



Challenging pre-WW1 militarism

The Hague International Peace Conferences of 1899 & 1907

These significant government-level conferences led to the establishment of the voluntary *Permanent Court of Arbitration*, which exists to this day.

The *Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes* was confirmed and expanded by the 1907 conference.

The peace movements in Britain, Europe and elsewhere were galvanised by what had been achieved, and renewed their efforts at combating militarism. European powers, however, continued to build up their military capabilities and engage in expansion of their spheres of influence.

“War is not the sad necessity ... it has been so long regarded, there are other and better ways for settling the differences of the nations.”

General Meeting for Australia, October 1906.



John Hills, 1912

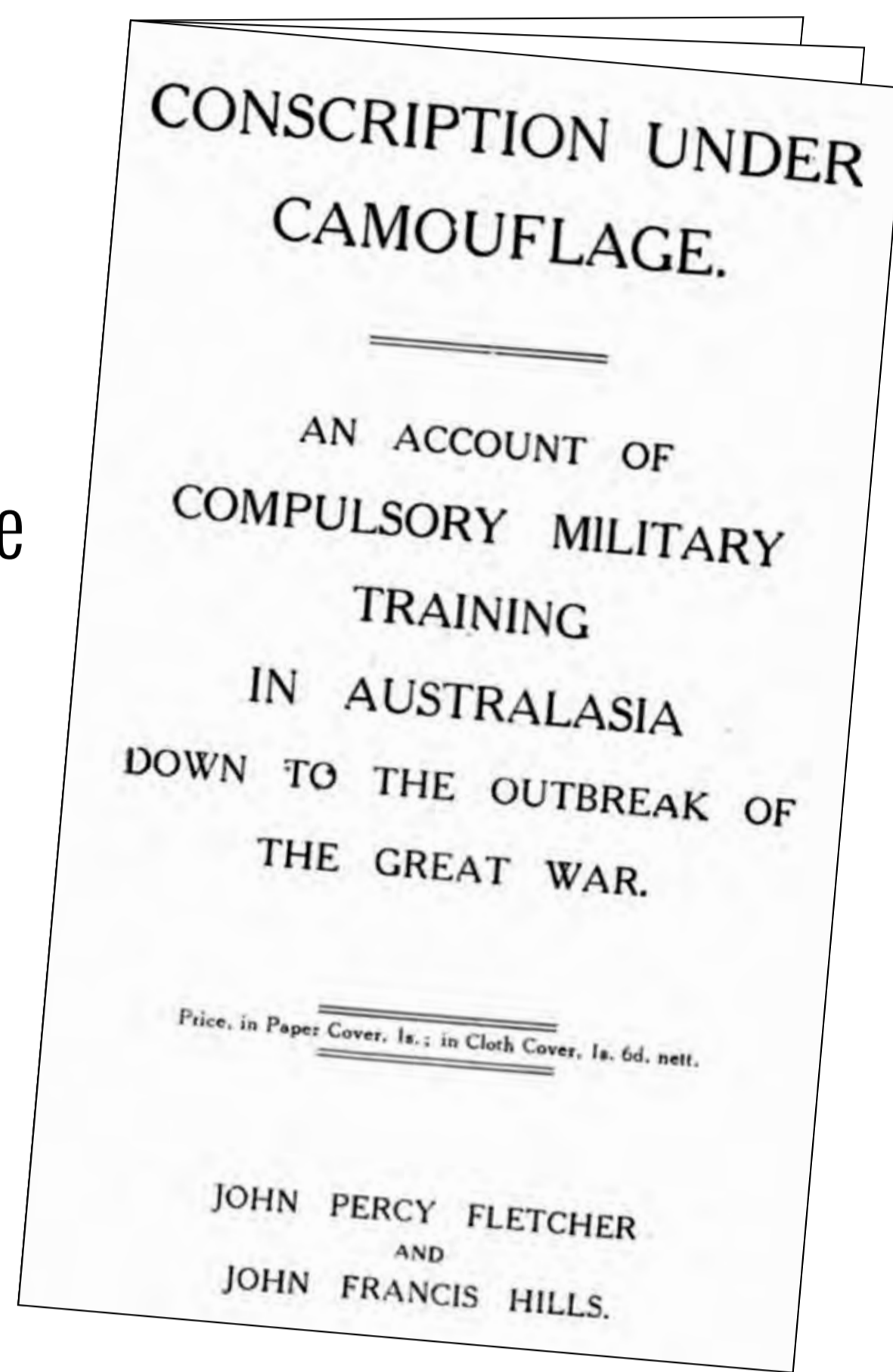


J. Percy Fletcher, 1912

Challenges to militarism and the Defence Act

Before WW1, other groups opposing militarism included:

- ◆ the Anti-war League in Sydney
- ◆ state branches of the London Peace Society
- ◆ the Australian Peace Alliance (an umbrella group)
- ◆ the Australian Freedom League for the Abolition of the Compulsory Clauses of the Commonwealth Defence Acts.



