

**THE REACTIONARY AND THE RADICAL:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MASS CONSERVATIVE  
MOBILISATION IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND  
DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION**

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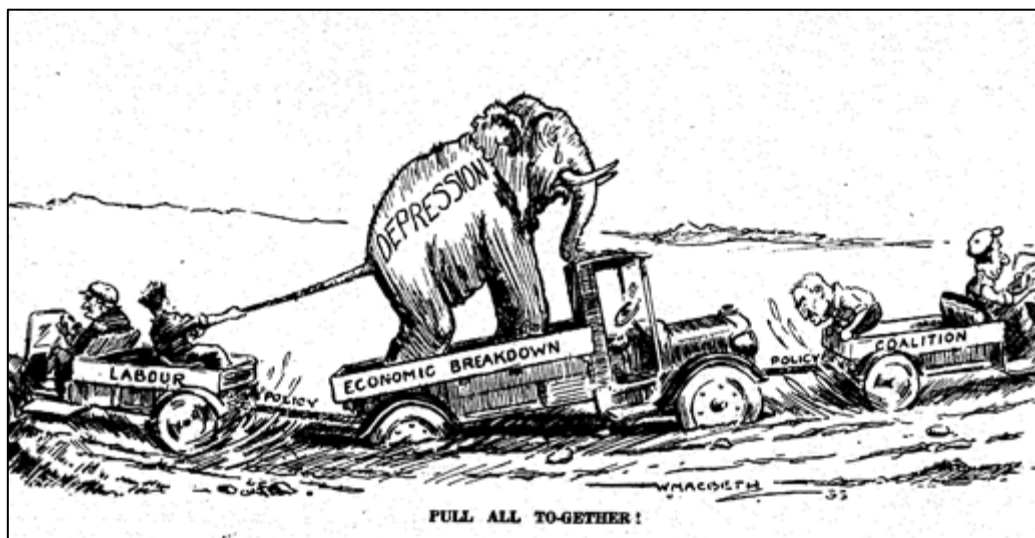


Figure 1: New Zealand Legion cartoon lamenting the lack of unity between political parties. Source: *National Opinion* 1:4 (21 September 1933): 4.



## **ABSTRACT**

The Great Depression witnessed an unparalleled explosion of mass conservative mobilisation across Australia and New Zealand. Large populist movements sprang into being virtually overnight and amassed a collective membership numbering in the hundreds of thousands. At the height of their influence they posed a direct challenge to the electoral base of mainstream conservative parties. They soon faded away from the political scene and, indeed, from the collective memory of Australian and New Zealand society.

This thesis is concerned with four of these movements: the Citizens' League of South Australia, the Australian Citizens' League of Victoria, the All for Australia League of New South Wales, and the New Zealand Legion. The former three arose in Australia in 1931, whilst the latter appeared in New Zealand in 1933. These movements combined a populist and idealist rhetorical and organisational style with standard conservative social and economic ideas. They simultaneously sought new and radical alternatives to party politics and class conflict whilst expressing nostalgia for an illusory nineteenth century colonial society epitomised by classlessness, limited government, independent politicians, and the self-sufficient pioneer. This thesis suggests that, in order to truly understand these movements, this inherent contradiction between looking forwards and backwards for political inspiration must be embraced rather than ironed out in favour of narrative consistency. It argues that the citizens' movements were a contradictory blend of the reactionary and the radical, and that their history, from their origins to their rapid demise, can be best interpreted through the lens of this thematic contradiction.



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ACL	Australian Citizens' League
AFAL	All for Australia League
ANZ	Archives New Zealand, Wellington
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
AUL	Auckland University Library, Auckland
AWM	Australian War Memorial, Canberra
CLSA	Citizens' League of South Australia
NAA	National Archives of Australia, Canberra
NLA	National Library of Australia, Canberra
NZL	New Zealand Legion
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales, Sydney
SLSA	State Library of South Australia, Adelaide
SLWA	State Library of Western Australia, Perth
UQFL	University of Queensland Fryer Library, Brisbane



## INTRODUCTION

The time is ripe for what may be described as a “Citizens’ Movement,” with the one definitive objective of making articulate [the] great body of sane opinion, illuminated by a reasonable knowledge of affairs, and not clouded by class antipathy or doctrinaire prepossessions.<sup>1</sup>

So proclaimed a Melbourne *Argus* editorial on 30 January 1931 entitled ‘A Call to Citizenship’. Its author called upon the ‘average citizens’ – those everyday professionals, businessmen, tradesmen and wage earners who were ‘divorced from any strong party affiliations or sectional interests’ – to shrug off their political apathy and bring their knowledge and patriotic effort to bear against the economic woes of the time. These everyday citizens, it argued, were the epitome of sane and reasoned opinion, and the only force capable of putting the nation’s interests before their own. The *Argus* contrasted this attitude with the ‘subversive’ actions of militant trade unionists and the ‘reckless extravagance’ of politicians. If these disruptive forces were to be countered, the average citizens would need to unite in ‘a powerful, organised presentation of mass opinion ... before it is too late’. Such a ‘Citizens’ Movement’, claimed the *Argus*, would rouse the nation from the economic and political doldrums of the Depression through the spirit of cooperation and mutual self-sacrifice.<sup>2</sup>

The *Argus* did not have to wait long to see its vision realised. By the middle of 1931, over 300,000 Australian men and women had organised into dozens of mass conservative movements across the country. In 1933 the phenomenon of mass conservative mobilisation reached the shores of New Zealand, encouraging tens of thousands of normally apathetic individuals to join the ranks of new political organisations. The aims and methods of these

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<sup>1</sup> *Argus*, 30 January 1931, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

movements varied, but they shared a desire to effect fundamental political, social, and economic change through the organised efforts of the everyday citizenry. At the height of their influence they became nationally significant bodies, attracting the attention of politicians and the media alike, and in some cases they posed a direct challenge to the electoral base of mainstream conservative parties. However, they soon faded away from the political scene and, indeed, from the collective memory of Australian and New Zealand society.

This thesis is concerned with four of these movements: the Citizens' League of South Australia, the Australian Citizens' League of Victoria, the All for Australia League of New South Wales, and the New Zealand Legion. The former three arose in Australia in 1931, whilst the latter appeared in New Zealand in 1933. These movements combined a populist and idealist rhetorical and organisational style with standard conservative social and economic ideas. They simultaneously sought new and radical alternatives to party politics and class conflict whilst expressing nostalgia for an illusory nineteenth century colonial society epitomised by classlessness, limited government, independent politicians, and the self-sufficient pioneer. This thesis suggests that, in order to truly understand these movements, this inherent contradiction between looking forwards and backwards for political inspiration must be embraced rather than ironed out in favour of narrative consistency. It argues that these movements were a contradictory blend of the reactionary and the radical, and that their history, from their origins to their rapid demise, can be best interpreted through the lens of this thematic contradiction.

These four movements have been chosen for analysis for several reasons. As the following section demonstrates, they have received limited coverage in the existing historiography of

mass conservative mobilisation in Australia and New Zealand. This scholarship has also tended to focus on individual movements rather than the broader phenomenon of mass conservative mobilisation. Whilst this has resulted in a number of useful case studies, there remains ample room for fresh insight into overarching trends that may further the understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. The four movements with which this thesis is concerned are well suited for this sort of comparative analysis: they emerged out of very similar crises within Australasian conservatism, and they displayed striking ideological and structural similarities. This poses several interesting questions: why were these movements so similar despite being separated by state and national boundaries? Were they connected somehow, or were their similarities merely coincidental? And finally, can their similarities assist in explaining how and why they declined? The fact that these movements arose in two separate independent nations makes these questions even more worthy of consideration. This thesis, which is chiefly a study of the inception and evolution of ideas, addresses these questions by examining the reactionary and radical trends upon which these movements drew. In brief, it highlights where these ideas came from, how they changed and were moulded to meet specific regional and national requirements, and how the attempt to blend reactionary and radical ideas ultimately caused the movements' downfall.

## **HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MASS CONSERVATIVE MOBILISATION**

Scholarly analyses of mass conservative mobilisation across Australia and New Zealand during the Depression can be summarised into two categories – those that attempt to describe or interpret all of the movements as part of a broader phenomenon, and those that isolate specific movements for discussion. There are only a few studies of the former type, and they only cover the Australian movements. These studies generally present mass conservative mobilisation as a spontaneous reaction to the Depression with little or no ideological roots.

Phyllis Mitchell (nee Peter) contended that the movements represented an amorphous right-wing backlash against the dire economic and political situation. Their energies quickly dissipated due to their lack of a coherent ideology or policy with which to differentiate themselves from mainstream conservative parties.<sup>3</sup> Peter Loveday argued that the movements were the result of a 'shock' in Australian politics which 'provoked party figures and other public men to state their political beliefs explicitly and often more dogmatically than usual'. Movements espousing this form of 'anti-political political thought', he argued, expressed their political ambitions in one of two ways: support for an all-party or non-party government, or advocating for a form of non-parliamentary dictatorship.<sup>4</sup>

Other scholars contend that the phenomenon had roots in the traditions of Australasian conservatism. Judith Brett argued that '[n]on-party political organisations are a permanent presence on the Liberal side of politics in Australia' that draw on 'convictions of their moral worth based on experience and on deeply held self-understandings.'<sup>5</sup> John McCarthy argued that the movements drew on the 'deep-rooted conservatism' of the nineteenth century that questioned the value of representative government and democracy itself. These roots lay in 'the Macarthur type squatters, the ideas of the older Wentworth, [and] the government action in the strikes of the 'nineties'.<sup>6</sup> Andrew Moore categorised this tradition as 'Burkean conservatism', arguing that democracy was received with 'grumbling from the antipodean

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<sup>3</sup> Phyllis Peter, "Social Aspects of the Depression in New South Wales, 1930-1934" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1964), 268-314. Peter (later Mitchell) focused on four mass movements in New South Wales: the All for Australia League, the Riverina Movement, the New Guard, and the Old Guard.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Loveday, "Anti-Political Political Thought," *Labour History* 17 (1969): 121-6.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 102-13.

<sup>6</sup> John McCarthy, "'All for Australia': Some Right Wing Responses to the Depression in New South Wales, 1929-1932," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 57:2 (1971): 161-2, 169. See also McCarthy, "A "Law and Order" Election: New South Wales, June 1932," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 60:2 (1974): 105-16.

*ancien regime*’ in the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> C. J. Lloyd pointed to several ‘educational’ groups that emerged during the 1920s as ‘provid[ing] the basis for the Citizens’ Movement’. Their opposition to party politics stemmed from the increasing sophistication of extra-parliamentary ‘machines’ during the 1920s, which they sought to oppose with a ‘sense of unity and purpose’ and a commitment to the conservative dictums of ‘sound finance’.<sup>8</sup>

More scholarly work has been produced on individual mass conservative movements, including several studies on the four movements with which this thesis is concerned. Broadly speaking, these studies have focused on the conservative aspects of the movements’ ideology – what Michael Pugh categorised as a form of ‘conservative protest’ – whilst downplaying their more radical style and rhetoric. Pugh’s noteworthy thesis on the New Zealand Legion viewed it as one of a series of *laissez-faire* protests against the increasingly interventionist policies of conservative governments during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>9</sup> Whilst its criticism of the party system of government ‘seem[ed] radical at times’, it was merely a recurrent feature of ‘individualism’ that arose during times of crisis.<sup>10</sup> Len Richardson similarly focused on the *laissez-faire* elements of the Legion’s ideology, whilst Gerald C. Campbell argued that the movement only adopted radical ideas when it began receiving criticism from the public regarding its lack of a firm policy.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Cathcart’s analysis of the Australian Citizens’

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Moore, *The Right Road: A History of Right-Wing Politics in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 12-14.

<sup>8</sup> C. J. Lloyd, "The Formation and Development of the U.A.P., 1929-1937" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1984), 2-3, 17-19, 79, 91-93. See also Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 104-6, 112-3.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest in the Great Depression" (MA diss., University of Auckland, 1969). 11-42, 144-83, 184-9; Michael Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion, 1932-1935," *New Zealand Journal of History* 5:1 (1971): 49, 68-69.

<sup>10</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 76-78; Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion, 1932-1935," 68-69.

<sup>11</sup> Len Richardson, "Parties and Political Change," in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Geoffrey W. Rice (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992), 225; Gerard Campbell, "The New Zealand Legion in Otago, 1933-1935" (BA Hons diss., University of Otago, 1987), 60-67, 72.

League suggested that its sole purpose was 'mobilizing the non-Labor citizenry' behind a single electoral banner.<sup>12</sup>

Several accounts question whether these four movements espoused any original ideas at all. P. J. Gibbons argued that the New Zealand Legion was a manifestation of 'inchoate radicalism' whose range of opinion was 'limited by the narrowness of the colonial experience'.<sup>13</sup> Trevor Matthews claimed that the values of the All for Australia League represented 'the coin of Australian conservatism' rather than an attempt to posit a radical alternative. These values were 'deliberately, and ludicrously, simple', amounting to little more than 'a set of moral injunctions'.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Mitchell argued that the League's focus on morals rather than policy was the reason for its popular appeal.<sup>15</sup> John Lonie contended that the Citizens' League of South Australia was completely unoriginal and merely parroted the 'economic status quo'.<sup>16</sup> Its anti-partyism, according to Michael J. Thompson, was simply an extension of its commitment to economic orthodoxy that was designed to garner public support.<sup>17</sup> R. N. Wait suggested that the League focused on simple ideals with 'strong appeal' such as anti-communism to avoid having to delve deeply into 'the more intangible economic problems'.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop: Australia's Secret Army Intrigue of 1931* (Fitzroy: McPhee Gribble, 1988), 158-62; Michael Cathcart, "The White Army of 1931: Origins and Legitimations. The League of National Security in Victoria in 1931 and the Means by Which It Was Legitimated" (MA diss., Australian National University, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> P. J. Gibbons, "The Climate of Opinion," in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Geoffrey W. Rice (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992), 328.

<sup>14</sup> Trevor Matthews, "The All for Australia League," in *The Great Depression in Australia*, ed. Robert Cooksey (Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1970), 136-7, 140-1.

<sup>15</sup> Peter, "Social Aspects of the Depression," 271-8.

<sup>16</sup> John Lonie, "'Good Labor Men' and 'Non-Labor' During the Great Depression in South Australia," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* 2:1 (1976): 36; John Lonie, "Conservatism and Class in South Australia During the Depression Years, 1929-34" (MA diss., University of Adelaide, 1973).

<sup>17</sup> Michael J. Thompson, "Government and Depression in South Australia, 1927 to 1934" (MA diss., Flinders University, 1972). 174-6.

<sup>18</sup> R. N. Wait, "Reactions to Demonstrations and Riots in Adelaide 1928-1932" (MA diss., University of Adelaide, 1973). 169-70.



In contrast, some studies have suggested that these four movements did develop robust platforms. Stephen James argued that the Citizens' League of South Australia developed 'detailed economic, political and social policies' that evoked 'the ideologies of liberalism, traditional conservatism, nationalism/imperialism and Protestantism'. Whilst the League's extreme individualism led 'naturally' to an anti-party mentality, it ultimately served to shore up the dominant capitalist ideology of the ruling class.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, Geoffrey Robinson claimed that the policies of the All for Australia League were designed to provide a 'centrist' alternative to the mainstream political parties. Like other successful centre parties before it, the League's 'political entrepreneurship' allowed it to take advantage of the body of voters who had been disaffected by the rightward shift of the Nationalists at the previous election. This resulted in 'a populist revolt against the conservative establishment', although Robinson does not elaborate on what this populism entailed.<sup>20</sup>

Whilst the majority of studies locate these four movements within a reactionary conservative tradition, a small number consider them to have been more radical in nature. The New Zealand Legion, for instance, has often been termed 'fascist', 'quasi-fascist' and 'protofascist', no doubt influenced by the 'semi-fascist' sobriquet originally used by Keith Sinclair.<sup>21</sup> The three Australian movements have mostly avoided this contentious label, due

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<sup>19</sup> Stephen A. James, "God, Mammon and Mussolini: The Ideology and Policy of the Citizens' League of South Australia, 1930-1934," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 37:1 (1991): 43, 46-47; Stephen A. James, "'The Big Hand of Service': The Citizens' League of South Australia, 1930-1934; Origins, Ideology and Policy" (BA Hons diss., University of Melbourne, 1986).

<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, "The All for Australia League in New South Wales: A Study in Political Entrepreneurship and Hegemony," *Australian Historical Studies* 39:1 (2008): 36-40, 51-52. Rodney Smith also positioned the All for Australia League within this 'centrist' tradition; see Rodney K. Smith, *Against the Machines: Minor Parties and Independents in New South Wales, 1910-2006* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2006), 39.

<sup>21</sup> Tony Simpson, *The Slump: The Thirties Depression, Its Origins and Aftermath* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1990), 67; Tom Brooking, *The History of New Zealand* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), xxvi; Alexander Davidson, *Two Models of Welfare: The Origins and Development of the Welfare State in Sweden and New Zealand, 1888-1988* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1989), 175; Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 245.

largely to the existence of a more obvious target – the paramilitaristic and openly fascist-leaning New Guard, which is discussed in more detail below. Other scholars such as Marinus la Rooij and the present author have argued that the Legion was a form of radicalised conservatism brought about by a vacuum in New Zealand politics during the Depression.<sup>22</sup> Adam Allington highlighted several areas in which the Legion lay to the right of mainstream conservatism, such as its desire to abolish the party system and its strong patriotic sentiment.<sup>23</sup> Spoonley suggested that it was an early manifestation of right-wing extremism brought about by the lack of representation by the mainstream political parties.<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Ward argued that it is more useful to examine the Legion's shared characteristics with fascism than whether or not it was fascist.<sup>25</sup>

Some scholars have attempted to reconcile these competing ideological strands. In his study of the Australian Citizens' League, Geoff Hewitt argued that it was overwhelmed by the juggling act required to balance its non-party ideals with its support for the process of uniting the disparate conservative political forces under Joseph Lyons, the dissident former Labor Party member, in order to contest the 1931 Federal election. Whilst its leaders sought the return of a Federal government committed to economic orthodoxy, overcoming the dominance of political machines 'was equally, if not more, important to their followers'. Consequently, the League's demise 'was the direct result of its supporter's [sic.] quandary

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<sup>22</sup> The terms 'conservative radicalism' and 'conservative radicalisation' are used by the present author and La Rooij respectively; see Matthew Cunningham, "Conservative Protest or Conservative Radicalism? The New Zealand Legion in a Comparative Context, 1930-1935," *Journal of New Zealand Studies* 10 (2011): 139-58; Marinus La Rooij, "Political Antisemitism in New Zealand During the Great Depression: A Case Study in the Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy" (MA diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 1998), 61-63, 83-86.

<sup>23</sup> Adam Allington, "Gold-Shirts in God's Own? The Extreme Right in New Zealand During the 1930s Depression" (BA Hons diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 2009), 5, 37-39, 54-55.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Spoonley, *The Politics of Nostalgia: Racism and the Extreme Right in New Zealand* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1987), 54-55.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Ward, "The New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui, 1933-1935" (BA Hons diss., Massey University, 2011), 47-49.

over its increased, and finally total, absorption into machine politics, their alienation and division by such a trend, and their inability to prevent it.'<sup>26</sup> In contrast, James Watson's discussion of the New Zealand Legion suggested that the professionals who dominated the movement introduced radical policies that alienated its more conservative supporters.<sup>27</sup> These approaches have informed the dual thematic framework of the reactionary and the radical that is espoused by this thesis.

The movements with which this thesis is concerned were only one part of a broader phenomenon of mass conservative mobilisation in Australia and New Zealand during the Depression. There is a particularly robust historiography of those movements that were paramilitaristic in nature. The history of paramilitarism in Australia would be incomplete without reference to the many works of Andrew Moore, in particular his seminal work *The Secret Army and the Premier*. Moore provides a detailed account of the emergence of a paramilitary tradition in Australia during the interwar years, the roots of which lay in the formation of a state-sanctioned 'farmers' army' of strikebreakers in New South Wales in 1917. After the war, the federal government sought to establish a permanent reserve special constabulary along the lines of the American Protective League and the British Supply and Transport Organisation. This led to the formation of an organisation dubbed the King and Empire Alliance which combined public rallies affirming 'imperial patriotism and anti-communism' with the formation of a secret paramilitary army. Continuing links with the state allowed those associated with the Alliance to provide special constables to the Victorian

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<sup>26</sup> Geoff Hewitt, "The All for Australia League in Melbourne," *La Trobe Historical Studies* 3 (1972): 9-10, 13-14.

<sup>27</sup> James Watson, "Crisis and Change: Economic Crisis and Technological Change between the World Wars, with Special Reference to Christchurch, 1926-36" (PhD diss., University of Canterbury, 1984), 541-544.

government during the police strikes of 1923 and the New South Wales government during the seamen's strike of 1925.<sup>28</sup>

After several years of quiescence, the paramilitary tradition was revived during the Depression under the name of the Old Guard. The key trigger in its formation was the victory of dissident Labor leader Jack Lang in the New South Wales elections of October 1930. The upper class elite who comprised its membership – wealthy graziers, manufacturers, doctors, solicitors, and accountants – feared that Lang's unorthodox economic policies, in particular his desire to suspend interest payments to British holders of State public debt, would lead to an economic collapse or even a socialist revolution.<sup>29</sup> Whilst its leadership was based in Sydney, it also managed to secure substantial rural support by appealing to country values.<sup>30</sup> After the ousting of the Federal Labor party at the end of 1931, the United Australia Party under Joseph Lyons passed legislation allowing it to recoup the costs the Federal government had incurred by meeting New South Wales' defaulted interest payments. According to Moore, the Federal government came perilously close to enrolling members of the Old Guard as special constables in an attempt to recover the state's tax receipts by force. This was only prevented by the intervention of Governor Philip Game, who precipitously sacked Lang on 13 May 1932.<sup>31</sup>

Several scholars have identified a similar paramilitaristic history for a Victorian movement known as the League of National Security. John Schauble and Paul James traced the origins

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier: Conservative Paramilitary Organisations in New South Wales, 1930-32* (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1989), 12-64; Andrew Moore, "'Send Lawyers, Guns and Money': A Study of Conservative Paramilitary Organisations in New South Wales, 1930-1932; Background and Sequel, 1917-1952" (PhD diss., La Trobe University, 1982).

<sup>29</sup> Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 70-90, 119-20.

<sup>30</sup> Moore, "The Old Guard and 'Countrymindedness' During the Great Depression," *Journal of Australian Studies* 27 (1990): 57-62.

<sup>31</sup> Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 79-90, 119-20, 162, 165-205.

of the League to the 'White Army', a force that emerged from the special constabulary formed during the Melbourne police strikes of 1923.<sup>32</sup> According to Frank Cain, its close ties to the Melbourne political and military establishment led intelligence authorities to express a 'marked reluctance' to investigate it.<sup>33</sup> The resulting paucity of records makes the League of National Security difficult to analyse in detail. Michael Cathcart developed a unique solution to this problem. By recording the oral testimonies of hundreds of ex-League members across Victoria, he was able to determine a number of conclusions about the conservative worldview that motivated them. Cathcart described this worldview as an 'unwritten constitution' which linked the legitimacy of government to the extent that it upheld historical conservative values and traditions. Any perceived betrayal of this contract with the past allowed members of the League to rationalise the forceful removal of a democratically elected government.<sup>34</sup> Whilst Cathcart could be accused of oversimplifying the complex and multi-faceted nature of conservatism, his analysis is nevertheless an insightful demonstration of how political worldviews dictate what is, and is not, considered to lie within the bounds of acceptable political activity.

Of all the mass conservative movements that arose during the Depression, the New Guard has attracted the most scholarly attention. The works of Keith Amos and Andrew Moore provide the best general histories of the movement. Like Moore's account of the Old Guard, Amos highlighted the influence of the paramilitary tradition of the previous decade on the New Guard, especially on its leader Eric Campbell. According to Amos, Campbell was recruited

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<sup>32</sup> John Schauble, "Right-Wing Militancy in Australia: The Rise of the League of National Security" (BA Hons diss., University of Melbourne, 1979); Paul James, "Armies of the Right: In Defence of Empire and Nation," *Melbourne Journal of Politics* 16 (1984-1985): 87-90; Paul James, "Militarism and Loyalty: Civilian Paramilitary Movements in Melbourne During the Interwar Period" (BA Hons diss., University of Melbourne, 1980). A newspaper piece may have acted as the inspiration for James's research – see Richard Hall, "The Secret Army," *National Times* (23-28 January 1978): 12-13.

<sup>33</sup> Frank Cain, *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia* (Melbourne: Angus & Robertson, 1983), 214.

<sup>34</sup> Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop*, 9-16, 121-124, 165-180.

by Prime Minister Stanley Bruce during the 1925 seamen's strike to organise a special constabulary force of 500 ex-soldiers. A desire to resurrect this force after Jack Lang's election in 1930 brought Campbell into contact with the founding members of the Old Guard, whom he agreed to assist.<sup>35</sup> Amos argued that Campbell split from the Old Guard out of frustration with its secrecy and its unwillingness to take direct action against a constitutionally-elected government. Moore countered that Campbell was asked to leave by the Old Guard leadership because of his arrogance and vanity.<sup>36</sup> It was along this split that the New Guard staked its claim to uniqueness by openly courting publicity and threatening to act unilaterally against the 'socialistic' policies of Jack Lang. As Moore aptly put it, this made the New Guard an 'obstreperous mutation' of the typically secretive paramilitary tradition.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time as the paramilitary movements arose in several Australian states, other mass conservative movements were mobilising towards the goal of secession, either to form a new state or an independent nation. As New Zealand hosted no mass secessionist movements during the Depression, both types were limited to Australia. Two 'new state' movements existed in New South Wales – the New England New State Movement and the Riverina Movement. Whilst these two regions called for full statehood within the Australian constitution, the Dominion League of Western Australia (and a much smaller Dominion League in Tasmania) agitated for complete separation as an independent nation under the Commonwealth.

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<sup>35</sup> Keith Amos, *The New Guard Movement, 1931-1935* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976), 11-12, 22.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 23; Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 139-42.

<sup>37</sup> Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 137.

This thesis is chiefly concerned with any ideological and structural overlaps between the citizens' movements and the secessionist movements, and whether these overlaps prevented the citizens' movements from spreading into Western Australia and the new state regions of New South Wales. An important historiographical question, therefore, is whether secessionism was the primary motivating factor behind these movements. Ulrich Ellis and Don Aitkin suggested that, whilst the new state movements were a rural manifestation of the wider conservative protest against Jack Lang, they held a genuine desire to separate from New South Wales.<sup>38</sup> R. G. Neale agreed that the movements represented deep-seated grievances over the lack of public investment in rural development and the 'failure to solve these grievances by means other than separation'. Like Ellis and Aitkin, Neale asserted that '[s]uch movements ... flared into vital activity when met by some challenge to the economic security of its population.'<sup>39</sup> Similar grievances regarding a lack of federal investment in the state of Western Australia fuelled the secessionist sentiment of the 1930s, according to Thomas Musgrave.<sup>40</sup> Edward Watt argued that secessionist sentiment in Western Australia was genuine; however, 'it would have been more difficult to rally the public around this specific grievance had there not been a general discontent which could be channelled.'<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Harry H. Hiller considered the recurring secessionist sentiment in Western Australia to be a periodic assertion of power when other mechanisms for addressing state

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<sup>38</sup> Ulrich Ellis, *The Country Party: A Political and Social History of the Party in New South Wales* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1958), 130-40; Ulrich Ellis, *A Pen in Politics (Finished and Published by Max Ellis)* (Charnwood: Ginninderra Press, 2007), 173-186; Don Aitkin, *The Country Party in New South Wales: A Study of Organisation and Survival* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972), 31.

<sup>39</sup> R. G. Neale, "New States Movement," *The Australian Quarterly* 22:3 (1950): 12-13, 20, 22.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Musgrave, "The Western Australian Secessionist Movement," *Macquarie Law Journal* 3 (2003): 99-100, 105-7.

<sup>41</sup> Edward Watt, "Secession in Western Australia," *University Studies in Western Australian History* 3 (1958): 82-83, Edward Watt, "Western Separation: The History of the Secession Movement in Western Australia, 1918-1935" (MA diss., University of Western Australia, 1957).

inequities had failed.<sup>42</sup> Whilst these authors agreed that the Depression played a role in stirring up the population, they stressed that the secessionist sentiment underlying it was genuine.

Other studies have argued that animosity towards the Federal and New South Wales Labor governments was the main factor in arousing secessionist sentiment. Lloyd considered the New England and Riverina Movements and the Dominion League as little different from other mass conservative movements. For example, the Dominion League 'dominated populist sentiment in West Australia, channelling it into resentment against the Commonwealth, and away from the anti-party and sane finance preoccupations of the eastern states.'<sup>43</sup> Sherry Morris claimed that the Depression, and in particular Jack Lang, were the main trigger that led to the Riverina Movement, which in turn brought long-running grievances against city dominance to the forefront.<sup>44</sup> F. R. Beasley argued that most who voted for secession in the Western Australian referendum in 1933 did so as a protest against the federal government rather than out of a genuine desire to secede.<sup>45</sup> These scholars suggest that secessionist sentiment was more of a symptom than a cause of these movements.

The New England and Riverina Movements differed starkly in their approach to the New South Wales political establishment, with the latter adopting a populist and combative ideological style that was similar to that of the four movements with which this thesis is concerned. Aitkin demonstrated that, whilst the New England Movement and the Country Party were closely intertwined from the outset, the Riverina Movement formed independently

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<sup>42</sup> Harry H. Hiller, "Secession in Western Australia: A Continuing Phenomenon?," *Australian Quarterly* 59:2 (1987), 231-2.

<sup>43</sup> Lloyd, "The Formation and Development of the U.A.P.," 58-62.

<sup>44</sup> Sherry Morris, *Wagga Wagga: A History* (Wagga: The Council of the City of Wagga Wagga, 1999), 178.

<sup>45</sup> F. R. Beasley, "The Secession Movement in Western Australia," *The Australian Quarterly* 8 (1936): 31-32.



of the Party and often clashed with it.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Peter Tuziak argued that the Riverina Movement often acted against the wishes of the Country Party, unlike the more closely aligned New England Movement.<sup>47</sup> Ellis argued that the Riverina Movement was driven by 'a fierce crusading ideal and confusion concerning practical objectives': it believed that it would succeed in dealing with the Depression where parliaments, governments and political parties had failed.<sup>48</sup> James Logan agreed that the fierce anti-party rhetoric of Riverina Movement leader Charles Hardy, which was directed against both the Labor and Country Parties, provoked the greatest criticism from the New England Movement.<sup>49</sup> W. A. Beveridge claimed that the ideological vagueness of the Riverina Movement gained it the support of a wide variety of people who wanted to 'do something' to combat the Depression.<sup>50</sup>

The Great Depression also saw a massive surge in interest in monetary reform. Douglas social credit was by far the most popular monetary reform ideology during the Depression. Despite this fact, the history of social credit in Australasia prior to World War Two has attracted little scholarly attention. Baiba Berzins and Richard Brockett provide the only analyses of Australian social credit during its formative years in the 1920s, which was typically carried out by 'one-man exponent[s]' in different parts of the country.<sup>51</sup> Renewed interest in social credit during the Depression resulted in the establishment of Douglas social

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<sup>46</sup> Aitkin, *The Country Party in New South Wales*, 31.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Tuziak, "Riverina Awake! A History of the Riverina Movement" (BA Hons diss., University of Sydney, 1990), 63-65.

<sup>48</sup> Ellis, *The Country Party*, 141; Ellis, *A Pen in Politics*, 177.

<sup>49</sup> James Logan, "Re-Examining Senator Charles Hardy's Role in Coordinating the Country Protest Movements in Nsw in the 1930s," *The Page Review* 1:2 (2005): 22.

<sup>50</sup> W. A. Beveridge, "The Riverina Movement and Charles Hardy" (BA Hons diss., University of Sydney, 1954), 2-3, 13, 60.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Brockett, "Douglas Social Credit in Queensland 1929-1939" (BA Hons diss., University of Queensland, 1993), 15-16.

credit associations in each of the state capitals by the end of 1932.<sup>52</sup> It was predominantly an urban movement until the end of 1934, with fifty-five percent of the Queensland branch being comprised of businessmen, professionals, tradesmen and labourers.<sup>53</sup> In contrast, Robin Clifton demonstrated that the supporters of the Douglas social credit movement in New Zealand were rurally based, and were dominated by the Auckland branch of the Farmers' Union from late 1933. Like its Australian counterpart, the Douglas social credit movement grew out of regional study circles in the early 1930s before forming a national movement in January 1933.<sup>54</sup> Clifton also suggested that the dramatic growth of the Douglas social credit movement led the New Zealand Legion, one of the movements with which this thesis is concerned, to adopt elements of monetary reform into its policy.<sup>55</sup> The belief in a secret cabal of Jewish financiers became more central to social credit on both sides of the Tasman as the thirties progressed.<sup>56</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

Consideration of the works discussed above suggests that mass conservative movements in Australia and New Zealand during the Depression could be usefully categorised as falling into four categories: paramilitarist, secessionist, monetary reformist, and what this thesis will refer to as the 'citizens' movements'. This distinction is intended as a useful heuristic device rather than as a rigid taxonomic typology: few movements fell within a single category, and some of the ideas they espoused – especially those of the monetary reformists – found a

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<sup>52</sup> Baiba Berzins, "The Social Credit Movement in Australia to 1940" (MA diss., University of New South Wales, 1967), 70-118; Baiba Berzins, "Douglas Credit and the A. L. P.," *Labour History* 17 (1969): 154-5.

<sup>53</sup> Brockett, "Douglas Social Credit in Queensland 1929-1939," 24-25.

<sup>54</sup> Robin Clifton, "Douglas Credit and the Labour Party, 1930-1935" (MA diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 1961), 65-90, 128-9, 152-5.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 315-321; La Rooij, "Political Antisemitism in New Zealand During the Great Depression," 105-37; La Rooij, "Arthur Nelson Field: Kiwi Theoretician of the Australian Radical Right?," *Labour History* 89 (2005): 37-54. Spoonley, *The Politics of Nostalgia*, 62-63.

willing home on the left of the political spectrum as well. The New Guard, Old Guard, and League of National Security were all distinguishable primarily by their paramilitarism, although the latter two preferred secrecy to the openly public and confrontational approach of the New Guard. Similarly, the Dominion League of Western Australia and the Riverina and New England Movements were all distinguishable by their secessionism despite the differing levels of government which they targeted. Douglas social creditors comprised the loudest and most numerous of the monetary reformists, although there was a wide variety of individuals and movements within this category.

The Citizens' League of South Australia, the Australian Citizens' League, the All for Australia League, and the New Zealand Legion do not fit neatly within any of the three categories described above. They shared the populist and idealistic flavour of the New Guard and the Riverina Movement, but they lacked their paramilitaristic and secessionist predispositions. Their primary occupation, as they saw it, was to transform the nation's moribund political apparatus by mobilizing the citizenry toward greater democratic participation. For ease of reference, this thesis will use the term 'citizens' movements' to refer solely to the four movements that are the subject of this study. This is not intended as an attempt to enforce artificial labels or divisions upon contemporary participants who would not have made such distinctions. Typically speaking, the participants themselves applied the term 'citizens' movement' to a wide variety of groups.<sup>57</sup> However, the distinction is useful for the sake of analytical clarity: by using the term 'citizens' movement' to refer exclusively to the Citizens' League of South Australia, the Australian Citizens' League, the All for

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<sup>57</sup> The broadest use of the term came during a conference of 17 'Commonwealth citizens' movements' held by the Citizens' League of South Australia in April 1931; see Report of Executive Committee presented at Third Convention of Delegates of Branches of the CLSA, 10 June 1931, box 1 item 1, Citizens' League of South Australia papers, MS 1186, NLA (hereafter 'CLSA papers').

Australia League, and the New Zealand Legion, this thesis can rhetorically differentiate them from the broader body of mass conservative mobilisation. In addition, it should be noted that the Australian Citizens' League amalgamated with the All for Australia League on 4 March 1931 and adopted its name and its platform.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, this thesis will continue to use the term 'Australian Citizens' League' to distinguish the Victorian movement from its New South Wales counterpart. This will facilitate the analysis of any differences that remained between the two movements despite their nominal merger.

This thesis approaches the four citizens' movements from a comparative, and occasionally a cross-national, perspective. The distinction between comparative and cross-national analysis is drawn from Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor's analysis:

Comparative history is seemingly concerned with similarities and differences; in explaining a given phenomenon, it asks which conditions, or factors, were broadly shared, and which were distinctive ... [C]ross-national histories follow topics beyond national boundaries. They seek to understand reciprocal influences, as well as the ways in which the act of transplantation itself changes the topic under study.<sup>59</sup>

Michael Miller added that the two are 'complementary rather than competing methods of writing multinational history'. However, he argued that cross-national histories 'reach beyond what could be accomplished through comparative history alone' due to their ability to highlight the causative links between the phenomena being compared.<sup>60</sup> Both can be broadly summarised under the heading of trans-national history, a field within the historical discipline that seeks to transcend the use of the nation-state as the standard unit for historical analysis.

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<sup>58</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 March 1931, 10.

<sup>59</sup> Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004), xi-xii.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Miller, "Comparative and Cross-National History: Approaches, Differences, Problems," in *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective*, ed. Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor (New York: Routledge, 2004), 126-7.

The notion of the 'Tasman world' is central to the comparative and cross-national component of this thesis. This 'Australasian' worldview, which dominated political, cultural and economic exchanges between the seven Antipodean colonies in the nineteenth century, has been the subject of a resurgence in scholarly interest in recent years.<sup>61</sup> Scholars such as Donald Denoon, Peter Hempenstall, Philippa Mein Smith, Miles Fairburn, Ian McGibbon and Gary Hawke have argued that the ties of this 'Tasman world' did not end with the decision of the six Australian colonies to federate in 1901; rather, they continued to grow and develop in less recognised ways including state experimentation, trade relations, defence policy, people movement, and print culture.<sup>62</sup> The sharing of working class ideas and strategies across the Tasman, and throughout the Anglo world, has been the subject of a particularly robust historiography, with one prominent example being the 2008 trans-Tasman issue of *Labour History*.<sup>63</sup> Less attention has been paid to comparative and cross-national analyses of right

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<sup>61</sup> See Philippa Mein Smith, "The Tasman World," in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia and New Zealand, 2009), 299. Mein Smith argued that earlier historians such as Keith Sinclair had sidelined the notion of 'Australasia' in favour of more nationalist narratives; however, the fact that Sinclair devoted an entire edited collection to trans-Tasman connections in the 1980s suggests that 'Australasian' history did not fall out of favour as much as recent historians suggest. See Keith Sinclair, ed. *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987).

<sup>62</sup> Donald Denoon, "Re-Membering Australasia: A Repressed Memory," *Australian Historical Studies* 34:122 (2003): 290-304; Peter Hempenstall, ed. *Remaking the Tasman World* (Christchurch: University of Canterbury Press, 2008); Philippa Mein Smith and Peter Hempenstall, "Australia and New Zealand: Turning Shared Pasts into a Shared History," *History Compass* 1:1 (2003): 1-8; Philippa Mein Smith et al., *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific: The Formation of Identities* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); Philippa Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Ian McGibbon, "Australia-New Zealand Defence Relations to 1939," in *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, ed. Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), 164-82; Miles Fairburn, "Is There a Good Case for New Zealand Exceptionalism?," in *Disputed Histories: Imagining New Zealand's Pasts*, ed. Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006); Gary Hawke, "Australian and New Zealand Economic Development from About 1890 to 1940," in *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, ed. Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), 104-5. For more information on Tasman trade relations, see Keith Sinclair, "The Great Anzac Plant War: Australia-New Zealand Trade Relations, 1919-39," in *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, ed. Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), 124-41; P. J. Lloyd, "Australia-New Zealand Trade Relations: NAFTA to CER," in *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, ed. Keith Sinclair (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987), 142-63.

<sup>63</sup> Ray Markey and Kerry Taylor, "Trans-Tasman Labour History: Introduction," *Labour History* 95 (2008): 1. See also James Bennett, *'Rats and Revolutionaries': The Labour Movement in Australia and New Zealand 1890-1940* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2004); Melanie Nolan, 'Personalizing Class Conflict Across the

wing ideas and movements, and the scattered subject material of these works reveals that there is much fertile ground to be covered.<sup>64</sup> Whilst this thesis cannot claim to be truly trans-national in focus, it does examine where ideas travelled across national boundaries, particularly within an imperial and trans-Tasman context. However, its primary focus is comparative, and it will assess the similarities, differences, and links between the four citizens' movements and identify the causal relationships between them.

Despite this trans-Tasman focus, this thesis does not devote equal amounts of space to Australia and New Zealand. Rather, space has been roughly divided amongst the four citizens' movements. Since three of the movements were located in Australian states, this has resulted in parts of this thesis being heavily weighted towards Australia. However, coverage has been more evenly divided between Australia and New Zealand where particular points of analysis have revealed crucial national distinctions. Chapters five and six, for example, show the unique challenges faced by the Australian and New Zealand citizens' movements in dealing with the contradictions between reactionary and radical ideas.

Whilst this thesis is concerned primarily with the four citizens' movements outlined above, it also explores where these movements intersected with the wider body of mass conservative

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Tasman: the New Zealand Great Strike and Trans-Tasman Biography', *Journal of New Zealand Studies* 10 (2014): 118-36; *Australia and Canada: Labour Compared. A Special Joint Issue of "Labour/Le Travail" and "Labour History"* 38, 1996; Gregory S. Kealey and Greg Patmore, ed. *Canadian and Australian Labour History: Towards a Comparative Perspective* (Sydney: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1990); Robin Gollan, "American Populism and Australian Utopianism," *Labour History* 9 (1965): 18-21.

<sup>64</sup> See for example Cunningham, "Conservative Protest or Conservative Radicalism?" 139-58; Nick Fischer, "The Australian Right, the American Right and the Threat of the Left, 1917-35," *Labour History* 89 (2005): 17-36; Nick Fischer, "An Inspiration Misunderstood: Australian Anti-Communists and the Lure of the U.S., 1917 - 1935," *Eras* 5 (2003), <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/publications/eras/edition-5/fischerarticle.php>; Christopher Besant, "Two Nations, Two Destinies: A Reflection on the Significance of the Western Australian Secessionist Movement to Australia, Canada and the British Empire," *University of Western Australia Law Review* 20 (1990): 209-310; La Rooij, "Arthur Nelson Field: Kiwi Theoretician of the Australian Radical Right?" 37-54; Malcolm Alexander, "Conservatism, Counterrevolution, and Semiperipheral Politics: Australia and Argentina in the Interwar Period," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 12:2 (1989): 299-333.

mobilisation during the Depression. It is particularly concerned with two elements of this intersection: the methods by which ideas were shared between different movements and regions and, conversely, the factors that prevented the adoption of ideas within specific movements and regions. The importance of this subject is reinforced by the geographical limitations of the four citizens' movements themselves: they existed in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, and New Zealand, yet no citizens' movements arose in Queensland, Tasmania, the Northern Territory, or the Australian Capital Territory. This thesis aims to determine why this was the case by comparing the factors that allowed the four citizens' movements to achieve a mass membership. Similarly, this thesis will explore whether secessionist movements inhibited the spread of the citizens' movements into Western Australia and rural New South Wales. It will also analyse how the citizens' movements approached the subject of paramilitary preparations, paying particular attention to the influence of existing paramilitary movements such as the New Guard.

This thesis has relied heavily on sources produced by, or which report upon, the four citizens' movements themselves. Since attracting a mass membership was one of their core aims, the movements produced a large amount of propaganda in the form of pamphlets, booklets, circulars, notes to speakers, and letters to newspapers. In the case of the New Zealand Legion and the All for Australia League, this ephemeral material culminated in the issuing of official platforms.<sup>65</sup> In contrast, the Citizens' League of South Australia did not release its first platform until 1932, which was subject to several modifications over the next two years as it considered reconstituting itself as an independent 'Citizens' Party'.<sup>66</sup> The citizens'

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<sup>65</sup> *National Opinion* 2:14 (1 March 1934): 1, 5; *Policy as adopted by convention of the League* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931).

<sup>66</sup> Meeting of a Special Sub-Committee appointed to draft proposed policy, 18 January 1932, box 1 item 3; Broadcast speech by Mr. W. Queale from Station 5AD, 22 February 1932, box 3 item 27; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 17 January 1933, box 1 item 3; Citizens' League. State Elections: Policy, 8 April 1933, box

movements were also the subject of regular newspaper coverage, which provides useful information concerning meetings, speeches, and the names of important members. This combined body of material demonstrates the issues that were of importance to the movements and the political-rhetorical style they utilised to express them. It also demonstrates the worldview through which they judged the legitimacy of various political beliefs.

Propagandist material, by its very nature, obscures or distorts the truth through the lens of its authors' self-perceptions. Movements such as those under analysis in this thesis could carefully and meticulously select and rehearse the image they project without revealing their true motivations and influences. Newspaper coverage can provide a counterbalance through its use of damaging exposes, but these can be as biased as the uncritical praise that newspaper editors often lavished on the citizens' movements. This thesis will therefore counterbalance the movements' public faces with their internal dynamics and the inherent contradictions they sought to contain. Fortunately, samples of internal material have survived for the New Zealand Legion and the All for Australia and Australian Citizens' Leagues. In contrast to these partially complete and often peripherally-centred collections, the extensive papers of the executive of the Citizens' League of South Australia were bequeathed to the National Library of Australia by the movement's founder and general secretary, Edward Daniel Alexander Bagot, in 1965. The deliberate preservation of these records for public use raises the possibility of retrospective editing; however, the occasionally unflattering portrayal of Bagot suggests that the collection was not altered before being donated.<sup>67</sup> This material will

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1 item 6; 'Citizens Party': suggested policy [c. August 1933], box 1 item 6; 'Bagot's Policy' [c.1934?], box 1 item 4; Citizens' League Policy for 1934, 6 March 1934, box 1 item 4, CLSA papers.

<sup>67</sup> One example included a letter of resignation from a member who complained about Bagot's authoritarian leadership style; see letter from W. A. Blackler to the Secretary of the CLSA, 23 October 1931, box 12 item 1, CLSA papers. Bagot also made several positive references to fascism and Mussolini – something that few would openly admit to in the post-WW2 era; see Bagot, 'A Dictator Needed', submitted to the Editor of *The*



be further augmented by the records of other mass conservative movements that arose during the Depression, as well as those of various right-wing groups that preceded them in earlier decades.

Government papers play an important part in assessing the internal dynamics of the citizens' movements. For example, the author utilised the intelligence records of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch in Australia and the Defence and Police Departments in New Zealand to explore whether any of the citizens' movements assumed a paramilitary or special constabulary function. The papers of conservative politicians Joseph Lyons and John Latham also shed light on the role the Australian citizens' movements played in the formation of the United Australia Party. However, as Moore argued, government records should not be treated as sacrosanct – politicians have their own agendas, which in this case included redirecting the radical energies of the citizens' movements towards their own electoral ends.<sup>68</sup> Despite this agenda – or perhaps because of it – Lyons and Latham were very frank when discussing the danger that the citizens' movements posed to the tenuous unity they were building amongst non-labour forces. This provides invaluable insight into the relationship between the Australian citizens' movements and the conservative mainstream.

This ideas-based approach is complemented with a quantitative analysis of the citizens' movements' geographical distribution and membership. All of the original data used in these analyses is preserved in appendices A and B, which are included on the CD inside the back cover of this thesis. Geographical data was gathered from a number of sources including internal correspondence and distribution lists, official movement pamphlets, and newspaper

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*Advertiser*, 5 September 1930, box 3 item 25D; Letter from Bagot to Lionel Hill, 13 May 1932, box 13 item 14, CLSA papers.

<sup>68</sup> Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 4-5.

reports on the inaugural meetings of new branches. There are several shortcomings with this data, chief amongst which is that no full, definitive branch list has survived for any of the citizens' movements. This is unsurprising given that they were in a constant state of flux; new branches appeared all the time, old branches faded away or were absorbed into others, and the level of sustained activity varied dramatically from branch to branch. However, such branch lists as have been compiled utilised the most complete source material that could be found, and can be taken as reasonably reliable indicators of the geographical distribution of each movement. The exception is the New Zealand Legion, for which only a regional list for Otago could be found. Any conclusions drawn by this thesis will reflect the limited nature of the geographical data on the Legion whilst identifying any common themes amongst the four movements that might be extrapolated and applied in the New Zealand context.

The membership analysis has assessed the variables of occupation, age, and military history. Pragmatically speaking, these three variables were the easiest to obtain, whereas others such as religious affiliation and education proved too elusive or time-consuming to track down. Some qualitative information has been found on the religious affiliation and education of leading figures in the citizens' movements, and the dominance of Protestantism amongst white individuals of Anglo-Saxon origin in Australia and New Zealand suggests that the religious makeup of the movements was fairly homogenous.<sup>69</sup> More importantly, the 'triad' of occupation, age and military history enables detailed conclusions to be drawn regarding the structural composition of the citizens' movements. Occupation and age provide important information on whether the movements achieved the cross-class unity they desired, whilst the

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<sup>69</sup> Ian Breward, "Protestantism in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania to the Present Day," in *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism*, ed. A. E. McGrath and D. C. Marks (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 232-8.

presence or absence of an ex-serviceman contingent is pertinent given the proximity of the events in question to the Great War.

This thesis also utilises both quantitative and qualitative information to draw some tentative conclusions regarding gender and the citizens' movements. Despite women playing a significant role within these admittedly male-dominated movements, gender analysis is almost entirely absent from the historiography.<sup>70</sup> This thesis will compare the ratios of male-to-female members at the various levels of organisation, the relative ages of women in comparison to men, and any special provisions made to encourage female leaders. The ways in which women, femininity and gender roles were portrayed by the movements, and the rhetoric used by prominent female members, will also be analysed. This analysis will be informed by the women's Empire movements that arose in the late nineteenth century and the ways in which liberal women participated in the political process during the first post-suffrage generation in Australia and New Zealand. It is worth noting that this analysis is brief, and that there is much room for fresh research regarding gender and mass conservative mobilisation.

Finally, this thesis attempts to position the citizens' movements, both ideologically and structurally, in relation to broader trends of political thought. Two trends in particular are woven throughout this thesis: conservatism and populism. The evolution of conservatism in the Australasian context is the subject of chapter one, and serves as a foundation for determining the extent to which the citizens' movements veered away from standard reactionary fare towards the radical. Populism, in its broadest sense, can be understood by its

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<sup>70</sup> The exception is Elizabeth Ward's brief treatment of women in the New Zealand Legion; see Ward, "The New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui," 21.

etymology – a belief system which stakes its legitimacy upon a real or perceived direct relationship with the populace. Its central legitimating factor is ‘the people’, a community or ‘heartland’ of individuals who, according to Paul Taggart, are considered as constituting a unified and homogenous population.<sup>71</sup> Arrayed against this unified population are the uncaring and compromising political ‘elites’ whose self-serving political tactics have alienated them from the people and brought traditional community values under increasing threat.<sup>72</sup> But populism is about more than gaining (or regaining) control of the political apparatus from the insidious ‘other’: it is, as Francisco Panizza argues, ‘a journey of sacrifice’ carried out in the face of a looming crisis.<sup>73</sup> It possesses ‘the revivalist flavour of a movement’ and ‘the tendency for heightened emotions to be framed on a charismatic leader’, according to Margaret Canovan.<sup>74</sup> Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell have suggested the following succinct definition:

[Populism is] an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous ‘others’ who were together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice.<sup>75</sup>

The different ways in which this populist tendency manifested within the citizens’ movements, and how they contributed to the movements’ radicalism, are explored throughout this thesis. Other broader trends, such as fascism and the growth of novel economic theories such as proto-Keynesian thought and monetary reform, are also discussed at varying points.

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<sup>71</sup> Paul Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), 95.

<sup>72</sup> Margaret Canovan, "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy," *Political Studies* 47:1 (1999): 2-16.

<sup>73</sup> Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2005), 23.

<sup>74</sup> Canovan, "Trust the People!" 6.

<sup>75</sup> Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, "Introduction: The Sceptre and the Spectre," in *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is organised in both a thematic and a chronological fashion. Chapter one examines the history of Australasian conservatism from the late nineteenth century until the onset of the Depression. It explores the divided nature of this evolving conservatism through the lens of economic fractions within the capitalist class. This chapter also examines the rise of ‘non-party’ political leagues, the key ideas and tropes which they drew upon and the way that they evolved over time in response to domestic and international events. Chapter two considers the effects of the Depression on this collection of right-wing ideas and movements. It examines the ways that mainstream conservatives became radicalised by the economic crisis and directed their frustrations against political parties and their extra-parliamentary ‘machines’. The rise of alternative economic theories in New Zealand, in particular monetary reformism, is also discussed. This chapter concludes by discussing the birth of the four citizens’ movements at the apex of this process of conservative radicalisation.

Chapters three and four analyse the elements that distinguished the citizens’ movements from other forms of right-wing organisation. It is these chapters that most clearly distinguish the approach taken in this thesis from other major studies of the citizens’ movements, in particular Pugh’s thesis on the New Zealand Legion. Chapter three discusses the organisational and promotional techniques that the citizens’ movements used to generate a lasting sense of enthusiasm, engagement and belonging. This culture of mass conservative mobilisation was deliberately spread across Australia, and this chapter explores both the geographical extent of that spread and the areas in which the citizens’ movement ideology failed to take hold. The types of individuals who joined the movements, and their motivations for doing so, are also demonstrated in this chapter. Ideology also played a part in securing a mass membership, and chapter four analyses the populist blend of reactionary and radical

ideals that the citizens' movements espoused in order to draw upon the widespread conservative discontent caused by the Depression.

Populism could only conceal the inherent contradictions between reactionary and radical ideals for so long before the fractures came to the surface. Chapters five and six show how these fractures became apparent in Australia and New Zealand respectively. In chapter five, the relationship between the Australian citizens' movements and a revitalised mainstream conservative opposition party is examined. In particular, it outlines the ways that the movements negotiated the divide between anti-party purity and the political expediency that was required for them to cooperate with mainstream conservatives in presenting a united electoral front. In contrast, chapter six examines the influence of unorthodox economic ideas such as proto-Keynesianism and monetary reform on the New Zealand Legion and the contradictions that this exposed with the more standard conservative dicta regarding economics and the state. In both of these chapters, the role of the differing contradictions in the decline of the citizens' movements is assessed. The conclusion reflects on the significance of this mass conservative mobilisation to the understudied history of the right in the Tasman world. It suggests that the citizens' movements played an important transition role in both the radical right tradition as well as the consolidation of the post-war mainstream conservative factions in the form of the Liberal and National Parties.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **CONSTRUCTING THE CITIZEN: THE EVOLUTION OF CONSERVATISM AND ‘NON-PARTY’ ORGANISATION IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND, 1880-1929**

The Constitutional Association aims at setting up in Australia the highest standards of citizenship. It appeals particularly to younger men to interest themselves in public affairs and thereby to fit themselves for the responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic community. It is a political but not a partisan body. Its members are encouraged to join and work for political organisations. They retain complete political independence, and may work for what party they choose ... It is searching for men who will subordinate their own personal interests or inclinations to the common welfare, the “Commonwealth.”<sup>1</sup>

When the conservative discussion group known as the Constitutional Association of New South Wales published its membership rules in March 1931, it prefaced them with the above overarching statement of purpose. The Association, it argued, was aimed at promoting the ideals of good citizenship by encouraging individuals to educate themselves about the political process. In order to ensure a well-rounded and unbiased educational experience, the Association claimed to provide an impartial, non-party environment where the ‘personal interests’ of individuals and political parties would be subordinated to the ‘common welfare’. Taken at face value, these words appeared to offer something for everybody – however, beneath the apolitical veneer, the Constitutional Association was part of a long-standing conservative tradition that presented right-wing ideas on politics, society and the economy as unbiased, common sense values that lay outside the realm of political contestation. This chapter explores the evolution of that conservative tradition. It outlines the history of conservatism in the Tasman world from the late nineteenth century until the onset of the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Constitutional Association of New South Wales* (Sydney: W. C. Penfold & Co., 1931), 1.

Depression through its ideological and structural changes and the growth of various right-wing ‘non-party’ leagues that expanded the reach of conservatism beyond the boundaries of parliament. This conservative tradition, as subsequent chapters will show, would form the ideological foundation upon which the citizens’ movements built.

## **DEFINING CONSERVATISM IN THE AUSTRALASIAN CONTEXT**

Since this thesis argues that the citizens’ movements were a form of mass conservative mobilisation, it requires a definition of conservatism in the Australasian context. However, conservatism is a diverse and multi-faceted ideology that is applicable across a wide variety of locations, time periods, and historical contexts. If, as its etymology suggests, its aim is to ‘conserve’ something, the question then emerges as to what behaviours and institutions it is intended to conserve. This section approaches the problem in two ways. Firstly, it engages with the studies that problematise attempts to apply nineteenth century British understandings of the terms ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ directly to the Tasman world. Secondly, it settles on a flexible minimum definition of conservatism in order to chart the ways it evolved in Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Whilst the roots of conservative thought can be traced to the English Restoration period, it first evolved into a coherent body of thought largely in response to the wave of anti-monarchist revolutions that began in the late eighteenth century. As Karl Mannheim put it, conservatives subscribed to a society that was hierarchical in nature, where political and economic power resided with the monarch and the Church, and the landed gentry provided for the lower classes through the customs of *noblesse oblige*. They believed that individual liberties were the inheritance of centuries of gradual constitutional reform, and rejected



Lockean notions of social contracts and inalienable rights.<sup>2</sup> Edmund Burke, typically regarded as one of the founders of British conservatism, believed this respect for tradition was a vital check against the radical republicanism that was sweeping Europe at the end of the eighteenth century:

[W]hat is liberty without wisdom and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint. Those who know what virtuous liberty is cannot bear to see it disgraced by incapable heads on account of their having high-sounding words in their mouths.<sup>3</sup>

This opposition to the increasing democratisation of political and economic power was partially in response to an emerging capitalist class whose growing commercial and industrial wealth was perceived as a threat to the landed wealth of the aristocracy.<sup>4</sup> Part of this threat came from the Liberal Party, which represented an alliance of reformist Whigs and radical republicans. The Liberals called for greater personal freedoms, increased or universal male suffrage, limited Crown and church authority, and free trade. The term 'liberalism' subsequently became associated with a wide range of international movements and governments in the nineteenth century, particularly in the Western world, which viewed free trade and personal liberty as the key to a new egalitarian order. In particular, the doctrine of free trade became so pervasive that British conservatives also adopted it in the 1850s.

Several difficulties arise when attempting to apply these definitions of 'conservative' and 'liberal' to the nineteenth century Australasian context. The first is that, unlike Britain, Australia and New Zealand were new European settlements that lacked an *ancien régime*

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<sup>2</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. David Kettler et al. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 102-10.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France," Constitution Society, [http://www.constitution.org/eb/rev\\_fran.htm](http://www.constitution.org/eb/rev_fran.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Robert Eccleshall, *English Conservatism since the Restoration: An Introduction and Anthology* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 79-80.

seeking to preserve hereditary or landed power. As Jim McAloon and Kenneth Buckley demonstrated, the colonial upper class were typically of humble origins. They had accumulated their wealth by arriving fortuitously early in the process of European settlement to amass large estates for primary production, or they had provided vital financial and marketing services to these burgeoning agricultural enterprises.<sup>5</sup> Rather than a Wakefieldian cross-class transplantation, the colonial upper class more closely resembled the growing middle class that had pushed for electoral reform in Britain in the 1840s. One exception was New South Wales which, as Gregory Melleuish highlighted, possessed an ageing generation of landed elites by the 1850s who had played a key role in the political foundation of the colony.<sup>6</sup>

The new Australasian colonies also lacked the commitment to laissez-faire shared by British conservatives and liberals. Noel Butlin and Michael Bassett argued that Australasian governments were heavily involved in economic activity from the outset of European colonisation. This originally served a pragmatic purpose: colonial enterprise was simply too underdeveloped, and the accumulation of private capital was too slow, to provide essential services to the market. As colonial primary industries expanded, state involvement in the economy likewise expanded to incentivise these industries: railways, roads, postal services, immigration schemes, communication technologies and port facilities were all developed to service primary industry, and public investment in agricultural technologies such as fertilisers, pesticides and refrigeration, as well as the virtual state monopoly on the expropriation of land from indigenous communities, encouraged the increased cultivation of

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<sup>5</sup> Jim McAloon, *No Idle Rich: The Wealthy in Canterbury and Otago, 1840-1914* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002), 171-82; Ken Buckley, "Primary Accumulation: The Genesis of Australian Capitalism," in *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, ed. E. L. Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (Brookvale: Australia & New Zealand Book Company, 1975), 12-32.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory Melleuish, *A Short History of Australian Liberalism* (St Leonards: The Centre for Independent Studies, 2001), 1.

land by settlers.<sup>7</sup> Butlin famously called this ‘colonial socialism’, whilst James Belich used the term ‘progressive colonisation’.<sup>8</sup> This national development ethos overrode laissez-faire tensions between public and private enterprise, so long as the interests of the two converged.

The label ‘conservative’ was seldom used in nineteenth century Australia and New Zealand. Leading politicians and political thinkers of all colours tended to consider themselves ‘liberals’ or ‘progressives’, reflecting their desire to build what Belich termed ‘better Britains’ in the south seas.<sup>9</sup> Ownership of these terms became particularly contentious with the emergence of two self-styled liberal political factions at the end of the nineteenth century – the Deakinite liberals in Victoria, and the New Zealand Liberal Party. These fell broadly within the emerging tradition of ‘social liberalism’: they believed the state should play a more active role in providing social welfare, mediating class conflict, and redistributing wealth by breaking up the vast tracts of land held by graziers and speculators.<sup>10</sup> Deakinite liberalism was also defined by its adherence to protectionism, which had become prominent in Victorian politics after the gold rushes as a means by which to provide employment for the colony’s

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<sup>7</sup> Noel G. Butlin, *Investment in Australian Economic Development, 1861-1900* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964); Michael Bassett, *The State in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998). See also G. R. Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand: An Economic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 103-21; Judith Bassett, "Sir Harry Atkinson and the Conservative Faction in New Zealand Politics, 1879-1890," *New Zealand Journal of History* 2:2 (1968): 135-6.

<sup>8</sup> Noel G. Butlin, "Colonial Socialism in Australia, 1860-1900," in *The State and Economic Growth*, ed. Hugh Aitken (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1959), 26-78; James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Penguin Press, 1996), 375.

<sup>9</sup> Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland: Penguin Press, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (Melbourne: Kibble Books, 1978); Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991); David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals: The Years of Power, 1891-1912* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988); Keith Sinclair, "The Legislation of the Liberal Party, 1891-1898," in *Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics*, ed. Robert Chapman (Auckland: Dobbie Press, 1961), 11-17; Robert Chapman, "The Decline of the Liberals," in *Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics*, ed. Robert Chapman (Auckland: Dobbie Press, 1961), 18-24. According to Marian Sawer, social liberals believed in ‘state intervention that increased rather than reduced liberty ... [and] that the “real freedom” of the individual could only be achieved through identification with a collective will oriented to the common good’. See Marian Sawer, *The Ethical State? Social Liberalism in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 57.

large population.<sup>11</sup> The resurgence of neoliberalism in recent years has further politicised the ownership of the 'liberal' tradition. Australian academics and commentators such as Melleuish and Paul Kelly have sought to reclaim the mantle of liberalism for free trade politicians and theorists such as George Reid and Bruce Smith.<sup>12</sup> Melleuish is particularly critical of Deakinite liberals for having lambasted their free trade opponents as 'conservatives'.<sup>13</sup>

Despite these difficulties, a convenient minimum definition of conservatism can be found by defining it in relation to the status quo. Hayden White's analysis of the implicit biases and subjectivities that underlie the writing of history are useful here. Building upon Mannheim's analysis of ideology, White suggested that conservatives are 'suspicious of programmatic transformations of the status quo' and 'inclined to imagine historical evolution as a progressive elaboration of the institutional structure that currently prevails, which structure they regard as a "utopia"'. Rather than opposing change entirely, conservatives envision it as occurring via 'plantlike gradualizations' that do not fundamentally alter or challenge the 'structural relationships' upon which society is based.<sup>14</sup> Whilst this may seem to strip the term 'conservative' of any comparative or analytic value, it is actually an acknowledgement that conservatism is neither static nor universal. Rather, it is a sentiment, a framework for

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<sup>11</sup> Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 20-21; A. J. Reitsma, *Trade Protection in Australia* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1960), 7; W. A. Sinclair, *The Process of Economic Development in Australia* (Melbourne: Cheshire Publishing, 1976), 94-95; Andrew Leigh, "Trade Liberalisation and the Australian Labor Party," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 48:4 (2002): 489-90; John Lonie, "From Liberal to Liberal: The Emergence of the Liberal Party and Australian Capitalism, 1900-45," in *Critical Essays in Australian Politics*, ed. Graeme Duncan (Melbourne: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1978), 54-55.

