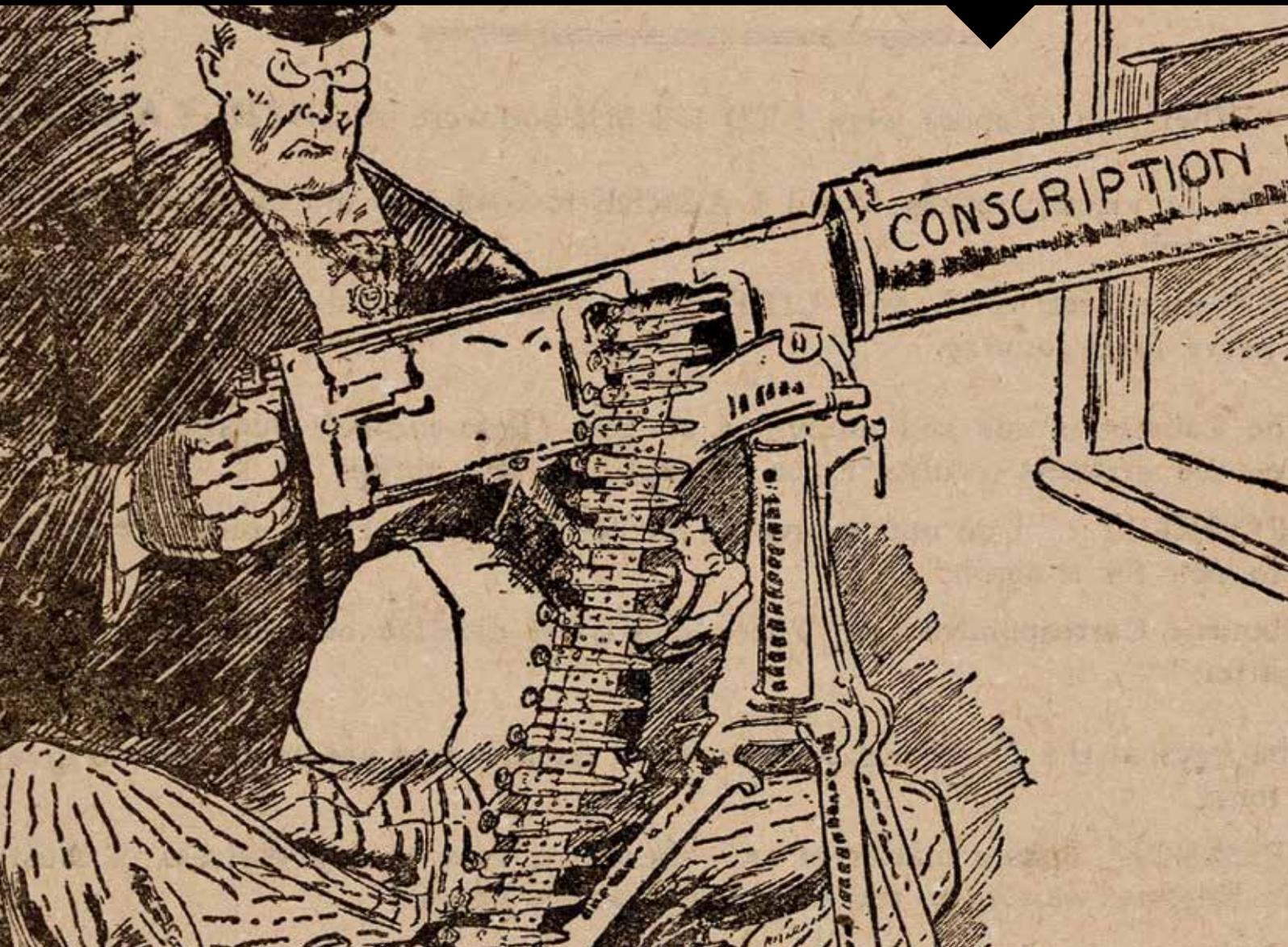


GREAT DEBATES: ARGUMENTS AGAINST CONSCRIPTION

CHARACTER PROFILE

3

Mr Tom **Barker**



Great Debates: Conscription

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Source Analysis Worksheet

Source	What is the source? Who created it?	What information does the source provide?	What argument does this provide your character?	What questions are you left asking?

Biography

Tom **Barker**



“I would not like to have as many murders on my conscience as the politicians who have attempted to force conscription on this country.”

