.

with the unenviable task of raising the enlistment rate. The Recruiting Committee conducted an investigation into the causes militating against recruiting and decided that the majority of Australians took the war too lightly; they but faintly realised the Empire's peril and the consequent urgency of the need to get men to the front. It distressed the Committee that life went on as usual, seemingly unaffected by the holocaust across the seas; sport and pleasure seemed to occupy the minds of thousands to the exclusion of the more solemn thoughts of war.<sup>140</sup> As a consequence of the committee's findings, it launched an onslaught on balls, dances, race meetings and football matches. Returned soldiers in recruiting addresses on the Domain also attacked the number of social functions and the fact that young women accompanied eligible men to them: "the young women were practically preventing men from going to the front."<sup>141</sup> Thus, by a peculiar twist of logic, women were blamed for the lack of desire on the part of men to enlist for the front. The soldiers were inventive in their recruiting efforts as well as critical; they were responsible for a striking and original advertisement which appeared in the windows of the Returned Soldiers' building. Dummies in khaki held placards which enticed: "free trip to Berlin via Africa, England and France; all expenses paid; six shillings per day for extras. Dependents supported; pension provided if accidents happen en route."<sup>142</sup> The trouble was that free trips to Berlin were not in high demand in the spring of 1917.

While the men who made up the recruiting committees put their minds to the question of enlistments, the Premier and the Attorney-

---

140. *ibid.*, 24 September 1917.

142. *ibid.*, 6 September 1917.

141. *ibid.*, 28 August 1917.

General were engaged on a problem of a different sort. The Premier still desired to remove Dicker both from the Public Works committee and the House of Assembly. He set his Attorney-General, W.B. Propsting,<sup>143</sup> to work out the means by which this could be achieved. Propsting found that neither the House of Assembly nor the Legislative Council had any power to add to the number of members of the committee, or to discharge members from it. The only way Dicker could be removed was through legislation to alter the Act by which the Public Works committee was constituted.<sup>144</sup>

The bill to remove Dicker was preceded by a resolution, introduced on 2 August, that the words used by Dicker were "disloyal" and a "contravention of the honorable member's oath of allegiance to his Majesty the King." Lee explained that if Dicker still refused to resign from the Public Works committee after the motion was passed, he would introduce a bill to expel him. Ogden accused the Premier of following too readily the directions of the *Mercury* which that very morning had advised the Premier that it was his "public duty" to take such a course. The Premier replied he was guided not by the *Mercury* but by a "sense of duty to the Empire". It was clear that Lee was hopeful of making political capital out of the case. Lyons attempted to prevent this by moving an amendment to the motion which said that while the House deprecated the alleged statements, it believed Dicker did not make them and that the House accepted his denial. Dicker spoke in his own defence, citing his recruiting efforts in Franklin as evidence of his loyalty. He argued that as he was deeply anti-

---

143. W.B. Propsting (1861-1937) C.M.G.: Barrister; M.H.A. for Hobart 1899-1905; M.L.C. for Hobart 1905-37; Treasurer and Premier 1903-4; Attorney-General 1906-9; 1916-23; President 1926-7.

144. Premier's Department, 59/2/17, T.S.A.



militaristic and anti-conscriptionist he could not possibly wish to live under German rule. His argument was of little consequence. The amendment was lost and the motion was agreed to 18 - 9. Large crowds in the public galleries and behind the Speaker's chair bore witness of the widespread interest in the proceedings.<sup>145</sup>

Dicker incurred further unpopularity by his gratuitous suggestion that the women had only informed on him, when after giving Dicker "the glad eye" and "showing a fine limb", he had not responded to their invitation.<sup>146</sup> His suggestion provoked further shrieks from outraged piety. The father of one of the women wrote from Sydney, furiously defending his daughter's honour. Dicker was likened to a species of vermin: "a rat cornered by its pursuers will, it is said, bite with a venom born of savage despair."<sup>147</sup> The bill to repeal the Public Works Committee Act was passed by mid August. In the final speech on the question to the House, E. Mulcahy stated that all Labor members were disloyal and harboured disloyal thoughts; the only difference with Dicker was that he had given expression to them.<sup>148</sup> In the Liberal view the Empire's enemy within the gate had been exposed and defeated.

An event which at once reinforced conservative doubts about Labor's loyalty and confirmed Labor's suspicions of the repressive intentions of the Hughes government, was the general strike. Although the strike began as a dispute in the Government Tramway Workshops in Sydney over the introduction of the Taylor card system of costing jobs, it was to all concerned, much more than that.

The workers already thought they had much to complain about and the continuing strains of war exacerbated their grievances. Despite

---

145. *Daily Post*, 3, 8 August 1917. 147. *ibid.*, 18 August 1917.

146. *Mercury*, 3 August 1917. 148. *Daily Post*, 17 August 1917.

the establishment in 1916 of the Necessary Commodities Commission with price fixing powers, the cost of living continued to soar. Figures released at the beginning of August showed that although wages had increased by 39.5 *per cent* from 1901 until December 1916, prices had risen over the same period by 50.7 *per cent*.<sup>149</sup> "Prices leapt; wages lagged behind, so that the workman found that he had bigger bills to meet, but relatively less means with which to pay them."<sup>150</sup> Discontent among railway men and other workers was rife. Only a small spark was needed to precipitate an explosion. It came in the form of the Taylor card system.

Once the railwaymen had struck, spontaneous support came from workers in many trades throughout eastern Australia. In Tasmania, the strike was confined to the north of the State, although its effects touched everyone. In Burnie over 120 men went on strike: 50 waterside workers, 70 harbour works employees and a few timber workers.<sup>151</sup> In Devonport about 140 watersiders went out.<sup>152</sup>

The unionists were quickly replaced, as elsewhere in Australia, by volunteer labour. The steamers, *Oonah*, *Marawah* and *Wareateah* all continued to run between Melbourne and the north west coast. Town and country people alike were eager to unload the cargo; farmers, labourers, carpenters, commercial travellers, produce merchants, clerks, carters and even a solicitor volunteered for watersiders' work. In Launceston the waterside workers did not strike but were "locked out".<sup>153</sup> Volunteers, mostly students from Launceston Grammar, were employed in their stead. In Devonport, Burnie and Launceston, National Workers' Unions were formed - the industrial equivalents of the National Federation.

---

149. *ibid.*

152. *ibid.*, 5 September 1917.

150. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 665.

153. *Daily Post*, 26 September 1917.

151. *N.W. Advocate*, 28 August 1917.

Two hostile camps emerged. At Devonport men could not contain the hostility they felt for each other and physical clashes occurred between unionists and National Workers. Court cases followed in which the unionists were fined by an ex-Labor Nationalist magistrate for disturbing the peace.<sup>154</sup>

The National Workers' Unions were formed with the encouragement and blessing of the Premier, who had been instructed by the Prime Minister to have adequate free labour organised.<sup>155</sup> The rules of the new unions fully reflected their patronage. They included the decision to abide by and at all times uphold the duly constituted authority for the settlement of industrial disputes; liberty of speech and action; the right of secret ballot; no member of an unlawful association, no recognised agitators and no M.P.s to be eligible for membership; any member proposing or fomenting strikes to be expelled; and no Union funds to be used for political purposes. The man behind the Union in Devonport, W.H. Lewis, told prospective members they faced a position "nearly as serious as that in Russia". The aims of the new Unions he advised, were to "cleanse out all disloyalists", to protect industries and to safeguard the workers' wives and children.<sup>156</sup> There was an immediate sympathetic response and residents of the north west coast flocked to join the National Workers' Union, as six months before they had joined the National Federation. As before, some forsook the old organisations to join the new : the president of the Devonport branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation swapped sides to become the vice-president of the National Workers' Union.<sup>157</sup> A gratified Premier Lee

---

154. *N.W. Advocate*, 27 August 1917.

155. Premier's Dept., 84/15/17; Prime Minister to Premier 15 August 1917. T.S.A.

156. *N.W. Advocate*, 29 September 1917.

157. *ibid.*, 15 September 1917.

telegraphed his sympathy and encouragement to the new unions.<sup>158</sup>

Although some steamships were able to continue their run between the north west coast and the mainland they were unable to maintain the former service. Trade was disrupted and a discontinuance of flour supplies caused a shortage of bread. Manure and fertiliser supplies also ceased at a time when farmers were about to plant crops. At North Mt. Farrell, the mine was forced to close down through lack of coal. All but fourteen of the miners were discharged.<sup>159</sup> Because of the amount of lead ore lying at Devonport and Burnie there were fears that the whole mining industry would come to a standstill unless the strike was soon ended.

More serious dislocation of trade and industry occurred in Hobart, which was almost completely cut off from the mainland. Early in August the Denison branch of the Tasmanian Labor Federation met to consider a request from the Sydney Trades Council for assistance to the striking workers in N.S.W. The Hobart unionists feared that the strike would spread to all Tasmanian ports, in which case they would need all their funds. A.G. Ogilvie proposed that a circular be forwarded to every league and union to assist workers in the event of the trouble spreading to Tasmania. The proposal was accepted and it was also agreed that if the money was not needed in the State it would be sent to N.S.W.<sup>160</sup>

As it happened the strike did not spread to Hobart because the complete suspension of shipping between the mainland and Hobart meant that there was no work available on the waterfront. Watersiders were put in a state of enforced idleness. Quickly the supplies of butter, sugar and salt dwindled; shopkeepers responded by raising their prices.

---

158. *ibid.*, 20 September 1917.

160. *Daily Post*, 13 August 1917.

159. *ibid.*, 7 September 1917.

Within a few days over 1,100 persons were unemployed in Hobart.<sup>161</sup> Jones' jam factory, unable to ship the jam away or to receive adequate sugar supplies, closed down, throwing 700 out of work. As well confectionary workers, flour-mill hands and watersiders were without work. Supplies of coal from which Hobart consumers derived their gas supplies, ran extremely low and the desperate Premier tried frantically to restore the shipping service to the mainland. The Hobart Chamber of Commerce impressed upon Lee the urgent necessity for ships to carry away apples and pears, large quantities of which remained in growers' hands and were fast decaying.<sup>162</sup> Individual orchardists and firms plagued the Premier with requests that their fruit be shipped away.<sup>163</sup>

Lee worked diligently in an effort to secure at least one ship to carry cargo between Hobart and Sydney. He made arrangements with Hughes to provide a ship but the Prime Minister appeared singularly unco-operative.<sup>164</sup> The Premier had more success with the agent of a charter boat which ran between New Zealand and Tasmania and also with the owner of a timber boat which worked from Macquarie Island. Both agreed to carry perishable cargo to Sydney and back.

The Premier was encouraged in his efforts by the large numbers of letters which inundated his office offering help and support. Many correspondents could not find words strong enough to express the rage they felt for the "shirking" unionists. In one case the residents of the four small towns of Sidmouth, Richmond Hill, West Bay and Blackwood Hills had assembled in a public meeting, there to place on record their "deep disgust and anger at the mutinous conduct of organised

---

161. Premier's Dept., 84/14/17, T.S.A.

162. *ibid.*, 7 September 1917.

163. *ibid.*, 12 September 1917

164. *ibid.*, Prime Minister to Premier, 11, 14 September 1917.

labour in Australia." They considered the unionists disloyal to the Empire, treacherous to the lads at the front, and playing directly into the hands of the enemy.<sup>165</sup> A Railton resident denounced "mob rule" and assured the Premier he had his country behind him : "should you want my service I shall be only pleased to serve you .... There are others who will be ready if called upon."<sup>166</sup> R.N. Butler of the Hobart architect firm, Rodway and Butler, also offered his services "to assist the government to rule the country and help keep the unions in their proper place."<sup>167</sup>

Letters to the press supported those to the Premier. *Mercury* correspondents offered their services to combat the strike which was condemned as "a tyranny worse than that of the Kaiser or the Tsar."<sup>168</sup> A letter to the *N.W. Advocate* suggested all strikers be sent to the captured German islands in the Pacific.<sup>169</sup> Editorials added to the denunciations. "Who is to govern Australia?" asked the *Mercury*. "Are the States and Federal governments elected by the qualified citizens as a whole to govern or are we to be entirely at the mercy of those who have captured the unions?"<sup>170</sup> The latter were said to be German or at least in German pay. "Large as the country is there is no room for Kaisers and Junkers even if they wear blueys and corduroys."<sup>171</sup> The *Mercury's* loathing of the striking unionists was profound: "we would rather see Japanese running our overseas services than knuckle down to conscienceless strikers who have treated the State and the

---

165. Premier's Dept., 84/15/17, 27 August 1917. T.S.A.

166. *ibid.*, 84/14/17, 15 August 1917.

167. *ibid.*, 84/15/17, 25 August 1917.

168. *Mercury*, 24 August 1917.

169. *N.W. Advocate*, 22 August 1917.

170. *Mercury*, 16 August 1917.

171. *ibid.*, 31 August 1917.

public in so rascally a fashion."<sup>172</sup> The *N.W. Advocate* recommended that "the most drastic and immediate measures of repression" be initiated against the strikers, "men saturated with the poisonous doctrines of the I.W.W."<sup>173</sup> A cartoon in the *Tasmanian Mail* depicting the strikers helping the Kaiser over the wall into Australia reinforced the idea that unionists were traitors or at least "not overburdened with patriotism."<sup>174</sup>

The Labor movement agreed that the strike held a meaning and significance far beyond the dispute over the card system. If to the Nationalists the strike represented a rebellion, to Labor the attempt to impose the Taylor card system represented a determined effort on the part of the ruling classes to smash unionism. To John Ball, the strike was "a struggle between industrialism and a bureaucracy engineered by capitalists";<sup>175</sup> to W.E. Shoobridge it was another manifestation of the class conflict in Australia.<sup>176</sup> The strikers regarded their action as a last ditch stand in defence of their liberty against reactionary and repressive government.

Hughes' constant use of War Precautions regulations was cited as evidence of his repressive, autocratic intentions. Regulations were gazetted to prevent persons interfering with the loading and coaling of ships. Police were instructed to strictly enforce the regulations and offer protection to "volunteer" labour.<sup>177</sup> At the end of August a regulation was gazetted giving power to the Federal Executive to deregister any industrial organisations which ceased work.<sup>178</sup> The *Daily Post* lamented that Hughes had become Emperor of Australia :

---

172. *ibid.*, 22 August 1917.

173. *N.W. Advocate*, 25 August 1917.

174. *Tasmanian Mail*, 16 August 1917.

175. *Daily Post*, 14 August 1917.

176. *ibid.*, 4 September 1917.

177. Premier's Dept., 84/14/17, T.S.A.

178. *Daily Post*, 30 August 1917.

"there is no limit whatever to his power and his throne is hedged about with War Precautions." The government's actions had imperilled the future of democracy in Australia.<sup>179</sup>

The strike sharply accentuated class and party animosities in Australia. People took up extreme positions. The stand of Earle surprised even the most cynical of Labor men. In a letter to the press he lashed out at the striking unionists, denouncing them as "national scabs and blacklegs, reckless wreckers of all the aspirations and ideals that the workers have for years been fighting for." "Even in a time of peace," continued the ex-union organiser, "an industrial strike is not only unjustifiable and foolish from a worker's point of view, but it is a serious offence against society generally."<sup>180</sup> The Labor man had been cast off and in his place, stood an arch-conservative. It was hard for Laborites to believe that Earle had ever represented the working class. "To those who imagined that Senator Earle ever had any sympathy with the workers," wrote John Ball, "it must come as a mournful disillusionment when they read his remarkable letter in this morning's issue of the *Daily Post*." Ball thought it would have been more to the point if Earle had reserved his "thunder and lightning" for the denunciation of "the profiteering ghouls who are robbing the absent soldiers' wives and families."<sup>181</sup> But it was not to be. Earle had been forced to make his choice between nation and class; he became a patriot with a vengeance.

The strike gradually drew to an end. The strikers were defeated by hunger and the large number of volunteer "loyalist" workers. First the railwaymen conceded defeat and they were followed by the miners,

---

179.    *ibid.*, 17 August 1917.

181.   *ibid.*, 31 August 1917.

180.   *ibid.*, 30 August 1917.



the watersiders and the carters. Many people however were not content to let the unions merely acknowledge defeat and return to work. They desired to see the unions broken and humiliated. The Government was determined that "loyalists" would receive preference in employment over unionists and accordingly preference to members of the Waterside Workers' Federation was cancelled. As a result unionists at Burnie, Devonport were deprived of work for several weeks.

Persons of a vindictive nature had worse things in mind for the strikers. F.A.W. Gisborne, a prominent Liberal, wanted the "planners" of the strike to be punished as "traitors" and the Arbitration Court abolished because of its "mingled partiality and ineptitude." He urged the immediate implementation of conscription to force the "fire-brands" out of the country.<sup>182</sup> The *Mercury* demanded a regulation outlawing all strikes.<sup>183</sup> The *Tasmanian Mail* made a similar suggestion.<sup>184</sup> In Launceston the Tasmanian Farmers' and Stockowners' Association also deliberated on the fate of strikers. The president, L.M. Shoobridge, an intensely conservative man of property and future Legislative Councillor, held that unionist insubordination should be punished. He proposed that, in view of the immense amount of loss and suffering caused by the recent strike, anyone engaging in a strike in the future should be disfranchised for ten years. A number of the farmers and stockowners endorsed the suggestion, but ultimately more moderate views prevailed and the motion was lost.<sup>185</sup> The *Daily Post* was outraged at the very suggestion : "We are in the presence of a spirit which would trample liberty into the dust and would certainly cause and to some extent justify cabals and secret societies for revolution."<sup>186</sup>

---

182. *Mercury*, 4 October 1917.

185. *Daily Post*, 9 October 1917.

183. *ibid.*, 20 September 1917.

186. *ibid.*, 15 October 1917.

184. *Tasmanian Mail*, 25 October 1917.

The strike left the country more deeply riven than perhaps it had ever been before. Class stood against class, worker against worker. Any hope of unity in face of the common enemy was lost: "Today Australia is like an armed camp of two opposing factions," commented a Labor man. "On the one side is Labor, repressed, sullen, defiant. On the other are those who have temporarily suppressed the forces of democracy and rule by enforced law rather than by the goodwill of a great section of the people."<sup>187</sup>

As comments in the conservative press and the Farmers' and Stock-owners' meeting reveal, a large section of the Australian public were becoming increasingly authoritarian in attitude and reaction. The task of upholding Law and Order assumed a major importance and men exhorted each other to eschew flabby-mindedness and stand firm against weakness. The Federal government relied on this trend towards authoritarianism for its continued popularity. It relied too on the widespread belief that Labor was careless about winning the war. How far was this belief justified? What was Labor's attitude towards the war? It is of course dangerous to generalize for one must rely on individual expressions and actions and the ruling of conferences for an answer, but it is at least clear that 1917 marked a year of transition.

Until that year most Labor spokesmen still spoke of the war in idealistic terms and would accept nothing less than absolute victory. At the beginning of 1917 the *Daily Post* pronounced the idea of a "premature" negotiated peace "repugnant". Because of Germany's "brutal arrogance" and "fiendish barbarity" she could not be allowed to escape "the retribution which so justly [awaited] her."<sup>188</sup> Dwyer-Gray thought Wilson's idealism and moral superiority little short of despicable.

---

187. *ibid.*, 1 October 1917.

188. *ibid.*, 22 January 1917.

The notion that Wilson was "too proud to fight" was scorned and the President's suggestion that the objects of both sides in the war were "virtually the same" was hotly repudiated. The difference between the aims of Germany and Great Britain were not less marked than "the difference between night and day".<sup>189</sup> Attitudes altered significantly during the next few months and the *Daily Post* emerged as the champion of peace-makers.

During 1917 the Labor movement in Tasmania moved in the direction of favouring a negotiated peace. The most ardent patriots - the conscriptionists - had already left the party. The special Labor conference in January had passed a resolution which called upon the Allies and Britain to declare their terms of peace, that they might be made a basis for a conference between warring nations. At the April conference of the Labor Federation Robert Cosgrove spoke of the "imperative necessity for the early assembly of a workers' international congress". He moved that the Australian Labor movement organise it. A significant division occurred over this motion. The more conservative and opportunist of the delegates, led by J. Ogden pressed for an amendment to state the proposed congress would be held "after the war." The motion implied that a peace conference should be held at once, said Ogden. "There was a danger of being misunderstood." The more radical delegates led by Woods supported the original motion but were defeated. The motion as amended was carried.<sup>190</sup>

In place of the concepts of glory and honour, the slaughter and destruction of the war increasingly impinged on men's consciousness. This is evident in the *Daily Post's* response to the third anniversary

---

189. *ibid.*, 6 January 1917.

190. *ibid.*, 13 April 1917.

of war : "the world is a welter of blood; after 1,000 days of slaughter the shambles are unsatisfied."<sup>191</sup> Some people began to doubt if there was such value in suffering as the churches preached. The publicity accorded the Stockholm Peace Conference moved some men to hope that there might be another way out of the war than through further bloodshed and carnage. Headlines in Australian newspapers proclaimed to readers that British delegates were to attend the conference : as it happened although they received passports, the seamen refused to carry them. A complaint was voiced in Launceston that Australian Labor was not being represented.<sup>192</sup>

People became more outspoken in their challenge to the prevailing assumptions relating to the war. A.L. McBride of Hobart objected to being "cornered for cash for patriotic and war funds", when little was being done to combat "the raging disease, penury and want in our midst."<sup>193</sup> The Australian Friends Peace Board publicly denounced the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act, in their view, "an insidious method of enslaving the whole manhood of Australia" and stated the necessity for peace.<sup>194</sup> The Tasmanian secretary of their "peace committee", Gilbert Rowntree, offered speakers to interested organisations. "Peace-talk" was in the air and the *Daily Post* boldly defended it : "to insinuate that those religious leaders or Socialist leaders who courageously come forward with peace proposals are animated by some secret tendencies to care more for Berlin than for the world is an atrocity which we view with abhorrence and contempt."<sup>195</sup> Since the war began there had been much high-sounding talk about it being a war to end war; now came the realisation that only peace, not war, could

---

191. *ibid.*, 4 August 1917.

194. *ibid.*, 28 August 1917.

192. *ibid.*, 23 August 1917.

195. *ibid.*, 30 August 1917.

193. *ibid.*, 28 August 1917.

end war.

The *Daily Post* continued, ever more fervently, to condemn those who would spurn the peace-maker. The editor recognised that the pressure towards peace was of a world-wide character and that it might soon be possible to see, as a result of rational discussion, the termination of the war. The Allies were frequently called upon to declare their "war purpose". Dwyer-Gray stated his ideals and hoped they would be embraced in high places:

Disarmament, courts of law, justice for the conquerors and conquered, a final end of war, an international force to compel obedience and the jurisdiction of arbitration for all - till the Allies say that and declare that to be their aim, not in rotund sentences of after dinner oratory, but in a clear charta for mankind, to which they themselves have subscribed, they may speak of the rising sun but the sun has not risen yet.<sup>196</sup>

The Labor movement in Tasmania received great encouragement in their idealistic turn of thinking from L.F. Giblin, the highly respected former Labor M.H.A., now serving at the front. In a letter to Jim Ogden in October, he advised his Labor comrades to work for a statement of war aims pruned of Imperialism; sympathetic treatment of Russia and appreciation of the revolution for its own sake and liberty generally : more information and less suppression of it for political reasons. Giblin also stressed that Australia should set a good example to other nations by renouncing her claim to German New Guinea and the islands; to put them under international control. Germany, he thought, would "acquire sense" before the Australian government and press, unless the Australian public stirred them very vigorously.<sup>197</sup> The Labor movement was basically in accord with Giblin's ideas, although

---

196. *ibid.*, 27 September 1917.

197. *ibid.*, 5 October 1917.

of the progress of the Russian revolution, Tasmanians knew little. The *Daily Post* welcomed the abdication of the Czar and the installation of democratic government but did not as yet appreciate the full significance of either.

Giblin's vision and generosity were unfortunately not shared by the majority of civilians at home. As C.E. Montague pointed out in *Disenchantment* there was an increasing discrepancy in attitude between the soldier at the front who felt always more and more sure that the average German was just a poor decent fellow like himself and the civilians on the home front, the "first-class haters" to whom the German was Evil Incarnate and military victory all.<sup>198</sup> There were a large number of letters to the press in 1917 demanding "reprisals" against the Germans for their air raids on England. "The time is past for half measures", wrote James Price. "Why not Tasmania lead and recommend to the British War Council the sternest reprisals?"<sup>199</sup> "We can play this bombing game better than Fritz", wrote "Justice", "so I say give him a taste of his own physic."<sup>200</sup> Fierce retaliation was also recommended by Thomas de Houghton prominent low-church layman of the Church of England.<sup>201</sup> One woman regretted that her sex prevented her from killing Germans : "It is the only time in my life that I have regretted not being a man. I would take delight in helping to kill the Germans. I am determined on this point, that as long as I live I will not buy any article made in Germany or buy goods from a shop kept by a German."<sup>202</sup>

Attitudes to peace and war polarized. Labor and Nationalists had reached a parting of the ways. The more idealistic some Labor

---

198. C.E. Montague, *Disenchantment* (London, 1928), p. 151.

199. *Mercury*, 19 June 1917.

200. *ibid.*

201. *ibid.*, 25 June 1917.

202. *ibid.*, 10 August 1917.

spokesmen became, the more conservatives craved after military victory. The question of the future of New Guinea and the Pacific islands further divided Tasmanians. The *Daily Post* like L.F. Giblin, favoured the islands being placed under international control : "snatching black islands is not what the war is for."<sup>203</sup> The *Mercury* on the other hand was contemptuous of the "prattling" about "no annexations": it was imperative that Australia retained possession of the islands.<sup>204</sup> The Nationalist victory in the elections was interpreted as a mandate on this point and Britain and the Allies were requested to take note of the fact.<sup>205</sup> The *Mercury's* colonialist position was shared by T.J.K. Bakhap, Tasmanian Liberal Senator who moved in the Senate in July that Australia retain the conquered German colonies. When President Wilson announced his peace terms (later elaborated as the 14 Points), they were condemned by the *Mercury* as not "strong" enough; the Germans had to be punished.<sup>206</sup> The Labor movement, adopting Wilson as its mentor, embraced internationalism; The Nationalists, led by Hughes became fervent Imperialists.

Although some men longed for an end to the war, it was not in sight. The demand for men continued. The election campaigns and the strike had caused deep divisions in the community which were militating against recruiting. "The general welfare became subservient to class and individual animosity", reported the Director-General of Recruiting, "and the trouble grew as the effects of war weariness began to make themselves felt."<sup>207</sup> The situation was aggravated by the Federal government's plan to introduce a £10 "bachelor tax", a tax on single men not yet enlisted. The government stated

---

203. *Daily Post*, 10 October 1917.

204. *Mercury*, 24 January,  
6 June 1917.

205. *ibid.*, 6 June 1917.

206. *ibid.*, 4 October 1917.

207. Quoted in Scott, *op. cit.*,  
p.398.

it had two objects in imposing the measure: the first, to stimulate recruiting, the second, to finance the repatriation scheme. The Labor party strongly opposed the tax; indeed according to the *Mercury* the proposal seemed to stir them to "something approaching a frenzy".<sup>208</sup> The Labor critics denounced the tax as another form of economic conscription, although seemed to contradict themselves by adding that rather than stimulate recruiting, the tax would deter men from enlisting. Meanwhile win-the-war enthusiasts applauded the proposal as another means of driving the recalcitrants into the trenches.

Although the recruiting rate was falling throughout Australia, it strangely began to rise in Tasmania. From an average of about 20 recruits a week in the early months of 1917, Tasmania began suddenly in September to produce an average of 40 a week. In the third week of September 41 recruits offered their services, this being six more than offered in the same week in the more populous State of Western Australia.<sup>209</sup> A gratified Director-General telegraphed his congratulations.<sup>210</sup> By mid October Tasmania was producing 54 recruits a week, one short of the quota, an achievement none of the other States approached. By 20 November Tasmania was fulfilling her quota.<sup>211</sup> The reasons for the phenomenon are hard to find. It could be that some of the hundreds of men thrown out of work as a result of the general strike decided to enlist or more simply that the strenuous efforts of the State Recruiting Committee were at last paying dividends.

The Tasmanian figures were inconsequential however when set in the total Australian context. Australia as a whole was not doing nearly as well as the authorities would have liked. She was unable to

---

208. *Mercury*, 20 September 1917.

210. *ibid.*

209. *Daily Post*, 21 September 1917.

211. *ibid.*, 20 November 1917.



raise enough volunteers to replace the dead and wounded of the Third Battle of Ypres, a battle which as Turner has noted, "cost the A.I.F. the staggering total of 38,000 casualties, about one in three of all Australians at that time on the Western front."<sup>212</sup> There were rumours and threats that Australia's Fourth Division would have to be broken up to reinforce the others. The United States, Canada and New Zealand had all resorted to conscription; Hughes desired to follow them but he was hampered by his promise to consult the people first. On 7 November he announced the second conscription referendum.