<sup>12</sup> See for example Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: Power, Politics, and Business in Australia* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994); Gregory Melleuish, *Cultural Liberalism in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Melleuish, *A Short History of Australian Liberalism*, vii; Melleuish, "Australian Liberalism," in *Liberalism and the Australian Federation*, ed. J. R. Nethercote (Riverwood: Federation Press, 2001), 28-41.

<sup>14</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 22-25; Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, 1946), 104.

mediating change through the guidelines of tradition, which varies by region, timeframe, and above all historical context.

Australasian conservatism in the nineteenth century, then, can be understood emphasizing two main concerns: preserving the large landed estates of the upper class from radical land reform, and mitigating the effects of the expanding franchise. The question of land reform, perhaps the major political issue in the second half of the nineteenth century, was resolved by the passing of legislation in each country that was intended to break up large estates for closer settlement.<sup>15</sup> The question of the franchise, and the potential impact of the radical demands that the newly enfranchised might have on the state, had a much more transformative and long-lasting effect on conservative ideology in Australasia.

## **CONSTRUCTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND ‘NON-PARTY’ POLITICAL LANGUAGE**

Conservatism evolved two intertwined ideas in the late nineteenth century to contain the threat posed by the expanding electorate – the ‘citizen’ and ‘non-party’. These two ideas became central to how conservatives defined themselves in the first half of the twentieth century, and were a vital component of the mass conservative movements that arose during the Depression. Intertwined with the development and usage of ‘citizen’ and ‘non-party’ were words and phrases like ‘Empire’, ‘nation’, ‘liberty’, and ‘British tradition’. These ideas formed part of a political language used by conservatives to present an image of objective reality, but which in reality limited the perceptions of its speakers to the bounds of that language. They carried implied meaning for those who understood them, and they provided

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<sup>15</sup> The success of legislation intended to break up the landed estates is debated; see Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 96-97; Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, 86-94, 102, 142-3; Sinclair, "The Legislation of the Liberal Party, 1891-1898," 13, 15-17; Steven Eldred-Grigg, "Whatever Happened to the Gentry? The Large Landowners of Ashburton County, 1890-1896," *New Zealand Journal of History* 11:1 (1977): 3-27.

the justification for ostracising or delegitimising those who espoused ideas that were deemed to lie outside the bounds of conservative opinion. This language also demonstrated the perennial behaviour of conservatives as presenting their ideas and policies as ‘national’ and ‘non-sectional’ in nature, as opposed to the parochial and self-interested beliefs of their opponents. This naturalisation of conservative values was an evolving process, which will be highlighted throughout this chapter.

The ‘citizen’ is the staple figure in the rhetoric of most conservative parties and leagues within the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He or she (most typically codified by the patriarchal *he*) is a figure heavily steeped in the values and traditions of British society; he is respectable, genteel, and God-fearing, and he possesses a healthy respect for British political institutions and the monarchy. He is economically self-reliant and individualistic, and he exercises his political franchise with care and consideration. Charitable and good-natured, he is always willing to help those less fortunate than himself – provided that they are worthy of that help. In that vein, whilst he may grudgingly accept some forms of state pensions or unemployment insurance – especially in the colonies, where a certain degree of developmental pragmatism is part of the status quo – he shudders at the thought that the state might provide succour those who are unwilling to help themselves. But most importantly, he recognises that the rights he enjoys as a citizen come with a responsibility to protect and uphold those rights, whether at a community, national, or imperial level. It is only by fulfilling this unwritten contract that he can assume the mantle of good citizenship.

The importance of the ‘citizen’ to the evolution of conservatism in the Tasman world cannot be overstated. Keith McClelland and Sonya Rose argued that the notion of ‘good citizenship’ was unconsciously elucidated by conservatives as a means of addressing the potentially

transformative powers of the broadening electorate. By extolling the ‘values of good citizenship’, in particular regarding the sense of reciprocal responsibilities with the state, they hoped to dampen the electoral demands of the newly enfranchised and undercut popular support for radical legislative reforms.<sup>16</sup> But defining ‘good citizenship’ was not a top-down process enforced by an elite tier of conservative politicians and the bourgeoisie. It was an organic response by various political and societal forces to the dramatic transformations of the fin de siècle, including churches and religious associations, educationalists, imperialists and youth organisations.<sup>17</sup> Damen Ward demonstrated how the language of ‘constitutionalism’ was used by settlers and the press in South Australia and New Zealand to justify a variety of political positions.<sup>18</sup> This language was expressed most often through public meetings, which were a significant form of political ceremony inherited from Britain: they followed a standard protocol that involved a series of speeches followed by formal resolutions and deputations which were used to convey ‘respectable’ public opinion to political officials.<sup>19</sup> Constitutionalism was ‘the defining language of political reform in mid-nineteenth century Australia’ according to Mark McKenna, and it drew on such elements as ‘balanced government, trial by jury, a free Press, responsible government and the right to resist arbitrary rule, tyranny, corruption and patronage, and, if necessary, to threaten separation in order to achieve the perceived rights of free-born Britons.’<sup>20</sup> Judith Brett argued that the term ‘citizenship’ was largely captured by non-labour forces during the twentieth

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<sup>16</sup> Keith McClelland and Sonya Rose, "Citizenship and Empire, 1867 - 1928," in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 284-5.

<sup>17</sup> For a good discussion of the fin de siècle, see Mikulas Teich and Roy Porter, ed. *Fin De Siècle and Its Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> Damen Ward, "Colonial Communication: Creating Settler Public Opinion in Crown Colony South Australia and New Zealand," in *Imperial Communication: Australia, Britain, and the British Empire C. 1830-50*, ed. Simon J. Potter (London: Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 2004), 21-35.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-21.

<sup>20</sup> Mark McKenna, "A History for Our Time? The Idea of the People in Australian Democracy," *History Compass* 1:1 (2003): 7. See also Mark McKenna, *The Captive Republic: A History of Republicanism in Australia 1788-1996* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

century and imbued with moral as well as political dimensions. A true citizen served the national interest first and foremost, rather than the sectional interests of a particular class or creed.<sup>21</sup>

An important part of this process was the emergence of a wide variety of right-wing leagues in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These leagues provided an outlet for exercising political responsibility through participation in voluntary associations.<sup>22</sup> The importance of voluntary political participation is demonstrated in the failure of the British Royal Colonial Institute to achieve a monopoly over imperial propaganda in the nineteenth century. The Institute was founded in 1869 as a centre for imperial and colonial studies. In 1886 it tried, without success, to unite various right-wing leagues into 'a great central institution for Empire study and propaganda.' John Mackenzie believed that its failure 'prevented imperial propaganda from becoming institutionally ossified'.<sup>23</sup> However, more fundamentally, it also reflected the importance of voluntary participation as a means of exercising political and moral individualism.

The emphasis on voluntary participation was linked to the second trope of 'non-party'. If a good citizen was meant to exercise his political judgment in a reasoned and unbiased way – as the tenets of individualism dictated – he required complete independence from rigid or coercive organisational structures that imposed collective rules, behaviours, or ideas. Right-wing leagues provided one mechanism for this independence: they were a space where conservatives of like minds could meet and share ideas, and a means by which those ideas

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<sup>21</sup> Judith Brett, "Retrieving the Partisan History of Australian Citizenship," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 36:3 (2001), 423-37.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 431-4.

<sup>23</sup> John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 148.



could be communicated to political representatives and the public in the hopes of effecting political or cultural change. At the same time, they preserved the participants from the ‘taint’ of politics, replete as it was with the connotations of back-room deals, self-serving motives, questionable alliances, nepotism, and above all compromise. By positioning themselves as ‘non-party’, right-wing leagues established a dichotomic language between themselves and the world of politics: their motives were clean and pure, whereas politics was full of the selfish and the greedy; their methods were voluntaristic and rational, whilst politicians squabbled and bickered amongst themselves; and their ideals were classless and nationally-focused, unlike the sectarian and parochial policies of parties. Non-party leagues also allowed conservatives to exercise their political judgment without challenging the status quo; indeed, like an unofficial extra-parliamentary arm of the right, they tended to reinforce conservative hegemony by promoting the political, economic and moral values of colonial conservatism. This allowed right-wing leagues to present themselves as apolitical, regardless of how fluent they were in the political language of conservatism.

The large number of pro-Empire leagues that emerged during the height of imperial fervour at the turn of the century were of particular significance in Australia and New Zealand. These included the Liberty and Property Defence League, the Primrose League, the Imperial Federation League, the British Empire League, the League of the Empire, and the Overseas Club.<sup>24</sup> These leagues utilised several techniques which became standard practice amongst future right-wing leagues. Their memberships were typically based on a small coterie of dedicated activists surrounded by a larger circle of affiliates and sympathisers. They accomplished their goals through a combination of social functions, public education, the

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<sup>24</sup> For an overview of the various right-wing leagues that arose in Britain at this time, see Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 149-158.

widespread circulation of printed and visual propaganda, and parliamentary lobbying. The Liberty and Property Defence League, for example, maintained an ongoing correspondence with a Sydney gentleman's group named the 'Australian Club', and its publications were widely circulated by booksellers in major cities across the Tasman world.<sup>25</sup> The New South Wales branch of the British Empire League was instrumental in making Empire Day an official national holiday in 1905.<sup>26</sup> The League of the Empire established branches in Tasmania, South Australia and New Zealand by 1904.<sup>27</sup> Its main aim was to foster imperial sentiment through education, which it did through a series of colonial conferences in London from 1907. It also produced a series of textbooks and atlases for use in elementary and secondary schools, and established a 'Comrades Correspondence Branch' which facilitated connections between 30000 students across the Empire.<sup>28</sup>

Women's Empire leagues played an important part in the propagation of imperial sentiment. The Victoria League, which was founded in London in April 1901, was the most prominent in Australia and New Zealand.<sup>29</sup> A Tasmanian branch of the Victoria League was established in 1903 followed by one in Otago in 1905, and by the end of the Great War there were

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<sup>25</sup> *Report of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Liberty and Property Defence League* (London: Liberty and Property Defence League, 1887), 47; Moore, *The Right Road*, 16-17.

<sup>26</sup> Maurice French, "'One People, One Destiny' - a Question of Loyalty: The Origins of Empire Day in New South Wales, 1900-1905," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 61:4 (1975): 242. For a summary of its parent league in Britain, see Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 151-2.

<sup>27</sup> *Colonist*, 21 July 1903, 3; *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 25 May 1904, 43; *Advertiser*, 9 July 1904, 10; Helen Jones, "George, Madeline Rees (1851-1931)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/george-madeline-rees-6296>.

<sup>28</sup> Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 155-6.

<sup>29</sup> Similar organisations included the Canadian Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire and the South African Guild of Loyal Women; see Julia Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000); Elizabeth van Heyningen and Pat Merrett, "'The Healing Touch': The Guild of Loyal Women of South Africa 1900-1912," *South African Historical Journal* 47:1 (2003): 30-38; Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

branches in most Australian states and major New Zealand cities.<sup>30</sup> The process of branch formation was given a boost by a tour of the Dominions between 1909 and 1911 by London League Secretary Meriel Talbot, who stressed the importance of personal ties in binding the Empire together.<sup>31</sup> This imperial network was important for fostering mutual hospitality: headquarters in London regularly entertained visitors from the colonies and introduced them to respectable society, whilst the Antipodean branches welcomed immigrants from Britain and assisted their transition to colonial life.<sup>32</sup> Lantern slide lectures and British literature were also distributed to the colonies, and a penpal scheme between British and colonial children was established.<sup>33</sup>

Women's Empire leagues practised what Katie Pickles called 'female imperialism'. This employed the gendered role of women in the promotion of the British Empire through 'hospitality and socialising in the 'private' female world, to the support of immigration and education.'<sup>34</sup> Apart from being an example of 'acceptable' public activity, Empire leagues provided an outlet for the political aspirations of newly enfranchised women that had previously been limited to temperance movements. Elizabeth van Heyningen and Pat Merrett asserted that:

The war ... offered loyalist women the first real opportunity to engage themselves politically and to speak out on public platforms without incurring male hostility. Not only was an expression of loyalism acceptable; women could argue that they brought special womanly gifts to reinforcing the bonds

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<sup>30</sup> Katie Pickles, "A Link in 'the Great Chain of Empire Friendship': The Victoria League in New Zealand," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33:1 (2005): 36-37; Sarah Dowling, "Female Imperialism: The Victoria League in Canterbury, New Zealand, 1910-2003" (MA diss., University of Canterbury, 2004). 20-21.

<sup>31</sup> Eliza Riedi, "Women, Gender, and the Promotion of Empire: The Victoria League, 1901-1914," *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002): 593.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 582-4; Dowling, "Female Imperialism," 55-78.

<sup>33</sup> Riedi, "Women, Gender, and the Promotion of Empire," 585-8.

<sup>34</sup> Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity*, 16; Pickles, "A Link in 'the Great Chain of Empire Friendship'," 26.

of Empire and healing the wounds of war. They were the peacemakers who could 'calm the troubled spirits and heal the broken hearts'.<sup>35</sup>

This focus on moral authority also allowed such leagues to maintain a non-partisan stance whilst implicitly reinforcing conservative political and cultural ideals. As Eliza Riedi argued, women's leagues avoided any overt association with political parties and contentious political issues. Instead, they focused their efforts on activities that could be considered extensions of the 'domestic sphere', including a war fund for widows, orphans and soldiers' graves in South Africa, and affiliating with schools to encourage the adoption of an Empire-centric school curriculum.<sup>36</sup>

The spread of women's Empire leagues to Australasia intersected with a domestic phenomenon which Marian Simms termed 'conservative feminism'.<sup>37</sup> This was partially a continuation of the tradition of the women's suffrage movement, which aimed to organise the political energies of diverse women's organisations and to educate women about politics, leadership and public speaking. Conservative women's organisations such as temperance unions played a significant part in this process.<sup>38</sup> Once women had secured the franchise in Australia and New Zealand, many suffragists redirected their energies into harnessing this voting power and directing it towards furthering the position of women in society and politics. In Australia, this led to the formation of conservative lobby groups such as the

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<sup>35</sup> van Heyningen, "'The Healing Touch'," 27; Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power*, 90-91.

<sup>36</sup> Riedi, "Women, Gender, and the Promotion of Empire," 576-9, 585-6; Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 49, 90-91.

<sup>37</sup> Marian Simms, "Conservative Feminism in Australia: A Case Study of Feminist Ideology," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2:3 (1979): 305-18.

<sup>38</sup> For some good introductory literature on conservative women and the suffrage movement, see Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988), in particular chapters 3 and 4; Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Women's Non-Party Association and the Australian Women's National League.<sup>39</sup> Women's organisations in New Zealand tended to favour more progressive objectives – such as the campaign of the Women's National Council for equal rights in marriage and employment – however the Women's Christian Temperance Union also included a strong conservative strand well into the twentieth century.<sup>40</sup> Like the women's Empire leagues, these groups sought to channel the energies of newly enfranchised women into 'acceptable' avenues that did not overtly challenge the status quo.

Some of the pro-Empire groups that emerged during this period directed their attention toward imperial defence. The earliest of these, the Navy League, was the product of the 'naval revival' between 1889 and 1914 that stressed the importance of a strong British Navy as both a symbol of national honour and a guarantor of imperial security. The Navy League soon spread to Australia and New Zealand through leading businessmen, farmers and ship company owners who were keen to promote imperial sentiment and to preserve the security of the imperial waterways upon which their export-driven livelihoods depended.<sup>41</sup> Whilst the Navy League looked to the sea, the National Service League championed the defence of the

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<sup>39</sup> See for example Margaret Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women: Federation to 1949* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2004), Chapter 3; Margaret Fitzherbert, "Alfred Deakin and the Australian Women's National League," in *Liberalism and the Australian Federation*, ed. J. R. Nethercote (Sydney: Federation Press, 2001), 98-112; Marian Quartly, "Defending 'the Purity of Home Life' against Socialism: The Founding Years of the Australian Women's National League," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 50:2 (2004): 178-93; Judith Smart, "'Principles Do Not Alter, but the Means by Which We Attain Them Change': The Australian Women's National League and Political Citizenship, 1921-1945," *Women's History Review* 15:1 (2006): 51-68.

<sup>40</sup> Jeanne Wood, *A Challenge Not a Truce: A History of the New Zealand Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1885-1985* (Nelson: New Zealand Women's Christian Temperance Union Inc., 1985); Sarah Dalton, "The Pure in Heart: The New Zealand Women's Christian Temperance Union and Social Purity, 1885-1930" (MA diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 1993).

<sup>41</sup> W. Mark Hamilton, "The 'New Navalism' and the British Navy League, 1895-1914," *Mariner's Mirror* 64:1 (1978): 37-38; Anne Summers, "The Character of Edwardian Nationalism: Three Popular Leagues," in *Nationalist and Racist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914*, ed. Paul Kennedy and Anthony Nicholls (London: MacMillan, 1981), 68-69; Matthew Johnson, "The Liberal Party and the Navy League in Britain before the Great War," *Twentieth Century British History* 22:2 (2011): 141; Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 154; Jim McAloon, "Militarist Campaigns in New Zealand c 1899-1914: Trade and Imperialism" (paper presented at the New Zealand Historical Association Conference, Wellington, 1996).

land. It was formed in 1901 in response to the lengthy and expensive Boer War to promote compulsory military training.<sup>42</sup> The National Service League inspired the formation of National Defence Leagues in Australia and New Zealand, and the three movements regularly traded correspondence and publications.<sup>43</sup>

The various Empire leagues provided one of the key channels for the dispersion of conservative ideals. Mackenzie described the British groups as 'middle-class and elitist', whose function was to provide a vehicle 'by which the committed elite could establish contact among themselves'.<sup>44</sup> This was also the case in the Tasman world, where the predominantly farming, business and professional membership of the leagues often tended to overlap. The inaugural executive of the Canterbury Victoria League in 1910, for example, contained several current or previous members of the local Navy League executive, including prominent lawyer A. E. G. Rhodes.<sup>45</sup> The leagues also cooperated with each other wherever possible; the Australian British Empire League was recognised as the representative of the Victoria League in New South Wales, and Lady Dixson held prominent positions in both organisations.<sup>46</sup> The ideological continuity provided by the long-standing and overlapping membership of the Empire leagues provided the ideological foundation upon which subsequent right-wing movements were built.

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<sup>42</sup> Summers, "The Character of Edwardian Nationalism," 69-70, 74-75; Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 154-155.

<sup>43</sup> See the Australian National Defence League NSW Division papers, 2DRL/1098, AWM.

<sup>44</sup> Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 148.

<sup>45</sup> *Press*, 22 March 1910, 7; *Press*, 5 May 1910, 8; McAloon, "Militarist Campaigns in New Zealand," 8. The Victoria and Navy Leagues in Canterbury cooperated on several ventures over the following decades, including a long-running essay competition for primary and secondary schools; see Dowling, "Female Imperialism," 72-73.

<sup>46</sup> Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power*, 92; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 August 1911, 13; B. Cook, "Dixson, Sir Hugh (1841-1926)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/dixson-sir-hugh-5983>.

## THE RISE OF ‘POPULAR CONSERVATISM’

By providing a venue for conservatives to share ideas, the various right-wing leagues of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were also helping to transform the ideological and structural nature of conservatism in Australia and New Zealand. This transformation can be broadly understood through David Orwin’s models of ‘patrician’ and ‘popular’ conservatism. Orwin argued that nineteenth century patrician conservatives survived by aligning their interests with middle class liberals in the defence of individualism and property against the growing power of organised labour.<sup>47</sup> Whilst Orwin’s image of patrician conservatives as a British-inspired landed gentry is somewhat antiquated, the consolidation of conservative and liberal tendencies into a two-party system in the early twentieth century is still a vital part of understanding the evolution of Australasian conservatism. To conservatives and liberals alike, the collectivist ideology of organised labour and its parliamentary counterparts seemed to threaten the fundamental nature of society: it contradicted the basic tenets of economics by undermining the healthy competition and individual self-reliance of the market economy.

The chief vessel of popular conservatism in New Zealand was the Reform Party. It began as a loose coalition of individualist and anti-socialist groups in the 1890s including the Farmers’ Union, the Political Reform League, and the Primrose League-inspired National Association.<sup>48</sup> By 1909 this coalition had formally arranged itself behind William Massey as a unified opposition party. Reform positioned itself as a defender of property, the rule of law and the free market as opposed to the ‘socialistic’ policies of the Liberal Party, although

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<sup>47</sup> David Orwin, "Conservatism in New Zealand" (PhD diss., University of Auckland, 1999), 93-131.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-99.

Massey was quite comfortable with the developmentalist ethos of the nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup> At the same time the Liberals were entering a period of protracted decline, and a Reform government took power in 1912.<sup>50</sup> The 1913 great strike furthered the consolidation of conservative forces in New Zealand through the cooperation of the state and private employers' and farmers' in combating the strikers.<sup>51</sup> This cemented Reform's position as the dominant party in New Zealand and discredited the Liberals' concessions to labour. It also hardened the lines between the propertied classes and organised labour, the latter of whom began to increasingly redirect their energies towards the nascent Labour Party.<sup>52</sup>

The consolidation of popular conservatism in Australia commenced with the fusion of both liberal and conservative political parties: Deakin's Protectionists and George Reid's Free Traders. Prior to their merger, the Protectionists favoured alliances with Labor due to their shared commitment to state intervention in the economy to further Australian economic interests.<sup>53</sup> Despite this, the Protectionists merged with the Free Trade Party in 1909 to form a loose Federal organisation known as the Commonwealth Liberal Party. The causes of this

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 100-5.

<sup>50</sup> For an account of the rise of the Reform Party, see L. C. Webb, "Rise of the Reform Party: A History of Party Politics in New Zealand between 1910 and 1920" (MA diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 1928).; W. J. Gardner, "The Reform Party," in *Ends and Means in New Zealand Politics*, ed. Robert Chapman (Auckland: Dobbie Press, 1961), 25-33; Michael Bassett, *Three Party Politics in New Zealand, 1911-1931* (Auckland: Historical Publications, 1982), 3-14. On the decline of the Liberal Party, see Chapman, "The Decline of the Liberals," 18-24; Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, 309-60.

<sup>51</sup> For a good introduction to the 1913 strikes, see Melanie Nolan, ed. *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005); Erik Olssen, *The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour, 1908-14* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). See also V. Hughes, "Massey's Cossacks – the Farmers and the 1913 Strike" (University of Auckland, 1977). The literature on employers' organisations in New Zealand is sparse, but there are a few good overviews: see Selwyn Parker, *Wealthmakers: A History of the Northern Employers' and Manufacturers Associations* (Auckland: Employers & Manufacturers Association (Northern) Inc, 2005); J. H. Millar, *The Merchants Paved the Way: The First Hundred Years of the Wellington Chamber of Commerce* (Wellington: Reed, 1956); Kynan Gentry, *Raising the Capital: An Illustrated History of 100 Years of the Wellington Regional Chambers of Commerce* (Wellington: Raupo Publishing, 2006).

<sup>52</sup> Jim McAloon, "The Making of the New Zealand Ruling Class," in *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand*, ed. Melanie Nolan (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005), 234; Olssen, *The Red Feds*, 210-23.

<sup>53</sup> Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 149-50.



'Fusion', as it became known, are a subject of debate amongst historians. Judith Brett argued that the Protectionists became increasingly alienated by the rigid caucus structure and party pledges of Labor, whilst Ian Marsh suggested that the growing electoral dominance of Labor drove the Protectionists to ally with Free Trade.<sup>54</sup> Peter Loveday offered a number of causes of Fusion, including the increasing independence of Labor, the popularity of Free Trade's new anti-socialist brand, the decreasing electoral strength of the Protectionists, and the vulnerability of their remaining seats to challenge from both sides.<sup>55</sup>

The Protectionists may also have been won over by the impressive campaigning abilities of right-wing non-party groups. For example, Margaret Fitzherbert highlighted the role that the Australian Women's National League played in promoting the unified anti-Labor cause.<sup>56</sup> One particular organisation which attracted national attention was the Kyabram Reform Movement. It arose in Victoria in 1901 on a wave of middle class dissatisfaction with public expenditure by the State government and its failure to reduce the number of politicians after Federation. When the State Premier refused to accede to their demands, the Kyabram Reform Movement embarked upon a massive membership drive in the hopes that its sheer voting power could elect a government more inclined to its ideals. By late 1902 it had over ten thousand members and two hundred branches across Victoria, as well as the support of the State opposition leader. In October 1902 the opposition won a sweeping victory on the back

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<sup>54</sup> Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 19-25; Brett, "Class, Party and the Foundations of the Australian Party System: A Revisionist Interpretation," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 37:1 (2002): 39-56; Brett, "'The Fortunes of My Own Little Band': The Dilemma of Deakin and the Liberal Protectionists," in *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System*, ed. Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009), 23-44; Ian Marsh, "The Federation Decade," in *Liberalism and the Australian Federation*, ed. J. R. Nethercote (Sydney: Federation Press, 2001), 93-97.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Loveday, "The Federal Parties," in *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, ed. Peter Loveday et al. (Marrickville: Hale & Iremonger, 1977), 449-52. Paul Strangio also identifies the declining electoral strength of the Protectionist Party; see Paul Strangio, "Introduction: From Confusion to Stability," in *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System*, ed. Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>56</sup> Fitzherbert, "Alfred Deakin and the Australian Women's National League," 98-112.

of this mass support and immediately began reducing the numbers in parliament and the salaries of public sector employees.<sup>57</sup> The dramatic success of the Kyabram Reform Movement had a lasting impact on conservative ideology, and would be remembered by the citizens' movements on both sides of the Tasman thirty years later.

## **THE GREAT WAR AND THE GREAT 'OTHER'**

The Great War helped to solidify the position of popular conservatism by bolstering the forces of the political right. One of the ways in which this occurred was the emergence of thousands of new patriotic societies and fundraising clubs on both sides of the Tasman. In Australia these included the Adelaide Mayor's Patriotic Fund, the St Kilda Patriotic Society, and the Young Workers' Patriotic Guild. Patriotic societies in New Zealand included the Wellington War Relief Association, the Canterbury Patriotic Fund, and the Otago and Southland Women's Patriotic Association.<sup>58</sup> Their efforts often overlapped with those of the pre-war Empire leagues; for example, the Canterbury branch of the Victoria League sent care packages to the front and raised money for the purchase of ambulances and machine guns. They also directed their resources into soldier rehabilitation and remembrance.<sup>59</sup>

The Great War provided these conservatives with something they had previously lacked – a single, powerful, and seemingly pervasive enemy in the form of Germany and its expatriate citizens. Whilst pre-war conservatives were not averse to levelling criticism against

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<sup>57</sup> Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 21-22; Frank Bongiorno, *The People's Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition 1875-1915* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 55-57; John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth 1890-1910* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976), 177; William Henry Bossence, *Kyabram* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1963); Don Anderson, *The Kyabram Reform Movement of 1902* (Kyabram: Kyabram Free Press, 1989).

<sup>58</sup> "Women Fundraising for Belgium, First World War," New Zealand History online, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/womens-fundraising>. See also Sarah Jane Piesse, "Patriotic Welfare in Otago: A History of the Otago Patriotic and General Welfare Association 1914-1950 and the Otago Provincial Patriotic Council 1939-" (MA diss., University of Otago, 1981).

<sup>59</sup> Dowling, "Female Imperialism," 40-54.

‘socialistic’ policies or ‘foreign’ elements, the ‘German menace’ assumed a central position in a way that previous enemies had not by providing an ‘other’ against which they could define themselves. For example, Anti-German Leagues in Australia and New Zealand called for a boycott of German shops and goods, the removal of government officials and educators of German heritage, and the confiscation of German property.<sup>60</sup> The rhetoric expressed at their public meetings was often heated and vitriolic:

I have no patience ... with the public man who sympathises with a German because his window has been broken (Wild applause.) When I hear of a man doing a thing like that my mind runs back to the murderous fumes of France and the diabolical outrages of Belgium. ... The Germans don't fight fairly; It's not war they are waging – it's just an instrument of hell to ruin the civilised world (Cheers.)<sup>61</sup>

This ideological ‘othering’ became a standard which future conservatives would build upon and adapt, as they substituted or incorporated new enemies such as Irish Catholicism and Sinn Fein, organised labour, and eventually communism.

A Coalition Government organised New Zealand for the war effort by introducing conscription under the Military Service Act 1916. This decision, whilst controversial, avoided the polarising conscription debates that divided Australia later in the war and helped to solidify popular conservatism. However, New Zealand conservatives were given an opportunity to share ideas and techniques by attempting to coordinate the efforts of the nation's multitude of patriotic societies. One of the earliest attempts at coordinating the several hundred patriotic societies in New Zealand was a proposal put forth by C. P. Skerrett,

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<sup>60</sup> For some sample literature, see Alexander Trapeznik, "New Zealand's Perceptions of the Russian Revolution of 1917," *Revolutionary Russia* 19, no. 1 (2006), 63-77; Andrew Francis, "'To Be Truly British We Must Be Anti-German': Patriotism, Citizenship and Anti-Alienism in New Zealand During the Great War" (PhD diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 2009), 42-52; Frank Cain, "Some Aspects of Australian-Soviet Relations from 1800-1960," *Journal of Communist Studies* 7:4 (1991): 501-21.

<sup>61</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 September 1915, 10.

a prominent Wellington lawyer (and later a Chief Justice), at a conference in September 1915. His proposal was ultimately rejected because of a clause that required solvent societies to contribute to the funding of insolvent ones.<sup>62</sup> A subsequent conference called by the Minister of Internal Affairs in February 1916 proved more successful, and a Federation of New Zealand Patriotic War Relief Societies was created to provide uniformity in the granting of relief funds. Each of its constituent patriotic societies nominated a representative to a central Advisory Board, which included L. O. H. Tripp, partner of the law firm Chapman and Tripp; J. J. Dougall, Commandant of the Canterbury Citizens' Defence Corps and a member of the Navy League; and J. T. Paul, a right-wing Labour politician and a former commander of the National Defence League.<sup>63</sup> The Society worked solidly throughout the war, and continued to dispense its considerable funds on soldier rehabilitation after the armistice.<sup>64</sup>

The campaign for national efficiency in New Zealand also brought like-minded conservatives together. This campaign arose out of the Great War's unprecedented demands on New Zealand's manpower and material reserves. In February 1917 the government appointed a National Efficiency Board to consider the means for organising the nation's industries and regulating competing demands for military and industrial manpower.<sup>65</sup> Its chairman, William Ferguson, was a Wellington engineer who had played a leading role in the development of

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<sup>62</sup> L. O. H. Tripp, *The War Effort of New Zealand* (Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1923), 177. Skerrett's proposal is detailed in the *Wanganui Chronicle*, 22 September 1915, 6.

<sup>63</sup> Tripp, *The War Effort of New Zealand*, 180-2; *Colonist*, 19 February 1916, 4; *Marlborough Express*, 4 March 1916, 2; *Evening Post*, 4 May 1916, 8; Letter from J. J. Dougall to Minister of Defence, 19 November 1914, Rifle Clubs - Christchurch Citizens Defence Corps, 1914 – 1919, AAYS 8638 AD1/1035, ANZ; *Press*, 24 May 1915, 9; Erik Olssen, "Paul, John Thomas (1874–1964)," *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3p16/1>.

<sup>64</sup> *Evening Post*, 9 October 1919, 6.

<sup>65</sup> John Martin, "Blueprint for the Future? 'National Efficiency' and the First World War," in *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, the Allies and the First World War*, ed. John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (Auckland: Exisle Publishing, 2007), 520.

the capital's harbour facilities.<sup>66</sup> He was also a member of the Wellington War Relief Association executive alongside Federation delegate L. O. H. Tripp.<sup>67</sup> Ferguson's colleagues on the Board included prominent businessmen and politicians such as Thomas Moss and J. H. Gunson, as well as Dunedin sheepfarmer and longstanding member of the Victorian and Navy Leagues, James Begg.<sup>68</sup> By June 1917 the Board had produced a detailed list of recommendations to government based on its ranking of New Zealand's industries in terms of their 'essentiality'.<sup>69</sup> However, apart from implementing restrictions on the import, manufacture and sale of liquor, the government dismissed the recommendations of the Board. As a result its work became increasingly marginalised, and it dissolved shortly after the war ended.<sup>70</sup>

Despite its lack of impact on government, the National Efficiency Board provided valuable experience to its members. It gave them a national stage upon which to develop and hone their ideas on the operation and management of New Zealand industries. These ideas in turn contributed to a wider conservative dialogue on cultivating a harmonious relationship between employers and employees in the interests of national development. Unlike the employers' and farmers' association of which many of the Board's members were a part, the National Efficiency Board required at least a token effort to balance the interests of capital and labour in the interests of a perceived 'common good'. However, their recommendations almost always favoured employers' interests, as is suggested by the Board's desire to modify

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 521; F. Nigel Stace, "Ferguson, William (1852–1935)," Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3f4/1>.

<sup>67</sup> *Evening Post*, 4 March 1916, 9. Ferguson resigned from this position upon commencing work with the Board; see *Evening Post*, 7 February 1917, 6.

<sup>68</sup> Martin, "Blueprint for the Future?" 520, 526; Letter from Marjorie Macandrew, Secretary of the Otago Victoria League, to Mrs Begg, 26 May 1960; Obituary in the Otago Daily Times [undated], James Begg papers, privately held.

<sup>69</sup> David Littlewood, "'Should He Serve?' The Military Service Boards' Operations in the Wellington Provincial District, 1916-1918" (MA diss., Massey University, 2010), 32-33.

<sup>70</sup> Martin, "Blueprint for the Future?" 521-30.

or suspend industrial awards for the duration of the war.<sup>71</sup> Linking such recommendations to the war effort allowed the Board to disguise them under a smokescreen of the 'public interest'.<sup>72</sup> Together, the National Efficiency Board and the Federation of New Zealand Patriotic War Relief Societies provided key individuals on the right with the experience, the contacts and the ideological repository to form right-wing leagues after the war.

In Australia, the two conscription referenda of 1916-1917 were a crucial factor in the consolidation of popular conservatism and the two-party system. The referenda, and the general strike that punctuated them in 1917, exposed several underlying divisions in Australian society.<sup>73</sup> Opponents of conscription included trade unions, Catholics, socialist minorities such as the Industrial Workers of the World, and most of the Labor Party. Supporters of conscription included Labor Prime Minister William Hughes and a small coterie within the Labor Party, urban businessmen, newspaper proprietors, and the Commonwealth Liberal Party.<sup>74</sup> Whilst the referenda failed, they drove Hughes and 24 members of the Federal caucus into a merger with the Commonwealth Liberal Party. The resulting 'Nationalist Party' solidified the position of popular conservatism as the new status quo.<sup>75</sup>

The conscription referenda also provided a major galvanising event for the mobilisation of mass right-wing leagues in Australia. The Loyalist League, which arose during this time, bore

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 524-5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 526.

<sup>73</sup> For a detailed analysis of the strikes, see Robert Bollard, "'The Active Chorus': The Mass Strike of 1917 in Eastern Australia" (PhD diss., Victoria University, 2007).

<sup>74</sup> Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 48; Dan Coward, "The Impact of War on New South Wales: Some Aspects of Social and Political History, 1914-1917" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1974), 367; Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 17-18; Amos, *The New Guard Movement*, 5-7. By this time the Commonwealth Liberal Party had been renamed the 'People's Liberal Party'.

<sup>75</sup> Lonie, "From Liberal to Liberal," 57-59.

many of the hallmarks of the citizens' movements that arose during the Depression. The origins of the Loyalist League lay in the second referendum, and in particular the role that Irish Catholics played in successfully opposing it. Its mastermind was prominent manufacturer Herbert Brookes, who had worked closely with Hughes on the two referenda and had become intimately familiar with those who opposed conscription – in particular, Melbourne Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix.<sup>76</sup> Shortly after the second conscription referendum failed to pass, Brookes began to consider alternate means to combat Mannix and his followers. He found fertile ground for his ideas in Melbourne, and in March 1918 several patriotic leagues appointed representatives to a combined 'Citizens' Loyalist Committee'.<sup>77</sup>

The Citizens' Loyalist Committee drew upon a new rhetorical dichotomy to distinguish between itself and the 'other': 'loyalism' versus 'disloyalism'. Raymond Evans explored this dichotomy in his study of the 'Red Flag Riots' in Queensland in 1919. He argued that the wartime frustrations and disillusionment of returned soldiers was directed against a perceived conspiracy of disloyal forces, which was believed to be the reason why the promises of prosperity awaiting them upon their return had been rudely shattered.<sup>78</sup> However, loyalty and disloyalty were also embedded in the nationalistic and emotional baggage of the home front: those who had supported their country with their bodies, their finances or their votes were loyal, honest, and trustworthy patriots; in contrast, those who had opposed the war or conscription, or who had dared to strike in favour of better conditions when the men at the front needed the fruits of Australian industry so badly, were traitorous and disloyal.

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<sup>76</sup> Alison Patrick, "Brookes, Herbert Robinson (1867–1963)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brookes-herbert-robinson-5372>; Rohan Rivett, *Australian Citizen: Herbert Brookes 1867-1963* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965).

<sup>77</sup> For a full list of members of the Citizens' Loyalist Committee, see Citizens' Loyalist Committee members, item 109, series 21, Herbert and Ivy Brookes papers, MS 1924, NLA.

<sup>78</sup> Ray Evans, "'Some Furious Outbursts of Riot': Returned Soldiers and Queensland's 'Red Flag' Disturbances 1918-1919," *War and Society* 3:2 (1985): 78-80, 90-92; Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988), 187-90.

That there were disloyalists in Australia at all was a source of great consternation for conservatives such as Brookes. Surely Australians, who had time and again proved themselves of good British stock, were clever enough to see through such ruses as those proclaimed by Mannix? The answer, which would become a staple tool for right-wing scapegoating in the future, could only be that a small, insidious group was exploiting the fears and insecurities of their fellow men with their false doctrines. The Citizens' Loyalist Committee contrasted 'the growing disloyalty exhibited by Archbishop Mannix and his followers' with 'the loyal attitude of large numbers of Catholics who have nobly shouldered their responsibilities to the Empire.'<sup>79</sup> This approach deliberately separated the disloyal minority from the 'noble' majority whilst expressing hope that the disloyal few would certainly be as loyal and decent as their fellow countrymen if the traitorous influence was removed. It also demonstrated the shifting nature of the 'other': what had once been a nebulous Germanic fifth column had been replaced with a specific Australian working class threat backed by an international Catholic conspiracy.

The Citizens' Loyalist Committee distinguished itself from previous right-wing leagues through its use of public ceremony and populist rhetoric. A 'Loyalist Demonstration' held on 9 April in the Melbourne Exhibition Hall, which attracted an audience of 40000, included three separate platforms for speakers and the singing of patriotic songs.<sup>80</sup> The two resolutions passed at the meeting were redolent with the new language of loyalism. The first reaffirmed the attendees' 'passionate loyalty' to the British Empire and the ideals of 'liberty, honour, and prosperity' for which Australian soldiers were dying. The second supported the Federal

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<sup>79</sup> *Advertiser*, 23 March 1918, 17.

<sup>80</sup> Circular from Herbert Brookes, 25 March 1918, item 1; Loyalist Demonstration, 9 April 1918, item 13; Loyalist Demonstration Programme, 9 April 1918, item 16, series 21, Herbert and Ivy Brookes papers, MS 1924, NLA; *Argus*, 18 April 1918, 8.



Government in its 'suppression of disloyal utterances, demonstrations, and emblems' whilst affirming that 'the vast majority of Australians are loyal to their country and to the Motherland, and would eagerly support the Government in any measures taken against traitors'.<sup>81</sup> The Committee decide to follow up on the success of the demonstration by establishing a permanent 'Loyalist League', which was launched at a second demonstration on 11 October 1918.<sup>82</sup>

## THE THREAT OF BOLSHEVISM

The event that had the greatest consolidating effect on popular conservatism in both Australia and New Zealand was the Bolshevik Revolution. 'Bolshevism' provided a unifying trope under which the various forces of disloyalism could be grouped. Reverend T. E. Ruth, a leading speaker of the Loyalist League in Victoria, best demonstrated this by linking various forces together into a single 'other':

[N]o Australian obsessed by Sinn Fein spite or anti-British hate should be allowed to befoul the Australian nest with Bolshevik corruption ... Sinn Feinism or Bolshevism or Prussianism or Suffragetism can only be regarded as a stupid excrescence on our Australian life.<sup>83</sup>

Fear of Bolshevism was exacerbated by the economic uncertainty of the post-war years. Rising unemployment and declining wages caused renewed industrial turmoil: Australia lost

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<sup>81</sup> Loyalist Demonstration Programme, 9 April 1918, item 16, series 21, Herbert and Ivy Brookes papers, MS 1924, NLA.

<sup>82</sup> Circular from E. D. Patterson, Secretary of the Citizens' Loyalist Committee, 2 October 1918, item 24; Letter from T. W. Lyttleton to Brookes, 10 October 1918, item 27, series 21, Herbert and Ivy Brookes papers, MS 1924, NLA.

<sup>83</sup> *Revolution or Evolution?* (Melbourne: The Loyalist League of Victoria, 1919), 8, 10. The Loyalist League was a prolific publisher of pamphlets – some of its other titles included *Sinn Fein and Germany* (1919), *The true story of Sinn Fein* (1919), *Industrial sectarianism versus industrial democracy* (1920), and *The Menace of an Irish Republic* (1920).

more days to strikes in 1919 than in any other year until the 1970s.<sup>84</sup> To Australasian employers, working class radicalism at home appeared to have been emboldened by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution and was threatening the very basis of industrial relations. This appeared to be confirmed by the formation of the Australian and New Zealand Communist Parties, the adoption of socialisation planks by the Labour Parties, and the renewed campaigns of the Industrial Workers of the World and the One Big Union movement.<sup>85</sup> The conservative press reflected this increasing paranoia through use of buzz words like 'class war', 'bourgeoisie' and the 'proletariat'.<sup>86</sup> As one anxious business organisation in New Zealand wrote, '[t]here is no question that there exists in this Dominion a small minority of persons, supporters of and agitators for, Bolshevik and I.W.W. principles and propaganda.'<sup>87</sup>

The Bolshevik threat spurred the formation of another mass right-wing organisation that bore many similarities to the citizens' movements. The King and Empire Alliance arose through a coalition of loyalist leagues and patriotic societies in Queensland termed the 'United Loyalist Executive', which participated in a series of xenophobic riots across Brisbane in March 1919 in response to a civil liberties march by the Trades Hall.<sup>88</sup> Inspired by the Queensland example, a group of prominent businessmen, politicians and military officers organised a public meeting in the Sydney Town Hall on 19 July 1920 to form a 'King and Empire

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<sup>84</sup> Humphrey McQueen, "Shoot the Bolshevik! Hang the Profiteer! Reconstructing Australian Capitalism 1918-1921," in *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, ed. E.L. Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (Sydney: ANZ Book Company, 1978), 193.

<sup>85</sup> Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 36; Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 51-52, 73-74; Trapeznik, "New Zealand's Perceptions of the Russian Revolution of 1917," 63-77.

<sup>86</sup> Amanda Gordon, "The Conservative Press and the Russian Revolution," in *Australian Conservatism: Essays in Twentieth Century Political History*, ed. Cameron Hazlehurst (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 45-46.

<sup>87</sup> New Zealand Employers Federation: Seventeenth Annual Report, 27 Sep 1919, Minute book 30 Nov 1917-30 Sep 1925, New Zealand Employers' Federation papers, 2001-129-01/3, ATL.

<sup>88</sup> Evans, "'Some Furious Outbursts of Riot'," 87-89; Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 24-33; Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance*, 44-46, 64-65, 70-72, 186.

Alliance' in New South Wales. Once again, Australia's troubles were pinned on 'a small but organised section of the community taking up an attitude distinctly hostile to constituted authority, distinctly anti-British, and disloyal in the extreme.'<sup>89</sup> Its objects stressed the supremacy of Empire, the cultivation of loyalty and the suppression of disloyalty, which it proclaimed as values that lay above party and religious differences.<sup>90</sup> The Alliance also relied on public ceremony and the attraction of a mass membership. By February 1921 it claimed a membership of 5300, with an additional 10000 members in affiliated groups.<sup>91</sup> Its influence proved far greater during a 'loyalist rally' it organised in the Sydney Town Hall in response to the shredding of a Union Jack on May Day in the Sydney Domain. Attendance was so great that over 15000 individuals had to stand outside the hall.<sup>92</sup> The following morning, a crowd of over 100000 assembled at the Domain and stormed the platforms of the Socialist Labor Party, the Communist Party and the returned soldiers section of the Labor Party.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Reports of Inaugural Meetings* (Sydney: King and Empire Alliance, 1920), 3.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>91</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1921, 14.

<sup>92</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 May 1921, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 39-41.



**Figure 2: The conjoining of 'Bolshevist savagery' with 'German kultur'. Source: *Western Mail*, 20 September 1918, 26.**

## CONSOLIDATION AND FRACTURES

As patrician conservatism evolved to become popular conservatism, so too did the way in which its ideals were portrayed as natural evolve. Whilst such naturalisation was a perennial component of conservatism, popular conservatism made this connection more overt. As its core tenets became part of the status quo, conservatives were able to present their ideology as serving the 'national interest'. Those who differed with the status quo were described as beholden to special or parochial interests, regardless of whether they were revolutionary socialists or labour party members.<sup>94</sup> This conservative worldview represented what Michael

<sup>94</sup> Neville Kirk, "'Australians for Australia': The Right, the Labor Party and Contested Loyalties to Nation and Empire in Australia, 1917 to the Early 1930s," *Labour History* 91 (2006): 95-111; Peter Loveday, "The Liberals' Image of Their Party," in *Australian Conservatism: Essays in Twentieth Century Political History*, ed. Cameron Hazlehurst (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 240-7.

Cathcart termed an 'unwritten constitution' – 'a body of principle and tradition which can never be fully known or articulated, but which defines the grounds upon which political activity may legitimately be undertaken'.<sup>95</sup> Anything that lay outside the acceptable bounds of popular conservative dictum could thus be delegitimised as sectional, disloyal, or seditious. The idea of the 'national interest' formed one of the pillars of popular conservative ideology in Australia and New Zealand during the interwar period, and it would have a strong influence on the citizens' movements during the Depression.

The League of Good Citizenship, which emerged out of the short-lived Directorate of War Propaganda founded by the Federal government in August 1918, demonstrated the consolidation of various popular conservative ideas regarding loyalty, anti-communism and the 'national interest'.<sup>96</sup> Its objects, which could easily be interchanged for those of the four citizens' movements, bear repeating in full:

1. To show that the interests of the community as a whole must precede those of any individual, party or class, and that this common interest is at the present time jeopardised by forces making for disintegration and anarchy.
2. To create and foster a spirit of national unity.
3. To work by educational methods towards the realisation of a constructive policy based on an orderly progress and repudiating revolutionary excess.
4. To show the necessity for increased production and to discuss the problems of private and public ownership; the relations between capital and labour, producers and consumers, and social problems generally in such a spirit as to promote a clear, accurate, and sympathetic understanding of the nature and value of the services of each section of the community.
5. To pursue these objects on strictly non-party and non-sectarian lines.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop*, 165.

<sup>96</sup> Directorate of War Propaganda: General Scheme of Work (1918); Letter from M. M. Threlfall to I. Maclean, Chief Archivist at the Commonwealth Archives Office, 8 March 1962, Directorate of War Propaganda papers, MS 897, NLA; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 1918, 13.

<sup>97</sup> *Objects, League of Good Citizenship: a collection of policy statements and speeches of the league* (Sydney: League of Good Citizenship, 1919).

The League portrayed itself as a vehicle for ‘national unity’, which it believed could be achieved despite divisions of class or party. Such unity lay in the realisation that these divisions, which were being used by a disloyal few to promote sectional strife, were in fact artificial. The needs of opposing forces were not mutually exclusive, and could be reconciled to the benefit of all through educative efforts designed to foster class collaboration and counter seditious propaganda. Such efforts were promoted as ‘strictly non-party’, removing them from the taint of party politics and reinforcing the League’s claim to represent a ‘common interest’. To reinforce this dichotomy of legitimate and illegitimate values, the League released a series of pamphlets directed at a working class audience which contrasted ‘common sense’ and ‘proved methods’ with the ‘destructive’ and ‘revolutionary’ tactics of ‘fanatics and dreamers’.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the rhetoric of national unity, popular conservatism suffered a number of divisions throughout the 1920s. These divisions arose out of the increasingly conflicting interests of rural and urban conservatives. In Australia, a lack of rural political representation and the continued dominance of manufacturing interests in the Nationalist Party led to the formation of a separate Country Party in 1920 which competed for the rural conservative vote.<sup>99</sup> The Country Party drew upon an agrarian yeoman ideology which exalted the economic and cultural supremacy of rural life over the supposedly nasty and parasitic life of the cities. Don Aitkin coined the term ‘countrymindedness’ to describe this widely held set of beliefs about

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<sup>98</sup> *Parliament vs Soviet; To Working Men and Women, League of Good Citizenship: a collection of policy statements and speeches of the league* (Sydney: League of Good Citizenship, 1919).

<sup>99</sup> Ulrich Ellis, *A History of the Australian Country Party* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963), 1-60; B. D. Graham, *The Formation of the Australian Country Parties* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1966), 31-142; David Meredith and Barrie Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy: Continuity and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 103-5. The origins of the Australian Country Party lay in groups such as the Farmers’ and Settlers’ Association and the Graziers’ Association; see William A. Bayley, *History of the Farmers and Settlers’ Association of N.S.W.* (Sydney: Farmers and Settler’s Association, 1957).

the virtues of agricultural endeavour.<sup>100</sup> When the Country Party claimed the balance of power in the 1922 election, they forged a coalition with the Nationalists on the proviso that Hughes be replaced as Prime Minister by someone more amenable to tariff revision and greater government economies. His successor, Stanley Bruce, proved disappointing to rural interests. Despite his association with urban business interests, Bruce proved just as interventionist – if not more so – than Hughes. His slogan for national reconstruction was ‘Men, Money and Markets’ – immigrants from Britain to swell the population, capital investment in infrastructure through public borrowing, and expanding overseas markets for exports.<sup>101</sup> One of the pillars of this program was a strengthened tariff policy, with a minor preferential concession on British imports.<sup>102</sup> By the end of the twenties the average tariff rate had almost doubled, and the economists of the ‘Brigden enquiry’ cautiously accepted protection as part of the intellectual orthodoxy.<sup>103</sup>

In New Zealand, the division between rural and urban conservatives was exposed by the policies of the Reform Party. A Country Party was formed by the Auckland branch of the Farmers’ Union in the mid-1920s due to its perception that the Reform Party was beginning to favour urban business interests over those of primary producers.<sup>104</sup> On the other side of the divide, a backlash from businessmen and professionals arose against the increasingly

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<sup>100</sup> Don Aitkin, "'Countrymindedness': The Spread of an Idea," in *Australian Cultural History*, ed. S. L. Goldberg and F. B. Smith (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 51. Whilst Aitkin spoke only of the Australian context, John Martin used a similar concept to describe rural communities in New Zealand. He argued that the small populations and personal working relationships associated with the country acted as a dampener of class differences. See John Martin, "Development from Above: God Made the Country and Man the Town," in *Development Tracks: The Theory and Practice of Community Development*, ed. Ian Shirley (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1982), 90-116.

<sup>101</sup> Lonie, "From Liberal to Liberal," 56-63; Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 77-81.

<sup>102</sup> Lonie, "From Liberal to Liberal," 63-104; Meredith, *Australia in the Global Economy*, 104.

<sup>103</sup> Leigh, "Trade Liberalisation and the Australian Labor Party," 490; Meredith, *Australia in the Global Economy*, 106; Leon Glezer, *Tariff Politics: Australian Policy-Making 1960-1980* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982), 11.

<sup>104</sup> B. D. Graham, "The Country Party Idea in New Zealand Politics, 1901-1935," in *Studies of a Small Democracy*, ed. Robert and Sinclair Chapman, Keith (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1963), 175-200.

interventionist policies of the Reform Party. The voluntary Meat and Dairy Export Boards established by Massey in the early twenties attracted some criticism from laissez-faire purists. His successor as Prime Minister, Gordon Coates, aroused further criticism by introducing fixed prices into the Dairy Board in 1926. This led several prominent Reformers and businessmen to form a new political party in 1927 with what remained of the Liberals.<sup>105</sup> The new conservative party, which named itself the United Party, organised urban business interests against the 'socialism' of the Coates ministry whilst calling for reductions in the size and scope of government.<sup>106</sup>

### **TRANS-NATIONAL RIGHT-WING NETWORKS IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD**

The post-war period also saw popular conservatism become increasingly associated with laissez-faire rhetoric, in particular as a bulwark against collectivism. At the forefront of this were a number of post-war right-wing leagues which were concerned specifically with defending capitalism against the forces of Bolshevism and organised labour. Unlike most of the broad school of right-wing organisation and agitation that preceded them, these new groups explicitly linked the defence of Empire, liberty and British tradition with laissez-faire capitalism. To these leagues, collectivism represented a very real and genuine threat; its proponents were active and motivated, and its doctrines were dangerously pervasive amongst the population. Educating the public in the merits of capitalism was the only means of combating this insidious threat. However, despite their focus on anti-communism, these groups displayed a marked continuity with their predecessors prior to, and during, the Great War: they drew upon existing notions of national interest and the 'other', they utilised similar organisational and propagandist techniques, and they often involved the same individuals

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<sup>105</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 11-16; Graham, "The Country Party Idea in New Zealand Politics," 183; Michael Bassett, *Coates of Kaipara* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995), 91-129.

<sup>106</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 16-27; Bassett, *Coates of Kaipara*, 138-53.



who were involved in previous right-wing movements. By the mid-1920s these anti-communist leagues had appeared across most of the Anglo world, and had begun to coordinate their efforts in a trans-national network of anti-communist propaganda. This section analyses the contributions of two leagues in particular to this network – the Sane Democracy League of Australia, and the New Zealand Welfare League – along with several other right-wing groups that they were directly or indirectly involved in establishing.

The New Zealand Welfare League was founded at a conference in Wellington on 12 March 1919.<sup>107</sup> Most of its leading figures had worked together through the Federation of New Zealand Patriotic War Relief Societies, including League founder and first President C. P. Skerrett, L. O. H. Tripp and D. McLaren from Wellington, Hope Gibbons from Wanganui, and E. H. Williams from Hastings.<sup>108</sup> National Efficiency Board member James Begg was a vice-president of the League, and his Board colleague J. H. Gunson was an ‘honoured protégé’. Begg and Gunson’s connection with the League probably came through National Efficiency Board chairman William Ferguson, who worked with Tripp and McLaren on the Wellington War Relief Association.<sup>109</sup> Other members included Major D. H. Lusk, commander of the mounted special constabulary in Auckland during the 1913 Great Strike and founder of a short-lived ‘Anti-Party Political League’, and C. M. Olliver, President of the Canterbury Progress League.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *Colonist*, 15 March 1919, 6. See also M. A. Noonan, "The Aims of the New Zealand Welfare League, 1919-1922," *Historical Society Annual* (1969): 28-46.

<sup>108</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 March 1916, 6; *Colonist*, 10 July 1919, 5. Hope Gibbons was the Welfare League's sole member in Wanganui; see *Wanganui Chronicle*, 8 December 1919, 4. Tripp and McLaren seem to have been the League’s unofficial envoys to the New Zealand Employers’ Federation whenever the two groups sought to cooperate on an issue; see for example Minutes of meeting of New Zealand Employers Federation: Industrial Peace Conference, 9 June 1920, minute book, 30 Nov 1917-30 Sep 1925, New Zealand Employers’ Federation papers, 2001-129-01/3, ATL.

<sup>109</sup> *Observer*, 20 December 1919, 9.

<sup>110</sup> *Marlborough Express*, 26 May 1919, 5; John Crawford, "A Tale of Two Cities: Military Involvement in the 1913 Strike," in *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand*, ed. Melanie Nolan (Christchurch:

The Sane Democracy League was originally founded in Australia in 1920 as the 'Commercial and Industrial Publicity Bureau', but was renamed in 1925 when the league was revitalised under new leadership.<sup>111</sup> Unlike the Welfare League, the founders of the Sane Democracy League do not appear to have been part of the pre-war and wartime right-wing in Australia. However, it shared the same ideological and geographical space as several prominent right-wing movements in the immediate post-war period, including the King and Empire Alliance and the League of Good Citizenship. One of the leading propagandists of the Sane Democracy League, George Waite, was praised by the League of Good Citizenship for his 'courageous stand against the enemies of our Empire' and invited to join their movement in 'combating all disloyal propaganda.'<sup>112</sup>

The new anti-communist leagues represented the sharp edge of popular conservatism in Australia and New Zealand. Whilst the Nationalist and Reform Parties defended conservative values from within the party framework, the anti-communist leagues reinforced them from outside of it. Their claim to be 'non-party' contributed to the naturalisation of the capitalist system by presenting it as an inextricable, and therefore apolitical, part of the human condition. As the Sane Democracy League stated in the first volume of its journal:

Our system of industry is built upon the constancy of certain conditions of human existence, upon the certainty of economic forces which thence arise, and upon the fact that these forces act with perfect regularity under changeless laws. We can try to redirect these laws against one group or another through

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Canterbury University Press, 2005), 130; *Northern Advocate*, 5 September 1918, 4; *Evening Post*, 13 December 1918, 7. The 'Anti-Party Political League' was formed early in 1919 by members of the Marlborough and Auckland Farmers' Unions (the latter of which Luck was an executive member of). Its aim, which is reminiscent of the rhetoric of the future citizens' movements, was 'to abolish party Government and to support only those who pledge themselves to vote for measures and not for men'.

<sup>111</sup> Keith Richmond, "Reaction to Radicalism: Non-Labour Movements 1920-1929," *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 5 (1979): 54; Keith Richmond, "Response to the Threat of Communism: The Sane Democracy League and the People's Union of New South Wales," *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 1 (1977): 70.

<sup>112</sup> Letter from the President of the League of Good Citizenship to George Waite, 9 May 1921, box 2, item 6, George Waite papers, MLMSS 208, SLNSW.

bad legislation but in the end we [can] never destroy an economic force any more than we destroy a physical force.<sup>113</sup>

The capitalist system was portrayed as inherently neutral, and thus equally beneficial to all classes within society. This reinforced the popular conservative notion of the ‘national interest’, which was both an extension of the idea of ‘non-party’ as well as an attempt to limit the range of acceptable political opinion and delegitimise those who lay outside of it. The phrase appeared in some form in the objects of most right-wing movements of the period: the Welfare League, for example, claimed that it sought to ‘place the National or Community interests before those of any Party, Section, or Individual’.<sup>114</sup>

Building upon the model of the ‘other’ used by wartime right-wing groups, the leagues directed their efforts against what they perceived was a small but dedicated band of communist agitators seeking to undermine constitutional authority. The Sane Democracy and Welfare Leagues were convinced that the communist enemy was working tirelessly to ‘white-ant’ social democratic parties, trade unions and working men’s associations in order to extend their influence beyond their small circle of fanatics. This distinction between communist agitators and the wider body of the working class provided a convenient device with which the leagues could reconcile the industrial turmoil of the post-war period with their image of a classless society where the interests of employer and employee were conjoined. The working class was, under typical circumstances, loyal and patriotic, and negotiations for modest improvements in pay and working conditions were ‘just’ and ‘reasonable’. Communist agitators had disrupted this natural order by exploiting class hatred and social tension with

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<sup>113</sup> *Sane Democracy* 9 (17 April 1925): 1.

<sup>114</sup> *Colonist*, 15 March 1919, 6.

their insidious propaganda.<sup>115</sup> To reinforce this dichotomy, the anti-communist leagues expanded the language of opposites: 'loyalism' and 'disloyalism' were complemented with 'sane' and 'insane', 'moral' and 'immoral', and 'clean' and 'dirty'. This further delegitimised the politics of those who lay outside the range of naturalised conservative dictum.

To combat the efforts of the communist 'other', the anti-communist leagues employed the low-level propagandist methods utilised by previous right-wing groups. Since this only required the services of a small number of dedicated members, this method of organisation and influence proved much more long-lasting than the populist style of the mass movements that arose in Australia at the end of the war.<sup>116</sup> The Sane Democracy League conducted public speaking campaigns, wrote countless letters to newspapers, and produced dozens of pamphlets. It also presented a radio series in 1926, which included topics such as 'How to Raise Wages in Australia', 'Communism & Capitalism – a Contrast in Methods', and 'Production for Profit is Production for Use'.<sup>117</sup> The Welfare League relied heavily on newspaper contributions: its long-standing Secretary, the mountaineer A. P. Harper, claimed that the League perused a package of newspaper clippings from Ilott & Co. every morning for 'dangerous propaganda' and issued responses to any it found. The League also sent weekly articles to about sixty newspapers, and claimed a publication rate of '60 to 70 percent'.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *Sane Democracy* 14 (21 May 1925): 1; *Sane Democracy* 31 (18 September 1925): 1; Chris Priday, "Sane Democracy in New South Wales 1920-1940" (BA Hons diss., Macquarie University, 1975), 10, 12-13; Arthur P. Harper, *The Revolutionary Campaign: Facts which everyone should know* (Wellington: New Zealand Welfare League, 1921). See also Noonan, "The Aims of the New Zealand Welfare League," 31-40.

<sup>116</sup> Both the Sane Democracy and Welfare Leagues appear to have survived until the 1950s, due in large part to the lifelong efforts of their secretaries Aubrey Colville Henry de Rune Barclay and Arthur Paul Harper.

<sup>117</sup> *Sane democracy: some radio lectures on 2KY* (Sydney: Sane Democracy League, 1926).

<sup>118</sup> New Zealand Welfare League – General Report for year ending December 31st, 1931, Alphabetical correspondence - Nacker-Norton, 1929-1962, Arthur Nelson Field papers, 73-148-089, ATL. The Welfare League also began publishing its own broadsheet in 1919 called *Freedom*, but this appears to have been short-lived. Only one issue survives – see *Freedom* 1:1 (12 December 1919).

These methods placed a steady stream of anti-communist material before the public consciousness which reinforced the language of popular conservatism.

The anti-communist leagues imagined their enemy, and by extension their own struggle, as trans-national in nature. The perceived international communist network which they sought to combat was supposedly centred on, and rigidly regimented by, Bolshevik forces in Moscow using the Third International as their vehicle.<sup>119</sup> In contrast, the anti-communist leagues described themselves as an organic phenomenon that had arisen independently across multiple countries before coordinating their efforts. As the Welfare League put it:

[I]t is significant that conditions obtaining in this country and which called for a strong non-party, national and educative movement, also existed in other parts of the Empire, and were met in the same way – by the formation of organisations, so like our own that, in all cases, we could exchange constitutions without losing our original objectives. This proves that the movement which the Welfare League has originated in New Zealand – its fight against the forces of disorder – its attempt to place the community and national interests before party or section – is the natural outcome of an Empire-wide condition of affairs.<sup>120</sup>

By the mid-1920s the Welfare and Sane Democracy Leagues were regularly corresponding with several anti-communist organisations around the world including the British Economic League, the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation and the Constitutional Defence League in Shanghai.<sup>121</sup> The Economic League also introduced the Australasian leagues to the International Entente against the Third International, a Swiss organisation that coordinated

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<sup>119</sup> *Sane Democracy* 15 (21 March 1930): 2; Arthur P. Harper, *The Revolutionary Campaign: Facts which everyone should know* (Wellington: New Zealand Welfare League, 1921).