Quakers in Britain

The **Friends Peace Committee** (formed in the late 1880s) established local and international links with the wider peace movement. It campaigned against the growth in armaments and the threat of militarism, promoting arbitration, influencing public opinion and petitioning government.

In January 1913 the **Northern Friends Peace Board** was set up to

‘advise and encourage Friends in the North and through them their fellow Christians and citizens generally, in the active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth.’

Northern Friends Peace Board. www.nfpb.org.uk/node/212

Quakers in Australia

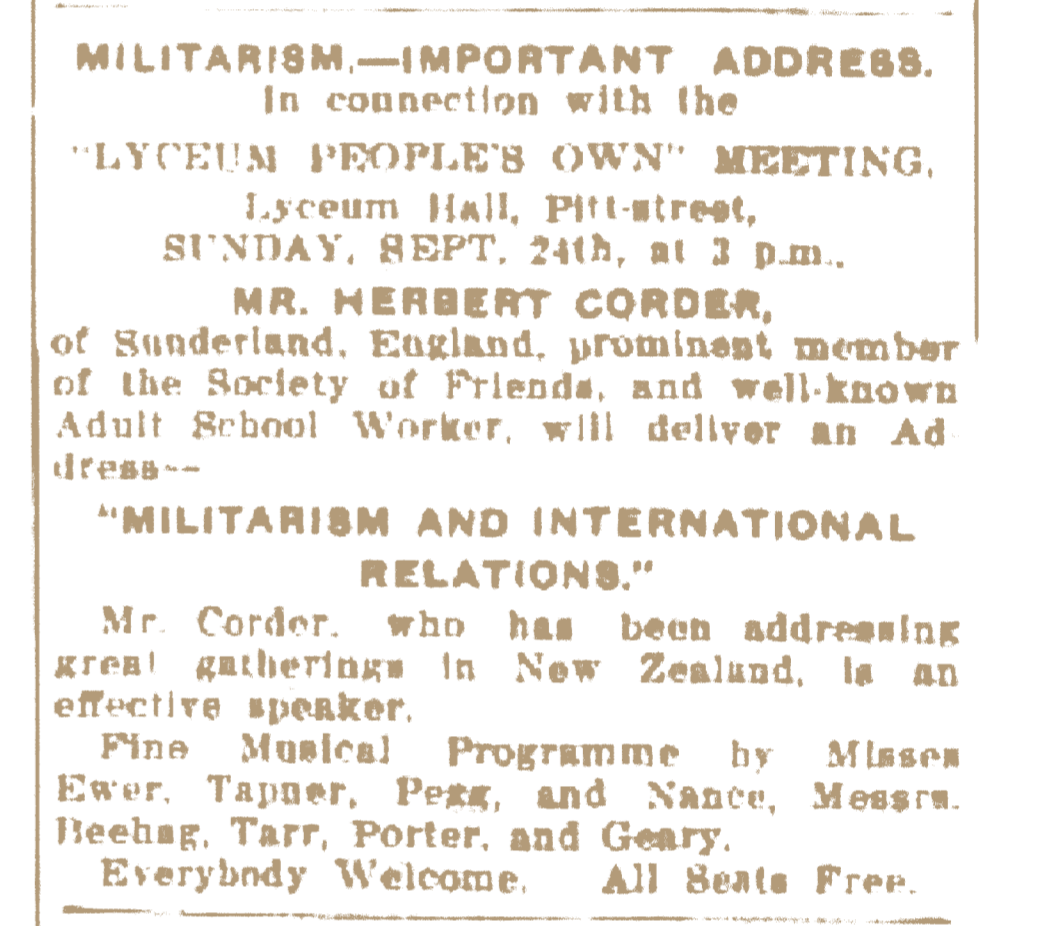
Quakers made known to the government, and the community, their concerns about increasing militarism and the proposed (post-Federation) Defence Act.