The Labor party had for many months feared that Hughes would not accept the defeat of the first referendum. As early as February the *Daily Post* had warned the Labor movement of the likelihood of conscription being foisted on an unwilling Australia; the movement was advised to be "thoroughly prepared for the onslaught that [was] surely coming."<sup>213</sup> On 7 June it was reported that in federal political circles it was considered practically certain that the question of submitting another conscription referendum would be raised in Parliament as soon as it met.<sup>214</sup> The Unions were preparing to fight. At the beginning of July, E.J. Kavanagh of the N.S.W. Trades and Labor Council wrote to the Denison Labor Council urging all unions to organise for the next anti-conscription campaign. Woods and Bigwood expressed the hope that the Hobart anti-conscription executive would be called together immediately.<sup>215</sup>

While Labor feared the introduction of conscription, win-the-war forces vociferously urged it. Since the beginning of 1917, the *Mercury* had pronounced voluntary recruiting a failure. The great Nationalist victory in May was taken by the paper as a mandate for conscription.

212. Turner, op. cit., p. 162. 214. *ibid.*, 7 June 1917.

213. *Daily Post*, 2 February 1917. 215. *ibid.*, 1 July 1917.

It was maintained that the people had changed their minds : "the result of the General Election distinctly proves that Australia realised the unwisdom of the 'NO' vote almost as soon as it was cast."<sup>216</sup> Jans Jensen, the director of the Nationalist election campaign in Tasmania, also claimed that voluntary recruiting was a failure. It was his hope that one of the first acts of the returned Nationalist government would be to hold a second conscription referendum.<sup>217</sup>

Increasingly attention was focused on Sir William Irvine, who had gathered nation-wide support with his continuous and full-throated appeals for compulsion. F.A.W. Gisborne of Hobart was one of the many who thought he should replace Hughes as leader : "Resolute and patriotic leadership is the need of the hour."<sup>218</sup> Irvine was believed to be the man to fill the need and match the hour. Voices all over the State joined in the chorus demanding the immediate implementation of conscription and most wanted this by regulation rather than by referendum. Authoritarians longed for strong men, strong government, strong "win-the-war measures". "In our whole governing body," lamented Charles Watson, "there is not one absolutely strong man able to carry conscription without submitting to the folly of a referendum."<sup>219</sup> Others thought that the military authorities should deal with the matter, rather than the flabby-minded civilians who ran the government. Throughout the discussion and speculation, Hughes remained quiet. Right to the last he denied the possibility of another conscription referendum. But for all his reticence, the announcement when it came, surprised no-one.

The reactions to the announcement followed much the same pattern

---

216. *Mercury*, 8 June 1917.

217. *ibid.*, 13 March 1917.

218. *ibid.*, 2 August 1917.

219. *ibid.*, 2 November 1917.

as in 1916. The ardent conscriptionists welcomed the bid for conscription, but deplored the use of a referendum to achieve it. The words of anger were familiar : Hughes had shown "lamentable weakness"<sup>220</sup>; his decision was an "amazing surrender of government responsibility at the most critical period of the war."<sup>221</sup> His announcement of a referendum was a "shameful declaration."<sup>222</sup> To win-the-war minds, Hughes' pledge to consult the people counted for little in face of the deteriorating military situation. Russia's withdrawal from the war and Italy's collapse were said to justify an immediate Act of Parliament. Premier Lee agreed that direct legislation would have been better than a referendum. Again, letters to the press called for Hughes' resignation in favour of the "courageous" Sir William Irvine.<sup>223</sup>

Labor's reaction to the news of the referendum was predictably hostile. This second attempt to introduce conscription was seen as the next instalment of the Nationalist government's plan to crush the unions; to suspicious eyes it seemed to follow inevitably from the repression of the strike. "Military conscription was [but] another device of the capitalists to enslave the producers."<sup>224</sup> The *Daily Post*, like Sir William Irvine, called for an election on the issue, but knew that the government would not thus risk its existence.

Hughes delivered the opening speech of his campaign at Bendigo on 12 November. There he set forth the details of the government's proposals. Voluntary enlistment was to continue but the difference between the number thus raised and the quota of 7,000 men a month was to be made up by compulsory reinforcements selected by ballot. The

---

220. *ibid.*, 7 November 1917.

221. *ibid.*, 12 November 1917.

222. *ibid.*, 8 November 1917.

223. *ibid.*, 20 November 1917; *N.W. Advocate*, 9 November 1917.

224. *Daily Post*, 14 November 1917.

ballot was to be taken only among single men, including divorcees and widowers between the ages of 20 and 44. Men working in industries prescribed by the government as essential to the prosecution of the war and the national welfare of Australia were exempt, as were such groups as the physically unfit, Federal and State judges, magistrates, ministers of religion and conscientious objectors. Hughes named the rural industries, the production of food, transport, mining and ship-building as essential industries.

The Prime Minister obviously hoped to appease some of his former opponents with what he called the "moderate and equitable" nature of his proposals,<sup>225</sup> but instead he drew forth fresh criticism from conscriptionists. The *Mercury* castigated Hughes for his leniency in offering too many exemptions, intended as they were, merely to placate his critics:

Why should a patriotic Government thus repeatedly insist on binding itself not to do what adverse fortune in the War may call for? It seems to us that the Federal Ministry would do well to forsake the enervating, sybaritic influence of the mainland and spend a good portion of each year in the more bracing air of Tasmania. Here our votes have shown conclusively, thrice over since the War began that we are in earnest about the war.<sup>226</sup>

The anti-conscriptionists had other grounds for criticism. The form of the question was seen as an attempt to deceive the electors and more especially, the soldiers at the front. The electors were to be asked "Are you in favour of the proposal of the Commonwealth government for reinforcing the Australian Imperial Force overseas?" Anti-conscriptionists thought it unfair and deceiving not to include the words "conscription for overseas service" in the question.<sup>227</sup> Most

225. *ibid.*, 24 November 1917.

227. *Daily Post*, 13, 22, 28

226. *Mercury*, 14 November 1917.

November 1917.

Labor men still favoured reinforcing the A.I.F.; they wanted Hughes to call his proposal by its proper name: conscription.

To those fighting for a NO vote the Prime Minister's subterfuges appeared endless. One of the first was his deliberate disfranchisement of a large portion of the electorate. By closing the rolls on 10 November, only two days after the announcement of the Referendum, Hughes prevented thousands from enrolling. In many rural districts, news of the impending vote became known after the rolls had closed. Hughes' undue haste served to increase the suspicion with which people regarded him. R. Wylie of Somerset voiced the growing misgivings: "Surely this is not a sample of the consideration we are to expect if we give the present administration the powers they are seeking?"<sup>228</sup> The Prime Minister also decided that citizens of enemy origin, whether naturalized or not, and the children of such persons, were not entitled to vote in the referendum. One man who was affected, K. Gallus of Jericho, protested to the Premier about his disqualification but to little effect. "Hardships", replied Lee sanctimoniously, "had to be endured by innocent people on both sides."<sup>229</sup> The *Daily Post* vividly characterised Hughes as the "vote-thief". The editor estimated that perhaps some 300,000 persons had been stripped of their rights by the vote-thief.<sup>230</sup> Still other people were alienated from Hughes' proposals because of his plan to conscript twenty year olds, who had no vote to exercise themselves.<sup>231</sup>

The change of polling day from Saturday to Thursday, cited as another piece of Hughes' trickery, augured ill for the Labor party's chances. Many workers would be unable to vote. The Federal Council

---

228. *N.W. Advocate*, 16 November 1917.

229. Premier's Dept., 66/7/17, 21 November 1917. T.S.A.

230. *Daily Post*, 3 December 1917.

231. *ibid.*, 29 November, 3 December 1917; *N.W. Advocate*, 17 November 1917

of the F.M.E.A. whose president was James McDonald, resolved that unless every facility were given to electors to exercise their vote, all unionists would consider the advisability of holding a stop-work meeting on Referendum Day, in order that none would be prevented from recording a vote.<sup>232</sup> As L.C. Jauncey pointed out, never before or since has the Federal government held an election or referendum on any other day than a Saturday.<sup>233</sup>

The Labor party thus faced major disadvantages; in Tasmania it was also afflicted with internal troubles. Industrialists expounding the doctrine of "Direct Action" counselled workers to avoid political action. Disunity was hushed up as much as possible, but so serious was the threat, the *Daily Post* was compelled to deliver a homily on the values of co-operation and solidarity:

The attempt to sow the seeds of disruption in the organisation is rank disloyalty to the working-class. The Labor conference is the official voice of Labor and judged by the past is thoroughly reliable. Thoughtful workers will hearken to Mr. Tudor's words and stand solid with the recognised Labor organisation and work towards the achievement of the Labor platform, leaving the enthusiastic, the energetic, but quite impractical young men to their pastime of carping criticism and building castles in the air.<sup>234</sup>

The conflict was relegated to the background rather than resolved. The impending split between the political and industrial wings of the Labor Federation was delayed by the necessity of working together a second time to defeat conscription.

The campaign in Tasmania for a NO vote was again directed by the Anti-Conscription Executive under the presidency of Robert Cosgrove.

---

232. *Daily Post*, 27 November 1917.

233. L.C. Jauncey, *The Story of Conscription in Australia* (Melbourne,

234. *Daily Post*, 13 November 1917.

1968), p.272.

The case against conscription repeated many of the themes of the first anti-conscription campaign: conscription was morally wrong: it was not right to force another man to give his life; compulsion was wanted for civil reasons rather than military: to suppress the workers and enforce repressive economic conditions; the government could not be trusted with such enormous power.

There was a new emphasis on food and ships. Largely due to the German submarine offensive there was a severe shortage of shipping space and it was repeatedly argued that this could best be used in sending food to the Allies, rather than a few thousand extra troops. Australia unlike England was a producing country, Jim Ogden told a crowd on the Domain - therefore, she had a different function to perform in the war.<sup>235</sup> An advertisement of food rationing taken from a British newspaper confirmed the message : Britons were desperately short of bread; Australia could provide it. People were reminded that the soldiers too needed regular food parcels from Australia. The *Daily Post* drew attention to Napoleon's alleged observation that "an army fights on its stomach".<sup>236</sup>

Since the last referendum campaign, much had been heard of the crippling effects of conscription in New Zealand. As a result of the tireless efforts of H.E. Holland, editor of the *Maoriland Worker*, wide publicity had been given in particular to the harsh treatment meted out to conscientious objectors, some of whom had been forcibly sent to France. Anti-conscriptionists suggested that Australia should learn a lesson from the experience of her unfortunate neighbour across the sea. The ill-effects of the operation of conscription in New Zealand

235. *ibid.*, 19 November 1917.

236. *ibid.*, 30 November 1917.

were said to include "industrial slavery", the denuding of the farms with a consequent drop in production and a great scarcity of labour.<sup>237</sup>

To those who wanted conscription however, the vicissitudes of life in New Zealand were irrelevant to the central issue. That was that Australia needed conscription to raise the 7,000 men a month she had been unable to raise by voluntary methods. The critical war situation following Russia's withdrawal and Italy's collapse meant that the men were more urgently needed than ever.<sup>238</sup>

The campaign to urge the electors to vote YES was directed by the Reinforcements Referendum Council which was the old conscription committee under a new name. The executive committee included the Premier, John Earle, E. Mulcahy, Rev. J. Brown, A.J. Taylor and Sgt. George Foster. Their campaign opened with the usual public meeting in the Town Hall. The audience was not a large one, a fact which the *Mercury* attributed to a preceding thunderstorm. The Premier was the first speaker and he spoke of his regret that the people had to be consulted at all. It appalled him that the authorities should go to the people and "beg for permission" to furnish the necessary reinforcements. He realised however that the vote was before them; to prepare for this he advised all to adopt a calm and dispassionate frame of mind. The second speaker, Anglican Dean Hay, told of how proud he felt to be able to play a small part in the campaign. He promised that his Church would bear the full share of the fray. Private Steel impressed upon the audience that it was better to die fighting for the right, than to live and walk in the wrong. Conscription would not send men to their death, but would save life. Sgt. Foster assured the audience that although some soldiers were opposing the government's

---

237. *ibid.*, 27 November; 1, 13 December 1917.

238. *Mercury*, 10 November 1917.



proposals, the majority supported them. The Attorney-General, in closing the meeting, asked those present to express their thanks in a practical way by acting as "living agents" to secure votes in favour of conscription.<sup>239</sup>

Although the Premier would have reason and moderation prevail, statements became more reckless than ever. Describing the voting at the last referendum the *Mercury* stated that although "all the strength, all the valour, all the intelligence, all the wisdom, and all the patriotic grit in Australia thundered 'YES', the weaklings, the ignorant, the honourless, the thieves, the prostitutes, the cowards, the deluded and the unpatriotic" said 'NO'.<sup>240</sup> The Warden of Devonport described anti-conscriptionists as "the blackest of traitors", "a menace to the nation",<sup>241</sup> while in Wynyard a resident warned that behind Tudor stood "the Caucus party, the Socialists, the I.W.W., and the Sinn Feiners led by Archbishop Mannix."<sup>242</sup> References to Archbishop Mannix and Sinn Fein became frequent during the second campaign, largely replacing the I.W.W. smear of 1916. As Andrew Needham saw it : "The I.W.W. stalking horse had got rusty at the knees and was no longer of any use, so this time in addition to German gold and other cries, they had "Sinn Fein" thrown in as well. Most of the men who were now accused of being Sinn Feiners did not know what the expression meant, but still it was handy for Mr. Hughes as an item of abuse."<sup>243</sup>

There were no equivalents of Daniel Mannix in Tasmania and anti-conscriptionists, even those of Irish descent again refrained from citing Ireland's repression as a reason to vote NO. Nevertheless,

---

239. *Tasmanian Mail*, 29 November 1917. 242. *ibid.*, 28 November 1917.

240. *Mercury*, 12 November 1917.

243. *Daily Post*, 26 November 1917.

241. *N.W. Advocate*, 1 December 1917.

largely as a result of the activity of the conscriptionist press, sectarian animosity was a prominent feature of the second conscription debate. The mutual antagonism between Protestants and Catholics was exacerbated when the *Mercury* began to devote much space to reports of Irish rebellions, aided by German gold and led by Catholic priests. The Catholicism of the rebels was always emphasized; "notoriously Protestants [were] not associated with it."<sup>244</sup> In Hobart Monsignor Gilleran had warned the *Mercury* against stirring up sectarian ill-feelings, but to little avail. J.J. Kenneally reacted angrily to the continuing "sectarian savagery" of the *Mercury*. The paper's articles on the Irish caused "the blood to boil with resentment in the veins of every Irishman and every Australian of Irish descent who had a particle of manhood in him."<sup>245</sup> Emotional letters to the *Daily Post* and the *Mercury* began to speak enthusiastically of the Sinn Fein movement. It was asserted by one correspondent that Irishmen were "the most brilliant men on earth"<sup>246</sup> and by a Sinn Fein enthusiast that collaborationist John Redmond was to the Catholics of Ireland very much the same as W.M. Hughes was to the unionists of Australia.<sup>247</sup>

During November the *Mercury* carried reports from the *Argus* telling of Mannix's "naked hatred of England and the Empire".<sup>248</sup> The editor interspersed his passages of vituperation with kindly appeals to the "loyal" Roman Catholics and Irish : it was hoped they would "make it their business to show in the present Referendum that they refused to pay any heed whatever to so disloyal or treacherous a guide" as Mannix.<sup>249</sup> It is ironical that it was the *Mercury's* own slanderous attacks which

---

244. *Mercury*, 29 October 1917.

245. *Daily Post*, 3 November 1917.

246. *Mercury*, 25 July 1917.

247. *Daily Post*, 3 November 1917.

248. *Mercury*, 17 November 1917.

249. *ibid.*, 27 November 1917.

were driving many Irish Catholics to pay heed to the counsel it so deplored.

Many conscriptionists appeared convinced that the anti-conscription movement was little more than an Irish Catholic conspiracy. After noting that with the exception of H. Boote, editor of the *Sydney Worker*, E. Dwyer-Gray was the "strongest fighter" on the anti-side, the *Mercury* remarked:

It is a curious fact not without significance that except for one or two Labor party men who have to keep up their professional role, the only noisy people in the present Referendum are a section of Irish Catholics. On the mainland such men as Mannix and Ryan are the NO leaders. Professional Jesuits go around impressing on the people what wonderfully clever men they are. Here we have our Dwyer-Grays, our O'Keefes and Kenneallys.<sup>250</sup>

Hysterical conspiracy theories probably did little for the conscriptionist cause. Dwyer-Gray ignored all attacks thereby lessening their impact. But the resentment of Irish Catholics in Tasmania went deep. It is clear that the *Mercury's* attitude served to alienate many Catholics from the Nationalist cause. Attacks by priests on the conscriptionist press merged easily into defence of Mannix and Sinn Fein. It eventually became difficult, as Richard Davis has noted, to distinguish between Mannix's critical attitude to the war and the views of the once enthusiastic Tasmanian Catholic clergy.<sup>251</sup>

One Roman Catholic priest remained unwavering in his support of conscription. On the north west coast the revered priest and orator T.J. O'Donnell, continued to put the case for conscription with characteristic vigour and eloquence. He was undoubtedly one of the conscriptionists' greatest assets and recognising this, the residents of

---

250. *ibid.*, 19 December 1917.

251. Davis, *op. cit.* p. 84.

Circular Head had joined together after the first conscription campaign to make O'Donnell a presentation. It was noted that wherever he had held meetings, there were substantial majorities for YES.<sup>252</sup> He endeared himself to his admirers still more when he announced during the second referendum campaign that he had enlisted for the front. To the largest audience ever assembled at Burnie, O'Donnell delivered his farewell address on conscription. Warden Dunning responded in eulogistic terms: "Your example of dogged perseverance and sustained effort and enthusiasm is an object lesson to the whole Commonwealth and the blue blooded action of offering yourself as a unit to do the bidding of the government or the Minister for War is beyond praise; it is supreme in its exhibition of true loyalty to the Crown and the Empire."<sup>253</sup> Amidst pathetic protestations of devotion, O'Donnell left Tasmania, claiming to his distraught followers that he would never again return.

Meanwhile on the west coast the less popular but equally passionate minister of religion, A.J. Prowse attempted to persuade people to vote NO. As during the first campaign he pleaded to Australians to keep their country free from "the black pitch of the worst sort of militarism".<sup>254</sup> Prowse was inspired by a vision of Australia as a nucleus of a new Christian movement of international fellowship. A second NO vote he hoped would provide an impetus towards "a federation of mankind". He reminded people that it was the Christmas season and asked all to vote NO to "the Herod-like intrusion of militarism on the very festival of the birth of the Prince of Peace."<sup>255</sup> Again the Protestant clergymen who opposed conscription were a small minority.

---

252. *N.W. Advocate*, 23 January 1917.  
253. *ibid.*, 13 December 1917.

254. *Daily Post*, 29 November 1917.  
255. *ibid.*

A manifesto drawn up by ministers who "dissented from the time-serving, Christ forgetting decisions of the various Churches" was signed by only nine clergymen, four from Victoria, four from New South Wales and one from Tasmania, namely Arthur Prowse.<sup>256</sup>

Most men seemed to be more impressed by facts and figures than by Christian idealism. The anti-conscriptionists regarded as their most compelling argument a table of figures which purported to show that during the twelve months from October 1916 to September 1917, the number of enlistments (56,470) exceeded the net casualties (38,066) by 18,404. From this the anti-conscriptionists concluded that there was an ample number of enlistments and hence no need for conscription.<sup>257</sup> Conscriptionists denied that the figures were correct. "The whole compilation constitutes the greatest jugglery of figures and falsification of facts, that it has ever been my lot to ponder," retorted Earle.<sup>258</sup> The real number of casualties was said to be 64,296.<sup>259</sup> There followed a series of confusing arguments and counter-arguments, each side drawing on different sets of figures. The barrage of figures did not clarify, but rather obfuscated, the issues and the minds of the electors.

Returned soldiers were again prominent in the campaign and while the great majority of their Tasmanian peers still plumped for YES, an increasing number was prepared to take the platform for the anti-conscriptionist cause. This fact marked a difference from the first referendum campaign. In N.S.W. the anti-conscriptionist soldiers formed a Returned Soldiers No-Conscription League, but they were less

---

256. *ibid.*, 12 December 1917.

258. *ibid.*, 4 December 1917.

257. *ibid.*, 26 November 1917.

259. *Mercury*, 4 December 1917.

organised in Tasmania and probably less numerous, although the soldiers in Launceston established an anti-conscription committee.<sup>260</sup> In Hobart a special general meeting of the Tasmanian branch of the R.S.S.I.L.A. was called soon after the announcement of the Referendum. In an address to the meeting, Sgt. Foster referred to the establishment of soldiers' anti-conscription organisations and suggested that the meeting should calmly discuss the government's proposals, weighing the *pros* and *cons*. Whatever decision they arrived at he wanted it to be unanimous. No-one however spoke against the proposals and after a short discussion a resolution of support for the government was unanimously agreed to. Three soldiers were appointed to represent the League on the Southern Referendum Council while another committee of ten was formed to further assist in the securing of a YES vote.<sup>261</sup>

The soldiers who opposed conscription worked individually alongside Labor spokesmen. They often worked as platform orators and two most active in this regard were Walter Geard, the ex-secretary of the Zeehan branch of the F.M.E.A. and J. Bergan. The reason most often given for voting NO was their poor treatment at the hands of the Repatriation department.<sup>262</sup> Bergan also received poor treatment from his comrades-in-arms. At a meeting in Burnie he was accused by Lt. H.G. Harris of never having been at Gallipoli as he had claimed. Only after the soldier produced documents signed by his commanding officers certifying his presence at Gallipoli was he allowed to continue with his address.<sup>263</sup>

---

260. *Daily Post*, 5 December 1917. 261. *ibid.*, 22 November 1917.

262. *ibid.*, 5, 6 December 1917; *N.W. Advocate*, 10, 15 December 1917.

263. *ibid.*, 13 December 1917.

The meetings of the campaign were usually rowdy and disorderly and this was especially true of those addressed by the anti-conscriptionists' visiting speakers, Vida Goldstein and Frank Anstey. Both speakers attracted large crowds and their speeches and the mostly favourable response suggest that the Labor movement was beginning to adopt much of the radical opposition to the war itself. In Hobart Anstey was cheered when he exhorted the workers to fight not the Hun, but "the great capitalistic class piling up its enormous profits, strengthened, glutted with blood and the product of blood, more dominant than ever."<sup>264</sup> Anstey's utterances aroused strong emotions on both sides. While his admirers applauded, his opponents heckled and booed. Ex-Labor man, R. Thorne noted with disapproval that Anstey opposed the war as well as conscription and the *Mercury* dubbed him "the anti-Reinforcement Prophet".<sup>265</sup>

The description would have applied more aptly to Vida Goldstein of the Australian Women's Peace Army, who was uncompromising in her opposition to all war. Her meetings in Hobart were large, boisterous and frequently interrupted. On her announcement that she worked for peace against militarism of every brand, she was received with loud applause.<sup>266</sup> One hostile interjector asked her (she was unmarried) how many sons she had at the front, a question which outraged her supporters and caused considerable commotion. She, like fellow anti-conscriptionists, was adamant that conscription was wanted for industrial purposes rather than military. More and more people were coming to believe, with Goldstein, that conscription in Australia would not help win the war in Europe.

---

264. *ibid.*, 5 December 1917.

266. *Daily Post*, 10 December 1917.

265. *Mercury*, 5 December 1917.

Vida Goldstein's enemies worked actively to break up her meetings. When speaking to an open-air meeting in Hobart she was confronted by a truck-load of persons who had been collecting for On Active Service funds. Each time she attempted to speak, they sang and rattled their boxes until her voice could no longer be heard. The audience, annoyed at the interference, was about to set upon the singers, when a policeman happened along and persuaded them to move.<sup>267</sup> Her detractors made frequent reference to her "German sounding" name. The *Mercury* denounced her arguments as "a mixture of Karl Marx and Lenin" and stated that her name suggested "German-Jewish ancestry".<sup>268</sup> A reader condemned her as "a recreant ... preaching disloyalty".<sup>269</sup>

Women seemed to be slightly more involved in the second anti-conscription campaign than the first. Vida Goldstein had urged her sisters to demand full rights, to organise industrially and not to rest content with half the pay given to men. The response to the feminist call was nil : the traditional roles of men and women continued to be adhered to. Rather than challenge the privileged position of men in society, women continued to act in a supportive role, joining with the men in fighting their causes. Women anti-conscriptionists (with the exception of the occasional visitor) did not make it to the platform in Tasmania, but were active letter writers. Whereas men notoriously tended to appeal to women in emotional terms ("don't make your loved ones slayers of men"), assuming no doubt that they were the sort of arguments women would best understand, women themselves argued in more concrete, rational terms. Lucy Hunter of Queenstown for example, objected to Hughes' insinuations that all who opposed national

---

267. *ibid.*, 8 December 1917.

269. *ibid.*, 19 December 1917.

268. *Mercury*, 11 December 1917.



service were "playing the German game". To her mind trying to rule Australia by militarism was the nearest approach to any "German action".<sup>270</sup> Florence Alberry also objected to the irrational charges of disloyalty and criticised the militaristic stance adopted by the clergy.<sup>271</sup>

Women in favour of conscription also worked diligently but remained very much in the background. During November, the women's branches of the Liberal League dissolved themselves to become Nationalist win-the-war workers for the YES cause.<sup>272</sup> They were confined to an auxiliary role however, brewing tea and raising funds, while their husbands formulated the arguments and mounted the platforms. Although the *Mercury* might assert that due to the disturbances of war a fundamental change was occurring in the position of women in the community,<sup>273</sup> the evidence shows that in Australia, woman's subordinate position in society was changed very little.

Tasmanians had voted strongly for conscription in the last referendum and Hughes was determined to keep them on side. In a Manifesto to the Electors of Tasmania, he invited them to show that they regarded the NO majority as "a stain upon the name of Australia".<sup>274</sup> The Prime Minister told Tasmanians abruptly "to get well into their heads" the fact that reinforcements could not be secured any other way. They were also instructed to turn deaf ears to the "craven counsel" of anti-conscriptionists, who were variously identified as the type responsible for the great stike, the rebellion in Ireland and the revolution in Russia. The Prime Minister pledged not to exceed the power given him and made a special bid for the support of farmers who

---

270. *Daily Post*, 6 December 1917.

273. *Mercury*, 10 November 1917.

271. *ibid.*, 13 December 1917.

274. *ibid.*, 13 December 1917.

272. *ibid.*, 15 November 1917.

were promised exemption. But Hughes had overreached himself. He was no longer trusted by many people and further pledges did nothing to renew that trust.

The main cause of distrust was Hughes' assumption of increasingly dictatorial powers, especially in the area of censorship. "That conscription is bad and of doubtful moral aspect is evidenced by the fact that there exists an unwarrantable censorship which prohibits free speech and free literature," wrote W.J. Way of Kellevie. "We are at the partings of the ways and in a question fraught with such tragic consequences, the utmost liberty of speech and print should not only be allowed, but craved for; but in place of that [there is] the Russian "gag" with threatened pains and penalties ... this despotism is attributable chiefly to the insensate dictation of one man."<sup>275</sup> Hughes' personal involvement in censorship was highlighted in his confrontation with Premier Ryan in Queensland and again in a case against E. Dwyer-Gray in Hobart. Gray like H.E. Boote of the *Worker* had been charged with prejudicing recruiting by publishing "The Lottery of Death."<sup>276</sup> He immediately contacted the Director-General of Recruiting and impressed upon him how much he had done for recruiting as a member of the State Committee. He admitted the article might be prejudicial to conscription, but not to recruiting. Mackinnon communicated this to the Prime Minister, who fearing the consequences of continuing the prosecution, withdrew it.<sup>277</sup> Within two weeks however the *Daily Post* was again charged with breaches of the War Precautions Regulations for publishing material which had not been first submitted to the censor.<sup>278</sup> Dwyer-Gray was confident that Hughes' autocratic methods would bring

---

275. *Daily Post*, 5 December 1917.

276. *ibid.*, 7 December 1917.

277. *ibid.*, 11 December 1917.

278. *ibid.*, 19 December 1917.

about his defeat:

the confidence in a big NO victory is growing stronger every day on the anti-side. The coercion we are getting, the persecution and the prosecutions, all are doing their work. They illustrate better than anything that could be said or written what conscription involves .... There are already so many autocratic and ridiculous regulations that no citizen can be sure he will not break one when he is eating his breakfast.

The Prime Minister, the *Daily Post* concluded, was "the best NO advocate in Australia."<sup>279</sup>

On 20 December over 79,000 Tasmanians went to the polls: 38,881 voted YES, 38,502 voted NO (the rest informal). The year before 48,493 had voted YES, while 37,833 had voted NO; a majority of over 10,000 for the conscriptionists in 1916 had dwindled to a mere 379 in 1917. This represented the most significant swing away from Hughes and conscription in Australia.<sup>280</sup> It seems clear that while the anti-conscriptionists remained steadfast in their opposition and attracted some converts, thousands of people who had previously voted YES stayed away from the polls. It is also possible that when Hughes disfranchised large numbers of voters, he disfranchised some of his own supporters.

Hughes' very eagerness to win had proved his downfall. Where his passions were involved, he was incapable of acting with prudence. His reckless invocation of the War Precautions Act to effect prosecutions, censorship and disfranchisement caused many to doubt his intentions and finally to decide to withhold from him the power of conscription. Commenting on the referendum result Labor Senator O'Keefe said that he had gained the impression from his travels

---

279. *ibid.*, 8 December 1917.