<sup>120</sup> *Interim report for Period Ending May 31st, 1921* (Wellington: New Zealand Welfare League, 1921), 1; *Evening Post*, 5 February 1921, 9.

<sup>121</sup> For works on the Economic League, see Mike Hughes, *Spies at Work* (Bradford: 1 in 12 Publications, 1994); Arthur McIvor, "'A Crusade for Capitalism': The Economic League, 1919-1939," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23:4 (1988): 631-55; Mark Hollingsworth and Charles Tremayne, *The Economic League: The Silent Mccarthyism* (London: National Council for Civil Liberties, 1989).

the activities of over two dozen anti-communist organisations throughout Europe.<sup>122</sup> The global connections forged between anti-communist leagues during this period were far more substantial and lasting than the informal ties of earlier organisations.

The methods of the anti-communist leagues served both a combative and an educative function: they were designed to counter the communist 'other' whilst enlightening the public in the merits of capitalism. This educative function was central to conservative notions of good citizenship, and it became a vital function amongst other right-wing leagues that arose in the 1920s. For example, the Constitutional Association was established in Sydney in May 1925 to promote discussions of economic, political and constitutional questions. The Empire-wide waterside strike in August gave the Association added impetus, and Constitutional 'Clubs' soon emerged in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Adelaide.<sup>123</sup> In Western Australia an 'Argonauts Civic and Political Club' was founded in May 1925 on the principles of 'imperial unity', 'the development of the state upon constitutional lines', 'the counter-acting of the growth of socialism', and the 'freedom and development of the individual'.<sup>124</sup> By July 1926 the Argonauts were running several study groups, a model Parliament, an Information and Employment Bureau, as well as several 'Industrial Groups' designed to convince workers of the dangers of communism.<sup>125</sup> The Welfare League actively encouraged the formation of other right-wing organisations in New Zealand. In 1921 it collaborated with the Wellington

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<sup>122</sup> McIvor, "'A Crusade for Capitalism'", 641-642; Beatrice Penati, "Anticommunism and Empire in China (1924-1939): A Transnational Network among Shanghailanders and Russian Emigres" (Research internship, Hokkaido University, 2008), 1, 13-15.

<sup>123</sup> Richmond, "Reaction to Radicalism," 56-57; Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 51-52; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1926, 10.

<sup>124</sup> *Argonaut* 1:2 (September 1925): 2-3.

<sup>125</sup> F. G. Clarke, "The Argonauts Civic and Political Club – an Early Attempt at Industrial Group Organisation in W.A., 1925-1930," *Labour History* 18 (1970): 35.

Progress League and Town-Planning Association to form a Wellington Civic League.<sup>126</sup> Whilst the Civic League was nominally ‘independent of all party or sectional control’, its activities served political goals: it supported conservative candidates at municipal elections, and its secretary David McLaren was also the national organiser of the Welfare League.<sup>127</sup> These various groups would play a crucial role in the emergence of the citizens’ movements during the Depression.

## CONCLUSION

One of the major crises faced by turn-of-the-century conservatism in Australia and New Zealand was the expansion of the franchise and the radical demands of the growing electorate. In order to survive, conservatives transformed the ageing patrician model of conservatism to a more popular, inclusive model that recognised the demands of middle class liberals. As a result, by the end of the 1920s there existed a well-established tradition of popular conservatism in Australia and New Zealand. The core ideological tenets of this tradition were a general commitment to market principles mediated by the nineteenth century state developmentalist ethos; the minimisation or outright negation of class difference by portraying the interest of employer and employee as conjoined and mutually beneficial; an orientation towards Britain, both in terms of patriotic sentiment as well as economic and foreign policy; a political and rhetorical style utilising the moralistic language of private enterprise, individual self-reliance, and balanced public budgets; and immigration restriction designed to preserve the racial and cultural dominance of white Europeans. The hegemonic

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<sup>126</sup> *Interim report for Period Ending May 31st, 1921* (Wellington: New Zealand Welfare League, 1921), 4; *Dominion*, 18 June 1921.

<sup>127</sup> Civic Organisation: Proposed Constitution, Wellington Civic League papers, MS-Papers-0158-300D, ATL; Kerry Taylor, "McLaren, David (1867-1872?-1939)," *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3m22/1>; *Evening Post*, 4 April 1925, 7.

status of this ideology allowed it to appropriate the label of the ‘national interest’ for itself, which in turn allowed its adherents to delegitimise their opponents.

Nevertheless, the rhetoric of popular conservatism concealed within it three economic fractions – manufacturing, primary production, and a professional, business and commercial fraction. Whilst these fractions were united in their opposition to the demands of organised and political labour, their economic interests were sufficiently contradictory to cause tensions and splits in the conservative political apparatus on occasion. Manufacturers, for instance, broadly believed in individualism and market principles; however, as their industries were largely in their infancy, their primary concern was to secure tariff protection against foreign competitors. In Australia, this led them to clash with primary producers over the higher costs associated with buying Australian-made farming equipment and machinery. In New Zealand however, the farming tradition was paramount, and what limited manufacturing interests existed were largely tied to the protein boom. But primary producers could hardly claim independence of state assistance – much of the nineteenth century ‘colonial socialist’ legacy had been directed towards furthering their interests, and small farmers were not averse to demanding compulsory pooling and guaranteed prices when it suited them. In contrast, the professional, business and commercial fraction, which lacked the kind of tangible goods for which the other two fractions sought state protection, found it easier to adhere to the tenets of the free market and a limited government.

The wide variety of ‘non-party’ right-wing leagues that appeared across the British Empire during this time were a central part of the process of conservative reinvention. They encouraged the development of ‘good citizenship’ through respect for political and cultural traditions and a reasoned and voluntary participation in the political process. The leagues that



emerged during the Great War played an important role in honing the idea of the seditious and covert 'other'. Regardless of whether he or she was a German, an Irish republican, a Catholic or a communist, this 'other' was inherently 'disloyal'. This in turn provided the ideological backboard against which the notion of the 'loyal' citizen could be defined. Most of these leagues operated on a low-key, propagandist basis; however, the Australian general strike of 1917 provided fuel for a much larger response. The Loyalist League and the King and Empire Alliance bore many of the characteristics of the later citizens' movements. They were responses to domestic crises that were influenced by, and borrowed from, the various right-wing leagues that preceded them. They rapidly attracted mass appeal through populist rhetoric and public ceremony only to decline just as rapidly when the crisis subsided or the mass appeal could not be sustained. The model provided by the smaller, propagandist movements proved far more long-lived, and it was picked up by a trans-national web of anti-communist leagues in the post-war period.

The various right-wing leagues that emerged in Australia and New Zealand between 1880 and 1929 were, for the most part, reactionary rather than radical in nature. Whilst the occasionally extreme and populist rhetoric of the wartime movements may have lain on the fringes of respectable conservative opinion, it was still part of the milieu of mainstream conservatism. Furthermore, the 'non-party' nature of these leagues made it possible for them to espouse political values without being part of the political machinery itself. This reinforced rather than challenged the hegemony of the mainstream conservative political parties of the time. However, the Depression would lead to a radicalisation of this right-wing tradition as middle class conservatives attempted to find new solutions to the political, social and economic troubles of the time. The ideas that they settled upon, as the next chapter will show, laid the foundations for a direct and radical challenge to the very political system itself.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FROM REACTIONARY TO RADICAL: THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE ORIGINS OF THE CITIZENS' MOVEMENTS

Politicians – and we have armies of them – are so busily engaged in snapping and snarling at one another like so many dingoes, that they will not allow prosperity to come. A commission of a dozen good business men ... would accomplish more towards re-establishing confidence in Australia, and putting business matters on a fair footing than all these place-seeking politicians.<sup>1</sup>

When a concerned citizen wrote this letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in March 1931, the Great Depression had begun to have an effect in varying degrees across Australia and New Zealand. Plummeting export receipts were having a run-on effect across the rest of the economy, causing mass unemployment and social dislocation, reduced business confidence, and increased exposure of government indebtedness. In that time, many conservatives began to dramatically reappraise the kind of political and economic systems in which they were prepared to place their faith. This chapter examines the journey of these discontented conservatives from the reactionary to the radical. It argues that this process of conservative radicalisation drew upon, and extended, the ideas and strategies of the various right-wing leagues that arose in previous decades. The common thread in this process, as this chapter will demonstrate, was the condemnation of the party system of government – a condemnation which occasionally extended to the questioning of democracy itself. This chapter will conclude by demonstrating how the four citizens' movements arose as part of this process of conservative radicalisation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 March 1931, 5.

## MAINSTREAM CONSERVATIVES AND THE DEPRESSION

The post-war conservative electoral hegemony in Australia was shattered by the victory of the Labor Party in the snap election of October 1929. At the time, the nation's economic situation was already far from ideal: export prices had dropped by 30% in the middle of the year, and the combined overseas debt of the Federal and State governments totalled £631 million. Servicing the interest on this debt alone required 40% of export receipts.<sup>2</sup> Unemployment was at its highest point in a decade at 11.1%, and the nation's trade deficit in 1929-1930 was two-thirds greater than the average deficit of the previous four years.<sup>3</sup> The Depression accelerated this downward spiral: export prices continued to plummet, and creditors in Britain and the United States – so essential to the expansion of public infrastructure in the twenties – were unwilling to extend new loans.<sup>4</sup> Registered male unemployment skyrocketed to 29% in 1932.<sup>5</sup>

The Federal Labor government's response to the Depression was handicapped by a hostile Senate and private banking sector. At the onset of the crisis, cabinet's ability to regulate the supply and distribution of money was limited by the lack of a modern central bank. The Commonwealth Bank possessed some of the features of a central bank, including the authority to issue bank notes, but its independence from government made it difficult for cabinet to enact monetary policy in times of crisis. Treasurer E. G. 'Ted' Theodore attempted

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<sup>2</sup> Alex Millmow, "The Power of Economic Ideas: The Origins of Keynesian Macroeconomic Management in Interwar Australia 1929–39," Australian National University E-Press, <http://epress.anu.edu.au/apps/bookworm/view/The+Power+of+Economic+Ideas%3A+The+origins+of+Keynesian+macroeconomic+management+in+interwar+Australia+1929-39/204/upfront.xhtml>. Chapter 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Year Book Australia* (Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001), 243; Meredith and Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy*, 120.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 177-81; "Australia's Prime Ministers: James Scullin in Office", National Archives of Australia, <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/scullin/in-office.aspx>; Meredith and Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy*, 123.

<sup>5</sup> *Year Book Australia*, 243; Meredith and Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy*. 131.

to resolve this problem in April 1930 by introducing a Central Reserve Bank Bill, which proposed splitting the Commonwealth Bank into a fully fledged central bank and a private commercial trading bank.<sup>6</sup> The private banking sector, in particular the Commonwealth Bank, opposed the Bill as an unnecessary disruption to the banking sector. Commonwealth Bank Chairman Robert Gibson spoke against it before the Nationalist-controlled Senate, which ultimately rejected the Bill.<sup>7</sup> The Senate also blocked the government's 'Grow More Wheat' proposal which offered a guaranteed price to farmers through compulsory pooling.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the government's only legislative success during this period was a substantial increase in the tariff in April 1930.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of this opposition, the government's policy vacillated between economic orthodoxy and proto-Keynesianism. In 1930 the Commonwealth Bank, in agreement with Prime Minister James Scullin, invited Sir Otto Niemeyer from the Bank of England to visit Australia and advise the government on its finances. Niemeyer recommended a long list of austere reforms to ensure Australia's loan commitments were met, including drastic cuts in public expenditure and wages. His proposals were adopted at a conference of State Premiers in Melbourne in August 1930, and Scullin spent the next several months in Britain negotiating reduced interest payments on Australian debts. The chief supporters of the 'Melbourne Agreement' within cabinet were Joseph Lyons, who assumed the position of acting Treasurer in July 1930 when Theodore stepped down to deal with a corruption charge,

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<sup>6</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *"Red Ted": The Life of E. G. Theodore* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1994), 238.

<sup>7</sup> C. B. Schedvin, *Australia and the Great Depression: A Study of Economic Development and Policy in the 1920s and 1930s* (Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 1970), 172-6.

<sup>8</sup> Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 124; Schedvin, *Australia and the Great Depression*, 146-153.

<sup>9</sup> Meredith, *Australia in the Global Economy*, 122; Leigh, "Trade Liberalisation and the Australian Labor Party," 490; Ann Capling and Brian Galligan, *Beyond the Protective State: The Political Economy of Australia's Manufacturing Industry Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 95-101; Meredith and Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy*, 122-3.

and acting Prime Minister James Fenton.<sup>10</sup> Theodore, who would come to believe that only fiscal stimulus or 'reflation' would boost the economy out of Depression, was one of its opponents. Scullin was persuaded by Theodore's ideas upon returning to Australia at the beginning of 1931, and he reinstated him as Treasurer on 26 January.<sup>11</sup> Fenton and Lyons immediately resigned from Cabinet in protest and crossed the floor to the opposition benches in March 1931 with a small group of Labor supporters.<sup>12</sup> Scullin and Theodore took their ideas on 'reflation' to a second Premier's conference in Canberra in February, although Theodore's subsequent Fiduciary Notes Bill – which proposed the issuing of £18 million in fiduciary notes for an extensive public works program – was blocked by the Senate in April.<sup>13</sup>

Mainstream conservatives responded to the Federal government's policies by drawing on the standard tropes of deflationary economics. The release of Labor's first budget in July 1930, which included an increase in taxation to fund an additional £1 million in public spending over the previous financial year, prompted urban business organisations to hold protest meetings in several state capitals.<sup>14</sup> The Sydney Chamber of Commerce sent a delegation to Canberra representative of 'all classes of taxpayers' to convince Scullin to reduce taxes and balance the Federal budget.<sup>15</sup> Similar distaste was reserved for compulsory wheat pooling, which groups like the Town and Country Union condemned as 'socialistic' interference with

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<sup>10</sup> Meredith and Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy*, 128-131; "Australia's Prime Ministers: James Scullin in Office"

<sup>11</sup> Neville Cain, "Theodore, Edward Granville (1884–1950)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/theodore-edward-granville-8776>.

<sup>12</sup> P. R. Hart, and C. J. Lloyd, "Lyons, Joseph Aloysius (Joe) (1879–1939)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lyons-joseph-alloysius-joe-7278>; "Australia's Prime Ministers: Joseph Lyons before Office," National Archives of Australia, <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/lyons/before-office.aspx>.

<sup>13</sup> Millmow, "The Power of Economic Ideas", Chapter 5; Meredith and Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy*. 131-3; "Scullin, James," National Museum of Australia, [http://www.nma.gov.au/primeministers/james\\_scullin](http://www.nma.gov.au/primeministers/james_scullin).

<sup>14</sup> *Advertiser*, 12 July 1930, 15; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 July 1930, 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Argus*, 12 July 1930, 21; *Advertiser*, 15 July 1930, 16.

individual liberty and private enterprise.<sup>16</sup> Many conservatives drew upon the Kyabram Reform Movement, the turn-of-the-century conservative protest organisation in Victoria discussed in chapter one, for inspiration. In July the Wheat Producers' Freedom Association decided to launch a 'new Kyabram' at a meeting in the South Australian country town of Moonta.<sup>17</sup> Their enthusiasm quickly waned, due in part to the deflationary agreement reached at the Premier's Conference in August, and the promise of a new Kyabram was not met.<sup>18</sup> However, the memory of Kyabram would remain an important influence on the citizens' movements in both Australia and New Zealand.

Most conservative ire was directed at Theodore's credit issuing proposals. Conservatives condemned these proposals as 'inflationary', arguing that they would devalue the currency and destroy the savings of the middle class. In January 1931 an 'Anti-Inflation League' was founded in Sydney 'to combat the iniquitous and suicidal doctrine of inflation'.<sup>19</sup> Economists and bankers were especially critical of Theodore's proposals. 'Australia is financially sick', wrote Sir Ernest Wreford of the National Bank, 'and will not get well by drinking the financial champagne of further borrowing or note inflation.'<sup>20</sup> A publication titled *The Menace of Inflation*, written by South Australian educator and historian Archibald Grenfell Price and sponsored by several economists, sold 30000 copies in its first print run in March 1931.<sup>21</sup> Price laid the blame for the Depression on the 'orgy of borrowing and extravagance' in the 1920s, and claimed that 'immediate action and grave sacrifices' were required 'to

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<sup>16</sup> *Advertiser*, 30 April 1930, 16; *Burra Record*, 4 June 1930, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Advertiser*, 12 July 1930, 15; *Advertiser*, 15 July 1930, 15; *Advertiser*, 19 July 1930, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson, "Government and Depression in South Australia," 167-8; Lonie, "Conservatism and Class in South Australia," 207-8.

<sup>19</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 January 1931, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Millmow, "The Power of Economic Ideas," chapter five.

<sup>21</sup> Archibald G. Price, "The Emergency Committee of South Australia and the Origin of the Premiers' Plan, 1931-2," *South Australiana* 17:1 (1978): 11-12. This piece was originally written by Price in 1932, but was not published until the year after his death. See also Millmow, "The Power of Economic Ideas," chapter five.

avoid the ruin which inflation nearly always brings in its train.'<sup>22</sup> Imbedded in his criticism of inflation were the moral imperatives of thrift and self-reliance. Australians had been 'spoon-fed by arbitration, by pensions, and by a dozen socialistic policies, which had temporarily sapped the foundations of individualism.'<sup>23</sup>

Conservative fears of inflation were matched by a second anxiety-ridden buzzword: repudiation. The fear that the Australian Federal and State governments might be unable, or refuse, to meet their debt repayments struck at the very core of the sanctity of contract. With no central Reserve Bank to adjust monetary policy, it fell to individual politicians and citizens to negotiate reduced rates of interest on government bonds. In the closing months of 1930, acting Treasurer Lyons led a £28 million loan conversion campaign designed to ensure that an overseas loan payment due on 15 December was met. The success of this campaign, which attracted a significant amount of publicity and patriotic fanfare, made Lyons a nationally-recognised figure.<sup>24</sup> As later chapters will explore, Lyons' stand against the Labor Party and his methods of courting publicity contributed to his future success as the leader of the citizens' movements and of a reinvigorated conservative opposition.

The biggest threat of repudiation came from Jack Lang, the leader of the Labor Party in New South Wales. Lang had a long history of stirring up conservative ire; in his first term as State Premier between 1925 and 1927 he had enacted several reforms deemed radical by conservatives, including mandatory workers' compensation insurance and a 44-hour working week. In October 1930 Lang was returned to office on a campaign of restoring public servant salaries, increasing child welfare payments, and an extensive public works program. In order

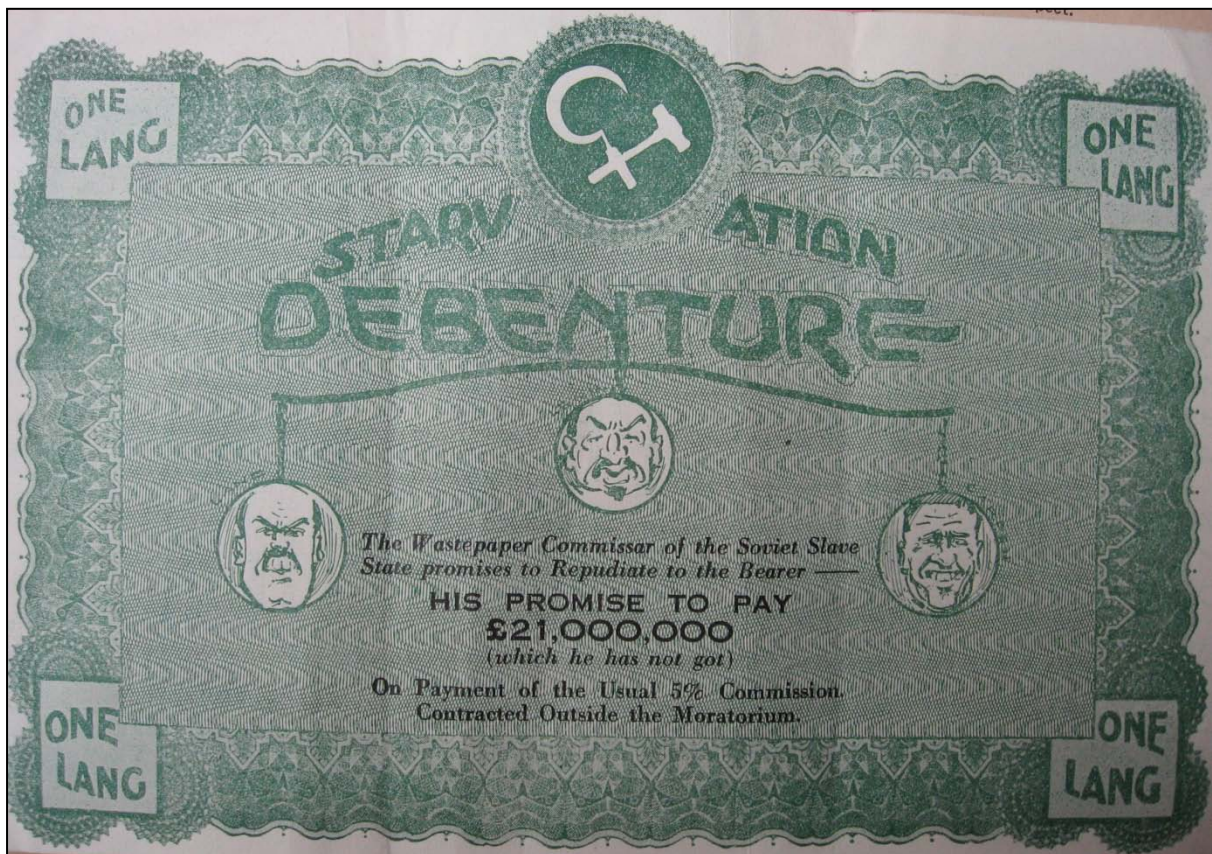
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<sup>22</sup> A. G. Price, *The Menace of Inflation* (Adelaide: F. W. Preece & Sons, 1931), 6-10.

<sup>23</sup> Price, "The Emergency Committee of South Australia," 40.

<sup>24</sup> Hart, "Lyons, Joseph Aloysius (Joe) (1879-1939)"

to pay for this program, he suggested at the conference of State Premiers in February 1931 that Australia should halt interest payments to British bondholders until the crisis passed.<sup>25</sup> This was the same conference at which Scullin and Theodore had put forth their ‘inflationary’ proposals, making it a highly controversial – and also highly ineffectual – gathering. Lang’s proposal granted him the dubious honour as the foremost bogeyman in conservative eyes.



**Figure 3: A ‘starvation debenture’ lampooning Jack Lang’s ‘repudiationist’ policies. Source: Item 50, Mutch papers.**

New Zealand was affected by the Depression in the same general fashion as Australia. Farming formed the backbone of both economies; almost one third of New Zealanders were employed in primary production in the 1920s, and agricultural goods comprised the majority

<sup>25</sup> Bede Nairn, *The ‘Big Fella’: Jack Lang and the Australian Labor Party, 1891-1949* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1896), 223.



of the country's exports.<sup>26</sup> Like Australia, New Zealand's economy had already been weakened in 1929 by an international fall in export prices, especially in the wool market.<sup>27</sup> The Depression exacerbated the drop, and by 1933 prices had declined by 45% from their 1929 level. From 1930 businessmen and professionals began to feel the flow-on effects: by 1933 the volume of imports had decreased by 40%, and prices fell by as much as 12%. Public sector wages were cut by between 10% and 20%, and the average private sector wage fell by 10%. The economy reached its nadir in mid-1933 when the unemployment rate reached 12% of the registered workforce.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike Australia, New Zealand was governed almost solely by right-wing political parties throughout the Depression. In 1929 it was governed by the United Party with the support of Labour. As conditions worsened, Prime Minister Joseph Ward found himself in the position of being unable to fully meet his election promise of a £70 million spending program – which had attracted the Labour Party – or to cut public spending as United supporters demanded. Ward's deteriorating health further immobilised his government, and he resigned in May 1930 in favour of Finance Minister George Forbes.<sup>29</sup> The United government spent the following year juggling deflationary policy with its agreement with Labour, which it honoured through an Unemployment Act providing relief payments for the unemployed. When Forbes announced in February 1931 his plan to reduce public servant salaries, Labour withdrew its support for the government. United turned to Reform for support, and the two

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<sup>26</sup> "Percentage of Employment in Different Sectors, 1841–2001," Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/economy/2/3>. This figure includes those employed in the mining sector.

<sup>27</sup> J. B. Condliffe, *New Zealand in the Making: A Study of Economic and Social Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1936), 45.

<sup>28</sup> These figures were drawn from Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand*, 124, 127, 134, 148, 155.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Bassett, "Ward, Joseph George (1856–1930)," Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2w9/1>.

parties agreed to form a Coalition government in September 1931 which was returned to power in the December general election.<sup>30</sup>

The Coalition responded to the Depression in two ways: traditional deflationary methods designed to lower wages and expenditure, and new departures in respect of unemployment and insolvency. The key supporter of deflation was Finance Minister William Downie Stewart, the only urban business representative in Cabinet. These methods were epitomised by the 1932 National Expenditure Adjustment Act which enforced rigorous public spending cuts, decreased pension payments, additional reductions in public service salaries, and the removal of compulsory arbitration from the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act.<sup>31</sup> However, despite the Coalition's desire to effect greater government economies, public debt grew as the national income continued to decline. In April 1932 Downie Stewart alarmed conservatives when he announced a projected deficit of £8.3 million for the next financial year. A specially appointed Economists' Committee called the budget situation 'critical', and recommended further budget cuts and the introduction of new taxation.<sup>32</sup> Some of these measures made their way into the National Expenditure Adjustment Act, and by October the Coalition claimed the deficit would be reduced to £1 million by the end of the year.<sup>33</sup> Despite this reassurance, projected deficit figures continued to float over the following months, and were not fully settled until a small surplus was announced with the release of the following year's budget in May 1933.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 32-37; W. J. Gardner, "Forbes, George William (1869-1947)," Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3f9/1>.

<sup>31</sup> Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand*, 150, 152-3, 155; Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 46-48.

<sup>32</sup> *Evening Post*, 8 April 1932, 7; Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand*, 150.

<sup>33</sup> *Evening Post*, 5 October 1932, 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Evening Post*, 25 January 1933, 8; *Evening Post*, 17 February 1933, 6; *Evening Post*, 1 May 1933, 10.

Deflationary methods also contributed to a series of unemployed riots in the first half of 1932. The most serious riots occurred in Auckland in April during a march of the Unemployed Workers Movement and public servants protesting against the second round of cuts to their salaries. When the leader of the march was batoned by a policeman, the crowd reacted by attacking the police cordon and looting several shopfronts along Queen Street.<sup>35</sup> Conservatives reacted with alarm to the events in Auckland; the Wellington Chamber of Commerce urged the immediate imprisonment of the leaders of the Communist Party, and the *Auckland Star* called for the formation of a 'widespread official organisation of citizens ... free from any suggestion of party politics'.<sup>36</sup> The Coalition responded by introducing a Public Safety Conservation Bill that would grant the government comprehensive powers to deal with future emergencies.<sup>37</sup>

The second, more 'reflationist' government response tested the boundaries of the established developmentalist tradition. The Unemployment Act of 1930 had introduced tax-financed (rather than loan-financed) unemployment assistance. This taxation for unemployment relief was to be massively expanded by the Coalition, under the rubric of sharing the burden. Subsequent policies, such as the 20% reduction in interest rates and rents provided by the National Expenditure Adjustment Act, were similarly able to appeal to a perceived equality of sacrifice, although the challenge to the sanctity of contract led Downie Stewart to threaten resignation. Rural relief in the form of the Mortgages and Tenants Relief Act aroused greater concern amongst conservatives, but it was grudgingly accepted as necessary to alleviate the

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<sup>35</sup> <todo: Dunstall reference>; "The Depression Riots, 1932," An Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/1966/riots/6>.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 51-53.

<sup>37</sup> *Evening Post*, 19 April 1932, 8.

growing insolvency of the farming community.<sup>38</sup> State intervention in the economy to alleviate the distress of farmers and the unemployed was acceptable provided it fell within the bounds of the Australasian developmentalist ethos.

The cleavage between the primary production and the professional, business and commercial fractions of conservatism was further exposed when the government raised the exchange rate in January 1933. The chief supporter of the move, Reform leader Gordon Coates, hoped that by devaluing the currency from £NZ110:£UK100 to £NZ125:£UK100 the resulting boost in farmers' incomes would flow through to the rest of the economy.<sup>39</sup> However, unlike mortgage and interest relief, the benefits accrued to farmers by a devalued currency had the exact opposite effect on import-dependent businessmen, who accused the government of promoting the sectional interests of one fraction of society. The Wellington Chamber of Commerce accused the government of 'violating established banking practice and universally recognised economic principles', with the result that 'the majority must suffer for the benefit of a minority'.<sup>40</sup> The move also compounded fears of a budget crisis, with rumours circulating that a devalued currency would swell the deficit by an additional £3 million.<sup>41</sup>

### **'ANTI-POLITICAL POLITICAL THOUGHT'**

Australasian conservatives responded to this growing perception of crisis in a number of ways. Whilst many retained their faith in the existing parliamentary system, a significant number began to question its ability to handle the economic crisis. Fascism provided one

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<sup>38</sup> Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand*, 145-9, 152, 154; Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 48-49.

<sup>39</sup> Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand*, 153-5; Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 59-61; Michael Bassett, "Coates, Joseph Gordon (1878-1943)," *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3c24/1>.

<sup>40</sup> Meeting of Council, 24 January 1933, Minute book, Aug 1932-Dec 1935, Wellington Chamber of Commerce papers, MS-Group-0018, ATL.

<sup>41</sup> *Evening Post*, 25 January 1933, 8.

source of political inspiration for these anxious conservatives. There is a fairly robust historiography of the influence of fascism in Australia, although much less so in New Zealand. Nevertheless, some tentative extrapolations can be drawn between the two countries. For instance, the observation of John McCarthy, Andrew Moore and Roslyn Cooper that many Australian conservatives admired fascism's anti-communism and its intense patriotism, and viewed it as a potential solution to class conflict, is likely to have also been the case amongst New Zealand conservatives.<sup>42</sup> David Bird demonstrated that leading Australian political figures such as Robert Menzies and Joseph Lyons expressed a quiet admiration for fascism's unity of purpose, and literary figures such as P. R. 'Inky' Stephensen became so enamoured with fascism that they were interned during the Second World War as potential subversives through their involvement with the Australia First Movement.<sup>43</sup> However, the understanding of fascism in Australasia was severely limited, and if conservatives were occasionally willing to overlook fascist violence and abuses of power, left-wing labour and pacifist movements were consistently there to remind them of it.<sup>44</sup> Wilfrid Kent Hughes, the Australian MP who proudly declared himself to be a fascist in 1933, exemplified this misunderstanding of fascism.<sup>45</sup> This is reinforced by scholars such as Gianfranco Cresciani, Paul Elenio and John Perkins, who demonstrate that fascism was fairly much contained within Italian and German diaspora communities in Australia and New

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<sup>42</sup> McCarthy, "Some Right Wing Responses to the Depression in New South Wales," 162-4; Andrew Moore, "Discredited Fascism: The New Guard after 1932," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 57:2 (2011): 190-1; Moore, *The Right Road*, 46-48; Roslyn Pesman Cooper, "'We Want a Mussolini': Views of Fascist Italy in Australia," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 39:3 (1993): 348-66.

<sup>43</sup> David Bird, *Nazi Dreamtime: Australian Enthusiasts for Hitler's Germany* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012). For more information on 'Inky' Stephensen and the Australia First Movement, see Barbara Winter, *The Australia-First Movement: Dreaming of a National Socialist Australia* (Carindale: Interactive Publications, 2005); Bruce Muirden, *The Puzzled Patriots: The Story of the Australia First Movement* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1968).

<sup>44</sup> The best source on left wing campaigns against fascism in Australia during the interwar years is Carolyn Rasmussen, *The Lesser Evil? Opposition to War and Fascism in Australia 1920-1941* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1992).

<sup>45</sup> See Frederick Howard, *Kent Hughes: A Biography of Colonel the Hon. Sir Wilfred Kent Hughes* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1972); Geoff Spenceley, "'The Minister for Starvation': Wilfrid Kent Hughes, Fascism and the Unemployment Relief (Administration) Act of 1933," *Labour History* 81 (2001): 135-54.

Zealand due mainly to the insistence of consulate officials that fascism should act as a shield against cultural integration.<sup>46</sup>

The danger in political alternatives such as fascism was that they could potentially fragment the mainstream conservative electorate and thus strengthen the forces of political labour. This posed a dilemma to conservatives who were both anxious for change yet wary of disrupting the political status quo. The solution to this dilemma lay in the radicalisation of the well-established tradition of 'non-party' right-wing organisations in Australasia. Rather than challenge conservative ideals and policies, they chose instead to lay the blame on the political system itself in a fashion that Peter Loveday labelled 'anti-political political thought'.<sup>47</sup> The chief proponents of this anti-partyism were 'non-party' right-wing leagues, in particular new leagues that arose during the Depression or immediately prior to it. One such group was the 'Who's for Australia? League', which was founded in November 1929 but was rooted in theosophy. Geoffrey Robinson has highlighted the influence of the Who's for Australia League on one particular citizens' movement, the All for Australia League. However, whilst he correctly notes that Australian theosophists promoted patriotism and economic nationalism, he does not consider the deeper roots of theosophical tradition and how it was adapted to the Australian context.<sup>48</sup> It is this tradition that made Australian theosophy, and the Who's for Australia League in particular, an ideal vehicle for the kind of idealist and populist rhetoric that would later characterise the citizens' movements.

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<sup>46</sup> Gianfranco Cresciani, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia, 1922-1945* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980); Paul Elenio, *"Alla Fine Del Mondo": To the Ends of the Earth* (Wellington: Petone Settlers Museum and the Club Garibaldi, 1995), 58-9; John Perkins, "The Swastika Down Under: Nazi Activities in Australia, 1933-39," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26:1 (1991): 111-29.

<sup>47</sup> Loveday, "Anti-Political Political Thought," 121-35.

<sup>48</sup> Robinson, "The All for Australia League in New South Wales," 38.

One of the goals of theosophy is to forge a ‘Universal Brotherhood of Humanity’, which would appear to be at odds with patriotism and economic nationalism.<sup>49</sup> The notion of applying theosophist principles to the inculcation of patriotism came from Dr G. S. Arundale, a leading figure in the global theosophical movement during the 1920s. Arundale believed that the nucleus of a ‘Universal Brotherhood’ lay in the shared heritage of Britain and its colonies, in particular Australia and New Zealand. If this spirit of imperial patriotism could first be harnessed and refined in one particular colony, Arundale imagined that it might then be extended in stages across the British Empire, and eventually across the world.<sup>50</sup>

Arundale chose Australia as the laboratory for what he later called his ‘Australian experiment’.<sup>51</sup> As the General Secretary of the Australian section of the Theosophical Society, he demonstrated a keen ability to harness new and existing technologies to promote his ideas to a wide audience. In 1926 he founded a ‘Theosophical Broadcasting Station’ (2GB).<sup>52</sup> He also founded a new Australian theosophical journal, titled *Advance! Australia*, which was aimed at a wider audience than the more traditional *Australian Theosophist*. The new journal drew heavily upon conservative tropes regarding good citizenship and applied them to the goal of a universal brotherhood:

“Advance! Australia” will stand for the promotion of a noble type of Australian citizenship, vitally Australian, eagerly conscious of Australia’s specific place and part in the building of the future, no less eagerly conscious of the wider and equally vital citizenship involved in Australia’s membership of the British Commonwealth, and recognising, too, that beyond even this

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<sup>49</sup> The principles of theosophy are drawn from H. P. Blavatsky, "The Key to Theosophy," Theosophical University Press Online Edition, <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/key/key-3.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Josephine Ransom, *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (Madras: Vasanta Press, 1938), 476; G. S. Arundale, "The Australian Experiment," *World Theosophy* (February 1931): 103-6; *Australian Theosophist* 1:1 (1926): 9-13; *Advance! Australia* 1:1 (July 1926): 9.

<sup>51</sup> Arundale, "The Australian Experiment," 103-6. For a general history of theosophy in Australia, see Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia 1879-1939* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1986).

<sup>52</sup> *Australian Theosophist* 1:2 (15 August 1926): 43-44; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 August 1926, 10.

Commonwealth-citizenship there is a World-citizenship, the obligations of which may no longer be ignored.<sup>53</sup>

*Advance! Australia* invoked several important ideas in its defence of good citizenship. Drawing upon the ANZAC ethos, it argued that ‘the supreme sacrifice of more than a million of our comrades in that Great Adventure’ would have been for nothing ‘if we have not learned that Peace must continue and perfect the virtues war called forth.’<sup>54</sup> This same sense of ‘brotherhood’ and ‘sacrifice’ was needed to overcome the problems which contemporary society faced, including class conflict, religious tensions, international strife, and party politics.<sup>55</sup> *Advance! Australia* urged these warring groups to set aside their parochial concerns in favour of ‘the welfare of the community as a whole’, and called for a leader like Mussolini who would ‘capture public imagination and array behind him an organised body of public opinion in the carrying out of the needed reforms’.<sup>56</sup> These ideological tropes, along with printed media and radio broadcasting, would become important tools in the arsenal of the citizens’ movements.

The ‘Who’s for Australia? League’ was founded in November 1929 to transform Arundale’s experiment into a mass movement.<sup>57</sup> Whilst the League never amassed more than 9000 members, its populist rhetoric was reminiscent of the Loyalist League and the King and Empire Alliance that had arisen ten years earlier.<sup>58</sup> Its co-founder and General Secretary A. E. Bennett was a fellow theosophist, the manager of 2GB, and an ardent admirer of

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<sup>53</sup> *Advance! Australia* 1:1 (July 1926): 9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Advance! Australia* 1:1 (July 1926): 9; *Advance! Australia* 1:1 (July 1926): 2-3.

<sup>56</sup> *Advance! Australia* 1:1 (July 1926): 2.

<sup>57</sup> The name seems to have come from an old theosophist question, ‘Who is for Us?’, which was often raised during times of crisis; see Ransom, *A Short History of the Theosophical Society*, 508.

<sup>58</sup> These two movements are discussed in chapter one. The height of 9000 members was reached in November 1930; see *Who’s for Australia?* 2:13 (26 November 1930): 4.



Mussolini.<sup>59</sup> The League boomed under his leadership, and several dozen business and metropolitan branches were established by June 1930.<sup>60</sup> This included several branches in Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia, the latter of which included Harold Boas, leader of the defunct Argonauts Civic and Constitutional Club.<sup>61</sup> Its widely circulated journal continued to spread the rhetoric of national unity, anti-partyism and the need for a strong leader, and it produced several pamphlets espousing the same ideals.<sup>62</sup> The League also encouraged economic nationalism amongst its members, and organised two public exhibitions of Australian-manufactured goods.<sup>63</sup> This brought it into contact with several other economic nationalist groups, including the Advance Australia League in Adelaide.<sup>64</sup>

Arundale's 'Australian experiment' influenced several young New Zealand theosophists, although it was far less successful than in Australia. Tom Naylor, the President of the New Zealand section of the World Federation of Young Theosophists, was inspired by Arundale's example and hoped to 'awaken the patriotic spirit' of New Zealanders through the use of patriotic folklore. He produced an intermittent journal in the late 1920s titled *Advance! Zealandia*, although it proved far less successful than its Australian counterpart.<sup>65</sup> Even less

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<sup>59</sup> *Australian Theosophist* 1:2 (15 August 1926): 35-36; Philip Geeves, "Bennett, Alfred Edward (1889–1963)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bennett-alfred-edward-5207>.

<sup>60</sup> *Who's for Australia?* 2:2 (25 June 1930): 11.

<sup>61</sup> *Who's for Australia?* 1:8 (23 April 1930): 3; *Who's for Australia?* 2:1 (11 June 1930): 5; *Who's for Australia?* 2:2 (25 June 1930): 11; *Who's for Australia?* 2:4 (23 July 1930): 3; *Who's for Australia?* 2:5 (6 August 1930): 12.

<sup>62</sup> See for example *Who's for Australia? League* (Sydney: Who's for Australia League, 1929); *Who's for Australia? Four songs in her praise* (Sydney: Who's for Australia League, 1930).

<sup>63</sup> *Who's for Australia?* 1:4 (26 February 1930): 4; *Who's for Australia?* 2:2 (25 June 1930): 12; *Exhibition of all Australian Manufactures at Drummoyne* (Sydney: Who's for Australia League, 1930).

<sup>64</sup> *Who's for Australia?* 1:5 (12 March 1930): 3.

<sup>65</sup> No copies of this journal appear to have survived, but it is discussed in the World Federation of Young Theosophists correspondence; see Letter from Tom Naylor to Raymond Ernest Hansen, April 3 1930; letter from Naylor to Hansen, Empire Day 1930, Inward correspondence 1930-1958, Raymond Ernest Hansen papers, 84-204-74, ATL. The journal is also mentioned in the Australian Theosophical Society's list of periodicals; see "Theosophy in New Zealand, 1908-2006," The Theosophical Society in Australia, [http://www.austheos.org.au/indices/TINNZ\\_.HTM](http://www.austheos.org.au/indices/TINNZ_.HTM).

successful was his plan to form a 'Who's for Zealandia? League' modelled off the Who's for Australia? League after Arundale gave a speaking tour of New Zealand in 1930. His lack of success was due to the generally more left-leaning nature of New Zealand theosophists, who were more inclined to favour monetary reformism over patriotic experiments.<sup>66</sup> Naylor noted that his ideas had been given the 'cold shoulder' from the New Zealand section of the Theosophical Society and their journal, *Theosophy in New Zealand*.<sup>67</sup> The prominence of monetary reformism in New Zealand, which will be explored later in this chapter, was an important factor in the radicalisation of New Zealand conservatives.

Youth played an important part in the formation of 'non-party' right-wing leagues opposing the party system of government. Two groups in particular, the Political Reform League of South Australia and the New Zealand National Movement, bear comparison. Both were founded by men who were, in comparison to the majority of political figures, relatively young and inexperienced. The Political Reform League was formed in January 1929 by Keith Wilson, a twenty-eight year old solicitor, to provide a voice for young conservatives in the South Australian Liberal Federation.<sup>68</sup> However, the League also expressed a deep dissatisfaction with party politics, and sought a parliament where members could 'legislate for the good of the State as a whole' rather than being 'restricted by Caucus or party platform'. To accomplish this it proposed simplifying the platform of the Liberal Federation to allow candidates to vote according to their conscience.<sup>69</sup> Whilst this was in part a response to the Liberal Federation's method of caucus control, the relative youth of the movement and

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<sup>66</sup> Minutes of the 38th Annual Convention of the New Zealand Section of the Theosophical Society, 27 December 1933, New Zealand Section of the Theosophical Society papers (privately held).

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Naylor to Hansen [c.1930], Raymond Ernest Hansen papers, 84-204-74, ATL.

<sup>68</sup> *Register News-Pictorial*, 9 January 1929, 13. In many ways the Political Reform League might be considered the interwar equivalent of the 'youth wings' of today's political parties; in fact, it renamed itself the 'Young Liberal League' in March 1932. See Interview with Sir Keith Wilson [sound recording] Interviewer: Susan Marsden, 1983, SRG 660/1/147, SLSA.

<sup>69</sup> *Policy and Aims of League* (Adelaide: Commercial Printing House, 1930).

its inexperienced President also suggest an idealistic impatience with the status quo. Indeed, Wilson's first public statement as President was full of phrases such as 'new blood', 'latent zeal', and 'broad vision', which he contrasted with the 'fetter[s]' and 'restrictions' of the Liberal Federation.<sup>70</sup>

The New Zealand National Movement was a group of Hawkes Bay farmers and disgruntled Reform Party members who were frustrated with their Party's decision to align with the United Party rather than develop a bold new policy of its own. They were led by J. D. Ormond, a twenty-seven year old sheep farmer who had stood as an Independent for the Waipawa seat in the 1931 general election in defiance of the Coalition's decision to support incumbent MPs. After a delegation to the Reform Executive in April 1932 failed to convince Coates to adopt a firmer policy, Ormond and his colleagues resolved to 'reform the Reform Party or form a new party' and that 'an organisation should be started to support such a move.' A tour of the South Island found widespread support for such an organisation, and an inaugural meeting of thirty businessmen and farmers was convened in Palmerston North on 23 July 1932.<sup>71</sup> The new movement sought the 'eradication of the petty Party spirit' and the introduction of fresh talent into national politics. Ormond told Coates that the Reform executive was 'as much out of touch with the public as the moon is from the earth', and that his movement would gain the support of 'the moderate minded people' who held 'the interest of the Country at heart.'<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Register News-Pictorial*, 14 January 1929, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 53-55; P. S. Tait, *In the Chair: The Public Life of Sir John Ormond* (Waipukurau: CHB Print, 1989), 12-17.

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Ormond to Coates, 20 September 1932, Ormond family papers (privately held).

Despite professing their disdain for party politics, the Political Reform League and the New Zealand National Movement were well versed in the language of political conservatism. The League proposed to alleviate Depression conditions by reducing the size of parliament, curbing government interference with private enterprise, rationalising government administration 'by seeking the advice of experts', and encouraging those 'skilled in commerce, science, [and] industry' to run for parliament.<sup>73</sup> The National Movement condemned the 'extravagant and socialistic policy' of past governments and called for 'strict economy in Govt expenditure', 'curtailment of external borrowing', and the 'encouragement of Private enterprise, personal initiative and thrift'.<sup>74</sup> Much like many mainstream conservatives, the movements attempted to naturalise these values as apolitical. The League claimed that they were 'for the good of the State as a whole'.<sup>75</sup>

Existing right-wing leagues, in particular the anti-communist, propagandist and educative groups that arose during the 1920s, also contributed to the spread of anti-party sentiment. Indeed, one of the chief consequences of the Depression was that it tore away the thin non-partisan shield which these leagues used to disguise their conservative ideals regarding politics, economics and society. The dramatic fall in export prices in 1929, for example, encouraged the Constitutional Association of New South Wales to produce a pamphlet supporting the incumbent Nationalist government in the September Federal elections. Prime Minister Stanley Bruce's plan to abolish Federal Arbitration was singularly praised as 'giving industry a fair chance in the interests of the whole people'.<sup>76</sup> Lang's victory in the October 1930 State elections had a particularly radicalising effect on the Association, which led it to

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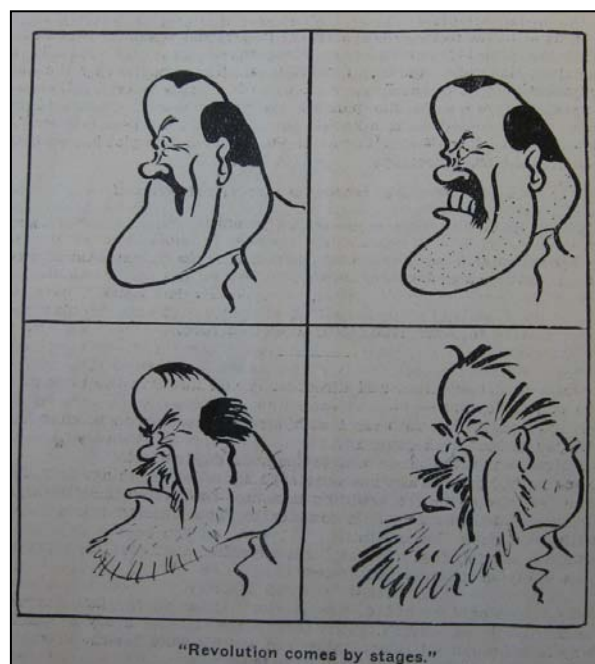
<sup>73</sup> *Policy and Aims of League* (Adelaide: Commercial Printing House, 1930).

<sup>74</sup> New Zealand National Movement Circular No. 2, October 1932, reproduced in Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 200-2.

<sup>75</sup> *Policy and Aims of League* (Adelaide: Commercial Printing House, 1930).

<sup>76</sup> *The election issue, from the viewpoint of the N.S.W. Constitutional Association* (Sydney: Constitutional Association of New South Wales, 1929), 2-3.

abandon its nominally non-partisan stance in favour of an ‘immediate policy’ to combat Lang.<sup>77</sup> This policy called for balanced budgets, reduced costs of production and distribution, greater industrial cooperation, and a firm opposition to inflation and repudiation. Its purpose was to bring attention to ‘the urgent necessity for immediate public action’ in order to combat ‘party strife and vacillating government’.<sup>78</sup> Several months later the Association released *Lang, Lunacy, Loot*, a pamphlet condemning Lang’s policies as an attempt to ‘[k]ill private enterprise’ and foist socialism upon the state.<sup>79</sup> A follow-up pamphlet in 1932 claimed that Lang Labor had been infiltrated by Communists plotting ‘a revolutionary conspiracy against constitutional government’.<sup>80</sup>



**Figure 4: Anti-Lang cartoon. Source: *A recipe for revolution* (Sydney: Constitutional Association of New South Wales, 1932), 12.**

<sup>77</sup> Minutes of Committee Meeting 28 October 1930, box 2 item 1, Constitutional Association of New South Wales papers, MLMSS 7646C, SLNSW.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes of Special Committee Meeting 2 February 1931, box 2 item 1, Constitutional Association of New South Wales papers 1925-1961, MLMSS 7646C, SLNSW.

<sup>79</sup> *Lang, lunacy, loot* (Sydney: Constitutional Association of New South Wales, 1931), 50.

<sup>80</sup> *A recipe for revolution* (Sydney: Constitutional Association of New South Wales, 1932), 1.

The Sane Democracy League was also boosted by its opposition to Lang. The League had castigated him as a demagogue and a communist puppet since the mid-1920s, and had produced anti-Lang posters during his failed re-election bid in 1927.<sup>81</sup> At the time they argued that ‘the whole community has been split into groups continually kept in a state of hostility by the yapping of the politicians and the operation of the machinery that the politicians have created.’<sup>82</sup> The League’s criticism of Lang reached unprecedented vitriolic heights in 1930, with two entire issues of *Sane Democracy* being devoted against his campaign.<sup>83</sup> When Lang won the election in a landslide, the League foretold dire results. ‘[Bavin’s] was not a party policy nor even a State policy, but an Australian policy,’ wrote *Sane Democracy* of Lang’s opponent.<sup>84</sup> This language reinforced the naturalisation of conservative values as being in the ‘national interest’ in contrast to the values of organised labour. It also demonstrated that, whilst existing right-wing leagues were willing to channel popular discontent with the status quo, they did not wish to challenge the position of mainstream conservative parties as the political representative of conservative ideals.

## NEW ZEALAND CONSERVATIVES AND MONETARY REFORM

A distinctive feature of conservative radicalisation in New Zealand was the popularity of ‘unorthodox’ economic theories. This was a general phenomenon encompassing individuals on both the left and the right of the political spectrum, the most prominent example of which was the rise of the New Zealand Labour Party. Prominent Labourite and ardent theosophist H. G. R. Mason was an example of the left-wing of this phenomenon. Monetary reformists subscribed to a multitude of ideas, ranging from revolutionary socialists to those who sought

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<sup>81</sup> *Sane Democracy* 8 (9 April 1925): 1; *Sane Democracy* 16 (5 June 1925): 1; *Sane Democracy* 134 (7 October 1927): 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Sane Democracy* 106 (25 March 1927): 1.

<sup>83</sup> See *Sane Democracy* new series 29 (3 October 1930) and new series 30 (17 October 1930).

<sup>84</sup> *Sane Democracy* new series 31 (31 October 1930): 1.

simply to 'fine-tune' the capitalist economic system. Conservatives were particularly drawn to the latter: they argued that capitalism, as it was currently conceived, had failed due to structural deficiencies within the allocation of resources rather than a fundamental flaw in the capitalist mode of production. Many monetary reformists attributed these deficiencies to a conspiratorial element attached to international finance, which was often heavily imbued with anti-Semitism. Monetary reformists remained loyal to the tenets of private property and individualism whilst seeking to alter elements of the economic system such as the control and distribution of currency.

Whilst Douglas social credit study circles had existed in New Zealand in the 1920s, it was not until the publication of Arthur Nelson Field's *The Truth About the Slump* in 1931 that monetary reform was brought to a popular audience. Field's work, which laid the blame for the Depression on a small clique of prominent Jewish financiers and their families, was well received by the New Zealand public and was discussed in parliament by Harry Atmore and Bob Semple.<sup>85</sup> The number of 'funny money' groups, as they were known, subsequently proliferated. In October 1932 an attempt was made by one such group, the Stable Money League, to unite these various monetary reformers. The resulting Federation of Monetary Reform Associations included representatives from 33 different organisations as well as the Auckland and Hawkes Bay provincial districts of the Farmers' Union.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Marinus La Rooij, "From Colonial Conservative to International Antisemite: The Life and Work of Arthur Nelson Field," *Journal of Contemporary History* 37:2 (2002): 229-33; Clifton, "Douglas Credit and the Labour Party," 65.

<sup>86</sup> Minutes of Special Meeting of Hawkes Bay Provincial District 15 October 1932, Hawkes Bay branch minute book 1928-1936, New Zealand Farmers' Union papers, MSY-0288, ATL; circular from Wynford O. Beere c.October 1932, printed matter associated with the Federation of Monetary Reform Associations 1932, Arthur Nelson Field papers, MS-Papers-8615-052, ATL.

The Federation was overshadowed by the formation of a united Douglas social credit movement in New Zealand the following January. By mid-1933 there were branches of social credit throughout rural New Zealand and in several major cities with a total membership of around 4000.<sup>87</sup> These various monetary reform movements were able to bring a considerable force of public opinion to bear: in 1932-1933 48 separate petitions calling for 'an enquiry into the present monetary system and alternatives thereto' made their way to parliament, one of which had 2700 signatories.<sup>88</sup> Bowing to popular pressure, the government established a Monetary Commission in 1934, although its mandate did not extend to an evaluation of the existing capitalist economic system. The Commission's most distinguished witness was Major C. H. Douglas himself, who was then touring New Zealand courtesy of the Douglas social credit movement.<sup>89</sup>

The prominence of monetary reformism in New Zealand during the Depression can be understood as a form of protest against orthodox economics. In Australia, conservatives could direct their frustrations against either the Federal or State Labor governments since deflationary economic policy had not been consistently applied by either. Unlike Australia, however, New Zealand was governed almost entirely by conservatives throughout the Depression, and power was held by a Coalition of the two conservative parties during its nadir. Conservative frustration had few other targets except orthodox economics, at least until Coates' currency devaluation in January 1933. As the New Zealand psychologist T. A. Hunter argued in 1934, economics had usurped the role of the church as the people's new religion, with '[b]uying price, selling price and profit constitut[ing] the new trinity.' The

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<sup>87</sup> Clifton, "Douglas Credit and the Labour Party," 71-76, 128-9, 150-2.

<sup>88</sup> Malcolm McKinnon, 'Funny about money?' (paper presented at the Reserve Bank of New Zealand museum, Wellington, 24 July 2012).

<sup>89</sup> McKinnon, 'Funny about money?'; Clifton, "Douglas Credit and the Labour Party," 90-91, 210-6.



simple solutions offered by monetary reform, which suggested that a minor tweak or alteration in the capitalist system would restore prosperity, acted as an emotional salve for these disenchanted conservatives.<sup>90</sup>

## **THE CITIZENS' LEAGUE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

The journey from reactionary to radical is epitomised in the example of Edward Daniel Alexander Bagot, founder of the first citizens' movement known as the Citizens' League of South Australia. Born on 25 December 1893 at Henley Beach in South Australia to a middle class Protestant family, Bagot was educated in England at Framlingham and Lowestoft. He served as a Lieutenant in the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Wireless Signal Squadron during the Great War and ran a series of semi-successful transport services in Mesopotamia and Australia during the 1920s.<sup>91</sup> His travels made him a popular figure, and in 1929 whilst working as an insurance agent in Adelaide he was invited to give a speech to the Constitutional Club on emerging markets in the Middle East. At the time, his knowledge of politics was limited to an appreciation for sound business practice: his speech criticised high labour costs which made Australian exports prohibitively expensive in emerging markets.<sup>92</sup> His words evidently inspired the Club, for they co-opted him onto the Executive Committee in June 1929.<sup>93</sup>

Like many other right-wing leagues of its kind, the Constitutional Club served as an incubator for a younger and more radical generation of conservatives during the Depression. It began to host public speakers calling for the 'rationalisation of industry' and an end to the

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<sup>90</sup> T. A. Hunter, "Some Aspects of Depression Psychology in New Zealand," *Economic Record* 10:1 (1934): 38-39.

<sup>91</sup> James, "God, Mammon and Mussolini," 40; John Lonie, "Bagot, Edward Daniel (1893–1968)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bagot-edward-daniel-5091>.

<sup>92</sup> *Advertiser*, 28 March 1929, 14; *Register News-Pictorial*, 28 March 1929, 8.

<sup>93</sup> *Register News-Pictorial*, 21 June 1929, 5.

government's 'orgy of expenditure'.<sup>94</sup> One guest speaker, leader of the state Country Party and member of parliament A. G. Cameron, lambasted party politics as the cause of the Depression, and warned that the country was headed for a military dictatorship 'unless there was a cleaning up of the present Parliamentary system.'<sup>95</sup> It was within this environment that Bagot, like many of his fellow small businessmen of an individualist mindset, anxiously sought a solution to the Great Depression. In April 1930 he wrote to an associate in Melbourne criticising Scullin's wheat pool as an 'attempt at sovietism'. If simultaneous protest meetings were organised by the forces of capital in every city, he considered, Scullin would be compelled to establish a 'Supreme Economic Council' to deal with the Depression.<sup>96</sup> Shortly after Cameron's foreboding speech to the Constitutional Club, Bagot wrote to the *Advertiser* openly calling for a dictatorship:

Surely through the length and breadth of this country, which produced such outstanding personalities in time of war, the individual exists who is able and willing to take command in time of peace, one strong enough to cut the shackles of party politics, to displace those useless politicians both Liberal and Labour who have allowed the country to drift into insolvency by their sheer ineptitude[.]

Such a dictator, Bagot continued, would need to be 'a big man in business leadership' who would remove the government from all forms of enterprise, abolish arbitration, revise tariffs and bounties, and replace State parliaments with 'small Councils of efficient operatives well paid for their services'.<sup>97</sup>

As Depression conditions worsened, Bagot became driven by a sense of urgency. In a September 1930 address to 'the younger generation of political thinkers' in the Political

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<sup>94</sup> *Advertiser*, 31 July 1930, 12; *Advertiser*, 2 October 1930, 10.

<sup>95</sup> *Advertiser*, 24 July 1930, 8.

<sup>96</sup> Letter from Bagot to Harold Darling, 14 May 1930, box 7 item 36, CLSA papers.

<sup>97</sup> Bagot, 'A Dictator Needed', submitted to the Editor of "The Advertiser", 5 September 1930, box 3 item 25D, CLSA papers.

Reform League, he stressed the need to ‘act and to act immediately if we are to avert one of the biggest crashes that Australia has ever seen’. The crisis, he stated, was twofold; political, in the sense that democracy had become subservient to ‘party politics’ and ‘partisan platforms’; and financial, due to the ‘insidious onslaught of political power upon commercial fields’:

It is not an uncommon occurrence for a country to be faced with a serious political crisis or a financial panic independently of each other, but when both happen together the blow is so staggering that for a while we are numbed by its strength and thus dazed, are inclined to let others find a remedy while we do nothing. In other words we are inclined to say “Isn’t it appalling? Something will have to be done soon” instead of saying “Isn’t it appalling; something must be done now [emphasis in original].”

The urgent need to do something to avoid a pending crisis was reinforced by the failure of earlier responses. A meeting of businessmen in July 1930, Bagot noted, had ‘passed resolutions and sent a few gentlemen to Canberra who achieved little’, and the Kyabram movement founded at Moonta earlier that year ‘no longer moves’. The time had come, he concluded, to ‘show our politicians ... that there is a section of the public – a long suffering section indeed – that has nearly reached the limit of its endurance – that now cries halt!’<sup>98</sup>

Bagot decided to follow through on his pledge to do something by forming a new protest movement. One of his techniques involved drawing on the knowledge and expertise of existing right-wing organisations. Throughout September 1930, he utilised the connections of the South Australian Constitutional Club to approach several such organisations with a view to organising a combined demonstration against ‘the criminal procrastination of the Federal

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<sup>98</sup> Bagot, speech given to the Political Reform League, September 1930, box 3 item 25A, CLSA papers

Government'.<sup>99</sup> His proposal was well received, and a meeting was held at Balfour's Café on 3 October 1930 to organise the demonstration. Present at the meeting were 35 'members and friends' of the Constitutional Club, including Keith Wilson and C. L. Abbott from the Political Reform League and A. L. Langsford from the Wheat Producers' Freedom Association. Those present resolved to hold the demonstration in the Adelaide Town Hall on 14 October, and to form a permanent organisation to follow up on the demonstration.<sup>100</sup> An Executive Committee of ten was appointed, including Langsford as country organiser, Abbott as Town Hall meeting planner, and several members of the Constitutional Club.<sup>101</sup> The newly formed Citizens' League also absorbed an existing right-wing organisation known as the Empire Loyalty League, and it agreed to cooperate with the South Australian Proportional Representation Group, the Advance Australia League, and the South Australian branch of the Women's Non-Party Association.<sup>102</sup> These organisations connected the Citizens' League to the right-wing ideological tradition that preceded it.

## THE AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS' LEAGUE

The formation of a citizens' movement in Victoria was partially influenced by the Citizens' League of South Australia, which resolved in January 1931 that Bagot should help establish one there.<sup>103</sup> However, Bagot's experiences in Melbourne demonstrated the nuanced nature of conservative discontent, in particular regarding fractions within the capitalist class. Whilst Bagot was well-received by the Melbourne Constitutional Club, his relationship with a group

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<sup>99</sup> Address by L. V. Pellew, 14 October 1930; minutes of inaugural meeting, 3 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>100</sup> Minutes of inaugural meeting, 3 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>101</sup> Minutes of General Meeting of the Citizens' League, 7 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers; *Advertiser*, 13 November 1930, 11.

<sup>102</sup> Minutes of Special Joint Sub-Committee meeting of the Citizens' League and the Empire Loyalty League, 22 October 1930; Report of Executive Committee presented at First Convention of Delegates of Branch Committees, 1 December 1930; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 12 January 1931, box 1 item 1; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 7 July 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>103</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 8 January 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

of influential businessmen named the Citizens' Committee was more strained. The Citizens' Committee had been formed in December 1930 to assist Lyons with his £28 million loan conversion campaign, and included prominent members of Victoria's conservative elite such as H. D. Luxton (Mayor of Melbourne), R. W. Knox (Chairman of the National Union), and Kingsley Henderson (partner at the architectural firm A. & K. Henderson).<sup>104</sup> The Committee was also associated with 'the Group of Six', a small clique of conservative politicians and professionals including Robert Menzies (President of the Victorian Young Nationalists Organisation) and Staniforth Ricketson (stockbroker at J. B. Were & Sons) who sought to woo Lyons and his followers away from the Labor Party.<sup>105</sup>

Bagot viewed the Citizens' Committee as a potential ally in forming a Victorian Citizens' League, and he attended their final meeting in January 1931. After hearing a brief speech by Bagot on the work that had been done so far in South Australia, the Citizens' Committee agreed in principle to work with the Melbourne Constitutional Club in forming a citizens' movement in Victoria. There were, however, two potentially divisive issues. The Citizens' Committee was too associated with conservative party politics for Bagot's liking, so Bagot recommended that the Committee support Constitutional Club secretary P. W. Powell for leadership of the new movement instead.<sup>106</sup> The Committee agreed with Bagot regarding the need for political 'neutrality', but were disinclined to serve under Powell. In his place they recommended E. Lee Neil, managing director of Myer Emporium and a lay canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. Bagot had 'a long interview' with Lee Neil in which he stressed 'the

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<sup>104</sup> D. H. Borchardt, "Knox, Sir Robert Wilson (1890–1973)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/knox-sir-robert-wilson-6993>; Susan M. Balderstone, "Henderson, Kingsley Anketell (1883–1942)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/henderson-kingsley-anketell-6634>.

