

*For Henry Mayer,
who disagrees*

Humphrey McQueen

GALLIPOLI TO PETROV

Arguing with Australian History

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Who were the conscriptionists?

IN his Preface to the reissue of Jauncey's *The Story of Conscription in Australia*, Dr O'Farrell rightly comments that *The Story of Anti-Conscription in Australia* would be a more appropriate title for the book because Jauncey relegated the conscriptionists to malign oblivion. These notes are offered as partial amends, and in the hope that other 'rats' will be accorded a more detailed funeral service. The aim is to identify the distinguishing features of a Labor conscriptionist, in particular how he differed from his fellow Labor MPs.

Nothing less than an analysis of each individual member of parliament will produce a satisfactory explanation of why one man was a conscriptionist and another was not. Hughes showed militarist sympathies as early as 1901,¹ whereas Holman became a conscriptionist because he was a Francophile.² Both men maintained a radical streak that led Evatt to deny the wisdom of expelling them at all. J. H. Catts left his office as Director of Voluntary Recruiting in New South Wales to direct the 'Vote No' campaign because he feared an imminent Japanese invasion.³ Frank Tudor, later to lead the anti-conscriptionist faction of the Labor Party, made a pro-conscription speech at Casterton in 1916; his views changed when his local branches expressed their opposition.⁴ W. G. Spence was reportedly tricked into supporting conscription by Hughes.⁵ J. H. Fenton left the Caucus room with Hughes but returned shortly afterwards.⁶ Opposition to conscription in no way indicated opposition to the war as seen in the case of Catts. Three anti-conscriptionist MPs were on active service in 1916, although one of them, Ozanne seems to have grown less enthusiastic the closer he came to Europe.⁷ Three Tasmanian Senators, Guy, Long and Ready, who stayed with the Labor Party in 1916, allowed Hughes to use them in 1917 in an attempt to prolong parliament—

indicating a suppleness in their anti-conscriptionist ardour.⁸ Similar peculiarities can be observed at the State level. In Queensland, Hardacre, who spent 23 years on the opposition benches, was unwilling to sacrifice state butcher shops for his conscriptionist sympathies. F. S. Wallis, a South Australian MLC, first went with the Hughesites, then back to the United Labor Party from which he was expelled shortly afterwards. In Western Australia, battle was joined on the clear understanding that all could return to the fold. When developments in the eastern states made this impossible at least two conscriptionists stayed with the Labor Party.⁹

With so many hidden stories any statistical account is mined with obvious dangers. The temptation to adjust the balance by shifting the doubtful cases back and forth has been resisted and the division I have accepted is that which was drawn when Hughes walked out of the Caucus room on 14 November 1916. Failure to discover a comprehensive list of the pro- and anti-forces prompts the following breakdown according to states.¹⁰

Conscriptionists

Queensland

Senators: Givens, Thomas.

MHRs: Bamford, Frederick William.

New South Wales

Senators: Nil.

MHRs: Carr, Ernest Shoobridge; Chanter, John Moore; Hughes, William Morris; Lynch, John; Spence, William Guthrie; Thomas, Josiah; Webster, William.

Victoria

Senators: Russell, Edward John.

MHRs: Nil.

Tasmania

Senators: Nil.

MHRs: Jensen, Jens August; Smith, William Henry.

South Australia

Senators: Guthrie, Robert Storrie; Newlands, John; Senior, William; Story, William Harrison

MHRs: Archibald, William Oliver; Dankel, George; Poynton, Alexander.

Western Australia

Senators: Buzzacott, Richard; Henderson, George; de Largie, Hugh; Lynch, Patrick Joseph; Pearce, George Foster.

MHRs: Burchell, Reginald John.

Anti-Conscriptionists*Queensland*

Senators: Ferricks, Myles Aloysius; Maughan, William John; Mullan, John; Stewart, James Charles; Turley, Henry.

MHRs: Finlayson, William Fyfe; Higgs, William Guy; McDonald, Charles; Page, James; Sharpe, James Benjamin.

New South Wales

Senators: Gardiner, Albert; Grant, John; McDougall, Allan; Watson, David.

MHRs: Burns, George Mason; Charlton, Matthew; Catts, James Howard; Mahoney, William George; Riley, Edward; Watkins, David; West, John Edward.

Victoria

Senators: Barker, Stephen; Barnes, John; Blakey, Albert Edward; Findley, Edward; McKissock, Andrew Nelson.