280. For a comparison of the 1916 and 1917 results in all States see Appendix No. 1.

around the State, that the autocratic attitude of the Prime Minister was resented by all shades of political opinion; "his peculiar methods of conducting the campaign had evidently recoiled on himself."<sup>281</sup>

Before Hughes' bad faith and dictatorial leanings could affect people's decisions, they had to be exposed and made known. The meaning of conscription in his hands had to be made clear and no-one did these things more effectively than E. Dwyer-Gray of the *Daily Post*. In Tasmania he was more influential than any other one person in securing the increase in the NO vote. Certainly his supporters thought so and they were warm in their praise. "The case against conscription as stated by the *Daily Post* over the name of E. Dwyer-Gray, was considered by fair-minded electors as unanswerable," wrote J.J. Kenneally, "hence the change in their attitude towards conscription on this occasion."<sup>282</sup> "The intelligent perception of our fellow-voters in Tasmania has to a very large extent been produced by the educational value of the *Daily Post* and the ability of the editor," wrote J. Benjamin.<sup>283</sup> A great many people from Fr. Graham, Catholic priest of Fingal to Jas. Belton, Labor M.H.A., paid tribute and offered their congratulations to the Labor paper.<sup>284</sup> M.E. Gates of Moonah declared the editor and staff to be "the most valuable friends the people ever had."<sup>285</sup>

The power of the press during the first world war must be recognised as constituting one of the most important factors of the time. It was during the war that the newspaper reached perhaps its highest point of influence. Radio was still in the future. At a time when people were avid for news the newspapers were the only source of

---

281. *Daily Post*, 22 December 1917.

284. *ibid.*,

282. *ibid.*, 24 December 1917.

285. *Ibid.*, 31 December 1917.

283. *ibid.*, 29 December 1917.

information and their circulation rose still higher when casualty lists began to appear. Newspapers provided not only news, but opinions and it was in that that their importance lay. Some editors merely voiced opinions; more often than not they formed them. Such an editor was E. Dwyer-Gray.

As the counting of votes proceeded it was clear that the rural vote was again crucial. The farmers and rural workers, perhaps unwilling to trust in Hughes' pledge of exemption and perturbed by the experience of their counterparts in New Zealand, again voted NO to conscription. The support for the anti-conscriptionists in the country districts of Franklin increased. For a second time Oatlands, Campbell Town, Esperance, Hamilton, Port Cygnet and Richmond all recorded a NO majority and they were joined in 1917 by Bothwell, New Norfolk and Tasman.<sup>286</sup> The electorate of Franklin was one of the six in Australia to swing from YES in 1916 to NO in 1917. The electorates of Bass, Denison and Darwin all came very close and the final figures suggest that some Labor -YES voters had returned to vote NO. The swing back was especially marked on the west coast. It is interesting also to note that the municipality of Esperance, the home of David Dicker, the Labor M.H.A. found guilty of prejudicing recruiting, recorded larger than 2 : 1 NO majorities in both referenda. As he was an extremely active campaigner for NO it is reasonable to see in this vote approval of Dicker and disregard for the accusations of disloyalty levelled against him.

On the whole the second conscription campaign was marked by less personal bitterness and hostility than the first. The denunciations and expulsions which accompanied the split in the Labor party were

---

286. *Mercury*, 24 December 1917.

absent; the animosity and ill-feeling present arose this time from sectarian conflict. Language was still extreme, wild words were common and reckless statements abounded : *The Anti's Creed* and "The Lottery of Death" provide ample evidence of this. But people took it all less seriously; such exaggerations had been engendered by the heat and passions of war-time that words began to lose their meaning. The *Mercury's* denunciations of political opponents lost their impact : the Labor party was not the same as the I.W.W. and a thousand assertions by the *Mercury* to the contrary could not make it so. There were signs that passions were cooling; the climax of jingoism was past.

CHAPTER FOUR :

1918 - 19 :

triumph - for old hates and new.

Another year of conflict drew to an end. Christmas passed by unobtrusively; the bells it seemed were scarcely audible above the roar of artillery. Church sermons affirmed that Christ lived, but men might have been excused for doubting it. To some, Christianity was another of the casualties of war : it was Christian nations which were responsible for the bloodshed and destruction. The Christian virtues, love and mercy, seemed non-existent; hatred and vengeance ruled the world. At least a few men began to ponder whether paganism had not more to offer mankind than Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

Hatred and vengeance pervaded Australia. Angry men were calling for the resignation of Hughes.<sup>2</sup> His enemies in the Labor party were pitiless and unforgiving : "we would pity this man if our conscience permitted it," wrote Dwyer-Gray in the *Daily Post*. "But our conscience does not, he is the evil genius of Australia. Workers made him; he owes all he has to them and he paid his debt by betraying them .... We can extend no sympathy to a man who deserves none."<sup>3</sup> The Prime Minister had repeatedly stated during the referendum campaign that he would not continue to govern without the power of conscription. The *Daily Post* now called upon him to honour that pledge by resigning and calling a general election. The conservative voice of the *Mercury* defended Hughes against the attacks of the Labor party members, who

---

1. *Daily Post*, 24 December 1917.

3. *ibid.*, 22 December 1917.

2. *ibid.*, 22, 26 December 1917.

were variously likened to "a yelping crowd of traitors, haters, mongrels and sneaks", "howling wolves and hyenas" and "curs and snakes and biped reptiles".<sup>4</sup> The editor of the *Mercury* believed what the *Daily Post* did not - that Hughes would in fact do the honourable thing and step down.

It was soon clear however that Hughes did not intend to relinquish the Prime Ministership and that it would be difficult to wrest it from him. The *Mercury* thought it "inconceivable" that Hughes could form another ministry.<sup>5</sup> The *Daily Post* expressed outrage at the likelihood of it : "If he succeeds in carrying out a policy of 'resign and resume' we will have witnessed about the most shameless exhibition of selfishness and indifference to plighted words that this continent has ever witnessed."<sup>6</sup> So it happened. A meeting of the parliamentary Nationalist party expressed confidence in Hughes as leader. He handed in his resignation to the Governor-General, aware that the Labor leader Tudor, could not form a viable government. The situation was summed up accurately if cynically by the *Daily Post* :

Mr. Hughes is to resign and resume. He is to go out at one door and come in by another. He is to fulfil his pledge not to attempt to carry on the government of the country without the powers demanded, by ceasing to be P.M. for five minutes. He is to yield up his portfolio to the Governor-General marked 'to be returned'.<sup>7</sup>

Thus it was that Hughes was called on by the Governor-General to form a new administration.

Staunch Liberals, hoping to see Hughes replaced by a Liberal such as Sir John Forrest, were indignant. F.A.W. Gisborne of New Town concluded, as his Labor opponents had eighteen months earlier, that "Mr. Hughes and his associates are animated by a greater love of office

---

4. *Mercury*, 29 December 1917.

5. *ibid.*, 3 January 1918.

6. *Daily Post*, 29 December 1917.

7. *ibid.*



than love of country".<sup>8</sup> In a letter to the *Mercury* he wrote bitterly that Australia owed nothing to the Hughes government but "internal dissension, wasted effort, a broken hope and a dishonoured name".<sup>9</sup> Premier Holman of N.S.W. undoubtedly voiced the thoughts of many frustrated conscriptionists, when he remarked that "if Mr. Hughes is going to be bold and dashing and start breaking pledges, he might have started a little earlier and he would have saved the country a lot of trouble".<sup>10</sup> The year 1918, opened in Australia on a decidedly sour note.

For a second time Australians had decided against conscription as a means of reinforcing the A.I.F. Recruiters were again faced with the formidable task of persuading men by one means or another, to enlist of their own free will. From the outbreak of the war until 31 December 1917, 14,205 Tasmanians had enlisted in the A.I.F.<sup>11</sup> This was the third highest percentage of recruits to eligible males in Australia. But Tasmania like the other States could not rest content with past records. Thousands of men were still required monthly from Australia to furnish reinforcements. Just how many thousands was a debatable point.

The anti-conscription campaign had caused people to doubt Hughes' estimation of the number of enlistments necessary for adequate reinforcements. Many people believed his figure of 7,000 a month to be excessive. The *Daily Post* wanted advice from the British government and the Allied War Council.<sup>12</sup> At the first meeting of the State Recruiting Committee in 1918, a resolution was carried unanimously:

- 
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 8. <i>Mercury</i> , 29 January 1918.    | 11. <i>Tasmanian Mail</i> , 17 January 1918. |
| 9. <i>ibid.</i>                         | 12. <i>Daily Post</i> , 1 January 1918.      |
| 10. <i>Daily Post</i> , 3 January 1918. |  |

That this committee considers that it would materially assist the recruiting movement if a full statement was made which would remove the impression arising from conflicting statements and setting forth clearer and more definitive information than that before the public at present in relation to

- (1) the actual quota required to maintain the five divisions in Flanders and the Light Horse division in Palestine.
- (11) casualties.
- (111) embarkation
- (1V) the number of eligible men still in Australia.<sup>13</sup>

The Labor paper also complained about the anomaly of a conscriptionist government being in charge of voluntary recruiting. It was a situation which in the editor's opinion, would seriously prejudice recruiting efforts.<sup>14</sup> Certainly, the Federal government did little in the way of assisting the recruiting movement. Perhaps had Hughes and Pearce (Minister for Defence) been more personally interested in recruiting, the results would have been more pleasing to them.

One of the men who contributed most to the voluntary recruiting movement in Australia was Director-General of Recruiting, Donald Mackinnon. Although himself a conscriptionist, he remained absolutely loyal to the voluntary system for which he worked, full-time and without pay. His resilience and dedication won the admiration of both conscriptionists and anti-conscriptionists. Much of his time he spent travelling around Australia and in January 1918, he toured Tasmania in an effort to inspire new interest in a languishing recruiting movement. He spoke at centres along the north west and north east coasts, appealing for co-operation in recruiting between men politically opposed. In Hobart he told a large audience that he had come to their beautiful city to try and put a little soothing balm on the wounds which the

---

13. *ibid.*, 8 January 1918.

14. *ibid.*, 2 January 1918.

recent political fight had reopened.<sup>15</sup> On his return to Melbourne, he reported that he was much encouraged by his visit to Tasmania. He thought the recruiting organisation had been kept going better in that State than in any other. He attributed the good results of late 1917 to the fact that in Tasmania the members of the State Recruiting Committee maintained a close connection with local committees. That situation seemed to keep people involved and interested.<sup>16</sup>

But there was little cause for optimism. The recruiting position rapidly deteriorated in Tasmania during the first months of 1918. Conscriptionists charged Labor members with a lack of interest in recruiting. In particular Lyons, Senators O'Keefe and Guy and the latter's son, J.A. Guy, M.H.A., were singled out for opprobrium.<sup>17</sup> The *Mercury* denounced the Labor party for doing nothing to obtain recruits and declared that the initiatives towards co-operation should come from anti-conscriptionists.<sup>18</sup> On 19 February a conference of recruiting officers, organisers and the State Recruiting Committee met to discuss the problem. It was revealed that in the previous two months five of the local committees had resigned, the reason in nearly all cases being the rejection of the conscription proposals.<sup>19</sup> A majority of the committee members were conscriptionists who desired that anti-conscriptionists be given the opportunity and responsibility of raising recruits through the voluntary system. The lack of activity of the recruiters was reflected in the enlistment figures. In the week ending 18 February only 18 men enlisted<sup>20</sup>, while for the following week the figure dropped to 14.<sup>21</sup>

---

15. *ibid.*, 16 January 1918.

16. *ibid.*, 19 January 1918.

17. *Mercury*, 14 January 1918.

18. *ibid.*, 18 January 1918.

19. *ibid.*, 20 February 1918.

20. *Daily Post*, 15 February 1918.

21. *ibid.*, 26 February 1918.

The government's response to the declining number of enlistments was a New Recruiting Scheme announced at the end of February.<sup>22</sup> A plan to ascertain the numbers of men required was outlined, with a High Court judge, the Commonwealth Statistician and the Chief of General Staff, as expert advisers. The government also intended to appoint a parliamentary Under-Secretary of Defence, who by overhauling the existing organisations, would, it was hoped, advance the recruiting movement. Separation allowances were to be increased by one third and deferred pay would accrue interest at a rate of four and a half *per cent*. The proposal which attracted most attention was one for a "voluntary ballot". It was planned that cards would be sent to all men aged 19 to 44 asking their ages and occupations and whether if a ballot were taken in their district and their names were selected, they would be willing to go. Other proposals included a bonus of ten shillings to recruiting sergeants for new recruits and a plan for enlisted men to be given leave with pay to act as recruiting agents. The report by the Chief Justice (Sir Samuel Griffith) on the number of men required for the front was issued on 21 March. He stated that there was a present deficiency in the training camps and depots of 27,000 men, while to replace the average wastage there would need to be an extra 5,400 recruits raised each month. The Prime Minister commented that it would be futile to expect to raise 27,000. "The most we can hope for is to continue using one of the divisions as a depot division and endeavour to raise in Australia at least 5,400 recruits per month."<sup>23</sup>

Even 5,400 recruits a month seemed well in advance of what

---

22. *ibid.*; *Mercury*, 26 February 1918.

23. *Tasmanian Mail*, 28 March 1918.

Australia in 1918 could manage to raise. For the first three months of that year the enlistments throughout Australia totalled slightly over 6,000 - substantially less than the 16,200 (5,400 monthly) said to be necessary. The prospects were gloomy. The German offensive on the Somme heightened the alarm. In the second week of April the Governor-General intervened, calling a conference of employers' and employees' representatives as well as politicians of both parties from all States. It was a desperate and unrealistic endeavour to return to the unanimity of purpose which characterized the nation in the first weeks of war. It was hoped there would follow a grand reconciliation. But the differences were too great : too many things had been said and done which could not be forgiven.

The *Daily Post* was indignant that Labor having been "insulted by every phrase possible", was expected to forgive and forget in peaceful conference. Before there could be peace in Australia, stipulated Dwyer-Gray, Hughes, the man who led the campaign of hate and slander, would have to be ostracized by all decent people, then forced to resign.<sup>24</sup> The Hobart Trades and Labor Council was also averse to co-operation and formally refused the invitation to the Governor-General's conference. The Tasmanian delegates were Premier Lee, leader of the Opposition Lyons and president of the National Federation, the ex-Premier and sea-captain, J.W. Evans.<sup>25</sup>

Little of positive value came of the conference. After seven days' sitting, all that resulted was an ineffectual and pious resolution

---

24. *Daily Post*, 11 April 1918.

25. J.W. Evans, C.M.G (1856-1943): Master mariner; M.H.A. for Kingborough 1897-1909; for Franklin 1909-37; Premier and Minister for Education 1904-5; Premier and Treasurer 1905-6; Premier and Chief Secretary 1906-9; Speaker 1913-14; 1916-25; 1928-34.

that those present would make "all possible efforts to avert defeat at the hands of German militarism and [would] urge the people of Australia to unite in a wholehearted effort to secure the necessary reinforcements under the voluntary system."<sup>26</sup> No-one was committed to anything specific and no new programme was subscribed to. Recent differences, instead of being forgotten, dominated the conference. As a condition to participation in recruiting, Labor representatives demanded an end to economic conscription and to the use of the War Precautions Act against the government's political opponents. Wrongs already committed in this regard would have to be rectified as a condition of Labor assistance with recruiting.<sup>27</sup> The proceedings of the Governor-General's conference indicate how far even the more conservative parliamentary members of the Labor movement had moved away from their original position of unconditional support for the war and recruiting.

The year 1918 saw a marked radicalization of parts of the Labor movement in Tasmania. Their preference for peace by negotiation rather than by military victory, their endorsement of the O.B.U. objective and their sympathy and praise for the Russian revolutionaries are all evidence of this.

The events of the (November) Russian revolution were obscured in Australia by censorship of the news and a consequent lack of information. Partial ignorance did not however preclude an enthusiastic response. The revolution was greeted by Labor supporters as the triumph of idealism, socialism and popular liberty. Lenin's Decree on Peace drew a favourable response from people weary of cant. The *Daily Post* deplored in sorrow and anger the Allied reaction to events in Russia :

---

26. *Daily Post*, 24 April 1918.

27. *ibid.*

"The Allied Governments by their unbelievably hysterical follies ever since Kerensky disappeared, have apparently done their level best to misunderstand and antagonize Russia." The editor thought it "plain enough" where workers' sympathies lay : "the real democrats of the world, the Labor people, are growing more and more sympathetic with revolutionary Russia's ideals and less and less enamoured of the work of the Imperialistic planners and plotters."<sup>28</sup>

Tasmanians quickly divided in their reactions to Bolshevism. While Labor spokesmen were enthusiastic in their welcome, conservative voices became strident in their denunciation. The pathological anti-communism of later years was in the process of formation. Russia's withdrawal from the war was seen as treachery to the Allies, but Australians in particular, suggested the *Tasmanian Mail*, had a right to resentment. The attempt to take Constantinople, in which so many Australian lives were lost at Gallipoli, was made, it was said, to help out Russia. Russia had paid her debt by betrayal.<sup>29</sup> With the spread of stories depicting Lenin and Trotsky as German agents, anti-Bolshevism became an extension of the hostility felt towards the Germans. Bolsheviks and Germans were identified as one and hated as one.

Although their reactions differed all newspapers displayed an intense interest in what was happening in Russia in 1918. The *Tasmanian Mail* and the *Mercury* ran two or three stories weekly describing Russia's troubles. Readers read week by week of the nation sinking deeper and deeper into civil war. "Conditions in Russia cannot become much worse than they are now," declared the *Tasmanian Mail* somewhat triumphantly in February.<sup>30</sup> Those responsible for the chaotic state

28. *ibid.*, 8 January 1918.

30. *ibid.*, 28 February 1918.

29. *Tasmanian Mail*, 3 January 1918.

in which Russia found herself were said to be Lenin and Trotsky, who for German gold, betrayed their country into the hands of the enemy. Kerensky was dismissed as a well-meaning fool.<sup>31</sup> It was realised that Russia was helpless before German demands and invasion, still there was no room for pity : "a country or government of a country that can act so basely deserves no sympathy .... From being a powerful Ally, she became a treacherous foe."<sup>32</sup>

The *Daily Post* was more cautious in relating news of Russia. In early February the editor castigated other newspaper proprietors for printing the mass of uninformed statements which were appearing.<sup>33</sup> News stories which did get past the censor often conflicted with each other. The Czar of Russia was reported to have died in multitudinous ways, while at other times he was said to be alive and well. The Federal government seemed intent on maintaining the state of ignorance. A.W. Foster who wished to visit Russia on behalf of the Australian Socialist party in order to ascertain the true nature of the conditions in that country, was refused a passport.<sup>34</sup> It was difficult for editors to sort out authentic information from government propaganda, particularly that emanating from the newly formed United States Committee on Public Information, set up by President Wilson to combat American opposition to the war. It was in this bureau that one of the most authoritative and influential pieces of propaganda about the Russian revolution originated. The Committee claimed to have captured Bolshevik documents which showed conclusively that Lenin, Trotsky and their associates were German agents; that the Bolshevik revolution was arranged by the German General Staff and financed by the German

---

31. *ibid.*, 1 July 1918.

32. *ibid.*, 28 February 1918.

33. *Daily Post*, 4 February 1918.

34. *ibid.*, 2 March 1918.



Imperial Bank; that German officers had been secretly received by the Bolshevik government as military advisers, as spies upon the Embassies of Russian Allies, as officers in the Russian army and as directors of the Bolshevik military, foreign and domestic policy; and that the Bolshevik government was not a Russian, but a German government, acting solely in the interests of Germany and betraying the Russian people.<sup>35</sup> This "information" was published in all major newspapers throughout Australia.

The conservative press welcomed the information as conclusive proof of the treachery of the Russian Bolsheviks. The *Mercury* found the details "both interesting and instructive". The editor was moved to compare the Bolsheviks with their "Australian counterparts" in the Labor party and found it "impossible" to avoid the suspicion that German agents might have extended to Australia "the methods which worked so well in Russia."<sup>36</sup> The *World* (which had succeeded the *Daily Post* as Labor daily, retaining the services of E. Dwyer-Gray as editor) thought the disclosures "certainly remarkable", but was loath to believe them. The editor speculated that the report might well have been the invention of threatened capitalism. "Capitalism is capable of any crime and there can be no doubt that capitalism was directly and permanently threatened by events in Russia."<sup>37</sup> More important to Labor than the import of the disclosures was the fact that the Russian revolution had taken place : "The Russian revolution will never be undone - even if ended. Nor can the besmirching of any leaders or sectional parties besmirch the splendid triumph of idealism, socialism and popular liberty of which the revolution was the consummation."<sup>38</sup> The first

---

35. *Tasmanian Mail*, 19 September 1918.

36. *Mercury*, 20 September 1918.

37. *World*, 19 September 1918.

38. *ibid*.

Bolshevik Consul to Australia, M. Simonoff, subsequently denied the truth of the American disclosures and it was later admitted by Washington that the documents on which the Committee of Public Information based its theories, were forgeries.

There was little reason to equate the Russian Bolsheviks with the Australian Labor party, as the *Mercury* had done. But Australian Labor men were certainly inspired by the Russian example and many adopted an increasingly radical stance, both in relation to the war and the means of achieving a socialist State. E. Dwyer-Gray had made up his mind as to how the war should end. "It was more desirable that peace should come through negotiation than all out military victory at tremendous expense to both sides."<sup>39</sup> Governments had a choice between "Waterloo thought and civilisation-thought".<sup>40</sup> President Wilson was the prophet and the mentor. The *Daily Post* was fervent in its praise of his proposal for "a peace among equals", without annexations or indemnities.

Supporters of peace negotiations in Australia opposed Hughes' claim to represent the Australian people at the proposed meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet. They claimed he was out of touch with the altered mood of the time : that even people in high places in Britain, notably Lord Lansdowne, agreed that it was not worthwhile or possible to annihilate a nation like Germany. Lloyd George himself, partly in response to Labor agitation had produced in January 1918 an idealistic statement of British war aims. These included "no dismemberment of the Hapsburg Monarchy" and "no partition of the Ottoman Empire among the victors". More pertinent to Australia was the proposal that the

---

39. *Daily Post*, 31 January 1918.

40. *ibid*.

German colonies would be disposed of on "the general principle of self-determination". As the *Daily Post* recognised, Hughes was very much out of step:

While British and Allied leaders have changed their War Aim Speeches to suit the altered temper of the nation, Mr. Hughes as lately as 20 December (1917) was still mouthing the battle cries that made him famous in the early part of 1916 when he first ran hopelessly amok .... The question for Australia just now when the people are showing signs of returning commonsense is whether this erratic individual is to be allowed to remain in charge of the continent.<sup>41</sup>

The Denison branch of the Tasmanian Labor Federation joined with the *Daily Post* in opposition to Hughes' claim to represent Australian opinion in Britain.<sup>42</sup> A protest by various Australian peace bodies, anti-conscriptionists and Labor members was circulated throughout Australia. The circular stated that Hughes' pronouncements would only serve to prolong the war.<sup>43</sup>

Some Labor spokesmen were becoming increasingly outspoken in favour of peace negotiations. In April the *Daily Post* asserted that it was time people stopped apologising for speaking of peace.<sup>44</sup> Sixteen Labor members of the House of Representatives were congratulated for their attempt to amend the Prime Minister's resolution of a full prosecution of the war to read : "and in order that the sacrifice of valuable human life may be stopped and an end put to the intolerable human suffering this House is not opposed to peace by negotiation." For Labor members who refrained from supporting the amendment, the *Daily Post* felt only "contemptuous disdain".<sup>45</sup> It was clear that although many in the Labor movement wanted peace negotiations, there were others who were not so keen. The party was divided.

---

41. *ibid.*, 7 January 1918.

42. *ibid.*, 9 March 1918.

43. *ibid.*, 1 May 1918.

44. *ibid.*, 20 May 1918.

Generally, it was the parliamentary members of the party, especially the leaders, who were the more conservative. Philip Collier, leader of the Labor Opposition in Western Australia, was no exception and he drew severe censure from the *Daily Post* for his hasty dismissal of "peace-talk". It appalled the editor that "men generally should see the saturnalia of slaughter and endeavour to trample down the sentiment which would seek somehow to end it."<sup>46</sup> More people were seeking to end it. In June the Trades and Labor Council was addressed by T. Miller, secretary of the Victorian Council of the Australian Peace Alliance - an organisation which also had branches in N.S.W., Queensland and South Australia. Two weeks later a Hobart branch of the Alliance was formed with the intention of holding fortnightly meetings to discuss ways of obtaining and maintaining peace. In Tasmania unionists, Labor branch members and Quakers were to the forefront of the movement for peace.

Although the newly constituted Tasmanian Labor Federation had brought the political and industrial wings of the Labor movement together in one body, the two sections had been pulling away from each other since the Federation's inauguration. An open schism between industrialists and politicians had only been averted by the need to fight the second conscription campaign. The split seemed inevitable however and it was expected that the renewed division between the political and industrial movements would be formalised at the 1918 State Labor Conference in May.

The conference was held in Hobart. In the opening address, the president, Jas. Belton, M.H.A., spoke with some bewilderment of the antagonism felt by the industrial section of the movement towards the

---

45. *ibid.*; There were no Tasmanian Labor members in the House of Representatives at this time.

46. *ibid.*, 31 May 1918.

politicians. Did not the unions realise "how helpless they were" without the power of government?<sup>47</sup> The politicians' incomprehension of the industrialists' attitudes was symptomatic of the general lack of understanding and agreement between the two wings of the movement. The annual report recommended that conference revert to the constitution in operation immediately preceding the change in 1917. This was agreed to.<sup>48</sup>

Various motions put to the conference reflect the unionists' distrust of their political representatives. A motion to put the "power of Recall" on the platform, to give the movement the power to recall men from parliament who ceased to represent the people, was defeated 21 - 18.<sup>49</sup> A resolution moved by A.G. Ogilvie and seconded by J.J. Kenneally proposed to restrict the number of members of parliament on the State Executive to two - one each from the Federal and State parliaments. Ogilvie claimed that the State Labor party was so strongly represented on the Executive that there was no possibility of securing a censure on the party, no matter how necessary it might be. Dwyer-Gray, newly sympathetic to union demands, supported the motion, stating that the parliamentary party had grossly neglected its duties. All the politicians present opposed the motion as well as a subsequent amendment, deleting the requirement of one member to be from each parliament. J. Ogden in particular was offended by the motion, regarding Dwyer-Gray's attitude as a personal affront. The motion was lost.<sup>50</sup>

There were also divisions over motions relating to the war. As a motion for the interstate conference, R. Slater, a union delegate, moved "that no action be taken by Australia in future European wars

---

47. *ibid.*, 9 May 1918.

48. *ibid.*

49. *ibid.*,

50. *ibid.*, 10 May 1918.

without the approval of the electors as expressed by the means of a referendum." W. Sheridan, M.H.A., (who had moved the "peace motion" at the 1917 conference) seconded the motion, asserting that no Prime Minister should be able to commit a country to war.<sup>51</sup> The motion was strongly opposed by B. Watkins and J. Ogden, the former commenting that the logical accompaniment of the resolution was the cutting of ties with the Empire. A Needham supported the motion arguing that Australia had been "crushed" by the current war and should never be involved in another. Enid Lyons (wife of the leader of the parliamentary party) moved to amend the motion by striking out "European" and substituting "any" and adding at the end the words "unless Australia be directly attacked". The motion as amended was passed. On the question of repealing the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act, the conference again divided between unionists and politicians. Unionists S. Champ, R. Johnson, J.J. Lewis, W.E. Bowen and R. Slater all stated a case for repeal. Many voiced pacifist sentiments. Slater dismissed the compulsory clauses as a "vote-catching dodge". J.J. Kenneally, T. Ogden and (surprisingly) W. Sheridan, opposed the motion for repeal. Dwyer-Gray moved a rather peculiar compromise amendment to delete the compulsory enlistment clause but to retain compulsory training. This meant that men would enlist voluntarily for home defence, but when enlisted, would be compelled to train. The amendment was passed 16 - 12.<sup>52</sup> A further amendment to raise the age of training to 18 years was also carried. A motion empowering the government in time of war to appropriate all wealth over £300 a year (the original suggestion was £200) was carried.<sup>53</sup>

---

51. On issues of war and peace Sheridan usually stood to the left of his generally conservative parliamentary colleagues.

52. *Daily Post*, 11 May 1918.

53. *ibid.*

Other business included a resolution demanding a retrial of the imprisoned I.W.W. twelve, which was carried unanimously and a discussion of the conference's attitude towards recruiting. On the second day of the conference, those assembled were addressed by the State Recruiting Committee, represented by W.M. Williams, M.L.C., Dean Hay, Dwyer-Gray and Capt. Ogilvy. Williams and Dean Hay appealed to the conference to co-operate in recruiting efforts. Another member of the committee, Dwyer-Gray, also a delegate to the conference, advised that he could not go on with recruiting work unless economic conscription were ended. He thought it of prime importance that men chose freely whether or not to enlist. Most members of the conference felt Tudor had been right to demand that certain conditions be fulfilled before Labor assist with recruiting. They felt collectively wronged and demanded "the full restitution of rights enjoyed prior to October 1916." Some opposed recruiting altogether; others like J. Ogden agreed with Dwyer-Gray's resolution

... that the matters placed before the Conference by the Labor representatives constitute a list of obstacles to the unity of all sections of the Australian people. It therefore urges the Federal and State governments, also the Employers' Federation to immediately put into operation the promises given at the Conference to remove such objections.