<sup>105</sup> Hart, "Lyons: Labor Minister - Leader of the U.A.P.," 44; Frank Strahan, "Ricketson, Staniforth (1891–1967)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ricketson-staniforth-11521>.

<sup>106</sup> Letter from Bagot to Knox, 17 January 1931, box 13 item 12, CLSA papers.

absolute necessity for bringing in from the outset all classes of the community and making it a real Citizens' movement', which Lee Neil agreed with. The two eventually agreed to leave the matter of leadership in the hands of a committee from which a chairman would be elected at each meeting.<sup>107</sup>

A second and ultimately more divisive issue arose over whether the Victorian or South Australian citizens' movements would take the lead on the national stage. Bagot envisioned the new Victorian movement as a mirror of his own, and requested that it adopt the name and badge of the Citizens' League of South Australia.<sup>108</sup> Whilst the Melbourne Constitutional Club was happy with this plan, the Citizens' Committee wanted to form an entirely new movement named the 'Australian Citizens' League' that would then spread to Sydney and Brisbane, rather than accepting 'the extension of a League already formed'.<sup>109</sup> The Committee won the argument, and Bagot left Melbourne with little else beyond a vague promise of cooperation.<sup>110</sup> Even this was not forthcoming, as the Citizens' Committee was keen to demonstrate its independence from the South Australian movement. In a statement released on 31 January 1931, Henderson said that the new Victorian citizens' movement would be a continuation of the work of the Citizens' Committee.<sup>111</sup> The announcement took Bagot by surprise, who had been trying to contact Knox for an update on the movement's progress.<sup>112</sup> The eventual reply from Knox emphasized his disdain for Bagot:

Apparently you do not get copies of the Melbourne "Argus"; otherwise, you would have seen, almost daily, accounts of the Citizens' Movement which was

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<sup>107</sup> Letter from Bagot to H. E. A. McCarthy, 17 January 1931, box 13 item 16, CLSA papers.

<sup>108</sup> Letter from Bagot to Knox, 17 January 1931, box 13 item 12, CLSA papers.

<sup>109</sup> Letter from Bagot to H. E. A. McCarthy, 17 January 1931, box 13 item 16, CLSA papers.

<sup>110</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 21 January 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers; *Horsham Times*, 23 January 1931, 6.

<sup>111</sup> *Argus*, 31 January 1931, 19.

<sup>112</sup> Letter from Bagot to R. W. Knox, 31 January 1931; Letter from Bagot to Knox, 2 February 1931, box 13 item 12, CLSA papers.

brought before the notice of the public last week very forcibly by a strong “leader” ... The movement is making in every way satisfactory progress.<sup>113</sup>

The League was subsequently launched at a Melbourne Town Hall meeting on 19 February.

The schisms between the two citizens’ movements reflected the cleavage between middle and upper class conservatives. Members of the Citizens’ Committee came from the upper echelons of Melbourne society, and had close ties to the National Federation of Victoria. Bagot, in contrast, was a political newcomer from the professional middle class. Whilst he shared their desire to uphold orthodox economic values, his fiery rhetoric and his virulent anti-partyism made him a wild card with the potential to split the conservative vote. The desire to encourage conservative unity was of particular concern in January 1931 because the openly ‘inflationist’ Theodore had just been re-appointed as Treasurer. The reluctance of the Citizens’ Committee to follow Bagot or the Melbourne Constitutional Club also stemmed from the role they had played in securing the conversion loan. Citizens’ Committee members had, in their eyes, defended the nation’s honour from the stain of repudiation through their ‘patriotic and painstaking efforts’.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, when the Australian Citizens’ League was founded in Victoria, its leaders were keen to stress that it was a continuation of the Citizens’ Committee rather than a branch of the Citizens’ League of South Australia.<sup>115</sup> Class and political allegiance would continue to influence the Australian Citizens’ League, and will be further explored in chapter five.

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<sup>113</sup> Letter from Knox to Bagot, 6 February 1931, box 13 item 12, CLSA papers.

<sup>114</sup> Or so the note of thanks from Lyons said; see *Argus*, 27 December 1930, 8.

<sup>115</sup> *Argus*, 31 January 1931, 19.

## THE ALL FOR AUSTRALIA LEAGUE

Unlike the Australian Citizens' League, the All for Australia League arose independently of the Citizens' League of South Australia. One of its early influences was a rural protest movement named the Producers' Advisory Council, which emerged from the 'financial panic' that followed Lang's electoral victory in October 1930. Its key instigators were Graziers' Association President F. H. Tout and former M. P. for Gwydir C. L. A. Abbott, who met several times to discuss 'what could be done to prevent a smash'. Abbott suggested that the Country Party Central Council set up a meeting of various primary producer, business and manufacturing organisations, and at a widely attended meeting on 4 December 1930 it was decided to form a pressure group that would organise protest meetings throughout the New South Wales countryside calling for lowered costs of production through drastic government economies, tariff reductions and the abolition of arbitration.<sup>116</sup> Its early activities gathered significant public attention, and in January 1931 it addressed a total of 40000 people at 40 meetings.<sup>117</sup> Abbott's efforts impressed several Sydney businessmen, including R. A. Malloch of farming equipment manufacturer Dangar, Gedy & Malloch and Deputy Chairman of Associated Newspapers Sydney Snow. Abbott explained what the Council had done in the country and 'suggested they should try to do the same in Sydney'.<sup>118</sup>

At the same time that this was occurring, a group of Sydney Rotarians including Alex J. Gibson (consulting engineer with Julius Gibson & Poole) and Norman Keysor (managing director of General Industries) held discussions on the deteriorating economic situation. After meeting with the leaders of several business and manufacturers' organisations, a conference

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<sup>116</sup> C. L. A. Abbott, 'Family Background: The Upper Hunter Abbotts,' folder 5, Hilda and C.L.A. Abbott papers, MS 4744, NLA, 335-8; *Primary Producers' Problems: The Way Out* (Sydney: Land Newspaper Ltd., 1931).

<sup>117</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1931, 7.

<sup>118</sup> Abbott, 'Family Background: The Upper Hunter Abbotts,' 339.



was convened in the Sydney Chamber of Commerce on 28 January 1931. As was the case with the Citizens' League of South Australia, the attendees at this inaugural conference were associated with a number of current and former right-wing groups: A. E. Heath from the Constitutional Association and the Producers' Advisory Council; Sir Henry Braddon, whose long list of organisational affiliations included the Sane Democracy League and the King and Empire Alliance; Malloch and Snow, who had recently spoken with Abbott about the Producers' Advisory Council; and Major-General H. G. Bennett, brother of Who's For Australia? League President A. E. Bennett.<sup>119</sup> These individuals later formed the nucleus of the first State Council of the All for Australia League, and coopted A. E. Bennett from the Who's For Australia? League and O. D. A. Oberg from the Sane Democracy League and the Constitutional Association.<sup>120</sup> The new movement was launched at a public meeting in the Killara Memorial Hall on 12 February 1931. The Citizens' League of South Australia does not appear to have been involved in the establishment of the All for Australia League, although Bagot maintained a regular correspondence with the Constitutional Association of New South Wales.<sup>121</sup>

## THE NEW ZEALAND LEGION

The emergence of a citizens' movement in New Zealand was influenced by right-wing organisations on both sides of the Tasman. However, despite the striking similarities between the citizens' movements in Australia and New Zealand, there do not appear to have been any direct connections between the movements themselves or their leaders. Nevertheless, many

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<sup>119</sup> Matthews, "The All for Australia League," 138-139; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 1931, 11; Abbott, 'Family Background: The Upper Hunter Abbotts,' 339; *Reports of Inaugural Meetings* (Sydney: King and Empire Alliance, 1920), 4-6; *Singleton Argus*, 21 January 1931, 4.

<sup>120</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 1931, 11; Minutes of Committee Meeting, 26 May 1931, box 2 item 1, Constitutional Association of New South Wales records, MLMSS 7646C, SLNSW.

<sup>121</sup> Report of Sub-Committee, 21 October 1930, box 1 item 1; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 21 October 1930, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers; Minutes of Committee Meeting, 28 October 1930, box 2 item 1, Constitutional Association of New South Wales records 1925-1961, MLMSS 7646C, SLNSW.

prominent figures in the citizens' movements had business and professional interests in both countries, and this trans-Tasman view of business and economics may have extended to a similar appreciation of politics. New Zealand employers' and farmers' organisations were certainly aware of the deteriorating financial situation in Australia in 1931, and they stressed the need for drastic action to prevent the same thing from happening in New Zealand. In his speech to the annual dominion conference of the Farmers' Union in July 1931, President W. J. Polson stated that New Zealand would 'be faced with the precise financial problems which confront New South Wales' unless rural and urban interests cooperated in cutting production costs. One attendee at the conference suggested that New Zealand should follow the Australian example in reducing interest rates on government bonds.<sup>122</sup> When New Zealand was at its lowest economic point in 1933, members of the Associated Chambers of Commerce claimed that the Australian economy had begun to improve since the new conservative government had started implementing policies that incentivised private industry.<sup>123</sup>

Newspapers and magazines kept New Zealanders abreast of events transpiring in Australia during the Depression. The entire June 1931 issue of the *New Zealand Financial Times* was devoted to the economic situation in Australia, paying particular attention to the Commonwealth Bank's attempts to counter the Scullin government's initiatives. It also noted with approval the formation of 'citizen groups' such as the All for Australia League, whose badge was reproduced on the front cover with the slogan 'Loyal Australians Prepare to Uphold Australia's Honour'.<sup>124</sup> Newspapers were a particularly vital channel of information:

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<sup>122</sup> Report of Thirtieth Dominion Conference, 7 July 1931, Dominion meetings and conferences - Minutes 1931, MSY-0248, New Zealand Farmers Union papers, MS-Papers-1159, ATL, 19.

<sup>123</sup> Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference of the Associate Chambers of Commerce of New Zealand, 26-27 October 1933, MSX-0135, Wellington Chamber of Commerce papers, MS-Group-0018, ATL, 49.

<sup>124</sup> *New Zealand Financial Times*, June 1931, 1.

the trans-Tasman cables from Auckland and Wellington both originated in Sydney, which allowed news items from Australia and the wider British Empire to be reprinted in New Zealand. The growth of the citizens' movements in Australia was covered throughout 1931, with newspapers noting favourably their call for national unity in the face of party strife. One reporter expressed incredulity that party politicians might prevent a similar unity from being achieved in New Zealand:

Can it be that just as the friends of good government in Australia are uniting, regardless of party, to save the country, our own leaders will resist the call to national unity and aggravate the common danger by maintaining the artificial division of the party system[?] <sup>125</sup>

The All for Australia League attracted the majority of this press attention, due perhaps to the geographical proximity of New South Wales and the historical ties it shared with New Zealand. New South Wales was also the site of the most heated divisions during the Depression: Jack Lang's party held power there until May 1932, which provided a convenient rhetorical opposite to the values that the citizens' movements espoused.<sup>126</sup> At the very least, this suggests that many New Zealanders were aware of the Australian citizens' movements.

The paramilitary New Guard had a more direct influence on the New Zealand Legion. The combative rhetoric of its leader Eric Campbell, combined with its violent clashes with unemployed and communist meetings across Sydney in the summer of 1931-1932, were regularly covered by the New Zealand press. However, it was the antics of a mounted New Guardsman named Francis De Groot at the Sydney Harbour Bridge opening ceremony in March 1932 that attracted the most attention.<sup>127</sup> De Groot became a trans-Tasman celebrity

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<sup>125</sup> *Evening Post*, 17 April 1931, 6.

<sup>126</sup> *Evening Post*, 23 February 1931, 9.

<sup>127</sup> *Evening Post*, 19 March 1932, 12.

virtually overnight: he received fan mail from several New Zealanders, including a school boy in Canterbury who attended a fancy dress ball in a De Groot costume.<sup>128</sup> A promotional video containing statements from himself and Eric Campbell was screened before feature films at the St James Theatre in Wellington and was met with applause.<sup>129</sup> The opening of the Haupiri Bridge in Kopara was disrupted by an ‘amateur “De Groot”’ who ‘galloped up on a horse and, with a dramatic sweep of a stick, severed the ribbon across the bridge’.<sup>130</sup> This positive reception soured after May 1932 when a police investigation revealed the New Guard’s secret plans to launch a coup against the state government.<sup>131</sup> By the end of 1932 the movement had begun adopting the trappings of fascism, which further tarnished its reputation in New Zealand.<sup>132</sup>

The declining popularity of the New Guard coincided with the birth of the New Zealand Legion. As with the Australian citizens’ movements, the Legion emerged from the tradition of right-wing agitation that preceded it. By November 1932 the New Zealand National Movement was all but defunct, and its organiser, a Waipukurau sheepfarmer named J. R. V. Sherston, began canvassing leading conservative and right-wing figures across the country who he believed might be interested in forming a new movement. The first individual he approached was Arthur Nelson Field, the prominent monetary reformer from Nelson. Apart from being knowledgeable regarding monetary reform, Field was also well placed to inform Sherston of developments overseas. He had received orders from hundreds of foreign publishers and individuals for his work, and his Australian correspondents kept him well

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<sup>128</sup> See letters from Cecil Sweet Allen, D. A. Blackman, Oswald Cotterell, and Henry G. Ford, Volume 4, CY3091; and from A. H. MacKay, H. T. Morton, and unknown, Volume 5, CY3092, Francis Edward de Groot papers, SLNSW. Cotterell was the school boy.

<sup>129</sup> *Evening Post*, 9 April 1932, 8; Letter from Mr M. V. Nelson [undated], Volume 5, CY3092, Francis Edward de Groot papers, SLNSW.

<sup>130</sup> *Evening Post*, 21 November 1932, 8.

<sup>131</sup> *Evening Post*, 11 May 1932, 7; *Evening Post*, 17 June 1932, 7.

<sup>132</sup> Cunningham, "Australian Fascism? A Revisionist Analysis of the Ideology of the New Guard," 388-9.

informed of events occurring across the Tasman, including those involving the New Guard.<sup>133</sup> However, Field and Sherston held different views on how a new movement should be constituted, so the two men agreed to part ways.<sup>134</sup> Sherston then met with Sir Andrew Russell, a New Zealand general during the First World War and a long time acquaintance of Sherston's. Russell was associated with several right-wing organisations, including the National Defence League and the Returned Services Association, and he had a particular interest in monetary reform.<sup>135</sup> The two men met in January 1933, and Russell agreed wholeheartedly with Sherston's ideas. '[W]e need a fresh start', he recorded in his diary, 'doing away with party government, not quite socialism nor yet fascism, rather a combination.'<sup>136</sup> Russell later became Chairman of the Hawkes Bay Division of the New Zealand Legion.

Sherston also met with several Wellington businessmen and professionals in January 1933. One of these was a urologist named Robert Campbell Begg, who had recently become renowned for his election to the Wellington Hospital Board as a candidate for the Wellington Civic League, the body formed by the anti-communist Welfare League in 1921. Begg's campaign was based on his belief that hospital administration was heavily politicised, haphazard and inefficient, and required self-sacrificing and non-partisan leadership if it were to become more economic and sustainable.<sup>137</sup> Begg's views on public service were influenced by his involvement with the Wellington Rotary Club, where he had served in a

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<sup>133</sup> La Rooij, "Arthur Nelson Field: Kiwi Theoretician of the Australian Radical Right?"; Letter from Arthur James Vogan, 28 March 1932, Scrapbook of correspondence enclosing some clippings, 1930-1938, Arthur Nelson Field papers, MS-Papers-8615-083, ATL.

<sup>134</sup> Letter from Field to Sherston, 16 Jan 1933; Letter from Sherston to Field, 20 Jan 1933, alphabetical correspondence, Arthur Nelson Field papers, 73-148-108, ATL.

<sup>135</sup> Jock Vennell, *The Forgotten General: New Zealand's World War I Commander Major-General Sir Andrew Russell* (Auckland: Allen & Unwin, 2011). 219-20, 224-5, 252-6. The information on Campbell's relation to Russell is drawn from Eric Campbell's memoirs (privately held).

<sup>136</sup> Quoted in Vennell, *The Forgotten General*, 253.

<sup>137</sup> *Evening Post*, 3 March 1931, 4.

leadership or committee member role since 1929.<sup>138</sup> He was also the younger brother of Dunedin sheepfarmer James Begg, who was a long-standing member of the Victoria and Navy Leagues and a founding member of the Welfare League in 1919. When he met with Sherston, Begg had already been considering how his successful rationalisation of the Wellington Hospital Board might be extended to local and central government across New Zealand.<sup>139</sup>

It was around this time that tenuous links were established between the New Guard and the New Zealand Legion. During a stopover in Fremantle on 19 January 1933 on his way to Europe for business, Campbell mentioned that the New Guard had established ties with a 'strong body in New Zealand'.<sup>140</sup> This may have been hyperbole considering Campbell boasted in the same breath that the New Guard had 250000 members and active branches in every Australian state, but it is interesting that his claim coincided with the formative discussions of the New Zealand Legion in January 1933. His announcement led a New Zealand Labour MP to ask the Minister of Justice in February whether he had any information regarding a local branch of the New Guard, and 'what steps he proposed to take to suppress it'. The Minister replied that he no information that such an organisation existed.<sup>141</sup> Upon reaching Europe Campbell met with British Union of Fascists leader Oswald Mosley, and the two established a 'New Empire Union' with Campbell empowered to speak for the New Guard in Australia and South Africa as well as an unnamed organisation in New Zealand.<sup>142</sup> Given that there was, in fact, a New Guard movement in South Africa, it is possible that Campbell was aware of a similar movement in New Zealand.

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<sup>138</sup> Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 25 June 1929, Wellington Rotary Club papers, MSY-3661, ATL.

<sup>139</sup> Robert Campbell Begg, *The Secret of the Knife* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, 1966), 84.

<sup>140</sup> *West Australian*, 19 January 1933, 4

<sup>141</sup> *Evening Post*, 7 February 1933, 9.

<sup>142</sup> *Blackshirt* 11 (July 8 – 14 1933): 1.

In 1968 Campbell recalled that someone in New Zealand had contacted him during the Depression seeking advice on organisation. Whilst he could no longer remember who made the inquiry, he recalled that '[t]here was no discussion of policy ... [as] there was a similarity between our objectives that made comment unnecessary.'<sup>143</sup> Since the New Guard was well and truly dead by the 1960s and Campbell was no longer in the public spotlight, there was far less reason for him to exaggerate his international connections than there had been in 1933. Michael Pugh suggested that it was Hugh McLean Campbell, the Reform MP for Hawkes Bay, who made contact with the New Guard leader. This assumption appears to have been based on Pugh's mistaken belief that Hugh was Eric Campbell's Uncle, which Pugh seems to have gathered from an article in the *New Zealand Observer*.<sup>144</sup> However, Eric Campbell's first cousin (once removed) was Sir Andrew Russell, and it was possible that the Hawkes Bay sheepfarmer contacted Campbell after being canvassed by Sherston in January 1933.<sup>145</sup> It may also have been Sherston himself: if he had discussed his proposed organisation with prominent New Zealand personalities such as Russell, Field and Begg, he may also have sought the advice of right-wing luminaries in Australia.

A key figure in the transfer of New Guard ideas to New Zealand was journalist and author Will Lawson. Born in Durham, England in 1876, Lawson's family migrated to New Zealand in 1880 and settled in Brisbane four years later. After working for several years as a clerk he embarked on a lifelong career as a writer, which saw him travel back and forth across the

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<sup>143</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 54.

<sup>144</sup> *New Zealand Observer*, 21 April 1932, 4. Eric Campbell's daughter informed me that she 'doubt[s] that Hugh McLean Campbell was a relative (definitely not an uncle) of EC'. I have been asked to withhold her details for privacy purposes.

<sup>145</sup> Vennell, *The Forgotten General*, 219-20, 224-5, 252-6. The information on Campbell's relation to Russell is drawn from Eric Campbell's memoirs (privately held).

Tasman almost thirty times throughout his life.<sup>146</sup> He was working for the *Evening News* in Sydney when the Depression hit, and his fellow reporters wrote several approving articles about the formation of the All for Australia League in February 1931.<sup>147</sup> After the *News* merged with the *Sun* in March he commenced full-time work in the Sydney office of the New Zealand-based Mount Cook Tourist Company, until it closed in April and requested that he relocate to the head office in Wellington. When the company folded at the end of 1931 he moved to Auckland where he worked as a publicity man for a flax company and wrote occasional pieces for local newspapers.<sup>148</sup> Lawson was working as a freelance writer for the *New Zealand Observer* in Auckland during the unemployed riots of April 1932. His experiences led him to write fondly about the way that the New Guard had dealt with the unemployed in Sydney:

From a mere handful of carefully picked men, whose loyalty to high Australian ideals was undoubted, it has grown into a body composed of many thousands of patriots of the highest calibre. By its silent work, as well as its spectacular posing, it undoubtedly saved Australian cities from disturbances such as those which have occurred in Auckland.

Whilst Lawson incorrectly claimed that the New Guard had been formed by the All for Australia League, he argued that a similar body should be formed in New Zealand 'while the Soviet propaganda is stirring the people in one direction or another.'<sup>149</sup> When the Legion was formed in 1933 Lawson was working in Wellington on a booklet for the centenary

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<sup>146</sup> Biographical information drawn from the three drafts of his autobiography; see Will Lawson, 'The Golden horseman', MS-Papers-1679-5, ATL; Will Lawson, 'Baa' baa' Black Sheep: an autobiography', MLMSS 356, SLNSW; Will Lawson, 'Baa' baa' Black Sheep: an autobiography of an Australian author', MLMSS 3129, SLNSW. See also Elizabeth Webby, "Lawson, William (Will) (1876–1957)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lawson-william-will-7122>.

<sup>147</sup> *Evening News*, 13 February 1931, 4.

<sup>148</sup> Will Lawson, 'Baa' baa' Black Sheep: an autobiography of an Australian author', MLMSS 3129, SLNSW, 259-66.

<sup>149</sup> *New Zealand Observer*, 21 April 1932, 4.



celebrations.<sup>150</sup> He was hired as the editor for the movement's new journal, *National Opinion*, where he worked alongside Begg in the Legion's head office in Kelvin Chambers, Wellington. It is quite possible that, in the close confines of the Legion's office, Lawson and Begg held many conversations about policy. Lawson's editorials were amongst some of the fieriest articles published in *National Opinion*.<sup>151</sup>

The New Zealand Legion was launched by Begg at a conference of businessmen and farmers organised by the Wellington Civic League on 8 February 1933. Begg was chosen to lead the new movement, and a Committee was empowered to establish branches across the country.<sup>152</sup> The Committee included two of Begg's associates from the Civic League, a fellow member of the Wellington Rotary Club, and Sherston from the New Zealand National Movement.<sup>153</sup> Many of the founders of the National Movement also became prominent members of the Legion.<sup>154</sup> The cooption of members from a variety of existing right-wing organisations, combined with the influence of the New Guard, demonstrated the connections between the New Zealand Legion and the radicalised conservative tradition that arose during the Depression across Australasia.

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<sup>150</sup> Will Lawson, 'Baa' baa' Black Sheep: an autobiography', MLMSS 356, SLNSW. 206.

<sup>151</sup> *National Opinion* 1:3 (7 September 1933): 3.

<sup>152</sup> Letter from Sherston to Field, 22 May 1933, Alphabetical correspondence - Sherston, J R V, 1932-1936, Arthur Nelson Field papers, 73-148-108, ATL; No. N.Z.L. 2, 11 March 1933 – 'To Every Member of the Legion', file 1 folder 2, Hawkes Bay division of the New Zealand Legion papers, A38, AUL (hereafter 'NZL papers'); *Dominion*, 11 March 1933, 11; *Evening Post*, 20 March 1933, 8. The role of the Civic League is mentioned in an earlier draft of Begg's autobiography; see Early draft of 'The Secret of the Knife' (undated), James Begg papers (privately held).

<sup>153</sup> The Civic League associates were W. Appleton and W. J. McEldowney (both of whom had stood alongside Begg in the 1931 Wellington municipal elections). F. Vosseler was the fellow Rotarian. See Minutes of Meeting of the Provisional National Council 4-5 April 1933, file 1 folder 1, NZL papers; *Evening Post*, 18 March 1931, 10; Meeting of Directors 3 March 1932, Minute book Jul 1930-Dec 1937, Wellington Rotary Club papers, MSY-3662, ATL.

<sup>154</sup> These were J. D. Ormond, M. Smith, J. W. Harding and J. F. Nelson from Hawkes Bay, W. G. Black from Palmerston North, and A. St. Clare Brown from Auckland; see notes of a meeting of the movement held in the Grand Hotel Palmerston North, 23 July 1932, Ormond family papers (privately held); Minutes of Meeting of the Provisional National Council 4-5 April 1933, file 1 folder 1, NZL papers.

## CONCLUSION

The Great Depression had a significant impact on economic and political life in Australia and New Zealand. Plummeting export receipts, increased public debt, rising unemployment and social instability combined to generate a sense of crisis amongst the populace. As conditions worsened, some conservatives began to question the ability of the existing political machinery to handle the crisis. Their search for alternative solutions, both domestic and foreign, carried them in often unorthodox and radical directions. Some conservatives looked favourably on the sense of order and purpose that fascism had apparently created in Italy, whilst others sought to correct the perceived failures of the capitalist system through a variety of reforms to the control and distribution of currency. This ‘monetary reformism’ was particularly popular in New Zealand: with the government nominally following orthodox economic policies, disenchanted conservatives were more likely to turn to unorthodox economics as a form of protest. Chapter six will demonstrate the effect this monetary reformism had on the New Zealand Legion as opposed to the three Australian citizens’ movements.

The most significant ideological development during the Depression was the emergence of a form of ‘anti-political political thought’. This type of thought laid the blame for the crisis at the feet of party politicians and the extra-parliamentary ‘machines’ that had been constructed around the mainstream political parties since the turn of the century. It drew primarily upon the right-wing tradition that had developed in Australia and New Zealand since the 1880s, in particular the anti-communist, propagandist and educational leagues that had appeared in the 1920s. Existing leagues, as well as new groups characterised by youth and political idealism, participated in this process. What resulted was a blend of ‘non-party’, reactionary pro-capitalist conservative ideals with a radical form of ‘anti-partyism’ directed towards the

supposedly sectional interests of contemporary political parties. The fact that most of these groups still supported, or were at least ambivalent towards, mainstream conservative parties forestalled any tension that might have arisen between these reactionary and radical ideas.

The four citizens' movements were a manifestation of this process of conservative radicalisation. By recruiting the ideas and the individuals associated with existing right-wing organisations, they thoroughly grounded themselves in both the reactionary conservative worldview that dominated the right-wing spectrum of Australasian politics as well as the radical tradition that had emerged during the Depression. What distinguished the citizens' movements, as the next chapter will show, was a commitment to large-scale, populist-style mobilisation rather than the low-level propagandist methods commonly favoured by right-wing organisations over the previous decade. Furthermore, as subsequent chapters will show, the citizens' movements were far less able or willing to maintain the balance between reactionary and radical ideas than their predecessors.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A CALL TO ARMS: THE POPULIST CULTURE OF MASS CONSERVATIVE MOBILISATION

[I]n no time a dissident body sprung up, calling itself the All For Australia movement. Members wore a disc in their lapels inscribed “A.F.A.” One morning on the crowded Mosman ferry a dozen or so of these appeared, not even provoking curiosity. The following morning there were twenty or thirty. They began to proliferate. By the end of the week a majority of the passengers were wearing them. The same thing was going on in every middle class suburb in Sydney.<sup>1</sup>

Upon recalling the dramatic rise of the All for Australia League in later years, one Sydneysider retold the above anecdote. In the course of a single week, according to this anecdote, a practice arose amongst League members that involved the wearing of badges as an identifying symbol. This practice became so common that by the end of that week, more people were wearing badges than not. Equally important, however, was the fact that this practice did not even provoke curiosity amongst bystanders. The badge, it appeared, held implicit meanings and connotations that were widely known and accepted by wearers and non-wearers alike – so widely that they did not require comment. This chapter explores how this rapid proliferation of meaning occurred. It suggests that one of the crucial ingredients in securing a mass following was the ability of a citizens’ movement to channel the discontent that many conservatives experienced during the Depression with populist promotional and organisational techniques that encouraged a lasting sense of enthusiasm, engagement and belonging. These techniques will be used to compare the four successful citizens’ movements with other movements that failed to gather popular support. The types of individuals who were attracted to the movements, and their motivations, are also analysed in this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Exercise Book titled ‘Politics; UAP; AFA’, folder 4, H. M. Storey papers, MS 8539, NLA, 25.

## ATTAINING MASS MEMBERSHIPS

The previous chapter showed how Edward Daniel Alexander Bagot, the leading figure in the Citizens' League of South Australia, was influenced by the phenomenon of conservative radicalisation that occurred during the Depression. Through his position in the Citizens' League, Bagot also became one of the key influences on the spread of mass conservative mobilisation throughout Australia during the Depression. His primary concern was to avoid the loss of momentum that had crippled previous protests, such as the abortive Kyabram-inspired movement at Moonta earlier in 1930. At the inaugural meeting of the Citizens' League on 3 October, Bagot introduced a successful resolution that the attendees should 'form a permanent body of citizens to follow up this protest with further concerted action.'<sup>2</sup> This resolution embodied the style of protest that Bagot had been increasingly drawn towards during his period of political radicalisation: it was pervasive, in that it would unite a large body of decent, right-minded citizens; and it was sustained, in that it would maintain its enthusiasm through continued action. Such a body would pressure government not through delegations or low-level propaganda, but through the sheer weight of mass public opinion and, if necessary, through directed voting power. This method of protest became the standard *modus operandi* of the citizens' movements and of other forms of mass conservative mobilisation during the Depression.

The citizens' movements used several tools in their drive to attain mass memberships, including public ceremony, organisation, symbolism and mass media. Public ceremony played an important role in attracting new recruits and maintaining enthusiasm amongst existing members. In particular, mass meetings or 'monster rallies' provided a stage for the citizens' movements to promote their ideas to a wide audience. Whilst the 'public meeting'

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<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Inaugural Meeting, 3 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

had been a standard form of colonial political participation since the nineteenth century, the citizens' movements meetings were distinguished by their sheer size: attendees typically numbered in the thousands, which required many to stand or queue outside. This was not uncommon on the left – Jack Lang's populist oratory was renowned for attracting large audiences – but was relatively novel on the right. The inaugural meeting of the Citizens' League of South Australia packed out the Adelaide Town Hall, with those unable to obtain a seat lining the walls, aisles, and 'even the organ galleries'; the inaugural Australian Citizens' League meeting at the Melbourne Town Hall attracted over 3000 people, with a similar number being turned away at the door.<sup>3</sup> Attendance was so high at the inaugural All for Australia League meeting at Killara Memorial Hall that loudspeakers were set up outside the venue to cater for the overflow.<sup>4</sup> These mass meetings represented an attempt to consciously portray the overwhelming size and scope of the citizens' movements. Since the movements viewed themselves as the voice of the silent majority, they were keen to demonstrate, as often and in as many ways as possible, the sheer weight of numbers that they claimed to represent.

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<sup>3</sup> *Register News-Pictorial*, 15 October 1930, 3; *Advertiser*, 20 February 1931, 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 1931, 11.



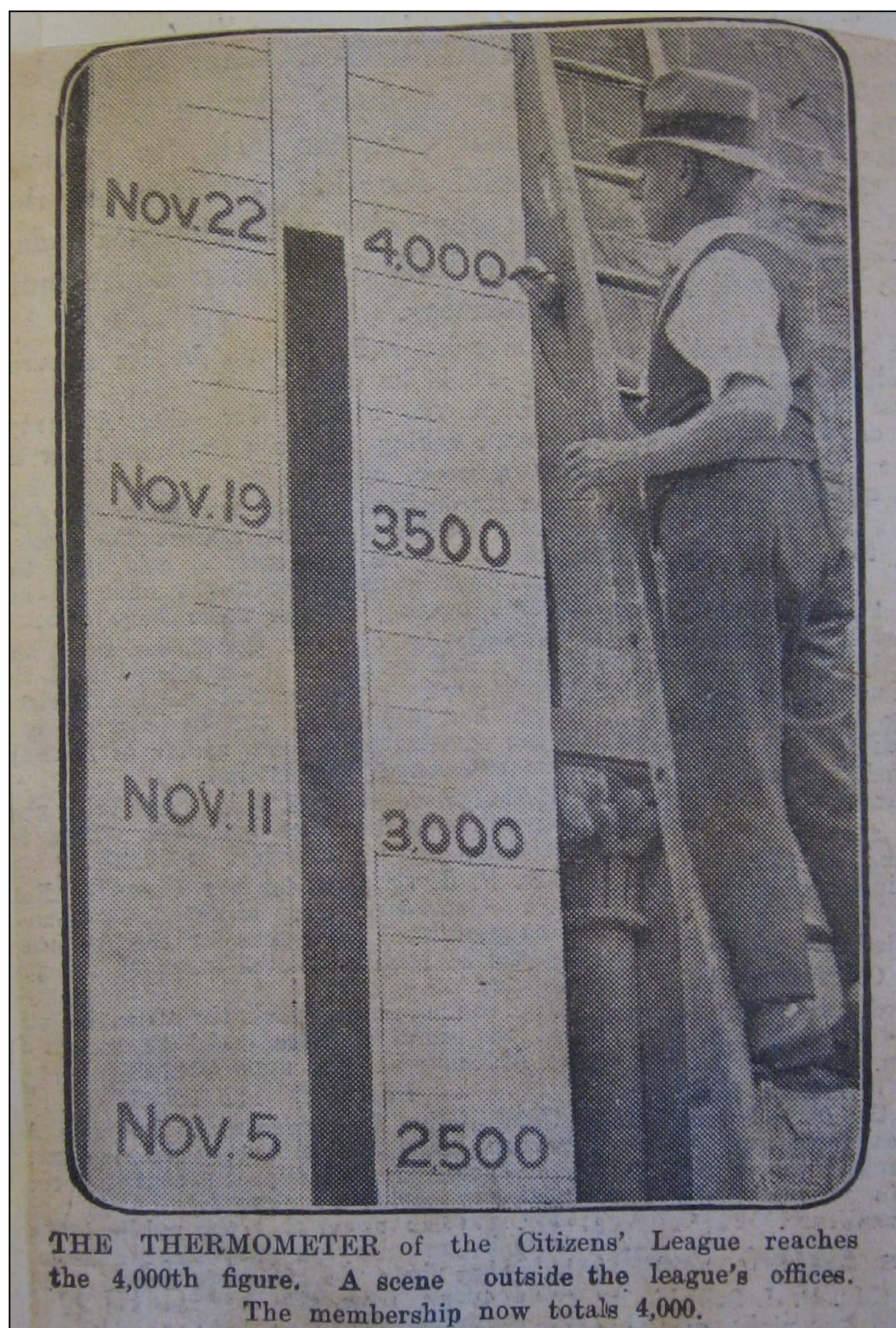


Figure 5: The Citizens' League of South Australia's 'membership thermometer'. Source: *Register*, 25 November 1930, 28.





**Figure 6: Inaugural meeting of the Citizens' League of South Australia at the Adelaide Town Hall. Source: *Register*, 16 October 1930, 13.**

The mass meeting also provided a means for the citizens' movements to engage directly with their membership. Advertisements for meetings, which were published and distributed as widely as possible, used emotive and personal language to appeal directly to the reader. In figure 7, the Citizens' League of South Australia linked the fate of the nation with that of the individual: it was only by taking action – by joining the Citizens' League – that financial order would be restored. General platitudes and a lack of specific or controversial policies ensured that the advertisement appealed to a wide audience. Once at the meeting, attendees listened to speakers who were familiar with the nature of their grievances and understood their desire for urgent action. Bagot urged the crowd at the inaugural Citizens' League of South Australia meeting to bring about 'the cleansing of our political stables', whilst other



speakers warned that ‘a crisis is approaching’ that required ‘immediate action’.<sup>5</sup> Gibson gave a rousing speech to the inaugural All for Australia League meeting that listed a plethora of grievances with the government, including its ‘reckless borrowing and expenditure’, the ‘deliberate alignment of class against class’, and ‘the setting of party and personal power above the interests of the State’. Speakers often involved the audience in their speech by appealing to their sense of public duty:

[The Depression] had been referred to as a financial crisis: but they were approaching a crisis in their national honour. Were they going to stand by and see the fair name of Australia dragged in the dust of infamy? (Cries of “No” and “Never.”).<sup>6</sup>

This reinforced the link between individual action and national well-being: attendees were cast as the pivotal players in ensuring whether government carried out its duties responsibly. Mass meetings were typically concluded with a resolution condemning government inaction or calling for greater unity and cooperation between parties, which invariably gathered unanimous support. The text of these resolutions was usually prepared in advance, which made the expression of approval by attendees a formality.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Addresses by E. D. A. Bagot, L. V. Pellew, and T. R. H. Griffiths at a Citizens’ Public Meeting in Adelaide Town Hall, 14 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>6</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 1931, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Resolution passed at Citizens’ Public Meeting in Adelaide Town Hall, 14 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.



**Figure 7: Advertisement for a Citizens' League of South Australia 'monster meeting'.**  
**Source: Box 1 item 8, CLSA papers.**

One of the crucial ingredients in the success of the citizens' movements was the importance that was placed on the attainment of a mass membership. The very legitimacy of their cause depended on the belief that only the mobilised and directed voting power of decent, fair-minded citizens could achieve what they perceived as true, lasting democratic change. As a result, the citizens' movement leaders went to great lengths to organise their new movements. Between 17 February and 26 March 1933, New Zealand Legion committee members travelled nearly 15000 kilometres across the country organising meetings and establishing branches. Begg alone traversed 8490 kilometres and attended 42 meetings, which led the

*Evening Post* to declare that he 'must have some of St. Paul's qualifications as a missionary'.<sup>8</sup> Inaugural meetings were by invitation only and were closed to the press, which generated an air of mystery about the new movement. This attracted audiences of over 2000 in major cities, whilst country meetings were often attended by 300 or more people.<sup>9</sup> The Australian movements were no less energetic; the Citizens' League of South Australia held 221 public meetings between October 1930 and June 1931, which attracted a total attendance of 42000. Bagot in particular was praised as the figure to whom 'the success of the League's operations to date has been due in a very large measure.'<sup>10</sup>

The citizens' movements utilised novel enrolment techniques to encourage new recruits. The Citizens' League, for example, awarded gold badges and brooches to individuals who encouraged large numbers of individuals to join.<sup>11</sup> It also created the 'L. G. Abbott Shield' which was awarded each month to the district which recruited the most new members.<sup>12</sup> The All for Australia League and the Australian Citizens' League operated hugely successful enrolment booths in central Sydney and Melbourne: an advertising campaign by the All for Australia League for its first convention in March netted 25000 new members in one week.<sup>13</sup> In New Zealand, the Legion utilised a 'ticket' system of enrolment whereby each new member was requested to recruit five new members. Enrolment booths were planned for

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<sup>8</sup> Itinerary in Forming the NZ Legion, file 1 folder 1, NZL papers; *Evening Post*, 6 April 1933, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Y. T. Shand from the Organiser of the inaugural Legion meeting in Christchurch, 17 March 1933, Papers concerning the New Zealand Legion, Arthur Nelson Field papers, MS-Papers-0426-086, ATL; Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 97-98.

<sup>10</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented at Third Convention of Delegates, 10 June 1931, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented at First Convention of Delegates of Branch Committees of the CLSA, 1 December 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>13</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 March 1931, 9; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 March 1931, 1; *Argus*, 21 February 1931, 18. Bagot was very impressed with this achievement, and considered opening enrolment booths for the Citizens' League of South Australia in Adelaide; see letter from Bagot to J. Blitz, 19 March 1931, box 12 item 2, CLSA papers.

several cities, although the only one established was in the square at Palmerston North.<sup>14</sup> Cheap membership fees of two shillings or less, which were often waived in cases of financial hardship, further ensured the spread of the movements. The subscription for the Citizens' League was voluntary.<sup>15</sup>

The organisational structure adopted by the citizens' movements was designed to facilitate democratic participation and encourage leadership at multiple levels. The lowest units of organisation were typically arranged at the level of a town or suburb. These units, known variously as sub-divisions, branches or centres, were supposed to meet frequently and discuss important political and economic questions. They would also review policies proposed by the leadership and nominate members to represent them at higher levels of the organisation.<sup>16</sup> The New Zealand Legion was particularly interested in maximising the participation of its members. Front-line 'centres' were supposed to investigate and develop policy ideas which would be submitted to a National Council that met quarterly in Wellington. Ideas considered worthy of pursuing would be circulated to all centres, and those that received the approval of every centre would be adopted as official Legion policy. In practice, however, centres typically looked for guidance to the National Executive, a small body appointed by Begg to manage the everyday business of the movement. To assist in the production and dissemination of discussion material, the Executive appointed research Committees in

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<sup>14</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Provisional National Council, 4-5 April 1933, file 1 folder 1, NZL papers; *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Evening Post*, 27 April 1933, 12; *Argus*, 2 April 1931, 7; Minutes of Inaugural Meeting, 3 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>16</sup> *All for Australia League: Draft Constitution* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931); All for Australia League: Locality Layout for Metropolitan Campaign, 3 March 1931, item 70, Thomas D. Mutch papers, MLMSS 426, SLNSW (hereafter 'Mutch papers'); *Constitution of Citizens' League of South Australia* (Adelaide: F. Cockington & Co. Printers, 1931); Constitution and Rules of the New Zealand Legion, No. NZL 15, file 1 folder 1, NZL papers; *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity* (Melbourne: All for Australia League, 1931), 26.

Wellington to study topics including central government, local government, economics, unemployment, and land.<sup>17</sup>

These organisational techniques helped the citizens' movements to spread rapidly. Within a week of its official launch on 14 October 1930, the Citizens' League of South Australia had 1500 members.<sup>18</sup> That figure tripled to 4765 by the end of November, and tripled again to 14200 by the following March.<sup>19</sup> At its height in August 1931 the League had 21752 members representing 6.71 percent of the total electors of South Australia.<sup>20</sup> In New South Wales, the All for Australia League amassed a membership of 30000 by March 1931, with between four and five hundred new members enrolling every day.<sup>21</sup> A peak figure of 137000 was reached at the end of June.<sup>22</sup> The Australian Citizens' League in Victoria recruited 5691 members by 4 March 1931 when it decided to adopt the name and objects of the All for Australia League.<sup>23</sup> By its first annual meeting on 19 May its membership was 80000; two months later it claimed to have exceeded 100000.<sup>24</sup> Across the Tasman, the New Zealand Legion enrolled 2000 individuals in its first month, and by July 1933 its membership totalled 15000.<sup>25</sup> At the end of August it claimed to have in excess of 20000 members.<sup>26</sup> In total, close to 300000 Australians and New Zealanders joined one of the four citizens' movements.

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<sup>17</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Provisional National Council, 4-5 April 1933, file 1 folder 1; Ref. 6/2/16 – 12 May 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers; Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 92-93.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of Meeting held at Balfour's Cafe, 21 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>19</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented at First Convention of Delegates of Branch Committees of the CLSA, 1 December 1930; Report of Executive Committee presented at Second Convention of Delegates of Branches of the CLSA, 16 March 1931, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>20</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented to the First Annual Convention of Branch Delegates, 16 September 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers. A slightly higher figure of 23133 was reported in August 1932; however, it is likely that the majority of members were nominal by this point, as the League had rapidly declined in strength and influence from the end of 1931.

<sup>21</sup> *Horsham Times*, 13 March 1931, 2; Matthews, "The All for Australia League," 139.

<sup>22</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 June 1931, 16; Committees (handwritten note), undated, item 79, Mutch papers.

<sup>23</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 March 1931, 10; *Argus*, 6 March 1931, 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Age*, 20 May 1931, 8; *Wodong and Towonga Sentinel*, 24 July 1931, 3.

<sup>25</sup> No. N.Z.L. 1, 11 March 1933; Circular to all members, 28 July 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers.

A sense of belonging was reinforced by the use of easily recognisable and culturally resonant symbols. This use of symbolism was similar to that identified by Bruce Scates in his study of radical left wing culture in the 1890s. Scates argued that symbols allowed those who were unfamiliar with the issues under discussion to still feel as if they belonged. They represented broader ideas and forces with which the observer could identify, even if they did not fully understand those ideas and forces.<sup>27</sup> Symbols of Britishness provided one of the main sources of inspiration for the citizens' movements: mass meetings always began and closed with God Save the King, Rule Britannia or other patriotic songs, and the Union Jack was usually hung from the podium where speakers stood. Badges provided a much more potent symbol of the movements themselves: as the quote at the start of this chapter demonstrates, the All for Australia League badge became a regular sight on the streets of Sydney, and provided an effective barometer of the movement's growth. So pervasive was the badge that opponents of the League measured its failure by the same standard: in July, the *Worker* proclaimed that '[t]o-day it is difficult to find anyone wearing [the badge]', whereas it had once 'decorated every second coat lapel in Sydney.'<sup>28</sup> Public interest pieces in the newspaper further enhanced its recognisability: in March 1931, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* claimed that a man wearing a League badge subdued a crowd of unemployed threatening to riot in front of parliament house:

At this stage Mr O. W. Lapham, who was wearing the badge of the All for Australia League, scrambled up on to a derrick nearby, and appealed for law and order. To the consternation of the leaders, the majority of the unemployed

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<sup>26</sup> Letter from J. B. Wilson to Hawkes Bay members, 22 August 1933, file 5 folder 1, NZL papers. Wilson claimed that the membership was 'in excess of 20,000 and is increasing daily', but he may have been exaggerating given that the purpose of his letter was to remind members to regularly attend meetings and to encourage them to enrol more members.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Scates, *A New Australia: Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 30-32.

<sup>28</sup> *Worker*, 15 July 1931, 13.

gathered below to listen to him. The militant element counted him out on several occasions, but he persisted and out-talked them.<sup>29</sup>

Whilst this story was undoubtedly exaggerated, it demonstrates the power that conservatives associated with the badge. It identified the wearer as embodying something greater than themselves; they carried with them the ideals of the movement, and their rational and clear-headed rhetoric could be expected to win through the false and pernicious doctrines of the disloyal minority stirring up the unemployed.

The culture of mass conservative mobilisation was further promoted by the citizens' movements through the use of mass media. In the first year after it was founded, the Citizens' League of South Australia distributed 222,250 dodgers and dispatched 4261 letters and 29,605 circulars.<sup>30</sup> The Australian Citizens' League distributed batches of circulars directly to employers across Melbourne so that they might encourage their staff to join en masse.<sup>31</sup> Pamphlets, booklets and journals allowed the movements to distribute more in-depth collections of ideas and policies through popular outlets. The New Zealand Legion's two booklets, *Light on the Legion* and *National Unity in Crisis*, sold well in many bookstores and newsagents, although its journal *National Opinion* only had a circulation of 2400.<sup>32</sup> Radio provided a more modern, and potentially more far-reaching, distribution medium. Speeches at large meetings of the Citizens' League were broadcast on 5AD, and twice-weekly broadcasts

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<sup>29</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March 1931, 15.

<sup>30</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented to the First Annual Convention of Branch Delegates, 16 September 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>31</sup> Hewitt, "The All for Australia League in Melbourne," 5-7.

<sup>32</sup> *Light on the Legion* (Wellington: Commercial Printing Co. Ltd., 1933); Ref. 6/12/17, 15 May 1933; Letter from Begg to all Divisions and Centres, 3 February 1934, file 1 folder 2; Letter from A. S. Tonkin to J. R. V. Sherston, 6 June 1933, file 2 folder 3, NZL papers.

commenced in June 1931.<sup>33</sup> The All for Australia League gave broadcasts on the theosophist radio station 2GB three nights a week.<sup>34</sup> As with the movements' organisational techniques, this focus on the mass dissemination of ideas emphasised a conscious focus on scale. The movements were demonstrating their ability to reach far and wide with their mission to educate the masses whilst reinforcing their belief that they represented a significant body of moderate opinion.

### **A NATION-WIDE PROTEST?**

Bagot was an important advocate of nation-wide mass conservative mobilisation. Indeed, from its inception, he viewed the Citizens' League as the first branch of a nationwide movement. In his speech before the inaugural Town Hall meeting on 14 October, he called on 'similar minded people in other States to take similar action, so that the voices of the citizens of Australia will be heard as one.'<sup>35</sup> An Australia-wide organisation, he told the Executive Committee, could recruit as many as 680,000 individuals, and he offered to visit other States and 'get the movement going there.'<sup>36</sup> This was the impetus that led him to approach the Melbourne Citizens' Committee, which is explored in chapter two. He also contacted other Constitutional Clubs across the country, and discovered that 'similar bodies to the South Australian League' were already taking shape in several states – a 'Vigilance Committee' in Brisbane, a 'Citizens' Federation' in Perth, and the Who's for Australia League in Sydney. Bagot advocated forming an 'Interstate organisation' as soon as possible, arguing that the 'moral effect' of holding simultaneous demonstrations across the country 'would be

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<sup>33</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented to the First Annual Convention of Branch Delegates, 16 September 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers; *Advertiser*, 11 February 1931, 8; *Advertiser and Register*, 17 April 1931, 20.

<sup>34</sup> *All for Australia League* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 16.

<sup>35</sup> Address by Bagot at a Citizens' Public Meeting in Adelaide Town Hall, 14 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>36</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 16 October 1930, box 1 item 2. CLSA papers.



enormous'.<sup>37</sup> Such a massive force of public opinion would either compel the Federal government to act or use its directed voting power to elect a government that would.

Despite Bagot's lofty ambitions, most of the embryonic citizens' movements in other states failed to achieve a mass following. This was due primarily to their inability to tap into conservative discontent and channel it through relevant promotional and organisational techniques. The Brisbane organisation named 'the Vigilants' was formed in October 1930 by representatives from several dozen conservative groups including the Constitutional Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Taxpayers' Association and the United Graziers' Association. It sought to achieve drastic government economies, including the suspension of awards and a reduction in the size of Federal and State governments.<sup>38</sup> In mid-November the Vigilants redirected their efforts toward local government reform in Brisbane, seeking a reduction in the number of aldermen and the abolition of their salaries. A combination of bad publicity and repeated failures to convince the Mayor to implement their recommendations led to the sidelining of the Vigilants by a new municipal party named the Civic Reform League.<sup>39</sup> In December the Citizens' League of South Australia Secretary C. W. Andersen, visiting Brisbane on business, gave a speech before the Constitutional Club and 'several members of the Vigilant Association' in the hopes of establishing the basis of interstate cooperation. Nothing came of the visit, for the Vigilants were largely defunct by this time.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Report of Sub-Committee, 21 October 1930, box 1 item 1; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 21 October 1930, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>38</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 8 October 1930, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Brian Costar, "Was Queensland Different?," in *The Wasted Years? Australia's Great Depression*, ed. Judy Mackinolty (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 170-2.

<sup>40</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 15 December 1930, box 1 item 2; Letter from Bagot to Phillip Frankel, 18 February 1931, box 13 item 12, CLSA papers.

Undeterred, Bagot attempted to establish a branch of the Citizens' League in Queensland. In January 1931 Philip Frankel, owner of a motor accessories distributing company in Brisbane, wrote a well-publicised open letter calling for the abolition of political parties and the replacing of State parliaments with regional councils under a uniform central government.<sup>41</sup> Bagot read Frankel's commentary with interest, and sent him a copy of the Citizens' League program in the hope that he might start a branch in Brisbane. The two entered into correspondence for the next several months, during which time Frankel attempted to establish a 'Citizens' Federation' in Queensland with several members of a non-party electoral organisation named the 'Grand Council of Progress Associations'.<sup>42</sup> At Frankel's request, Bagot forwarded him a copy of the Citizens' League constitution and several other pamphlets 'as a foundation' for drawing up similar documents in Queensland.<sup>43</sup> Bagot also forwarded copies of this material to W. A. Burns, an associate of Frankel's in Cairns who had been working to establish a branch of the All for Australia League but decided to work with Frankel on the Citizens' Federation.<sup>44</sup>

Despite this support, the Queensland Citizens' Federation failed to make headway. Frankel decided to join the 'Queensland Non-Party League' in June, a group formed by the new Mayor and Progress Association candidate J. W. Greene.<sup>45</sup> Frankel gave all of the material he had received from Bagot to the new group, which established relations with the Citizens'

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<sup>41</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 19 January 1931, 13. The same letter was republished in several other papers, including the *Cairns Post*, the *Morning Bulletin*, and the *Albany Advertiser*. Frankel wrote a follow-up letter in February advocating the reduction of the franchise to 'those capable of giving an intelligent reflex of the wishes of the people'; see *Brisbane Courier*, 14 February 1931, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Bagot to Phillip Frankel, 18 February 1931; Letter from Frankel to Bagot, 28 February 1931; Letter from Bagot to Frankel, 9 March 1931; Letter from Frankel to Bagot, 30 April 1931, box 13 item 12, CLSA papers.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Bagot to Frankel, 4 May 1931; Letter from Frankel to Bagot, 12 May 1931; Letter from Bagot to Frankel, 16 May 1931; Letter from Bagot to Frankel, 15 June 1931, box 13 item 12, CLSA papers.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from W. A. Burns to Bagot, 22 May 1931; Letter from Bagot to W. A. Burns, 2 June 1931, box 12 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Frankel to Bagot, 25 June 1931, box 13 item 12, CLSA papers; *Brisbane Courier*, 10 June 1931, 10.

League of South Australia in July.<sup>46</sup> However, like its predecessors, the Non-Party League proved short-lived, accomplishing little beyond a series of public debates with kindred associations such as the League of Women Voters.<sup>47</sup> Brian Costar argued that the Vigilants focused on civic rather than state or federal politics because the Queensland state government was in conservative hands for most of the Depression.<sup>48</sup> Yet in South Australia, where a centrist and economically orthodox Labor government held power, the Citizens' League was still able to thrive by directing its frustrations against the Federal government.<sup>49</sup> This suggests that individuals like Frankel lacked the skills of Bagot and Langsford, whose organisational skills, speaking ability, and focus on rapid membership growth ensured that the Citizens' League became a mass movement.

In contrast, the Tasmanian branch of the All for Australia League was hampered by internal divisions. Its founding was delayed until May 1931 by bickering amongst the leaders of the proposed branch over who would lead the movement and how many labour representatives would be included on its committee. Even after it was founded, the movement was only concerned with holding on to the 'floating vote' which had swung in favour of the conservatives in 1930 rather than actively recruiting a mass membership. As a result, one contemporary noted that it had not found 'any substantial footing in Tasmania'.<sup>50</sup> The Tasmanian All for Australia League also had to compete with a group named the Tasmanian Reform League, which was founded in April 1931 to agitate for a smaller state parliament, a

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<sup>46</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 7 July 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>47</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 30 September 1931, 16. The Non-Party League may also have influenced the formation of the rabidly anti-party 'Queensland Party' in 1932, which ran several independent candidates in the June 1932 state elections. See box 33, Albert Welsby papers, UQFL40, UQFL.

<sup>48</sup> Costar, "Was Queensland Different?" 173.

<sup>49</sup> James, "God, Mammon and Mussolini," 31.

<sup>50</sup> *Mercury*, 21 May 1931, 9; Letter from F. Mary Parker to Latham, 29 May 1931; Letter from Latham to Parker, 11 June 1931, box 89, series 49, folder 2, Sir John Latham papers, MS 1009, NLA (hereafter 'Latham papers').

reduction in members' salaries, and the banning of seditious literature.<sup>51</sup> Given the relatively small population size of Tasmania, this further reduced the potential membership pool of the League.

The Citizens' League of South Australia fared little better with its attempts to cooperate with a group known as the Citizens' Federation of Western Australia. The Federation's founder and President, Colin Unwin, subscribed to a very particular and parochial form of anti-partyism which he termed 'Unism' that he had promoted through a variety of short-lived protest movements since before the Great War.<sup>52</sup> Unwin was very protective of his philosophy, which was focused heavily on parliamentary reform and rejected any form of economic policy as potentially divisive. As a result, he was wary of forming an alliance with the other citizens' movements. Despite sharing their distaste for party politics, he feared that any 'broad common policy' would require the Federation to adopt 'proposals of an economic or financial character'.<sup>53</sup> As he explained to S. R. Dickinson, editor of the Melbourne *Argus*, in March 1931:

[W]e cannot trace that any of them [the citizens' movements] are dealing with fundamental electoral and parliamentary reform, but rather do they seem to urge a mixture of principles and political, financial and economic planks all more or less debatable, and thus liable to split any movement at any time, especially as new planks are introduced.<sup>54</sup>

Instead of cooperating with the established citizens' movements, Unwin sought to establish branches of his own movement in other states. He wrote to Kingsley Henderson during the formation of the Australian Citizens' League in February 1931 urging it to adopt the

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<sup>51</sup> *Examiner*, 7 May 1931, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Colin Unwin, *Unism: The New Constructive Policy* (Freemantle: Porter & Salmon, 1916).

<sup>53</sup> *The abolition of party government depends upon you* (Perth: Citizen's Federation of Western Australia, 1931), 1.

<sup>54</sup> Letter from Unwin to S. R. Dickinson, 6 March 1931, folder 15, Colin Unwin papers, ACC 6321A, SLWA.

Federation's platform, and sent a similar letter to Dickinson in the hopes that he would publish it.<sup>55</sup> When Dickinson replied stating he had declined to join the Australian Citizens' League because of its economic policy, Unwin urged him to join the Federation and form local 'Propaganda Groups' in Victoria.<sup>56</sup> He asked Citizens' Federation assistant organiser Mrs C. T. Wright to do the same during a six week stay in Adelaide in early 1931, even if this 'conflict[ed] with The Citizen's League in Adelaide'.<sup>57</sup> These efforts came to nothing: Wright left Adelaide the following month without forming a local branch of the Citizens' Federation, and if Dickinson complied with Unwin's request the press took no notice.<sup>58</sup>

The Citizens' Federation failed to achieve the mass mobilisation of its eastern cousins for several reasons. Firstly, by refusing to consider economic policies, the Federation missed the opportunity to tap into the widespread conservative discontent over the policies of Scullin, Theodore and Lang. The citizens' movements in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales were all fluent in the conservative language of laissez-faire and individualism, which provided them with a large base of potential members. Secondly, Unwin was opposed to the idea of holding 'big meetings first', preferring 'study circles' and 'Propaganda Groups ... until we can be sure of reasonable support in the Town or other large halls'.<sup>59</sup> This cautious approach proved to be counterproductive: the Federation never actually held a Town Hall meeting, which prevented its message from reaching the wide audiences that the mass rallies

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<sup>55</sup> Telegram from Unwin to Kingsley Henderson, 11 February 1931; Telegram from Unwin to Dickinson, 11 February 1931, folder 15, Colin Unwin papers, ACC 6321A, SLWA.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from Unwin to Dickinson, 6 March 1931, folder 15, Colin Unwin papers, ACC 6321A, SLWA.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Unwin to Mrs C. T. Wright, 6 March 1931, folder 15, Colin Unwin papers, ACC 6321A, SLWA.

<sup>58</sup> *Advertiser and Register*, 4 April 1931, 19.

<sup>59</sup> Letter from Unwin to S. R. Dickinson, 6 March 1931, folder 15, Colin Unwin papers, ACC 6321A, SLWA; *An Australia-wide appeal for the abolition of the party system of government* (Perth: Citizens' Federation of Western Australia, 1931), 8.

of the citizens' movements did. As a result, its propaganda efforts were limited to several letters in the *West Australian* and the occasional public meeting.<sup>60</sup>

Thirdly, and more fundamentally, aspiring citizens' movements in Western Australia had to compete with the growing tide of secessionism in that state, which exploded during the Depression in the form of the Dominion League of Western Australia.<sup>61</sup> When R. F. Rushton, a Perth accountant, attempted to form a local branch of the Citizens' League of South Australia in 1933, he encountered this problem:

The swing towards Secession is most pronounced and the bulk of those sane-minded citizens who could be looked to to support our movement are now becoming somewhat active supporters of the Secession movement with the result that much time and much money which could be expected to be given to our movement is being absorbed in other directions.<sup>62</sup>

As a result, the small nucleus of members which Rushton was able to assemble decided to focus their energies on Empire trade, tariff reduction, and the formation of a 'lesser states movement'.<sup>63</sup> Even this failed to make headway, and the September 1933 Annual Convention of the Citizens' League reported that '[t]he Secession movement in [Western Australia] ... was so strong that no close affiliation was possible.'<sup>64</sup> This confirms C. J. Lloyd's assertion that the Dominion League channelled populist sentiment in Western Australia 'into resentment against the Commonwealth, and away from the anti-party and sane finance preoccupations of the eastern states.'<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *West Australian*, 20 March 1931, 15; *West Australian*, 31 March 1931, 8; *West Australian*, 27 April 1931, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Hiller, "Secession in Western Australia," 222-33; Musgrave, "The Western Australian Secessionist Movement," 103-5.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from Rushton to Bagot, 19 January 1933, box 14 item 20, CLSA papers.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Rushton to Bagot, 24 January 1933, box 14 item 20, CLSA papers.

<sup>64</sup> Report of the Executive Committee presented to the Third Annual Convention of Delegates, 12 September 1933, box 1 item 4, CLSA papers.

<sup>65</sup> Lloyd, "The Formation and Development of the U.A.P.," 58-59.

The spread of the citizens' movements in Australia had a more appreciable impact on other forms of mass conservative mobilisation. In particular, their populist style of organisation and rhetoric were adapted by several movements that arose in 1931. Eric Campbell, the founder and Chief Commander of the New Guard, attended the inaugural meeting of the All for Australia League and was thoroughly impressed with its anti-partyist stance.<sup>66</sup> The New Guard subsequently utilised mass rallies and demonstrations in its campaign against communism, and combating 'machine politics' became one of its core aims.<sup>67</sup> Campbell was also friends with All for Australia League executive member Sydney Snow, and the two believed that 'the New Guard was the fighting wing and the A.F.A. the political wing of the same brand of thought'.<sup>68</sup> The secessionist Riverina Movement in southern New South Wales also relied on 'monster meetings': its inaugural open-air rally in Wagga Wagga attracted 10000 attendees, which was widely touted as the biggest meeting of its kind ever held in rural Australia.<sup>69</sup> The policy and rhetoric of the new movement, which blended anti-partyism with criticisms of city dominance and calls for rural relief, represented an adaptation of citizens' movement ideology to the rural fraction of capital.<sup>70</sup>

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Despite these promotional and organisational techniques, the geographical distribution of the citizens' movements generally tended to favour urban over rural areas. Figures 8-11 display the locations of branches, centres or sub-divisions of each movement. The data used in this quantitative analysis is provided in appendix A. The initial growth of the Citizens' League of

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<sup>66</sup> Eric Campbell, *The Rallying Point: My Story of the New Guard* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1965), 42-43.

<sup>67</sup> Cunningham, "Australian Fascism?" 386.

<sup>68</sup> Campbell, *The Rallying Point*, 43.

<sup>69</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March 1931, 9; *Argus*, 7 March 1931, 15.

<sup>70</sup> *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 16 March 1931, 4. Hardy claimed several years later than the two primary objectives of the Riverina Movement had been to combat party politics and city dominance; see Ellis, *A Pen in Politics*, 195.