MHRs: Anstey, Frank; Brennan, Frank; Fenton, James Howard; Hampson, Alfred John; Hannan, Joseph Francis; McGrath, David Charles; Maloney, William Robert; Matthews, James; Moloney, Parker John; Ozanne, Alfred Thomas; Tudor, Frank Gwynne.

Tasmania

Senators: Guy, James; Long, James Joseph; O'Keefe, David John; Ready, Rudolph Keith.

MHRs: O'Malley, King.

South Australia

Senators: O'Loughlin, James Vincent.

MHRs: Yates, George Edwin.

Western Australia

Senators: Needham, Edward.

MHRs: Mahon, Hugh.

By supplementing the biographical data compiled by Crisp and Bennett¹¹ a further analysis has been completed in Table 2.1. Initially ten classifications were attempted but 'attitude to war'¹² was dropped because of the incomplete and hearsay nature of the evidence. No attempt is made to divide the members on the basis of their occupation as so many were socially mobile even before they entered parliament; almost all appear to have been journalists.

As a group, the conscriptionists were older, were born in Britain rather than in Australia, represented New South Wales, Tasmania or Western

Table 2.1 Federal MPs

	Overall	Pro-	Anti-
Numbers:	71	25	46
Senators	31	12	19
MHRs	40	13	27
Average age in Nov. 1916	53 years	58 years	50 years
Place of birth:			
Australia	38	11	27
Britain	21	10	11
Ireland	5	2	3
elsewhere	2	1	1
not available	5	1	4
State represented:			
Queensland	12	2	10
New South Wales	18	7	11
Victoria	17	1	16
Tasmania	7	2	5
South Australia	9	7	2
Western Australia	8	6	2
Religion:			
Protestant	55	22	33
Catholic	14	3	11
nil	1	—	1
not available	1	—	1
Trade union experience:			
nil	20	8	12
some	48	17	31
not available	3	—	3
Ministerial experience:			
nil	55	17	38
some	16	8	8
federal only	12	6	6
state only	4	2	2
state and federal	—	—	—
average length	3 years	3 years	3 years
Average length of parliamentary service (prior to Nov. 1916):			
state	6.5 years	7.6 years	5.8 years
federal	8.5 "	10.3 "	7.2 "
total	11.5 "	14.6 "	9.9 "
Number with prior state service	35	14	21

Australia, were Protestant, were less inclined to have had a trade union background, were more inclined to have had ministerial experience, and were inclined to have had longer periods of parliamentary service. None of this is very startling, or very revealing, since a multitude of individual peculiarities must be considered. Three points are worth noting. First, the division on the basis of religion is not as clear-cut as legend might suggest. An interesting case in this connection was a South Australian MHA, Peter Reidy, who was an Irish-born, Catholic policeman, and a conscriptionist! Secondly, there is evidence to show that the more an MP had been integrated into the system through parliamentary and ministerial experience, the more likely he was to support conscription. The third point is by far the most important and concerns place of birth. Anti-conscriptionists were far more likely to have been native-born Australians. But even this is not without its paradoxes. In 1895 Henry Lawson had expressed one aspect of Australian nationalism when he wrote:

From grander clouds in our peaceful skies than over were there before,
I tell you the Star of the South shall rise—in the lurid clouds of war.
It ever must be while blood is warm and sons of men increase;
For ever the nations rose in storm, to rot in a deadly peace.
(‘The Star of Australasia’)

This militarist tradition found its realisation at Gallipoli ‘when Australia became a nation’. This made Australian nationalism quite compatible with full support for the war. The other aspects of Australian nationalism were racism and opposition to the imperial connection. These acted against uncritical support for the war, the former being particularly pertinent in the opposition to conscription. Even otherwise enlightened leaders like Henry Boote of the *Worker* raised the spectre of yellow hordes who would invade Australia once its men were dead or fighting in Europe. It might well be that the arguments which defeated conscription in 1916 assured its acceptance in 1966. [1969]

3

Sentimental thoughts of ‘A moody bloke’: C. J. Dennis

‘OUR chief object in coming out is to make money’, began Dennis’ first editorial for the *Gadfly*. Dennis made no money and resigned late in 1907 to ‘eke out an existence as a freelance journalist’ in Melbourne, from where he sent the *Gadfly* a poem, ‘Apostate’, announcing his willingness to exchange principles for cash. Dennis survived the next seven years through the generosity of friends who removed him to Toolangi where there was no opportunity to buy flash shirts and ties, and where his journalism amounted to a living wage only because he had private support, free board and few expenses away from the city. The publication of *Backblock Ballads* in 1913 did not improve matters, since such royalties as were earned were held up by his publisher, E. W. Cole, in an effort, Dennis suspected, to force him to settle for ‘a sum down for the copyright’.¹ With this bitter experience in mind, he forwarded the typescript of *Songs of a Sentimental Bloke* to Angus and Robertson, along with a portfolio of publishing proposals all ‘with an eye to the greatest possible profit’.² In this mood, he reprinted ‘The Austra-laise’ and dedicated it to the Australian Expeditionary Force. Dennis was rewarded beyond his wildest expectations: royalties from the first year’s sales of *The Bloke* amounted to almost £900.