The resolution was passed.<sup>54</sup>

The election of officers proceeded. Unionists and politicians were about evenly represented on the committee although two politicians, J. Ogden and Senator Guy, were elected to the senior positions of president and general secretary. Delegates appointed to the inter-state conference were Senators O'Keefe and Long, J. Ogden and E. Dwyer-Gray, to be accompanied by two proxy delegates from Perth.

---

54. *ibid.*

The delegates of the seventh Commonwealth Conference of the Labor party met in Perth on 17 June. As it happened, Tasmania was represented by Senators Long and O'Keefe and W.E. Shoobridge, M.H.A. The first motion relating to the war was the "1917 peace resolution"<sup>55</sup> which read in part:

We are of the opinion that a complete military victory by the Allies over the Central European Powers if possible, can only be accomplished by further sacrifice of millions of human lives; the infliction of incalculable misery and suffering upon the survivors; the creation of an intolerable burden of debt to the further impoverishment of the workers who must bear such burdens; and the practical destruction of civilisation among the white races of the world.

We therefore urge that immediate negotiations be initiated for an International Conference for the purpose of arranging equitable terms of peace; on which Conference the working-class organisations shall have adequate representation with the inclusion of women delegates; and we further urge that the British self-governing Dominions and Ireland shall be granted separate representation thereon. 56

Already Labor conferences in Victoria, N.S.W., Queensland and South Australia had adopted the resolution; it was not submitted in Tasmania but had been endorsed by the State Labor executive.<sup>57</sup> A differently worded motion calling for peace terms had been passed by the 1917 Tasmanian Labor conference. The above resolution was carried unanimously by the Perth conference.

The conference's attitude towards compulsory home defence and recruiting was also tested. A motion that all sections of the Defence Act relating to compulsory training and compulsory service be repealed was lost, as was a further motion that compulsory training be abolished. On a motion that compulsory training be limited to persons over 18, an

---

55. The phrase is Turner's. See op. cit. p. 177.

56. *Daily Post*, 21 June 1918. 57. *ibid.*, 6 June 1918.



amendment was moved and passed, that the age for military training be the same as the voting age. Yet another motion that compulsory service in time of war (as provided in the Defence Act) be abolished, was also defeated.<sup>58</sup> Clearly the pacifists were still in a minority - the *Daily Post* voiced regret that compulsion was not given "an absolute quietus."<sup>59</sup>

The discussion on the party's future attitude towards recruiting revealed a clear difference of opinion between the left and right wings of the conference. On the left, a minority favoured a straight out declaration against further participation in the war effort, while the more conservative or timid preferred reference to the rank and file of the movement to ascertain their opinion.<sup>60</sup> A sub-committee appointed to recommend Labor's attitude to the war and recruiting, suggested further participation by Labor in recruiting be subject to (a) a clear statement by the Allies, asserting their readiness to enter into peace negotiations on the basis of no annexations and no indemnities, and (b) an immediate enquiry into Australia's requirements for Home Defence and industry. It was also decided (on the motion of T.J. Ryan supported by South Australia and Tasmania), to submit the conference proposals on recruiting to the rank and file of the A.L.P. A referendum was to be held to assess the opinions of the members of the party.

The conference decisions on recruiting were interpreted variously. Both anti-war Labor men and pro-war jingoes saw in the proposals a Labor declaration against recruiting. The *Daily Post* anxious to preserve Labor unity and the Labor image from the smear of disloyalty,

---

58. *ibid.*, 25 June 1918.

59. *ibid.*, 26 June 1918.

60. As Turner has rightly noted, reference to rank and file "is a characteristic delaying tactic in labor movement affairs; it ensures that no action can be taken for some weeks or months, and has the appearance of being democratic." See Turner, p. 177.

denied this. "The Perth conference," said the editor, "made no declaration whatever against recruiting - quite the contrary."<sup>61</sup> Senator O'Keefe at a Domain meeting in Hobart described the position more correctly : "The Labor party did not say no more men should go; it would not presume to say that. What it did say was that the assistance of the party would not be available for recruiting until the conditions mentioned by conference had been fulfilled."<sup>62</sup> What warmed the hearts of the opponents of the war effort was that it was unlikely that the conditions would ever be fulfilled.

While the movement urging a negotiated peace gained in strength and momentum, other voices in the community demanded a total and punitive victory. Many Tasmanians hungered for revenge and they reacted angrily and in disbelief to the British Labor party's statement of war aims in December 1917, which were endorsed "unreservedly" by Lloyd George in his speech the following month.<sup>63</sup> The Labor programme included the usual repudiation of secret diplomacy, a refusal to discriminate between enemies and allies and an emphasis on reconciliation with Germany. This was an outlook far removed from that of Win-the-War enthusiasts in Tasmania. "What of the arch-criminal and criminals who deliberately forced on the war?" demanded E.W. Turner in a letter to the *Mercury*. "Not one word about retribution for these. Is the bloody list of appalling crimes against humanity and international and personal right to go unpunished? Is the blood of our slaughtered soldiers to cry out in vain for vengeance?"<sup>64</sup> Reaction to Lloyd George's statement of war aims revealed similar thinking. While Labor sympathisers might applaud the British Prime Minister's speech for its "combination

---

61. *Daily Post*, 27 June 1918.

62. *World*, 23 July 1918.

63. A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford 1965), p. 97.

64. *Mercury*, 4 January 1918.

of idealism and good sense," ardent patriots were far from satisfied. They were also surprised that world opinion did not seem to share their concern:

The cable news continues to bear witness to the unanimity of sentiment among the Allies in support of Mr. Lloyd George's statements of their aims and intentions as regards Peace .... Yet the speech undeniably shows extraordinary leniency towards the Germans and their leaders, royal, military and naval, whose guilt, alike for the War itself and for the infamous methods by which it has been carried on ... has never ceased to cry to Heaven for retribution. We confess to some surprise that more general exception has not been taken so far as the cabled accounts disclose to the Prime Minister's weakness on this point.<sup>65</sup>

Nationalists feared that world opinion might also differ from theirs over the question of the future of the German colonies in the Pacific. They were adamant that the colonies should not return to Germany, but this was not a point of contention. People of all political persuasions agreed on this - differences developed over the question of the method of post-war administration of the colonies. Government supporters wanted Australian control; Labor sympathisers preferred some sort of international surveillance. A.J. Taylor, the public librarian, strongly supported the government's imperialistic ambitions. Australia, he claimed, should have control over the islands.<sup>66</sup> The *Mercury* suspected that some of the Allies might not be predisposed to support Australia's bid for territorial aggrandizement. It was clear Australia's position in regard to peace terms was fast diverging from that of her Allies. Early in 1918 the editor urged that, in order to put Australia's case with strength and authority, Hughes hurry to Britain to take his place in the Imperial War Cabinet. For it was

---

65. *ibid.*, 8 January 1918.

66. *ibid.*

necessary to

make people there understand the position of Australia in regard to the future of the Pacific. Recently there has been evidence of a disposition in British political circles to minimise the importance of refusing absolutely to return to Germany the Islands in the Pacific .... It would be madness to wait till the end of the War to urge the claims of Australia to be considered in this regard. It is likely that we shall in this receive little support from America and that is the greater reason why no time or opportunity should be lost. 67

The *Mercury* was supported in its punitive crusade against Germany by the powerful voice of the R.S.S.I.L.A, which met in conference in Hobart at the beginning of March. The bellicose spirit which permeated the congress was evident in their resolution on the war. On the motion of Capt. Hempton (N.S.W.), the returned soldiers resolved that they place on record their appeal to the Allied nations to continue the war until ultimate and complete victory was achieved. They resolved further that the Allied peace delegates refuse to sign any treaty which did not include the payment by the Central Powers of full indemnity to the Allied nations. There was one lone dissentient from the proposal for total military victory. W. Morris (N.S.W.) suggested that President Wilson "just about filled the bill". He said they were not fighting the German people but the "Junker class". He doubted whether it was worthwhile sacrificing any more men to gain complete victory. His attitude provoked loud murmurs of dissent. The mover of the resolution reprimanded Morris, advising him that "it was wrong for a returned soldier to say such things". One, Capt. Pike, referred his listeners to the words of the German socialist Maximilian Harden who allegedly said that Australian men had been weakened by women and

---

67.    ibid., 9 February 1918.

gambling. Pike exhorted his fellows to disprove the contention by standing up to fight. Evidently the aspersions cast on the soldiers' masculinity were enough : all opposition to the resolution disappeared and it was passed unanimously.<sup>68</sup>

Already observers discerned that the League was "beyond doubt destined to become one of the most powerful organisations in Australia."<sup>69</sup> As more soldiers returned home the larger and more demanding their official body became. Branches had been formed along the north west and west coasts, where they mainly concerned themselves with administering to the rehabilitation and repatriation of their fellow soldiers. Reticence however, was not one of their virtues and all too often their officiousness and authoritarian tone drew a hostile reaction. A clash between the Penguin Council and the local branch of the R.S.S. I.L.A. illustrates the animosity resulting from the soldiers' growing self-importance and readiness to interfere in public affairs. At the beginning of January a Penguin meeting of returned soldiers had resolved

That in view of so many men returning to Penguin from the front incapacitated and unfit for manual labour, we desire that the office of council clerk be filled by one of these men at the end of the present year, as we consider the present clerk eligible for active service and think at least he should offer his services for such before again being elected.

The soldiers explained that they were without prejudice but that they had fought and suffered in a way the general public would never know and as a consequence they were entitled to such positions. The councillors reacted angrily, many deprecating the "tone" of the letter. It was ascertained that the council clerk in question had volunteered

---

68. *Daily Post*, 6 March 1918.

69. *ibid.*, 25 February 1918.

three times and held a reject's badge; his two brothers were at the front. The Warden, R. Bennett, remarked that the letter was "over the fence", a proposition with which the other councillors agreed.<sup>70</sup>

The third Congress of the R.S.S.I.A.A., which met in Hobart in March was attended by representatives from all States except Western Australia. Their business ranged widely. To encourage the men abroad to join the League, it was decided to station a representative of the R.S.S.I.L.A. in England.<sup>71</sup> The congress reaffirmed the principle of preference to returned men in government service : preference over both eligibles and rejected volunteers. Some returned soldiers were particularly assertive in their claims, notably Lt. Killeen (N.S.W.) who moved that the congress *insist* on absolute preference to returned soldiers, exclusive of rejected volunteers in all government employ. He thought it time the government acceded to their demands; if it did not it should be voted out. The President, W.K. Bolton, urged a more courteous communication, but the motion as it stood was agreed to.<sup>72</sup> Killeen also moved a motion to the effect that the government appoint a board of three (to include two returned soldiers) in each State to investigate all men employed in government departments and that no man eligible for service be classed as indispensable. This was agreed to. The congress then turned its attention to the system of soldier settlement on land and concluded that the States were taking a lot of credit for doing nothing more than extending the pre-war closer settlement movement. Capt. Pike moved that soldiers have preference in ballots for grazing blocks on Crown lands, which was agreed to by all except Morris, who took exception to soldiers demanding preference in everything. He reminded the soldiers that there were others in the community

---

70. *Mercury*, 28 January 1918.

72. *ibid.*

71. *Daily Post*, 2 March 1918.

besides themselves. It was a consideration however that did not weigh heavily with the conference; indeed most were emphatic that soldiers should have preference in everything. The motion was carried.<sup>73</sup>

Other matters of concern to the soldiers were pensions, aliens and alcohol. Resolutions were passed urging higher rates of pension to be paid on the basis of compensation for duty done regardless of earning capacity. The pension in their opinion ought not to cease as soon as men found work, but rather all ex-soldiers should receive the full pension for at least twelve months after discharge. The soldiers were also dissatisfied with the "lenient" treatment meted out to alien subjects in Australia. One resolution called for the immediate internment of all enemy subjects, while another pressed for the use of interned aliens to work on farms and to clear the land of soldiers' settlements. Capt. Hempton objected that the employment of alien civilian prisoners against their will was a breach of the Hague Convention, but others were satisfied that this could be disregarded. It was the president's view that "the Australian Government should do what Germany had done, Hague Convention or no."<sup>74</sup> The congress also moved a protest against the recent release from internment of Mr. Resch, the well-known Sydney brewer. Again Morris raised a storm of protest when he announced his dissent from the motion. He suggested that it was wrong to persecute an old and ailing man. Because of the resulting noise made by supporters of the motion Morris' remarks were barely audible. The motion was carried.<sup>75</sup>

There was a more even division over the question of alcohol and its effects on soldiers. Some delegates wanted special care and attention

---

73. *ibid.*, 4 March 1918.

74. *ibid.*, 2 March 1918.

75. *ibid.*

paid to "soldier inebriates", but others objected to the implication that soldiers had a particular propensity to drunkenness. To placate the latter the motion "that the Minister of Repatriation be requested to give special attention to the matter of soldier inebriates" was changed to read that the Minister give special attention "to soldiers who are victims of a moral, mental and physical reaction, with the view to providing a home or farm for their needs." The motion in its changed form was agreed to. One of the Tasmanian delegates, Duncan McRae, had for some time been preaching straight out prohibition. To this end he moved, "that the members of this congress sitting as individuals, consider that the elimination of the liquor traffic would be in the best interests of the soldiers." Sgt. Hammond seconded it : "some of the fine men who went off were returning a disgrace to the mothers who bore them." J. Kerr opposed the motion : prohibition was "an infringement of the sacred right of liberty for which the Australian men had fought and died." Capt. Pike objected to soldiers being used as a lever to force prohibition. The congress was deeply divided; an amendment that the whole question lapse was carried by a narrow majority.<sup>76</sup> So much time had been devoted to the "drink question" however, that one "old soldier" was moved to decry the congress as nought but a "wowser meeting".<sup>77</sup>

The interest shown by the soldiers in prohibition was not atypical; it reflected the interest of society at large. The war had given fresh impetus to the temperance movement in Australia. With a new emphasis on thrift, economy and efficiency, drink could be shown to be directly hindering the country's war effort. The King himself provided the exemplar. In the 1916 referendum to decide the closing

---

76.     ibid., 4 March 1918.

77.     ibid., 5 March 1918.



hour of hotel bars, a large majority demanded the earliest of the offered alternatives - 6 o'clock. Early closing came into operation in Tasmania at the beginning of 1917; temperance advocates had won their first battle. The introduction of 6 o'clock closing in Tasmania had at least two clear results : the number of court cases involving the illegal selling and consuming of alcoholic liquor soared and temperance workers set to with a renewed vigour and enthusiasm to achieve their next goal, prohibition or at least a referendum on the issue.

The temperance movement was nationwide and the Federal government had been frequently urged by deputations to implement temperance measures on a Federal scale. The government was not sympathetic to prohibition, but was anxious about the welfare of the soldiers and especially worried that alcohol might render them unfit for fighting. Already a regulation had been gazetted under the War Precautions Act, forbidding hotels to open in ports at which troopships were calling. In order to ascertain just what effect drink was having on Australian soldiers, the Senate agreed in January 1918 to the appointment of a Select Committee. It was hoped the Committee would assess the extent that intoxicating liquor was adversely affecting outgoing and returning soldiers and the best method of dealing with the sale of liquor during the period of war, demobilisation and repatriation.<sup>78</sup>

The Australian Temperance Conference which met in Hobart in February suggested that the government did indeed have grounds for concern. The Conference proposed that drink had : unfitted men for enlistment, caused enlisted men to be dismissed, caused troopships to leave without their full complement, caused inefficiency amongst the men, disturbed the harmony of the camps, caused sickness abroad and

---

78. *ibid.*, 30 January 1918.

the return of many soldiers, caused occasional disgrace in Egypt and England and for some soldiers, death itself.<sup>79</sup> Temperance advocates were confident that the final abolition of the liquor traffic would follow quickly on the government's realisation of the deleterious effects of drink on the war effort. Critics of the "wowers" feared the same thing.

The Select Committee arrived to take evidence in Hobart on 21 February. The first witness Col. W.J. Clark, State Commandant, was questioned at length about camp life, repatriation and recruiting. He answered that the drunkenness of some soldiers had prejudiced parents against allowing their sons to enlist; that there might have been more men enlisted had they not been addicted to drink; that he favoured reducing the strength of liquor in preference to prohibition and that drunkenness was a difficulty in the way of repatriation, but was not as important as the returned soldier's general disinclination to resume work. Citizens of varied occupations and viewpoints followed him on the stand : some stressed the connection between venereal disease and drink, while one clergyman stated that drink caused men's wounds to reopen. Prohibitionists recommended prohibition; others answered that it would merely drive the trade and the soldiers underground. Returned soldiers recommended "wet" canteens at camp, stating that their presence would prevent soldiers from imbibing so much in the city at weekends. It was also suggested that the practice of "shouting" was responsible for extreme drunkenness; that too often people expressed their goodwill towards a soldier by buying him a drink. Most soldiers from Col. Clark to the privates stressed their antipathy towards measures which would discriminate between the soldier and the civilian;

---

79. *ibid.*, 5 February 1918.

in the matter of liquor legislation they all wanted to be treated alike.<sup>80</sup>

During the next two months the committee travelled around Australia taking evidence and advice from citizens only too willing to offer it. At the beginning of May they made known their recommendations which seemed to be aimed at facilitating the process of repatriation, rather than increasing enlistments. The committee recommended that the regulations under the War Precautions Act be amended in order to provide that no-one be allowed to sell or give intoxicating liquor to a returned soldier under medical care. A severe penalty was suggested as a deterrent and it recommended that all returned soldier invalids wear a distinguishing badge. The committee concluded that "shouting" accounted for much of the drunkenness among soldiers and that all States should act to make the custom illegal.<sup>81</sup>

Most people interpreted the Committee's recommendations as discrimination against the soldier. And, as critics were quick to point out, such a situation would quite certainly militate against recruiting. The Defence department nevertheless adopted the Senate committee's recommendations and instituted what was called "the blue badge of prohibition" to be worn by sick soldiers. The *World* voiced the widespread objection to the measure:

Nobody desires to see sick soldiers, under medical treatment, served with alcohol to their hurt. But the methods of the authorities are tyrannous, degrading and absurd. There can be no general differentiation while off duty between soldiers and civilians which is not essentially unjust. All such differentiations are distinctly and directly prejudicial to

---

80. For report of Committee's evidence in Hobart see, *ibid.*, 21, 26 February 1918.

81. *Mercury*, 2 May 1918.

recruiting .... There is no medical difference in the civilian patient and the patient in khaki. <sup>82</sup>

Instead of assisting recruiting, it is possible that the Committee's recommendations discouraged more men from becoming soldiers.

The recruiting movement was in need of serious assistance. The Governor-General's conference produced disappointment on all sides; no solutions had come of it. It was followed nevertheless by renewed recruiting activity in all States. In Tasmania a public meeting was called, advertised as "non-political and non-sectarian". Its stated purpose was "to inaugurate in fitting form the new recruiting campaign and to emphasize and follow up the agreement arrived at by the leaders of all parties at the Governor-General's conference to wholeheartedly co-operate in the recruiting movement."<sup>83</sup> The response to the meeting caused a renewal of hope. "The meeting was not only large in point of numbers," wrote the *Mercury*, "but was highly representative of people in all callings, of different religions, and of opposing political creeds." More remarkable still, "there was no discordant note".<sup>84</sup> It was perhaps significant however that Lyons, the leader of the Labor party, was absent in the north of the State and equally so, that Labor was represented on the platform by J. Ogden, who impressed upon his audience how anxious he was to see the British Empire emerge "victorious from the fray". Clearly Ogden did not share the anti-war, peace sentiments of some of his colleagues. Significantly it was the anti-Labor press which congratulated him for his speech, which was said to be "excellent in its sentiments and in its bearing on the question."<sup>85</sup>

For a short time following the Governor-General's conference

---

82. *World*, 5 August 1918.

84. *Mercury*, 3 May 1918.

83. *Daily Post*, 1 May 1918.

85. *ibid*.

recruiters throughout Australia were fired with a new enthusiasm and this was reflected in the May figures. In the week ending 21 May, Australia raised 1,349 recruits, 103 more than the quota.<sup>86</sup> The month altogether produced 4,888 recruits, a number higher than that for any month since the second referendum and higher than for any succeeding month.<sup>87</sup> The increase in enlistments can be attributed to three factors : the increased participation by politicians in recruiting during May, the lengthening casualty lists reflecting the successful German offensive on the Western front and the lowering of the age limit. The recruiting regulations had been altered on 6 May to permit youths under 21 to enlist without the consent of parents or guardians.

The increase in enlistments during May was marked in all States except Tasmania, where the number of recruits fell. One factor which contemporaries thought detrimental to recruiting in Tasmania at this time was the renewed sectarian animosity. For many months the *Mercury* had fulminated against Irish Roman Catholics who were said to be disloyal and pro-German. Readers frequently agreed with the *Mercury's* attitude; one who was particularly fond of blaming the world's troubles on Roman Catholic priests was prominent Anglican layman, Thomas de Houghton. Many Tasmanians however found such suggestions offensive and the antagonism between the *Mercury* and its Irish Roman Catholic adversaries grew more bitter throughout the autumn of 1918. "The *Mercury* has for many weary months adopted an attitude so glaringly offensive as to make Irishmen in Tasmania wonder if they were living under a free constitution," complained Monsignor M.L. Gilleran. He suggested that the *Mercury's* "orange tinted vision", as another correspondent had characterized it, had seriously hampered and injured the

---

86. *Daily Post*, 21 May 1918.

87. See enlistment tables in Scott, p. 872.

work of recruiting in Tasmania.<sup>88</sup> This judgment was shared by Fr. N.M. McNally who pronounced the *Mercury* "the biggest menace to recruiting" in the State.<sup>89</sup> Fr. M.J. Dowling addressed the editor in stronger language : "Every priest and honest layman in Tasmania ought to organise into a strong body and hurl you and the rag you represent into the gutter - your proper place".<sup>90</sup> Even the Archbishop was moved to publicly protest at the *Mercury's* slander. In a letter to the *Daily Post* Delany spoke regretfully of what might have been. He had hoped that the war would bring everyone together, but instead men were divided against each other by hatred and prejudice:

Was political rancour ever more bitter in the past? Have sectarian attacks on ourselves been ever before so persistent? On the one hand, the great organs of capitalism exploiting a policy that would put flesh and blood below wealth, are free to indulge to the utmost in their wonted abuse of the workers' champions; and on the other the self-same organs, obedient to their plutocratic masters and to that world-wide organization which in secret ways is ever striving to turn our religion into a mark of scorn and hate for all the world, are girding for all their strength at us with ever growing violence.... To insult and wound a whole people is not the way to set about getting them to join in against a common foe.<sup>91</sup>

While the *Mercury* was being thus castigated by its Roman Catholic enemies for dividing the community, it was also being censured by the Director-General of Recruiting over another of its attitudes. It had been brought to Mackinnon's attention that the *Mercury* still wrote prolifically on the need for conscription. To Mackinnon such talk was worse than futile, it was harmful. "It tends to defeat that unity which is the key to successful recruiting efforts. Voluntaryism for recruiting purposes is nailed to the mast."<sup>92</sup> The editor of the *Mercury* was indignant at the reprimand; he declined to accept the Director-General's

---

88. *Mercury*, 14 May 1918.

91. *Daily Post*, 14 May 1918.

89. *Daily Post*, 15 May 1918.

92. *Mercury*, 13 May 1918.

90. *Mercury*, 16 May 1918.

advice, considering that the demand for a cessation of talk of conscription amounted to political censorship.

Against this background of partisan strife the State Recruiting Committee pressed forward with its job. In June an insurance scheme for new recruits was launched. The scheme was seen as an effective inducement to the hesitant : "There are married men and others with dependents willing to go, but they hesitate because the future of those dependents is very dark if the sole or chief means of support is cut off."<sup>93</sup> By insuring the soldier's life the Committee hoped to remove his dependents' fears of insecurity and consequently, their reluctance to let him go. The State government refused to accept even partial financial responsibility for the scheme, arguing that it meant preferential treatment for soldiers enlisting in 1918 as against those who enlisted at an earlier time. "Such differential treatment," said Lee, "[could] not be justified."<sup>94</sup> Appeals were therefore made to the public, especially the rich and the rejected volunteers, for insurance funds. In the same month the State Recruiting Committee appointed a Welcome Home Committee, its purpose being "to give the men who [had] given so much for their country a fitting reception on their return to their homeland."<sup>95</sup>

It was increasingly evident to recruiters during the last two years of the war that good treatment of soldiers on their return home served as an inducement to others to enlist. And too often it was the shabby treatment at the hands of repatriation authorities which received the publicity. The Committee members were hence eager to give the soldiers a warm welcome and to demonstrate the fact. Henceforth

---

93. *ibid.*, 3 July 1918.

94. Premier's Dept., 13/2/N, Lee to W.M. Williams 5 July 1918. T.S.A.

95. *Daily Post*, 8 June 1918.

soldiers arriving by ship in Launceston and by train in Hobart were accorded a civic reception, being personally greeted by the Mayor or sometimes the Premier himself. The Welcome Home Committee urged residents and business proprietors alike to show more enthusiasm towards returned soldiers, to put up more bunting and to do more cheering. Crowds greeting the soldiers were exhorted to be more generous in offering cigarettes, sweets and flowers to the men. In such ways was the public encouraged to lionize the returning soldiers.

The continuance of the voluntary system in Australia meant that more and more promises and inducements had to be offered before men would agree to enlist; it also meant that much was made of the soldiers on their return home. These facts account in some part for the singularly prominent and privileged position of returned soldiers in Australian society after the war, compared with the position of their peers in conscriptionist countries where they did not have to be promised great benefits and rewards before they would go and where they could be more easily ignored afterwards.<sup>96</sup>

Since the Governor-General's conference in April, the National Federation had taken a new interest in voluntary recruiting. The Federation organised public meetings which were addressed by J.W. Evans, M.H.A., W.M. Williams, M.L.C., Capt. Ogilvy, a variety of returned soldiers, members of the executive of the National Federation and strangely, Lt. Hurst, late Labor candidate for the Senate. The Premier wrote to all local authorities in Tasmania reminding them that at the Governor-General's conference it was decided there should be no economic conscription in public or private employment. The Premier

---

96. For an analysis of the returned soldiers' privileged position in Australia compared with the position of ex-servicemen in ten other countries see G.L. Kristianson, *The Politics of Patriotism* (Canberra, 1966), pp. 199-200.



added hopefully that he felt sure that in the interests of harmony and to secure the fullest co-operation, these bodies would carry out the decisions of the conference. The Hamilton Municipal Council had only contempt for the Premier's efforts at co-operation. The councillors unanimously decided "that considering the Empire is fighting for its existence, the Council regrets that the Premier address such a letter to the Councils and the Council deplores the policy of pandering to men disloyal to the Empire, to Australia and to Australians at the front."<sup>97</sup> The Circular Head Marine Board answered that it had never had the chance to practise economic conscription but if it ever did, it would use its own discretion.<sup>98</sup> The Leven Harbour Trust (Devonport) replied that it had no eligibles in its employ, but if it had, it would deem it their duty to be at the front.<sup>99</sup>

The State Recruiting Committee also sent circulars to all municipal councils, friendly societies, sporting clubs, rifle and social clubs and churches enclosing copies of letters of appeal recently received from the Queen,<sup>1</sup> Sir Douglas Haig and Lloyd George. The Recruiting Committee suggested that all organisations appoint committees of two to three to interview all eligibles in their districts. On receipt of the circular and letter of appeal the Warden of Esperance Council dismissed any more recruiting efforts as "a waste of time". They already gave men a hearty send-off and a welcome home and that was as far as he, the Warden, would go. Several councillors expressed a desire for conscription, claiming that voluntarism had failed. The Council resolved not to take any action.<sup>100</sup> Such resolutions provided little comfort for those whose task it was to secure reinforcements.

---

97. Premier's Dept., 66/4/18, 3 July 1918. T.S.A.

98. *ibid.*, 20 June 1918.

99. *ibid.*, 16 July 1918.

100. *World*, 17 July 1918.

Both on the right and the left, men were refusing to assist with recruiting activities; the number remaining in the middle was rapidly diminishing.

Labor people became increasingly interested not in the prosecution of the war, but of the O.B.U. scheme. Disillusion with the parliamentary Labor party in Tasmania, apparent at the beginning of the war, had deepened. John Ball was consistently one of the most vehement critics of those who retained faith in Labor governments to bring justice to the worker. Around him he saw "a world rotten and polluted with the effects of capitalism; gorged capitalists and ill-paid, sullen workers; social favourites in high places and degraded workers ostracized by the unwritten law of society that decrees labour a curse and robbery a virtue". Political reforms he dismissed as worthless : "we have seen Labor in Australia at the zenith of its power and what happened? Nothing .... The only thing is to form One Big Union. That accomplished, all else is possible."<sup>101</sup> Ball's faith in the ability of One Big Union to achieve all, was typical of many of his fellow believers.