Thomas Barker. Ref: 1/2-019136-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23067556>

It is November 1917. Tom Barker, an organiser for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a radical international labour union, has been imprisoned for violating the *War Precautions Act*. Barker came to Sydney in early 1914 and began writing for the IWW's paper, *Direct Action*. By the end of the year, he had become the editor. A fierce opponent of the war, he sees it as workers fighting workers for the benefit of the wealthy.

In 1917, Prime Minister Billy Hughes determined it necessary to introduce a second referendum on **conscription**. Falling enlistments and rising casualties, particularly from the fighting on the **Western Front**, have led to a shortage of reinforcements for the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Hughes has announced a **referendum** on the issue for 20 December. Australians will vote on whether conscripts should be sent to fight overseas.

This is not the first time Hughes has tried to introduce conscription. On 28 October 1916, the first referendum on conscription was held. It was defeated: 49% voted for the proposal, 51% were against. Only a narrow majority of soldiers serving in the AIF voted in favour of compulsory overseas service.

Early in the war, Barker created a famous poster (see Source 1.1, p. 5) for the anti-conscription and anti-war campaigns. In September 1915, he was charged with hindering recruiting efforts. He eventually escaped the charges on a technicality.

In the aftermath of the first conscription referendum, the IWW was declared unlawful. Barker, however, continued to push the anti-conscription message. In 1917, in the lead up to the referendum, Barker was imprisoned again but this time he was unable to escape the charges.

Source 1.1



Used with permission of the Industrial Workers of the World.
<http://www.iww.org/history/biography/TomBarker/1>

Source 1.2



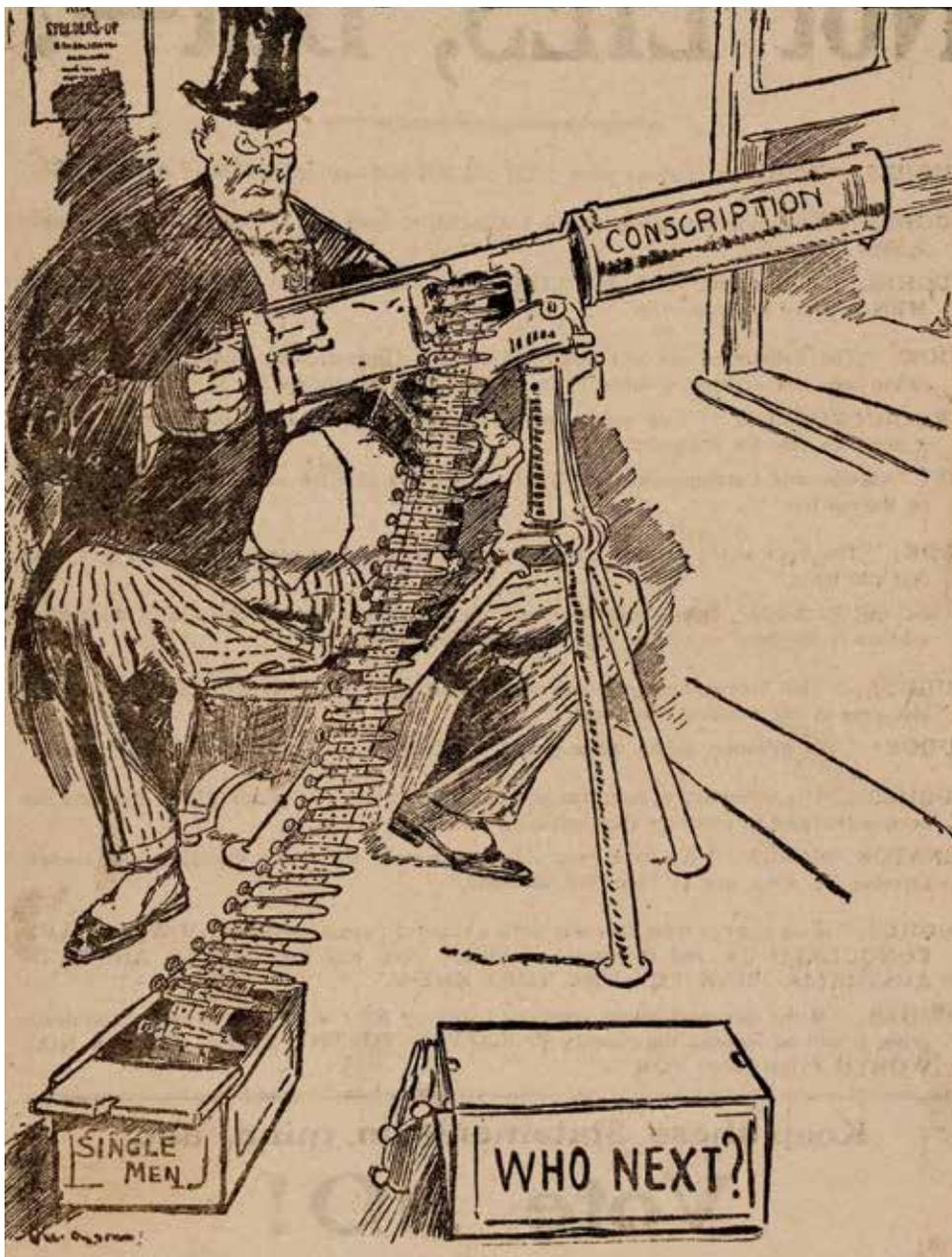
AWM RC00336
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RC00336/>

