

# Manifesto of the Australian Freedom League.

N.S.W. Council:—President, Colonel Onslow, M.L.A.; Vice-Presidents, Edmund Lonsdale, M.L.A.; Wm. Cooper, Esq., A. C. Willis, Esq.; Treasurer, J. R. Firth; Hon. Secretary, Stanley F. Allen, 32 Elizabeth-street, Sydney.

A great crisis has arisen in the history of our nation and of the British Empire, of which it is an honoured part.

Under the fair-sounding name of Citizen Service, there has been set up a system of military training which contains in the germ all the evils of European Conscription. This system, which may be called the New Conscription, is worse rather than better than its European fellow, in that it has placed its grip on the Mere Child, and not content with enslaving him when he becomes a man, seeks, by enrolling him as a part of the military machine at 12, and placing him under military law at 14, to mould his character and fashion him to its will.

The Australian Freedom League has been formed with the object of securing the repeal of the Compulsory Clauses of the Defence Act.

It is not a political association working against any other political body, or bodies, as such; it draws its members from all sections of the political arena.

It is not opposed to a Defence Force enrolled upon the voluntary principle, a position supported by high military authority, and one which, despite certain interested carping critics, has so far sufficed for British needs. But it is strenuously prepared to resist this New Conscription.

It contends that not only is compulsory military training unnecessary, but that it constitutes a grave menace to our civil rights and religious liberties; that as embodied in the 1903-12 Defence Act, which is most clearly framed in the interests of a military class, it is opposed to the principles of popular government, and has been placed upon the Statute Book without the consideration and consent of the people.

The League denounces as unspeakably mean a system which places the brunt of the training upon lads between 14 and 18 years old, who are liable to detention in a military fortress if they "fail to render the personal service required of them." Such a course is a radical departure from those principles of justice which have directed our legislation in the past on the lines that citizen responsibilities should be put upon those who enjoy citizen representative privileges. New Zealand and Australia alone among the civilised countries of the world, have allowed a cowardly set of politicians to impose the burden of military service on the boy who has no vote, because they dare not place it on the man who has the vote.

But the League's chief and most fundamental objection to the present Defence Act is that it, in time of peace, places the military power above

the civil authority. Any offence against the Act itself or the Military Board's regulations is defined as a "military offence." Trial by Jury for such offences is virtually abolished; the lips of the trainees are closed by regulations; the adult trainee is liable to be sentenced by Court martial to imprisonment in gaols or fortresses; appeal to a Civil Court ("any Civil Court," says the Act), is forbidden. The Senior Cadet is "under military law," and only owing to a concession on the part of the Board is not yet declared amenable to court-martial. He is as yet taken before a magistrate; but this is fast becoming a mere matter of form.

The terrible powers given to officers sitting in camera have not yet been exercised, because of the scheme not being yet well on its legs, and the public being restless and uneasy. But they are there in the Act and Regulations—all ready to enable a future Board to set up a Departmental terrorism.

Compulsory enrolment will cause every household in the land to furnish in the form of a lad or young man in the training a helpless hostage, i.e., a son, brother, or near relative.

Neither press, Parliament, or public meeting can protect such, since with fiendish ingenuity the Act has been so drafted that the facts connected with the conditions of camp life and the training cannot be obtained if the Board's discipline is sufficiently strong to effectively work their system.

Universal suffrage and Parliamentary Government are no protection for the people when faced by this militarist trust; the experience of France and other countries has proved this over and over again.

British Freedom is being destroyed. We can yet draw back from this curse of Conscription if we draw back at once. The footprints of all nations who have adopted compulsory enrolment point into the cave of this monster: none point away from it. Our hope and chance lies in this—that we are as yet only standing in the doorway.

The League appeals to all electors to harass and worry those politicians who are supporting this national sin; and to make them realise that "Britons never will be slaves."

When your candidate tells you this is not Conscription, make him tell you why, if he can. Challenge him to refute the above statements. Sign also at once (and only once) our Petition, copies of which can be procured of the Secretary of the League. Only those over 21 should sign.

Finally, and above all: Compel every supporter of the training to attempt to answer this question:

In what way are the citizen and other rights of the Australian adult trainee better protected than those of, say, the French conscript?

JOIN the Australian

Freedom League NOW.

(See over.)

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K Scott Legu MSS 38/55, items 1-6 marked