The *Daily Post* shared the disillusionment with political Labor and its corollary, faith in industrialism. The editor wrote that the spirit of Labor was dead and had to be reborn :

It would only be a slight exaggeration to declare that the sun of Labor did not set in May (the month of the Federal election), for the reason that the sun of Labor had never risen. There were parliamentary parties, Labor leaders, platforms, programmes, policies but Labor was dead. Parliamentary parties did nothing but play with the platform. It would seem in particular that State Labor parties considered that one of their functions

---

101. *Daily Post*, 12 March 1918.

was to preserve the Legislative Council.  
 ... Now, industrialism is the real source  
 and origin, the heart and soul, the conscience  
 and inspiration of Labor. Industrialism  
 watched and grew sickened. If there had been  
 no conscription crash there would have been  
 some other crash. The Labor movement had to  
 be reborn ...<sup>102</sup>

The *Daily Post* saw some possibility of rebirth in Queensland where Ryan's "socialist" government had been returned to power. But increasingly, Dwyer-Gray, like other Labor supporters, looked to industrial organisation, not politics, for the answer. By April 1918, the *Daily Post* was unequivocal; readers were advised that the chief duty of Labor was to organise industrially. "We live in perilous times when few men can be trusted and when the continent is under the control of men whom nobody trusts. It behoves Labor to be strong and the way to strength is through unionism."<sup>103</sup> Unemployment and the decline in the purchasing power of the average wage both served to remind the *World* of the failure of Labor governments to achieve anything real for the workers. The Commonwealth Statistician showed that the "effective wage" of the workers had been reduced so that they were actually worse off in 1918 than they were thirty years before. They were certainly worse off than at the beginning of the war : in 1914 the "effective" average weekly wage was 46/2 compared with 43/9 in mid 1918.<sup>104</sup> Wages Boards, Arbitration Courts and parliaments, the whole machinery of reform seemed useless. "It is full time Labor faced the fact that the Labor movement in Australia is failing to effect any real change in social conditions. So long as improvements in wages are pursued the same futile results will follow."<sup>105</sup> As yet the editor did not envisage any alternative system of government.

---

102. *ibid.*, 19 March 1918.

103. *ibid.*, 11 April 1918.

104. *World*, 9 August 1918.

105. *ibid.*, 29 July 1918.

On 5 August a trade union congress in Sydney endorsed the Sydney Labor Council's proposal for One Big Union. The Labor movement in Tasmania did not as yet seem to have any precise understanding of what its proponents projected, but was nevertheless warm in its support of the general idea. Labor men, impatient with palliatives, welcomed the O.B.U. scheme, the success of which would bring "a change in the whole system." "We want the world changed and changed in our time,"<sup>106</sup> said Dwyer-Gray, "and the O.B.U. will be the commencement in Australia." It seems that Dwyer-Gray, like some of his colleagues in the Labor party, envisaged the O.B.U. as working side by side with the Labor party, rather than replacing it and eventually, parliaments. This was a different interpretation from that of the radical E.E. Judd (N.S.W.) for example, described by the *Mercury* as an "outright Bolshevik". He saw the O.B.U.'s purpose as "the abolition of the Class State with its parliaments and [to] leave the conduct of the nation's production to the Central Administration [of the O.B.U.] thereby replacing Class Governments ... by an Industrial Parliament composed of men and women elected from and by those in industry."<sup>107</sup> Unions in Tasmania such as the Builders' Labourers Federation and branches such as Denison No. 1 and Launceston No. 2 were quick to endorse the O.B.U. project. The anti-Labor forces were just as quick to denounce it. The *Mercury* described the Preamble as set forth at the Sydney congress as "an amazing doctrine", "a bald and unashamed declaration in favour of the abolition of private property and a statement that class warfare and class hatred are to be fostered."<sup>108</sup> The paper warned that the adoption of such a scheme would lead inevitably to the horrors of Russia.

---

106. *ibid.*, 13 August 1918.

108. *Mercury*, 26 August 1918.

107. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

The conservatives and radicals in Australian politics were moving further and further apart. A similar polarization was occurring between Catholics and Protestants in the community. Roman Catholics had long been under attack from the *Mercury* and various Protestant organisations. Mannix's fiery participation in the referenda had incensed even the most passive of Protestants. The more paranoid began to call for the formation of vigilant Loyalty Leagues to combat the Roman menace. At a meeting in Launceston held under the auspices of the Baptist Union, the Rev. H.H. Jeffs addressed a crowd on "The Menace of Mannixism". He told of his concern at the efforts being made by Dr. Mannix to introduce sedition and sow the seeds of discord and disloyalty among the people. Examples of Catholic disloyalty were resurrected from times historical. "Is it true or not that a curse was pronounced by the Vatican on the British Protestant throne in the time of Queen Elizabeth?" asked the impassioned clergyman. "It has never been revoked." The audience was assured that the curse extended to the Allies and their cause.<sup>109</sup> Efforts were also made to stir members of the Loyal Orange Institution to action. Rev. A. Butler of the Baptist Church, addressing an Orange service at the Temperance hall in Hobart, advised those present to "take a leaf out of the Romanist book in regard to aggressiveness" and to prosecute their rights with a little more zeal and enthusiasm.<sup>110</sup>

Perhaps sectarianism had always been well-entrenched in Tasmania. By July 1918 it was militant and widespread. Protestants and Catholics stood bitterly and noisily opposed. In the second week of July a crowd filled the Town Hall to hear Rev. E.H. Hobday of the Baptist church expound his views on "Patriotism and the Papacy". His central idea

---

109. *ibid.*, 20 March 1918.

110. *ibid.*, 8 July 1918.

was that behind the Kaiser stood the Pope in active sympathy with the German cause, just as behind the Irish troubles were the Irish priests acting in the interests of Berlin. Hobday urged the immediate establishment of a citizens' vigilance league of loyalty.<sup>111</sup>

Already such organisations had gained considerable strength on the mainland, when the first Loyalty League was established in Tasmania in Launceston on 10 July. The meeting, chaired by A.T. Marshall, M.H.A., drew a fair attendance. In his address Marshall said that he felt that an absolute necessity existed for the formation of a strong and virile league to oppose the forces of sedition and disloyalty which were rampant in the Commonwealth at that time. The league's platform scrupulously avoided any mention of the Roman Catholic church by name, but the meaning was clear enough. One of the aims for example was to maintain the present national system of education without State subsidy or endowment to any denominational or private schools. A.T. Marshall was elected president, while the vice-presidents included Premier Lee, J.C. Newton, M.H.A. and R.J. Sadler, M.H.A., all Protestant members of the National Federation.<sup>112</sup>

Reactions to the advent of the League usually consisted of wholehearted approval or disapproval. The *Mercury*, displaying its growing obsession with Bolshevism, voiced the hope that the League would combat *all* disloyalty, rather than just Mannixism: "we want to see the League extend its efforts beyond this one enemy (Mannix) and set out to cope with the more terrible menace which gathers blacker and blacker as days go by ... the more serious menace comes from the official Labor party which in the resolutions of the Perth conference has put itself into line with the Bolsheviks who delivered Russian into the hands of

---

111. *ibid.*, 11 July 1918.

112. *World*, 11 July 1918.

the Germans."<sup>113</sup> Members of the Catholic community protested at the foundation of the League, one charging that it would be more aptly entitled the League of Bigotry.<sup>114</sup> Others, non-Catholics, congratulated the founders and urged all "right-thinking people" to report to the League all disloyal utterances. W.J. Wickens in a letter to the press called for a strong and collective effort to annihilate the disloyal and traitorous elements in the community.<sup>115</sup> Catholics were identified with and began to identify themselves with Labor : Protestants looked to the National Federation and the Loyalty League to deliver society from this "traitorous" combination. To some extent the division between Catholic Laborites and Protestant Nationalists (or Liberals) existed prior to 1914, but the war and events related to it sharply accentuated and encouraged the alignments.

Anti-Catholic feeling proved particularly strong on the north west coast where large Protestant organisations already flourished and branches of the Loyalty League began to spring into life. At the end of August a meeting of the Burnie branch of the Protestant Federation attracted 500 fully enrolled members. The meeting resolved that all institutions of whatever character be open to public inspection and that where school-work was done they be inspected by the government. A second resolution protested against the flying of the Papal flag, it being considered an insult to the British Empire.<sup>116</sup> In the same month a Loyalty League was formed at Devonport attracting a membership of 150 from its first meeting. Herbert Hayes, Nationalist M.H.A., was elected president.<sup>117</sup>

---

113. *Mercury*, 12 July 1918.

114. *ibid.*, 5 July 1918.

115. *ibid.*, 23 July 1918.

116. *ibid.*, 27 July 1918.

117. *World*, 14 August 1918.

The residents of Devonport had for a long time been particularly vigilant with regard to disloyalty of all kinds and when at the end of August it came to their notice that Fr. M.J. Dowling had voiced "disloyal" sentiments in the Ulverstone Town Hall, their representatives on the Leven Council lost no time in making a protest to the Federal authorities. They did not mention the priest by name however and consequently received a reply from the Prime Minister's department requesting further information on the case of "local disloyal utterances."<sup>118</sup> The councillors readily complied and some two weeks later, M.J. Dowling, Catholic priest, was charged in the Ulverstone Police Court, that, at a public meeting in the Town Hall he did say things calculated to encourage hostility to the British Empire.<sup>119</sup> To the fury of the Leven Council and local residents, however, Senator Pearce (Minister for Defence), decided not to proceed with the prosecution. He had received assurances from Monsignor Gilleran and Dowling himself, that during the continuance of the war he would not contravene the War Precautions Regulations.<sup>120</sup> The Leven councillors would no doubt have been outraged had anyone charged with disloyalty escaped without due punishment, but the fact that Dowling was Catholic, radical and a fervent defender of Sinn Fein, probably increased their ire tenfold.

The political affiliations of the anti-Catholic movement were brought out most dramatically in a clash in the House of Assembly between Lyons, the Roman Catholic leader of the Opposition and Lee, the Methodist Premier. On 25 September Lyons moved for an adjournment to direct attention to the circulation of leaflets in which he saw a bitter and insulting attack on Catholic members of the community. The two leaflets were entitled "The Man who is delaying Peace" (i.e. the

---

118. *Mercury*, 16 Septmber 1918.

120. *ibid.*, 22 October 1918.

119. *ibid.*, 2 October 1918.



Pope) and "Rome's Dream of Temporal Power". Much of their argument was derived from the English demagogue, Horratio Bottomley. The substance of the leaflets was summed up in the sentence : "At home and in the Dominions, in South Africa, in the United States and in Europe all the influence and authority of the Catholic church was cast on the side of the Central Powers". Lyons claimed that 5,000 copies of the leaflets were being distributed throughout Tasmania and that they constituted a direct attack on Catholics who comprised one fifth of the State population. He compared the position to that obtaining in N.S.W. and New Zealand. In the former, the government had seized the literature and destroyed it; in the latter the government had refused to carry it through the post and persons had been proceeded against for distributing it. Lyons' second objection was on technical grounds : the fact that the pamphlet bore no imprint was a breach of the Imprint Act of 1900.

In his reply, the Premier proceeded to defend the subject matter of the leaflets. He said that it was a well-known fact that behind the religious power of the Vatican there was political power; behind the claims of the Pope was the suggestion that he should assume temporal power. E. Mulcahy, Catholic member of the government protested against the Premier's defence of the leaflets; he deeply regretted that there should have been an attempt to justify their contents from the Liberal side of the House. A.T. Marshall had no qualms about his justification of the leaflets : he agreed with all that was in them.<sup>121</sup> The *World* strongly denounced the circulation of the "libellous" pamphlets and demanded that the Federal government consider whether or not the Loyalty League was prejudicing recruiting and creating a dangerous dissension

---

121. *World*, 26 September 1918, for full report of debate.

in the community.<sup>122</sup> A recipient of the pamphlets, Irish Catholic, M.F. Darcey, suggested in a letter to the *World* that it was "not loyalty, but bigotry and an unreasoning hatred of the Irish race" which prompted the distribution of the leaflets.<sup>123</sup> The *Mercury* denounced Lyons for introducing the matter into the House of Assembly and at the same time made it quite obvious where its sympathies lay : "it is quite improper for Mr. Lyons to use the forms of the House of Assembly to defend his spiritual sovereign (with a hankering after temporal power)."<sup>124</sup>

The former enthusiasm for the war effort had soured. Dissension and discord tore the community apart. Four years of war had seen the disintegration of society into hostile classes and warring factions. Concomitant to the partisanship, moderation and reason all but disappeared.

Moderation was rarely a characteristic of campaigners for prohibition and they became ever more fervent with the prospect of success ahead of them. While Protestant propagandists were busy fostering divisions within the community, temperance advocates (often the same people) seemed to many to be doing the same. One opponent of their cause estimated that they had caused more bitter feeling since the war started than anything else.<sup>125</sup> Prohibitionists were undeterred by criticism. They had moreover a powerful friend in the person of Premier Lee, who greatly heartened them with his new licensing legislation. Lee had evinced much concern over the continual flouting of the early closing law by hotel proprietors who sold liquor illegally after 6 o'clock in the so-called "temperance bars" or soft-drink bars.

---

122. *ibid.*

124. *Mercury*, 26 September 1918.

123. *ibid.*, 9 October 1918.

125. *Daily Post*, 11 February 1918.

"Generally speaking," the Premier lamented, "there was no attempt by the trade to assist in any way those responsible for administering the law."<sup>126</sup> To remedy the situation he proposed an amending bill which would close all of the licensed premises at 6 o'clock.

The proposal provoked opposition from both Hobart's daily newspapers. The *World* derided it as "a law to prevent the sale of lemonade" and added, "a humorous paradox is involved in the spectacle of a prohibitionist proposing to initiate his prohibitionist career by prohibiting cordials and closing temperance bars."<sup>127</sup> The *Mercury* judged the proposal a serious breach of faith with the licensees and the public in that it differed significantly from what was agreed to in the referendum.<sup>128</sup> G.T. Matson of Launceston thought it high time to organise against "the wowsers". He advised that in South Australia and Melbourne, Liberty Leagues had been formed to combat their killjoy machinations; similar action was advocated for Tasmanians. "Given a Liberty League here in Tasmania it would probably grow numerically stronger than the wily wowsers' organisation and then we could whip the wowsers and free ourselves from the fetters of fanaticism."<sup>129</sup>

Another proposal embodied in the Premier's legislation was that the questions of continuance, reduction and no-license (prohibition) should be submitted to the people at the next general election. This was to replace the municipal option polls based on the taxpayer's franchise. For no-license to be carried a nine-sixteenths majority was necessary.

Before the referendum could be held however the legislation had to be passed by parliament. Lee received assurances of support for

---

126. *ibid.*, 5 June 1918.

127. *World*, 20 August 1918.

128. *Mercury*, 27 September 1918.

129. *World*, 8 July 1918.

his licensing proposals from all parts of the island. A letter from one, P.A. Craw, assured him "he was on the popular and winning side."<sup>130</sup> So it seemed. Each of the sixty-six branches of the Tasmanian Temperance Alliance expressed its appreciation of the Premier's efforts to bring about temperance reform<sup>131</sup> and over sixty towns held public meetings endorsing his proposals. The citizens of Premaydena assured Lee that their district was strongly in favour of "immediate prohibition as a necessary matter for the State in this time of stress."<sup>132</sup> At Mole Creek the residents denounced "the harmful effects of the drink traffic especially at a time when the efficiency of our men is a matter of first importance."<sup>133</sup> A Sassafras meeting pledged support for prohibition believing it to be "for the highest good of the State and that [it would] make for efficiency and prosperity in times of war and peace."<sup>134</sup> But despite the tremendous public support, victory for the temperance legislation was by no means assured. One of Lee's many correspondents, A. Brownell of Moonah, pointed to the obstacles to success : the opposition of Lee's fellow members of parliament, the press and "vested interests".<sup>135</sup> On 2 October the Bill to close the whole licensed premises was defeated 18 - 11. In December the Bill providing for a referendum on prohibition was also defeated. The people's wishes had been thwarted by parliament.

During the last months of the war fewer and fewer people offered to assist with recruiting. Preparations proceeded nevertheless for the voluntary ballot, suggested at the Governor-General's conference in April. Lists were compiled of all eligibles thought to be still living in Australia and in September cards were posted to them. It

---

130. Premier's Dept., 167/9/18, (7 June 1918). T.S.A.

131. *ibid.*

133. *ibid.*

132. *ibid.*

134. *ibid.*

135. *ibid.*

was the recipient's choice whether or not to submit his name to the ballot but to encourage him to do so local recruiting committees visited the young man with persuasive arguments. The ballot-cards represented a last desperate appeal to those who had so far refused to enlist. The Minister for Recruiting, R.B. Orchard, recognized that "there is a section of men of military age who apparently refrain from reading recruiting pamphlets or recruiting news in the papers and cross over to the other side of the street if they see a recruiting speaker addressing a crowd."<sup>136</sup> It was recalcitrants such as these who were being sought through the ballot cards. But bungling on the part of the compilers of the lists caused only resentment and criticism to flourish where recruiters had hoped to see enthusiasm and support. On 25 October members of the House of Representatives drew attention to the fact that recruiting pamphlets accompanied by ballot cards had been sent to homes which had already sent their sons or where all the sons had been killed or were over-age.<sup>137</sup> This last insensitive blunder signalled the final collapse of voluntary recruiting. Exhausted recruiters were no doubt relieved when due to the war situation, the ballot was called off in early November.

At the same time as preparations were being made for the voluntary ballot, Labor organisations were also preparing to hold their own ballot on recruiting. Following the Perth Conference decision, Labor's rank and file were to be asked in November whether they agreed with the Conference resolution on recruiting, i.e., not to participate further in recruiting unless certain conditions were fulfilled. It meant a virtual repudiation of recruiting in that the resolution made participation in recruiting conditional upon something to be done by the

---

136. *Mercury*, 26 September 1918.      137. *ibid.*, 26 October 1918.

Allied Powers over which Australia could exercise no effective influence.

The Conference and several Labor leaders and journalists advised the rank and file to agree to the proposal, to vote YES. Others in the party advised them to vote NO. At the beginning of September three N.S.W. Senators and six members of the House of Representatives from the same state published a manifesto urging members of the party in their State to reject the Perth resolutions. "To abandon voluntary enlistment now," read the manifesto, "would mean pulling out of the war and leaving those trade unionists who are in the trenches without the help we should give them."<sup>138</sup> In Victoria J.E. Fenton, M.H.R., and D.C. McGrath, M.H.R. and returned soldier, also made declarations in opposition to the recommendations of the Perth conference. Clearly there was a breach in the party over the conference resolutions; on 18 September a meeting of the Federal caucus found itself sharply divided and the matter appears to have been shelved. The difference of opinion was symptomatic of the deepening split between the left and right.

In Tasmania a meeting of the A.L.P. executive in August had made arrangements for the ballot to proceed. The *World* earnestly advised all Labor members to vote YES, but at the same time Dwyer-Gray rather incongruously reaffirmed his belief in recruiting : "No necessarily leaves the situation as it is. Yes is in effect an affirmation of conditions which if fulfilled would suggest not less participation but more."<sup>139</sup> It is hard to determine whether Dwyer-Gray really believed a YES vote would result in more Labor participation in recruiting, or whether he was merely trying to allay the fears of a public already

---

138. Scott, op. cit., p. 468.      139. *World*, 11 September 1918.

doubtful of Labor's loyalty. Certainly he seemed reluctant to accept the real implications of his stand.

The YES advocates had to struggle against not only the opposition of the anti-Labor press and some Labor party members, but also the arguments advanced by D.M. Picken, the Educational Director of the recently formed Commonwealth Directorate of Educational War Propaganda. In the columns of the daily newspapers Picken urged Labor members that to agree to the conditions laid down by the Perth conference would be to expose themselves to the scorn and contempt of the civilized world.<sup>140</sup> The *Mercury's* opposition was more vociferous, more histrionic : "should the Labor conference proposals be accepted all members will be marked out among their fellow-citizens as men and women who are prepared to grasp in friendship the hands dripping with the blood of murdered innocents, of this Herod among nations .... On the name of Australian Labor ... the stain will be indelible."<sup>141</sup> More and more Labor members expressed doubts as to whether the ballot should go on. The Adelaide Labor Conference, meeting in the third week of September, decided against holding the recruiting ballot in that State and re-affirmed a resolution passed in 1917 leaving recruiting to individual decision.<sup>142</sup> When it was learnt that the remaining States were to have different forms of ballot papers, the *World* reacted angrily to what it termed "the ballot bungle".<sup>143</sup> It seemed that some States were to have ballot papers complete, while others would have the question only, omitting the Conference recommendation. The government's interference in the ballot through the Directorate of War Propaganda was seen as another reason to discontinue arrangements. The Directorate

---

140. *ibid.*

142. *World*, 21 September 1918.

141. *Mercury*, 10 September 1918. 143. *ibid.*, 24 September 1918.

as well as publishing appeals in the press, had also issued leaflets to all unions and leagues, an action which prompted the Sydney Labor Council to resolve that the A.L.P. withdraw from the ballot on recruiting.<sup>144</sup>

In Tasmania the State A.L.P. decided to abandon the ballot towards the end of October. It was hoped that this would prevent an open split in the party, but the differences were too numerous and too important. In the latter half of 1918 the Labor party in launceston became seriously divided over the nature and ideology of the Labor movement. The debate began over the propriety of Labor flying the red flag, but the issues went far deeper. On 13 December the reconstituted Launceston No. 1 branch resolved that the desire of the Labor party to fly the red flag was inconsistent with the printed objective and platform of Labor.<sup>145</sup> The proponent of the resolution was E.J. Price, secretary of the No. 1 branch, who had attained fame since his arrival from Sydney as a relentless critic of the I.W.W. and a popular street orator. He often attracted crowds of thousands to listen to him, as a result of which he was prosecuted for obstructing traffic. Refusing to pay his fine he was sent to prison from whence he initiated a "free speech movement". Because he held meetings in opposition to the Official Labor party and more annoying still, attracted larger crowds, he soon made many enemies within the party. One of these was G.J. Matson who retorted to Price's resolution against the red flag, that the flag was no less than an international symbol of freedom and because Labor was a movement of liberty it had consistently adopted the red flag as its symbol.<sup>146</sup>

---

144. *ibid.*, 26 September 1918.

146. *ibid.*, 16 September 1918.

145. *ibid.*, 13 September 1918.



In Price's reply to Matson the more important issues which divided the party became apparent. Price recognized that the "internationalism" espoused by his critics was logically inconsistent with the party's White Australia or "racial purity" platform :

if the Red Flag is an international emblem, the Labor party as defined in its printed objective, platform and constitution is illogical in therein being national and trying to wear an international appearance ... How can Labor progress with such inconsistency? No acrobatic equestrian can ride the two horses of internationalism and Labor, racial purity objective and White Australia platform. As these two political horses are rapidly pulling apart Labor must ride one or the other or tumble down into the dirt and quicksands of dissolution.

Price chose to follow the objective of racial purity at the expense of internationalism. He also chose the methods of reformism and "constructive evolution" as against those advocated by his radical critics whom he dismissed as "revolutionary visionaries and impractical theorists".<sup>147</sup>

The ideological differences were exacerbated by personal jealousies. As T.H. Williams remarked in a letter to the *World*, it appeared that Launceston's Labor leaders were envious of Price's energy and ability : "The way he gets an audience to stand and listen to him for hours seems to hurt those who ought to be pleased that he can get a crowd to attend his meetings in opposition to the Nationalists."<sup>148</sup> Price had acquired a band of loyal disciples many of whom defended his position in letters to the press. One particularly devoted follower was a Miss P. Bagley, who with Price resigned from the Labor party in October to form the Tasmanian Reform Labor League. Their action was a protest against the Labor party's decision to drop the ballot on

---

147. *ibid.*, 21 September 1918.

148. *ibid.*, 1 October 1918.

the Perth recruiting proposals. Both Price and Bagley had campaigned vigorously against the conference decision of "quitting". In his letter of resignation Price condemned both the local Labor leaders who had urged a YES vote (McDonald, Bowen, Kaye, Shaw) and Lyons, the leader of the party, for his "audacious display of political opportunism" in not declaring either way. He concluded that the Labor party in Tasmania was bent on a "Utopian revolutionary route aided by the uninspiring leadership of political opportunists."<sup>149</sup> About one week before the war ended, Price decided to enlist for the front. His friend Miss Bagley wrote to the Acting Prime Minister (W.A. Watt) and the Minister for Recruiting advising them of Price's intentions and his willingness to serve the Defence department "in a capacity commensurate with his qualifications". His chief qualification was said to be "a complete knowledge of revolutionary socialists, the I.W.W. and Pacifists" and the department was specifically urged to utilize Price's talents as an orator to combat "the peace propaganda" of the "Bolshevik Labourites" in Launceston.<sup>150</sup> The Federal authorities communicated with Premier Lee, who replied to Miss Bagley that her friend had not reported to camp and that in view of the cessation of hostilities his services would not be required.<sup>151</sup>

The *World* had postulated the certainty of Allied victory as early as July : "the entry of America into the war makes it certain that the eventual military advantage will be with the Allies."<sup>152</sup> The speeches on the fourth anniversary of the outbreak of war reflected a new spirit of optimism following, as the occasion did, the failure of the last German offensive against the French. The Hobart Lord Mayor

---

149. Premier's Dept., 66/8/18, 10 October 1918. T.S.A.

150. *ibid.*, 16, 30 October 1918.

151. *ibid.*, 21 November 1918.

152. *World*, 10 July 1918.

affirmed that he could see a silver lining in the clouds. "The good news that has come through during the last few days leads us to believe that the turning of the tide in our favour has at last been reached."<sup>153</sup> The speechmakers rightly perceived that the initiative was at last passing to the Allies.

The likelihood of British victory encouraged those calling for a negotiated peace to press their claims more loudly but at the same time it strengthened the determination of those who desired a complete, military victory, to accept nothing less. During the anniversary celebrations the Premier referred disparagingly to "the men in Australia who were talking of peace by negotiation"; a voice in the crowd suggested they be sent to Germany.<sup>154</sup> The *Mercury* also resolutely opposed peace by negotiation. The editor would only countenance a peace by dictation, involving severe punishments and reparations for Germany. "When she has atoned by years of penance for the innumerable calamities her criminal ambition has brought on the world, Germany may hope for forgiveness and readmittance to the fellowship of nations; but first she must drain to the dregs the cup of retribution."<sup>155</sup> Returned soldiers also repudiated the suggestion of a negotiated peace. The Queenstown branch of the R.S.S.I.L.A. for example, resolved that only one set of peace terms be open to Germany - "unconditional surrender."<sup>156</sup>

The community was clearly divided over how the war should end. The *World* reiterated its call for immediate negotiations to end the war. But no longer was the peace movement confined to a small minority; by the last months of 1918 probably a majority of the Labor party had endorsed the objective of a negotiated peace. "The Labor movement

---

153. *ibid.*, 6 August 1918.

155. *Mercury*, 12 August 1918.

154. *ibid.*

156. *World*, 15 October 1918.

desired peace," said Senator O'Keefe on the Domain in August, "first of all to put a stop to the horrible slaughter and secondly to avoid world-wide bankruptcy."<sup>157</sup> Other people's desire for peace sprang from disillusionment; they were convinced that the Allies were not fighting for the ideals of freedom and democracy as they professed, but rather for national aggrandizement. Hughes' hysterical claims for the Pacific islands confirmed this view.

With reports in September and October of Austrian and German peace overtures and Bulgaria's surrender on 29 September, most people in Australia were confident of Allied victory and that within a few weeks. On 3 October the *World* speculated that the war would end in a month. At the same time more attention was focused on President Wilson as the apparent arbiter of the world's destiny. Dywer-Gray expressed unqualified admiration of the President and his ideals and compared them to advantage with the aims of the Australian Prime Minister : "President Wilson wants law - not land; human rights - not markets; security - not glory. So does Labor."<sup>158</sup> Conservatives on the other hand grew uneasy at Wilson's "softness" in his dealings with Germany. The *Mercury* expressed the hope that the American people were possessed of more belligerence than was their President.<sup>159</sup> Readers were warm in their support of the paper's attitude; with victory at hand they desired to savour revenge. "The admirable articles in the *Mercury* anent the proposed peace terms," wrote Thomas de Houghton, "will find ready agreement in the hearts of all loyal men and women who can never forget the unspeakable and hideous outrages committed for more than four years past by that race that disgraces the earth - the foul Germans."<sup>160</sup>

---

157. *ibid.*, 19 August 1918.

159. *Mercury*, 9 October 1918.

158. *ibid.*, 30 September 1918.

160. *ibid.*, 29 October 1918.

Wilson's famous Fourteen Points were the object of continuing criticism and ridicule in the conservative press. It was feared the U.S. President would cheat the Allies of the fruits of victory at the last moment. The *Mercury* found points 2 and 3 particularly offensive. Point 2 proposed "absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas ... alike in Peace and War ...." "In other words," said the *Mercury*, "as a reward to Great Britain for having saved the world from the terrible results of a complete German victory, the command of the seas is to be taken from her and surrendered to a League of Nations, in the Courts of which Germany will sit on equal terms with all the others. Such a proposal is not to be tolerated."<sup>161</sup> Point 3 was found equally objectionable. It proposed "the removal so far as possible of all economic barriers and the establishment of equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to Peace and associating themselves for its maintenance." The *Mercury* saw point 3 as the American reply to the agreement made among the Allies nearly three years before for favoured treatment among themselves and discrimination against Germany. The editor congratulated Hughes for his repeated insistence on a trade embargo against the German nation; the only hope left was that "whatever may be conceded, Australian wool and metals will not be available to help Germany reap victory as the reward of defeat."<sup>162</sup>

The Labor press on the contrary had nothing but praise for Wilson's fourteen point plan. Dwyer-Gray saw it as an effective contributing factor to the end of the war. "President Wilson's speech," said the *World* at the beginning of October, "broke Bulgaria as much if not more than the Macedonian pressure."<sup>163</sup> It was believed that Wilson's ideals

---

161. *ibid.*, 6 November 1918.