South Australia was restricted to suburban Adelaide, with as many as 130 branches being established by March 1931.<sup>71</sup> Many of these branches evidently failed or were combined with other branches, because in September it was reported that there were 94 branches in the six urban Districts. The period from March to June witnessed a dramatic increase in rural activity through the work of the League's country organiser, A. L. Langsford, who held 40 meetings addressing a total audience of 8150.<sup>72</sup> His speech proved so convincing in the town of Moculta that, out of a town population of 142, 141 signed membership forms.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, by September the country membership was only 4877 across 64 branches, or 22.4% of the total membership of the League.<sup>74</sup> Figure 8 demonstrates that country branches were limited to the south-eastern portion of the state, which roughly matched South Australian population density in the 1930s.<sup>75</sup> Given the low non-Aboriginal population in these parts of South Australia during this time, this is unsurprising.

The All for Australia League fared even worse in rural New South Wales. Its original plans specified the creation of fourteen country divisions of the League that would share equal representation with their urban counterparts on the State Council. But rural New South Wales was a crowded ideological space in 1931. The League was competing against established bodies such as the Country Party and the Farmers' and Settlers Association, along with new groups such as the Producers' Advisory Council and the secessionist movements in New England and the Riverina. The League attempted to overcome this competition by drawing

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<sup>71</sup> Attendance Book for Second Convention, 16 March 1931, box 2 item 20, CLSA papers.

<sup>72</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented at Third Convention of Delegates of Branches, 10 June 1931, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>73</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 16 June 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>74</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented to the First Annual Convention of Branch Delegates, 16 September 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>75</sup> Graeme Hugo, "A Century of Population Change in Australia," Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/0B82C2F2654C3694CA2569DE002139D9?Open>.



upon the tenets of Don Aitkin's 'countrymindedness', including the romanticisation of rural life and the centrality of primary production. They also played on fears of city dominance:

The cost of Government has grown like a mushroom, the city has fattened at the expense of the rural districts, and the whole social structure of the community to-day is ill-balanced and conducive to bitter factional animosities.<sup>76</sup>

Their efforts were mostly unsuccessful. Had the All for Australia League managed to recruit the leader of a country movement – as the Citizens' League of South Australia did with A. L. Langsford, leader of the Wheat Producers' Freedom Association – it might have fared differently in rural New South Wales. Its attempt to convince Riverina Movement leader Charles Hardy to unite with the League were rebuffed, although Hardy did attend several League meetings and maintained correspondence with its leaders.<sup>77</sup> Other secessionists were less enamoured with the League's perceived interference in country affairs: the Western secessionist movement, for example, was 'definite in its opinion that the league should confine its activities to the metropolitan area.'<sup>78</sup> One Country Party stalwart in Griffith responded to a request to form a local League division by telling them to 'confine their operations to the Cities and leave the country districts alone'.<sup>79</sup> In a last-ditch effort to secure a country foothold, the League supported a constitutional convention to consider, amongst other things, the revision of state boundaries in the interests of creating new states within New South Wales.<sup>80</sup> When the secessionist movements agreed to form a United Country

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<sup>76</sup> *All for Australia League* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 5.

<sup>77</sup> Beveridge, "The Riverina Movement and Charles Hardy," 31; Ellis, *The Country Party*, 143-4; Robinson, "The All for Australia League in New South Wales," 42; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 1931, 12; First Meeting of the State Executive, 1 June 1931, item 79, Mutch papers.

<sup>78</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 June 1931, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Letter from W. Moses to Earle Page, 15 May 1931, box 19 folder 76, Ulrich Ellis papers, MS 1006, NLA.

<sup>80</sup> *Policy as Adopted by Convention of the League* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 4, 13-15.

Movement in August 1931, the League announced it would disband its country organisation.<sup>81</sup>

Nevertheless, as figure 9 attests, the All for Australia League was not entirely limited to metropolitan Sydney. By the end of March it had 15 sub-divisions outside of Sydney, compared to 84 in the city.<sup>82</sup> It enjoyed considerable support in suburban Newcastle, where eight sub-divisions were created and an official journal titled *The Hunter Statesman* was produced.<sup>83</sup> It is likely that the majority of the '30000 Country + Newcastle badges', representing 21.9% of the movement's total membership, came from the greater Hunter area.<sup>84</sup> The few rural sub-divisions it established performed relatively well; Broken Hill reported a local membership of 'well over 125', while in Lithgow the number 'exceeded 200'.<sup>85</sup> The location of these two towns in the area west of Sydney may explain why the Western secessionist movement was so opposed to the League's rural activities. The metropolitan-adjacent country electorates of Macquarie and Werriwa were represented at the September State Council, as was Eden-Monaro from south-eastern New South Wales.<sup>86</sup> The latter is surprising given that Eden Monaro was also home to a secessionist movement, although the fact that it was not launched until April 1931 may have allowed the League time to gather supporters there.<sup>87</sup>

The centres of the New Zealand Legion were more evenly distributed between city and country. Whilst a complete list of centres has not survived, a geographical analysis of the

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<sup>81</sup> Circular re: decision to close down country district organisations, 14 August 1931, item 70, Mutch papers.

<sup>82</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 March 1931, 12.

<sup>83</sup> There may have been only one volume of this; see *Hunter Statesman*, 2 July 1931, item 68, Mutch papers.

<sup>84</sup> Committees (handwritten note), undated, item 79, Mutch papers.

<sup>85</sup> *Barrier Miner*, 16 June 1931, 2; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 1931, 10.

<sup>86</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 September 1931, 8.

<sup>87</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 April 1931, 10; 'Monaro-South Coast Movement: Its history summarised', c.1931, box 19 folder 76, Ulrich Ellis papers, MS 1006, NLA.

Legion in Otago (see figure 10) shows a significant rural presence in Central Otago and in the country west of Oamaru. It is difficult to determine whether this equated to an equal distribution of membership between city and country, but the 1007 members in Hawkes Bay division represented one-twentieth of the Legion's total strength – an almost one-to-one ratio with the total number of divisions.<sup>88</sup> This rural spread may have been due to a lack of rural alternatives: a proposed country protest movement in 1930 named the 'Political Committee' failed to secure widespread support, and the Douglas social credit movement did not begin to make headway in rural areas until mid-1933.<sup>89</sup> The Legion's success was also greatest in regions represented by conservative MPs which, prior to Labour's success in 1935, included most of rural New Zealand.<sup>90</sup>

Nevertheless, the bulk of Legion activity occurred in urban areas. Gerard Campbell and Elizabeth Ward's studies of the Legion in Otago and the Manawatu-Wanganui regions paint a picture of highly active city leadership mirrored by moribund rural centres. The Otago leadership was particularly active, producing several reports on local government reform that became official Legion policy.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, Pugh suggested that towns such as Ashburton and Waipukurau were more active than most city centres. Wellington was the exception with its 900 members, but this was largely due to Begg's personal following.<sup>92</sup> However, Waipukurau had the well-respected Sir Andrew Russell as a drawing card for local members,

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<sup>88</sup> List of members in H. B. Division of N. Z. Legion (undated), file 2 folder 1, NZL papers. The tally on the list itself claims a total of 1011, but four names were repeated twice.

<sup>89</sup> Dominion Executive Meeting, 28 January 1931, Dominion Executive - Minutes, 1928-1931, New Zealand Farmers' Union papers, MSY-0288, ATL; Clifton, "Douglas Credit and the Labour Party," 73-76, 128-9.

<sup>90</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 98.

<sup>91</sup> Campbell, "The New Zealand Legion in Otago", 23-31; Ward, "The New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui," 11-15, 17.

<sup>92</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 98.

and Ashburton is the third largest town in Canterbury. Thus, Pugh's observation that the first meeting was also the last for many centres was probably truer in rural areas.<sup>93</sup>

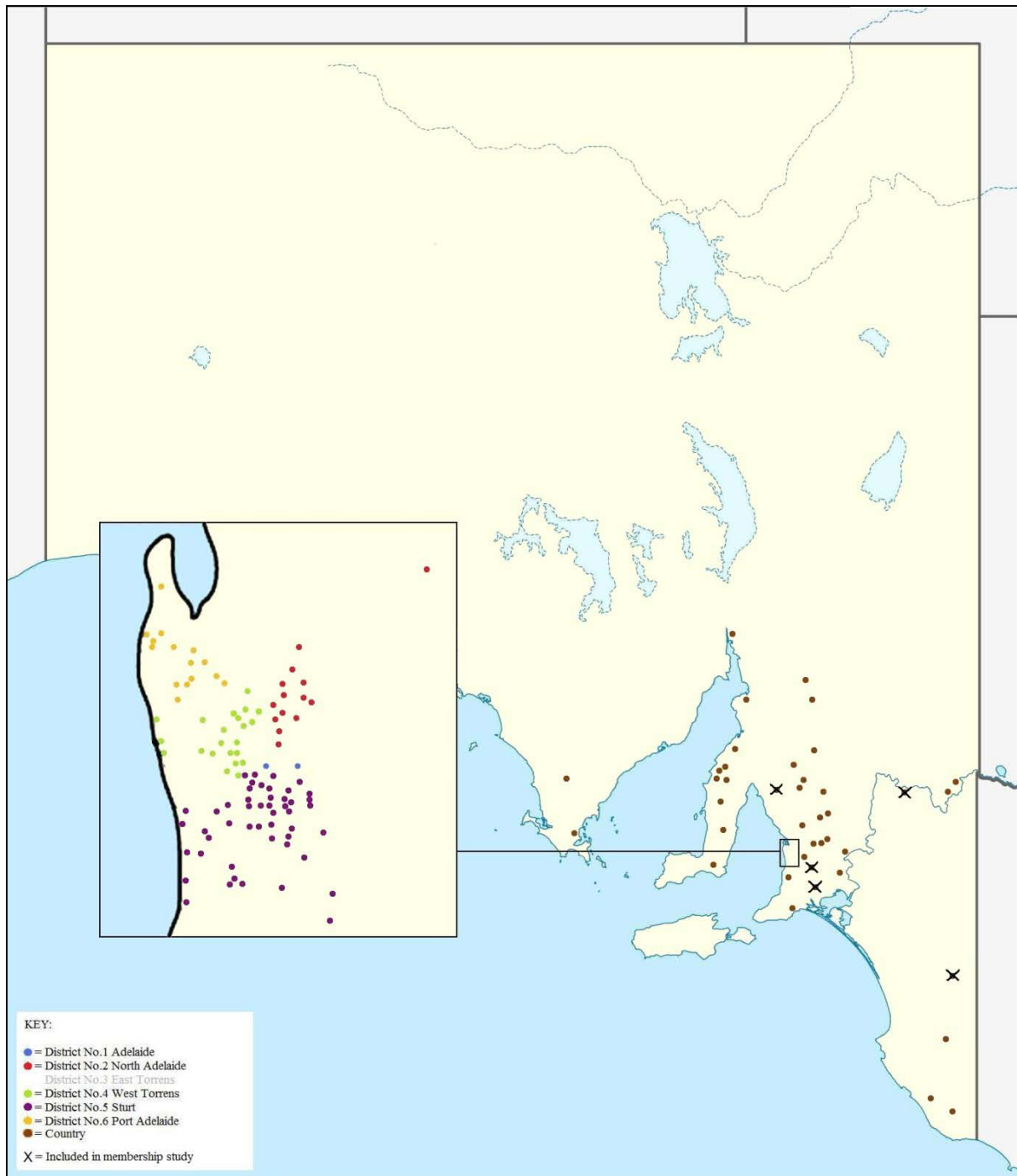
In contrast with the other three citizens' movements, the Australian Citizens' League was spread out across the entire state of Victoria. Out of a total of 317 branches and sub-branches in May 1931, only 28 were located in metropolitan Melbourne.<sup>94</sup> The geographical analysis of those branches in figure 11 suggests a fairly even distribution throughout Victoria, with the highest concentrations in the area north-west of Wilson's Promontory and along the border south of the Riverina. The overall distribution is roughly congruent with the rural population density of Victoria, which was similar in size but broader in spread than New South Wales and greater on both accounts than South Australia.<sup>95</sup> For this reason, the Australian Citizens' League was the only citizens' movement within Australia that could truly lay claim to being a state-wide movement.

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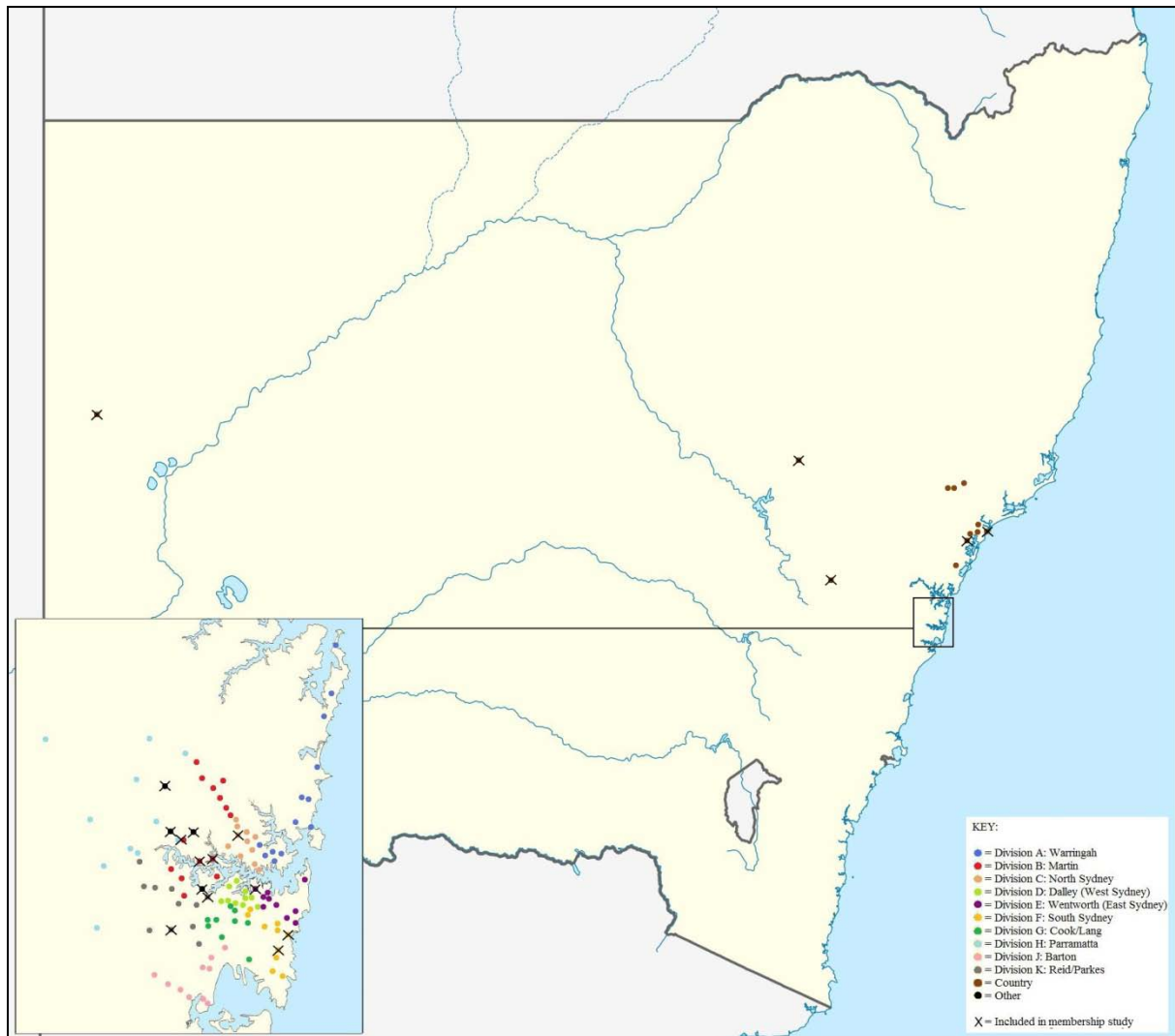
<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 91-92.

<sup>94</sup> *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity* (Melbourne: All for Australia League, 1931), 26.

<sup>95</sup> Hugo, "A Century of Population Change in Australia".



**Figure 8: Citizens' League of South Australia geographical distribution**



**Figure 9: All for Australia League geographical distribution**



Figure 10: New Zealand Legion geographical distribution (Otago only)

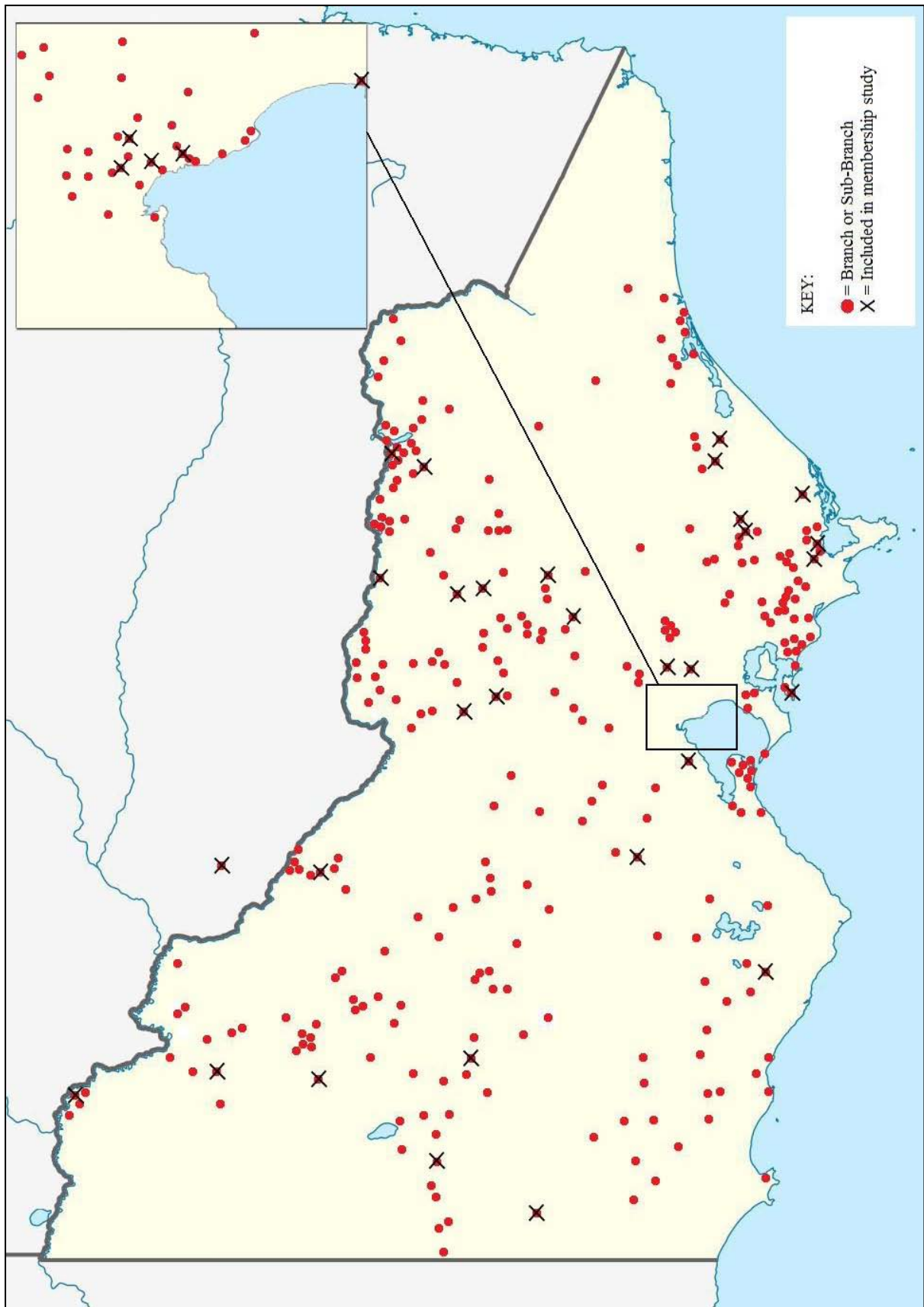


Figure 11: Australian Citizens' League geographical distribution



## MEMBERSHIP AND MOTIVATIONS

Several scholars have attempted to discern the motivations that drew discontented conservatives to the citizens' movements. In the case of the New Zealand Legion, Michael Pugh, Elizabeth Ward and Gerard Campbell show that a significant number of leaders were involved in other voluntary endeavours including community service organisations, unemployment relief committees, and local government. Several were serving or had previously served as Mayors and Council members, and others had presided on government commissions.<sup>96</sup> The leadership of the other citizens' movements performed a similar level of public service: there were seventeen Councillors in the Australian Citizens' League, whilst the All for Australia League had at least one Councillor and an Alderman. Pugh, Ward and Trevor Matthews also highlight the influence of Rotary on important figures within the New Zealand Legion and the All for Australia League.<sup>97</sup> This high level of participation in voluntary organisations was one of the components of the conservative notion of good citizenship: it signified a commitment to public service and civic duty. Founding or joining a citizens' movement, according to this argument, demonstrated a similar commitment to voluntary service and self-sacrifice in the interests of the nation.

Class played an important part in the motivations of citizens' movement members. Previous quantitative studies of the leadership of the Citizens' League of South Australia and the New Zealand Legion have demonstrated the predominance of middle class businessmen and professionals in these movements.<sup>98</sup> This thesis has augmented those studies with original

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<sup>96</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 104; Campbell, "The New Zealand Legion in Otago," 41-42; Ward, "The New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui," 25.

<sup>97</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 102; Ward, "The New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui," 26; Matthews, "The All for Australia League," 138.

<sup>98</sup> Lonie, "Conservatism and Class in South Australia," 212-4; James, "'The Big Hand of Service'," appendix G; Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 100-8; Gerard Campbell, "The New Zealand Legion in Otago," 38-48; Ward, "The New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui," 17-28.

quantitative research into the leadership of the All for Australia and Australian Citizens' Leagues. However, it is important to distinguish between the movements' leaders and the rank-and-file membership. Leaders, or those who actively participated in the movements by joining committees and attending conventions, have been the focus of previous quantitative studies. This has been largely due to the limitations of extant source material – leaders are regularly recorded in correspondence, official journals, and newspaper reports, whereas full membership lists for the citizens' movements no longer exist. But leaders were atypical when taken as an overall percentage of the movements, and their ongoing participation differed from the apathy of the average member. To treat them as indicative of the constitution of the movements as a whole is problematic without comparing them to a corresponding data set for front-line members. Fortunately, two partial front-line lists remain – the Hawkes Bay division of the New Zealand Legion, and the North Adelaide branch of the Citizens' League of South Australia. An analysis of these lists will be compared with a leadership analysis of the four movements to determine whether the two levels of membership were similarly constituted. The data used in this analysis is provided in appendix B, and are summarised in tables 1-2 and graphs 1-4. Unfortunately, the electoral rolls for South Australia were not available electronically at the time of writing. Consequently, without the full names of Citizens' League of South Australia members, it was impossible to determine their ages and military histories. Fortunately, the works of Lonie and James, which analysed the occupations of Citizens' League leaders, include their original data sets. Lonie also collated the occupations of the North Adelaide Branch members under similar categories as have been used in this study, which enabled them to be grafted onto the framework used to categorise the other citizens' movements.

A comparison of the leadership of the four citizens' movements confirms that the professional, business and commercial fraction of the capitalist class comprised between 60% and 75.5% of each sample. The All for Australia League also had a significant minority of manufacturers (11.3%), which explains why it was so reluctant to commit to tariff reform like the other citizens' movements.<sup>99</sup> In addition, the majority of the leaders were above 40 years of age, with the average age for each sample ranging between 44.9 and 45.7. The percentage of eligible leaders who served in the Great War was 46% in New Zealand and varied between 25.7% and 32.5% in Australia, which may have been due to the fact that conscription was introduced in the former but not the latter. Over half of those leaders who served in the military did so at a commissioned or non-commissioned officer level.

The sample lists of front-line members indicate a slightly broader class spread. Over three quarters of the North Adelaide branch of the Citizens' League of South Australia were professionals and businessmen, although these figures cannot be taken as representative of the movement as a whole given that North Adelaide was a wholly urban branch. In contrast, the professional, business and commercial fraction only constituted 42.6% of the Hawkes Bay division of the New Zealand Legion, whilst 34.4% of the sample were primary producers. Given the predominantly rural nature of the Hawkes Bay division this is not unusual: a previous study of Legion leadership in the Manawatu-Wanganui found that farmers constituted a significant fraction in this area as well.<sup>100</sup> However, the fact that almost one in four Hawkes Bay members was working class is surprising – especially since just over half of that number were unskilled workers. Front-line members were slightly younger than

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<sup>99</sup> After much obfuscation, the All for Australia League ultimately decided to leave the tariff in the hands of its proposed Economic Advisory Board, which would 'scientifically' determine 'the limits of tariff incidence and the industrial directions in which it should be imposed'. See *Policy as adopted by convention of the League, 8 August 1931* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 18; *All for Australia League* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 11.

<sup>100</sup> Ward, "The New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui," 22.

their leaders at the average age of 42.9, although unlike the leadership there were a significant number of members under 35 – particularly in the 25-29 bracket. 38.4% of eligible front-line members had served in the Great War – less than the 46% of leaders – however almost sixty percent of them did not progress beyond the rank of Private or equivalent. Seven had also served in the Boer War, and two members fought in both wars.

The dominant position of professional, business and commercial interests at a leadership and front-line level suggests that the citizens' movements were an important outlet for the frustrations of this particular class fraction. Unlike farmers and manufacturers, who could seek some form of protection or guaranteed price from the government for their goods, the services of professionals and businessmen were relatively intangible. Since government assistance was not an option, the best ideological defence for their trades lay in lower taxes and minimal government interference. The tropes of individualism thus assumed a particular importance for them, unlike manufacturers and farmers who were more willing to fall back on the developmental pragmatism that characterised nineteenth and twentieth century Antipodean conservatism. This further reinforces the symbiotic relationship between the citizens' movements and their members: the movements' provided a channel for conservative discontent, yet their immense popularity was predicated on their ability to recognise the nature of the discontent expressed by the professional, business and commercial fraction and respond using the same individualist language in which their grievances were being expressed.

It is difficult to determine what percentage of citizens' movement members were actively involved. In his study of the New Zealand Legion, Michael Pugh claimed that signing a membership form and paying the subscription was the extent of participation for a majority of

individuals, and that only a quarter of the total membership actively participated in the movement.<sup>101</sup> The experience in New South Wales was similar; members in Fairfield, for example, did not attend any meetings, whilst another member complained that he had not received any further communication after joining the movement.<sup>102</sup> In contrast, branches of the Citizens' League of South Australia appear to have been quite active throughout 1931, and reports of decline did not begin to appear until the beginning of 1932.<sup>103</sup> The fact that the All for Australia League badge adorned so many lapels in Sydney further attests to a level of pride amongst members, even if it did not equate to regular attendance at meetings.<sup>104</sup> Any attempt to estimate participation without further evidence is highly problematic and ultimately unnecessary for the purposes of gauging the conservative discontent underlying the citizens' movements. Even the act of signing a membership card required some form of commitment.

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<sup>101</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 97.

<sup>102</sup> Letter from R. T. Gillies to Mutch, 13 July 1931, item 70, Mutch papers; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1931, 5.

<sup>103</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented to the Second Annual Convention of Branch Delegates, 12 September 1932, box 1 item 9; Country Organisers' Report, 23 July 1932, box 13 item 10; Address to the Executive Committee, 19 December 1933, box 3 item 25A, CLSA papers. At least one member of the Citizens' League resigned in 1931 due to a lack of communication from his leaders, although he was also motivated by his belief that it had become a 'class conscious' movement. See Letter from R. B. Petch to Bagot, 2 February 1931, box 12 item 5, CLSA papers.

<sup>104</sup> *Argus*, 16 March 1931, 8.

**Table 1: Employment Statistics (Leadership)**

<b>1a: All for Australia League</b>			<b>1b: Australian Citizens' League</b>		
Primary production			Primary production		
Farmers:	2	2.8% (3)	Farmers:	38	25.4% (56)
Pastoralists:	1		Pastoralists:	18	
Manufacturing		11.3% (12)	Manufacturing		0.5% (1)
Professional, business and commercial			Professional, business and commercial		
Professionals:	35	72.7% (77)	Professionals:	54	60% (132)
Semi-professionals:	9		Semi-professionals:	25	
Business:	19		Business:	26	
Commercial:	14		Commercial:	23	
Working class			Working class		
Skilled workers:	9	10.4% (11)	Skilled workers:	19	14.1% (31)
Unskilled workers and unemployed:	2		Unskilled workers and unemployed:	12	
Other			Other		
Total number for whom occupations were identified		106	Total number for whom occupations were identified		220

<b>1c: Citizens' League of South Australia</b>			<b>1d: New Zealand Legion</b>		
Primary production			Primary production		
Farmers:	8	13.7% (10)	Farmers:	12	14.5% (23)
Pastoralists:	2		Pastoralists:	11	
Manufacturing		1.4% (1)	Manufacturing		0.6% (1)
Professional, business and commercial			Professional, business and commercial		
Professionals:	20	65.7% (48)	Professionals:	68	75.5% (120)
Semi-professionals:	11		Semi-professionals:	14	
Business:	11		Business:	21	
Commercial:	6		Commercial:	17	
Working class			Working class		
Skilled workers:	12	19.2% (14)	Skilled workers:	7	8.8% (14)
Unskilled workers and unemployed:	2		Unskilled workers and unemployed :	7	
Other			Other		
Total number for whom occupations were identified		73	Total number for whom occupations were identified		159

**Table 2: Employment Statistics (Front-line membership)****2a: Citizens' League of South Australia**

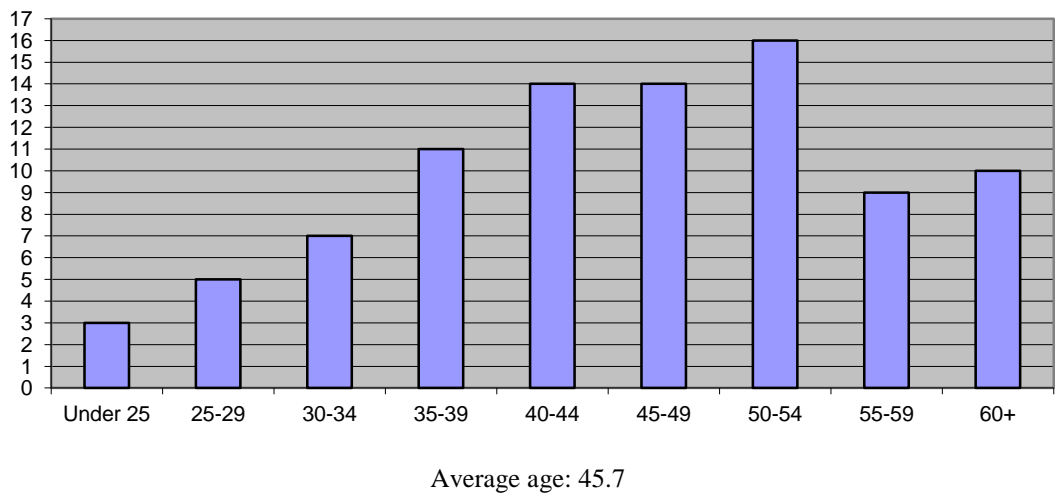
Primary production		
Farmers:	0	0
Pastoralists:	0	
Manufacturing		0
Professional, business and commercial		
Professionals:	25	
Semi-professionals:	32	76.5% (124)
Business:	45	
Commercial:	22	
Working class		
Skilled workers:	14	14.8% (24)
Unskilled workers/unemployed:	10	
Other		8.7% (14)
Total number for whom occupations were identified		162

**2b: New Zealand Legion**

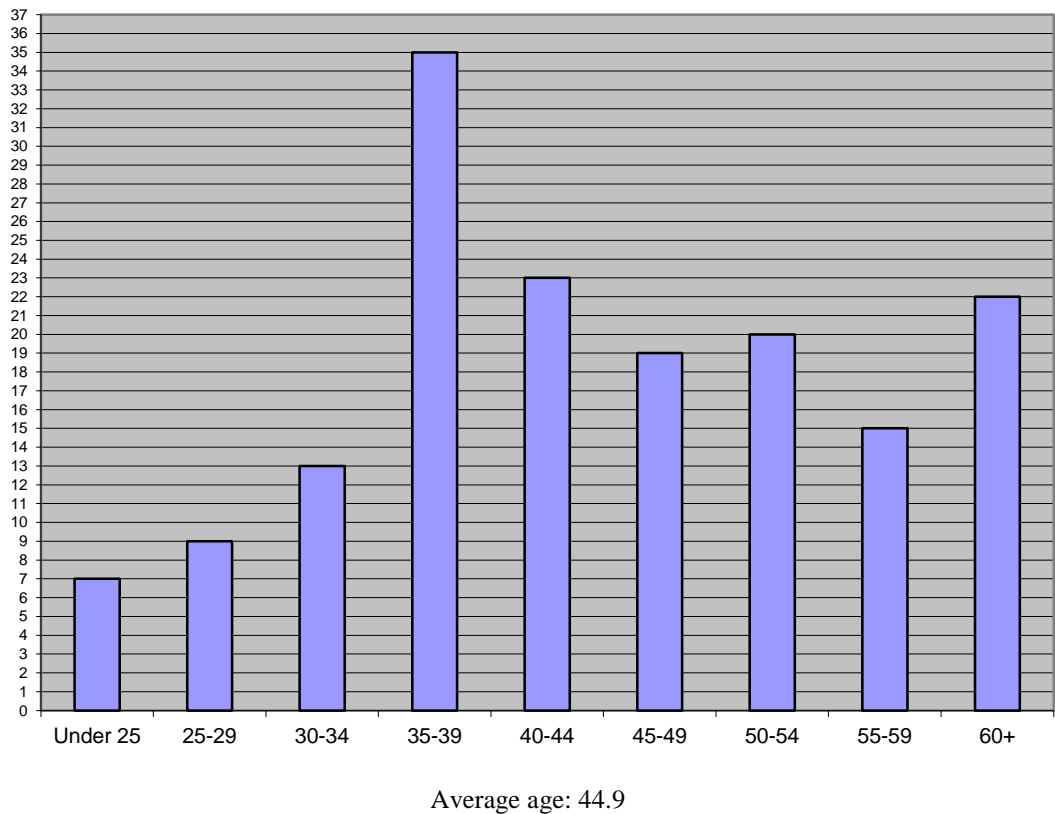
Primary production		
Farmers:	189	34.4% (257)
Pastoralists:	68	
Manufacturing		0.5% (4)
Professional, business and commercial		
Professionals:	127	
Semi-professionals:	78	42.6% (319)
Business:	51	
Commercial:	63	
Working class		
Skilled workers:	82	22.5% (168)
Unskilled workers/unemployed:	86	
Other		0
Total number for whom occupations were identified		748

**Graph 1: Age Statistics (Leadership)**

**1a: All for Australia League**

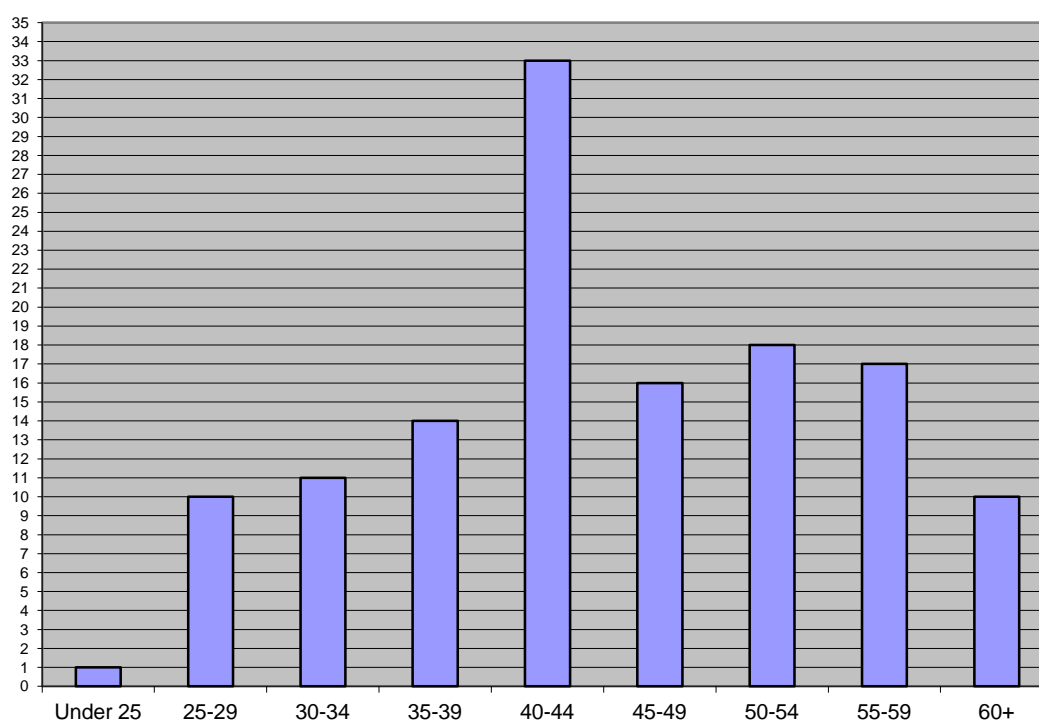


**1b: Australian Citizens' League**





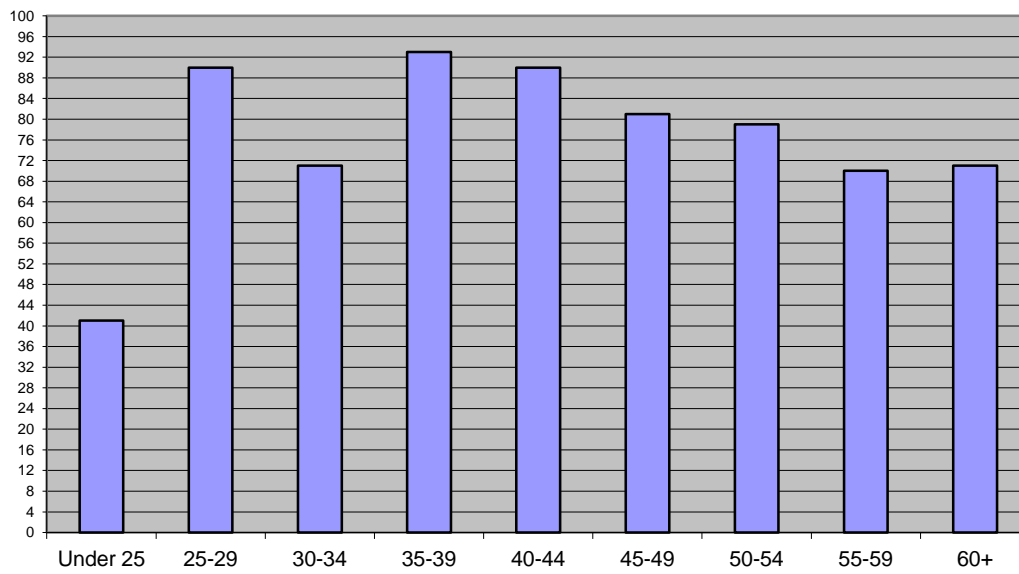
### 1c: New Zealand Legion



Average age: 45.1

## Graph 2: Age Statistics (Front-line membership)

### 2a: New Zealand Legion

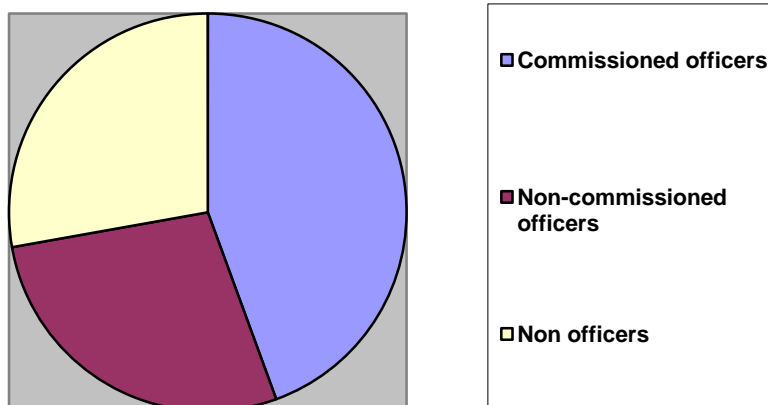


Average age: 42.9

### Graph 3: Military Statistics (Leadership)

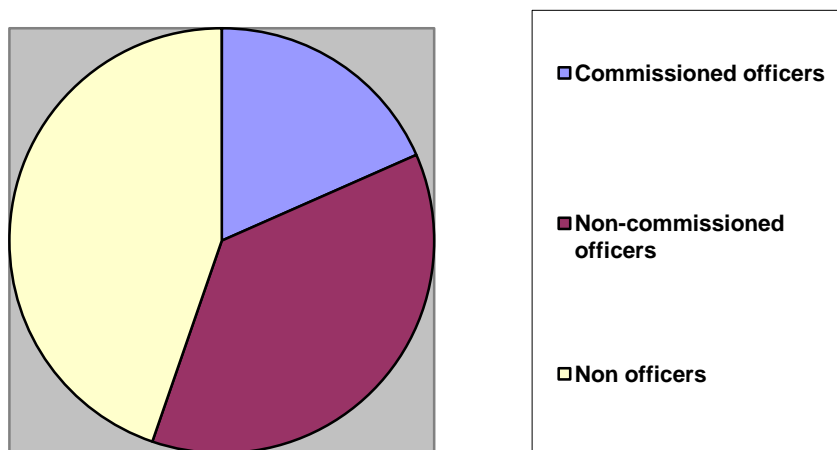
#### 3a: All for Australia League

Total number for whom military histories were identified: 91  
Total number eligible to have served in World War One<sup>105</sup>: 70  
Total eligible who served: 18 (25.7%)



#### 3b: Australian Citizens' League

Total number for whom military histories were identified: 153  
Total number eligible to have served in World War One<sup>106</sup>: 120  
Total eligible who served: 39 (32.5%)

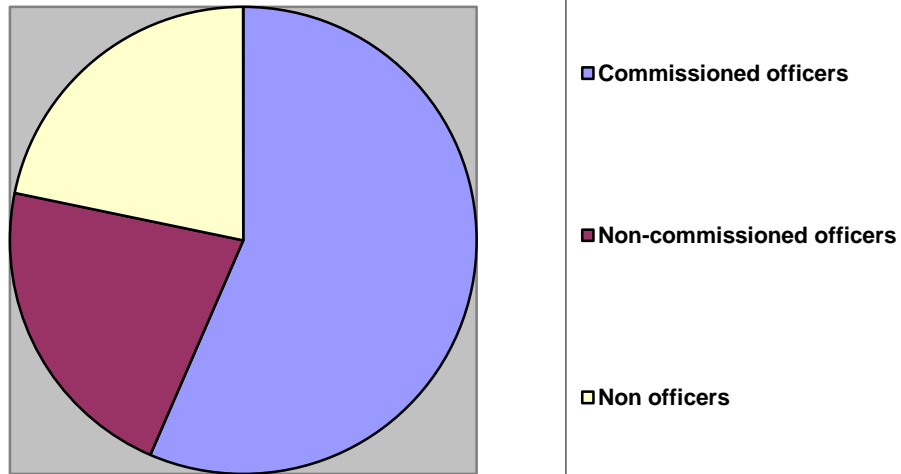


<sup>105</sup> If the individual was aged 18-47 in 1918 they will be treated as having been eligible to serve in the Australian military: 'In 1914 recruits had to be 18-35 years with a height of 167.6 centimetres and a chest measurement of 86.3 centimetres. In June 1915 the age and height standards were changed to 18-45 years and 157.5 centimetres. The minimum height was lowered again, to 152.4 centimetres, in April 1917. The standard of medical fitness required from recruits was also lowered.' ('Australian recruitment statistics for World War I,' National Library of Australia, <http://vrrroom.naa.gov.au/records/?tab=about&ID=19590>).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

### 3c: New Zealand Legion

Total number for whom military histories were identified:	132
Total number eligible to have served in World War One <sup>107</sup> :	100
Total eligible who served:	46 (46%)

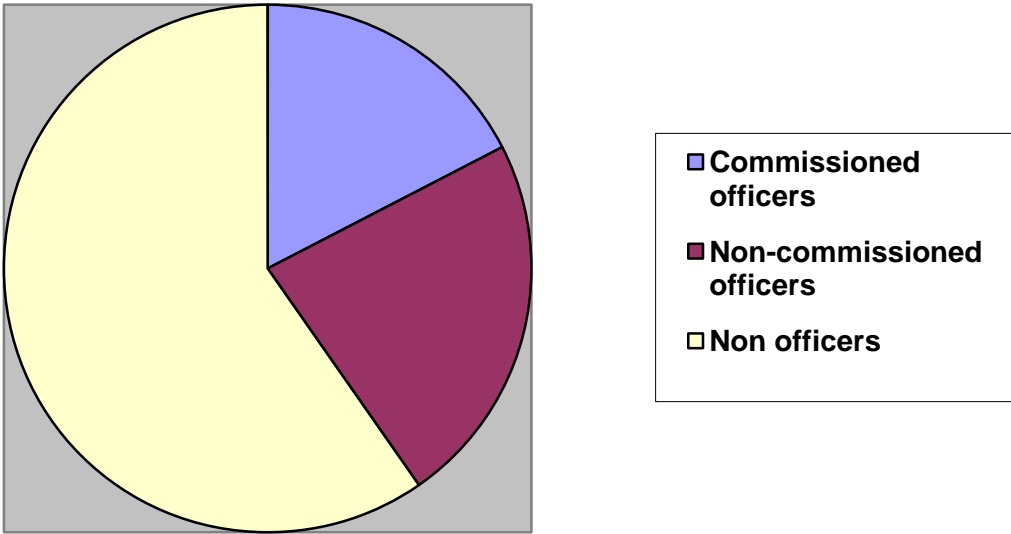


<sup>107</sup> If the individual was aged 20-47 in 1918 they will be treated as having been eligible to serve in the New Zealand military, based on the conscription range of 20-45 that was introduced in 1916. (James Belich, *Paradise Reforged* (Auckland: Penguin Press, 2001), 99.)

**Graph 4: Military Statistics (Front-line membership)**

**4a: New Zealand Legion**

Total number for whom military histories were identified:	576
Total number eligible to have served in World War One <sup>108</sup> :	380
Total who served in the Boer War:	7
Total who served in the Boer War and World War One:	2
Total eligible who served in World War One:	146 (38.4%)



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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

The citizens' movements appealed to the same middle class audience as the other mass conservative movements that arose during the Depression, in particular the paramilitaristic New Guard. Andrew Moore concluded that the New Guard consisted predominantly of 'small capitalists, those reliant on bank credit and subject to the fierce competition of larger and more established business firms', but that there was also a 'significant minority' of working class members.<sup>109</sup> Working class support for the New Guard's thoroughly anti-working class platform might seem contradictory; certainly, the works of Humphrey McQueen, William Tully, and Phyllis Mitchell contended that the proletariat was sparsely represented in the movement.<sup>110</sup> However, whilst Robert Darlington's suggestion that 'there were undoubtedly large numbers of workers in the New Guard' was surely an exaggeration, it is partially borne out by the evidence.<sup>111</sup> Jean O'Mara's study of the Five Dock locality of the New Guard – a predominantly working class suburb – demonstrated that eighteen percent were working class.<sup>112</sup> Moore wisely advised against extrapolating this figure across the entire movement as the Five Dock locality leader was 'unusually attentive to trade union issues.'<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, the Guard enjoyed the support of several right-wing trade unions, such as the Railway Service Association, and it managed to make inroads into communities with a strong working class RSL presence.<sup>114</sup> This minor working class presence is also apparent in the citizens' movements at both a leadership and front-line level.

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<sup>109</sup> Andrew Moore, "Workers and the New Guard: Proletarian Fascism in New South Wales, 1931–35," in *Transforming Labour: Work, Workers, Struggle and Change: Proceedings of the 8th National Labour History Conference*, ed. B. Bowden and J. Kellett (Brisbane: Brisbane Labour History Association, 2003), 244.

<sup>110</sup> Humphrey McQueen, "The Social Character of the New Guard," *Arena* 40 (1975): 85–86; William Tully, "The New Guard of New South Wales, 1931–1932" (BA Hons diss., Australian National University, 1974). 1, 6; Phyllis Mitchell, "Australian Patriots: A Study of the New Guard," *Australian Economic Historical Review* 9:2 (1969): 164.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Darlington, "Was There a Significant Working Class Element in the New Guard?" (paper presented at the Armies of the Night, Armies of the Right conference, Macquarie University, Sydney, 25 August 1979).

<sup>112</sup> J. O'Mara, "Guarding Five Dock: A Study of the Five Dock Locality of the New Guard, 1931–1935" (BA Hons diss., University of Western Sydney, 1997), 50–52.

<sup>113</sup> Andrew Moore, "The New Guard and the Labour Movement, 1931–1935," *Labour History* 89 (2005): 56.

<sup>114</sup> Moore, "The New Guard and the Labour Movement, 1931–1935," 57; Moore, "Workers and the New Guard," 242.

The percentage of ex-servicemen in the New Guard was also similar to the citizens' movements, although this is the subject of some debate in the historiography. Keith Amos argued that the Guard was made up primarily of middle class ex-servicemen who sought to recapture 'the sense of belonging, security of numbers, and consciousness of purposeful, organized co-operative effort' they experienced during the war.<sup>115</sup> Mitchell similarly argued that, to the returned soldier, the New Guard stood for 'patriotism, loyalty, honesty, courage, freedom and sacrifice' – all of which they could sympathise with.<sup>116</sup> However, Tully's quantitative assessment of the movement's membership suggested it was 'more representative of the middle to lower income *petit bourgeoisie*, than ex-servicemen or workers.'<sup>117</sup> Whilst McQueen reached the same conclusion, he added that 'its leaders were ex-A.I.F. officers who used their military experience to help them organize the bourgeoisie and its class allies.'<sup>118</sup>

The constitution of the citizens' movements membership was also similar to the two new state movements, although the New England and Riverina Movements differed somewhat in their membership. Grant Harman's quantitative analysis of the New England Movement demonstrated that it drew most of its support from 'newspaper editors and proprietors, urban businessmen and professional people, and the grazing community.'<sup>119</sup> Likewise, E. R. Woolmington's geographical analysis of new state support in New England suggested it was concentrated in the bigger centres of Tamworth, Armidale, Glen Innes and Coffs Harbour,

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<sup>115</sup> Amos, *The New Guard Movement*, 7-9.

<sup>116</sup> Mitchell, "Australian Patriots," 163-4.

<sup>117</sup> Tully, "The New Guard of New South Wales," 3-8.

<sup>118</sup> McQueen, "The Social Character of the New Guard," 68-69.

<sup>119</sup> Grant Harman, "New State Agitation in Northern New South Wales, 1920-1929," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 63:1 (1977): 36-37.

with a strong component of rural support in the area surrounding these towns.<sup>120</sup> In contrast, Nancy Blacklow demonstrated that the Riverina Movement enjoyed a much wider range of support, including 'graziers with vast landholdings, many less substantial landholders and small crop farmers, and men of the towns in business, the professions and the trades.' The Riverina Movement also enjoyed a far higher level of farming and grazing support than its New England counterpart. Blacklow suggested the 'strong regional identity and pride' in the Riverina region contributed to this wide base of popular support.<sup>121</sup>

There are limitations to this purely material analysis of motivation. For example, conservatives and capitalists of all stripes could hardly be considered marginalised or unrepresented – there was a swathe of conservative party options available to them at the time, ranging from the Nationalist and United Parties to Reform and the Country Party. In addition, whilst class allegiance no doubt influenced the significant minorities of primary producers and manufacturers in the citizens' movements, these groups were more likely to favour state intervention when it suited their interests. As Pugh, Ward, Campbell and Matthews suggest, the explanation lay partly in the conservative notion of good citizenship, which extolled individuals to participate in voluntary endeavours in order to give back to the community. This was certainly a factor with the leaders of the citizens' movements, whose middle and upper class upbringing had afforded them significant opportunities in education, business, politics, and the military. By the time that the Great Depression hit they were well-established within their business or professional fields, and possessed sufficient means to be able to devote significant time and resources into establishing and running large-scale

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<sup>120</sup> E. R. Woolmington, "The Geographical Scope of Support for the New State Movement in Northern N. S. W." (PhD diss., University of New England, 1963), X11-X26.

<sup>121</sup> Nancy Blacklow, "'Riverina Roused': Representative Support for the Riverina New State Movements of the 1920s and 1930s," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society: Special Riverina Issue* 80:3-4 (1994): 177-83, 194; Blacklow, "Regional Support for Riverina New State Movements in the 1920s and 1930s" (BA Hons diss., Charles Sturt University, 1992).



voluntary endeavours such as the citizens' movements. For example, the Provisional Committee of the Australian Citizens' League included the founders and managers of Nicholas Aspro Pty. Ltd. and retail chain G. J. Coles & Co., whilst the State Council of the All for Australia League included the managing directors of James Sandy and Co. Ltd. and General Industries Ltd.

Conservative notions of 'good citizenship' are less likely to have been a primary motivating factor for front-line and working class members, who possessed far less in the way of disposable time and income for such endeavours. They needed something else to draw them in and maintain their interest. In his study of the All for Australia League, Geoffrey Robinson argued that 'ideological enthusiasms and shared antipathies' was a more potent motivator than class allegiance.<sup>122</sup> A qualitative analysis of the accounts of citizens' movement members provides insight into what those enthusiasms and antipathies were. Such accounts are few and mostly limited to former members of the New Zealand Legion, but a textual analysis demonstrates a common perception of urgency and the pressing need to 'do something' to address the Depression crisis.<sup>123</sup> This analysis, which is discussed below, shows that the high ideals and populist approach of the citizens' movements played a central role in securing new members.

Many Legionnaires joined out of a desire for urgent action. Shortly after launching the movement's journal *National Opinion*, the editor wrote that he had received many letters expressing disappointment that it 'did not reflect a bolder note of immediate action –

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<sup>122</sup> Robinson, "The All for Australia League in New South Wales," 44-45.

<sup>123</sup> The desire to 'do something' is also mentioned in Beveridge, "The Riverina Movement and Charles Hardy," 2-3, 13, 60.

something that would stir and perhaps startle the public'.<sup>124</sup> One letter from 'Do Something', who had 'joined the Legion at its birth [in the] hopes that [it] might do some good', was bitterly disappointed in the Legion's inactivity.<sup>125</sup> L. E. Earle, who wrote several articles for the journal, recalled that he had joined 'because I was out of work and because I thought that things were in an awful mess and here seemed to be someone who was doing something.'<sup>126</sup> This 'something' did not need to be well-defined, as N. Tilley noted: '[t]he man in the street felt doubtful – he could easily be sold a pup with so little support.'<sup>127</sup> This demonstrates that many members viewed the worsening conditions of the Depression with a growing sense of desperation and disenchantment. The citizens' movements appeared to offer a simple yet far-reaching solution – a psychological salve, however nebulous, which swept away doubts with high ideals and platitudes that promised a radical turnaround of the nation's woes.

The desire for action led many members to view the citizens' movements with an almost spiritual reverence. Sir Douglas Robb, who would later have a distinguished career as a surgeon and a reformer of the medical profession, claimed that he and his colleagues looked upon the Legion as 'a voice, & a hope ... a light in the sky', and viewed Begg himself as a 'saviour'.<sup>128</sup> A letter in the *Sydney Morning Herald* from an All for Australia League member used similar language:

Like many other people in those misguided times, I hoped for some relief from Mr. Lang's oppression and looked upon this league as the saviour. I was prepared to help the league in every possible way, and was enthusiastic enough to wear the badge for a time.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *National Opinion* 1:2 (24 August 1933): 2.

<sup>125</sup> *National Opinion* 2:16 (29 March 1934): 12; *National Opinion* 2:23 (5 July 1934): 13.

<sup>126</sup> Letter from L. E. Earle, 27 August 1972, Transcripts of taped interviews with various people for Tony Simpson, 'The Sugar Bag Years', MS-Papers-9902, ATL (hereafter 'Simpson papers').

<sup>127</sup> Letter from N. Tilley, 26 August 1972, Simpson papers.

<sup>128</sup> Letter from Sir Douglas Robb, 29 September 1972, Simpson papers.

<sup>129</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1931, 5.

Given that he wrote this letter out of frustration with the lack of communication he had received after joining, his reverence is more likely to have been genuine. The fact that both used the word ‘saviour’ suggests that the connection felt by many members to the citizens’ movements was emotional as well as material. They inspired faith that the growing economic turmoil could be addressed, and that society could be transformed so that such crises would never occur again. This emotional investment amongst front-line members was also driven by a sense of personal threat: whilst the upper class may have possessed the means to insulate themselves from the Depression, the middle class had no such luxury. As Robb put it, ‘we were interested in the depression & the effect on our new-born practices, and on our friends, particularly farmers.’<sup>130</sup>

A dislike for party politics was also a strong motivating factor. As chapter two argued, this ‘anti-political political thought’ was a central component of the conservative radicalisation which occurred during the Depression. According to former Legionnaire J. D. Hall:

I think the main thing which attracted us (certainly the under 30’s) was the ideal that it would be possible to elect a governing body, which would recognise no party ties, obey no government whips but vote solely as our consciences dictated. This seems incredible nowadays and probably does to you now – but, I can assure you that to a 30 year old in the thirties, it actually appeared possible.<sup>131</sup>

Such a hope would certainly have seemed possible in the 1930s, given that party politics were a relatively new innovation and the nineteenth century ideal of the independent colonial statesman was still within living memory. For many who had witnessed the growth of extra-parliamentary machines and the solidification of the two-party system – in particular those who recalled the supposed unity of wartime – it was an unwelcome intrusion on the once

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<sup>130</sup> Letter from Sir Douglas Robb, 29 September 1972, Simpson papers.

<sup>131</sup> Letter from J. D. Hall, 24 August 1972, Simpson papers.

dignified field of politics. As R. F. Gambrill, author of an unofficial history of the Russell family, put it:

It was not my experience of the depression which attracted me to the Legion. As a Returned Service Man from World War I, after 4 ½ years of active Service, I was (in 1919) concerned with the state of party politics. No party then seemed to have any policy other than to become the Government ... We suffered “depression” in 1920 and other years prior to 1933, but these were more or less local ones. Enough, however, to convince me of the “rotteness” of party politics.<sup>132</sup>

Given that Hall and Gambrill wrote their recollections in the 1970s, when such rampant anti-partyism was imbued with fascist connotations, it is likely they were telling the truth. The citizens’ movements restored faith amongst people whose confidence in the existing political machinery had been sapped by its apparent inability to deal with the economic turmoil.

Conservative dicta played a part in attracting members as well. The chairman of the Otago division of the New Zealand Legion H. L. Paterson ‘understood that the legion was to combat the growing multiplicity of local bodies of all types and the increasing burden of taxation created by these local bodies.’<sup>133</sup> The rationalisation of government also appealed to Wanganui division chairman W. R. Brown, who drew parallels between the Legion and the Kyabram Reform Movement that had secured a reduction in the number of members of the Victorian parliament thirty years earlier:

[I]nfluence could be attained by securing a predominating portion of voting power, and this the Legion felt hopeful of securing. A similar movement was started in Victoria 30 years ago, and at the following elections the movement was influential in securing the return of 64 members out of 93. The New Zealand Legion aspired to succeed in the same way, so as to be instrumental in effecting a big improvement on the present unsatisfactory state of affairs.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Letter from R. F. Gambrill, 24 August 1972, Simpson papers.

<sup>133</sup> Letter from H. L. Paterson, 28 August 1972, Simpson papers.

<sup>134</sup> *Taihape Times*, 2 June 1933, 3.

Public service and civic duty was also a motivating factor for some. Legionnaire W. Bright, who was also president of the local Rotary Club and Unemployment Relief Committee, wrote that he was 'attracted to the Legion ... by the desperate state of the country with its ever increasing numbers of unemployed.'<sup>135</sup> Tilley joined because 'the main advocate in H.B. was our one-time Div. Com., Sir Andrew Russell, a man for whom I had a great respect'. This led him to assume that Begg must also be 'of Andy Russell's type, one who would automatically receive respect & confidence'.<sup>136</sup> This suggests that, for those already participating in public life, the Legion was viewed as one of many ways of 'doing something' about the Depression.

A major shortcoming of previous quantitative analyses of the citizens' movements has been the lack of attention given to the role of women. The only work that has included a gender analysis is Ward's thesis on the New Zealand Legion in the Manawatu-Wanganui. Her work demonstrated that women comprised 12% of the region's membership, some of whom played a role in establishing new centres and serving on committees. The Legion also actively attempted to enrol women in the movements, stressing in their meeting invitations that women were 'especially invited'. This led Ward to conclude that 'women were more involved in the New Zealand Legion than previously assumed.'<sup>137</sup> Whilst this thesis does not purport to undertake a thorough analysis of gender, it builds on Ward's work with additional quantitative and qualitative information for each of the citizens' movements. Nevertheless, this remains a subject in need of further study.

The quantitative data discussed above demonstrates that women were indeed more involved in the citizens' movements than previously expected, albeit much more so at a front-line than

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<sup>135</sup> Letter from W. Bright, 26 August 1972, Simpson papers.

<sup>136</sup> Letter from N. Tilley, 26 August 1972, Simpson papers.

<sup>137</sup> Ward, "The New Zealand Legion in Manawatu-Wanganui," 21.

a leadership level. Women only comprised between 5.2% and 6.4% of the leadership samples for the four citizens' movements, and only in the case of the Australian Citizens' League had women participated in the founding of a movement.<sup>138</sup> Conversely, women comprised 20.3% of the membership of the Hawkes Bay division of the New Zealand Legion, two of whom were particularly active – Lady Russell, the wife of Sir Andrew Russell, and Mrs Dorothy de Castro who had previously worked for the Conservative and Unionist Party in Britain.<sup>139</sup> Women also made up 54.4% of the front-line membership of the North Adelaide branch of the Citizens' League of South Australia, which may have reflected the ongoing cooperation between the Citizens' League and the South Australian Branch of the Women's Non-Party Association. Female leaders tended to be married, whilst there were a roughly equal number of married and unmarried women in the rank-and-file membership. Many joined with their husbands or other family members as part of a wider family unit.

A qualitative analysis provides more information on the role of women in the citizens' movements. Their motivations for joining and participating in the movements were influenced by the traditions of 'conservative feminism' and 'female imperialism' identified by Marian Simms and Katie Pickles.<sup>140</sup> This tradition was discussed in chapter one through the emergence of women's Empire and non-party movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These movements channelled the political and moral aspirations of newly enfranchised women into areas of 'acceptable' public activity that did not overtly challenge the patriarchal status quo. As New Zealand Legion member Edith Willoughby saw it, the

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<sup>138</sup> The female participants in the Australian Citizens' League provisional committee were Mrs L. M. Skene, Mrs A. F. Moss, and Mrs W. Thomas (who was also a member of the Melbourne Housewives' Association).

<sup>139</sup> *National Opinion* 2:24 (19 July 1934): 14.

<sup>140</sup> Simms, "Conservative Feminism in Australia: A Case Study of Feminist Ideology," 305-18; Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity*, 16.

citizens' movements were a continuation of this tradition, in particular of the women's patriotic societies that arose during the Great War:

Wake up, women citizens! You answered the call for help to the nation in August, 1914. Now, once again, use your powers and do your bit in this August, 1933, to help alleviate the chaos that exists ... Let us think more of our sisters' need, and practise daily doing unto others as we would be done by. You can be a magnificent support and help to your people if the right spirit prevails in your doings. Get together! Discuss serious questions of national import. Form your committees and work wholly and solely for the salvation of this beautiful country!<sup>141</sup>

The citizens' movements were also a valuable arena for women to express themselves politically. By the time the citizens' movements arose in the 1930s, a younger generation of post-suffrage women were beginning to seek avenues for political participation in a society where female representation in parliament was still very much the exception rather than the norm. The citizens' movements provided one such environment: not only did they encourage their members to learn about current affairs, they also provided opportunities to gain leadership and public speaking experience. Whilst this still occurred within the confines of a conservative worldview that remained uncomfortable with female political power, it nevertheless provided a level of exposure to matters of national importance that the ballot box did not. This suggests that the citizens' movements fulfilled a similar function as women's non-party organisations and branches of conservative political organisations such as farmers' unions.<sup>142</sup>

The All for Australia League was the only citizens' movement that took deliberate action to encourage female representation at all levels of the organisation. Women were entitled to

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<sup>141</sup> *National Opinion* 1:3 (7 September 1933): 14.

