Open Letter to Australian Citizens.

Citizens of Australia,—

You are born free, but Conscription will leave you everywhere in chains.

Mr. Hughes asks you to give his Government a mandate to conscript Australians for foreign service. Before you give your answer, examine carefully the record of his Government. Its advent to office put at its disposal the vast powers of the War Precautions Act. These powers it has consistently abused. It has prostituted the censorship to suppress the free expressions of your opinions on purely political matters. A clergyman who advised you to “mistrust” the present proposals of the Government had the word scored out of his article by the censor. That is one example; others could be multiplied, definitely.

The Government has prosecuted many of you for telling what is simply truth. When a lecturer said that all troops in an enemy country were likely to commit atrocities, he was heavily fined. Others have been imprisoned for free. On the other hand, grocers, who rob you by selling necessaries of life at a price above that fixed under the War Precautions Act, get off with a merely nominal fine. Ten shillings was the fine on the 12 lb. flour sold above the lawful price in Tasmania. The Government, then, suppresses your free speech, and, at the same time, permits the food profiteers to fleece you with impunity.

Not content with the powers of the War “Precautions” Act, the Government has usurped further power under the Unlawful Associations Act. Ostensibly passed only to deal with the I.W.W., this act has been used to persecute people with whose views the
Government disagrees. A Melbourne lawyer was a most notable victim. It empowers the
Government to deport men and women from Australia. Some have already disappeared.
Along with them have gone some of your elementary civil rights.

Every day sees a further abridgement of those rights. As you well know, regarded, the Prime Minister persists in regard to conscription. He is constantly being issued with messages by active parties in London, while you shall not read. He is always to understand:

With such a record, and in the face of the exhausting evidence that many of the
blood money out of the war, the Government now asks you to entrust it with the tremendous
power of Conscription. Mr. Hughes tells you that Conscription is necessary to reinforce
our troops in France. It is a lie. The rate of enlistment during the current year has been
4,004 men a month; and Mr. Ansley has shown that, with the men already in the army
and abroad, the voluntary system will provide adequate reinforcements for the next
years. Mr. Hughes tells you that Conscription is rendered necessary by the recent
truce in Italy and the Revolution. It is a lie. General O'Connell states that holding
divisions to Europe at the present juncture would be useless. Conscription is neither necessary for reinforcements nor useful for victory.

There is one thing only for which it is both useful and necessary to the
democracy abroad, but the annihilation of democracy at home. The
Government not to go beyond the present proposals, the following statement of
Michael Kinsella states that "there might be times when, under certain circumstances, the
pledge of the Government is a scrap of paper, and in the conscription system, liberty and
freedom is dead.

Australians, you have seen how the Hughes Government has abused the vast powers
it already possesses. It has exploited the war in the interest of plutocracy; it has forfeited
liberty to earth. Now it asks you for the last power, the axe of Conscription, con-
armed with which it can go out and finish the business. On December 20th, 1916, you will
Mr. Hughes peremptorily "No." Tell him"NO" still more peremptorily on December
20th, and render a shining, unforgettable service to Young Democracy.

Vote NO on Dec. 20

Authorised by F. Sinclair for
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