163. *World*, 1 October 1918.

162. *ibid.*, 22 October 1918.

persuaded men to lay down their arms and rulers to seek an armistice.

Perhaps Wilson's idealism was contagious. Certainly it exercised a decisive influence on the thinking of E. Dwyer-Gray, the editor of the *World*. Inspired and enraptured by Wilson's speeches Dwyer-Gray became a passionate exponent of "internationalism", a principle he had dismissed six months before as being of little account in a Labor movement with economic goals.<sup>164</sup> By October he thought differently:

President Wilson has a larger conception than that of the Nation-State. His latest pronouncement is the first recognition on the part of a ruler of a higher loyalty to a World-State. The world to become civilised, must become international .... This is the beginning of the change from the supremacy, material and ideal of the Nation-State to that of the universal Commonwealth of Nations - from the era of nationalism to the era of internationalism, which will create a real world civilization and make complete Socialism possible of complete attainment.

Indeed America was hailed as nothing less than "the world saviour".<sup>165</sup>

As the weeks progressed it became clear to most that the great war was drawing to an end. On 4 October Germany formally requested an armistice on the basis of the fourteen points. Wilson stipulated that she must first evacuate all occupied territory. On 14 October Tasmanians read that Germany had accepted Wilson's peace-terms. The *World* featured a headline announcing "Day of Peace Arrives" while the *Mercury* again criticised Wilson for being too "soft" with Germany. The paper demanded nothing less than "a march of the Allied troops to Berlin and the declaration there of the conditions under which it is the will of the conquering Powers that Germany may be suffered to exist."<sup>166</sup> But the *World's* announcement was premature; surprised Tasmanians read on 16 October that Wilson had turned about and refused the proffered

---

164. *Daily Post*, 2 March 1918.

166. *Mercury*, 8 October 1918.

165. *World*, 2 October 1918.

armistice. The *World* commented that it was a grave step on Wilson's part and speculated that although Wilson's answer was before the public, the facts were not.<sup>167</sup> Dwyer-Gray was right. Unbeknown to the public a German submarine had sunk the *Leinster*, a ship running between England and Ireland, drowning 450 passengers, some of them American. This fresh act of "barbarism" had deeply affronted the American President who replied sharply to the Germans that all submarine warfare must cease immediately. He also demanded that the armistice (as distinct from the peace terms) be settled by military commanders and that Germany produce convincing evidence she had become a democratic state. The German government eventually accepted Wilson's conditions and three days later the American President expressed himself satisfied with the German answer.

Germany had been brought to her knees. This, said the *World*, was the joint achievement of President Wilson and Bolshevism. The importance of military victories was minimized.

General Foch has declared to General Haig that the German evacuations are due solely to the rupture of the Hindenberg line by the Allies. We would be sorry to take that view without reserve .... We have had it declared from London that the German debacle is due chiefly to events in Berlin and the possible triumph of Bolshevism there and in the army .... President Wilson's speech did more than the battles. It was a just speech. It disrupted Germany as we always said such a statement would. It was backed by force but the speech itself was the force in Berlin.<sup>168</sup>

Certainly it was the mutiny at Kiel which prevented the Kaiser from attempting on 29 October to resume the war by sea. The crews of the ships stationed at Kiel had swept through the streets in a revolt which sparked the German revolution. But as A.J.P. Taylor has remarked, it

---

167. *World*, 16 October 1918.      168. *ibid.*, 21 October 1918.

was not the revolution which was the cause of defeat; rather the revolution was caused by the generals' confession that the war was lost.<sup>169</sup> For those however to whom Russia was the Light of the World it appeared otherwise : the secret of German collapse was Bolshevism and the real victor over the Kaiser was the plain working man. Labor looked to the future with faith and optimism.

In Hobart, crowds gathered outside the newspapers' offices, welcomed the news of military victories and the surrender of Bulgaria at the end of September and then Turkey at the end of October; with cheering and relief. Returning soldiers were accorded more enthusiastic receptions than previously and plans went ahead for a grand welcome home to the returning Anzacs. On 8 November people read of the German delegation setting off for the headquarters of Marshal Foch and three days later they learnt from an Extraordinary News Sheet that the Germans had surrendered; hostilities had ceased at 11 a.m.; the world's greatest war was at an end.

Throughout the world there was rejoicing. In Tasmania celebrations began long before official confirmation of the armistice arrived. The premature and unauthorised firing of three gun shots at the Queen's Battery shortly before 9 p.m. drew large crowds into the city and the news sheet handed out in the streets intensified the feelings of a people already worked up to "a tumultuous pitch".<sup>170</sup> Another press message announced from the Town-hall at 10.30 p.m. sent thousands there assembled "wild with excitement".<sup>171</sup> The elderly residents of Hobart remarked that never before had such crowds assembled in the city's streets.

---

169. A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, (Penguin, 1967), p. 25.

170. *World*, 12 November 1918. 171. *ibid*.



The Premier had announced that he would supply official news to all wardens in the municipalities immediately on receipt of official news from the Acting-Prime Minister, but until he received the message he declined to make an official announcement. Hence he confined himself together with the Mayor, the Chief Justice and the Attorney-General to the Mayor's parlour, while outside the public demonstrated their jubilation regardless. People sang popular songs and a band mounted the platform in front of the Town-hall and enlivened the proceedings with martial music. Everyone seemed intent on making as loud a noise as possible; car horns, whistles and bells together with crackers ignited in kerosene tins, all contributed to the pandemonium. Finally at 1 a.m. the Premier emerged from the Mayor's room with the official confirmation from London.<sup>172</sup>

Tasmanian crowds were jubilant, but as usual were more restrained in their demonstrations than the people of other cities. Melbourne, where damage of property was considerable, was said to be "mad with joy."<sup>173</sup> In London, such was the passionate release that total strangers copulated in public.<sup>174</sup> The rejoicing in Hobart was tinged with solemnity. The people were immeasurably relieved but also tired and a little sad. The *Mercury* described the reaction thus:

It was joyous and enthusiastic as it might well be when release came from the almost unendurable strain of the past years. But there was a note of solemn restraint through it all. Probably there was no adult man or woman in that crowd of thousands of people in whose mind there was not some sense of loss which nothing can quite repair. 175

The *World* too noted and commended the reticence : "For the world is a mourning world and no nation can regard this triumph otherwise than

---

172.    ibid.

174.    Taylor, *The First World War*,  
p.251.

173.    ibid., 13 November 1918.

175.    *Mercury*, 12 November 1918.

gravely without a desecration of the dead."<sup>176</sup>

It was perhaps thoughts of the dead which caused the crowds the following day to flock to the Thanksgiving services. The attendance at both St. David's and St. Mary's Cathedrals was reported as being exceptionally large. In St. David's the congregation was assured that the arrival of adversity and sacrifice had uplifted them and thus their nation had been able to achieve victory and success.<sup>177</sup> In St. Mary's, Mons. Gilleran referred to the tremendous cost of the war : "human blood had flowed in streams and millions of men - the flower of the human race - have gone down into the valley of death for ever." He thanked God for victory and urged the peace-makers to be men of goodwill, unstained by grasping greed or human hatred of a fallen foe.<sup>178</sup>

Thanksgiving and general rejoicing continued throughout the island for three days. Commentators and speechmakers were all conscious that they had witnessed a great and terrible event; "the greatest event recorded in history". Men spoke of the end of the old order and the inauguration of the new. Generally the atmosphere was one of high hopes for a better world. In country towns bells were rung and shots fired in the streets. Everywhere surrounding hills of towns and villages were studded with bonfires whose flames lit up the skies. Effigies of the Kaiser were constructed and then amidst screams of pleasure, were committed to the fires. Country people seemed to be less prone to the reticence and control which was said to characterize city residents. It was said that often the people went a little crazy. The feelings of elation are evident in a letter written by one, Beatrice Cross, to her cousin Clarence: "isn't the news grand, we all went nearly mad down here and I suppose they were the same up [your] way."

---

176. *World*, 13 November 1918. 177. *Tasmanian Mail*, 14 November 1918.

178. *ibid*.

I would love to have a few shots at the Kaiser, I hope they won't let him off too light."<sup>179</sup> Newspaper reports suggested that women were generally most eager to wreak revenge on the Kaiser. This they did symbolically by committing his image to the flames. The celebration at Mt. Hicks (home of Beatrice Cross) was typical. "A large bonfire was lit on the highest point of the mountain. Councillor Jones said a few words and announced there was an effigy of the Kaiser hidden somewhere in the paddock, but the young ladies of Mt. Hicks requested that they have first privilege of dealing with it. The ladies then made a search and soon drew the Kaiser from his place of hiding, marched him to the bonfire and committed him to the flames amid much rejoicing."<sup>180</sup> The disorder and popular tumult throughout the country would probably have been greater, but for the Commonwealth government's decision to close all hotels for two days.

In Hobart the formal demonstration organised by the Premier took place outside the Town Hall at 11 a.m. on 12 November. Before the arrival of the Governor, the crowds were entertained by the "hanging" of an effigy of the Kaiser, "the hangman performing his duty so faithfully that the victim's head was completely decapitated."<sup>181</sup> Both the Governor of Tasmania and the Governor of Queensland who was visiting the State, addressed those assembled on the meaning of the victory. They were followed by the Premier who concluded his peroration with the comforting reflection that Australia had shown herself worthy of the Empire. The National Anthem and "Rule Britannia" were sung, after which J.W. Evans, M.H.A., called for successive cheers for the lads in the trenches, Great Britain and her Allies, the returned wounded soldiers, the mothers, sweethearts, wives and relatives of the soldiers, for the

---

179. Cross Papers, NS 271/1/2, T.S.A.

180. *ibid.*

181. *Tasmanian Mail*, 14 November 1918.

Stars and Stripes, for the British Navy, for the Governor and finally for King George and victory.<sup>182</sup> The crowd responded vigorously.

One group which remained aloof from the Premier's official celebration was the returned soldiers' organisation which bitterly resented not being invited to take a place on the platform. Claiming that they had not received the official recognition due to their efforts on the battlefield, the Hobart soldiers organised a separate demonstration in the afternoon. The soldiers marched through the city streets and then assembled in front of the Town Hall where Lt. Col. D.P. Young gave an emotional address. It was the greatest privilege of his life he confessed, to address the gathering at that time. He then elaborated on the soldiers' experience and intentions. "Friendships had been made on the battlefield that were too sacred to be dissolved. The intention of returned soldiers was to keep those friendships intact for all time. They hoped their children in time would become good soldiers of Australia. The army was not going to disband because the war had ended."<sup>183</sup> Clearly the diggers were reluctant to relinquish their war-time status. Lt. Hurst sharply criticised the oversight which had led to the neglect of soldiers in the official celebration. The returned men, said Hurst, wanted to impress upon the people of Hobart that they who had made the sacrifices, who had left their homes to fight abroad, had a right to recognition. The next speaker, Lt. G. Foster, said he had heard it suggested that the Allies should be merciful toward the defeated foe. Never, thundered Foster; the German people had to be punished and he looked to the people of Tasmania to support him in this demand.<sup>184</sup> The audience were only too willing to comply.

---

182. *ibid.*

184. *ibid.*

183. *World*, 13 November 1918.

The celebrations continued into the following day when fully 50,000 people assembled on the Domain, an all-time record for the city of 40,000 as the Premier noted in his report to the Agent-General.<sup>185</sup> They were there to welcome a lengthy procession of 170 motor vehicles and 55 horse-drawn carts. The French and Belgian Consuls, the Japanese Consul and the Chinese community, the Red Cross, the Voluntary Aid Detachment, the Y.M.C.A. and the W.A.A.C. were but some of the organisations represented. It was the soldiers however who took pride of place, their progress being accompanied by incessant cheering and congratulatory comment. On the Domain the word VICTORY stood out, "formed perfectly by the children of State schools - a living word and a reality," enthused the *Tasmanian Mail*.<sup>186</sup> The President of the R.S.S.I. L.A. in Tasmania, Lt.Col. D.P. Young spoke before the Premier - a fitting procedure observed the *World* and "more than an implied admission that the policy of the previous day was altogether improper."<sup>187</sup> Again the orderliness of the crowds was remarked upon by visitors and newspapers alike. "The enthusiasm of the citizens," remarked the *Mercury*, "has been both sober and seemly."<sup>188</sup>

Not so seemly were the enthusiastic cries for vengeance which accompanied the armistice celebrations. The proclamation of victory resulted in a resurgence of anti-German feeling. This was expressed in the burning of hundreds of effigies of the Kaiser, but not content with symbols, Tasmanians again turned their animus against citizens of German extraction living in their midst. A fortnight after the Armistice celebrations in a bitter interchange in the House of Assembly, H.J. Payne made malicious reference to G.G. Becker's parentage,

---

185. Premier's Dept., 86/10/18, T.S.A. 187. *World*, 14 November 1918.

186. *Tasmanian Mail*, 14 November 1918. 188. *Mercury*, 14 November 1918.

addressing him as "Herr Becker". The remark resulted in a fist-fight between members in the lobby.<sup>189</sup> Racism reasserted itself. "Watch Dog" in a letter to the *Mercury* expressed the hope that the Germans in Australia, "that vile and malignant race with all the instincts and ideas of criminal lunatics," would be deported.<sup>190</sup> Meanwhile in the City Police Court three men were charged with having assaulted a man named Anders, calling him a "German bastard".<sup>191</sup> Letters to the press continued to urge the deportation of all German "brutes" living in Tasmania, while one correspondent with the Becker incident in mind, suggested that no person of German parentage be permitted to enter Federal or State parliament and that to the sixth generation, none be appointed to government positions.<sup>192</sup>

The chief victim of the renewed anti-German hysteria was Charles Metz, Australian-born butcher of Elizabeth Street. On the evening of 6 December a crowd of about 1,500 gathered outside his shop, subjecting his customers to hoots and groans. When Metz left his premises he was followed by several men who struck him about the face and body. Metz said his assailants had mentioned the absence of a flag from his shop; he explained that he, like many others, did not own a flag and therefore could not fly one. The following day, Saturday, the mob of men reappeared, some with pickets. They interviewed everyone about to enter the shop; Metz did little business. Some returned soldiers arrived, smashed down the door and demanded free meat; one attacked him. The persecution intimidated most customers with a consequent loss of trade for Metz.<sup>193</sup>

---

189. *World*, 21 November 1918.

192. *Mercury*, 30 November 1918.

190. *Mercury*, 15 November 1918.

193. *World*, 11 December 1918.

191. *World*, 11 December 1918.

Both the *World* and the Hobart Trades and Labor Council came to the defence of Metz. The former called on the police to arrest and prosecute his attackers, while the latter expressed its "utmost confidence in Mr. Metz' loyalty" and urged all delegates and members of industrial organisations to assist in repudiating the malicious rumours relating to Metz. The Council also advised unionists to support him in a practical manner as recompensation for the loss suffered from the "cowardly and uncalled for attack on him." Significantly the Trades Hall Council also condemned the Labor parliamentary party, resolving : "That this Council views with the greatest disapproval the action of Labor members of Parliament in being so dilatory in taking action to see that the police of Hobart properly carried out their duty in protecting the person and property of Mr. Charles Metz."<sup>194</sup> The *World* supported the Council's stand and reiterated its call for prosecutions. "The whole thing is contemptible," said the editor, "a perfectly loyal citizen has been ferociously mauled in this city .... The grandfather of Mr. Metz was it is true, born in Germany, well so was the grandfather of King George."<sup>195</sup>

Attacks on persons of German origin were one expression of hatred of the fallen foe; demands for harsh indemnities were another. The claim by J.T.H. Whitsitt, M.H.A., that Germany be made to pay Tasmania £10,000,000 indemnity, was warmly welcomed by the *Mercury* as "a decidedly good move and one that is justified."<sup>196</sup> There was wide community support for the demand. A. Courtney-Pratt suggested that if Germany could not afford to pay in full immediately, "children of the third and fourth generation" should be held responsible for the debt.<sup>197</sup>

---

194. *ibid.*, 16 December 1918.

196. *Mercury*, 15 November 1918.

195. *ibid.*, 17 December 1918.

197. *ibid.*, 22 November 1918.

"Lover of Destiny" recommended that all German property in Australia be confiscated to pay for Australia's losses.<sup>198</sup> So insistent was the cry for German payment, the Premier decided to communicate the wishes of the Tasmanian people to Acting Prime Minister Watt.<sup>199</sup> Lee assumed the Commonwealth would be making representations to the Imperial authorities for payment of indemnity to Australia. He suggested to Watt that as well, the States should be separately reimbursed with the amounts directly incurred by them in repatriation activities. Watt replied rather curtly that the Commonwealth was not making special representations for indemnities, Australia being represented in the Imperial War Cabinet for such purposes. Moreover the Federal government had no intention of allotting any portion of such indemnity to individual States. Nothing daunted, the Ringarooma Council continued to press for special indemnity payments to Tasmania. The Council circularised all other 47 municipalities in the State asking their co-operation in the attempt to win the £10,000,000 for Tasmania.<sup>200</sup>

An idealistic few condemned this "contemptible gospel of greed." "The hucksterers are about," warned the *World* and "the most prominent is our Prime Minister demanding settlement of War Bills, annexations and ferocious trade agreements."<sup>201</sup> The editor condemned those who would for the sake of revenge consign 60 million people and their children to a condition of perpetual serfdom. Hughes was deplored as a disgrace to the Commonwealth, his outrageous demands shaming Australia before the world. The Prime Minister's demands, outrageous though they might be, were nevertheless probably more reflective of Australian opinion than the *World's* yearning for a peace of conciliation.

---

198. *ibid.*, 26 November 1918.

200. *ibid.*, 6 December 1918.

199. *ibid.*, 12 December 1918.

201. *World*, 15 November 1918.



"Germany is down - keep her down say I, and draw her teeth ruthlessly."

Thus wrote Thomas de Houghton and the cry echoed throughout Tasmania.

. . . . .

Soon after the armistice had been proclaimed hundreds of soldiers began to arrive back in Tasmania. Arrangements had been made some months previous to the armistice that the original Anzacs would be given six months' furlough in Australia, but while still on the high seas the war had ended. Their return thus became a permanent one and Tasmanians set about to organise a fitting reception for their heroes. The ships arrived in Launceston so they travelled southwards by train, first to Claremont Camp and then by car through the northern suburbs into the city. Along the route huge numbers of people waited several hours to greet them. Two large triumphal arches had been erected over the road, the most splendid bearing the words "Anzac" and "Victory", woven in laurel leaves around the carved figure of a kangaroo. The cars were accompanied by brass bands and bagpipers, while church bells rang out on every side in honour of the returning warriors. Towards the city, crowds became larger still, exceeding in numbers those of the armistice celebrations. The soldiers were showered with roses, chocolates, strawberries, streamers, flags and confetti, while the bands played endless choruses of "See, the Conquering Hero Comes". When the procession finally reached its destination, the excitement reached its greatest height. Said the *Tasmanian Mail* : "Though the citizens of Hobart and those who joined them from the suburbs proved that they could cheer for the occasion of the armistice celebrations, last night's demonstration in front of the Town Hall surpassed all that had previously

occurred in the way of enthusiasm."<sup>203</sup> In paying homage to her warriors, Hobart and her suburbs excelled themselves.

It was welcomes such as these which contributed so much to the special status of ex-soldiers in the Australian community. The Diggers were not welcomed simply as "citizens who had done their duty", as the *Mercury* had described them some months before, but rather as men of a special breed. Thus they were told:

Your deeds will influence the national character of the people. You have sown the seeds of confidence and honest fearlessness in every youth in the Commonwealth and you have written the words Australia and New Zealand on the honour roll of the world. (Cheers.) <sup>204</sup>

Before they left the soldiers had been promised much on their return and the glorious welcomes reinforced their expectations. But as the *World* was quick to point out, the country was not in a position to fulfil all its promises : "We are no more prepared for peace, than we were prepared for war."<sup>205</sup> Disgruntled, unemployed soldiers turned to the R.S.S.I.L.A. to remedy their grievances and as their official organisation, the League went from strength to strength.

The Department of Repatriation was not established until 8 April 1918, almost four years after the first Australians left for the front. Criticism of the government's lack of repatriation activity was long-standing. At the beginning of 1918 the *Mercury* had remarked that "all over Australia there are returned soldiers to a greater or lesser degree incapacitated for the work to which they were formerly accustomed and who are waiting for something to be done for them."<sup>206</sup> D. McRae, a staunch worker in the soldier's cause and himself a convalescent,

---

203. *Tasmanian Mail*, 28 November 1918. 205. *World*, 11 November 1918.

204. *ibid*.

206. *Mercury*, 2 January 1918.

continually pointed to the urgency of repatriation. "Up to the present," he wrote in January 1918, "the Federal Government have handled this matter with a degree of procrastinating incompetence which fills me with dread for its success in the future."<sup>207</sup> He pressed for an immediate start with technical education classes. Another correspondent to the press warned "that thousands of our soldiers will demand and very loudly demand a remedy for what is already proving an intolerable grievance."<sup>208</sup>

To fill the vacuum the Hobart branch of the R.S.S.I.L.A. established a Labour Bureau, classifying all unemployed soldiers on their books into categories of potential for work. On behalf of the League, McRae appealed to all employers with job vacancies to consult the Bureau first. Finally in April, the new repatriation scheme came into operation and it was based on two main principles : (1) that the true purpose of repatriation was to secure the re-establishment of returned soldiers in the industrial life of the community to the extent permitted by circumstances and (11) that if a man abandoned his civil calling to serve the State, it was the duty of the State to sustain him until an opportunity for re-establishment was assured.<sup>209</sup> The scheme was to be under the control of a Commission, with a Minister as chairman. A measure of decentralisation was included with the establishment of State boards which were envisaged as channels through which all returning soldiers desiring help would secure it. It was thought at first that most returning soldiers would prefer to settle on the land than take up work in the city, so provision was made from the start for a land settlement scheme. This was to be a joint operation of State and

---

207. *ibid.*, 8 January 1918.

209. *ibid.*, 5 April 1918.

208. *ibid.*, 21 January 1918.

Commonwealth governments, the former providing the land and administration, the latter the finance for settlement. It soon became clear however, that the majority of soldiers desired not to become farmers but to obtain employment in the cities. As the months passed, the list of soldiers advertising in the Positions Wanted column, lengthened.

With armistice and the consequent arrival of large numbers of soldiers in Tasmania, the unemployment situation worsened. Criticism of the repatriation scheme was general. "With the exception of having approved of the establishment of classes for vocational training . . . and providing for some land settlement . . . the State Government as far as I am informed, is doing nothing in connection with the scheme," wrote Horace Walsh in the *Mercury*.<sup>210</sup> He suggested a permanent State official be appointed to administer the scheme. The *Mercury* also thought the scheme too centralised; the editor suggested the appointment of a State Minister to manage land repatriation.<sup>211</sup> In a rare moment of agreement, the *World* supported the *Mercury's* suggestion, but contended there was a more basic reason for the failure of repatriation : the State government's "niggardly expenditure in public works." "A public policy which creates a scarcity of employment will operate and must operate to prevent successful repatriation."<sup>212</sup>

Faced with unemployment and economic hardship, soldiers looked to their official organisation to fight their cases. The A.I.F. had been recruited by the Commonwealth government on the basis of general and specific promises and the R.S.S.I.L.A. was determined to ensure adherence to these promises. It felt that soldiers should not just receive compensation, but rewards for their patriotic service. An

---

210. *ibid.*, 2 December 1918.

212. *World*, 11 December 1918.

211. *ibid.*, 27 November 1918.

example of the R.S.S.I.L.A.'s determination and effectiveness in obtaining the fulfilment of promises was afforded in the case of J.J. White. When White enlisted he was head government chauffeur in receipt of a salary of £180 a year. The premier at that time, Earle, had promised him that on his return either that, or an equivalent job would be open to him. Upon returning White learned that his old position had been filled by another ex-soldier, MacMillen, but that the government would honour Earle's promise and find him another job. Several "billets" were offered White, but they involved a substantial decrease in salary. White took his case to the R.S.S.I.L.A., which immediately communicated its dissatisfaction to the Premier. "I think it is only a fair thing," wrote acting-secretary McRae, "that this man should not be penalised because of his patriotism, especially in view of the fact that White is a married man with a family, whereas the present occupant MacMillan has no family and I am rather doubtful if he can show any discharge from active service either in this war or in past wars. I say emphatically that treatment such as White has received is not what we have been led to expect from the promises made by public men of all parties."<sup>213</sup> MacMillan could show his honourable discharge from service in the war and White was quickly found a position in the Tramways department. In addition to his salary he was awarded a military pension to make up for any loss incurred.

The soldiers' league was becoming an effective and formidable body; part of its strength lay in its numbers. From a membership of 872 at the end of December 1917, the Tasmanian branch grew to 1,349 at the end of December the following year, while in the next ten months to October 1919 the number of members climbed to 7,000.<sup>214</sup>

---

213. Premier's Dept., 2/2/18, 26 March 1918, T.S.A.

214. Kristianson, op. cit., pp. 234-5.

The returned soldiers were supported in their demands by various like-minded organisations formed in Tasmania after the war. At the end of November a branch of the Sailors' and Soldiers' Fathers Association was formed in Hobart. The chair was occupied by Dean Hay. The objects of the movement were to watch and forward in every way the interests of all soldiers and sailors who had seen active service outside Australia; to foster closer association between fathers of soldiers and sailors; to distribute appropriate literature and to perpetuate in the civil life of the nation the principles for which the men fought. The utterances of the members suggest the association saw itself as a kind of vigilante group. "If the people themselves acted as they should," advised P. Reilly, "they would soon have all the Germans out of the country. The association was necessary because the government was apt to become apathetic."<sup>215</sup>

The returned soldiers' league was one of the most important products of the war years; Bolshevism was another. The prospect of Bolshevism's spread across the globe struck more terror into some hearts, than the concurrent spread of the fatal influenza virus. "The people of all nations are watching with alarm a menacing cloud that has been produced by the Great War," wrote the *Mercury*. "Its aim is to tear the fabric of society to pieces."<sup>216</sup> But while some men feared the success of Bolshevism, others hoped and prayed for it. Thus A. Needham, president of the Trades Hall Council intoned:

We live in tremendous times. The thunders of revolution roll westwards from the Ural Mountains and reverberate across the Rhine.... Europe seethes with revolt and although as in Australia today, the enemies of the people are striving with both cunning and force to more tightly fasten the manacles they will fail miserably. This movement towards freedom

---

215. *Mercury*, 29 November 1918.      216. *ibid.*, 10 December 1918.

cannot be crushed .... I say I am glad with a gladness unspeakable because it is a movement of the common people; because it promises the great change that shall wipe away the tears from the cheeks of unpaid labour and give the downtrodden a chance of self-realisation. <sup>217</sup>

The *World* shared Needham's exhilaration and reviled the Allied governments for their attempt to put down the revolution in Russia and Germany, an attempt to hold back the inevitable. <sup>218</sup> Local Labor members were filled with new hope. "Things are coming our way again," declared a Labor spokesman. "Not only in Australia but all over the world . . . democracy the world over is coming into its own." <sup>219</sup>

The majority of Australians did not share Labor's gladness at Bolshevism's gains. Though Needham might welcome "great change", his fellow-countrymen dreaded it. After the upheavals of war, most Tasmanians craved for stability and a staunch adherence to the *status quo*. They rallied together to combat the "Peril of Bolshevism", what was in fact to use David Mitchell's phrase, a "Red Mirage". <sup>220</sup> The Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce, roundly declared that the government was determined to crush Bolshevism wherever it raised its head. <sup>221</sup> The *Mercury* opined that more was needed: "it is necessary for every man and woman of balanced mind to keep a watch upon the sayings and doings of men who profess to be the leaders of advanced political thought." <sup>222</sup> The conservative papers featured gruesome stories entitled, for example, "Life under Bolshevism - Worse than Tsarism - An ex-Queenslander's Experience." <sup>223</sup> The government was congratulated on its decision to extend the War Precautions Act into peace-time; "The Dangers of Repeal"

- 
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 217. <i>World</i> , 19 November 1918.                          | 221. <i>Mercury</i> , 10 December 1918. |
| 218. <i>ibid.</i> , 27 November 1918.                          | 222. <i>ibid.</i>                       |
| 219. <i>ibid.</i> , 21 December 1918.                          | 223. <i>ibid.</i> , 28 December 1918.   |
| 220. D. Mitchell, 1919 <i>The Red Mirage</i> , (London, 1970). |   |

were elaborated at length. A.H. Sibley unionist and ex-Labor man wrote to congratulate the *Mercury* on its fine leading articles on the subject and was moved to exclaim that he would rather his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, than utter one word in favour of "that ugly monster, Bolshevism."<sup>224</sup>

During 1919 as more reports appeared in newspapers proclaiming the discovery of Bolshevik plots in places as far apart as Uruguay, Portugal, South Africa and Switzerland, the contagion of suppression in Australia spread rapidly. Men were regularly fined or imprisoned for showing the red flag, while Brisbane socialists were attacked by returned soldiers who had formed themselves into eight metropolitan units. In the *Mercury* report of a meeting of protest against the extension of the War Precautions Act, much was made of the fact that "foreigners were seen carrying red flags."<sup>225</sup> Referring to the clashes in Brisbane, Col. Bolton, Australian president of the R.S.S.I.L.A. stated "Bolshevism must be stamped out and dealt with as a German spy would be if he were discovered behind the Australian trenches."<sup>226</sup> The Brisbane returned soldiers held a special meeting at which they decided that if the Queensland (Labor) government were not prepared to clear the disloyalists out of the country it was the soldiers' task to do so. It was necessary they said to deport all Bolsheviks, Germans and Labor Senator Ferricks. The meeting was followed by a procession to the offices of the Labor newspaper, the *Daily Standard* where a number of windows were broken and shots fired.<sup>227</sup> The *Mercury* condoned the soldiers' actions and expressed the hope that they would lead to a change of government.<sup>228</sup>

---

224. *ibid.*, 18 January 1919.