Source 1.3

'In no circumstances would I agree to send men out of this country to fight against their will. If the day ever comes when men will not fight when their country is at deathgrips, it will be because the country is rotten to the core, and not worth fighting for. If the enemy comes here it will not be a question of conscription at all, for every one, young and old, must take what comes to his hand, and die, if need be, in the attempt to defend the country.'

William Morris Hughes, Speech to the House of Representatives, 16 July 1915. Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, Accessed 07 September 2015. http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansardr80/1915-07-16/0141/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf

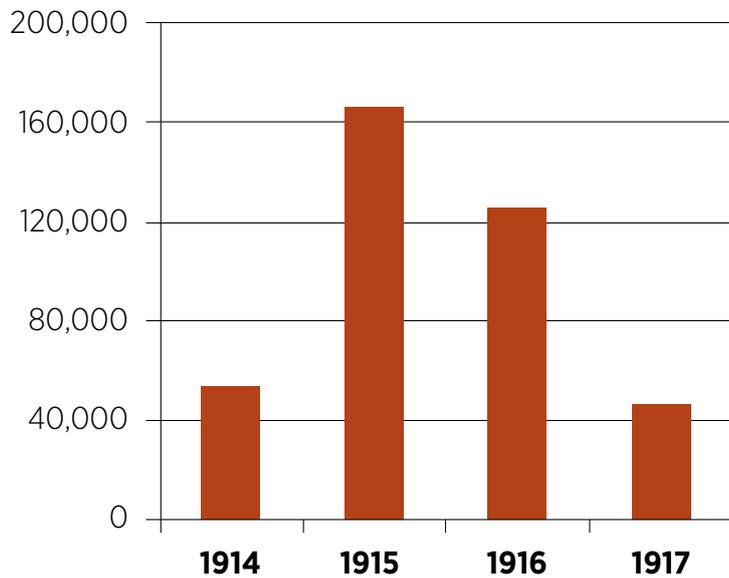
Source 1.4



AWM RC00339
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RC00339/>

Source 1.5

Enlistments by year*



In 1917 Britain sought a sixth division for active service. In order to meet this request, Australia needed 7,000 volunteers per month. However, the number of volunteers in 1917 was failing to meet this target. By 1917, to maintain five divisions at full strength, Australia needed 7,000 volunteers per month. However, the number of volunteers was failing to meet this target.

Based on *Enlistment statistics, First World War*, Australian War Memorial, accessed 3 September 2015

* Approximate only

<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/enlistment/ww1/#year>

Source 1.6

“They talk of conspiracy,” cried Barker vehemently, “Who are the conspirators? Hughes and Pearce! They took the children years ago to make them conscripts. They talk of murder!

I would not like to have as many murders on my conscience as the politicians who have attempted to force conscription on this country.”

Defence Agitation. (1917, January 20). *Direct Action* (Sydney, NSW: 1914 - 1930), p. 1. Retrieved September 3, 2015, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article111352231>

Glossary of terms

conscription A policy that compels citizens of a nation into military service.

referendum A public vote called by the government to approve a change to the Australian Constitution. The 1916 and 1917 referenda were in fact plebiscites. A plebiscite, also known as an advisory referendum, is used to decide a national question that does not affect the Constitution. It can be used to test whether the government has sufficient support from the people to go ahead with a proposed action.

Western Front A series of trenches running from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border, separating the Allied and Central Powers in the First World War.