‘[Compulsory military training is] the first step towards the militarisation of the Anglo-Saxon race, and tends to make us objects of suspicion to foreign powers... [It] encourages a disposition – here and elsewhere – to rely upon the might of the sword rather than upon principles of righteousness and justice.’

Manifesto of Sydney Monthly Meeting, August 1901

The **Australian Friends Peace Board** was formed in early 1914 to promote the cause of peace in a more organised way.

John Hills, Percy Fletcher and other Quakers established the more political, and vocal, Australian Freedom League in Adelaide in 1912. Branches, including women’s branches, were soon set up in other states.



Watchman (Sydney), 21 September 1911.

Compulsory Military Training in Australia pre-WW1

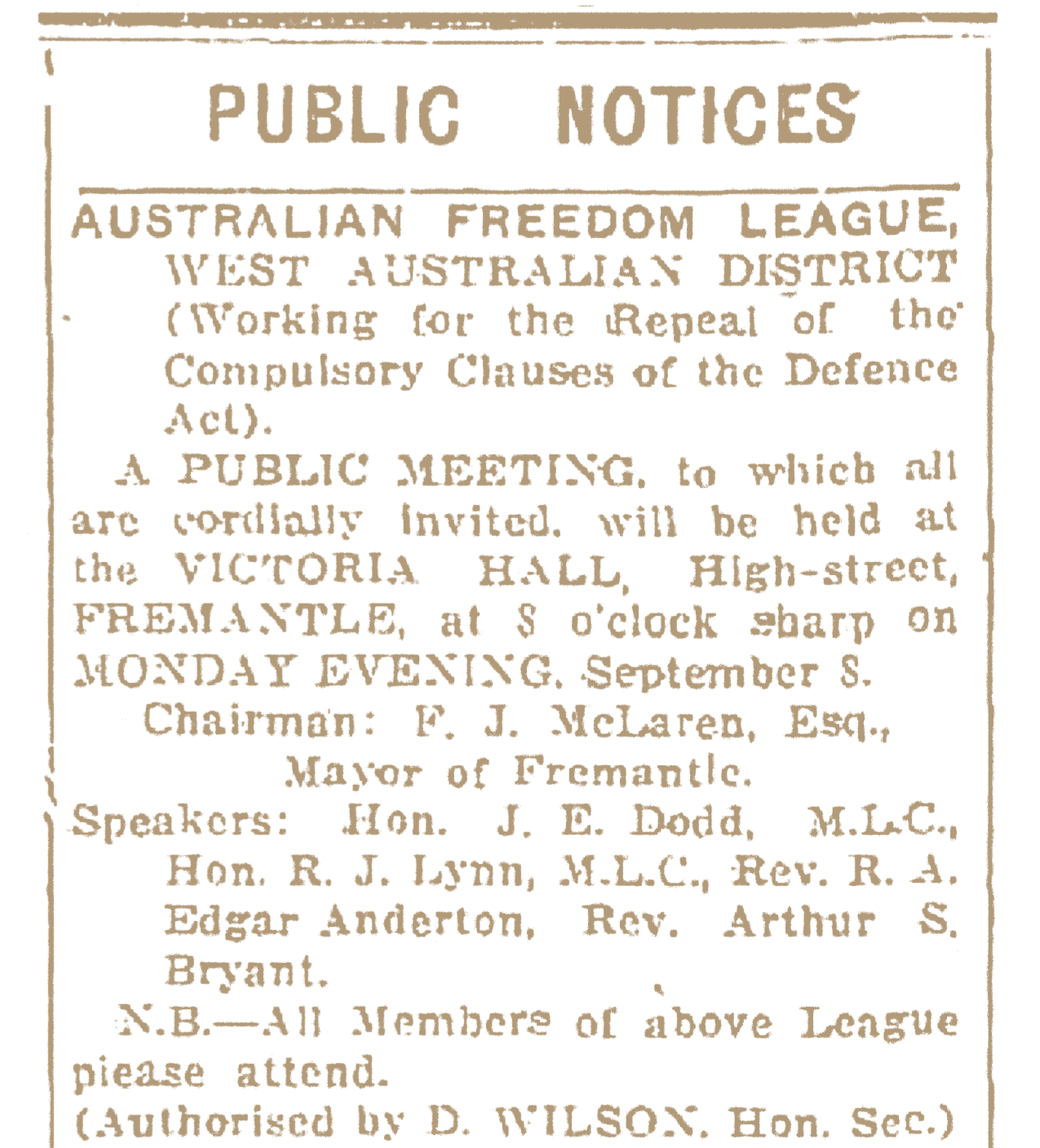
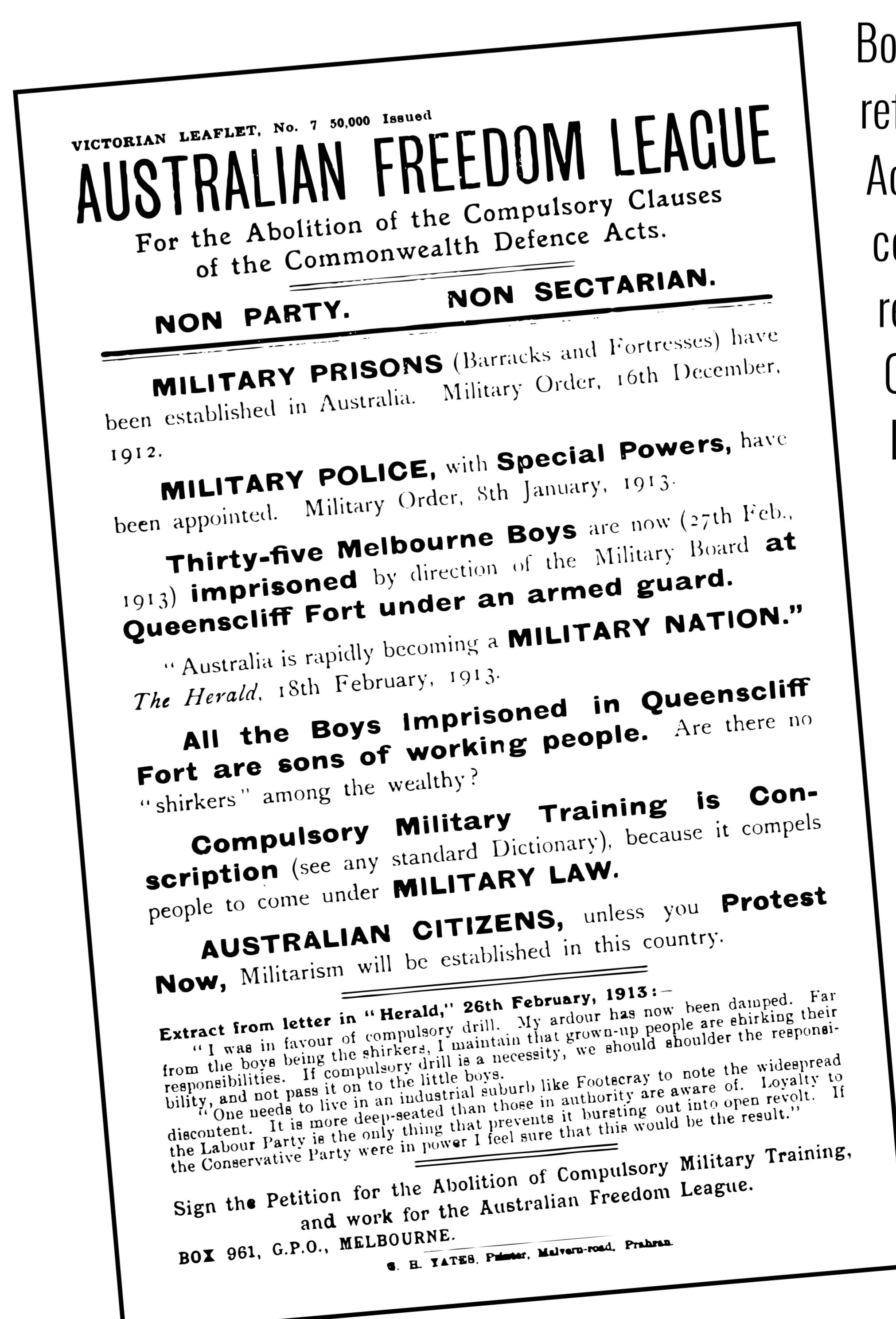
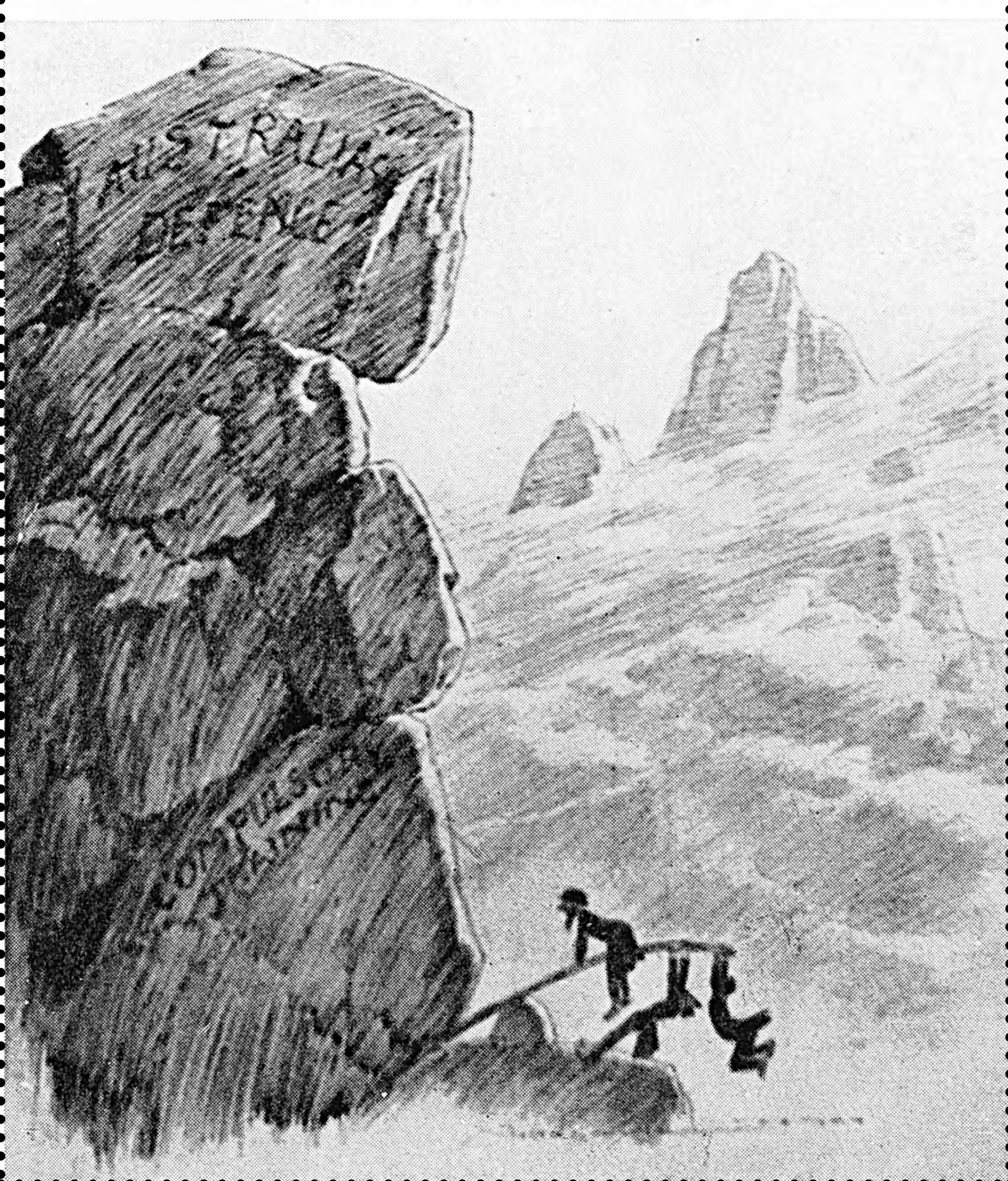
The Defence Bill of 1909, enacted on 1 July 1911, provided for compulsory military training:

- ◆ 12–14 years in Junior Cadets (physical drill)
- ◆ 14–18 years in Senior Cadets (military drill)
- ◆ 18–26 years in the Citizen Forces (military training)

The very limited, and qualified, provision for non-combatant duties on the grounds of religious principles was unsatisfactory as it was under the jurisdiction of, and at the whim of, the military authorities.

Boys, youths and their parents, who refused to comply with the Defence Act provisions, on the grounds of conscientious objection (not only religious), were supported by Quakers, the Australian Freedom League and the Australian Peace Alliance.

THREE MEN AND A CROWBAR
“The Australian Freedom League met last night. Colonel Onslow and Mr. Lonsdale, Ms.L.A., and the Rev. F. A. Cowling emphatically protested against compulsory military training.”—*News item, Sydney Bulletin*, September 12th, 1912



Daily News (Perth), 8 September 1913.