225. *ibid.*, 24 March 1919.

226. *ibid.*, 25 March 1919.

227. *ibid.*, 26 March 1919.

228. *ibid.*, 27 March 1919.



The Brisbane soldiers received further support from the soldiers in Hobart, who, while "deploring any defiance of constituted authority", recognised that "the tacit encouragement or permission by a government of seditious or disloyal utterances or actions necessitates measures by loyal citizens to ensure the quelling of such actions that are a menace to civil peace." The Hobart branch of the R.S.S.I.L.A. resolved to support the Queensland branch.<sup>229</sup> The Denison branch of the Loyalty League also offered its encouragement to the soldiers, unanimously resolving that "this meeting sincerely regrets the weakness of successive governments which has caused loyal subjects to resort to extreme methods to affirm and maintain the supreme and sacred principles which are the basis of our British constitution."<sup>230</sup> Everywhere "weak government" was condemned and Australians called for "discipline", "authority" and repression.

There were frequent suggestions to deport or imprison with hard labour "Bolsheviks in Australia". Labor speakers on the Domain and Labor writers in the press were assailed for their "seditious tendencies". The time had come, wrote "Tasman" to the *Mercury* for the effective suppression of radical ideas.<sup>231</sup> "Men may be entitled to think as they choose," said the *Tasmanian Mail*, "but they ought not to be allowed to express views that are certain to result in lawlessness."<sup>232</sup> In Launceston returned soldiers resorted to force to suppress Labor speakers. One prominent O.B.U. advocate, Victor Shaw, was counted out by soldiers and when he persisted in speaking they advanced and physically removed him from the platform. The following week left-wing Labor speaker A.J. Palamountain was pulled from the platform and his red tie

---

229. *World*, 7 April 1919.

231. *Mercury*, 1 April 1919.

230. *ibid*.

232. *Tasmanian Mail*, 17 April 1919.

torn to pieces. He was then chased by the khaki-clad group until he reached police protection. As a result of the disorder thus created, the Labor party was refused permission by the Launceston City Council to conduct any further open-air meetings.

The attempt to impose a patriotic uniformity on Australia was epitomized by the activities of the League of Loyalty, originally established to combat the menace of Catholicism, but increasingly directing its attention to the suppression of certain political ideas. In a manifesto issued in Hobart in April 1919, the League urged that all individuals professing and teaching disloyalty, irrespective of class or creed, from the highest to the lowest be punished with the utmost rigour of the law and if necessary, deported.<sup>233</sup> When the time approached for the signing of the Peace Treaty and the consequent repeal of the War Precautions Act, the Loyalty League unanimously resolved that in its place, the State government should devise legislation to deal with disloyalty, revolution and seditious utterances.<sup>234</sup>

Roman Catholics were also victims of the post-war repression, for they too were regarded as a threat from within to Australian society. Again the League of Loyalty was to the forefront of the movement for uniformity, for conformity to the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ideal. In January 1919, the parliament of Tasmania assembled to elect a senator to replace Senator Long, who, involved in corruption, had recently resigned. A few days before, members had received a letter from the Loyalty League, urging that a Protestant Nationalist be selected to fill the vacant position. The League complained that the number of Catholics in parliament was disproportionately high. It stated furthermore that the "tendency of all Catholics is to support the claims of

---

233. *Mercury*, 12 April 1919.

234. *ibid.*, 20 May 1919.

their particular organisation for state subsidies to their schools and preference to other establishments, and this we submit is subversive to the wishes of the majority of the electors." Mention was also made of the attitude of Roman Catholic clergy" in the Empire's recent need of united effort."<sup>235</sup> The Loyalty League's interference in the Senate selection rebounded on it. Labor men, infuriated by the circular, gave their second preferences to E. Mulcahy, Catholic Nationalist. As a result Alex Marshall, the Loyalty League president, who had led Labor candidate Hurst narrowly on the first ballot, was easily defeated by Mulcahy. The latter had originally polled worse than either but won on the second count.<sup>236</sup>

The *Mercury* strongly defended the League's action, arguing that "at a time when Mannixism and Sinn Feinism [had] threatened not only Australia but the Empire," it was quite proper to raise the question of Mulcahy's religion. Although indiscreet, it was said that the League was "perfectly justified".<sup>237</sup> Correspondents also endorsed the action. T. Miles compared sectarianism to "Hun poison gas"; "if it is used against us we must in self-defence fight the foe with a weapon of his own manufacture."<sup>238</sup> Protestant churches rallied to the cause of combatting the alleged menace of Catholicism and its political expression Sinn Fein. Meeting in March, the united conference of the Methodist Church of Victoria and Tasmania, passed a resolution of protest at "Mannix's sneer at the Union Jack and his support for Sinn Fein."<sup>239</sup> The following month the Tasmanian Baptist Assembly put on record its trust that "the government [would] use every endeavour to counteract and

---

235. *World*, 16 January 1919.

238. *ibid.*, 22 January 1919.

236. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

239. *ibid.*, 27 March 1919.

237. *Mercury*, 16 January 1919.

suppress the disloyal propaganda carried on under the guise of Sinn Feinism and other cults."<sup>240</sup> The latter remained unspecified.

The wave of intolerance and repression, in many ways akin to the "political fundamentalism" which swept the United States in the twenties, was aimed at "un-Australian" groups and subversives - Catholics, Irish, Bolsheviks, O.B.U. supporters, enemy aliens and foreigners in general. The League of Loyalty's emphasis on the British way of life, the Constitution and God and the clandestine nature of its meetings, lends it to a comparison with the Ku Klux Klan in the United States. The League can be seen as a non-terrorist expression of Klan values in Australia. As W.E. Leuchtenberg points out, the reconstituted Klan of the twenties, directed its animus more often against political enemies and Catholics than against the Negro, as in the past.<sup>241</sup> The Loyalty League, like the Klan preyed on people's fear that the country was in peril from elements within. The membership of both organisations was strongly Protestant, but there was also an important difference. Whereas the Klan was a populist organisation drawing its support from the poor and ill-educated of country towns, Loyalty League members tended to come from the wealthy middle-class - for example, Premier Lee, A.T. Marshall and Sir Henry Jones.

. . . . .

The war produced a marked movement leftwards in the Labor party. The exacerbation of class differences by the economic conditions on the home front led to a reassertion of class interests. At the same time, the more patriotic or Imperialistic departed from the party,

---

240. *ibid.*, 11 April 1919.

241. Leuchtenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

either to go to war or to join the National Federation. But the tension in the party between the parliamentary leaders and the radical idealists remained. The more impatient of unionists rejected parliamentarianism altogether. For them the answer lay in the O.B.U. Throughout 1918-19 the gap between the meek reformism of the Labor party leadership and the growing militancy of the rank and file, widened.

In January 1919 an Australia-wide conference ratified the O.B.U. scheme and the I.W.W. inspired "Preamble". A provisional council was appointed to supervise the preliminary work of launching the scheme and arrangements were made for existing unions to conduct ballots of their members on the question of joining the O.B.U. or rather, the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia, as it was to be known.<sup>242</sup>

The Tasmanian delegates to the conference, S. Champ from the south and W.E. Bowen and A. Kaye from the north, returned to the State exalted and enthusiastic. W.A. Woods, speaking on the Hobart Domain, observed that the launching of the O.B.U. was an indication that the spirit of the movement was regaining in strength, that "the noble ideals which had been temporarily mislaid would be again set up in the hearts of the dispossessed thralls of toil." "It was this recovery of Labor's 'punch of the ideal' that was the hopeful sign, the thing that really mattered."<sup>243</sup>

Launceston revealed the keenest support for the O.B.U. idea. There the delegates Kaye and Bowen were ardent proselytisers, regularly addressing meetings and explaining the details of the scheme. They emphasized that it meant revolution not reform, abolishing the present capitalist system, rather than patching it up. They envisaged both political and industrial action, but there was a vast difference between

---

242. *World*, 17 January 1919.

244. *ibid.*, 18 February 1919.

243. *ibid.*, 27 January 1919.

the present parliamentary party, said Kaye, and the industrial parliament advanced by the O.B.U.<sup>244</sup>

Many exponents of the O.B.U. plan were convinced utopians. E. Jameson was typical. He wrote: "the O.B.U. is the last word in industrial organisation making one economic boycott of industrial advocates impossible, unemployment a thing of the past, exploitation by the profiteers per medium of rent, food and clothing a crime."<sup>245</sup> Concomitant to this naive trust in the efficacy of industrial union was a profound distrust of parliaments and Labor politicians. There was a general belief that Labor representatives had done nothing to improve the workers' lot, but on the contrary had sold out the working class interest for place and pay. The O.B.U. it was contended, would put an end to such perfidy. "No longer will the workers be duped with the anaesthetics of self-styled Labor leaders who implore their supporters to be satisfied with bread and jam whilst they enjoy the fruits of office .... Politicians under the principle of O.B.U. will retain office through or by results."<sup>246</sup>

Labor politicians in Tasmania were for the most part devoid of pronouncements on the O.B.U., but it soon became clear that in the industrialists' antagonism to existing political institutions lay a threat to the politicians' very existence. "If the abolition of the capitalist system is the object why worry about capturing capitalistic institutions?"<sup>247</sup> enquired a *World* correspondent. Another writing over the pseudonym "Wage Plug" agreed:

Clear is the insight which reveals the  
parliament of the capitalist class with  
its representatives elected by territorial

---

245. *ibid.*, 26 February 1919.

247. *ibid.*, 23 January 1919.

246. *ibid.*

divisions and its elaborate methods of repression as the superstructure of an economic system based on class rule .... Proletarian sociology teaches that the revolutionary industrial organisations are the embryo of the new society forming within the shell of the old, the society of the future, whose directing authorities shall be the chosen groups in the various industries. 248

The letters to the press reflected a deep disillusionment, but also a new awakening. "The parliamentary institutions of these days have miserably failed," wrote J.P. "They are so terribly slow, tedious and expensive that millions have lost confidence in many desirable and urgent social reforms being brought about in their lifetime .... Labor members are unfortunately affected by their environment and after a while acquiesce in the slow down efforts that have become chronic by years and even centuries of 'precedent' and practice in our parliamentary institutions."<sup>249</sup> Labor politicians were particularly sensitive to this barrage of criticism, coming as it did just a few months before the State election.

The conflict between the industrialists and the politicians dominated the annual Labor Conference at Deloraine in May. In the opening address the President J. Ogden, M.H.A., attacked Labor members who preferred "direct action" to democratic government. He complained that there were "many in Labor's ranks seeking to belittle the politician and set up revolutionary methods."<sup>250</sup> The parliamentary party was in a majority at the conference and the votes went accordingly. The Burnie branch motion to put "the power of Recall" on the platform was defeated.<sup>251</sup> But it was on the proposal that conference adopt the

---

248. *ibid.*, 24 February 1919.

249. *ibid.*, 7 April 1919.

250. *ibid.*, 2 May 1919.

251. *ibid.*, 3 May 1919.

O.B.U. principle of organisation, moved by the Launceston No. 2 branch, that the conference was most clearly divided between cautious politicians and revolutionary industrialists. Kaye, Bowen and McDonald of the Launceston No. 2 branch and Needham, president of the Trades Hall Council and member of the Denison branch, spoke out in support of the proposal. Matt. O'Brien moved an amendment to the effect that conference favour closer organisation of industrial bodies, but that the proposed organisation of O.B.U. was not acceptable as it was opposed to the A.L.P. policy of "evolutionary socialism". O'Brien urged the conference to express confidence in the policy of the Labor party. Jas. Belton M.H.A., remarked on the divergent views of J.S. Garden (of the Sydney Labor Council) and E. Grayndler (A.W.U.) towards the scheme. (The A.W.U. had repudiated the O.B.U. and had refused to take a ballot of its members on joining the O.B.U.) Jas. Belton like so many other Labor leaders desired to have it both ways : he favoured one big union, but also desired to follow "constitutional methods", by which he meant the Labor party's constitutional methods. Senator O'Keefe opted for Grayndler's attitude of repudiation. Lyons, leader of the parliamentary party, summed up the politicians' predicament and their position : "In one word, they were asked to say that present political methods were futile while they were on the eve of an election and if any of them thought that way, then for God's sake, let them get out of the contest and go home."

Expediency prevailed. O'Brien's amendment was carried 22 votes to 8. Ben Watkins attempted to steer the conference along a middle course. He moved a further amendment that whilst it was not the function of the political section of the Labor movement to devise the policy of the industrial section, the conference, while not committing itself



to the Preamble of the O.B.U., was of the opinion that closer organisation of the numerous industrial organisations would be to the advantage of the movement generally. This was supported by the Launceston No. 2 branch, for as McDonald pointed out, the O'Brien amendment stood as a condemnation of the O.B.U. system, while Watkins' amendment left the position open. But the politicians, with their minds firmly fixed on vote-catching, defeated the amendment in favour of O'Brien's. Their confidence grew and they became more outspoken. O'Keefe avowed he had been very much disturbed by the section in the Preamble which declared against State ownership in favour of ownership by the community. How could the Labor party go to the country with a dozen or so planks for State ownership, if it declared against the principle at conference? The argument received a sympathetic hearing; Watkins' amendment was defeated 18 - 12 and O'Brien's amendment was put as the motion and carried 19 - 13.<sup>252</sup> The minority consisted of the few supporters of the O.B.U., Preamble and all, and those who favoured Watkins' compromise.

The ascendancy of the parliamentary party over the movement was confirmed in the election of officers. J. Ogden was re-elected president, Senator Guy secretary and J. Lyons treasurer. The executive consisted of J. Belton, Watkins, Becker, R. Cosgrove and Matt O'Brien, all but the latter politicians or aspiring candidates. The interstate conference delegates were Senators O'Keefe and Guy and Lyons, Ogden, Belton and Watkins.<sup>253</sup> O.B.U. advocates had been exposed as a minority and effectively silenced.

As the State elections approached, orators and editors put away their radical opinions and exhorted voters to return a Labor government.

---

252.    ibid.

253.    ibid.

Theirs was no easy task, for if the conference decisions had made the Labor party more palatable to the electors of Tasmania, which is doubtful, any gains from their new conservatism were more than offset by the increased discontent of the rank and file of the movement. *World* editorials voiced disappointment at the defeat of the Recall and the O.B.U. motion and the "parliamentarian" executive : "as one of the chief functions of the Executive is, or ought to be, to see that Parliamentarians elected by Labor carry out the platform and policy laid down by Conference," wrote Dwyer-Gray, "the wisdom of electing a Parliamentarian Executive can be legitimately doubted."<sup>254</sup> Letters to the Labor press were marked by a weary anger. "Not a single inspiring note was struck," objected "Unity", "and not a delegate took the slightest cognisance of the wonderful world-wide political and economic changes which have taken place during the last twelve months."<sup>255</sup> The insularity of outlook of the parliamentary party in Tasmania and its timidity in front of the electors was conducive to widespread cynicism. Post-war hopes for a brave new world under the auspices of the O.B.U. were quickly dashed. Recognising the alienation of some unionists from the party, left wing candidate A Needham wrote an open letter to the workers, urging on them the values of political representation in parliament. "Give a practical demonstration of the power of unionism at the ballot box," implored Needham somewhat lamely.<sup>256</sup>

The State election was held on the last day of May. There were 60 candidates contesting 30 seats, compared to 48 candidates in 1916. More people aspired to political power, although interest among the electors was at its lowest for some years. Many of the candidates were endorsed by more than one organisation, there being an unusually

---

254. *ibid.*, 5 May 1919.

256. *ibid.*, 28 May 1919.

255. *ibid.*, 8 May 1919.

high number of pressure groups involved in the election. The Temperance Alliance endorsed Nationalist candidates J.C. McPhee and D. McRae in Denison and S. Cummins in Franklin.<sup>257</sup> The Loyalty League also declared their support for McRae and McPhee, as well as Col. Eccles Snowden, Sgt. G. Foster and Sir Elliott Lewis.<sup>258</sup> The latter's name was a late addition to their card as it was believed at first that Lewis had favoured State aid. The Catholic Federation declared their support for Labor party candidates : in Denison, R. Cosgrove, J. Cleary, W.J. Sheridan and J.J. Lewis (left wing anti-clerical Woods and Needham were notable exceptions) in Bass, Becker, Guy, Bowen, Shaw and Sharp.<sup>259</sup> Circulars bearing these names were distributed to Sunday's congregations. The Tasmanian Farmers', Stockowners' and Orchardists' Association also entered the contest, supporting W.E. Bottrill and J.C. McPhee in Denison, J.B. Hayes for Bass, E. Hobbs, H.J. Payne and J.T. Whitsitt for Darwin and six candidates each in Wilmot and Franklin.<sup>260</sup> All of the Farmers' candidates were rabid anti-Labor men and it was their action in refusing endorsement to Nationalist candidate Pollard because he had been a Labor member prior to 1916, that precipitated a serious split in Nationalist ranks. Returned soldiers were also prominent in the election : Denison alone fielded three ex-soldier candidates.

The participation of pressure groups in the election gave rise to considerable ill-feeling. The Tasmanian Farmers', Stockowners' and Orchardists' Association was frequently castigated by the Premier and other Nationalists for running separate candidates and thus, by splitting the conservative vote, risking a Labor victory. In a letter to the *Mercury*, the retiring Liberal member, F. Burbury, stressed

---

257. *ibid.*, 12 May 1919.

259. *ibid.*, 26, 27 May 1919.

258. *Mercury*, 29 May 1919.

260. *ibid.*, 1 May 1919.

that it was necessary to recognise that "the day of the individual had passed and that against solid aggression we must present a solid opposition." He exhorted electors to vote for straight out Nationalists and to ignore those who were pushing particular views.<sup>261</sup> The *World* vented its spleen on the Tasmanian Temperance Alliance, charging that the Alliance had deliberately ignored Labor candidates who favoured prohibition, that it was "Tory first and Temperance after".<sup>262</sup> The actions of the Catholic Federation created considerable embarrassment among Labor members, some of whom were said to have replied favourably to Catholic demands in private despite the Labor policy of opposition to State aid. The *World* rebuked all Labor candidates who had replied to the Catholic questionnaire, arguing that the place for election promises was in the public hall, not in private correspondence.<sup>263</sup> The R.S.S.I.L.A. was also taken to task by the Labor press for its hypocrisy in claiming to be non-political and yet lending its support to the Nationalist soldier candidates, McRae, Snowden and Foster. Labor sympathisers within the soldiers' League claimed that Foster, the secretary of the R.S.S.I.L.A., was using the clubrooms as his electioneering office and that at the Club socials, ballot papers were handed around, bearing the names of all candidates, but with that of Foster's particularly prominent in heavy black type.<sup>264</sup> Foster's critics also maintained that he was using the soldiers' organisation merely to advance his own political career.<sup>265</sup> Further vindictiveness and vituperation were lent to the campaign by the *Mercury's* charge that several leading members of the Labor party were involved in bribery and corruption. Lyons hotly denied all charges and the State Executive decided

---

261. *ibid.*, 19 May 1919.

264. *ibid.*, 28 May 1919.

262. *World*, 12 May 1919.

265. *ibid.*

263. *ibid.*, 26 May 1919.

to sue the paper for £5,000 damages, stating that there was not the smallest atom of foundation for "the cruel and abominable libel."<sup>266</sup>

The conservative press did not stop at charges of corruption to defeat its opponents. The *Mercury* preyed relentlessly on people's fears of red revolution and Bolshevik terror. The Red Scare was foisted on a credulous electorate. It did not matter that the red revolution was thousands of miles away, for Bolshevism was "a quick and determined flier". "Probably most people will be inclined to smile or even laugh outright at the idea that a revolution is even remotely to be feared in Tasmania. We are not disposed to treat the idea quite so lightly," advised the *Mercury* gravely.<sup>267</sup> News of all kind was twisted to suit the *Mercury's* purposes. Three men, deported from Queensland, whose ship had called at Hobart on its way to England, were described as revolutionaries who had succeeded in making their way to Hobart but had been sent back.<sup>268</sup> The paper's claims became ever more outrageous and distorted. Noting that there were already revolutionaries in Hobart, the editor suggested : "the fact that the Labor Conference last week decided only by a small majority to reject the Preamble of the O.B.U., which is precisely the preamble adopted by the Bolsheviks, is very significant."<sup>269</sup> Lest readers doubted what they read, the editor advised that all they were reading was the truth and that for their own good the people should realise it. Repressive instincts were frequently appealed to : a Nationalist government would "stamp out at once" any revolutionary tendencies; the Labor party would foster them.<sup>270</sup>

A seamen's strike a few days before the election was cited by Nationalists as evidence of Labor's irresponsible intentions. Said to

---

266. *ibid.*, 19 April 1919.

267. *Mercury*, 9 May 1919.

268. *ibid.*

269. *ibid.*

270. *ibid.*

be led by the usual "utterly unscrupulous writers and leaders, ill-balanced, unsteady persons of weak moral character",<sup>271</sup> the stoppage immediately threatened Tasmania with a shortage of coal, wheat and sugar. Much was made of the fact that the strike was preventing the soldiers from coming home.<sup>272</sup>

Ironically there was little difference between the policies and promises of the two parties. Both leaders advocated a State insurance department and a State-owned line of steamers. Both promised the extension of the hydro-electric scheme and special attention to matters of repatriation and soldier settlement. Both parties asserted the need for economy, coupled with a policy of development and extensive public works. The Labor party in a bid for the farmer's vote offered him special benefits : reduced fares on railways, a government Produce department to cut out the middleman and exemption from payment on the land for seven years. The Nationalists declined to put in a bid, realising they would receive the radical-fearing rural vote almost automatically.

The Labor party made a special effort to counter the Bolshevik smear. The leaders decided to eulogise the present system. Whatever Bolshevism had done for Russia, said Lyons, it was out of place in Australia where they had a system of government which, if not perfect, at least contained the means by which it could be improved using proper constitutional methods. Lyons stressed that Labor was a reform party, a constitutional party. J. Ogden went even further in pandering to his electorate : "The Labor party stood for law and order. It would not adopt foreign nostrums for reform."<sup>273</sup> Again the Labor movement

---

271. *ibid.*, 22 May 1919.

273. *World*, 17 April 1919.

272. *ibid.*, 21, 23, 28 May 1919.

was polarized : on the one hand there stood those who desired revolution and on the other, the political opportunists who would shape their ideas to fit the electorate's whims. It is a cleavage endemic to the Labor party.

Labor's repudiation of the radicals in its ranks did it little good. To the jingoes and Nationalists, Labor remained the party which left the boys in the lurch, the party which befriended the Germans and Bolsheviks. Voters' memories were not so short. "The treatment by the Labor party of Billie Hughes who humped his bluey in Queensland and Jack Earle, the navvy blacksmith," wrote T.L. O'Brien, "clearly proves the statesman or loyalist has no place in their ranks."<sup>274</sup>

Despite Labor's efforts to transform the contest into a "bread and butter" election, it remained as it started, a Law and Order election. Headlines of Red Terror abounded in the anti-Labor press during May, effectively creating an environment of fear, an environment conducive to Nationalist victory. "At a time when Bolshevism is viewed with dread in other parts of the world, anything calculated to give it a footing here must necessarily be eschewed," cautioned the *Tasmanian Mail*.<sup>275</sup> On the day of the election the *Mercury* produced its grimmest editorial of the campaign:

With World War trembling in the balance;  
with universal anarchy looming over us as a  
distinct and real possibility, already a  
fact over a large part of the world's surface;  
with a plain, unmistakable effort to start that  
anarchy in Australia itself by a strike intended  
to paralyze every community in the Commonwealth -  
with these things before our eyes and our reasoning  
faculties what can any community that is still  
sane do? <sup>276</sup>

---

274. *Mercury*, 29 May 1919.

276. *Mercury*, 31 May 1919.

275. *Tasmanian Mail*, 1 May 1919.

That day Tasmanians went to the polls and voted overwhelmingly against the Labor party.

The Nationalists won a triumphant victory, securing 17 seats to Labor's 13. It was a vote against Labor rather than for the Nationalists and the *World* acknowledged it as a "disaster".<sup>277</sup> In every constituency the Labor vote was in a minority. At the top of the Bass poll were two members of the Loyalty League, J.C. Newton and A.T. Marshall. At the bottom were O.B.U. propagandists V.J. Shaw and W.E. Bowen. The two Labor members returned were professional politicians, A.J. Guy and G.G. Becker. In Denison, Labor candidate Cleary secured a remarkable personal triumph, topping the poll. He was followed by veteran Liberal and Loyalty League nominee, Sir Neil Elliott Lewis. The other Loyalty League nominees, the returned soldiers, all polled well, coming fourth, fifth and sixth out of thirteen candidates. (McRae and Foster fared badly in the cut-up however and failed to secure seats.) At the bottom of the poll were radicals Woods, Needham and J.J. Lewis (secretary of the striking Seamen's Union).

"With the exception of Franklin noted the *Mercury*, "the candidates who represented the more extreme section of the Labor party have been utterly routed."<sup>278</sup> The exception in Franklin was David Dicker, who won 3,037 votes, double the poll of his nearest rival, Nationalist sea-captain and ex-Premier, J.W. Evans. In several subdivisions Dicker scored twice as many number 1 votes as the other 16 candidates' votes combined. Dicker's victory was due to his immense personal following, his work as union organiser in the booming timber industry and to some extent, to his martyrdom at the hands of the military.

---

277. *World*, 2 June 1919.

278. *Mercury*, 2 June 1919.



Also, Franklin itself was probably more amenable to Labor radicalism, being the only Tasmanian electorate to vote NO to either conscription referendum.

Pundits and politicians had reasons aplenty for Labor's defeat. Lyons for example, attributed the result of the election to the actions of the Catholic Federation, the association of the Labor party with Bolshevism and the seamen's strike. The Catholic Federation for its part, claimed that its activities rather than being detrimental to Labor's cause, had in specific instances, helped Labor candidates to victory. According to the Federation president, Robert Cosgrove's return in Denison was "due absolutely to the work of the Federation." Cosgrove however had only secured the ninth highest primary vote in the electorate. His final victory on preferences would seem to be due to many factors. Support from the Catholic Federation was but one of these. His prohibitionist stand, his base in the unions, his reputation as a moderate in Labor politics and not least, his position on the ballot paper, directly following Cleary (who secured 1,260 first preference votes above the quota) all contributed to his success.

The *World* put Labor's defeat down to the widespread want of working class enthusiasm and the actual decline in the number of Labor supporters in the State, through the departure of "rodents" into the camp of capital.<sup>279</sup> Others saw the large vote for temperance candidates (McPhee and McRae third and fourth in Denison, Cummins third in Franklin) as detracting votes from Labor candidates.<sup>280</sup> Still others attributed Labor defeat to the lack of working class organisation.<sup>281</sup>

Labor's dilemma was that in attempting to woo back the ultra-

---

279. *World*, 3 June 1919.

281. *ibid.*, 7 June 1919.

280. *ibid.*, 5 June 1919.

patriots who had deserted the party (over conscription and the Perth conference), it alienated those who grew impatient with Labor's timidity. As the party failed in winning back the deserters, it was left stranded. In ordinary times the support of the left-wing might not be so important. In the scared post-war months, when moderates turned away to vote for the strong, repressive measures of conservatism, it was crucial.

One who viewed the election results with undisguised delight was Labor's first premier, John Earle. His comments, in which he likened his former comrades to "whipped curs" howling in the night,<sup>282</sup> bear testimony to the permanency of the wounds caused by war-time conflicts and provide poignant evidence of a poisoned life.

Earle's life would not have been rendered any the happier, when he received news of the split in his adopted party. It is not surprising considering the incongruity of the elements, thrown together in an emergency, that a breach should occur when the emergency had passed. At a meeting of the men's branch of the National Federation on 10 June, the president D. Rees, accompanied by other ex-Laborites and D. McRae, resigned from the Federation and walked out in a body. The split, as the *World* observed, with a conspicuous lack of pity, left the "ex-laborites cum Liberals shivering in the inhospitable waste of political isolation."<sup>283</sup> D. Rees advised that the trouble had been brewing for some time and the final provocation had come when the Farmers' and Stockowners' Association had refused endorsement to Nationalist candidate Pollard, because he was an ex-Labor man. "Oil and water cannot mix," observed Rees. "Now that the war has been won, we have

---

282. *ibid.*, 9 June 1919.