As he offered to do in ‘Apostate’, Dennis had climbed down ‘Parnassus slope’ to

... a place
Where the haggling traders dwell,
Who will buy the wares of the man who cares
His soul and slush to sell.³

After seven lean years, the apostate won the traders’ approval by mocking their shallow emotions, by ‘singing them muck’. Keeping his

- Diversion" Episode of the 'Thirties' *Australian Outlook* April 1968. I am particularly indebted to Ken Dallas for his correspondence on this aspect.
- 10 *Messenger* 20 June 1919, p. 1; and M. Boyd *The Montforts Rigby*: Adelaide, 1963, p. 213.
 - 11 Arnold Hauser *The Social History of Art* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951, chapter 8.
 - 12 Compare Fred Davison and his son Frank Dalby Davison: the father returned from the war a more convinced 'fascist' than ever, while the son returned to seek comfort outside human society.
 - 13 J. H. Fingleton *Cricket Crisis* Melbourne: Cassell, 1946, p. 88; Egon Kisch *Australian Landfall* Melbourne: Macmillan, 1969 ed., pp. 303 ff; and W. R. Staton *The 'Sporting English' from Front Line to Body Line* Sydney: Macquarie Head Press, 1933.
- Cricket performed another function in building national consciousness and identity: 'to many men now in middle age, the occasion of a test match was the only time during their boyhood when they realised Australia as a whole, apart from their own particular colonies', G. V. Portus *Australia: An Economic Interpretation* Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1933, p. 64.
- 14 E. D. Watt 'Secession in Western Australia' *University Studies in History* October 1958.
 - 15 Earle Page 'A Plea for Unification' *Daily Examiner* (Grafton) 1 September 1917.
 - 16 Latham Papers, ANL MS 1009, Series 28-4.
 - 17 P. R. Stephenson 'The Foundations of Culture in Australia' in John Barnes (ed.) *The Writer in Australia* Melbourne: OUP, 1969, pp. 204-44; cf. Bruce Muirden *The Puzzled Patriots* Melbourne: MUP, 1968.
 - 18 Rex Ingamells 'Conditional Culture' in Barnes *The Writer in Australia* pp. 245-65.
 - 19 H. McQueen 'An End to the White Australia Policy' *Australian Quarterly* March 1972.
 - 20 Miles Franklin & Dymphna Cusack *Pioneers on Parade* Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1939.
 - 21 A. P. Elkin *Society, the Individual and Change* Sydney: Robert Dey, Son & Co., 1941, p. 88.
 - 22 V. H. Wallace 'The Eugenics Society of Victoria (1936-1961)' *Rationalist* Nov.-Dec. 1961.
 - 23 A. P. Elkin *Our Opinions and the National Effort* Sydney: Australasian Medical Publishing Co., 1941, p. 32; cf. Lawson Glassop *We were the Rats* Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1944, and Eleanor Dark *The Little Company* Sydney: Collins, 1945.
 - 24 Julia McFarlane, *The Hughes-Evans Labour Party in NSW*, MA thesis, ANU, 1969.
 - 25 So many other issues complicate this comparison that it must be seen as an 'illustration' rather than as proof.
 - 26 *Meanjin* March 1942, pp. 5 and 11.
 - 27 Robert Hughes *Art in Australia* Ringwood: Penguin, 1970, chapter 6; Bernard Smith *Australian Painting, 1788-1970* Melbourne: OUP, 1971, chapter 8; Max Harris 'Conflicts in Australian Intellectual Life, 1940-1964' in Clemment Semmler & Derek Whitelock (eds) *Literary Australia* Melbourne: Cheshire, 1966; Roger Covell *Australia's Music*: Melbourne: Sun Books, chapter 4; G. Serle *From Deserts the Prophets Come* Melbourne: Heinemann, 1973, chapter 8.
 - 28 Special Issue of *Public Administration* V, pp. 53 ff.
 - 29 W. A. Greening 'The Mannix Thesis in Catholic Secondary Education' *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1961-62 Melbourne: MUP, 1962; Colin Jory, *The Champion Society*, BA (hons) thesis, ANU, 1967.
 - 30 Tim Morris, *Into the Valley of Megiddon*, BA (hons) thesis, ANU, 1973.

