



Parliament Remembers

The Armistice Centenary

11 November 1918 - 11 November 2018

Conscription and Queensland Hansard 1917

Queensland Labor Premier Thomas Joseph Ryan was a leading force in the anti-conscription campaign during the First World War. While Ryan supported Australia's need for reinforcements, he believed that men should not be forced to enlist and was the only state leader to say so openly.

Premier Ryan drew the ire of Prime Minister William Hughes after he refused the PM's request to have the state police crackdown on anti-conscription activities, following the conscription referendum.

The first referendum, held on 28 October 1916, asked "Are you in favour of... compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service." It was defeated by 1,160,033 against to 1,087,557 in favour.

At a public meeting on 19 November 1917, Premier Ryan gave an impassioned speech outlining his anti-conscription views. The Prime Minister responded by forbidding the printing or distribution of copies of the speech. The Premier countered this direction by re-reading the censored content of his speech in Queensland Parliament on 22 November 1917. The speech is recorded in Queensland Hansard.

Premier Ryan planned to print 10,000 copies of the Hansard record and make them available to the public. Incensed, Prime Minister Hughes responded by ordering a military raid on the Queensland Government printing office, intending to destroy all copies of the speech, including the official Hansard. This resulted in a tense standoff between state police and Commonwealth officers on the steps of the George Street Printing Office, followed by a long drawn out legal dispute between the Prime Minister and Premier.

A second conscription referendum was held on 20 December 1917, asking the question "Are you in favour of the proposal of the Commonwealth Government for reinforcing the Commonwealth Forces overseas?"

Again, Australians voted against conscription with 1,181,747 against to 1,015,159 in favour. Premier Ryan continued to promote voluntary enlistment launching his 'Ryan Thousand' appeal for recruits in May 1918.

Lest we forget...



"I have stood for the voluntary system and I still stand for it" Premier TJ Ryan launching "Ryan's Thousand" at the G.P.O, Brisbane. (*The Queenslander* 1 June 1918).



Examples of conscription badges from the First World War. Images Australia War Memorial.



WHO THREW THAT EGG?

On the 29 November 1917 Prime Minister William Hughes visited Warwick campaigning for conscription and allegedly had his hat knocked off by a flying egg.

The Warwick egg incident as depicted by satirical cartoonist Jim Case, from the *Worker* 27 December 1917. (Image National Library of Australia, Article 71042298).

On 30 October 1952 Paddy Brosnan declared to *The Courier-Mail* that he was the man who threw the Warwick egg. 'It hit him fair and square on the mouth' and 'Billy just kept on going' he said.