283. *ibid.*, 12 June 1919.

found our ideals incompatible with those of the Liberal party and we find it impossible to work with them any longer."<sup>284</sup> Dwyer-Gray drew a moral from the events. "Soon all will be darkness for this handful of men who left their party to consort with capitalism and have now discovered their mistake. And so it will be for renegades all over Australia."<sup>285</sup>

War was a great disrupter. Men's lives were changed utterly and often irrevocably. This was particularly so for many of the men of the front line who were now returning. They were unable to adjust to ordinary civilian life; too many years in the trenches had unfitted them for it. Some were plagued by apathy and lassitude, while others remained restless for renewed action and adventure. A sign of the times was the increasing number of soldiers arraigned before Court. The charges usually arose out of drunkenness and consequent indecent language, resisting arrest and disturbance of the peace. The soldiers were generally discharged with a mere conviction recorded against them or a slight fine. A case at Geeveston is typical. A soldier was brought before the court charged with disturbing the peace at Shipwright's Point regatta. The Magistrate advised that because the defendant was a returned soldier, an Anzac in fact, he would be treated leniently. He was fined sh.2/6.<sup>286</sup> More astounding was the treatment of John Dale, the returned soldier who had assaulted Metz. The defence produced medical evidence showing that Dale was suffering from shell shock as a result of his war experience. The Magistrate pointed out however, that Dale had already nine convictions recorded against him before he enlisted. He nevertheless chose not to inflict a penalty.<sup>287</sup>

---

284. *ibid.*

286. *ibid.*, 30 January 1919.

285. *ibid.*

287. *ibid.*, 10 January 1919.

Another soldier, charged with disturbing the peace, was reassured by the Magistrate : "You have made it possible to live in peace and goodness knows what would have happened only for men like you." The Bench recorded a conviction and the soldier was discharged.<sup>288</sup> Thus there developed a situation in which soldiers stood in a group above other men, and it seemed, above the law.

On 29 June 1919 the Peace Treaty was signed. There was no wild rejoicing as there had been at the proclamation of Armistice. Nationalists were by and large happy : the offending Powers had been treated with the harshness they deserved (although the *Tasmanian Mail* still yearned for the knock-out blow) and Australia had received control of New Guinea. Those who looked forward to the inauguration of a new era were not so exultant. By February 1919 the *World* recognized that the Peace Conference had become an "organized hypocrisy", engineered by "uncrowned autocrats".<sup>289</sup> "Mandate" was but a nice name for annexation, while the natives of the Pacific islands, contrary to the principle of self-determination, had not been consulted at all. "What about those dark-skinned people everyone is so anxious to civilize and exploit," queried the editor. "If we cannot recognise their 'rights of ownership' to their own country, is there any reason why the League of Nations should not consult them as to trusteeship?"<sup>290</sup> The disclosure of the secret treaty between Britain and Japan for the disposal of the Caroline and Marshall islands (the peace had brought "Japan more than half way down the Pacific," noted the *World*)<sup>291</sup> and the reports of starvation and disease in central Europe, sharpened the cynicism felt by many in the face of the Big Four's protestations of idealism.

---

288. *ibid.*,

290. *ibid.*, 6 February 1919.

289. *ibid.*, 20 February 1919.

291. *ibid.*, 1 April 1919.

The Labor paper judged the peace not worth celebrating. Others shared this view. Protests against the "waste" of money on celebrations were numerous, emanating from local councils, Chambers of Commerce, the Child Welfare Association and even the R.S.S.I.L.A. which felt only sufficient money to impress school-children should be set aside. Thoughts of economy prompted the protests, but even staunch patriots felt jaded and empty. They were not in a mood to celebrate victory.

The reaction against the war expressed itself in varied ways. Some people began to campaign against the glorification of war in schools. Gilbert Rowntree, the convenor of the Tasmanian branch of the Peace Alliance addressed a circular to various mothers' and fathers' organisations, protesting against militarism in schools. "The pagan system of Empire worship and military idolatry," he complained, was an integral part of education in Tasmanian schools. The war spirit was still being inculcated rather than the values of trustfulness, goodwill and justice.<sup>292</sup> An "Ex-teacher" expressed similar misgivings, regretting that the children were taught "pride of race" instead of fairplay and consideration for others.<sup>293</sup>

As the day grew near for the signing of the Peace Treaty, Labor men grew bitter. They had fought the war in the hope that the common people would inherit and cleanse the earth. But the clean sweep longed for, did not take place. The Paris Peace Conference saw to that. Wilson, once heralded as the new Messiah, was now dismissed as "a servile tool of old conditions".<sup>294</sup> The Peace was a "dictated Peace", "a Peace of Violence" made by dictators disguised as idealists. Needham, ex-Labor candidate for Denison, suggested that "a day of humiliation with a plentiful supply of sackcloth and ashes" would be

---

292. *ibid.*, 5 May 1919.

294. *ibid.*, 10 June 1919.

293. *ibid.*, 23 May 1919.

more appropriate to the occasion than glittering celebrations.<sup>295</sup>

Dwyer-Gray was also ashamed of the Peace : "There is nothing to celebrate except a triumph of paganism, hate and territorial greed . . . it is the greatest tragedy in history."<sup>296</sup>

As predicted by C.E. Montague, the English soldier and writer, a marred triumph had left men jaded and disillusioned, divided and half-bankrupt.<sup>297</sup> Men were bilious with faiths and enthusiasms gone sour in their stomachs. The times were badly out of joint. A. Needham was one who perceived the fact : "The great war has brankrupted all nations engaged in it. We have emerged sick and sore with legacies and fears and hatreds and suspicions and bigotries innumerable that will go down to generations unborn."<sup>298</sup>

---

295. *ibid.*

296. *ibid.*, 18 June 1919.

297. Montague, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

298. *World*, 11 June 1919.

### CONCLUSION.

In his introduction to *Tasmania's War Record*, Major General Sir John Gellibrand contended that "the most important factor of gain" from the war was "the national welding together of the various groups of the community, regardless of creed, occupation or birthplace, due to the universal devotion to a common cause."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Canon Shoobridge in his Armistice Thanksgiving address in St. David's Cathedral, claimed the "unifying influence" of the war had been most remarkable. Men had drawn nearer to one another; "the force of those things which had divided them had been greatly lessened".<sup>2</sup> It is my belief that the opposite happened : that the effect of the impact of war was not a "welding together", but a disintegration, a fragmentation of the community. The forces which divided men had not lessened, but strengthened. Men did not draw nearer to one another, but rather stood further apart. Class was set against class, creed against creed, district against district, soldier against civilian.

The unanimity of response and the degree of enthusiasm with which Australia went to war in August 1914 has often been exaggerated. Lloyd Robson recently stated that Australians indeed were "terrifyingly willing to go to war".<sup>3</sup> Certainly hundreds of men were anxious to see action. During the first few days, Anglesea Barracks in Hobart was "invaded by the eager ones, anxious to take up the Mother Country's quarrel, not questioning her justification in entering the fray."<sup>4</sup> But there were other responses. Many soldiers enlisted reluctantly,

---

1. Broinowski, op. cit., p. xv.

2. *Tasmanian Mail*, 14 November 1918.

3. Robson, *The First A.I.F.*,  
p.21.

4. Broinowski, op. cit., p. 2.

motivated more by feelings of duty rather than enthusiasm.<sup>5</sup> Some Labor men, particularly those belonging to the Denison branch of the party, doubted the justification for the war. They suspected it might be a capitalists' war in which the workers had no part. Marxists like Clifford Hall were free from such liberal doubts and soul-searching. He was sure it was a capitalists' war and denounced it accordingly. He had but one loyalty and that was to his class : "I will not be a martyr for any King, Kaiser or Czar. If I have to give my life it shall be in the interests of my class."<sup>6</sup> There were some pacifists, mostly religious people and notably the Australian Society of Friends, who repudiated all violence and made no exception for the latest outbreak of it in Europe. There were others who objected not on religious or political grounds, but who felt an emotional repugnance to violence and war and were reluctant to contribute to the war effort in any way. These were not men "terrifyingly willing" to join battle. Significantly few, if any people, objected to the war on the grounds that it was Britain's war and not Australia's. It was considered one and the same thing.

The strongest support for the war came from Protestants of Anglo-Saxon descent. They were fervent in their support of Australia's participation in the war and it was their persecution of others outside their group, which first led to considerable undercurrents of hostility developing in the community. The chief victims of these patriotic inquisitors were people said to be of German origin and so-called shirkers. The former were subjected to unceasing attack and abuse. The hatred of the enemy which characterized the home front during the

---

5. In conversations with Frank Green, he cited examples of this.

6. *Daily Post*, 9 February 1915.



First World War was unprecedented. Nationalism soon expressed itself as racialism. The condemnation and harassment of shirkers, also unceasing, had the opposite effect to that intended : resentful young men merely became alienated from the Empire's cause. Shirkers were not only accused of being unpatriotic, but "white-livered" and unmanly.

Protestants also dominated the temperance movement, which rapidly gained momentum during the war. Temperance, with its emphasis on thrift, efficiency and sobriety was held up as the highest form of patriotism. The "drink question" was debated with ever increasing intensity, further dividing the community into mutually antagonistic factions. The heated atmosphere of the war years was not conducive to compromise. British Protestants were intent on moulding Tasmanian society in their own image. As well as being anti-drink, they were often fanatically anti-Catholic.

The 1916 Easter Uprising in Ireland or rather, its vicious repression by the British authorities, caused many Irish Catholics to seriously question Britain's claim to be fighting for the freedom and self-determination of small countries. Most Catholic Tasmanians of Irish origin opposed conscription and reiterated their long-standing demands for State aid to their schools. Their attitudes incensed many Protestants in Tasmania, especially the editors of the *Mercury*, who took every opportunity to vilify the Irish and in particular their priests. From 1916 Catholics were regularly charged with disloyal and pro-German tendencies, with the result that some Irish, hitherto patriotic to the Empire's cause, now stood aloof from it. It seems likely that the *Mercury's* anti-Catholic activity caused some pro-conscription Catholic clergy to change their minds by the time of the

second referendum. With the establishment of Loyalty Leagues in Tasmania in 1918, the Protestant crusade against outsiders reached its peak.

As K.S. Inglis has pointed out there have been in Australia two main streams of national tradition : the one radical, the other patriotic.<sup>7</sup> But the two streams have often flowed together; they need not be seen as conflicting. The sentiments of Imperial patriotism and Australian radicalism could coexist happily within the one person and did so. Unionists and middle classes alike responded to the Mother Country's call. As Henry Lawson wrote in "The Recruits" they were all motivated by a common aim, namely

To sail for a foreign country  
And fight for England's name.

The first twelve months of war saw a strengthening of Imperial loyalties in conservatives and radicals alike. In May 1915 the *Mercury* could gladly observe that the Crown had never been more popular than it was then.<sup>8</sup> Radicals were effusive in their protestations of Imperialism. Irish radical E. Dwyer-Gray was at pains to point out that Imperialism was not incompatible with democracy and in July 1915 declared : "we Australians of true Anglo-Saxon stock will fight to the last man to defend our noble British Empire."<sup>9</sup>

With the landing of Australians at Gallipoli and the consequent praise of their feats by English observers, there occurred in Australia a new awakening of Australian national consciousness. In 1916 the celebrations of Anzac Day greatly overshadowed those of Empire Day and speakers on all sides paid tribute to the new national spirit. But

---

7. K.S. Inglis, "The Anzac Tradition" *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 100, vol. xxiv, p. 35.

8. *Mercury*, 25 May 1915.

Australian nationalism did not replace imperialism : the Protestant middle class, as Geoffrey Serle has observed, became "intense Australian patriots and intense Imperialists both".<sup>10</sup> It would seem however, on the evidence of trends in Tasmania, that Serle underestimates the continuing strength of Imperial sentiment. A considerable number of citizens did still think of themselves as "Britishers" first, Australians second. In May 1919, a few days before the State election, the *Mercury* stressed that "the National Party was the Empire's Party and the only party a Britisher could honestly support."<sup>11</sup> Returned Australian soldiers saw themselves as the mainstay of the Empire and adopted as a primary object, the inculcation of loyalty both to Australia and the Empire. In Ulverstone, the local branch of the R.S.S.I.L.A. resolved to fight again to maintain the integrity of the Empire against Ireland's threat of secession.<sup>12</sup> Therefore although the achievements of the soldiers inspired a new national pride in Australia, imperial ties were also strengthened as a result of Australia's participation. It could even be argued that her participation in the Empire's war ultimately retarded the development of a separate national identity in Australia.

The outburst of Australian nationalism following Gallipoli was especially noteworthy in Tasmania, a colony which had been largely untouched by the bush tradition and nationalism of the nineties and left unmoved by Federation. Perhaps for the first time most Tasmanians thought of themselves as Australians. But their Tasmanian identity seemed to remain predominant, both at home and overseas. Soldiers at the front often remarked on the self-conscious loyalties of the Tasman-

---

9. *Daily Post*, 10 July 1915.

10. G. Serle, "The Digger Tradition and Australian Nationalism", *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 101, vol. xxiv, p. 156.

11. *Mercury*, 10 May 1919.                      12. *Tassie Digger*, October 1921.

ians in the A.I.F. to their Tasmanian battalions. "[The] fraternising of the Tasmanians attracts attention from other battalions," wrote one soldier. "The Tassies are a somewhat exclusive lot and paddle their own canoe."<sup>13</sup> Lack of identity with Australia resulted in a stronger identity with Britain and the Empire. "Tassie is as pretty a jewel as there is in the Empire's diadem," enthused the soldiers' magazine, the *Tassie Digger* in 1920.<sup>14</sup>

A new development in Australian history after 1916 was that Imperial loyalties became increasingly the preserve of the right. The working class for various reasons became increasingly concerned with class; loyalty to Empire often came into conflict with class interests and in most cases it was the former which suffered. Pride of race was overcome by pride of class.

The economic strains of war were particularly important in accentuating the development of the class consciousness of Australian workers. Tasmania had experienced economic depression for many years prior to the war : continual unemployment led to the departure of thousands of young men to the mainland each year. With the advent of war, the situation was much worsened; hundreds employed in the mining and timber industries lost their jobs. Whereas in February 1914 5.9% of the population was unemployed, by January of the following year the figure had reached 13.1%<sup>15</sup> The rapid increase in prices and rents and the accompanying decline in the purchasing power of wages were explained easily, if inadequately, by the machinations of "profiteers". Workers became convinced that it was they who were bearing the burden of the war, both economic and military. The threat of conscription and their experience during the strike of 1917 reinforced the workers' view of

---

13. Lt. N. Meagher, *With the Fortieth* (Hobart, 1918), p. 65.

14. *Tassie Digger*, May 1920.

15. *Daily Post*, 25 May 1915.

themselves as an exploited class.

At the same time industrial unionists became disillusioned with their representatives in parliament who, they charged, succumbed too readily to their bourgeois environment. The stresses and strains of the war years, and the new issues raised, accentuated the divisions in the Labor party, revealing fully the heterogeneity of its components. The abandonment of the Commonwealth powers referendum in 1915 dramatically increased unionist disillusionment with the parliamentary party. By late 1915 the Labor movement in Tasmania was divided to such an extent that there were serious proposals to oppose Labor candidates with union nominees in the 1916 State election. Class conscious unionists expressed dissatisfaction with "collaborationist" politicians. Some repudiated the parliamentary system totally and called for direct action.

The crisis over conscription forestalled a split between the left and the right : the ultra-patriots left the party, but many moderate reformists stayed within it. It seems likely that had not the conscription issue arisen there would have been a split anyway, but it would have involved a breakaway of the left, leaving Lyons and Earle, more fittingly on the same side. The departure of the imperialists from the party combined with worsening economic conditions and the potent influence of I.W.W. and Bolshevik ideology, produced a marked movement leftwards within the Labor party. Also as Scott and Inglis have noted, the departure from the country of the more Empire-minded of the workers necessarily affected the balance of opinion among the working class which remained in Australia.<sup>16</sup> The Labor movement became increasingly

---

16. Scott quoted in Inglis "The Anzac Tradition", op. cit., p. 38.

pacifist and internationalist in outlook; the red flag - the symbol of international working class solidarity - replaced the Union Jack. Few recognised, or admitted, the contradiction of internationalism and the White Australia policy. Those who did in Tasmania opted for the latter and withdrew from the party to form the Tasmanian Reform Labor League.

The war proved a great disrupter. People's lives, attitudes and ideals were immensely changed. The men most obviously affected were those who participated directly in the fighting. Few lived through the horrors of trench warfare unscathed. Many who survived physically were often destroyed in morale. Perhaps most shattering was the violence done to the ideals and assumptions of the men who enlisted. Many who enlisted in the first years expected glorious and ennobling action and while on the long haul across the Indian Ocean were impatient for the "fierce joy of battle". Their experience at Gallipoli was generally not as terrible nor as destructive as that of the Western front. Just a few weeks in the French trenches were sufficient to dispel any illusions about the heroic nature of warfare. Clifford Hall, the marxist who chose to help his fellow men by enlisting in the Field Ambulance Brigade, wrote in anguish to his father of the misery around him. His conviction that war was nothing more than murder was painfully confirmed. "Oh I am so tired of this life with its mockery, sham and hypocrisy," he wrote in mid 1917. "Most of what you see in the papers of patriotism and glory is untrue - lies all lies."<sup>17</sup> The workers of the world had paid dearly for the blunders of their masters and Hall's heart ached for them. In October 1917 Hall was tragically killed

---

17. Clifford Hall to his father, 6 July 1917. Halls' letters are in the private possession of his sister-in-law, Mrs. Pearl Hall of Hobart.

when the hospital unit for which he was working, was accidentally bombarded. Clifford Hall had no illusions about war when he enlisted; Andrew Inglis Clark<sup>18</sup> did. He was one of the millions to suffer disenchantment. Clark was the son of A.I. Clark senior, the distinguished judge and statesman who played a vital part in framing the Federal Constitution. When he enlisted Clark junior had already begun to make a career for himself in law. In 1916 he went to France. There he wrote to his family : "Someone once said 'war is hideous' - I agree with him. When I enlisted I was hoping that I could prove him a liar, but worse luck I have learnt that he wasn't."<sup>19</sup> Clark feared that the war would leave him "a dopey old man". "A year of this sort of life would make the strongest headpiece dead or dopey. I should think that very few of the privates and drivers will ever regain their reasoning faculties."<sup>20</sup> The return to Australia of some 300,000 such men would obviously have a great, if incalculable effect on the development of society between the wars.

It was the "chronic weariness" of trench life, to use C.E. Montague's phrase, as much as the all pervasive violence which unfitted men for civilian life, which made them indifferent or callous, unable to stick at anything. Once home they might find themselves in a Court on a charge of drunkenness or on a plot of land they couldn't make work. The more energetic turned to politics, demanding some control over the society, which in their view, they had saved. It is significant that most of those who entered politics and all of those who held official positions in the R.S.S.I.L.A. in Hobart, had enlisted in August or

---

18. A.I. Clark (1883-1953) son of A.I. Clark senior, Federalist; judge of the Supreme Court 1928-53.

19. Letters to C.I. Clark from A.I. Clark, 20 September 1916, c 4/9 11 University of Tasmania Archives.

20. *ibid.*, 26 July 1916.

September 1914, served at Gallipoli and then been repatriated home and thus had escaped the holocaust of the Western Front.

There were some idealists among the returned soldiers who entertained a utopian vision of a future based on co-operation and a spirit of comradeship, such as they had experienced at the front. Duncan McRae was to the forefront of a movement to establish co-operative stores, eliminating profit and competition. The soldiers dreamt of a society without discord and partisan strife : the platform of their official association emphasized its non-sectarian and non-political nature. In practice however their concern for the well-being of their comrades and the "Australian way of life" caused them to become one of the most political of associations and one of the most reactionary.

One of the most important legacies of the first world war was the special status accorded to ex-soldiers in the Australian community. The soldiers had shown that Australia was fit to be counted among nations; their deeds had won the acclaim of the world. Australians were grateful. Another reason the soldiers were granted a place of privilege in post-war Australia was that they had continually been promised it. They had to be persuaded to enlist, enticed with benefits, as conscripts in other countries did not. More and more was promised them in the hope that the reluctant would agree to enlist.

The war also left its mark on civilian lives. Hardly a home had been left untouched in this terrible people's war. Thousands of families lost sons, fathers, brothers, husbands. For many women this meant losing part of their lives; some died from the shock of it. Of the people who remained in Tasmania, most experienced material hardship; some, fewer in number, profited.

Individual lives were changed irrevocably. In 1914 John Earle,



for example had been an immensely popular Labor leader; in 1919 he was a poisoned, bitter man, maligned by his former friends and pitied by his new ones. Individuals who deviated from the patriotic "norm" were relentlessly criticized and persecuted. Thus Herbert Heaton, university lecturer and J.J. Martin, organiser of the Tasmanian Colonising Association were condemned for what the *Mercury* called "advanced political thought". Both chose to leave the State. Gustav Weindorfer was persecuted because of his Austrian origins, as a result of which he retired from human society to live the life of a hermit on Cradle Mountain.

The persecutors, the patriotic middle class Tasmanians, seemed to emerge from the crisis (unlike the soldiers at the front) with the same preconceptions and prejudices they had when they went in, only strengthened. Xenophobia, sectarian hatreds and class antagonisms were all present in Tasmania before the war; during the war they attained extreme proportions. But there were new hatreds : hatred of the German, hatred of the Russian, hatred of the shirker. More often than not, on the home front at least, the crisis seemed to bring out the worst in men, not their best.

The war and the consequent revolutions in Europe had shaken Western civilisation to its very foundations and the reverberations were felt in Tasmania. There was a consciousness that an old order had toppled, that one epoch had ended and that the world was entering upon another. In Australia there was a majority however which had no complaint about the past age and who, frightened of change, clung tenaciously to the established order of things. In their fear they became hysterical about the threat of alien ideals, such as Bolshevism and

Sinn Fein. Revitalised unionism was also judged a threat and angry citizens called on governments to keep the unionists "in their place". The *status quo* had to be maintained at all costs. Reaction and repression swept Australia during 1919-1920. Middle class fear of change was to help make Australia, once one of the most democratic and progressive of countries, one of the most conservative.

APPENDIX I

Voting in Conscription Referenda.

1916

State	YES	NO
N.S.W.	356,805	474,544
Vic.	353,930	328,216
Qld.	144,200	158,051
S.A.	87,924	119,236
W.A.	94,069	40,884
Tas.	48,493	37,833

1917

State	YES	NO
N.S.W.	341,256	487,774
Vic.	329,772	332,490
Qld.	132,771	168,875
S.A.	86,663	106,364
W.A.	84,116	46,522
Tas.	38,881	38,502

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### I. Official Sources

#### (a) Unpublished

Records of the Prime Minister's dept. Commonwealth Archives Office.

Premier's dept. File 1914-1919, T.S.A.

Tasmanian Police dept. records, T.S.A.

#### (b) Published

*Report on Parliamentary Elections 1916 - 1950*

*Commonwealth Parliamentary Handbook 1938*

N.B. There is no Tasmanian Hansard. Both Hobart daily newspapers reported debates.

### 2. Non-Official Sources

#### Tasmanian State Archives

Major R.E. Smith family papers

Cross papers

W.A. Woods papers

#### University of Tasmania Archives

"Letters and Press Comments on the Actions of John Earle in the Great National Crisis."

Letters to C.I. Clark from A.I. Clark when at World War I, 1915 - 1919.

#### In the possession (1972) of Mrs. Pearl Hall, Moonah

Letters from Clifford Hall to his father from Egypt and France, 1916 - 1917.

### 3. Newspapers and journals

*Daily Post* 1914 - 1918

*Mercury* 1914 - 1919

*North Eastern Advertiser* 1916 - 1917

*North West Advocate and Emu Bay Times* 1916 - 1917

*Tasmanian Mail* 1914 - 1920

*Tassie Digger* 1920 - 1922

*World* 1918 - 1919

*Zeehan and Dundas Herald* 1916 - 1917

All except the *Tassie Digger* are in the Tasmanian State Archives. The *Tassie Digger* is to be located in the South Australian State Archives.

### Books, Articles, Theses

Alexander, Fred *Australia since Federation*, Melbourne, 1967.

Alexander, J.C. "D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo* : Fantasy, Fact or Fiction"  
*Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 101, vol. xxiv, no. 2, 1965.

Atkinson, Curtis "Was there Fact in D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*?"  
*Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 101, vol. xxiv, no. 2, 1965.

Bourne, Randolph S. *War and the Intellectuals Collected Essays*  
1915 - 1919, New York, 1964.

Broinowski, L. (ed.) *Tasmania's War Record 1914 - 1918*, Hobart, 1920.

Childe, V.G. *How Labour Governs*, Melbourne, 1964.

Clark, C.M.H. *Short History of Australia*, New York, 1963.

Davis, R.P. *State Aid and Tasmanian Politics 1868-1920*,  
Hobart, 1969.

Fitzhardinge, L.F. *William Morris Hughes : A political biography*,  
vol. 1, Sydney, 1964.

Gammage, Bill "The Broken Years : a study of the diaries and  
letters of Australian soldiers in the Great War  
1914-18", Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U. 1970.

- Gilbert, A.D. "The Conscription Referenda 1916-17. The Impact of the Irish Crisis", *Historical Studies*. No. 53, vol. 14, October 1969.
- Glass, Carol "Thomas Joseph O'Donnell 1877-1949". B.A.Hons. thesis, University of Tasmania, 1966.
- Green, F.C. (ed.) *A Century of Responsible Government 1856-1956*. Hobart, 1956.
- Hancock, W.K. *Australia*, Brisbane, 1961.
- Hart, P.R. "J.A. Lyons, Tasmanian Labour Leader" *Labour History*, No. 9, November 1965.
- Hodgman, R. "Tasmania and the Conscription Issue 1916-1919" B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Tasmania, 1962.
- Hohner, R.A. "The Prohibitionists : Who Were They?" *South Atlantic Quarterly*, No. 4, vol. LXVIII
- Inglis, K.S. "The Anzac Tradition" *Meanjin Quarterly* No. 100, vol. XXIV, No. 1, 1965.
- Inglis, K.S. "The Australians at Gallipoli - 1" *Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 54, April 1970.
- Inglis, K.S. "The Australians at Gallipoli - 2" *Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 55, October 1970.
- Jauncey, L.C. *The Story of Conscription in Australia*, Melbourne, 1968.
- Kozak, Maria "E. Dwyer-Gray : Labour journalist." B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Tasmania 1968.
- Kristianson, G.L. *The Politics of Patriotism*, Canberra, 1906.
- Lake, M.L. "W.A. Woods and the *Clipper* 1903-09. A Study in Radical Journalism." B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Tasmania, 1968.
- Lawrence, D.H. *Kangaroo*, London, 1971.
- Leuchtenberg, W.E. *The Perils of Prosperity 1914-32*, Chicago, 1958.
- Main, J.M. *Conscription The Australian Debate 1901-1970*, Melbourne, 1970.
- Marwick, Arthur *The Deluge*, London, 1967.
- Marwick, Arthur *Britain in the Century of Total War*, London, 1968.
- May, H.F. *The End of American Innocence*, London, 1960.

- Meagher, Norman     *With the Fortieth*, Hobart, 1918.
- Mitchell, David     *1919 : The Red Mirage*, London, 1970.
- Montague, C.E.     *Disenchantment*, London, 1928.
- McRae, M.D.        "The Tasmanian Labour Party and Trade Unions, 1903-1923."  
                          *Tasmanian Historical Research Association. Papers and Proceedings*, No. 1, vol. 5, April, 1956.
- Needham, A.        *The Radicals and Other Verse*, Hobart, 1911.
- Newton, L.M.        *The Story of the Twelfth*, Hobart, 1925.
- O'Farrell, P.        *The Catholic Church in Australia. A Short History 1788-1967*, Melbourne, 1968.
- Playford, J. & Kirsner, D. (eds.) *Australian Capitalism Towards a Socialist Critique*, Melbourne, 1972.
- Robson, L.L.        *The First A.I.F.*, Melbourne, 1970.
- Roe, Michael        "Comment on the Digger Tradition"  
                          *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 102, vol. XXIV, no. 3, 1965.
- Roe, Michael,        "'Thirk' : A Tragic Australian, 1891 - 1959"  
                          *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 119, vol. XXVIII, Summer, 1969.
- Scott, Ernest        *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*,
- Serle, G.            "The Digger Tradition and Australian Nationalism"  
                          *Meanjin Quarterly*, No. 101, vol. XXIV, no. 2, 1965.
- Taylor, A.J.P.        *The First World War An Illustrated History*, London, 1967.
- Taylor, A.J.P.        *English History 1914-1945*, Oxford, 1965.
- Turner, Ian          *Industrial Labour and Politics. The Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900-1921*, Canberra, 1965.
- Turner, Ian          *Sydney's Burning*, Sydney, 1969.