<sup>142</sup> See Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women: Federation to 1949*; Anne Henderson, *Enid Lyons – Leading Lady to a Nation* (Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2008); Heather Gunn, "'For the Man on the Land': Issues of Gender and Identity in the Formation of the Victorian Farmers' Union Women's Section, 1918–1922," *Journal of Australian Studies* 18:42 (1994): 32–42.

create their own women's divisions and sub-divisions to parallel the existing structure of the movement. In addition, five seats were reserved for women on the State Council. Along with this parallel organisation, women were still entitled to join standard sub-divisions and run for offices.<sup>143</sup> Feminist organisations such as the National Council of Women and the United Associations of Women initially treated the League with suspicion, but by July several of their members, including Mildred Muscio, were on the State Council.<sup>144</sup> Despite this, women represented only 5.2% of the leadership sample compiled for this study – the lowest of the four citizens' movements – and most of these women held the reserved seats on the State Council. This suggests that, despite its progressive intentions, the All for Australia League was still hampered by the cultural barriers against female leadership in the Anglo world.

## CONCLUSION

The success of the citizens' movements in achieving a mass following was due in part to their ability to channel conservative discontent through appropriate promotional and organisational techniques. From the start, the movements staked their legitimacy on their ability to harness a large body of popular opinion: therefore, much of the initial work of their founders was directed towards recruiting and sustaining a large membership. This was accomplished in part through the promotion of a culture of mass conservative mobilisation based on public ceremonies to demonstrate mass appeal, organisational structures that encouraged democratic participation and leadership, culturally resonant symbols, and a variety of media such as radio and print culture. Nevertheless, the geographical spread of the citizens' movements was generally limited to urban areas, although the New Zealand Legion and the Australian

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<sup>143</sup> *All for Australia League: Draft Constitution* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 14-15.

<sup>144</sup> Robinson, "The All for Australia League in New South Wales," 48-49.



Citizens' League had a more significant rural base. In the case of the All for Australia League, this was due to competing conservative organisations in rural New South Wales.

Despite their claims to represent a broad, cross-class national consensus, the citizens' movements were largely the manifestation of the frustrations of a particular fraction of Australasian society. The majority of members were from the professional, business and commercial fraction of the capitalist class: they were reasonably well-educated, in their early-to-mid forties, and those that had served during the Great War had usually done so at an officer level. Progressing down the membership hierarchy to the front-line correlated with increased diversity of employment, a slightly younger average age, higher participation in the Great War, and a lower military rank for those who served. The periodic claims of the citizens' movements to have recruited a significant number of working class individuals were largely hyperbole, although there was a significant manufacturing minority within the All for Australia League. This contrasts with the cross-class, youthful, and largely veteran membership of fascist movements.

However, the ability to channel conservative discontent was only part of the reason why the citizens' movements were so successful. They needed to be fluent in the nuanced and often contradictory conservative grievances with the way the Depression had been handled by politicians. The testimony of citizens' movement members themselves suggests that the average member was motivated just as much, if not more so, by ideological considerations as by their place in the class structure. These ideological considerations, which comprised a careful balance of reactionary and radical ideas, are explored in chapter four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MOBILISING THE MASSES: THE IDEOLOGY OF THE CITIZENS' MOVEMENTS

I was very unaware of politics – its motives, mechanics etc. We all knew there were parties in Wgn, but it was before a serious Labour Party came up ... [b]ut we were interested in the depression & the effect on our new-born practices, and on our friends, particularly farmers. There were also street riots to be feared. The Govt. of the day seemed as confused as we were and we heard the self-appointed saviours professing new economic doctrines, particularly Social Credit & Major Douglas ... When Dr Campbell Begg, a urologist in Wellington – in good professional status – started to raise his voice ... we sniffed a saviour.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Douglas Robb offered this recollection in 1972 of the motivations that led him to join the New Zealand Legion. It neatly captures the growing sense of discontent felt by many conservatives during the Depression and the sense of enthusiasm that they felt when the citizens' movements swept across the political landscape. The readers' eye is drawn most poignantly to the use of the word 'saviour': it suggests a degree of emotional investment bordering on reverence, as if the waters of economic peril had finally parted to reveal the long-awaited path to recovery. This chapter examines how such a sense of reverence was inspired by the citizens' movements. It argues that the movements espoused a populist ideology comprised of a blend of high-level reactionary and radical tropes rather than specific policies. This chapter also compares this ideology to other forms of right-wing radicalism, in particular fascism, to determine whether the citizens' movements fit within any broader ideological categories or trends.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Sir Douglas Robb, 29 September 1972, Simpson papers.

## THE RADICAL

Above all else, the citizens' movements portrayed themselves as forces of political and moral idealism. Their mission was just as much a spiritual one as it was an ideological one, for they aimed at nothing less than the awakening of the civic spirit of the citizenry and the transformation of the nation's moribund political apparatus into what they believed would be a more deliberate and democratic body. This awakening, they believed, had already begun as a formerly apathetic citizenry revolted against the worsening conditions of the Depression and the apparent inaction of party politicians. As the Citizens' League of South Australia put it:

We are not a political party and have no desire to become one, but we are a conscience, a sentiment, a force, the force of public opinion, public sentiment, public conscience, which, awakened at last by the crisis that confronts us, demands to make itself both heard and felt.<sup>2</sup>

The All for Australia League termed this 'a spontaneous rising of the public conscience' possessing 'something almost of a spiritual nature'; in Victoria, Australian Citizens' League President Ernest Turnbull wrote that he 'might as well be leading a whirlwind'.<sup>3</sup> This suggests a mutually reinforcing relationship between the citizens' movements and their membership: the former claimed to provide a channel for the raw, nebulous public outrage of the latter, yet it was also upon this very outrage that the citizens' movements staked their claim to represent 'a higher political conscience amongst the people'.<sup>4</sup> Thus the citizens' movements perceived themselves as the focal point of a wider grassroots wave of righteous frustration with the status quo.

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<sup>2</sup> Address by E. D. A. Bagot at a Citizens' Public Meeting in Adelaide Town Hall on 14 October, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>3</sup> *All for Australia League: its real significance* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 2, 3; R. W. Kenderdine, 'The Demand for Honest Government', *Life* (1 May 1931): 400.

<sup>4</sup> *All for Australia League: its real significance*, 2.

The citizens' movements exalted idealism above the need for concrete policies or reforms. Whilst there may have been an element of pragmatism in this, the movements were primarily motivated by their belief that theirs was a much more transformative, and therefore a more fundamental and far-reaching agenda than the shallow and parochial platforms of political parties. The New Zealand Legion called this 'a more definite, concrete and daring objective than any political party has had the courage to formulate'.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the citizens' movements believed their aims transcended politics entirely – it was their job to rebuild the tattered and fragmented political structures of the nation and ensure that the right kind of men were elected to keep it that way:

That is the problem – to call up a crusading spirit, to sound a rallying cry, not to elaborate details of policy. Details divide, we need to unite. Give us a common basis on which we can agree – first principles, fundamentals. In short, give us a creed, a confession of faith, high in its ideals, daring in its demands ... Let us leave the details to those whose job it is to work them out. Ours be the job of putting into expression the hopes and fears and dreams of the common man.<sup>6</sup>

However, this did not prevent the citizens' movements from developing policies on how a more deliberative democracy might be structured. 'There must be a practical side to any movement the purpose of which is to shape public policy', stated the All for Australia League, 'but the husk must not be mistaken for the kernel, the visible machinery must not dominate the underlying purpose.'<sup>7</sup> As chapters five and six demonstrate, this tension between the desire to preserve ideological unity and the need to translate idealism into policy was a central problem of the movements, and it ultimately contributed to their downfall.

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<sup>5</sup> No. N.Z.L. 3, 11 March 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers.

<sup>6</sup> *National Opinion* 1:3 (7 September 1933): 3.

<sup>7</sup> All for Australia League: A Call to Citizenship, item 70, Mutch papers.

The citizens' movements' claimed to provide the vehicle through which this fundamental change could be realised. In November 1930, Edward Daniel Alexander Bagot – General Secretary of the newly formed Citizens' League of South Australia – expressed the following ardent hope for his nascent movement:

We hope that all decent-minded citizens will rally to the call which we are making and help us by unity to fight this enemy which is in our midst. It can only be done by organisation, and it is for that purpose, amongst others, that we wish to see on non-party lines the union of all loyal citizens.<sup>8</sup>

His statement was built around three key subjects: firstly, the 'loyal' and 'decent-minded' citizens which he hoped to mobilise; secondly, an internal 'enemy in our midst' which needed to be faced; and thirdly, a desire to carry out these objectives by uniting under a 'non-party' organisation. These subjects are easily recognisable in the myriad of right-wing non-party leagues which preceded the citizens' movements, and which are discussed in chapters one and two. What distinguished the citizens' movements from their predecessors was the way in which they utilised these ideas to develop an ideology aimed at overthrowing the supposedly self-serving and out-of-touch political elites and transform parliament into a more deliberative and democratic body. In doing so, they directly challenged the status quo of the mainstream conservative political apparatus.

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<sup>8</sup> *Advertiser*, 27 October 1930, 12.

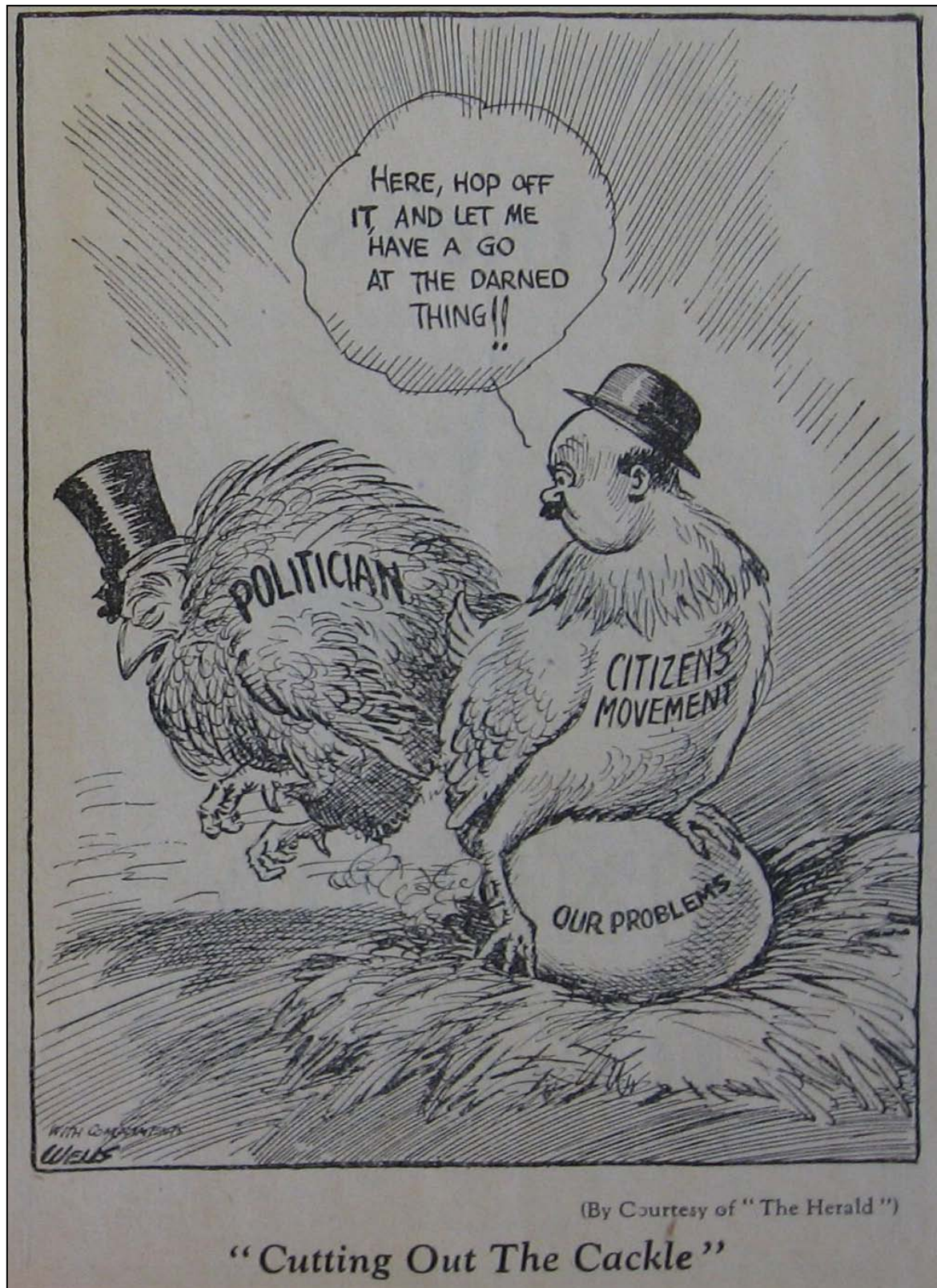


Figure 12: Australian Citizens' League cartoon demonstrating the citizens' movements' challenge to mainstream political parties. Source: *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity* (Melbourne: All for Australia League, 1931), 3.

The conservative notion of the good citizen lay at the heart of the citizens' movements' vision of a transformed society. Chapter one demonstrated how the citizen became the central figure in the popular conservative worldview during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a bulwark against the potentially transformative powers of the broadening electorate. The citizens' movements glorified the citizen as the voice of reason and moderation in a world of extremes. He (once again codified by the masculine pronoun) occupied an ideological 'middle ground': stoic, hardworking, and able to put the interests of the nation above his own parochial concerns. As E. Lee Neil, a founding member of the Australian Citizens' League put it:

I believe myself to be typical of thousands of serious-minded citizens who, over and above all party preferences or convictions, are as jealous as they are determined that our country shall be wisely led through the present stress ... it is of the highest importance that we as a people should be judged not upon extremist or factional opinions, but upon the considered views and determinations of the great body of sane, sober-minded citizens properly organised to express what they stand for in the life of the nation.<sup>9</sup>

The perceived separation of the citizen from the world of politics further increased his ideological appeal. Whilst party politicians were busily employing their powers to the benefit of themselves or the interests they represented, the citizenry were devotedly going about their everyday businesses in an attempt to keep the country afloat. This 'long suffering section of the public', according to the Citizens' League of South Australia, had gone for a long time without adequate political representation whilst the political extremists on either side developed sophisticated political machinery to represent themselves. The citizens' movements intended to change that:

Although all other interests appear to be represented by strong and influential organisations, John Citizen alone remains without any machinery through

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<sup>9</sup> E. Lee Neil, *Why we need a citizens' league* (Melbourne: Australian Citizens' League, 1931), 3.

which his voice can be effectively sounded. He is sick and tired of being the shuttlecock of party politics. The time has come, therefore, and he intends to rouse himself and show the party-bound politicians what a powerful force of public opinion can become.<sup>10</sup>

This notion of the loyal and self-sacrificing citizenry as the legitimate voice of the national interest represented an analogue of the populist conception of ‘the people’.

Class played a role in the citizens’ movements’ description of the loyal citizenry. Positioned as they were between two political poles, it was necessary to describe what those poles were. The citizens’ movements used a variety of terms, including ‘Reactionary Tories’ and ‘Red Labour’ or ‘Diehards’ and ‘Reds’.<sup>11</sup> This analysis of class, however, had less to do with the means of production than it did with the dominant position which these poles supposedly held within the political system. As the All for Australia League put it:

[C]lass-consciousness has found expression in the political sphere through organisations of employers and employees whose respective political and industrial activities, pursued without regard to the interests of the community as a whole induce a state of mutual antagonism rather than co-operation for the common weal.<sup>12</sup>

The shallowness of this class analysis was demonstrated by the appeal of the citizens’ movements to a form of class collaborationism. In essence, this represented a rejection of the validity of class difference in favour of a broad horizontal kinship based on ideological rather than material interests. As the New Zealand Legion argued:

New Zealanders of all walks of life – labourers, farmers, merchants, artisans, clerks, professional men – share this belief with us and, given a common ground on which to meet, will gladly work together for its attainment, instead

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<sup>10</sup> *Citizens’ League: its formation, aims, and objects* (Adelaide: Citizens’ League of South Australia, 1931), 4.

<sup>11</sup> The Financial Record of Party Politics [undated], item 68, Mutch papers; E. D. A. Bagot, ‘Principles in Politics: What the Citizens’ League hopes to achieve’, *Progress*, 31 October 1930, 11.

<sup>12</sup> *All for Australia League: Draft Policy* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 1.



of importer against exporter, farmer against townsman, and employee against employer.<sup>13</sup>

The movements argued that class consciousness had been artificially engineered by a small minority of 'extremists' on either side of the political spectrum so that they could gain control of the mainstream political parties. They countered that the loyal citizenry was comprised of both employers and employees who recognised that their interests were complementary rather than contradictory:

The A.F.A. League aims at excluding the extremists on both sides and reconstructing the body politic ... [around] Sane Labour and the business and producing interests [who] constitute the great majority of the citizens in this country. Freed from the domination of extremists, the Australian people have energy, initiative, courage, and ability sufficient to frame a policy and carry it into effect by legislation designed to promote the welfare of the whole community and not of any particular class or section.<sup>14</sup>

The citizens' movements aimed to provide a 'common ground' upon which these groups could come together free from the corrupting influence of party politics.<sup>15</sup>

Despite their glorification of the loyal citizenry, the citizens' movements also chastised them for their political apathy. During times of plenty they had been willing to ignore the welfare of their country in favour of material concerns, leaving matters of state in the hands of 'party hacks'.<sup>16</sup> The movements thus perceived themselves as fulfilling a vital educative function by encouraging its members to 'think nationally instead of individually' and 'be prepared to render service as the price of citizenship'.<sup>17</sup> This followed in the pattern of previous right-wing leagues such as the Constitutional Associations which considered their primary function

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<sup>13</sup> *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 2.

<sup>14</sup> The Financial Record of Party Politics [undated], item 68, Mutch papers.

<sup>15</sup> *All for Australia League: its real significance*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> *National Unity in Crisis: The Story of the N. Z. Legion* (Wellington: New Zealand Legion, 1933), 2-3; *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 5.

to be the elevation of the public consciousness on matters of public affairs. The New Zealand Legion was particularly concerned with providing a 'space' for honest political discussion that was free from sectional influences. It encouraged its centres to consider questions of national importance, and it formed central committees to produce and disseminate material for members on a wide range of subjects including central government, local government, economics, unemployment, and land.<sup>18</sup> By reminding their members of the duties of citizenship, the movements hoped to encourage the values of 'frankness, altruism and insight' in place of 'hypocrisy, selfishness, and superficial thought'.<sup>19</sup>

Had they simply sought to educate a large body of individuals in traditional conservative dicta, the citizens' movements may have amounted to little more than a larger version of the right-wing non-party leagues that preceded them. However, one of their fundamental tenets was their complete opposition to the party system of government and their commitment to challenging the electoral dominance of political parties on both sides of the spectrum. Their main target was the party 'machines', the extra-parliamentary arms of political parties that controlled party platforms and pre-selected candidates for elections. At the beginning of the twentieth century, non-labour politicians had distinguished themselves from their labour counterparts by highlighting their independence: whilst labour members were bound by the pledges and rigid caucus structure of their parties, non-labour candidates were free to serve their constituencies by exercising their own judgement. By the 1920s, however, the conservative party apparatus in Australia and New Zealand had evolved in an attempt to

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<sup>18</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Provisional National Council, 4-5 April 1933; Minutes of Meeting of the National Council, 19-21 July 1933, file 1 folder 1, NZL papers.

<sup>19</sup> *National Opinion* 1:4 (21 September 1933): 3.

replicate the organisational unity and extra-parliamentary support structure of labour.<sup>20</sup> The growth of this extra-parliamentary apparatus was pejoratively termed ‘machine politics’.

The citizens’ movements were critical of two elements of ‘machine politics’ in particular: party platforms and the pre-selection of candidates. Party platforms, which were enforced through candidate pledges and block voting in parliament, were seen to contradict the belief in reasoned and independent thought that was so central to the conservative worldview:

The present political parties form “platforms” with numbers of “planks” to which their candidates must adhere absolutely. Any display of individuality is severely “disciplined.” By a system of pre-selection, electors must vote for candidates who may have no other qualifications than their obedience to their party “bosses.” Thus, individuality is destroyed and Governments, instead of governing, are dictated to by cliques and caucus.<sup>21</sup>

This hearkened back to the conservative ideal of voluntary political participation. The citizens’ movements believed that the key to good citizenship lay in complete independence from any organisational structure that sought to impose collective rules, behaviours, or ideas. Party platforms robbed candidates of the ability to exercise their own judgment on political matters, resulting in a form of ‘Party dictatorship’.<sup>22</sup> The citizens’ movements considered this to be anti-democratic and immoral: it had caused ‘the degradation of the political conscience of the people.’<sup>23</sup> In a particularly vitriolic turn of phrase, the New Zealand Legion termed party politics an ‘abrogation of democracy’ that had ‘led to the substance of the State being poured out as a bloody sacrifice to the Moloch of party’.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Loveday, “Emergence: Realignment and Consolidation,” 453-87; Smith, *Against the Machines*, 23-50.

<sup>21</sup> E. D. A. Bagot, ‘Principles in Politics: What the Citizens’ League hopes to achieve’, 11.

<sup>22</sup> *National Opinion* 1:1 (10 August 1933): 2.

<sup>23</sup> *All for Australia League: its real significance*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> *National Opinion* 1:1 (10 August 1933). 2.



**Figure 13: The clash between party politics and ‘public interests’.** Source: R. W. Kenderine, ‘The Demand for Honest Government: How the All for Australia League Originated and Swept the Country’, *Life* (1 May 1931): 398.

The citizens’ movements also considered pre-selection to be anti-democratic in nature. By only selecting candidates who were willing to follow the party line, they argued that party machines limited the electoral choice available to everyday citizens and actively prevented any alternative political candidates from emerging:

Such pre-selected persons are then submitted as the candidates of the respective parties, and the only franchise the individual elector can exercise is to support the candidate, whoever he might be, of one or other of the contending parties. Thus the electors no longer vote for responsible representatives in Parliament, but vote for a party, and, by the strength of their machines, the major parties endeavour to defeat any effort to bring new political aspirations of the people into existence.<sup>25</sup>

This robbed individuals of the chance to fully exercise their democratic responsibilities as informed and reasoned citizens. As the All for Australia League put it, pre-selection

<sup>25</sup> *Policy as adopted by convention of the League* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 9.

‘deprived the people of their freedom in the choice of their Parliamentary representatives’ and ‘defeated the freedom of adult franchise’.<sup>26</sup> Instead of promoting the kind of deliberative and democratic body that the citizens’ movements envisioned for parliament, pre-selection encouraged mediocrity and cronyism. Only ‘incompetent men’ could be elected under such a ‘treacherous electoral system’, and only ‘[b]lind adherence’ and ‘ready acquiescence’ could guarantee them a continued seat.<sup>27</sup> As a result, it was ‘practically impossible for a citizen to secure election to Parliament against the will of the party machines and the powerful sectional interests that dominate them.’<sup>28</sup>

Party politicians provided the ‘other’ against which the loyal citizenry were pitted. They were portrayed in citizens’ movement ideology as members of a small but powerful political minority whose interests lay solely in retaining and enhancing their power at the expense of national interests. As the All for Australia League put it:

By the caucus machine control, a minority in Parliament can impose its will on a Parliamentary party, and, because party solidarity demands that members shall place their party before their conscience or their country, such minority can dominate Parliament and the Country.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to these party politicians, the citizens’ movements stressed their supposedly apolitical and national credentials. As non-party movements, their members were governed by purer motives than self-serving and parochially-minded party politicians: they were willing put the nation ahead of their own personal desires by facing the Depression crisis with disinterested determination. They represented the true voice of democracy, the nation’s

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<sup>26</sup> *All for Australia League: its real significance*, 1-2; *Policy as adopted by convention of the League*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Minutes of Inaugural Meeting, 3 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers; *National Opinion* 1:1 (10 August 1933), 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Policy as adopted by convention of the League*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

‘noblest, truest interests’, devoid of class or sectional prejudices.<sup>30</sup> The following passage from a speech by Bagot demonstrates the interwoven and mutually reinforcing nature of the dichotomy between the loyal citizenry and party politicians:

We can do nothing until we can convince the political leaders that we are sick to death of party politics, that we will not consent any longer to remain passive while they bicker and quarrel and play for their own ends instead of sinking their differences and uniting for the good of the country as a whole.

...

We must take the lead ourselves. We must organise and unite until we are such a huge power that our wishes can no longer be ignored. We must show these politicians, who are so prone to listen to arguments of force, that there is a force which can make itself felt above all others, the force of public opinion directed towards a common objective, and that object the cleansing of our political stables, which we intend to secure by every constitutional means within our power.<sup>31</sup>

In this, the loyal citizens were the inheritors of the ANZAC tradition: stoic, hardworking, self-sacrificing, and above all united in a common purpose. The citizens’ movements drew parallels between the Great War and the Depression: both were crises on a national scale, and both required the concerted efforts of the entire nation. However, rather than being invoked on a militaristic basis, the ANZAC tradition was used to reinforce the values of unity and self-sacrifice that the citizens’ movements claimed to represent.<sup>32</sup> Otherwise, the ANZACs did not feature heavily in citizens’ movement rhetoric.<sup>33</sup>

The citizens’ movements sought to overcome the dominance of party machines and self-serving politicians through the directed voting power of their membership. In place of party

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<sup>30</sup> E. Lee Neil, *Why we need a citizens' league*, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Address by E. D. A. Bagot at a Citizens’ Public Meeting in Adelaide Town Hall on 14 October, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>32</sup> Circular Ref. 6/2/34, 6th June 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers; No. NZL 15, file 1 folder 1, NZL papers.

<sup>33</sup> For examples of the ANZAC tradition being invoked, see address by L. V. Pellew at a Citizens’ Public Meeting in Adelaide Town Hall, 14 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers; *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 2; *Light on the Legion*, 5-6, 13; *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity*, 20, 22; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1931, 10.

lists they would support individual candidates ‘who by their past records merit our confidence as fit and proper persons to represent us.’ It did not matter whether they were independents or members of existing parties: the only criterion that the citizens’ movements would require of them was that they were prepared to serve their country before their party.<sup>34</sup> Such a ‘loose grouping of Independents’ was one of the strategies commonly utilised by minor parties and independents in New South Wales to combat the dominance of the major parties, according to Rodney K. Smith.<sup>35</sup> By doing so, the movements hoped to encourage a greater sense of political awareness amongst the public and restore parliament to a more deliberative and democratic body. Instead of being bound by restrictive party pre-selection lists and pledges, candidates would be free to campaign on their own merit and to exercise their own judgment. This would eventually ‘rais[e] the average personal standard of those who enter public life’ by encouraging the ‘right type of men’ to run for parliament.<sup>36</sup> It might also ultimately lead to the abolition of political parties entirely, or at the very least relegate them to irrelevance. However, as chapter five will show, holding to this ideal would prove especially difficult for the Australian citizens’ movements when faced with pressure from mainstream conservative politics.

The citizens’ movements also hoped to overcome party politics by reforming government along what they considered to be more democratic and cooperative lines. These proposed reforms typically focused on one of two areas: the size and scope of government and the management of the economy. The movements claimed that their proposed reforms in the size and scope of government were designed to encourage greater efficiency, decentralisation, and

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<sup>34</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented at First Convention of Delegates of Branch Committees of the CLSA, 1 December 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, *Against the Machines*, 3-4.

<sup>36</sup> All for Australia League: All for Australia, item 70, Mutch papers; *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 14.

pluralism, and they drew on standard conservative tropes regarding limited government. Such reforms were of particular importance to the New Zealand Legion, and remained one of its most consistent policies throughout its life. From its first press release in February 1933 the Legion stressed its devotion to 'more efficient government, [both] central and local'.<sup>37</sup> Local bodies were of particular concern: their sheer number and overlapping responsibilities made them 'troublesome excrescences on the body politic' in desperate need of rationalisation.<sup>38</sup> To combat the proliferation of local body government, the Legion proposed dividing New Zealand into a series of autonomous shires along lines of 'communit[ies] of interest' and 'convenience of communication'.<sup>39</sup> Shire Councils would be given authority on all matters of local government, including harbours, rivers, highways, power, and healthcare, leaving national matters such as justice, police, defence, railways, and external affairs in the hands of Parliament.<sup>40</sup>

The New Zealand Legion's fixation on governmental reform was caused by a number of factors. In part, the Legion was merely rehashing the mainstream conservative stance on the inefficiencies of local government, which had been the subject of criticism amongst deflationists and the press in New Zealand since the Depression began.<sup>41</sup> It was also influenced by Begg's campaign to rationalise the Wellington Hospital Board in 1931 and his desire to promote similar economies on a national scale. However, the Legion primarily viewed these reforms as a practical fulfilment of its opposition to party politics. It believed that the abolition of the Provincial system of government by Julius Vogel in 1876 had created

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<sup>37</sup> *Auckland Star*, 23 February 1933, 8.

<sup>38</sup> *Light on the Legion*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> *National Opinion* 1:4 (21 September 1933): 8-10. The Legion's policies on governmental reform were largely developed by the Dunedin executive, although the term 'shire' was introduced by the National Council; see Campbell, "The New Zealand Legion in Otago," 27-31.

<sup>40</sup> *National Opinion* 2:13 (15 February 1934): 5; *National Opinion* 2:14 (1 March 1934): 1, 5-6.

<sup>41</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 124.



an ever-increasing demand for local government bodies, which exerted a 'tyrannical influence' on their members of parliament.<sup>42</sup> By strictly delineating the responsibilities of local and central government, the Legion intended to free parliament from electoral concerns and allow it to focus solely on national affairs.<sup>43</sup>

The Citizens' League of South Australia took a more extreme view on reforming the size and scope of government. It called for the standardisation of Commonwealth laws and services across all states and territories and the amalgamation of every Australian parliament into a single body comprised of '60 honest representatives'. In addition, the salaries of civil servants should be halved because Australia '[could not] afford the luxury of supporting a huge army of social parasites'.<sup>44</sup> This was partially a reflection of the League's particularly strong espousal of laissez-faire economics, which included a desire for a 'drastic curtailment in Governmental expenditure'.<sup>45</sup> However, the League was also influenced by the idea of 'rationalisation'. Two days before its inaugural meeting on 3 October 1930, the Constitutional Club hosted a speaker on the topic of economic rationalisation in Germany and the United States, which he defined as 'a combination of the scientific organisation of materials and products, simplification of processes, and improvement in transport and marketing'.<sup>46</sup> This had a profound impact on Bagot, who was already an admirer of Henry Ford's innovations in management and the division of labour, and during the inaugural meeting he proclaimed that politics needed to be 'rationalised' in the same fashion as commerce and industry.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *National Opinion* 1:2 (24 August 1933): 1-2; *Light on the Legion*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> *National Opinion* 2:13 (15 February 1934): 5.

<sup>44</sup> Bagot, Address at Public Meeting, 14 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>45</sup> Meeting of a Special Sub-Committee appointed to draft proposed policy, 18 January 1932, box 1 item 3, CLSA papers.

<sup>46</sup> *Register News-Pictorial*, 2 October 1930, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Minutes of Inaugural Meeting, 3 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

The citizens' movements shared a common interest in redistributing power between political parties and the people at a national level. They favoured elective cabinets and proportional voting systems to ensure that no one party could dominate parliament or the executive, and the introduction of the powers of referendum, initiative and recall to give the electorate greater power in national decision making.<sup>48</sup> This reflected the movements' aim to transform parliament into a more deliberative body and to elevate the political mindedness of the citizenry. It also reflected their brand of 'anti-political political thought' which sought to sideline or eliminate political parties. Voting along party lines would be abolished by these reforms, leaving members free to vote 'according to their conscience' on all proposed legislation. In addition, the people would have the power to ensure that government respected the 'wishes and desires of the people'.<sup>49</sup> By introducing these reforms, the movements hoped that 'Party Government as we know it will cease to exist'.<sup>50</sup>

The Citizens' League of South Australia was also willing to support more extreme measures to combat party politics. As with its policies on the 'rationalisation' of politics, this was largely due to the influence of Bagot on the movement's ideology. During his process of political radicalisation in 1930, Bagot had become increasingly drawn to the idea of an Australian-style dictatorship led by a 'big man in business leadership' backed by a 'small strong Committee of Management'.<sup>51</sup> He carried this rhetoric across into the Citizens' League, where he called for the kind of leader who could "cleave through Party Politics" and

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<sup>48</sup> *National Opinion* 1:4 (21 September 1933): 8-10; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 2 May 1933, box 1 item 3; Citizens' League Policy for 1934, 6 March 1934, box 1 item 4; Letter from Bagot to W. A. Burns, 2 June 1931, box 12 item 1, CLSA papers; *Policy as adopted by convention of the League*, 11-12.

<sup>49</sup> *Policy as adopted by convention of the League*, 11-12.

<sup>50</sup> *National Opinion* 2:13 (15 February 1934): 5.

<sup>51</sup> Bagot, 'A Dictator Needed', submitted to the Editor of "The Advertiser", 5 September 1930, box 3 item 25D, CLSA papers.

establish Law and Order in our Social System'.<sup>52</sup> This was reminiscent of the nineteenth century patrician conservative suspicion of universal adult franchise and the desire to curb the influence of 'the masses' with strong and educated leadership. Bagot favoured a top-down style of governance which favoured personalities over democratic process – providing, of course, that the 'right' kind of personality could be found. Such a leader would be 'of the real bull dog breed' – a man willing to take control of the floundering affairs of the state, to place the national interest above all personal or sectional demands, and with the personal gravitas to inspire his fellow citizens:

Instead of the captain, the whole crew is trying to steer the ship of State. Let us get back the control, select our leader, and say to him: "In the name of humanity, take charge. We will gladly serve to the best of our ability, so long as you continue to justify our confidence. You shall swear to serve us, fearless and unfaltering, to one end – the welfare of the nation as a whole." Who will pledge to serve?<sup>53</sup>

Bagot believed that Sir John Monash, commander of the Australian corps during the Great War, fit the bill, and he made it clear that he would gladly support a dictatorship led by Monash if it was the only way to abolish party politics.<sup>54</sup> He was even willing to countenance unconstitutional methods, such as the withholding of taxation or a 'show of force', if the government failed to take action.<sup>55</sup>

The tension between democracy and 'national unity' also influenced the movements' suggestions for the management of the economy. The general thrust of these proposed reforms was that the industrial and technological growth that had occurred since the founding

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<sup>52</sup> Minutes of Inaugural Meeting, 3 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>53</sup> *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 14.

<sup>54</sup> *Advertiser*, 12 February 1931, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Minutes of Inaugural Meeting, 3 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

of most Western democracies had outpaced the ability of their political institutions to comprehend them:

Economic matters to-day are so complex, so diversified, so badly understood as to their general laws, that the people acting blunderingly through their representative institutions, and incapable of calculating and foreseeing the results of the measures adopted, generally have acted so as to injure the very interests which they were trying to defend.<sup>56</sup>

To cement the immunity of government from 'sectional' interests, the movements supported, to varying degrees, devolving authority on economic matters to independent 'experts'. The Citizens' League of South Australia advocated for 'an independent and qualified Board, free from political influence' to control public expenditure, revise tariffs and bounties, and manage unprofitable assets in preparation for their ultimate privatisation.<sup>57</sup> The All for Australia League advocated a similar policy, although its proposed 'Economic Advisory Council' was, as its name suggests, an advisory body only. Comprised of 'the highest experts obtainable in finance, economics and industry', it would 'disinterestedly examine' questions of taxation, wages and the tariff and provide recommendations to the government on economic policy. This would 'decisively check governmental extravagances or any tendency to the placation of sectional interests'.<sup>58</sup>

The Citizens' League and the All for Australia League complemented these proposed 'expert' bodies with policies on industrial relations. The Citizens' League suggested the creation of industrial boards comprised of trade union and employers' association representatives who would determine wages for each industry and impose penalties on 'sweating, profiteering ...

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<sup>56</sup> *Policy as adopted by convention of the League*, 16-17.

<sup>57</sup> Address by Bagot at a Citizens' Public Meeting in Adelaide Town Hall, 14 October 1930; Report of Executive Committee presented at First Convention of Delegates of Branch Committees of the CLSA, 1 December 1930, box 1 item 1; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 29 September 1931, box 1 item 3, CLSA papers.

<sup>58</sup> *Policy as adopted by convention of the League*, 8 August 1931, 16-18.

[and] malingering'.<sup>59</sup> This was not envisaged as an equal partnership, but as a redefinition of industrial relations in favour of employers, who possessed the 'brains' to labour's 'muscle'.<sup>60</sup> To emphasize the point, the League called for the abolition of the existing wage Arbitration Courts and their 'pernicious awards' which denied men the 'right to work'.<sup>61</sup> With wages subsequently lowered to their 'natural' level, unemployment would naturally decrease. To ensure that employment was found for all, the League advocated the rationalisation of various local unemployment relief schemes and bureaus under a single State Council to avoid duplication of effort. The South Australian government adopted this recommendation in 1933 in one of the few occasions where a citizens' movement directly affected government policy.<sup>62</sup>

The All for Australia League's approach to industrial relations was much more ambitious. Like the Citizens' League, it called for the establishment of a Federal Tribunal to arbitrate wages and hours based on the advice of the Economic Advisory Council. It, too, opposed the Arbitration Courts, but not for their 'pernicious awards': the League believed that State control of arbitration pitted States against each other, which was disruptive of national unity. A Federal Tribunal would eliminate this disunity by standardising industrial conditions across the Commonwealth.<sup>63</sup> In order to eliminate the class antagonism that had been fostered by party politics, the League also proposed an 'industrial parliament' called the 'Bureaux of Industrial Co-operation' that would adjudicate issues between employers and employees and promote a spirit of 'mutual understanding'.<sup>64</sup> In the long term, however, it hoped to

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<sup>59</sup> Bagot, 'The Problem of Unemployment', 6 August 1931, box 3 item 25B, CLSA papers.

<sup>60</sup> James, "God, Mammon and Mussolini," 52.

<sup>61</sup> *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 9; Bagot, 'A Dictator Needed', submitted to the Editor of "The Advertiser", 5 September 1930, box 3 item 25D, CLSA papers.

<sup>62</sup> James, "God, Mammon and Mussolini," 45.

<sup>63</sup> *Policy as adopted by convention of the League*, 19-20.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

encourage the formation of voluntary cooperatives in each industry comprised of 'labour, management, capital and consumption' that would plan the production and distribution of goods and services, standardise products and methods, and equitably distribute profits between employers and employees.<sup>65</sup>

## THE REACTIONARY

Whilst the citizens' movements were launching their radical populist campaign against the political system, they were also appealing to a set of traditional conservative values whose roots lay in the emergence of an Australasian conservative tradition in the late nineteenth century. This essentially reactionary and backwards-looking appeal contrasted with the radical and forwards-looking rhetoric of anti-partyism. The citizens' movements' ideal society drew upon the myth of the rugged and hardy individuals who had built European society in the colonies, and it was to them that they suggested the nation look for a model of how to reconstruct society:

[W]hat is essential to-day is a spirit akin to that of our pioneers, who deliberately and willingly faced the dangers, hardships, and privations of the pathway that led to prosperity, progress, and the making of a nation. To-day those hundreds of thousands of sturdy Australians in whom breathes the spirit of their forebears, are looking for a lead, and hoping for the emergence of an organisation that will link them together in a common ideal and a common purpose, so that their desire to re-adjust community life on sound foundations may be crystallised[.]<sup>66</sup>

This myth brought together several conservative tropes regarding civic duty and good citizenship. The pioneer was hard-working, self-sacrificing, and willing to get on with the day-to-day business of carving a nation out of the Antipodean wilderness without fuss or

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 22-25.

<sup>66</sup> *Manifesto of provisional committee of the Australian Citizens' League* (Melbourne: Australian Citizens' League, 1931). 4.

undue ceremony. Furthermore, he had done all of this without having to resort to the kind of ‘State paternalism’ and ‘[s]ervile dependence on the Government’ which had gradually eroded the foundations of individualism since the turn of the century.<sup>67</sup> This provided an ideal archetype for the citizenry of the Depression to aspire to whilst conveniently ignoring the fact that the nineteenth century developmentalist ethos of the colonies involved the considerable investment of public funds in farming technologies and techniques. There was also an element of implicit racism in this pioneer myth in that it ignored the wholesale appropriation of land from indigenous populations in order to establish an economy based on primary production.

The myth of the pioneer also represented an unspoken contract with traditional values. As the Citizens’ League of South Australia put it:

Fellow Citizens, we have received from the past a priceless inheritance – a trust that must not be betrayed – and that trust is the fair name of Australia. It remains for each of us to see that we shall pass on to posterity that name unblemished.<sup>68</sup>

Michael Cathcart termed this an ‘unwritten constitution’ – ‘a body of principle and tradition which can never be fully known or articulated, but which defines the grounds upon which political activity may legitimately be undertaken’.<sup>69</sup> Anything that lay outside the bounds of such unwritten constitutions could thus be delegitimised as sectional, disloyal, or seditious. In the case of the citizens’ movements, this meant the normalisation of conservative values regarding society, politics and economics, and the delegitimation of opposing points of view as lying outside the bounds of acceptable opinion. This was reflected in their use of

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<sup>67</sup> *Light on the Legion*, 2, 6-7; *National Unity in Crisis*, 3.

<sup>68</sup> Address given by Bagot, 11 February 1931, box 3 item 25C, CLSA papers.

<sup>69</sup> Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop*, 165.

phrases such as the ‘national interest’, which framed conservative values as sacred and inviolable rather than one worldview amongst many. Self-reliance, private enterprise, balanced public budgets, imperial patriotism: these were part of the natural order, a set of ‘fundamental laws’ that could not be changed ‘any more than we can alter the laws of gravity.’<sup>70</sup> They were also a matter of national honour:

We recognise that differences of political opinion must exist ... but when the differences involve a distinction between honesty and dishonesty, integrity and default, honour and dishonour, we rise in our wrath – and I think I can say to-day in our MIGHT – and denounce as traitors to their country those who put forward such views.<sup>71</sup>

This provides an additional dimension to the movements’ criticism of party politics. The ‘national interest’ supposedly lay in non-interventionist government, whereas ‘sectional’ interests were those that used the public coffers to support their own agendas to the detriment of others. Language such as this provided a convenient ideological smokescreen for conservative values by framing them as apolitical.

The citizens’ movements drew on a number of tropes consistent with popular conservative ideology, and which were compatible with the policies of mainstream conservative parties. They believed in individualism, which exalted private enterprise and self-reliance over the interference of the state in matters of the economy. As ‘non-party’ movements, however, the citizens’ movements were able to extol the ideals of individualism without being bound by the practicalities of economic policy or the desires of the electorate for increased state activity. Unhampered by details, they levelled criticism at the perceived ‘economic interference’ from both sides of the political spectrum:

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<sup>70</sup> *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 8-10.

<sup>71</sup> *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity*, 13.



[The crisis] has been brought about by the ever-increasing inroads made in recent years by the various Governments of Australia – both Federal and State – Liberal and Labour - into the fields of legitimate trade and commerce; inroads so aggressive and unwarranted that we now find every phase of our commercial and financial life subjugated either directly or indirectly to political interference.<sup>72</sup>

Public economy activity, according to this line of thought, was inherently political in that it brought 'legitimate' private enterprise under the control of party politicians. This criticism did not generally extend to the developmental pragmatism of the nineteenth century, although some of the citizens' movements were willing to challenge this. The Citizens' League of South Australia, for example, called for the privatisation of public assets such as railways and waterworks.<sup>73</sup>

The citizens' movements adhered to the conservative belief in more businesslike government. They argued that government departments and enterprises should be small, efficient, and free of unnecessary 'trammels' on the growth of private enterprise. A phrase used by the Legion and the Citizens' League to summarise this point was 'more business in government and less government in business'.<sup>74</sup> In this worldview, government and business were analogous, and should therefore be run in the same fashion:

[M]achine politics must give way to Government on sound business lines, in which the economic structure of the country is viewed as a gigantic business enterprise, with every member of the community as a shareholder. Overhead charges, represented by Governmental expenses must be kept down so that national dividends may be paid. In this way only can prosperity return.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Bagot, speech given to the Political Reform League, September 1930, box 3 item 25A, CLSA papers.

<sup>73</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 29 September 1931, box 1 item 3; Leaflet No.8, c.1931, box 14 item 23, CLSA papers; *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 6-7, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Address given by Bagot at public meeting held in the Exhibition Building, 11 December 1930, box 3 item 25D, CLSA papers; *Light on the Legion*, 12.

<sup>75</sup> *All for Australia League* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 5. The New Zealand Legion was also fond of the shareholder analogy; see *Light on the Legion*, 9-10.

The central concern of this businesslike approach was government debt. The citizens' movements believed that public borrowing had spiralled out of control during the 1920s, resulting in a 'false prosperity' that showed 'a callous disregard of the impossible burdens being prepared for the rising generation'. The movements called on governments to curb such 'reckless' and 'extravagant' borrowing and learn to live within their means.<sup>76</sup> Some, such as the New Zealand Legion, sought to remove the dependence on foreign borrowing altogether; others like the Australian Citizens' League recognised its necessity and aimed to reassure British investors of the 'sincerity' of the average citizen by forcing government to honour its debt commitments.<sup>77</sup>

Beyond economics, the citizens' movements believed that individualism provided a framework for the entire ordering of society from the role of government and the responsibilities of elected officials to the relationships between individuals, associations and businesses. This was summed up by the All for Australia League:

[We] desire above all things to see Australia's finances restored and the country once more on the way to prosperity; to see the man on the land, the office-worker and the wage-earner receiving the rewards of their efforts untrammelled by those crippling experiments in Government – existing and proposed – which withhold from a man the full fruits of his labour, and would deny him the freedom to work out his destiny in accordance with his own inclinations and ability.<sup>78</sup>

Individualism was thus concerned with both the material and the spiritual. Private enterprise and self-reliance were not only the most efficient means of delivering services to the public, they were also the most moral. They represented the ability to stand on one's own two feet

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<sup>76</sup> Address by Bagot to Young People's Employment Conference, 30 May 1931, box 3 item 25C, CLSA papers; *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 9, 11; *Light on the Legion*, 6-7; *National Unity in Crisis*, 3; *All for Australia League: its real significance*, 3; Lee Neil, *Why we need a citizens' league*, 4.

<sup>77</sup> *National Opinion* 2:14 (1 March 1934): 1, 5; Lee Neil, *Why we need a citizens' league*, 5-7; *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity*, 12-17.

<sup>78</sup> *All for Australia League*, 4.

without having to rely on the charity of others, whether through private donations or the coffers of the state. As such, the movements generally favoured lower taxes, reduced public spending, and a more efficient government whose functions were limited as much as possible to the business of everyday governance.<sup>79</sup> This formed part of a general belief in deflationary economic methods across the board, which they justified as being about ‘equality of sacrifice’.<sup>80</sup>

The citizens’ movements attempted to incorporate the working class into their individualist worldview. The premise of their appeal was that moderate or ‘sane’ labour had more in common with the middle class than with the ‘revolutionaries ... masquerading under the honourable title of Labour’.<sup>81</sup> They believed that government borrowing, combined with trade union agitation and arbitration, had led to unrealistically high wages and standards of living. In accordance with their preference for deflationary methods, the movements believed that these wages should be allowed to fall in line with the reduced national income to ensure that the ‘available wage pool’ was ‘divided equitably among all workers’.<sup>82</sup> Trade union activity, whilst not overtly condemned, was suspiciously regarded as a vehicle for extremism:

Trades unionism is recognised as representing one of the most beneficent movements of the past century ... In recent times, however, trades unionism has been so managed as to become a menace to the worker, whom it was designed to protect ... Unions cannot claim that they recognise the true worth and dignity of the worker when he is used merely as a pawn in political strategy or industrial conflict.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Citizens' League: its formation, aims, and objects*, 6-7; *Manifesto of provisional committee of the Australian Citizens' League*, 6; *Light on the Legion*, 8-12.

<sup>80</sup> *All for Australia League: its real significance*, 3; Letter from Norman Keysor to T. D. Mutch, 29 May 1931, item 79, Mutch papers. ‘Equality of sacrifice’ was one of the five principles in the ‘Big Hand of Service’ - see figure 7.

<sup>81</sup> The Menace of Communism – Shall Russia Rule Australia? Address by Bagot at a public rally in Adelaide, 21 July 1931, box 3 item 24, CLSA papers.

<sup>82</sup> *All for Australia League: its real significance*, 3.

<sup>83</sup> *Policy as Adopted by Convention of the League*, 2-3.

This language attempted to define the range of legitimate trade union activity: honest negotiation in the spirit of cooperation was acceptable, whereas strikes were selfish and sectional. Moreover, the ‘sane’ worker possessed full agency in the former, whereas in the latter they were unwilling dupes of a sinister agenda beyond their control. The movements thus attempted to pave over the complexities of class and the distribution of power between employers and employees with the dual tropes of ‘sane’ and ‘extreme’ labour.

Imperial patriotism played an important part of the conservative worldview to which the citizens’ movements ascribed. Britain and the Empire were the guarantors of the individual liberties that the citizens’ movements claimed to champion:

The New Zealand Legion is sturdily loyal to the Crown and Constitution. In the whole of the world, citizens of British countries have the greatest measure of liberty, the widest scope for individual development, the best system of justice. Loyalty to the Crown and Constitution is not a blind fetish; it is not old-fashioned sentiment; it is robust common-sense; it is the individual citizen’s insurance policy for personal freedom and justice. There is more liberty, equality and fraternity under the British Crown than under any republican flag.<sup>84</sup>

The protection offered by belonging to the British Empire was twofold. In a physical sense, the might of the British navy was perceived as offering protection against foreign threats, particularly those in the Pacific.<sup>85</sup> In a moral sense, however, the Crown was a potent symbol of ‘those great ideals of liberty, justice and national righteousness’.<sup>86</sup> Belonging to the Empire simultaneously recognised those shared values whilst ensuring their perpetuation. At the same time, the citizens’ movements stressed a more reciprocal relationship with Britain than mere colonial dependence. The Antipodean colonies were no longer ‘the suckling child

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<sup>84</sup> *Light on the Legion*, 13.

<sup>85</sup> Speech given by Bagot to the Political Reform League, September 1930, box 3 item 25, CLSA papers.

<sup>86</sup> *Light on the Legion*, 13; *All for Australia League: Draft Policy*, 5.

always at liberty to ask for protection and sustenance'; it was time to become 'grown-up son[s]' and do 'something to assist and support the Mother Country'.<sup>87</sup> This reflects the complementary national, imperial and Anglo-Saxon identities of many Australians and New Zealanders in the early twentieth century.<sup>88</sup>

Having established their worldview as the 'natural' order of things, the movements believed, to varying degrees, in the necessity of suppressing those ideas they considered 'unnatural'. All four movements believed to some extent that communist forces in league with the Soviet Union were secretly fomenting revolution throughout the British Empire. The Citizens' League was the most open about its suspicions, and the most extreme in its suggested solutions. It called on the government to declare communism illegal, ban the distribution of 'dangerous propaganda', and deport all 'agitators' who refused to swear loyalty to the Crown and Constitution.<sup>89</sup> This was partially the result of Bagot's personal distaste for communism, which he had been nurturing for several years. He had been particularly affected by the 1928 Adelaide waterside strikes, which he believed had been 'engineered' by the Militant Minority Movement as part of an ongoing Soviet plan to create 'a ring of socialised States' around 'the Commonwealth of British nations'.<sup>90</sup>

Given their shared belief in a communist conspiracy, the four citizens' movements each considered the possibility of forming a paramilitary wing to combat any perceived threats to

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<sup>87</sup> *National Opinion* 1:7 (2 November 1933): 3.

<sup>88</sup> Douglas Cole, "The Problem of 'Nationalism' and 'Imperialism' in British Settlement Colonies," *Journal of British Studies* 10:2 (1970): 160-82; Russel Ward, "Two Kinds of Australian Patriotism," *Victorian Historical Magazine* 41:1 (1970): 225-43; W. David McIntyre, "Imperialism and Nationalism," in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Geoffrey Rice (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992), 338-47.

<sup>89</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 27 October 1931, box 1 item 3; Minutes of First Convention of Delegates from District and Branch Committees, 1 December 1930, box 1 item 1; Leaflet No.6 c.1931, box 14 item 23; The "Reds" Revolution c.December 1931, box 3 item 24, CLSA papers.

<sup>90</sup> Address given by Bagot at a public rally in Adelaide, 21 July 1931, box 3 item 24, CLSA papers.

law and order. The extent of their preparations varied according where, and when, the movements arose. For example, it appears that neither the All for Australia League nor the Australian Citizens' League felt it necessary to assume a paramilitary function. This was due to the fact that highly secretive and semi-official paramilitary movements already existed in New South Wales and Victoria. The Old Guard and the League of National Security, as they were respectively known, were closely tied to the political, economic and military elite in each state, and it is likely that the leaders of the All for Australia League and the Australian Citizens' League were aware of their existence. It is also possible that there was a degree of cross-membership between the movements. However, Moore and Cathcart's argument that the All for Australia League and the Australian Citizens' League were 'front' organisations for their paramilitary counterparts does not consider the genuine conservative discontent that the citizens' movements, and those that had preceded them, represented.<sup>91</sup> The ideas that they promulgated held wide social traction, and did not require a paramilitarist backing to lend them legitimacy. It is more likely that paramilitarism and public agitation were complementary and occasionally overlapping manifestations of the widespread conservative discontent with government policy.

The Citizens' League specifically sought to build a reserve special constabulary in case of emergency. This was partially due to the recent example of the Essential Service Maintenance Volunteers, which had been established in Adelaide in September 1928 in response to a labour dispute on the waterfront. On 1 December 1930, the League's Executive Committee recommended the 'formation of committees of loyal citizens able and willing to

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<sup>91</sup> Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 92, 99; Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop*, 155.

help maintain essential services in case of industrial unrest'.<sup>92</sup> Bagot discussed this with Colonel G. W. Shaw, an acquaintance in the Police Commissioner's office, who reported that Police Commissioner R. L. Leane – the man responsible for swearing in the special constables in 1928 – 'would welcome the formation of a further Essential Service Body'. Bagot was authorised to offer the services of the League to Leane, with the understanding that their discussions 'be kept strictly secret'.<sup>93</sup> By March 1931 a number of Citizens' League members had been enrolled as special constables 'for the purpose of taking the place of police who are withdrawn from their districts in cases of emergency'. In such an emergency, a smaller force of dedicated specials would also serve alongside regular police under the command of Captain A. S. Blackburn and Lieutenant Colonel W. C. N. Waite, the men who had led the special constabulary in 1928.<sup>94</sup> Bagot was also inspired by the success of the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, a British strikebreaking outfit that had assisted the government with the provision of 'essential services' during the 1926 general strike. If a similar strike occurred in Australia, Bagot stated that the Citizens' League would 'carry on and assist in the maintenance of the essential services of the country, just the same as people of England did in 1926.'<sup>95</sup>

In contrast, the discrediting of the paramilitary activities of the New Guard in 1932 made the New Zealand Legion keen to disavow any paramilitary activity. It began its very first pamphlet by stressing that it was 'not a New Guard' or 'a Fascist body', and the same

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<sup>92</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented at First Convention of Delegates of Branch Committees, 1 December 1930, box 1 Item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>93</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 15 December 1930, box 1 Item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>94</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 12 January 1931, box 1 Item 2; Letter from Bagot to Colonel G. W. Shaw, 24 January 1931, box 13 Item 11, CLSA papers; The formation of secret bodies in the Commonwealth for the protection of the State against BOLSHEVISM, c. March 1931, D series, Commonwealth Investigation Branch correspondence files, A369, NAA.

<sup>95</sup> Address by Bagot at public meeting held in the Exhibition Building, 11 December 1930, box 3 Item 25D; The Menace of Communism – Shall Russia Rule Australia? Address given by Bagot at a public rally in Adelaide, 21 July 1931, box 3 Item 24, CLSA papers.

reassurance was sent out in a circular to division and branch chairmen.<sup>96</sup> The same point was presented during public appearances and in press releases.<sup>97</sup> Public comparisons proved difficult to shake, however: in April the Secretary of the Gisborne centre wrote that the main criticism he had faced during his recruitment campaign was that the Legion was a 'New Guard' or 'Fascist' group.<sup>98</sup> When Sherston was asked whether the Legion was a New Guard movement and what was 'the colour of its shirt', he replied, tongue-in-cheek, that he preferred to wear a coat.<sup>99</sup> When the possibility of assuming a strikebreaking function was raised at a public rally in April, Begg stated that the Legion intended to render strikes unnecessary by addressing their root cause.<sup>100</sup> The Legion's leadership decided that it would be in the best interests of the movement to avoid making any paramilitary preparations entirely and leave the matter to individual members to decide for themselves. When the Hawkes Bay Chairman asked the National Executive in June what action the Legion should take in the event of civil commotion, the response was blunt:

[T]he Legion is a society for propagation of political thought and action, and is not concerned with taking upon itself any such function as suggested. The actual control or dealing with Civil commotion is in the hands of the Government and Police and any members of the Legion must act according to their conscience in their private capacity. This is one of the points that has been very firmly stressed in regard to the movement [emphasis added].<sup>101</sup>

The quote that has been highlighted demonstrated the Legion's keen desire to dissociate itself from the negative connotations of paramilitarism. This may have been what Begg referred to when he told the Provisional National Council in April 1933 that '[w]e must fearlessly

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<sup>96</sup> *Light on the Legion* (Wellington: Commercial Printing Company Ltd., 1933), 1; No. N.Z.L. 6, 11 March 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers.

<sup>97</sup> *Evening Post*, 4 March 1933, 11; *Evening Post*, 11 March 1933, 5

<sup>98</sup> Letter to A. S. Tonkin, 19 April 1933, file 2 folder 2, NZL papers.

<sup>99</sup> *Evening Post*, 1 September 1933, 6.

<sup>100</sup> *Evening Post*, 20 April 1933, 12.

<sup>101</sup> Letter from E. Littlejohn to A. S. Tonkin, 29 June 1933, file 2 folder 3, NZL papers.



analyse the weaknesses in similar movements that caused them to fail.’<sup>102</sup> Whilst he was most likely referring to the failure of the Legion’s predecessors such as the New Zealand National Movement, he may also have been hinting at the negative publicity that had befallen the New Guard. This reflected the links between the two movements that are explored in chapter two.

## **AN ANTIPODEAN FASCISM?**

The above analysis begs the question: what exactly were the citizens’ movements? A related but equally important question is whether it is constructive or useful to assign a label to them at all. Labels are certainly heuristically pleasing – they allow disparate phenomena to be categorised, and they provide a simple language whereby academics can discuss those phenomena without having to delve deeply into specifics. This thesis has already made two such heuristic decisions – the use of the phrase ‘citizens’ movement’ to differentiate the four movements with which this thesis is concerned from the broader body of mass conservative mobilisation, and the differentiation of the ‘Australian Citizens’ League’ from the ‘All for Australia League’ despite their nominal merger. However, labels can also be useful from a comparative point of view by encouraging the analysis of shared and idiosyncratic attributes. This section compares the citizens’ movements with two such broad analytical categories: fascism and populism. This is not to say that the two categories are unrelated – on the contrary, populism is unmistakably a key component of fascist ideology, particularly during the interwar period. However, populism in itself does not imply fascism: it is a strategy that has been employed widely across the political spectrum, and is therefore treated as a separate analytical category in this section.

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<sup>102</sup> *National Opinion* 1:4 (21 September 1933): 12.

Any analysis of right-wing movements during the interwar years must inevitably draw comparisons with fascism – a difficult task, given the lack of consensus around a concise definition. The history of the scholarly quest to define fascism can be broadly understood as an ongoing, and often highly controversial, debate between ideological and material approaches. Daniel Woodley has defined these dual approaches as ‘comparative-analytic studies of fascist ideologies which interpret fascism as a millenarian revolt against the degenerative impact of modernity, and political-economic studies which link fascism to the economic and social-structural crisis of capitalism.’<sup>103</sup> The comparative-analytic approach, of which Roger Griffin, Stanley Payne, and Zeev Sternhell are demonstrative, seeks to highlight a series of generic attributes to which all fascist movements adhered – a ‘fascist minimum’, as it is commonly referred to.<sup>104</sup> In contrast, the political-economic approach favoured by Woodley and David Renton explores the material conditions out of which fascism arose.<sup>105</sup> It is ultimately beyond the scope of this thesis to decide which approach is best suited to understanding fascism. Both the comparative-analytic and political-economic approaches have drawbacks – the former overlooks the historical causes of fascist movements, their relationship with capitalist forces and conservative elites, whilst the latter risks overextending the definition of fascism by neglecting to engage with the common factors that distinguished it from other forms of right-wing mobilisation. This section will draw on elements of both approaches to compare various aspects of the citizens’ movements with fascism.

The conditions that gave birth to the citizens’ movements are similar to those that nurtured fascism. Both were born of, or given added impetus by, crises within the capitalist economic

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<sup>103</sup> Daniel Woodley, *Fascism and Political Theory: Critical Perspectives on Fascist Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1.

<sup>104</sup> Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993); Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>105</sup> David Renton, *Fascism: Theory and Practice* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

system coupled with the disarray or disunity of right-wing parliamentary forces. As mainstream conservative parties struggled to cope with the Depression, disaffected conservatives turned to political alternatives in the hopes of a dramatic turnaround in their fortunes. Both were also buoyed by the rise of organised labour and their political representatives, although the Australasian communist parties were far smaller than their European counterparts. However, their ideological backgrounds were vastly different. Where fascism drew upon particular traditions of organic nationalism and antirationalist socialism, the citizens' movements emerged from a wholly conservative tradition of non-party activism. Fascism also attracted broad, cross-class support, whereas the citizens' movements drew most of their support from the professional, business and commercial fraction of the capitalist class.<sup>106</sup>

There are elements of the citizens' movements' ideology that are reminiscent of fascism. Whilst idealism is a component of most political ideologies, the elevation of idealism to the position of a driving transformative force and the relegation of policy to a minor secondary role was similar to fascism's vitalist and anti-rationalist spirit. Fascists were also known for their appeals to national unity, self-sacrifice and their demonization of the 'other', although the fascist 'other' was a dynamic mix of Jews, communists and other perceived enemies rather than party politicians. The citizens' movements also experimented to varying degrees with corporatist economic ideas, although never to the same extent as the British Union of Fascists.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, despite their belief in cooperation and the subsuming of difference, the citizens' movements could hardly be considered totalitarian or authoritarian in nature.

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<sup>106</sup> For a good overview of the membership of various fascist movements, see Stein Ugelvik Larsen et al., ed. *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism* (Oxon: Global Book Resources, 1980).

<sup>107</sup> For a recent study of the British Union of Fascism's most renowned corporatist thinker Alexander Raven Thomson, see Matthew McMurray, "Alexander Raven Thomson, Philosopher of the British Union of Fascists," *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 17:1 (2012): 33-59.

