



GOOD-BYE DEMOCRACY.

## 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 this word scored out of his article by the censor. That is one example; it could be multiplied indefinitely.

The Government has prosecuted many of you for telling what is simple 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 less. On the other hand, profiteers who rob you by selling necessities 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 in cases of 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 solely 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 civic rights.

Every day sees a further abridgement of those rights. You are not, as you are regarded, the Prime Minister prefers to govern the country by royal decree. Bills are constantly being issued without necessity of effective parliamentary sanction. It describes what you shall not read. It is not intended to substitute a

With such a record, and at the behest of the profiteering scoundrels who made their blood money out of the war, the Government now asks you to entrust it with the crowning 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 war has been 4,004 men a month, and Mr. Anstey has shown that, with the men already in camps here and abroad, the voluntary system will provide adequate reinforcements for the next two years. Mr. Hughes tells you that Conscription is rendered necessary by the war in Italy and the Revolution. It is a lie. General Osanna states that sending more divisions to Europe at the present juncture would be useless. Conscription is therefore neither necessary for reinforcements nor useful for victory.

There is one thing only for which it is both useful and necessary. It is necessary for democracy abroad, but the annihilation of democracy at home. Mr. Hughes asks the Government not to go beyond the present proposals, the following resolution of the Workers states that "there might be times when pledges were broken." The Government's pledge is a scrap of paper, and in the conscriptionist countries of Europe 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 beaten liberty to earth. Now it asks you for the last power, the axe of Conscription, once armed with which it can go out and finish the business. On October 28th, 1916, you told 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

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