2 Who were the conscriptionists?

- 1 L. C. Jauncey *The Story of Conscription in Australia* Melbourne: 1968, pp. 11-12.

- 2 H. V. Evatt *Australian Labour Leader* Sydney: 1940, p. 348.
- 3 D. M. Catts *James Howard Catts* Sydney: 1953 p. 77.
- 4 M. Brodney 'Militant Propagandists of the Labour Movement' *Labour History* 5, p. 15; cf. G. F. Pearce *Carpenter to Cabinet* London: 1951, p. 143; I. A. H. Turner *Industrial Labor and Politics* Canberra: 1965, p. 110, rejects Pearce's claim that 'Tudor told them that he knew that conscription was right, but that "Richmond (his electorate) won't stand for it"', on the grounds that the 'April-May resolutions against conscription were all directed to Tudor as well as regarded as the leader of the anti-conscriptionist faction in caucus'. The Brodney incident, which confirms Pearce's claim, occurred before April-May 1916 so that Tudor had already undergone a transformation. Sending him copies of the resolutions could have been designed to strengthen his newly found resolve.
- 5 Carol Lansbury 'William Guthrie Spence' *Labour History* 13, pp. 9-10; cf. E. J. Holloway *The Australian Victory over Conscription in 1916-1917* Melbourne: 1966, p. 17. Senator Russell and J. Lynch (MHR) 'were against conscription, but, as they subsequently explained, short of conscription, they were determined that Australia should stand with the rest of the Empire in the prosecution of the War'. Pearce *Carpenter to Cabinet* p. 141.
- 6 Jauncey *Conscription in Australia* pp. 246-7. Pearce relates that 'When we left the party room several of the other members got up and commenced to walk towards the door, but in the storm that arose their hearts failed them and they again sat down. One member left the room with the intention of coming with us, but, not knowing where we had gone, returned to the room.' Pearce *Carpenter to Cabinet* p. 141.
- 7 B. J. McKinley 'The Conscription Referenda and the Labour Movement in Geelong' *Labour History* 14, p. 60. Ozanne is something of an enigma. McKinley's account is misleading in as much as it pictures Ozanne as an anti-conscriptionist martyr. Ozanne had served for five years in the Harbour Trust Battery of the Garrison Artillery before the war. He had not enlisted straight away because of a serious illness, but his brother was wounded at Gallipoli and eventually killed there because of the lack of reinforcements. This led Ozanne to declare that 'the man who had hung back ... was the murderer of his brother' (*Argus* 23 May 1916, p. 7). The Geelong Trades Hall attacked him over this statement (*Argus* 24 May 1916, p. 10). His reply was far from conciliatory (*Argus* 27 May 1916, p. 20). Even though Ozanne attacked the conditions at the front, he praised the 'war for democracy' (*Argus* 23 May 1917). The Ozanne affair illustrates the complexity of motives and actions that surrounded the split and the difficulty of cutting a path through such a maze.
- 8 Turner *Industrial Labour* p. 118.
- 9 J. R. Robertson 'The Conscription Issue and the National Movement, Western Australia: June 1916 to December 1917' *University Studies in Western Australian History* 3, 3, Oct. 1959, pp. 5-57.
- 10 The scattered list on page 247 of Jauncey prematurely expels Hugh Mahon and replaces him with Norman Makin.
- 11 L. F. Crisp and S. P. Bennett *Australian Labor Party, Federal Personnel, 1901-1954* Canberra: 1954. This does not indicate that George Dankel, who was of German parentage, was a pro-conscriptionist. Four other sources were consulted in an effort to obtain a more accurate and complete picture, viz. John Playford *Australian Labor Party Personnel in the South Australian Legislature, 1891-1957* Adelaide: 1957; G. C. Bolton and Ann Mozley *The Western Australian Legislature, 1879-1930* Canberra: 1961; Colin A. Hughes and B. D. Graham *A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics, 1890-1964* Canberra: 1968; and A. W. Martin and P. Wardle *Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 1856-1901* Canberra: 1959. It has not been possible to check these against original sources so that some of the raw data that has gone into the statistics may be inaccurate. The general pattern of Table 2.1 was not upset by analyses of the South Australian and Western Australian State parliamentary Labor parties.