Their professed goal was a more democratic and pluralistic society, albeit within the bounds of acceptable conservative opinion, and whilst they shared a belief in the necessity for new and charismatic leadership, this was almost always within the confines of the existing democratic structure. Only the Citizens' League of South Australia was openly willing to countenance more extreme measures, such as a dictatorship or the employment of force by extra-parliamentary means. Some of the citizens' movements' ideas on governmental reform were reminiscent of fascist policies of class collaboration and corporatism, although they were far less developed and far more wedded to the economic status quo. Only the New Zealand Legion seriously considered radical alternatives to the existing economic system – a subject which is discussed in chapter six. In contrast, the reactionary component of the citizens' movement ideology had far more in common with traditional Australasian conservatism than it did with fascism. Whilst the nostalgia of the citizens' movements for a mythical nineteenth century utopia was reminiscent of fascism's palingenetic ultra-nationalism, their reliance on the tropes of individualism were the opposite of fascism's anti-liberal and anti-conservative attitudes. Even their anti-communism was more in line with the typical attitudes of mainstream conservatism than it was with fascism. In fact, had it not been for their radical side, there would have been little to distinguish the ideas of the citizens' movements from those of their mainstream conservative counterparts.

The paramilitaristic New Guard had far more in common with fascism than the citizens' movements, although the extent to which it can be classified as fascist has generated some debate. Drawing upon the works of scholars such as Nicos Poulantzas, Ernst Nolte and Roger Griffin, most studies argue that it was a fascist movement.<sup>108</sup> The progression from

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<sup>108</sup> See for example Baron Alder, "The Ideology of the New Guard Movement," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 82:2 (1996): 192-209; Amos, *The New Guard Movement*, 100-15; Keith Richmond, "The New

Poulantzas' Marxist interpretation to the 'fascist minimum' approach founded by Nolte can be charted in Andrew Moore's works, which began with *The Secret Army* by categorising fascism as 'less a set of ideas and programs than a stage of capitalist development.'<sup>109</sup> His position attracted some virulent criticism from Richard Evans and Gerard Henderson, the latter of whom countered that the New Guard 'was one essentially Australian response to an essentially Australian situation.'<sup>110</sup> Henderson was particularly vitriolic in his tirade against 'left-wing historians' and their supposed 'ideological agenda'. Even if such baseless accusations are overlooked, Henderson's ignorance of the wide body of primary source material suggests that he has little to offer the debate.<sup>111</sup> Moore responded by enhancing his strictly structural approach – which he admitted was 'decidedly quaint' – with the wide body of literature on fascism that has emerged in the last two decades around Nolte's challenge to find a 'fascist minimum'.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, scholars such as James Saleam, Stephen Reid and the present author have questioned whether the New Guard met this 'fascist minimum', pointing to its steadfast commitment to individualism and imperial patriotism as uncharacteristic of fascist movements.<sup>113</sup> Irrespective of whether it was fascist or not, the

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Road to Salvation: Eric Campbell and the Centre Party," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 66:3 (1980): 184-98.

<sup>109</sup> Moore, *The Secret Army and the Premier*, 11. See also Moore, *The Right Road*, 43-45; John Perkins and Moore, "Fascism in Interwar Australia," in *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*, ed. Stein Ugelvik Larsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001): 269-86; Moore, "Another Wild Colonial Boy? Francis De Groot and the Harbour Bridge" *Australian Journal of Irish Studies* 2(2002): 135-48; Moore, *Francis De Groot: Irish Fascist, Australian Legend* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2005), 5, 201.

<sup>110</sup> Richard Evans, "'A Menace to This Realm': The New Guard and the New South Wales Police, 1931-32," *History Australia* 5:3 (2008): 76.3; Evans, "William John Mackay and the New South Wales Police Force, 1910-1948: A Study of Police Power" (PhD diss., Monash University, 2006): 152-153; Gerard Henderson, "All Quiet on the Civil War Front," *Sydney Institute Quarterly* 31 (2007): 12.

<sup>111</sup> Henderson, "All Quiet on the Civil War Front," 6-12.

<sup>112</sup> Andrew Moore, "Superintendent Mackay and the Curious Case of the Vanishing Secret Army: A Response to Richard Evans," *History Australia* 6:3 (2009): 72.10-72.11; Moore, "The Nazification of the New Guard: Colonel Campbell's Fascist Odyssey, 1933-1938," in *National Socialism in Australia: A Critical Evaluation of Its Effect and Aftermath*, ed. Emily Turner-Graham and Christine Winter (Berlin: Peter Lang publishers, 2010): 97-114; Moore, "Discredited Fascism." 188-206.

<sup>113</sup> Stephen Reid, "The New Guard in Decline: Eric Campbell and the Centre Party, 1933-1935" (BA Hons diss., Macquarie University, 1980), 58-64; James Saleam, "The Other Radicalism: An Inquiry into Contemporary

New Guard clearly shared more tenets with fascism than the citizens' movements, and it was the only mass conservative movement in Australia and New Zealand to openly term itself fascist.

The citizens' movements were much more reminiscent of populism than fascism. In their ideology, their organisational style, and their focus on mass politics, the citizens' movements pitted the supposedly unified and homogenous values of the citizenry against the malevolent forces of machine politics that had failed to set aside their own sectional interests to resolve the Depression. As such, the citizens' movements could be described as a form of 'conservative populism'. This label is loosely congruent with the label of 'conservative radicalism' that the present author has previously used to describe the citizens' movements, although 'conservative populism' more adequately captures the demagogic nature of that radicalism.<sup>114</sup> A useful comparison could be made to the recent Tea Party protests in the United States, although given the contemporary nature of these events there is little scholarly literature upon which to base such a comparison.<sup>115</sup> 'Conservative populism' also has an analogue in other forms of Australasian mass conservative mobilisation, in particular the dramatic rise of 'One Nation' in rural Queensland and New South Wales in the 1990s. Gregory Melleuish described One Nation as a backlash against the dismantling of the 'Australian Settlement' in the 1980s and its replacement with the new multicultural and neoliberal status quo. He categorised its ideology as consisting of a struggle between the 'ordinary people', whose cultural values were sacred and ubiquitous, against a 'new class

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Australian Extreme Right Ideology, Politics and Organization 1975-1995" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 1999): 17-34; Cunningham, "Australian Fascism?" 375-93.

<sup>114</sup> Cunningham, "Conservative Protest or Conservative Radicalism?" 139-58.

<sup>115</sup> See Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

elite' seeking to destroy those values.<sup>116</sup> Geoffrey Stokes partially accepted Melleuish's connection between One Nation and the decline of the Australian Settlement, but also argued that One Nation was distinguished from earlier forms of populism by its lack of a coherent ideological tradition.<sup>117</sup> Whilst the citizens' movements shared few ideological or structural similarities with One Nation, both are examples of conservative populist revolts against the political establishment. They demonstrate the significant fracturing that can occur within conservatism when significant numbers of conservatives with a shared sense of discontent cannot find an outlet for their concerns in the existing political apparatus.

## CONCLUSION

The citizens' movements espoused a form of conservative populism which blended reactionary conservative ideas regarding the role of government and the individual with radical ideas for transforming the political machinery of the state. Their ideology stressed the centrality of idealism over policy: it was portrayed as both something for all members to aspire to and as a fundamental, all-encompassing goal that outweighed trifling policy considerations. It was this idealism that allowed them to gloss over the contradictions between their reactionary and radical beliefs. By using high-level populist rhetoric, the movements were able to maintain a broad sense of inclusiveness without alienating particular fractions within their membership. Theirs was a mission to build a sense of 'national unity', where all loyal citizens would cooperate to bring their country out of the Depression. This also allowed the movements to couch their essentially conservative beliefs as non-partisan in nature whilst decrying those of their opponents as sectional and divisive.

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<sup>116</sup> Gregory Melleuish, "Populism and Conservatism in Australian Political Thought," in *The Politics of Australian Society: Political Issues for the New Century*, ed. Paul Boreham et al. (Sydney: Longman, 2000), 51–64.

<sup>117</sup> Geoffrey Stokes, "One Nation and Australian Populism," in *The Rise and Fall of One Nation*, ed. Michael Leach et al. (2000), 23–41.

Unlike the various right-wing leagues that preceded them, the citizens' movements posed a direct threat to the forces of mainstream conservatism. Their most radical belief lay in their anti-partyism, which questioned the very basis of the existing parliamentary system. Whilst not typically anti-democratic, the movements challenged the existence of political parties, or at the very least sought to circumvent them by supporting independent candidates who were free of the grip of party 'machines'. This brought them into direct competition with the ideological and electoral hegemony of mainstream conservative parties over the right-minded voting public. However, it also exposed the inherent contradictions between reactionary and radical ideas as the movements attempted to transform their high ideals into concrete policy. The challenges inherent in this transformation are discussed in the next two chapters.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

# **FLIRTING WITH PARTY POLITICS: THE AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS' MOVEMENTS AND THE UNITED AUSTRALIA PARTY**

[T]he position in Federal politics is so critical that even at a temporary sacrifice of some degree of independence, we [are] acting in the best interests of the country and citizens by co-operating with other political bodies to ensure the return to Parliament ... of representatives who will stand for the broad principles of national integrity and sound finance.<sup>1</sup>

By the beginning of 1931, the Australian Labor Party held power at a Federal level as well as in every state except Queensland and Western Australia. In contrast, the mainstream conservative parties and their supporters were in disarray, and had only just begun to rebuild their political brand. However, at a time when the need for conservative political unity was greater than ever, there had arisen a powerful backlash of anti-political political thought which questioned the very legitimacy of the mainstream political parties. The citizens' movements sat at the apex of this backlash, and their willingness to bypass the existing political machinery by supporting independent candidates posed a fundamental challenge to the electoral base of the mainstream conservative parties. This chapter explores the ways in which this challenge between the citizens' movements and the conservative parties was negotiated, and ultimately overcome, in the interests of ousting Labor from power by securing the return of mutually agreeable political candidates. It argues that it was this act of negotiation that exposed the inherent contradictions between reactionary and radical elements of the Australian citizens' movements' ideology. By exposing the schism between political

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Bagot to A. Whiteman, 1 June 1931, box 13 item 10, CLSA papers.

expediency and anti-party purity, the Australian citizens' movements paved the way for their downfall.

This chapter also explores how the Australian conservative political status quo was renegotiated during the heyday of the citizens' movements. Peter Gourevitch's *Politics in Hard Times* provides a useful model for this process. Gourevitch's work compared the effects of three economic crises – the Long Depression, the Great Depression, and the 'wide gyrations of the 1970s and 1980s' – on the internal politics of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Sweden. These crises, he argued, 'opened the system of [political] relationships, making politics and policy more fluid' until 'a resolution was reached, closing the system for a time, until the next crisis'. This process was driven by 'masses of voters desperate for some sort of change' led by political parties willing to make deals 'that took them away from their traditional political as well as policy attachments'.<sup>2</sup> In Australia this renegotiation took the form of a resurgent conservative opposition which competed with the citizens' movements for electoral support and political power. The extent to which the citizens' movements recognised and played a part in this renegotiation, it will be argued, was a crucial factor in their downfall.

## **THE DEFECTION OF JOSEPH LYONS**

When the acting Federal Treasurer Joseph Lyons resigned from the Labor cabinet in January 1931, he was in a surprisingly good position to reinvent his political career as a leading conservative. Chapter two discussed how he had spent the second half of 1930 establishing his credentials as a fiscal conservative by adhering to the conditions of the deflationary

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Gourevitch, *Politics in Hard Times: Comparative Responses to International Economic Crises* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 10, 21-22, 160-1.

‘Melbourne Agreement’. He had also successfully conducted a £28 million loan conversion campaign in the closing months of 1930 despite caucus opposition, thus avoiding the spectre of repudiation which so terrified conservatives. His resignation over Prime Minister Scullin’s reappointment of E. G. ‘Ted’ Theodore as Treasurer cemented his image amongst conservatives as an honest man who was willing to defy the directions of his party on matters of principle.<sup>3</sup> As the editors of the *Sydney Morning Herald* put it, ‘[i]n these days of political opportunism, it is refreshing to know that there are still a few public leaders who prefer honour to power.’<sup>4</sup>

The processes and forces behind Lyons’ political reinvention have been explored by several scholars. Most have focused on how the members of the conservative political and economic establishment convinced him to assume the leadership of a reinvigorated conservative opposition party. Chapter two touched upon the influence of a small clique of Melbourne politicians and professionals informally known as ‘the Group of Six’ who had become familiar with Lyons through the conversion loan campaign. Members of the Group were also closely associated with the Citizens’ Committee – the precursor to the Australian Citizens’ League – and the chief conservative political fundraising organisation known as the National Union. According to P. R. Hart, by the beginning of 1931 the Group envisaged Lyons as a leader who could unite the various anti-Scullin forces. At a meeting in early February they encouraged him to cross to the opposition benches and pledged their support to uniting the various non-labor groups behind him. After much soul-searching and a final failed attempt to defeat Theodore’s economic proposals in caucus, Lyons and his small circle of followers issued a joint vote of censure against the government with the Nationalist Party on 13

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<sup>3</sup> Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 97-100; A. W. Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life, Vol 1, 1894-1943* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), 83-85.

<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 January 1931, 12.

March.<sup>5</sup> Whilst the vote failed to achieve a majority, Judith Brett demonstrated that it cemented Lyons' image as a principled man who was willing to place the good of the nation above party interests and his own personal ambitions.<sup>6</sup> It also signalled Lyons' final break from Labor: he pledged to form a new centrist party with his small group of followers, which received the tentative support of the opposition parties.<sup>7</sup>

Lyons' supporters in the Group and the National Union were keen for him to assume the leadership of the Nationalist Party. Since the end of 1929, the Nationalists had been led by Sir John Latham, a former judge and Attorney-General who, according to Zelman Cohen and John Williams, lacked Lyons' popular appeal and accessible speaking style.<sup>8</sup> Hart, Williams and A. W. Martin demonstrate how, under the concerted pressure of the Group and the National Union, Latham ultimately agreed in April 1931 to step aside as leader of the opposition and recommend Lyons as his successor.<sup>9</sup> They also agreed on a common set of seven policy points with Country Party leader Earle Page. Apart from employing standard conservative tropes regarding balanced budgets and the encouragement of 'productive enterprise', the seven points also included a commitment to assist primary producers with 'real money', an ambiguous assurance that tariff policy would be '[e]conomically sound', and

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<sup>5</sup> P. R. Hart, "Lyons: Labor Minister - Leader of the U.A.P.," 43-45; Lonie, "From Liberal to Liberal," 65; Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life*, 86.

<sup>6</sup> Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 101.

<sup>7</sup> Hart, "Lyons: Labor Minister - Leader of the U.A.P.," 46.

<sup>8</sup> Zelman Cowen, *Sir John Latham and Other Papers* (Sydney: Halstead Press, 1965), 16-20; Williams, *John Latham and the Conservative Recovery from Defeat*, 4-11.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Hart, "The Piper and the Tune," in *Australian Conservatism: Essays in Twentieth Century Political History*, ed. Cameron Hazlehurst (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 116; Hart, "Lyons: Labor Minister - Leader of the U.A.P.," 49-50; Williams, *John Latham and the Conservative Recovery from Defeat*, 21; Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life*, 89-90. This was the second time that the National Union helped negotiate a new conservative union incorporating a Labor splinter group, the previous occasion being Hughes' National Labor Party in 1917. For general discussions of the influence of the National Union and other fundraising bodies on the Nationalist and United Australia Parties, see J. R. Williams, "Financing Conservative Parties in Australia," *Australian Quarterly* 43:1 (1971): 7-19; Lex Watson, "The United Australia Party and Its Sponsors," in *Australian Conservatism: Essays in Twentieth Century Political History*, ed. Cameron Hazlehurst (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 71-109.

a 'fair deal' for employers and employees.<sup>10</sup> This demonstrated Lyons' desire to cement his image as a force for unity rather than division by reaching out to the various cleavages of the capitalist class.

However, Australian conservatism was dominated by two political forces in the first half of 1931 – the mainstream conservative parties, represented chiefly by the Federal and State branches of the Nationalist and Country parties; and the citizens' movements, which by March had already secured over 100000 members. In order to secure unopposed leadership of a united conservative opposition, Lyons needed to gain the support of both. Scholarly attention has tended to focus on the way that Lyons and the conservative establishment outmanoeuvred the citizens' movements and brought them back into the mainstream political fold. C. J. Lloyd attributed this to the greater political experience of the Nationalists, who were able to co-opt Lyons and the inexperienced leaders of the citizens' movements.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, Hart, Brett and Anne Henderson emphasised the political nous of Lyons himself in gaining the support of the Nationalists and making use of the non-party language of the citizens' movements in order to appeal to their wide support base.<sup>12</sup> This chapter explores the other side of this dynamic. It analyses how the staunchly anti-party Australian citizens' movements negotiated their relationship with party politics at a Federal and State level, the justifications they developed for cooperating with mainstream political parties, and how this ultimately exposed the inherent contradictions between the reactionary and radical elements of their ideology.

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<sup>10</sup> The Seven Points: Policy announced by Mr. J. A. Lyons, 26 March 1931, item 101, box 89, series 49, folder 3, Latham papers.

<sup>11</sup> Lloyd, "The Formation and Development of the U.A.P.." 295; Lloyd, "The Rise and Fall of the United Australia Party," in *Liberalism and the Australian Federation*, ed. J. R. Nethercote (Riverwood: The Federation Press, 2001), 146-54.

<sup>12</sup> Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, 105-6; Hart, "Lyons: Labor Minister - Leader of the U.A.P.," 37-51; Anne Henderson, *Joseph Lyons: The People's Prime Minister* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2012), 237-83.

## **THE SEARCH FOR A LEADER**

Chapter four argued that one of the central ideals of the citizens' movements was their opposition to party politics. Had it not been for this, the ideology of the Australian citizens' movements would have been little more than a populist form of Australasian conservatism. Despite the occasionally anti-democratic and proto-corporatist nature of their economic policies, their ideal society was one in which the tenets of individualism were paramount. But anti-partyism complicated the ideological congruence between the Australian citizens' movements and mainstream conservative parties: it was an ideological line in the sand which the movements had drawn, and a foundation upon which they defined what made them different from 'sectional' party machines. The irony of opposing parties on both sides of the spectrum equally was that the goals of the citizens' movements were far more congruent with mainstream conservatism than they were with Labor, and the extent to which the movements clung to their anti-partyism despite this congruence demonstrates how central it was to their ideology.

The negotiation of this inherent contradiction between radical anti-partyism and reactionary conservatism, and the way in which it was ultimately overcome, needs to be examined at both the State and Federal level. The reason for this distinction is twofold: firstly, the separate elections for State and Federal parliaments; secondly, and more importantly, the central role of the State-based political machines in controlling conservative politics at the ballot box. The Nationalist Party, which was the leading conservative political force at the Federal level in 1931, was an organisational chimera. Rather than being comprised of a series of united and hierarchical party divisions, the Nationalist Party was a loose coalition of different State-based conservative organisations, including the National Federation of Victoria, the Nationalist Association of New South Wales, and the Liberal Federation of South Australia.

These organisations fielded and supported candidates for both State and Federal elections whilst maintaining their independence from each other. Federal policy was developed through an Australian National Federation comprised of six delegates from each State, although in practice only five interstate conferences were ever convened.<sup>13</sup>

It was at the State level where conservative machine politics were most apparent, due in large part to the increasing sophistication of extra-parliamentary support structures throughout the 1920s in an attempt to replicate Labor's organisational unity.<sup>14</sup> This made them the target of fierce and uncompromising criticism from the citizens' movements, who drew no distinction between their methods and those of their Labor opponents. As the All for Australia League said of the Nationalist Association:

[T]he Reds dominate the Labour Movement and the Reactionaries have gained control of the Nationalist Party. Controlling these organisations as they do, the extreme sections have forced Parliament to legislate in the interests of their respective factions, regardless of the welfare of the community at large.<sup>15</sup>

This criticism of conservative parties was more than a half-hearted attempt to win the support of centrist voters by appearing to seek out the middle ground. The citizens' movements were squarely set against the methods of machine politics irrespective of where on the political spectrum they lay. As chapter four demonstrated, they viewed party politics of all strands as anti-democratic, believing that they allowed the political fortunes of the nation to be dominated by a scheming minority and deprived citizens of their right to choose their parliamentary representatives.

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<sup>13</sup> Lloyd, "The Rise and Fall of the United Australia Party," 157.

<sup>14</sup> C. J. Lloyd, "Parkhill, Sir Robert Archdale (1878–1947)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/parkhill-sir-robert-archdale-7960>; Smith, *Against the Machines*, 23-50; Robinson, "The All for Australia League in New South Wales." 45-46; Lloyd, "The Formation and Development of the U.A.P., 1929-1937." 17; Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*. 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> The Financial Record of Party Politics [undated], item 68, Mutch papers.

The question thus became, how could the citizens' movements secure the election of a government committed to the 'national interest' without resorting to party politics themselves? Though this question might seem simple, it raised a whole swathe of other questions that required much more specific answers than the high-level platitudes with which the citizens' movements were more comfortable. After all, abolishing party politics was a very ambitious goal: it was one thing to speak of expanding 'until we are such a huge power that our wishes can no longer be ignored', but would it be acceptable if those wishes were fulfilled by a party government in the short term?<sup>16</sup> If it was acceptable, did this mean that anti-partyism was less important, and could therefore be temporarily cast aside, in order to achieve the more pressing goal of a change in government? And finally, if the goal of sound government was so important, was it acceptable for the citizens' movements to cooperate with other conservative organisations – even if only temporarily – to ensure it was realised? These were very important questions in Australia, as the three Labor bogeymen – James Scullin, E. G. Theodore and Jack Lang – presented conservatives with a real and immediate threat to the very basis of sane finance with their supposedly 'inflationary' and 'repudiationist' ideas. However, as will be shown below, the conflicting answers posed by each movement to these questions – and by different fractions within the movements – exposed an inherent contradiction that had previously been obscured by high-level rhetoric.

As the first of the citizens' movements to be founded, the Citizens' League of South Australia was also the first to grapple with this contradiction. Its original strategy was to pressure the Scullin government to enact its desired reforms, if necessary by creating an all-party

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<sup>16</sup> Address by Bagot at a Citizens' Public Meeting in Adelaide Town Hall, 14 October 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.



coalition.<sup>17</sup> However, in late January Scullin openly sided with Theodore's proto-Keynesian proposals, which the League condemned as a 'refusal to deal with matters affecting the interests of the citizens on national instead of party lines'.<sup>18</sup> However, even if he had chosen not to support Theodore, Scullin was an ill-suited saviour for the Citizens' League. Apart from being a party politician, the League perceived his approach to combating the Depression as hesitant and contradictory. Latham and the Nationalists were a possible alternative, although this would still have required throwing their lot in with party politicians. Nevertheless, the fact that the League was willing to support Scullin prior to the reinstatement of Theodore demonstrated their willingness to bypass mainstream conservative parties to achieve their goals.

What the Citizens' League needed was a leader who could bridge the gap between extra-parliamentary agitation and intra-parliamentary action – someone part of, but not beholden to, the nation's political machinery. Such a leader could, in the League's eyes, effect change from within parliament without being attached to any particular party, thus preserving the illusion of a national, non-party government. Leaders of this calibre would not even be politicians at all, but *statesman* – an important rhetorical differentiation that conjured images of the *noblesse oblige* of the idealised nineteenth century independent candidate:

Out of this new movement new leaders will be found. Men and women who are prepared to serve for the good of the country as a whole instead of for party. We demand statesmen instead of politicians, that all legislation be reviewed as to whether it is for the good of the people as a whole instead of for a section of them.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Resolution passed at Citizens' Public Meeting in Adelaide Town Hall, 14 October 1930, box 1 item 1; Letter from Bagot to Scullin, 9 January 1931, box 13 item 11; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 12 January 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers; *Register News-Pictorial*, 10 January 1931, 2; *Advertiser*, 12 December 1930, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Bagot to Scullin, 29 January 1931, box 13 item 11, CLSA papers.

<sup>19</sup> Address given by Mr. E. D. A. Bagot at public meeting held in the Exhibition Building, 11 December 1930, box 3 item 25D, CLSA papers.

The only question that remained, as Citizens' League General Secretary E. D. A. Bagot put in starkly gendered terms, was 'who is the man?'<sup>20</sup> He did not have to wait long for an answer. As the Citizens' League rose to prominence in the closing months of 1930, so too did Joseph Lyons. His loan conversion campaign utilised many of the same populist tactics as the Citizens' League, including mass rallies, idealistic notions of national honour, and direct appeals to the people against the supposedly apathetic attitudes of those in power.<sup>21</sup> By December he was a nationally recognised figure, and the Citizens' League was praising him for his 'courage and plain speaking'.<sup>22</sup> A League 'Monster Rally' was held on 11 December in part to encourage widespread support for the conversion loan, and a telegram from Lyons addressed to the League was read to the audience.<sup>23</sup> When Scullin failed to enforce deflationary measures during the Premiers' conference in February 1931, the Citizens' League called upon Lyons to overthrow the government and form a new ministry with the opposition.<sup>24</sup> Bagot offered him the League's unqualified backing, and circulated telegrams to MP's in New South Wales and South Australia urging them to support Lyons.<sup>25</sup>

## **THE CO-OPTION OF THE CITIZENS' MOVEMENTS AT A FEDERAL LEVEL**

Lyons' stand against his Labor colleagues appeared to provide an avenue for the citizens' movements into parliamentary action that did not overly stretch their non-party credentials. He was, in essence, a conservative politician without the burden of the conservative party machine, which made him the ideal candidate to lead a group of self-proclaimed non-party

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<sup>20</sup> Bagot, 'A Dictator Needed', submitted to the Editor of "The Advertiser", 5 September 1930, box 3 item 25D, CLSA papers.

<sup>21</sup> See for example *Argus*, 12 December 1930, 9; *Argus*, 13 December 1930, 23.

<sup>22</sup> *Advertiser*, 12 December 1930, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Telegram from the Hon. J. A. Lyons re: Conversion Loan, 11 December 1930, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

<sup>24</sup> Telegram from Bagot to Scullin, 12 February 1931, box 13 item 11, CLSA papers; *Advertiser*, 12 February 1931, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Telegram from Bagot to Lyons, 20 February 1931, box 13 item 13; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 23 February 1931, box 1 item 2; Letter from Bagot to Lyons, 7 March 1931, box 13 item 13, CLSA papers; *Advertiser and Register*, 21 February 1931, 15.

movements. However, two things needed to happen for this marriage to be realised – Lyons had to want the job, and all three citizens' movements needed to accept him. Lyons' position in February 1931 was complicated by the division between mainstream conservatism and the citizens' movements. If he chose to contest the leadership of the Nationalists, he risked alienating the growing membership of the citizens' movements; conversely, if he aligned himself too closely with non-party interests, he could lose his chance at leading an opposition coalition. Consequently, Lyons did not respond to the Citizens' League's overtures until after his announcement in March that he was forming 'a new party which would place the country before party'.<sup>26</sup> He then noncommittally informed the League that he was '[g]lad [to] do anything [to] help Australia'.<sup>27</sup> At the time Lyons was developing the seven point policy with the editor of the *Argus* in Melbourne, who advised him to 'check the growth of sectional mushroom movements that may be a menace to unity later'. Realising the electoral boon that such a large mass of supporters could bring to a united opposition, Lyons replied that he did not wish to alienate these movements.<sup>28</sup> This suggests that he wanted to keep both avenues open until he had decided which course to take.

Whilst all three Australian citizens' movements were supportive of Lyons, there was considerable disagreement between the Citizens' League of South Australia and the eastern movements on what a united non-party front should look like. The Citizens' League viewed Lyons' desertion from Labor as a chance for all of the forces opposed to 'inflation, repudiation, and financial drift', including mainstream conservative parties, the citizens' movements and other non-party organisations, and the forces of 'sane labour', to unite behind

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<sup>26</sup> *Advertiser and Register*, 13 March 1931, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Telegram from Lyons to Bagot, 13 March 1931, box 13 item 13, CLSA papers.

<sup>28</sup> Hart, "Lyons: Labor Minister - Leader of the U.A.P.," 46.

him under one non-party banner.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the League believed that the large membership of the citizens' movements would form the backbone of this new united front, and it boasted that Lyons would inherit 'an Australia-wide organisation with an immediate membership of 200,000' should he choose to accept it.<sup>30</sup> Whilst the notion that such a political force could really be non-party in nature may seem farcical, it must be remembered that in March 1931 Lyons was, for all intents and purposes, a free political agent. He had resigned from the Labor Party on principle and had yet to succeed Latham as leader of the opposition, and he had only just announced his intention to form a new minority party. With the citizens' movements enjoying a spectacular rise and the Nationalists in disarray, it was easy for individuals like Bagot to imagine that a new political order free from party domination was being forged.

In contrast, the All for Australia League saw no place for the mainstream conservative parties in a united non-party movement. A Citizens' League delegate to a meeting of the two eastern Leagues in March 1931 reported that the All for Australia League was unwilling to discuss a common policy, and refused to support Lyons as Federal leader.<sup>31</sup> The reason for their reluctance became clear when, at the first All for Australia League State convention on 28 March, delegates voted by 598 to 40 to launch a new political movement that would support its own candidates at State and Federal elections. Delegates stressed that their members, who supposedly came from both sides of the political spectrum, were looking to the League for leadership and action, and would not countenance supporting either Labour or Nationalist candidates. Their object, one of the founding members explained bluntly, was 'to save

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<sup>29</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 13 April 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>30</sup> *Mail*, 21 March 1931, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 23 March 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

Australia and not to save the National party'.<sup>32</sup> When confronted by Latham about the need for unity to defeat Scullin, League President Alexander J. Gibson replied that he was '[v]ery friendly' towards the Federal opposition forces but not to the Nationalist Party in general. The solution to the 'federal problem', he explained, was for Latham, Lyons and Page to join the All for Australia League.<sup>33</sup> Unlike the Citizens' League, the All for Australia League was unwilling to sacrifice any of its anti-party purity by cooperating with mainstream conservative parties – instead, it saw itself as the sole legitimate organisation through which to build a new non-party order.

These differing visions of a united non-party movement were partially influenced by lingering mistrust between the Citizens' League and its counterparts in the eastern States. Chapter two showed the unwillingness of the Australian Citizens' League's upper class leadership to align with Bagot, whose middle class origins and fiery rhetoric were viewed as a potential liability. The Australian Citizens' League found the leadership of the All for Australia League – which included several prominent businessmen and manufacturers – much less objectionable, which explains their decision to adopt the latter's name and objects. The placatory excuse they offered the Citizens' League of South Australia was that 'the name "citizen" to the country dweller connoted too much of city interests'.<sup>34</sup> A heated struggle occurred throughout March for control over the direction of the citizens' movement phenomenon. Both of the eastern Leagues pressured the Citizens' League of South Australia to 'fall into line with them in a wider movement' under the title of 'All for Australia'. The Citizens' League refused to amalgamate 'on the ground[s] of dominance from New South

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<sup>32</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 1931, 12.

<sup>33</sup> Notes made on 6th April 1931, item 106, box 89, series 49, folder 3, Latham papers.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Bagot to W. A. Burns, 2 June 1931, box 12 item 1, CLSA papers.

Wales and Victoria', and Bagot called the Australian Citizens' League 'selfish' for affiliating with the All for Australia League.<sup>35</sup>

In truth, the leaders of the Australian Citizens' League were far less enamoured with their alliance than they appeared to be. At the beginning of March the All for Australia League was a dynamic and rapidly expanding force whose only tangible targets were the forces of inflation and repudiation. By the end of the month, however, its opposition to cooperation with the Nationalists on all fronts was becoming increasingly apparent. This placed the leadership of the Australian Citizens' League in an increasingly uncomfortable position given their work with Lyons on the conversion loan campaign. Furthermore, whilst the All for Australia League was launching its tirade against the Nationalists, the Australian Citizens' League leaders associated with the National Union and the Group of Six were manoeuvring for Lyons to assume the leadership of the opposition. This may explain Bagot's cryptic statement to a South Australian journalist that the Australian Citizens' League had come to regret changing their name.<sup>36</sup> On 29 March 1931, the day after the All for Australia League launched itself as an independent political movement, the Australian Citizens' League leadership met with Latham to reassure him of their support. They also expressed their concern over the hostility from the All for Australia League, adding that it would be difficult to convince them to support the Nationalists.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 9 March 1931; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 23 March 1931, box 1 item 2; Letter from Bagot to Sir William Sowden, 23 March 1931, box 13 item 11, CLSA papers.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from Bagot to Sir William Sowden, 23 March 1931, box 13 item 11, CLSA papers. The reason that Bagot cited for the Australian Citizens' League's regret – that the badge of the newly formed Australian Labor Army bore a startling resemblance to that of the All for Australia League – is humorous but unconvincing.

<sup>37</sup> Notes made on 6th April 1931, item 106, box 89, Series 49, folder 3, Latham papers.

The competing visions of the Citizens' League and the All for Australia League came to a head at a conference of non-party organisations in Adelaide on 9-10 April 1931. The conference was called for two reasons: to attempt to coordinate the efforts of the three citizens' movements, as well as various other non-party organisations, behind a set of common principles; and to provide a platform where Lyons could address, and hopefully assume the leadership of, those movements. The conference represented an attempt by the Citizens' League to regain control of the citizens' movement phenomenon from the eastern States by securing widespread support for its vision of a united non-party force under Lyons. Apart from the Citizens' League of South Australia, the All for Australia League and the Australian Citizens' League, delegates were invited from the Sane Democracy League, the Empire Party, the Citizens' Federation of Western Australia, the Tasmanian Producers' Advisory Council, the South Australian Proportional Representation Group, the South Australian Women's Non-Party Association, the Producers' and Business Men's Political League, and a revived Kyabram Reform Movement.<sup>38</sup>

Lyons, who had by this time announced his intention to form a new moderate party, accepted an invitation from the League to address the conference and decided to use the occasion as the inaugural event of a speaking tour across Australia.<sup>39</sup> The influence of the citizens' movements on Lyons' thinking at this point in his political career is demonstrated by the way that his attendance at the conference blended the populist style of the movements with standard conservative canvassing techniques. The entire conference was a well-orchestrated theatrical affair from start to finish: Lyons was greeted at Adelaide train station by an adoring

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<sup>38</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 23 March 1931; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 7 April 1931; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 8 April 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers; *Advertiser and Register*, 9 April 1931, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 16 March 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers; *Advertiser and Register*, 19 March 1931, 9.

crowd of supporters and the press, and he gave an apparently impromptu address where he uttered his famous line that together they would 'strike a match to-night which will start a blaze throughout Australia'.<sup>40</sup> That night, he gave a speech to a mass rally in the Exhibition Hall that was broadcast live on 5AD and relayed to several radio stations in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Attendance was so large that he repeated his address to overflow crowds at the Garden Theatre and Palais Royal.<sup>41</sup> His speech skilfully blended the populist rhetoric of the citizens' movements with the orthodox economic rhetoric that had won him acclaim amongst conservatives:

The first problem facing us is to restore the confidence of overseas people in Australia. In that objective there should be no party, no sectional, and no State antagonisms ... let us unite on certain leading questions and then leave our representatives freedom of action in order that we might have true representative government.<sup>42</sup>

However, Lyons' schedule for the majority of his time in Adelaide was booked solid with meetings and luncheons with conservative organisations and businessmen's groups.<sup>43</sup> This demonstrated that he was cognizant of the political power held by the citizens' movements and mainstream conservatives and was keen to maintain support from both.

The morning after Lyons' speech, the delegates from the various non-party movements met to debate the future of the citizens' movements. The heated discussion was dominated by the opposing visions of the Citizens' League and the All for Australia League, with the latter reiterating that it would not cooperate with any political party. Instead, its delegates demanded that the Citizens' League adopt the 'All for Australia' brand and join the two

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<sup>40</sup> *Advertiser and Register*, 10 April 1931, 21.

<sup>41</sup> *Advertiser and Register*, 9 April 1931, 9.

<sup>42</sup> *Advertiser and Register*, 10 April 1931, 19-20.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 19, 21; *Advertiser and Register*, 11 April 1931, 17.



eastern movements in a new united movement that would field its own candidates. Bagot replied that the urgent need to defeat Scullin required the cooperation of all the forces opposed to inflation and repudiation, including the mainstream conservative parties. The All for Australia League delegates were eventually persuaded to support Lyons at a Federal level, however they refused to cooperate with the New South Wales Nationalist Association in selecting candidates for the next election. The delegates finally agreed to leave decisions regarding State-level cooperation in the hands of each movement.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the leaders of the three citizens' movements invited Lyons to become their leader so that he would have an organisation at his disposal that could begin encouraging candidates who subscribed to his broad principles.<sup>45</sup>

The path to a new united opposition movement under Lyons now seemed clear; however, the problem that had plagued Lyons in March 1931 was still unresolved. Utilising the Nationalist Party apparatus would not suit the citizens' movements who wanted a new, united political force that would set aside party politics for the sake of the nation. Likewise, if he were to accept the offer of leadership from the citizens' movements he risked inheriting an organisation with a significant membership but without a well-oiled political machine. The solution to the impasse was to form a new organisation under which political parties and non-party movements could come together without merging or losing their separate identities. This organisation, which was named the United Australia Movement, was formed at a meeting of Nationalist Party and citizens' movement delegates in Melbourne on 19 April. To effect the desired electoral unity, the delegates resolved to form Central Committees in each

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<sup>44</sup> Minutes of citizens' movement conference, 9-10 April 1931, series 4 item 1; Minutes of meeting of Emergency Committee Executive, 12 April 1931, series 4 item 1, Archibald Grenfell Price papers, PRG7, SLSA (hereafter 'Price papers'); Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 13 April 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers; *Advertiser and Register*, 11 April 1931, 15.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Gibson, Turnbull, and Bagot to Lyons, 11 April 1931, box 1 folder 8, Joseph Aloysius Lyons papers, MS 4851, NLA (hereafter 'Lyons papers').

State to collaboratively endorse candidates that adhered to the broad principles set out in Lyons' seven point policy.<sup>46</sup> On the surface, the United Australia Movement seemed to follow the non-party approach favoured by the Citizens' League; however, in reality, it was little more than a rebranded conservative political party with several new faces at its helm. This was demonstrated on 7 May when the parliamentary Nationalist Party and Lyons' small band of followers renamed themselves the United Australia Party.<sup>47</sup>

The citizens' movements portrayed their support of United Australia at the Federal level as the logical progression of the non-party spirit to the political arena rather than the consolidation of the conservative party machine. Nationalism was a tarnished brand, inescapably bound to the tired system of machine politics; 'United Australia', as its name implied, was a new and invigorated political force that represented unity along national rather than party lines. Having Lyons at the helm made it easier to preserve this veneer of non-partyism: he had, in the words of the All for Australia League, 'thrown off the shackles of machine control and set out as a leader of the moderate section of the community.'<sup>48</sup> It certainly helped that he was fluent in the language of non-partyism, which he ably demonstrated by stressing that the new party was built upon a 'great force of public opinion', that would 'constantly have in mind that personal and party ends must be entirely subordinated to the national welfare.'<sup>49</sup> But moderate or not, Lyons was still a politician engaged in the political process, and the citizens' movements needed to account for this if they were to justify supporting him. They did this by arguing that the principles they shared with Lyons transcended party politics:

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<sup>46</sup> Minutes of a Conference held in Melbourne on 19 April 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>47</sup> Hart, "Lyons: Labor Minister - Leader of the U.A.P.," 51. They were also joined by W. M. Hughes' 'Australian Party', comprised of himself and three other MPs who had defected from the Nationalists in 1930.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Norman Keysor to Lyons, 23 May 1931, box 1 folder 8, Lyons papers.

<sup>49</sup> *Advertiser and Register*, 8 May 1931, 21.

Just as we are not “pro” any party, so we are not “anti” any party, Labour or other. The best proof of our non-party character is that we have given our support to Mr. Lyons, both before and since he left the Labour Party. In supporting Mr. Lyons we are supporting our own principles, and if we declined to support Mr. Lyons we would be false to our principles, irrespective of the party in which he may belong.<sup>50</sup>

This stance, argued the Australian Citizens League, was ‘political’ but not ‘party’ because United Australia ‘was not a political party in the [traditional] sense’.<sup>51</sup> As Lyons was free of the taint of party politics and shared the principles believed by the citizens’ movements to represent the national interest, they saw no inconsistency in supporting him in the Federal parliament. Australian conservatism had thus begun to renegotiate its relationship with the electorate by appropriating the language of the citizens’ movements, but it remained to be seen whether this would be enough to iron out the hostility between the citizens’ movements and the mainstream conservative political machinery at a State level.

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<sup>50</sup> *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity*, 23-24.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 24; First Meeting of the Council under the new Constitution of the All for Australia League, 9 July 1931, Ernest Turnbull papers, MS 1942/2, NLA (hereafter ‘Turnbull papers’).



**Figure 14: Australian Citizens' League cartoon in support of Joseph Lyons. Source: *News*, 17 December 1931, 11.**

### **THE CO-OPTION OF THE CITIZENS' MOVEMENTS IN THE STATES**

With a commitment to unity achieved at a Federal level, mainstream conservatives in Australia set about co-opting the populist enthusiasm of the citizens' movements at a State level. A useful framework for understanding how this occurred is provided in John Lonie's analysis of the Citizens' League and the Emergency Committee, a conservative lobby group founded in South Australia to select and support right-wing candidates for the Federal election in December 1931. Lonie argued that the Emergency Committee 'outmanoeuvred and contained' the League by corralling it into a united front dominated by mainstream conservatives. By participating in this united front, the League ultimately 'negated ... its own

origins by integrating the disaffected parties back into line.'<sup>52</sup> Similar fronts were developed in Victoria and New South Wales, although achieving unity in New South Wales was a long and protracted process because of the All for Australia League's intractable hostility toward the Nationalist Association. This section explores this process of political co-option.

Like the Federal campaign to support Lyons, the precedent for State cooperation between mainstream conservatives and the citizens' movements was set in South Australia with the Emergency Committee. With tensions running high between the Citizens' League and the Liberal Federation in the first few months of 1931, leading Liberals W. G. Duncan and Charles Hawker began to consider how best to rein in the fiery and unpredictable Bagot. Since he seemed implacably opposed to the Liberals' party structure, they decided to form the nominally independent 'Emergency Committee' under which the Liberal Federation, the Country Party, and the various non-party groups in South Australia could cooperate for the purposes of contesting the next Federal election. Duncan and Hawker approached A. G. Price, author of the highly influential and widely distributed pamphlet *The Menace of Inflation*, to lead the new movement at the end of March due to his lack of overt party attachments. Invitations were sent to five organisations to attend the inaugural meeting of the Committee on 1 April 1931 – the Liberal Federation, the Country Party, the Citizens' League, the Political Reform League (whose founder Keith Wilson participated in the formation of the Citizens' League), and the Producers' and Business Men's Association.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Lonie, "Conservatism and Class in South Australia," 208, 240; Lonie, "'Good Labor Men' and 'Non-Labor'," 30-45.

<sup>53</sup> Price, "The Emergency Committee of South Australia," 11-13; Circular sent by Price, 29 March 1931, series 4 item 1, Price papers.

An analysis of Price's worldview emphasizes the similarities and differences between mainstream conservatism and the citizens' movement ideology. Price was a typical conservative – British in his loyalties, staunch in his defence of orthodox economics, yet relatively ambivalent about the conservative party apparatus. He believed that deflation and balanced budgets were natural – and therefore apolitical – tools of economic management, whereas the methods pursued by Labor were 'absolutely wrong'.<sup>54</sup> Those who supported sane economy were 'good men' who 'refused to be bound', whereas Scullin led 'a Government of wobblers, and financial extremists' who had 'temporarily sapped the foundations of individualism' with arbitration, pensions, and 'a dozen [other] socialistic policies'.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, Price was deeply concerned by Bagot's populist leadership style and uncompromising anti-partyism. He agreed to lead the Emergency Committee not because of any strong sympathy for the Liberals, but to prevent the Citizens' League from splitting the vote and 'letting in the extremists again.' This was a fear shared by Duncan and Hawker, who believed the League represented an 'immediate danger' and hoped to keep it under control until it ran out of money or momentum.<sup>56</sup> When interviewed many years later about the impetus behind the formation of the Emergency Committee, Price's response was blunt: 'we started the Emergency Committee to control Bagot'.<sup>57</sup> This demonstrates the level of apprehension with which mainstream conservatives perceived the citizens' movements in the States, and the extent to which they were willing to go to control them.

It was the fear of splitting the conservative vote, coupled with the chance to steer conservative political policy in a non-party direction, which convinced the leaders of the

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<sup>54</sup> Price, "The Emergency Committee of South Australia," 5-6, 11.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Lonie, "Conservatism and Class in South Australia," 248.

Citizens' League to work with the Emergency Committee. Bagot approached the inaugural meeting of the Committee with considerable bluster, telling the Citizens' League President and fellow delegate William Queale that he intended to 'let the bastards show themselves and then shoot them.' However, whilst Bagot proclaimed that he was 'dead against cooperation' with the Liberal Federation, the more moderate Queale was won over by Price's appeals for electoral unity and convinced Bagot to change his mind.<sup>58</sup> The Committee then expanded Lyons' 'seven points' into a twelve-point policy which it would require its candidates to uphold. Two of these additional policies demonstrated the willingness of mainstream conservatives to graft citizens' movement ideology onto an orthodox core: the '[e]ntire freedom of members of Parliament from party or caucus control', and a 'truce from contentious party issues for the duration of the next Commonwealth Parliament'.<sup>59</sup> Whilst this may have been little more than a token appeasement of the Citizens' League, it reflected a broader uptake of non-party language by Emergency Committee members such as Price:

[The Emergency Committee] is not really a political movement. It is an effort on the part of disinterested volunteers who have left their work and business simply to help the old parties co-operate, simply to aid them in one essential task of putting the country straight.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, Price strongly disapproved of the kind of populist, anti-party rhetoric used by the citizens' movements. He was concerned with the Citizens' League's continuing 'desire to run stunts' and he chided Bagot on many occasions for making 'overstrong statements' about the Liberal Federation.<sup>61</sup> Price's loyalty lay with the existing party system and the parliamentary process, even if he was not connected to any particular party. This made him

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<sup>58</sup> Price, "The Emergency Committee of South Australia," 14-15; Minutes of meeting of representatives to the Emergency Committee, 1 April 1931, series 4 item 1, Price papers.

<sup>59</sup> Report of subcommittee to the Emergency Committee, 7 April 1931, series 4 item 1, Price papers.

<sup>60</sup> Speech by Price to the Emergency Committee, 18 May 1931, series 4 item 1, Price papers.

<sup>61</sup> Price, "The Emergency Committee of South Australia," 19-20.

different from Lyons who, whilst committed to parliamentary politics, was willing to utilise the populist style of the citizens' movements.

Whilst Price had not completely ironed out the differences between the Liberal Federation and the Citizens' League, he had managed to secure their cooperation in selecting and supporting pro-Lyons candidates for the next Federal election. If the United Australia Party was to successfully oust Scullin at the election and avoid splitting the vote, a similar unity would need to be achieved in the other States. The Emergency Committee provided a model for mainstream conservative parties in the other States to control the citizens' movements, and it is likely that it was the inspiration for the 'Central Committees' in each State proposed at the inaugural conference of the United Australia Movement. The main purpose of the Committees would be to nominate and promote United Australia candidates, although their size and structure was left to the various parties in each State to decide.<sup>62</sup>

The ties of the Australian Citizens' League to the conservative political establishment in Victoria ensured their ready acceptance of the 'Central Committee' proposal. So confident was Lyons of their support that he decided to publicly announce the launch of the United Australia Movement at a conference of conservative parties and non-party movements in Melbourne on 5 May.<sup>63</sup> The conference agreed to form a Central Committee to ensure the cooperation of the various Victorian groups in fielding candidates at the next Federal election without sacrificing their individual identity.<sup>64</sup> As with the Citizens' League of South Australia, the fear of splitting the vote overcame any scruples regarding pre-selection:

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<sup>62</sup> Minutes of a Conference held in Melbourne on 19 April 1931, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

<sup>63</sup> Present at the meeting were delegates from the National Federation, the Australian Citizens' League, the Victorian Country Party, the Australian Women's National League, the Young Nationalist Organisation, the National Council, and the United Country Party (women's section).

<sup>64</sup> *Argus*, 6 May 1931, 9; Conference of delegates, 5 May 1931, Turnbull papers.



One of the chief aims of the council will be to prevent three-cornered contests between two non-Labour and one Labour candidate at the polls, with consequent division of non-Labour votes and advantage to the Labour candidate. The object will be to ensure the complete cooperation of the various parties in supporting one candidate in each electorate[.]<sup>65</sup>

Unlike the Citizens' League of South Australia, however, the Australian Citizens' League delegates expressed few qualms at surrendering anti-partyism in the name of political expediency – the political ties of its leaders were simply too strong. This was demonstrated by the election of two founding members of 'the Group' and the Australian Citizens' League, Ricketson and Henderson, to the positions of temporary secretary and chairman of the new Council.<sup>66</sup> The strongest opponent of unity in Victoria was the Country Party: their delegates soon abandoned the unity movement, and the remaining groups agreed that the Central Council should consist of five representatives each from the National Federation, the Young Nationalist Organisation, and the Australian Citizens' League.<sup>67</sup>

Working with political machines via the Committees – even if theoretically on an even footing – meant inevitably having to agree on a candidate list. Since the citizens' movements were opposed to pre-selection, this posed a dilemma: how to agree upon a single candidate for each electorate without laying themselves open to the charge of hypocrisy? The solution required a certain amount of rhetorical gymnastics. The citizens' movements had always maintained that they were willing to support any candidate, whether party member or independent, provided they met their strict self-sacrificing and apolitical criteria. Since the candidate lists produced by the Emergency and Central Committees included Nationalists, Liberals, Country Party members, and ex-Laborites, the Citizens' League of South Australia

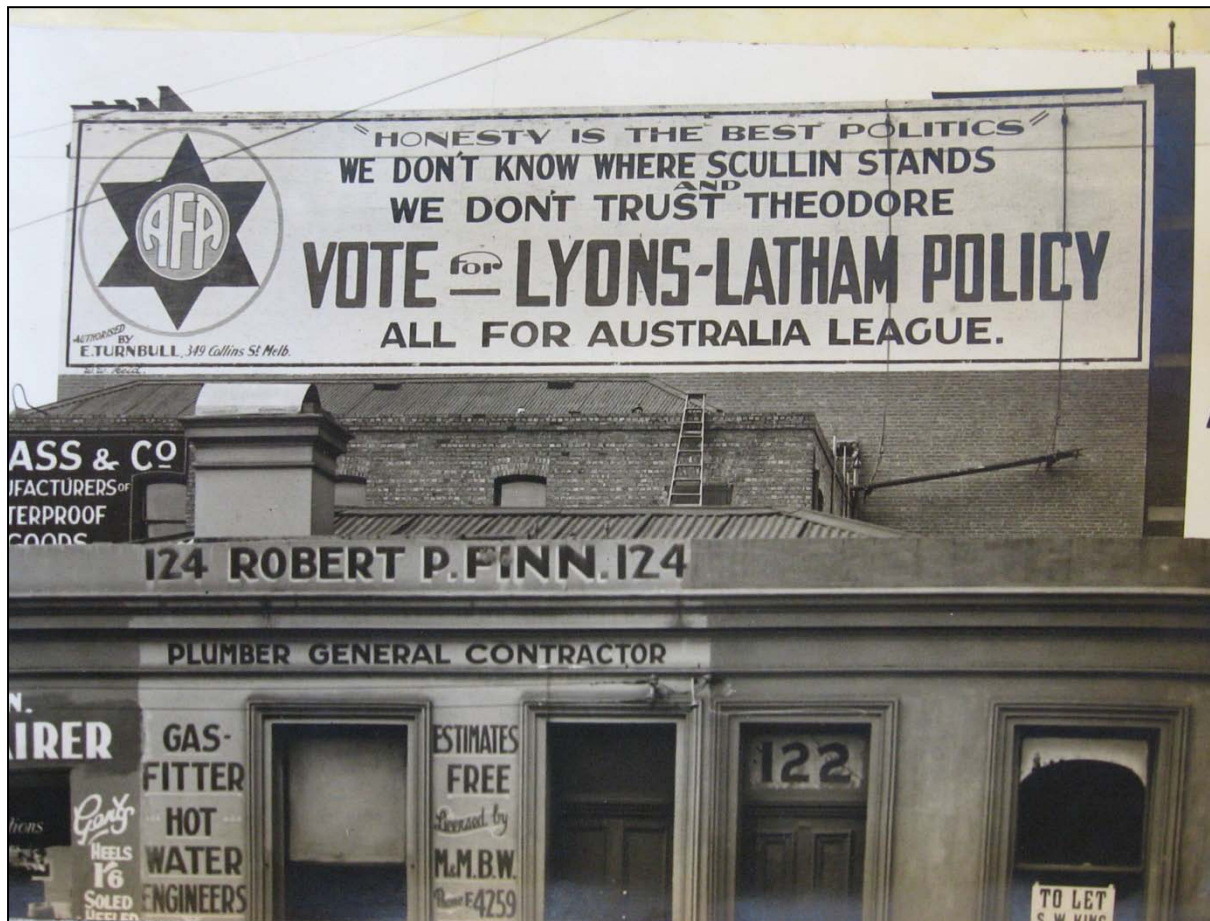
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<sup>65</sup> *Argus*, 6 May 1931, 9.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* Henderson subsequently resigned from his position as honorary secretary of the League; see Meeting of the Executive, 15 May 1931, Turnbull papers.

<sup>67</sup> Meeting of the United Australia Movement, 27 May 1931; Speech made by Ernest Turnbull to the State Council, 20 January 1932, Turnbull papers, 3-4.

and the Australian Citizens' League could nominally claim that they were merely being consistent in approving them.<sup>68</sup> This was not pre-selection, the Australian Citizens' League argued, but merely 'endorsement' – a subtle distinction, noted the *Age* with mirth, that 'the managers of other political parties must be sorry they never before thought of'.<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 15: An Australian Citizens' League billboard in support of Joseph Lyons (after the movement adopted the 'All for Australia League' brand). Source: Turnbull papers.**

The All for Australia League remained unwilling to cooperate with the Nationalist Association of New South Wales, and it was here that conservatives believed the greatest

<sup>68</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 2 June 1931, box 1 item 2; Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 29 September 1931, box 1 item 3; OPP Minutes, 13 October 1931, box 1 item 3, CLSA papers.

<sup>69</sup> *Age*, 20 May 1931, 8.

threat to conservative electoral unity lay. Gibson candidly informed Nationalist candidates that they should 'efface themselves' and join the All for Australia League if they ever hoped to be re-elected.<sup>70</sup> Price, who attended the heated conference of citizens' movements on 9-10 April, repeatedly referred to the League as 'dangerous': not only could they split the vote in New South Wales, but the lack of electoral unity in such a key State might discourage Lyons' supporters in Parliament from seeking an early election.<sup>71</sup> This was a subject of considerable anxiety in Canberra: Hawker wrote to Price urging him to convince the Citizens' League to pressure the All for Australia League into cooperating, and Lyons himself met with the leaders of the All for Australia League in mid-April.<sup>72</sup> Latham considered the League to be 'impractical' for refusing to engage in party politics, and wondered whether the only solution was for both organisations to surrender their separate identities and merge into a single United Australia Party.<sup>73</sup> This demonstrates the extent of the divide between mainstream conservative politics and the citizens' movements over the issue of the latter's populist style. Despite the underlying congruence of their conservative worldviews, the All for Australia League's anti-partyism posed a direct electoral threat to the political forces arrayed behind Lyons.

## EXPOSING THE INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS

By mid-1931 the three Australian citizens' movements had made a decision, one way or the other, regarding their relationship with mainstream conservative parties. Whilst the Citizens' League of South Australia and the Australian Citizens' League had agreed to cooperate

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<sup>70</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 April 1931, 12; *Canberra Times*, 21 April 1931, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Minutes of citizens' movement conference, 9-10 April 1931, series 4 item 1; Minutes of meeting of Emergency Committee Executive, 12 April 1931, series 4 item 1, Price papers; Price, "The Emergency Committee of South Australia," 18. Price noted that 'the A.F.A. in N.S.W. seemed to dislike the Nationalists even more than they did the Lang crowd.'

<sup>72</sup> Telegram from Hawker to Price, c. April 1931, series 4 item 1, Price papers; Telegram from Gibson to Lyons, 14 April 1931. box 1 folder 8, Lyons papers.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Latham to Bavin, 5 May 1931, item 5e, box 89, series 49, folder 2, Latham papers.

through front groups to avoid vote-splitting, the All for Australia League had declared its opposition to any such cooperation. Regardless of their respective choices, each movement had made a decision that exposed one of the crucial contradictions between the radical and reactionary elements of their ideology – the preservation of anti-party purity in the interests of destroying the much-hated political machines, versus the need to cooperate with the forces of mainstream conservatism in the interests of ousting the Labor government. This section examines how the citizens' movements tried, and ultimately failed, to explain this contradiction between political expediency and anti-party purity.

Whilst supporting Lyons at the Federal level had not proved too difficult, the decision of the Citizens' League of South Australia and the Australian Citizens' League to extend this cooperation to the State level stretched the definition of 'non-party' to the breaking point. They justified their decision in three ways: by highlighting the urgency of the situation, by claiming that having a voice in a united front would allow them to counter the political machines, and by stressing that the cooperation was only temporary in nature. Bagot argued that the imperative of defeating Scullin outweighed any small loss of independence the Citizens' League might incur:

[T]he position in Federal politics is so critical that even at a temporary sacrifice of some degree of independence, we [are] acting in the best interests of the country and citizens by co-operating with other political bodies to ensure the return to Parliament ... of representatives who will stand for the broad principles of national integrity and sound finance.<sup>74</sup>

The fear of splitting the conservative vote, which Price had been hammering home, likely contributed to this decision. Likewise, the Australian Citizens' League's 'immediate object' was securing the election of 'all who stand on the common ground of opposition to the

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<sup>74</sup> Letter from Bagot to Whiteman, 1 June 1931, box 13 item 10, CLSA papers.

dishonest policies of repudiation and inflation' to whom 'we can quite safely leave the details of ... policy'.<sup>75</sup> Since inflation and repudiation were of such immediate concern, these movements were willing to sacrifice a portion of their non-party 'purity' in the interests of political expediency.

Whilst the citizens' movements claimed that cooperation was necessary, they also argued that it would allow them to further their goal of curbing the excesses of party politics. Australian Citizens' League President Ernest Turnbull warned members not to 'delude' themselves into thinking that, by participating in the political process, they were 'altering the party system'. The League might be able to counter 'some of its worst faults' by cooperating with United Australia, but its main purpose was more long-term:

The true function of this organisation in the future is to be not a political party, with a policy of a hundred and one planks, but a watch dog, an overseer on behalf of the people to supervise the work of the political parties. Only in some such way can we prevent the parties in the future, as in the past, from sacrificing national to party interests.<sup>76</sup>

Likewise, the Citizens' League of South Australia claimed that its participation in the Emergency Committee would 'break down the control of political parties over candidates' by ensuring that they would not 'be tied in any way to any particular political party'. To prove this claim, Bagot pointed to the two 'non-party' planks that the League had secured in the Emergency Committee's twelve point policy.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Argus*, 7 May 1931, 3.

<sup>76</sup> *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity*, 27.

<sup>77</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented at Third Convention of Delegates, 10 June 1931, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

The movements also stressed that their cooperation with mainstream conservative parties would only last until Scullin was defeated. The Australian Citizens' League admitted that there was 'no satisfactory substitute' for the party system of government and it was likely to be 'the prevailing system for a long time to come.'<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, it stressed that its alliances with Federal and State parties were for 'a specific purpose', and once that purpose had been achieved it would 'consider whether there is any reason for continuing them.' This would avoid 'commit[ing] it to policies and to parties with which it has only some things in common.'<sup>79</sup> Similarly, the Citizens' League of South Australia stated that its membership in the Emergency Committee would last 'only until the next Federal election has been completed' and would not affect its 'permanent aims and objects and ideals'.<sup>80</sup> Apart from establishing a fixed timeframe for cooperation, this was also aimed at reassuring members that cooperation would not derail the fundamental purpose of the movements.

The decision of the Citizens' League of South Australia and the Australian Citizens' League to cooperate with mainstream conservative parties at a State level raised valid questions amongst their membership about the importance of anti-partyism. Despite their protestations to the contrary, the movements' leaders had implicitly acknowledged that anti-partyism was less important than the more immediate goal of securing the election of a conservative-friendly government. This exposed a contradiction between those members who agreed with this hierarchy of values and those who had joined primarily out of the anti-party fervour that arose in Australia in 1930-1931. This is demonstrated by the increased volume of complaints expressed by members in the wake of the movements deciding to cooperate with mainstream

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<sup>78</sup> *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity*, 27.

<sup>79</sup> Speech made by Ernest Turnbull, 20 January 1932, Turnbull papers.

<sup>80</sup> Report of Executive Committee presented at Third Convention of Delegates of Branches of the CLSA, 10 June 1931, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers.

conservative forces. One concerned member of the Citizens' League wrote that the movement was in danger of being 'swallowed up by the Liberal Federation', whilst another thought that the Emergency Committee was really 'one big party' in disguise.<sup>81</sup> This sense of shock and betrayal was summarised by Miss L. Rudkin in her letter of resignation:

It seems a pity that a movement with such a fine organization behind it should not undertake educational propaganda instead of tampering with politics. The public it seems need education in Citizenship more than anything. We need to develop a Public Conscience and to understand what true Citizenship means.<sup>82</sup>

Her choice of words demonstrates the central legitimating role that anti-partyism played for some members. The citizens' movements were supposed to be a force that transcended politics entirely in their quest for spiritual and moral renewal: 'tampering' with party politics shattered this illusion, stripping away the thin veneer of non-partisanship and revealing the movements as simply conservative political vehicles of a more populist bent. Whilst those who supported cooperation may have been able to justify this ideological compromise, it was clearly an uncomfortable move for others.

Cooperation with mainstream conservative parties seriously impacted on the fortunes of the two citizens' movements. Enrolment of new members dropped rapidly: attempts to form four new branches of the Australian Citizens' League in June 1931 failed.<sup>83</sup> The Citizens' League of South Australia noted that metropolitan subscriptions fell dramatically after it decided to align with the Emergency Committee. Bagot would later conclude that this was the point where 'public support fell away to an alarming degree' and 'the League lost initiative and

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<sup>81</sup> Letter to Bagot, 3 May 1931; Letter from A. Whiteman to Bagot, 20 May 1931, box 13 item 10, CLSA papers.

<sup>82</sup> Letter from Miss L. Rudkin to Bagot, 12 February 1932, box 13 item 10, CLSA papers.

<sup>83</sup> Hewitt, "The All for Australia League in Melbourne," 11-12.

popular support'.<sup>84</sup> Existing members from both the leadership and the front-line also responded with protest, dissension and resignation. Australian Citizens' League Provisional Committee member Alexander Dowsley resigned, claiming that the movement's choice would merely reinforce 'the present unsound system of party politics'.<sup>85</sup> The Echuca district council resolved that its members should ignore the endorsed candidate list circulated by the Australian Citizens' League leadership and follow the original policy of voting for any candidate that was prepared to abide by the movement's ideals.<sup>86</sup> The Preston branch condemned the leadership for kowtowing to the Nationalists and called upon them to resign:

That owing to the All for Australia League becoming swallowed up by a Nationalist organisation, and thus losing its identity and departing from its original ideals of non-party politics and opposition to pre-selection, the All for Australia League has failed in its duty to its members[.]<sup>87</sup>

The use of the word 'identity' reinforces the importance of anti-partyism to some members. It suggests that it was a crucial component of how they perceived the citizens' movements, and by extension their participation in them. Sacrificing this ideal, even if supposedly on a short-term basis, transformed the movements into something unrecognisable and therefore unworthy of their continued support.

Unlike the Citizens' League of South Australia and the Australian Citizens' League, the All for Australia League had refused to work with the conservative party in New South Wales. This posed a different problem than that faced by the other two Australian citizens' movements. Rather than having to justify cooperating with the Nationalist Association, the League had to justify competing with it in a fashion that might split the non-labour vote and

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<sup>84</sup> Report to Chairman, Finance Committee from Bagot, 15 March 1932, box 1 item 3, CLSA papers.

<sup>85</sup> *Age*, 6 May 1931, 5.

<sup>86</sup> *Argus*, 20 October 1931, 9.

<sup>87</sup> *Argus*, 1 December 1931, 8.



hand Scullin the election. The League's leadership justified this decision by arguing that there were unique and irreconcilable difficulties between themselves and the Nationalist Association of New South Wales that were not present in the other States. Given that the Nationalist Association was the most organised of the conservative political machines in Australia in 1931, this was not entirely without merit. '[T]he problem in this State is different to the problems in the other States or in the Federal arena,' explained one of the League's founders, 'and calls for different handling and [a] different solution.'<sup>88</sup> In the months after it launched itself as an independent political force, the All for Australia League issued its most virulent condemnations of the Nationalist Association. It proclaimed that it stood 'just as staunchly against the reactionary forces who have gained control of Nationalism' as it did against 'Mr. Lang and his Communist friends who preach the class war'.<sup>89</sup> In response, National Association leader Thomas Bavin proclaimed that the League had abandoned its high ideals, and its main object had become to 'destroy the Nationalist party'.<sup>90</sup>

Whilst the Citizens' League of South Australia and the Australian Citizens' League faced revolts from anti-party purists, the All for Australia League had to deal with members who favoured a compromise in the interests of ousting Scullin. The League's leadership was split over this question at the conference on 30 March 1931 when the decision was made to field its own candidates. Two founding figures in particular, O. D. A. Oberg from the Sane Democracy League and A. E. Heath from the Constitutional Association, tried to dissuade the League from launching itself as an independent political force. Oberg warned that such a move would split the movement and 'relegate us to the limbo of disunity in which more than

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<sup>88</sup> Letter from Norman Keysor to Lyons, 23 May 1931, box 1 folder 8, Lyons papers.

<sup>89</sup> Socialisation of Industry [undated], item 70, Mutch papers.

<sup>90</sup> *Barrier Miner*, 6 June 1931, 1.

one political party finds itself to-day.'<sup>91</sup> When their appeal failed, the Sane Democracy League convened a series of unity conferences between the All for Australia League, the Nationalist Association and the Country Party in the hope that the three would agree to form a 'Central Committee' along the lines that had been formed in the other States.<sup>92</sup> The conferences began promisingly, but were hamstrung by the League's insistence that cooperation be 'confined entirely to the Federal sphere' and the Nationalists' refusal to surrender control of all electoral activities to the proposed committee.<sup>93</sup> The League abandoned the negotiations in May and confirmed that it would contest the next elections independently.<sup>94</sup> Oberg and Heath resigned from the League in disgust, and Heath publicly denounced its leadership in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.<sup>95</sup> The remaining leaders of the League interpreted the outcome of the failed unity conferences as yet another example of the Nationalists' rigid machine tactics.<sup>96</sup>

Criticism from front-line members over the All for Australia League's hardline stance was equally heated. After the collapse of the unity negotiations in May, letters from disgruntled members began pouring in to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. They argued that the decision not to cooperate with the Nationalist Association had been made in an undemocratic fashion by

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<sup>91</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 1931, 12.

<sup>92</sup> Telegram from C. McDowell, SDL, to Lyons, 31 March 1931; Telegram from McDowell to Lyons, 15 April 1931; Letter from McDowell to Lyons, 21 April 1931; Telegram from McDowell to Lyons, 22 April 1931, box 1 folder 8, Lyons papers; Telegram from Lyons and Latham to McDowell, 23 April 1931, item 46, box 89, Series 49, folder 2, Latham papers; Priday, "Sane Democracy," 19-24.

<sup>93</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 May 1931, 9; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May 1931, 11; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 1931, 11; Letter from Norman Keysor to Lyons, 23 May 1931, box 1 folder 8, Lyons papers; Conference at Sydney, 25 April 1931, item 130; Decision of Conference, 29 April 1931, item 138; Letter from Sydney Snow to Latham, 29 May 1931, item 71 box 89, Series 49, folder 2, Latham papers.

<sup>94</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 1931, 12; Letter from McDowell to Lyons, 6 June 1931; Letter from Barclay to Martin Threlfall, 10 January 1933, box 1 folder 8, Lyons papers.

<sup>95</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 May 1931, 12; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 1931, 11.

<sup>96</sup> *All for Australia League* (Sydney: All for Australia League, 1931), 7.

the leadership and was distracting the League from its true enemies in Scullin and Lang. As

T. A. Baker put it:

I have for some time resented the tactics employed by [League] spokesmen in directing their attacks on National representatives instead of attacking the real evils of Socialism and Communism, the growth of which threatens the country like a malignant cancer. Had the A.F.A. leaders (so far as they are purely self-appointed leaders) devoted one half of their time and energy to opposing the repudiation policy of Mr. Lang, instead of attacking the National party, this State might not now be in its present parlous plight.<sup>97</sup>

Baker also pointed out the ‘gross inconsistency’ of supporting Lyons in the Federal sphere whilst hindering his efforts at a State level.<sup>98</sup> Wholesale branch resignations followed in North Ryde, Manly and Blackheath. The Chairman of the North Ryde branch explained their action by arguing that ‘[t]he only object the people of the State should have in mind to-day was to get rid of the present Government’, and the Manly branch resolved to form a new ‘citizens’ committee’ with the local branch of the Nationalists.<sup>99</sup> This reaction can be partially explained by the fact that New South Wales was home to the biggest Labor bogeyman of them all, Jack Lang, who provided a more immediate reminder of the need for conservative unity. However, it was more fundamentally a manifestation of the split between anti-party purists and those who favoured political expediency. Had the All for Australia League opted to pursue the same conciliatory path as the other two Australian citizens’ movements, it is likely that it would have experienced the same backlash as they did. This is exemplified in the complaints it received during the unity conferences from members who opposed cooperation with the Nationalists.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1931, 6. See also the letters from Henry Braddon and ‘B. G.’ on the same page.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1931, 13; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August 1931, 9; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 September 1931, 10.

<sup>100</sup> Letter from Norman Keysor to Lyons, 23 May 1931, box 1 folder 8, Lyons papers; Letter from J. G. Lonergan to T. D. Mutch, 24 May 1931, item 70, Mutch papers.

With their cohesion shattered by the exposure of their inherent contradictions, the Australian citizens' movements entered a terminal decline well before the United Australia Party victory in December 1931. Thus, whilst Geoffrey Robinson is correct that the citizens' movements were undercut by the reinvigorated United Australia Party, the movements had already undercut themselves through the process of shifting from ideals to policy.<sup>101</sup> The All for Australia League was so starved of funds and members by October that it did a complete about-face and agreed to cooperate with the Nationalist Association after all.<sup>102</sup> In a final stinging blow after the election, branches of the Nationalist Association throughout New South Wales unilaterally renamed themselves as United Australia Party branches and cordially invited members of the All for Australia League to join them.<sup>103</sup> The Australian Citizens' League resolved to disband itself in January 1932, although they offered a parting blow to party politicians by voting to withdraw themselves from the United Australia Movement and its 'party political objectives'.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, two Australian Citizens' League members were selected as United Australia Party candidates in 1931.<sup>105</sup> The Citizens' League of South Australia managed to limp on until December 1934 in a severely restricted capacity before resolving to enter into voluntary liquidation.<sup>106</sup> In what probably amounted to the closest admission of their own partisan stance ever made by a citizens' movement, the

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<sup>101</sup> Robinson, "The All for Australia League in New South Wales," 51-52.

<sup>102</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 October 1931, 9. Trevor Matthews argues that the League executive were gifted £1000 to pay off their debts in exchange for cooperating with the Nationalists; see Matthews, "The All for Australia League," 145.

<sup>103</sup> Letter from Sydney Snow to Lyons, 29 January 1932, Alex J. Gibson papers (privately held).

<sup>104</sup> Speech made by Ernest Turnbull to the [State] Council, 20 January 1932; Minutes of the State Council meeting, 20 January 1932, Turnbull papers.

<sup>105</sup> Hewitt, "The All for Australia League in Melbourne," 12-13.

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of Special Meeting of Executive Committee and General Council, 17 December 1934, box 1 item 4, CLSA papers.

Citizens' League admitted in its death throes that the majority of its members in its heyday were 'Liberals who had [since] returned to the party ranks'.<sup>107</sup>

## CONCLUSION

By the beginning of 1932 the Australian citizens' movements were a spent force, devoid of the enthusiastic momentum and mass membership that characterised their heyday. The primary reason for their decline was their inability to negotiate the inherent contradiction between anti-party purity and political expediency. Whilst Lyons provided a convenient and uncontroversial non-party figurehead at a Federal level, the conservative political machines in each State were irrevocably stained with the brush of party politics. Regardless of whether the citizens' movements decided to cooperate or compete with these parties, they inevitably exposed themselves to criticism from within their ranks. This dilemma was the inevitable outcome for any non-political movement in a parliamentary system where genuine change requires a degree of political participation, but it was especially the case for the Australian citizens' movements who were driven by the imperative of united political action against Scullin and the potentially dire consequences of vote-splitting. Once a decision had been made either way, the inherent contradictions within the citizens' movements could no longer be hidden behind the veneer of populist unity.

Exposing this inherent contradiction exposed the citizens' movements to other factors that led to their decline. One such factor was the co-option of their non-party essence by the forces of mainstream conservatism. The chief architect of this co-option was Lyons, who was able to utilise the populist style of the citizens' movements whilst simultaneously securing the

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<sup>107</sup> Minutes of Special Meeting of enrolled members of the Citizens' League, 4 October 1934, box 1 item 2, CLSA papers.

leadership of the conservative party apparatus that would lead him to victory in December 1931. The collaborative committees that he helped establish in each State, which were based on the highly successful Emergency Committee of South Australia, further strengthened the electoral unity of conservatives whilst countering the threat of independent political action by the citizens' movements. This demonstrates Gourevitch's political renegotiation in action, albeit without the abandonment of 'traditional political as well as policy attachments'.<sup>108</sup> The United Australia Party certainly benefited from the fresh influx of political enthusiasm provided by the citizens' movements, but this did not result in a major shift of the political status quo.

Nevertheless, the citizens' movements posed a major threat to the electoral base of the mainstream conservative parties in Australia. Despite sharing the same reactionary worldview as the Nationalists they criticised so much, their radical side – in particular their anti-partyism – made electoral cooperation a difficult endeavour. This was the crucial difference between the citizens' movements and their predecessors. Empire leagues, anti-communist groups, and civic and constitutional clubs could espouse their supposedly non-party ideology without challenging the mainstream conservative parties. This complementary rather than contradictory stance helps to explain why they survived for so long. In contrast, the citizens' movements challenged the very existence of mainstream conservative parties whilst competing for the same electoral base. Had the Nationalist Party framework not remained essentially sound despite the shock of the Depression, it is possible that the citizens' movements could have achieved the same dramatic electoral successes of European fascist movements which 'smashed the electoral base of the mainstream liberal and

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<sup>108</sup> Gourevitch, *Politics in Hard Times*, 160-1.

conservative parties'.<sup>109</sup> But the conservative establishment stayed solid, and the elites in finance and industry were never forced to turn to a more extreme alternative to defend their interests. Rather than breaking the control of the political machines, the citizens' movements ultimately helped to reinforce it.

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<sup>109</sup> Robinson, "The All for Australia League in New South Wales," 51.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **‘NEW DEALS’ AND ‘FUNNY MONEY’: THE NEW ZEALAND LEGION AND MONETARY REFORM**

The existing economic system, if it is to survive at all, can do so only as the result of strict and intelligent control, involving the carrying into effect of an organised plan of rehabilitation ... We must reconstruct the existing system and embark upon a plan of increasing consuming power, limiting the accumulation of money for investment and organising industry, or we must scrap the existing system in favour of something else.<sup>1</sup>

When the New Zealand Legion arose in 1933, it faced a vastly different domestic political landscape than the Australian citizens' movements had grappled with in 1931. Unlike Australia, New Zealand was governed almost entirely by right-wing political parties throughout the Depression, and in 1933 power was held by a Coalition of the two leading conservative parties, United and Reform. As chapter two demonstrated, the Coalition's increasingly unpopular response to the Depression attempted to balance traditional deflationary methods with a more interventionist stance on issues such as unemployment and insolvency. Meanwhile, the global political environment was undergoing a major transformation as new ideas on the role of the state in the economy were being promulgated. These ideas ranged from Keynes' demand-side economics to the more radical and conspiratorial ideas of social credit and other monetary reformers. This chapter explores the influence of these new ideas on the New Zealand Legion. It argues that the increasing flirtation of the movement's leaders with radical economic alternatives resulted in a confusing and contradictory mix of reactionary and radical economic policy. This inherent

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<sup>1</sup> *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 5.



contradiction contributed to the Legion's downfall by alienating and driving away its reactionary members.

### **A YEAR OF 'RAPID CHANGE'**

In December 1933, the New Zealand Legion's journal *National Opinion* ran an article discussing the year of 'rapid change' that had passed. The previous twelve months, the author wrote, had witnessed the beginning of President Roosevelt's 'New Deal' in the United States along with a similar, albeit more militaristic proto-Keynesian experiment in Nazi Germany. The British were also becoming increasingly drawn to economic nationalism, whilst Douglas social credit – once merely 'the plaything of a few cranks' – now counted its supporters in the hundreds of thousands.<sup>2</sup> The changes observed by the author on the global stage were also paralleled by changes in the domestic political environment. As chapter two showed, the Depression had witnessed the rise of a variety of 'unorthodox' economic ideas and theories in New Zealand. The chief notion that linked these often contradictory theories was that the Depression had caused, or exposed, a crisis of consumption: goods were still being produced in vast quantities, but consumers lacked the money to purchase them. The solution to 'overproduction' and 'underconsumption' required some form of wealth redistribution, but the proponents of unorthodox economics differed widely on how that might be achieved. Some favoured the inflationary approach of borrowing or printing money to stimulate demand, whereas others sought to nationalise the banking system so that the state could exert greater control over monetary policy.

The New Zealand Legion was influenced by two broad schools of 'unorthodox' economic thought. The first was the growing global trend of greater economic intervention and

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<sup>2</sup> *National Opinion* 1:10 (14 December 1933): 1, 3.

planning, which in 1933 had yet to fully mature into the Keynesian consensus that would eventually become the new orthodoxy across the Western world. The chief proponent of this school of thought in New Zealand was the Labour Party, who promoted the nationalisation of key industries, large public works programs, increased wages, and guaranteed prices for certain primary exports. The second was monetary reformism, in particular Douglas social credit, whose adherents sought to 'fine-tune' the capitalist economic system by rectifying the supposed imbalance between production and consumption. Their principal strategy for achieving this involved nationalising the banking system and issuing some form of credit scrip or 'dividend' to embattled consumers in order to bring consumption in line with production. Monetary reformists were also generally preoccupied with the conspiratorial (and often anti-Semitic) belief that the Depression crisis had been engineered by a secret cabal of international financiers and bankers who controlled the world's currencies.

The tensions between these two schools of thought were originally played out amongst the leadership of the Legion. Chapter three distinguished the leaders of the citizens' movements as those who actively participated by joining committees and attending conventions. By doing so, these individuals held a disproportionate amount of power over the ideology and policy of the movements. Whilst Legion policy was supposed to be proposed by front-line members, in practice the 'centres' typically looked for guidance to the National Executive, a small body appointed by Robert Campbell Begg to manage the everyday business of the movement. To assist in the production and dissemination of discussion material, the Executive appointed research committees in Wellington to study topics such as central government, local government, economics, unemployment, and land. The Economic Research Committee was by far the most prolific: its members published several pamphlets, wrote extensive articles in *National Opinion*, and circulated dozens of articles and reading

lists on economics to front-line members. Being Wellington-based, they were also able to directly influence the Executive and the quarterly meetings of the National Council that were attended by delegates from across the country. This influence over individuals and printed material allowed the Economic Research Committee to frame the debate between the competing schools of thought.

The leading proponent of the ‘economic planning’ school was the Chairman of the Economic Research Committee, Evan Sydney Parry. Parry was the son of the renowned electoral engineer of the same name and a partner in the law firm Buddle, Anderson, Kirdcaldie and Parry.<sup>3</sup> From his work with the Legion, it is clear that he was very much a man of his time. Aged just 32 in 1933, he was more than ten years younger than the average Legionnaire. He was also thoroughly disappointed with the economic orthodoxy of his elders and had become enamoured with Roosevelt’s proto-Keynesian ‘New Deal’ as an alternative. This led him to believe that the only answer to the Depression was for New Zealand to reject free markets in favour of an ‘adapted Roosevelt plan’:

There are still quite a number of well-meaning people who go about their daily business, if any, in the comfortable belief that in some miraculous manner the world depression will right itself ... the public should face the truth and recognise the fact that the trade depression cannot and will not right itself upon the old basis, and that the only hope of a return to prosperity lies in a consciously-planned economic system.<sup>4</sup>

Drawing upon this proto-Keynesian discourse, Parry claimed that the crisis was caused by ‘over-production and under-consumption’, and that governments should focus on increasing the purchasing power of consumers at home before expanding their export markets or

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<sup>3</sup> *Evening Post*, 29 July 1944, 8. Little could be found on Parry’s background and upbringing, however his first task upon joining the firm in 1926 appears to have been compiling a law guide on workers’ compensation in New Zealand with C. A. L. Treadwell – see *Workers’ compensation in New Zealand* (Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1927).

<sup>4</sup> *National Opinion* 1:2 (24 August 1933): 5.

investing funds overseas.<sup>5</sup> In order to accomplish this, the state needed to enact a deliberate plan for economic rehabilitation that involved increased wages, shorter working hours, and job creation for the unemployed.<sup>6</sup> These measures were not only essential to recovery, but to long-term peace and stability – the alternatives, Parry believed, were revolution or war.<sup>7</sup>

Parry's position amongst the Legion's leadership allowed him to disseminate material on economic planning across the movement. The reading list he compiled for the Economic Research Committee included works by J. M. Keynes, Fabian socialists Sir William Beveridge and G. D. H. Cole, and the Australian social creditor Arthur E. Powell.<sup>8</sup> This list was also circulated to centres as recommended economic study material, along with a reprint from the *British Fortnightly Review* praising the 'sane planning or State collectivism' of Fascist Italy and calling for 'the overthrow of laissez-faire'.<sup>9</sup> Parry also had a hand in developing the Legion's constitution and was part of the committee that established its journal, which subsequently published several of his articles on planned economics.<sup>10</sup>

Parry's ideas proved persuasive amongst the Legion's leadership, due perhaps in part to his legal background, and he was able to wield considerable influence over the movement's policy. When the Legion released a 'Statement of Principles' in June 1933 it included an entire section on 'political economy' that called for a 'bold reorganisation of our economic life' along the lines advocated by Parry:

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<sup>5</sup> *National Opinion* 1:2 (24 August 1933): 5; *National Opinion* 1:4 (21 September 1933): 5; *National Opinion* 1:6 (19 October 1933): 5.

<sup>6</sup> *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 5.

<sup>7</sup> *National Opinion* 1:3 (7 September 1933): 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ref. 6/2/32, 5 June 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers.

<sup>9</sup> Ref. 6/2/32, 5 June 1933; Ref. 6/2/63, 8 August 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Provisional National Council, 4-5 April 1933, file 1 folder 1; Ref. 6/2/41, 26 June 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers; *National Opinion* 1:2 (24 August 1933): 5; *National Opinion* 1:3 (7 September 1933): 5; *National Opinion* 1:4 (21 September 1933): 5; *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 5; *National Opinion* 1:6 (19 October 1933): 5; *National Opinion* 1:8 (16 November 1933): 5, 11.

[T]he basic idea directing such reorganisation must be that all industry should be the servant of the consumer, and that production, distribution and finance are simply means to an end ... economic recovery will not be automatic and cannot be looked for solely as the result of occurrences overseas.<sup>11</sup>

Planned economics soon spread to almost every aspect of the Legion's policy. Begg himself became one of its staunchest supporters, calling on the nation to 'throw off ... the laissez faire of the past and deal boldly with the reconstruction of New Zealand'.<sup>12</sup> In order to facilitate domestic consumption, the Legion proposed putting the unemployed to work on extensive public works programs at full wages. For those who still could not find work, new employment bureaus would be established to connect them with employers 'willing to give employment at adequate wages'.<sup>13</sup> Begg also developed an ambitious proposal to absorb one million of Britain's unemployed in exchange for the British government taking over New Zealand's foreign debt. The new arrivals would be put to work on the land, thus creating 'an economic internal market for the products of land and industry'.<sup>14</sup> The Legion even toyed with proto-corporatist reforms, including one suggestion that local body government should be reconstituted on a vocational rather than geographical franchise.<sup>15</sup> The culmination of this new direction was the Legion's proposal for an Economic Advisory Council comprised of representatives from various business organisations and trade unions that would be responsible for issuing policy recommendations on all economic and industrial matters.<sup>16</sup> This was very similar to the boards proposed by the All for Australia League and the Citizens' League of South Australia.

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<sup>11</sup> Ref. 6/2/34, 6 June 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers.

<sup>12</sup> Ref. 6/2/75, 16 October 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers.

<sup>13</sup> *National Opinion* 2:14 (1 March 1934): 5.

<sup>14</sup> This was (rather unoriginally) termed the "Begg Plan". See *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 1-3; *National Opinion* 1:6 (19 October 1933): 2-3; *National Opinion* 2:14 (1 March 1934): 1.

<sup>15</sup> *National Opinion* 1:7 (2 November 1933): 8. The proposal envisioned a 'Regional Council composed of one representative of each of the following interests:- Agriculture, Manufacturing, Commerce, Transport, Medical, Finance (Banking, Insurance or Accountancy), Engineering, Women'.

<sup>16</sup> *National Opinion* 2:14 (1 March 1934): 1, 5, 7.

The second school of thought that influenced Legion policy was monetary reform. As chapter two discussed, monetary reformism – in particular Douglas social credit – had attracted significant public attention in New Zealand by mid-1933, and many adherents joined the New Zealand Legion in the hope that it could be used to achieve their goals. For instance, whilst the Douglas social credit movement was generally hostile towards the Legion, several members of the Wellington branch joined so that they might ‘influence it towards Douglassism’. They also claimed that one of their members served on ‘the Central Executive of the Legion’, but it is not clear if this was the case.<sup>17</sup> One such monetary reformer within the Legion was C. R. C. Robieson, who had previously been involved with minor conspiratorial and millenarian groups such as the New Economic Research Association and the British-Israel League.<sup>18</sup> Robieson wrote several articles for *National Opinion*, including one in response to a proposed Reserve Bank Bill claiming that it was the work of a small clique of international financiers seeking to control the nation’s economy:

Currency and credit are the vehicles of production, distribution and exchange, and whoever controls those controls the very basis of a nation’s existence. There was a time when an attempt made to deprive a people of their sovereign rights would have been regarded as high treason; but to-day the sovereign rights of a people are sought to be made the playthings of the international financiers.<sup>19</sup>

This conspiratorial talk became popular amongst some of the Legion’s leaders, although its purpose appears to have mainly been to resolve an uncomfortable contradiction between imperial patriotism and dissatisfaction with the colonial financial system. The target for this conspiratorial rhetoric was ‘Tooley Street’ in London, the funnel through which Antipodean dairy produce and British capital flowed. This caricature represented the anxieties of New

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<sup>17</sup> *Farming First*, 10 April 1933, 18-19; Wellington Douglas social credit Association, 8th Newsletter, 15 April 1933, Inward correspondence, 1930-1958, Raymond Ernest Hansen papers, 84-204-74, ATL.

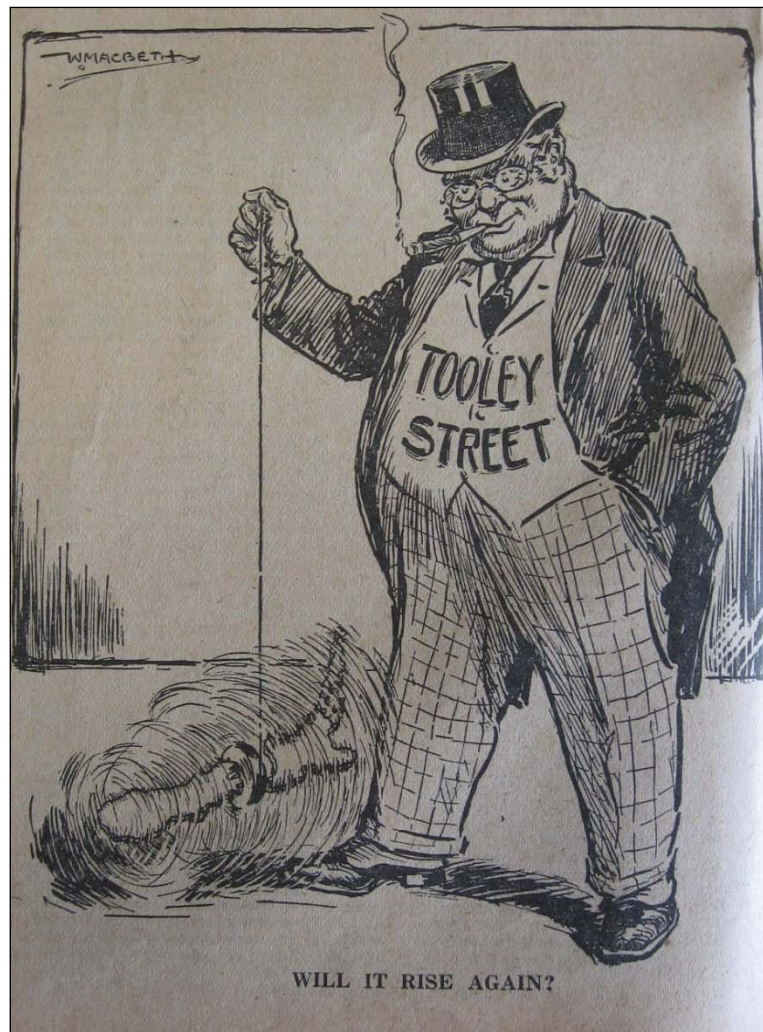
<sup>18</sup> *Evening Post*, 16 July 1931, 8; *Auckland Star*, 6 September 1932, 3; *Evening Post*, 20 October 1932, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *National Opinion* 1:3 (7 September 1933): 2.

Zealand primary producers over the financial power that Tooley Street wielded over Empire suppliers. Indeed, Tooley Street had attracted similar criticism from elements of the rural community in the 1920s in response to its perceived role in the torpedoing of the Dairy Board's attempts to establish guaranteed prices for its exports. There was little anti-Semitism evident in this criticism: the financier they caricatured was more reminiscent of John Bull than Shylock (see figure 16). This allowed Legionnaires to lay the blame for the crisis on a small band of constructed 'others' rather than the broader imperial system or the dependence of the colonies on Britain for capital investment. The Legion could thus aspire to forge a closer relationship with the 'mother country' whilst arguing that this would require New Zealand to shed its reliance on British financiers.<sup>20</sup> By separating the negative elements of the metropole-colony relationship from the broader community of Empire, the Legion was able to preserve its sense of imperial patriotism.

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<sup>20</sup> *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 2.



**Figure 16: New Zealand Legion cartoon criticising the control of British financiers over the New Zealand economy. Source: *National Opinion* 1:1 (10 August 1933): 4.**

The economic aspects of monetary reformism had less impact on Legion policy. A ‘Stamped Scrip’ scheme produced by the Economic Research Committee in 1933 was vaguely reminiscent of social credit ideals. It envisioned the issue of temporary ‘scrip stamps’ to the unemployed by a State Credit Board to stimulate consumption; however, its main inspiration was a similar policy employed in several American cities rather than Major Douglas’ ‘National Dividend’.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, its author A. W. Free was more inclined to favour economic orthodoxy, and one of the circulars he distributed explicitly rejected the social

<sup>21</sup> Ref. 6/2/70, 12 September 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers; *Evening Post*, 5 May 1933, 7.



credit explanation of the causes of the Depression.<sup>22</sup> It was not until Major Douglas' visit to New Zealand in early 1934 for the Monetary Commission that the Legion began to seriously consider the economic aspects of monetary reformism. However, its approach was one of cautious open-mindedness rather than the blatant appropriation of social credit doctrine suggested by Robin Clifton.<sup>23</sup> Begg met with Douglas twice during his time in New Zealand, and attended a speech he gave in Wellington.<sup>24</sup> His rhetoric was supportive but noncommittal:

With the knowledge that Lister, Simpson and Pasteur in my own profession were opposed as cranks by the orthodox school, I am willing to believe that the same error may be made in the sacred realms of economics ... That Douglas is opposed by the so-called orthodox school makes the pleasure of listening to him more attractive.<sup>25</sup>

The Legion subsequently adopted a commitment to state control of currency, although this was more influenced by proto-Keynesianism than social credit. Begg, for instance, claimed that his inspiration came from 'Roosevelt's dictum of the inherent right of the government to issue currency'.<sup>26</sup> The Legion maintained that it held 'deep suspicions of the A+B theorem', and when one member expressed concern that the movement was adopting Major Douglas's proposals its response was blunt: 'Of course the Legion does not advocate Douglas Credit.'<sup>27</sup> It was also critical of Douglas's submission before the Monetary Commission, claiming that he had 'sidestepped and twisted and bluffed' and ultimately 'crashed'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Circular No. 1, 2 August 1933, file 1 folder 4, NZL papers.

<sup>23</sup> Clifton, "Douglas Credit and the Labour Party," 128.

<sup>24</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 128-129; Clifton, "Douglas Credit and the Labour Party," 91.

<sup>25</sup> *National Opinion* 2:13 (15 February 1934): 15.

<sup>26</sup> *National Opinion* 2:13 (15 February 1934): 14.

<sup>27</sup> *National Opinion* 2:12 (1 February 1934): 3; *National Opinion* 2:20 (24 May 1934): 12.

<sup>28</sup> *National Opinion* 2:24 (19 July 1934): 7, 15.

A third school of economic thought that influenced the Legion was single tax theory. Proponents of single taxism considered land to be the fundamental resource upon which all economic activity was based, and they argued that the entire tax system should be scrapped in favour of a single tax on the unimproved value of land in order to ensure its maximum utility. The leading single tax supporter within the Legion was E. W. Nicolaus. In 1931 Nicolaus had founded a group named the Citizens' National Movement with several other Henry George supporters and single tax veterans to contest the Wellington Central electorate. When this proved unsuccessful, the group briefly reformed itself as a local branch of the Commonwealth Land Party of England.<sup>29</sup> Nicolaus joined the Legion in the first half of 1933 and became a member of the Economic Research Committee, where he was able to disseminate ideas on single tax theory to front-line members. Whilst his ideas did not gather widespread support within the Legion, they contributed to a general policy to effect 'the maximum development and settlement of land'.<sup>30</sup> However, closer settlement of land had attracted bipartisan support since the heyday of the Liberal Party in the 1890s, so the Legion's policy was hardly a radical departure from the norm. Nevertheless, Nicolaus' position on the Economic Research Council still allowed him to export his ideas to a wider milieu, adding further to the confused mix of different economic ideas being espoused within Legion publications and circulars.

## **EXPOSING THE INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS**

The fractures between these various schools of thought first manifested when the Economic Research Council presented a plan for economic recovery to the meeting of the National

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<sup>29</sup> *Manifesto of the Citizens' National Movement to the Coalition Government* (Wellington: Citizens' National Movement, 1932); *Evening Post*, 16 December 1932, 13; Letter from R. A. Gosse, 20 December 1932, series 2 item 157, Sir George Fowlds papers, MSS & Archives A-17, AUL.

<sup>30</sup> 1934 Circular No. 2, 8 February 1934, file 1 folder 4, NZL papers.

Council in July 1933. The difficulty in reconciling the radical economic ideas of Parry and Nicolaus with the more orthodox ideas of other committee members was hinted at by Parry when he presented the plan to the Council:

He made it clear that the scheme endeavoured to reach a compromise which would meet the conflicting views of those comprising the Committee. The main difficulty they had encountered was that of overcoming the various lines of conflicting thought and opinion and moulding them into a common plan.<sup>31</sup>

As a result, the plan was a hodgepodge of different economic principles and policies. It began in a rather orthodox fashion by referring to the intolerable burden of debt and interest that previous governments had amassed by excessive borrowing. However, it then argued that the Depression had been worsened by banks whose interests in preserving their stakeholders' profit margins were incompatible with the national interest. The solution to this problem, according to the plan, was the resumption of sovereign authority over currency via a State Credit Board which would stimulate the economy through interest-free loans to public and private enterprise. The Board would also be granted sole control of importing and exporting in order to maintain a stable internal price level independent of fluctuations in the global market. The plan also referred to land as the 'foundation of the nation's economic life', and it recommended that the Crown 'reassert sovereignty over land' by taxing its unimproved value to prevent speculation.<sup>32</sup> This demonstrated a mix of economic planning and single tax theory with language that was reminiscent of the anti-banking conspiracy favoured by monetary reformers.

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<sup>31</sup> Minutes of Meeting of National Council of the New Zealand Legion, 19-21 July 1933, file 1 folder 1, NZL papers.

<sup>32</sup> *Evening Post*, 24 July 1933, 8.

Parry was doubtful that the National Council would approve the ambitious Economic Plan: he simply hoped that it would be circulated amongst the various centres for discussion. What he got was much more. Whilst the Council did not agree with the specifics of the report, it nevertheless resolved that ‘the Legion is convinced that a planned economic system is necessary for the purpose of co-ordinating consumption and production, with a view to increasing consumption.’<sup>33</sup> For a movement that was so heavily focused on individualism and decentralised government, this was a radical stance – especially given the fact that policy was supposed to be vetted by all centres before being adopted. The minutes of the National Council meeting do not reveal why the Legion’s leadership took such a dramatic step, but it is possible that the apparent failure of New Zealand’s mainstream conservative parties to deal with the Depression made the Legionnaires more willing to consider drastic alternatives. The Depression had entered its fourth year in 1933, and discontented conservatives in New Zealand did not have a Labour bogeyman in power against whom they could direct their frustrations. Conversely, Australia in 1931 was dominated by the Labor Party, which meant that there was less need for discontented conservatives to experiment with alternate economic remedies. In addition, Parry’s vaguely-worded resolution could easily be interpreted by moderate conservatives as being compatible with their worldview. Increased state control may have been anathema to free markets, but the relatively pragmatic boundaries of Australasian conservatism readily encouraged such interventions when they were seen as serving the national interest. So whilst it was a radical new direction, it was still nominally within the boundaries of the nineteenth century developmentalist tradition.

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<sup>33</sup> Minutes of Meeting of National Council of the New Zealand Legion, 19-21 July 1933, file 1 folder 1, NZL papers; *Evening Post*, 24 July 1933, 6.

This confused mix of different economic ideas was repeated in the Legion's twelve point policy in March 1934. On the one hand, it called for the reduction in size and cost of parliament and the decentralisation of power to semi-autonomous 'Shire Councils'; on the other, it called for the establishment of new government departments such as the Economic Advisory Council and the creation of a 'Unity Government' to carry out aspects of economic planning such as public works, vocational training and employment bureaux for the unemployed. A separate plank for the state control of currency was reminiscent of monetary reformism, whilst a commitment to land settlement and the prevention of speculation was included to appease the single taxers.<sup>34</sup> In effect, the twelve point policy represented an attempt to corral a series of contradictory ideas into a single platform.

The expression of such divergent schools of thought within Legion policy and literature exposed the inherent contradictions within the movement. The chief division lay between the proponents of the new radical alternatives and the supporters of the economic status quo that formed the backbone of the movement. One of the places where this was most evident was the letters' pages of *National Opinion*, where members expressed their frustrations with the different ideas being floated by the Legion's leadership. In the very first volume one member wrote a letter protesting against Nicolaus' proposal regarding Crown ownership of all land; in a following volume, two replies were published defending Nicolaus.<sup>35</sup> This set off a debate that spanned several issues in 1933 between Nicolaus himself and A. W. Free, a more orthodox member of the Economic Research Committee.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *National Opinion* 2:14 (1 March 1934): 1, 5.

<sup>35</sup> *National Opinion* 1:1 (10 August 1933): 4; *National Opinion* 1:3 (7 September 1933): 4.

<sup>36</sup> *National Opinion* 1:4 (21 September 1933): 4; *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 4; *National Opinion* 1:6 (19 October 1933): 4; *National Opinion* 1:7 (2 November 1933): 4; *National Opinion* 1:8 (16 November 1933): 9; *National Opinion* 1:9 (30 November 1933): 7; *National Opinion* 1:10 (14 December 1933): 8.

Mr. Nicolaus's views on Credit and Currency prove again that shoemakers should stick to their lasts ... Practical observation by a layman would lead to the conclusion that the sun moves around the earth. I rely upon the authorities who assure me that the reverse is true. So with money – the analyses of the experts are more important than the conclusions of the amateur observer.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, Parry's articles on planned economics attracted letters in support and opposition: one member praised his attempt to 'evolve a system of finance whereby consumption can be made to equate with production', whilst another believed that all other options needed to be exhausted before resorting to 'the desperation of "planning"'.<sup>38</sup>

The Legion's flirtation with monetary reformism provoked the most significant debates in *National Opinion*. One orthodox member criticised Robieson's conspiratorial approach to the Reserve Bank Bill as 'heavy-handed', whilst another outright condemned the Economic Research Council's stamped scrip plan.<sup>39</sup> As social credit doctrine became more prominent in 1934, so too did the letters for and against it. A lengthy debate between the poet and dedicated social creditor A. R. D. Fairburn and a supporter of orthodox economics named E. Keating spanned several months, with many other Legion members contributing to each side of the debate. The closest the debate came to a conclusion was Fairburn's accusation that Keating was secretly an economist or a banker in disguise.<sup>40</sup> Other members disagreed over whether the Legion had adopted too much, or not enough, social credit doctrine. E. Manoy argued that social credit had been 'proved a fallacy by leading economic authorities throughout the world' and hoped that the Legion was not 'advocating such a disastrous

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<sup>37</sup> *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 4; *National Opinion* 1:7 (2 November 1933): 4.

<sup>38</sup> *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 4; *National Opinion* 2:12 (1 February 1934): 12.

<sup>39</sup> *National Opinion* 1:5 (5 October 1933): 4; *National Opinion* 1:6 (19 October 1933): 4.

<sup>40</sup> *National Opinion* 2:11 (18 January 1934): 11-12; *National Opinion* 2:12 (1 February 1934): 12; *National Opinion* 2:14 (1 March 1934): 12; *National Opinion* 2:16 (29 March 1934): 12; *National Opinion* 2:21 (7 June 1934): 12; *National Opinion* 2:22 (21 June 1934): 13; *National Opinion* 2:23 (5 July 1934): 13; *National Opinion* 2:25 (2 August 1934): 12-13; *National Opinion* 2:26 (1 September 1934): 15-16.

proposal'.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, a 'Disgusted Subscriber' lamented that the Legion was spending too much time talking about reducing government expenditure and not enough on monetary reform.<sup>42</sup> Another member, E. F. Rothwell, argued that state control of currency should be given central importance rather than being 'relegated to a position among the "odds and bits"' of the twelve point platform.<sup>43</sup>

Once the inherent contradictions between reactionary and radical economic ideas had been exposed, widespread resignations soon followed. The majority of those who resigned were supporters of traditional conservative dicta who believed that the Legion had betrayed its founding values by veering towards radical economics. One subscriber to *National Opinion* wrote that the Legion's refusal to believe that Britain's orthodox economic policies were causing a recovery was 'criminal' because it was 'kill[ing] the spirit of confidence'.<sup>44</sup> The Secretary of the Christchurch centre resigned 'when it became apparent control had passed in Wellington to an extreme Left Wing group whose aims were directly contrary to our own', and even took the extreme measure of destroying the centre's membership lists out of fear that they would be misused.<sup>45</sup> The Chairman of the Hastings centre listed a long line of grievances that had led him to quit the movement:

[T]he movement has not come up to my expectations, that I do not agree with the system of local organisation that has been adopted, that I cannot see any hope of success on present lines and that I believe I can make better use of myself in the ordinary political sphere as we know it.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *National Opinion* 2:20 (24 May 1934): 12.

<sup>42</sup> *National Opinion* 2:25 (2 August 1934): 12-13.

<sup>43</sup> *Legion* 1:3 (29 November 1934): 4.

<sup>44</sup> *National Opinion* 1:10 (14 December 1933): 8-9.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from J. D. Hall, 24 August 1972, Simpson papers.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Ald. Harrison to Tonkin 5 September 1933, file 5 folder 1, NZL papers.

That the Chairman had been driven back into the fold of mainstream conservatism further demonstrates that it was the reactionary wing of the Legion that was most alienated by its policies. They had joined out of a growing perception of crisis and a desire to do something about it, but their sense of civic duty did not extend to abandoning their faith in limited government, free markets and individual self-reliance. Whereas the Legion's leadership appeared to be obsessively looking forward to new and modern ideas on how to combat the Depression, they preferred to look backwards to the tried and tested methods of their forefathers in the nineteenth century.

Those supporters of orthodox economics who remained in the movement advised the leadership to distance itself from its radical policies. The Secretary of the Otane centre suggested that they avoid expressing any 'ambitious & rather vague (to the rank and file) views' that might 'frighten some members away'.<sup>47</sup> The Wilder centre proposed that the Legion should focus on the reform of parliament rather than the more contentious question of economics:

[T]here exists an urgent need, in order to attract to the Legion a greater and wider measure of public support, to delete, for the time being at least, from the Legion's published programme all controversial matters such as managed currency, the question of community created values etc., and to place before the public with more prospect of endorsement, a short and simply worded programme with reform of the Parliamentary system as the Prime objective.<sup>48</sup>

To these members, parliamentary reform met the definition of non-partisanship where 'managed currency' did not. This demonstrated their perception of conservative values as being natural and therefore non-partisan. Parliamentary reform, in their worldview, meant the rationalisation and standardisation of the government in order to rid the public sector of

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<sup>47</sup> Letter from J. A. S. Logan to the General Secretary, 6 January 1934, file 2 folder 3, NZL papers.

<sup>48</sup> Remit from Wilder Branch N. Z. Legion [undated], file 1 folder 5, NZL papers.



services deemed frivolous or unnecessary. Economics of this sort were a natural, and therefore uncontroversial, policy, whereas ideas such as a 'managed currency' were partisan and controversial.

The fractures within the Legion were further exposed during the July 1934 National Council when the Legion resolved to field its own candidates for the next election. The move was partially a response to the criticisms of the Legion's confusing and contradictory economic policies. In order to overcome this criticism, the Council resolved that candidates would only be required to support the reform of local and central government and the establishment of an Economic Advisory Council, rather than the more controversial elements of its twelve-point policy.<sup>49</sup> However, this decision alienated the Legion members who wanted the movement to maintain its non-party purity. Several division and centre executives resigned in protest, including the one in Dunedin:

[T]he sole aim of the Legion was the securing of more efficient government, central and local, and government based on national and not sectional interests ... it had become evident that the aims of the Legion had departed from this interpretation, and that the Legion was prepared to enter the field as a political party. In view of this, the executive felt that it would not, in fairness to the members who had been induced to join the Legion on the old understanding, remain in office.<sup>50</sup>

This reiterated the central importance that moderate members placed on parliamentary reform as the core business of the Legion. The decision to support its own candidates, which effectively meant rebranding itself as a moderate party, contradicted the non-partisan ideals upon which these members believed the movement had been founded. Even worse, it raised the spectre of vote-splitting at a time when the New Zealand Labour Party was in the

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<sup>49</sup> *National Opinion* 2:25 (2 August 1934): 5.

<sup>50</sup> *Evening Post*, 20 September 1934, 12.

ascendant and the conservatives needed to retain every vote. The Legion countered that it was more likely to split the labour or 'progressive' vote, but this was a hollow defence given the overwhelmingly conservative nature of its membership.<sup>51</sup>



**Figure 17: 'Caesar's Dilemma' – the divisive effect of the Legion's policies. Source: *Auckland Star*, 22 September 1934, 10.**

By the time the Legion had decided to launch itself as a new political party, it was already largely irrelevant. The inherent contradictions exposed by the adoption of controversial economic policies had begun to weaken the Legion from the second half of 1933, and by October the leadership reported that only seven of the eighteen divisions were fully operational. The other eleven were still nominally operating under their original provisional

<sup>51</sup> *National Opinion* 2:20 (24 May 1934): 1-2.

committees, although none of their centres were active.<sup>52</sup> In the Hawke's Bay division, only two of six centres were functioning satisfactorily, and of the outlying centres it was reported that 'complete silence reigns'.<sup>53</sup> From 1934 the movement struggled to maintain its relevance, but it was, for the most part, completely ignored by mainstream conservatives. The lofty aspiration to run its own candidates never materialised due to a lack of funds and manpower, although a particularly active branch in the Hutt Valley managed to get several of its members elected to local government bodies in 1935. J. W. Andrews and E. W. Wise were elected unopposed as mayors of Lower Hutt and Eastbourne respectively.<sup>54</sup> In May 1935 Begg resigned as President in favour of Clarence Meachen, a fellow medical professional and a pioneer in blood transfusions, although even this failed to reverse the Legion's flagging fortunes.<sup>55</sup> The movement disappeared after the general election in November 1935, although a few centres in the Hastings division survived into 1936.<sup>56</sup> In what might be claimed as one of its few lasting successes, eight former members of the Legion were selected as National Party candidates in 1938.<sup>57</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Like its counterparts in Australia, the New Zealand Legion arose in response to a general feeling of conservative discontent caused by the Depression. However, where the Australian citizens' movements had a Federal Labor government and a series of left-wing bogeymen against whom to direct their frustrations, the New Zealand Legion had only a conservative government whose generally orthodox economic policies had neither resolved the crisis nor inspired the public. As a result, New Zealand conservatives increasingly turned their attention

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<sup>52</sup> Ref. 6/2/75, 16 October 1933, file 1 folder 2, NZL papers.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from R. B. G. Chadwick to J. Stewart, 21 October 1933, file 2 folder 3, NZL papers.

<sup>54</sup> *Evening Post*, 27 April 1935, 13.

<sup>55</sup> *Evening Post*, 15 May 1935, 12.

<sup>56</sup> The Russell Saga Vol 4, section labelled 'New Zealand Legion', qMS-0823, ATL, 1-3.

<sup>57</sup> Pugh, "The New Zealand Legion and Conservative Protest," 195-9.

to alternative remedies to the Depression. Such remedies abounded when the Legion arose in 1933, including proto-Keynesian economic planning and monetary reform. As the Legion rose to prominence, adherents of these schools of thought were drawn to the movement as a potential vehicle for realising their goals. They used the movement's bureaucratic apparatus to influence its leadership and utilised its journal and its mailing list to disseminate their ideas amongst the wider membership. In doing so, however, they exposed the inherent contradictions between their disparate radical economic theories and the reactionary bulwark upon which the foundation of the movement's ideology and membership lay. Protests, fractures and resignations followed suit, and by the end of 1933 the Legion was rapidly losing members and money. The leadership's decision to launch a new political party in 1934 provoked the final split in an already fractured movement, and the Legion faded into obscurity and irrelevance long before its final demise in 1935.

## CONCLUSION

Talking of large families, the Lyons' visiting card is popular in England. Destiny plays her cards in a very peculiar way. Little did Mr. Bagot, of the Citizens' League (now faded into the background), dream that through his sponsorship it was made possible for Mr. Lyons to go before the public in the Adelaide Exhibition Building. "Lyons hysteria" followed, and the other States fell into step at once. All parties then sank their differences, the emergency committee was formed, and now Mr. Lyons is the constant guest of the King! So far, Mr. Bagot has been unable to secure a seat even in Parliament. The public soon forgets.<sup>1</sup>

As the citizens' movements faded from the political scene, so too did they fade from the public consciousness. By 1936, the only time they were mentioned in the press was in the obituaries section, where the families of former members dutifully recognised the deceased's service with the citizens' movements well down their long lists of personal achievements. This rather ironic form of remembrance – or lack thereof – may partially explain why the citizens' movements have attracted so little scholarly attention. This thesis has aspired to fill that gap. In doing so, it implicitly argues not only that the citizens' movements are worthy of study, but that they were an important social and political force that contributed more to Australasian conservatism than a mere blip in an otherwise uninterrupted radar. This proposition – the so-called 'so what' justification – is in contradistinction to the popular obituaries that belie the movements' lasting impact.

This thesis demonstrates the importance of the citizens' movements in three ways. Firstly, as the title and core argument suggest, it argues that the citizens' movements were a contradictory blend of reactionary and radical ideas which threatened the electoral and ideological hegemony that mainstream conservatives held over the right-minded section of

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<sup>1</sup> *Recorder*, 10 April 1935, 3.

the populace. Chapter one analysed the origin of the movements in the long tradition of Australasian conservatism and right-wing organisation. This tradition was heavily steeped in reactionary conservative values concerning society, politics and the economy, and it relied on the tropes of 'good citizenship' and 'non-party' political endeavour to enforce those values. It subsequently became radicalised during the Depression as some conservatives began to seek alternate political and economic solutions to the crisis. As chapter two demonstrated, the main component of this radicalisation was a form of 'anti-political political thought' that laid the blame for the crisis on political parties and their supposedly self-serving and parochial party politicians. In New Zealand, where the government remained in the hands of conservative parties throughout the Depression, discontented conservatives also turned to radical economic theories such as Douglas social credit which presented simple 'tweaks' to the capitalist mode of production that would supposedly return prosperity.

The citizens' movements sat at the peak of this process of conservative radicalisation. Chapter three demonstrated that the founders envisioned their new creed as a nation-wide form of mass protest that would force their governments to take action: thus, they actively encouraged the recruitment of mass memberships through novel organisational and promotional techniques which stressed the underlying messages of size and direct participation. Their ideology was a populist blend of reactionary and radical tropes that pitted the citizenry against an elite and malevolent 'other' in the form of party politicians and the political 'machines' which supported them. As chapter four showed, this contradiction between looking backward to a mythical pioneering past and looking forward to new and modern ways of reshaping the nation's political machinery was temporarily obscured by high-level ideals that supposedly transcended the political process entirely. Their aim, the movements stressed, was nothing less than the transformation of the nation's political system

and the reinvigoration of an apathetic electorate. Whilst their membership was drawn primarily from the professional, business and commercial fraction of the capitalist class, the huge numbers that joined suggested that they were at least partially successful in the latter objective. This thesis has suggested that the citizens' movements could therefore be considered a form of 'conservative populism', much like One Nation and the recent Tea Party protests in the United States.

It was their populism and their anti-partyism that made the citizens' movements both radical and unique. Whilst previous right-wing movements may have occasionally questioned the merits of machine politics, the citizens' movements transformed this into a large-scale challenge against the political status quo. Despite their ideological affinity with mainstream conservatives, their anti-partyism was so deeply ingrained in their worldview that they were compelled to reject political parties on both sides of the spectrum with equal fervour. As a result, they directly challenged the electoral base of these parties by promoting independent candidates of all shades who were willing to pledge themselves to upholding the movements' broad ideals. This challenge was particularly strong in Australia, where mainstream conservatives went to great lengths to contain it. Chapter five discussed the convoluted attempts of Joseph Lyons and the Nationalists to rein in the citizens' movements and the tortured ideological explanations which the movements developed to justify their cooperation with mainstream conservative parties. Whilst the New Zealand Legion did not pose a similar threat to the United and Reform parties, it still managed to recruit a large number of members. Nevertheless, it was similarly affected by inherent contradictions when it came to controversial, non-orthodox economic ideas such as proto-Keynesianism and monetary reform. The end result was the same – once the citizens' movements attempted to transform

their ideals into formal policy, they exposed the inherent contradictions that had previously been concealed. The ruptures that followed ultimately caused their downfall.

Whilst this thesis has argued that the exposure of the inherent contradictions between radical and reactionary ideas was the primary reason for the decline of the citizens' movements, there were other contributing factors. In Australia, Lyons' appropriation of non-party rhetoric and his success at bringing the citizens' movement under the aegis of the United Australia Party effectively undercut the reason for the movements' existence, especially after his victory in the December 1931 Federal election. Similarly, the New Zealand Legion's confused mix of unorthodox economic ideas could never compete with the clearly enunciated reformist program of the New Zealand Labour Party. As Labour grew in strength and its policies became more popular, the Legion's lofty ideas appeared increasingly hollow by comparison. However, these issues arose after the movements had decided on policies that exposed their inherent contradictions – the choice of political expediency or anti-political purity by the Australian movements, and the adoption of various unorthodox economic ideas by the New Zealand Legion. As this thesis has shown, exposing this contradiction caused a chain reaction of protests and resignations that weakened the movements to the point that they struggled to remain in existence. Lack of funding was an additional factor that plagued all four movements, although this did not prevent the Legion and the Citizens' League of South Australia from limping on until well after their heyday had passed.

The decline of the New Zealand Legion was also hastened by the increasingly divided nature of right-wing politics in New Zealand during the Depression. Unlike in Australia where conservatives were brought together under the United Australia Party, the political right in New Zealand continued to splinter up until the November 1935 election. The main splinter



group was the Democrat Party, a laissez-faire group formed by the well-known political campaigner Albert Davy. Whilst the Democrats did not win any seats in 1935, they received around 7.8% of the total votes cast. This vote-splitting appears to have been a factor in at least eight of the seats won by Labour.<sup>2</sup> A further 10.5% of the vote was received by independent candidates. In a sense, then, the Legion went down with the ship of a divided right wing, although by the time of the 1935 election it was already largely defunct.

The second, and more far-reaching, reason for the relevance of the citizens' movements is their position within long-term trends and processes in Australasian conservative thought. Whilst the movements themselves soon faded into the obituaries pages, their novel methods of political mobilisation and ideological expression contributed to the consolidation of the conservative parliamentary forces in Australia and New Zealand in subsequent decades. One of the ways in which this occurred was through ex-members who subsequently went on to have political careers within the mainstream conservative establishment, in particular from the Australian Citizens' League and the New Zealand Legion. Much like the individuals of the pre-Depression right who were involved with multiple right-wing leagues, these ex-members of the citizens' movements brought their ideological baggage with them, which in turn shaped the ways in which they interacted with, and influenced, mainstream conservatism. A trans-national parallel can be drawn between the two biggest success stories of the citizens' movements – Robert Menzies in Australia, and Sid Holland in New Zealand. The latter was an enthusiastic member of the Christchurch centre of the New Zealand Legion, whilst the former had worked closely with the Australian Citizens' League through his involvement with the Victorian Young Nationalists Organisation and the 'Group of Six'.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael C. Pugh, "Doctrinaires on the Right: The Democrats and Anti-Socialism, 1933-36," *New Zealand Journal of History* 17:2 (October 1983): 115.

Both subsequently became leading figures in the consolidation of mainstream conservatism in Australia and New Zealand. They oversaw, to varying degrees, the creation of the Liberal and National Parties and their transformation into mass organisations based on permanent hierarchical branch structures similar to their Labor opponents. As the vanguard of a younger generation of conservative politicians, they also oversaw a shift away from the tempered, patrician rhetoric of their predecessors to a more populist style aimed at colonising the electoral middle ground with conservative ideas and tropes. They sought to turn their new political organisations away from elite financial backers towards the middle class, which they portrayed as the backbone of the nation's economic prosperity and social stability. Menzies' new approach was summed up in his 1942 radio address to 'the forgotten people' who comprised this middle class, whilst Holland's came a year later in his 'passwords to progress'.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that, despite their failure, the citizens' movements had a lasting impact through the new, populist style of mass conservative politics pioneered by their former members. However, the extent to which the experiences of Menzies and Holland with the citizens' movements influenced their long-term political outlook must remain a subject for further study.

The citizens' movements also demonstrated the persistence of classical liberalism in Australasia during the twentieth century. This tradition was recently explored by Frank Bongiorno in the Australian context, who argued that the claim – so frequently expressed by neoliberals – that free trade was banished to the political wilderness after the 'Australian Settlement' was an oversimplification:

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<sup>3</sup> Sid Holland, *Passwords to Progress: a plan for post-war security, freedom and prosperity* (Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1943). For a thorough analysis of Menzies' appeal to the middle class (including a copy of the 'forgotten people' speech itself), see Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1992).

[A]ny suggestion that Free Trade liberalism was eclipsed between Federation and the 1980s requires some qualification, for there are some obvious continuities in ideology and rhetoric between the Free Traders of the Federation era, and non-Labor political discourse of the middle decades of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

One minor caveat to Bongiorno's approach is that, if Australasian conservatism is viewed within the framework of the nineteenth century developmentalist ethos, then the progression from free trade to neoliberalism, along with the intervening period of the Australian Settlement, was merely part of a continuum of greater or lesser state economic activity. Nevertheless, there is clearly an ideological 'low point' for classical liberalism during the middle portion of the twentieth century, which was marked especially in Australia and New Zealand by the advent of Keynesian economics in the post-war period. The citizens' movements are a clear example of how the ideology and rhetoric of liberalism persisted during those years. It was of particular relevance to their largely professional, business and commercial membership base, for whom the temptations of protection and price guarantees were largely irrelevant.

The third reason for the relevance of the citizens' movements is their position within the global right-wing ascendance that occurred during the interwar years. The phenomenon of mass conservative mobilisation, which arose in a number of forms across Australia and New Zealand during the Depression, was by far the largest and most significant right-wing reaction that occurred in the Antipodes. A growing body of scholarly work has sought to place these movements within a global framework, which this thesis has contributed to. Whilst chapter four demonstrated that the citizens' movements had much more in common with conservatism than European fascism, a more ambitious argument can be made about

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<sup>4</sup> Frank Bongiorno, "Whatever Happened to Free Trade Liberalism?" in *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System*, ed. Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009), 250.

their position at the crossroads between pre- and post-war right-wing mobilisation in Australasia. Prior to the rise of the citizens' movements, the majority of right-wing leagues were decidedly reactionary in outlook – they were conservative in their ideals and imperial in their loyalties. In contrast, the post-war far right tradition in Australasia was radical, xenophobic, and feverishly nationalistic to the point of rejecting British imperialism. This tradition was incubated amongst the conspiratorial and anti-establishment circles of monetary reform and social credit during the 1930s which had little involvement with the citizens' movements, apart from the New Zealand Legion. However, whilst the citizens' movements remained loyal to Britain, their focus on national issues and their lack of international connections demonstrated a shift in geographical locus from their predecessors. They arose in response to specific crises of a national nature, and their enemies were tangible and nationally-based. The nation was also the rhetorical unit for recovery, inasmuch as recovery required national unity and self-sacrifice in the service of the national interest. Eschewing strong international ties was therefore one way for the citizens' movements to reinforce their exclusively 'national' credentials, despite the imperial focus of their patriotism. This shift from imperial to national loyalties was symptomatic of the changing priorities of the right in Australia and New Zealand.

A final word can be said about the wider applicability of the framework outlined by this thesis to Australasian conservatism. Like most ideologies, conservatism is a broad school of thought containing many inherent contradictions. Some contradictions, like those of the citizens' movements, lay between the reactionary and radical fringes of conservative opinion; others, however, are structural in nature, such as those that divide the interests of farmers, manufacturers, and professionals, businessmen and commercial interests. The constant splits and consolidations of the non-labour parties in Australia and New Zealand during the first

half of the twentieth century demonstrate how divisive these contradictions could be. This thesis has suggested that, rather than ironing out these contradictions in the interests of narrative consistency, they must be embraced if a deeper historical understanding is to be achieved. Contradictions can reveal how alliances are forged and broken, how consensus is built around common issues without causing splits on more divisive ones, and how ideas and movements rise and fall by their ability to achieve this consensus. By exploring the antithesis – and occasionally the synthesis – of inherent contradictions, a fuller understanding of Australasian conservatism might be achieved.

## **APPENDIX A: GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

The data contained in appendix A was used to inform the discussion on the geographical spread of the citizens' movements in chapter 3, in particular through figures 8-11. It is provided in Excel spreadsheet form on the attached CD.

Where it was possible to ascertain the leaders of branches/sub-divisions, their names were included in the quantitative membership studies in appendix B. The branches/sub-divisions included in the membership studies are also marked with an 'X' in figures 8-11.

Specific methodological information on the data for each movement is noted below. This information is also provided in the associated Excel spreadsheets.

### **A1: THE ALL FOR AUSTRALIA LEAGUE**

The All for Australia League was split into divisions and sub-divisions, with sub-divisions representing the lowest level of organisation for the movement.

The list of sub-divisions used was drawn from the All for Australia League's 'Locality Layout for Metropolitan campaign', item 70, Mutch papers. Some of these sub-divisions may not have existed, as this may have only been a planned organisational structure. Where more than one city is mentioned in a sub-division, they have been plotted as separate sub-divisions (where possible or appropriate) on the geographical distribution in figure 9.

There were originally intended to be ten metropolitan and ten country divisions; however, in practice there were only a handful of sub-divisions outside of the Sydney metropolitan area

(15 country sub-divisions reported in March 1931). Several of these have been identified and highlighted in blue in the spreadsheet.

A few additional metropolitan subdivisions have also been identified and highlighted in red.

## **A2: THE AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS' LEAGUE**

The Australian Citizens' League was split into branches and sub-branches, with sub-branches representing the lowest level of organisation for the movement.

The list of branches and sub-branches used was published at the height of the Australian Citizens' League in 1931 in a pamphlet titled *All for Australia League shows the way to prosperity*. The list did not distinguish between branches and sub-branches, although it stated that there were 147 branches and 172 sub-branches. The pamphlet also mentioned that thirty more branches were in the process of formation – those additional branches that could be found in newspaper sources are highlighted in blue in the spreadsheet.

## **A3: THE CITIZENS' LEAGUE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

The Citizens' League of South Australia was split into districts and branches, with branches representing the lowest level of organisation for the movement.

The list of branches used was compiled from two sources: a full list of branches presented at the League's second convention in March 1931 (Attendance Book for Second Convention, 16 March 1931, box 2 item 20, CLSA papers), and a list of country branches presented at the third convention in June (Report of Executive Committee presented at Third Convention of Delegates, 10 June 1931, box 1 item 1, CLSA papers). At the third convention it was

announced that there were 93 metropolitan branches and 40 country branches of the League, with 17 more country branches in formation. As there were more than 93 metropolitan branches in March, this suggests that some of the metropolitan branches did not last. Conversely, only three country branches were listed in March, which suggests that the majority must have been formed between March and June 1931.

The branches for District 3: East Torrens were not listed in the report to the second convention.

#### **A4: THE NEW ZEALAND LEGION**

The New Zealand Legion was split into divisions and centres, with centres representing the lowest level of organisation for the movement.

A complete list of centres could not be found by the present writer. Consequently, the list used was extracted from Gerard Campbell's thesis on the Legion in Otago, which covers the Otago, North Otago and South Otago divisions only.



## **APPENDIX B – MEMBERSHIP DATA**

The data contained in appendix B was used to inform the discussion on the membership of the citizens' movements in chapter 3, in particular through tables 1-2 and graphs 1-4. It is provided in Excel spreadsheet form on the attached CD.

Along with the original membership data, separate tables are provided demonstrating how the present author divided occupations into the categories of farming, manufacturing, professional/business/commercial, working class, and other.

Specific methodological information on the data for two of the movement is noted below. It is also mentioned in the associated Excel spreadsheets.

### **B3: THE CITIZENS' LEAGUE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Electoral rolls for South Australia were not available electronically when this study was undertaken. As a result, the leadership analysis relies on the occupational data listed in Stephen James, "The Big Hand of Service": The Citizens' League of South Australia, 1930-1934; Origins, Ideology and Policy' (BA Hons diss., University of Melbourne, 1986), appendix G; and John Lonie, 'Conservatism and Class in South Australia During the Depression Years, 1929-34' (PhD diss., University of Adelaide, 1973), 213-214.

The list of front-line members for the North Adelaide branch was located in box 3 item 10, CLSA papers. As the electoral rolls were unavailable, no data could be gathered on occupation, age or military history. It was, however, useful in determining the gender balance of the branch.

#### **B4: THE NEW ZEALAND LEGION**

The list of front-line members for the Hawkes Bay division was located in file 2 folder 1, NZL papers.

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